

# Women's History

The journal of the Women's History Network



**Spring 2019**

**Articles by**

*Elżbieta Pawlak-Hejno*

*Marta Kargól*

*Friederike  
Brühöfener*

**Plus**

*Five book reviews*

*Getting to know each  
other x 2*

*Committee Report*

women's  
HISTORY  
NETWORK



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# WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019

## Professional Women: the public, the private and the political



2019 marks the centenary of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in Britain, which opened all 'civil professions or vocations', including the civil service and legal profession, to women. It was a significant landmark – but neither a beginning or an end – to the history of professional women.

This conference will explore not only the significance of the 1919 Act, but also the 'professional woman' in all periods, nations and forms. She is found far beyond 'the professions', in fields ranging from agriculture to industry, from education to the arts. She has worked with or without official sanction and recognition, in widely varying conditions, for typically unequal wages. She has created her own professional niches, from domestic trades to feminist organisations – or forced her way into traditionally male domains. Her professional life has been influenced by sex and gender, but also by class, ethnicity and race, sexuality, disability, age, nationality and family situation.

We look forward to welcoming established scholars, postgraduate researchers, independent scholars, museum curators, archivists, local history groups and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines researching professional women in Britain and elsewhere in the world, to this conference to be hosted at

**LSE Library, the home of the Women's Library**

on

**6-7 September 2019**

Conference organiser: Gillian Murphy ([G.E.Murphy@lse.ac.uk](mailto:G.E.Murphy@lse.ac.uk))

Booking information will be provided in the next issue



The *Women's History* editorial board would like to take this opportunity to wish all readers a belated 'Happy New Year'. After last year's 1918 centenary commemorations, we switch focus with this issue, turning to look at twentieth-century women's history beyond Great Britain. It is perhaps appropriate – albeit that the timing is entirely coincidental – that our attention this spring should be drawn toward western and eastern continental Europe.

Our selection of articles has many points of thematic linkage. Following on from our Autumn suffrage-themed double issue it is perhaps apposite that we now have the opportunity to reflect upon how the British women's suffrage campaign was perceived and reported abroad. As Elżbieta Pawlak-Hejno shows, at the opening of the second decade of the twentieth century the Polish press was faced with a challenge in deciding how to report the campaign – particularly those events that were of a more contentious nature. British culture and society, she argues, had previously been idealised in Poland and Polish newspapers and magazines thus adopted a range of rhetorical strategies in their reportage: the various approaches were dictated by a publication's politics, genre and target audience. General titles tended to sensationalise; focusing on radical tactics, they represented activists in terms of madness, hysteria or sexual disappointment. Feminist publications, on the other hand, contextualised women's rights activity as part of wider moral social reform initiatives. They offered nuanced explorations of British politics and differentiated between the constitutionalist and militant branches of the movement. As Pawlak-Hejno argues, Poland's own political and cultural circumstances were especially influential in terms of how the media reported the British women's suffrage campaign: at this period, prior to independence, Poland looked to Britain as an ally. At the same time, wider discourses of freedom and individual rights provided a very particular context to the discourse of women's liberation.

Staying with the subject of Polish politics, the later twentieth century provides the backdrop to Marta Kargól's exploration of the social and political dimensions of knitting between the 1950s and 1980s. As she argues, the practice of knitting symbolised gender ideology in Poland at this period. There was a tension between, on the one hand, the official political discourse of gender equality – in public space and with regard to employment – and expectations with regard to domestic duties on the other. This tension is, arguably, reflected in the practice of knitting, which was at the same time said to be 'practical' and 'useful' yet also 'a pleasant activity'. Knitting was promoted as a means of combining an enjoyable leisure pastime with domestic obligations. In addition, at times of economic crisis such as the immediate post-Second World War period and the early 1980s, and against the backdrop of struggles with problems of commodity supply, home-made knitted clothing constituted a means of making valuable savings to the family budget. Knitted clothing accordingly became fashionable: it was both a source of pride and a means of self-expression. It also offered the possibility of deviating from the expected norms of plainness and lack of colour of the Communist era.

The symbolic significance of clothing is also central to Friederike Brühöfener's study of the military uniforms worn by West Germany's first female military medical officers in the 1970s. The article points to the tensions between the government's priorities on the one hand (the need to symbolise women's status as members of the West Germany's armed

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forces without being too militaristic, whilst allowing a degree of individuality and recognising the women's femininity) and the officers' own priorities on the other. These included functionality and the representative nature of their outfit. As Brühöfener argues, the uniform thus acquired a significance beyond the basic institutional requirements for functionality. It reflected, at the same time, various military and governmental symbolic meanings together with the female officers' expression of self and group identity. Situating clothing within the broader context of material culture, the article builds upon the work of scholars who have stressed the important role that clothing plays in the creation and shaping of identities, body images, social relationships and institutional hierarchies.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this issue's selection of articles. As ever, we welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues.

Rosi Carr, Sue Hawkins, Catherine Lee, Naomi Pullin and Zoë Thomas



Front Cover  
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# Rhetorical strategies used in representations of English women's suffrage activists in the Polish press before the outbreak of the First World War

Elżbieta Pawlak-Hejno

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Women's history does not only emerge from documents stored in archives or from research into everyday artefacts. In addition to journals, diaries, letters and the memoirs of historical actors, press reportage constitutes a key source for women's history. Newspaper and magazine journalism offers readers the opportunity to learn about both local and international events. However, it also comprises interpretation and the communication of judgement and opinion. Journalists' style and analyses thus contribute to the shaping of public opinion and the formation of popular judgements as well as – looking from the contemporary perspective – the creation of 'official' versions of historical events.

In the period before the First World War, the Polish press reported British women's suffrage activity for two reasons. Firstly, this campaign was well known. In addition, British women fought for their rights with unprecedented power and determination, using methods that shocked European society. This both provided journalists with excellent source material and posed them an interesting challenge. The Polish press, which predominantly glorified the British people, had to find an appropriate stance from which to report the news about the women's struggle. The question was whether to depict suffrage activists as heroes or as troublemakers who were threatening the order of an idealised society.

Therefore, in their presentation of British suffrage campaigners, Polish journalists adopted certain rhetorical strategies. These can be understood in terms of the communication and cognitive techniques used by writers to influence both the course of a dialogue and the audience. Aristotle's persuasion triad divides modes of persuasion into those dependent on the speaker's character (ethos), those dependent on the emotional appeal to the listener (pathos) and those dependent on the actual or apparent reasoning contained in the speech itself (logos). Analysis of the values expressed in Polish press reports of British women's suffrage activity demonstrates which of these strategies journalists utilised. The research covered a sample of 200 various journalistic texts from eleven daily papers and magazines from the years 1908–1914.

The aim of this article is to explore the rhetorical strategies used in the Polish press to portray British women's suffrage activists. Using the Aristotelian framework, the following three main strategies are evident: 1) emotional (connected with the reports' sensational character), 2) evaluative (connected with building of ethos) and 3) informative (connected with the factual presentation of the subject matter). Describing the women's struggle for voting rights in Britain, Polish journalists not only reported events objectively but also interpreted them subjectively, according either to their world view, their visions of gender roles or according to the political ideology of their editorial teams. Hence, suffrage campaign articles not only had a cognitive value for the reader but also contained the characteristics of persuasive rhetorical texts. This shaped the

discourse on the subject matter, the language of its description and the semantic field of the term 'suffrage activist'.

## The first strategy: the dominance of *pathos* – sensationalist reports in the daily papers

Between 1908 and 1910, the Polish press contained only occasional references to British women's suffrage activity. These were predominantly news items concerning unusual propaganda methods and satirical comments showing the women's struggle through a distorting mirror. The texts described – for example – noisy demonstrations, stubborn women waiting at Parliament and courageous campaigners flying a balloon. The intensification of the 'Votes for Women' campaign was reflected in an increasing level of coverage. The years 1911–1913 saw escalating numbers of news articles and commentaries about women's struggle for the right to vote. In 1914, press interest in women's suffrage campaigners waned somewhat due to the focus on growing international conflicts. The outbreak of the First World War brought the campaign to a halt and totally absorbed the attention of the Polish press.

The event that came to represent the history of the campaign and which had thus become widely established as one of its key symbols in the Polish press was the smashing of shop windows by suffragettes on 1 March 1912. *Kurier Warszawski*, for example, reported the events in its telegram column. Articles covering this event were informative in character: on the one hand, they gave matter-of-fact descriptions of events such as window breaking (*Wybryki sufrażystek* – Suffrage activists' excesses), the toughening of penalties for activists and the arrests of Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) leaders for conspiracy. On the other hand, they reported the reactions of a society appalled by the women's actions. It was reported that, in retaliation against the activists, young people smashed windows at the Union's headquarters. Growing hostility towards the activists was also said to be manifest in the eagerness of some onlookers to assist the police with arrests. The report went on: 'The wild excesses of suffrage activists finally annoyed even impartial bystanders' so that, when one of the 'rowdy women' chained herself to a tree as a sign of protest, the witnesses uprooted the tree in order to hand her over to the police. Despite the fact that the women involved in the action were mostly from intellectual circles, the report noted that the courts imposed severe penalties – strongly applauded by the audience – and treated the accused either as criminals or suggested that the reason for their criminal activity might be insanity.

An article called *Z psychologii sufrażystek* (The psychology of suffrage activists) explained the women's revolution in terms of a desire to feature in the media because, it was claimed, all 'hysterics' wanted to seem interesting. The Warsaw daily confidently hypothesised that all militants were 'old maids' or dissatisfied wives. In the author's opinion, the movement's

political goals must be a pretext for attracting publicity since women did not all use their existing right to vote in town council elections. The only genuine reason for the women's activity, the article claimed, was displeasure with the world. This was said to stem from their unmarried status, combined with the passionate hatred of men displayed by 'old maids' over thirty. In addition to the subjectivity of interpretation expected of a journalistic commentary, the *Kurier Warszawski* article was based on stereotypes and did not provide any background to the events described. Nor did it discuss psychological issues in detail, as promised by the title. It explicitly condemned women's suffrage activity while expressing sympathy with the irritated public. According to journalists, the militants' action contributed to the defeat of the Parliamentary Franchise (Women) Bill, which would have granted limited voting rights, on 28 March 1912.

The Polish press most frequently mentioned two politicians by name: Prime Minister Asquith, who opposed the calls for reform, and Lloyd George, who supported them. The Polish press portrayed the latter, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as enjoying no advantage among suffrage campaigners since his pro-emancipation views did not prevent them from attacking him.

On 16 March, *Dziennik Poznański* carried a report from the Cracow daily, *Czas*, recounting the Chancellor's speech to a National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (WUWSS) meeting held at the Royal Albert Hall. Since, typically, public opinion did not distinguish between the various suffrage groups, the article expressed hostility towards all delegates. This was damaging to the constitutionalists. It was reported that the minister, greeted with shouts of disapproval, emphasised the importance of finding a parliamentary solution to the women's suffrage question. The reporter judged the speech to have been conservative in nature, as it did not offer women any promises or assurances apart from a personal declaration of the speaker's sympathy with their cause. Furthermore, the reporter expressed the opinion that Lloyd George's speech was overly general and thus not convincing for the suffragists.

Several days later, an assembly of anti-suffragists took place in the same venue. Reasons for opposing women's suffrage included concern about the impact that active participation in public life would have on women's domestic duties. Additionally, there were fears that an extended franchise would destabilise government and national politics. Anti-suffragists also cited an alleged lack of support for the women's suffrage cause among the majority of female citizens as evidence that women's suffrage efforts were pointless. The final part of the report emphasised the presence of eminent statesmen and dignitaries, including Prime Minister Asquith, at the opponents' rally.

Reporting the March events, Polish daily papers focussed on factual description supplemented by correspondents' opinion. However, the emphasis was not so much on the political aspects of the events but on lawsuits, penalties and the public outrage at militant activity. Thus, a topos of the restored order seemed to be important in the reports. Newspapers' sympathies were with the government and with those Londoners who were hostile to the campaigners. The militants' adoption of new, violent tactics also sharpened the language used in the reports. Following their arrest, which attracted favourable comment in the Polish press, WSPU leaders were imprisoned, the Union's headquarters were closed down and Christabel Pankhurst fled from justice to Paris.

These events were outside of Polish readers' everyday experience and the press reported indisputable facts alongside

rumour and suspicion in an undifferentiated way. Militant suffrage campaigners' actions were described in terms of 'attacks', 'excesses', 'stunts', or even 'terror', without distinguishing between the significance of shouts at ministers on the one hand and arson at a theatre on the other. All aspects of suffrage activism were treated equally, attributed to hysteria and were explored in detail in newspaper editorials. Newspapers published telegrams and agency reports without verification and did not correct false information. Reports of acts of vandalism in Britain were often accompanied by the comment that they were probably caused by suffrage activists.

It was the practice of the larger daily papers to publish articles based on foreign newspaper coverage. These explained telegraphic news and absorbed readers' attention for several issues. On 28 July, *Kurier Warszawski* published an article called *Sufrażystki* (Suffrage activists) which explored suffrage activism through a framework of psychoanalytic theory. The author cited Dr. Meder, a Swiss medical authority in this field, who described his impressions of a visit to England. In the doctor's opinion, suffrage activists represented a type of female fighter who strove for masculinisation through roughness 'of face, movement and behaviour' and toned-up muscles. In this case, physical activity was regarded as a typically male preserve and outside the scope of female experience. Meder attributed the desire for equal rights to spinsterhood caused by a surplus of women (which was said to be empirically confirmed by statistical data). Moreover, British women were said to aspire to masculine physical characteristics through trying 'not to have breasts or hips or any soft and curvy lines.' As a counterpoint, the journalist pointed to the worthy attitudes of the opponents of this 'abnormal' kind of femininity and described in detail events in which women pacified militant radicals.

Meder's ideas also formed the basis of an article called *Anglicy i Angielki* (Englishmen and Englishwomen) published in *Kurier Ilustrowany* in 1913. The two texts differed in terms of their fidelity to the original and the degree to which they simplified it. The *Kurier Warszawski* condensed the psychoanalyst's views to a popular theory that attributed suffrage activity to spinsterhood. The *Kurier Ilustrowany*, on the other hand, applied Freudian ideas about human personality development governed by sexuality. This article used psychoanalysis to interpret English culture, aiming to show how subconscious national features contributed to the formation of a group of militant women. The author emphasised the important position of the 'fair sex' in British society, associating women's demand for the vote with a desire to free themselves from traditional passive roles. Symptoms of masochism, sadism and hysteria were identified in the militants' behaviour and their desire for action was explained by women's special position in British culture, resulting in egoism. The search for opportunities for self-realisation outside of the household was said to be a consequence of a desire for novelty because satisfying the biological function was no longer sufficient for contemporary women.

Furthermore, the author sought for activists' motivation in a female ideal which, in British culture, was allegedly devoid of femininity (as defined by sex appeal and curvy figure). Allegedly, this significant deficiency was evidenced by British painters' preference for models lacking ample curves: 'The English, absolutely consciously and willingly, try to retain a woman at the pre-sex stage of her development, at the level preceding maturity'. This was supposed to testify to cultural immaturity with regard to full 'sexual feelings'. In the subsequent parts of



the analysis, the journalist summarised the researcher's views on factors such as: the British doll-woman 'type', prudishness contributing to abnormal behaviour, high expectations of men who, in order to satisfy women, practised numerous sports to be physically fit, together with a cult of eminent individuals. All typical features of the English nation were explained by the psychoanalyst with reference to sexual immaturity, manifested in the anomalies of public life.

This juxtaposition of two articles based on the same source allows an exploration of how newspaper journalists simplified the image of suffrage activists by resorting to stereotypes. Although the writer of *Kurier Warszawski* referred to an authority in the field of psychoanalysis, offering readers a seemingly new and original point of view, he boiled down the selected thesis to motifs well known to readers. On the other hand, the editorial team of *Kurier Ilustrowany* presented a more extensive extract from Meder's reflections. This, despite containing conventional statements, presented the subject matter against a wider cultural background and created an impression of a scientific discourse.

Marian Dąbrowski's *Listy z Anglii* (Letters from England), published in *Kurier Lwowski*, represented a different attitude towards suffrage campaigners from those reflected in popular opinion. Reasons for this divergent point of view included deeper knowledge of the movement together with an opportunity to follow current events rather than a reliance only on press reports. Marian Dąbrowski criticised the Polish newspapers for their absolute trust in foreign sources and for copying content that was far from truthful. He was a keen observer of British women's suffrage activity and he sent his observations to various Polish press titles. He criticised the 'lunatic militant' stereotype and emphasised what he thought was most important: that the demands of the British women were valid. The correspondent argued that the movement's effective organisation proved that it was not just a group of emotional hysterics. As evidence, he provided Polish readers with descriptions of flawlessly organised demonstrations, quoted numerical data about the women's movement, and wrote about extraordinary skills in the areas of fundraising and winning support among various social groups. The correspondent's report encouraged readers to adopt a critical approach to popular opinion.

*Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* featured an article entitled *Zbrodnie sufrażystek w Anglii*. Protesters' activities were described as 'orgies', 'frenzy', 'political hysteria', 'terror' and 'criminal acts' that harmed primarily their own cause and only served to swell the ranks of their opponents. The newspaper also observed that, by embracing militant tactics, the activists provided members of parliament with counter-arguments against them. This observation was valid to the extent that members of parliament cited activists' violence in voting against the Parliamentary Franchise (Women) Bill. The article ended with a claim that the 'hysterical attacks and crimes' would quickly lead the activists to prison. The journalists emphasised the scale of emotions accompanying the new methods of the women's struggle through the article's explicit disapproval.

In conclusion, it is worth adding that, apart from political prognoses, the Cracow daily contributed to a discourse concerning feminists' alleged lack of beauty. In one of the drawings presenting *Stylowe psy i kostiumy* (Stylish dogs and costumes), an obese suffrage activist with an unpleasant facial expression was juxtaposed with a bulldog which was supposed to imitate the features of the portrayed woman. Another drawing featured WSPU leaders with their likenesses distorted. The

caption under the drawing said that it was 'a gallery of figures not in the prime of their youth and beauty'.

Accounts of British women's suffrage activity were perfectly suited to the rhetoric commonly used in press reportage. Such reports responded to a growing need, on the Polish market as elsewhere, to provide readers with sensational articles that engaged their emotions and imagination as well as providing information. Moreover, they presented key facts in the form of dramatised narratives that made use of military motifs: armed heroes, attempts at breaking through police cordons, angry reactions among the crowd, new ways of attracting attention, together with prison anecdotes. These generated stories that the press eagerly recounted, due both to the exceptional nature of the events described and their emotional load. The facts presented were selective and neither reflected the complexity of the women's struggle for political emancipation nor explained the context of suffrage activity.

## The second strategy: the anti-ethos of suffragists

It might appear that the Polish satirical press was entirely responsible for popularising negative images of suffrage activists – it responded to current events and ruthlessly ridiculed key protagonists. However, it was only partially responsible. On the one hand, the satirical and comic press did indeed create stereotypes of suffrage campaigners through various means. Firstly, the activists were represented as the 'Other', yet made recognisable and more easily understood through analogy with more familiar native 'types'. Alternatively, they could be distanced by emphasising their difference. It is clear that the editorial teams of satirical newspapers approved and promoted an androcentric vision of the world. Here, there was no place for women striving for reform and change in politics in order, ultimately, to change the world. The target reader of these magazines was the affluent citizen with a mind-set that accommodated extravagance, insincerity, vanity and even infidelity to women. He was afraid of progressive trends and the impulsive acts of those who promoted them. Visual material played a significant role in shaping the attitudes towards suffrage activists: humorous drawings and caricatures, similar in the Polish version to those in British periodicals and biased against suffrage campaigners. The key elements of the satirical message included: deformed appearance, ugliness, spinsterhood, mature or old age, madness, masculinisation or unspecified gender, misandry and unsatisfied 'truly feminine' desires.

Texts about suffrage activists were often accompanied by vulgar humour with sexual innuendo. An article presenting the tragic death of Emily Wilding Davison gives the following description of her:

One day she even raped a sixteen-year-old youngster in a public square. The young man died of terror, and the fanatic suffrage campaigner was brought to justice. However, during the trial she started to undress so quickly ... that all assembled people ran away in fear on seeing her naked. ... Emily Stupid without her clothing aroused such disgust that the mouths of those present opened unwittingly, imitating volcanic eruptions.

Davison died after being trampled by a horse and, in the coverage of her funeral, lament was intermingled with mockery.

The article clearly presented the attitude of satirists to British suffrage activists. They were a perfect object of mockery and their activity was discredited with offensive jokes. This was a typical example of the type of personal attack that diverted attention from the substance of the campaign for political equal rights, presenting the campaigners as hysterics or even sexual perverts.

However, the satirical press was not solely responsible for creating and promoting this image. Opinion-forming periodicals might be expected to have responded to one-sided portrayals of British suffrage campaigners, correcting them and supplementing them with necessary context. Unfortunately, many journals, including *Nowości Illustrowane*, *Świat* and *Ziarno* referred to suffrage supporters as vixens, scandalmongers: obedient soldiers of fanatic Pankhurst, who waged a grotesque war armed with umbrellas and hairpins.

It is notable that press coverage of suffrage activity took many forms, from short notes devoid of a broader context, through reports and profiles, to in-depth articles illustrated with photographs. Photojournalism played a significant role in the way in which the subject matter was communicated to the public, giving periodical magazines a significant advantage over the daily press. It fulfilled a persuasive purpose: the descriptive captions to the photographs were used to shape readers' views on women's suffrage campaigners. For example, a famous photograph of Ada Wright taken on Black Friday in 1910 was captioned 'Passive resistance of a suffrage activist'.

Since the journalistic representation of 'Votes for Women' campaigners involved demonising them and representing them as different, attention to the visual aspects of the subject matter seems to have been received particularly well by the readership. It can be supposed that readers, intrigued by the activity of British so-called 'battle-axes', 'Furies' or 'participants of collective obsession' wanted to check for themselves what these seemingly bizarre and determined women looked like.

The photographs of suffrage activists published in illustrated periodicals could be emotionally loaded enough when viewed on their own. However, when accompanied by editorial teams' captions, they constituted persuasive visual arguments, aimed at creating a particular image of British suffrage campaigners. Since the women's activity was invariably interpreted negatively, arguably some photographs and drawings were intended to be undermining in various ways. Firstly, they undermined the campaigners' credibility by suggesting that their activity was influenced by madness; secondly, their altruism, by emphasising self-centred motivations (an abreaction to ugliness or desire for revenge). Finally, their honour was implicitly questioned by negating the campaign's logic through presenting images of women destroying common cultural values. The arrest of suffrage activists was one of the motifs most eagerly published by the press. Picture captions described the women as furious and aggressive. Therefore, from the perspective of rhetoric and referring to Aristotle's definition, the Polish press arguably constructed the anti-ethos of suffrage campaigners.

The negative image of British activists, whose methods and dress associated them with modernity, can be understood in terms of expressions of fear of change. This change was, on the one hand, desirable and unavoidable. On the other hand, it horrified because it was believed to represent a threat to the

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**Zemsta sufrażystek.** (Treść na str. 25)

Treść numeru: Wybuch na poczcie krakowskiej. — Groźny pożar. — Strajk powszechny w Belgii. — Krwawy zatarg z robotnikami w Warszawie. — Wychodzą polscy na wyspach Hawajskich. — Nauka strzelania w szkołach. — Praca społeczno-oświatowa na wsi. — Kwietniowa zima w Krakowie. — Trzeci wiceprezydent m. Lwowa. — Opielka nad więźniami w Warszawie. — Zgon urzędnika-obywatela i t. d.

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status quo and to lasting values such as family. Journalists created the metaphor of the 'women's war', reflecting a mood of anxiety in the period prior to the First World War. However, the conflict was not afforded serious treatment; the press marginalised and sometimes explicitly ridiculed it.

It should be emphasised that the majority of Polish journalists understood the English women's demands. However, activists' methods shocked the public and provoked its disapproval. The perceived excesses of the suffrage militants triggered associations with the banditry often identified with anarchism. This was a real and dangerous phenomenon, especially in the Kingdom of Poland. News about the methods used by the suffrage militants was met with genuine fear and fuelled an atmosphere of dread concerning the effects of apparently unpredictable women's actions.

It is possible to identify several influential factors in the way in which the Polish press portrayed the British women's suffrage campaign. Foremost among these was the public's conservative belief in the family's role in society. Even the liberal magazines promoted the traditional division of roles into male – in the public sphere – and female – in the household. An indirect political reason is also identifiable. The press was dominated by titles that either explicitly or implicitly supported traditional ideas about the 'women's cause' that were promoted





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by the national democrats. Moreover, the Polish people hoped that the military power of Britain would be a possible ally in the fight for Poland's independence. Negative perceptions of suffrage activists were also possible consequences of a fear of anarchism. In this context, suffrage militants seemed to be political troublemakers who could destabilise the superpower.

Therefore, women's suffrage campaigners were treated as curiosities, a sensation – and perfect material for readers' entertainment. Moreover, the manner in which they were portrayed raises questions about attitudes to the foreign press as a credible source of information. Some articles were published in an uncritical translation, thus resulting in similar attitudes to those expressed by anti-suffragists.

### The Third Strategy: information and explanation in the Polish magazines for women

Prior to Polish independence, the demand for women's voting rights formed a key theme in the country's wider liberation discourse. The political situation was not, however, conducive to making it a reality. Polish women's liberation supporters struggled with a double subjugation: the lack of sovereignty

as well as socially embedded gender-based stereotypes and prejudices. However, even though the convergence of emancipation and patriotism discourses did not result in the articulation of radical women's rights demands, Polish activists were keenly interested in the feminist aspirations of the wider world.

A discussion of women's political and civic rights opened the convention organised to mark Eliza Orzeszkowa's forty-year career in June 1907. Although a previous women's convention (which was clandestine due to a ban on public gatherings) had taken place in 1891 in Warsaw, it was not until sixteen years later that the question of voting rights was articulated as an explicit demand. Firstly, this was made possible by the events of 1905, after which associations could operate legally in the Kingdom of Poland and censorship was liberalised. This made it much easier for the Warsaw press to operate. Secondly, the Association for Equal Rights of Polish Women, headed by Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit and established on 2 July 1907, decided to focus women's rights activity on the suffrage question. The guiding influence of pre-war European and American feminists became increasingly important for Polish activists. In her reports from the Warsaw convention of women, columnist Natalia Jastrzębska noted a transformation in the portrayal of women's equality campaigners. Formerly treated rather lightly and contemptuously, they were now seen as equal rights advocates who constituted a legitimate social force, who could no longer be ignored by political parties or by the press. Therefore, coverage of the British 'Votes for Women' campaign in the Polish women's press can be argued to have played a special role in the intellectual development of Polish emancipationists. It influenced the way in which they framed their demands.

Prior to the First World War, women's magazines did not constitute a homogenous sector of the press, but offered their readership a varied menu of content according to the readers' perceived preferences. Owing to the diversity of the readership, both ideological and practical magazines operated alongside each other in the publications market. The women's emancipation question was a key element of social programmes of that time and the manner of its presentation depended on a magazine title's target readership. Both information about, and the commentaries concerning, English suffrage activity were dealt with similarly.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there emerged a group of women, particularly in the territories annexed by Austria and Russia, who tried radically to influence public opinion. They confronted gender-based discrimination and demanded full equal rights. The platforms for spreading modern views were the periodicals *Nowe Słowo*, based in Cracow (1902-1907) and *Ster*, based in Warsaw. Analysing the ideology of the discourse of both journals, Aneta Górnicka-Boratyńska describes them as 'a project of Polish suffrage campaigners' which demonstrates the awareness of the Polish women in their quest for political independence and links their intellectual achievements with the European trends. The author notes that historical and social differences are too significant to be able to make comparisons between the practical activities of the women in London and Warsaw. However, Polish feminists clearly saw the demand for political rights as part of the wider moral revival of society.

The term 'suffrage campaigner' appeared in 1907 in



*Nowe Słowo* published in Cracow, in the article *Walka kobiet o prawa polityczne w Anglii* (Women's Fight for Political Rights in England). However, the most complete picture of the Votes for Women campaign was presented in *Ster*. This title was published in Warsaw (1907–1914) and edited by a leading Polish feminist, Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit (1859–1921), who was known by her contemporaries and by posterity as 'Commander in Chief' of the women's movement. *Ster* was first published at a particular moment in history: in 1906, voting rights had been granted to Finnish women. Revolutionary events in the Polish territories, meanwhile, contributed to the establishment of legal women's organisations, including the aforementioned Association for Equal Rights of the Polish Women, headed by Paulina Kuczalska-Reinschmit. In the same year, suffragists from Galicia organised Maria Dulębianka's election campaign, thus demonstrating their readiness for full participation in public life. Finally, the Convention of Polish Women took place on 9–11 June 1907 in Warsaw, with strongly worded demands for suffrage and for intensified activity to achieve women's liberation.

In launching *Ster*, its editors eschewed the traditional women's magazine format. Following the example of western campaigning journals, they omitted popular columns about fashion and household tips. Instead, they focused on the fight for women's voting rights and prioritised this topic over all other magazine content. Interestingly, the magazine's target readership was not defined by gender: the magazine was addressed to all people who opposed gender-based oppression. Moreover, the editors differentiated between the fight for women's suffrage and the issue of national independence, and specifically departed from the ideology that privileged collective liberty ahead of individual freedom. Therefore, they argued that freedom in a nation should be all encompassing, which is why they demanded attention for the women's cause.

Without doubt, *Ster* was the most important magazine among the feminist circles developing in the Polish territories. However, it was *Bluszcz*, published since 1865, that gained a reputation as the leading women's periodical in this period. *Bluszcz* was aimed at ambitious female readers interested in current affairs, with extensive knowledge of history and keen on great literature. The periodical's success was ensured by a sensibly pursued editorial policy. Commentators concur in their assessment of the management of Zofia Seidlerowa, editor-in-chief of the magazine from 1906 and its owner from 1909. She was in charge of the periodical until the end of the First World War and built a wide group of women subscribers who represented various ideologies and readily participated in polemical discussion.

It should be emphasised that, although the women's magazines fulfilled various aims and represented different views, they adopted similar rhetorical strategies when it came to representing English suffrage activists. This was because they had a common goal: to provide reliable information about, and explanations of the progress of, the campaign for women's political emancipation. Aside from emphasising the arguments from the sphere of logos, journalists tried to cool down emotions surrounding the 'Votes for Women' campaign and to avoid controversy whenever possible.

It should be said that women journalists writing for women aimed to understand British suffrage activity and to explore the wider social and political context of the 'Votes for Women' campaign. Women's magazine journalists frequently emphasised the differences between suffragists – who used

legal methods of influencing parliament – and suffragettes, also described as militants, who broke the law in expressing their opposition. Moreover, the female journalists attempted to describe the most important groups in the women's movement, presenting their goals and aspirations. In contrast, the majority of the general press identified the entire women's suffrage movement with the WSPU and evaluated it very negatively. The WSPU leader, Emmeline Pankhurst, was portrayed as a fanatic and the embodiment of the evil allegedly typical of a woman. Distinguishing between factions and pointing to the differences between particular groups enabled women's magazine journalists to approve of the constitutionalist struggle whilst disapproving of militant activity, which was not supported, even by radical feminists. Interestingly, *Ster*, the feminist magazine, glossed over the famous violent actions of suffragettes, whereas the moderate *Bluszcz* journalist, Natalia Jastrzębska, defended them fiercely. However, where journalists defended the militant methods of suffragettes, their articles were accompanied by commentaries from the editorial team, clearly distancing themselves from the journalist's opinions.

The interpretation of suffrage campaigners' actions was also coloured by journalists' own political views. For instance, Róża Centnerszwerowa claimed, in her study *Sufrażystki angielskie w świetle własnych ich zeznań* (English Suffragists in the Light of Their Own Words), that the suffrage demands of both factions were identical. This, she said, was because their goal was to reinforce class interest and the political representation of the affluent classes. She viewed the campaign as a struggle to win the right to vote under the same rules as men (that is according to the property criterion), rather than to achieve universal suffrage. The author was sceptical about demands formulated in this way and especially criticised the campaign's strategy:

Today these methods are monotonous, because they always consist in making an infernal uproar with noisy instruments: bells, trumpets, whistles or simply shouting at the top of their voices a battle cry: 'Votes for women.'

A key theme in the press coverage was the explanation of English parliamentary procedure, which allowed the writers to justify suffrage activists' growing frustration. The rejection of violent tactics, together with work on a compromise Conciliation Bill, met with the strong approval of Polish women journalists. The debate in *Bluszcz* presented the fears of English politicians, especially of Winston Churchill, who was said to have hired an army of detectives in fear of the determined suffragists. The press articles accused ministers of shallow liberalism and short sightedness. In explaining the opposition to the women's suffrage cause, journalists observed that the pacifism of some women's rights campaigners posed an obstacle to military solutions to international problems. In addition, their vocal demands for a moral revival were said to threaten the vested interests of industrialists in the alcoholic beverage sector.

Moreover, the women's press did not approve of the methods employed by politicians against suffrage campaigners: the avoidance of debate, the suppression of demonstrations and the arrest of activists were interpreted as cowardice. This was said to reflect the weaknesses of the democratic system.

Although the *Bluszcz* editorial team approached the English women's campaign with caution, the title's journalists included some of the movement's most ardent defenders. The introduction to the article *Taktyka sufrażystek angielskich*

(Tactics of English Suffrage Activists) was mildly ironic in drawing an analogy between the inhabitants of backwoods villages who used the word 'matron' as a malicious nickname and intellectuals who did not understand the term 'suffrage campaigner' and used it as an insult. For this reason, the author offered a neutral definition of a suffrage campaigner: a woman striving for political equal rights in order to raise levels of education and morals. A woman of that time needed the right to vote in order to select representatives who would take care of her interests. This toned-down definition debunked a semantic stereotype, existing in the periodical up to then, which described a radical militant as a classic vixen.

The article's author framed her thesis in the wider sociological and economic context. She considered economic factors as the drivers of a new model of social relations, which forced women to earn a living equally with men yet did not give them equal rights. Justifying the women's suffrage campaign by social factors in this way legitimated it by framing it in the broader context of reform initiatives to improve the position of those with no political representation. The article concluded that the women's suffrage movement was the result of economic change and social progress.

Nevertheless, in the journalist's opinion, activists shaped the campaign and its course. She viewed their tactics, including rows with the police, pursuit of the prime minister and forcing their way into the parliament, as part of a well-thought-out strategy. The purpose of all these actions was to attract the media's attention, ensuring publicity on a large scale for their actions. This was the first clear suggestion made by *Bluszcz* about the English women's use of the press as an instrument of political struggle. It argued that the women consciously made use of the force of press influence and were not discouraged by the negative odium that fell on them. They valued the power of publicity, because extraordinary actions not only helped maintain interest in the cause and helped its message reach wider society, but also aroused the curiosity of the wider public who would then be more willing to check out suffrage propaganda brochures. The introduction of the suffrage question, together with the parliamentary debate on equal rights for women into the public discourse, were the undeniable achievements of the campaign, testifying to its effectiveness.

The use of violence by women as part of the political struggle had not previously been justified or approved in Poland. In the author's opinion:

Our newspapers in which second and third-rate reporters and correspondents, and even comedy writers, sharpened their – blunt by nature – wit on English suffrage campaigners, never considered this movement to be in the context of the English national character.

An element deeply embedded in this collective mentality was an attachment to civil freedoms, guarded even at the cost of civil war, together with pugnacity in defence of personal autonomy. Another difficulty in understanding the insular attitude was visible in the dismissive approach of certain nations to the Salvation Army, a religious and social organisation founded by William Booth, which – according to the author – worked miracles.

Similar articles were published in the feminist periodical *Ster*, which devoted much attention to correcting the suffrage activists' image for Polish readers. The magazine depicted a

collective portrait of women totally committed to the question of equal rights, ready to make the utmost sacrifice: heroic protagonists persecuted by state institutions. The periodical published translated fragments of articles from *Votes for Women* and traumatic reports of the women undergoing the torture of forced feeding. A positive image of suffrage campaigners was created. This was achieved through reliable, factual reporting and the validation of values important to the equal rights movement. It was also achieved through the omission or downplaying of uncomfortable matters such as the violent actions of militants, which were rarely reported.

The coverage of English women's suffrage activity in the *Warsaw* periodical also included descriptions of their tactics, thus familiarising readers with modern forms of campaigning and propaganda techniques. The use of unprecedented and controversial methods of political struggle evoked considerable levels of public response and publicity in the worldwide press. Moreover, it created opportunities to influence legislation. The women's suffrage campaign significantly drew attention to the role that the media can play in the development of political situations.

The British 'Votes for Women' campaign exposed weaknesses in a democratic system in which elected representatives, especially Prime Minister Asquith, did not listen to electors' opinions but used a variety of parliamentary instruments to manage reform. On the one hand, the Polish image of great and powerful Britain was still secure. On the other hand, the vector of this power was reversed: it was manifest in the fight against the legal system, against the women's actions and their impressive marches, and against the numerous supporters of the movement. This was a significant change of perspective in relation to the Polish national periodicals portraying a vision of all-powerful Britain. *Ster* journalists seemed to claim that a country's power lies in its citizens rather than in a government that was using pressure and violence to control women's actions.

Furthermore, the image of British suffrage campaigners presented by progressive feminists created a role model for Polish activists. Emphasis on activism, solidarity and heroism showed them the path to choose, aiming to mobilise them to become involved in the fight for their rights.

## Conclusion

Through a campaign of intense women's suffrage activity before the outbreak of the First World War, British feminists popularised and brought the 'Votes for Women' slogan before the public on an unprecedented scale – both in Europe and across the wider world. Equal political rights became the subject of press comment, attracting more attention than educational or economic issues. It posed a number of questions about women's possible participation in public life, as well as their contribution to democratic systems and procedures. It also revealed systemic shortcomings: women citizens were ostensibly equal under the law yet their protests were belittled and did not meet with appropriate political response.

Furthermore, the women's campaign was one of the symptoms that heralded a change in the existing social order, an order that was ultimately to be destroyed by the first total war. Women's demand for full participation in the public sphere raised many questions concerning, for example, the status of family. The potential conflict between full participation in public life with civil rights on the one hand and the accomplishment



of private goals on the other, was brought into view. Women's intellectual capabilities, which equipped them to take socially and politically responsible decisions, were reaffirmed. In the context of the suffrage campaign, a new model of femininity thus emerged, going beyond the binding patriarchal cultural paradigm.

With reference to the Aristotelian Triad, the rhetorical strategies used to portray British suffrage campaigners in Poland are, arguably, mainly to be found in press reportage and in the values emphasised therein. For committed supporters of the women's movement, the most important factors were access to reliable information about the campaign's achievements together with editorial strategies that rectified the negative image of suffrage activists (logos). In feminist publications, it is possible to find articles creating the ethos of suffragists as brave and heroic women, fighting against an oppressive system.

Publications addressed to readers for whom the women's movement was not the most important topic emphasised the sensational character of the events described (pathos). Reporting the events of the 'Votes for Women' campaign, Polish journalists focused on the sensational, focusing on militant action and reinforcing the image of a suffrage activist as an unattractive, unmarried scandalmonger and vixen. The published dispatches, notices and short notes, devoid of a broader context, distorted the meaning of women's fight for equal rights, boiling it down to a list of amusing anecdotes and shocking excesses. Commentary articles, irrespective of a periodical's profile, created a similar picture. This was, firstly, the result of reliance on a limited amount of available material concerning suffrage activism. Secondly, it was influenced by the contemporary cultural model in which there was no place for a woman who used violence and fighting for any purpose other than the national cause.

It should be said that the women's suffrage campaign, as presented in the Polish press, ought to be considered in terms of sensational, unusual and exciting events, able to involve emotions of readers and fulfilling the requirements imposed on present-day news. A significant role in this creation was played by the protagonists themselves who skilfully drew reporters' attention, were conscious of the impressiveness of their actions, and arranged events ready to be transmitted by telegraphic agencies. Suffragists appreciated the strength of publicity and power of the media, and made their goals and actions visible and public, becoming an everlasting part of women's history far beyond the English borders.

On the other hand, the unconventionality of their actions and courage in putting forward modern demands contributed to creation of the anti-ethos of suffragists (ugly old maids) which can be recognised even today in negative features attributed to stereotyped feminists.

## Notes

1. Marcin Koszowy and Katarzyna Budzyńska, *Strategie retoryczne, techniki komunikacyjno-poznawcze, błędy i sofizmaty* (Warszawa, Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2015), 11.
2. Arystoteles *Retoryka Poetyka*, transl. Henryk Podbielski (Warszawa, Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988).
3. This article is based on articles from the following newspapers and magazines:  
*Kurier Warszawski*: a modern Polish daily published in the territories annexed by Russia, issued twice daily. It was considered a newspaper of European stature, open to discussion,

reacting dynamically to events in the world, and had an extensive international section. *Dziennik Poznański*: one of the biggest newspapers published in the territories under Prussian rule. *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*: a daily published in Cracow from 1910, illustrated, edited in a modern way and distributed in Europe. *Mucha*, *Kolce* and *Sowizdrzał*: these were magazines of a satirical and comical genre, using verbal and graphic caricature and mockingly commenting on current events. They played an important role in shaping public opinion. *Nowości Ilustrowane* was a modern illustrated magazine, published in Cracow from 1904, whose journalists understood the market value of sensational material. News about suffrage activists and their actions was readily published, using elements of novelty and surprise. *Ziarno*: this was a conservative magazine in which commentaries on suffragists were a part of ideological debate and suffrage activists were demonised as a threat to the family. *Świat*: an illustrated magazine published in the Kingdom of Poland from 1906. Popular and liked by readers, it published short notes about suffrage activists, treating their protests as a 'social issue' and not as a political event. *Ster*: a Polish feminist journal, that was key to the formulation of Polish demands for women's voting rights and totally dedicated to the dissemination of this idea. It was a magazine extremely important for development of the Polish feminist thought. *Bluszcz*: a women's weekly with many years of tradition, considered to be the most important and most influential magazine. It represented moderate views, though it also provided a forum for open, global perspective debate and for the development of modern demands for women's liberation.

4. Radicalisation of the militants' campaign contributed to the increased opposition to suffrage campaigners. A similar trend in the USA is described by Sandra Adickes in 'Sisters, not Demons: the Influence of British Suffragists on the American Suffrage Movement', *Women's History Review*, 11/4 (2002), 675-687.
5. 'Wybryki sufrażystek', *Kurier Warszawski*, (1912), 66-68.
6. 'Z psychologii sufrażystek', *Kurier Warszawski*, (1912), 75.
7. 'Dwa wiece kobiece', *Dziennik Poznański*, (1912), 62.
8. *Ibid.*
9. 'Sufrażystki', *Kurier Warszawski*, (1912), 207.
10. *Ibid.*
11. 'Anglicy i Angielki', *Kurier Ilustrowany*, (1913), 88.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Marian Dąbrowski, 'Listy z Anglii', *Kurier Lwowski*, 359 (1912), 2.
14. Peter Burke, *Materiały wizualne jako świadectwa historyczne*, transl. J. Hunia (Kraków, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012), 147.
15. A. N., 'Historia o dwóch sufrażystkach', *Sowizdrzał*, 2 (1912), 27.
16. Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841-1910), an eminent writer of Polish positivism. In 1905 she was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature (laureate: Henryk Sienkiewicz). She was involved in the struggle for women's emancipation.
17. Urszula Chowaniec, 'Listening to Women's Voices: Historical Overview of Women's Right to Write in Poland', In *Women's Voices and Feminism in Polish Cultural Memory*, ed. Urszula Chowaniec and Ursula Phillips (Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 26-6.
18. The Revolution of 1905-1907: working class strikes and protests, taking place mostly in the Kingdom of Poland (the territories annexed by Russia) and connected with events in Russia.
19. Grzegorz Krzywiec, 'Paulina Kuczalska-Reinchmit', in A

*Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminism: Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova and Anna Loutfi (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2006), 274–277.

20. Teresa Kulak, 'Trybuna umiarkowanego feminizmu: *Bluszcz* pod kierownictwem pod kierownictwem redakcyjnym Zofii Seidlerowej w latach 1906-1918' In *Kobieta i media: Studia z dziejów emancypacji kobiet*, ed. P. Perkowski and T. Stegner (Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2009), 84–85.

21. Aneta Górnicka-Boratyńska adds that the term 'suffrage campaigner' was not widely used in Poland to describe the circles of women connected with *Ster* even though the struggle for suffrage was the primary goal of its journalists: *Stańmy się sobą: Cztery projekty emancypacji (1863-1939)*, (Izabelin, Świat Literacki, 2001), 82.

22. 'Paulina Kuczalska-Reinchmit', *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminism*.

23. Maria Dulębianka (1861–1919) was a Polish social activist, painter and writer. In 1907 she announced her candidacy for the Diet of Galicia and Lodomeria in Lviv, which was rejected on formal grounds. It is worth adding that in 1912 a Czech woman, Božena Kuneticka, was elected to parliament as the first woman, but her mandate was blocked. Cf. Katarzyna Sierakowska, 'Aspiracje polityczne Związku Równouprawnienia Kobiet Polskich', in *Kobieta i świat polityki: Polska na tle porównawczym w XIX i w początkach XX wieku*, ed. A. Żarnowska and A. Szwarc, (Warszawa, Wydawnictwo DiG, 1994), 245–254.

24. Urszula Chowaniec, *Listening to Women's Voices*.

25. Róża Centnerszwerowa, 'Sufrażystki angielskie w świetle własnych ich zeznań', *Bluszcz*, 37 (1909), 411–412.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Maria Iwanowska, 'Taktyka sufrażystek angielskich', *Bluszcz*, 3 (1913), 27–28.

28. *Ibid.*

## The practice of knitting in communist Poland as a way of understanding the private space of women

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### Introduction

In the nineteenth century and during the early decades of the twentieth, knitting was a notable way in which women expressed agency in society.<sup>1</sup> This was particularly true during times of crisis, such as wartime. For example, in many European countries during the First World War, women knitted socks and other garments for soldiers.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, during the American Civil War, women knitted and sewed for soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Needlework was also a charitable tool: it gave women an opportunity to help in circumstances in which their social opportunities were severely limited.<sup>4</sup> Most often, however, knitting has been a way of providing one's own family with clothes and household decoration. Understanding the social meaning of knitting involves understanding the reasons why women practise it. Such reasons might include shortages and household financial problems or the desire for a leisure activity, entertainment or a hobby, an urge to create fashion or a desire for social interaction.<sup>5</sup> A close look at these reasons reveals the meaning of the activity itself. More importantly, analysis of this specific housekeeping activity should allow a better understanding of the position of women in both public and private space.

I have chosen to look at the practice of knitting in the context of women's history in Poland between 1945 and 1989 because of the specific circumstances of this period. The position of women was interpreted in a particular way under the communist ideology of the government, in terms not only of a woman's role as a citizen of a communist society but also her role as housewife. In particular, the relationship of the two roles, the public and the private, merits consideration. For that reason, I place this analysis in the context of historical research concerning gender relations and the dichotomy between public and private space in the time of communism. Polish historian

Dobrochna Kałwa argues that the communist state attempted to create a sense of equality between women and men in the public space.<sup>6</sup> Women were supposed to be equal citizens; therefore, they should work professionally and contribute to the creation of social prosperity. The state, however, did take the biological role of women into account. Therefore, women's work was seen only as supplementary to the work done by men. In addition to their professional work, women were expected to take care of the household. Yet, in that domain, there was no place for equality. The female role in the domestic space was, in fact, regarded in an entirely traditional way. Kałwa claims, besides, that the media was clear about this: according to communist ideology, women were obliged to do double work.<sup>7</sup> The League of Women, which supported women living in cities and towns, also focused on the domestic sphere, especially after the year 1956. In the countryside, groups called Circles of Rural Housewives played a similar role.<sup>8</sup> These organisations saw it as one of their goals to teach women all aspects of taking care of a household and of themselves. Among other things, The League of Women organised courses in sewing and needlework. Taking this into consideration, we realise that, although the private sphere was not directly managed by the state, accepted gender roles defined the meaning of domestic chores.

Second-wave feminists considered knitting a traditional female occupation, which bound women to their home space. The British design historian Joanne Turney explains in her book *The Culture of Knitting* how second-wave feminists considered knitting as a chore that enslaved them.<sup>9</sup> Keeping in mind the specific situation of women in communist state, such as Poland, I want to challenge this cultural perception. How does the practice of knitting fit in the context of this aforementioned Polish reality of 'double work'? In other words, could knitting, instead of being considered only as confirmation of a traditional female



position be viewed as a possible vehicle for the empowerment of housewives?

The goal of this paper is to answer the following questions: how does making clothing (specifically by knitting) fit into the framework of communist ideas on the social position of women, and how was it perceived and experienced in women's private lives? The detailed analysis of a single female activity helps illuminate other aspects of women's everyday lives. I will consider three different functions of knitting in connection with these aspects of female life: knitting as a way a woman could support the family's wardrobe and budget, knitting as a form of entertainment and leisure activity within the domestic sphere and, finally, knitting in the context of fashion, beauty and self-care.

I am singling out knitting from other forms of needlework and home sewing for the subject of this paper because knitting is more practical than, for example, embroidery. Moreover, knitting is an activity that has a more social character than does sewing with a sewing machine. Knitting allows one to produce one's own clothing, so in this sense it can contribute to the family wardrobe and budget. At the same time, it is a pleasant activity that allows women to put their feet up and gives them satisfaction. Knitting as a technique or practice in communist Poland is not necessarily exceptional.<sup>10</sup> However, the role of knitting is always influenced by specific social and cultural circumstances. For that reason, the analysis of the historical discourse around it brings us closer to understanding that specific social context of women's lives. Knitting in Poland, much as other kinds of needlework, has always been women's domain. In Polish territories, it was uncommon for men to knit, unlike in some non-western cultures (for example, in Peru).<sup>11</sup> In traditional rural communities, women took care of the production of the family wardrobe and possessed the knowledge of handicraft and sewing techniques. In the cities and among the aristocracy, on the other hand, handicraft was a form of entertainment.

## Sources and methods

This article is based on three types of primary source: written evidence, oral history and material objects. The written evidence includes women's magazines and knitting handbooks. Among others, I used women's magazines popular in communist Poland, such as *Moda i Życie Praktyczne* (Fashion and Practical Life), *Przyjaciółka* (The Girlfriend), *Świat Mody* (The World of Fashion) and *Przegląd* (The Review). The knitting handbooks included manuals for beginners as well as publications with complicated and creative patterns for knitted garments. All aspects of these books were taken into account: introductions reveal the way knitting was viewed by contemporaries and the audience to whom a book was addressed. They also include illustrations and patterns, which help us to understand the kinds of objects that the books' authors promoted. There were no knitting books addressed to men, which confirms that knitting was seen as a female activity. The handbooks for women vary widely, not only in terms of the age range of the women to whom they were addressed, but also in terms of their social circumstances (for example, working or unemployed women).<sup>12</sup> The books do include, however, patterns for men's clothing that women could make for their husbands or sons. This was nothing new in the period of communism. Analysis of these sources helps reconstruct the public discourse on knitting during the communist era. I assume that such discourse reflects

the changing perception and social meaning of events, activities and objects.<sup>13</sup> In these cases, meaning was created by the small group of women who wrote the manuals and magazines articles. An important objective of public discourse, including manuals and magazine articles, is to shape the ways in which people think and act.<sup>14</sup> The language of the written evidence suggests that influencing women with regard to knitting was a main goal of these texts.

The second type of primary source material used here is oral history interviews. These were conducted both with women who knitted during the communist era and with others who, as children under communism, could remember being knitted for. In choosing interviewees, I considered several factors. Firstly, the women I interviewed lived both in the city and in the countryside. Secondly, some of them were full-time homemakers not employed outside of the home, while others had to share their time between professional work and work at home. For some women, knitting was the only form of dressmaking they practised, while for others it was just one of many. Finally, I chose women in different stages of life: mothers, grandmothers and unmarried women. I was interested in a variety of experiences and circumstances. The interviews focused on individual living conditions and the home circle, while the questions about their professional life were asked only to provide necessary context.<sup>15</sup> The goal of the interviews was not only to collect information about knitting practices and individual life circumstances, but also to reveal feelings and opinions about the past.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, during the interviews, women displayed garments that were knitted many years ago, and still kept as a part of the family wardrobe. Objects are valuable because of their connection to experience or identity yet people are not always aware of exactly why they still keep them. The observation of women's behaviour during interviews led me to conclude that the importance of these objects is determined by two factors. Firstly, women made the clothing with their own hands, which lends a special value to the pieces. Secondly, the objects come from periods when, because of scarcity, everyday articles were much more valued than they were to become following the collapse of communism. Importantly, objects in this research process did not only have an assistive function in revealing memories.<sup>17</sup> Knitted garments appeared during interviews spontaneously as additional witness to the material past.

## Taking care of the family wardrobe and budget

The history of communist Poland includes periods of economic crisis and recession as well as times of relative prosperity. The first years after the war were a time of great scarcity. The major centre of the Polish textile industry – the city of Łódź – had largely been destroyed.<sup>18</sup> The surviving factories were taken over by the state in the process of nationalisation. However, the state prioritised investment in heavy industry ahead of the production of consumer goods, including textiles. The Polish state refused to accept the Marshall Plan and introduced price controls but national production provided only poor quality consumer goods in insufficient quantities. After 1956, the new regime somewhat eased the politics of control and repression, but its economic programme failed. Together with economic crisis, this led to political turmoil and, eventually, to martial law, which was introduced in 1981. In this second period of scarcity, Polish citizens experienced the greatest difficulties in

terms of the supply of consumer goods.<sup>19</sup>

During the first years after the Second World War, women's magazines mainly offered advice on how to remake old or simple outfits into more elegant or fashionable ones.<sup>20</sup> They stressed that a dress remade at home could be fashionable, citing the example of Parisian women who used their own creativity to stay in fashion.<sup>21</sup> By way of illustration, in 1949 *Przyjaciółka* published instructions on how to remake a woollen cardigan.<sup>22</sup> In 1950, *Moda i Życie* published an article about making yarn from damaged silk stockings. The yarn could be used to knit a shawl, a children's cap or a purse.<sup>23</sup> Knitting was one of the most popular ways of creating an interesting and fashionable outfit for women, men and children. However, in the first years following the war, it was not necessarily the cheapest solution, because materials such as wool were quite expensive.<sup>24</sup> Women, who carried the responsibility of caring for the family wardrobe, were expected to demonstrate ingenuity and resourcefulness. Importantly, in their attention for family clothing they should not forget about fashion and originality.

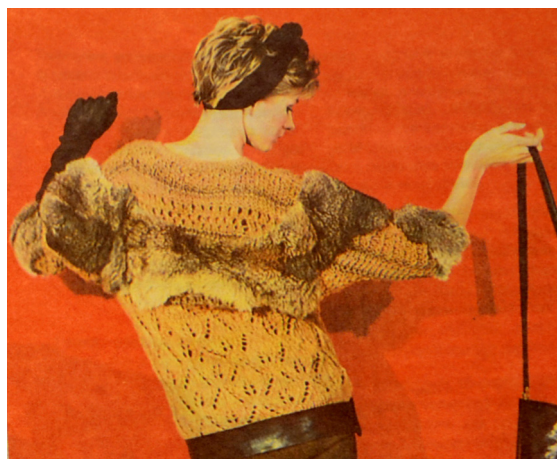
This emphasis was also seen in the 1970s and 1980s. People who were children at this time remember having special, often colourful, cardigans, hats, socks and even knitted toys.<sup>25</sup> Anna (born in 1978) told me that her teachers asked her where her beautiful clothing came from. Her mother made them for her, as there were no colourful children's clothes available.<sup>26</sup> Both books and magazines often emphasised this situation, as in this example from a book written in 1987:

You will not find clothes like that in our stores. You can buy a unique outfit in fancy galleries or boutiques, but it will cost you a fortune. I would like to propose that you become more independent of the commercial offer or the need of having considerable financial resources. You have to start using your own imagination.<sup>27</sup>

Under communism, Polish women faced problems concerning the supply, not only of ready-made clothes but also of fabrics or yarn. When women who used to knit in those times were asked about the availability of yarn, at first they did not remember any difficulties with finding knitting materials. However, the stories that followed revealed various unconventional ways of obtaining yarn, especially that of good quality. For example, some women worked in an enterprise in the city of Łódź that had friendly contacts with another factory producing yarn. Through this connection, they could buy larger amounts of yarn during trips organised by their employers. Another woman I interviewed had family members working abroad who brought back good quality yarn.<sup>28</sup> Janina (born in 1950) who lived in the South of Poland, used to produce her yarn herself from her own sheep's wool.<sup>29</sup> It is possible that the interviewees did not perceive those experiences from the past as difficulties because they grew up in times of scarcity. It was the norm to make considerable effort to obtain some products, since goods were not as generally available in shops as they were to be following the collapse of communism.

Further, the authors of books on knitting from that time confirm the lack of the quality yarn:<sup>30</sup>

Interest in manual knitting is not decreasing; it is increasing. However, the shortage of wool makes it necessary to use yarn unstitched from old products or synthetic fibres, polyester or viscose



From: Urszula Staniewska, *Swetry* 1966, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Przemysłu Lekkiego i Spożywczego (1966) reproduced with permission

that are offered in the market.<sup>31</sup>

The book authors had various pieces of advice on how to deal with this problem. The first was to recycle yarns and to remake.<sup>32</sup> In 1984, Ewa Gorzelany and Wioleta Piwońska published the book *Knitwear From Leftover Yarn*. In the introduction, they advised the following:

You should carefully review the contents of your wardrobe and suitcases in order to find: knitted caps or bonnets of obsolete cuts, a faded scarf, which is worn out so that no one wants to wear it, woollen gloves and mismatched socks, vests nibbled by moths, cardigans with battered elbows which would not be saved even with patches, or pullovers too small for the youngest member of the family.<sup>33</sup>

Another useful skill was letting out garments that became too small.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, some authors of knitting manuals advised bartering yarns with friends, colleagues or neighbours.<sup>35</sup> In case their desired colour was not in stock, women could find instructions on how to dye yarn.<sup>36</sup> Małgorzata (born in 1960) remembers herself dyeing white yarn in different colours.

A subject that appears often in the context of scarcity is the originality of outfits. If Polish women under communism did not always experience an absolute lack of products, more often they faced a lack of choice.<sup>37</sup> Knitting was one of the ways to acquire an outfit that no one else could have. This aspect is very visible in the discourse on knitting, however its clearest confirmation is reflected in the types of clothes proposed by authors of the manuals. To help women with creating their own original outfits, the authors encouraged them to experiment with patterns. In 1982, Irena Szymańska advised in her book:

... teach yourself the skills of inputting of free changes to customise the outfit. We know that it is not a pleasure to meet people dressed identically. Meanwhile, the change of colour, use of a different weave, sometimes even other finishing edges, unwinding cuffs – makes the style look different.<sup>38</sup>

Knitting could be used to supplement the family budget in two ways: by producing the family's own clothes at a lower cost and by selling self-made garments. In the written sources



there are no comments about fighting poverty by knitting one's own clothes but home dressmaking was definitely described as cheaper.<sup>39</sup> Knitting was a matter of supplementing the family wardrobe and of avoiding the necessity of buying fashionable and original outfits at exorbitant prices.<sup>40</sup> It was common to have garments knitted by someone from one's own family.<sup>41</sup> Marcin (born in 1982) recalls his grandmother sitting in front of a television in a dark room, where only a small lamp gave her enough light to knit. He also remembers warm cardigans knitted by his grandmother for all family members.<sup>42</sup> In the communist era, grandparents played a significant role in raising their grandchildren. It was common for one of the children to stay in the parental home and start their own family within the same household. When children were born and both parents worked, grandparents replaced them and took over a great deal of parental care.<sup>43</sup>

Women who could not knit themselves were able to buy home-made clothes on the 'black market', which meant nothing more than that they knew women in their neighbourhood who wanted to make an additional income by knitting clothes for others. One of the women I interviewed still remembers someone who did not work professionally and used her free time for knitting and selling the results to friends and neighbours.<sup>44</sup> This aspect shows how women used traditionally female activities to increase the family's income. Even though they stayed at home and were fully devoted to the house-keeping activities they still had their contribution to the financial resources of the household.

## Domestic duties and free time

Knitting takes time and had to be fitted into a schedule already full of many other duties and domestic chores. Within these dynamics, the question of the extent to which knitting was regarded as a female duty is also raised. As knitting is – at least in the western world – seen as a task traditionally associated with women, especially women whose life is strongly limited by the boundaries of home, it could be regarded as an activity of those with limited rights or opportunities. Research into knitting in times of crisis reveals that knitting gave women the chance to be active and useful within society. On the other hand, knitting could be perceived as something discriminatory if it is culturally or socially seen as a duty that every woman should fulfil, even against her wishes. Yet I found no remarks suggesting that women in communist Poland were somehow socially obliged to make their own outfits or clothes for their families. On the contrary, authors of books understood that mothers who shared their time between caring for children and home and their professional occupation, would hardly find extra time for knitting. However, in the times of scarcity it was, above all, her concern to provide clothing to her family.

Yet, the authors of some books about knitting suggested that it was not very time consuming because you could perform it while doing many other things at the same time. In 1955, in the magazine *Przyjaciółka*, Alicja Kozłowska wrote an article about her experiences concerning knitting:

Recently, I learned to knit ... my newly acquired skill is very useful and actually does not take up my time. While knitting, you can soak your feet, listen to the radio or talking [sic] with a talkative friend. Oh, and you can still fully respond to all the children's endless questions.<sup>45</sup>

This suggests also that women should be capable of managing their time in the most efficient way. That was, in fact, necessary if they wanted combine work in a private space with a professional job. On the contrary, in 1986, Helena Dutkiewicz called her book *For Family in Your Spare Time*. This title points out that knitting was perceived as a hobby that women could perform after all other household duties were fulfilled.<sup>46</sup> This advice was especially applicable to women living in the countryside. Work on the land was seasonal and, whereas in the summer women could hardly find any time for knitting, winters gave them the opportunity to catch up on this activity.<sup>47</sup> In this case, knitting is seen more as a hobby than one of the essential female duties at home. Most of the women I interviewed were able to find time for knitting, in addition to their jobs and household chores. Knitting and sewing were, however, described as activities for long winter evenings. These activities were not considered a labour that women were obliged to perform, but a pleasant distraction to combat boredom. Krystyna (born in 1939) remembers her colleague who worked on the night shifts. The night work did not require a major commitment, so the women could use knitting to fill the long nights with useful and enjoyable activity.<sup>48</sup> Barbara (born in 1974) remembers that her grandmother participated in a kind of informal needlework club. She met her female friends to work together, but also to drink coffee, to chat and to exchange patterns.<sup>49</sup>

Knitting was often advertised as a relaxing manner of spending free time. In 1978, in the special issue of the magazine *Świat Mody* (World of Fashion) readers were encouraged to start practising knitting in the following way:

Knitting, which had once been the subject of many jokes, has become a matter that is treated more seriously. More people gain professional skills, and most importantly, they engage in knitting with great pleasure. Knitting has become a form of leisure activity.<sup>50</sup>

The titles of manuals gave also an impression that the main purpose of knitting was pleasure. For example, in 1980, Teresa Gilewska-Wójcicka gave her book the title *Relax With Needles*.<sup>51</sup> Although knitting was considered a hobby, it obviously had a practical character. Therefore, another interpretation of the meaning of knitting is possible: if we consider the communist mentality that rejected idleness, knitting provides a way to take advantage of free time to perform pleasant, but at the same time useful, work. The trust in one's own abilities and the belief that, with hard work and good will, everything was possible was part of communist discourse. In 1981, Ewa Gorzelany, author of numerous books of knitting patterns, wrote a manual addressed to teenage girls who 'have always been considered to have two left hands for knitting but never even tried to start any knitting or crochet. I advise you to adopt this practical hobby as a kind of fun, which provides excellent relaxation.'<sup>52</sup> Gorzelany believed that every woman or teenage girl would be able to knit if she only tried. Stanisława Podgórska expressed similar ideas, in reassuring her female readers that they all were capable of knitting. She wrote: 'There are no women who can't do knitting, except those who do not believe in their own abilities.'<sup>53</sup>

The importance of doing something with one's own hands was very evident in the writing on fashion and dress. Women could make, copy, remake, rearrange, redecorate or reuse their clothes, and all these actions were described as very positive and praiseworthy. Women with advanced skills in knitting and other

needlework competed with each other and tried to show off their best achievements in the field. Barbara, who remembered her grandmother's needlework club, told me that this aspect of competition was very evident during those meetings.

## Fashion and self-image

In the first years after the Second World War, when communist propaganda launched the ideology of women as equal citizens on the same level as men, it was believed that women should not take too much time in the care of their appearance. Rather, they should concentrate primarily on their work. Leopold Tyrmand, a Polish writer and publicist, referred to this attitude when, in 1954, he wrote in his diary:

In spite of this statement, the Communists did not want to offer colour and joy. Instead, they sought dullness, greyness and plainness that would not distract people from sanctified ideals. A sort of official ugliness became a moral value ... No one says this openly, but we all know that they would like to see us in Stalinist jackets, or in overalls, everyone without exception: young girls and acrimonious elders. The lack of loveliness is a virtue, while charm is a diversion.<sup>54</sup>

The ideal woman should have worn a uniform, ridden a tractor and done all kind of work – even that regarded as typically male.<sup>55</sup> A good-looking and fashionable woman was perceived to be an enemy of communist society. Women were expected to look decent when their profession demanded it from them: for example, when a woman was serving other people.<sup>56</sup> This was especially applicable to female clerks and workers in the public sector who had direct contact with other people.<sup>57</sup>

However, this attitude towards women and fashion evolved over time. First, the regime softened and there was more space for alternative thinking about such aspects of daily life as how people looked. Second, the branches of industry such as textile and dress started to develop intensely. The second half of the 1950s brought an important change. The most significant event of this time in the field of fashion was the opening of the national enterprise *Moda Polska* (Polish Fashion) in Warsaw. *Moda Polska* created a chain of shops in big cities and aimed to create luxurious and elegant outfits, albeit that these were out of financial reach for ordinary women. It also had an important function in representing Polish production abroad, even though communist ideology was against capitalistic ideas of fashion, and there was a desire to develop a Polish fashion style rather than merely follow Western fashion.<sup>58</sup> Within *Moda Polska*, several young and talented fashion designers were able to develop their talents. One of them was Jerzy Antkowiak. In addition, two female fashion designers should be mentioned: Barbara Hoff and Ewa Hase. Barbara Hoff, who was a designer and one of the most important figures in the Polish fashion industry in the communist era, created her own label, called Hoffland. Ewa Hase worked autonomously with various clothing factories and cooperatives.<sup>59</sup>

I believe there are two links between knitting and fashion. Firstly, people making their own clothing at home can try to follow fashion and, even in times of crisis, do their best to create an outfit that, at least to some extent, mimics the ruling trend. Indeed, this approach was advised by the authors of knitting manuals, as is revealed in the following quotation:



From: Ewa Gorzelany, *Dzianina na luzie. Cięte, szyte, dziergane*, Warszawa: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Prasowe (1987) reproduced with permission

I do not advise ignoring the spirit of contemporary fashion, because it is against well-being! Attiring at ease, with a pinch of madness, being unconventional, or in a wicked taste – as long as it is original and with character – is also necessary.<sup>60</sup>

In this case, fashion is understood as originality. Fashionable dress was defined as unusual and its opposite as boring. This aspect becomes obvious in the context of mass production under communism that supplied clothing of a narrow range and of rather low quality.<sup>61</sup> However, the material evidence reveals something else. The garments still kept by the interviewees, who used to knit in the period of communism, show that clothes knitted by an average woman were rather simple.<sup>62</sup>

Second, the act of knitting itself can be seen as fashionable and its popularity can alternately increase or decrease. The biggest interest in knitting was clearly present in the eighties. By the seventies, knitwear had become an important product of the clothing industry. In these two decades, knitting had two functions: it was an answer to crisis and it was in fashion: 'Knitwear is a phenomenon in the fashionable world. It has established its place in any fashion, and in every season. In short:



the knitwear was, is and will be'.<sup>63</sup>

In the context of fashion, other advantages of knitwear were also recommended. In 1986, Helena Dutkiewicz assured that knitted garments were 'lightweight, hygienic, rational and pleasant to wear'.<sup>64</sup> Books with patterns providing original and interesting inspirations for garments and their authors did their best to follow fashion. Barbara Hoff, mentioned above, promoted knitwear as well.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, she also saw recycling yarn as obvious and usual procedure.<sup>66</sup>

Women were proud of the outfits made by their own hands and proud of their own capabilities. They could show them to colleagues and friends and surprise the neighbourhood with an original outfit that was not available in shops. Being proud about original clothing made by one's own hands was one of the most common arguments made by knitting manual authors to convince women that they should start knitting. Likewise, feelings of envy could develop in the presence of other women who had an original self-made dress. In 1986, Stanisława Podgórska dedicated her books to 'all those women who, with unfeigned admiration and a little envy, gaze upon a sweater made by a neighbour herself'.<sup>67</sup>

#### Conclusion:

The analysis of contemporary discourse and women's memories on the practice of knitting in communist Poland provides some insight into women's everyday lives and mentality, as well as their position in society and at home. According to the dominant political ideology in Poland, women were supposed to be equal in the public space. They were expected to work outside of the home and many of them did indeed have a job. At the same time, they were not freed from their domestic duties. Partners did not take over, and so it happened that women in fact had to do double work. Paradoxically, the ideology that gave women equal right to have a job, at the same time influenced their everyday life at home.

This paradox is reflected in the practice of knitting, which was described in the dominant discourse as 'practical' and 'useful', but also 'a pleasant activity'. At home women were supposed to take a rest after work, but not until their household chores were completed. Knitting was promoted as a solution to combine leisure with home care. In times of economic crises, when people were trying to cope with problems of supply, knitting proved to be a tool to support the family budget, hence it was a popular method for making one's own clothes. Interestingly, knitted clothes were often fashionable. Not only were the clothes themselves in fashion, but knitting was, based on the research of magazines, also an activity of a fashionable woman. For women, making one's own clothes was a source of pride. They could use objects that they created with their own hands in their private space, but to impress others in public.

Eventually, the question remains: what was political or social about knitting in the private space? The discourse on knitting in communist Poland shows that, even though it remained a typical female activity and it was practised in the private realm, it was not an activity meant for weak women, limited by social circumstances. In contrast, knitting did empower women, both at home and in society. Even though, as in Western Europe, knitting in communist Poland was loaded with cultural, stereotypical meanings, its social picture was not that black and white. It rather reflected the multi-shade and complex reality of women – their work, their duties, their taste and their dress.

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# Between flintenweib and stewardess: putting West German women into military uniforms, 1960s–70s

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On 1 December 1976, R. G., who served as a female medical staff officer surgeon (*Oberstabsärztin*) in the West German armed forces, the Bundeswehr, sent a letter to the West German Ministry of Defence to share her ‘experience with the uniform.’<sup>1</sup> Her letter responded to a request, which the Ministry had sent to the Bundeswehr’s female medical officers a month earlier, asking them to provide feedback on their outfits. Dissatisfied, G. criticised her uniform’s lack of quality and functionality. She complained, for example, that the fabric of her blouses was of ‘significantly poorer quality’ than that of the men’s uniform shirts. The skirts and trousers of her uniform ‘creased so severely’ that, after a day’s work, only an overcoat could conceal the wrinkles. In addition, the trousers soiled easily during rainy weather due to the light colours. Although G. did not state it outright, her feedback implied that she was in constant danger of appearing in an untidy outfit that did not meet her expectations of a neat, clear-cut military uniform. This observation was closely connected to her most important criticism: because of the uniform’s overall style, her contemporaries neither addressed her as a soldier nor recognized her as one. Often, G. wrote, they mistook her for a female police assistant responsible for regulating traffic (*Politesse*) or for a stewardess of the German national airline Lufthansa. Even other Bundeswehr personnel had trouble identifying her as a soldier, since the rank insignia on her blouses were too small. If they thought she was a member of the Bundeswehr, they associated her with the air force due to her uniform’s light and dark blue colours. Concluding her assessment, R. G. urged the Ministry of Defence to take her feedback seriously. After all, she noted in the letter’s last sentence, ‘Since I am a soldier now, I, with justified pride, would like to be recognized [anerkannt] as such.’<sup>2</sup> As her detailed feedback shows, G. – like many other female medical officers who responded to the ministry’s inquiry – was eager to improve the uniform that clothed her body.

R. G. sent her letter at an important juncture in the women’s and gender history of the Bundeswehr. Over the course of the 1970s, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) witnessed the growth of (new) extra-parliamentary social movements, which included the second-wave women’s movement. As feminist activists pushed for women’s self-realisation and equality between the sexes, some argued for the equal integration of women into the military. Their demands coincided with reforms pursued by the social-liberal coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Free Democratic Party (FDP) under the leadership of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. In the mid-1970s, the government responded to a warning that Bundeswehr’s troop level was in danger because of West German men’s unwillingness to serve in the military. When the Bundeswehr was established in 1955–6, compulsory military service was legally defined as a duty only men could be compelled to render. Yet, from the very start, the military had to deal with a constant shortage of volunteers. Moreover, beginning in the mid-1960s, it also faced a growing number of conscientious objectors who preferred to render alternative civilian service (*Zivildienst*). As a countermeasure, Helmut Schmidt’s government introduced a bill in early 1975 to

alter several laws to allow for the recruitment of women into the medical service. After only a few deliberations the West German parliament, the Bundestag, voted to allow experienced, state-licensed female doctors, pharmacists, and veterinary surgeons to serve as medical officers.<sup>3</sup>

The relatively swift parliamentary negotiations were accompanied by the equally speedy development of new service uniforms. Deliberations regarding the outfit of the future female medical officers began only in November to December 1974. Yet, the planning took place under the direct leadership of the social-democratic Minister of Defence, George Leber, who took an eager interest in and played an active role in the uniforms’ design. The ministerial attentiveness did not cease once the first women had put on their uniforms. On the contrary, the ministry was determined to improve the uniforms and sought to involve the first generation of female officers in the process. As R. G.’s letter indicates, the women readily complied with the ministry’s request. The outfitting of West Germany’s first female medical officers hence sheds light on the development of uniforms as a multilateral process whose significance extends beyond mere institutional requirements for functionality. It testifies to the various meanings that militaries and governments as well as individual military members attribute to uniforms.

Despite the relevance of this history, the history of the Bundeswehr’s first female medical officers has attracted only limited attention.<sup>4</sup> Most sociological and historical studies have focused more closely on what preceded or followed this episode. For instance, scholars have focused on the 1968 Emergency Laws, which invested West German governments with considerable powers – including the curtailment of basic constitutional rights – to deal with external and internal threats. The highly controversial laws also provided the legal basis for the drafting of women for civil defence purposes.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the debates that erupted in the late 1970s and early 1980s have received more scholarly attention. At that time, government officials toyed with the idea of recruiting women as soldiers for more than just medical service and, furthermore, to train them with weapons.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, political scientists and sociologists have focused on the European Court of Justice’s 2001 ruling that Germany’s exclusion of women from combat forces violated the European community principle, which requires the equal treatment of men and women.<sup>7</sup>

Even less attention has been paid to the development of the uniform for West Germany’s first female officers. Only Sybille Hannelore Koch’s 2008 dissertation, which broadly traces the developments that led to the recruitment of first female medical officers and discusses the consequences of the Bundeswehr’s ‘opening’, addresses the creation of the women’s uniform.<sup>8</sup> Her study shows that the ministry’s efforts are noteworthy, given the institutional and cultural significance of clothing. Situating clothing within the broader context of material culture, scholars have stressed the important role that apparels play in the creation and shaping of identities and body images, social relationships and hierarchies. The wearing

of clothes is, as Gabriele Mentges argues, a 'cultural technique and strategy aimed at the body'. It bears meaning for the maker, the wearer, and the beholder. Clothes – and the ways they are produced, worn, and perceived – reflect social tendencies and function as 'effective instrument[s] to realize cultural assumptions and customs'.<sup>9</sup> In particular, clothes allow for the shaping and disciplining of the body according to cultural and social expectations, especially gender norms and ideals. An analysis of fashion and design shows how gender is culturally constructed, reproduced, and imposed on the body. While clothing functions as a societal and cultural vehicle to fashion the body according to ideas of femininity and masculinity, it also enables individuals not only to express and perform their gendered identities, but also to challenge or conform to social norms and expectations.<sup>10</sup>

These observations also hold true for uniforms, including military uniforms. Scholars have stressed that uniforms fulfil several functions. On an institutional level, they make it possible for individuals to be recognised as members of a certain organization. In the case of the military, and especially during wartime, uniforms are important to differentiate between friend and foe, combatants and non-combatants, military personnel and civilians.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this outward function, uniforms also fulfil an internal purpose. While they encourage a strong relationship between the individual and the institution, uniforms also help establish a group identity and cohesion. As they aim at the eradication of individuality, military uniforms play a particularly vital role 'in the formation of institutional and personal mentalities'.<sup>12</sup> Studying the history of nurses in Canada, Christina Bates emphasises that the introduction of new uniforms, or the alteration of existing ones, are brought about not only by changes to an institution's function. They also communicate changes in institutional values and custom. Yet, the significance of military uniforms extends beyond the institutions, because they also reflect political and cultural currents. Military uniforms are textile representations of institutional and societal ideas about gender. Intentionally or not, they give shape to concepts of military femininity and masculinity.<sup>13</sup>

These forces are at work in the case of the Bundeswehr's first female medical officers and the development of the uniforms. An analysis of parliamentary debates, together with Ministry of Defence's official records, reveals the conflicted process of how the West German government sought to integrate women into the Bundeswehr. This was done by equipping them with a uniform that, on the one hand, clearly identified them as member of the military's medical services and, on the other, left no doubt about their sex and gender.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the communication between the ministry and the first generation of female officers shows that many of these women were proud of being part of the Bundeswehr. Their letters are defined by the desire for a functional and neat uniform that reflected their military status. Analysed together, the process of enlisting the first women as medical officers and equipping them with new service uniforms reflects the cultural and political changes swept through West Germany at the time. While being informed by the memories of the Third Reich, it above all sheds light on the scope and limits of the reform-minded spirit of the early and mid-1970s.

To show this, this article first discusses the gendered conceptualisation of military service in West Germany, for it fundamentally informed debates surrounding the recruitment

of the first medical officers. In a second step, it provides an overview of the negotiations that eventually led to the recruitment of female doctors. Drawing on both secondary literature and primary sources, the article then analyses the deliberations within the Ministry of Defence as well as between the ministry and the first generation of female officers to reveal the multifaceted process in which the uniforms were created.

## Gendering the Bundeswehr: compulsory military service in post-war West Germany

Military service in West Germany was gendered and based on the perceived differences between the sexes. When the Bundeswehr was established in the 1950s as a national defence force consisting of both volunteers and conscripts, compulsory military service was defined as a duty that applied to men only. As part of the so-called Wehrverfassung (defence constitution amendment), Article 12, Subsection 3 was added to the West German constitution, the Basic Law, in March 1956. It stated that women 'shall not be required by law to render service in any unit of the Armed Forces. On no account shall they be employed in any service involving the use of arms.' The Basic Law thus made it unmistakably clear that the West German soldier was male and that military service, especially under arms, was something women should and would not render.

The reasons for this legislation can be found in the parliamentary debates that preceded the passing of the Wehrverfassung. Even though the establishment of the Bundeswehr was debated vigorously and at length in the Bundestag, parliamentarians of all parties agreed to exempt women from compulsory military service. This conviction was influenced chiefly by the notion that military service and, above all, service under arms, was against women's nature and violated West Germany's gender order. This notion was upheld by many parliamentarians, including Marie Elizabeth Lüders who was one of the so-called 'mothers of the Basic Law', because in 1948/49 she served on the Parliamentary Council responsible for the drafting of the West German constitution. Stating that 'men are no women and women are no men,' she argued in 1954 that women 'could not handle weapons' and men 'could not handle babies'.<sup>15</sup>

Lüders and other parliamentarians expressed gendered beliefs that emphasised women's role in the creation of life and closely connected masculinity with the usage of arms and the act of killing. They also sought to separate the Federal Republic both from its National Socialist predecessor and from its communist counterpart, the German Democratic Republic (GDR).<sup>16</sup> For instance, Adolf Arndt, a politician of SPD, was appalled by the prospect of recruiting 'young girls' as anti-aircraft-axillaries as the Nazi regime had done in the Second World War. He stated that he did not want to see West German women 'armed as riflemen' (*Flintenweiber*).<sup>17</sup> Dating back to the nineteenth century, the derogatory term *Flintenweiber* was used extensively by the Nazi regime during the Second World War to denounce the roughly 800,000 women who served as soldiers in the Red Army and as partisans in irregular units.<sup>18</sup> In early post-war West Germany, however, politicians like Arndt used the term to warn his contemporaries not only against the dangers of Communism, but also against the revival of Nazism. While the Nazis had denounced the Soviet Union for enlisting women, the German Wehrmacht employed nearly 500,000 female auxiliaries, so-called Wehrmachtshelferinnen.<sup>19</sup> According to West German



parliamentarians, women's compulsory and armed military service was a sign that a state had turned authoritarian and militaristic.

Despite this agreement across party lines, the Bundeswehr would not be deprived of women entirely. West German politicians did not object to employing women on a voluntary basis in positions that 'match[ed] women's character'.<sup>20</sup> From the 1950s onward, women were employed as nurses, secretaries, kitchen staff, or in the military's laundry facilities. While other armed forces at the time maintained women auxiliary corps and recruited women as soldiers to fulfil these and other functions, the Bundeswehr employed women only as civilians.<sup>21</sup> By the 1970s, about 49,000 women worked as civilians for the military. As they worked to serve, support and take care of male soldiers, these women were far removed from the image of the *Flintenweiber*. Instead, their work conformed to social ideals about gender difference that evolved around the ideals of caring/nurturing/vulnerable/feminine and strong/aggressive/protective/masculine.

Despite the passing of the 1968 Emergency Laws, which enabled the government to conscript women for civilian services in the event that the Federal Republic of Germany should be in a national state of defence or emergency, this gendered understanding of military service remained strong. It shaped the debates surrounding the employment of the first medical officers in the 1970s. The main reason for the West German government to consider the recruitment of women was the growing lack of male recruits and volunteers. While few young men, who were drafted into the military in the 1950s and early 1960s, protested conscription, West German men were generally not keen on volunteering. The situation began to change in the mid-1960s when the number of men who applied for conscientious objector status started to rise. Although this trend did not pose an immediate challenge to the Bundeswehr, the situation became problematic in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The numbers of conscientious objectors skyrocketed and the number of volunteers plummeted. Between 1965 and 1969, for example, the total number of men filing for conscientious objection rose from 3,437 to 14,420. In addition, more and more soldiers on active duty applied for conscientious objector status.<sup>22</sup> Concerns over the military's ability to recruit able-bodied men grew even more in mid-1970s due to a declining birth rate. Although West Germany witnessed its own 'baby boom' after the Second World War, in the mid-1960s the birth rate began to decline relentlessly. In 1964, the year that West Germany's birth rate spiked, 1,357,304 babies – 698,046 of them boys – were born (live births). By 1978, the numbers had dropped to 808,619 babies; 409,749 of these were male. Given this development, military experts feared that the Bundeswehr's ability to defend the Federal Republic in case of an attack would soon be at risk. One of the many areas affected by this change was the Bundeswehr's medical service. According to 1975 estimates, the Bundeswehr needed 2,100 doctors. Yet only 800 of these posts were occupied.<sup>23</sup>

Even though these numbers were the driving force behind Minister Leber's decision to propose the recruitment of women, the Ministry of Defence was eager to put it in another light. Much to the dismay of his critics, Leber sought to portray the proposal as proof that the government of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt actively supported women's emancipation. The year 1975 was particularly fitting to show this. Just three years previously, the United Nations had chosen 1975 as International Women's Year. Although the West German government did not deny that the

problematic recruitment numbers were the main reason for its push to recruit women, officials were happy to point out that the International Women's Year would not be 'a year of lip service to women'. Instead, the West German government was proving that women as 'pari passu members of society had a place in the Bundeswehr'.<sup>24</sup>

The ministry's attempt to portray its recruitment plans as a contribution to women's emancipation was not the only aspect that was criticised. During the Bundestag deliberations in the spring and summer of 1975, West German politicians were dismayed because the Ministry of Defence remained vague about the scope of its proposed recruitment efforts. In particular, parliamentarians were concerned that the government wanted to recruit women for more than just medical services. Their concerns were somewhat justified. In October 1974, the parliamentary state secretary at the Ministry of Defence, Karl Wilhelm Berkhan, responded ambiguously to an inquiry that the ministry indeed considered the recruitment of women as soldiers so that they could 'fulfil functions in the different military branches'. This meant the army, navy, and air force. Emphasising further that women's armed military service was entirely out of the question, Berkhan also specified that the ministry was currently focusing on 'doctors' and the 'medical care of the troops'. Despite such public statements, internal documents show that Georg Leber was initially willing to consider a much broader recruitment strategy. In early 1974, he issued instructions to 'investigate the question' whether women could be employed as soldiers in careers and branches other than the Bundeswehr's medical corps.<sup>25</sup>

Leber's readiness to expand women's recruitment did not get very far, because West German parliamentarians were determined to limit the 'opening' of the Bundeswehr to the employment of female officers who would be in charge of the troops' medical wellbeing. Although most politicians appreciated the 'valuable medical help' that these women would provide, and delighted at the prospect of 'tender women's hands' at work in military hospitals, they generally agreed that this development could not lead to women receiving weapon training and being assigned to combat units.<sup>26</sup> Under no circumstance, as one parliamentarian put it, could this development result in the Bundeswehr recruiting and training female soldiers who resembled the *Flintenweiber* of 'eastern character' [*östlicher Prägung*].<sup>27</sup> Rehashing the same images that shaped the negotiations in the 1950s, politicians in the 1970s agreed that women's armed military service violated women's natural roles in a functioning, non-militaristic society. As they portrayed the future medical doctors as 'helping hands', the parliamentarians invoked a concept of complementary femininity, which built on the assumption that the Bundeswehr was a male-dominated space in which all leadership decisions were made by men. As a result, the twenty-nine women doctors who served in the Bundeswehr in 1975 voluntarily received the status of soldiers.<sup>28</sup> They were, however, prohibited from rendering armed military service. Although they could be trained on a voluntary basis in the usage of small arms or handguns (*Handfeuerwaffen*) to defend themselves and their patients in case of an attack, they were considered 'non-combatants' under international law.<sup>29</sup>

## **'Chic' and 'womanly': fashioning West Germany's first female officers**

At the time the Bundestag was debating the possible recruitment of women, the Ministry of Defence was hastily preparing for the Bundeswehr's first generation of female medical officers. George Leber had requested the development of a 'clothing concept for the doctors of the medical services' only in early November 1974.<sup>30</sup> Over the next months, different departments – above all the Bundeswehr's Medical and Health Services and subdivision responsible for acquisition of soldier's apparel – considered a range of options. The deliberation that began in December 1974 focused on the regular service uniform and supplementary equipment for peacetime service (*Friedenszusatzausstattung*). This included peaked caps, jackets, shirts, skirt, trousers, shoes, underwear and stockings.<sup>31</sup> A couple of months later, in February 1975, plans also included the development and purchase of a dress uniform in addition to the regular service uniforms.<sup>32</sup> Although female medical officers would render their service for different branches, the Ministry of Defence clearly stated that they belonged 'neither to the army nor to the air force nor to the navy'.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, the uniforms would be – unlike their male counterparts – the same across the different military branches.<sup>34</sup> The ministry's eagerness to draw the lines between women's medical services and other military branches leaves room for different interpretations. First, it could be attributed to military eagerness to distinguish clearly the female officers as medical staff and non-combatants. Second, the visual demarcation also underscored the prevailing understanding – codified in the West German constitution – that by nature, women did not render armed military service, but acted as caregivers. Third, the creation of a distinct uniform also suggests that the Ministry of Defence sought to encourage women's identification with Bundeswehr's medical service as well as to create a group identity among the medical staff.

At the same time, the development of the women's service uniform also reveals institutional and societal ideas about gender. For the Ministry of Defence, it was important that the uniform did not only identify the medical officers as members of the Bundeswehr, but also made visible the differences between the two sexes. As Sybille Hannelore Koch has shown, the ministry wanted to create a 'uniform image of female medical officers' that did not resemble the outfit of the Bundeswehr's male officers.<sup>35</sup> To achieve this, Minister Leber urged his staff to consider the type of woman that would serve in the medical corps as officers. Because the female officers would not enter the Bundeswehr as young recruits, but as already licensed doctors, veterinary surgeons, or pharmacists with professional experience, the minister 'stressed emphatically' that the uniform would 'primarily be worn by middle-aged women'. Consequently, Leber argued, the ministry had to develop an outfit that would look 'becoming and appealing' and be suitable for women with 'stocky figures'.<sup>36</sup> Although the official documents lack explicit discussions of what the creation of a uniform appropriate for middle-aged women would entail, one can discern several ways in which the ministry – knowingly and unwittingly – took the medical officer's sex and gender into account. From the very start, proposals for the women's uniform included not only trousers, but also women's skirts and stockings; clothing items that were at the time associated with women's every day and professional apparel. Another way in which the ministry sought to ensure the feminine look of the women's uniform and underline the

distinction between male and female soldiers was through the shoulder piece, which displayed the officer's rank insignia. Those insignia, as the Minister of Defence himself insisted, 'should ... not look masculine'. To ensure this, the rank insignia of the female officers would be much smaller and more delicate than those of their male comrades.<sup>37</sup>

In order to develop a feminine-looking uniform that suited middle-aged women and would clearly identify them as members of the medical services, the Ministry of Defence looked for inspiration at home and abroad. In addition to inspecting the uniforms of NATO partners such as Norway, Denmark and France, the ministry also compared and evaluated the uniforms of women who worked for the West German airline Lufthansa, the West German railway company, the national postal service and the police.<sup>38</sup> The decisive input for the uniform's production came from Georg Leber, who favoured the uniforms of Lufthansa stewardesses. These were, unlike their American counterparts at the time, considered traditional, conservative, and in no way sexy.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, the ministry contacted Lufthansa to inquire which companies it had used to produce their uniforms.<sup>40</sup> The recommendation of the Bielefeld-based company Jobis impressed the ministry's staff considerably. According to official assessments, the company was sufficiently big and well equipped to complete the job. In addition, Jobis's employees passed muster. The company's model maker, the ministry observed, was 'despite his work-related artistic nature – in contrast to some fashion designers – a practical man'.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the confidence in Jobis, Georg Leber did not feel comfortable having only men decide which uniforms the future female medical officers should wear. Consulting the all-male representatives of the Bundeswehr's armed forces staff was not enough.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the minister created an advisory board and invited several women to serve on it. In addition to inviting his own wife, Leber contacted the wives of his parliamentary secretaries, of the Bundeswehr's General Inspector and of the ministry's department heads to attend the presentation of uniform models.<sup>43</sup> Eventually, sixteen women agreed to advise the minister and attended the equivalent of a fashion show in June 1975. During the showing, the ministry underlined both the gendered and somewhat military appearance of the uniforms. According to the speaking notes prepared for this occasion, the attending women were informed that the current models had to some extent preserve the traditional 'uniform character'; the future female medical officers would receive the 'real status of a soldier' (*Soldatenstatus*) and would not be civilians. At the same time, the attendees were reminded that the outfit 'had to be chic' and suitable for women. For that reason, the future uniforms would not include masculine items such as neckties.<sup>44</sup>

The jolly deliberations during the meeting provided George Leber and his staff with considerable input, which influenced the production of the final uniforms. The final service uniform included winter and summer coats, shirts in variable lengths, light blue and white blouses, several sweaters, trousers and skirts, neck scarfs, and a beret. For different reasons, Leber and his staff decided that, unlike combat uniforms, the women's regular uniform provided by the military would not include items such as shoes, gloves, handbags, stockings or underwear. According to internal correspondence, this was due to a lack of 'expert knowledge with regards to women's clothing and its cost'.<sup>45</sup> This cited lack of experience is somewhat surprising, because previous administrations had already considered unified clothing for the women who were employed by the



Bundeswehr's medical service in a civilian capacity. The debates in 1975 represent both a continuation and a break from the discussions that started in early 1960s. At the time, the Ministry of Defence deliberated the creation of a uniform outfit for its female medical staff that was intended for both peacetime service and for possible deployment during disaster operations and manoeuvres, as well as in cases where the Federal Republic was in a state of defence.<sup>46</sup> Just two years after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Ministry of Defence reckoned that the uniform should be 'dirt resistant and sturdy' and offer 'protection against NBC [nuclear, biological and chemical] weapons.' Moreover, the Ministry of Defence planned to equip its female medical staff with some underwear such as shift dresses and woollen panties.<sup>47</sup> As with deliberations that took place in 1975, the 1960s plans stated that the uniform of the female staff 'should not follow fashion trends' and should clearly identify the wearer as a member of the Bundeswehr. At the same time, however, the uniform had to maintain 'a civilian character' to ensure that the female medical staff were recognised as civilians. Finally, like in the mid-1970s, the ministry's officials emphasised that the uniforms should 'maintain the womanly tone'.<sup>48</sup>

The public announcements that accompanied the recruitment of the first female medical officers in 1975 portrayed the lack of government-provided accessories in terms of a freedom of choice and the ministry's awareness of women's fashion. On 1 October 1975, Minister George Leber officially introduced the first three female officers to the public. By allowing women to choose parts of their uniforms themselves, the ministry intended to not only create an 'appealing appearance', but also offer women the opportunity to 'realise their own clothing ideas'.<sup>49</sup> This apparent concern for personal stylistic preferences also influenced the ministry's decision to opt against a special uniform for special occasions. During the meeting of the all-women advisory board, the attendees pointed out that a dress uniform 'would cause too many problems' because it depended more strongly on 'fashion trends'. This was important, since the ministry could 'hardly expect a lady with a sense for fashion' to attend official festivities in a uniform that had gone out of style.<sup>50</sup> These suggestions must have influenced George Leber and his staff, for the ministry did not pursue the development of a dress uniform.

While this discussion suggests that the Ministry of Defence took special liberties with the women's uniform, the 1970s represented a general period of experimentation for the Bundeswehr. Beginning in the late 1960s, West Germany's armed forces recruited more and more men who wore long hair and beards. Instead of forcing them to immediately change their appearance to meet existing military standards and guidelines, the Ministry of Defence issued the infamous 'hair and beard decree' in February 1971. It permitted soldiers to wear longer hair, provided they kept it neat and clean. Moreover, the decree stipulated that servicemen 'whose work and safety might be impaired through their hairstyle must wear a hairnet'. Because of immense international and national criticism as well as hygiene problems, the decree was revised just one year later and soldiers had to cut off their long 'manes'. Despite its short life span, the decree shows that the West German government in the 1970s was willing to take into account the soldiers' individual freedom to follow the 'general taste'.<sup>51</sup> Although the 'hair and beard decree' revealed the shortcomings of this approach, the Ministry of Defence was still willing to grant the Bundeswehr's female medical officers some stylistic freedoms.

In the case of the female officers, the ministry's willingness to bow to women's individual fashion ideals also underscores official desires to create a uniform that deviated 'intentionally from the strict uniform character' of the Bundeswehr's male soldiers.<sup>52</sup> George Leber and his staff seemed to have been eager to downplay the fact that the Bundeswehr's female medical officers possessed the military status of a soldier. For example, the official magazine *Bundeswehr Aktuell*, which was produced to be read mainly by conscripts and professional soldiers, ran a story in June 1975 that introduced the 'chic, becoming, practical' uniforms of the new female medical officers. The article highlighted that the uniforms were not only 'fashionable' but also 'quite civil' (*sehr zivil*).<sup>53</sup> Only the narrow shoulder-piece with the rank insignia, it noted, suggested that the women were wearing a military uniform. The article hence welcomed the non-military outlook of the female medical officers.

### **'I'm a soldier now': female medical officers and their uniforms**

The hurried efforts of George Leber and his staff to create a practical and attractive uniform that would suit the first female officers were only partially successful. The Ministry of Defence already received its first complaints in November 1975, only two months after Leber had presented the first female volunteers to the West German public.<sup>54</sup> Over the next months, several female medical officers sent letters to the ministry criticising different aspects of their outfit. Above all, the women's disapproval focused on the uniform's winter coat, which was too thin to keep the women warm, and the beret, which many considered unbecoming and impractical, because it did not fit well.<sup>55</sup> The lack of a dress uniform that could be worn for special occasions also drew criticism. While the ministry responded to the women's individual complaints, it also actively sought feedback from the first generation of female medical officers. In late 1976, it sent out letters to the first cohorts of women asking them to share their experience with the daily usage of the new uniform. These letters informed the addressees that the Ministry of Defence had paid special attention to their uniforms because they were the first women the 'Bundeswehr had to dress.' Although the ministry had not been able to consult with the future wearers of the uniform or conduct a trial run, the letters assured their readers that 'for the first time ever it was not only men who had chosen the Bundeswehr models'; women too were involved. Therefore, the ministry was certain that it had done its best to create a 'flattering' uniform for the first female officers. Despite this presumed success, one year after the first medical officers donned their uniforms, Leber and his staff wanted to know whether their product had stood the test of daily service.<sup>56</sup>

In the weeks following the ministry's request, numerous women responded. Most of the replies echoed earlier grievances: they found fault with the unbecoming beret and the overly thin winter coat, as well as the inferior fabric quality, which resulted in a wrinkly uniform and consequently in a disorderly appearance. In addition, many officers seconded earlier demands for the creation of a dress uniform.<sup>57</sup> Staff surgeon A. S., who was employed at the Bundeswehr's NBC Defence and Self-Protection School (ABC- und Selbstschuttschule) in Sonthofen, expressed great interest in obtaining an 'evening uniform'. According to her letter, the Bundeswehr had scheduled several balls for the winter half year that required attendees to appear in uniform.<sup>58</sup> Although A. S. did not specify what pieces of clothing

this special uniform should include, many other women, who issued similar requests, recommended the creation of form-fitting evening gowns or long skirts.<sup>59</sup> As these letters show, many female officers were eager to attend official Bundeswehr festivities in appropriate uniforms that allowed them to partake in all aspects of the military's social life and adhered to gendered assumption about the appropriate clothing for men and women.

Proud of their service, several women also criticised the fact that the uniforms did not clearly identify them as members of the Bundeswehr's medical services. Like R. G., who was quoted in the introduction of this article, they noted that contemporaries confused them with stewardesses, police assistants, hostesses, streetcar conductors, or members of the Salvation Army.<sup>60</sup> According to one officer, this confusion was understandable and 'inevitable', because the existence of the first female Bundeswehr officers was not widely known, either inside or outside of the military.<sup>61</sup> Running counter to the ministry's initial intentions, they wanted not only recognition as medical officers, but they also wanted to be associated with the military branch they served.<sup>62</sup> Since the uniform represented the most obvious tool to achieve this goal, some expressed the wish to have the colours of their uniforms and their rank insignia adjusted.

In addition to demands for proper recognition, a number of female officers also raised concerns about the freedoms that the Ministry of Defence had granted them. Whereas some defended their ability to choose their accessories, most women wanted to create a unified image. Staff pharmacist U. K.-B. lamented, for instance, the lack of a dress code for the Bundeswehr's female medical staff. According to her letter, this resulted in female officers, unlike their male counterparts, dressing in various ways.<sup>63</sup> The ministry's decision to let female officers choose parts of their own uniform ran counter to the eagerness of many female officers to create a unified and uniform appearance. Sharing her experience as a staff surgeon at the Bundeswehr hospital in Munich, A. B. reported that the hospital's female medical staff had jointly agreed to wear dark blue shoes and light blue stockings so that the medical wards did not look 'too colourful' when the women went to work.<sup>64</sup> By highlighting the inconsistent clothing situation, A. B. expressed the common concern that the women's freedom to shape their appearance according to their 'individual taste' defeated the 'character and purpose' of military uniforms. After all, the clothes of the female officers were supposed to document their 'affiliation with the armed forces'.<sup>65</sup>

Interestingly, while most women discussed the need for recognition as members of the Bundeswehr, few explicitly addressed the gendered style of the uniform. For example, in contrast to the officers who criticised the small size of their uniform's rank insignia, which prevented them from being recognised as a member of the Bundeswehr, one orthopaedic doctor wanted to personally compliment the ministry for producing a uniform wholly appropriate for female officers. Considering her outfit indeed functional and chic, she particularly approved of the 'relatively inconspicuous shoulder piece with the delicate rank insignia'. As part of a uniform that 'had until now been reserved for men', she viewed them as a 'successful expression of feminine restraint'.<sup>66</sup> Although several female officers recognised their special status as women in the Bundeswehr, it did not define their assessment of the uniform they were wearing. Rather, their feedback was predominantly shaped by their professional work as medical officers and the desire to properly represent the West German military.

Although her references to the gendered style of her uniform represented an exception, the orthopaedic doctor was not the only one who praised the uniform. Overall, the letters indicate that the majority of women were generally happy with their outfits and enjoyed wearing them.<sup>67</sup> Much to the delight of the officials who read the letters, staff surgeon V. W. reported that she was not the only one who liked her uniform. Her male colleagues also approved of it.<sup>68</sup> Referencing the ministry's initial request to provide feedback, the staff surgeon E. S. furthermore agreed that the government had indeed been successful in staying clear of any 'short-term fashion trends', except for the flared cut of the trousers.<sup>69</sup> According to her and to other medical officers, the Ministry of Defence had, for the most part, succeeded in creating a uniform that fulfilled its institutional purpose, even though its fabric quality and practicality needed improvement.

Based on the feedback it received, the ministry partially enhanced the uniforms. As Sybille Hannelore Koch has discussed, the Ministry of Defence immediately initiated the creation of a dress uniform that the female medical officers could wear for special occasions. It included a long, dark blue skirt, two long-sleeve blouses and two short jackets in dark blue and white. The creation of a gendered uniform that could be worn on special occasions underlines the ministry's continuing commitment to a uniform that accentuated the officers' sex. At the same time, however, the Ministry of Defence did not immediately follow up on the women's request to create uniforms that would not only identify them as medical officers, but also mark their association with the military branches they served. This only happened in the late 1980s, when the Bundeswehr started to accept female officer candidates. From then on, the uniform of the female medical officers matched those of their male counterparts and reflected the individual military branches.<sup>70</sup>

## Conclusion

As this analysis shows, the development of the service uniform for the first female medical officers who joined the Bundeswehr in the mid-1970s was a multilateral process, shaped by conflicting objectives. The process reflects the politics and reforms pursued by the West German government under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. For the West German Ministry of Defence, the uniform had to symbolise the women's status as soldiers and important members of West Germany's armed forces. At the same time, the uniform could not be too militaristic and should allow some degree of individuality. Moreover, while the ministry sought to portray the officers as symbols of the government's contribution to women's progress, the uniform was designed to recognise women's femininity and thereby signal that the first female medical officers did not violate society's traditional gender order. Yet, in contrast to the ministry's focus on the officers' sex and gender, the women who joined the Bundeswehr in the 1970s were more concerned with the functionality and representative nature of their outfit. Their concerns focused more strongly on whether uniform clearly identified them as members of the military and distinguished them from other women who wore uniforms as part of their civilian occupations.



## Notes

1. R. G. to the Ministry of Defence, 1 December 1976. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg (hereafter BAArch), BW 1/250654. Author knows full name of the medical staff officer surgeon, but her name as well of all the following female officers have been abbreviated with respect to the German privacy/data protection laws.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Jens-Reiner Ahrens, 'Verzögerte Anpassung und radikaler Wandel. Zum parlamentarischen Diskurs über Frauen in den Streitkräften seit Gründung der Bundeswehr', in *Frauen im Militär: Empirische Befunde zur Integration der Streitkräfte*, ed. Jens-Reiner Ahrens, Maja Apelt and Christiane Bender (Wiesbaden, VS Verlag, 2005), 32–44.
4. One significant exception is Sybille Hannelore Koch, 'Militärpolitik im 'Jahr der Frau': Die Öffnung der Bundeswehr für weibliche Sanitätsoffiziere und ihre Folgen' (PhD thesis, Technischen Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig 2008), [https://publikationsserver.tu-braunschweig.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/dbbs\\_derivate\\_00004825/ediss.pdf](https://publikationsserver.tu-braunschweig.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/dbbs_derivate_00004825/ediss.pdf), on which this article draws; see also Franz Wilhelm Seidler, *Frauen zu den Waffen? Marketenderinnen, Helferinnen, Soldatinnen* (Koblenz, WehrWissen, 1978); Swantje Kraake, *Frauen zur Bundeswehr: Analyse und Verlauf einer Diskussion* (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1992).
5. See for example, Beate Fieseler and Ulrike Ladwig, 'Women and the Peace Movement in the Federal Republic of Germany', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 8/2 (1985), 59–64; Renate Janßen, *Frauen ans Gewehr?* (Cologne, Pahl-Rugenstein, 1983).
6. Achim Schneider, 'Politische und gesellschaftliche Aspekte einer generellen Öffnung der deutschen Streitkräfte für weibliche Soldaten', in *Frauen im militärischen Waffendienst: Rechtliche, politische, soziologische und militärische Aspekte des Einsatzes von Frauen in den Streitkräften unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Deutschen Bundeswehr und des Österreichischen Bundesheers*, ed. Armin Steinkamm (Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2001), 340–91.
7. Gerhard Kümmel, 'Freundin oder Feindin? Frauen als Soldatinnen in der Bundeswehr', in *Entschieden für den Frieden: 50 Jahre Bundeswehr*, ed. Klaus-Jürgen Breem et al. (Freiburg, Rombach, 2005), 483–506; Maja Apelt, Cordula Dittmer and Anne Mangold, 'Die Bundeswehr auf dem Weg zur Gleichstellung der Geschlechter?', in *Frauen im Militär: Empirische Befunde und Perspektiven zur Integration von Frauen in die Streitkräfte* (Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 108–31.
8. Koch, 'Militärpolitik'; for additional discussion of the uniforms, see Seidler, *Frauen zu den Waffen?* and Kraake, *Frauen zur Bundeswehr*.
9. Gabriele Mentges, 'Kleidung als Technik und Strategie am Körper: Eine Kulturanthropologie von Körper, Geschlecht und Kleidung', in *Zweite Haut: Zur Kulturgeschichte der Kleidung*, ed. André Holenstein et al. (Bern, Hauptverlag 2010), 15–42, 36–37.
10. Leora Auslander, 'Deploying Material Culture to Write the History of Gender and Sexuality: the Example of clothing and textiles', *Clio* 40 (2014), 157–78; Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton, 'Fashion, Representation, Femininity', *Feminist Review* 38 (1991), 48–66.
11. See Ute Frevert, 'Männer in Uniform: Habitus und Signalzeichen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in *Männlichkeit als Maskerade: Kulturelle Inszenierung vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Claudia Benthien and Inge Stephan (Cologne, Böhlau, 2003), 277–95, 279 and 283.
12. Frevert, 'Männer in Uniform', 280.
13. Christina Bates, "'Their Uniforms all Esthetic and Antiseptic': Fashioning Modern Nursing Identity, 1870–1900', in *Cultures of Femininity in Modern Fashion*, ed. Ilya Parkins and Elizabeth M. Sheehan (Durham, University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 152–153.
14. For this argument see also, Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 115–116.
15. Ruth Seifert, 'Soldiers and Mothers in the German Bundeswehr. Constructions of Gender and Service under Arms', in *Women and Death 2. Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination 1500*, ed. Sarah Colvin and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (New York, Camden House, 2009), 186–208; Friederike Brühöfener, 'Sending Young Men to the Barracks: West Germany's Struggle over the Establishment of New Armed Forces in the 1950s', in *Gender and the Long Postwar: Reconsiderations of the United States and the Two Germanys, 1945–1989*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Sonya Michel (Baltimore and Washington, DC, Johns Hopkins University Press/Wilson Centre Press, 2014), 145–64.
16. Urte Evert, 'Soldatenbraut und Mannesehre': Geschlechtsspezifische Symbolisierungen und Zuordnungen militärischer Waffen', in *Soldatinnen. Gewalt und Geschlecht im Krieg vom Mittelalter bis Heute*, ed. Klaus Latzel, Franka Maubach and Silke Satjukow (Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011), 65–94.
17. 16. Sitzung des Ausschusses für Rechtswesen und Verfassungsrecht, 9 February 1954, 64–65. For this debate see also Kraake, *Frauen zur Bundeswehr*, 52.
18. Felix Römer, 'Gewaltsame Geschlechterordnung. Wehrmacht und 'Flintenweiber' an der Ostfront 1941/42', in *Soldatinnen. Gewalt und Geschlecht im Krieg vom Mittelalter bis Heute*, ed. Klaus Latzel, Franka Maubach and Silke Satjukow (Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011), 331–51.
19. Karen Hagemann, 'Mobilizing Women for War: The History, Historiography, and Memory of German Women's War Service in the Two World Wars', *Journal of Military History*, 75 (2011), 1055–93.
20. Protokoll der 16. Sitzung des Ausschusses für Rechtswesen und Verfassungsrecht, 9 February 1954, 68.
21. Janßen, *Frauen ans Gewehr?*, 43.
22. Patrick Bernhard, *Zivildienst zwischen Reform und Revolte: Eine bundesdeutsche Institution im gesellschaftlichen Wandel 1961–1982* (Munich, Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005).
23. Ahrens, 'Verzögerte Anpassung', 36.
24. Deutscher Bundestag, 7. Wahlperiode, 171; Sitzung, Bonn, 16 May 1975, 12014. For the Bundestag debate see also Ahrens, 'Verzögerte Anpassung', 36 Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 71.
25. Letter from Fü S I 1, 'Verwendung von Frauen im Soldatenstatus in der Bundeswehr', 29 November 1974, BAArch, BM 1/6967.
26. Deutscher Bundestag, 7. Wahlperiode, 181. Sitzung, 19. June 1975, 12687 and 12689.
27. Stenographischer Bericht des Deutschen Bundestages 7. Wahlperiode, 181. Sitzung 19 June 1975, 12686. See also Ahrens, 'Verzögerte Anpassung', 37.
28. The number of female medical officers rose only slowly. In 1980, for example, it had increased to thirty-five doctors, five pharmacists, two dentists, and one veterinarian. For the numbers, see Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 150.
29. For a full discussion of the legal background, see Koch, 'Militärpolitik'.
30. Letter from VR III 5, 'Einstellung von Ärztinnen als

Sanitätsoffiziere, 12 November 197, BArch Freiburg, BW 1/250674. See also, Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 113.

31. Memorandum, VR III 5, 'Einstellung von Ärztinnen als Sanitätsoffiziere,' 12 December 1974, BArch, BW 1/250674. For a list of items the regular service uniform included, see Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 216.

32. Letter from VR III 5, 20 February 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

33. Letter from VR III 5, 12 August 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

34. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, *Uniformen der Bundeswehr* (2016), 9, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/975292/729868/a567e2ec2a914b1eabb5f5010233da0a/uniformen-der-bundeswehr-download-bmvg-data.pdf?download=1>

35. Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 116–7.

36. Letter from VR III 5, 20 February 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674, 29.

37. Notation regarding 'Phone Call with Minister', 20 February 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674 and letter from VR III 5, 20 February 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

38. Letter from VR III 5, 20 February, 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

39. Regina Henkel, 'Der Mythos Stewardess: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Stewardess-Uniform' in *Schönheit der Uniformität, Körper, Kleidung, Medien*, ed. Gabriele Mentges and Birgit Richard (Frankfurt and New York, Campus Verlag, 2005), 59–77.

40. Notation regarding 'Phone Call with Minister', 20 February 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

41. Memorandum, VR III 5, 5 März 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674; see also Richard Göbelt, 'Gleichberechtigung ist nicht Gleichmacherei: Die ersten weiblichen Sanitätsoffiziere im Einsatz bei der Bundeswehr', *Militärgeschichte. Zeitschrift für historische Bildung* 15/4 (2005), 22–23.

42. Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 114.

43. Notation regarding 'Phone Call with Minister', 20 February 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

44. Speaking notes, 6 June 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

45. Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 113.

46. Letter from P VR IV (P I), 22 June 1964, BArch, BW 1/98262.

47. Letter from P VR IV (P I), 22 June 1964, BArch, BW 1/98262.

48. Letter from P VR IV (P I), 22 June 1964, BArch BW 1/98262.

49. VR III 5 Minister's Speaking Notes, 18 September 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674.

50. VR III 5 Notation, 10 June 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674, 100.

51. Friederike Brühöfener, 'Defining the West German Soldier: Military, Masculinity, and Society in West Germany, 1945–1989' (PhD thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014), 280–281.

52. VR III 5 Minister's Speaking Notes, 18 September 1975, BArch, BW 1/250674, 165.

53. "'Schick, kleidsam, praktisch: Uniform für weibliche San-Offiziere'", *Bundeswehr Aktuell* 11/106 (10 June 1975).

54. VR III 5 letter to Frau Oberfeldstabsarzt Dr. S. F., 12 November 1975, BArch, BW 1/250654.

55. Letter from VR III 5, 5 March 1976, BArch, BW 1/250654; see also Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 116.

56. VR III 5l to Frau Dr. V., 19 November 1976; BArch, BW 1/250654.

57. For a discussion of the demands for an evening gown, see

also Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 117.

58. Letter from A. S., 1 December 1976, BArch, BW 1/250654; see also, letter from A. B., 6 December 1976, BArch, BW 1/250654.

59. Letter from R. S., 1 December 1976; letter from U. K.-B., 8 December 1976; and letter by V. v. W., 30 November 1976 all in BArch, BW 1/250654.

60. Letter from E. V., 29 November 1976 and letter by I. W. 1 December 1976, both in BArch, BW 1/250654.

61. Letter from E. V., 29 November 1976 and letter by I. W. 1 December 1976, both in BArch, BW 1/250654.

62. See also Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 114–115 and 119–120.

63. Letter from U. K.-B., 8 December 1976, BW 1/250654.

64. Letter from A. B., 6 December 1976, BW 1/250654.

65. Letter from Fü S I 1, 15 January 1976, BW 1/250674, 172–174.

66. Letter from Dr. O., 30 November 1976, BArch, BW 1/250654.

67. Letter from E. K., 6 December 1976, BW 1/250654; letter from A. V. undated, BArch, BW 1/250654.

68. Letter from V. v. W., 30 November 1976, BArch, BW 1/250654. The section of her letter, which states that the male officers (die Herren Offiziere) liked her uniform was underlined and marked with an exclamation point by one of the recipients.

69. Letter from E. S., 29 November 1976, BArch, BW 1/250654.

70. Koch, 'Militärpolitik', 117 and 119.

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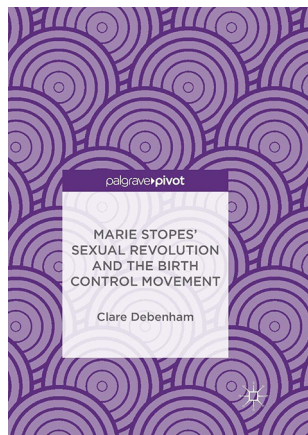
## Book Reviews

### Clare Debenham, *Marie Stopes' Sexual Revolution and the Birth Control Movement*

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. £44.99, ISBN 978-3-319-71663-3 (hardback), pp. xvi + 164

Reviewed by Lesley A. Hall

Wellcome Library



Ruth Hall and June Rose both provided detailed biographies of Marie Stopes, and Stephanie Green recently gave us an illuminating account of Marie and her mother Charlotte, redeeming the latter from the condescension of posterity and supplying a fascinating case study of feminist generations. But for some while it has seemed desirable that there should be an account of Stopes dealing primarily with her public impact and achievements and rather less with the

melodramatic soap opera of her personal life, even if the latter can hardly be entirely avoided given how influential it was upon her career.

Debenham's book appears to promise a valuable introduction for students: an overview of Stopes as pioneering woman scientist, advocate for female sexual pleasure, and campaigner for birth control provision, with consideration given to the enduring controversies about her, such as the accusation of extreme eugenic views. It takes into account recent work on Stopes and her activities and Debenham's earlier work on the wider birth control movement of the period. While it may omit much discussion of her literary activities, most would consider the less said about Stopes' poetry, drama, and fiction, the better.

Dr Debenham is sound and nuanced in her analysis of the controversial aspects of Stopes' activities and her conflicted relationship with the suffrage movement, feminism, and the rest of the British birth control movement. However, there is sometimes a cavalier attitude to matters of specific fact. For example, I was considerably puzzled by the statement that *Married Love* was a response by Stopes to letters on 'her widely reported [annulment] case' (67) with no citation to any archival location of such letters, or indeed, to actual newspaper reports on the case. I have not traced any such reports, and would not really anticipate that an undefended case – Gates, who had been in North America since 1914, a deliberate choice following the declaration of war which cannot have predisposed the court to look favourably upon his manhood, did not return to the UK to fight his corner – involving two obscure academics, would have been deemed newsworthy. I suspect conflation with her 1923 libel case: by that date Stopes was a figure of significant media interest, and the reporting on the case garnered her huge amounts of free publicity in newspapers (including those that had refused advertisements for her books and clinic). It led to a massive increase in her already large correspondence as well as a major boost in sales. There is also strong evidence that she

had long planned to write on marriage, even prior to marrying Ruggles Gates. One must remember that she was a dedicated self-mythologiser – the famous phrase in the preface to *Married Love* about the 'high price [she] paid for ignorance' in her marriage must be taken, I think, with a very large pinch of salt.

Unfortunately, in spite of its strengths, I am not sure I feel able to recommend this book, for reasons for which Dr Debenham cannot bear all the responsibility. This is by no means the first instance I have come across in recent years in which an academic press is badly falling down in the matter of due diligence in actually *editing* the books it produces and for which it is charging rather high prices (£46 for a slim hardback, £36 for the ebook in this particular case).

I found a large number of inconsistencies, contradictions, and confusions which a competent copy-editor should have picked up. As early as page 2, we read 'Margery' Pyke in the text – correctly given as 'Margaret' in the related footnote. Differing dates are given for the same event at different points: most egregiously on page 87 where the Mother's Clinic, founded by Stopes and her husband Humphrey Verdon Roe in 1921, is stated to have been founded early in 1917 – i.e. a year before the publication of *Married Love*, and before she had even met Humphrey, let alone married him! (It is correctly dated in the 'Timeline' on page xiii.) We also see the Society for Constructive Birth Control cited as the publisher of *A Letter to Working Mothers* two years before its inauguration (70). There is a curious practice in the bibliographic citations of intermittently omitting the actual titles of articles and chapters, and random inclusion or not of page numbers. The bibliography at the end does not appear to be a complete collation of works cited in the preceding chapters. Besides providing inaccurate information, this is not modelling best practice for students.

### Naomi Clifford, *Women and the Gallows, 1797–1837: Unfortunate Wretches*

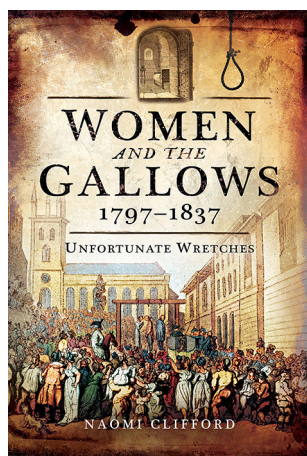
Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2017. £19.99, ISBN 147386-3341 (hardback), pp. xix + 236.

Reviewed by Amy Milka

University of Adelaide

Female criminals have always attracted significant attention. Their crimes are publicly discussed, their methods and motivations scrutinised and their actions assessed against expectations of female behaviour. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this fascination with crimes committed by women was demonstrated in newspapers, trial transcripts, and the crowds of people who turned out to witness the execution of female felons. In *Women and the Gallows*, Naomi Clifford explores the crimes and punishment of a number of criminal women, some notorious (the poisoner Eliza Fenning, or Mary Bateman, the 'Yorkshire witch') and others less well known, their deaths ultimately recorded in just a few lines in a local newspaper. In twelve chapters, Clifford pieces together the lives and experiences of these women and their alleged crimes, together with details of the way they were dealt with by a justice system that relied heavily on the threat of capital punishment as a deterrent. We learn about the gendered punishments meted out





to women – burning at the stake for ‘petty treason’, the murder of a husband or male superior – and about the particular social and economic conditions which drove desperate women to commit murder or infanticide. Divided into two parts: crimes against the person and crimes against property, Clifford’s book explains that under England’s famous ‘Bloody Code’, a litany of crimes including assault, forgery, arson and sheep-stealing were treated with as much severity as murder.

Clifford weaves the piecemeal reports of newspapers, trial summaries and popular ‘criminal life’ literature into concise and coherent stories about the lives and crimes of individual women. While her accounts generally refuse to speculate on the guilt or innocence of the executed women, they reveal many of the shortcomings of legal procedure during the early nineteenth century. The limited reliability of forensic evidence, the testimony of accomplices out to save their own skins, and the effects of aspersions about a woman’s moral (read sexual) character on the jury leave the reader wondering how these women could have received a fair hearing. Bolstering her accounts with contextual detail about the state of the nation and public morals, Clifford links the fluctuating severity of punishments for crimes such as infanticide or forgery to moral panics fuelled by war, perceived crime waves, immorality, and middle-class paranoia about the domestics who shared their hearths and homes.

Clifford’s focus on executions (as opposed to acquittals, pardons or commuted sentences) necessarily skews the picture of how female criminals were treated in this period. From the detailed narratives and the extensive chronology of executed women provided at the end of the book, we learn that executed female criminals fit recognisable profiles: many were young, orphaned or ‘friendless’, domestic servants or other lower class women, both married and unmarried, living near the poverty line. They excused their crimes for reasons of necessity, abuse, or fear of losing their character and ability to earn wages, and many protested their innocence to the end. Some women were involved in larger criminal concerns such as forgery rings, some showed absolutely no remorse for their crimes, and others demonstrated symptoms of mental illness or instability. And yet, as Clifford points out, these women were the exception to the rule: only 7% of guilty verdicts ended in an execution. Acquittals, reduced sentences, or even full pardons were commonplace, and many women clearly expected to receive merciful treatment. This begs the question: what separated the stories of women who received mercy from those who faced the full force of the law? The nuanced questions laid out in Clifford’s detailed introduction are never fully answered. We are left with the sense that the poorest and most vulnerable women were more likely to experience capital punishment, but further comparison between cases and defendants is needed to drive this argument home. More detailed exploration of the importance of class, appearance, legal defence, and courtroom performances would have been welcome and interesting.

This book is engaging and its focus on women’s experiences of criminal justice is important. It provides detailed explanations that place unfamiliar crimes and punishments in

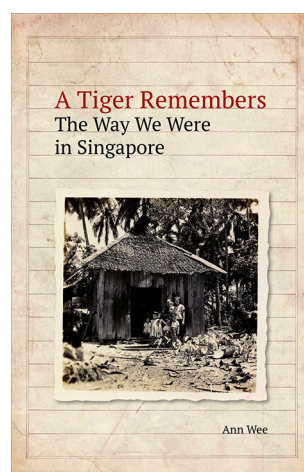
context. While it is near impossible to recreate women’s voices and experiences from the sources available (trial records heavily mediated by male legal clerks, journalists and courtroom reporters, and accounts of executions by male spectators), Clifford’s attention to their lives and stories makes for refreshing reading.

### **Ann Wee, *A Tiger Remembers: The Way We Were In Singapore***

**Singapore: Ridge Books, 2017. £20.95, ISBN 978-981-4722-37-7 (paperback), pp. xxiv + 130**

**Reviewed by Susan Walton**

*University of Hull*



Now in her nineties, Ann Wee has written an engaging memoir of living and working in Singapore over the last sixty-five years. This is neither a typical expatriate tale nor a sociological study; Wee calls it a ‘patchwork’ (xi) of reminiscences and observations arising from her extensive experience of practical and academic social work. Her account is valuable as witness to the effects of the momentous economic and political changes that transformed the island of Singapore from a small British

Crown Colony into an independent thriving powerhouse of the twenty-first century. These developments happened at such speed that the cultural practices and living conditions of Singaporeans during the 1950s to the 1980s can seem like ancient history to its modern citizens at whom this book is primarily aimed, particularly the high-achieving, well-educated young women of present-day Singapore.

In 1950, newly graduated from the London School of Economics with an MA in Social Anthropology, Ann Wilcox took the intrepid step of sailing to Singapore to marry her fiancé, Harry Wee, whom she had met when he was reading law at Cambridge, to become a member of a middle class, professional, Singaporean Chinese family. Janadas Devan, in a foreword to the book, describes Wee as ‘the founding mother of social work in Singapore’ (xvii), but her professional career happened almost accidentally over the years, often in response to invitations. Soon after her arrival, she was asked to help out with an English Literature class at the Chinese Methodist Girls School and she credits colleagues in the staffroom, as well as her husband’s family, for her initiation into the cultural practices of Peranakan Singaporeans. These were members of Chinese middle class families long-settled in Singapore, usually Christian, with English as their first language, yet retaining a structure of traditional beliefs and value-systems. She acquired further practical knowledge when invited in 1955 to join the colonial government’s Social Welfare Department before taking up a University post in 1957 in the Social Studies Department where she remained for the rest of her distinguished academic career. Typically, she also served on numerous welfare committees, putting her expertise to practical use – her term as Advisor to the Juvenile Court lasted from 1971 to 2009.

The appeal of this book lies in Wee's use of anecdotes to illustrate and scrutinise customary habits, some of them so minor that they might be lost to history, yet each a signifier of cultural attitudes reacting to social and political change. Her anthropological training led her to understand, for example, the value placed on the acquisition of gold jewellery as 'a matter of wise asset-building' (32) for women who have recently survived the trauma of the Japanese invasion. She notes with interest how young women in the 1950s were opting to wear the Chinese cheongsam rather than the sarong-kebaya of their mothers' generation, and links this to a post-war respect for China in contrast to the pre-war desire to distance themselves from what was perceived as a failed state. Alert to the diversity of customs among Chinese dialect groups and clans, Wee is keen to share evidence from interviews conducted by her students for academic theses, in sections on housing and living arrangements of the recent past. Singapore's radical major building programmes to rehouse its population has now all-but wiped out these clusters of extended family settlements as well as the rows of distinctive shop-houses where migrant men lodged.

For the reader who knows nothing about Singapore, the most interesting sections are perhaps those about families, and especially 'the structured and corporate character of the Chinese family' (48) where the individual is subjugated to the needs of the group. Children learned absolute obedience because the parents' well-being in this life and, importantly, in the next, was dependent on their children's future care – especially that of sons who alone could perform the necessary post-death rituals to prevent parents becoming homeless ghosts. Meanwhile the disinterest in their daughters is explained by their insignificance in their birth families: 'They were yours only temporarily, until they fulfilled their destiny as members of their husbands' families' (50). Wee's role on an Adoption Committee provide further pertinent cultural insights about both gender and caste.

Readers of this book will gain a strong impression of Ann Wee's warm personality and open-minded curiosity that welcomed opportunities to observe the nuances of custom practised by different ethnic groups. Her life-story is a testament to one woman's remarkable attainments in a society where, initially, tradition ranked women as subordinate in families and second-class citizens in society, and thus adds another unusual record to the annals of women's history.

**Jane Pearson and Maria Rayner, *Prostitution in Victorian Colchester: controlling the uncontrollable* Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2018. £18.99, ISBN 978-1-909291-97-3 (paperback) pp. xii + 210**

**Reviewed by Catherine Lee**  
*The Open University*

This is a lively and readable local history. Exemplifying its genre, the book's chief strength lies in the degree of ground-level detail it provides: about the women who made money – or a living – from prostitution in nineteenth-century Colchester and about their spatial, social and economic context. As one of the garrison towns brought under the jurisdiction of the notorious Contagious Diseases Acts (CDAs) in the 1860s, Colchester's on-going (and apparently generally unsuccessful) struggle to control the 'problem' of prostitution is a key theme.

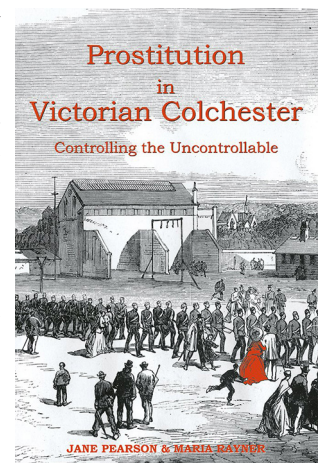
The study turns firstly to consider the garrison itself:

established in 1856, it originally had the capacity to house 3,000 men. Inevitably, this had an immediate and double-edged impact on the town and local community. On the one hand, local businesses benefitted from the government contracts to provide goods and services; these provided a boost to the local economy, enabling a programme of civic improvement. On the other hand, the presence of the soldiers posed a considerable obstacle to the maintenance of law and order. Street brawls between

soldiers and civilians and the intimidation reportedly felt by some residents in taking their Sunday afternoon strolls were among the problems prompted by the influx of thousands of soldiers – most of them unmarried – into the local population. Many other incidents, involving the drunken and disorderly behaviour of soldiers and women described as prostitutes, particularly in the local beer shops, challenged the ability of the police to keep the peace. A chapter is devoted to the policing of prostitution, appropriately placed into the historical context of the development of the 'new' police and the shift, over time, from reactive to deterrent models of policing. Expectations of new levels of decorum on the streets at this period were also a factor here, and more might have been made of this.

While the chief problem posed to the local civilian authorities was the maintenance of law and order, that faced by the military authorities was the high level of venereal disease among military personnel. An 1862 army medical report claimed that incidences among the personnel stationed at Colchester affected 464 per thousand men, resulting in many days per head lost due to sickness. The 1864 CDA, passed to address this problem, proposed remedying the problem by regulating the behaviour of women believed to be living by prostitution, rather than of the men who bought their services. Appropriately, the authors devote a chapter to the local reaction to the imposition of the regime of the Act, and the drafting into Colchester of a unit of Metropolitan Police Officers charged with implementing it. A new lock hospital was constructed at a cost of almost seven thousand pounds, funded by the War Office. The ensuing debate between local medical authorities (who supported the initiative and believed it was effective) on the one hand, and local religious reformers (who believed that it served to give official license to sin) on the other, echoed that conducted at national level. There was little organised feminist opposition to the legislation, though Josephine Butler did make one visit. At the 1870 by-election, the anti-CDA candidate was unsuccessful and split the Liberal vote. It is in these details that we see most the influence of local factors and differentiation between subjected stations across the country. Thus, it is here that the advantages of a close-focus local study are most clearly to be found.

Other chapters include representative case studies of individuals and of licensed premises, and an account of the broad range of circumstances of the Colchester women who, as far as the evidence suggests, either lived by prostitution or used it as part of a mixed economy. A key strength here is the recognition that prostitution can only be understood in its specific local urban and economic context: consideration





is given to philanthropic reform efforts, to the solicitors who defended prosecutions for prostitution-related offences in court. Among the study's conclusions are that it is difficult to generalise about the circumstances of the women who earned money from prostitution in mid nineteenth-century Colchester. With regard to age, marital status and ultimate outcomes there was heterogeneity of experience. Where some Colchester women resorted to prostitution to supplement earning from other means, for others it appears to have been their sole source of income: for some it was a life-cycle stage while others conformed more exactly to the Victorian tragic, fallen women trope.

Any investigation into the lives of the poor and marginalised has to overcome a methodological challenge. The available evidence will invariably have been generated by, and mediated through the eyes and values of, the middle classes. Whether in newspaper reports of magistrate court hearings or in the records of local and national administrative bureaucracy, the voice of the subjects of such studies are inevitably refracted through distorting lenses. This study relies heavily on the columns of local newspapers – regrettably, no petty sessions records have survived for the period under investigation.

Local history, as Kate Tiller has said, will always be a 'balancing act in relating the particular and the general, judging the specific detail as part of an overall picture'.<sup>1</sup> At times, Pearson and Rayner's eye for detail prevented them from getting this balance quite right, and anecdote prevails over analysis. However, as a social history of a particular location at a particular place in time, this book will appeal to readers with an interest in nineteenth-century Colchester as well as those wishing to put another piece in the jigsaw of the histories of the CDA subjected districts.

## Notes

1. Kate Tiller, 'Local history brought up to date', *The Local Historian*, 26 (2006), 148-62.

## Jo Stanley, *Women and the Royal Navy*

London: I B Taurus, 2018. £20.00, ISBN 978-1-78076-7567 (hardback), pp. xxiv + 256

Reviewed by Katherine McAlpine

*Imperial War Museum*

While the Royal Navy has been around since 1660, women were only admitted just over one hundred years ago. Sea-faring had previously been characterised by a very simple distinction: men go to sea, women stay on land. This background is set out by Stanley in the first chapter, before launching into a more detailed study of the past hundred years of women in the Royal Navy. Until the creation of the WRNS, women were officially restricted to the roles of wives and daughters of seamen, in whose names wars were fought. Even after they were admitted, women in the navy initially served on land. At one time, the Women's Royal Naval Service motto was 'Never at Sea'.

The book is organised chronologically and split between sections on the Queen Alexandra Auxiliary Royal Naval Nursing Service (medical) and Women's Royal Naval Service (military). The division into chapters appears to reveal a genuine distinction between the two services, and one that was maintained throughout their history. During the First World War, the WRNS was a temporary service, with seven hundred times more personnel than the QARNNS, which continued to see itself as a highly

trained, elite service.

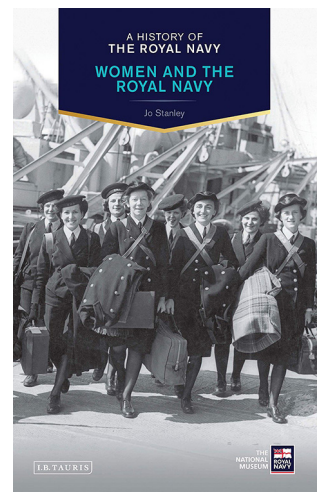
The book charts how women in both services navigated their way through uncharted social waters to adopt behaviours that were deemed appropriate: at the same time feminine and naval. For example, it seems a surprise that the nurse matron character – typified by Hattie Jacques in the *Carry On* films that is so familiar to many – had to be created. There was no model of how to behave as a naval nurse, so women had to strike a balance: on the one hand, not appearing too bossy, empowered, and therefore masculine, yet at the same time not too mothering or mollicoddling of the patients. The sensible straightforward matron seems to be the way they went.

Throughout the book, Stanley demonstrates how women used gender discrimination to their own ends by emphasising the stereotypical differences between men and women that allowed the WRNS to exist. Against the backdrop of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, the Wrens responded the way they always have, combining non-traditional roles for women with traditional femininity. They emphasised not equality between men and women, but their differences, thus showing what women could bring to the table that men could not.

Throughout the history of women in the Royal Navy, fears abounded and continually resurfaced that women would be bad for the service, either as a security risk or as a sexual distraction. From the pre-WREN days, where the only role for women at sea was as sex worker, to the establishment of the reputation of the WRENS as a highly moral institution, there were fears that young women would not be allowed to enter the force for fear of unplanned pregnancy. The introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1967 is often hailed as the change-maker in women's history and, in this respect, the Naval service was no different.

Stanley argues that the drive towards employing women in the Navy, from the Navy's perspective at least, was never motivated by ideas of equality or doing the right thing, but was always motivated by pragmatism: it solved a problem caused by lack of trained male personnel. Practical reasons to employ women included that they were cheaper to employ overall: they could be paid less than men and were not provided with uniforms, expensive training or accommodation.

The book is part of a series published by the National Museum of the Royal Navy, so the focus on naval matters to the exclusion of all others is perhaps unsurprising. It would additionally have been interesting to make comparisons with women's experience in the civilian maritime world. The book, unsurprisingly, is dominated by the two World Wars and conflict, but little is said about the opportunities for women on cruise ships that would give them similar opportunities to travel, see the world and develop their careers, without entering warzones. Stanley sets out a useful guide to naval terminology and things to be aware of at the beginning of the book, but still occasionally slips in some naval term or acronym that has not been explained, making the topic seem slightly obscure. This book is a useful starting point for revealing the experiences of female naval personnel who were, at times, both overlooked and celebrated for their difference.





## BOOKS RECEIVED AND CALL FOR REVIEWERS

The following titles are available for review, so if you like to review any of the titles listed below, please email David Geiringer, Book Reviews Editor, at [bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto: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 the book reviews editor as above.

Peter Hore, *Lindell's List. Saving British and American Women at Ravensbruck* (The History Press)

Harry Stone, *That Monstrous Regiment. The Birth of Women's Political Emancipation* (Mereo Books)

Tim Clarke, *The Countess. The Scandalous Life of Frances Villiers, Countess of Jersey* (Amberley)

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

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

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

Miriam E. David, *A Feminist Manifesto for Education* (Polity Books)

Wendy L. Rouse, *Her Own Hero. The Origins of the Women's Self-Defense Movement* (New York University Press)

Christine E. Hallett, *Nurses of Passchendaele. Caring for the Wounded of the Ypres Campaigns 1914-1918* (Pen and Sword Books)

Clare Mulley, *The Women who flew for Hitler. The true story of Hitler's Valkyries* (Macmillan)

Jacinta Prunty, *The Monasteries, Magdalen Asylums and Reforming Schools of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland, 1853 - 1973* (Columba Press)

Brian Titley, *Into Silence and Servitude. How American Girls became Nuns, 1945 - 1965* (McGill - Queen's University Press)

Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women's Year. The Greatest Consciousness - Raising Event in History* (Oxford University Press)

Robert Lopresti, *When Women Didn't Count* (Praeger Publishing) - a study of women in US official statistics

Brianna Leavitt-Alcantara, *Alone at the Altar. Single Women & Devotion in Guatemala, 1670-1870* (Stanford University Press)

Angela Giallongo, *The Historical Enigma of the Snake Woman from Antiquity to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing)

John Thabiti Willis, *Masquerading Politics. Kinship, Gender & Ethnicity in a Yoruba Town* (Indiana University Press)

Eva Maze, *With Ballet in my Soul. Adventures of a Globetrotting Impresario* (Moonstone Press LLC)

Teresa Barnard (ed), *Anna Seward's Journal and Sermons* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing)

Emily Skidmore, *True Sex. The Lives of Trans Men at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York University Press)

Ruth Ewan, *Twenty-Nine Thousand Nights. A Communist Life. Nan Berger* (Book Works)

Vivien Newman & David A.S. Semeraro, *Regina Diana. Seductress, Singer, Spy* (Pen + Sword)

Summer Strevens, *Burned at the Stake. The Life and Death of Mary Channing* (Pen + Sword)

Isobel Blackthorn, *The Unlikely Occultist: A biographical novel of Alice A. Bailey* (Creativia)

### Membership Announcements

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

Do you pay your subscription by standing order? If so, can you check that the payment details reflect the 2019 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 2019 rates for all categories of members can be found on the back cover of the magazine or by logging into your account at [www.womenshistorynetwork.org](http://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](http://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 into your account at [www.womenshistorynetwork.org](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org) OR by emailing [membership@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:membership@womenshistorynetwork.org)

## Getting to Know Each Other



### **Name**

Gillian Murphy

### **Position**

Curator of Equality, Rights and Citizenship at LSE Library

### **How long have you been a WHN member?**

A few years.

### **What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?**

This has to be when I started work as an archivist at the Women's Library when it was located in Aldgate. Being able to hold Emily Wilding Davison's race card, or read the instructions for the 'hole in the wall' meeting before the Miss World demonstration in 1970, really made me think about women as people, rather than as historical figures, and why they did what they did. Over the years, I have catalogued lots of archives covering many different periods of history, but it is the women's stories behind the documents that are so fascinating.

### **What are your special interests?**

Being an archivist / curator, you know a bit about everything in your area.

### **Who is your heroine from history and why?**

It has to be Helena Normanton who opened up the legal profession to women. Cataloguing her papers was the reason I applied to be an archivist at the Women's Library, as I had studied Law at university a while before, and her story intrigued me.

Until relatively recently, Helena Normanton's story had been largely forgotten. She is one of the early cohort of women pioneer lawyers in Britain who challenged male exclusivity to enter the legal profession. She was the first woman to be admitted to an Inn of Court, one day after the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act had been passed in 1919. After her call to the Bar in 1922, she still faced many challenges of prejudice and misogyny from within the Bar.

Helena was the first woman to hold a brief in the High Court and the Old Bailey and (with Rose Heilbron) the first to be made a King's Counsel. She was also an author (she had to supplement her legal earnings) and campaigned for married women's rights. Additionally, she fought to retain her maiden name on her passport in 1924, something we just take for granted now, but it's a right that she fought for.

## Getting to Know Each Other - 2

### *Name*

Susan Cohen

### *Position*

Independent Researcher, author and Honorary Fellow Parkes Institute, University of Southampton; co-founder of the Remembering Eleanor Rathbone group; volunteer interviewer on the oral testimony project at the Holocaust Survivor Centre. NW4

### *How long have you been a WHN member?*

I joined in 2008, but I'm not sure why it took me so long to sign up.

### *What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?*

It's a long story. I became very interested in Victorian and Edwardian women social investigators whilst undertaking a module as part of my first degree course in 1992, as a very mature student. When it came to deciding on a subject for my M.Phil in 1994 - I couldn't face another exam - I chose to undertake a detailed study of the works of a prolific, but under-researched, social investigator, Miss Loane, who was a Queen's (district ) nurse. This opened up a whole new area of research for me, and introduced me to the archives of what is now the Queen's Nursing Institute, and an enduring relationship with the organisation and its history. My choice of a PhD subject in 2001 reflected my growing interest in the British response to Jewish refugees before and during the Second World War, and led me to an investigation of Eleanor Rathbone and her work for refugees.

### *What are your special interests?*

The role of women in refugee organisations in Britain during the second World war; Victorian and Edwardian social history; the history of nursing, district nursing and midwifery in Britain; medical services in the First World War, refugee women academics and the British Federation of University Women.

### *Who is your heroine from history and why?*

This has to be Eleanor Rathbone, MP (1872-1946) for the Combined English Universities from 1929-1946. Her lifelong career included her role as a feminist, social and welfare investigator and reformer, a local and national politician, Justice of the Peace, and refugee activist before and during the Second World War. Eleanor was, for seventeen years, the most effective woman member of the House of Commons, continuing her tireless campaigning on behalf of those who could not help themselves.

That she became the champion of refugees in and from Nazi occupied Europe, and acquired the honorary title 'MP for refugees' was a revelation, for all I knew about her at the time was that she was the architect of the Family Allowance, of which I had been a beneficiary years before.

The fact that she began her career as a feminist, suffragist, social and welfare reformer and local politician fitted in with earlier research. Added to this was the coincidence that her father, William Rathbone IV, was instrumental in the foundation of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses in 1887 - the very organisation that Miss Loane belonged to between 1893 and 1905. Rathbone is the epitome of a humanitarian activist, who devoted her working life to representing the underprivileged in society, regardless of gender, race and religion.



## Committee News

The Steering Committee met last on 24 November 2018 at the IHR, University of London.

### Budget and membership

Our finances and membership are healthy. Together with the relatively low spend last year, this means that there is currently around £10,000 in the bank account on top of the required reserves. A resolution was passed to enable the new Chair of the Committee Margaret Rosemary Eldred to become an authorised signatory of the WHN account, to replace June Purvis, former Chair of the Committee. The main thing we are focusing on is ensuring people that can are Gift Aiding their subscription fees. If members could please check the Subscription tab to ensure they are doing this that would be great.

### Women's History Journal

A new editor is required for the journal. This is a demanding and substantial role which requires experience in publishing. Means of making the role were discussed and agreed and a strategy for advertising and recruitment

### Publicity surrounding events and public engagement work

There has been a concerted effort to extend the temporal and geographical range of members on the book prize committee, in order to better interrogate, and advocate for, the scholarship being proposed. Sponsorship of the Community History Prize has been extended for a further year and sponsorship is being sought for Book and Schools Prizes. More members of the committees for these prizes have been sought so that they operate on the same basis as the other prizes. It has been agreed to introduce new categories – 'shortlisted' and 'highly commended' – into the book prize in order to recognise a greater range of scholarship. The wording of the eligibility criteria for the book prize has been slightly amended in order to make it explicit that submissions must be the 'first' book – not simply 'the first book in women's history' which leaves it open for entry from established scholars.

This year's schools prize – commemorating Black women's history – is progressing well. The artist commissioned to produce the artwork – Freya Bramble-Carter – has proved to be a strong and supportive partner. If possible, the winning artist would be able to meet her in her studio to see the art produced. It was hoped this would

## Women's History Back issues

Back issues of *Women's History* (formerly known as *Women's History Magazine*) are available to buy in both digital and (in very limited quantities) print versions for:

£5.00 inc postage (Digital/UK print version)

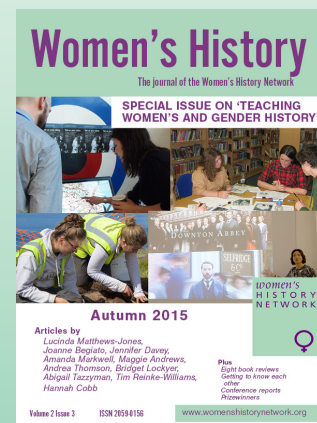
£6.50 inc postage (Overseas print version)

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

[www.womenshistorynetwork.org/category/magazine/editions/](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org/category/magazine/editions/)

Order and pay online or email

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



offer good publicity for the network. Plans for next year's prize – linking with the International Women's Day theme of #BalanceforBetter were progressing well.

### Annual Conference for 2019

Planning is going very well for the WHN conference 'Professional women: the public, the private, and the political' to be held at LSE Library, home of the Women's Library, on 6-7 September 2019. The first call for papers is live (the deadline is 15 February 2019). For more information see: <https://womenshistorynetwork.org/womens-history-network-annual-conference-2019/>

### Date of next meeting

**23 March 2019, Institute of Historical Research, All WHN members are welcome.**

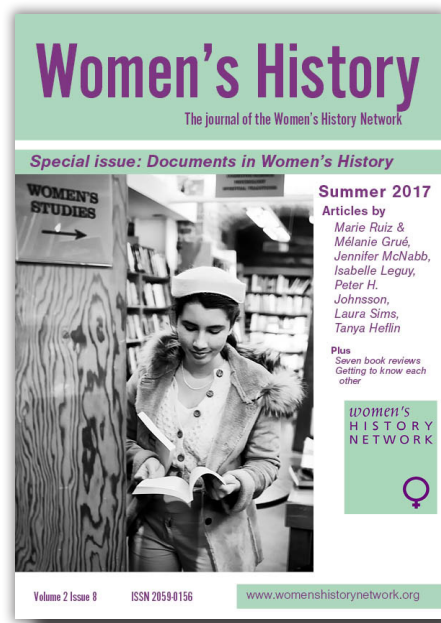
# Publishing in *Women's History*

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

Please email your submission, as a word attachment, to the editors at [editor@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:editor@womenshistorynetwork.org)



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*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:*

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To join the WHN just go to  
[www.womenshistorynetwork.org](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org) and follow the instructions.  
Payments and Gift-Aid declarations can all be  
accessed online as well – see panel on page 31 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 the *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
Retired Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy)	£175

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