

Women's History

The journal of the Women's History Network

Pregnancy Special Issue



Summer 2016

Articles by

*Katarzyna Bronk,
Sara Read,
Hannah Charnock,
Chelsea Phillips,
Emma O'Toole*

Plus

*Eight book reviews
Getting to know each
other
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Welcome to the Summer 2016 issue of *Women's History*, a special issue on pregnancy guest edited by Jennifer Evans and Ciara Meehan of the University of Hertfordshire. *Women's History* is the journal of the Women's History Network and we invite articles on any aspect of women's history. If you are inspired by this themed edition, we would also be interested to talk to you about your suggestion for future special issues.

Editorial Team: Jane Berney, Lucy Bland, Rosalind Carr, Catherine Lee, Naomi Pullin, Rachel Rich

Introduction

Jennifer Evans and Ciara Meehan (University of Hertfordshire)

I am a young Gentlewoman of a considerable Fortune, my Father and Mother both living; I was promis'd Marriage by a Gentleman, to whom by much persuasion I granted his Desires, and it happen'd I found my self with child: I continually desir'd him to perform his Promise, but he slighted me. And now there is a Gentleman whom I could freely love, courts me; but being in this condition, am unwilling to deceive him: and my Father and he desires me to settle my Affection, and the other Gentleman always upbraids me of my Sin with him; so I fear he will not only make a discovery, but render me odious to the World. What course would you advise me to take?¹

So read the familiar story in an eighteenth-century reprint of a popular seventeenth-century weekly question and answer paper the *Athenian Mercury*. This publication, designed for widespread popular consumption, spoke to the concerns of early modern men and women. Yet the plight of this unmarried girl who had found herself pregnant and unable to move without hindrance into a suitable marriage resonates across the centuries. Indeed in 1960s Ireland another advice column recounted,

When I told my boyfriend that I was pregnant, he said that the only thing to do was to get an abortion. At first I was shocked and horrified, but now I am beginning to come round to his way of thinking. Anything would be better than having to tell my mother.²

Experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, and without an offer of marriage from her boyfriend and fearing the judgement of her family, this young woman, just like the unmarried girl who had turned to *Athenian Mercury*, found herself in a desperate situation. The comparable position of these two women – contravening societal conventions and expectations by becoming pregnant outside marriage – in radically different historical contexts spoke loudly to us as we talked about our research into women's lives when we first began working together at the University of Hertfordshire in 2013. From these initial discussions about the ways in which women's reproductive lives had been a core element of popular advice literature and magazines we came to question more and more ways in which we were often confined in our thinking by time period and geographical location. Increasingly we felt frustrated that there was not a forum dedicated to the

discussion of reproduction and pregnancy that stretched not only across historical fields and approaches but across disciplines. From these rather humble, and quite likely unfounded gripes, developed the 'Perceptions of Pregnancy: from the Medieval to the Modern' conference, held at the University of Hertfordshire in 2014.

The conference lived up to, and vastly exceeded, our expectations as art historians, historians, journalists, literary scholars, political geographers, and psychologists from around the world came together to discuss abortion, conception, contraception, miscarriage, pregnancy and parturition in different eras and countries. The conference allowed us to start to see the ways in which women's, and men's, experiences of reproduction have changed over time and space, and the ways in which they were, and in some cases are, marked by continuity and familiarity.

Early modern scholars have tended to consider either infertility or miscarriage separately from pregnancy and birth. Numerous scholars have considered the importance of fertility and conception to early modern society and have recently come to consider in more detail the place of men in these discussions.³ However, these discussions have rarely included discussions of miscarriage – which in early modern thought

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Cover: Woman pregnant with nine or eleven babies, described by Ambroise Pare after Francesco Pico della Mirandola.

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was considered a type of barrenness if it reoccurred frequently. Instead a separate body of literature has considered the place of miscarriage in early modern society, which has, for example, thought about the ways in which narratives of miscarriage could be deployed to underscore expected gender relations.⁴ Work on pregnancy and birth often acknowledges that these were precarious months for the mother but there remains an apparent lack of work connecting pregnancy with miscarriage, and parturition with stillbirth.⁵

Studies of the modern period have followed something of a similar pattern. Explorations of abortion, for example, have focussed mostly on the political debate rather than the bodily experience. Women feature as part of the analysis in either the role of activist or politician, but rarely as the pregnant women whose bodies are at the centre of the debate.⁶ Furthermore, in the case of Britain, the period after the Abortion Act, 1967, has been considerably under-researched compared to that pre-legislation.⁷ The study of fatherhood has also been overlooked in the historiography in favour of motherhood, marriage and the home.⁸ We concluded that more work needs to be done to connect masculinity and pregnancy in both periods.

So successful was the conference in addressing these historiographical issues that we decided to create an online Perceptions of Pregnancy research network to continue to facilitate these discussions. Collectively the conference and the network have revealed that several key themes dominate our historical understandings of pregnancy. These themes are shown in the contributions to this special issue by the authors, each of whom presented at the conference. The contributions address a range of experiences: abortion, miscarriage, pregnancy and fatherhood. In so doing they emphasise the fact that to truly understand pregnancy in the past we need to look beyond the pregnant body and integrate discussions about abortion, contraception, infertility, miscarriage and indeed parenthood itself. For many people in the past these experiences were not discrete entities but were understood as part of a 'whole' reproductive life.

The first of the themes illustrated by these discussions is the strong presence of narrative. Across the centuries prospective and existing parents have cultivated particular narratives to ameliorate their fears of bodily change and their fraught emotional connection with the life of a child. Sara Read's piece on miscarriage touches upon this by illuminating the ways in which women who suffered a miscarriage constructed narratives about their experiences that focused on biblical teachings. The narratives were not always beneficial to women, though. Many representations of the female reproductive and pregnant body drew upon concerns about appropriate generative behaviour and the potential for women to undermine social order throughout the eras. Hannah Charnock's piece on abortion carefully considers the ways in which the narratives about abortion stressed by the media invariably framed these actions as negative, a sign of desperation or an abhorrent rejection of motherhood. Thus even while advocating for women's rights over their own bodies such narratives reinforced the restrictive notion that a woman's only important and valued role was motherhood. Likewise, Chelsea Phillips's exploration of eighteenth-century satirical representations of the actress Dorothy Jordan emphasises that her pregnant body was used to form narratives about the inherent untrustworthiness of women

and to underscore the potential disarray that resulted from female promiscuity. Chelsea's piece also picks up on the ways in which the pregnant body was costumed, a theme expanded upon in Emma O'Toole's discussion of Irish eighteenth and nineteenth-century maternity wear.

The second theme that emerged was the ways in which fertility, birth control, and pregnancy have shifted between medical and consumer discourses with participants variously described as either patients or consumers. This theme is addressed less explicitly in the papers presented here, but Katarzyna Bronk's consideration of William Cobbett's (1763 – 1835) musings on parenthood, show that fathers, to his way of thinking, should act partly as savvy consumers carefully selecting a wife that would best suit a maternal role.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the pieces gathered for this special issue. They provide a flavour of the vibrant and exciting research being pursued in a range of disciplines that illuminates our understanding about women's experiences of these important bodily functions in the past. The chapters trace the dilemma of finding an appropriate partner, the bodily experience of pregnancy, and then the costuming of the pregnant body. They remind us that while fertility and pregnancy, in one way or another, affect all women in all times, our experiences are shaped by cultural, economic, medical, political, and social discourses. As the historical figures who opened this introduction show, these are often familiar but rarely identical in different geographical and temporal settings.

Notes

1. Anonymous, *The Athenian Oracle: Being and Entire Collection of all the valuable Questions and Answers in the Old Athenian Mercuries* (London, Andrew Bell, 1706).
2. *Woman's Choice*, 17 September 1968.
3. For example see; Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1300-1840* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986); Angus McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals: The Perception of Fertility in England from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York, Methuen, 1985); Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, 'Childless men in early modern England', in idem (eds) *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007); Daphna Oren-Magidor, 'Literate Laywomen, Male Medical Practitioners and the Treatment of Fertility Problems in Early Modern England Soc Hist Med 2016 : hkv137v1-hkv137; Jennifer Evans, "'They are called Imperfect men': Male Infertility and Sexual Health in Early Modern England', *Social History of Medicine*; Jennifer Evans, 'Female Barrenness, Bodily Access and Aromatic Treatments in Seventeenth-Century England', *Historical Research*, 87/237 (August 2014), 423-43.
4. Raymond A. Anselment, "'A Heart Terrifying Sorrow': An Occasional Piece on Poetry of Miscarriage', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 33/1 (1997); Sara M. Butler, 'Abortion Medieval Style? Assaults on Pregnant Women in Later Medieval England', *Women's Studies*, 40/6 (2011), 778-99; Jennine Hurl, "'She Being Bigg with Child Is Likely to Miscarry": Pregnant Victims Prosecuting Assault in Westminster, 1685-1720', *The London Journal*, 24/2 (1999), 18-33; Elizabeth S. Cohen, 'Miscarriages of Apothecary Justice: Un-separate Spaces of Work and Family in Early Modern Rome', *Renaissance Studies* 21/4 (2007): 480-504; Jennifer Evans and Sara Read, "'Before Midnight she had

miscarried”: Women, Men and Miscarriage in Early Modern England’, *The Journal of Family History*, 40 (January 2015), 3–23.

5. For examples of work on pregnancy, birth and still birth see: Linda A. Pollock, ‘Embarking on a Rough Passage: The Experience of Pregnancy in Early Modern Society’, in *Women as Mothers in Pre-industrial England*, ed. Valerie Fildes (Abingdon, UK, Routledge, 2013); Laura Gowing, ‘Secret Births and Infanticide in Seventeenth-century England’, *Past and Present*, 156 (1997): 87–115; Ulinka Rublack, ‘Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany’, *Past and Present*, 120 (1996); Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict: The Social Relations of Childbirth in Early Modern England* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2013).

6. Joni Lovenduski and Joyce Outshoorns (eds), *The New Politics of Abortion* (London, Sage Publications, 1986); Dorothy McBride Stetson, *Abortion Politics, Women’s Movements, and the Democratic State: a Comparative Study of State Feminism*

(Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001); Leslie Hoggart, *Feminist Campaigns for Birth Control and Abortion Rights in Britain* (Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning and the British Left from the 1800s to the Present Day* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011).

7. The classic study of abortion in England concludes with the passing of the Abortion Act, 1967 and its immediate implications. See, Barbara Brookes, *Abortion in England, 1900–1967* (London, Croom Helm, 1988).

8. For more on this, see Laura King, ‘Hidden Fathers? The Significance of Fatherhood in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain’, *Contemporary British History*, 26/1 (2012). The first academic study of fathers and families can be found in Laura King, *Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914–1960* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015).

From one father to another: William Cobbett’s advice on motherhood and maternity

Katarzyna Bronk

Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland

Contemporary studies on the genre of British conduct narratives pinpoint the eighteenth century as the moment of transition in conduct writing technique and style, especially those for and about women. The century not only features what Vivien Jones calls a ‘boom’ in the production and sale of such conduct narratives, but other scholars also underscore an ideological change in perceiving and socialising women through such manuals, namely achieved by stressing the natural virtue and moral superiority of women.¹ The later turn resulted in seeing the female sex as the one responsible for the moral grounding of the entire nation, or as Thomas Marriott, an eighteenth-century conduct writer, declared in his *Female conduct*: ‘Women have it much in their power, by their exemplary Behavior, to render Virtue fashionable, and discountenance Vice, among Men’.² This peculiar socio-technique of putting women on a moral pedestal, while giving them nothing much in return in terms of rights and freedom, continued throughout the Victorian era, leading to the creation of the now metaphorical ‘Angel in the House’ paragon of femininity.

While this literary concern in moral reformation needs to be traced or seen as initiated much earlier, for instance, by the Societies for the Reformation of Manners reacting to the licentiousness of the Restoration, both Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall confirm in their monumental *Family Fortunes* that ‘late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century was peopled by many ... ideologues, who sought to map out new forms of social and familial order’ and indeed conduct narratives (as well as prose) served their goals.³ William Cobbett (1763–1835), whose life span falls within the timeframe mentioned by Davidoff and Hall, is one of such long eighteenth-century moralists who not only decided that Britain needed a political

rebirth — and he was never shy in giving his opinion on how to achieve it — but also extensive reforms in conduct. In contrast to some authors from the same decades, such as the aforementioned Marriott, Cobbett, the radical politician, refuses to be forgotten, and keeps resurfacing in contemporary scholarship as will be shown in what follows.⁴

Although indeed largely due to his involvement in the politics of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, Cobbett’s gilded status is likewise strongly related to his multifarious publications on topics ranging from the fate of the poor, the history of the Protestant church and lessons on grammar, as well as the work under discussion herein, that is the *Advice to young men and (incidentally) to young women in the middle and higher ranks of life. In a series of letters*, written in 1829.⁵ Being informed by the existing studies, in this article I wish to present Cobbett as an instructor on successful family planning and its later government, thus humbly joining scholars like Joanne Bailey, Karen Harvey and Matthew McCormack, all of whom have re-discovered Cobbett’s participation in ideological creation of the notions and ideals of masculinity.⁶ Ultimately, the present study is designed to further elaborate on why this rather egotistic politician became a self-proclaimed exemplar of fatherhood.

And yet to distinguish this narrative from the existing Cobbettian studies and biographies, and to look even deeper into Cobbett’s peculiar manual of conduct, this article discusses his advice to young men on what happens before they are given the chance to see their children grow and flourish, namely on the ways and means of preparing the future wife/mother – as well as themselves – for pregnancy, birth(s) and maternity as well as the earliest duties and benefits of fatherhood, all proven by Cobbett’s often quoted own experience. Throughout



William Cobbett. Stipple engraving by F. Bartolozzi, 1801, after J. R. Smith.

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his semi-autobiographical manual, Cobbett fashions himself into a loving and devoted husband as well as a tender and responsible father to his many children, while the 355 entries of his six letters – to a Youth, a Young Man, a Lover, a Husband, a Father and the Citizen – offer an exposition on the rules and regulations of a generally felicitous life of a ‘sober, abstinent, industrious and well-informed man’, who will eventually found his own family and socialise them.⁷

This paper and Cobbett’s words above pertain to the middle classes and not the ‘lower’ ones for whom he was such a vocal champion. In particular, he was very concerned about the fate of labourers and their family life. He publically and very vehemently criticised and challenged Malthusian ideas on the ‘moral restraint’ in terms of marriage and procreation of the poorer classes.⁸ Although often misreading Malthus’s ideas, as well as changing his mind on some aspects of the parson’s theories, Cobbett remained the defender of the rights of the poor, including their rights to domestic happiness.⁹ In the manual, however, Cobbett thoroughly elaborates only on the paragons of middle and higher class masculinity and it is to them that the manual is dedicated.

Cobbett devotes a lot of attention to lessons on the domestic bliss available to the male head of a family and not *only* those required for his successful public career. As Karen Harvey notes, earlier historical research on domesticity and masculinity was obstructed by the belief that ‘the home is predicated on men’s absence’; however, newer scholarship, and Bailey’s and McCormack’s in particular, based on cultural artefacts such as Cobbett’s writings, shows that, ideally, public and private masculinity should be linked.¹⁰ The two scholars present Cobbett as a case study in their fatherhood studies. Bailey calls Cobbett ‘a paternal exemplar’, while McCormack states that Cobbett valorises fatherhood and sees it as ‘the touchstone of manly character’.¹¹ Indeed, Cobbett

teaches his young male readers who, like many men might be experiencing ‘the conflict between homosocial activities and the claims of home and family’ that there is no shame in being an affectionate father; nor is it a threat to one’s ‘true manliness’ to stay at home and mind the children (how a man minds his children is yet another matter).¹² As *Advice to Young Men* convinces its readers, being affectionate in the domestic context is not an evidence of being effeminate in any way; neither is being ‘fond of little children’, and Cobbett himself never found it troublesome to pursue his career while having ‘babies in [his] arms’.¹³ On the contrary, examining his own life as evidence, he admits: ‘I have had all the numerous and indescribable delights of home and children, and, at the same time, all the bachelor’s freedom from domestic cares’.¹⁴

For Cobbett, fatherhood complements the public perception of one’s masculinity, because ‘he [who] is fond of his family, is, of itself, to say that, in private life at least, ... a good and trust-worthy man; aye, and in public life too, pretty much’.¹⁵ This allows him to subsequently caution his model youth about faulty reasoning, leading contemporary young men to believe that homes and family members can only claim the second position in a successful man’s heart and hierarchy. Becoming the tender father that Bailey sees him to be, he scolds the career-driven men of his times for ‘profligate abandonment of their homes’, and allowing themselves to be ‘seduced’ from the literal and metaphorical fireside.¹⁶ The Cobbettian man should never forget that his family is his biggest achievement and that there is ‘payment for the pleasures of the marriage state’.¹⁷ The young man, just as Cobbett himself, has to deserve his right to ‘the sole possession of a woman’s person’, his ‘vast authority’ as well as ‘the honourable title and the bondless power of the father’.¹⁸ Consequently, attending to various ‘ideological moorings of manliness’, to use John Tosh’s nomenclature, Cobbett hopes to prepare his model youth for the pursuit of all major goals in a man’s life, but making sure he likewise sees value in finding the perfect woman to take for a wife and with whom he can create a happy family with which he could spend these prospectively blissful hours.¹⁹

To be able to give credible advice on marriage and fatherhood, throughout his manual Cobbett introduces his wife, bit by bit, to his readers, praising her looks, amiability, devotion, resourcefulness and general domestic talents. In the fourth *Letter* of the manual he presents Ann Reid, his wife, thus: ‘a companion, who ... was so innocent, so just in all her ways, so pure in thought, word and deed, so disinterested, so generous, so devoted, ... so cheering ...’.²⁰ He also calls her a ‘partner that never frowned, that was never melancholy, that never was subdued in spirit. That never abated a smile, ... that fortified me, and sustained me by her courageous example’.²¹ Cobbett’s biographers, and George Spater, Leonora Nattrass and Lewis Melville in particular, note, however, that the actual story behind the public face of the Cobbett family is very different from the bombastic self-praise offered in *Advice to young men*. For instance, Cobbett honestly admits that he was close to infidelity, not necessarily sexual, when, spending part of his early life in America he ‘unknowingly’ courted another woman.²²

Moreover, although Cobbett’s own letters to the family tenderly mention Ann’s long-suffering attitude during his imprisonment or enforced travels such as ‘God knows that my heart is always at home; but I must have my mind and hand here’ Spater and Nattrass suggest that, for example, the wife

attempted suicide at one point during their marriage.²³ Even if one purposefully disregards this important biographical hint, other letters by Cobbett likewise suggest that, while he acknowledged the pain he kept causing, he found his wife's sadness and worry annoying, at least at times.²⁴ It seems, therefore, that despite claiming in his advice book that the boundaries between home and public space are potentially permeable, he did not necessarily appreciate when these permeations actually happened. Spater relates that Cobbett spent significant time away from his family, sometimes disregarding the well-being of the family or the mental state of his wife. Nevertheless, in his manual such spousal absence is reconfigured as something more positive. More specifically, Cobbett teaches that the model Cobbettian man was to be able to leave his household and his family 'with as little anxiety as he quits an inn', and thus he was to make sure that the woman chosen for his wife was to possess all the necessary virtues to manage the home when its head was held up elsewhere.²⁵

As the title of Cobbett's manual hints, one indeed can find references to women and their nature in all of the letters directed to the model youth, but in particular in the ones to the lover, the husband and the father. What becomes clear is that none of these analyses of the future lover/wife/mother are incidental as the title suggested. Resultantly, it becomes clear that Cobbett's literary and ideological agenda was to help his reader not only to create a perfect family unit in general, but more importantly, to choose the perfect woman who will facilitate him in achieving the pinnacle of his masculinity. And thus, having thoroughly analysed the virtues of a perfect middle-class young man, Cobbett begins to teach his male readers about the value and purpose of marriage as an important milestone in the development of masculine identity. *Advice to young men* teaches that the Cobbettian youth displaying, like the author himself, 'pre-Victorian prudery' mixed with the character of 'the eighteenth-century Mrs Grundy', should leave nothing to chance, and therefore Cobbett subsequently offers his readers a meticulous anatomy of the perfect woman, with her perfect body and manners.²⁶ Although, superficially, most of the virtues seem beneficial solely for the state of 'properly performed wifedom', Cobbett makes his male readers think ahead, and look for virtues which indicate that the candidate will be a perfect mother to his equally perfect children.

In another article on the perfect Cobbettian woman, I stress that when analysing the paragon of femininity contained in the manual, Cobbett's *Eight Cardinal Virtues* come to the fore. Cobbett states: '1. Chastity; 2. sobriety; 3. industry; 4. frugality; 5. cleanliness; 6. knowledge of domestic affairs; 7. good temper; 8. Beauty.'²⁷ Out of these essential features, unfeigned chastity is the most important as it both guarantees personal happiness to the man himself and also assures his power position as a husband and future father.²⁸ If the young man has any doubts about his chosen woman's chastity, or simply ignores existing suspicions, it will be his own fault if the woman strays from home or, more importantly for this paper, if he ever has 'spurious offspring to maintain'.²⁹ This is why the model youth needs to observe the woman's manners, movements and temperament. Among one of many interesting signs of virtue or vice, the manual's fragments on teeth are the most curious: '[I]f her jaws move in slow time, and if she rather squeeze than bite the food ... set her down as being ... incorrigibly lazy'.³⁰ Cobbett's logic is that such 'an eater' will never be fit for a wife or mother; she will never be able to bear the responsibilities

put on her by maternal duties. Even walking is a giveaway of her character and, according to Cobbett, a too-relaxed girl will inevitably be 'a cold-hearted mother'.³¹ Resultantly, then, neglecting to see these seemingly insignificant warning signs equals consciously jeopardising personal happiness and the joy of the life of the innocent, prospective children. Taking this into consideration, finding the perfect woman is, indeed, like an investment, and it is no wonder that the Cobbettian man should pay attention to minute details in designing his adult life.

Importantly, part of this investment is finding a woman who is ready to devote herself to having and raising children. For Cobbett, motherhood is part and parcel of marriage and the realisation of any woman's happiness, and all this to such an extent that he sees true monstrosity in a woman who is not interested in reproduction.³² He openly issues a warning: 'There are, comparatively, very few women not replete with maternal love; and, by-the-by, take you care, if you meet with a girl who "is not fond of children," not to marry her by any means'.³³ Furthermore, motherhood has more practical benefits, namely, in a rather pre-Victorian anti-romantic mood, Cobbett claims that it is babies who help to eradicate useless melancholy caused by overblown expectations of women. In a sober manner, Cobbett says: 'the first little faint cry of her first baby drives all the tunes and all the landscapes and all the Clarissa Harlowes out of her head for ever'; whereas 'Both arms full of children is a pretty efficient remedy in most cases' of unnatural and prolonged misery.³⁴ Babies, then, contribute to women's mental health as well as the development of virtues, such as humility because they shift their pride onto their children, thus ceasing to focus on themselves, while never truly giving up their affection and admiration for the husband. The only *risk* he sees in motherhood is that it partially takes away the wife's attention from the husband. Nevertheless, a wise man should learn to accept the situation and dutifully participate in the raising of the new generation of model citizens.

While the drive towards motherhood and the engendering of maternal affection seem natural in a woman, there is still a lot of responsibility placed on the Cobbettian husband and father before the children are born. The letter *To a Husband* begins to explain how much influence husbands have on the never-ending socialisation of their wives even after marriage. One of the first duties of the husband, to whom, according to Cobbett, any wife gives 'the command and possession of her person', is to re-structure the young woman's life expectations; that is to re-focus her life on one goal only Cobbett states: 'make her clearly see the justice of beginning to act upon the presumption, that there are children coming'.³⁵ With this agenda in mind, she is to perfect her domestic skills as well as curb her spending, all in preparation for the inevitable.³⁶ A father of many himself, and as Chesterton claims 'the most enthusiastic of fathers', Cobbett saw in motherhood and fatherhood ways for personal progress; beneficial for men; but absolutely vital for women.³⁷

Despite his general straight-forwardness in the manual, Cobbett observes the rules of politeness and does not venture too deep into the details, or norms and regulations, of conception or the earliest stages of pregnancy. He rather euphemistically hints at a situation that a young wife is to expect; when she 'must encounter that familiar pain and danger of which' the Cobbettian young man has 'been the happy cause of'.³⁸ This is the moment when the husband is

allowed to turn into a romantic – not a word Cobbett fancies in any other situational context than this – and should ‘exceed in care, in watching over her, in tender attention to all her wishes’.³⁹ Once the fragile period is over, and labour is approaching, the young husband will have to make one of the most important decisions in his adult life, namely to choose an experienced midwife, male or female.⁴⁰

As Lisa Forman Cody in *Birthing the Nation* reminds us, it was from 1760s that ‘male experts’ began to successfully replace female midwives.⁴¹ Cobbett humbly and shamefully admits that due to various complications, he personally had to resort to calling a ‘man-operator’ for his wife, which he does not condone. He informs his readers that, contrary to what he did, midwives are the more preferable option as only women know the arcane workings of the female body, and are the only ones capable to establish a more intimate relationship with the pregnant woman. As far as Cobbett can see it, even despite their lack in formal medical knowledge, they are still the preferable option in contrast to the ‘man-operator’ who will never achieve the same ‘native feeling of women’.⁴² Thus, if the lives of the woman and child are not endangered, a responsible and affectionate husband is to choose a female attendant to guide his wife through the pain of childbirth. Progressively, Cobbett reconfigures labour and subsequent breast-feeding pain as pleasure and an expression of love for the husband, which the head of the family needs to learn to appreciate.

Breastfeeding is indeed the issue which in the manual takes an almost philosophical aspect. Cobbett is not original in this ‘nurturing turn’; earlier eighteenth-century conduct texts also touched upon this issue, which must be the evidence of existing medical practices. To give an example strictly from the conduct text tradition, the aforementioned Marriott poetically stated: ‘The Name of Mother, she with Honor bears, / Who, with her Milk, her Babe, indulgent rears’.⁴³ The conduct writer also accused some mothers of defrauding the ‘lacteal Stream’, doing this against good fathers who would normally applaud the ‘pious Care, / which, to its Mother, will the Child indear’.⁴⁴ A few decades after Marriott, Cobbett confirms that it is one of the main duties of a responsible father to make sure that children have unlimited and exclusive access to their birthright, that is to their mother’s breast.⁴⁵ Objecting to a ‘hireling breast’ – on medical grounds first – he then ventures into more moral aspects, explaining that the painful process of breastfeeding is ‘a necessary consequence of pleasures foregone’.⁴⁶ It is a duty of the woman, and the obligation of the husband to supervise it.

Cobbett devotes more than just the entries of the *Advice to young men* to this issue; he also wrote a sermon entitled ‘The Unnatural Mother’ which degraded all women who resort to ‘a hireling breast’ or deny their children ‘the fountain of life’.⁴⁷ Vilifying those mothers who give their children to strangers, or as Cobbett’s words seem to suggest, almost poison the babies with their ‘unnatural’ milk, he accuses them of emotional coldness and then goes on questioning their humanity. Such a monstrous and cruel mother – with the permission of an equally monstrous father – purposefully endangers her child and fails in her natural duty.⁴⁸ It is thus shameful for the husband, if he allows for such disobedience to natural/biological laws in his wife, and the woman herself can only be called ‘half a wife’.⁴⁹ It seems, then, that breastfeeding is not only a biological imperative for Cobbett, but like pregnancy itself, it is a way of establishing the woman’s identity as a loving wife and a mother. Firstly, this is an expression of devotion for

the husband because the woman willingly endures pain to secure the child’s (healthy) future and thus helps to create an offspring that the father can be proud of.

Secondly, through breastfeeding, the woman forges tight bonds with the child as well as consolidating her motherly identity. Bailey notes in her book that, since the eighteenth century, ‘tender maternity was equated with more hands-on and time-consuming physical care’ and this indeed is confirmed in Cobbett’s *Advice to a young man* and ‘The unnatural mother’.⁵⁰ It is through breastfeeding that a woman establishes her value and authority within the family, which, in contrast, the husband naturally and traditionally already possesses. One can see, also, that it is thanks to the husband’s guidance and supervision that a well-functioning family begins to take its shape, and he can proudly reap the benefits of such a successful domestic situation.

Cobbett continues his letter *To a Father* by offering multifaceted advice on issues connected to children’s health, well-being and education. While the latter subject features in many conduct texts, Cobbett’s active engagement in more medical aspects of raising children seems quite original, especially since he has no formal medical training. For instance, in *Advice to young men*, he surely and boldly enters contemporary debates about issues such as inoculations. Admitting some influence of his wife, he relates how his seven children, ‘the sons as tall, or nearly so, as their father, and the daughters as tall as their mother; all, in due succession [were] inoculated with the good old-fashioned face-tearing small-pox’.⁵¹ As the new type of a father – according to himself much more engaged in the everyday life of his family – he finds such decisions as part and parcel of his paternal government. It is no wonder, then, that Cobbett stresses more than other conduct writers that the young man needs to be mentally ready to take up and embrace both the ‘burden’ and joy of fatherhood. Reading his manual, one can deduce that Cobbett considered himself proof of this being achievable by an aspiring middle class young man.

Consequently, Cobbett seemingly manages to do something more than simply merge the multifarious functions expected from the new type of a father. Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers suggest that:

The father must be absent enough to provide, to represent his family ... to support his country’s mission abroad, and to afford the mother her ascribed role as primary influence and educator, but present enough to participate in, and benefit from, the domestic rituals, duties and pleasures that were understood as formative of personal, civic – and civilian – virtue.⁵²

Though not as vocal about the mother’s primary educational function – at least in the later stages of the children’s development, when boys are separated from too much feminine influence – Cobbett strongly insists in his manual that it is the man’s prerogative and obligation to take part in every stage of his family development. This, necessarily includes the choice of the woman to marry because only such advanced planning guarantees the creation of a happy domestic environment.

In summary, the close reading of Cobbett’s advice manual and his persona, offered here, reveals that in his ideas and convictions he is a peculiar mix of a Romantic

freedom fighter, a naturally authoritative but compassionately emotional eighteenth-century paterfamilias and a Victorian prude obsessed with notions of public and private decency, of utility and gender order within the family unit, all for the sake of building his own, small proto-Victorian empire.⁵³ This makes placing Cobbett and his ideas within one period and its ideology a research challenge, but when read carefully, Cobbett himself gives his reader an answer to this conundrum – he does not belong to any one era, he creates his own. Chesterton, Cobbett's biographer, once concluded: "It is the paradox of his life that he loved the past, and he alone really lived in the future".⁵⁴ While this comment clearly pertained to his political vision and ideology, Cobbett's *Advice to young men and (incidentally) to young women* follows the same trajectory. It is based on wishful-thinking, while Cobbett himself 'raise[s] up a fictionalised version of his own domestic experiences as a beacon to his readers'.⁵⁵

And, finally, there is one person largely left out from the narrative. Always un-incidentally silent, even though her feelings and body have been offered on display throughout the manual – Cobbett's wife, Ann Reid, is the missing authority of the *Advice to young men*, whose voice is yet to be heard. Chesterton, Cobbett's biographer, acknowledges her presence: 'His wife was soon to discover that if she had married (as she had) one of the most constant and considerate of husbands, she had also married one of the most restless and incalculable of men'.⁵⁶ As the biographer insists, she exists in the manual as a 'powerful silence' and thus, like other unnamed female paragons placed on pedestals in conduct texts across centuries, she becomes conceptualised as the proof of somebody's successful socialisation.⁵⁷ Thus, both Ann and Cobbett's children function as his legacy, all enshrined, like himself, on the pages of the *Advice to young men and* [allegedly only] *(incidentally) to young women*.

Notes

1. Vivien Jones, intro., *The young lady's pocket library, or parental monitor* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995).
2. Thomas Marriott, *Female conduct: Being an essay on the art of pleasing to be practised by the fair sex, before, and after marriage. A poem in two books. Humbly dedicated, to Her Royal Highness, The Princess of Wales. Inscribed to Plautilla* (London: Printed for W. Owen, at Homer's Head, Temple Bar, 1759), xxvii-xxviii.
3. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*. Revised edition (London: Routledge, 2007 [1987]), 149.
4. For more on his lessons on pleasing and perfect womanhood, see my "'Ye virgins, (...) learn to please': Thomas Marriott's lessons on the art of pleasing and ideal femininity" (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2014). Cobbett is significant for my studies of the genre and discourse of conduct manuals. I have presented his very detailed vision of the perfect Cobbettian woman or wife-to-be in 'All in a wife is the work of her husband: William Cobbett's not-so-incidental advice on finding and recognising the perfect woman' at 10th Literature in English Symposium at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland (in preparation for publication).
5. William Cobbett, *Advice to young men and (incidentally) to young women in the middle and higher ranks of life. In a series of letters* (Hamburg: Tredition GmbH, nd [1830]). The references

are: the type of the letter, entry number within this section and page number.

6. Matthew McCormack, "'Married men and the fathers of families": Fatherhood and franchise reform in Britain', in: Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers, eds, *Gender and fatherhood in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 43-54; Karen Harvey, *The little republic: Masculinity and domestic authority in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England, 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
7. *Letter II*, 53.47.
8. See the second appendix in George Spater, *William Cobbett: The poor man's friend*. Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) for a brief analysis of Cobbett's anti-Malthusianism.
9. For more on Cobbett's peculiar dislike of Malthus, see: James P. Huzel, *The popularization of Malthus in early nineteenth-century England: Martineau, Cobbett and the Pauper Press* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006); William Petersen, *Malthus: Founder of Modern Demography* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1999); Charles H. Kegel, "William Cobbett and Malthusianism", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1958): 348-62.
10. Bailey, *Parenting in England*; Harvey, *The little republic*, 8; See McCormack, "'Married men and the fathers of families": Fatherhood and franchise reform in Britain', 48.
11. Bailey, *Parenting in England*, 78; McCormack, "'Married men and the fathers of families": Fatherhood and franchise reform in Britain', 47.
12. John Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 70-1; See Cobbett's *Letter to a Father*.
13. *Letter IV*, 180.123.
14. *Letter III*, 92.76
15. *Letter V*, 249.161
16. *Letter III*, 170.117
17. *Letter V*, 250.162
18. *Letter V*, 250.162
19. Tosh, *Manliness and masculinities*, 3; Cobbett reminds his readers: 'to be a father, with all the lasting and delightful ties attached to the name, you must first be a husband'. *Letter IV*, 209.139.
20. *Letter IV*, 216.143.
21. *Letter IV*, 217.144.
22. see *Letter III* of *Advice to young men*, entries 141 to 151; Melville, the editor of Cobbett's letters, concludes that after this incident, '[h]aving encountered this temptation, Cobbett never encountered another, or, if he did, he did not know it'. Lewis Melville, *The life and letters of William Cobbett in England and America, based upon hitherto unpublished family papers. With thirty-two illustrations in two volumes*, Vol. two (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head; New York: John Lane Company; Toronto: Bell & Cockburn, 1913), 71.
23. Ibid., 128; Leonora Nattrass, *William Cobbett: The politics of style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xii. Spater, *William Cobbett*, 518-9.
24. In Cobbett's letters, written when he was imprisoned, one can read fragments, such as: 'Do not thus harass my mind, I beseech you; or, at least, do not do it at this time. I have no human being to speak comfort to me. I have been anxiously labouring to provide for our comfort and happiness; and do not tear my heart in pieces; and that, too, for nothing at all!

Now, will you spare me? Will you have compassion on me? I could cry like a child at the receipt of these letters. They kill me by inches'; or 'For my sake, for your children's sake, for my life's sake, be tranquil, and do not make such a serious matter of every trifling thing'. Melville, *The life and letters*, 68-9.

25. *Letter III*, 92.75.

26. Nattrass, *William Cobbett*, 183.

27. K. Bronk, "All in a wife is the work of her husband": William Cobbett's not-so-incidental advice on finding and recognising the perfect Woman'; In: Sikorska, Liliana; Bronk, Katarzyna; Fraczak, Marta; Jarzab, Joanna (eds.) *"Curators of Memory": Women's Voices in Literature in English* (Poznan: Wydżiał Anglistyki Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2015), 129-146; *Letter III*, 89.71.

28. *Letter III*, 90.71.

29. *Letter IV*, 199.135. This implied promiscuity of the woman is also a risk when the woman does not display signs of sobriety (*Letter III*, 92.74) and industriousness, and this latter virtue seems to be as important as modesty (*Letter III*, 101.82).

30. *Letter III*, 104.84.

31. *Letter III*, 105.84-85.

32. Cobbett claims in his manual that a man who is not "fond of babies" should be "an object of compassion" (*Letter V*, 247.161),

33. *Letter IV*, 179.123.

34. *Letter III*, 121.92; *Letter III*, 128.96.

35. *Letter IV*, 219.145; *Letter IV*, 153.107.

36. A woman free of the maternal instinct, in Cobbettian terms, completely useless (or as Cobbett says 'good for nothing'; in contrast, a man not fond of the little ones is not 'good for much').

37. G. K. Chesterton, *William Cobbett* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1925), 48.

38. *Letter IV*, 162.111.

39. *Letter IV*, 162.111.

40. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this paper for pointing out that Cobbett most probably meant a male midwife, and not a doctor. After the reviewer I recommend reading: Vivien Jones, "The death of Mary Wollstonecraft", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20 (1997): 187-205.

41. L. Cody Forman, *Birthing the nation: Sex, science, and the conception of eighteenth-century Britons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

42. *Letter V*, 237.155.

43. Marriott, *Female conduct*, 261.

44. *Ibid.*, 263-5.

45. *Letter V*, 227.149.

46. *Letter V*, 227.149; *Letter V*, 228.150.

47. William Cobbett, 'The unnatural mother', in *Thirteen Sermons* (New York: Published by John Doyle, 1834), 172-84, 175-8. (books.google.pl/books?id=5q8SAAAAAYAAJ&oe=UTF-8&redir_esc=y) (accessed 11 Feb 2015). This sermon is one of the few texts where Cobbett directly addresses women. He issues a warning to '[w]ives, and young wives in particular' where he beseeches them not to listen to those, who try to convince them that breastfeeding is a detriment to their health or beauty. He also calls to them: '... [h]e, who has not known a mother's breast, has no mother!'. *Ibid.*, 182.

48. *Ibid.*, 177.

49. *Ibid.*, 178. Interestingly, Cobbett further intimates that if a woman does not perform her maternal duty right, she likewise

willingly accepts the fact that she releases the husband from his fidelity towards her. *Ibid.*, 179.

50. Bailey, *Parenting in England*, 31.

51. *Letter V*, 265.172.

52. Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers, eds, *Gender and fatherhood in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 4.

53. Forman, *Birthing the nation*, 14.

54. Chesterton, *William Cobbett*, 15.

55. Harvey, *The little republic*, 158. With a typical lack of humility, Cobbett suggests: 'When I am asked what books a young man or young woman ought to read, I always answer, let him or her read all the books that I have written'. Melville, *The life and letters*, 228.

56. Chesterton, *William Cobbett*, 47.

57. *Ibid.*

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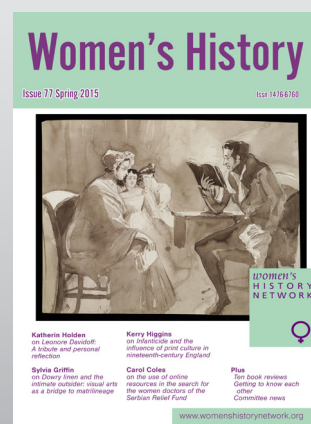
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‘Thanksgiving after Twice Miscarrying’: Divine Will, Women, and Miscarriage in Early Modern England

Sara Read

University of Loughborough

The centrality of religion in the lives of early modern people cannot be overstated. From the mid-sixteenth century Protestantism was the authorised state religion in England. Religious observance and the constant self-reflection and self-examination required of the new Protestant faith caused many to scrutinise all life events for signs of God’s favour or otherwise towards them. As Alec Ryrie put it, drawing on Owen Watkins, ‘at the heart of the Protestant experience was this “sense of contact with something other”. They spoke of engaging with – or wrestling with, in one of their favourite metaphors – a presence quite distinct from themselves’.¹ The term used to describe this sense of God as all around them, overseeing all aspects of their daily life, was ‘Providence’.² As Alexandra Walsham has explained, ‘Providentialism was not a marginal feature of the religious culture of early modern England, but part of the mainstream, a cluster of presuppositions which enjoyed near universal acceptance’.³ But even for people who were less ardent in their personal practice, the Bible was the main cultural referent document and allusions and biblical metaphors populated everyday discourse at all levels. Nowhere does this become more apparent than in the ways that women interpreted their reproductive bodies. While it might seem self-evident in this context that women should have sought to rationalise their life experiences through their faith using these self-reflexive practices, in fact what women’s writing on miscarriages shows repeatedly is the way in which women used their faith to help them manage their grief, as we might expect, but also to learn from the experience and to develop spiritually. The way in which childbirth was subject to religious beliefs is well documented by scholars but the place of the miscarriage in this is less well studied.⁴ This article will explore some of the ways that women used miscarriages to aid their spiritual growth. It will also show some of the ways in which miscarriage was used as a metaphor for broader spiritual concerns, often because of the way that the multiple meanings of the term miscarriage could be applied to faith or spirituality. Further, the article will briefly discuss the ways that medical practitioners tried to treat suspected miscarriages and the ways that this discourse too was founded upon a Christian framework.

This idea of the reproductive female body displaying religious meanings is the reason that even studious medical treatises such as a mid-seventeenth-century translation of Jan Baptiste van Helmont’s treatise, which appeared in English as *Van Helmont’s Works Containing his Most Excellent Philosophy* (1664), would use religious doctrine to explain physiological symptoms such as labour pains. This text explained that the reasons that women had to suffer pain and danger in childbirth was that:

Eve did by the Member through which she became subject unto many Miseries, testifie among posterity, a successive fault of her fall, and bloody defilement in Nature: For the part wherein the Image of God ought to be conceived

*by the holy Spirit, became a sink of filths, and testifies the abuse, and fault of an unobliterable sin, and therefore also suffers: Because, In sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy Sons ...: For so that Curse hath entred into Nature, and shall there remain. And by the same Law also, a necessity of Menstrues: For before sin, the Young going forth the Womb being shut, had not caused pain.*⁵

Therefore, because of the temptation of Eve to sin, all women were cursed with labour pains and menstruation. This was, however, thought by some to be a gift for women. Patricia Crawford cites preacher Richard Sibbes who argued that this frequent suffering forced women into ‘a deeper communion with God’ than they would otherwise have achieved.⁶ A genre of prayers existed for the use of pregnant women to aid the spiritual growth which pregnancy afforded them, as well as to appeal to God for a positive outcome.⁷

Women were thus taught to expect a degree of suffering in reproduction, from the healthiest delivery to a failed pregnancy. In early modernity, of course, as now, not every conception became a full term pregnancy and miscarriages were a common event. Even nowadays with improved antenatal care the risk of miscarriage amongst women who know they are pregnant is one in seven.⁸ Because of the prevalence of miscarriage, Christian instructional books such as prolific devotional author John Kettlewood’s book which included specific childbirth prayers also contained, ‘A Prayer for a breeding Woman, and against Miscarriage, to be used at any time before Travel [Labour]’. The prayer covers the pregnancy from conception to delivery and asked:

O! Almighty Lord, who in thy Mercy hast given me an hopeful Conception, carry it on I humbly intreat thee, to an happy Deliverance in thy due time.

Oh! let not my Child fare the worse for mine Offences, nor deal with it according to my Deserts, but according to thy own tender Mercies. Give it its due shapes, and full growth: and preserve me from all Frights, or evil Accidents which may cause me to miscarry, and in great Love and Pity both to it and me, bring it into the World at its full Maturity.⁹

Frights and accidents were thought to be the most common cause of miscarriages at this time.¹⁰ The prayer went on to ask for an easy delivery in due course, should that be God’s will. Kettlewood’s prayer specifically asks God not to punish the foetus for the mother’s sins. The sentiment is taken from Psalm 28.4, which states ‘Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert’, which was commonly used to rationalise life events such as recurrent illnesses as a punishment from God. Miscarriage in particular could be seen as a just punishment

for a sinful woman. Indeed, in the Old Testament book of Hosea 9.14, the prophet calls upon God to give the people of Ephraim 'a miscarrying womb and dry breasts' in order that the sins of the parents are not passed on to the next generation. So while the above prayer was designed to cover pregnancies generally, even more specifically, one Christian conduct book opined, 'Oh, how many doth *Sin strangle* in the Womb! Oh, how many *Abortives* and *Miscarriages* doth *Sin* make!'¹¹

It is against this background that Lady Mary Carey used her faith to rationalise a miscarriage she experienced. Lady Mary's last and most famous poem, 'Upon the Sight of my abortive Birth the 31st of December 1657', was an occasion piece written to work through her feelings after suffering a miscarriage. At this time, the terms miscarriage and abortion were used interchangeably with abortion or aborment being used for a spontaneous abortion or miscarriage in medical texts especially, with the term being used at any stage of an unsuccessful pregnancy. As Thomas Raynalde's guide to reproduction *The Birth of Mankind* (1545) explained:

Aborment, or untimely birth, is when the woman is delivered before due season, and before the fruit is ripe (as in the third, fourth, or fifth month), before the birth have life; and sometimes, after it hath life, it is delivered before it stir, being by some chance dead in the mother's womb.¹²

Lady Mary used both terms herself: she referred to the birth as abortive and later asked God to ensure that her 'heart' unlike her womb, a comment she added parenthetically, does not miscarry.¹³

The poem was written eleven days after the miscarriage and the specificity of the title is telling; these events were not taken lightly. In her poem Lady Mary questioned what had happened: 'What Birth is this? a poore despised Creature? / A little Embrio? void of Life, & Feature?' (lines 1 – 2). The use of the term embryo does not on its own make an implication about the gestation of the pregnancy since it was the name for a child in the womb before birth (not just in the time before the third month of pregnancy, as is the modern sense). However, in this case, the embryo aborted before it was fully formed (it was void of features – the 'due shapes' referred to in Kettlewood's verse). Lady Mary discussed how she was happy to submit to God's will in ending this pregnancy, and indeed took comfort in the idea that God had gathered her baby to be with him. She did, however, seek answers as to what she had done wrong to attract the punishment:

*I only now desire of my sweet God,
The Reason why he tooke in hand his Rod?
What he doth spy? what is ye thing amisse?
Ifaine would learne? (lines 34 – 37)*

There are conventions in this type of poetry and Pamela Hammons discussing women's elegies for their dead children has argued that there are broadly speaking three themes: '(1) the need for the parents to resign themselves to God's will; (2) the child as lost property; and (3) parental sin as the ultimate cause of the child's death'.¹⁴ Following this taxonomy it is clear that Lady Mary felt that she did not resign herself to God's will as much as glory in it saying 'His Will's more deare to me; then any Child' (15). Alec Ryrie has explained that this

sort of sentiment is to be expected in that it was not enough to show repentance but instead one was expected to yearn for it.¹⁵ However, that said it is clear that Lady Mary viewed her living children as God's property, saying that the happy two she has were there because 'God yet lends [them] to Maria' (29), and similarly she certainly saw her sin as the cause of the miscarriage. In the poem she had God's voice admonish her that:

*Thou often dost present me wth dead Fruit;
Why should not my Returns, thy Present sute:
Dead Duties, Prayers, Praises thou dost
bring,
Affections dead, dead Heart in every thing;
In Hearing, Reading, Conference, Meditation;
In acting Graces, & in Conversation; (lines 40
– 45)*

Put simply, Lady Mary considered that her spiritual-self produced dead fruit or insincere worship was justly rewarded with her own dead fruit or miscarriage. Theologian Antony Burgess made a similar argument for the ways that people might fail being righteous in the ways that Lady Mary feared her prayers to have been inadequate too. Burgess's ideas map onto medical causes of failed births. He suggested that miscarriage could happen '*Through Defect, when there is want of due matter*'; and thus in Grace men grow monstrous through defect'.¹⁶ In medical terms this was thought to happen when the womb lacked the seed and the blood to support the life of an embryo, but in Christian terms this was when a man was outwardly performing his religion (praying, attending church) but doing so without absorbing this inwardly, or worse when '*there are some inward Affections and Workings of God upon the heart, but they come to no Perfection*', and both of these are spiritual failings of which Lady Mary was quite sure she was being accused. The third type of spiritual miscarriage for Burgess was 'Want of Perseverance' which is when people stopped trying and reverted to ungodly ways making them monstrous in the sight of God.¹⁷ In medical terms this could relate the idea that a woman did not take sufficient measures to protect herself and her pregnancy. The list of personal management actions required in pregnancy in medical treatises was extensive, but was based around avoiding upset, eating and drinking in moderation, and taking moderate exercise. In religious terms, however, as Rachel Adcock has argued, 'Carey's miscarriage was understood by her as a necessary chastisement [from] God in a framework where such affliction was considered necessary to make herself spiritually healthy'.¹⁸ The lesson she hoped to take from her experience would be beneficial to her religious and spiritual development. The pain of miscarriage and grief is all too evident in Lady Mary's poem, but spiritually there was a sense that pain was good, theologically 'pain is better than numbness, and broken-heartedness better than stony-heartedness'; pain could show that God was fulfilling His promise as told to Ezekiel (11.9) that he would give his people hearts of flesh instead of hearts of stone'.¹⁹ Or in other words that God cared enough to send these trials to you.

Lady Mary's poem on miscarriage then can be seen to fit within some of the conventions as identified by Pamela Hammons, but it is important to remember that Lady Mary's verse on her miscarriage was not designed for publication but was for her own spiritual growth in dialogue with both God and her husband who also wrote poems on the deaths of their

children. This suggests that, written as it was, within days of the event, it was intended to allow her to work through the complicated feelings a miscarriage could arouse made even more complex for a Calvinist by the association that its author had fallen from God's favour by some unknown action. As Lady Mary said repeatedly, she accepted and indeed rejoiced in God's will but 'does only now desire of my sweet God, / The Reason why he tooke in hand his Rod?' (34 – 35). In other words she was desperate to know for what specifically she had been punished. It was especially important for Lady Mary as there was no obvious external explanation for the miscarriage. In this culture dancing, a trip, or even an argument could explain a miscarriage but here any such material event was missing. If a fall or event could be pinpointed as having started the miscarriage this could then be analysed as to the circumstances of it and what lessons God wished the couple to infer from it, but it also provided a rational explanation. Calvinists and other Protestants continuously examined their lives for signs for evidence of God's will, such as by anagramming their names, for example, and a miscarriage was a material event which was productive to reflect upon in this context. Where there was no discernible physical event to precipitate the miscarriage, then women were likely to look inwards for the answer.

Poetry was not the only form for this reflection could take, and some women wrote short meditations on their miscarriages. Eighteen years after her 1656 marriage, Elizabeth, Viscountess of Mordaunt used what was probably a series of miscarriages, but could refer to the loss of twins, to reflect on God's lesson to her. Entitled, 'A thanksgeving after twic miscaring, and a fever. March ye 18: 1674', the meditation is as specifically dated as Lady Mary's poem.²⁰ However, unlike Lady Mary, Mordaunt used her miscarriage as the occasion of her piece but did not refer to it directly in the text. Instead, she described her period of illness and how, 'It is of the Lords mercy that I was not consumed, but preserved thoro all thes illes, and wekenes'. While she did not list her sins in the prayer, it is clear that here Mordaunt was practising what was known as 'aggravation'. That is a process of confronting your sins 'in their full horror', because as Ryrie explained, 'it was far safer to exaggerate them than to understate them – even if it strained the truth'.²¹ It is likely that her daily transgressions were not so extreme, but by presenting them in prayer in the worse possible light, she could show her God that she took them seriously. Mordaunt did view the miscarriage as reasonable a punishment 'for my oft repeted transgretrions'. The key thing for Mordaunt, like Lady Mary, was to keep the faith and to strive to be a better Christian. Mordaunt alluded to the book of Revelations (8.1) in her rationalisation of this event as a learning opportunity, when she wrote 'remember mine affliction and my miseries, the wormwood and the gall'. Here the allusion was to how easy it was for the ungodly to become embittered by the trials of life, whereas Mordaunt thanked God for giving her hope. She told the story of the men who died of drinking wormwood infused waters because they were made bitter by their sufferings whereas she inferred that by caring enough to send her these afflictions it meant she has cause to hope 'thus I recall to mind the afflictions, and the mercies, I have resevd from thy Allmighty hand, and therefor have I hope; O Lord thou hast pleased the causes of my Soul, thou hast redeemed my Life'. What was taken from the experience, then, was not a sense that God had reclaimed his own property, but precisely like with Lady Mary's poem, that instead He had

inflicted suffering as an opportunity for Mordaunt to develop spiritually: that is to say that the suffering was proof that she was one of God's chosen people.

Even in the more secular medium of letter writing, the convention that God was the common factor in deliverance from a miscarriage is normally seen. For example, writing to her husband's cousin from The Hague, Anna, Lady Meautys told Jane, Lady Cornwallis Bacon that she had recently miscarried:

I was gone with child three months, at the end of which time I did miscarry and was in that extremity that those that were about me did not think I should have escaped, and for one particular I had no hope for this life. I found myself so weak a creature, but God, Who is all powerful has vouchsafed to raise me up again, and I hope to His honour, and the good of my poor children.²²

Here it was not the lost child who had been redeemed but the existing children who had their mother back. Perhaps the implication here is similar to Lady Mary's when she considered whether the miscarriage would serve to remind her of the blessings she already had in Berthia (b. 1653/4) and Nathaniel (b. 1654/5).

While Lady Meautys' letter might sound melodramatic, miscarriages could take a heavy toll on a woman's health, which was acknowledged by medical practitioners too. Stratford-upon-Avon physician, John Hall recorded treating twenty-eight year old Joyce Boughton in 1621 when she miscarried at around twenty weeks. Boughton was suffering from heavy bleeding 'after-fluxes', a fever, vomiting and fainting and was 'in danger of death'. Hall treated her primarily with burnt hartshorn to sweat out the fever, along with flavoured sugar water. Hall tended to be conservative in his treatments and erred on the side of caution. In his case notes he gave the medicines the credit for saving Boughton, but thanked God for her recovery: 'by these Medicines alone she was cured beyond all expectation, praise be God'.²³ Miscarriage was thought more dangerous for women than a normal birth and often more painful too. Medical author Nicholas Fonteyn commented 'This is far more dangerous, then a lawfull and naturall birth, in regard of the perturbations and violence which is offered to nature'.²⁴ This sentiment appears in François Mauriceau's influential midwifery guide too where he wrote that 'The Woman that miscarries hath more pain than a Woman at her full time'.²⁵ In his instructional text on piety, Richard Allestree described how the pain of a miscarriage could be on a par with a labour, and how women who had had a miscarriage were the more likely, because of the effects of it on her body, to suffer from further miscarriages:

As in an Abortion the unhappy Mother, besides the frustration of her hopes, and child-birth pains sustain'd, acquires an aptitude to miscarry for the future, and never to be able to bring forth a vital birth: And thus God knows multitudes of *Embryon* purposes perish, and the misery of it is, they are our best that do so.²⁶

This sentiment chimes with Lady Mary's assertion that now God had called her miscarried embryo to Him, she could rejoice that 'God hath gained one more / To praise him in the Heav'ns, then was before' (32 – 33). Her lost child would

have been spiritually pure and therefore was called to God's presence.

Brilliana, Lady Harley wrote a letter to her son in 1639 about a debilitating miscarriage she had recently experienced which described the effects on her health. Harley wrote:

for the Lord hath been pleased to show His strength in my weakness, to enable me to undergo such a fit of weakness which hath made stronger bodies that mine to stoop. This day seven night it pleased God I did miscarry, which I did desire to have prevented; but the Lord which brought His own work to pass, and I desired to submit to it ... I thank God I am pretty well, and I hope that as the Lord hath strengthened me to bear my weaknesses in my bed, so I trust He will enable me to rise out of my bed.²⁷

By suggesting that she was strong enough to endure this trial, Harley was invoking II Corinthians (12.9) 'for when I am weak I am strong': the more bodily suffering Harley endured the more spiritually developed she would become. In fact, despite the fact that this was another reasonably early miscarriage, like Lady Meautys's and indeed Lady Mary's, Harley was only barely able to sit up out of bed for a short time a couple of weeks later; indeed Harley reflected that she had become so weak that this experience compared to the laying in period following a full-term pregnancy. Harley referred to God directly five times in this short extract alone. As a devout Puritan Protestant, her faith and trust in divine will were unwavering.

Significantly though, despite her utter certainty in God's will, Lady Harley accepted medical intervention in her desire to prevent the miscarriage. Medicine and religion could work hand in glove, and Harley told her son how 'Your father out of his tender care over me sent for Doctor Diodati, who gave me some directions, and is now gone'.²⁸ As Alec Ryrie has explained, 'Every respectable Protestant accepted that the sick should make use of physicians. Medicine was God's provision for the sick just as food was for the healthy'.²⁹ Cures to try and prevent miscarriages ranged from the more invasive treatments such as bloodletting of medical practitioners to the so-called kitchen physic of manuscript recipe books such as Lady Ayscough's, which lists an 'excellent plaister to prevent miscarriage'.³⁰ This is similar to the one seen in *The Countrymans Physician* (1680), which advised that

As soon as [a woman] perceives the least suspicion of miscarrying, apply to her navil a hot loaf new out of the oven cut in the middle, dipt in Malaga wine, sprinked with powder of Cloves and Nutmegs, and bind it close on.³¹

Elizabeth Okeover advised an even gentler method: 'drinke a good draught of faire water & lie downe in a bed warme' followed after half an hour by some medicine made from silk threads, roses and eggs.³² Lying still in bed was the method employed by Jane Hooke in 1631 when she had pains, following the shock she felt at an attempted burglary, which made her worry she might be about to miscarry: 'I was fane to keepe my bed two dayes together and had those pains upon me as made me afraid I should be delivered incontinently'.³³ The more conventional medical practices of midwives such as Jane Sharp advised using things to 'contract and fasten' to help to close the body and prevent it from losing the baby.³⁴ John

Hall treated Elizabeth Sheldon for repeated miscarriages at about two months pregnant. Sheldon was overweight, which was a known cause of miscarriage, cited in texts going back to Hippocratic times.³⁵ Sharp listed the most common causes of miscarriage as happening in women whose womb is 'too weak, corrupted by phlegmatick, slippery, slimy, or watry humours, so that it cannot retain the child', adding that 'fat women have slippery wombs'.³⁶ However, Hall's prescription of both a purge and medicine to strengthen her womb, and a plaister smeared on a piece of leather and applied to her 'Loins, *Os Sacrum*, and the bottom of the Belly' was successful. Hall claimed she used this treatment all the time and had 'a lusty, hearty Son, and after than more'.³⁷

All the personal examples of miscarriage discussed here automatically involved a consideration of the writer's relationship with God. God was assumed to micro-manage people's daily lives, and regularly 'stepped in to discipline sinners and bestow blessings on the righteous and good'.³⁸ So he could save a pregnancy after the unfortunate event or not as he deemed appropriate, and rationalising a miscarriage in these terms was the way early modern women came to terms with and sought comfort from what had happened to them. As has been shown, this is not to say that physical steps and preventative measures to stop a miscarriage were against God's will. In fact it was thought incumbent upon women to behave carefully in pregnancy and to take whatever steps she could to achieve a successful birth, it was just that these medicines and other interventions too were subject to divine will.

For early modern women, life on earth was often seen as a trial to endure in order to proceed to heaven. This thinking is evidenced when in 1629 Lady Elizabeth Masham wrote that all earthly upsets were essentially a 'means of the curing the great distemper of our souls, and may make us long for that home where all sorrows have an end and we shall triumph in joy and glory forever more'.³⁹ In this paradigm an early death could be viewed as a blessing. This is seen in William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* when Feste asks Olivia why she is mourning her brother and if that means she thinks his soul is in hell. When she responds of course not, he replies: 'the more fool, Madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven', and of course in the comedies it is often the clown who is given the truths to speak.⁴⁰ This speech is almost identically replicated in an entry in Alice Thornton's autobiography when her four year old daughter Naly asked her "my deare mother, why doe you morne and weepe soe much for my brother Willy? Doe you not think is he gon to heaven?" I said "yess, deare heart, I believe he is gon to heaven, but your father is soe afflicted for his losse, and being a son he takes it more heavily, because I have not a sone to live".⁴¹ By this answer, Thornton could account for her grief in terms of the disappointment her husband felt in the loss of his only heir without diluting her faith. The logic that being in heaven was a blessing is the reason why Lady Mary could seek comfort in the fact that her baby was now 'forever blest' (19), and why Elizabeth Mordaunt could end her meditation on this sad topic by resolving: 'O let me lift up my hart with my hands, unto my God, in the heavens, to prase and to glorephy him'.⁴²

Notes

1. Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), 14.
2. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*

(Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

3. *Ibid.*

4. See, for example, Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion, 1500-1720* (London, Routledge, 1993) and *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (London, Routledge, 2004); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997); Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004); Mary E. Fissell, 'The politics of reproduction in the English Reformation', *Representations*, 87 (2004), 43-81; William P. Stoneman, "'These griping greefes and pinching pangs': Attitudes to childbirth in Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones* (1582)", *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 21/2 (1990), 193-203.

5. Jan Baptiste van Helmont, *Van Helmont's Works Containing his Most Excellent Philosophy, Physick, Chirurgery, Anatomy*, trans by John Chandler (London, Lodowick Lloyd, 1664), 743.

6. Crawford, *Women and Religion, 1500-1720*, 73.

7. Delores LaPratt, 'Childbirth Prayers in Medieval and Early Modern England: "For drede of perle that may be-falle."', *Symposia*, 2 (2010), [symposia.library.utoronto.ca last accessed May 2015].

8. The actual figure will be higher as many miscarriages occur before a woman is aware of her pregnancy, [www.nhs.uk/conditions/miscarriage/Pages/Introduction.aspx last accessed 15.02.15].

9. John Kettlewood, *Death Made Comfortable; or the Way to Dye Well Consisting of Directions for an Holy and an Happy Death* (London, Robert Kettlewood, 1695), 222.

10. See Jennifer Evans and Sara Read, "'Before Midnight she had Miscarried': Men, Women and Miscarriage in Early Modern England", *Journal of Family History*, 40/1 (2015), 3-23.

11. Richard Mayhew, *Charisma Patrikon, a Paternal gift; or the Legacie of a Dying Father* (London, John Hancock, 1676), 118.

12. Thomas Raynalde, *The Birth of Mankind; otherwise Named the Woman's Book*, Elaine Hobby ed. (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009), 134.

13. Cited in *Flesh and Spirit: an Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Writing*, eds Rachel Adcock, Sara Read and Anna Ziomek (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2014), 54-7 (line 74). Subsequent references are to this edition of the poem and line numbers will be given following a quotation.

14. Pamela Hammons, 'Despised Creatures: The Illusion of Maternal Self-Effacement in Seventeenth-Century Child Loss Poetry', *ELH*, 66 (1999), 25-49, at 27.

15. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 63.

16. Antony Burgess, *Spiritual Refining: Or A Treatise of Grace and Assurance* (London, 1652), 235.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Rachel Adcock, "'In Order to Spiritual Good the Body Often Afflicted": Bodily Affliction in Lady Mary Carey's Conversion Narrative (1649-57)", *The Glass*, 25 (2013), 18-30, at 26.

19. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 26 and 20.

20. Elizabeth, Viscountess Mordaunt, *The Private Diaries of Elizabeth the Viscountess Mordaunt*, ed. by the Earl of Roden (Duncairn: [n. pub], 1856), 153-4. Subsequent references are to this edition.

21. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 53.

22. Joanna Moody, ed., *The Private Correspondence of Jane*

Lady Cornwallis Bacon 1613-1644 (London and Cranbury NJ, Associated University Presses, 2003), 264.

23. Joan Lane, *John Hall and his Patients: The Medical Practice of Shakespeare's Son-in-Law* (Stratford, The Birthplace Trust, 2001), 44.

24. Nicholas Fonteyn, *The Womans Doctor* (London, 1652), 196.

25. François Mauriceau, *The Diseases of Women with Child* (London, 1672), 196.

26. Richard Allestree, *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety* (London, 1667), 267-6.

27. Cited in *Flesh and Spirit: an Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Writing*, 139-40.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 127.

30. Wellcome Library (hereafter WL), MS 1026/123, Lady Ayscough 'Recipe Book' (1692), 246.

31. Anonymous, *The County-mans physician* (London, 1680), 55.

32. WL, MS3712/52, Elizabeth Okover, 'Recipe Book' (1725?), 14.

33. Arthur Searle, ed., *Barrington Family Letters: 1628-1632* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983), 174. This incident was described in a letter to her aunt. In this case the 'burglary' turned out to be the maid letting in her boyfriend and she was duly dismissed.

34. Jane Sharp, *The Midwives book, or the whole art of midwifry discovered* (London, 1671), 224.

35. *Ibid.*, 222.

36. *Ibid.*, 174. Being too lean was considered equally likely to result in a miscarriage since the womb was too dry and lacked the essential nourishment to support a foetus.

37. Lane, *John Hall and his Patients*, 100.

38. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence*, 2.

39. Arthur Searle, ed., *Barrington Family Letters: 1628-1632*, 92. Lady Masham was writing to her mother to comfort her after the loss of her husband.

40. William Shakespeare, 'Twelfth Night' in *Complete Works*, ed by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2007) (1.5. 54).

41. Alice Thornton, *The Autobiography of Alice Thornton*, ed. by Charles Jackson (London, Mitchell and Hughes, 1875), 126.

42. Mordaunt, *The Private Diaries*, 154.

'This Haunting Sadness': Press coverage of John Corrie's Abortion (Amendment) Bill, 1979-1980

Hannah Charnock

University of Exeter

In July 1979 an article entitled 'Abortion and the Press' written by the Irish journalist Mary Kenny was featured in *The Spectator*. Kenny here argued that 'almost all the national newspapers are broadly pro-abortion' and that they made 'no attempt' to provide balance in their coverage of the issue. Attributing this trend to the morally liberal nature of journalists and to the continued distaste for the culture of backstreet abortions which preceded the 1967 Abortion Act, she went on to suggest that the monopoly of pro-abortion discourse in the press fundamentally undermined the notion of free choice.¹ However, whilst Kenny may have been right in suggesting that the British news media was largely opposed to attempts to restrict access to legal abortion, a close analysis of press coverage of John Corrie's 1979 Abortion (Amendment) Bill reveals that discussion was far from dominated by a radical 'pro-abortion' agenda. Indeed, the rhetorical techniques and conceptual frameworks that were used to justify and promote this position largely undermined the feminist claims to bodily rights that were advocated by those in pursuit of 'abortion on demand'. The pro-abortion position held by the news media was instead one rooted in pragmatism, resting upon the notion that abortions were inevitable and that it was thus in the public interest that women had access to legal abortions performed by medical professionals.²

For several decades scholars of abortion politics have sought to interrogate the discourse which has influenced the shape and tone of the abortion debate in the West. However, the understanding that 'language both reflects and shapes social reality,' has thus far only been applied to analysis of the rhetoric of lobbyists on either side of the debate.³ As Gail Davis and Roger Davidson have noted, whilst there has been much written on the 1967 Abortion Act, the historiography of abortion in Britain in the twentieth century has been dominated by accounts of political manoeuvring.⁴ Furthermore, as investigation into abortion in Britain has focused on the ways in which access to legal abortion became enshrined in law, little research beyond Davis and Davidson's own work has been conducted into the status of abortion post-1967.

Whilst there is, of course, a need to interrogate the rhetorical culture of the abortion debate as articulated by politicians and lobbying groups such as the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) or the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), discussion of the broader public discourse on abortion must move beyond this and consider the ways in which such discourse was represented, appropriated and circulated by the British news-media. By examining the mechanisms through which abortion was presented in a number of national newspapers, women's magazines and an episode of the BBC current affairs programme, *Panorama*, this study uncovers the ways in which abortion discourse functioned within the news-media during Margaret Thatcher's first term in government. Acknowledging that no individual's opinion would have been shaped by the representation of abortion in a single media form alone, this research considers how the collective output of these publications contributed

to a broader public discourse. Of particular concern are the recurring tropes and conceptual frameworks which formed the core of the abortion discourse across these forms. The ubiquity of the victim narratives trope demonstrates the extent to which 'apologetic' abortion rhetoric had become cemented as the dominant language of abortion discourse by the early 1980s. It is argued that such discourse only accentuated the divide between 'worthy' and 'unworthy' abortions and thus reaffirmed abortion stigma and perpetuated abortion taboo by heightening the sense of deviance which accompanied less traditionally sympathetic abortion experiences. As such, whilst journalists may have understood themselves to be 'pro-abortion', it is suggested that the conceptual frameworks they employed to articulate their opposition to restrictive abortion legislation undermined the broader project of advocating female reproductive rights.

John Corrie's Abortion (Amendment) Bill

Whilst historians have often hailed the 1967 Abortion Act as a watershed moment representing the triumph of liberal sexual morality, it can be argued that British abortion law remains inherently conservative. Under British statute, abortion remains illegal under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act. The 1967 Act simply allowed women to obtain an abortion up to the twenty-eighth week of pregnancy on the provision that two doctors certify that the continuation of pregnancy would endanger the physical or psychological health of the mother, or that that foetus was severely deformed or disabled. Women in Britain thus never had the right to abortion on demand, with medical grounds remaining the only legal justification for terminating a pregnancy.

Furthermore, despite having support from within the medical profession, the legalisation of abortion remained controversial long after the 1967 Abortion Act was passed. Though the Lane Committee (a committee of enquiry into the working of the 1967 Act) offered unanimous support for the Act in its original form in its report of 1974, by 1982 eight attempts had been made to legislatively restrict access to abortion, including Bills put forward by James White in 1975, Francis Benyon in 1977, and Bernard Braine in 1978.⁵ The most notable challenge, however, was initiated by John Corrie, the Scottish Conservative MP for Bute and North Ayrshire, after the landslide victory of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party in the 1979 election. Corrie's Private Member's Bill initially proposed reducing the upper time limit for abortion from 28 weeks to 16, though parliamentary debate forced Corrie to raise the proposed limit to 20 weeks with potential for the Secretary of State to reduce the limit further. More significantly however, the Bill sought to restrict the criteria that determined the eligibility of requests for abortion: the Bill stipulated that abortions would only be obtained if physicians would certify that the risk of continuing pregnancy was "substantially" greater than having an abortion. If passed, the legislation would also have greatly limited the abortion services provided within

the charitable sector by banning the provision of counselling by organisations who performed abortions.

Proponents of the Bill insisted that the amendments were intended merely to tighten up the existing legislation so as to 'put a stop to the practice of abortion on demand in defiance of the 1967 Act'.⁶ However, opponents of the Bill, including the British Medical Association, vehemently argued that it was a gross understatement to call Corrie's proposals 'amendments', claiming that the Bill was tantamount to a radical reimagining of the 1967 Act which would have a devastating impact on access to abortion in Great Britain.⁷ Despite substantial lobbying efforts by supporters of both sides of the debate, Corrie's Bill was defeated as a result of canny political manoeuvring by opponents who waited to introduce amendments to the Bill until it was on the floor of the House of Commons in order to protract debate beyond the allotted timeframe.⁸

Although this attempt to limit access to abortion ultimately failed it was hugely significant in triggering public debate on the issue of abortion. As political debate intensified and interest groups on either side of the aisle mobilised their bases of support, the press was forced to engage with the abortion debate not only in its capacity as a provider of news but also due to its perceived role as an informer and educator of the British public.⁹ It is within this context, therefore, that we should consider the desire for journalists and commentators to render explicit their understandings of the potential influence of the rhetorical culture in shaping the abortion debate.

Abortion Rhetoric and the Press

In her piece, 'Abortion and the press', Mary Kenny sought to highlight the pro-abortion bias of the British news-media. She noted how '*The Guardian*, the *Observer*, *The Sunday Times* and the *Mirror* papers are broadly pro-abortion' and lamented that even those publications which were anti-abortion (the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Sunday Express*) were reticent to run features about 'the reality of what is happening'.¹⁰ Initially Kenny framed this situation as problematic on the grounds that the press was failing to adequately represent the attitudes of the British public; in her words, 'although nearly half the British people are against abortion, it is an interesting phenomenon that in the national press, this section of the population is dramatically unrepresented'. She explicitly linked social reality with rhetorical culture by questioning 'how healthy a society is when a prevailing orthodoxy dominates the means of communication', thereby insinuating that the hegemony of 'pro-abortion' discourse was indicative of a broader societal rot. However, the insidiousness of this situation lay not only in the fact that the press was misrepresenting the public's pre-existing views on abortion, but that it was misinforming them and preventing them from taking an informed stance on the issue. Appropriating the language of choice usually employed by supporters of legal abortion and abortion on demand, Kenny suggested that the 'unrelenting orthodoxy' of pro-abortion positions articulated in the British press undermined the capacity for informed choice: 'A Woman's Right to Choose, if it means anything, should mean a woman's right to full freedom of information'. What was at stake is the very ability of the British public to take a fully informed stance on the issue of abortion for individuals 'cannot possibly make a choice in any sense of the word unless you are equipped with the full facts'.¹¹

Kenny's critique of the British press and its stance on abortion in this particular editorial was thus clearly rooted in a belief that the news media was directly involved in shaping public opinion. Though her initial claims regarding the levels of public support for abortion demonstrate her disappointment that the anti-abortion views held by 44 per cent of the population were not proportionally represented and reflected in press coverage, her later concerns regarding freedom of choice rest upon the notion that the press was failing its obligation to educate and reliably inform the public. Though Kenny undoubtedly used this argument as a means of pursuing her own anti-abortion agenda, the notion that the press had a duty to the British public continued to be widely understood in this period, not least by the news-media itself. As Adrian Bingham has suggested, although newspapers, particularly the tabloids, in this period were increasingly sacrificing news coverage for entertainment and titillation, they never fully rejected their previously claimed role of providing a public service.¹²

The belief that the press had a unique influence over public and political opinion and should thus present current affairs in a balanced manner was explicitly demonstrated by the fact that the International Pro-Life Information Centre filed a complaint with the Press Council over *The Times*' coverage of John Corrie's Abortion (Amendment) Bill on the basis that a report was 'biased and inaccurate and might have influenced MPs to stay away from the vote'.¹³ Elsewhere, press coverage of the Corrie Bill is notable for the readiness of journalists to draw attention to the rhetorical techniques used to persuade people to oppose legal abortion. For example, in a segment claiming to demonstrate 'How the pros and antis line up', a *Daily Mirror* piece (quoting a spokesperson from the British Pregnancy Service) listed examples of 'how propaganda is used' by groups such as the SPUC, noting in particular the utilisation of 'horror stories' in publications such as the 1974 book *Babies for Burning*.¹⁴ Similarly, other journalists were keen to note how 'shock-horror tactics' involving 'sensational stories' of live-abortions were 'part of the business of creating fear'.¹⁵ Journalists of this period thus recognised that the news-media was deeply embroiled in the shifting 'propaganda initiatives' of the abortion debate and many remained wary of the service their employers performed for the anti-abortion lobby by continuing to publish stories of 'live' abortions.¹⁶

Kenny and her peers were thus confident of the persuasive power of the news-media's presentation of the abortion issue. However, their concern appears to have been directed at the explicit politics of the issue, namely, whether the press was for or against legal access to abortion and how they articulated that position to their readers. However, if we move beyond the language of self-identification to interrogate the abortion discourse of the news-media more closely, we can identify how the so-called 'pro-abortion' press overwhelmingly framed the issue in ways which perpetuated and reinforced the stigma and taboo around abortion. Whilst Kenny claimed that it was only the 'anti-abortion' papers that were willing to identify abortion as 'tragic' and note 'how it can only ever be accepted as a last resort', this was, in fact, the default position of all mainstream press discourse on abortion. Whilst editorial writers and popular columnists such as Marje Proops and Bel Mooney explicitly positioned themselves as being in favour of legal access to abortion and opposed to John Corrie's Bill, the primary way in which they articulated their stance was through

apologetic abortion rhetoric which understood abortion as a tragic necessity.

Apologetic Abortion Rhetoric

'Apologetic abortion' rhetoric pre-dated the Corrie debate, however, once the Corrie Bill directly threatened legal access to abortion this discourse intensified. In the face of the proposed restrictive legislation, those who opposed the bill sought public support by presenting themselves not as feminists with radical views on body rights but instead as realistic pragmatists. Indeed, the press often presented the feminist 'pro-abortion' lobby with disdain. In a piece seemingly lamenting Corrie's attempt to 'put the clock back', Paul Ferris described feminist groups as inclined to 'over-react' on the topic of abortion and suggested that 'cannier' pro-abortion campaigns avoided association with them despite their aligned agenda on the issue.¹⁷ Elsewhere, in a special feature on the abortion debate, the *Daily Mirror* included a small piece on the feminist 'Fight for "freedom"'. Far from portraying women's groups as champions of women's rights however, the piece used the language of terrorism to describe the feminist ultimatum on abortion. According to this article, women were 'militant' and willing to 'flout' and 'break' the law through an 'underground network of women'.¹⁸ In contrast to the victim narratives that dominated the feature's other pieces and abortion discourse more generally, here the fact that women were willing to organise themselves and take direct action was portrayed not only as deviant but as thoroughly dangerous. Whilst historians have since noted the invaluable contribution that feminist campaigns made to passing the 1967 Abortion Act and rebuffing subsequent challenges to abortion access, commentators in the late 1970s and early 1980s did not wish to be tarnished by association.¹⁹ While few went as far as Christopher Booker who damned women in favour of legal access to abortion for their rejection of 'their instinctive, unconscious selves', describing them as 'haggard-faced flocks ... who have become obsessed by the 'right' to destroy unborn life to the exclusion of almost all else', journalists remained wary of endorsing abortion outright.²⁰ Instead, they presented themselves as rational navigators of the abortion debate, taking the position that so long as unwanted pregnancy was a tragic inevitability it remained in the public interest that women had access to safe and legal, medically performed abortions.

Marje Proops, a female columnist and agony aunt for the *Daily Mirror* very heavily utilised the apologetic abortion approach in her contribution to the newspaper's special feature on the Abortion Bill in February 1980. Calling her piece 'This Haunting Sadness' and going on to describe abortion as 'an ugly word for an ugly medical procedure', 'a hateful subject', a 'grim experience' and 'a last, desperate resort in a desperate situation', it could not be clearer that, while Proops considered herself a vehement supporter of maintaining legal access to abortion, she could not define abortion in anything other than negative terms.²¹ By simultaneously couching abortion in a language of misery and desperation and articulating the necessity of legal abortion, Proops positioned herself as occupying the pragmatic middle-ground in an otherwise highly dogmatic debate.

Proops' column represents one of the most explicit examples of apologetic abortion rhetoric but positions similar to hers were articulated throughout the news-media of this

period. On the eve of the second reading of John Corrie's Abortion Amendment Bill in the House of Commons, an article entitled, 'The Decision That Only Women Can Make,' written by the popular columnist Bel Mooney appeared in the *Daily Mirror*.²² Whilst the piece went on to make some fairly radical claims regarding a woman's right to '[make] choices as a free and responsible adult', it is telling that these were declared at the end of the article so that only those interested and invested enough to read the whole piece were privy to these 'extreme' views, with cursory readers exposed only to the tempered down, traditional rhetoric. Indeed, the opening lines of the article conformed to the stereotype of women as cautious, full of self-doubt and unsure of their own minds: 'Sometimes I don't know what I think. Sometimes I can't make up my mind.' Four sentences later she asserted her maternal instinct by stating that, 'I have never had an abortion and sincerely hate the idea. I love babies. I hate death'. Though Bel Mooney defended the right to abortion in the abstract, she explicitly distanced herself from women who had abortions and rejected motherhood. In so doing she not only implicitly acknowledged the taboo around abortion but actively perpetuated the perceived binary between women who terminated pregnancies and those who embraced their maternal instincts.

Such rhetoric was not merely confined to the tabloid press, however. Journalists for *The Guardian* similarly described abortion as a 'grisly business' and often expressed the sentiment that all women who had abortions agonised over the decision, only considering abortion as 'a drastic solution to a drastic problem'.²³ Numerous editorials published during this period asserted the need for legalised abortion on the basis that it was the only viable option in a 'humane and decent society'.²⁴ *The Times* remained largely silent on the Corrie Bill. When it did offer comment, however, it articulated views which only very tentatively supported legal access to abortion as laid out by the 1967 Act. Its editorials indicate a great preoccupation with questions regarding the rights of the foetus and whilst they articulated a degree of sympathy for women experiencing unwanted pregnancies (especially those with whose foetuses showed signs of disability), their position was one dominated by calls for moderation and continued rational debate.²⁵ As such, it is unsurprising that they felt that John Corrie's 'moderate' Abortion (Amendment) Bill 'deserve[d] success'.²⁶ Whilst *The Times'* position was considerably different from that of *The Guardian* and other pro-abortion publications, the underlying principle regarding abortion was the same across the spectrum: for the British news-media in the early Thatcher years access to abortion was an unfortunate social necessity; in an ideal world it would no longer be required.

Apologetic abortion rhetoric was thus ubiquitous in the press throughout its coverage of Corrie's legislative challenge to the 1967 Abortion Act and beyond. Whilst the news-media broadly supported legal access to abortion in Britain, it continued to portray abortion as a lamentable inevitability of contemporary life. The remainder of this paper will dissect further the apologetic abortion rhetoric of the most vocal opponents of restrictions on abortion, namely *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*, to demonstrate the extent to which the key tropes of victim narratives and abortive guilt dominated the abortion rhetoric of this period and served to undermine any alternative form of discourse on the subject.

Victim Narrative 1: Teenage Girls

The most pervasive of the tropes comprising apologetic abortion rhetoric was that of the victim narrative in which women who sought abortions were portrayed as deserving of sympathy. Victim narratives remain a staple of pro-abortion discourse in the twenty-first century, however, unlike in contemporary discourse the victims most closely associated with abortion in the late-1970s and early 1980s were not so much those who had been explicitly abused (i.e. those who had been subjected to incest or rape) but women who were seen to have been exploited in some way. The two dominant stereotypes of abortion in the news-media were vulnerable teenage girls who had been manipulated by their partners, and married women who already had children and faced mental exhaustion and financial ruin if forced to raise another child.

Hera Cook has noted how the late twentieth century witnessed a shift in understandings of problematic female sexuality with the primary subject of scrutiny shifting from unmarried women to adolescent girls in the decades after the so-called 'Sexual Revolution'.²⁷ Whilst there is definitely evidence to support the claim of growing public concern over adolescent sexuality in the late 1970s, discussion of abortion in the media tended to avoid the uncomfortable matter of teenage sexual agency, instead portraying young women who sought abortions as victims. On the tenth anniversary of the Abortion Act, Marje Proops defended the Act in the *Daily Mirror* by making reference to the 'suffering and deep despair of women forced to carry unwanted, unplanned babies,' illustrating her point by relating a letter she had recently received from a woman whose seventeen-year-old daughter had become pregnant by a married man.²⁸ Several months later the paper's women's page had a whole page feature on 'A Sad Story That Statistics Cannot Tell,' containing a detailed account of 18-year-old Jill's story of pregnancy and abortion.²⁹ It described her 'anguish' of obtaining an abortion after having had unprotected sex. In both these instances the teenagers were portrayed as having been taken advantage of – the second article even captioned the page's photo with 'Victim of love.' Moreover, both teenagers were characterised as 'good' girls who had been manipulated by their partners – the girl of the first story was impregnated by an older, married man whilst Jill's boyfriend 'refuse[d] to wear a contraceptive sheath'. Both girls were thus portrayed as having been exploited and as such were powerless to prevent pregnancy. As neither girl was presented as having possessed sexual agency, any potential responsibility for their pregnancy is assuaged.

These discussions of naïve and exploited adolescent sexuality resulting in pregnancy and abortion often tapped in to continuing anxieties regarding sex education and family planning for adolescents. The instance above, for example, indulged concerns regarding the continued divide in sexual culture regarding male responsibility for birth control by describing the male partner's unwillingness to use contraception. Elsewhere, the necessity of abortion was attributed to the inadequate provision of contraceptive supplies and sexual education resulting in an adolescent sexual culture that intensified the risk of pregnancy. One discussion of the Corrie Bill in the *Daily Mirror* opened with the story of 'a frightened young girl of nineteen' who had an illegal abortion in 1966 after becoming pregnant by an older man.³⁰ The article claimed that, 'Like so many young girls she was more

worried about the image she presented to men than about contraception. She didn't want to appear a tease.' *The Guardian* and the *Observer* expressed similar sentiments by repeatedly invoking the image of 'the very young school girl who concealed her pregnancy' as a reason to reject Corrie's attempt to limit the time limit on abortion.³¹ Expressing their objection to the attempts to legislatively restrict access to abortion, the British news-media thus drew upon the trope of the desperate young girl whose promising future was threatened by unexpected pregnancy. Teenage girls seeking abortions were thus typically portrayed as passive victims not only powerless to resist the advances of male sexual partners but unable to ask for help or advice about sex and contraception and thus prevent the need for abortion in the first place. Access to legalised abortion was thus justified on the basis that to deny such girls the ability to terminate their pregnancy would be cruel punishment for crimes committed against them.

Victim Narrative 2: Overburdened Married Women

The alternative victim narrative invoked in discussions of abortion in this period was that of the overburdened married woman. Married women, particularly those who already had children, could not so readily be characterised as lacking sexual agency (and therefore responsibility) so they were primarily portrayed within abortion debates as victims of circumstance. In many cases these women described how they already had children and felt that they could not support another. For example, one interviewee on *Panorama* described how she felt obliged to have an abortion as she already had 5 children, one of whom was handicapped.³² In July 1980, the magazine *Good Housekeeping* ran a feature which detailed the stories of four women who had had abortions. Whilst one of the women interviewed had been a teenager at the time of her abortion the other three were all married with children when they had their abortions. Pat was 26 and had two children under 4 and described how panic stricken she was upon finding out that she was pregnant again: 'I knew it would be intolerable to have another ... I could barely cope as it was, I felt so tired, so hemmed in'.³³ Though the selection of featured stories in part undoubtedly reflected the interests of the magazine's key demographic (namely, married women), given the publication's conservative outlook it is unsurprising that they selected case studies which were deemed to more easily evoke empathy among readers.

We must of course be careful not to undermine the experiences of these women and the genuine physical, mental and financial pressures that prompted them to obtain abortions. However, the ubiquity of such narratives demonstrates a desire to justify access to legal abortion on the basis of women's misfortune and continued oppression. Indeed, the experiences of these women demonstrate a key contradiction of social life under Margaret Thatcher's government: whilst there was undoubtedly a renewed emphasis on women as mothers and homemakers, the restriction of maternal rights, particularly in relation to employment, reduced the financial capabilities of individual families to support more children.

In light of economic difficulties and increasingly repressive social policy, the strains on families were great. Sections of the press identified many of the policies of Margaret Thatcher's government as being socially conservative and

signalling a desire to return to times before the social and sexual liberation of the mid-century. In its discussion of the Corrie debate, the left-wing periodical *New Statesman*, pointed out that attempts to restrict access to legal abortion were part of a broader programme of policy which restricted women's rights in the workplace and in society more generally. As time went on, the initial suggestion of the left-wing press that women were being coerced in to the role of stay-at-home mothers by a government who seemingly wanted them 'barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen,' appeared to become reality.³⁴ In December 1979, the *Daily Mirror* ran an article entitled 'Lose a Baby – and Your Home,' in which it expressed outrage at a plan by the Conservative-controlled Wandsworth Council which sought the power to evict women who had abortions or miscarriages from council houses that had been provided by virtue of their pregnancy.³⁵ Pregnancy and motherhood guaranteed homeless women accommodation, the rejection of pregnancy forced them back on to the streets.

Yet, for all that Conservative social policy indicated a desire for women to remain mothers and homemakers, the economic situation in 1980s Britain prevented this from being a reality in many homes. The unemployment rate in Britain rose from 5.9% in June 1979 when Margaret Thatcher's premiership began to 11.9% in June 1984; in March 1981, over 2.4 million Britons were out of work.³⁶ In light of this, the financial capacity of many women to have children diminished significantly. Given this economic climate, many women (including those in stable marriages) were unable to afford a child and thus chose to terminate unplanned pregnancies. Reflecting this, in May 1981, a spokesperson for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) claimed that, 'With a husband on the dole many wives cannot afford another baby. The Government is making it much more difficult for women to have a free choice about whether to have a child.'³⁷

Women were thus portrayed in the press as victims not only of unfortunate circumstances but also of repressive Conservative policy. As a result these women could not be held accountable for needing an abortion – social and financial burdens were determining their actions – and their behaviour was therefore not perceived as deviant. Whilst married women seeking abortions seemingly contradicted the government's desire to see women return to the home, it should be noted that any sense of blame or distain for these individuals was further limited by the fact that, having had other children, these women had already fulfilled their 'primary purpose' in society and therefore could not be interpreted as having entirely rejected their biological destiny.

Abortion Guilt

The other dominant, though not entirely compatible, trend of abortion discourse in this period was the notion that guilt was implicit to the abortion process. Similar to the victim narratives previously described, this language of guilt was rooted in the understanding that abortion was inherently bad; seen as killing a potential human or as a rejection of motherhood, abortion was ultimately troubling and acceptable only in certain circumstances. This assumption thus inferred that all women who had abortions would acknowledge their wrongdoing and feel guilty about their decision to end their pregnancy. However, for all that victim narratives and constant references to guilt stemmed from the same root understanding,

these two features were not entirely congruent; there existed a tension between the passive victim narratives that assuaged women of blame after having terminated a pregnancy and the implied female agency which resulted in guilt. Whilst victim narratives depicted women who had abortions because they had no other choice, guilt stories required that individuals made conscious choices they realised were reprehensible.

An explicit exploration of this trope occurred in a 1981 feature in *Cosmopolitan* magazine entitled 'Stop Pleading Guilty'. The article's introduction suggested that the piece would help readers to identify the source of their guilt and take constructive action. However, after having explored guilt as rooted in sexual anxiety and poor work life balance among other sources, the article turned to abortive guilt and its form and function shifted away from providing advice, instead simply warning individuals against terminating a pregnancy. This section told the story of the author's friend Judy who had an abortion after becoming pregnant from a one-night stand. Judy's abortion resulted in an infection which left her bed-ridden in hospital for several days whilst her 'bleeding and pain reminded her most sorely of the life she had nipped in the bud.' Unsurprisingly, 'She felt flooded with remorse.' In the following months, 'crushed under the weight of her guilt,' Judy became listless, depressed and reclusive. Six months after the abortion Judy's periods stopped and her failure to menstruate was described as her body and psyche seeking a 'fitting penance for her "crime"'. Eventually Judy met a new man and finally had 'a chance of restoring her fractured self-esteem.' Judy married this man but proved unable to become pregnant and slipped back in to depression: 'Until she has the child she denied herself before, Judy has regimented all joy out of her life.'³⁸

Regardless of how compelling we find this psychologism, the clear implication was that both Judy and the author believed that Judy's decision to reject maternity and have an abortion was wrong. The language of denial implied that Judy should have had the child, and that terminating that pregnancy was thwarting her destiny. Judy's breakdown after having the abortion was portrayed as having been inevitable – the article presented no alternative interpretations of abortion and offered no advice as to how to healthily manage post-abortive emotions. That this article featured in *Cosmopolitan*, a women's magazine which considered itself to hold relatively liberal attitudes to female sexuality, is testament to the extent to which the notion of guilt as synonymous with abortion had permeated social consciousness.

It is interesting, therefore, to stand this article in contrast to the *Good Housekeeping* feature mentioned previously. In that article two of the contributors explicitly stated that they felt no sense of guilt, whilst a third admitted that she'd felt stupid for getting pregnant in the first place but expressed no remorse for having an abortion. Only one of the women expressed qualms: 'I suppose I do feel a bit guilty about having denied life to a certain child when I've given life to other ones, but in a way I'm surprised that there's even a little guilt because in every other way I'm quite sure I did the right thing.'³⁹ As stated above, these women's status as mothers protected them from public condemnation, yet, the fact that they felt compelled to explicitly state their lack of guilt demonstrates the prevalence of the notion that guilt was a universal side-effect of abortion. Whilst the press sought to defend legal abortion its repeated references to the anguish that terminating pregnancies

instilled in women demonstrates a concession to the notion that abortion was inherently wrong. More than this, however, it can be argued that the press' attempts to make certain types of abortion acceptable in order to further their political agenda actually perpetuated the taboo and stigma they perceived themselves to be challenging.

Worthy and unworthy abortions

Indeed, the press' rhetorical strategies bought into and perpetuated the notion that some abortions were more worthy of forgiveness than others. This moral relativism was evident in the attitudes of women themselves. In 1979 research psychologist Janet Simpson conducted a project to explore the experiences of women applying for an abortion and which revealed that women directly compared and weighed their own reasons for having an abortion against those of others. Whilst the women she interviewed believed their own reasons for terminating their pregnancies to be valid, they were highly sceptical of others who may have been procuring abortion 'too easily'.⁴⁰ Women's justifications for abortion were highly subjective and were constructed within a scale of worthiness with some women being deemed more deserving of abortions than others.

This scale of justification can also be observed within the experiences of abortion described in the press. In her account in *Good Housekeeping*, Maggie implied that part of her potential abortive guilt was eased by the fact that she had been using contraception when she became pregnant but, 'if I had been careless, then it would have been my own fault and maybe then there would have been a real reason to be guilty'.⁴¹ Maggie felt as though she deserved her abortion because she had behaved properly, implying that those women who failed to use contraception had a far less valid claim to abortion. Similarly, in an attempt to convince readers of the danger of the Corrie Bill, Bel Mooney made her point by listing sympathetic abortion situations: 'Young girls can be shy about obtaining contraceptive advice. Married couples (often struggling to cope with kids and low wages) find their contraceptive has failed. Women come off the pill for health reasons, and fall pregnant. Others are told there is a likelihood they will have a handicapped child'.⁴² By virtue of the fact that they '[weren't] irresponsible people,' their claim to abortion was upheld. The status of abortion rights for couples who knowingly engaged in sexual intercourse without contraceptives was not articulated.

It must be reiterated that the purpose here is not to sceptically dismiss the 'truth' in the accounts presented but rather to suggest that the monopoly that tropes such as these had within public discourse was actually disruptive to the pro-abortion cause which the press are believed to have championed. The perpetual voicing of similar accounts only stood to make those that strayed from this norm seem deviant. The case studies of abortion described by the press were coded in a way that made them socially acceptable but in turn meant that experiences which could not be explained in such terms stood out in stark contrast. Single women in their mid-twenties who fell pregnant often lacked both a personal support network and financial stability, relying on institutional help. Yet their voices were largely absent from public discussions of abortion. When such women did speak out, their experiences were framed in such ways that only reinforced the taboo. In a *Panorama* episode on the Corrie Bill,

Pat Shenstone, a married woman with five children who had an abortion, was identified by name and told her story sat in her living room, fully lit with her face to the camera. By contrast, single girl 'Karen', who was forced to have a late-term abortion via the British Pregnancy Advisory Service after doctors in the West Country refused to give her an abortion, was identified by a pseudonym and was interviewed in the dark with only her silhouette visible. Although her voice was heard, the visual framing of her testimony served to highlight and reinforce the extent to which 'single girl' abortions were deemed socially unacceptable; to have her so visibly contrasted to Pat only reinforced that stigma.⁴³

In its attempts to present abortion in as socially acceptable a form as possible so as to further their political agenda of preventing restrictive legislative amendments to the 1967 Abortion Act, journalists in the British news-media narrowed the available discourse to an extent that undermined the pro-abortion position. As James Davison Hunter and Joseph E. Davis have articulated, 'language both reflects and shapes social reality, for words themselves frame how we make sense of experience ... those who have the power to establish the language of public debate have a tremendous advantage in determining the debate's outcome'.⁴⁴ Though the press provided a public forum for the discussion of abortion, the news media's recourse to the tropes and stereotypes of apologetic abortion, victim narratives, and guilt only made detailed and universal discussion and debate more difficult and thus denied the opportunity for any alternative pro-abortion views to be heard.

Conclusion

It is thus apparent that there was a significant discrepancy between the British news-media's stated position on abortion and the nuances underpinning their abortion discourse. Mary Kenny was right when she asserted that the press articulated a pro-abortion agenda – the examined publications conceded the need for legal abortion in Britain and many articulated opposition to John Corrie's Abortion (Amendment) Bill. However, the rhetorical techniques, language and conceptual frameworks that were used to justify and promote this position were highly problematic. The pro-abortion position held by the news media was defended on pragmatic grounds, rooted in the notion that abortions were inevitable and it was therefore in the public interest that women had access to safe, legal abortions performed by medical professionals. Yet this 'rational' position was articulated in highly emotive ways – victim narratives formed the backbone of the pro-abortion stance as abortion was portrayed as the preserve of the vulnerable women who had been exploited. Whilst such an approach may have made the general public more receptive to the pro-abortion cause in light of Corrie's legislative challenge, it only accentuated the divide between 'worthy' and 'unworthy' abortions and thus reaffirmed the stigma and taboo surrounding abortion by heightening the sense of deviance which accompanied less traditionally sympathetic abortion experiences. The press' pro-abortion position rested upon the notion of apologetic abortion, a foundation that was entirely unstable as it implied that abortion was inherently wrong. The news-media held that abortion was fundamentally bad but socially necessary and was thus forced to constantly negotiate the boundaries of

social morality and the needs of individuals. Whilst the British news-media may have positioned itself as being pro-abortion, its unceasing portrayal of abortion as lamentable and a tragic last resort ultimately undermined this position.

Notes

1. *The Spectator*, 28 July 1979, 13.
2. Throughout this paper the term 'pro-abortion' will be used to denote individuals and groups who were in favour of legalized abortion and opposed to restrictions being placed on the 1967 Abortion Act. It is not intended to suggest that such individuals endorsed abortion in all instances or that they desired the legalisation of abortion-on-demand.
3. James Davison Hunter and Joseph E. Davis, 'Cultural Politics at the Edge of Life', in *The Politics of Abortion and Birth Control in Historical Perspective*, ed. Donald T. Critchlow (University Park, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 109-10. Histories of abortion discourse include: Tracy A. Weitz, 'Rethinking the Mantra that Abortion Should be "Safe, Legal, and Rare"', *Journal of Women's History*, 22/3 (2010), 161-72; Laurie Shrage, 'From Reproductive Rights to Reproductive Barbie: Post-Porn Modernism and Abortion', *Feminist Studies*, 28/1 (2002), 61-93; Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, 'Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction', *Feminist Studies*, 13/2 (1987), 263-92.
4. Gail Davis and Roger Davidson, "A Fifth Freedom" or "Hideous Atheistic Expediency"? The Medical Community and Abortion Law Reform in Scotland, c. 1960-1975', *Medical History*, 50 (2006), 30. Examples of politically focussed work include: Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011); Leslie Hoggart, *Feminist Campaigns for Birth Control and Abortion Rights in Britain* (Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Dorothy McBride Stetson, *Abortion Politics, Women's Movements, and the Democratic State: A Comparative Study of State Feminism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001); Martin Durham, *Sex and Politics: The Family and Morality in the Thatcher Years* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991); Joni Lovenduski and Joyce Outshoorns eds., *The New Politics of Abortion* (London, Sage Publications, 1986).
5. For detailed discussion of the Lane Committee of Enquiry see, Ashley Wivel, 'Abortion Policy and Politics on the Lane Committee of Enquiry, 1971-1974', *Social History of Medicine*, 11/1, 109-35.
6. Bernard Braine, MP quoted in *The Guardian*, Feb. 8, 1980, 8.
7. *The Guardian*, 12 July 1979, 3.
8. Colin Francome, *Abortion in the USA and the UK* (London, Ashgate, 2004), 114-5.
9. Adrian Bingham, 'Newspaper Problem Pages and British Sexual Culture Since 1918', *Media History*, 18/1 (2012), 51-63.
10. *The Spectator*, 28 July 1979, 13.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), 5-6.
13. *The Times*, 15 Dec. 1980, 2.
14. *Daily Mirror*, 5 Feb. 1980, 9.
15. *The Observer*, 5 Aug. 1979, 39. *The Guardian*, 22 Dec. 1979, 3.
16. *The Observer*, 4 Nov. 1979, 34.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Daily Mirror*, 12 July 1979, 9.
19. Hoggart, *Feminist Campaigns for Birth Control and Abortion Rights in Britain*.
20. *The Spectator*, 16 Feb. 1980, 15.
21. *Daily Mirror*, 6 Feb. 1980, 9.
22. *Daily Mirror*, 12 July 1979, 9.
23. *The Guardian*, 22 Dec. 1979, 3. *The Guardian*, 6 May 1979, 39.
24. *The Guardian*, 3 Feb. 1980, 10. See also: *The Observer*, 6 May 1979, 39; *The Observer*, 5 Aug. 1979, 39; *The Observer*, 3 Feb. 1980, 10.
25. *The Times*, 6 Nov. 1981. *The Times*, 10 Feb. 1982, 11. *The Times*, 14 Feb. 1982, 8.
26. *The Times*, 6 Feb. 1980, 15.
27. Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 294.
28. *Daily Mirror*, 25 Apr. 1978, 12.
29. *Daily Mirror*, 21 Nov. 1978, 9.
30. *Daily Mirror*, 6 Feb. 1980, 9.
31. *The Observer*, 15 Jul. 1979. Jo Richardson, quoted in *The Guardian*, 9 Feb. 1980, 5.
32. *Panorama: Mercy or Murder? The Abortion Debate*, BBC1 television broadcast, Feb. 4 1980 [BFI InView, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/inview/title/7550>, accessed 18 Feb. 2015].
33. *Good Housekeeping*, July 1980, 37-44.
34. *New Statesman*, 8 Feb. 1980, 192-3.
35. *Daily Mirror*, 3 Dec. 1979, 11.
36. Simon Rogers, 'How Britain changed under Margaret Thatcher', *The Guardian*, 8 Apr. 2013 [www.theguardian.com/politics/datablog/2013/apr/08/britain-changed-margaret-thatcher-charts#data, accessed 18 Feb. 2015]. Complete data set: [<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/cc?key=0AonYZs4MzlZbdHE0dnFiRmIwM0Y3T1dMeXIwQVZBR2c#gid=18>, accessed 18 Feb. 2015].
37. *Daily Mirror*, 30 May 1981, 7.
38. *Cosmopolitan*, July 1981, 144-5 & 205.
39. *Good Housekeeping*, July 1980, 41.
40. Janet Simpson, 'Having an Abortion: clients satisfaction with an out-patient day-care service', MSc dissertation, London School of Economics (1980), Wellcome Library, PPSIM/1.
41. *Good Housekeeping*, July 1980, 41.
42. *Daily Mirror*, 12 July 1979, 9.
43. *Panorama*, Feb 4. 1980.
44. Hunter and Davis, 'Cultural Politics at the Edge of Life,' 109-10.

Mrs. Pickle's mistake: the origins of an eighteenth-century satirical print

Chelsea Phillips

Villanova University

From 1785 to 1812, Dorothy Jordan was a leading lady in comedy at Drury Lane theatre. She was petite with masses of curly brown hair and famously beautiful legs. Her acting style was natural and sincere and her repertoire consisted primarily of romps and hoydens (boisterous and energetic young women), cross-dressing heroines, and travesty roles such as the hopelessly spoiled boy hero Little Pickle in *The Spoil'd Child* (1790). She played these parts even while visibly and frequently pregnant: between 1782 and 1807 she had fourteen children and was pregnant as many as twenty times.¹

Jordan came to London in the 1785–86 theatrical season; the following fall she began a relationship with Richard Ford, a lawyer and aspiring politician. The couple remained together for five years, during which time Jordan was received as Mrs. Ford socially and the couple was widely assumed to be married.² They had three children, two girls and a short-lived boy. During this relationship, Jordan was depicted as the possessor of both considerable talent and admirable domestic virtue. An early biographer wrote: 'in private as well as public life, she evinces the best claims on our praise, since to a sweetness of temper she unites a pliability and benevolence of disposition, that insures domestic tranquillity, and yields comfort and happiness to her family.'³ Furthermore, her continued appearances during pregnancy, and even the timing of her children's births, were seen as indicative of her devotion to the public: 'Mrs. Jordan ... has so perfectly timed this her second offering at the shrine of Lucina, that she will be enabled to take her post again ... on the Boards of Old Drury.'⁴ Positive associations with Jordan's maternity were important to her continued popularity: in her first six years as a leading lady at Drury Lane Jordan was visibly pregnant on four occasions, making her fertility a feature of her public identity. When Jordan ended her relationship with Ford to become mistress to the Duke of Clarence in the fall of 1791, her body was recast from a site of domestic probity and professional devotion to a signifier of sexual excess and duplicity.

When the affair between Jordan and Clarence became public, what was most damaging was the belief that Jordan's new position was in fact a revelation of what she had always been. The *Public Advertiser* claimed, 'When Little Pickle fell into the sweets of one thousand per annum, she might be truly said to have changed her nature into a *preserve*, or that at least she was well *clarified*.'⁵ This change in, or clarification of, Jordan's nature is a result of her slide from respectable companion to royal mistress. In Scotland, where Jordan frequently toured, the *Caledonian Mercury* described the popular performer as 'a *prostitute* actress.'⁶ A series of satirical prints between late October 1791 and May 1792 used visual effigies of Jordan to uncover what were perceived to be the hidden truths behind her public body. The most damning of these hidden truths were the rumours (much more evident in print sources) that Mrs. Jordan was pregnant at the time of the split with Richard Ford.

Soon after the official break with Richard Ford, the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* proclaimed: 'Little Pickle

is again pregnant; but whether the infant is to be a Lawyer [child of Ford] or an Admiral [child of Clarence, a naval officer], time only can discover.'⁷ The press characterized Jordan as sexually promiscuous, implying she had maintained sexual relationships with both men simultaneously. The use of 'again pregnant' asks the reader to remember the many occasions on which they have previously seen Jordan pregnant as a way of both imagining this pregnancy, and lending credence to the rumours. In light of accusations about her sexual dissipation, Jordan's presumed pregnancy prompted a shift in attitude toward her maternal body that divorced it from her reputation as a caring mother and rendered it, instead, indicative of an unrestrained sexual appetite and flawed morality.

References to the pregnancy persisted from October through December, by which time she was rumoured to have miscarried. Like the pregnancy itself, this is unconfirmed, but Jordan was ill and did not perform for two weeks in late November and early December. The November 1791 issue of the monthly *Bon Ton Magazine: or microscope of fashion and folly* wrote: 'The Country Girl, it is said, has got into a *sad pickle*—all was not right at the *helm*.' In December they clarified, 'A recent *miscarriage* has been treated in the higher circles, with no small share of *levity*.'⁸ In the new year, pregnancy rumours began again: on 4 January 1792 the *Star* observed that 'Mrs. Jordan has of late grown thin; but there is great prospect, that, in the Spring, she may get *round* a little.' In June, Clarence was seen about town in a new yellow carriage, the colour of which sparked another pregnancy rumour: 'From the *colour* of the Duke of Clarence's new carriages, it is not at all improbable that Mrs. Jordan will very shortly be in the *straw*!'⁹ There is no definitive proof that Jordan was pregnant before March 1792, but ultimately this does not seem to have mattered to the press or public—if the pregnancy was in its early stages, it meant that no visual confirmation of her condition was possible or necessary, and speculation was rampant. Having one hidden truth revealed—her relationship with Clarence—the public seemed continually convinced that Jordan's body concealed something from them; it became suspicious.

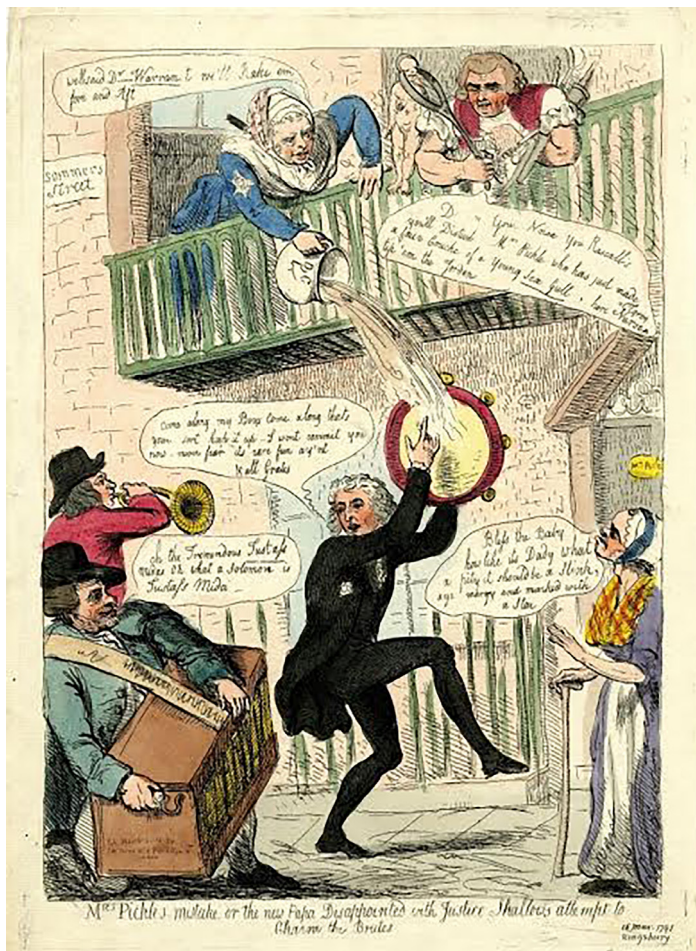
Commentary about this potential pregnancy is occasionally factual and more frequently cruel, judging Jordan to be more valuable for her additional 'cargo' in the fall: 'The *Little Pickle* Frigate will prove an invaluable acquisition to her new Commander, as she had taken in a *Cargo* immediately previous to the late Contract!' and less valuable after losing 'the expensive fruit' in August 1792: 'The 6th in the morning Mrs. Jordan was delivered of a child, which expired a short time after its birth. Only five months of her time had expired; so that the expensive fruit has fallen without being brought to perfection.'¹⁰ The obsessive attention to Jordan's body reveals not simply an interest in the pregnant body or a pending illegitimate royal birth, but an almost fanatical need to uncover Jordan's body as a sexual and reproductive entity. Duped into thinking the unmarried actress a respectable wife and not one of the 'easy dames of the theatre,' the public could no longer trust Jordan's physical appearance or public performances to

grant them truthful access to her private character.¹¹

The preoccupation with Jordan's body fed an appetite for satirical prints featuring imagined private scenes between Jordan and Clarence. In both visual and textual effigy, Jordan's body was anatomized, scrutinized, and made to perform independently of the woman herself – made to reveal, in short, her hidden sexuality. In total, ten prints appeared between October 1791 and May 1792 that imagined or directly referenced Jordan's hidden sexual activities with the Duke. These prints are linked both topically and through visual motifs. These motifs create a vocabulary by which one may read hidden truths about Jordan and her sexuality. As Vic Gatrell writes in *City of Laughter* (2006):

motifs tended to cluster chronologically. And since each cluster had its own external provocations, it can be read just as a cluster of written texts is read, that is, as a cue to the preoccupations of the moment. Follow these cues, and it becomes possible to think with and through images, and not merely about them.¹²

Placing the prints in conversation with each other and with textual narratives about Jordan and Clarence's relationship helps us to locate and read a print whose dating has long presented problems to Jordan's biographers.¹³



Isaac Cruickshank, *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake, or, The new papa disappointed with Justice Shallow's attempt to charm the brutes*.

London: S.W. Fores, 15 March 1791. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Mrs. Pickle's Mistake, or the new papa disappointed with Justice Shallow's attempt to charm the brutes (Fig. 1) shows the Duke Clarence, dressed as a midwife, emptying the contents of a chamber pot labelled 'DC' (Duke of Clarence) onto the head of another man, presumably Richard Ford. Ford leads a band of people in a charivari (also shivaree, chivaree or 'rough music'), a noisy procession used to indicate disapproval of a relationship.¹⁴ Next to Clarence is Dr Warren, a physician in ordinary to the royal family, who holds a child in a pair of forceps.¹⁵ He tells the crowd to quiet down as 'Mrs. Pickle has just made a faux Couche' (had a miscarriage) of a 'young Sea Gull' (Clarence). The woman in the bottom right comments on how much the 'slink,' a premature or stillborn baby, looks like its father Clarence. The child's paternity is made even clearer by its birthmark, an Order of the Garter star. The visual association between the child and the emptying chamber pot suggests a correlation between the two: both were previously hidden contents of Jordan's body, but neither is worth keeping. Mrs. Pickle's 'mistake,' then, refers not only to the relationship with Clarence, but also to the loss of the infant.

The print is dated 14 March 1791, six months before Jordan and Clarence's relationship became public and four months before rumours of Clarence's interest in Jordan began to circulate. The problem of the print's date has prompted several of Jordan's biographers to either ignore it, or dismiss it as the by-product of a rumour that was never recorded in print. Claire Tomalin argues that the print must be a mistake, perhaps referencing an illegitimate child of Clarence's conceived before his relationship with Mrs. Jordan began. This is an unsatisfactory explanation, however, since the print specifically identifies Jordan visually with the chamber pot, and by calling her 'Mrs. Pickle.' Brian Fothergill skips over the 1790 – 91 season entirely and therefore provides no commentary on this portion of her life; James Boaden similarly makes no comment. Neither the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* nor Highfill, et al's *Biographical Dictionary of Actors* address *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake* or the pregnancy rumours of fall 1791. Clare Jerrold discusses the cartoon and asserts that rumours must have been circulating in March 1791 but for unknown reasons were not picked up by the press. While more plausible than Tomalin's explanation – Jordan did, in fact, have a miscarriage in March 1791 – satirical prints generally follow reports in the public press, not anticipate them. For example, news of the Prince of Wales's marriage to Maria Fitzherbert broke in February 1786, but the first satirical prints addressing the scandal did not appear until mid-March.¹⁶ Prints might also be created at some distance from their subject: James Gillray's striking *Wierd-Sisters* [sic], for example, takes as its subject George III's first fit of madness in 1788 – 89, but was not printed until 1791.¹⁷ I argue that viewing the satirical prints of Jordan and Clarence in 1791 – 92 as a cluster clearly locates *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake* in March of 1792, not March of 1791.¹⁸ I further argue that this print, instead of offering a view of immediately contemporaneous events, is looking back to the rumoured miscarriage Jordan suffered in late November or early December 1791, which kept her off the stage for two weeks. That it was this pregnancy that prompted rumour and anxiety about the child's paternity, and paternity is the subject of *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake*, further supports a dating of March 1792.

To correctly interpret the print *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake*, a spectator needs several pieces of information. Knowing that

Jordan was closely associated with the role of Little Pickle in *The Spoil'd Child* (1790) helps the viewer understand who 'Mrs. Pickle' must be. In addition, if the viewer is also a reader of newspapers, they have come to associate the use of 'Little Pickle' or the 'Pickle Duchess' with unflattering references to Mrs. Jordan, as the papers almost universally used these monikers when they are reporting gossip or accusations against her. The chamber pot offers an additional means of identification, since they were known colloquially as 'jordan'.¹⁹ The use of the chamber pot here, particularly in its cracked form, picks up on a motif first used on 1 November 1791.

The *Lubber's Hole*, alias *The Crack'd Jordan*, printed on 1 November 1791, replaces Mrs. Jordan's entire body with that of a cracked chamber pot. A vaginal opening runs from knee to head, into which the Duke is diving face first while exclaiming 'Yeo! Yee! Yeo!' The title references the state of the 'jordan' in the image, but also puns on 'crack'd' as a term for morally bankrupt. The motif of the Duke disappearing into the 'jordan/Jordan' was echoed on 8 November with Dent's *Fording the Jordan*. This print shows Jordan scantily clad painted onto the side of a large cracked chamber pot, inscribed '1000l. a year for the use of this JORDAN.' While we see only her bare breasts, the chamber pot stands for what we do not see under her skirts. The Duke is waist deep in the filled pot, saying, 'I shall be lost in Thee JORDAN' to which she responds: 'Where should a wounded Tar be but in the Cockpit?' In *Fording the Jordan*, Mrs. Jordan's body and image become secondary to her more than man-sized vagina – the 'cockpit' into which the Duke fears he will be 'lost.' The image of Clarence inside the urine that presumably fills the chamber pot calls to mind images of doctors examining a patient's urine to determine pregnancy. In several of these paintings and prints, a small foetus is visible in the urine, indicating that the woman in the picture is indeed pregnant, and suggesting the doctor's diagnostic skill.²⁰

In *Fording the Jordan* and *The Lubber's Hole*, the Duke's bodily engagement with the jordan/Jordan suggests leakage and contamination, as well as offering to a public gaze images of their hidden sex life and her possible pregnancy. The over-sized chamber pots-cum-sex organs and Clarence's enthusiastic abandon imply an orgiastic overindulgence to their relationship, while Jordan's body, which is full and/or swollen, becomes pregnant both literally and in terms of sexual excess. These print representations became a way of expressing the anxieties surrounding Jordan's body. If Jordan's actual body concealed sexual activity and/or a pregnancy, her body in visual effigy could be made to reveal its secrets. *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake* picks up on the motif of the cracked chamber pot as a signifier for Jordan, and continues the work of uncovering the hidden truths of Jordan's body. *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake*, then, stands in for proof of Jordan's rumoured pregnancy and miscarriage, revealing the contents of her "jordan" (the stillborn child) and answering the question of the child's paternity.

When taken as an isolated image, the dating of *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake* can be genuinely confusing. Considering the Clarence/Jordan prints as a cluster as Gatrell suggests, however, illuminates both the subject matter and dating of this evocative print. This image showcases how satirical prints might develop alongside, and in response to, rumours and innuendo in popular press sources. Finally, it showcases the way satirical prints developed their own language of motifs and symbols—the jordan/Jordan pun is never used in textual sources, only as a visual metonym.

Notes

1. For biographies of Jordan, see James Boaden, *The Life of Mrs. Jordan*, 2 vols (London: Edward Bull, 1831); Clare Jerrold, *The Story of Dorothy Jordan* (New York: Brentano's, 1914); Brian Fothergill, *Mrs. Jordan: Portrait of an Actress* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965); and Claire Tomalin, *Mrs. Jordan's Profession: The Actress and the Prince* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).
2. See, for example, the Duke of Clarence's letter to the Prince of Wales, 13 October 1791 in A. Aspinall, *Mrs. Jordan and Her Family: being the unpublished correspondence of Mrs. Jordan and the Duke of Clarence* (London: A. Barker, 1951), 10.
3. *Jordan's Elixir of Life, and Cure for the Spleen*. (London: William Holland, 1789), 7-8.
4. *Public Advertiser*, 6 September 1787. All citations from London newspapers come from the digitized copies in 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers (Gale: Cengage Learning, 2011).
5. *Ibid*, 4 November 1791.
6. *Ibid*, 31 October 1791.
7. *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 15 October 1791.
8. (London: D. Brewman, November 1791), 357 and *ibid*: December 1791, 490.
9. *Bon Ton*, June 1792, 153.
10. *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 8 November 1791; and *Bon Ton*, August 1792, 234.
11. *Bon Ton*, April 1793, 101.
12. Vic Gatrell. *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), 14.
13. Isaac Cruikshank. *Mrs. Pickle's Mistake: or the new papa disappointed with Justice Shallow's attempts to charm the brutes*. British Museum Satires (hereafter BM Sat.) 7835 (London: S.W. Fores, 15 March 1791[?]).
14. In her entry for the image, M. Dorothy George defines the charivari as a ritual that specifically shamed "unfaithful wives" (*Catalogue of political and personal satires preserved in the department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, Volume 6, no. 7835 (London: British Museum Press, 1938)). The OED entry places the behavior in reaction to "incongruous or unpopular marriages," indicating that both partners might be targeted ('charivari, n.' *OED Online*. (Oxford University Press, June 2015)).
15. Physician in ordinary is somewhat equivalent to a general practitioner, whereas a physician in extraordinary was more specialized (for example, an obstetrician).
16. The earliest is attributed to James Wicksteed, *The Follies of the Day; or Marriage of Figaro*, BM Sat. 6924 (London: S.W. Fores, 13 March 1786).
17. James Gillray, *Wierd-Sisters; Ministers of Darkness; Minions of the Moon* (London: Hannah Humphrey, 1791). Digitized copy available through the Lewis Walpole Library.
18. Most catalogue entries for the print, including the British Museum and Library of Congress, use the date 1791; the Yale University/Lewis Walpole Library catalogue, however, notes that the year appears to have been altered from 1791 to 1792 in plate.
19. 'jordan n.2.' *OED Online*. (Oxford University Press, June 2015).
20. See, for example, "A physician examining a urine specimen in which a faint figure of a baby is visible, a female patient is crying and being shouted at by her angry mother, indicating that she is pregnant." Watercolour by I.T., 1826; and *A Physician Examining a Urine Flask*, oil painting after Gerrit Dou, c.1700. Wellcome Institute.

Dressing the expectant mother: Maternity fashion in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland

Emma O'Toole

National College of Art & Design, Dublin.

In 1760, Caroline Fox, Lady Holland (née Lennox, 1723-1774), wrote to her sister Emily Fitzgerald, Countess of Kildare (née Lennox, 1731-1814) and penned her thoughts on the latest London hairstyles and clothing. Emily Fitzgerald, who lived in the magnificent Carton House in County Kildare, Ireland, was a keen follower of fashion, and delighted in receiving such fashion reports. At the time these letters were sent, Fitzgerald was heavily pregnant with her ninth child (Louisa Bridget, 1760-5) and in her letters Lady Caroline described the latest maternity fashions. In one such letter she revealed her thoughts on Lady Louisa Lennox's (née Kerr, 1739-1830) pregnancy fashion: 'She is big with child again, and yet her figure is so smart, pretty ... she grows big and lies in October, I believe ... even in her dress she wears a vast thick handkerchief'.¹ Lady Holland's description of Lady Lennox's 'vast thick handkerchief' possibly referred to a piece of cloth or apron which covered her pregnant stomach. Wearing a thick handkerchief or long apron over the clothing just beneath the breasts and covering the abdomen was one of the most characteristic items of clothing worn by pregnant women during the eighteenth century.²

Wearing such distinctive items of clothing underpins that even during the gestation period a particular style of fashion existed for women. During this period concerns over the latest fashion for maternity, before and after pregnancy, preoccupied women's minds and as a subject it frequently featured in the letters Lady Caroline Fox wrote to her sister, Emily Fitzgerald. In a twenty-year period, between her marriage and the birth of her last child at age 47, Emily Fitzgerald gave birth to twenty-two children – nineteen children from her first marriage with James Fitzgerald (1722-1773), and three children from her second marriage to William Ogilvie (1740-1832). Certainly, women who experienced so many pregnancies had to be prepared for the bodily changes involved. She either had to have specialized garments in her wardrobe or plans for converting regular clothing into maternity wear. The letters of Emily Fitzgerald reveal that throughout the maternity period she maintained an active schedule of work and socialising. If anything, the gestation period represented a busy period for the expectant mother, with many women making preparations for childbirth and the arrival of the new infant including hiring wet nurses and nursery maids, as well as managing the household, purchasing groceries, and supervising servants. Women also did not deter from participating in, or hosting, dances and parties. Even when Fitzgerald's pregnancies were racked with nausea, inflammation of the breast, and headaches, she maintained an active life throughout her pregnancy, visiting friends, and family.³ A successful pregnancy, Fitzgerald believed, was one which was lived as usual: 'More people have hurt their health by fear of miscarrying than by its happening', she declared. She advised good food and plenty of rest and exercise.⁴

Despite an established literature on consumerism and dress, there is little social history of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fashion and the life cycle.⁵ This

is surprising considering that maternity, a near-constant condition in eighteenth-century women's lives, mandated that women regularly adapted their fashionable wardrobes. Evidence of what was actually worn during the maternity period is, however, rare. One of the difficulties with tracing information on maternity clothing is that few garments survive in their original form from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Throughout this period clothing was either adapted for pregnancy without alteration or made over afterwards to re-use expensive textiles. Depictions of pregnant women in art during the eighteenth century are also scarce, which has left historians with little information on exactly what maternity garments looked like, and what types of clothing were available to the expectant mother. One means of gaining an insight into the design, sale, and use of maternity clothing and undergarments is the trail of evidence found in household papers, alongside advertisements and newspaper bulletins.

This article attempts to answer some questions regarding the consumption of maternity clothing and medicinal goods in Ireland during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Throughout this period the Irish Georgian Ascendancy, the minor Protestant elite who ruled Ireland, were as every bit interested in fashion as the rest of Britain and Europe. As the second city in the British Isles, Dublin in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries offered a vast and sophisticated array of fashionable goods for the astute shopper.⁶ This article will consider specifically what was available to purchase and discovers how an Irish shopper could hear news of the latest maternity fashions.⁷

Exchanging information on the latest maternity clothing

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries oral exchange acted as an essential means through which advice on the latest clothing was circulated. Information on the new fashionable attire for maternity wear was often acquired through informal social networks and exchanged during social visits or circulated by letters through a network of family, friends, and friends of friends living in Ireland and abroad. Irish provincial elites frequently drew on knowledgeable friends in convenient locations (often London or Paris) to provide information about goods and suppliers and sometimes to acquire specific information. Throughout the 1750s and 1760s, Emily Fitzgerald's sisters including Lady Caroline Fox, Lady Louisa Conolly (née Lennox, 1743-1821) and Lady Sarah Bunbury (née Lennox, 1745-1821), provided her with details of the latest London fashions, and executed commissions on her behalf.⁸ Lady Caroline Fox, in particular, regularly passed on information relating to maternity fashions to her sister. In a letter of 1760, she expressed her thoughts on Elizabeth Gunning, the Duchess of Hamilton's (1734-1790) maternity wear to Emily:

The Duchess of Hamilton is big with child and looks sadly. She is grow[n] intolerably affected and disagreeable ... Lady Waldgrave is with child too, but shines more than any of the beauties. She grows genteel, and looks most divinely beautiful, indeed tho' I think I have seen more pleasing faces than hers often, she is so shewy, so well dressed, and don't appear at all affected.⁹

A key feature of eighteenth-century fashion was accessories. It was through hairstyles, hairpieces and caps, as well as gloves, handkerchiefs, lacings, and buttons, that the details of fashion trends were expressed. Lady Caroline Fox's letters were often filled with details of accessories for her sister. In the letter, dated January 1760, mentioned above, she revealed her thoughts on the accessories Lady Louisa Lennox wore during her pregnancy:

Her dress she wears a vast thick handkerchief, that the least bit of an exceeding white neck she has may not appear, crops her hair like the Duchess, and squeezes her cap close down to her face (in your life you never saw such head-dresses as they both wear, spoiling their charming hair which they both have so pretty).¹⁰

The thick handkerchief worn by Lady Louisa Lennox was most likely tied just beneath the breasts and covered the abdomen. Lady Louisa Lennox's attempts at covering herself with a handkerchief could understandably have been from a desire to cover her growing body, or from feelings of discomfort. Further contemporary descriptions reinforce this image. In 1735, Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough (1660-1744), wrote to her granddaughter reminiscing about her pregnancies and the clothing she resorted to in an attempt at comfort:

I remember when I was within three months of my reckoning, I could never endure any bodice [corset] at all; but wore a warm waistcoat wrapped about me like a man's and tied my petticoats on top of it. And from that time went abroad but with a long black scarf to hide me I was so prodigiously big.¹¹

Textile and costume historian, Linda Baumgarten, has suggested that the warm waistcoat described by Churchill may have been a quilted vest that laced or tied at the front.¹² The waistcoat may have been altered with additional fabric panels sewn in to enlarge the waist and bust to ensure an appropriate fit during her pregnancy. Although they were especially suited to pregnancy, waistcoats were worn by non-pregnant women, as well as serving as a light foundation for non-public occasions and a warm under layer beneath the other clothing.¹³

Written sources confirm that most women adapted their usual clothing for maternity or had special garments made. Given the expense of textiles, alterations were commonplace and figured among the sewing skills of most women. Throughout this period, fitted gowns were surprisingly adaptable to changes in style or size through manipulation of their lacings and the clever addition of accessories. Gowns usually fastened at the front, sometimes with hidden lacings that could be let out to accommodate the new figure. The triangular stomacher at the bodice front was usually removable, replaceable with a wider one to accommodate waist expansion or with a large neckerchief to fill in the gaps. Petticoats were

often fastened at either side with narrow tapes, and could thus be worn during pregnancy by loosening the ties and wearing the petticoat above the expanding stomach. Fashion historian Harriet Waterhouse's research on surviving English gestation stays and corsets dating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century showed that in the earlier centuries clothing styles, and even some fully boned stays, were surprisingly easy to adapt to a pregnant shape. Waterhouse's research revealed that stays with front and side lacings could be used as maternity clothing, and could equally be used during breastfeeding.¹⁴ However, in the nineteenth century, the changing cut and construction of corsets necessitated the development of specific pregnancy styles, followed, rather later, by maternity dresses.¹⁵

Surviving letters found in the Leinster papers suggest that Emily Fitzgerald chose not to wear stays during pregnancy or throughout her lying-in. In a letter dated to June 1778, Lady Charlotte (1758-1836), daughter of Emily Fitzgerald, described her mother's enjoyment of returning to her normal dress and stays after childbirth and lying-in:

The Duchess is charmingly well in spirits. She went out riding yesterday which agrees with her, and which she takes great pleasure in. She is reckoned to ride uncommonly well. Now that she is not with child and has got stays on, I can see she had a very pretty figure, something like Lady Holland's I think, and if I don't forget Lady H's size, she is about as tall.¹⁶

Further evidence found in Irish correspondence also reveals that a style easily adapted to pregnancy and worn by Irish women during the maternity period was a loose relatively unfitted gown, known as a bedgown. Various styles, these garments were a type of dress worn by urban women, mainly domestic servants, from as early as 1732, and by rural working women from at least 1759.¹⁷ Since they were cut full and loose, bedgowns could be worn during pregnancy without alterations and for working women they made a comfortable alternative to fitted gowns. In wealthy households the bedgown was worn as an informal garment, typically over stays and petticoats in the relaxed setting of a ladies bedchamber or dressing room.¹⁸ The materials available for making bedgowns varied according to social rank, with elaborate silk bedgowns restricted to wealthy elites, while 'working bedgowns' were typically made from linen and later cotton fabrics.¹⁹ In a letter of 1803, when Sarah Drennan, wife of the Dublin physician William Drennan (1754-1820) was heavily pregnant with her second child, her sister-in-law Martha McTier (1742-1837) described in detail her visit to Lady Anna Chichester's, Marchioness of Donegall (née May) lying-in chamber at her residence in Belfast. Martha McTier described how Lady Donegall received guests dressed in a short 'quilted white satin' bedgown, 'trimmed in rich lace', and a 'little light cap'.²⁰ Such detailed descriptions of Lady Donegall's maternity clothing would have been of great interest to Sarah Drennan who was busy making preparations for her own lying-in in Dublin.

Print culture: reporting on pregnancy fashion

While oral exchange remained a dominant means for accessing news on the latest fashion, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards reliance on information about maternity clothes came through a wide and varied array of sources,

including publications and newspaper bulletins. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries access to such literature in Ireland was aided by the increasing availability of Dublin editions of medical tracts and the significant growth in the number of booksellers and printers.²¹ As economic historian David Dickson has pointed out, the number of master printers grew by more than tenfold throughout this period.²² The lenient copyright laws allowed Dublin booksellers to reprint English publications at significantly low prices. Dublin newspapers also evolved over the period from a handful of ephemeral news sheets in the 1690s to the appearance in the 1730s of rarely less than five competing titles, usually twice a week on Tuesday and Saturdays to coincide with the post days to the provinces.²³

Unlike oral exchange which focused on the latest fashionable attire for maternity, vernacular medical texts and pamphlets advised the Irish female on a range of pregnancy related health problems and information on the 'best' type of clothing to wear during pregnancy. Such medical advice manuals, for instance included William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1769, first published in Dublin in 1772), alongside Seguin Henry Jackson's *Cautions to Women, Respecting the State of Pregnancy* (London, 1798) and the *Mother's Medical Pocketbook* (London, 1827). Other publications were also targeted at women, emphasising their roles as mothers and guardians of family health. Most notable were John Ball's *The Female Physician or Every Woman her Own Doctor*, published in Dublin in 1771, and Buchan's *Some Friendly Cautions to the Heads of Families*, published in Dublin twenty years later.

Medical books such as these devoted a significant portion of their texts to the subject of pregnancy and clothing and stress the vital role clothing played in the health of the mother and the unborn child. Authors emphasised that in maternity, a mother was expected to maintain a physical environment conducive to infantile health, which included attending to her own body as a safe place for infant development. Problems such as pregnancy related illness, methods of dressing during maternity, pregnancy cravings, travelling during pregnancy, and inflammations of the breast that interfered with nursing, were all addressed in these publications.²⁴ These medical tracts identified the 'numerous problems' associated with pregnancy wear, and repeatedly cautioned and tutored expectant mothers on the importance of wearing the 'right' type of clothing during pregnancy. According to the literature, the 'right' type of clothing promoted longevity and vitality, and the 'wrong' type of clothing accounted for a range of serious illnesses and physical decline, and in some cases resulted in the death of the infant. Publications, such as the *Mother's Medical Pocketbook* (London, 1827), for example, advised that during the lying-in period it was a mother's duty to make sure that 'her clothes should be made large and commodious' and 'that she may have as little trouble or exertion as possible in putting them on'.²⁵ Another example can be found in Jackson's *Cautions to Women, Respecting the State of Pregnancy* (1798), where he advised against the use of stays. Jackson insisted that tight stays caused the nipple to become inflamed, short or drawn in and the pressure to the breasts contributed to a rising generation of women who were unable to suckle their own infants.²⁶ The medical tracts often included illustrations of women wearing high-waisted uncorseted gowns during their lying-in or taking care of children, which emphasised the type of clothing medical authors preferred pregnant women



Line engraving of a pregnant woman on an obstetrical bed by Giovanni Battista Cipriani after Silvio Clementi, eighteenth century.

Credit Wellcome Library, London, available under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

to wear. These gowns were often fitted to the upper body with drawstrings that could be loosened as necessary.

Alongside medical tracts, Irish national newspapers, such as the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Belfast Newsletter* frequently published extracts from these publications. Typically, such articles were detailed descriptions of the latest developments in medicine or excerpts from the most recent medical tract, but they could also include information on pregnancy and pregnancy clothing. Stays and corsets received a lot of attention in such reports. These articles warned the Irish female public that 'no attempt should be made to resort to pressure or any mechanical contrivances'.²⁷ In 1829 extracts from the *Medical Gazette, Scotsman* (1817 - present) and *London Paper* published in the *Freeman's Journal* were written with the specific purpose of convincing the 'ladies of the folly' to quit 'compressing their waists to the real distortion of symmetry, and injury to the system'.²⁸ 'Tight stays and compressed waists', the authors of these bulletins argued, caused the natural dimensions of the chest and the abdomen to become altered, instigating health defects such as lung disease, spinal disease and distension of the abdomen.²⁹ Medical authors warned that the harmful effects of tight stays and stiff jackets would be particularly detrimental to the pregnant mother; they petitioned that stays 'disfigure[d] the beautiful and upright shape of the woman' and 'injure[d] the breasts and bowels'.³⁰ In November 1835, the *Belfast Newsletter* published an extract from the publication *The Good Nurse* entitled 'On the Great Danger of Ligatures and Bandage of Every Kin':

I would gladly convince our ladies, that it is always dangerous, and never graceful, to contract any part of the frame by bandages, and that it is never done without danger. Two circumstance have occurred under my own notice – the one a lady who had several children short of the period designed by nature, all born dead entirely owing to tight lacing of the corset, added to the unnatural piece of steel which is worn; and it ended in her being paralysed from head to foot, to the ruin of her husband and four daughters, all of them ill grown unhealthy subjects, from cruel management of the mother.³¹

In the same article the *Belfast Newsletter* also discussed the type of dress most suitable for pregnant women: 'A married woman cannot have any wish to conceal her situation: as such, her dress should be perfectly easy, exploding the fashion of her broad piece of steel worn in front of the corset, which is universally adopted by all ranks, from the duchess to the peasant'.³² The broad piece of steel referred to in the article related to a triangular stomacher. Gowns usually fastened at the front, sometimes with hidden lacings that could be let out to accommodate pregnancy. The triangular stomacher at the bodice front was however usually removable, replaceable with a wider stomacher to accommodate waist expansion. These notices also included information about the best way to style your hair during pregnancy. For instance, in November 1835 *Belfast Newsletter* reported that: 'a lady should not bestow too many curls upon her head, unless she has an attendant to make them, as the long holding up her arms, more especially when far advanced, is attended with risk, and possibly fatal consequence'.³³

The aforementioned printed sources had a clear purpose. The increasing volume of literature on pregnancy and women's health, in the form of medical tracts and newspaper bulletins, can be attributed to high infant and maternal mortality rates. In 1769, physician William Buchan estimated that of the total number of children born in England, half would die before they reach their twelfth birthday. And so how women dressed during their maternity and cared for their unborn children, as well as how they swaddled, feed and cared for their infant's after childbirth, became a widespread concern, which is reflected in these printed sources. Some critics saw a moral wickedness in wearing tight stays and suggested that wearing whale-boned stays could carry a potential risk of bringing on a miscarriage. A more indirect means of miscarrying can be found in Irish women's receipt books, where in some instances details can be found of remedies on how to 'bring on the menses', involving herbs which were perhaps used as abortifacients.³⁴

While it is impossible to determine to what extent women read medical bulletins and medical tracts, it is clear that these sorts of publications and the information contained within them were easily accessed by wealthy, literate women in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland. During the eighteenth century, access to such literature in Ireland was undoubtedly aided by the increasing availability of Dublin editions of medical books. And whereas these publications were a somewhat costly collectable in their own right, the *Freeman's Journal*, and other such newspapers which carried occasional articles on pregnancy clothing were cheap and had a broad readership, particularly throughout the capital. Each consumer could take and use the contents of these publications as required and desired.

Among the most important printed sources from which women could obtain information concerning fashion were journals and fashion bulletins. Regular descriptions of the ever-escalating fashion trends started to appear in the Dublin press particularly from the 1780s. The Dublin newspaper and periodicals, which stand out in particular for the inclusions of fashion bulletins were the *Dublin Evening Post*, the *Evening Herald* and *Walkers Hibernian Magazine*. The late eighteenth century also witnessed the flourishing of a variety of ladies journals first published in England, and reprinted in Ireland, including *The Ladies Pocket Magazine*, *The Ladies Cabinet of Fashion, Music & Romance* and *The Penny Gazette of Fashion*,

amongst many others. Fashion plates were used to advertise the latest female fashions, presenting women wearing the promoted designs and thus encouraging women to consume these latest clothing ideas. Interestingly, I have found no mention of the appearance of the fashion plate for pregnant women in fashion journals or the inclusion of pregnancy wear in the Irish fashion bulletins dating to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This is unusual as it was an important market tool for the fashion industry and an important source for Irish female consumers.³⁵

Buying clothes and medical goods for maternity

The retail market was also an important means through which women could learn about the latest maternity fashions. Early nineteenth-century Dublin as a place for fashionable consumption was often favourably compared to London and sometimes considered superior to the larger provincial English cities. Commentators and visitors to Dublin writing in the 1800s and 1820s wrote favourably about the new shopping streets, comparing them to their foreign counterparts. According to James McGregor, in his publication *New Picture of Dublin* (Dublin, 1821) 'the principal shops are fitted up with a degree of taste scarcely surpassed in the British Metropolis'.³⁶ Dame Street, which linked the two great establishments of the Irish Ascendancy, Trinity College at one end and Christ Church at the other, was described by one visitor as 'the great focus of fashion, bustle and business and is lined with noble shops and buildings'.³⁷ While Grafton Street was described as 'a sort of London Bond Street': jewellers, silversmiths, milliners, gloves, glass and china merchants offered both foreign and Irish luxury goods, alongside boasting a vast number of readymade textile and clothing warehouses.

Newspaper advertisements confirm that by the early nineteenth century a number of Dublin retailers were trading in clothing and a range of medicinal goods specifically designed for the pregnant and nursing mother. The first gestation corsets were advertised in England in 1811, and as early as 1814 in Dublin.³⁸ In advertising, terms such as 'healthy' were often used to market pregnancy corsets, which stressed the improved and patented designs and links to the latest developments in medicine. Indeed, throughout this period the use of the word 'healthy' was a highly noticeable trait within the advertising world, as was the tendency to use health issues as a means of selling goods.³⁹ In 1830s Dublin, Madame Ballicourt was a prominent mercer, judging by her presence in the press; she regularly advertised her sale of pregnancy corsets in this manner. At the opening of her establishment in 1834, located at No.90 Upper Abbey Street in Dublin, she announced that her sale of 'Elastic Stays and Corsets, on the principle more approved of by the Physicians'.⁴⁰ Ballicourt's advertisements declared that her elastic corsets were 'particularly recommended to growing persons' and were 'designed to preserve the elegance of the shape' that would ultimately contribute 'to the good health of the wearer'.⁴¹ The marketing ploy of focusing on health issues used by corset makers was not unique but was used as a strategy by a vast number of retailers, across a spectrum of clothing goods.

As these advertisements indicate, the early nineteenth century did see great developments in corsetry design. One particularly important invention was the introduction of

elastic. Made from a vegetable substance, elastic replaced the spiral brass wire that was commonly used in the construction of shoulder straps, glove tops and corsets. In 1835 an article featured in the *Belfast Newsletter*, which highlighted the new developments in corset making to the Irish consumer. The article stated that the latest corsets were 'made of smooth, soft, elastic materials', they were 'accurately fitted and modified to suit the peculiarities of the figure of each wearer' and no stiffening was used but 'quilting and padding'.⁴² The corsetry described in these advertisements, which incorporated elasticised sides, supportive shoulder straps and frontal lacings, provided the early nineteenth-century pregnant mother with greater support than previous eighteenth-century designs. While no examples of such corsets survive in Ireland, a corset dated to 1820 sourced in the Maidstone Museum and Bentrif Art Gallery in Kent gives an indication of the style available. As with earlier pregnancy stays, the corset is made with front lacings, side lacings and back lacings; in addition, it has abdominal support belt boned which sits under the belly.

Novelty was the cornerstone of fashionable design. In Ireland, the new style of corsetry was often linked to French clothing. Advertisements of the period confirm that a number of French natives were trading in Dublin and they made sure to stress their continued links with their homeland. Linking maternity goods with imported items may have been particularly appealing to Irish women. Recent studies of newspapers advertisements, alongside inventories and diaries of Irish consumers, reveal that a preference for imported over native-made goods was an established characteristic within the buying patterns of those purchasing luxury and semi-luxury goods in eighteenth-century Ireland.⁴³ The corset makers, E. and M. Williams, at their shop located at No.29 Grafton Street, advertised their sale of new elastic French corsets. The notice stated that they begged 'leave to recommend their newly arrived patterns, a variety of which they have recently received from Paris and London, which, for elegance of make, capability of assisting shapes, and nice fitting, stands unrivalled'.⁴⁴ E. and M. Williams also advertised that country dwellers could have 'stays made to their own size', once they sent their exact measurements 'round the top, waist and hips' to this corset maker.⁴⁵

By the early nineteenth century a number of retailers in Dublin and Belfast advertised the range of goods they stocked for breastfeeding mothers. As Valerie Fildes' research has highlighted, from the mid eighteenth onwards an increasing number of aristocratic mothers were breastfeeding their infants, something that is also documented in Irish household manuscripts.⁴⁶ In 1814, the *Freeman's Journal* featured an article marketing a new type of morning dress that accommodated women who wished to nurse their infants. The dress was designed in such a way that it had a 'small front of plain muslin', which 'fastened over the bosom', allowing women to easily suckle their infants.⁴⁷ The article advertised that the novelty of this dress lay in its unique design and practicality:

We are certain that no Lady, on first seeing this elegant dress, could possibly surmise the purpose for which it is designed that of enabling

a lady to suckle her own child; it is however so contrived, as to enable a lady to act the part of a nurse without discomposing her dress in the slightest; and the moment the pleasing office is over, a single pin leaves her again in the most elegant style of morning costume.⁴⁸

The all-in-one nursing and morning dress was progressively innovative compared with early versions of nursing dresses, which would have relied on altering and tailoring bodices.⁴⁹ An early nineteenth-century Irish dress held in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum provides tangible evidence of the type of morning dresses that this article described. The morning dress made of white cotton is decorated with vertical strips of violet and green. The front part of this bodice is similarly composed of a panel, which is sewn onto the neckline of the dress; the bottom part hangs loose and can be placed in position at the waist by pins. This dress traces its history to the home of the Ormsby family of County Mayo. The survival of this dress indicates that readymade maternity dresses were available for Irish mothers during the early nineteenth century. This style of dress was also caricatured in London prints, which were perhaps circulating in Ireland



A fashionable mother wearing a dress with slits across the breasts in order to feed her baby before she dashes off to the carriage waiting outside. Coloured etching by J. Gillray, 1796. Credit Wellcome Library, London, available under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

too, such as that by James Gillray (1756-1815) *The Fashionable Mamma or the Convenience of Modern Dress* (1796). This print and satire depicts a fashionable lady in evening dress about to go out fully equipped with her feather turban, choker, gloves and fan. Her dress is cut in such a way that it features fashionable slits across the breast, similar in style to that worn by the Ormsby family.

In addition to corsets and readymade maternity gowns, the market also boasted a variety of medicinal commodities that were designed specifically for curing illnesses suffered during pregnancy and nursing. Such problems could range from sore, cracked and inverted nipples, and swollen breasts. The correspondence of Emily Fitzgerald reveals a number of instances when she or her family members suffered from such maternal health problems. As early as 1755, Emily Fitzgerald wrote about a problem with her breast during the pregnancy of her daughter Caroline (born and died 1755). She noted her use of the patent medicine the 'French remedy'.⁵⁰ She penned: 'I am quite well again; my breast was bad two days, which you know always frightens me. Think of my being persuaded to take the French remedy to make my physic work, which had been pretty strong and had no effect'.⁵¹ In 1768, when Emily Fitzgerald's sister Sarah Bunbury attempted to breastfeed her new-born daughter, she suffered from inverted nipples, a condition where the nipple instead of pointing outwards is retracted into the breast. Days after childbirth, Caroline Fox wrote to Emily Fitzgerald describing the increasing problem of Sarah Bunbury's inability to lactate:

Dear Sal [Sarah Bunbury] is well. This is her tenth day, but alas the nursing scheme fails, and what is worse, the child neither feeds nor can they get it to suck now ... it's vastly well now, but unless it takes to feed it won't do. It has all along been provoking, for Sal had an abundance of milk, but the nipple would never come out, till now by drawing it various ways she has brought it about, and the child won't take it. It's quite vexatious altogether, but I hope in God it may feed or suck soon.⁵²

Sarah Bunbury's efforts to draw the nipple out 'in various ways' suggest that a variety of methods to cure this illness were available to her. The solution for this problem could be resolved by resorting to a variety of medicines, including salves, poultices, and patent medicines. Or by attempting to draw the milk from the breast by using a nursing glass or breast reliever, precursors to today's breast pump. Advertisements dating from the mid eighteenth century confirm that there existed an expanding market for patented medicines claiming to cure sore and cracked nipples suffered by pregnant or nursing mothers. National newspapers, such as the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Belfast Newsletter*, frequently advertised quack medicines such as Mr Lignum's 'royal anti-scorbutic' drops that were a 'sovereign remedy' for sore and cracked nipples, and Gall's Nipple Liniment, which promised to prevent the 'distressing disorder'.⁵³ From as early 1803, apothecaries in Belfast and Dublin also advertised their stock of mechanical devices, such as breast relievers, breast pumps, teats, and nipple shields that promised to prevent any problems experienced by the pregnant and breastfeeding mother. The Medical Hall at No.30 Westmoreland Street in Dublin, for instance, featured regular advertisements throughout the 1820s showcasing their stock

of a wide spectrum of these goods.⁵⁴ Such goods were used to care for maternal health including; relieving milk from the breast, preventing cysts, inflammation, and infections.

Among the most popular commodities were nipple shields, which were commonly used to raise inverted or retracted nipples or help in the formation of new nipples after ulceration.⁵⁵ Nipple shields were small conical shaped devices with perforated holes. They were often worn while breastfeeding or underclothing to prevent sore nipples from becoming infected during pregnancy. Medical authors, such as Seguin Henry Jackson, as already mentioned, believed that the use of stays caused the nipple to become inflamed, short, or drawn in. He encouraged the use of elastic or fake nipples during the later months of pregnancy.⁵⁶ The benefits of using a nipple shield were exemplified in the *Freeman's Journal* in March 1803, when the surgeon, Mr McFadzen, located at No.15 Donegall Street in Belfast advertised 'if early used to them' children would be able to 'suck [suck] with equal ease as if from a natural nipple'.⁵⁷ Nipple shields made from silver, glass, and ivory were available to purchase in fitted cases made from modish sharkskin and lined with red or blue velvet.

While the market was an important source for purchasing medicinal goods during maternity, it seems that women often made medicinal goods at home. A number of Irish household medicinal pocketbooks record a variety of recipes for sore and cracked nipples. The recipes in manuscripts often specified plasters, salves, and poultices made from ingredients such as wormwood, marshmallow, chamomile and turpentine that were to cure sore and cracked nipples for 'milking breasts'.⁵⁸ One such example found in the pocketbook of Eliza Connolly, an unknown aristocrat from Northern Ireland, was for a salve that was recorded as being particularly 'good for milking breasts'; one had to 'put in a brass skillet five ounces of beeswax', which was 'mixed with olive oil, white flour, ale, frankincense, and Bernice turpentine, and boiled on a slow fire'.⁵⁹ These homemade salves also provided a thrifty alternative to the expensive silver nipple shields or glass teats marketed and sold by Irish apothecary shops.

Conclusion

Despite the problem of sources relating to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century maternity wear, a good deal of information can be derived from personal correspondence, medical tracts, and retailer's advertisements about the clothing worn by women during maternity. The evidence provided in the letters of women such as Lady Emily Fitzgerald and Lady Caroline Fox suggest that dressing for maternity during the eighteenth century was not as difficult as one might imagine: fitted gowns were surprisingly adaptable to changes in style or size through manipulation of their lacings and the clever addition of accessories, such as handkerchiefs. In addition to providing a personal account of maternity clothing, Irish correspondence also highlights that during the eighteenth century women engaging in motherhood often relied on their own social network to hear news of the latest maternity clothing.

While the Irish gentry often looked to London and Paris to hear information on the latest clothing fashions, Dublin shops remained an abundant source of goods. Irish household papers also offer evidence of the expanding consumer market in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Dublin, which is

witnessed in the range of medical tracts that gave advice to pregnant mothers, alongside the variety of medicinal goods and maternity clothing sold by apothecary shops, corset makers and ready-made clothing retailers. Despite the fact that Dublin shopkeepers sold a wide range of commodities, it seems that throughout the eighteenth century, pregnancy-clothing items were not a common sight in Irish shops, which is suggested by the absence in advertisements of the period. In the wake of the early nineteenth century, the changing cut and construction of corsets necessitated the development of specific pregnancy styles. Maternity dresses and items such as silver nipple shields later followed corsets. The increasing number of advertisements found in Irish national newspapers from the early nineteenth century onwards promoting a range of these goods to female shoppers in Dublin city and the Irish provinces offers evidence of an expanding market for clothing and medicinal goods designed specifically for the expectant mother.

Notes

1. Lady Caroline Fox to the Countess of Kildare, Brian Fitzgerald (ed), *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster, 1731-1814* (3 vols, Dublin, Stationary Office, 1949), vol. 1, 294.
2. As early as 1669, the diarist Samuel Pepys associated an apron with pregnancy: 'I waited upon the King and Queen ... she is being in her white pinner and apron, like a woman with child' quoted in Cunningham and Lucas, *Costumes for Births, Marriages and Deaths* (London, A & C Black Publishers, 1972), 14.
3. An engraving by William Hogarth's entitled 'Swearing a Child to the Grave Citizen', also shows a pregnant woman wearing a long apron and a neckerchief.
4. Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats* (London, Vintage, 1995), 228.
5. *Ibid.*, 231.
6. For discussions on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fashion and maternity refer to: Harriet Waterhouse, 'A Fashionable Confinement: Whaleboned Stays and the Pregnant Woman', *Costume*, 41 (2007), 53-64; Linda Baumgarten, 'Dressing for Pregnancy: A Maternity Gown of 1780-1795', *Dress*, 23 (1996), 16-24; Lynn Sorge-English, *Stays and Body Image in London: The Staymaking Trade, 1680-1810* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2011).
7. Edel Sheridan-Quantz, 'The Multi-Centred Metropolis: The Social Topography of Eighteenth-Century Dublin', in *Two Capitals: London and Dublin 1500-1840*, eds. Peter Clark and Raymond Gillespie (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), 265-83.
8. Sarah Foster, 'Going Shopping in Eighteenth-Century Dublin', *Things*, 4 (1996), 33-61; Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2004), Sarah Foster, "'Ornament and Splendour': Shops and Shopping in Georgian Dublin', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies: The Journal of the Irish Georgian Society*, XV (2012), 12-33.
9. This article represents one theme explored in my doctoral thesis, 'The Material Culture of Pregnancy and Infancy in Ireland, c. 1680-c. 1830', National College of Art & Design. It is expected that the thesis will be submitted for examination in 2016.
10. For further information on the fashion information exchanged between Lady Caroline Fox and Emily Fitzgerald, refer to: Macushla Baudis, 'Smoaking Hot with Fashion From Paris: The Consumption of French Fashion in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Costume*, 48/2 (2014), 150-1.
11. Lady Caroline Fox to Emily Fitzgerald, Duchess of Leinster, in Fitzgerald, *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, 272. The Lady Waldegrave mentioned in this letter, possibly refers to Lady Maria Waldegrave (née Walpole, 1736-1807), wife of James Waldegrave, Earl of Waldegrave (1715-1763). In 1760, Lady Waldegrave was pregnant with her first child, Elizabeth Laura Waldegrave (1760-1816).
12. Lady Caroline Fox to Emily Fitzgerald, Duchess of Leinster, 31 January 1760, Fitzgerald, *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, 294.
13. Philis Cunningham and Catherine Lucas, *Costumes for Births, Marriages and Deaths* (New York, Barnes and Noble, 1972), 15; also quoted in Linda Baumgarten, 'Dressing for Pregnancy: A Maternity Gown of 1780-1795', *Dress*, 23 (1996), 17.
14. Baumgarten, 'Dressing for Pregnancy', 17.
15. *Ibid.*, 18.
16. Harriet Waterhouse, 'A Fashionable Confinement: Whaleboned Stays and the Pregnant Woman', *Costume*, 41 (2007), 53-64.
17. Waterhouse, 'A Fashionable Confinement', 53-64.
18. Letters of Charlotte Mary Fitzgerald (later Strutt) to her mother Emily Fitzgerald, Countess of Kildare (after 1766), National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI), 1778, Ms 610.
19. Clare Rose, 'A Group of Embroidered Eighteenth-Century Bedgowns', *Costume*, 30 (1996), 70-84.
20. *Ibid.*, 70.
21. Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1979), 18-20.
22. Martha McTier to William Drennan, 21 December 1801, in *The Drennan McTier Letters*, eds. Jean Agnew and Maria Luddy (Women's History Project in association with the Irish Manuscripts Commission), 404.
23. M. Pollard, *Dublin's Trade in Books, 1550-1800* (Oxford, Oxford Clarendon, 1989), 210.
24. David Dickson, *The Making of a Capital City* (Dublin, Lilliput Press, 2014), 148.
25. *Ibid.*, 148.
26. William Buchan, *Advice to Mothers on their own Health and the Means of Promoting Health, Strength and Beauty to their Offspring* (London, 1804).
27. J. S. Forsyth, *The Mother's Medical Book* (London, 1827), 4.
28. Seguin Henry Jackson, *Cautions to Women Respecting the State of Pregnancy* (London, 1798), 60.
29. *Freeman's Journal*, 24 June 1829, 1.
30. *Ibid.*, 1.
31. *Ibid.*, 1.
32. *Belfast Newsletter*, 13 November 1835, 4.
33. *Ibid.*, 4.
34. *Ibid.*, 4.
35. Recipes to 'bring on the menses' can be found for example in the Boole Library, 'Book of recipes, cures and household hints', 1829-1858, Ms U56.
36. For further information on the fashion bulletins published in Irish newspapers refer to: Baudis, 'Smoaking Hot with Fashion', 151-159.
37. James McGregor, *New Picture of Dublin* (Dublin, 1821), 293.
38. John Carr, *The Stranger in Ireland; Or, A Tour in the Southern or Western Parts of the Country in the Year 1805* (London, 1806), 35.

38. *Ibid.*, 60.
39. See Colin Jones and Rebecca Spang, 'Sans-Culottes, Sans Café, Sans Tabac: Shifting Realms of Necessity and Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France', in Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford eds, *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999), 52.
40. *Freeman's Journal*, 4 December 1834, 2.
41. *Ibid.*, 2.
42. *Belfast Newsletter*, 9 June 1835, 1.
43. See for example: Baudis, 'Smoaking Hot with Fashion', 141-59; Sarah Foster, 'Buying Irish: Consumer Nationalism in 18th-Century Dublin', *History Today*, 47/6 (1997), 44-51; Sarah Foster, 'An Honorable Station in Respect of Commerce As Well As Constitutional Liberty': Retailing, Consumption and Economic Nationalism in Dublin, 1720-85' in *Georgian Dublin*, eds. Gillian O'Brien and Fintuala O'Kane (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2008), 30-44.
44. *Freeman's Journal*, 20 December 1821, 1.
45. *Freeman's Journal*, 12 December 1820, 2.
46. Valerie Fildes, *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1998), 190-1.
47. *Freeman's Journal*, 9 August 1814, 4.
48. *Ibid.*, 4.
49. Nursing gowns often relied on altering and tailoring bodices of ladies' garments to allow the mother to breastfeed. This method often included cutting slits across the bosom of

- ladies' garments and concealing the slits with buttonholes hidden underneath bias-cuts of material. Examples of such gowns can be found at the National Trust Springhill Costume Collection, County Derry, Northern Ireland and the Herefordshire Museum, England.
50. Letter from Emily, Duchess of Leinster to her husband James Fitzgerald, Duke of Leinster, 1755, Fitzgerald, *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, 29.
51. *Ibid.*, 29.
52. Letter from Caroline Fox to her sister Emily, Duchess of Leinster, 1768, Fitzgerald, *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, 584.
53. *Freeman's Journal*, 3 September 1819, 1; *Freeman's Journal*, 17 October 1818, 1.
54. *Belfast Newsletter*, 10 June 1828, 4.
55. For further reading on the use of nipple shields refer to Valerie Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1989).
56. Jackson, *Cautions to Women*, 60.
57. *Freeman's Journal*, 18 March 1803, 1.
58. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, copy of 170 page booklet of medicinal recipes compiled by Eliza Connolly, Eliza Connolly papers, 1805, T2400.
59. *Ibid.*

Book Reviews

Jessica L. Malay, *The Case of Mrs Mary Hampson: Her Story of Marriage, Abuse and Defiance in Seventeenth-Century England*.

Stanford: Stanford University Press: 2014.

£13.99, ISBN: 978-0-8047-9055-0 (paperback), pp.176

***Memoirs (1630-1680): Sophia of Hanover*. Ed. and trans. Sean Ward.**

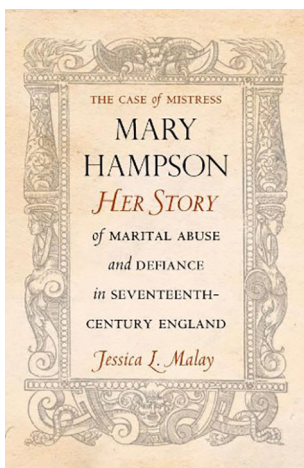
Toronto, Centre For Reformation and

Renaissance Studies and ITER: 2013,

£4.99, ISBN: 978-0-7727-2148-8. (kindle edition)

Reviewed by Elizabeth Connolly

University of Adelaide.



Both these books make vital contributions to women's history in the early modern period. Each book makes available the writings of a seventeenth-century woman and each woman's writing is presented in a very different style. Nevertheless, there are similarities in the stories of these two early modern women that make for an interesting comparison.

Mary Hampson (1639-

1698) and Sophia of Hanover (1630-1714) were born within a decade of each other, married within two years of each other (1656 and 1658 respectively), and during the 1680s they both wrote accounts of their remarkable lives. While Mary published a pamphlet detailing the marital abuse suffered at the hands of her husband Robert (1627-1688), Sophia tasked herself with writing memoirs, to alleviate a period of boredom while her husband Ernest Augustus (1629-1698) took a lengthy trip to Italy. Mary Hampson came from a modest gentry family who lived in Cambridgeshire, while Sophia of Hanover was born into European royalty and would have been England's monarch had she not died several weeks before Queen Anne (1665-1714), an occurrence which resulted in Sophia's son becoming George I of England. Although Mary and Sophia's societal spheres were poles apart, marital issues played a large part in both their lives.

Jessica Malay delivers a cultural perspective on seventeenth-century marriage by richly contextualizing Mary Hampson's account of her marital woes. Malay both corroborates and disputes aspects of Mary's claims and widens the perspective of Mary's story by supplying detailed background information derived from meticulous research to find associated documents. Malay gives us an insight into some of the ripples felt by the rest of the Hampson family, as well as examining her husband Robert's position throughout the saga. As a result, the indignation provoked by reading Mary's pamphlet is dampened to some degree by Malay's measured reasoning. Each chapter explores and examines Mary's story in relation to the various players and it is difficult to reconcile several valid points that Malay makes. For example,



Robert's offer of marriage was an appealing and respectable one that Mary may have failed to fully appreciate. It also appears that Mary's refusal to comply with her husband's monetary and property demands played a major role in contributing to the problems that surfaced in the union, thus implying that she may have brought her troubles on herself. It also appears that Mary had difficulty in maintaining relationships within the family, namely with

her mother and her daughters. While Robert seems to have looked after the daughters fairly well there are scant facts on offer to examine this particular matter in more detail. The fact that Mary was able to survive the onslaught from her husband and retaliate by writing her pamphlet indicates she was a strong-minded, perhaps stubborn individual, however, this conjecture does not diminish the indignities Mary suffered at the hands of her husband and the shame she endured through the machinations of the law.

It emerges that the very laws designed to produce marital harmony, such as wifely obedience, were distorted into weapons that fell heavily on Mary, transforming her from a happily married woman in the honeymoon period to wronged and assaulted wife in the aftermath. Mary was hampered and belittled by laws that forced her to seek help from male acquaintances, without whose permission and support she would not have been able to appeal judicial decisions regarding her marriage. While Mary was continually portrayed as a wilfully disobedient wife, Robert seems to have escaped unscathed and was even promoted in his career. The story is a woeful tale of how women like Mary had little or no chance of obtaining justice or help when faced with an antagonistic and violent husband. A litany of female exploitation is described, including physical assault, withdrawal of shelter, food, money and even clothing, as well as the most inhumane prohibition of refusing a mother's access to her young children. The unfairness of Mary's experience takes one's breath away.

Sophia of Hanover's memoir writings need no further context. There are no dire facts to be corroborated and Sophia did not write for the public, she wrote for her own private amusement. Sean Ward has deliberately edited and translated Sophia's memoirs so that her she and her writings will appeal to twenty-first century readers. The result is a very readable book full of Sophia's amusing anecdotes, which turn up a great number of recognizable figures from European royal circles, including Charles Stuart II, in exile. A rather quaint picture is drawn of opulent royal gatherings where participants avoided the onerous formalities of the time by playing *Wirtschaft*, a game in which the hosts pretended they were the innkeepers and the guests were their customers. Such circumstances removed the necessity for formal bowing and curtsying and dismissed customary prohibitions against approaching people of higher status. Sophia's memoirs give insight into how royalty circumnavigated the insistent ceremonial duties that accompanied their every move.

The superficial glitter of Sophia's charmed life, however, covered up seething troubles that hid beneath the surface. Her

writings demonstrate that prettiness was an essential asset for women, female learning was a source of mirth, and malicious gossip was used to curtail women's unseemly behaviour. Sophia's memoirs relate a selection of her own and others marital prospects, exposing secret negotiations that saw her engaged to one brother and then passed over to the other brother for an expedient marriage. Many royal women she met were unhappy in their marriages. One lady with a magnificent bosom had her breasts groped by her husband in public in full view of the emperor, as a rebuke for appearing in revealing clothes. Another wife was forced to comply with her husband's wishes through violent ill treatment, and a third wife bit the finger of her husband's mistress through to the bone. This particular husband installed a trapdoor in his bedroom ceiling so as to ascend to his mistress in the apartment above. Women in Sophia's world were commodities, married to the highest bidder or the most convenient partner in the focused pursuit of political advantage.

Both books are essential reading for scholars interested in marriage culture and marital law in the seventeenth century. The effect of the law on Mary Hampson's marriage can be related to wider themes concerning the separation between religious and secular authority. Mary careened between the two, seeking help wherever she could. When she fled to the continent she was declared dead by her husband and had great difficulty proving she was alive and that she was indeed the wife of Robert Hampson. Marriage culture is conjoined with courtly life and courtly love throughout Sophia's memoirs, which Sean Ward has greatly enhanced with extensive family trees and excellent footnotes that give European royalty a new and welcome familiarity. The apparent contrasts in the way Mary Hampson and Sophia of Hanover lived their lives are diminished by evidence of the many similarities and attitudes they experienced, as women.

Yvonne McEwen, *In the Company of Nurses. The History of the British Army Nursing Services in the Great War*,

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

£22.00, 978 -0748679119 (Hardback), pp.ix+237

Vivien Newman, *We Also Served. The Forgotten Women of the First World War*,

Barnsley, Yorkshire: Pen & Sword History, 2014.

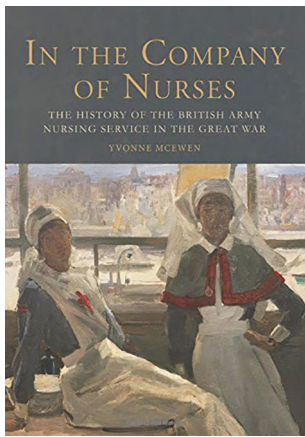
£19.99, 978-1783462256 (Hardback), pp.224

Reviewed by Susan Cohen

Honorary Fellow of the Parkes Institute, University of Southampton

Both of these excellent books deal with the role of women in the First World War, one specifically, the other more generally, but both provide an insight into hidden aspects of the contribution of women to the war effort.

Yvonne McEwen is the official historian of the British Army Nursing Service, and her book is of seminal significance, being the first to provide a detailed research-based account of the members of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) in the Great War. From a scant 400 trained nurses at the outbreak of war, including Reservists, more than 23,391 trained and untrained women had served with the



nursing service by the end of hostilities, often at great cost to themselves.

Throughout McEwen skilfully challenges the many myths and legends about military nursing history, beginning with Book I, the genesis of the practice itself, predating the Boer War by centuries. Chapter two examines the politics of care-giving in 1914, discussing how the highest positions in wartime nursing authority were decided, the impact poor planning had on

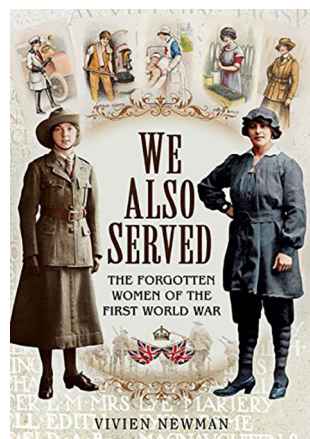
care-giving, and the uneasy relationship between professional nurses and the VADs.

First-hand accounts vividly demonstrate every aspect: in chapter three excerpts recount the horror of wounds, the grim reality of working conditions, and the chaos of the Gallipoli Campaign, whilst chapter four, encompassing the Mesopotamia Campaign, is unsparing in its descriptions of the extreme challenges, as reported by Sir Ian Malcolm in *The Times* in March 1916, 'We hear of lack of hospital accommodation, shortage of medicines, anaesthetics, dressings, bandages...one letter from the spot tells me of three medical officers in charge of 1,000 badly wounded men with practically no dressings or bandages.....Another correspondent writes that a single nurse was in charge of 500 cases, mostly amputations, with only coolies to help.' (p.119). There are vivid descriptions of Field Ambulances and the chain of evacuation, with the essential role of army nurses in the Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) receiving particular attention. The CCS were the first place that a wounded man encountered a female nurse and were 'the beating heart of all life-and-limb saving interventions' (p. 127).

McEwen uses the story of the No. 26 General Hospital at Étaples, which was mobilised for France on 18 June 1915, to exemplify the diverse nature of the work and the patients. The rules which the nursing staff had to abide by were, of necessity, strict, but so too were the general regulations concerning their professional and moral conduct, which stated, for example, '...It is not desirable for members of the Nursing Staff to go to public places of amusement without permission...dances are not permitted...cigarette smoking and the consumption of alcohol are banned,' (p.153) but as McEwen points out, rules were made to be broken, and at times they were definitely relaxed. Informative appendices list awards and citations, as well as data on the occupational lives, health and deaths of nurses.

Finally McEwen concludes that the 'endeavours, sacrifices and professional achievements of the nurses (trained and volunteer) who served during the First World War' were disproportionate to their small numbers, but have been largely overlooked.

The same can be said of the women in Vivien Newman's engaging book, which also challenges legends and preconceptions, but sadly



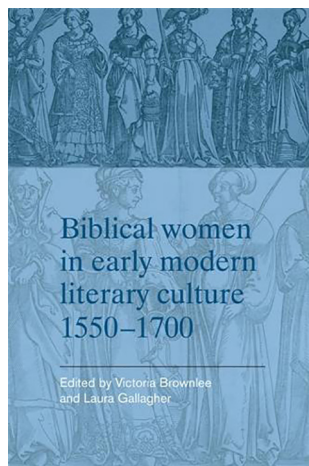
lacks footnotes. The population in Great Britain in August 1914 included 27.6 million women, but other than trained nurses, the skills and labour of the vast majority, however well qualified, were discounted. But in chapter one Newman describes how they were officially encouraged to persuade their men to enlist, before conscription was introduced in 1916. Their 'skills' were also harnessed to write letters for the boys, and to knit. The much-mocked 'Knitting Army' is robustly defended, and indeed without the staggering output of socks produced by women and girls as young as six, far more men would have had amputations as a consequence of trench foot and frostbitten toes.

Chapter two looks briefly at nursing at the front, whilst chapter three looks at the essential role played by women in munitions factories at home. Contrary to popular belief, they were not paid the same rate as men, but contributed generously to wartime charities and benevolent funds. They endured insanitary working conditions, including 'rat infested lavatories' (p.67) and the danger of working with TNT and cordite, which they knew would affect their hearts. The increasingly precarious food situation brought women into agricultural work with sceptical employers impressed with their tractor driving. (p.76). The reader is introduced to some of the approximately 23,000 women who joined the new Women's Land Army, but who, despite their efforts, were discarded at the end of the war.

Newman looks at some of the resourceful and inspiring women who ignored official patronising advice and took themselves off to the Western and Eastern fronts to set up medical facilities, in chapter four. Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland, lacked medical expertise but had money and connections which she used to establish her fully equipped and staffed Ambulance Unit, welcomed by the Belgians. Another was Dr Elsie Inglis, one of several highly qualified British doctors and surgeons, who went abroad with her Scottish Women's Hospital Units (SWHU), with the eastern front presenting the greatest challenges and dangers. Then there were the women spies: we are told that Dr Alice Hutchinson, of the SWHU, working temporarily behind enemy lines, was eager to share information with the British authorities. Hers was an unofficial role, unlike Martha Cnockaert, a young Belgian linguist, who was recruited by a family friend to spy whilst working as a nurse, risking her life in the process. Using khaki clothing as the link, chapter five recalls the dangerous activities undertaken at the front line by the uniformed women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, by the lone 'soldier' Flora Sandes, and briefly introduces the women of the auxiliary army corps and royal naval services. The final chapters reflect on the price paid by women and upon the recognition they received, or failed to receive, for their wartime contribution.

V. Brownlee, & L. Gallagher, (eds), *Biblical Women in Early Modern Literary Culture, 1550-1700* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. £70.00, 978 0 7190 9155 1 (hardback), pp. xi + 252

Reviewed by Alison T. McCall
University of Dundee.



This book comprises ten essays, divided into two sections, Old and New Testament. Each section is preceded by an overview and there is an introduction and afterword to the whole. Each chapter is followed by a full bibliography and the book is well indexed.

The central question addressed by the essays is “which biblical women are appropriated in the period and to what ends?” (p9) The authors use a diverse range of sources, including

books, plays, sermons, mothers’ advice manuals and funeral orations, aimed at a variety of readerships and audiences. As the editors point out early modern writers “display nuanced familiarity with the scriptural figures they address, and anticipate a similarly sophisticated biblical knowledge among their readers.” (p1). Early modern culture was saturated with knowledge of biblical stories, with biblical women typifying various feminine archetypes and therefore every aspect of early modern women’s lives and conduct could be mapped onto the story of a biblical woman, either to exemplify ideal conduct or to highlight undesirable behaviour.

The conduct of the ideal Post-Reformation woman is explored in Clarke’s “Gender and the inculcation of virtue: the Book of Proverbs in action” but also in Gallagher’s “Stabat Mater Dolorosa: Imagining Mary’s grief at the cross.” The latter examines the way in which Mary was refigured from a pre-Reformation ideal of a distraught mother exhibiting extreme emotion to a Post-Reformation ideal of a woman who was sorrowful but, importantly, silent and controlled. Brownlee and Gallagher observe that “It seems that, as is the case so often with early modern male readings of biblical women, the Bible prescribes a role for women that is at odds with early modern expectations of female behaviour.” (p138) and this is especially the case when biblical women played an active role in their society. Lydia, for example, countered cultural restrictions on female silence, and was also, unusually, used as an example of Christian conduct for men. Zipporah, wife of Moses, and Michal, wife of David, were particularly problematic, and early modern wrestling with the meaning of their actions is explored in Osherow’s “Wives, fears and foreskins: early modern reproach of Zipporah and Michal” Streete’s essay “Christian liberty and female rule: exegesis and political controversy in the 1550” points out that Knox elided the issue of Deborah’s rule as one of the Judges of Israel by ascribing her power to the Word of God and not to “any temporal regiment or authority” (p68).

John Knox claimed that female monarchs share “the spirit of Jezebel and Althaliah” (p67) but more commonly

biblical women could be used to flatter. Both Queen Elizabeth I, and Queen Henrietta Maria were compared to the Virgin Mary, although Elizabeth I was also contrasted unfavourably with Mary, as is described in Rist’s essay “Mary of recusants and reform: literary memory and defloration.” Elizabethans wishing to flatter their queen compared her to Rebecca, Deborah and Esther. In addition to operating as an antecedent for Queen Elizabeth, Deborah was also an example of a woman had an active voice and who “sang hymnes of thanksgiving unto the Lord.” (p27) As this seemed at odds with her gender, Deborah was one of several biblical women regarded as having “masculine” qualities, although Deborah was also described by Thomas Bentley as having “babbling speech” (p75). This illustrates the way in which early modern writers wrestled with problematic female figures.

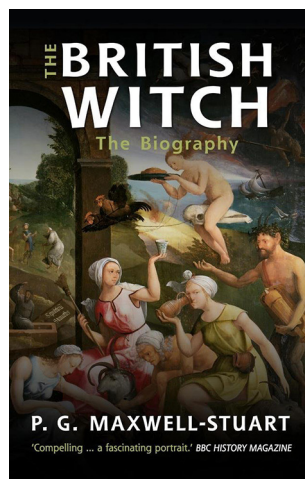
Female writers used biblical women to advance arguments in favour of their own sex. Aemilia Lanyer referred to the Bible’s “wise and virtuous” women, and her passion poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* was dedicated “To all virtuous ladies in general.” Her sympathy towards Eve is described in Hodgson’s “A ‘Paraditian creature’: Eve and her unsuspecting garden in seventeenth-century literature.” Margaret Fell also pointed out the active role played by biblical women “we do not read that [Apollo] despised what *Priscilla* said, because she was a Woman, as many now do” (p137). Female petitioners to the House of Commons often cited Esther to justify their actions. Thorne focuses on this in her essay “The politics of female supplication in the Book of Esther.”

This book helps to highlight the contested areas of women’s lives in the early modern period, by examining the use of biblical women by a variety of authors to exhort, warn, praise and encourage. Biblical women whose stories were subject to multiple and contradictory interpretations highlight the complexity of women’s lives in this period. The reviewer found this collection engrossing and is only sorry that she could not mention other essays within the word length for this review.

P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The British Witch: The Biography*

Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014. £25, 978 1 4456 2202 6 (hardback), pp.470.

Reviewed by Nicola Darwood
University of Bedfordshire



P. G. Maxwell-Stuart has drawn on a significant amount of scholarly research for this book and provides a detailed discussion of notions of witchcraft between 1222 and 1735 (with a postscript which details a jury’s use of a Ouija board in 1993). Maxwell-Stuart has previously published books which discussed variously the representation of the Devil, the story of astrology and a history of the poltergeist; this book explores various forms

of witchcraft and, through the use of detailed case histories, recounts the practice, persecution and prosecution of those deemed to have been involved in magic.

In this chronological study, Maxwell-Stuart also provides a significant amount of legislative information. For example, we learn that the *Act against Conjurations, Enchantments, and Witchcrafts* of 1563 legislated against the 'conjunction and invocations of evil spirits' and that 'if any person or persons [...] shall practise, or exercise any witchcraft, enchantment, charm, or sorcery whereby any person shall happen to be killed or destroyed [... they] shall suffer pain of death as a felon' (132-133). Maxwell-Stuart's approach includes a recognition that a number of words have been used to describe the various aspects of witchcraft and sorcery and he notes the difficulties inherent in the translation of documents. This is particularly the case when considering the use of words such as witch and witchcraft in terms of the Latin words *sortilegium*, *sortelegi* and *sortilegae* (p. 64), which can refer to sorcery, witchcraft or a range of activities including 'divination, evocation of demons, spells of love, hatred, or cure, acts of maleficent intention, image magic [and] control of the weather' (p.65).

All these aspects of witchcraft are discussed in detail in the numerous case histories in this book including that of Margery Jourdemayne (also known as the 'Witch of Eye') who, in 1441, was accused of making a wax image of the king on behalf of Eleanor Cobham, the Duchess of Gloucester. The wax image, it was alleged, would be instrumental in the king's death (p. 70). This particular case history highlights the connections between witchcraft, treason and regicide while other histories align pagan practices to heresy or to Catholic beliefs. It is also evident that members of royal families encouraged, at various times, elements of witchcraft; John Dee is perhaps the best known example of regal patronage of sorcerers. Others considered witchcraft a threat to the monarchy and society. Indeed James VI of Scotland wrote in his treatise *Daemonologie* (written circa 1589 but not published until 1597) that:

The fearful abundance at this time in this country of these detestable slaves of the Devil, the witches or enchanters has moved me (beloved reader) to write quickly this following treatise of mine ... to endeavor thereby, as far as I can, to resolve the doubting hearts of many, both that such assaults of Satan are most certainly practiced, and that the instruments thereof merit most severely to be punished (p. 195).

What is very apparent from Maxwell-Stuart's book is that, although some may have made accusations of witchcraft in order to settle old debts, there were many who truly believed these practices were both real and a danger to society; the wealth of primary and secondary material used in this book provides detailed information about these fears which would be useful for any scholar of British history. However, this portrait of the British witch should not be considered a 'quick read' to be used solely for reference purposes, rather it is a book that will reward a sustained reading.

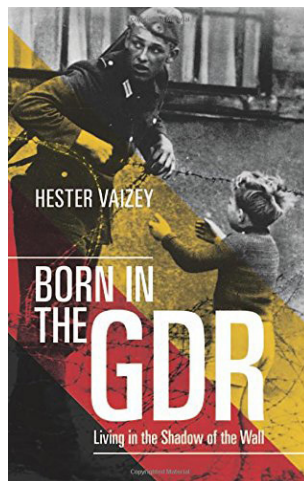
Maxwell-Stuart argues that we should 'put aside both preconceptions and modern intellectual clichés, and look, or at least try to look, at our forebears through their eyes and not through ours' (8). Perhaps, therefore, this is a perfect book for long winter afternoons when the reader will have the time to imagine life in a world in which sorcery and magic is

considered part of everyday life and to read what is ostensibly a biography of the British witch but which is also a fascinating portrait of the belief systems of Britain over six centuries.

Hester Vaizey, *Born in the GDR Living in the Shadow of the Wall*

Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. £20.00, 978-0-19-871873-4 (Hardback), pp. ixii + 217

Reviewed by Anna Olsson Rost
Bangor University



Vaizey's proposition that '[T]he collapse of communism was certainly not the end of the story, but rather the start of a new chapter' (p.179) in the lives of East Germans is vividly illustrated in this book. *Born in the GDR* sets out to investigate individual experiences from East Germany (GDR) and of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The book is structured around eight interviews with individuals who were born after the construction of the wall in 1961 and whose early lives were shaped by

growing up in the strictly communist GDR. These diverse recollections provide fascinating insights into particular individuals' memories from the former GDR as well as their present-day views on their lives in former East Germany and sheds light on the unfolding legacy of the reunification process. Each chapter of the book presents and analyses one principle witness account. Constructing the chapters around each interviewee presents a compelling narrative, making the book an easy read while still providing both historical detail and interpretation. Vaizey successfully avoids getting too entangled in the notoriously thorny theoretical debate often associated with oral history studies. By applying a pragmatic approach in the use of her sources, and by emphasising the significance of the contrast between individual experiences, Vaizey presents a relatively unproblematic oral history study.

In the first chapter the reader is introduced to Petra, who in the aftermath of reunification became one of only seventeen socialist MPs (out of 662) from the former GDR to represent the party in the *Bundestag*. In subsequent chapters we meet Carola who left the GDR in January 1989 in order to find new freedoms and opportunities in West Germany, while Mario's failed attempt to escape from the GDR in 1987 has critically shaped his memories of life in East Germany after having been imprisoned by the Stasi. Other accounts include that of Katharina and her life as a devout Christian under the Communist regime, as well as Lisa and Robert who both remember conforming to life in the GDR, and how acceptance of the regime and its demands generally allowed for an acceptable every day existence.

Although these recollections of life in the GDR are very diverse, Vaizey has been able to draw some overarching conclusions. In the wake of the fall of the wall two extreme

characterizations of the former GDR developed: either the negative image of East Germany as a strictly controlled 'Stasiland', or the nostalgic view of the GDR as a communist utopia. Instead Vaizey allows a more complex and nuanced picture to be portrayed. Although none of the interviewees expressed any desire to return to life in the former GDR, most of them felt at least some sense of loss for their shared past. Most also felt that there had been certain positive aspects to life in the GDR that have been written out of history. An illustrative example is given by Petra, who during the late 1980s was an active member of the Independent Women's Association in the GDR. The Association aimed to improve women's situations in East Germany, and Petra observes that she had to defend the rights and benefits that had been afforded to women in the former GDR, but which were not recognised in reunified Germany. However, Vaizey suggests that as far as 'nostalgia' for the GDR is concerned it is not a political desire to return to the old regime, but rather an expression of nostalgia for shared memories and experiences among East Germans. She emphasises that '[I]n many ways, then, it is no different from West Germans who remember aspects of their past in a positive light. Crucially, though, the FRG still exists but the GDR does not' (p.174). Having been brought up in two very different societies, East and West Germans were shaped by very diverse systems. Different skills, ways of lives and beliefs were encouraged on either side of the wall, and many East Germans were ill-equipped for life in a reunited Germany which embraced the Western 'way of life'. In this respect Vaizey's sources provide enlightening and engrossing insights into East Germans' perception of the reunification process, and their responses to the vanishing of a society that shaped them.

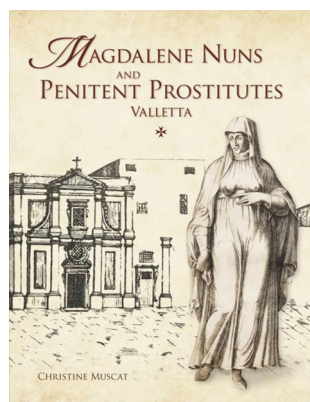
Christine Muscat, *Magdalene Nuns and Penitent Prostitutes*

Malta Book Distributors Limited, 2013. €45/£32.

ISBN 978-99957-33-96-4, pp.231

Reviewed by Susanna Hoe

Independent Scholar



The re-creation of Maltese women's history by Maltese women is still in its infancy, which makes Muscat's book all the more valuable. The fact that it is so thorough and so beautifully illustrated and produced is a bonus.

Male historians have touched upon the life of nuns in Malta: Carmel Cassar's *Daughters of Eve: Women, Gender Roles and the impact of the Council of*

Trent in Catholic Malta (2002) is the most obvious example, and Giovanni Bonello has contributed several chapters on the subject in his works. Given that Malta is still a Roman Catholic country, and that in previous centuries so many women were confined, often involuntarily, to convents, an in-depth study of one of its convents, from its inception to its closure, was long overdue. And what could have been a purely academic study –

and did, indeed, start life as a master's dissertation – has been transformed into an engrossing read.

Sicilian farming families arrived in Malta 7000 or so years ago and Christianity is said to have done so with St Paul's shipwreck on the island in AD60, but it could just as easily have come with St Agatha who took refuge in caves in Rabat in AD249 and also spread the word. But it is now more generally accepted that it finally took root in the 12th century, following 200 years of Muslim Arab domination.

The first nuns, the Ursulines, were not invited to establish their House until 1582. They were attached to the Order of St John of Jerusalem, whose Knights had been given Malta as their refuge from the Turks in 1530. The task of the Ursulines was to look after poor orphan girls in order to safeguard their virginity. Given the less-than-celibate life of the Knights, they needed protection and in response the Convent of St Mary Magdalene – known colloquially as the 'Maddalena' – was established under the Franciscan Poor Clares in 1598 to house unmarried mothers and prostitutes. But it was not simply a refuge, the females there – sometimes as young as eight – were expected to gain full spiritual recovery; they were to be both penitent and reformed (*Repentite* and *Convertite*). The Maltese 'Maddalena' was not unique, and Christine Muscat usefully sets the convent in the context of similar institutions in other parts of Europe. Then she takes the reader through the progress of the Valletta 'Maddalena' and its denizens for the next two hundred years, until the French Revolutionary administration of 1798 closed it. Its church, once richly embellished, is now a sad shell, and in place of the convent itself, is a modern school block. But here those who lived there come to life again.

The 'Maddalena' started life as a poor relation, lacking the funds available to the Ursulines. But the women who entered the house – and their categories gradually expanded – began to establish themselves. They were soon neither poor nor downtrodden, even vying with the Ursulines for funds through litigation, which they won, and not always toeing the line set by their lords and masters.

Christine Muscat not only highlights interesting characters, but has unearthed portraits of them. Typical is Flamenia Valenti, who looks so pious, but when she was mistress of Grand Master de Paule, he built her a villa next to his with a door in the adjoining garden wall. As Sister Dorothea, she donated 18,000 scudi 'dishonestly acquired' to the convent as part of her dowry for entry, and she gave birth to her daughter there. Starting with the obligatory dowries for entry, the 'Maddalena' built up its funds so that latterly it owned property all over Malta and Gozo, including at least 65 houses in Valletta. The skilful conclusion is that access to wealth offered opportunities for development which the nuns of the 'Maddalena' did not hesitate to exploit.

This is not a book to put in your holiday suitcase. Not because of its content – it is surprisingly accessible for a work of real scholarship – but because of its large format and weight. It is, though, essential reading for anyone interested in the history of women in religious institutions, or the history of Malta, more particularly the history of Maltese women. It gives a hint of how it is that today they are increasingly able, through their own efforts, to jump the hurdles that some of its institutions have erected over the years. Perhaps one of its most attractive features is the sense that the author has really engaged with her subject, thus providing encouragement to others to add to the exploration of women's history in Malta.

Deborah Heller (ed.) *Bluestockings Now! The Evolution of a Social Role*

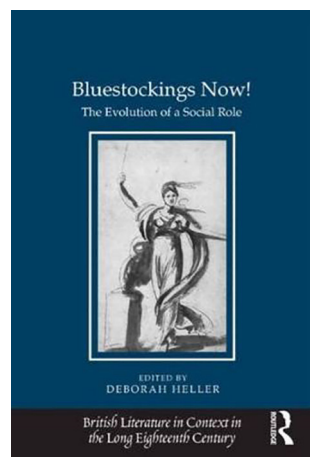
Farnham, Surrey and Burlington VT:

Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015 £60, ASIN

BOOXV3Q6EC (hardback), pp. 254

Reviewed by Anne Stott

formerly Birkbeck, University of London and the Open University



In her recollections of her famous brother, the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, his sister noted that he could not bear 'Blues', associating them with pedantry, pretentiousness and lack of originality. Yet this same Tom Macaulay had been mentored in his youth by the Bluestocking, Hannah More, who had formed one of the figures of Richard Samuel's 1779 painting, 'The Nine Living Muses of Great Britain' and whose 1783 poem the 'Bas Bleu' was a celebration of

the Bluestocking circle that congregated round Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vesey and Frances Boscawen. The transformation of the admired 'Bluestocking' into the despised 'Blue' is one of the themes of this volume.

The nine essays engage with two issues: the taxonomic question of how to define a Bluestocking and who to include in the category; and the relevance of the Bluestockings to the present day. The title, exclamation mark and all, was suggested by one of the contributors, Gary Kelly. Its dual meaning is to bring together the latest scholarship on the Bluestockings and to assess their significance in an allegedly post-feminist age.

One way into the subject is provided by Deborah Heller's application of network theory to Bluestocking sociability. Her sociograms provide important information about their many connections and interactions, though perhaps more could have been made of their geographical links. It is worth stressing, for example, that Margaret Middleton and Beilby Porteus, Bishop of Chester, were near neighbours in Kent, forming the hub of the abolitionist movement in the county.

The importance of neighbourhood and diocesan links comes out well in Clarissa Campbell Orr's study of the Gloucester networks of Sarah Kirkham Chapone, mother-in-law of the more famous Hester Mulso Chapone, whose feminist pamphlets were published anonymously in 1735 and 1750. Such connections can be very complex indeed, as is shown in William McCarthy's account of John Burrows, friend of Hester Chapone, tutor to Elizabeth Montague's nephew and recorder of Bluestocking conversation. Abandoning the usual metaphors of networking, McCarthy aptly describes the Burrows family as 'a junction box where all the wires met' (p. 115).

Orr's study of the elder Chapone raises the question of chronology: did Bluestockings exist before Elizabeth Montagu set up her salon? Should the term be applied to any literary woman of the eighteenth century (and earlier?) or should it be tied to one specific group? The chronology is extended into the twentieth century in Patricia Demers' intriguing comparison

of Hannah More and the Canadian novelist and ordained minister, Grace Irwin.

Beth Fowkes Tobin focuses on the Bluestockings' contributions to the domestic arts, pointing out that they 'were not only skilled wordsmiths, but were also skilled needleworkers, shellworkers, featherworkers, and apparently, according to Doctor Johnson, good cooks' (p. 57). Felicity Nussbaum notes their links to the theatre, and in particular Hester Thrale Piozzi's longing for dramatic celebrity. Her trip to Italy following her notorious second marriage places her in the ranks of the cosmopolitan Bluestockings described by Nicole Pohl, though as Pohl points out, their cosmopolitanism was undercut by an Anglocentric 'exclusionary bias' (p. 87).

There is a change of tone in Michael J. Franklin's study of Hester Thrale's travails as the wife of an incorrigible philanderer whose reckless speculations (encouraged by Johnson) nearly ruined his brewing business. In her attempts to keep the concern afloat, Hester was left battling against two male egos. At first sight, this essay, though full of interesting details, does not seem to fit in well with the themes of the book, but a link is provided by Gary Kelly's long final chapter. The generation of Elizabeth Montagu and Hester Thrale saw battles between different versions of modernity. Thrale's loveless first marriage ran counter to the new emphasis in intimacy and domesticity, an emphasis that threatened to undercut the historic power of the social elite. Another threat to the existing order came from Anna Letitia Barbauld, who as a middle-class Dissenter represented a different version of modernity from that associated with Elizabeth Montagu.

In demonstrating that Bluestocking culture extended far beyond the Montagu-Vesey-Boscawen circle and in setting out the range of meanings associated with their 'gynocratic modernity' (Kelly's term), this volume makes a significant and welcome contribution to Bluestocking studies.

Erratum

Please note that the correct title and citation for Elizabeth R's Escobedo's book reviewed in the Spring 2016 edition is:

Elizabeth R. Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits. The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. \$34.95, 978-1-4696-0205-9(Hardback), pp. xv +229.

We apologise for the error and any distress caused to the author and reviewer.

Committee News

The Steering Committee met on Saturday 12 March 2016 at Senate House, University of London.

Budget

The treasurer, Aurelia Annat, reported that the organisation's finances were healthy: we have £10,926.60 in our current account and £10,027.82 in our bonus account. However, it was noted that we have £8359 of expenses still to go out. Nevertheless, we have a clear surplus of £500. Aurelia raised the issue for discussion of increasing bursaries for the 2016 conference to £2000. She noted that moving to three meetings a year (from four) means that the provisional budget will not be discussed in the summer, prior to it being presented at the AGM. Possible options were discussed, including a skype meeting, or circulating information for review via email. It was decided that Aurelia will circulate points regarding the provisional budget by email to the steering committee by 20 June 2016, for the committee to review and respond. It was decided that the steering committee meetings will be held three times a year: at the AGM (September conference), November and April.

Membership Report

Felicity Cawley, membership secretary, presented the Membership Report. We have 402 members and she noted that some members have already updated their membership to accept the digital copy of the magazine. She advised that on average there are two new memberships a month. Gift Aid memberships have decreased unfortunately. The earlier suggestion of having a table at the annual conference to enable members to access Gift Aid membership was again endorsed.

Feedback from 2015 annual conference

Catherine Lee, one of the organisers of the last WHN conference (held at Kent University) noted that management of the conference programme had been challenging because of delegates' uncertainty about funding. Maggie Andrews advised using Early Bird registration. Catherine suggested that the programme needs to be tied into registration. Penny Tinkler, who is the new WHN conference liaison person, advocated having administrative support for the conference organisers (Maggie advised on how this worked at the 2014 conference). Penny will draw up conference guidelines for future conference organisers to be distributed amongst the steering committee in late May.

Annual conference for 2016

The conference on 'Women's Material Cultures/Women's Material Environments', 16-17 September 2016 is to be held at Leeds Trinity University. Forty papers have been received after the first call for papers, including papers from museum professionals and researchers. It was noted that a date needs to be fixed for a second call for papers. Penny will email conference organisers (Lauren Padgett in particular) to get in contact with Robin Joyce about putting abstracts on the blog.
Admin assistance for 2016 conference

Admin assistance for 2016 conference

June Purvis proposed assigning £500 for secretarial assistance for the 2016 conference, and Lucy Bland asked if it was possible to increase this to £1000. Aurelia advised that our current account could afford more than £500, and noted that we are due an HMRC rebate (based on previous years, this is estimated to be in the order of £500). Lucy proposed revised figures of £1750 for bursaries and £750 for conference administration and this was agreed.

Women's History Journal

Lucy submitted a report: the new team is now in place, with Catherine Lee at the helm, and it will be taking over as from the Summer 2016 issue (Spring was still technically under Kate's leadership). The Spring editorial pays tribute to Kate Murphy for stepping in and leading the team with such enthusiasm. The journal continues to attract interesting proposals for themed issues; the current ratio themed/open looks set to stay at 2:1 per year. We are always interested to receive theme proposals, and articles for non-themed issues. Lucy is to leave the journal in September 2016. Catherine suggested that Naomi Pullin takes over Lucy's role and Naomi is to be mentored by Lucy over the remaining months.

£500 Competition for Teaching/Research Staff to mount one day conference

June reported that she had not had any applications for the competition to date, but the deadline is 1 May. Maggie Andrews and Penny Tickler volunteered to review applications, along with June.

Prizes

Maggie noted that so far there were only two entries for the book prize. Pat Thane has agreed to join the panel to cover twentieth century but there is still a need for someone else for the medieval/early modern periods. Publicity and invitations of submissions for the Community Prize will go out in Easter. We are coming to the end of the History Press's three year sponsorship and Maggie will explore the potential for continued sponsorship from them over the next few months.

The Blog

Robin Joyce's report noted that the blog has been revamped and that it is now accessible as part of the WHN site, rather than having an independent address. Robin endorsed June's previous suggestion about using the blog for discussion, e.g. a recent example that would have worked well was the debate about the feature film, *Suffragette*. Recent posts have been between 500 and 1000 words, with shorter posts in the majority. Robin's suggestion that undergraduate students might be encouraged to contribute to the blog was endorsed.

IFRWH news

June noted that the next 'stand alone' IFRWH will be in August

BOOKS RECEIVED AND CALL FOR REVIEWERS

The following titles are available for review, so if you would like to review any of these, please email me, Jane Berney, at bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org

You don't have to be an expert to review, if you have a general interest and knowledge of the relevant historical period or territory then that will count for a lot. The ability to summarise a work (within the word limit!) and write interestingly about it is the most important thing. Any suggestions for books to review are also welcome – just email me as above.

Kate Murphy, *Behind the Wireless. A History of Early Women at the BBC* (Palgrave Macmillan)

Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds) *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (Palgrave)

Nick Holland, *In Search of Anne Brontë* (The History Press)

Penny Starns, *Sisters of the Somme. True Stories from a First World War Field Hospital* (The History Press)

Susan Cohen, *The Midwife* (Shire, Bloomsbury)

Mary McAuliffe and Liz Gillis, *Richmond Barracks 1916. "We were There". 77 Women of the Easter Rising* (Four Courts Press)

Joel Lobenthal, *Alla Osipenko. Beauty and Resistance in Soviet Ballet* (Oxford University Press)

Deb Vanasse, *Wealth Woman. Kate Carmack and the Klondike Race for Gold* (University of Alaska Press)

Susan Pares, *Displaced by War. Gertrude Powicke and Quaker Relief in France and Poland 1915-1919* (Francis Boutle)

Paul Chrystal, *Women at War in the Ancient World* (Amberley)

Zubin Mistry, *Abortion in the Early Middle Ages, c.500 - 900* (Boydell & Brewer)

Joanna Burke, *The Story of Pain. From Prayer to Painkillers* (Oxford University Press)

Tanka Szabo, *Young, Brave and Beautiful. The Missions of SOE Agent Lieutenant Violette Szabo* (The History Press)

Rickie Solinger & Mie Nakachi (eds), *Reproductive States. Global Perspectives on the Invention and Implementation of Population Policy* (Oxford University Press)

Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, *Awakening. Four Lives in Art* (Wakefield Press) - 4 Australian women who made their reputation in the arts outside of Australia in the first half of the 20th century

Revolutionary History, *Clara Zetkin. Letters and Writings* (Merlin Press) – Clara (1857-1933) was a prominent figure in the international socialist movement and then in the communist party in Germany

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (OUP - Oxford World's Classic series)

Lesley Poling-Kempes, *Ladies of the Canyons. A League of Extraordinary Women and their Adventures in the American Southwest* (University of Arizona Press)

Susanna Rabow-Edling, *Married to the Empire. Three Governors' Wives in Russian America 1829-1864* (University of Alaska Press)

Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* (Yale University Press)

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

2018 in Santa Barbara, California, USA, organized by Eileen Boris. The conference that is part of the International Congress of the Historical Sciences (CISH) will be held in Pozan, Poland in 2020. Details of all IFRWH news can be found on the website, under Newsletter.

Social Media

Lucinda Matthew-Jones' report pointed to the need for greater synergy between the blog and the social media accounts. Lucinda will liaise with Robin to have information about new blog posts sent to her, and asked if widgets for social media were included on the blogs which would also encourage more circulation of our material by our followers on social media. Lucinda also noted that it would be useful to have a lead-in to any significant events etc.

Items for AGM in September

Firstly, changes to Constitution as recommended by Jocelynn Scutt: point 7 (of 'The National Steering Committee'): the wording about the length of service of a chair (convenor) needs to be clarified. Did it date from when the person joined the Committee or when the person took over as chair? There

was a long discussion about the nominations and selection process for a new convenor/chair, including the eventuality that there might be only one nominee from the committee and that the process of selecting the new chair should begin nine months before takeover rather than six months. It was agreed that the steering committee needed to begin discussion about nominations for a new convenor/chair in the November meeting, three years into the current chair's term. The issue of using gender-neutral language was also raised e.g. the draft frequently referred to 'her'. Felicity will send out the new constitution (when finalised) via the membership email list in summer 2016, and in any case before the AGM.

Secondly, reducing our meetings to three per year was discussed. Point 7 (c) of the Constitution states that the steering committee shall ordinarily hold 3 meetings each year and a minimum of 2. Discussion followed about the implications of reducing to three meetings a year. It was felt that members of the steering committee should attend a minimum of two meetings per year, or may be considered to have stepped down. Further discussion about steering committee posts: Lucy raised again the suggestion of creating a new committee position of a postgraduate liaison representative. This was endorsed and Maggie Andrews suggested that one of her

postgraduate students might be interested in this post.

Aurelia proposed the steering committee meeting held before or after the AGM at the annual conference might be used for broader discussion about the future of the WHN etc. It was agreed that this meeting of the steering committee should be an 'open agenda meeting', with members sending in to the convenor well beforehand a list of the topics they wished to discuss.

Members leaving this year

June expressed warm thanks to Maggie Andrews and Lucy Bland who leave the steering committee this year after the

Getting to Know Each Other

Name Catherine Lee

Position Associate Lecturer and Honorary Associate in History, The Open University

How long have you been a WHN member?

Only a couple of years, I'm ashamed to say. What on earth was I doing?

What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?

I don't recall a time when I wasn't interested in history, beginning with TV period dramas as a child. During my teens, second-wave feminism was still in its infancy and no doubt this cultural and political atmosphere had an impact on the way I thought about the past, leading to a particular interest in women's experience. I'm proud to have received Antonia Raeburn's *the Suffragette View* as a school prize so clearly I was showing signs of this enthusiasm even then! It wasn't until much later (I didn't come to academia as a first career) that this instinctive enthusiasm received a more scholarly underpinning.

What are your special interests?

My special interest is in the disadvantaged and those at the margins of society, and in how they negotiated (or circumvented, or confronted) social rules and conventions in order to survive in the past. Additionally, I like to take a bottom-up approach to questions more often examined top-down, a combination that usually leads to a focus on women. I'm also particularly interested in – what seems to me to be the inherent – tension between feminism and marginalised women's agency.

Who is your heroine from history and why?

Given what I've said, I have to choose someone completely anonymous! I like to think that heroism can be reflected in endurance and self-determination as well as by more obviously brave acts. I've written about women like Sarah Darge, the daughter of a destitute Kentish fish-hawker's widow, who used a mixed economy based on prostitution, combined with applications to the workhouse, to survive in the 1870s. She lived on her wits and played the patriarchal poor law and criminal justice systems.

AGM. As Gillian Beattie-Smith has resigned, we need three new steering committee members for various positions – on the Journal, Postgraduate Liaison, and Community History Representative (who would take over the Prizes role).

The date of next meeting will be at the annual conference, 16-17 September 2016. All WHN members are welcome.

Membership Announcements

In response to rising costs the Women's History Network is making a move towards a digital distribution of 'Women's History', it has therefore been decided to increase membership fees for all members wishing to continue to receive *Women's History* in hardcopy. This decision has been outlined in a recent E-mail sent to all members and the new membership fees can be found on the back cover or on our website. If you have any questions or queries please email - membership@womenshistorynetwork.org

You can manage your WHN membership, update your details, pay your subscription, add your research interests/books and make a donation by logging into the Members' Area at www.womenshistorynetwork.org

Do you pay your subscription by standing order? If so, can you check that the payment details reflect the 2016 rates. Don't forget, we have different rates to reflect different personal circumstances, so it is worth checking that you are paying the correct rate for you. Details of the 2016 rates for all categories of members can be found on the back cover of the magazine or by logging in to your account at www.womenshistorynetwork.org.

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, or changes to personal details, can be arranged by logging in to your account at www.womenshistorynetwork.org OR by emailing membership@womenshistorynetwork.org OR by mail to Ms Felicity Cawley, Postgrad Research Student, Economic & Social History, Lilybank House, University of Glasgow, G12 8RT.

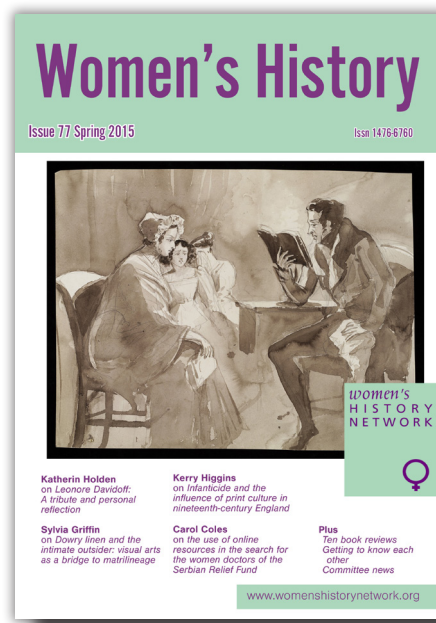
Publishing in *Women's History*

Women's History 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



Women's History Network Contacts

Steering Committee Officers:

Membership, subscriptions, Felicity Cawley:
membership@womenshistorynetwork.org

or write to Ms Felicity Cawley, Postgrad Research Student, Economic & Social History, Lilybank House, University of Glasgow, G12 8RT

Finance, Aurelia Annat:
treasurer@womenshistorynetwork.org

Committee Convenor, June Purvis:
convenor@womenshistorynetwork.org

WHN Book Prize, Chair, June Hannam:
bookprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

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

Charity Representative, Alana Harris:
charityrep@womenshistorynetwork.org

Newsletter Editor, Meleisa Ono-George:
newsletter@womenshistorynetwork.org

WHN Blog, Lucinda Matthews-Jones:
womenshistorynetwork.org/category/blog/

Web Liaison and Social Media Co-ordinator, Robyn Joyce:
liaison@womenshistorynetwork.org

Journal Team:

Editors: Jane Berney, Lucy Bland, Rosalind Carr, Catherine Lee, Naomi Pullin and Rachel Rich.
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

For Journal submissions and peer review:
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

For book reviews: Jane Berney:
bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org

To submit books for review please email the book reviews editor with details of the book to be reviewed.

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

*To join the WHN just go to
www.womenshistorynetwork.org and follow the instructions.
Payments and Gift-Aid declarations can all be
accessed online as well – see panel on page 42 for further details*

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 *Women's History*, 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. The journal is delivered electronically in PDF form to all members via email. UK based members, however, can elect to receive a printed hardcopy of *Women's History* for an increased membership fee.

WHN membership

Annual Membership Rates *(/with journal hardcopy)*

Student or unwaged member	£15 / £20
Low income member (*under £20,000 pa)	£25 / £30
Standard member	£40 / £45
Overseas member	£40
Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy)	£350

Charity Number: 1118201. Membership application/renewal, Gift Aid Declaration are all available at
www.womenshistorynetwork.org