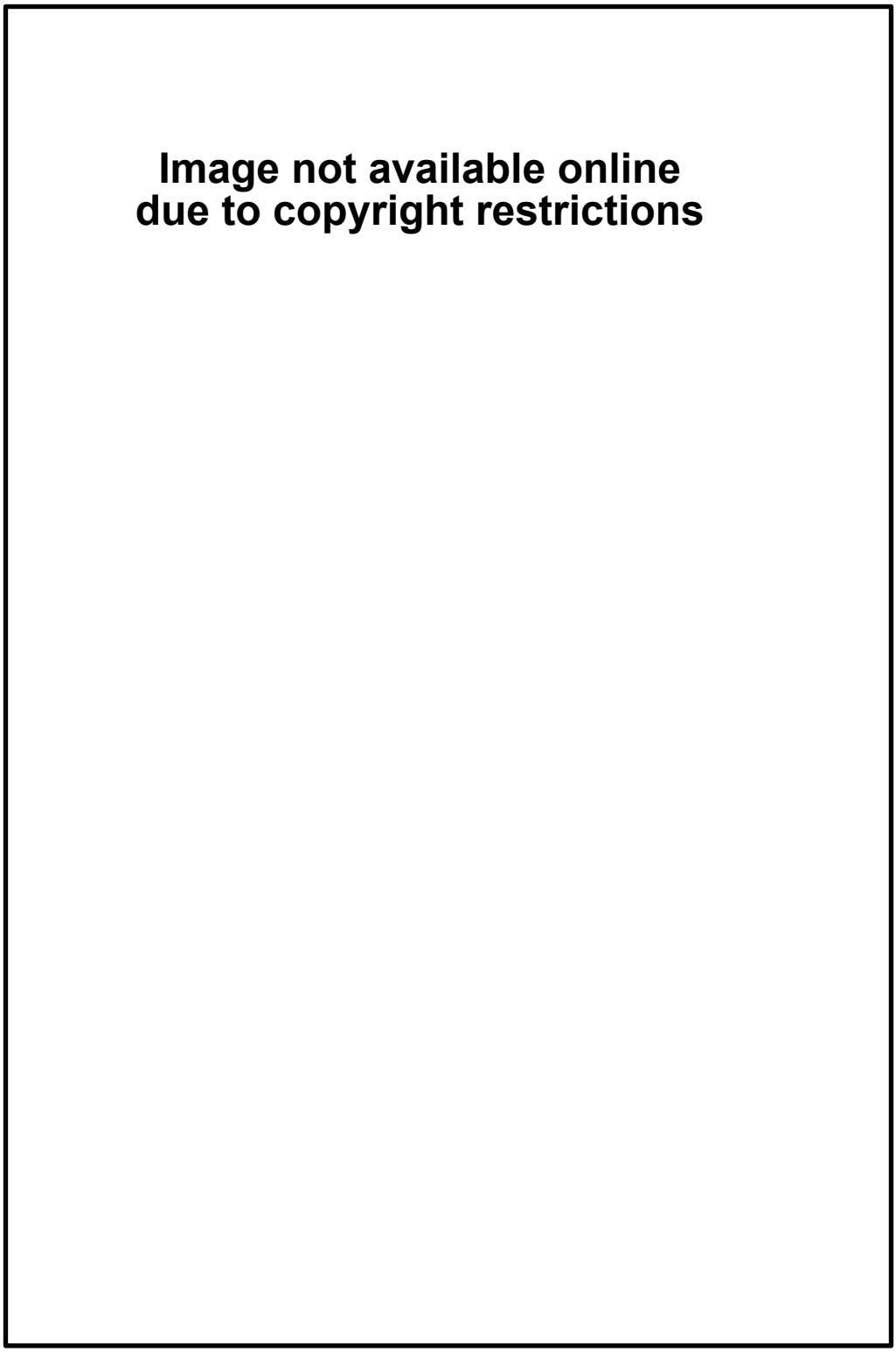
Women's History
MAGAZINE



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women's HISTORY NETWORK

Women's Histories: the Local and the Global

This major international conference is jointly organised by the International Federation for Research in Women's History and the Women's History Network.

Engaging with recent global and transnational turns in historical scholarship, the conference will explore the history of women worldwide across a broad chronological span. It aims to push forward the international agenda for research in women's and gender history through deepening our understanding of processes of globalisation, of the interplay between 'local' and the 'global' histories, and of the relationship between nation-based traditions of history writing and transnational approaches which focus on connections and comparisons.

The four-day conference will include over 200 papers arranged in parallel thematic strands, delivered by scholars from around the world. The confirmed keynote speakers are: Jacqueline van Gent, Professor of English and Cultural Studies, The University of Western Australia; Catherine Hall, Professor of Modern British Social and Cultural History, University College London; and Mrinalini Sinha, Alice Freeman Palmer Professor of History, University of Michigan.

Conference languages: English and French

If you wish to attend you are advised to register as soon as possible in order to secure the 'early bird' conference fee and the accommodation of your choice.

For details and online registration forms see the conference website:
www.ifrwh2013conf.org.uk

IFRWH

women's HISTORY NETWORK

Sheffield Hallam University

Editorial

This Summer issue, our research articles range widely both chronologically and geographically. Yet despite their variety, in each we find women exercising agency in their own individual lives, and sometimes gaining power over the lives of others, through their labour, writing, and political activism. In Johanna Ilmakunnas' opening article, elite women in eighteenth-century Russia and Sweden find power, status and security through courtly professions. Elizabeth Lovegrove, in our second piece, explores how middle-class women in the second half of the nineteenth century could exercise power through writing and publishing. Finally, Martine Stirling examines the phenomenon of women's parliaments in Britain during World War Two as a means through which some women were able to influence their own wartime fate, and that of others.

We begin in the mid eighteenth century, with Johanna Ilmakunnas offering insight into the lives of courtly women in two societies – Swedish and Russian – during the turbulent period of 1750-1850. She provides a window into the daily routines, friendships, and ambitions of these elite women as they negotiated the world of the courts. We learn how, for some women, this was a career spanning decades of their lives, culminating in the honour of a grand funeral. For others, a courtly career provided an opportunity for social advancement through marriage. Ilmakunnas offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of the courts just before the upheavals of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In 'Dangerous Display', Elizabeth Lovegrove explores in fascinating detail the writing and identities of a small group of women involved in producing the *Monthly Packet* magazine (published from 1851- 1899) as editors and reader-contributors. At a time when the 'Woman Question' was high on the social and political agenda, Lovegrove argues that it was the use of pseudonyms which allowed these women to 'dip their toes' into the public arena and to explore some potentially controversial opinions – even amongst their own circle.

Martine Stirling's article offers new insights into the neglected topic of women's parliaments in Britain during World War Two. Stirling traces the development of these parliaments, their objectives, achievements and disappearance in the late 1940s. The images reproduced here of the parliamentary bulletins for the regional meetings suggest the empowering message they conveyed to women during wartime and certainly support Stirling's argument that these were an important step on the way to Second Wave feminism.

Our final piece for summer is a new feature: a review essay. Katie Barclay, our lead editor on the *Magazine* editorial board, offers us critical insight into the latest publications in the developing field of family history. We hope to offer more of these review essays in the future, as an addition to our regular book reviews section. In another book review-related feature, our 'Getting to know you' section introduces one of our regular – and much appreciated – book reviewers, Ruth Richardson. If you would like to contribute a book review, please see our call for reviewers and list of books received.

As this issue goes to press, final preparations are underway for the annual Women's History Network conference, which this year will be held jointly in late August with the International Federation for Research in Women's History conference at Sheffield Hallam University. The theme is the 'local and the global' – an appropriate topic for an event which promises to bring together historians from near and far. Sheffield is itself a city in which the 'local' has long been formed through 'global' connections. For example, the steel, cutlery and coal industries, each seen as representative of the distinctive local identity of this South Yorkshire city, were each dependent upon a global economy. Sheffield will be an excellent setting for what should be an exciting (and large!) gathering and a number of excursions have been arranged into the surrounding area (see conference website for details).

This issue says a sad farewell to a long-serving member of our editorial team, Ann Kettle, who has reached the end of her four-year term. We are, however, very pleased to be able to welcome formally Lucy Bland, who has taken over from Ann in the role of Committee Liaison and has produced our Steering Committee report for this issue. Lucy works on gender and sexuality in twentieth-century Britain. Her forthcoming book *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in the Age of the Flapper* is due out in 2013, published by Manchester University Press. Lucy has certainly been thrown in at the deep end, as she has also taken on the role of co-lead editor of this summer issue!

As always, this magazine is your space as Women's History Network members, and we welcome suggestions for how it could be improved or extended. Finally, we welcome articles, both long and short, that help us to explore women's history.

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

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Cover: *'Fast Flow - Women on Production', Report of First Session of the Lancashire Women's Parliament (Front Cover), 12 April 1942. Reproduced by permission of the People's History Museum, Manchester, UK.*

Careers at the courts: Noblewomen in the service of Swedish and Russian royals, c. 1750–1850

Johanna Ilmakunnas

University of Helsinki, Finland

In early modern and modern Europe, many noblewomen were occupied with various tasks in royal households. The key concepts for understanding the early modern European nobility are the ideas of duty and service. Serving the sovereign was an obligation, a responsibility which was not to be avoided. For a noblewoman, the most obvious way to gain dutiful aristocratic agency was to act as a lady-in-waiting at the royal or imperial court. For some women a career at court was a heavy duty, whereas for others it was a pleasure. Courts formed an important political and social arena throughout Europe; women were an essential part of this sociability and the power structures of royal and imperial courts.

At court, an ambitious noblewoman could engage in political or cultural activities and act in her own right on an institutional level despite her gender. Moreover, an office at court could also offer noblewomen the possibility of a career with their own income and prospects for advancement. Several ladies-in-waiting kept their occupation for decades, and their careers survived changes of rulers, successions and *coup d'états*. Ladies-in-waiting increased the power and magnificence of the sovereign; they represented the royal lineage through their service and their social connections within and outside the royal court.

Noblewomen in service at Swedish royal and Russian imperial court

This article aims to discuss ladies-in-waiting and other noblewomen in the service of the Swedish royal court and Russian imperial court in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, c. 1750–1850.[1] The focus is on the hundred-year period before industrialisation and on how an emerging bourgeois society created new employment for upper-class women. Until the late nineteenth century, noblewomen had limited possibilities to act in public and work for their living. Societal change was not the same in every country and Russia for one followed behind other countries in regard to changes affecting the lives of noblewomen. In late nineteenth-century Sweden, a career at court was no longer the only professional opening for noblewomen, but in Russia the importance of a court career was fundamental to aristocratic women up until the 1917 revolution.[2]

In the societies of *ancien régime*, the world of the court, 'ce pays-ci',[3] was not only a professional arena for nobles, both men and women, but also a fundamental part of the culture, ideology and worldview of the nobility. Hence many noblewomen did not even consider professions other than a career at court, unless they married and concentrated on the role of wife and mother. Rapid social changes during the nineteenth century, including the evolving separation of home, work and leisure was not an issue for noblewomen appointed as maids of honour or ladies-in-waiting in the same way as for women at other levels of society.[4] High position at court and wealth offered noblewomen possibilities to act in public, for instance through philanthropy. For example, the Russian maid of honour and personal friend of the empress Alexandra Fyodorovna, the immensely rich Aurora Karamzina (née Stjernvall), used her social rank and fortune explicitly for philanthropic work in nineteenth-century Russia and especially in her native home of Finland.[5]

There have been many studies of philanthropic work in early modern and modern Europe, of women's professionalisation during the nineteenth century, and of upper-class women's opportunities in the late nineteenth-century labour market.[6] Less has been written about noblewomen's occupations in the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. The important role of aristocratic women and their actual cultural and political possibilities at royal and imperial courts during the period c.1750–1850 is widely acknowledged,[7] yet their occupations at court have seldom been studied as careers and work.[8]

Examples of noblewomen whose attitude to their career at court could be characterised as professional are drawn here from Swedish and Russian courts. Most of the women who made a career at court came from the highest aristocracy in both countries. However, the royal court in Stockholm and the imperial court in St. Petersburg also offered possibilities to daughters of the provincial nobility. Aristocratic women considered court offices as their privilege, especially those of lady-in-waiting or mistress of the robes, which only married women could hold. The highest-ranking offices were reserved for aristocratic women but short-term offices, such as the prolific role of maid of honour, could be held by those from less grand families, thereby opening the palace door to less privileged young women.

Noblewomen in the structure of the courts in Sweden and Russia

Until the early eighteenth century, the Swedish royal court was organised after the German pattern, which meant that the court was relatively small in size and less hierarchical than the seventeenth-century French or Spanish courts.[9] From the 1740s, the court followed French court ideals, especially in regard of cultural activities, but the economy, size and structure of court offices continued to follow the German system. The new Crown Prince of Sweden, Adolph Fredrick of Holstein-Gottorp, and Crown Princess Louisa Ulrika of Prussia, chose as the marshal of the court Count Carl Gustaf Tessin, former Swedish ambassador in Paris and acquainted with French royalties, aristocracy and court life.[10] In Russia, the westernisation

of the nobility and the court during the eighteenth century led the way to court etiquette, hierarchy, clothing and practices taken likewise from the French court. Peter the Great's sartorial revolution in Russia, and changes in court life made by Catherine II, born a German princess, opened Russia to European, francophone, cosmopolitan court culture.[11] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, language, lifestyle and other practices of the nobility and royal or imperial courts were French-influenced throughout continental Europe, a phenomenon which made the social life of the aristocrats and nobles accessible to their peers everywhere.

In the eighteenth century, the political and military power of Russia strengthened in Europe, and after the Napoleonic wars its status as a power state was indisputable. The power of Russia was manifested both to the foreign powers and its own subjects, especially through the Russian nobility – who, during previous centuries, had been important in the many shifts of power and *coups d'état* typical of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russia.[12] The political power of the Swedish sovereign, however, was relatively weak during the period called by contemporaries the Age of Liberty (1719–1772).[13] The absolutist reigns of King Gustav III and King Gustav IV Adolf (1772–1809) were characterised by the growing importance of the ceremonial role of the court.[14] Hence political intrigues were constant between the royals, the court and the ruling classes when sovereigns with loyal courtiers tried to aggrandise the political power of the ruler. In Sweden, the splendour of royal manifestations of power as well as the privileges of the nobility diminished throughout the nineteenth century alongside the growth of the bourgeoisie. It has been argued that the Swedish royal family became more bourgeois during the nineteenth century because of the increasing societal valuing of domesticity and family life over ceremonious public life.[15] In Russia, however, the political role and thus magnificent representation of the imperial court was strong until the end of the nineteenth century when Emperor Nicholas II withdrew from official life to St. Petersburg.

A career at the royal court, though much sought after, was an option only for a small group of noblewomen. Compared to other European courts in Versailles, Vienna and Berlin, the Swedish royal court and Russian imperial court were relatively small during the eighteenth century, and could thus offer careers only to a small number of noblewomen. For instance, in the late-eighteenth century, at the court of Queen Sofia Magdalena of Sweden, a chief mistress of the robes, a mistress of the robes, and nine ladies-in-waiting were appointed, but no maids of honour.[16]

The offices were mostly for life, which emphasises the exclusive nature of a court career. In Russia, the number of courtiers increased substantially during the reign of Catherine II,[17] to be increased again in the course of the nineteenth century when the Russian imperial court had approximately 1,500 noble officeholders.[18] A large number of the maids of honour at the imperial court (in the early nineteenth century about 150) were maids of honour 'in town' (*demoiselles d'honneur de la ville*) whose position was mostly ceremonial and given as an honour to the father, whereas the number of the maids of honour 'in entourage' varied from one to five depending on whether the dowager empress was alive.[19] Also a number of ladies-in-waiting (*dame d'honneur*) without duties were nominated as a reward and honour for women based on their merits. The number of ladies-in-waiting varied in the eighteenth century, but in the early nineteenth century Emperor Nicholas I decreed their number to be thirty-six.[20]

The ladies-in-waiting did not change when the new ruler was crowned. If the dowager queen or dowager empress lived, she kept her own court and her courtiers. After the death of the dowager queen or the dowager empress, the ladies-in-waiting either retired or continued in the service of the new queen or empress. They transmitted knowledge of the royal family, ceremonials and traditions to new consorts who often came from abroad and had to leave their personal courtiers behind when marrying into a foreign royal or imperial family.

Qualities of a maid of honour, a future lady-in-waiting

In order to achieve the inner and outer appearance of a maid of honour or lady-in-waiting – indeed, the appearance of a lady – nobility educated their daughters with great care. In Sweden, until the early nineteenth century, most of the aristocratic families educated their daughters at home.[21] During the nineteenth century it became more usual for the nobility to send their daughters to boarding schools.[22] In Russia, education of the daughters of high-ranking noble families became a responsibility of the state when Catherine II established Russia's first school for noble girls, Smolnyi Institute, in 1764. Her goal was to take society's westernisation further in educating girls well.[23] Girls were future mothers, who were in their turn responsible for the upbringing of the next generation of Russian nobles for State service at court, for the army, or for employment in state bureaucracy.

In aristocratic culture, the role of the mother was undeniably essential in passing the knowledge of the world of the court from generation to generation. The transmitting of social knowledge and skills in high society were mothers' and other female relatives' responsibility, whereas fathers were responsible for the formal education of children – both boys and girls. Young girls learned at an early age how to behave, please and act in various social events, such as visits, balls, assemblies, masquerades or in spa resorts and at country houses. In aristocratic circles, girls' education in conversation (mostly in French), in dancing, drawing or sewing, as well as their moral and ethical education, aimed for the gracious, modest, tasteful behaviour and aristocratic sociability essential at court.[24]

It was not unusual that the daughters of aristocratic families became familiar with the royal court from their childhood. An appointment, especially an appointment that continued for several years, was most often available for young girls whose parents or relatives had close connections to the royal or imperial court. Young noble girls were appointed as maids of honour more often in honour of their parents or other relatives than because of their own qualities. However, personal qualities of the maids of honour should not be underestimated. In a world

Portrait of Aline Stjernvall wearing a monogram of the empress (the emblem of maids of honour at the Russian imperial court) and a head-dress (kokoshnik) - the only traditional Russian part of the otherwise Western clothing. Unknown artist, 1830s. Photo Jaakko Ojala, reproduced courtesy of Emil Cedercreutz museum, Finland.

where birth, politeness, sensibility, wit, grace and beauty were highly valued, personal qualities of these young girls helped them in one or other of the two possible paths for aristocratic women in this period: finding a suitable match in marriage, or combining such a match with a career at court. While some of the noblewomen who made a career at court never married, most of them did, for marriage aided them in ascending the court hierarchy.

In the lives of young noblewomen, presentation at court became a ritual transition from the world of home to the world of court. After presentation at court, young ladies had entered high society and left childhood and adolescence behind them. Some of them soon married and moved to the estates of their spouses, while some of them were appointed as maids of honour for a longer period. Connections and social status as well as personal qualities were required before a young lady could be appointed at court. However, in some cases young ladies from families with lower status and position were appointed as a supreme favour to the girl's family.

Work and duty

Genteel women's occupations at royal courts varied according to which household (king's, queen's, emperor's, empress's or other members of royal and imperial families) they belonged; to the season; in which of the royal palaces the court was sojourning; to the number of ceremonies (for instance coronations, victory celebrations, balls, banquets, marriages, funerals or christenings); and to the personality of the sovereign as well as to the personal qualities or skills of female courtiers. It can be argued that in the history of royal courts the most important task of the courtiers was consolidating and manifesting the power of the sovereign through sumptuous ceremonies and lavish everyday court life. However, women's tasks and duties at court can and should be characterised as work because they were very much seen as such by their contemporaries. Ladies-in-waiting had generally more tasks than maids of honour and their duties had more the character of work than maids of honours' duties.

Ladies-in-waiting had many duties, of which accumulating and manifesting the splendour of the court and sovereign was perhaps the most visible. In addition, the everyday duties of the ladies-in-waiting varied from helping with correspondence, engaging in conversation, reading to the royals, playing cards with them or accompanying them on promenades, to the care of and choosing of jewellery for various occasions, or organising queens' or empresses' philanthropic work.

Ladies-in-waiting dealt with everyday practical issues and served as companions to the female royals but they were also important figures in the daily life at court. The life at court offered courtiers ceremonies and festivities, sociability and culture, intrigues and quiet days as well as a lot of travelling between different royal residences. Court was a stage on which both married and unmarried noble ladies could act for various purposes. At the eighteenth-century Russian court, for instance, the intrigues around the sovereign and the succession played an important part for the aristocratic families who had their own favourites among the members of the imperial family. Ladies-in-waiting who came from aristocratic families competed with each other for status, favours, political power and offices for their husbands, brothers and other relatives.

At court both in Russia and in Sweden, courtiers wore court dresses that distinguished their rank and social position. In Russia, the sartorial ranking was more nuanced and more visible than in Sweden, where all ladies-in-waiting and mains of honour wore similar gowns. At the Russian imperial court, the colours, cut and embroideries of the court dresses distinguished the rank of the ladies.[25]

In Sweden, ladies-in-waiting were regarded as the highest-ranking women in the country. They had admission to the queen's apartment at all times and all of them were present at public audiences and at ambassadors' audiences, which can be seen as a direct mark of their rank. The chief mistress of the robes and the mistress of the robes, the highest-ranking women at court, had the power to introduce anyone to the queen who wished to meet her. They also took care of the train or mantle in

ceremonies, although one of the queen's chamberlains carried it. The ladies-in-waiting on duty followed the queen wherever she went, saw to her needs and her accessories, and informed male courtiers like the lord chamberlain as to when the queen needed them. Ladies-in-waiting arranged balls or suppers for the queen, they organised illuminations, music and dances. Compared to male courtiers, ladies-in-waiting and maids of honour were fewer in number at the Swedish court. They numbered only eleven, of which the chief mistress of the robes and the mistress of the robes and three ladies-in-waiting were on duty at the same time. The queen had also between ten and twelve male courtiers at her court, whereas the court of the king was distinctly larger.[26]

In Russia, young women who were selected to serve the empress as maids of honour 'in entourage' were chosen with care. One of the most important qualities was discretion, because nothing about the imperial family was to be discussed outside the palaces. The maids of honour 'in entourage' served the empress from morning to night and were on duty every other day. They participated in the daily life of the court, receptions, banquets, opera and theatre performances. On the emperor's and empress's various visits in Russia and to other countries, at least one maid of honour followed the empress everywhere and helped her in all possible ways. Two important tasks entrusted to maids of honour were the empress's wide correspondence and taking care of the empress's jewellery.[27] However, during the nineteenth century, dozens of maids of honour did not have any official role at the Russian court. The maids of honour appointed from the noble families based in the Grand Duchy of Finland were obligated to serve only when the imperial family was sojourning in Finland.[28] This made the imperial appointment even more clearly a position of honour.

The hierarchy at court gave women substantial power. As mentioned, at the Swedish court the chief mistress of the robes, and in her absence the mistress of the robes, could choose who was presented to the queen and when. The chief mistress and mistress of the robes were on duty at all times, whereas nine ladies-in-waiting served three at a time on a three months rota. The ladies-in-waiting were allowed to organise their time of service themselves.[29] This gave them possibilities to better arrange family life or duties towards their husband's estate outside the court.

Bonds of friendship were frequently tied between royals and mistresses of the robes or ladies-in-waiting. Most likely these female friendships offered support and solace in the court's hierarchical world where both courtiers and royals were rarely alone and most of the time were controlled by strict etiquette – notably strict at the Russian imperial court in the nineteenth century. Friendship between Countess Sophie Piper (née von Fersen) and Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta (later Queen Charlotta), from the 1770s until Sophie Piper's death in 1816, is an example of this kind of mutual intellectual bond.[30] Countess Piper already knew the duchess in 1774, when the countess participated in the entourage, led by her mother Countess von Fersen, that escorted the young Holsteinian princess to Sweden to be married to Prince Carl (later King Karl XIII), King Gustav III's brother. Sophie Piper was appointed as maid of honour at the duchess's court before her marriage in 1777. Later, Countess Piper acted as chief mistress of the robes at the duchess's court.[31]

Salary and remuneration

The courtiers in most European courts received lodging, generous presents, a salary and other benefits in compensation for their services. Through emblems and luxurious presents, the maids of honour and ladies-in-waiting made their status at court visible to all. At the same time, these objects can be seen as part of the monarch's use of symbolic power.

In Sweden, maids of honour were entitled to a salary, apartment or other lodging in the royal palace, candles, firewood, food and a clothing allowance. All of this gave them independence from parents and family. Furthermore, the prestige and economic independence, even if relative, gave young noblewomen genuine possibilities to consider a career at court as an option for a lifetime.

In mid-eighteenth-century Sweden, maids of honour had a yearly salary of 400 silver dalers, while ladies of the bedchamber had 600. The salary was relatively high, and can be compared to the salaries of noblemen serving at court: masters of the hunt had 1,000 silver dalers a year and pages had 140. Comparison with the pages – young noblemen often from families with limited social and economic resources – reveals the high position of the maids of honour in the hierarchy of the courts and royal households. The mistresses of the robes and ladies-in-waiting had a high salary, equivalent to the highest male courtiers: 900 silver dalers for a mistress of the robes.[32] The ladies-in-waiting also had an apartment or rooms in the royal palace, meals and carriages.[33]

At the eighteenth-century Russian court, the situation was quite the opposite, for ladies-in-waiting did not get any monetary compensation for their service. Maids of honour got a salary of 600 roubles a year and ladies of the bedchamber got 1,000. Minor maids of honour got an annual salary of 200 roubles, while the pages' salary was between 110 and 140.[34] In the nineteenth century, noblewomen appointed to the imperial court had, however, a relatively high salary even though the imperial family sought not to reveal salaries to aristocratic circles in which the costs and benefits of a court appointment were constantly calculated.[35]

By the early nineteenth century, nomination to maid of honour at the Russian imperial court had become part of the diverse hierarchical rewarding system of imperial Russia.[36] In the 1830s, Aurora Stjernvall, a young Finnish noblewoman, was appointed as a maid of honour to the empress at the imperial Russian court. Again, the appointment of a young lady was in honour of her late father, who had been the governor of the Vyborg Province, and her stepfather, Senator Carl Johan Walleen. However, Aurora Stjernvall's personal qualities also played a key role in her appointment. Later she became a life-long personal friend of the Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna and was rewarded with some of the highest homages of imperial Russia. In 1835 and 1836, Aurora Stjernvall served as maid of honour

'in entourage'. In 1836, she married the fantastically rich Prince Paul Demidov, mainly because the empress strongly advised her to accept the proposal.[37]

At the nineteenth-century Russian court, the majority of maids of honour were so- called maids of honour 'in town'. They did not have a salary and lived at home, attending the court ceremonies when called upon. The maids of honour who served the empress twenty-four hours a day were called 'in entourage'. They lived at imperial palaces and were entitled to a salary but the salary was not sufficient for the aristocratic lifestyle they required.[38]

An appointment at court gave noblewomen possibilities to have their own income and own space, even though sometimes they had to wait for their salaries for years and the apartments in royal residences were cramped. Other ways of rewarding noblewomen's service at court were possibly even more significant. Expensive jewels, elegant boxes, fans or a bigger apartment were remunerations that made the status and royal grace of a lady-in-waiting visible to everybody at court. Furthermore, personal friendships with rulers and members of royal and imperial households can also be considered a reward in the world of courtiers, even though the friendship probably seldom blossomed through deliberate calculation.

Admission to a court career and the length of the career

In Sweden, Baroness Charlotta Sparre entered her career at court in 1744. She was in the Swedish delegation that travelled to Berlin in order to accompany Princess Louise, the future crown princess of Sweden, to her new homeland. Count Carl Gustaf Tessin, former ambassador in Paris, and close relative to Charlotta Sparre, led the delegation. Princess Louise had to give up her Prussian maids of honour after her arrival in Sweden because of their connections to the Prussian court. She chose new ones amongst the Swedish aristocracy. Charlotta Sparre was nominated as a maid of honour in honour of Carl Gustaf Tessin, whom Lovisa Ulrika (as was her name in Swedish) regarded highly. Moreover, Charlotta Sparre's personal qualities played a key role in the nomination. She had spent a few years in Paris, where she and her younger brother lived with the Swedish ambassador Tessin and his wife (neé Sparre). In Paris, the Tessins and Charlotta Sparre were acquainted with the royal court and Parisian society, where she was much admired for her *esprit* and grace. Charlotta Sparre also had high birth and polished manners, much valued in French-speaking cosmopolitan aristocratic culture. For her, nomination as a maid of honour was the beginning of a long career at court.[39]

Maids of honour were generally between seventeen and twenty years of age and were appointed until they married (marriage being a usual occurrence). Because of the marriages, the turnover of the maids of honour was noticeable, while the ladies-in-waiting were generally appointed for their lifetime. This led to a situation in which new opportunities for ladies-in-waiting opened rarely. In Sweden, during the 1740s and 1750s at the royal household of the Swedish Crown Princess Lovisa Ulrika, and from the 1770s to 1790s at the royal households of Princess Sofia Albertina and Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta (later Queen Charlotta), several maids of honour as well as ladies-in-waiting were in employment. From the 1770s to the 1790s, Queen Sofia Magdalena had at her household only married ladies-in-waiting and one lady of the bedchamber.[40] Female royals had in their households both female and male courtiers, whereas male royals had only male courtiers.

A possible career at court could nonetheless be occasionally destroyed if royal favourites turned from grace to disgrace. For instance, in the autumn of 1752, the maid of honour Countess Ulrika Strömfelt left her position because she was not content with Queen Lovisa Ulrika's and maid of honour Countess Ulrika Eleonora von Düben's behaviour towards her.[41] Presumably she resigned for political reasons since the queen's and Countess von Düben's political ambitions differed from hers. Countess Strömfelt, unlike Countess von Düben, did not support the politically ambitious queen in her desire to increase the power of the sovereign.

The sense of duty, service and obligation were explicit for the courtiers and had an impact on the choices noblewomen made concerning their appointments or careers at court. In the mid-nineteenth century, Countess Mina Bonde was asked to accept the appointment of chief mistress of the robes in Queen Lovisa's household. She was at the time running the family estate and wanted personally to dedicate herself to this and to family life. However, her sense of duty was even stronger and she accepted the queen's request. The nature of Mina Bonde's appointment can be seen as exceptional because she could herself decide when to work at court and when to dedicate herself to her family. When not at court, she delegated her duties to the ladies-in-waiting.[42] Normally, the chief mistress and mistress of the robes were on duty at all times. Noblewomen who made a career at court in the second half of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century were all married. There were, however, a few maids of honour who never married but because of their personal relations to royals stayed on in their court careers throughout their lives. As married women, most of the ladies at court had children. In many cases, the husbands of ladies-in-waiting also held an office at court. When on duty, ladies-in-waiting inhabited royal palaces where they had own apartments, whereas their children and husband, if not courtiers on duty at court, resided elsewhere.[43]

At royal and imperial courts, an ambitious lady could work for issues she was interested in or found of importance: whether political, social or cultural ambitions; a sense of duty to the sovereign and royals; helping family members to get good positions at court, in civil administration, or in the army; or, most important of all, to make good marriage matches for her sons and daughters. In Sweden in the second half of the eighteenth century, ladies-in-waiting such as sisters Countess von Höpken and Countess Löwenhielm (née von Fersen), performed at court in opera, theatre and concert productions and were, according to contemporaries, skilled actors and singers.[44] In nineteenth-century Russia and Finland, *dame d'honneur* Aurora Karamzina used the immeasurable

fortune she inherited from her first husband Paul Demidov, one of the richest aristocrats in Russia, to give to charity. She founded schools, hospitals, orphanages and nursing homes. She also founded the Deaconess Institution in Helsinki.[45]

Neither at the Swedish nor at the Russian court was the appointment of courtiers hereditary. Still, most of the female courtiers had relatives at court at some point in time. In the eighteenth century, one out of five maids of honour or ladies-in-waiting at the Russian imperial court was married to a courtier, two out of five had a sister at court, and one out of ten had another relative at court. Thus, two out of three of the Russian female courtiers had a relative at court.[46] At the early-nineteenth-century Swedish court, a lady-in-waiting, Baroness Hedvig Amalia Charlotta Möllersvärd (née Klinckowström) was a daughter of a marshal of the court and a lady-in-waiting. Her uncle and his wife, as well as three of their daughters, held an office at court. In addition, her aunt Sophie Piper had been mistress of the robes at the court of the Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, later Queen Charlotta.[47] When keeping in mind that at the Swedish court there were nine ladies-in-waiting, of which only three were on duty at the same time, the careers at court were held in an exclusive circle which only occasionally admitted new members in the form of maids of honour, from which the future ladies-in-waiting were selected.

In the late-eighteenth-century Swedish court, deceased ladies-in-waiting were buried either with pompous ceremonials dictated by the rigid court etiquette or quietly in the presence of only the nearest family of the deceased lady, depending on the wishes of her family.[48] Chief mistress of the robes in Queen Sofia Magdalena's household, Countess Ulrika Eleonora Sparre (neé Strömfelt), died in April 1780. Born in 1724, she had spent her whole life in court society. Her mother had also been chief mistress of the robes. She was herself twelve years old when she was appointed as maid of honour in the household of Queen Ulrika Eleonora. Later on, at the court of Queen Lovisa Ulrika, she became a lady of the bedchamber and finally, in 1777, she was appointed, at the age of 53, to the position of chief mistress of the robes in the household of Queen Sofia Magdalena. The countess had thus served three queens over a period of 44 years.[49] Countess Sparre's funeral was stately and sumptuous. It was designed by King Gustav III, who had great talent in making ceremonies and theatre for all kinds of occasions, felicitous or lugubrious – as Count Axel von Fersen noted dryly in his memoirs[50]. Despite the magnificent funeral ceremony, the countess was already forgotten by the next day when the king appointed a new chief mistress of the robes, Countess von Fersen (née Sparre), and a new mistress of the robes, Countess Piper (née Ekeblad).

Similar careers can be found at the Russian imperial court where politically unstable times, palace revolutions and *coups d'état* might have shaken even the position of the courtiers. However, this was not the case, and the eighteenth-century courtiers formed a relatively stable group in the middle of the political disturbances. Princess Marie Yurievna Cherkasskaya, Countess Avdotiya Ivanovna Chernysheva, Countess Praskoviya Yurievna Saltykova and Countess Anna Alekseevna Tatischeva were ladies-in-waiting both at the court of Empress Anna Ivanovna in the 1730s and at the court of Empress Elizabeth in the 1740s and 1750s.[51]

Significance of the court career for noblewomen, c. 1750–1850

The royal court was central to the lives of European nobles and aristocrats in many ways. The court career of a noblewoman could begin in adolescence and continue until old age if death did not intervene. Some of the maids of honour were appointed as ladies-in-waiting directly after wedding ceremonies organised and paid for by the court, while some ladies interrupted their career at court for a few years after getting married and having children, only to continue it when family duties could be put aside. Generally, for female courtiers in the late eighteenth century, a career at court came before obligations to family life, whereas the growing importance of the private sphere and family in the nineteenth century had an impact on such careers. This led to the growing importance of maids of honour for aristocratic families, particularly visible at the Russian imperial court. The daughters of aristocratic families could serve a relatively short period, sometimes no more than six months, as maids of honour at court, then achieve enormous social and cultural capital in the form of a suitable marriage, connections and personal reverence.

Especially for women belonging to the highest aristocracy, the court offered a public or half-public sphere where they had an official position and prospects to use their social capital in various different ways chosen by themselves. Some of the ladies-in-waiting were engaged in political and social life, some in intellectual or artistic interests. For instance, in Russia, Princess Yekaterina Dashkova (née Vorontsova), lady-in-waiting to Empress Catherine II, was one of her era's most prominent *femmes de lettres*, esteemed by Voltaire, Diderot, Benjamin Franklin and David Garrick. She was appointed as the director of the Imperial Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1782 and as the first president of the Russian Academy in 1783.[52]

From maid of honour, to the chief mistress of the robes, a noblewoman's career at court could continue for decades and terminate in the last manifestation of both royal and noble status and female agency at court: a grand funeral. Whilst many of the ladies-in-waiting who made a long career at court resigned before they were too old to maintain their duties, many of them were ageing at court together with the royals to whose households they had been appointed as young girls. Obviously, some of the ladies-in-waiting died young and unexpectedly.

The Swedish royal court and the Russian imperial court were hierarchical, traditional and public spheres of power, favouritism, etiquette and strict social order. During a century of rapid social and political change, revolutions and wars, the court society persisted in which aristocratic ladies-in-waiting deliberately maintained the exclusive air of the court, held offices for decades and passed them on to the next generation. The turmoil of the early twentieth century changed everything: peacefully and gradually in Sweden; brutally and dramatically in Russia.

Notes

1. In this article, the concept of 'royal' is used to refer to both royal and imperial courts. Likewise the concepts of 'king' and 'queen' include their equivalent Russian concepts 'emperor' and 'empress' or 'tzar' and 'tzarina' if not otherwise stated.

2. Barbara Alpern Engel, 'Women, the family and public life', in *The Cambridge History of Russia, volume II Imperial Russia, 1689-1917*, ed. Dominic Lieven (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2006), 306–25.

3. William R. Newton, *La petite cour: Services et serviteurs à la Cour de Versailles au XVIII[e] siècle* (Paris, Fayard, 2006), 12. Newton criticises very rightly the concept of the 'court society' as being too inflexible to describe an institution that was more a world than a society; see also Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983).

4. Angela Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer: En etnologisk studie av aristokratiska kvinnor 1850–1900* (Stockholm, Carlssons, 1989), 151-95.

5. Jyrki Paaskoski, 'Aurora Karamzinin vuosisata', in *Aurora Karamzin: Aristokratian elämää* (Helsinki and Espoo, Otava and Espoo City Museum, 2006), 26-37.

6. E.g. Britta Lundgren, *Allmänhetens tjänare: Kvinnlighet och yrkeskultur i det svenska postverket* (Stockholm, Carlssons, 1990); Pirjo Markkola, *Synti ja siveys: Naiset, uskonto ja sosiaalinen työ Suomessa 1860–1920* (Helsinki, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2002); Anne Ollila, *Jalo velvollisuus: Virkanaisena 1800-luvun lopun Suomessa* (Helsinki, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998); Maritta Pohls, *Ensimmäiset virkanaiset: Nainen postin palveluksessa 1800-luvulla* (Helsinki, Helsingin yliopisto, 1986); Deborah Simonton, *Women in European Culture and Society: Gender, Skill and Identity from 1700* (New York, Routledge, 2011); Marie Steinrud, *Den dolda offentigheten: kvinnlighetens sfärer i 1800-talets svenska högreståndskultur* (Stockholm, Carlssons, 2008).

7. Elaine Chalus and Fiona Montgomery, 'Women and politics' in *Women's History: Britain, 1700–1850. An introduction*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London and New York, Routledge, 2005), 217-59; Jeroen Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550-1780* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), *passim*; Paul Keenan, 'The Function of Fashion: Women and Clothing at the Russian Court (1700-1762)' in *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn and Alessandra Tosi (Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Jacques Levron, *Les inconnus de Versailles: Les coulisses de la Cour* (Paris, Perrin, 2009); Anne Martin-Fugier, *La vie élégante ou la formation du Tout-Paris 1815-1848* (Paris, Perrin, 2011); Newton, *La petite cour*; K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998); Angela Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*; Jean-François Solnon, *La Cour de France* (Paris, Fayard, 1987); Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm, 'De ryska kejsarinnornas finländska hovfröknar, hovdamer och statsdamer' in *Gentes Finlandiae*, IX (2001), 57–95.

8. Excellent accounts on this are Newton, *La petite cour* and Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 188-219; see also Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*. Even though Duindam examines who attended court, offices they held and courtiers' daily activities, he sees the courtiers more as an entity of royal or imperial household than as individuals who made a career at court as office holders.

9. Fabian Persson, *Servants of Fortune: The Swedish Court between 1598 and 1721* (Lunds Universitet, Historiska institutionen, 1999).

10. On the new, more French, court see Olof Jägeskiöld, *Lovisa Ulrika* (Stockholm, Wahlström & Widstrand, 1945), 75-84.

11. *At the Russian Court: Palace and Protocol in the 19th Century* (Amsterdam, Hermitage Amsterdam, 2009); Isabel de Madariaga, 'The Russian Nobility in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, volume II, Northern, Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. H. M. Scott (London and New York, Longman, 1995), 223-73; Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy, vol. I From Peter the Great to the Death of Nicholas I* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995); on clothing see e.g. Christine Ruane, 'Subjects into Citizens: The Politics of Clothing in Imperial Russia' in *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender, Citizenship*, ed. Wendy Perkins (Oxford and New York, Berg, 2002), 49-70.

12. de Madariaga, 'The Russian Nobility', *passim;* Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, *passim*.

13. Jonas Nordin, *Frihetstidens monarki: Konungamakt och offentlighet i 1700-talets Sverige* (Stockholm, Atlantis, 2009); Charlotta Wolff, 'Aristocratic Republicanism and the Hate of Sovereignty in 18th Century Sweden', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 2/89 (2004), 358-75; Charlotta Wolff, *Noble Conceptions of Politics in Eighteenth-Century Sweden (ca 1740-1790)* (Helsinki, Finnish Literature Society, 2008).

14. Mikael Alm, *Kungsord i elfte timmen: Språk och självbild i det gustavianska enväldets legitimitetskamp 1772-1809* (Stockholm, Atlantis, 2002); Henrika Tandefelt, *Konsten att härska: Gustaf III inför sina undersåtar* (Helsingfors and Stockholm, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland and Atlantis, 2008).

15. Lena Rangström, *En brud för kung och fosterland: Kungliga svenska bröllop från Gustav Vasa till Carl XVI Gustav* (Stockholm, Livrustkammaren and Atlantis, 2010), 299-397; Per Sandin, *Ett kungahus i tiden: Den bernadotteska dynastins möte med medborgarsamhället ca 1810-1860* (Uppsala, Uppsala universitet, 2011).

16. Mikael Alm and Bo Vahlne, eds, *Överkammarherrens journal 1778–1826: Ett gustavianskt tidsdokument* (Stockholm, Kungl. Samfundet, 2010), 426-9.

17. Ekaterina Boltunova, 'The Russian Imperial Court in the 18th century'. The Conference of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), 2-4 April 2005, Cambridge. [kogni.ru/text/court.htm, accessed 14 March 2012.]

18. Tillander-Godenhielm, 'De ryska kejsarinnornas hovdamer', 57-8.

19. Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm, 'Kunniamerkkejä ja koruja', 86, in *Aurora Karamzin. Aristokratian elämää* (Helsinki

and Espoo, Otava and Espoo City Museum, 2006).

20. Tillander-Godenhielm, 'De ryska kejsarinnornas hovdamer', 58-60, 68.

21. Johanna Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv: Familjen von Fersens livsstil på 1700-talet* (Helsingfors and Stockholm, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland and Atlantis, 2012), 65-9; Jessica Parland-von Essen, *Behagets betydelser. Döttrarnas edukation i det sena 1700-talets adelskultur* (Hedemora & Möklinta, Gidlunds förlag, 2005).

22. Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*, 71-5; Henrika Tandefelt, 'Kvinnoliv under trehundra år sedda genom Sarvlax arkiv' in *Sarvlax: Herrgårdshistoria under 600 år*, ed. Henrika Tandefelt (Helsingfors, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2010), 75-6; Göran Ulväng, *Herrgårdarnas historia: Arbete, liv och bebyggelse på uppländska herrgårdar* (Uppsala, Hallgren & Björklund, 2008), 144; Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, *Sofie Munsterhjelmin aika: Aatelisnaisia ja upseereita 1800-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2012), *passim*; Anna-Maria Åström, *'Sockenboarne': Herrgårdskultur i Savolax 1790-1850* (Helsingfors, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1993), 261-7.

23. Engel, 'Women, the family and public life', 307.

24. Parland-von Essen, *Behagets betydelser*.

25. Georgy Vilinbakhov and Lina Tarasova, 'Imperial Russian Court Ceremonial', in *At the Russian Court: Palace and Protocol in the 19th Century* (Amsterdam, Hermitage Amsterdam, 2009), 78-85; Tamara Korshunova, 'Russian Court Dresses', in *At the Russian Court: Palace and Protocol in the 19th Century* (Amsterdam, Hermitage Amsterdam, 2009), 230-7.

26. *Överkammarherrens journal 1778–1826*, 424-9.

27. Tillander-Godenhielm, 'Kunniamerkkejä ja koruja', 86-7.

28. Tillander-Godenhielm, 'De ryska kejsarinnornas hovdamer', *passim*.

29. *Överkammarherrens journal 1778-1826*, 428.

30. On friendship between Sophie Piper and the duchess, see My Hellsing, *Hovpolitik: Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte, hovliv och politik i det sena 1700-talets Stockholm*, forthcoming 2013.

31. Hellsing, *Hovpolitik*, *passim*; Bengt Hildebrandt, 'Sophie Piper', *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* (1956), [www.nad.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=15287, accessed 20 April 2012]; Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 125.

32. Johanna Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer i 1700-talets Sverige', *Historiska och Litteraturhistoriska studier* 82 (Helsingfors, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2007), 32–4; Ilmakunnas, *Ett ståndsmässigt liv*, 120-5.

33. Persson, *Servants of Fortune*, 160; Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*, 159, 165-8.

34. Boltunova, 'The Russian Imperial Court in the 18th century'.

35. Tillander-Godenhielm, 'De ryska kejsarinnornas hovdamer', 65-8.

36. Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm, *The Russian Imperial Award System during the Reign of Nicholas II, 1894-1917* (Helsinki, Suomen muisnaismuistoyhdistys, 2005).

37. Märtha Norrback 'Aristokraattisen kulttuurin näyttämöllä', 39-83, in *Aurora Karamzin. Aristokratian elämää* (Helsinki and Espoo, Otava and Espoo City Museum, 2006); Paaskoski, 'Aurora Karamzinin vuosisata', 9-37; Tillander-Godenhielm, 'Kunniamerkkejä ja koruja', 85-99.

38. Paaskoski, 'Aurora Karamzinin vuosisata', 19-21; Tillander-Godenhielm, 'Kunniamerkkejä ja koruja', 86.

39. Lovisa Ulrika to Fredrik II, 31 August 1744, in *Luise Ulrike, die schwedische Schwester Friedrichs des Großen. Ungedrukte Briefe an Mitglieder des preußischen Königshauses I. 1729-1746*, ed. Fritz Arnheim (Gotha, Friedrich Andreas Perthes 1909), 65; Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer i 1700-talets Sverige', *Historiska och Litteraturhistoriska studier* 82 (Helsingfors, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2007), 20.

40. Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 20-3, 30; *Överkammarherrens journal 1778-1826*, 426-9.

41. Axel von Fersen, *Riksrådet och fältmarskalken m. m. Grefwe Axel von Fersens Historiska Skrifter*, 2, (Stockholm, Nordstedt, 1868), 48.

42. Rundquist, *Blått blod och liljevita händer*, 154-8.

43. Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 40; Tillander-Godenhielm, 'De ryska kejsarinnornas hovdamer', 58-68.

44. Carl Forsstrand, *De tre Gracerna: Minnen och anteckningar från Gustaf III:s Stockholm* (Stockholm, Hugo Gebers Förlag, 1912).

45. Marianne Långvik-Huomo, 'Hyväntekeväisyys – velvollisuus ja elämäntehtävä', 155-80, in *Aurora Karamzin. Aristokratian elämää* (Helsinki and Espoo, Otava and Espoo City Museum, 2006); Paaskoski, 'Aurora Karamzinin vuosisata', 26-30.

46. Boltunova, 'The Russian Imperial Court in the 18th century'.

47. Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor*, 4, 149 (Stockholm, Sveriges släktforskarförbundet, 1998); Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 20-1.

48. Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer', 40-3.

49. Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof*, 2, ed. E. V. Montan (Stockholm, P. A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1878), 173-174; Ilmakunnas, 'Hovets damer i 1700-talets Sverige'.

50. Axel von Fersen, *Riksrådet och fältmarskalken m. m. Grefwe Axel von Fersens Historiska Skrifter*, 4, (Stockholm, Nordstedt, 1869), 220.

51. Boltunova, 'The Russian Imperial Court in the 18th century'; Long careers were typical also at other European courts. For instance, in the early Victorian court in Britain, the average appointment of ladies-in-waiting lasted for twenty years. Some ladies had forty-year careers and retired in their seventies and eighties or died in office, as often was the case also in Sweden. See Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society*, 193-5.

52. Yekaterina Dashkova, *Mémoires de la princesse Daschkoff, dame d'honneur de Catherine II impératrice de toutes les Russies* III (Paris, Librairie A. Franck, 1859), 113-4, 191-6; A. Worzonoff-Dashkoff, *Dashkova: A life of influence and exile* (Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 2008).

‘Dangerous display’: Charlotte Yonge, Christabel Coleridge, and pseudonyms in the *Monthly Packet*

Elizabeth Lovegrove
Oxford Brookes University

> Probably many of our young lady readers belong to essay societies of one kind or another. They are a very happy arrangement for giving young girls an object and interest in their studies, and we should strongly recommend them to the damsels who have just left the school-room and its regularities, and are in danger of … spending their whole days between the practice and display of new music and croquet. (‘Hints on reading’, *Monthly Packet*, August 1865, 221).[1]

The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church, to give its full title, ran from 1851 to 1899.[2] Charlotte Yonge was the editor until 1894 and Christabel Coleridge was co-editor from 1891. The magazine was largely didactic in the way it related to its readers but from the 1870s onwards it actively encouraged readers to send in contributions to the magazine. These were mostly in the form of essay competitions but were also sometimes on subjects of debate – a practice which grew directly out of earlier unpublished essay societies, such as those mentioned by the anonymous author quoted above.

While the ‘Hints on reading’ article (quoted above) recommended essay societies, the author also expressed some caution about their operation:

> the essay society, if sensibly conducted, and that is a great *if*, supplies a purpose and a time, with just competition enough to brighten the wits, and lead to the exertion of the faculties; and if its productions do not pass beyond the members and their immediate families, there is no dangerous display.[3]

Thus the advisability of belonging to an essay society depended on the sensibleness of its conduct, and on its productions reaching only a carefully limited audience. When the *Monthly Packet* began to run its own essay society, the sensibleness of its conduct was assured, at least by the standards of the author of ‘Hints on reading’, who is likely to have been Yonge herself.[4]

It is the second proviso, warning against any risk of ‘dangerous display’, which is the subject of this article. In the *Monthly Packet*’s essay-contribution sections, and indeed in the unpublished essay society which spawned them, both editors and contributors used pseudonyms. These pseudonyms allowed readers and editors of the *Monthly Packet* to engage in public debate on such controversial questions as women’s rights with a greatly decreased risk of ‘dangerous display’.

This protection was particularly important for the magazine’s editors, Yonge and Coleridge, both of whom held conservative views on ‘the woman question’.[5] Their use of pseudonyms helped to mitigate the apparently contradictory position of women who were themselves active in the public sphere as writers and editors but who wished to limit women’s entry into areas of society hitherto occupied by men. While Yonge was supportive and helpful to her contributors, she was also careful to shape contributions to the *Packet* to avoid anything with an inappropriately ‘unfeminine professional or argumentative tone’;[6] and while the reader debate I discuss below might at times have crossed that line, the contributors’ pseudonyms protected them from wider display, in the same way that earlier essay societies kept their productions within a strictly limited circulation.

From the *Barnacle* to the ‘China Cupboard’

> Wanted – a few respectable young men & women to write in The Barnacle … Enter all who aspire to Deathless fame.[7]

In the 1860s and 70s, as well as editing the *Monthly Packet*, Charlotte Yonge was acting as ‘Mother Goose’ to an essay society of young female friends and relatives, who called themselves the Goslings. Members submitted essays, stories, poems and drawings to Yonge, who had the best of them bound and circulated among the society as the manuscript magazine *Barnacle*.[8]

The *Barnacle* mostly includes uncontentious fiction and essays on aspects of history or scripture, although an early (unsigned) contribution gently satirises the idea of woman’s proper place in a piece called ‘The Two Goslings, A Fable’. In it, two unhatched goslings are arguing about the intention of one to break out of its shell; the gosling who is opposed to this action says:

> You rash and faithless creature, don’t you know this house has been made on purpose to keep us safe from all harm, & you must be setting yourself up as wiser than anybody else, & trying to get out of your own proper sphere, and go – where?[9]

The conservative gosling is, of course, misguided, for it is only by hatching and taking their place in the wider world that the goslings can truly begin their lives.

Even on such controversial questions as the proper place of women in society, contributors to the *Barnacle* were protected from any risk of ‘dangerous display’ by the limited circulation of the magazine. Yonge had the original, handwritten, manuscripts bound, and with just one copy produced of each volume, the magazine was only available to the friends and family of contributors. Indeed, the circulation lists attached to each volume often include a plea for the return of a missing volume – each was irreplaceable. Perhaps in case one of these missing

volumes found its way into unfriendly hands, contributors were also protected by their use of pseudonyms, some of which, such as 'Chelsea China' and 'Bog-Oak', were later to appear within the *Monthly Packet*.

By 1872, Yonge had evidently softened on the dangers of a wider audience for the output of essay societies. The Christmas issue of the *Monthly Packet* began with an article describing an apparently unrelated essay society set up by a group of girls calling themselves the 'Spiders', and including a reference to 'our dear veteran Spider, Chelsea China, our senior surviving Spider'.[10] The writer took great pains to conceal any relationship between the Spiders and the Goslings; her description of the 'impartial Arachne' they found to judge their work had little in common with Yonge: 'a dear friend, Mrs Whitgift, a young, childless widow, who was confined to her sofa, but had all her wits about her, and plenty of time and good-nature to attend to our cobwebs'.[11]

However, Arachne, as the supervisor of the Spiders, visibly exerted some influence over the magazine. The rest of the Christmas issue was made up of stories written by the Spiders to illustrate a proverb, and the issue concluded with an invitation for readers to send in their own stories for another proverb, with the best to be published in the following year's Christmas issue. In July 1873, 'Spider Subjects' started to appear as a regular section of the magazine, with Arachne as its editor and arbiter, featuring essays submitted by readers on set subjects, mostly historical.

The Goslings' activity gradually moved over to the pages of 'Spider Subjects'. Then, in 1877, Yonge marked the closure of the Gosling society, 'with a Michaelmas Day roast goose dinner at which it was "solemnly decided that our work was done and we must merge into 'Arachne' and her Spiders in the *Monthly Packet*"'.[12]

In 1886, the *Packet* published a letter to Arachne from Chelsea China, who had been a frequent contributor to 'Spider Subjects': 'It has struck me forcibly of late, that whenever a statement of opinion appears in the 'Monthly Packet' some one is at once seized with the desire to contradict it flat'.[13] To give vent to this tendency of the magazine's readers to actively engage with its content, she proposed a new section of the magazine, 'Debatable Ground', to which readers could submit essays debating set discussion topics. The section was duly instituted, with Chelsea China herself presiding over it. Within its pages, readers were positively encouraged to trade dissenting views. Arachne, in her introduction to Chelsea China's letter, promised readers, 'the fair field of a page or two on which to break their lances on the Debatable Ground'.[14] Chelsea China restated the section's purpose a few years later, after it had become well-established: 'Nothing is considered to be a matter of faith which is debated in these pages. We are on Debatable Ground, and the coat is trailed with the most earnest desire that people will tread upon it, and tear it if possible'.[15]

By the 1890s, when Christabel Coleridge began co-editing the magazine, 'Spider Subjects', 'Debatable Ground', and the various other essay-submission forums run by the *Monthly Packet*, all of which used pseudonyms for contributors, had been merged to form a section called the 'China Cupboard' under Chelsea China's direction.

Obfuscated identities

The use of pseudonyms in the essay submission sections of the magazine was in part a protection against the 'dangerous display' that the author of 'Hints on reading' advised against.[16] Although reader contributions *were* on display, it was not possible in most cases to identify their writers. Anonymous journalism had been standard practice until the 1860s,[17] and although it was waning by the 1890s, it still offered a shield to many female journalists. As described in 1891 in the *Monthly Packet*'s contemporary, the *Girl's Own Paper*: 'A great deal of the most effective work on our newspapers has been done by women; and, could it be told, the public would to-day be surprised to learn how much of the total is still done by them'.[18]

Despite this background of uncertainty about women's journalistic work, and her own conservative views, Yonge was nevertheless supportive of young women's literary aspirations, as seen both in her work with the Goslings and in her careful nurturing of the *Packet*'s contributors. However she was also decidedly cautious, tending to advise against attempts towards publication if there was any doubt about the quality of the work.[19] The essay submission pages in the *Monthly Packet*, then, offered a relatively safe place for aspirant writers and debaters to practice their craft – echoing the call for contributors to the *Barnacle* which I quote above – while their use of pseudonyms protected them from inappropriate entry into the public sphere.

Charlotte Yonge and Christabel Coleridge, both published novelists under their own names, are perhaps surprising candidates to have made use of this protection for themselves in the magazine they both edited. Perhaps the protection offered to them was illusory: theirs were the most prominent pseudonyms used within the *Packet*, with the more junior sharing initials with the more junior editor, so attentive readers may have suspected that Yonge's hand guided Arachne's pen, or that Chelsea China and Christabel Coleridge were one and the same. However, there was little explicit evidence supporting this. With very few exceptions, the magazine persisted in maintaining some measure of separation between its editor-authors and its moderator-debaters. Casual or occasional readers could easily miss the few signs and believe that Chelsea China and Arachne were merely readers like themselves, albeit with some extra privilege.

Evidence of the identity behind Yonge's pseudonym seems to have been confined to two transcribed conversations between Arachne and Spider: one in June 1882 under Yonge's own name, and one in October 1887 written as 'The Editor'. There was also a telling line in a poem by Yonge bidding farewell to 'Spider Subjects' in April 1887. When set against the initial naming of Arachne as 'Mrs Whitgift' – in other words, explicitly *not* Charlotte Yonge – these occasional unmaskings might only have been available to attentive readers who read each issue thoroughly; some of them might have been interpreted as fiction.

The most explicit linking of the editors with their pseudonyms was not until 1898, after Yonge's contributions under both her own name and Arachne's had become exceedingly infrequent. In an article using the establishment of the Charlotte Yonge Scholarship as an excuse to heap praise upon her mentor, Coleridge referred to her as 'The "Author of 'The Heir of Redclyffe,'" "Miss Yonge," "Arachne!"'. She also identified the Spiders with the Goslings (Mrs Whitgift conveniently forgotten) and heavily implied her own identity as Chelsea China – by reference to 'one idle "gosling" who signed herself "Chelsea China"'.[20] Under her real name, Coleridge had been co-editor of the magazine since 1891. Yonge had been forced by the magazine's publisher to retire as editor entirely in 1894, although she continued to contribute and was often mentioned within the magazine.[21] Coleridge therefore had, in 1898, considerable power to shape the magazine's portrayal of Yonge, as well as responsibility for the pseudonyms both women had used for so long.

Under Coleridge's editorship, the magazine's readers also lost some of their shield of anonymity, which Yonge had always maintained. In September 1892, the competition rules required that, 'The name and address of the Competitor should be written on every paper'. However it also advised that, 'A *nom de plume* may be given as well, for the Lists'.[22] It may have come as a surprise, then, when the winner of the China Cupboard's 'Variety specimens' section was named as '*Cheshire Cat*. — Miss Louisa M. Bourne, Western-sub-Edge, Broadway, Worcestershire'.[23] This seems to have been the first time that a reader-contributor's pseudonym and real name had been explicitly linked. This practice continued, although it was not until October 1893 that the rules changed to, 'The real name of a prize *winner* may always be published'.[24]

With Yonge's declining influence over the paper and the reader submission sections established as Coleridge's domain, the risk of dangerous display seems to have increased for prize-winning readers. Although this seems contrary to Yonge's cautiousness about exposure to the public sphere, it can also be seen as a sort of reward for those readers who had worked hard to perfect their craft behind their protecting pseudonyms. As prize-winners they were now judged worthy to speak, unmasked, on the public stage – as the *Packet*'s editors did – while those who were not awarded the prizes still spoke from safely behind the protection of their masks.

By 1895, when Arachne sparked one of the *Packet*'s most controversial debates, the idea of prize-winners being named had been established practice for some time. Some of the readers who contributed to the debate were therefore publicly stating strong political opinions in a way that could be traced back to their real identities.

The suffrage debate

> *Arachne* throws down so warlike a gauntlet on the 'woman question,' that Chelsea China hopes taking it up may lead to an interesting discussion [italics original].[25]

Reader debates in the *Monthly Packet*, even within 'Debatable Ground' where readers were given explicit permission to argue, were usually on uncontentious subjects. However, in 1895, after she was no longer the magazine's editor, Yonge made full use of whatever shield her pseudonym offered: Arachne's gauntlet, thrown down within the pages of the 'China Cupboard', was a statement of opposition to women's suffrage. The letter is curiously constructed, appearing at its beginning to be a review of a new book by C.C. Stopes (feminist mother of Marie Stopes), *British Freewomen*, and progressing through a condemnation of the intelligence and judgement of the average woman, the involvement of women in the French Revolution, and some cases of cruelties and murders committed by women, with only occasional references to the vote. As an apparently unprompted public polemic, it seems ill suited to the pages that contain it and unlike Yonge's other writing, both in the *Packet* and elsewhere.

Her main argument seemed to be that although some women had sufficient judgement to vote responsibly, most women did not, that they were unsuited to the public sphere, and that even the most sensible were unduly swayed by their emotions. She wrote that 'the peril is in increasing the number of those voters who are unfit to have power in their hands', and evidently saw this peril as severe enough to overrule any claims of unfairness.[26]

Although Yonge did not explicitly invite responses to her letter, its position in the 'China Cupboard' did so implicitly, and Coleridge's introduction of it made the invitation clear. The ensuing debate rumbled on for months. Although Arachne's seniority might have put off some potential contributors, the nature of the debate section gave them permission to argue against her and the controversy of the question encouraged it. The nature of the responses, however, might have disappointed. Like Yonge, Coleridge was opposed to women's suffrage – an opinion the majority of her reader-contributors did not seem to share.[27] The presentation of the responses, then, offered Coleridge a significant challenge: to give fair voice to the contributors she disagreed with, without doing disservice to her own opinion on the subject; while also preserving the dignified feminine tone of the magazine. As such, although the use of pseudonyms protected (some of) the magazine's reader-contributors, on a question as contentious as women's suffrage the magazine itself was risking something rather like 'dangerous display', straying away from its usual content of history, religion, nature, and unproblematic literature.

Coleridge's usual practice on 'Debatable Ground' was to give some replies in full and describe others (sometimes with quotations), often offering her own critique of their engagement with the topic, as well as giving her own position, thus shaping the published response.[28] The suffrage debate, and its extension into the 'New Woman' debate, is unusual in that most of the reader contributions Coleridge mentions are published in full, although while the debate is ongoing she makes occasional references to other letters received for which there is no space. No contributions are merely summarised, perhaps as an attempt by Coleridge to fairly portray opinions with which she disagrees.

The first replies to Arachne appeared in February, from 'Dragon' and 'Paperknife' – familiar names from

previous issues. Written in support of women's suffrage, both contributions were nonetheless published in full, with no introductory text from Chelsea China at all. This allowed the authors to speak entirely for themselves. Paperknife's letter referred to Charlotte Yonge's novel *The Daisy Chain*, perhaps implying that Paperknife knew Arachne's identity as its author. Yet she does not explicitly link Arachne with Yonge. As the novel had been serialised in the magazine, and was therefore well known to its readers, the association might have been by chance, or intended as a nod to those who already knew Arachne's identity, without revealing it to those who did not.

In March, the 'China Cupboard' was introduced with:

> Old and new contributors are all contending for *Arachne's* gauntlet. The subject being of such engrossing interest, Chelsea China will insert as many of the letters as possible. She regrets that *E. Leigh Fry's* is so long as to be inadmissible, in its present form. Possibly its substance may appear next month, as a contribution to the debate, for which more space will be available, until which time Chelsea China will reserve her own opinion.[29]

Contrary to her usual practice in the 'Debatable Ground' section, she declined to give her own opinion until more space was available. Curiously, she once again left the floor to those arguing against Arachne (and her own inclination). Indeed, Arachne's was the only letter opposing women's suffrage which the *Packet* published – all the published reader contributions were in favour of suffrage. In this month, 'as many of the letters as possible', meant two: from 'C.M. Weisskopf' and 'Amaryllis'. E. Leigh Fry's letter was never published.

This was C.M. Weisskopf's only contribution to the *Monthly Packet*, and she was the only participant in this debate using a name which might have been her real one, and one unusual enough that it probably clearly identified her. She acknowledged that it was 'a formidable thing to enter the lists against *Arachne'*, but wrote that she 'cannot forbear'.[30] She did not dispute any of Arachne's points about women's suitability to vote; rather she appealed to fairness: 'Is it fair that [the ordinary woman] should be expected to train her sons in principles and opinions she is debarred, with idiots and criminals, from giving expression to by a vote?'[31]

Amaryllis was more explicit in her complaint that Arachne had missed the point: '[s]he does not meet the arguments for women's suffrage, which are based on justice and right'.[32] She clearly disagreed that women were intellectually inferior to men, but pointed out that this was not part of the argument for women's suffrage. Later in her letter, however, from behind the safety of her pseudonym, she could not resist mention of 'the superiority of women, on the whole, to the men'.[33]

March also included the invitation for readers to move the discussion towards the existence and definition of the 'New Woman'. The only contribution to the debate in April was a rather indirect and satirical one: the text of a talk from a men's rights activist in a mythical future where women are acknowledged superior, and all pre-twentieth century literature has been suppressed. It was unsigned, and Coleridge made no reference to it in her introduction to the 'China Cupboard'.

In May, the 'China Cupboard' carried the heading 'The new woman'. Suffrage was no longer explicitly mentioned in the submitted papers, although Coleridge clearly intended for the new debate to continue seamlessly from the old.

The 'new woman'

> The discussion on *Arachne's* paper about the Franchise for Women may be considered to be merged in this larger subject, but Chelsea China still receives furious denunciations and equally hearty praises of its principles from her various correspondents.[34]

The published contributions to the suffrage debate had all been 'furious denunciations' of Arachne's ideas. Coleridge's claim that the debate continued to attract responses in agreement with her own anti-suffrage position is therefore a strange one. The letters of 'hearty praise' might have been fictional, or of insufficient quality for public display, even behind a pseudonym. The change of subject, then, to the broader idea of the 'new woman', might have been intended to broaden the range of responses and bring some readers to Yonge and Coleridge's side of the debate. Perhaps Coleridge intended to take some of the sting from the controversy by moving from the politics of suffrage towards the *Monthly Packet*'s more typical, and safer, territory of literature – one of the primary contexts in which the 'new woman' could be seen.

In the relative safety of this new, broader question, Coleridge finally gave her own opinion. However, unlike her mentor's clear statement which began the original version of the debate, Coleridge's contribution was so vague that it suggests she aimed to be seen as agreeing with both sides: skirting the issue of suffrage and redefining the 'new woman' as the 'new young lady'. She claimed a commitment to 'allow[ing] people to speak for themselves' but went on to put words in her subject's mouth: 'the "new" young lady would not say that she wished to imitate the ways of men, which is no novelty'.[35] Coleridge herself was certainly not a 'new woman', nor, by 1895, could she claim to be a 'young lady': born in May 1843, she passed her fifty-second birthday in the month the *Monthly Packet*'s 'new woman' debate began.

Coleridge's description of the 'new woman' mostly seemed to centre on the idea that she was not so new after all: although she admitted 'perhaps there *is* some novelty in recognising under how many different conditions [the new woman] has to live and learn'.[36] She granted the existence of a character 'burning and flashing through contemporary fiction' but her only description of that character – as 'perverse, often well-meaning, but extremely provoking' – did little more than imply Coleridge's distaste for the 'new woman', without addressing any of the questions she represented.[37]

To open this new version of the debate – perhaps a further indication that she felt on safer ground than with

suffrage – Coleridge returned to her usual practice of summarising the letters received:

> *Nora's* paper is *facile princeps*, and has what the New Woman, in common with other new and earnest folk, too often lacks—a sense of humour; but it is very long, and she had the prize last month. *Jon* and *Vanessa* have both sent very good papers on the favourable side, but, on the whole, Chelsea China thinks *Cynthia* has given the best description of her. *U.W.B.'s* is strong in opposition. *Nora's* paper can perhaps be squeezed in next month. [Coleridge erred in referring to 'U.W.B' – the letter-writer actually signs herself 'U.V.W.'] [38]

Of these, it was only Cynthia and U.V.W. whose papers were published, although Nora's paper did indeed appear in the following month.

Despite the 'new woman's' initial, positive, portrayal in progressive novels such as those by Sarah Grand, Talia Schaffer argues that 'when people wrote and spoke about the "New Woman" in the 1890s, they were usually referring to … the unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazon ready to overturn the world'.[39] Within this first instalment of the *Monthly Packet*'s 'new woman' debate, however, this was not always the case. Although U.V.W. clearly visualised this monstrous form in her submission, Cynthia and later contributors seem to have seen through the caricature to the 'women concerned with social and political change' who stood behind her,[40] reclaiming the 'new woman' from her stereotyped appearance in novels: 'The real new woman who lives and moves in our midst to-day is quite another being from the sexless caricature these books put before us.'[41] Although she admitted some faults in the 'new woman', and that '[s]ome empty-headed girls' might adopt the pose in pursuit of 'folly and flirtation', Cynthia insisted on the overall good of the 'new woman' and the possibility of moving beyond the conventional female roles: '[s]he is not merely, wife, mother, sister, or daughter; she is also a citizen'.[42]

U.V.W., drawing on the 'unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazon' described by Schaffer,[43] had a clear image in her mind of what one of these 'new women' looked like: riding around a university city on a bicycle, wearing 'clothes which, though passed by the police, were never in Nature's eye when woman was created'.[44] She evidently believed that nature created woman complete with petticoats, corsets and all the other complicated array of garments necessary for a respectable Victorian woman.[45]

In the 'China Cupboard' in June, the topic broadened even further, under the heading 'The "Woman Question"'. Coleridge introduced the section:

> We have by no means got to the end of the New Woman and other kindred variety subjects. We print further on two copies of verses which have reached Chelsea China, both forwarded by old subscribers and showing the difference made by the point of view. Both are highly idealistic.[46]

June also included the paper from 'Nora' which Coleridge had deferred the previous month. Although she spent much of her time dwelling on the 'new woman's' faults, Nora eventually reached a largely positive conclusion:

> Lastly—and this is surely a great merit—she is not dull; she is not uninterested and (therefore) uninteresting, and though much, very much may be said against her, it seems to me that she is quite as good as her masculine contemporary. For now, as of old, Mrs. Poyser's view is the true one: 'I'm not denying the women are fools. God Almighty made 'em to match the men.'[47]

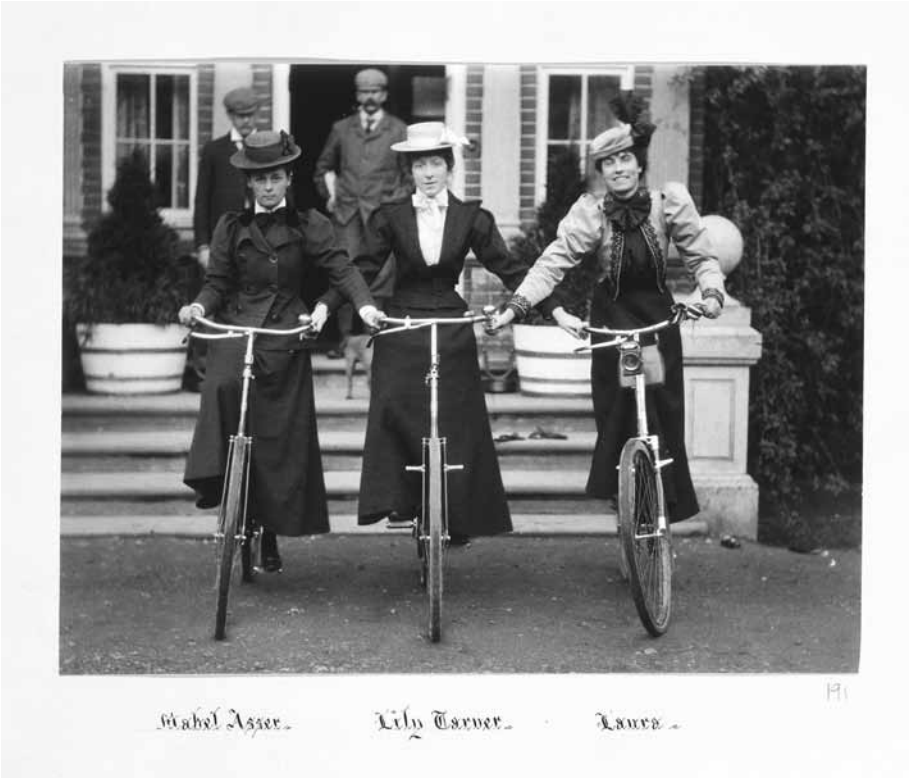
Having recently won a prize in the *Packet*'s debates, Nora's real name was potentially known to the magazine's readers. She was therefore under more pressure than most to be carefully even handed in her contribution and to avoid some of the rhetorical excesses of her more-shielded sisters.

The verses by 'Fortress' were explicitly about suffrage, condemning as frivolous the reasons women would use for casting their vote. Coleridge's description of this contribution as 'idealistic' seems odd when the lines are actually rather cynical until the final note:

> Dear things! let them take to themselves this consoling truth:
>
> They will govern man best in the old-fashioned way![48]

The other verses, by 'D.B.M.' are more obviously idealistic, attributing high and selfless motives to the 'new woman'.

Coleridge's introduction to the final month of the debate, in July, made explicit reference to her printing submissions in their entirety, which she had done throughout the debate: 'Chelsea China has received letters, more or less bearing on the "Woman Question," with the well-known signatures of *Bog-Oak* and *The Muffin Man*. She is glad that space enables them to speak for themselves.'[49] The Muffin Man corresponded with Yonge under her real name[50] and Bog-Oak's association with Yonge and Coleridge went back to the *Barnacle*. These final contributors therefore knew the real identities of those against whom they argued. As the arbiter of the Church History Society, which had run in the magazine until December 1894 and continued to publish its essay questions in the *Packet* after it became a privately conducted society, Bog-Oak was herself a semi-official contributor. Although she had less of a public persona than either Yonge or Coleridge, the 'Bog-Oak' pseudonym was associated with her position in the Industrial School at Andover – the address given for entries to the Church History Society – so the pseudonym was unlikely to have obfuscated Bog-Oak's identity to those who actually knew her. She might therefore have been less 'protected' by her pseudonym than either of the *Packet*'s editors were by theirs. However, like C.M. Weisskopf three months earlier, her contribution to the debate displays liberal ideas, which perhaps meant she had less belief in the concept of 'dangerous display' than did the magazine's editors.



'Unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazons'. Victorian women on bicycles, 1898; copyright Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK.

She, perhaps, therefore felt more comfortable stating such opinions without the protection of anonymity. Bog-Oak's was the pseudonym most consistently and explicitly linked to her real identity, at least throughout the run of the Church History Society, even though her real name never seems to have appeared in the *Packet*.

In September 1895, the introduction to the 'China Cupboard' declared, 'A long letter on "woman" cannot be inserted this month for want of space'.[51] This letter seems never to have been published and the debate finally ended, having run for seven months across three incarnations of the question. Although the first and perhaps most official contribution to the debate was opposed to increased rights for women, the last – also from a long-standing, semi-official contributor – was in favour. There were twice as many published contributions supporting new rights for women as there were opposing them.

Conclusion

Although Yonge was no longer the editor of the *Monthly Packet* by 1895,[52] June Sturrock argues that '[t]hroughout its history [it] … bore the unmistakable stamp of its founding editor and her beliefs'.[53] Indeed, as well as Yonge's continuing contributions as a mere writer, under both her own name and Arachne's, her ongoing influence may also be attributed to the fact that Coleridge, too, bore Yonge's stamp. Coleridge herself acknowledged this in 'The Author of the Heir of Redclyffe', her paean to Yonge.[54]

In their opposition to increased rights for women, Yonge and Coleridge were not necessarily hypocritical. As I have shown, both made extensive use of their pseudonyms within the magazine and although the identities behind those pseudonyms would have been known to an inner circle of contributors, and perhaps to some attentive readers outside that circle, this use did go some way towards mitigating the effects of their fame as novelists. In sections like 'Debatable Ground', they extended this carefully managed public platform to allow readers a safe place in which to practice their own writing. In the 'woman question' debates, contributors could take part in the debate that was so central to their own lives. While the writing was public, the editors' selection and presentation of reader contributions, as well as the use of pseudonyms, provided readers with some degree of shielding from the risks of 'dangerous display'.

These protections were especially important in the suffrage and 'new woman' debate, which was unlike most others in being so much about public life and about women's involvement in it. The way this debate played out is an interesting contrast to the didacticism that otherwise characterises much of the run of the *Packet*. The majority of progressive responses suggests either that the majority of contributing readers were in favour of expanded rights, or that Coleridge was taking care to avoid biasing the debate with her own convictions. Either is evidence that – at least under its second editor, and at the prompting of the first – the magazine and its readers were engaged in discussions on the highly charged woman question. The shield of anonymity achieved through pseudonyms permitted 'ordinary readers', and some extraordinary ones, to dip their toes into the public sphere and to actively engage in a debate that could easily have been 'dangerous' if practiced under their own names.

Notes

1. Note that volume and issue numbers are not consistently applied in the *Monthly Packet* (hereafter *MP,*

). For example, the issue for May 1881 calls itself 'vol 31, part 185', whereas the following issue, in June, claims to be 'vol 1, part 6', evidently having begun a new series and back-dated the numbering to the beginning of the year. I have therefore identified issues of the magazine by date, rather than issue number.

2. 'Younger' was dropped from the title in 1866 (Kristine Leslie Moruzi, 'Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the Church of England' [sic], in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism,* ed. Laurel Brake and Marisa Demoor (Gent, Academia Press, 2009), 424).

3. *MP,* August 1865, 221.

4. Yonge wrote many of the anonymous contributions to the *Monthly Packet*, particularly in its early years. Despite her fame as an writer of fiction, she was reluctant to allow her name to be used in the pages of the *Packet*, and resisted being publicly identified even as its editor for the first two years of the magazine's existence. (June Sturrock 'Establishing identity: editorial correspondence from the early years of the *Monthly Packet*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 39/3 (2006), 266-279 [muse.jhu.edu/content/crossref/journals/victorian_periodicals_review/v039/39.3sturrock.html, accessed 17 January 2013].

5. Julia Bush, *Women Against The Vote: female anti-suffragism in Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007)

6. Sturrock, 'Establishing identity'.

7. *Barnacle* Volume IV, 1864, no page numbers. Lady Margaret Hall library, Oxford.

8. The incomplete archive is held in the library of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

9. *Barnacle* Volume II, undated, although it was probably 1866, as volume 13 was Christmas 1866.

10. *MP,* December 1872, 209.

11. *Ibid.*, 2.

12. Barbara Onslow, *Women of the press in nineteenth-century Britain* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) 165, quoting Christabel Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: her life and letters* (London, Macmillan, 1903), 203. Freudians might have something to say about the choice of goose for the meal announcing the demise of 'Mother Goose' and the 'Goslings'.

13. *MP,* May 1886, 485.

14. *Ibid.*, 484.

15. *MP,* January 1890, 93.

16. *MP,* August 1865, 221.

17. Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian periodical* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11.

18. G.H.P. 'Young women as journalists', *Girl's Own Paper* issue 586 (21 March 1891), 396.

19. Sturrock, 'Establishing identity'.

20. *MP,* May 1898, 204-5.

21. Moruzi, 'Monthly Packet', 424.

22. *MP,* September 1892, 360.

23. *Ibid.*, 474.

24. *MP,* October 1893, 480.

25. *MP,* January 1895, 118.

26. *Ibid.*, 126.

27. Bush, 'Women Against The Vote'.

28. For a detailed analysis of Coleridge's influence on the presentation of 'Debatable Ground', see Kristine Moruzi, '"Never Read Anything That Can At All Unsettle Your Religious Faith": Reading and Writing in the *Monthly Packet*'. *Women's Writing,* 17/2 (2010), 288-304. [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09699081003755086, accessed 28 November 2012].

29. *MP,* March 1895, 369.

30. *Ibid.*, 376.

31. *Ibid.*, 377.

32. *Ibid.*, 377.

33. *Ibid.*, 378.

34. *MP,* May 1895, 619. Coleridge hinted at her own opinion with her choice of adjectives – the unseemly anger of 'furious' for those in favour of women's suffrage, and the more decorous 'hearty' for those opposed.

35. *MP,* May 1895, 618.

36. *Ibid.*, 619.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. Talia Schaffer, '"Nothing But Foolscap And Ink": inventing the new woman'. In *The new woman in fiction and fact: fin-de-siècle feminisms*, ed. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001), 39-52.

40. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, eds, *The New Woman In Fiction And Fact : fin-de-siècle feminisms* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001), 28.

41. *MP,* May 1895, 619.

42. *Ibid.*, 619-20. 'Citizen' implied a position of equality with men but Deborah Cameron emphasises that this was not necessarily so even at the end of the twentieth century, let alone a century earlier: 'President George Bush underlined the non-equivalence of "women" and "American citizens": explaining why the US saw fit to invade Panama, he said he could not tolerate assaults on "the wife of an American citizen". I have looked in vain for any evidence that the woman concerned was not herself American' (Deborah Cameron, *Feminism & Linguistic Theory* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2nd ed., 1992), 120).

43. Schaffer, '"Nothing But Foolscap And Ink"', 39.

44. *MP,* May 1895, 620.

45. Coleridge rescued Oxford women, at least, from the charge of bicycle riding, by footnoting U.V.W.'s letter with the correction that female students at Oxford did not, to her knowledge, ride bicycles.

46. *MP,* June 1895, 742.

47. *Ibid.*, 749.

48. *Ibid.*, 750.

49. *MP,* July 1895, 113.

50. Charlotte Mitchell, Ellen Jordan and Helen Schinske, eds, 'The Letters of Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901)', [www.yongeletters.com, accessed 17 January 2013].

51. *MP,* September 1895, 370.

52. The magazine's publisher, Arthur Innes, took over from her as co-editor in 1894 (Moruzi, 'Monthly Packet', 424).

53. Sturrock, 'Establishing identity', 275.

54. *MP,* May 1898, 504.

‘In our hands’: women’s parliaments during the Second World War

Martine Stirling
University of Nantes

Introduction

In a world where institutions and politics are largely under male control, women’s parliaments in different forms were and still are an alternative power base where women can discuss issues of importance to them.[1] Around the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they sprang up in England, the US and Canada, largely with the aim of pushing forward the case for female suffrage. Generally speaking, these women’s parliaments are fairly well documented and recognised as an intrinsic part of the feminist movement.[2] This cannot be said of the women’s parliaments that appeared in Britain during the Second World War, with a following of hundreds of thousands of women. Strangely enough, these organisations have raised little interest among historians, receiving no more than an occasional mention in books covering this period.[3]

I first developed an interest in British women’s parliaments of the Second World War while studying Hansard debates in which one of the few women MPs at Westminster expressed admiration for their work. My initial research revealed a limited but rich selection of archival material-mostly session reports from 1941-1944 and the odd pamphlet-in various libraries and museum collections.[4] There were also regular mentions of the wartime parliaments in British newspapers like *The Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Observer*. The session reports alone have an enticing quality. Everything about them-the faded ink, the poor typesetting and the fuzzy black and white snapshots or rough monochrome sketches-springs to life as soon as you start to read. The spontaneous quality of the testimonials and the form in which issues are presented-fictitious everyday conversations alternating with more formal demands presented in true parliamentary style-are evocative. The reports provide a wealth of information on women’s wartime issues while raising many questions about the parliaments themselves. Why did women feel the need for their own parliaments in the midst of such dramatic events? What could a women’s parliament provide that other women’s organisations could not? This article explores the formation of women’s parliaments in the specific context of the Second World War, their operations and the reasons for their demise and aims to shed new light on a hitherto neglected aspect of women’s involvement in the war effort.

The wartime context

The institutional and political context in 1941 was very different from the situation women faced at the end of the nineteenth century, when some of the original women’s parliaments had been created. Women had acquired many rights, the main one being the right to vote and stand for parliament.[5] There had even been a woman in cabinet during the interwar years.[6] Despite these improvements, old ways of thinking continued to dog the representation of women in the Westminster Parliament and their sphere of influence. By 1940, there were still only twelve women MPs. Initially, the war seemed to make little difference to women’s status. Winston Churchill’s coalition government in May 1940 did include parliamentary secretaries Florence Horsbrugh (Conservative) and Ellen Wilkinson (Labour), the former at the Ministry of Health and the latter at the Ministry of Pensions. Although their posts had strategic importance-health and pensions were two major battlegrounds for feminists-there was little doubt that key decision-making remained a male prerogative. During debates, even women MPs talked about picking ‘the right men’ for positions of responsibility.[7]

In February 1940, one million women were asked to volunteer for war work; Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown, was keen to point out that there was no question of ‘mobilisation’.[8] As the conflict intensified however, the Government was faced with the need for a larger workforce to sustain the war effort. Conscription for women was therefore introduced in December 1941. Women were enlisted within the *National Service Act* and joined the armed forces, civil defence or essential war industries. Throughout the war, registration was never compulsory for mothers of children under fourteen but they were strongly encouraged to help. In 1942, almost seven million women were involved in war-related activities.[9] By 1943, conscription covered all women aged nineteen to forty and it was finally extended to the under fifties-a mobilisation greater than in any other country. Women played their role in all fields, working ten to twelve hour shifts in factories day and night, digging out victims on bombsites or spending hours on the lookout for enemy planes or fires on strategic sites. However, right from the start, a number of issues connected with recruitment methods and working conditions fuelled a general feeling of frustration-echoes of which were heard regularly in the House of Commons. It was in such a context that the first women’s parliament was formed in London.

‘In your hands’: women’s parliaments take charge

A discreet advertisement in *The Times* newspaper in March 1940 invited women everywhere to ‘join the women’s parliament being created by Mrs Van der Elst’. Placed as it was between a request for tinfoil donations for a local hospital and private French classes with a female tutor, it could easily have gone unnoticed except for the name of its creator. Mrs Van der Elst-born Violet Dodge-was a self-made businesswoman and politician of modest origin, who campaigned tirelessly against the death

London Women's Parliament, Report of First Session, 13 July 1941, Glasgow Museums, SP 2002.2.113. Reproduced courtesy of CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, UK.

penalty. She had also been an independent candidate for the Putney parliamentary seat in 1935. The small message explained, briefly and rather cryptically, that hundreds of women were needed to 'assist in obtaining voters' but did not state to what purposes. No other information was provided, save for a somewhat grandiose claim that the movement was starting 'the greatest civilisation the world had ever known' and an emphasis on women's role as peacekeepers. The contact address given was in West London.[10] Curiously, the report of the first session of the London Women's Parliament, held at Conway Hall, did not mention Violet Van der Elst's name, or indeed that of any other organiser. It simply stated that it was 'the result of a meeting between London women from different backgrounds who realised that despite their differences, they faced similar problems' and that as '[t]heir old life was gone, it rested with them to take the first steps in seeing that their new lives should be better'.[11]

In other areas, women inspired by this example decided to follow suit. The next women's parliament to be created was in the West Riding of Yorkshire in September 1941. The report of its first session included a long list of difficulties hampering Britain's chances of winning the war and concluded: 'What are we going to do about it? The answer is mainly in YOUR hands'.[12] Glasgow Women's Parliament emerged in January 1942, with Lancashire Women's Parliament formed in April later that year.

Although women's parliaments borrowed a number of elements from the Westminster parliamentary structure, such as MPs and sessions, they were keen to distance themselves from any links with the Establishment and from the rigid structure that only allowed a very small and privileged part of the population to air its views. They were at pains to point out that they did not want to be a national organisation, but to coordinate the work of many different movements and all-women groups. Professional associations or societies, as well as women factory workers, or a group of mothers in a village, could send one or several delegates who would then present a particular issue, without anyone being able to claim absolute authority over the parliaments' proceedings and discussions.

This absence of administrative constraints allowed a certain amount of freedom and openness in discussing topics. Sometimes a general theme linked to the most pressing issues of the time could be brought to the fore-such as housing, employment conditions or access to nurseries for working mothers-but this was not restrictive. Such freedom also allowed delegates from different backgrounds to talk about their personal experience and the problems they faced. The opportunity to speak out, regardless of ability or rank, was a crucial part of the democratic ideal the parliaments defended. Reports frequently welcomed the spontaneous ease with which ordinary women, who had not received much in the way of a formal education and 'in some cases had never spoken before', came on the platform and gave a 'simple, telling story' before thousands. The West Riding Women's Parliament welcomed the bond between women regardless of social or professional status, describing how '[y]oung mothers sat side by side with older housewives, girls from the factories, teachers, clerks, civil servants' and found a 'common bond of sympathy'.[13]

Nevertheless, there was an ambiguous side to the refusal of any element redolent of an established structure that can be detected in the way the parliaments described themselves: refusing the term 'organisation' and preferring 'institution'. Perhaps this unease in the choice of terminology reflects the delicate balancing act these parliaments had to perform, between giving women 'a voice' and distancing themselves from any accusations of anarchy and divisive behaviour, which could easily spring up in these troubled times.[14] Indeed, the collective objective was gender-free patriotism: subjects for debate were brought up 'according to their importance in the winning of the war'.[15]

One of the most striking elements of the reports is the enthusiasm they convey and the feeling that women were aware of the power that their participation in the war effort gave them. The monochrome photographs show them sitting proudly at machines, or holding forth at meetings with a determined expression, while the sketches illustrate the large number of delegates attending parliamentary sessions. The front cover of the report on the first session of the Lancashire Women's Parliament was entitled 'Fast Flow-Women on Production', highlighting their role in raising productivity.[16] 'Inspired' was the very first word in large lettering for the West Riding Women's first parliamentary session that described 'women on the march' and 'the building of a new and better world'.[17] As for the Glasgow and West of Scotland Women's Parliament, it praised the 'important work', which would help 'the women of Scotland to take their rightful place in the forefront of the fight against fascism'.[18]

The positive aspects of the parliaments' work were emphasised. Women were shown as strong and resolute, a far cry from the weaker sex requiring protection: 'They were not there to air grievances or bewail their fate, but to put forward concrete proposals'.[19] The aim of the sessions, through constructive discussion, was to vote on bills and emergency resolutions. Ministries were petitioned and local authorities lobbied. Files containing evidence on working conditions and women's demands were passed on to MPs-in particular, to the women MPs who on occasion attended the sessions. The Government also sent observers and the press were always there to ensure wide coverage of events and decisions-a fact the London Women's Parliament underlined: 'Every woman in London who takes either the *Daily Express, News Chronicle, Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, Herald, Mirror, Sketch, Daily Worker* or *Evening Standard* has had the chance to read all about Mrs. Brown's views'. The Parliaments were described as '[a] movement which … after less than three years of life -has become recognised by the Press and the BBC'.[20] The working-class aspect was emphasised: 'Mrs Brown', representing the average housewife, usually featured in a little terraced house, discussing an issue with neighbours in the street or over the back garden wall.

The overriding concern for women was to stand supportively at the side of their fighting men, to secure victory against fascism, and for Britain not to become 'an enslaved and passive nation'. However, beyond this objective, women's parliaments' reports constantly pointed a finger at the authorities for the disorganisation of the country and the ways in which the war effort was thus hampered. Emphasis was laid on the practical ability, the good sense and the honesty of women who would 'break through the inefficiency, corruption and profiteering'.[21] These women were ready to take charge and 'not prepared to see their efforts stultified through wastefulness and inefficiency'.[22]

Issues and objectives

The wastefulness and inefficiencies that the women's parliaments aimed to tackle included the ways in which women's services had been sought by the Government and local authorities. Besides the frustration caused by the inefficiency of the bureaucrats in organising volunteer work, and later conscription, there were other more serious grievances. Women were systematically directed towards less qualified jobs, were offered fewer opportunities for training and once trained were paid less than the men. The pay gap varied according to the different employment sectors but was estimated to be at least thirty per cent, even after training.[23] Some Government members and a large share of the population had been in favour of a single fixed wage across the board but the Ministry of Labour had decided to let the factory managers and trade unions agree on rates of pay. In practice, this led to a general lack of clarity. All sorts of excuses or arbitrary rules and regulations were used to pay women much less than men. As one woman shop steward explained during a session of the Women's Parliament: 'Women are put on men's jobs … When a woman takes over a man's job she has to work eight weeks on trial, and then eight weeks before getting a rise; altogether she must be on a job 32 weeks before she can get the man's rate'.[24] At regular intervals, MPs called upon the Ministry of Labour for more transparency and clearer instructions to companies on government contracts but nothing had been done.[25]

The need for women workers at this crucial time gave women's parliaments a chance to push for legislation on equal pay, which had last been discussed, and rejected, at Westminster in 1936. The London Women's Parliament protested against the unfair treatment that had followed the First World War:

> The employers took advantage of the unorganised condition of women workers. They employed them on hard, monotonous work, at low wages, and used them wherever possible to displace skilled men at semi- or unskilled rates of pay, and so undercut the men's rate. The trade unions made little effort to organise the women. Now the wheel has turned full circle. [26]

They demanded pay for women on the basis of trade union rates and above all, equal pay for equal work. Working time was also a much-discussed subject, with reports of women working a seventy-two hour week. London Women's Parliament demanded a forty-eight hour week for workers in Civil Defence and the Glasgow Women's Parliament specified fifty-six hours including overtime.[27] These demands were widely reported, leading the *Manchester Guardian* to state that the London Women's Parliament was 'vigilant on behalf of women's rights'.[28]

The pay gap was not the only source of resentment. The working conditions offered to women were also usually inadequate. The most frequent complaints included a lack of canteens, no washing facilities or women's lavatories, no changing rooms or restrooms. The London Women's Parliament asked for separate sleeping quarters and washing facilities for women fire-watchers-a move which was applauded by the press. Employees were urged by the women's parliaments to start 'canteen committees' with the help of shop stewards. As women who ran homes and cooked meals themselves, they emphasised the

importance of quality and a balanced diet and sought the help of nurses and doctors to press their point.[29] Petitions were sent to management, demanding one hot meal per shift for all women workers, and pressure was put on local councils to start British restaurants in areas where factories and offices lacked facilities for a canteen.[30] Boosted by the support of the Lancashire Women's Parliament, women like office worker Miss Lipson, with no previous management experience, started a nationwide campaign for the setting up of such restaurants for office workers in the cities. Miss Lipson submitted a petition with a large number of signatures, found a site so the restaurant could open and urged fellow delegates to follow her example. With determination, the energy of an ordinary woman could beat the listlessness of local authorities. One just had to take matters into one's own hands, she explained, in an illustration of the rallying cry of the women's parliaments: 'When the names have been collected, the local council should be approached, but if no satisfaction is obtained, the Parliament Committee should be approached, and then a deputation could be elected to the Regional Officers'. Women councillors attending parliamentary sessions, for instance in Lancashire, ensured that there was an immediate debate on the subject, with subsequent reports during parliamentary sessions on progress in this sector.[31]

Another problem was clothing. The warm coats and/or heavy duty shoes for outdoor jobs like farm work, trench-digging, surveillance and bombsite rescue work (to name but a few), were regulation issue for men. Women, on the other hand, usually had to provide work clothes at their own cost or out of their coupons, or were told to make do with whatever came to hand. In this respect, the situation of women conductors at the Putney Bus Garage in Chelverton Road was by no means unusual:

> All last winter the girls were working in summer dust-coats; they had to put on woollen underclothes, and many girls were continually being laid off sick because of the cold … Their union branch had decided not to draw their regular issues of new clothing unless it was absolutely necessary.[32]

Again, women's parliaments widely publicised this issue, sending mock bills to trade unions and relevant ministries listing their requirements. The West Riding Women's Parliament demanded that all uniforms, including shoes and stockings, be free,[33] while the London Women's Parliament requested steel helmets for women during bombing raids.[34]

Travelling to and from work, sometimes across considerable distances, was particularly challenging in wartime conditions because of a lack of vehicles and complicated routes with several changes. This added to an already long working day for many women. The Lancashire Women's Parliament heard how even transport workers were not spared, with reports of shifts lasting from 4am until 8pm.[35] This left very little time for purchasing food. Most of the time, products in demand had run out by the time the women got there and they sneaked off from work to try and beat the queues. Another reason for frequent absenteeism, as reported to the Glasgow Women's Parliament, was the need for women to take time off once a fortnight for the laundry, as washhouses did not stay open late enough.[36] A shop steward at Fairey Aviation reported that, in her factory, the management reported a loss of 9,000 hours a week due to poor timekeeping and staff not turning up. Generally speaking, women could be away from home for up to fifteen hours per day and absence from work among women was sixty to ninety percent higher than for men.[37]

Women's parliament delegates drew attention to the double burden of married women. A bill presented by the London Woman's Parliament, 'to safeguard the health and well-being of women in industry', explained that a man could go to work daily, given that he had 'a wife or mother at home to provide food, cook, clean, wash and mend for him and look after the children and old people', as opposed to the women who had 'two jobs-one in the factory and one at home'. A mover of the bill, shop steward Mrs. Peacock, described the grim daily toil of the average woman wartime worker:

> Many are soldiers' wives who are obliged to go to work to keep their homes together, as their allowances are so inadequate. If they have children they are obliged to leave them in the care of 'minders'; during the day the mother gets one hour off for dinner, this she spends running all over the town for her rations or else lining up in the canteen for meals; she finishes work at about 6.30, when the shops have closed. After her hard day's work she spends her evening washing, cleaning and mending for the children.[38]

The difficulty of combining work and children was frequently mentioned. No nurseries or after-school playgroups for working mothers had been planned, nor had the authorities addressed the question of daytime meals for schoolchildren. Delegates pointed out that many children were left to wander the streets while their mothers worked.[39] In the Glasgow Women's Parliament, members insisted that, 'The women of Scotland and the women of Glasgow were ready and willing to play their part in the factories', but were being 'held up by the Government and Local Authorities'. A representative from the Nursery Schools Association said she was 'appalled by the impractical way in which business was conducted' at the Ministry of Education and stressed that women should play a bigger role in such government bodies.[40]

Wartime childcare became the battleground for which women's parliaments became best known, alongside the National Association of Day Nurseries. The solution originally advocated by the Ministries of Health, Education and Labour as an afterthought was to use 'minders': either family, friends or neighbours. The London Women's Parliament described it as 'the most pressing problem of the moment'. Mothers came to talk about their permanent state of anxiety if their children fell ill or if their makeshift arrangements came to an unexpected end. Parliamentary sessions abounded with testimonials like this one: 'Coming off night shift was the worst; hurrying

home in the early morning through these dark, empty streets, tired, always wondering what the trouble would be that day. I got really jumpy'.[41]

Membership and achievements

Women's parliaments became a powerful lobbying tool on such issues. The list of credentials at the end of each report indicate how many different groups sent delegates to parliamentary sessions and give an idea of the variety of interests covered. The first London Women's Parliament included 346 delegates from 179 organisations, cooperatives, guilds, church committees and housewives' associations, representing a total of 90,000 women.[42] The smaller West Riding Parliament totalled 47 delegates. Essential employment sectors and industries like transport, engineering, aircraft and ship-building, previously associated with male staff and trade unionism, also began to send members. In fact, women's political groups and trade unions accounted for about a third of the delegates to the West Riding and Lancashire Women's Parliaments, and for just under a quarter of the delegates to the Glasgow Women's Parliament. The proportion was slightly lower for the London Women's Parliament, at just one-sixth.[43]

As time went on and women's parliaments gained widespread acceptance, they were also attended by well-known public figures and politicians of both sexes. Labour MP Haden Guest chaired the London Women's Parliament All London Conference held on 13 February 1944, making a very strong case for demands including increased wives', children's and disabled servicemen's allowances.[44] Representatives of the London Women's Parliament, including the 'wives and mothers of serving men, women factory workers, and members of housewives' clubs' were later able to present a motion to eleven MPs in the House of Commons.[45] Liberal politician and feminist Rosalie Mander, wife of MP Sir Geoffrey Mander, moved a bill in favour of women's part-time work at the second session of the Lancashire Women's Parliament.[46] Lady Bonham-Carter, a Liberal politician, daughter of former Prime Minister Asquith and a very close friend of Churchill, handed out awards for the 'Win the War' contest organised by the London Women's Parliament, praising housewives as 'the unknown warrior for whom there were no medals and no roll of honour'. The selection committee for the awards included no less than MP Megan Lloyd-George and Liberal politician and suffragette Margery Corbett Ashby.[47] In 1945, a deputation of the London Women's Parliament met Sir Malcolm Trustam Eve, Chairman of the War Works commission, to talk over plans for bombsites, future housing and repairs.[48]

Members were urged to petition local authorities, were told how to proceed and were given the assurance that the women's parliament would back them. The Lancashire Women's Parliament explained, 'The War-Time nurseries are yours-with a complete 100 per cent grant from the Government-if you go out and get them. If local authorities do not move-or do not move quickly enough-it is up to you'.[49] Mothers were encouraged to gather for 'pram parades', where they marched up and down streets with their children in pushchairs covered in posters demanding proper childcare. Deputations from the women's parliaments went to local councils, put pressure on medical officers and were even filmed, on one occasion, by the Ministry of Information.[50] Eventually the pressure they put on the various councils was such that the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health and the Board of Education-jointly responsible for the issue of childcare-agreed to receive a deputation from the London Women's Parliament. The result of this meeting was a written statement from the Ministry of Health promising to deal with the 'slackness' of certain local authorities in setting up nurseries and to increase nursery provision in certain areas around London.[51] There were other instances of cooperation, such as when the Ministry of Labour provided lists of areas where workers were in short supply and the London Women's Parliament encouraged its members to fill the vacancies in exchange for improved facilities for working mothers.[52]

The lobby for improved medical care was another key aspect of the women's parliaments' campaign, asking for an 'industrial medical service' to be created. Twenty-two delegates went to ask the Health Minister to set up a home-help programme for working mothers.[53] Proposals of health and welfare measures concerned all women, whether at work or at home. Members drew attention to the large number of pregnant women in employment and the need to make proper provision for them, with lighter tasks and shorter shifts. They also requested proper medical and weekly antenatal care, an increase in the number of maternity beds, and wards to provide sufficient facilities for all women who wished to deliver at hospital. Maternity benefit was to be extended, they said, to at least six weeks before and after confinement. Finally, the status of home helps was to be upgraded and their wages raised.[54] These issues were detailed in the Fourth Session Report of the London Women's Parliament, which pressed for the implementation of the Beveridge Report and the 'establishment of a comprehensive Health Service'.[55]

Women's parliaments were also active concerning military issues and strategy. In 1941, an emergency resolution carried by the London Women's Parliament called on the Government to take urgent action and 'split up Hitler's forces and relieve pressure on Russia'.[56] On one occasion in June 1942, 1,000 women marched to Downing Street to carry a resolution hailing the creation of a second front and asking the Government to make full use of women's participation.[57] In 1943, General Montgomery thanked the women's Win the War Rally for the support they were giving the troops and their help with 'the successful outcome of the war'.[58]

The parliaments strove for maximum efficiency. Each parliamentary session report listed a number of demands presented in the form of a bill, replicating the Westminster model and containing a detailed review of the existing situation and improvements to be made. Written in a formal style, they were the joint effort of representatives of many women's organisations who were gathered 'to forge a common policy on problems common to them all'.[59] Copies of the bills were then sent to relevant ministries, women MPs, women's trade union executives

and ministerial committees responsible for women's welfare and employment.[60]

During the sessions, the right to equal self-expression on neutral territory made discussions possible between parties with opposing interests. Solutions were worked out, practical tips and information given, misunderstandings cleared. One GP in Levenshulme told mothers how to obtain free milk for their children and advised them to boycott doctors who charged a fee for the certificate they needed. A councillor from Urmston explained to workers complaining about the lack of nurseries and canteens in certain districts how to approach their local council and ask for new and proper childcare facilities. Alice Samuel, from the Manchester branch of the Shop Assistants' Union, defended shop-workers' right to rest in reaction to demands for extended shopping hours.[61]

As a result of their efforts, of the formal/informal networking of their members, and due to the fact that they embraced so many organisations, the women's parliaments gained more and more respect. They were gradually included in discussions with local authorities and government members, meeting on a regular basis with MPs and ministerial department members. By the end of the war, they were receiving messages of support at the highest level, both nationally and internationally.

Women's parliaments and the feminist issue

The position of the women's parliaments on the issue of feminism was ambivalent. On the one hand, the patriotic ideal was held as their ultimate objective and reports insisted on the fact that the women's parliaments were 'by no means' a feminist network. Women were encouraged to air their own views without forgetting their traditional role, firmly rooted in the domestic sphere and at the side of men. Men and women had to work together as 'partners' to 'secure victory'. In the same way, men's advice was 'welcome'.[62] Feminism could have been seen as selfish, unpatriotic and as undermining the war effort.

Yet it was the defence of women's rights and status-acceptance within trade unions, equal pay, equal working conditions and access to childcare, to name but a few-which gave such a strong impetus to these parliaments. As time went on and the end of the war drew nearer, it became clear that the parliaments saw themselves fighting for women's rights in the future. This was most apparent when Margery Corbett Ashby described the London Women's Parliament as being at the vanguard of new movements where women were 'clamouring that their voices should be heard in the new State after the war'.[63] Freda Grimble, organiser of the London Women's Parliament, publicly contested an appeals court decision in London, which refused married women the right to keep their savings from housekeeping money. This was reported as far away as Australia, giving the women's parliaments international fame.[64] Indeed, the feminist message of a worldwide movement of women asserting their rights was never far away. Across the globe, as the London Women's Parliament put it, people heard what 'ordinary British housewives' were 'thinking, wanting and meaning to get'.[65] Eleanor Roosevelt praised the women's parliaments for helping to push through reforms that would enable women take their 'rightful place in society'.[66]

Beyond demands for improvements in the workplace, there was a strong hope that wartime work would herald a new beginning for women. Reports drew a parallel between the fight for suffrage-and hence past women's parliaments-and postwar expectations: 'Our mothers had to fight desperately for the right to vote. It lies with us now to make real their victory, to make true the paper equality of status which the suffrage gives us'.[67] A well-known West End actress and playwright of the time, Beatrix Lehmann, addressed delegates of the women's parliament in Bradford, explaining that a new era was close at hand: 'This time the post-war period will not be dark', she said, 'if women have won their equal place with men. Prejudice must be overcome once and for all'.[68] If feminism appeared to be a dirty word, gender equality, on the other hand, was something to be aspired to.

Women's parliaments as a political mouth-piece?

So what was the political allegiance of the women's parliaments? The parliaments themselves, especially the London Women's Parliament, were at pains to point out that any specific links with a political party would be 'against the whole principle of the Parliament'.[69] They were keen to avoid falling into the trap of belonging to one single party for they wanted to be a 'widely representative institution'.[70] The fact that they were open to all women was one of their strengths.

However, there were undeniably strong ties with the Soviet Union and the Communist Party, which suggest they may have been under the control of the Left. One unquestionable sign is the fact that the London Council of the People's Convention, a Communist Party (CP) movement, helped to launch the London Women's Parliament on 13 July 1941. The creation of women's parliaments and their strong working-class component and ethic was certainly in line with the CP's call for a 'People's Government'; its propaganda postulated that an alliance with the Soviet Union was the surest way to peace and the only hope for the working classes, as prominent members of the upper classes had promptly sided with Hitler and Nazi Germany.[71]

The session reports of women's parliaments also pointed to close links with Russian objectives. Friendship committees with the USSR were of course numerous at the time, even at official level, as this new ally was a major obstacle in the way of Hitler's progress. However, women's parliaments went further, in particular in Scotland and the North of England. They celebrated the overthrow of 'corrupt Tsarism' and communism, which would secure a better deal for women as mothers and workers with a 'free and unfettered equality of men and women'.[72] Delegates from the Communist Party of Great Britain, like Tamara Rust, attended parliament meetings and vigorously denounced speculation and capitalist greed in fields such as housing.[73]

The West Riding Women's Parliament, alluding

to the Soviet Union, squarely stated, 'Your fight is our fight … we will do everything possible to bring about the closest possible unity between the people of our country and the people of yours'.[74] In its opening address, it welcomed the Soviet regime as 'the land of progress and social development, where for the first time in recorded history, women are welcomed in all relations of life as man's equal'.[75] The Lancashire Women's Parliament was set up by the Anglo-Soviet Women's Unity Committee and the creation of close ties between the two countries was the main theme in the first few pages of their session report. Women's parliaments were also busy fundraising for the Soviet population-in particular for the women. Original supporters included a cross-section of well-known intellectuals and politicians associated with the Left, the Fabian Society and the Labour Party: for example, George Bernard Shaw and Beatrix Lehman, or the Pethick-Lawrences and Margery Spring Rice, author of *Working-Class Wives*. Yet Liberal politicians and MPs were also involved. The emphasis was always on non-exclusion, save for fascist groups, and on women acting to bring about victory and a better world.

Pamphlets and reports constantly reminded readers with some pride that the women's parliaments were a grass-roots movement. Reported conversations-real or fictitious-took place over garden walls or a cup of tea in the kitchen and had a homely quality. They featured ordinary housewives devoted to their families, their neighbours and their country-people you might meet just walking round the block:

> Turn off the main road just past the Co-op, into a side road of little grey houses all exactly alike and all joined together. Go into the first one you come to … There, in her kitchen-dining room-lounge, you will find Mrs. Brown.
>
> Women's Parliaments have made a big difference to the Mrs. Browns of this country. They have given them a voice, raised their consciousness and increased their confidence:
>
> Who is this Mrs. Brown, you want to know?
>
> She is a woman who has started to think.
>
> Before the war, she would have told you she didn't know a thing about politics-they didn't concern her. Who indeed? Thought Mrs. Brown in those early days when her thoughts first took shape. Whoever's going to hear what **I** think-**I** who have hardly ever been out of London, let alone outside Britain?[76]

Women's parliaments relied heavily on the interface provided by the women's guilds, cooperatives, professional and housewives' associations, as well as on the trade unions which provided the experience and the structure which they lacked. After some initial weariness, the latter became interested in the women's parliaments' efforts to improve working conditions for the working classes. The very informal nature of women's parliaments probably helped to overcome initial distrust from male-dominated unions and encouraged collaboration from the likes of the Transport & General Workers' Union (T&GWU) and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers (NUGMW). Representatives of these unions were interested in supporting women's parliaments on various grounds. Members of their executive committees and shop stewards were sent as delegates to the parliamentary sessions and put forward male workers' demands. The National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) asked for support from the women's parliaments in respect of equal pay.[77] Sessions were also an opportunity to encourage women to join unions to strengthen bargaining power. Both the NUR and the Amalgamated Engineering Union boosted their wartime membership substantially in this way. On occasion they acted as a mouthpiece for women's demands among male workers: turning them, as a London delegate remarked, into 'two of the most progressive unions in the country'.[78] Trade union membership was one of the main issues discussed at the first session of the London Women's Parliament, as women asserted they did not want to threaten men's jobs and pay rates and were just standing in for soldiers on the front.[79]

Woman-Power, London Women's Parliament, Report of Third Session, 14 June 1942, Glasgow Museums, SP 2002.2.112. Reproduced courtesy of CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, UK.

However, the Labour Party and the Trade Union Council (TUC) as a whole did not welcome the creation of women's parliaments, despite support from individual members. From the start, they were viewed with deep suspicion and matters did not improve as the importance of women's parliaments and their recognition grew.

In December 1942, the General Council of the TUC warned its members and affiliated organisations not to support the women's parliaments, later stating that they were interfering in areas that were outside their scope, such as employment issues. They were, as the TUC's General Secretary Sir Walter Citrine put it, a threat to the unions, which would generate 'conflicting policies and misunderstandings'.[80] In 1942, the Manchester City Labour Party executive committee actually tried to prevent the creation of the Lancashire Women's Parliament by forbidding its members to attend and simply stating, as if it were enough, that the Women's Cooperative Guild, also a campaigner for equal rights for women, would not be attending.[81] This was not actually true, not on a national level at any rate, as individual members were among those present at the London Women's parliamentary sessions. The explanation came later, in the face of protests by no less than Mary Knight, a prominent Communist and Labour Party member: the Manchester Labour Party branch was concerned that the demands presented at the first session of the Lancashire Women's Parliament had been drafted by members of the Anglo-Soviet Committee, although no details were given about precisely which bills.[82]

It could be that Labour was uncomfortable with the women's parliaments' demands for better working conditions as encroachments on its Party ground. Through their growing popularity, the women's parliaments were becoming a form of competition. The other group singled out for a warning from the local Labour Party was the Daily Worker Defence League, a communist organisation. This did not prevent the newly formed Lancashire Women's Parliament from receiving hearty greetings from a wide cross-section of trade unions like the T&GWU, National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers or the NUGMW. Neither the TUC nor the Labour Party gave in however. In fact, as the Labour Party went from strength to strength, reaching a record number of members in 1943, it hardened its position, never recognising the importance of the women's parliaments as anything else than a Communist front interfering in areas outside its remit.

This view of the women's parliaments was a very reductive one, even though they broadly supported the CP and its ideals. For one, as we have seen, session reports constantly reminded readers that they did not see themselves as a political organisation. The emphasis was on women getting together to help with the war effort and their main objective was to restore peace and prevent fascism from taking hold over Europe. The links that the women's parliaments had with the Left, and the help they obtained, can be largely explained by the fact that traditionally women's movements and feminist issues have always met with more interest from the Left than the Right. Besides, until the Labour Party took a tougher stance towards its left wing, Communists were frequently among its members.

The women MPs at Westminster who supported the women's parliaments reflected this ideological mix. One of their main admirers was Eleanor Rathbone, Independent MP for Combined English Universities. She maintained constant links with the women's parliaments, using them to gather evidence about women's status and conditions in the factories. She praised the movement on various occasions. In March 1942, she described the London Women's Parliament to the House of Commons as 'rather magnificent' and 'a movement which has come from below'.[83] On the day she died, five days before the Women's Parliament met, she commended their 'careful and realistic study' of the rebuilding of postwar family life.[84] She had also been particularly impressed by the information they had gathered on the working conditions of women in the munitions factories, which she described as 'a bundle of rather impressive evidence'.[85] Other women MPs had demonstrated an interest early on in women's parliaments and worked with them on several occasions, regardless of politics. Mavis Tate (Conservative) and Megan Lloyd George (Liberal) asked them to provide them with information and help them set up meetings with shop stewards from various factories. Conservative MP Nancy Astor, meanwhile, welcomed the Lancashire Women's Parliament.

The mysterious end of women's parliaments

From the moment they were created, women's parliaments grew at an impressive rate: the London Women's Parliament went from 90,000 to 280,000 members in the space of three months. Over 900 delegates, representing around 500,000 women, attended the third session of the London Women's Parliament. The pamphlets published by women's parliaments kept reminding the reader that the movement was gaining momentum and that attendance figures were soaring, as was the number of women represented. Their achievements were listed at the end of each parliamentary session report and the message was that their wartime mission was only a beginning, with mentions of future peacetime sessions.[86] The report for the fourth session of the London Women's Parliament, published in November 1943, promised to 'lay the foundations of the better Britain of tomorrow'.[87] Yet for all their success and enthusiasm, there is no trace of any report published after the end of the war. Articles in the national press recorded postwar sessions but only until 1949, after which all trace is lost.

There are several possible explanations for the disappearance of women's parliaments. One is the crucial matter of funding. As each parliamentary session report explained at length, women's parliaments were dependent on their members and on fundraising activities such as raffles, social events and dances. Pamphlets repeatedly underlined how little money was available and the urgent need for financial support: 'One MP gets £600-The London Woman's Parliament which has 1,000 MPs wants £600 too'.[88] They urged supporters to pledge a weekly or monthly amount, however small. They pointed out that the parliaments received no affiliation fees and encouraged small subscriptions on a monthly or yearly basis, which also seemed to hint at the idea of a lasting movement. But it was difficult for them in a situation where their contributors returned to their homes and their financially dependent status.

With the gradual demobilisation of women as the end of the conflict neared, women's parliaments were more than likely starved of any previous funding. Unlike Women's Institutes, which were subsidised by the Board of Agriculture and received a substantial grant to continue their work after the First World War as an independent organisation, the women's parliaments benefitted from no financial help. Their close ties with the increasingly marginalised Communist Party and the fact that the Labour Party and the TUC never endorsed them could also account for a loss of postwar support, certainly in the North of England and Scotland where the ties with the Soviet regime appear to have been strongest. From a peace-loving nation and wartime ally dedicated to repelling the fascist invader, the Soviet Union was turning into another threat from the East as a new, sinister type of dictatorship loomed. There was no real room for leftists or communist organisations under the postwar Labour Government, which had been careful to get progressively rid of its more extreme factions since the mid 1920s. It is true that this did not prevent other blacklisted organisations like the International Youth Council from surviving even today. But for a national and women-only movement in a family-oriented postwar context, to be blacklisted by one of the country's main working-class oriented parties was a serious drawback.[89] Perhaps it was the very fact of being so mixed, rather informal and open to all that prevented the women's parliaments from becoming a vehicle funded by a political party or other particular group.

Press articles indicate that these parliaments survived until the late forties. They continued to fight for key wartime demands, notably generalised and state-funded childcare-an area in which Britain still lags far behind other European countries. Indeed, from 1944, the Government had asked local authorities to close down wartime nurseries gradually, as women were returning to their homes. At the time, as Hansard debates show, no woman MP was interested in taking up the issue, except Labour MP Edith Summerskill. The other women MPs were keener to use available funds to support breastfeeding campaigns and nursery education for the over-threes. The MPs who tried to push through a bill to maintain the nurseries were, in fact, two men. Labour MP Hector McNeil and Liberal MP Sir Geoffrey Mander both stressed the benefit of having access to proper childcare, in particular for the working classes. They called for a debate, which eventually took place on 9 March 1945 but did not result in a vote.[90] Two supportive groups were the National Association of Day Nurseries and the London Women's Parliament, who presented a list of proposals to extend the scope of these nurseries after their transfer to local authority control.[91]

In November, the organiser of the London Women's Parliament, Freda Grimble, led a deputation of representatives of day nurseries who discussed the issue with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, asking the Government to enforce nursery provision for all local authorities.[92] This prompted Health Minister Aneurin Bevan to put forward plans for a nationwide nursery system funded through an exchequer grant. This initiative never materialised under the new NHS but the Minister's reaction shows that the women's parliament, initially scorned by the authorities, was now receiving full attention at Cabinet level. Women's parliaments were also actively involved in discussions on latest government reforms, expressing, for instance, support for the new National Health System against opposition from the British Medical Association, whilst regretting that preventive medicine and nurseries would not be included in the package.[93] In March 1947, they sent further deputations to the Ministry of Health to restore the national grant to nurseries. The last mention found is in a newspaper article from 1949, listing them among the organisations proscribed by the Labour Party. There is no other trace of their activities that year.[94]

Newspaper reports of the London Women's Parliament's sixth session in January 1946 point out that it represented 'half a million women members'-as many as in 1943. Whatever their fate, we cannot overlook the importance of the parliaments in terms of raising women's collective consciousness and sense of identity at a social, economic and political level. Perhaps the postwar Labour victory and the setting up of the welfare state was an answer to many of their demands and militant action was slowly giving way to a new and wider involvement of women in political life. The Duchess of Atholl, one of the first women MPs at Westminster, had in fact once questioned whether it was wise for women to restrict themselves to political organisations consisting only of women, fearing this might create a 'new antagonism' which could be by its very nature 'lasting and widespread'. She argued instead in favour of women's involvement in mainstream politics and parties, which they could influence from within.[95]

The lobbying and media attention women's parliaments produced were instrumental in helping to implement wartime legislation on training and pay. Beyond that, they brought together women from all walks of life who made their collective voice heard at the highest level and campaigned for a redefinition of women's status by defending the idea that women could successfully combine work and mothering given the right conditions. Employment was not just an economic necessity but also a source of satisfaction and enrichment. At one woman's parliamentary session, a mother of eight told delegates that she felt younger since she had started to work.[96] In that sense, women's parliaments were far ahead of their time: the first national life-work balance enquiry did not take place until some sixty years later.[97] Similarly, many of the reforms they campaigned for, such as maternity leave on full pay for four months, have not yet seen the light.[98] And if they had won their battle for nationwide nursery provision, the situation of working mothers in Britain today would be very different.

The women's parliaments shed a different light on the debate surrounding women's wartime expectations. Elizabeth Roberts and Harold Smith have defended the idea that the Second World War did little to change women's perception of themselves, even reinforcing gender differences.[99] However, the testimonials contained in the documents produced by the women's parliaments tell a different story-that of women looking beyond their

wartime role, keen to pave the way for a new society. The leaflet publicising the second session of the London Women's Parliament listed a number of demands but the last one, in capital letters, asked how women could 'use this great chance to break down for ever the prejudices and barriers that debar them from full equality with men'.[100]

Of course, the thousands of delegates who expressed their views on behalf of many more women are not to be taken as definite proof that the collective consciousness of women had changed. Still, the sheer numbers involved and the powerful message the parliamentary sessions contain point to a collective will for social change and a redefining of gender roles. Although the end of the war in many ways heralded the return of women to their traditional mothering and family-oriented role-with legislation focusing on child benefit, new housing and the start of the welfare state-the objectives of the women's parliaments went much further. In the speeches of their delegates can be seen the foundations of the second wave of feminism.

Notes

1. For instance the annual Women's Parliament in South Africa and Women's Parliaments in India, Finland, New Zealand and former Yugoslavia.

2. A key figure in this context is May Wright Sewall, one of the founders of the International Council of Women (ICW). This was the first international women's organisation defending human rights for women and still exists today. One of its initial aims was to create an international women's parliament where social, professional, political and philosophical issues could be discussed from a woman's perspective. Initial meetings in March and April 1888 in Washington DC gathered speakers and delegates from Canada, the United States, Ireland, India, England, Finland, Denmark, France and Norway. An overview of the ICW is given in the International Council of Women's, *Women in a Changing World: The Dynamic Story of the International Council of Women since 1888* (London, Routledge, 1966). In England, the Union of Women Workers, created in 1895, combined the strengths of around 100 affiliated societies and was known by the press as a 'Women's Parliament'. The Women's Social and Political Union (1903–1917) founded by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, staged women's parliaments from 1907 in connection with the fight for women's votes. Women's parliaments are mentioned in several books on the history of women's suffrage and the Pankhursts. See for example, Harold Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign* (Harlow, Pearson Education, 2007).

3. They are not discussed in Dorothy Sheridan's *Wartime Women* (London, William Heinemann, 1990) nor in David Doughan and Peter Gordon's comprehensive *Dictionary of British Women's Organisations 1825-1960* (London, Woburn Press, 2001). One or two lines on the subject can be found in Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London, Viking, 1997) and Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1999* (London, St Martin's Press, 2000).

4. For instance the Karl Marx Library in London; The Women's Library, London; the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre; the Communist Party archives of the People's History Museum in Manchester.

5. In 1918, women over thirty only were given the suffrage. They acquired equal voting rights with men ten years later.

6. Margaret Bondfield, Labour Minister 1929-1931.

7. See Eleanor Rathbone : 'One necessary factor in the solution is to have more really first-class men in places of authority'. Hansard, House of Commons, vol. 376, 'Maximum War Effort', 2 Dec 1941, col. 1091.

8. Hansard, Houses of Common, vol. 357, 'Oral Answers, War Supplies/Employment of Women', 15 Feb. 1940, col. 924.

9. *Statistical Digest of the War* (London, Central Statistical Office, 1951).

10. *The Times*, 4 Mar. 1940.

11. Glasgow Museums, SP.2002.2.113, London Women's Parliament (hereafter LWP), Report of First Session, 13 Jul. 1941, 1.

12. People's History Museum, Manchester, Labour History Archive and Study Centre (hereafter LHASC), West Riding Women's Parliament (hereafter WRWP), Report of First Session, Sep. 1941 (undated), 21.

13. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, Sep. 1941 (undated), 'Foreword' and 2-21.

14. Women's Library, London (hereafter, WL), LWP, Report of Second Session, 26 Oct. 1941, 1.

15. WL, LWP, Report of Fourth Session, 1944 (undated), 31.

16. LHASC, Lancashire Women's Parliament (hereafter LancWP), Report of First Session, 12 Apr. 1942, Credentials.

17. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, Foreword.

18. Glasgow Museums, SP. 2002.2.111, Glasgow and West of Scotland Women's Parliament (hereafter GWP), Report of First Session, 25 Jan. 1942, back cover.

19. WL, LWP, First Session, 2.

20. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, Nov. 1943 (undated), 2-3.

21. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 4.

22. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, 7.

23. In Government Training Centres, women started on thirty-eight shillings per week and men on sixty shillings and sixpence; after training women received forty-six shillings but once employed went back to thirty-eight shillings per week plus a productivity-based bonus, but the total never exceeded forty-three shillings. See Hansard, House of Commons, vol. 378, 'Woman-Power', 5 Mar. 1942, col. 889 and WL, LWP, Second Session, 5.

24. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 16.

25. Hansard, House of Commons, vol. 376, 'Maximum National Effort', 3 Dec. 1941, col. 1156.

26. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 9-11.

27. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 13, 20 and 25; Glasgow Museums, GWP, First Session, 2. To situate the debate, the European Directive on the forty-eight-hour working week was subject to an opt-out in Britain until 2005.

28. *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Oct. 1942.

29. LHASC, LancWP, First Session, 4 and Glasgow

Museums, GWP, First Session, 6.
30. British restaurants were created at the initiative of the Government (Ministry of Food) and provided cheap and balanced meals in wartime in industrial areas and town centres.
31. LHASC, LancWP, First Session, 22.
32. WL, LWP, Second Session, 29.
33. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, 13.
34. WL, LWP, draft bill, 13 Jul. 1941.
35. LHASC, LancWP, First Session, 9.
36. Glasgow Museums, GWP, First Session, 4.
37. *Select Committee on National Expenditure* (London, HMSO, 1942).
38. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 9-15.
39. Glasgow Museums, GWP, First Session, 7. This was used as an argument by those opposed to the employment of mothers, like Conservative MPs Mavis Tate and Viscountess Astor. See Hansard, House of Commons, vol. 376, 'Maximum National Effort', 2 Dec. 1941, col. 1081 and 3 Dec., col. 1205.
40. Glasgow Museums, GWP, First Session, 7.
41. WL, LWP, *Wartime Nurseries*, 4.
42. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, Credentials, 30.
43. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, 6; Glasgow Museums, GWP, First Session, 11. LHASC, LancWP, First Session, 12 Apr. 1942, 27.
44. See WL, LWP letter, All London Conference on Dependants' Allowances, Forces Pay and Pensions, 12 Jan. 1944, and *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Feb. 1944.
45. *Ibid.*, 3 Mar. 1944.
46. *Ibid.*, 12 Oct. 1942.
47. *Ibid.*, 18 Jan. 1943.
48. *Ibid.*, 15 Jan. 1945.
49. LHASC, LancWP, First Session, 32.
50. Glasgow Museums, SP.2002.2.112, *Woman-Power*, LWP, Third Session, 14 Jun 1942, 11.
51. *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Mar. 1942.
52. Glasgow Museums, *Woman-Power*, LWP, Third Session, 11.
53. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 14-15.
54. *The Times*, 15 Dec. 1943.
55. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 17.
56. *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Oct. 1941.
57. *The Times*, 15 Jun. 1942.
58. *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Mar. 1943.
59. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 15.
60. Glasgow Museums, *Woman-Power*, LWP, Third Session, 13.
61. LHASC, LancWP, First Session, 18 and 21-23.
62. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 30.
63. *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Jan. 1943.
64. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 Oct. 1943, and *Manchester Guardian*, 29 Oct. 1943.
65. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, Nov. 1943 (undated), 2.
66. *Manchester Guardian*, 20 Nov. 1944.
67. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 4.
68. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, 1.
69. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 31.
70. WL, LWP, Second Session, 1.
71. See *Daily Worker,* 14 Jan. 1941, 'Hayes Peoples History', [ourhistory-hayes.blogspot.com.au/2011/02/peoples-convention-january-1941.html, accessed 6 May 2013].
72. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 6-7.
73. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 21.
74. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, 4.
75. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, 2; part of this quote, 'land of progress and social development', can be found in WL, LWP, First Session, 3.
76. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 2.
77. WL, LWP, Second Session, 26 Oct. 1941, 31.
78. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 28.
79. Glasgow Museums, LWP, First Session, 4.
80. *Manchester Guardian*, 17 Dec. 1942, and 18 Jan. 1943.
81. *Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1942.
82. *Manchester Guardian*, 9 Mar. 1942.
83. Hansard, House of Commons, vol. 378, 'Woman-Power', 5 Mar. 1942, col. 889.
84. *Manchester Guardian*, 7 Jan. 1946.
85. Hansard, 'Woman-Power'.
86. Glasgow Museums, *Woman-Power*, LWP, Third Session, 5.
87. WL, LWP, Fourth Session, 30.
88. Glasgow Museums, *Woman-Power*, LWP, Third Session, 25.
89. In 1949, the Labour Party reached an all-time high with 5,500,000 members. *Manchester Guardian*, 19 May 1949, 2.
90. Hansard, House of Commons, vol. 406, 'Written Answers', 21 Dec. 1944, col. 1966, and vol. 408, 'War-Time Nurseries', 9 Mar 1945, col. 2447.
91. *Manchester Guardian*, 10 Aug. 1945.
92. *The Times*, 13 Nov. 1945. On this occasion, representatives of the LWP met the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health and a representative of the Ministry of Education; *Manchester Guardian*, 13 Nov. 1945.
93. *The Times*, 23 Mar. 1946.
94. *Manchester Guardian*, 19 May 1949.
95. Katharine (Duchess of) Atholl, *Women and Politics* (London, Philip Allan, 1931), 176-7.
96. Glasgow Museums, *Woman-Power*, LWP, Third Session, 8.
97. 'Work & Parents, Competitiveness and Choice-a Summary' (London, Department of Trade and Industry, HMSO, December 2000).
98. LHASC, WRWP, First Session, 12. Maternity leave now covers twenty-six weeks but not on full pay unless specified in the employment contract. Source: Citizens Advice Online, August 2011, www.citizensadvice.org.uk.
99. Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families. An Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford, Wiley, 1995), 17-18 and 115-16; Harold Smith, 'The Effect of the War on the Status of Women', in *War and Social Change*. *British Society in the Second World War*, ed. H.L. Smith (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986), 225.
100. WL, LWP, *Mrs. Brown of London Town has a job to do*, undated pamphlet (c. July 1941).

Review article: the history of the family: structures, power and emotion

Katie Barclay
University of Adelaide

Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England, 1760-1830: Emotion, Identity and Generation*
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. £65.00, ISBN 978-0-19-956519-1 (hardback), pp. 296

Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800*
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. £41.00, ISBN 978-0-19-920480-9 (hardback), pp. 376

Leanore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780-1920*
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. £35.00, ISBN 978-0-19-954648-0 (hardback), pp. 464

Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and Social Relations in Georgian England: Share and Share Alike*
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. £65.00, ISBN 978-0-7190-8737-0 (hardback), pp. 224

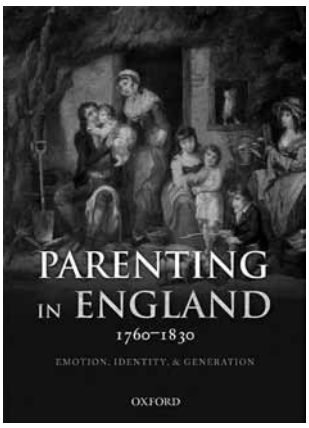
C. Dallett Hemphill, *Siblings: Brothers and Sisters in American History*
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. £22.50, ISBN 978-0-19-975405-2 (hardback), pp. 352

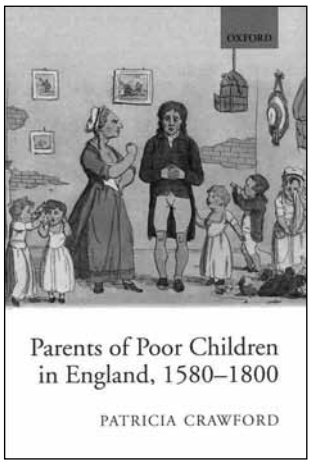
Whilst having its origins in the social history of the 1970s (or perhaps earlier if we count a long-standing interest in family genealogies), the history of the family has exploded in recent decades, reflected in the expansion of historical journals in this area.[1] As a field coming into fruition, the last few years has seen a wide range of books published, particularly in the area of marriage and the extended conjugal family.[2] This has been accompanied by an interest in 'non-normative' family experiences, including those of single parents, families in institutions, and non-biological families, such as servants and masters.[3] This set of books seeks to explore two relationships that until now have been given less attention: that between parent and child, and that between siblings. In doing so, they seek to complicate the history of the family by encouraging us to imagine it as a more dynamic and interactive set of relationships than the strictures of patriarchy and marriage tend to imply. As a result, all these books have an interest in family structure, in power and in emotion as the driving force between family members.

Structures

The history of family structures has been a central subfield within family history for decades, arising out of an interest in historical demography that emerged from a desire to explain and determine the significance of the population explosion in Western Europe at the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, as well as an interest in how family structure shapes society.[4] More recently, family structures have been used to explain economic processes, particularly the formation and success of family businesses, and family prosperity, looking at how the life-course of the family and related structural changes impacted on prosperity levels.[5] Catherine Hall and Leanore Davidoff's magnum opus *Family Fortunes* was one of the most significant works in this area, reflecting on the importance of family relationships and gender to the making of the English middle classes, and inspiring a generation of newer work that explored the intricacies, nuances and problems of their thesis.[6] More recently, however, as the family has become increasingly valued as the seat of the individual, reflecting the growth in histories of subjectivity and individualism that draw on psychological theories of child development that are rooted in the family, family structures have also become of interest in explaining both the nature of family relationships but also broader cultural phenomena emerging from them, such as national character traits, and interpersonal relationships and choices and their related macro phenomena such as marriage patterns.[7]

Davidoff's latest work, *Thicker than Blood*, situates itself into this debate with a focus on the 'long' families of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Long families were a trend amongst the English middle classes, where improvements in health, medicine and nutrition allowed for large families with age ranges as large as twenty or more years between eldest and youngest child. This was a phenomenon that could be exaggerated through second marriages, where men married younger second wives, allowing for even more children over a long period of time. Davidoff argues that these long families had a number of effects, notably intensifying family relationships by providing siblings with a concentrated network that allowed families to be reliant on themselves and so less dependent on making links beyond the family. These intense relationships also encouraged





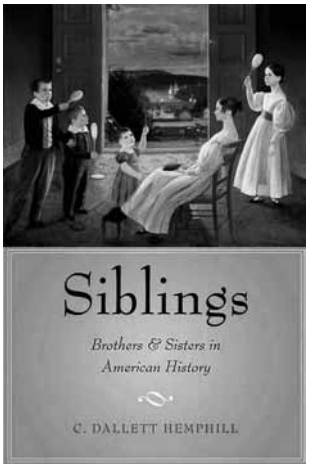
cousin marriage as by the second generation, individuals tended to socialise within their family network and they had a large choice of partners within that network. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, this trend began to reverse as family limitation strategies reduced family size, leading to the present day 'ideal' of two children. In her work, Davidoff explores the impact of such structural change, reflecting on the implications of this reduction for different psychologies and family dynamics and their possible wider implications for society and economy.

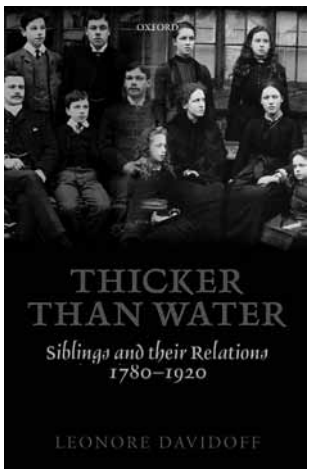
Davidoff's focus on siblings, as opposed to the more traditional concern with the nuclear family and its extensions, also challenges the emphasis within much child development theory on the parent-child relationship, by emphasising that in these large families the intensity of the parent-child relationship was diluted by carer siblings, aunts and uncles, who offered alternative models for adult behaviour, as well as allowing for different power dynamics within the family. This principle is also explicitly taken up in both Hempbill's *Siblings* and Harris' *Siblinghood and Social Relations*, which attempt to readdress the focus on the nuclear family through moving the sibling relationship centre stage. Both argue that the focus on the conjugal relationship has distorted the importance of siblings to the individual, the family and society, and that putting them back into the history of the family shifts our understanding of the past. Neither Harris's work on the English Georgians, nor Hemphill's on Americans over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries give space to the exceptional long families that make this so convincing for Davidoff's nineteenth-century England. This may have reflected that these would have been significantly rarer in the early modern period, which would also have resulted in smaller numbers of sibling cohabitation in adulthood, and smaller numbers of aunts and uncles to influence a younger generation. As a result, many of the adult sibling relationships explored in these works tended to be between married siblings, or married and single siblings living in separate households. While individual sibling relationships, particularly for those that lived together, may have been the most important in emotional and material terms for some people, and particularly those who were single, neither of these authors convinced in decentring the conjugal family from the centre of the story in their contexts.

Yet, their works provide a useful corrective to a focus on the conjugal family by reminding of us of the lateral connections within family structures that disrupt the vertical power relationships that have been the focus of most works. Interestingly, the importance of lateral relationships also emerge from both Crawford and Bailey's work on parenting. While focusing on the hierarchical relationship between parents and children that the literature on siblinghood is trying to destabilise, both works recognise both the influence of multiple children to the parent-child dynamic, and the place of wider and fictive kin as parents. For Bailey, this includes the grandparents, aunts and uncles that Davidoff in particular points to as important parent-alternates, as well as the role of the state in offering a support and welfare as substitute parents. Crawford's focus on the parents of poor children leads to an extensive discussion of this latter area, particularly looking at charity amongst the growing middle class as a form of civic fatherhood, that bestowed both responsibility and power over the lives of poor children. Similar to the work of Megan Doolittle on fatherhood and the workhouse, she carefully reflects on the significance of these patriarchs to poor children and how their interference in poor families shaped such children's relationships with their biological parents.[8] In doing so, she reminds us of the fragility of family structure for poor families, as children moved between biological and step parents, to grandparents, aunts and uncles, to institutions, as necessity required it, often splitting up siblings and families along the way, but not necessarily breaking the ties of family that could be reconnected at a later point in life.

Power

As the discussion of family structure above implies, power relationships are central to discussions around the nature of the family, as historians attempt to understand the way that relationships can be both hierarchical but also loving and emotionally fulfilling. That so much recent family scholarship has emerged from gender and women's historians has kept this question at the fore, with the family viewed as a key site for the creation and maintenance of gendered power. These works are no exception. The question of power in the parent-child relationship is particularly prominent across these works. Bailey explores how discipline was expected to be enacted in the home from parent to child and concludes that violence was expected to be lightly used in a loving context, and, for some, even abusive relationships were not necessarily seen as 'unloving' by children in retrospect. She also highlights the way that parent-child relationships evolved over the life-course, and while children's obligations were framed in terms of filial duty, nonetheless adult children were often placed into positions of power as their parents' aged and became reliant on their support. For Crawford, hierarchies of power within poor families were disrupted by outsiders, who thought they were too lax or too violent towards their children, or difficult to enforce due to the inability of parents to provide for their children and so disrupting the traditional relationship between fulfilment of responsibility in return for obedience. In both, the relation between motherly and fatherly





authority over children are complex questions, evolving with changing ideas of parenthood. As noted above, Davidoff explores how large families complicated these 'natural' hierarchies by adding intervening adults and children into the family dynamic.

Hemphill and Harris expand on this through their exploration of power relationships between siblings. While not unaware of the complexities of gender, race, region and finance to dynamics within families, Hemphill explores the increasing emphasis in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century on sibling equality, arguing that, especially in a culture that rejected primogeniture, sibling love ties 'gave men and women a space that was both unfettered by the old restraints of patriarchy and protected from the buffetings of the new world of individual competition' (p. 126), before going on to discuss how this breaks down with the increasing emphasis on gender differentiation in the later nineteenth century. Harris offers a sense of this latter dynamic in Georgian Britain, arguing that while siblings were encouraged to 'share and share alike', the realities of primogeniture, as well as an assumption that women were less equal than men, meant that such notional equality often broke down in practice. In this, Georgian Britain and the American North do appear to be experiencing distinctly different dynamics in family life during the same period.

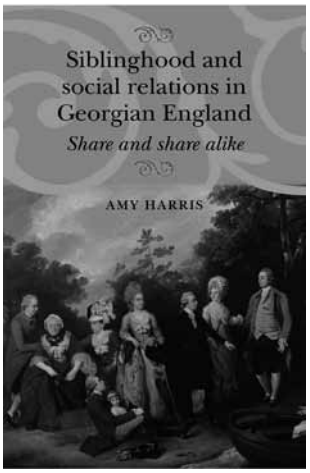
For both, meanings of sibling equality were of wider social importance during an era where fraternity, and to a lesser extent sorority, were being increasingly imagined as an ideal form of political order, notably in France and the USA.[9] Yet, as both of these authors acknowledge, the political ideal of an equal fraternity amongst different citizens in the nation sat in contradiction to the realities of being a sibling, where hierarchies of power continued to shape people's everyday experiences. As Harris concludes, the narrow political definition therefore hid, and continues to 'hide other hierarchies' (p. 173). Although not suggested by these authors, it may well be the case that this reason is why the concept of fraternity managed to capture the imagination of the period: the notional equality of siblinghood was understood to incorporate difference and power differentials based on difference and so was less threatening an ideal than the modern mind imagines.

The importance of family hierarchies to the public imagination was also taken up by Bailey, who considers the way that the parent-child relationship was used to imagine the relationship between the monarch and the British nation, as well as the use of the trope of the affectionate and benevolent father in discussions around the role of George III during the Regency Crisis. She argues that one of the reasons that British Republicans had difficulty removing George III was the cultural tenacity of the idea of George as a tender father, due filial duty and love. More widely, the idea of the caring but disciplining father could be used as a justification for Britain's role in Empire, where the British state became a caring father to indigenous peoples, 'rescuing' them through appropriate discipline, education and love. The family then remained a key construct for imagining the nation and wider social and political relationships, whether that was in terms of brotherly equality or paternal care. Its persistence reflected the importance of family to people's lives, where the family taught them how to make sense of themselves, the world and broader social relationships. As a result, as long as the family remained hierarchical, it remained difficult to imagine social equality.

Emotion

While a focus on structure and power has usually been used to look at more 'material' phenomenon, such as patronage networks, inheritance, and familial support mechanisms, all of these works fundamentally focus on the nature of the family relationships and how that shaped the family and the psychology of the individuals that emerged from it. Reflecting the development of the field of the history of emotions, the application of psychology to history and the growth in identity studies, family dynamics and emotional connections have became valued in their own right, as well as for the impact they have on society. Joanne Bailey's *Parenting in England* is perhaps most engaged with this new literature. A cultural history of emotion, Bailey's work not only describes the emotional language parents and children used, and that was employed in discussions of parenthood in wider literature and art, but attempts to think about that language within the worldview of the period. She reflects on what maternal and paternal love meant in historical context and what behaviours were expected to accompany it, as well as the implications for the nature of the family relationship. In doing so, she draws attention to the way that not only family structures, but emotions themselves are culturally specific, creating historically unique psychologies and family dynamics.

This was an approach that none of the other works explicitly used. Rather, they tended to either take emotional language at face value, and/or to apply contemporary psychological frameworks to the past and 'test' them against the evidence, reflecting on their validity during this period. This latter approach has its uses, providing an access point to explore family dynamics that are familiar and helping to highlight difference. Sibling rivalry (in this instance an ancient trope, as well as a modern psychological device) was a particularly central discussion point for the works on siblinghood. Davidoff found it to be central to explaining childhood dynamics, to challenging authority structures, and carrying on into adulthood, if mediated in multiple ways through the family structure. Hemphill includes a lovely discussion of rivalry amongst very young children, thinking about 'child replacement' in an era of high child mortality and name-sharing amongst siblings, but concludes that cultural expectations actually mediated against rivalry in older children, encouraging them to have more mutually supportive relationships.



Harris makes a very similar point about the cultural reinforcement of supportive relationships and the location of rivalry as an 'unnatural' behaviour, but also highlights that rivalry could only be imagined between equals and so inequalities between brothers and sisters were not only acceptable but not seen to be divisive. These insights into past family dynamics are interesting and insightful, but occasionally fall short of what a history of emotions approach could offer.

By limiting their discussions to the application of psychological frameworks to the past, there is a risk of universalising emotion and of missing emotional and psychological frameworks that are unique to particular historical moments. With the exception of Bailey, these works could have all benefited from a more detailed interrogation of meanings of the emotions they describe, notably love. At times, it's hard to get past the impression that all we have learned is that family members in most times and places appeared to have loved each other and were expected to do so – something that is unfortunate given the effort made by these authors to provide a chronology for change within the family over time. Moreover, some of these works even lent towards using highly emotive language as a measure of love, so that the more emotionally expressive an era, the more cultural significance was applied to the extent of siblings' love for each other. This is problematic because emotional language is very variable and affected by fashion, with some eras being suspicious of overly emotive language and relying on action as a more useful measure of the strength of their relationship. What it means to love is different in different times and places, as well as in different relationships, so that unpicking what individuals meant when they used such language, and when they did not, helps to produce a more historically contextualised and specific sense of the family dynamic, allowing for unique psychologies to emerge.

Despite these issues, all of these works highlight the extent to which emotion is central to what makes the family, with connections between people forged at an emotional level. The work, or 'emotional labour', involved in forging these relationships is made explicit in these works, as they debate the importance of emotional expression, gift-giving, obligation and duty to reinforcing family connections and ensuring they continue after family members no longer cohabit.[10] Hemphill offers a particularly interesting contribution to this discussion with her emphasis on the increasing importance in the nineteenth century of elder sisters as the principle actors doing the 'emotional work' that keeps families together. A distinctly gendered role, elder sisters became imagined as 'second mothers' with responsibilities towards care and education of younger siblings. Informed by the increasing importance of domesticity and the feminisation of certain types of household management, this could be a position of authority for elder sisters within family, and reinforced an age-hierarchy amongst siblings, yet it also made them responsible for the emotional and material labour in the up-keep of sibling relationships. Brothers in particular became less central in the maintenance of family relationships, and their responsibilities, such as letter-writing or gift-giving, sometimes became part of their wives' duties, creating a pattern commented on in the modern era where women became responsible for the maintenance of wider kin relationships.

Sources

As well as engaging in a new approach to the family, one of the most striking aspects of all these works is their source usage. All five works are cultural-social histories, drawing on a wide panoply of sources to build up a picture of family relationships, including family correspondence and diaries, official and institutional records, novels and other creative writing, non-fiction published works, prints and portraiture. Crawford's is perhaps the most traditional social history in this respect due to the limited sources available on the poor, but she manages to combine criminal cases, institutional records, and petitions for assistance to good effect. The use of portraiture was particularly striking in both Hemphill and Harris, who use the discussion of changing emotional styles in family portraiture, developed extensively by Kate Retford, to think about the nature of sibling relationships, alongside family correspondence and literature.[11] Interestingly, Hemphill notes how by the nineteenth century, small family groups of selected siblings were replaced by boy-girl pairs, reinforcing this relationships as special and mutually supportive. Harris uses portraits to highlight the tension between equality between siblings and hierarchies of gender and age, that created ambiguities in power relationships. In all these works, different types of cultural product are combined to build a picture of these families' emotional worlds. In doing so, the cultural production of individual sources is downplayed for a more eclectic approach, where different cultural products are woven together to create a coherent cultural discourse around family relationships. In the large part, these works do this well and with nuance, reflecting carefully on what can be known from these types of sources, and reminding us that all sources are a form of fiction in the archive.

These are all ambitious works that cover either large periods or multiple social groups (or both). Harris, Hemphill, and Bailey all explore a wide range of social classes, while Hemphill and Crawford incorporate histories of people from different races and ethnic groups. While these authors are careful to try and demarcate difference, in the space of the modern monograph, it sometimes leads to a sense of a lack of specificity and depth, particularly for the more marginal groups who did not produce the bulk of these sources, and indeed whose experiences are often being mediated through the writings of another social group. This is exasperated in some ways by the large source base, as the creation of a broad cultural discourse – that relies on finding similarities between

disparate sources – has difficulty providing space for alternative voices and opinions. As a result, at times these works feel like a useful starting point for other historians to jump off from, as much as definitive statement on the experience of families in the past. However, this also reflects the historiographical moment of the field, where new methodologies and new ideas are coming to fruition, ready to be applied and tested in more detailed case studies. Both individually and together, these works offer enough detail, nuance, interesting data and debate to lead that conversation.

Notes

1. *Journal of Family History*; *Journal of Family and Community History*; *History of the Family*.

2. Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650-1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011); Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, eds, *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008); Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Foyster, *Marital Violence: an English Family History, 1660-1857* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005); Maria Agren and Amy Erickson, eds, *The Marital Economy in Scandanavia and Britain 1400-1900* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005); Ginger Frost, *Living in Sin: Cohabiting as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2008); Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001).

3. Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?: Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012); Angela Davis, *Modern Motherhood: Women and Family in England, 1945-2000* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012); Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin, and Abigail Wills, eds, *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain Since 1800* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2009); Carolyn Steedman, *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007); Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005); Kath Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage: Singleness in England 1914-1960* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007).

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5. Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (London, Yale University Press, 2003); Richard Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family, and Business in the English- Speaking World, 1580-1740* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001); Barry Stapleton, 'Inherited Poverty and Life-cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18/3 (1993), 339-55; Paola Subacchi, 'Conjectural Poor and Structural Poor: Some Preliminary Considerations on Poverty, the Life-cycle and Economic Crisis in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italy', *Continuity and Change*, 8/1 (1993), 65-86.

6. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1987).

7. Michael Roper, 'Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History', *History Workshop Journal*, 59 (2005), 57-72; Diane Purkiss, 'Women's Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: the House, the Body, the Child', *Gender and History*, 7/3 (1995), 408-32; Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft. Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London, Routledge, 1994); Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power*; Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995); Rebeka Habermas, 'Parent-Child Relationships in the Nineteenth Century', *German History*, 16 (1998), 43-55.

8. Megan Doolittle, 'Fatherhood and Family Shame: Masculinity, Welfare and the Workhouse in Late Nineteenth Century England', in *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, ed. Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin and Abigail Willis (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 84-110.

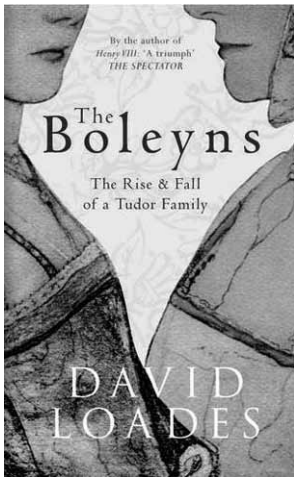
9. Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993); Jennifer Heur, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press); Jennifer Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education and Autonomy in Modern France* (Lebanon, University of New Hampshire Press, 2008); Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power and the Coming of the American Revolution,* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Richard Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University, 2009).

10. Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, *The Work of the Heart: Young Women and Emotion, 1780-1830* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2007).

11. Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, Yale University Press, 2006); see also Karin Calvert, 'Children in American Family Portraiture, 1670-1810', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 39 (1982), 97-113; Margaretta Lovell, 'Reading Eighteenth-Century American Family Portraits: Social Images and Self-Images', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 22 (1987), 243-64; Orest Ranum, 'Intimacy in French Eighteenth-Century Family Portraits', *Word and Image*, 6/4 (1990), 351-67.

Book Reviews

David Loades, *The Boleyns, The Rise & Fall of a Tudor Family,*
Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2011. £20 / $34.95, ISBN 978-1-4456-0304-9 (hardback), pp. 288
Reviewed by Ruth E. Richardson
Independent Scholar



The Boleyns featured on the political stage for a very brief period in the 16th century. As a family they were minor players at the royal court allied to the far more powerful Howards, whose head was the Duke of Norfolk. Their enduring fame was established when Anne Boleyn became the love of King Henry VIII, who, rather uncharacteristically, pursued her for seven years. The pursuit was all, for Anne was an admirable, witty and accomplished mistress, only allowing consummation when marriage was a certainty. Conversely, as a wife, Henry found her lacking in the required humility and submissiveness. Nevertheless, she would have survived if she could have given him the longed-for son. Henry and Anne did have a healthy baby but this was, unfortunately, a girl – the future Queen Elizabeth I. Then what really sealed Anne's fate in 1536, were her subsequent miscarriages. Henry had been through this scenario with his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, and he evidently had no intention of repeating the process.

The chapters in this book, arranged chronologically, give the Boleyn family background, explain how Thomas Boleyn arrived at the royal court, examine the careers of the three Boleyn children in turn, and describe Anne's downfall. The last chapters provide information about Anne's nephew, Henry Carey Lord Hunsdon, and her daughter, Elizabeth I. The book concludes with an informed essay on whether the Boleyns could be designated a political family. This is a straightforward format but at times the story is hard to follow. More dates would have helped and occasionally it is difficult to decide who is being discussed as prior knowledge tends to be assumed. Thomas Boleyn very probably did have a good command of French but this is just stated without any supporting evidence. A small point, but this does demonstrate some of the drawbacks for the reader.

The best chapter concerns Anne's brother, George. As the author says 'George is not an easy man to get to know. In his youth he was overshadowed by his father, and in later years by his sister.' Nevertheless, George Boleyn's career, as described here, is easy to follow and is firmly based on clear evidence. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the chapter on Anne's sister, Mary. Here, there is a great deal of speculation. Mary was Henry VIII's mistress before he married her sister and her two children, Catherine and Henry, were both surnamed Carey after her first husband. There has been debate about which child was the elder and there is little definite evidence as to the paternity of Henry in particular. The author comes down firmly on Henry being William Carey's son, which may well be true, but this involves convoluted speculation that Mary 'must have had some contraceptive knowledge'. Mary was Henry VIII's mistress for three to five years and the question of pregnancy does need examining. However, more emphasis on factual evidence would have been appropriate.

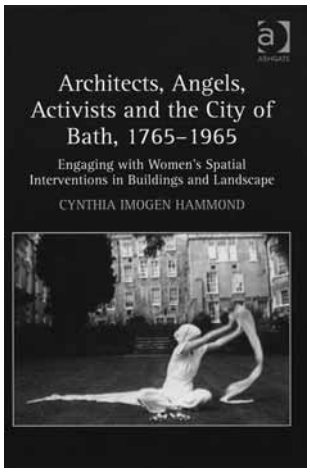
It is also unfortunate that the author did not consult some of the latest research. Lady Troy, who is not mentioned at all, was in charge of Elizabeth in childhood, Kate Chapernowne/Ashley being subordinate to her. Lady Troy was still at the royal court when Henry Carey married her grand-daughter, Anne Morgan, in 1545. This family connection can reasonably suggest a hypothesis to explain the match, despite Anne's father being from 'a part of the world with which he [Henry] had no known connection'. Sadly, Blanche Parry, Lady Troy's niece, is also omitted though she was, to some extent, pivotal due to being related to William Cecil Lord Burghley and the Knollys family. Her nephew married the widow of one of Anne Boleyn's alleged lovers. The evidence presented is therefore uneven. A very plausible case is made for the match between Sir Thomas Boleyn and Elizabeth Howard, which 'was a dazzling achievement for the son of a London alderman, and the foundation of much of the fortune and misfortune which subsequently overtook the family'. This is an example of the available evidence being discussed extremely well, separating the known facts from very reasonable inference.

David Loades has authored a number of books on the Tudors. The difficulty of this book for the reader is that it assumes considerable prior knowledge of the period and the people involved. Perhaps this is inevitable, as the author evidently knows his material well. There would be no problem if the reader, too, was well versed in Tudor history but for those seeking information it would be preferable to read other books first. It would have also considerably helped if this book had been provided with family trees showing names and dates. There are very useful footnotes and a good bibliography giving primary and secondary sources. The fairly comprehensive index is unfortunately, and disconcertingly, separated from the rest of the book by advertisements for the publisher's other books. Despite these caveats, this book remains interesting, and enjoyable, especially for those who know the period.

Cynthia Imogen Hammond, *Architects, Angels, Activists and the City of Bath, 1765-1965: Engaging with Women's Spacial Interventions in Buildings and Landscape*

Farnham, Surrey and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2012. £65, ISBN 978-1-4094-0043-1 (hardback), pp. xv+277

Reviewed by Anne Stott
[formerly] Birkbeck, University of London



This book makes an ambitious claim – to combine the methods of the architectural historian with the site-specific interventions of the artist in order to show how women shaped the built environment in Bath over a period of two hundred years. Hammond's approach is not simply interdisciplinary or academic in the conventional sense. She describes her work as 'research-creation' and defines space as 'the discursive, historical and material specificity of a specific location'.

Hammond claims that women's role in the creation of Bath's spaces has largely vanished from the public memory. The architectural history of the city is invariably viewed through the 'narrow lens' of a deeply misleading nostalgia that ignores women's contributions to its built environment and cultivated landscapes. Even in the rare instances when a woman's name is associated with a public building, she manages to get written out of the picture. For example, no-one seems to have entertained the possibility that the Gothic architecture of the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel – a controversial stylistic choice for this Georgian city – might have been constructed according to her specifications.

Hammond points out that in the nineteenth century, when Bath's architectural 'virility' was in apparent decline, it was a city of thousands of single women. Women with every possible relation to power lived here but there are scant traces of their presence in the city's material forms. In this period in particular, the physical spaces of Bath were linked with sexuality. The war against prostitution was a war against the buildings that housed it. The Bath Female Home and Penitentiary signalled a new era in the city's history. Its refurbishment in 1845 separated inmates from the public, creating a Foucauldian zone of separation and incarceration.

One of the most intriguing parts of the book is the little-known story of the 'Suffragettes' Wood'. Between 1909 and 1912, the suffragette Emily Blathwayt planted an arboretum on her family's estate at Batheaston on the outskirts of Bath. Each tree honoured an individual suffragette. With the death of the last of the Blathwayts in 1961, the woodland was doomed. From 1965, the developers and the bulldozers moved in. This was a grim period in the city's history. But, as Hammond notes, while attention was turned to the destruction of the Georgian buildings in the now notorious 'Sack of Bath', few voices were raised to protect a space created by women and neglected for decades.

An artist and performer as well as an architectural historian, Hammond is concerned to press against the limits of 'architecture', 'history' and indeed 'woman'. The book has a recurrent metaphor of wings: the wings she herself creates from cotton-pulp, Sir George Frampton's falling female angel on the north buttress of Bath Abbey, the male winged Daedalus, the winged King Bladud (the legendary founder of Bath) and that familiar winged version of Victorian femininity, the angel in the house. Bath, it transpires, is a city of wings in a literal as well as metaphorical sense.

Hammond's approach is unashamedly subjective, even though she recognises that she cannot 'know' the women she discusses 'in a personal, historical, nor of course in any empirical sense' (p. 154). This approach is stimulating but also problematic, as it is hard to see how it can altogether avoid the trap of solipsism. Its weakness can be a lack of historical specificity. Hammond's discussion of the rigidly Calvinist Countess of Huntingdon is appropriately nuanced and contextualised but she seems unduly cross with the nineteenth-century cleric who campaigned to clear his parish of prostitution. And how helpful is it to bring our own sensibilities to a study of Victorian prostitutes by describing them as sex workers?

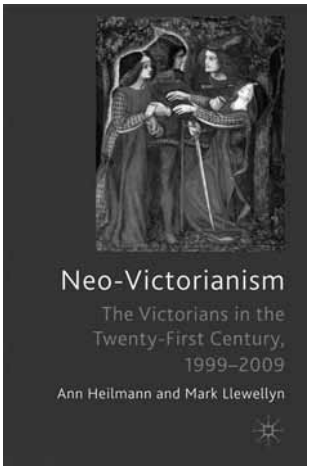
Yet Hammond's intense subjectivity is also one of her strengths. In the final section she tells of the diligent research that enabled her to rediscover the location of the Suffragettes' Wood and of her role in the ceremonial planting of commemorative trees in 2011. The achievement of her book is to make us look at Bath in a new way: a city of exquisite, honey-coloured buildings, but also one of living, growing trees, lovingly planted by its current citizens as a direct link to the resilience and hope of women a century ago.

Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009*

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. £55, ISBN 978-0-2302-4113-8 (hardback), pp. 323

Reviewed by Teresa Barnard
University of Derby

As our flirtation with the Victorians continues to flourish, the significance of neo-Victorianism comes to the forefront, posing questions on the interaction between Victorian and contemporary culture. These questions are addressed soundly in Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn's timely volume**,** *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009.* This is an important addition to the growing body of critical works on the subject, drawing from the latest debates and topical research. First offering clarity of definition, the authors continue with an



exploration of the agency of the past in contemporary texts and the way in which today's culture is arbitrated through a re-visioning of the nineteenth century. In identifying and analysing a range of key texts, the authors seek to confirm that with an intellectual engagement with the Victorian past, we can better relate to the present.

What exactly is neo-Victorianism and what do we expect from it? The book tackles the complexities of definition by first discounting clichés, stereotypes and preconceptions associated with historical fiction and instead engaging with the genre's ever expanding parameters in terms of 'metatextual and metahistorical conjunctions as they interact within the fields of exchange and adaptation between the Victorian and the contemporary' (p. 4). The main premise is to question why contemporary literature repeatedly revisits the nineteenth century. The book provides a multi-disciplinary, analytical structure through which to 'read' neo-Victorian texts and is divided into six main sections. The formal structure is precise with subsections dealing with different issues through the exploration of individual texts. The book by no means presupposes the readers' familiarity with all the selection presented, as each text is provided with a relevant summary within its analysis. This systematic approach works well for an academic text and, importantly, also provides a solid foundation from which to develop ideas and most certainly offers an incentive to explore for oneself less familiar books.

Starting with issues relating to memory, mourning and misfortune, the book introduces the neo-Victorian preoccupation with loss and regeneration, examining the complex relationship between nineteenth-century themes, such as inheritance and the haunted/haunting house, with contemporary metaphors of reconstructions of the past, for example in Sarah Blake's novel *Grange House*. Following this, a chapter on race and the British Empire considers hybridity, slavery, Victorian Orientalism and transculturalism. Whilst similar issues have been explored at length in previous critical writings, the authors take a fresh approach to the topic, discussing recent works like Laura Fish's excellent *Strange Music*, the title of which refers to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem.

Aspects of sex and science are investigated in the third chapter. Here, Heilmann and Llewellyn explore the 'sensational' aspect of Victorian culture, such as child prostitution and the male brothels frequented by public figures, as well as the scientific constructions of the female body, the sexual gaze, pornography and scopophilia. They argue that society's fascination with Victorian sexuality might disclose much about our own anxieties and also that neo-Victorian texts raise concerns about the conceptual paradigms of contemporary science. These ideas are developed further through a range of texts which engage with the subject; the objectifying gaze in Chase-Ribaud's *Hottentot Venus*; prostitution in Jane Harris's *The Observations*; and racial and sexual violence under the guise of science in Belinda Starling's *Journal of Dora Damage.* The novels are drawn together with the Foucauldian theme of the operations of power on the body through surveillance. An introductory study of the books' themes includes an illustrated interpretation of book covers and their inter-textual links as a visual analysis of this preoccupation. Illustrating the central themes of *Dora Damage*, the image of the exquisite but tragic anatomical

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Has your email address changed? If we don't have your current details, you may not receive the monthly e-newsletter, included in your membership fee. If you have changed email addresses since joining, or recently acquired a new email address, please update your details by logging into your account at **www.womenshistorynetwork.org OR** by emailing the membership secretary.

All information (or queries) about membership, including requests to set up a payment by standing order and changes to personal details, can be arranged by logging in to your account at womenshistorynetwork.org OR by emailing membership@womenshistorynetwork.org OR by mail to Imaobong Umoren, St Cross College, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LZ.

wax figure, *Venus Anatomica,* lying on her silk cushions and complete with detachable front and removable organs, is like Sleeping Beauty, the perfect, silent woman exhibited for the male gaze. In exposing voyeuristic images such as these, the authors find reverberations of the erotics of the corpse in the contemporary gaze in the works of artist, Gunther von Hagen, whose exhibition 'Körpenwelten' allowed eight million visitors to contemplate actual corpses in a variety of poses.

The book deals with spectrality and haunting, with a fascinating study of glass and mirror as Victorian tropes and also with neo-Victorian metatextual magic with a study of the relationship between neo-Victorian author and reader in terms of conjuror and spectator. Finally, it extends towards the idea of the branding of heritage, authenticity and the nature of 'theme-park Victoriana', particularly in the modes of TV costume drama and docu-drama.

This is an altogether fascinating and well-organised book that is expertly researched and crafted, providing finely nuanced insights into the interrelation between Victorian and contemporary literature and culture. Although grappling with complex critical and theoretical issues, it has a ready accessibility that extends beyond a narrow field of academic research to appeal to all levels of readership.

BOOKS RECEIVED AND CALL FOR REVIEWERS – May 2013

The following titles are available so if you would like to review any of the titles listed below, please email **bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org**

Elizabeth R. Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: the Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (University of North Carolina Press)

Christina Laffin, *Rewriting Medieval Japanese Women: Politics, Personality and Literary Production in the Life of Nun Abutsu* (University of Hawaii Press)

Nina Reid-Marony, *The Reverend Jennie Johnson and African Canadian History, 1868-1967* (University of Rochester Press)

Rosemary Seton, *Western Daughters in Eastern Lands: British Missionary Women in Asia* (Praeger)

Laura Schwartz, *Infidel Feminism: Secularism, Religion and Women's Emancipation, England 1830-1914* (Manchester University Press)

Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The image of Female Heroism* (Oxford University Press)

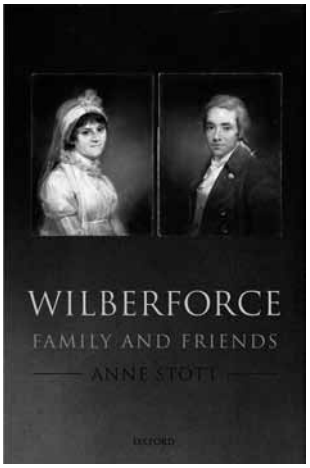
Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Oxford University Press)

A few titles are still available from lists published in the Autumn 2012 and Spring 2013 issues of the Magazine. If you are interested in reviewing any of these please contact Anne Logan, Book Reviews Editor, via **bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org**

Anne Stott, *Wilberforce: Family and Friends*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. £35.00, ISBN 978-0-19-969939-1 (hardback), pp. xiii + 338

Reviewed by Katie Barclay
University of Adelaide



William Wilberforce (1759-1833) was a businessman, campaigner for the abolition of slavery, politician and central figure in the 'Clapham Sect', a group of influential evangelical social reformers based around Clapham. As a key abolitionist and well-known public figure, he is the subject of a number of biographies, as well as featuring in numerous more general works on the period. Yet, like so many, especially male, public figures, Wilberforce's story has been told through his public life and works. As the title suggests, Anne Stott's biography is a history of the 'personal' Wilberforce, his relationship with his friends and family, his bodily needs and his emotional life. Yet, in many ways, it also operates as a biography of the Clapham Sect, particularly Marianne Sykes (whose letters are used extensively), Henry Thornton and Zachary Macaulay. Across four sections that roughly correspond with Wilberforce's life course, individual chapters introduce us first to Wilberforce, then his friends and family, explaining how they met, how their relationships developed, the internal workings of the Clapham families and how they compared to Wilberforce, and finally how those relationships ended.

Through this network of lives, Stott builds a vivid picture of Wilberforce's 'private life'. We learn a great deal about his consistently poor health and its treatments (including opium use) and how that impacted on his public service. Stott provides psychological insights into what motivated Wilberforce to prioritise love and family, his love of small children, and why he selected to surround himself with the people that he did. More broadly, we are given insight into how families within the Clapham Sect managed child-rearing and how they differed in their approaches, and into the different attitudes that these men had to their wives' public roles – varying from expectations of a public political role, to tolerance for the philanthropic, to a desire for wives to remain located in the domestic.

For the historian of the early-nineteenth-century family, all of this seems very familiar. From the cherishing of domestic life (whilst living highly public lives), to their attitudes towards marriage and gender, the Clapham Sect

in many respects conform to what historians have come to know about the English family at this period (despite their typically Evangelical concern of being 'outsiders' to a sinful world). Moreover, the Clapham Sect have been used in a number of works interested in their almost 'incestuous' family networks, with many of the group marrying into each other's families over generations, a phenomenon that was to become so typical of the Victorian middle class. Yet, one of the benefits of biography, which Stott draws out carefully in this work, is the way that individual families negotiated these norms in their own ways, so that their family lives were both recognisable but also unique and shaped by their own personal interactions. As such, this book makes a useful contribution to this field, by providing insight into these dynamics to which more general contributions to the field have not been able to give space.

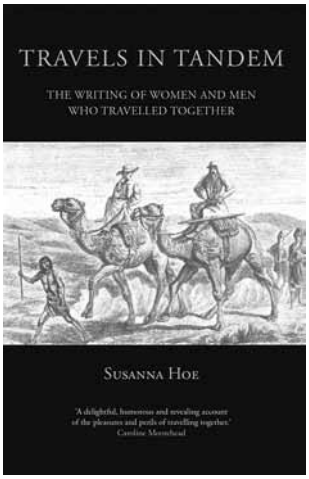
As a historian of Evangelicalism, Stott also carefully demonstrates the way that religion acted as a motivator of both personal behaviours and feelings. One of the most fascinating discussions in this book is of the accounts of the deathbed scenes of the various members of the Clapham Sect as they died at different ages, from childhood illnesses, childbirth complications or old age. The importance to Evangelicals of dying a 'good death' (that is, showing resignation and hope when dying and not struggling to overcome death) as evidencing salvation was born out in their detailed descriptions of death bed scenes in their letters to each other. These accounts are not only fascinating, but also highlight the way that even at the end of life emotion was disciplined and interpreted through the religious register. Such accounts are also complemented by Stott's wider focus on the Clapham Sect's sentimental worldview that informed both their personal relationships and their political commitments.

Stott suggests that this book is Wilberforce through the eyes of the women in his life, and it is certainly true that she draws extensively on the letters and diaries of his female relatives, friends and children. Yet, it is also a world that incorporated numerous male friends and family and they are just as vital to the story told here. Marianne Sykes's voice, reflecting the surviving evidence, is particularly loud, and at times shapes the narrative, so that Barbara Spooner, Wilberforce's wife, comes across as too domesticated and demanding – reflecting Syke's opinion but perhaps a little unfair to Barbara! But such quibbles between reader and author should emerge from good biographies, which attempt to give insight into personality and psychology from disparate evidence and through other people's eyes. This is well written, deliberately accessible for the non-expert reader, but also a leisurely book where the pleasure comes from immersion in these families' relationships. The expert historian might not learn anything new about gender or the family in the period, but this does not detract from a scholarly and engaging work that does tell us something new about Wilberforce and particularly the women and men that made him who he was. In particular, it reminds us of how significant friends and family are to shaping the identity of great men.

Susanna Hoe, *Travels in Tandem. The Writing of Women and Men Who Travelled Together*

Oxford: The Women's History Press, Holo Books, 2012. £19.99, ISBN 978- 0-9544-0569-4 (paperback), pp. xv + 226

Reviewed by Jane Berney
The Open University



Travel writing is an increasingly fertile ground for historians and Susanna Hoe's idea to compare the writing of men and women (usually husbands and wives) about the same journey is an intriguing one. Hoe includes a variety of couples that travelled together for a variety of reasons. However, their reasons for writing a memoir of their travels were also various and herein lies the weakness of the book.

The book is divided into two parts: Part I covers five couples who travelled in the nineteenth century and Part II covers another five couples who travelled in the period between the late 1920s and the late 1940s. The couples are all British and American; most travelled abroad because of the husband's work but not all were married couples and some were travelling for pleasure, rather than work. The couples Hoe has selected (and she does not explain why she has picked these particular couples) clearly wrote an account of their travels for different reasons. For example, Lucy Atkinson wrote her account of her travels in the 1840/50s to Siberia with her husband Thomas, two years after his death in 1861. His account had been published earlier in 1858 and fails to mention that Lucy was his companion on the journey. The publication of Lucy's memoir makes clear why this was so; Thomas was a bigamist and Lucy's account is a devastating rebuttal of everything Thomas had previously claimed for himself. There is therefore no great mystery to explain the differences between the two accounts. Similarly, when discussing the differences between the accounts written by Diana and Eric Shipton on their journey through 1940s Chinese Turkestan, Hoe observes that Eric made no mention of his wife's suffering because that would not be of interest to his readers. Again there is no mystery as to why the accounts differed; they were intended for different audiences and each author was portraying themselves and their travels in a way that would appeal to their particular audience.

The issue of audience is why travel writing can be problematic for historians but this is something that Hoe has overlooked. Many of the women's accounts are based upon the letters they wrote home to their families and were published almost as an afterthought. Many of the men had been employed to write accounts of their

Getting to Know Each Other

Name: *Ruth Elizabeth Richardson*

Position: *Independent Scholar / Researcher / Author*

How long have you been a WHN member?

About three years though I have been following WHN for far longer.

What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?

As an archaeologist and historian I hope to make the past interesting. Men were easier to record due to land ownership, social positions, taxation and war. Most women had other focuses but their history permeates everything. Look at a prehistoric saddle quern – once a flat stone but (and this was usually women's work) worn down by hours and hours of grinding corn. Educate a woman and you educate the family ... but women need role models to show them they can make a difference even in a male-dominated world.

What are your special interests?

People can be fascinating. One of my books is Mistress Blanche, Queen Elizabeth I's Confidante, about Lady Troy who brought up the Tudor children and Blanche Parry who was close to Elizabeth for fifty-six years. My website: www.blancheparry.com also includes my research on Field Names, the Iron Age and Romans, Medieval plays and local history.

Who is your heroine from history and why?

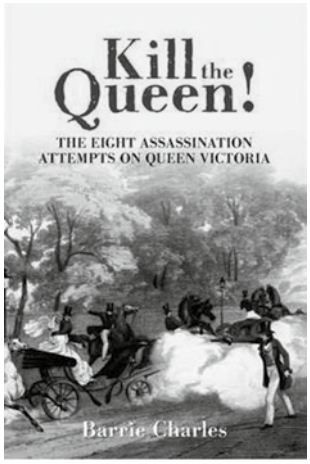
My heroines are those women who, despite the odds against them, worked positively to improve the lives of their children and of those around them. From the seventy-seven-year-old Eleanor of Aquitaine who, in 1200, crossed the Pyrenees in winter to fetch her Castilian grand-daughter to marry the French king's heir, to Elizabeth Hopkins, my grandmother, left to care for four small children when her husband joined the army in the 1914 First World War. Such women were indomitable and did what had to be done at the time. Some, like Eleanor, Queen of France then of England, we can research but most women can only be known by examining the context of their lives, the forces ranged against them, and the results of their efforts through the lives of their children and those they helped. Women like Elizabeth Fry, Marie Curie, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Rosalind Franklin made a difference that helped others. Their pebbles of achievement produced ripples of hope that radiate further than they knew.

journeys in their professional capacities, whether as colonial administrators, writers or explorers. The work of Barbara Greene is a typical example. Barbara travelled with her cousin, the author Graham Greene, to Liberia in 1935. Graham Greene had been paid an advance to write an account of his journey; Barbara's book was based on her diary and was published quite by chance, a few years after her cousin's.

Although Hoe has produced a fascinating and painstakingly researched account of the couples' travels, she has not produced a sufficiently coherent argument to explain why the travel writing of people who travelled together should be so different, beyond the rather obvious fact that they were intended for different audiences. In her conclusion, Hoe has attempted to tie the threads together but this reviewer was left none the wiser. As such, the book is a collection of anecdotes rather than a considered thesis. As the former it is very entertaining, but this reviewer was left wanting more by way of analysis and explanation.

Barrie Charles, *Kill the Queen, the Eight Assassination Attempts on Queen Victoria*, Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2012, £18.99, 978-1-4456-0457-2, (paperback) p160
Reviewed by Paula Bartley
Independent Scholar

Queen Victoria is one of the most studied, and most written about, women in history. Thus, biographies sometimes read like a palimpsest, each author stacking ever more obscure facts on to previous layers. Biographies from Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (1921) through to Elizabeth Longford's *Queen Victoria* (1964) and Stanley Weintraub's *Victoria* (1987) have turned over almost every aspect of her life, making it almost impossible to have anything new to say. Recently there has been a shift in biographical writing to focus on particular aspects of Victoria's reign, allowing authors to explore the minutiae of her life: for example Shrabani Basu's *Victoria and Abdul* (2011) examines the relationship between the Queen and



her Indian servant.

Barrie Charles' *Kill the Queen* looks at a previously overlooked aspect of Queen Victoria's life: the eight assassination attempts on her by, respectively, a public house waiter, an unemployed carpenter, a news vendor, a navvy, an army officer, a clerk, an artist and some Irish nationalists. The main events are well known. In 1840, just three years after Victoria ascended to the throne, a young eighteen-year-old man fired two pistols at the pregnant Queen while she drove up Constitution Hill in a low open carriage. The miscreant was caught, tried and transported to Australia. In 1842, there were two more attempts: one by a nineteen-year-old unemployed youth, the other by a four-feet-tall disabled seventeen-year-old. The courts were less lenient to the former. The Chief Justice pronounced 'that you be drawn on a hurdle to a place of execution, and there be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and that afterwards your head be severed from your body, and your body divided into four quarters'. Fortunately for the would-be assassin, the Queen intervened and his sentence was commuted to life transportation. The second youth's attempt was not taken so seriously and the offender was given eighteen months imprisonment. The Queen remained safe for seven years, until an Irish navvy took a pot-shot at her from an unloaded pistol borrowed from his landlady. He received seven years transportation. The first four would-be assassins had several things in common: they were poor, uneducated, desperate and powerless individuals.

The fifth assassination attempt was by a man from a more privileged background. On 27 June 1850, when Victoria, a lady in waiting and three of her children were waiting in – yet another – open carriage, the Queen was knocked unconscious by a brass-topped cane wielded by a retired lieutenant of the 10th Hussars. He was transported to Australia for seven years. By the 1870s, the political climate had become more edgy, heightened by Victoria's increasing seclusion from the public eye. Reports that Irish Fenians were plotting to assassinate the Queen increased the nervousness of the Government and the police force. The Queen remained safe until 1872 when a young man – the great-nephew of the Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor – pointed an unloaded pistol at her and demanded the release of Fenian prisoners. He was given one year's imprisonment but the Queen implored that he be transported: the youth agreed to go abroad voluntarily provided the Home Secretary chose a healthy climate. On 2 March 1882, a seventh attempt on the Queen's life was made by a disaffected artist who fired at the Queen's carriage outside Windsor station. The twenty-eight-year-old man was declared insane and incarcerated in an asylum for life. These attempts on Victoria's life were the work of unconnected individuals, some of whom were clearly insane. The last attempt, by a group of Irish nationalists, was foiled by an effective spy network and reliable informers.

Each chapter of *Kill the Queen!* contains a short biography of each of the culprits set against the history of the period. There is nothing new in the historical background but the biographies are fresh and engaging. It is a cracking good read, which those interested in the lives of the would-be assassins and in criminality and the criminal system more generally would enjoy. Throughout his carefully researched history, Barrie Charles explores the flawed judicial system, the harsh conditions of prisons, the rigours of transportation and the lives of the hapless culprits. Unfortunately, the author has 'tried to divine the thoughts and motives' of the assailants, an ill-advised judgment which detracts from his scholarship: a little more questioning and a little less speculative writing would have improved the book.

Committee News

The Steering Committee met on Saturday 9 February 2013. Sue Bruley, a new member, had not previously been assigned a role; she will liaise with Imaobong Umoren, the new Membership Secretary, in chasing up WHN members who no longer pay. Aurelia Ainat has agreed to become Treasurer from September. The current Treasurer, Grianne Goodwin, presented her report and noted that the WHN has £7,356 in its current account. The magazine remains the biggest cost, especially postage. It was agreed that individual issues in the UK be raised to £5 and to £6.50 for overseas. Membership figures are very healthy at the moment, with currently 405 individual members and 13 institutional members. It was decided that the £1,000 surplus we have this year should go to the WHN/IFRWH conference for bursaries and/or publicity materials. There was an extensive discussion of the conference, which is recruiting well and has space for the delivery of up to 300 papers. Jocelynne Scutt, who is responsible for the WHN blog, encouraged members to write in with short pieces and news. There was discussion of the transfer of The Women's Library to the LSE. They hope to reopen in July, with full services by September.

Members are welcome to attend meetings of the steering committee; dates of meetings can be found at **www.womenshistorynetwork.org** or email **convenor@womenshistorynetwork.org** for further details.

Women's History Magazine Back issues

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

£5.00 inc postage (UK)
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Most issues are available, from Spring 2002 to the present. Discover the contents of each issue at **www.magazine.womenshistorynetwork.org**

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Publishing in *Women's History Magazine*

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

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

www.womenshistorynetwork.org/whnmagazine/authorguide.html

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

editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

What is the Women's History Network?

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

Aims of the WHN

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

What does the WHN do?

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

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

Joining the WHN

Annual Membership Rates

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

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

Women's History Network Contacts

Steering Committee Officers:

Membership, subscriptions, Imaobong Umoren:
membership@womenshistorynetwork.org

or write to her at St Cross College, St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LZ

Finance, Gráinne Goodwin:
treasurer@womenshistorynetwork.org

Committee Convenor, Barbara Bush:
convenor@womenshistorynetwork.org

Web Team:
web@womenshistorynetwork.org

WHN Book Prize, Chair, Ann Kettle:
bookprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

UK Representative for International Federation for Research into Women's History, June Purvis:
ifrwh@womenshistorynetwork.org

Charity Representative, Jane Berney:
charityrep@womenshistorynetwork.org

Newsletter Editor, Linsey Robb:
newsletter@womenshistorynetwork.org

WHN Blog, Jocelynne A. Scutt:
womenshistorynetwork.org/blog/

Magazine Team:

Editors: Katie Barclay, Sue Hawkins, Anne Logan, Emma Robertson, Kate Murphy, Lucy Bland:
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

For Magazine submissions, steering committee and peer review:
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

For book reviews: Anne Logan:
bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org

or send books to her at University of Kent, Gillingham Building, Chatham Maritime, Kent, ME4 4AG

For magazine back issues and queries please email:
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You may now join the WHN online – just go to ***www.womenshistorynetwork.org*** *and follow the instructions. Payments, standing-order mandates and Gift-Aid declarations can all be accessed online as well – see panel on page 37 for further details*

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