Women's History Today

The journal of the Women's History Network

Special Issue on Childcare

Articles by:
Alison T. McCall
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Three Book Reviews
In Profile
Doing History
From the Archives
Spotlight On Research

women's HISTORY NETWORK

Summer 2024

womenshistorynetwork.org

Volume 3 Issue 10
ISSN 2752-6704

Women's History Network 2024 Annual Conference: 'Curating the Female Self'

Hosted with the Bedford Centre for the History of Women and Gender

Royal Holloway University, 5-6 September

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WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

EDITORIAL

A warm welcome to the summer issue of *Women's History Today*. This special issue has focused on childcare and includes rich and varied themed contributions across continents and generations.

By exploring the topic of childcare, the issue offers deep insights into how the nexus of the past continually informs the present about how childhood is perceived and valued. Explorations and discussions range from infancy and the growing child, the value of early education, family values to institutional care. Highlights include a window into the Froebel Archive and reading voices from Froebelian women educators and their views about childhood, nature, and early education. Institutional care across the United Kingdom has also been examined, revealing and valuing the minutiae of individual lives, and then widening the lens about the impact national policy has had on childcare throughout history. Activism takes the reader back to the lived experiences of women within England during the mid-twentieth century, bridging the global to the local topics of childcare. International perspectives continue on the path to exploring childcare, with early childhood and childcare discourses included, from the nineteenth century through to recent times and how childcare was impacted by the pandemic.

The contributions to this issue offer a wide range of diverse research and highlights the ongoing interests about childcare. The three research articles in this issue explore the establishment of childcare and welfare systems, concepts of babyhood and mother's duties towards ensuring children received physical and moral education from an infant's earliest days, and women's activism in relation to childcare policies.

The viability of facilities established by charitable organisations proved problematic in Aberdeen in the late-nineteenth century. Alison T. McCall presents a historical analysis on the provision and challenges of childcare in Aberdeen following the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872. The focus of 'Childcare and the Education (Scotland) Act 1872: Aberdeen Day Nursery 1871-1874' is on the Women's Alliance and the Aberdeen Association for improving the conditions of the poor. The article enables the reader to have an appreciation of the socio economic constraints during the late-nineteenth century, and how, despite their charitable status, the organisation struggled to provide affordable childcare for working mothers. The research activity, sponsored by the Aberdeen Women's Alliance History Group, emerged from the alliance's on-going exploration of the history of women in Aberdeen.

Moving from the late-nineteenth century into the early-twentieth century, Elisabeth Yang, in 'From Medical Expert to Mother: Health Advice for Tiny Moral and Spiritual Agents in Late-Nineteenth Century and Early-Twentieth Century America', presents another perspective of childcare. The article focuses on babyhood, highlighting how perspectives towards infant care have shifted from the theological to the scientific gaze, underpinned by the persistence of infants portrayed as moral and spiritual beings. The article centres on the role played by medical and child-rearing advice books and pamphlets, and their influence on middle-class Protestant American ideals of babyhood.

The focus on activism takes centre stage for Rosa Schling in '"In those days we occupied everything all the time": Collecting Histories of Childcare Activism in London'. Documenting her work with On the Record, an oral history and community heritage organisation, Schling uses her research for her Grow your Own project (2023) – a community oral history project that has been gathering, presenting and sharing about the history of activism and campaigning around childcare and early years education in London, England – to explore activism during the 1970s and 1980s.

In addition to the research articles, our regular sections continue with the issue theme. In *Doing History*, Dr Sarah-Anne Buckley and Dr John Cunnigham explain the origins of the Tuam Oral History project in Tuam, Ireland, highlighting the ways in which this community-led project collected interviews of survivors of the infamous Mother and Baby institution, and how these interviews have informed both creative outputs and academic research. *From the Archives* highlights the impressive Froebel Archive at the University of Roehampton with a look at their collection of materials from the Somers Town

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Cover Image

From the Archive: Watercolour of 'FEI students share observations and excitement on a field trip to Keston, organised by Miss Lulham, Nature Department, published in the Keston Journal in 1921'

Nursery School in North London. In *Spotlight on Research*, Dr Alison Chand's piece, 'Rainbows in the Windows: an Oral History of Young Families in the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2022', takes the reader on an emotional journey of women, living in the UK, experiencing motherhood during the pandemic.

In Profile features the founding editor of the *History Workshop Journal*, Professor Sally Alexander. There are also three book reviews related to the issue theme. We are always eager to have our membership review books for our issues, so please consider selecting a title from the list in the back of the issue. If you are a Women's History network member, please let us know if you have an upcoming book that you would like us to review.
We hope that you enjoy this issue.

Amanda Norman, Kate Terkanian, Kate Murphy, Samantha Hughes-Johnson, Angela Platt, Catia Rodrigues and Joy Burgess

Childcare and the Education (Scotland) Act 1872: Aberdeen Day Nursery 1871-1874

Alison T. McCall

Aberdeen Women's Alliance History Group

Aberdeen Women's Alliance History Group was formed in 2013, as a sub-group of Aberdeen Women's Alliance. It is a group of women with a keen interest in Women's History in Aberdeen. The members joined the group with varying previous knowledge of the subject, ranging from PhD level to no formal educational qualifications in history. The group has created opportunities for its members to visit archives, libraries and places of historic interest for study sessions to learn research techniques. As a group it has created Heritage Walks, published booklets and been responsible for increasing the number of plaques to women in Aberdeen.[1]

The group initially discovered references to the day nursery in the *Aberdeen Journal* whilst researching the area around Aberdeen's Castlegate. The day nursery was set up by the Aberdeen Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in 1871. The Castlegate is one of the oldest areas of Aberdeen, and by the 1870s it was an area of great poverty, once grand houses having been subdivided and former gardens having been built up. This paper is based on the findings that emerged from the group's first Women's Heritage Walk.[2] The main sources used to research it were contemporary newspaper reports of the committee meetings of the association and Aberdeen School Board records.[3] The records of the nursery itself have not survived. The members of the association were prominent members of Aberdeen society, of whom much was already known. Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to locate sources that give voice to the parents and children for whom the nursery was created.

Education in Scotland was made compulsory for all children from the ages of five to thirteen by section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1872. Although fees were charged by schools, at a rate fixed by the School Board, poor parents could apply to the Poor Law authority for payment. Children could be exempted from school once they had attained sufficient knowledge of reading, writing and elementary arithmetic (the three 'Rs') and had been given a certificate by a school inspector. This was subsequently reviewed and made more specific by section 6 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1878, which stipulated that children could be granted exemption if they were aged at least ten years of age and had achieved proficiency in grade five of the curriculum, defined as an ability to read and write and do elementary arithmetic. Grade six was the top grade, although brighter pupils could widen their education by taking additional subjects. Elected School Boards were responsible for ensuring that children attended school and they did so by employing a Truancy Officer, also known as a Compulsory Officer, Default Officer or School Board Officer, and informally known by other various names, such as the Tak A' (Take Everybody) in Aberdeen and the Plunky Man in Glasgow, from the Glaswegian term for truanting, 'plunking'. Under section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1872 the Truancy Officer was responsible for reporting the parents of truanting children to the School Board. Parents could be summonsed to appear before the School Board and fined, or even imprisoned, for failing to ensure their children attended school.[4]

There were two problems to resolve before the provisions of the Education (Scotland) Act 1872 could be implemented. Firstly, there were not enough existing schools to provide a place for every child. This was solved by a significant programme of renovating, extending and building schools. The *de facto* date on which the truancy provisions came into effect varied from place to place. Edinburgh, already well-supplied with schools, was amongst the first. Aberdeen was similar to Edinburgh in providing sufficient school places for the local population of children and enforcing attendance. Dundee took several years to create sufficient school places and was one of the last places to enforce attendance. It was a cruel irony that the cost of creating this new educational infrastructure, funded as it was by local rates, fell heaviest on the poorer areas least able to afford it. This was an urban, rather than a rural, problem as school building had lagged behind the rapid growth of cities in the wake of the industrial revolution. Glasgow and Govan took an alternative approach. Initially only children aged six and over were admitted and successfully placed in schools. Attendance officers enforced attendance amongst the six- to twelve-year-olds in Govan from January 1874. The Govan School Board then worked to create enough additional spaces

to accommodate five-year-olds and comply with the statutory ages.

The second problem was more complex; families living in poverty often relied on older children, usually daughters, to provide childcare for younger siblings, to enable their mothers to work. Under the terms of the Act, such absences would be classified as truancy, and the parents would be liable to prosecution.

This issue was approached differently in various areas; in some, a certain level of female absenteeism for domestic reasons was regarded as acceptable. Dundee's economy was based heavily on jute mills, staffed by female millworkers. Female employment was high, and childcare for working mothers was a pressing concern. Consequently, in Dundee, some schools accepted four-year-olds on an ad-hoc basis, and parents occasionally attempted to send three-year-olds to school, as a form of childcare. Also in Dundee, the Truancy Officer reported that some working mothers started work in the mills before their children left home for school. Therefore, the mothers were unable to ensure that their children did attend school. This suggests that there were a group of children for whom childcare was nonexistent during the long working hours at the mills. Truancy officers in Dundee focused on 'nuisance' truants committing petty crimes rather than girls caring for siblings.[5]

In Aberdeen, the issue of providing nurseries for pre-school aged children, in order to enable their older siblings to attend school, was discussed by Aberdeen School Board. A day nursery had in fact been established in 1871. The remainder of this paper will examine the Aberdeen Day Nursery and whether such a nursery would prevent girls from missing school to provide childcare.

The Aberdeen Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was founded in March 1870, on a similar basis to the existing associations in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Its supporters in Aberdeen were drawn from the titled and the affluent professional classes. Their aim was not 'to go forth as almoners' but to 'promote self-reliance, sobriety and economy' and to 'help the humbler poor to help themselves'.[6] Shortly after it was founded, Queen Victoria became its patron.

The association divided Aberdeen into fourteen districts, each with its own committee. Its first task was to compile statistics to gain an insight into areas of need. Two priorities were to encourage children to attend school, and to assist men to find casual work, in particular during the winter months when bad weather hampered many local industries and reduced the opportunities for casual labour. To these ends secondhand clothing was collected, to prevent lack of clothing from being a barrier to attending school. Stone-breaking and firelight manufacturing schemes were established, both of which were occupations that could provide work in winter.

Despite the general avoidance of 'hand-outs' the association provided a free dinner to 5,600 poor children on the occasion of Princess Louise's marriage in March 1871, primarily as an act of patriotism.[7] This gives an indication as to the scale of childhood poverty in Aberdeen at that time.

In February 1871, less than one year after the association was formally constituted, Mr. Robert Lumsden, a local banker, recommended the provision of a day nursery for children, to enable their mothers to go out and work, and to enable children currently caring for younger siblings to attend school.[8] The provision of a day nursery would assist with two of the association's main objectives – education for the young and creating the conditions whereby hard work and self-help would be a means to rise out of poverty. The educational benefits were focused on the older siblings; there does not seem to have been any suggestion that the nursery would provide an educational benefit for the babies and infants. At this initial point, links had not been made with the upcoming Education Act.[9]

The suggestion of a day nursery was adopted by the association immediately. The association committee started looking for suitable premises, with a garden, near King Street.[10] Premises were found at 11 East North Street, a three-storey property with eleven rooms with windows. The *Aberdeen Journal* described it as being 'airy and commodious' capable of accommodating sixty or seventy children and added '[s]uch an institution is a novelty and an experiment here; but in several large cities in England public nurseries have been found of great utility.' Furniture and toys were donated, and lawyer Mr. J. Forbes Lumsden donated 'a handsome brass door plate'.[11]

The day nursery was to be managed by a committee of ladies. It is not clear whether these ladies were expected to play a 'hands-on' role, visiting the nursery in person. An earlier organisation, the Aberdeen Ladies Sanitary Association, whose object was to tackle disease in Aberdeen's slums, insisted that each member personally visit families in slum housing, and it would be surprising if the ladies of the day nursery committee did not also interact with the families using the nursery.[12] There were several existing charities in Aberdeen in which titled and affluent middle-class women played a role, and some of those involved are likely to have had previous organisational experience of committee work and fundraising. A matron, Mrs Thomson, was employed.[13] Her salary was £20 pa plus free accommodation within the building, and fire and light provided.[14]

East North Street was amongst some of the very poorest areas of Aberdeen. The Public Health Committee of Aberdeen City Council published a list of streets in which diseases, such as typhus fever, were prevalent annually. East North Street generally featured as one of those affected by the diseases associated with overcrowding and poverty. It was a street of small shops at street level, with flats above, and connected by small lanes to the Castlegate. Number 11 may have been unusual in that it had not been subdivided and was, therefore, available as a large property suitable for a nursery.

The week prior to the opening of the day nursery, the association acknowledged receipt of donations of furniture, plus £19 14 shillings in cash. It solicited donations of bedding, coal and vegetables.[15] This indicates that there was considerable public support for the day nursery. It also shows that the day nursery was not intended to be a merely utilitarian resource to accommodate babies and young children whilst their mothers worked, but a place in which the young might

thrive.

The day nursery was opened on 15 June 1871. The *Aberdeen Journal* reported that Provost Nicol predicted that it 'would be found of much use to many poor families and especially to widows left with children they have to provide for'.[16] The reference to widows is interesting. Whilst widows would seem to be the most obvious group of women forced to work to support their families, the association itself did not seem to link the nursery to working widows. The surveys carried out by the association had presumably shown that many families relied on income from married women whose husbands could not support the family single handedly. The association had already identified the irregularity of casual work as a cause of poverty, and many of these casual workers would have relied on their wives as a source of a more regular income.

In his opening speech, Mr. Lumsden said that 'he thought their object should be to make it self-sustaining, or as nearly so as possible'.[17] He described the day nursery as an experiment, which was being observed by other sections of the association. The assumption, at that point, was that it would be the first in a series of day nurseries.

The nursery charges were initially fixed at 4d a day for one child, 6d for two siblings and 8d for three siblings.[18] The nursery took children from six weeks to five years, from 5.30am to 6.30pm. All meals were provided. The cost of these meals to the association was reduced because local traders donated or provided food at cost in return for favourable publicity. Acknowledgements of donations of food from local tradesmen were printed in the local press. Although the association believed the charges to be affordable by the poorest, it transpired that they had failed to understand the depth of poverty in the area.

The expectation that the nursery would accommodate up to seventy children did not materialise. Initially there were typically only eight to ten children on an average day. This figure increased only gradually over the following weeks and months. Mrs. Forbes Lumsden continued to collect money for the nursery, with donations coming from wealthy families such as the Davidsons of Inchmarlo. Again, all such donations were publicised in the *Aberdeen Journal*.

By November, it was decided that the fees, subsidised as they were, were still too high. The charges were reduced to 3d a day for one child, 4 1/2 d for two children from the same family, and 6d for three children. These charges covered not only the care of the child, but also 'a plentiful supply of wholesome food'. The association reflected that 'such an institution takes some time to be properly appreciated, and the Committee are confident that this appreciation is slowly, but steadily, becoming manifest'.[19]

There was clearly a problem; poverty made it essential for women to work to support their families; in order to work they needed childcare; they could not afford good quality childcare, even heavily subsidised childcare, because they were poor. This was the cycle that the association was attempting to change.

Notwithstanding the poor uptake, other parts of Aberdeen were anxious to have more nurseries established and the possibility for further nurseries was raised at meetings of the association. One was set up in Woodside, on the outskirts of Aberdeen. This was an area close to the river Don, and the mills which it powered, and was an area of high female employment. This nursery was described as 'day boarding for children of very tender years' and it also took children overnight.[20] The charges, however, were higher – 2 /6 to take a child day and night for a week.[21]

The association was by this time aware that the forthcoming Education Act would make education compulsory and impact the availability of older children to provide childcare for younger siblings. By June 1872, numbers had increased to an average of twenty a day, with the highest number in any one day having been twenty-nine.[22] This was still less than half of the capacity of the nursery. By 1872, the association was running a labour register to make it easier for women to find work as charwomen. The nursery and the labour register were twin aspects of the association's belief that what the poor needed was not hand-outs, but assistance to work themselves out of poverty. This view was widespread.[23]

The Education (Scotland) Act 1872 received Royal Assent on 6 August 1872. School boards were elected by ratepayers. Both men and women were entitled to vote and to stand for election, but in Aberdeen the first female member of the school board was not elected until 1894. The Aberdeen School Board, recognising the value of the day nursery, resolved 'to consider how the existing Day Nursery system may be made most available in facilitating school attendance on the part of girls'.[24] To describe the East North Street Day Nursery as a 'Day Nursery System' suggests that the school board did not realise how limited the uptake had been at that point.

In 1873, Aberdeen School Board member Mr. Forsyth noted that,

> from what he knew about the poorer classes, and from what he had heard from a good number of working men, the number of children detained at home to take charge of the younger ones was very great. In some cases at least one third was kept at home for nursing the young children and he believed it would inflict a great hardship upon many hard-working people, and drive at least thirty or forty women at once upon the Parochial Board if compulsion was used without day nurseries being available.[25]

Driving the poor 'upon the Parochial Board' was precisely what the association wanted to avoid. But realistically, if a family was so close to the breadline that the loss of the childcare provided for free by a school-aged child could tip the family into receipt of poor relief, then any charge for childcare (even given that meals were included in the cost) was too much. Of those attending, the majority were siblings paying the reduced rates for multiples. The association had not foreseen this. The cost per child to the association was the same, but the income for siblings was less. The daily charge for one child was 3d, but for three siblings it was 6d, 2d per child. The association had to offer a sibling discount; poor mothers could not afford to pay 9d a day for three children. The sibling discount, however, meant that the association

could not break even at 6d a day for three. In November 1872, it was reported that had every child paid 3d, the income for the year would have been £71, rather than £43 12sh 6d. However, the association reported that,

> It would be a misconception to regard the deficit as altogether at loss, although it be a loss to the funds of the Association. The mothers of the children in the Nursery are all enabled to go out to work; and the advantages to a number of poor persons is to be taken into account in judging of the merits of the enterprise.[26]

The introduction of the compulsory clause in the 1872 Act did not result in an influx of children. The Education (Scotland) Act 1872 stated that parents were responsible for ensuring their children attended school and could be fined or imprisoned if their children were absent. However, it was not immediately enforced as in some areas of Aberdeen there were still insufficient school places. The school board felt that day nurseries were required, but could not assist financially, given their primary focus was on improving existing schools and building new ones. The *Aberdeen Journal* suggested that nurseries may need to be attached to schools,

> given the extent to which young girls, of from five to twelve years of age are kept at home to take care of the younger children while their parents are at work. In these cases unfortunately the nursery is very often some public thoroughfare, or the street door, or the street itself; and the habits learned by the poor little nurses are not conducive to their wellbeing in any respect.[27]

Within three years of opening, it was clear that the nursery was not viable. In February 1874, the day nursery committee recommended that the nursery close 'the expense of maintaining the nursery being disproportionate to the benefit which it confers'. The issue was entirely financial; the committee stated that 'the non-success of the nursery in no degree arose from the management of the matron and stated that with Mrs Thomson's efficiency, care and kindness, they have been entirely satisfied'. The nursery was to close at Whitsunday 1874, or sooner if the matron wished to take up another post.[28]

The failure of the day nursery illustrates the perennial problem of the costs of childcare provision. Unfortunately, throughout this paper the only opinions reflected are those of the members of the Aberdeen Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and members of the Aberdeen School Board, both of whom were generally drawn from the same social circle. The views of those using the day nursery and their personal accounts of the difficulties of childcare were probably not recorded and, if recorded, have not survived. Helen Anna Lumsden (Mrs Forbes Lumsden), one of the members of the Ladies' Committee that managed the day nursery, had four servants, including a nursemaid, in the 1871 census.[29] At this point she had been married for two years and had one child. In the 1871 census Mrs Georgia Esslemont was also revealed to have a nursemaid to help care for her six children.[30] Their experiences of childcare could not have been further removed from those of the mothers accessing the nursery. There appears to have been universal agreement that day nurseries were imperative to allow women to work to support their families. Indeed, premises were being sought for further nurseries even as the East North Street Nursery was closing, although none of these came to fruition. However, even the heavily subsidised day nursery was too expensive to attract infants, and the women of the East End of Aberdeen continued to seek other, cheaper, informal sources of childcare.

In conclusion, in Aberdeen in the early 1870s, the need for affordable childcare to enable women, whether widows, deserted wives or wives whose husbands could not find work, without relying on school-aged girls to miss school to provide childcare, was seen and recognised. The Aberdeen Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, an association that included highly competent professional men, and women with experience of charity work amongst its members, attempted to meet this need. That it failed in the attempt indicates the difficulty in providing childcare that was within the means of those for whom it was designed. Further research into this issue in other cities would be helpful to clarify whether this was an insoluble problem, or whether other areas had found a solution to this intractable difficulty.

Notes

1. The Alliance has researched and funded plaques to Nora Griffith, Louisa Lumsden, Maggie Myles, Caroline Phillips, Dr Laura Sandeman, Nan Shepherd and Dr Agnes Thomson.

2. Initial research by Fiona J. Rennie, subsequent research by other members of the group, in particular Alison T. McCall.

3. Aberdeen School Board minutes were bound and published and, even better, indexed. Sets of minutes are available in Aberdeen Central Library, Local Studies Department and in Aberdeen City Archives on request.

4. Education (Scotland) Act 1872, section 70.

5. Alison Taylor McCall, 'The Lass o' Pairts: Social mobility for women through education in Scotland, 1850-1901' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 2013), 94-95.

6. *Aberdeen Journal*, 26 Jan. 1870, 8.

7. *Aberdeen Journal*, 22 Mar. 1871, 8.

8. Several Lumsdens appear in this paper, from two separate Lumsden families. Robert Lumsden was a banker. His brother, Rev Dr James Lumsden, was Principal of the Free Church College and Chairman of the School Board. They do not appear to be related to the second Lumsden family. James Forbes Lumsden was a lawyer, whose wife Helen Anna Lumsden (Mrs Forbes Lumsden) was active on the Ladies Committee. This was the well-known Lumsden family which included James Forbes Lumsden's sisters, Dame Louisa Innes Lumsden, Rachel Lumsden and Katherine Lumsden.

9. *Aberdeen Journal*, 15 Feb. 1871, 6.

10. King Street ran from the corner of the Castlegate northwards; East North Street ran eastwards from King Street, roughly parallel to the Castlegate.

11. *Aberdeen Journal,* 14 Jun. 1871, 8.
12. The Aberdeen branch of the Ladies' Sanitary Association was founded in October 1859, initially with an all-male committee. Women gradually took over the posts and by 1865 it had an all-female committee. Aberdeen Central Library, Local Studies Department NRA(S)3542.
13. It has not been possible to identify Mrs Thomson. She does not appear in the *Aberdeen Directory* between 1871 and 1874, and without a first name it is impossible to trace her in the 1871 or 1881 censuses.
14. As per advertisement, *Aberdeen Journal,* 10 May 1871, 4.
15. *Aberdeen Journal,* 7 Jun. 1871, 4.
16. *Aberdeen Journal,* 21 Jun. 1871, 5.
17. *Aberdeen Journal*, 21 Jun. 1871, 5.
18. *Aberdeen Journal,* 17 May 1871, 3.
19. *Aberdeen Journal*, 15 Nov. 1871, 5.
20. *Aberdeen Journal,* 17 May 1871, 3.
21. *Aberdeen Journal* 17 Jan. 1872, 3.
22. *Aberdeen Journal* 19 Jun. 1872, 6.
23. At the same time, for example, the Aberdeen Ladies Sanitary Association was trying to encourage the poor to improve their slum housing by lending out buckets and scrubbing brushes and selling soap at cost price. See for example *Aberdeen Journal* 17 Mar. 1875, 6.
24. *Aberdeen School Board minutes,* 20 Nov. 1873.
25. *Aberdeen Journal*, 10 Dec. 1873, 6.
26. *Aberdeen Journal*, 13 Nov. 1872, 6.
27. *Aberdeen Journal,* 5 Nov. 1873, 8.
28. *Aberdeen Journal*, 4 Feb. 1874, 7.
29. 1871 Census, Scotland, 168 /2 27/15.
30. 1871 Census, Scotland, 168 /2 15/41.

From Medical Expert to Mother: Health Advice for Tiny Moral and Spiritual Agents in Late-Nineteenth Century and Early-Twentieth Century America

Elisabeth M. Yang
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> Throughout these pages we have insisted upon regularity in the life and habits. This has its effects upon the health of your baby. But it also has a marked effect upon the moral nature of the infant. The institution of early systematic training in habits of regularity and order nurture and helps to develop in the infant a self control, which is essential to strong moral character … If you have been insistent upon regularity, and good habits up to this time on account of the health, be even more rigorous from now on. The health and morals demand it.[1]
>
> *Le Grand Kerr, M.D. (1908)*

In the November 1905 edition of *Babyhood,* featured under the title, 'Little George Washington's Virtue', a mother with the initials O.A. addressed the experts with the anxious suspicion that her little girl suffered from 'moral hyper-aesthesia'.[2] One could easily imagine that O.A. assiduously observed, measured, and perhaps recorded the behaviours, movements, expressions of her little girl from infancy, with the hope that the child would meet the standards of what was deemed moral, right, and healthy and happy by the medical expert. At the end of the nineteenth century, the life experience of the infant and young child also assumed a new importance in medicine. Their needs were viewed as relatively precise and measurable, and the standards established were believed to apply to all infants, with little consideration of individual differences. Physician L. Emmett Holt's *The Care and Feeding of Children* (1894) provided a good example of the systematised approach to infant care. Every function in the life of the baby was regulated, including the times and numbers of feedings; the quantity of food given; the temperature of the nursery; the precise time of bathing and the order in which its face, body and limbs were washed; and the amount of sleep required. The query posed by O.A. reflected mothers' growing dependency on the physician or child-rearing expert in matters of infants' or children's morality, reflecting the shift in epistemic authority in matters of moral and spiritual formation from theologians, ministers and pious matrons and pedagogues to medical and scientific experts. Nevertheless, despite the scientisation of infant care – moral and physiological – the fundamental assumption of O.A.'s anxiety and the anticipated expert's opinion of the matter was that the little girl was a moral, if not a hyper-moral, agent.

Nearly a decade later, in February 1914, physician Robert Hall addressed the Oregon Congress of Mothers affirming, 'In babyhood and early childhood, the physical health is of the most supreme importance. This is the foundation of the health and life upon which all the superstructure of mental and spiritual life must be built'.[3] The entanglement of the moral, spiritual and physiological was manifest in the history of child health and medicine, tracing back to the late eighteenth century. This was evidenced not only in the discourse within the medical and scientific communities but also in the transference of medical knowledge to white, middle-class American mothers and hence, the rise of what historian Rima Apple coins as scientific motherhood.[4] Yet, medical and scientific experts conceded to the notion that mothers were artists and co-labourers with the divine, reliant on the notion that those in their charge were spiritual beings and agents.[5] Reminiscent of child-rearing advice literature authored by pedagogues, theologians, reformers and skilled matrons during the first half of the nineteenth century, infant and child health and domestic medical texts addressed toward

mothers and mothers-to-be, who were largely white, middle-class, and Protestant, propounded principles of moral and spiritual growth and development. In an attempt to ensure the optimal physiological health of infants and children, child-health physicians also sought to 'shape the morality of future citizens' through their 'amending' of 'the consciousness and conduct' (including their outward display of emotions) of mothers and mothers-to-be.[6] Advisors, invariably, juxtaposed scientific principles of hygiene and medicine with theological and philosophical notions of childhood, motherhood, citizenship, happiness, purity, the normal, the good and the right.

The scientific objectification of the human infant during the second half of the nineteenth century signified a major shift in the Victorian figuration of the infant. As Erica Burman aptly put it, the production of children as objects and subjects of scientific study 'naturalized the romantic fiction of childhood as innocent bearers of wisdom'.[7] Evolutionary science positioned infants as closer to nature than civilisation, as prehistoric relics or links to the lower animal species. The intensified scientific gaze upon the infant, within clinical and domestic settings, grounded the once ethereal and embodied spirit envisaged by proponents of Romanticism and sentimental Protestantism of previous generations in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Infancy became a site of the interface of these different epistemes.

The scientific gaze towards infants and their bodies during this era reflects a critical shift in the history of the body. As sociologist Bryan Turner posits, the history of the body in the West chronicles the secularisation of the body from having been the locus of a 'sacred discourse of flesh' to becoming an object in medical discourse that resembles a machine ready to operate in accordance with scientific regimens.[8] While experts, in their child-rearing and medical advice literature, established notions of infants as automatons, or machines made in the image of humans, that operated within the apparatuses of health and hygiene, religious themes and images concerning the infant continued to be relevant in overt and tacit ways. Scientific and theological motifs, and themes in infants care, juxtaposed one another in the text and images within the pages of child-rearing advice literature. As literary scholar Tamara Wagner notes, '[c]linically precise instructions on medical issues were often juxtaposed with more traditional reminders of a mother's lasting moral influence'.[9] Even with the ascendancy of the scientisation of infant health and management in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, knowledge transmitted from expert to middle-class mother appeared to rely on the underlying assumption that infants were moral and spiritual agents who were in need of moral and spiritual nurture.

Child-rearing advice literature for mothers, authored by physicians, child-rearing advisors and other established experts during the second half of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, materially encapsulated the transmission of scientific and medical knowledge from medical experts in whom such authoritative knowledge resided. These artefacts reveal to us the dynamic interface of different epistemological frameworks within which these authors negotiated in order to make sense of the moral and spiritual agency and nature of their young patients. For example, some accommodated an evolutionary framework with their understandings of spiritual growth and the development of human consciousness. Some invoked theories of childhood that reflected a syncretism of Romanticism, Protestantism and republicanism that increasingly diverged from Calvinist notions. Whilst the enterprise of infancy and its medical and scientific management during the second half of the nineteenth century began to adopt a secularised, physicalist and biomedical lens, theological, philosophical and political themes of infancy, health and motherhood continued to manifest in child-rearing advice literature, which suggested that infants were moral and spiritual agents.

Furthermore, the claim for the perpetual signification of the moral and spiritual agency of infants within scientific child-rearing advice literature relies on another argument. While prescriptive counsel that animated the emergence of a scientific motherhood sought to enlighten the minds of allegedly ignorant and negligent mothers with rational and scientific principles and techniques—as argued by historians such as Jay Mechling, Rima Apple, Julia Grant, Janet Golden, and Ann Hulbert—the Protestant ethos of childrearing and motherhood recurs in the literature with a moral sentimentalism reminiscent of earlier American feminine ideals.[10] Highlighting this intricately interwoven thread of the elements of Protestant sentimentalities regarding childhood and motherhood, Enlightenment philosophy and modern science, this research suggests that such a transition in the ideals and practices of motherhood, from religious and sentimental to secular and scientific, was more complex than has been discussed thus far.

The rise of the American mother's regime in nineteenth-century America and the continuing legacy of 'ministry of motherhood' was borne out of post-Revolutionary America that was civic, moral, religious, and later, scientific in tone throughout the nineteenth century. Secondly, there was a shift in the medical and care perspectives of child development and behaviours that exhibited the adoption of hereditarianism and a *diminishing* reliance on theological accounts of human nature that reinforced the notion of sin. The infant was viewed as an inheritor of instinct and weakness rather than of 'original sin'. Thirdly, there was an emphasis on the formation of 'good' habits in infancy and their implementation as salvific efforts, by the medical and scientific elite, to counter the perceived threats to the existence of a 'civilised' nation. Remnants of notions of infants' moral and spiritual agency and capacities – vices and virtues – recur in medical and health discourse. Hence, medico-theological descriptions of infants in child-rearing and domestic advice manuals. Fourthly, in spite of the 'scientisation' of childrearing and the advent of evolutionary theories, theological notions of the infants' spiritual and moral nature and agency remained intact or persisted throughout the nineteenth century and, arguably, into the early-twentieth century. A reappropriation or an accommodation of both the evolutionary framework and theological models of childhood is evident in child-health

discourse during this time. Finally, in the 1920s, there was a turn in focus or emphasis in medical discourse from the *moral* to the *mental* agency of the infant – a notable shift in public and private concerns from infants' souls and character to their brains and personalities.

The Rise of the American Mother's Regime

The history of infant care and child-rearing theories and praxis in Victorian America was symptomatic of the emerging division between public and private, commercial and domestic, male and female, which positioned the mother and woman as the superior figure, rather than the man, in matters of religious and moral education of children. As one author wrote in the prominent *Godey's Lady's Book*, the mother's role was 'the domain of the moral affections, the empire of the heart, the co-equal sovereignty of intellect, taste, and social refinement'.[11] As the 'chief priest' of the family, which was idealised as the 'ablest earthly illustration of the heavenly kingdom', the American mother was expected to model service and self-sacrifice, while also managing the house and the mundane quotidian tasks such as cleaning, cooking, laundry, and decorating.[12] The mother's holy commission in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, entailed establishing and managing both the spiritual realm, and earthly realm, existing within the walls of the domestic sanctuary, and the church-home. She was entrusted with the souls and bodies, the immaterial and material, and the tenor and infrastructure present in the ideal Victorian American middle-class home.

The identification of the mother as the charge over her infant's soul by early nineteenth- century advisers was a consistent theme that prevailed in medical and scientific discourses on childrearing into the second half of the nineteenth century. As many early-nineteenth century child-rearing authorities emphasised in their script for motherhood—a motherhood which historian Nancy Theriot describes as a child-identified, or a child-centred, motherhood—the most pressing task was to prepare the infant's soul for eternal life. The assumption was that the infant's soul was malleable and under the charge of the mother.[13]

Experts claimed that it was never too early to cultivate the moral faculties and capacities of the child. According to pedagogues and ministers who wrote advice literature – those who composed the majority of advisors in moral and physiological health matters – the moral faculties of the infant 'unfolded' along with the 'intellectual talents' justifying the need for mothers to commence moral education of infants at their bosoms, lest 'their souls and society would suffer'; they asserted that as soon as the child was able to distinguish her mother from others, she was capable of 'receiving impressions' that ultimately affected her moral and religious character.[14] The medical and scientific communities maintained the ethos of previous generations of child-rearing authorities – ministers, pedagogues, and other child-rearing advisors – who increasingly stressed the formative influence of very early experiences. Such an ethos of civic motherhood and an emphasis on early childhood stemmed from post-Revolutionary American values that reified the visions of moral and social reformers who sought to cultivate the young republic's citizenry by way of ministering to mothers.[15] Hence, the phenomenon of a ministry of American mothers in nineteenth-century America, who were deemed as the moral, spiritual and political arbiters of the souls of their children and those under their charge. While perspectives of the infant's morality were varied and complex – comprising Calvinist, Romantic or hybrid views of the child – public and private discourse on infant-rearing among 'experts' and middle-class Protestant mothers in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries assumed a general consensus about the growing significance of early training, monitoring and social grooming.

Child as Inheritor of Instinct and Weakness, not of Original Sin

No longer the 'white paper' of the Enlightenment, the child, in the dawn of Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859), was now perceived as the 'inheritor of instincts' and traits forged by evolution.[16] The lens through which white, middle-class mothers viewed their babies shifted; the little bundles of joy were not viewed as sinners, so much as they were perceived as the embodiment and inheritors of the instincts and behaviours of their primordial ancestors, savage men or the lower animal species. As Christina Hardyment points out, psychologist Bernard Perez assured mothers that their child's anger was a 'legitimate animal instinct, a self-preservative mechanism, the sign of a strong character'.[17] As the evolutionary framework took precedence, habit-formation in infancy, lest the baby turn into a tyrant, and training of the infant's will, signified a different approach to understanding and cultivating the infant as an embodied moral and spiritual agent. Naughtiness was tolerated and parents were advised to laugh away their child's lying, thinking of it, not as a sin, but as a sign of its imagination or a reaction to fear caused by the mistake of the parent or nurse.[18] In turn, the child was relieved from having evil intentions and instead was possessed of morbid impulses or inherited weakness. Such an understanding of the moral agency of infants and children impelled white, middle-class mothers to view moral acts, not so much as expressions of a sinful nature, as effects of an inherited weakness or the result of bad parenting, which they aimed to prevent by enforcing scientific principles of hygiene, health, and good habits – amplifying further the phenomenon of the anxious mother in Victorian America and Britain.

Consequently, the view that infants required moral training was not antithetical to, but rather during this period, entirely consistent with the notion that infants are deliberate and conscious moral agents. According to psychologist Wilhelm Preyer, in his influential *The Infant Mind* (1893), the infant was not a 'blank repository' but richly endowed with 'moral germs', that is, 'tendencies, aptitudes which he had inherited in a lavish abundance from his ancestors'.[19] Newborns do not come into the world mere passive receptacles. Rather, they are teeming with moral agency that the medical community advises mothers to harness and engage right away.

For prominent paediatrician Emmett Holt (1855-1925), the infant was not the derelict, inherently sinful child of Calvinistic doctrines and beliefs, but was a mouldable and responsive specimen for early training. He wrote concerning the infant, '[h]e is the most plastic living thing in the world', with an extraordinary disposition to form habits, good and bad.[20] Concepts of the infant's moral consciousness and moral understanding faded away and experts established that the moral agency of the infant depended on the formation of good habits guided by the mother's 'rational' and 'scientifically-informed' practices.[21] Child-rearing authorities, including psychologists and medical experts, highlighted the critical importance of training the child to form habits, and to act as automatons, in order that the child may gain mastery over himself and free his mind to perform higher works.[22]

Medical and scientific advisors to mothers sought to help them guide infant moral habits and hereditary transmission. Physician Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910), in her medical treatise *The Human Element in Sex: A Medical Inquiry into the Relation of Sexual Physiology to Christian Morality* (1894), argued that the relation between habit and heredity foregrounded the powerful *physiological* factors that were key to preventing or accelerating degeneration of the individual and the nation.[23] The spiritual and moral agency of the infant were understood as features of physiology and habits. Moral education, training and virtuous habits formed at infancy were thought to counter the risk of degeneration by encouraging morally directed self-governance and temperance. The lack of self-governance signified for experts and their audience a degeneration to a 'lower level of evolution'.[24] The spiritual and moral agency of the infant was reimagined and reconfigured in different ways as it reappropriated contemporary trends in hereditarianism.

Parents could hardly blame their children for faults they themselves had passed down to their children. A shift occurred in which theological rhetoric regarding the moral and spiritual agency of the infant in medical and scientific discourse began to be replaced by scientific rhetoric predicated on the theories of hereditarianism. Sinfulness was considered just a tendency or natural impulse for wrongdoing, which might or might not be inherited. For example, physician Myer Solis-Cohen's comments that the destructive tendency of a mentally deficient child is due, not to the wicked nature of the child, but rather to the child's 'inability to control his morbid impulses', which were treatable by specially trained teachers.[25] With careful training – habit formation – sinfulness could presumably be eradicated.[26]

Saving the American Child, Race and Nation with Good Habits

The exigency in cultivating the moral agency through habit formation stemmed from social and political anxieties predicated on the theories of hereditary degeneration that permeated medical and scientific – anthropological, biological, sociological, and criminological – thought from 1870 to the early-twentieth century, a theory first advanced by French psychiatrist Bénédict Augustin Morel in 1857.[27] As Heidi Rimke and Alan Hunt note, the notion of degeneracy provided a theory of a hereditary moral pathology, eclipsing the image of the sinner with that of the degenerate.[28] Hence, the adherence to a theory of hereditary degeneration, along with a belief in the possible extinction of the 'civilised race', fuelled the efforts of mothers to cultivate their infants' moral faculties and capacities, which were now reconceptualised, no longer in terms of sin, but rather as products of neo-Lamarckian habit training.[29] The moral sins and goodness of humanity were naturalised, grounded, made tangible and transmitted through one's lineage. Infant moral training was required precisely because they were born brimming with moral agency, though understood as a product or amalgamation of inherited traits.

Both hereditary transmission of tendencies and early habit formation provided an explanatory framework with which to address what seemed an ineffable moral, physical and mental regression of individual progeny, the race and the nation.[30] As sociologist Nikolas Rose insightfully points out,

> The biopolitics of the first half of the twentieth century … involved more than the idea that, other things being equal, healthy individuals were more desirable than those who were unhealthy. Health was understood in terms of quality – of the individual and of the race – and quality was understood in a quasi-evolutionary manner, as fitness.[31]

Physicians' prescriptions for middle-class American mothers to cultivate good habits in their infants aimed to promote health in this way, that is, in terms of racial fitness. In order to maintain and ensure their infant's spiritual purity, the middle class sought to accord their daily routines and their infants' bodies with the credos of hygiene and health established by the medical community. These prophylactic measures aimed to prevent the moral insanity and eventual degeneration not only of the individual white, middle-class infant, but also of the entire 'civilised' class, race and nation of which he/she was a member and emblem. The fear of race-degeneration and race-suicide were perhaps salient for the urban middle class as they witnessed a decrease in the ratio of whites under the age of fifteen to those over fifteen. As historian Steven Mintz notes, the ratio of whites under the age of fifteen decreased from ninety-six per one hundred to fifty-three per one hundred.[32]

Accommodating the Theological and the Scientific in Child Health Discourse

For Mrs J. Bakewell, author of *The Mother's Practical Guide in the Physical Intellectual, and Moral Training of her Children* (1846), infant training, insofar as it was of the spiritual kind, placed it higher than scholastic learning. She writes:

> … but these, however essential, are far from being all that is requisite. In *training* up a child, not for this world only but for

> another, there is a higher aim than the acquirement of languages, mathematics, and accomplishments … above all, those religious precepts must be enforced, and those principles implanted, which with the blessing of God, will prepare the youthful mind for the duties of this life and the joys of the life to come.[33]

Chapters entitled 'spiritual development', 'moral education' and the 'moulding of mind and character' featured widely in physician-authored child-rearing advice literature. In their popular guide, *The New Tocology: The Science of Sex and Life, Physiology and Hygiene of the Vital Organization, Health and Beauty, Education and Character-Building* (1902), physicians Eli F. Brown and Joseph H. Greer juxtaposed scientific principles and health regimens with chapters devoted to character building or 'moral uprightness'. Chapters entitled 'Human Creation' and 'The Temple of the Soul' were situated between chapters on menstruation, conception, prenatal culture, childbirth, child development and disorders of infancy and childhood. Brown and Greer advanced theologically-inflected moral descriptions of the body and its functions, describing the body as the 'dwelling place of the Ego' and whose mental and physical development reflected an obedience or 'transgression' of the 'natural law', the latter of which would result in the lack of 'beauty, strength, and all the graces'.[34] Health, according to these physicians, depended on one's obedience or disobedience to a nomos, reminiscent of an obedience or transgression of divine law. Within the interwoven threads of theology and science in the discourse of infant health, the medical community, in particular, acted as the secular superintendents not only of the bodies but also of the souls and minds of infants and their mothers.[35]

It is important to note that physicians did not necessarily practise medicine but rather, the principles of health and hygiene. Rather than treating and healing infants and children of diseases, physicians would invoke a new code of ethics that promoted an ideology of health, or what sociologist Peter Conrad terms 'healthism'.[36] For some physicians, such as George and Susan Everett, their ministrations towards infants and their families relied on a definition of health predicated on the spiritual nature of their patients. As they noted in their medical advice manual, *Health Fragments or Steps Toward a True Life*, first published in 1874, health was more than the loss of pain, or sleeping soundly and eating regularly.[37] At the beginning of their text, they wrote, '[h]ealth means energy, ambition, enthusiasm, a divine activity which consecrates all the quickened purpose of a royal soul'. For these physicians and child-rearing authorities, the medical enterprise was undoubtedly a spiritual enterprise, as it involved an engagement with majestic souls – some of whom, dependent upon the mother's moral and spiritual nature and nurture, entered the world 'freighted with spiritual power' or 'marred' and needing to 'unlearn' actions and effects later in life.[38] Theological notions of the human person threaded through medical discourse on infancy and infant management.

As physician Mary Melendy affirmed the sanctity and privilege of motherhood, she referred to the infant as a 'soul straight from God, clothed in a physical form that reflects the mother's own life and thought'.[39] Another, notably female, physician Mary Ann Dacomb Scharlieb (1845-1930), an advocate of the latest scientific principles, sustained her Catholic faith throughout her medical pronouncements and practice. While heralding motherhood as the paramount office of moulding one's children and the nation, the physician ennobled the bodies of infants and children as 'temples of the Holy Ghost' who were 'deserving of all reverent and careful treatment'.[40] The informal and non-didactic education of infants, according to the physicians, relied on the tacit dimensions of the home environment and family life under the supervision of mothers and the belief that the souls of the infant and child responded to such invisible, yet present, features. The aim of motherhood, as some child-rearing authorities upheld, was to acknowledge and respond to the moral and spiritual agency of the infant, an agency deeply embedded within the maternal-infant nexus; the goal was to expand and grow the moral nature of the infant, not wilt it.

Even though infants were often viewed as spiritual agents in their families' lives, some physicians advised that their spiritual and moral agency did not develop at birth, but occurred some weeks later. According to physician S.J. Donaldson in his *Decalogue for the Nursery*, '[t]he first three months of life we must not count, for during this period the little body simply exists – breathes, eats, and sleeps. It is hardly earlier than the fourth month that the soul awakens and the spirit of intelligence begins to perceive and reason'.[41] Similarly, for Christine Terhune Herrick, author of *Cradle and Nursery* (1889), the newborn infant was a 'tiny bundle of flesh and blood—a packet of potentialities, rather than actual human entity' and had 'little more perception than a jelly-fish'.[42] The implication for some experts was that infants were born with what anthropologist Alma Gottlieb refers to as 'bio-bundles'.[43] According to physician Myer Solis-Cohen, there was an 'order of development of the senses' in which the infant's 'soul and intelligence' awakened into lively activity after two or three months of dormancy during which, all of the infants' motions were 'automatic and without volition'.[44] Fellow physician J.P. Crozer-Griffith echoed Donaldson's and Cohen's affirmations concerning the display of 'intelligence' when the infant was three months old.[45]

As spiritual agents, infants were also often understood to be endowed with individual rights, including the right to be 'well born' and to be treated as such from the 'first moment of its birth'. With a somewhat reverent tone, Colorado physician Genevieve Tucker affirmed to her readers that the baby was not a 'plaything for the household that was thrown up and around and tossed about like a ball, chucked, patted, and kissed'. Rather, as 'messengers of God', babies were individuals and not playthings. Ending her advice manual, *Mother, Baby, and Nursery: A Manual for Mothers* (1896), the physician exhorted the reading mother to treat the baby as a 'sensitive, intelligent being from the first moment of its birth'. According to Tucker, mothers were beholden to infants by respecting and nurturing them as those divinely created and endowed with physical, mental and moral qualities. [46]

The Twentieth Century: Idealising 'Average' and 'Normal' Babyhood

During the early decades of the twentieth century, medical and scientific advice to mothers slowly shifted or displaced their focus from the *moral* agency in theological terms to a *mental* agency in psychological terms. Discourse on the moral agency began to lose salience as mental health, hygiene and personality gained greater currency by the 1920s. As Mintz points out, the focus on the moral character – a central theme of post-Revolutionary and Victorian-era literature – shifted to the psychological development of the child and terms such as shyness, timidity and bravado entered into child-rearing discourse.[47] The study of babies shifted to a greater emphasis on their mental development and hygiene, instilling in mothers an urgency to gain an even greater understanding of the nature and needs of their infant by studying their psychology in addition to the physiology of babyhood. Published in 1925, *A Practical Psychology of Babyhood: The mental development and mental hygiene of the first two years of life,* authored by Mrs Jessie Chase Fenton, would introduce the 'average intelligent parent' to the scientific findings, once reserved for physicians and psychologists, on the 'unfolding of mind and personality' of infants.[48]

By the 1920s, rhetoric regarding the soul of the infant gradually waned within public discourse as the concerns over the mental health and personality took precedence. Questions of whether one's baby was morally and spiritually healthy and secure were soon replaced by those of whether one's baby was 'mentally all right'.[49] Hence, the scientific mother, who distinguished herself from the average mother, strove to fit her infant and child into the frame of the average baby or child. The allusions to tests designed by the psychologist-physician Arnold Gesell (1880-1961) to calibrate the mental development of one's child – tests simple enough to practise at home – reinforced an anxiety in the lives of middle-class mothers that their child be average and normal. *Simplifying Motherhood: A Handbook on the Care of the Baby* (1925), authored by physician Frank Howard Richardson, proffered allegedly simplified versions of infant feeding practices and notably, a chapter devoted to teaching readers how to detect 'potential problems' in the mental development of their babies. The underlying question implicit within the handbook and within the minds of Richardson's audience of middle-class American mothers was, 'Is he just a plain, healthy, average American baby?'[50]

Conclusion

Even as the emphasis of parents and experts shifted from a theologically-inflected moral agency to a more secularised and scientific assessment of mental capacity of the infant by the 1920s, the fundamental belief in the morally and spiritually agentic powers of the child transpired among the white-coated sages of morality and health, and their assiduous and anxious female students of white, middle-class America. The idealised happy and healthy infant was made tangible and mouldable, not as a blank repository, but as a savage, plant, tyrant or angel to be attended to, monitored, measured, groomed and esteemed.

While the moral sceptre passed from theological authorities to mothers under the aegis of physicians, scientists and other experts, a closer examination of medical advice manuals to mothers over the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century reveals that such allegedly scientific principles and techniques contained clear moral and religious undertones. Unravelling the enterprise of medical and scientific knowledge transmission from experts to mothers reveals not only power imbalances undergird by class, gender and race, but also underlying philosophical, political and religious discourses on the moral and spiritual agency of infants – tacit features of American consciousness during the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. As discussed in this article, scientific medicine and anthropometric modes of childrearing juxtaposed with theological notions of health, morality, infancy and motherhood in interesting ways that suggest an amalgamation of apparently incompatible worldviews, systems of logic and vocabularies within the enterprise of infant health and hygiene.

Physicians and child-rearing experts in late Victorian and early Progressive America exhorted fellow experts and dutiful, eager mothers to maintain and nurture infants' physiological and moral attributes from the womb of science, theology and philosophy. As embodied souls, endowed with moral and spiritual wisdom and germs, infants, according to child-rearing authorities, demanded maternal acceptance and training. Through early formation of habits and rituals of hygiene, or the management of natural impulses and acquired vices and virtues, infants persisted as moral and spiritual agents. Whether through a scientific or theological lens, experts portrayed infants as morally and spiritually agentic beings, whose dedicated and deferential mothers would further validate experts' putatively 'modern' beliefs.

Notes

1. Le Grand Kerr, *The Baby: Its Care and Development for the Use of Mothers* (Brooklyn, NY: Albert T. Huntington, 1908), 102.

2. 'Little George Washington's Virtue', *Babyhood*, 21/252 (1905), 428.

3. 'Normal Babe Data Are Given by Medical Men', *Morning Oregonian*, 1 Feb. 1914.

4. During the second half of the nineteenth century, science and medicine were heralded as the source of solutions to the physical and emotional problems of children accompanied by a notable rise in physician-authored child-rearing manuals, pamphlets, and articles. 'Scientific motherhood' refers to the ideology that emphasises the mothers' dependence on medical and scientific expertise in the matters of raising healthy children. See Rima Apple, 'Constructing Mothers: Scientific Motherhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *The Society for the Social History of Medicine*, 8/3 (1995), 161-78.

5. Mary Ries Melendy, *Ladies' Home Companion: A Book Giving Full Information on all the Mysterious and Complex Matters Pertaining to Women: A Complete Medical Guide for*

Women (Chicago, IL: K.T. Boland, 1903), 344.

6. M.V. Schertz, '*The Mother's Magazine*: moral media for an emergent domestic pedagogy, 1833-1848', *Gender and Education*, 21/3 (2009), 309-320.

7. Erica Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 10.

8. Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 37.

9. Tamara Silvia Wagner, 'The Sensational Victorian Nursery: Mrs Henry Wood's Parenting Advice', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 45 (2017), 802.

10. Rima D. Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Janet Golden, *Babies Made Us Modern.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018);Julia Grant, *Raising the Baby by the Book* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts. Parent, and a Century of Advice About Children* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003); Jay Mechling, 'Child-Rearing Advice Literature', in *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood: In History and Society*, ed. Paula S. Fass (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004).

11. Sarah Josepha Hale, 'Domestic Economy', *Godey's Lady's Book,* 20 (n.d.), 42.

12. Catharine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: Principles of Domestic Science* (Hartford, Connecticut: Stowe-Day Foundation, [1869] 1975), 19, 23, 42.

13. Nancy M. Theriot, *Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America: The Biosocial Construction of Femininity* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 21.

14. Catherine Scholten, *Childbearing in American Society* (New York: NYU Press, 1985), 77, 79. Scholten observes that pastors and pedagogues advised mothers to begin the moral education of their children at infancy, including Bible lessons and prayers. Throughout the early 1800s, childcare experts, and in turn mothers, believed the moral rearing of the infant was tied to the belief that an observant Christian was likely to be a moral citizen.

15. Ruth H. Bloch, 'American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815', *Feminist Studies* 4/2 (1978), 100-126.

16. Jay Mechling, 'Child-Rearing Advice Literature', in *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood: In History and Society*, ed. Paula S. Fass (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 171.

17. B. Perez as quoted in Christina Hardyment, *Dream Babies: Three Centuries of Good Advice on Child Care* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1983), 149.

18. Hardyment, *Dream Babies*, 151.

19. Wilhelm Preyer, *The Infant Mind,* translated by H.W. Brown (New York: D. Appleton and Co., [1893] 1901), 157.

20. L. Emmett Holt, *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses* (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1905).

21. J.P. Crozer-Griffith, *The Care of the Baby*: *A Manual for Mothers and Nurses* (Philadelphia and London: W.B. Saunders Company, [1895], 1911), 178.

22. Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 72-73.

23. Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Human Element in Sex: A Medical Inquiry into the Relation of Sexual Physiology to Christian Morality* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1894), 59, 62.

24. D.H. Tuke, *Prichard and Symonds in Especial Relation to Mental Science with Chapters on Moral Insanity* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1891), 21-2.

25. Myer Solis-Cohen, *Womanhood in Girlhood-Wifehood-Motherhood: A Guide in Hygiene, Tocology, Pediatrics* (Philadelphia, Chicago: The J.C. Winston Co., 1906), 304.

26. Hardyment, *Dream Babies,* 149.

27. According to Heidi Rimke and Alan Hunt, while Morel's treatise was never translated from the French, his theory of progressive hereditary degeneration nonetheless had a strong influence on Western European and North American medicine. See Heidi Rimke and Alan Hunt, 'From Sinners to Degenerates: the medicalization of morality in the 19th century', *History of the Human Sciences*, 15/1 (2002), 59-88.

28. Ibid., 73.

29. The Lamarckian evolutionary mechanism entailed the transmission of moral and physical characteristics between generations, leading to the scientisation and naturalisation of moral concepts such as lust, aggression, and idiocy—a reframing of religious abstractions as inherited traits. Rimke and Hunt, 'From Sinners to Degenerates', 79.

30. Blackwell, *The Human Element in Sex*, 59, 62.

31. Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 62.

32. Steven Mintz cites the statistics found in the U.S. Bureau of Census, *The Statistical History of the United States from the Colonial to the Present* (Stamford, CT: Fairfield, 1965), in Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

33. Mrs J. Bakewell, *The Mother's Practical Guide in the Physical, Intellectual, and Moral Training of her Children* (New York: Lane & Tippett, 1846), 13-14.

34. Eli F. Brown and Joseph H. Greer, *The New Tocology: The Science of Sex and Life: Physiology and Hygiene of the Vital Organization, Health and Beauty, Education, and Character-Building* (Chicago: Laird and Lee Publishers, [1902], 1911), 103. Power and gender dynamics are strikingly apparent in this male-authored text. Notably, the exhortation inscribed in the beginning is addressed to the female reader, stating, 'Woman, Know Thyself' with illustrations by female physician Ruth Blake.

35. The term secular superintendents is borrowed from Heidi Rimke and Alan Hunt who describe the medical experts as 'secular superintendents of the public soul'. Rimke and Hunt, 'From Sinners to Degenerates', 79-80.

36. Peter Conrad, *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

37. George and Susan Everett, *Health Fragments or Steps Toward a True Life: Embracing Health, Digestion, Disease, and the Science of the Reproductive Organs* (New York: Charles P. Somerby, [1874] 1875), 1.

38. Ibid., 17, 20.

39. Ibid., 412.

40. Mary Dacomb Scharlieb, *Woman and Race-Regeneration* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1912), 27.

41. S.J. Donaldson, *Decalogue for the Nursery* (Boston: Otis

Clapp & Son, 1886), 266.

42. Christine Terhune Herrick, *Cradle and Nursery* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Franklin Square, 1889), 1.

43. Alma Gottlieb, 'Where have all the babies gone? Towards an anthropology of infants (and their caretakers)', *Anthropology Quarterly*, 73/3 (2000), 121-132.

44. Solis-Cohen, *Womanhood in Girlhood-Wifehood-Motherhood*, 146.

45. J.P. Crozer-Griffith, *The Care of the Baby*: *A Manual for Mothers and Nurses* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1896).

46. Genevieve Tucker, *Mother, Baby, and Nursery: A Manual for Mothers* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896), xiii, 144.

47. Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 187.

48. Lewis M. Terman, 'Introduction', in Mrs Jesse Chase Fenton, *A Practical Psychology of Babyhood: The Mental Development and Mental Hygiene of the First Two Years of Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), xv-xvi.

49. Hardyment, *Dream Babies*¸117.

50. Frank Howard Richardson, *Simplifying Motherhood: A Handbook on the Care of the Baby* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1925), 221-8. Richardson offered descriptions of behaviour or expectation for reactions to certain stimuli at different points or 'stations' (e.g., four months, six months, nine months, twelve months, two years, etc.) in a child's life from birth to school-age (five years). By comparing the behaviour of one's child with the set average reactions, one could determine the mental status of her own child.

'In those days we occupied everything all the time': Collecting Histories of Childcare Activism in London

Rosa Schling

On the Record

This paper explores the findings of the ongoing research and oral history project Grow Your Own, which since 2023 has been documenting and mapping some of the myriad ways in which activists and campaigners sought to change and increase childcare provision from 1970 onwards in London, England.[1] Grow Your Own has identified that childcare activism was a diverse movement which used a variety of tactics. This included community-based research, the lobbying of decision makers, policy development and direct action such as protests, occupations and strikes to push for more, and better, childcare provision wherever possible.[2] As suggested by these activities childcare activism was driven by an urgent need for childcare. To meet some of this need community- and workplace-based childcare projects were set up, such as childcare cooperatives, community nurseries and children's centres. There was constant debate within the movement, not only about the best tactics to use to achieve their aims, but also regarding what kinds of provision they should develop and campaign for. Arguments centred on what kind of childcare would best meet the needs of young children, liberate the women who mainly cared for them and ultimately contribute towards the creation of a more equal and just society.

The primary purpose of the Grow Your Own project is to respond to present-day childcare inequality by making the history of community-based childcare initiatives, campaigns and organising more visible and increasingly acknowledged in London, particularly by people affected by the lack of affordable childcare or who are campaigning for change in childcare today.[3] Today, the provision of childcare has expanded dramatically, but access remains unequal. It is predominantly privately owned, expensive and with a largely low-paid, non-unionised workforce. This inequality of provision can be related to poverty as recent research has shown.[4] Therefore, working with a contemporary campaigning organisation, Post Pandemic Childcare Coalition, a key part of our methodology at Grow Your Own has been to communicate the history of childcare activism to those affected by childcare inequality today. In 2023, ten project participants with personal experience of childcare inequality were supported to conduct their own research into the childcare issues that concerned them. They then made an eight-episode podcast series *Childcare Voices*.[5] Ongoing plans continue to develop in 2024, with the launch of an online map, highlighting some of the historic childcare campaigns, projects, and initiatives in London, the research has identified so far. We will also create a set of resources for people directly affected by the issue and people campaigning for change, as well as a series of interactive play sessions for parents/carers with children under-five years. By making material regarding past childcare activism from the mid- to late-twentieth century more widely available, the project aims to increase understanding about the historic roots of the current childcare crisis and assess how useful this understanding is for attempts to achieve good quality, affordable childcare for all in the present day.

Research has included an exploration into what is held in existing archives, as well as building a new archive of documents and oral history interview recordings. An initial seven interviews with individuals were recorded in both single and multiple sittings. The interviews focused on the individual's involvement in childcare activism, with a semi-structured format and broadly adopting a chronological approach. Many of the interviewees have had long careers in the childcare and early-years sector, for instance by either running nurseries themselves, becoming academics and experts in the field of childcare, working for the Greater London Council and local authorities, as well as contributing their expertise to the

Fig 1: Past and present staff, parents and children discuss Hackney's community nurseries at Hackney Museum, November 2023. Photograph by Sophie Polyviou for On the Record.

Labour government Sure Start programme as advisers or consultants. The interviews revisit historical key moments of London's childcare. This includes the brief period between 1982 and 1986 when childcare was extensively funded by the Greater London Council, changes to childcare after Labour's 1997 election and the rapid expansion of private, for-profit childcare in the twenty-first century.

The rationale chosen to record and share oral history, alongside using other archival sources such as campaign materials, publications and organisational records is that it provides, as Margaretta Jolly puts it, an 'archive of feeling, experience and voice, important … for public understanding – indeed, for public action.'[6] Whilst not full biographical life-story interviews, which Jolly says attempts 'to listen to the whole story the long way', the interviews' follow a more fluid chronology that traces the interviewees' lifelong involvements with childcare, often starting with brief descriptions of their own childhoods and their mothers' experiences.[7] Using oral history as a method within the project allowed the interviews to examine and explore not only the events related to the relevant period of childcare activism but also the meanings made of them within the life stories of participants. As Alessandro Portelli put it, oral history 'tells us less about events than about their meaning'.[8] For instance, most of the people interviewed were born between 1937 and 1950, and so were children during the 1940s and 1950s. Their mothers often had had experience of working during the Second World War and many struggled in the postwar period when they were not able to continue in their paid work. Some of the interviewees directly referred to their mothers' experience as being confined to the home in explaining their determination to work and create the childcare that would allow them to do so.[9] This aids an understanding of the motivations of at least some of the childcare activists who emerged in the 1970s.

In addition, as part of the Grow Your Own project, we also recorded three interviews with pairs or small groups of people who were involved in the same campaigns or childcare groups. From these findings, we have organised public discussions, or memory sharing events, around specific subjects such as the Islington Nursery Strike in 1984 and Hackney's community nurseries. The group interviews recorded at Grow Your Own allowed the participants to discuss their ideas and experiences of their collective work on campaigns such as the Southwark Childcare Campaign, or childcare projects such as the Fleet Street Nursery, together. Although interviewing in groups precludes more detailed discussion of each individuals' life story, this method has been useful because it has allowed the participants to share their memories collectively, mirroring the way they worked together in the past.

Several interviewees have also engaged in the collective work of the project in a variety of ways, from sitting on the advisory group and helping to organise events, through to commenting on and helping shape the project's outputs. This participatory approach to working is an attempt to disrupt the 'social divisions' between the professional oral historian and their 'source' who the Popular Memory Group argued were 'at best … left untouched, unchanged by the whole process except in what they have given up – the telling'.[10]

In 1970, the National Women's Liberation Movement Conference at Ruskin College, Oxford voted on the Women's Liberation Movement's first four demands. Alongside equal pay, equal education and opportunity, free contraception and abortion on demand, the conference agreed a demand for free, twenty-four-hour nurseries.[11] As the 1970s progressed, activism around childcare grew; there were childcare co-operatives, community nurseries, nursery campaigns, childminder groups, local under-fives umbrella organisations, and trade union campaigns for workplace childcare. Furthermore, the creation of new forms of training and qualifications for early-years workers, industrial action by childcare workers, campaigns against racism in early-years provision and attempts to create childcare services that were anti-racist, anti-sexist and accessible to all children was gaining momentum in England. Drawing towards the latter part of the twentieth century there were efforts to coordinate these grassroots, predominantly local community initiatives, on regional and national levels. However, as observed by Sarah Stoller in *Inventing the Working Parent: Work, Gender, and Feminism in Neoliberal Britain (2023)*, the complex and nuanced movement of childcare activism

Fig 2: Southwark Childcare Campaign on a demonstration. Photograph courtesy of Linda Smith / Grow Your Own archive, Bishopsgate Institute

has been commonly overlooked, even within feminist historiography. Stoller's book also includes an overview of childcare activism in Britain from the 1970s onwards.[12]

Campaigns and community action around the issue of childcare, from the late-twentieth century, proliferated in part because while the numbers of women in work who had or expected to have children were steadily increasing, there were few, if any, childcare options available to them.[13] During the Second World War the state had greatly expanded nursery provision for working women.[14] However, this was reversed after the war when the Ministry of Health handed control of the nurseries back to local authorities, cut their grants and took back the wartime nurseries' requisitioned buildings. In post-war England state-provided full-time daycare (distinguished from nursery education which had shorter hours and was not meant to allow parents to work) was only available through local authority Social Services departments. However, these only served a limited number of the most highly-vulnerable children, considered to need daycare as a form of protection from their home lives.[15] In stark contrast, at the other end of the class spectrum, childcare was available to those affluent enough to be able to afford help, for instance by hiring a nanny. Anyone who fell between these two groups had few childcare options.

From the early 1970s onwards, campaign groups were established in most London boroughs, demanding more publicly funded nurseries, more and better support for childminders from local authorities and better pay and working conditions for childcare workers. Often these groups also helped to fundraise for and open 'community nurseries' in their local areas. Some groups, like the Islington Nursery Campaign, were connected to local chapters of the Working Women's Charter Campaign.[16] The Southwark Childcare Campaign was initiated by the Women's Committee of Southwark Trades Council.[17] In 1975, nursery nurses employed by Hackney Council took extended industrial action for better pay and conditions. The following year the nursery nurses, Hackney Trades Council and Hackney Under-Fives joined forces to form the Hackney Nursery Campaign, which agitated for more nursery places, pay parity amongst the various kinds of childcare workers, better support for childminders and against the closure of existing nurseries.[18] In 1977, the London Nursery Campaign brought local campaigns together, and in July 1980, the National Childcare Campaign was established.

During this period community-based childcare facilities were established in response to local needs, especially within working class areas, but also significantly, connected by broader social and political aims. When Sue Finch, one of the founders of Market Nursery (a community nursery in Hackney) in the early 1970s, was asked, as part of the Grow Your Own project, what she hoped to do with her time once the nursery she founded was in operation, she replied that she was just as motivated by collective purpose than by her individual needs:

> Well, it was what I wanted for myself, but … I could see that … from the point of view of women without childcare, you can't have a life that's anything but staying in the home. And it was one of the demands that came out of the Oxford conference … free childcare, 24-hour childcare on demand. So, in a way, I felt like I was kind of choosing what I wanted to do, which of the demands to focus on, and that it meant women could be politically active … I mean, [there are] still only one in three women in Parliament. But in those days, it was a tiny proportion, even tinier proportion. … For that generation, we were seeing that our mothers were very frustrated … if they weren't working, and I suppose very few women were going to university and there were very few options for women … So, it was what I wanted to do. I didn't know that when I went to university. I hadn't seen that. But I think as soon as you have a child, it all comes much clearer that you're not going to get anything done in life

> if you can't find a way of collectively looking after children once you have them.[19]

The Children's Community Centre in Highgate New Town, North London, England, was one such collective response to the need for childcare. One of the earliest community nurseries in London, it grew from the twelve Women's Liberation groups in the London Borough of Camden. It opened in 1972 and served as a model for many of the community nurseries that opened later in the decade. Sue Finch, one of many to do so, visited the centre for inspiration before Market Nursery opened in 1975.

However, eighteen months after opening, they wrote that the 'the euphoria we experienced at actually opening the place in December 1972 had been replaced by a growing awareness of real contradictions in a scheme such as ours'. The centre was based in a short-life property, given to them rent-free in a redevelopment zone. The families living in the local area were often placed there in temporary accommodation, lived in poor conditions, and needed to work. The Children's Centre was insufficiently funded by the council and relied on voluntary labour provided by parents to supplement the paid staff, and the nursery did not charge any fees. They reflected that their model could only work, 'where parents – and especially women – have the time, energy, and confidence to organise their own nurseries. Most do not'. They concluded that 'schemes such as ours are not going to solve the national child-care problem … Although we recognise the limitations of our model, we'd still like to see more neighbourhood-based nurseries controlled by parents'.[20] One of the things they hoped for at their centre was that the people involved would

> learn how to struggle collectively for what they want (and to learn that that can be enjoyable as well), and to take back some of the power that has been alienated from them. The Centre, despite its contradictions, has at least glimmerings of being a place where these things can happen.[21]

Trade unionists and childcare campaigners also sought to address the lack of childcare for working women by establishing workplace nurseries. Similarly to community nurseries, some of the interviewees acknowledged that they perceived this solution as at best an interim measure. Sarah Stoller describes how campaigners for workplace nurseries were keen to show they remained committed to achieving a comprehensive state-funded system.[22]

Ann Field who helped establish the Fleet Street Nursery, a workplace nursery for media workers, began the group interview recorded by referencing the debate around whether workplace nurseries were the best approach:

> And what emerged was a bit of a difference of opinion shall we say about whether we should concentrate solely and wholly on state and municipal funding. Or whether we should also ask for private funding or workplace nurseries as it was called at the time. And I started out really completely opposed to the idea of workplace nurseries for a whole variety of reasons. But realised actually that for practical purposes it was really a necessity, we needed both, and a number of others in the NUJ and in my union, NATSOPA, at the time, we felt the same, we thought well, we've got to try and bash up our employers to do something about it.[23]

After a long, six-year campaign to establish itself, the Fleet Street Nursery opened in 1986. It shared a building with the Kingsway Children's Centre, which had been opened by a different group of trade unionists in 1977 in Wesley House, central London, following two years of negotiations with employers. Kingsway Children's Centre was a form of workplace nursery used by a group of participating employers, who then paid two-thirds of the cost of their employees' nursery places. This allowed the childcare provided to be of high quality but at an affordable cost for parents. The Fleet Street Nursery was similarly funded in part by employer subsidies. The disadvantages of these central London nurseries included having to travel to work in the rush hour with young children and little outdoor play space, but these were far outweighed for the people interviewed by the opportunity to take up high quality affordable childcare.[24]

Other workplace nurseries were aimed at specific groups of workers with needs, such as the Blackshaw Nursery at St George's Hospital, Tooting. This nursery opened in 1982, although Wandsworth Childcare Campaign started fundraising for it in 1977. It had longer opening hours in order to cater for NHS shift workers, although it was not quite open for twenty-four hours.[25] In the late 1980s, it was open from 7am to 7pm, three days a week and 7am to 10pm, two days a week.[26] Sarah Rackham, one of the campaigners who helped to open the nursery, remembered that the nursery looked after the babies of specialist intensive care nurses in the hospital, 'they would come back to work when their babies were six weeks old because they could come in [during] their shifts and … feed the babies'.[27]

Students and staff in higher education also campaigned for creches and nurseries in universities, colleges, and polytechnics to allow women to study. Nursery campaigner Jenny Williams campaigned for a nursery at Middlesex Polytechnic in the early 1970s, when she studied there. During her interview, she explained how many students at the polytechnic at the time were from West Africa and, due to the lack of alternative childcare available, were forced to use foster care for their children while they studied. The polytechnic also had a Trade Union Studies course, often taken by industrial workers. Some of these students joined in the nursery campaign. Jenny, who was interviewed for the Grow Your Own Project, explained:

> So, it was lovely because it wasn't just these feminist women, it was these guys as well who did actually appreciate why we needed it [a nursery]. And what we did in those days was we occupied everything all the time. And so we occupied. Well, I tell you, it was

quite funny. We had this debate and we were going to basically push for this nursery. And we had a space identified and I sort of worked out the cost. We knew how much it was costing and everything. And the directorate were just intransigent. They just didn't want to know. So, I always remember on the Friday evening, um, we were approached by another sort of political group saying, 'we don't think the time is quite ready'. And I said, 'well, tough on Monday morning we're going to occupy the director's office'. And I said, 'anyway, most of the guys have gone home and the decision's already been taken'. And it was always very funny because what they had done is that they had talked to all the caretaking staff. So caretaking staff knew what was happening and we did. There's this picture in *The Guardian* of all of us sitting in the director's office waiting for an agreement. And we eventually got an agreement, and we had a nursery set up and it was right in the middle of the building, actually, another portacabin. And what was really sad was that some of the children hadn't seen their parents for like three months. And so we had loads of tears because parents were bringing their children in and it was really, really, you appreciated that you were doing something positive. And so the nursery and it went on for a long time and then we had a national campaign through the NUS about childcare and quite a lot. I mean, really quite a lot of nurseries in colleges got set up as a consequence of that.[28]

In working-class areas like Newham in east London, access to free or low-cost childcare was especially needed. 'Newham's first Children's Centre', as it was described in interviews recorded in 2017, developed from a playgroup founded in 1967. The founder, Judith Marchant, described how the playgroup was established by a group of mothers, known as the 'Young Wives', who met at the Memorial Baptist church in Plaistow. At the time there was very limited provision for under-fives in the area, but playgroups were rapidly springing up across the country, and the idea took off in Plaistow.[29] Judith Marchant, a qualified teacher, was increasingly asked by local women for all-day care for their children while they went to work. In response to this the Children's Centre, which included daycare alongside the playgroup, opened in 1977. By 1978, a second Children's Centre was opened at another location nearby. From 1974, the centre offered an Opportunity Group for disabled children that ran alongside the playgroup. A Family Centre was also then opened in the subsequent years, which provided families with emotional support, free clothes, a toy library, and a food bank.[30] This combination of inclusive care, education and family support are key features of the children's centre model, that was later drawn upon by the Labour government for their Centres of Excellence and Sure Start programmes.

On the other side of London, in North Kensington, two pioneering nursery centres, Maxilla Nursery Centre and Colville Nursery Centre, also opened in the late 1970s. The model they developed inspired many childcare activists. Maxilla Nursery Centre was a purpose-built complex constructed under what was the new Westway motorway. It combined a nursery school with full-time childcare, including provision for under-threes and a parent's centre used for drop-in activities, education and training. It provided a free, universal, and high-quality service for any child under-five years who lived within a small geographical area surrounding the centre, termed the catchment area by local authorities.[31] Funding for the centre, described by ILEA, as 'the jewel in their crown', became increasingly difficult to maintain once the New Labour government replaced supply-side funding with demand-side funding given to parents. This was through tax credits and childcare vouchers, which was never financially sufficient to sustain operation. Maxilla Children's Centre, as it became in 2004, was hard fought for and despite the funding challenges did not fully close until 2015.[32]

Community, workplace and university/college nurseries were part of a wider movement that reflected, debated and argued about what the best form of childcare provision for young children as well as their parents/carers. For some of those involved, grassroots solutions such as community and workplace nurseries were seen as an interim measure, only needed until a universal, state funded – but democratic and flexible – system for the care

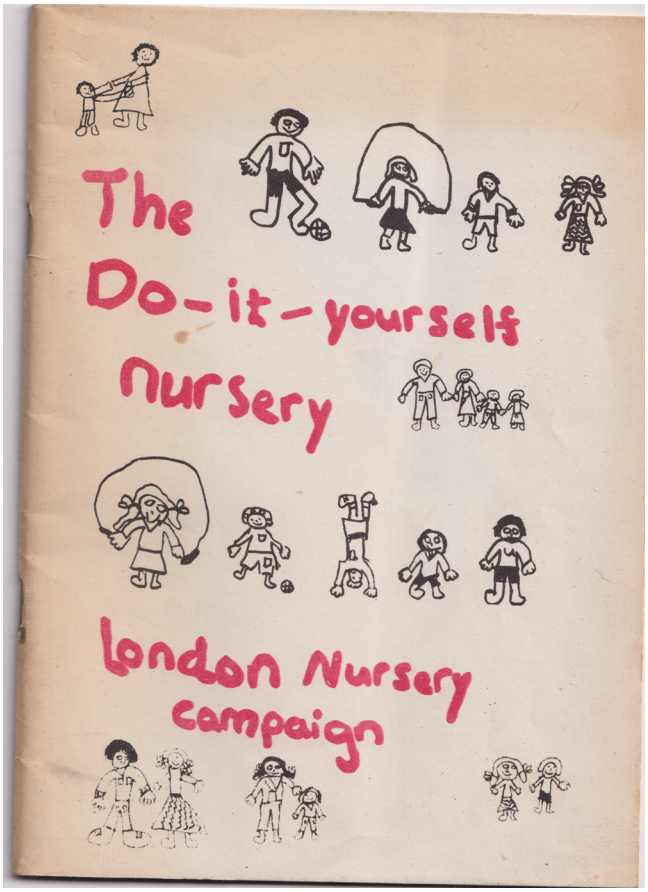

Fig 3: The Do-It-Yourself Nursery by the London Nursery Campaign, front cover. Booklet held in the Grow Your Own archive, Bishopsgate Institute

and education of under-fives was achieved. There was much debate about how democratic and flexible it should be, and how much control should be conceded to the state. The grassroots solutions developed to address the lack of childcare described above were vital testing grounds for new forms of collectively organised childcare, and the practical experience gained by running these projects aided participants in clarifying their thinking about what kind of childcare system they wanted to create. Perhaps most importantly, they put into practice ideas about combining the care and education of under-fives, which as Jane Lewis has written, would finally become widely adopted as part of the first national strategy for childcare brought in by the Labour government in 1998.[33] The early nursery centres and children's centres provided a model for activists at the time, showing what could be achieved if sufficient funding was available.

In comparison to the flagship nursery centres, the community nursery model could at times be seen as a cheaper option by some of those in government keen to avoid responsibility for a comprehensive, state-funded system. Many of those involved were aware of the tension between organising community- or workplace-based childcare solutions while simultaneously campaigning for better state-funded provision, as the example of the Children's Community Centre above reveals. Campaigners continued to debate and consider this issue. This can be seen in this extract included in the London Childcare Network's January 1986 newsletter in a report on the Tottenham Under Fives Centre, a new community nursery initiated by the Tottenham Childcare Campaign. The network wrote:

> It has taken a lot of energy, time, and commitment [to start the nursery] and it is sometimes argued that for a campaign to get involved in a particular service provision drains a campaign of the energy needed to maintain campaigning on all levels for under 5s and out of school care, in an area, or a borough. However, it is also important for campaigns to sometimes set an example by trying out new initiatives, and to point a local authority in new directions by showing what can be done. This particular Childcare Campaign has also gained a lot of fresh energy from actually achieving something positive and concrete. Perhaps other Childcare Campaigns could write in with their ideas about their ways to campaign, and how they see their role.

Today the wider structural changes that would make high-quality childcare and early-years education available to all – such as the system envisaged by the National Child Care Campaign in 1985 of 'comprehensive, flexible, free and democratically controlled childcare facilities funded by the state' – remain unrealised. [34] Although she does not discuss the movement for childcare, and to what extent it managed to impact on the decisions of those in power, Jane Lewis has written that by the end of the 1970s, this was inevitable as 'the foundations for the kind of mixed economy of provision and fragmented service that have continued to characterise childcare in Britain were firmly in place'.[35] However, despite, or perhaps more importantly, because of the movement's unfinished nature, the work done in this period to develop and test a vision of the way forward contains much vital relevance to people interested in resisting the neoliberal, fragmented model of childcare in contemporary England. And, as Stoller concludes, more work needs to be done to fully understand the 'highly complex world of left-wing childcare activism that emerged in the 1970s and to map its consequences for the childcare available to British families'.[36] This work is urgent both because of its relevance to the present moment and because interviews need to be recorded while the movement remains in living memory. The map and archive Grow Your Own have produced are an attempt to initiate work across London, and make the products of this research project more accessible and widely available.

Rosa Schling is an oral historian and co-director of On the Record, an internationally recognised organisation co-creating public history media productions using oral history. Details about Grow Your Own and their other projects can be found at https://on-the-record.org.uk/.

Notes

1. By 'childcare' I mean forms of care and education for children aged between 0 and 5 that allows the child's primary carers to work, study or pursue other prolonged activities. This distinguishes what is often called daycare or childcare from other forms of education and/or care such as playgroups, as they were commonly only open for short play sessions and often relied on parent volunteers, and many nursery classes or schools, as they offered half or short days, were not open in school holidays and commonly only took children aged three and over.

2. The project is run by community history organisation On the Record, in partnership with campaigning organisation Post Pandemic Childcare Coalition.

3. Grow Your Own has been funded by Trust for London.

4. 'Flying Against Gravity: The Lived Reality of Poverty in London, 4 in 10 Trust, https://4in10.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/flying-against-gravity.pdf (accessed 8 Mar. 2024).

5. Acast, Childcare Voices https://shows.acast.com/childcare-voices (accessed 8 Mar. 2024).

6. Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 40.

7. Jolly, *Sisterhood and After*, 41.

8. Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different' in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 67.

9. Margaretta Jolly writes that *Sisterhood and After* interviewees' 'growing up stories' helped explain why their activism took certain paths in *Sisterhood and After*, 70.

10. Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, politics, method' in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 85.

11. Ibid., 26.

12. Sarah Stoller, *Inventing the Working Parent: Work, Gender and Feminism in Neoliberal Britain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2023).
13. Angela Davis, *Pre-school Childcare in England, 1939–2010; Theory, Practice and Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).
14. Ibid.
15. Davis, *Pre-school Childcare in England.*
16. Working Women's Charter Campaign Newsletter 4, Grow Your Own archive, Bishopsgate Institute (hereafter BI). The Grow Your Own archive has not yet been deposited but will be available at Bishopsgate Institute on completion of the project.
17. National Childcare Campaign newsletter 1, Dec. 1980, Grow Your Own archive, BI.
18. Working Women's Charter Campaign Newsletter 4, Grow Your Own archive, BI.
19. Interview with Sue Finch, recorded by Rosa Schling on 28 Feb. 2023, Grow Your Own archive, BI.
20. The Children's Community Centre: 123 Dartmouth Park Hill, N19, Jul. 1974, 7SHR/P/01, The Women's Library, London School of Economics (hereafter LSE).
21. Ibid.
22. Stoller, *Inventing the Working Parent*.
23. interview with Ann Field, Mike Pike and Jill Mann, recorded by Rosa Schling on 28 Jun. 2023, Grow Your Own archive, BI.
24. The building both nurseries were based in, Wesley House, was owned by the West London Mission when the Kingsway Children's Centre began, and the project was allowed to use a space that in 1912 had been the country's first ever purpose-built creche. In 1983, Wesley House was bought by the Greater London Council's Women's Committee to safeguard the future of the Children's Centre, after which Wesley House became a centre for women in central London that included the National Child Care Campaign's offices alongside the two nurseries and other women's organisations. Records of the London Centre for Women, Newsletter 1 about A New London Centre for Women, Jul. 1985, 5LCW, The Women's Library, LSE.
25. National Childcare Campaign newsletter, Jun. 1981, Grow Your Own archive, BI.
26. Employer's Guide to Workplace Nurseries, 1988, 7HEF/03/03, The Women's Library, LSE.
27. Interview with Sarah Rackham, recorded by Rosa Schling on 30 Mar. 2023, Grow Your Own archive, BI.
28. Interview with Jenny Williams, recorded by Rosa Schling on 12 May 2023, Grow Your Own archive, BI.
29. Davis, *Pre-school Childcare in England*.
30. BI, Holding the Baby, HTB/2/1/21, Timeline: Children's Centre, c.1990.
31. Maxilla Archive, "The Early Years" http://maxillaarchive.com/the-early-years/ (accessed 8 Mar. 2024).
32. Maxilla Archive, "Tightening the Screw" http://maxillaarchive.com/tightening-the-screw/ (accessed 8 Mar. 2024).
33. Jane Lewis, 'The Failure to Expand Childcare Provision and and to Develop a Comprehensive Childcare Policy in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24/2 (2013), 249-74.
34. Records of the London Centre for Women, Newsletter 1 about A New London Centre for Women, July 1985, 5LCW, The Women's Library, LSE.
35. Lewis, 'The Failure to Expand', 274.
36. Ibid., 59.

The Tuam Oral History Project

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Tuam is a small town in the west of Ireland, with a population of less than 10,000. It is situated about twenty miles from the University of Galway, where the Tuam Oral History Project is based. Between 1925 and 1961, Tuam was the location of an institution known variously as a 'Children's Home' or a 'Mother and Baby Home'.[1] Since 2014, that institution has been notorious due to the meticulous research and indefatigable campaigning of historian Catherine Corless, who discovered that the remains of 796 infants and children had been concealed there in an underground 'septic tank'.[2] Corless's efforts drew attention to the (mis)treatment of women and children in such institutions in Ireland and led to the establishment of a high-profile state investigation in 2015, the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Inquiry (2020) hereafter MBHCOI, which published its *Final Report* in January 2021, running to 2,865 pages.[3] The protracted process drew international attention to the treatment of children of parents who were not married, and to the great extent of institutionalisation in Ireland historically.[4]

Mother and Baby institutions in Ireland

These histories are not new, and neither are the responses from the state and from bodies like the Catholic church. Globally over the past twenty-five years – in Ireland, Britain, Australia and Canada, as well as in states in northern, western and central Europe – there has been an increasing number of commissions of inquiry into historical institutional child abuse and gender based violence.[5] In the Irish context, several lengthy reports had been published prior to the MBHCOI's *Final Report*. For its part the *Final Report* addressed the history and 'experience' of 56,000 women and 57,000 children which it estimated spent time in fourteen institutions as well as the four (out of thirty-four) county 'homes' selected for investigation.[6]

Terms of reference are key to any investigation, and the MBHCOI's remit was to examine questions of entry,

Fig 1: The former Tuam workhouse, which became the Tuam Mother and Baby Institution. Tuam Home Graveyard Committee, colourised by Prof John Breslin.

treatment, vaccination trials, mortality, burials, post-mortem practices and 'exit pathways' of single mothers and their children in the fourteen institutions and the 'representative sample' of county 'homes'.[7] There are 228 institutions listed in Chapter 2 of the *Final Report* which include industrial and reformatory schools, hostels, Magdalene asylums and other small and sometimes short-lived institutions that require further investigation.

Throughout its operation, the MBHCOI declined to gather or hear evidence in public, and refused to provide transcripts to oral informants who gave testimony. With regard to the findings, there was particular criticism of the prominently placed 'Executive Summary', which refused to accept that non-married, pregnant women were coerced into entering the institutions, or that any forced adoptions were arranged by them. Of the *Final Report* more generally, there was widespread criticism that it took little account of the testimony of survivors, while privileging the undoubtedly sanitised documentary record.

The *Final Report*'s denial of the abuse of thousands of people was widely challenged, and a legal challenge was subsequently upheld in the High Court.[8] As the ensuing redress scheme was based upon the flawed and unsupported findings of the MBHCOI, it has also attracted widespread criticism for grossly undervaluing the abuse suffered by survivors, for excluding those who were adopted or otherwise separated from their mothers before the age of six months, and those who were 'boarded out' from institutions or forcibly separated. While steps have been taken towards a National Memorial and Records Centre – a welcome step for many – governments continue to ignore concerns around redress, burials, excavation, and memorialisation. Survivors, or those who were incarcerated, have always spoken out – even if society was not listening. It was in that context that the Tuam Oral History Project emerged in 2019.

The Tuam Oral History Project

'Nothing about us without us' has remained the motto of the Tuam Oral History Project since its inception. Grassroots, interdisciplinary and grounded in the principles of transitional justice, the project has had a substantial impact in Ireland – culturally, educationally, politically and socially. It has raised the profile of the Tuam Mother and Baby institution and highlighted the life stories and experiences of survivors. Representing activist, co-creative and trauma-informed research, it is a local project with limited funding which has had a global reach. It has been a privilege to work on the institution whose history was instrumental in drawing general attention to conditions in Irish mother and baby institutions, which happens to have been located close to the University of Galway. Tuam, it should be pointed out, was an exception in several respects, not least in closing its doors as long ago as 1961, decades before some of its sister institutions.

The project emerged from a day-long workshop held in the University of Galway in February 2019, involving survivors of the Tuam institution, academics and advocates. Survivors asked that the university create an oral history archive – a living archive independent of State inquiries. The outcome was the Tuam Oral History Project. Since then, through the pandemic and other challenges, the Project has been a collaboration between those directly affected and a number of university disciplines – History; Archives; Drama; and Creative Writing. With funding of €57,000 awarded by the Galway University Foundation, the interdisciplinary team consisted of Dr Sarah-Anne Buckley, Dr John Cunningham, Dr Barry Houlihan, Elaine Feeney, Dr Miriam Haughton, Mary Cunningham, and Lorna Farren,. The aims of the project were to:

1. Permanently preserve and maintain the recorded recollections of individuals in the James Hardiman Library, University of Galway along with relevant personal documents.
2. Provide access to this material for historical research and other legitimate academic purposes with survivors' consent (which may be withdrawn at any point) .
3. To work with survivors to provide an artistic response to their testimonies.

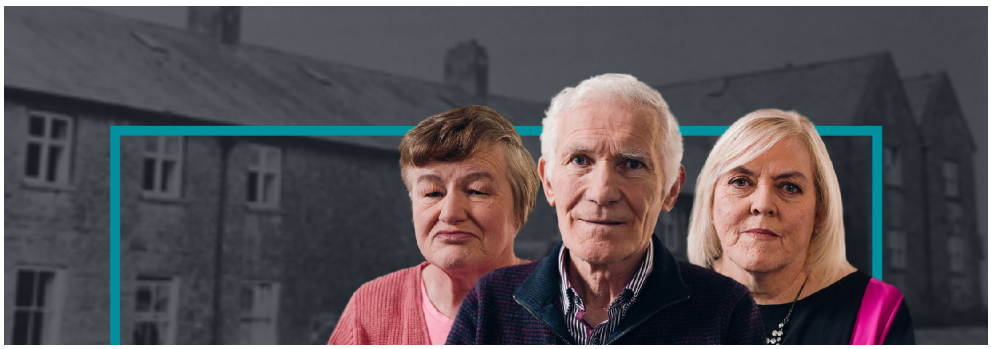


Fig 2: Christine Carroll, Peter Mulryan and Teresa O'Sullivan. Image by Fionn McCann for Tuam Oral History Project.

Like previous projects (including the CLANN Project, Justice for Magdalenes Research and Waterford Memories) the project has demonstrated how a considered, survivor/person-centred approach could provide a supportive and non-adversarial environment for individuals to tell their stories. The great majority of the current interviewees were born in the long-closed Tuam institution. Some were fostered or boarded out. Some were adopted. In July 2020 we released a three-part podcast series, *Other: Stories from the Tuam Mother and Baby Home*, which explored the stories of survivors Teresa O'Sullivan, Peter Mulryan and Christine Carroll, and the impact that the institution had on their lives. It was narrated by the actor and patron of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at University of Galway, Cillian Murphy. A second podcast series is currently being developed by Mary Cunningham and Orla Higgins.[9]

These testimonies are one small piece of a larger puzzle, but an important one. A tapestry of details and institutional connections emerge: the County Home where their mother was placed, or perhaps the Magdalene Asylum; the district where interviewees were fostered or boarded out, showing strong geographical concentrations. The testimonies also describe the work they did without pay, the thirty or more years that it took to find their mother, and their families today. The diversity of these histories reveals similarities and differences in their life stories,

To date we have taken thirty testimonies, eleven of which are available on the project website alongside personal documents, academic outputs, podcast series, photo exhibition, and related projects. Not all of the testimonies are yet publicly accessible, for varied reasons, but all those whose testimonies have been made available to date have chosen to use their own names. We owe them a great debt for sharing their history. As Johanna Sköld states, 'lived childhood must be narrated through memory … and, more importantly, the memories of those in institutions and the archival records of the institutions "seldom tell the same story"'.[10]

Outside of the testimonies the work of the team has been invaluable in involving students and bringing individual work to this project. Miriam Haughton's work on trauma, memory and performance has been central to her outputs and impact, while Dr Barry Houlihan's work on access to archival resources and his focus on historical justice has brought further impact. To date there have been several peer-reviewed articles and chapters published, a monograph will be published in 2025-26, as well as two edited collections, one on *Trauma and the Archive*. A creative writing response is currently being developed with writers Elaine Feeney and Jessica Traynor working with participants to create and explore their own experiences of the institution and their lives afterwards. .

Our national story

Until the history of Ireland's institutional past is part of our national history – taught to our children like that of the Great Famine or the Irish Revolution – our national story is incomplete. Historians must engage with those directly affected by this history, and they must advocate for the preservation of records and for free access by survivors and others to all their own records. We must ensure that this long and dark period in our history is discussed fully and openly – in contrast to the fragmented and divisive approach that the State and religious organisations have taken for decades.

Notes

1. The term 'institution' will be used as opposed to 'home' for this piece. See Caroline McGregor, Carmel Devaney and Sarah-Anne Buckley, *Language, Terminology and Representation Relating to Ireland's Institutions Historically Known as 'Mother and Baby Homes', 'County Homes' and Related Institutions* (UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, University of Galway, 2023).

2. See Catherine Corless (with Naomi Linehan), *Belonging: A Memoir of Place, Beginnings and One Woman's Search for Truth and Justice for the Tuam Babies* (Dublin: Hachette Books, 2021); Dan Barry, 'The lost children of Tuam', *New York Times*, 28 Oct. 2017; Catríona Crowe, 'The Commission and the Survivors', *Dublin Review of Books*, Summer 2021. See also work by Conall Ó Fatharta, 'Mother and Baby Home Scandal Hidden in Plain Sight', *Irish Examiner*, 5 Jun. 2014. http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/mother-and-baby-scandal-hidden-in-plain-sight-271157.html and https://conallofatharta.wordpress.com/. For a discussion of the foundation of the institution and research used in this case study see Sarah-Anne Buckley and John Cunningham, 'Remembering and Forgetting: The Tuam Mother and Baby Home and the Irish Revolution', in *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism and Violence*, ed. Linda Connelly (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2020), 198-215.

3. *Final Report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Inquiry* (Dublin: 2020). Hereafter MBHCOI, *Final Report*.

4. See Sarah-Anne Buckley, 'Gender and institutionalisation: from the Foundling Homes to the

Mother and Baby Institutions' in *Gender & History: Ireland, 1852-1922*, eds. Jyoti Atwal, Ciara Breathnach & Sarah-Anne Buckley (New Delhi & London: Routledge, 2022).

5. *Age of Inquiry: A Global Map of Institutional Abuse Inquiries*, www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/research/ageofinquiry/index.html.

6. MBHCOI, *Final Report.*

7. Ibid., chapter two.

8. See www.thejournal.ie/mother-and-baby-home-commission-high-court-settlement-5633597-Dec2021/.

9. Project outputs include: ENLIGHT *Award for Societal Impact 2023* (https://impact.enlight-eu.org/ambassadors); Project Webpage: Tuam Oral History Project (https://www.universityofgalway.ie/tuam-oral-history/); Drama Performance 'Nochtaithe (Unveiled)', involving Drama and Theatre Students, commissioned piece of music by Colm Mac Con Iomaire Nochtaithe (https://www.universityofgalway.ie/tuam-oral-history/nochtaithe/); three part podcast series: *Other: Stories from the Tuam Mother and Baby Home*, narrated by Cillian Murphy (https://www.universityofgalway.ie/tuam-oral-history/podcasts/); Survivor Stories Exhibition (http://www.allendigital.ie/clients/nuig/tuam202007-29d/index.html#/overview); Kara Fox, 'For decades, Ireland's mother and baby homes were shrouded in secrecy. Some say the veil still hasn't lifted', 8 Sep. 2019, https://edition.cnn.com/2019/09/07/europe/ireland-mother-and-baby-homes-intl/index.html; Junior Certificate History Module, 'Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland' to be made available in 2024-25 and developed in collaboration with the project team; Buckley and Cunningham, 'Disremembering and Remembering'; Sarah-Anne Buckley and Lorraine Grimes, From Tuam to Strettan House: A Case Study of Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland and the UK', in *Magdalen Laundries: Commemoration, Gender and Systems of Abuse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 125-43; Miriam Haughton, 'Performance, Care and Intergenerational Response: Grieving for "Ungrievable Bodies" in the Tuam Oral History Project', *Performance Research*, 2/6 (2023).

10. Johanna Sköld, 'The Truth about Abuse?: A Comparative Approach to Inquiry Narratives on Historical Institutional Child Abuse', *History of Education*, 45/ 4 (2016), 498.

From The Archive

Women and Childcare in the Archive: Froebelian Women in London's north

Kornelia Cepok

Archivist, University of Roehampton

Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies

The Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies is a collection of books, archives, photographs, objects and multimedia materials, centring on Friedrich Froebel's educational legacy, early years and elementary education. The archive liaises closely with academic departments, supporting teaching and learning within and beyond the University of Roehampton.

The Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies was established in 1977 at Froebel College where it was located until 2006. Since its formation the archive has grown considerably, both in its collection of material on Friedrich Froebel, in English and in German, and in its holdings relating to the history of Froebel College. The archive also has several books on kindergartens in other countries.

Together with the archives of the National Froebel Foundation, now the Froebel Trust, that reaches back to its foundation in 1874 and which is housed alongside the Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies, these elements reflect the strands that make up the history of the Froebel movement in the UK.

Froebelian Women in London's north

As the days are getting warmer, sunnier and longer, it is fair to say that many of us are drawn much more towards the outside than we are in wintertime. Like the plants, we too pull our heads up towards the sun. We are more active and have good intentions to get in better shape and look and feel healthy. Equally, we want our children to do the same. And for those of us living in a busy city who are lucky enough for their children's schools to be right next to a large green space, this task is not so very difficult. The children pour out of the school gate and onto the common or a park to run around and play with their friends, climb the trees and collect grasses and leaves. Their parents follow, often not really having the time for it! Still, many parents enjoy this green space break too.

There is enough evidence on the health benefits of green spaces and spending time in nature and at least for some, it is hard to imagine not being able to step outside and enjoy nature with its grasses, trees, blooms, the sound and sight of birds and other animals.

Going back a century or so, families and their children living in deprived urban areas were less fortunate and the sight of trees and open green spaces was not something many of them encountered easily.

It was these situations that motivated women associated with Froebelian education, and the Froebel Educational Institute (FEI), to set up kindergartens and provide free or low-fee educational provision for infants and pre-school children. Somers Town Nursery School in North London was one of them. With a first intake of ten children – later going up to forty-three – it opened in November 1910 at '18, Crowndale Road, N. W. Near Mornington Crescent Tube Station'.[1] The school's head

(or Directress) was Miss Lawrence, the Principal of the Froebel Educational Institute, making it clear that Froebel would be the chosen educational principle in this setting. Many of their staff and voluntary supporters were current and former students of the Institute.

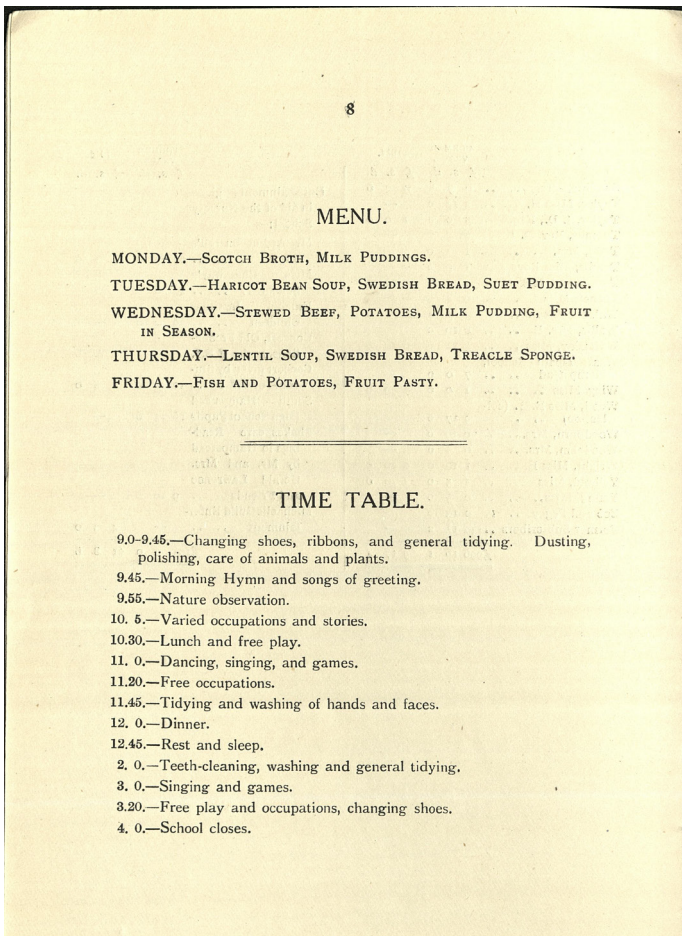
The Froebel Archive holds a set of Annual Reports from Somers Town from the years 1911-1912 to 1943-1944, giving a close insight into their principles, plans and struggles. According to the reports, the nursery school had implemented a programme to take care of the whole child – looking after their physical wellbeing by providing nutritious meals, and providing medical and dental care, as well as working with the families and the local community to ensure similar standards were implemented in the home environment for the benefit of the children. Equally, the carers fostered activities to build confidence and positive mental development – all very closely following the footsteps of Froebel's holistic approach to child development.

The 1913 report highlights exactly where Somers Town stood out among the crowd:

> The Nursery School is not an ordinary charity, and it not only cares for the children while they are under its roof, but it seeks to strengthen and train them so that they may be more capable of fighting their own battles later on, and of fighting them wisely and well.[2]

Nature was a fundamental part of Froebelian child-centred education – it is not a coincidence that he named his invention 'Kindergarten'. True to a Froebelian nursery setting, the women running Somers Town ensured that the children had a small garden where they could grow plants and play. At the same time, the urban setting was not able to offer a meaningful connection with nature. It is not surprising therefore that Somers Town almost immediately introduced summer holidays in the countryside for the children. Much like field trips undertaken by the FEI students, all organised by Miss Rosalie Lulham who dedicated much of her life to the Nature Department at the FEI, the women who were engaged with Somers Town might have wanted to offer the children this very experience. The Annual Report from 1917 could not have been more poignant:

> … the country holiday is one of the most important factors, if not *the* most important factor in promoting the health and happiness of the children throughout the year. The fresh air, good food, the country experiences and general cheerfulness all do untold and lasting good. The basis of spiritual and intellectual life is best laid in the country, therefore, from all points of view, the holiday should become a definite feature of the Nursery School programme and should be prolonged, more especially for delicate children.[4]



8

MENU.

MONDAY.—Scotch Broth, Milk Puddings.

TUESDAY.—Haricot Bean Soup, Swedish Bread, Suet Pudding.

WEDNESDAY.—Stewed Beef, Potatoes, Milk Pudding, Fruit in Season.

THURSDAY.—Lentil Soup, Swedish Bread, Treacle Sponge.

FRIDAY.—Fish and Potatoes, Fruit Pasty.

TIME TABLE.

9.0-9.45.—Changing shoes, ribbons, and general tidying. Dusting, polishing, care of animals and plants.
9.45.—Morning Hymn and songs of greeting.
9.55.—Nature observation.
10. 5.—Varied occupations and stories.
10.30.—Lunch and free play.
11. 0.—Dancing, singing, and games.
11.20.—Free occupations.
11.45.—Tidying and washing of hands and faces.
12. 0.—Dinner.
12.45.—Rest and sleep.
2. 0.—Teeth-cleaning, washing and general tidying.
3. 0.—Singing and games.
3.20.—Free play and occupations, changing shoes.
4. 0.—School closes.

Fig. 1: Extract from the Somers Town Annual report 1914.[3]

Fig 2: FEI students share observations and excitement on a field trip to Keston, organised by Miss Lulham, Nature Department, published in the Keston Journal in 1921.[5]

In 1924, they were even able to purchase a property in Sussex for this very purpose. It was realised thanks to a generous bequest of a former student of the Froebel Educational Institute, Mrs Macdonald who dedicated much time and money to the nursery. The report from 1923-24 reads:

> We have just secured a Home in the heart of Sussex, which Miss Stokes found after a prolonged search, and we hope to have it ready in July for the children's holiday. The property, which covers nearly 4 acres, contains a cottage and out-buildings, and more accommodation is to be added. There are two meadows, a little woodland, and a tiny orchard. A very safe and charming running stream is a boundary on one side of the property.[6]

Perfect! A permanent summer residence, which was named Somers Cottage, was a proud achievement and a worthy occasion to start a dedicated summer holiday report, in addition to the annual reports.

These pictures and reports are almost 100 years old. It is hard to imagine how a small handful of carers could take about forty children under the age of five on a four-week holiday away from their families. And yet this is exactly what these women were doing. They were usually helped by a few mothers, and staff and students from the Froebel Educational Institute, all donating their time to help with the mammoth task of looking after forty very young children who needed much attention and supervision. It is also very hard to imagine that these children would not miss their parents and vice versa. They probably did. The reports do not mention any of this. Instead, they focus on the remarkable time the children had and the visible benefits to their health and development. The Summer Holiday Report from 1931 reads:

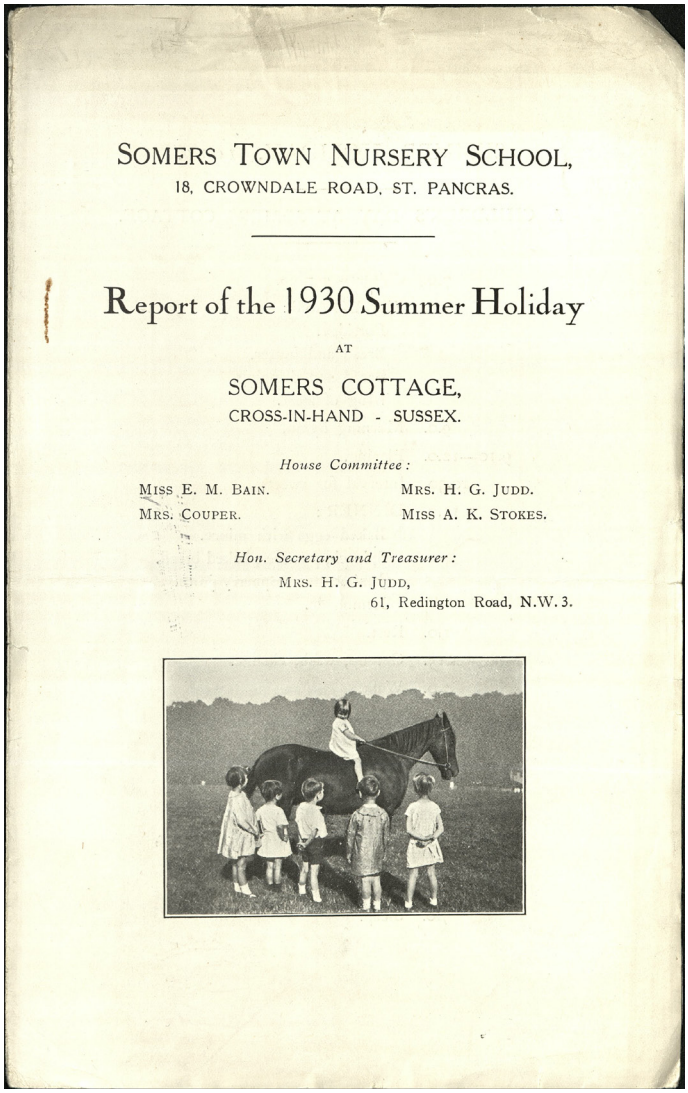
> We only wish that all our kind friends could see the children on holiday – running about the meadow, 'tucking away' their meals, or being tucked up in their tiny beds. To see the colour grow in their cheeks and the sunburn on their legs, is, by itself, ample compensation for the work and the cares of the holiday month.

An earlier report from 1929 highlights the long-term benefits of holidays in the country:

> To see those London babies at Somers Cottage is a sight worth while; and it is wonderful to think what it means to them – this healthy holiday, full of happiness from morning till night, in an ideal spot deep in the country, away from main roads and the bustle and noise of traffic… The freedom of the children is very striking and is not abused. What precious memories are stored up by these little city babies. The happiness and physical well being must undoubtedly sow the seeds of a higher standard of living for the future.[9]

It seems quite remarkable how those involved in running this nursery made it survive financially. When opening a low-fee nursery school in a deprived London area, it was clear that parents' contributions would not generate any income; based on the annual reports, small parents' contributions were only accounted for twice during the first decade. Initially, they made it work on a shoestring, being largely dependent on donations from private beneficiaries, the Froebel Educational Institute and the FEI students' and supporters' budget generating initiatives – not a very stable form of income – not allowing any forward planning without relentless advocacy and asking for more donations from their supporters. Both activities took dedication towards the child, which these women seemed to have had in abundance. Interestingly, it seems that it was 'far easier to get subscriptions for a summer holiday than for the ordinary working of a Nursery'.[10] However, their hard work paid off. The Annual Report from 1918 reports on a welcome development to secure finances:

> The year 1919 will surely be a memorable one for Nursery Schools, for the Board of Education now recognises and encourages their work and will help to support those



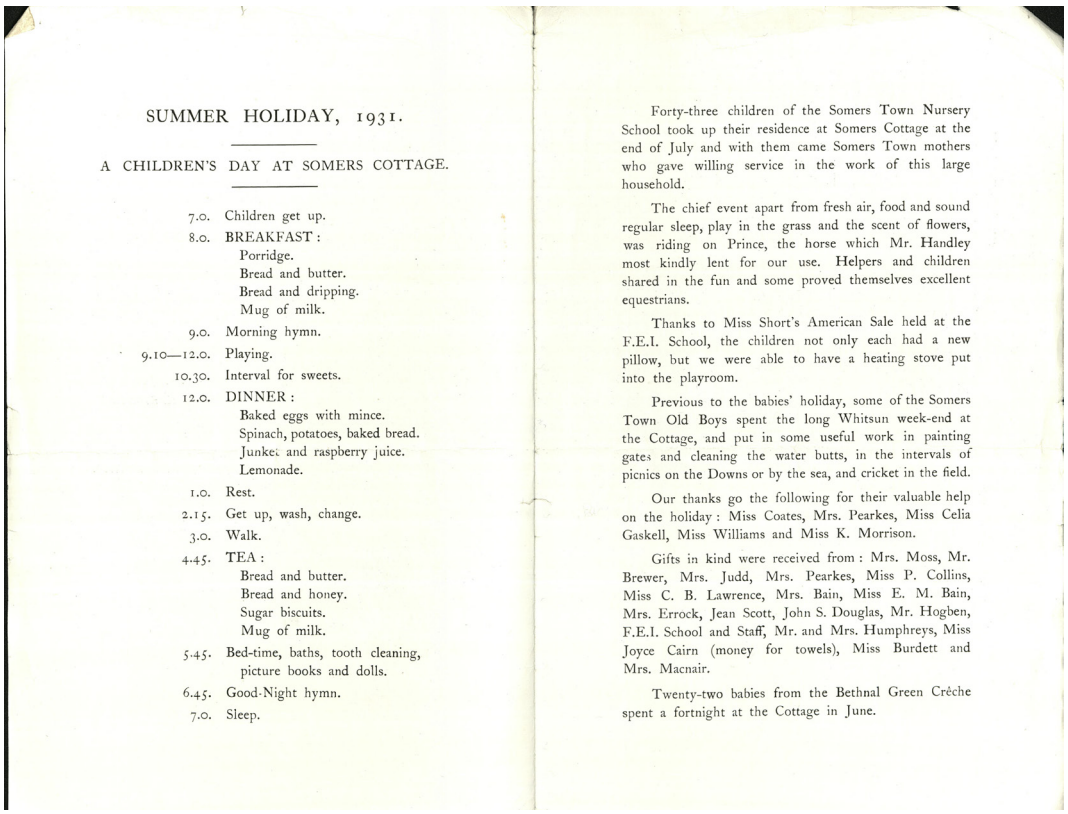
SOMERS TOWN NURSERY SCHOOL,
18, CROWNDALE ROAD, ST. PANCRAS.

Report of the 1930 Summer Holiday
AT
SOMERS COTTAGE,
CROSS-IN-HAND - SUSSEX.

House Committee:
MISS E. M. BAIN. MRS. H. G. JUDD.
MRS. COUPER. MISS A. K. STOKES.

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer:
MRS. H. G. JUDD,
61, Redington Road, N.W. 3.

Fig 3: Reports of the Summer Holiday residence for the Somers Town Nursery School.[7]



SUMMER HOLIDAY, 1931.

A CHILDREN'S DAY AT SOMERS COTTAGE.

7.0. Children get up.
8.0. BREAKFAST:
Porridge.
Bread and butter.
Bread and dripping.
Mug of milk.
9.0. Morning hymn.
9.10—12.0. Playing.
10.30. Interval for sweets.
12.0. DINNER:
Baked eggs with mince.
Spinach, potatoes, baked bread.
Junket and raspberry juice.
Lemonade.
1.0. Rest.
2.15. Get up, wash, change.
3.0. Walk.
4.45. TEA:
Bread and butter.
Bread and honey.
Sugar biscuits.
Mug of milk.
5.45. Bed-time, baths, tooth cleaning, picture books and dolls.
6.45. Good-Night hymn.
7.0. Sleep.

Forty-three children of the Somers Town Nursery School took up their residence at Somers Cottage at the end of July and with them came Somers Town mothers who gave willing service in the work of this large household.

The chief event apart from fresh air, food and sound regular sleep, play in the grass and the scent of flowers, was riding on Prince, the horse which Mr. Handley most kindly lent for our use. Helpers and children shared in the fun and some proved themselves excellent equestrians.

Thanks to Miss Short's American Sale held at the F.E.I. School, the children not only each had a new pillow, but we were able to have a heating stove put into the playroom.

Previous to the babies' holiday, some of the Somers Town Old Boys spent the long Whitsun week-end at the Cottage, and put in some useful work in painting gates and cleaning the water butts, in the intervals of picnics on the Downs or by the sea, and cricket in the field.

Our thanks go the following for their valuable help on the holiday: Miss Coates, Mrs. Pearkes, Miss Celia Gaskell, Miss Williams and Miss K. Morrison.

Gifts in kind were received from: Mrs. Moss, Mr. Brewer, Mrs. Judd, Mrs. Pearkes, Miss P. Collins, Miss C. B. Lawrence, Mrs. Bain, Miss E. M. Bain, Mrs. Errock, Jean Scott, John S. Douglas, Mr. Hogben, F.E.I. School and Staff, Mr. and Mrs. Humphreys, Miss Joyce Cairn (money for towels), Miss Burdett and Mrs. Macnair.

Twenty-two babies from the Bethnal Green Crèche spent a fortnight at the Cottage in June.

Fig 4: Daily schedule of activities at the Summer Holiday residence in 1931.[8]

> it considers efficient. The Somers Town Nursery School has applied to the Board for a grant, and it is hoped this may be given.[11]

The following year the report reads, 'On the recommendation of the Local Education Authority the Nursery has been recognised by the Board of Education, and for the first time in its history received a Government Grant'.[12] From the following year, the London County Council matched and later even exceeded the Board of Education grant, taking considerable pressure off the money generating machinery of the nursery's management, something they were very quick to acknowledge, noting that 'The anxiety that has always been felt on account of the finances of the Nursery, has been considerably lessened by the Grants …'.[13]

Their Annual Reports keenly reported on their work and the lasting positive impact the provision had on the children and their families to their supporters:

> One child came to the school three years ago almost an idiot. She had no mother, and her father was out at work all day, and there was no one in the house to care for her. She was very dirty and a most miserable child. No one would recognise her now in the handy little maiden who is constantly sent to deliver messages about the house. She can take her part with the rest in the affairs of the nursery; she helps the tiny ones in various ways, and looks cheerful and contented… When she leaves the Nursery School this year she will be fit to take her place among the other children in a Council School. If it had not been for the care and training she has received it is almost certain she would have been an imbecile.[14]

They eagerly take credit for positive medical reports and the improvement of dental hygiene of the children due to the 'suitable mid-day meal and the daily use of tooth-brushes' which was even followed at the children's homes. Yet, the difficult years of the First World War and the Second World War they concentrated on the basic Nursery mission and its importance:

> The need for Nursery Schools is increasing daily. In these times many mothers are away from their homes during the day, doing munition or other work, and the children below school age are either kept in close rooms or allowed to wander about the streets with no supervision. […] (H)ow important it is that this work should continue and that these little children should be given a chance in life to become healthy, happy citizens.[15]

During the Second World War, Somers Town Nursery School was evacuated to Eydon Hall, near Rugby providing a residential nursery setting for twenty-something children under the age of five from all over London. The final few reports from the final years of the war highlight the continuous dedication of both the management and supporters in their quest to offer the best early childhood care provision they possibly could without compromising Froebelian standards. Miss Jebb, the successor to Miss Lawrence as FEI Principal and the Chairman to the Management Committee of Somers Town, wrote in December 1941:

> This year has seen all over the country an increased and pressing demand for residential nurseries for children under five from the bombed areas and cities. In many

> cases nursery school standards of staffing and accommodation have had to be abandoned in order to meet war-time needs. There is all the more reason for continued support for those nursery schools which are able to carry on a real nursery school tradition even in these hard times.[16]

Comments such as 'busily eating poached eggs (think of it!)' and 'demolishing baked apples and very milky milk pudding' demonstrate their continued determination to provide healthy living conditions and food for the children during war time. The whole child was not forgotten either as the reports note that the children 'are being looked after by people who like them and are interested, (making) the children cheerful and unafraid'.[17] They considered themselves lucky and, hidden in the countryside, of being able to offer a lot in tune with the nature-close principles of Froebelian education.

Unfortunately, despite Miss Jebb's immense campaign with the London County Council to secure a new home for Somers Town Nursery School in Fulham after the end of the Second World War, where she had hopes to run it as a Demonstration School for the Froebel Educational Institute, her efforts were not realised. The Nursery School had to close in November 1945, almost exactly 35 years after first opening its doors. Her frustration can clearly be heard in her final letter to the Nursery supporters, but she closes on a positive note saying 'what good work has been done! [bringing] health and happiness to many generations of children'.[18] We know that Miss Jebb and her successor, Miss Brearley, continued working and had much impact on shaping post-war early childhood education, carried out with the same dedication as before.

Notes

1. *The Link*, No. 2 (Mar. 1911): 21. *The Link* is available through the Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies, University of Roehampton; The Somers Town Nursery School Annual Report, 1913, *Somers Town Nursery School Annual Reports*, 1911-45, FACS/14/5, Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies, University of Roehampton.
2. Annual Report, 1913, FACS/14/5.
3. Annual Report, 1914, FACS/14/5, 8.
4. Annual Report, 1917, FACS/14/5.
5. *Keston Journal* (1921), Froebel Educational Institute, FACS/13/5, Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies, University of Roehampton.
6. Annual Report, 1923-24, FACS/14/5.
7. *Somers Town Nursery School Reports of Summer Holidays*, 1925-1931, FACS/14/5, Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies, University of Roehampton.
8. Holiday Report, 1931, FACS/14/5.
9. Holiday Report, 1929, FACS/14/5.
10. Annual Report, 1915, FACS/14/5.
11. Annual Report, 1918, FACS/14/5.
12. Annual Report, 1919, FACS/14/5.
13. Annual Report, 1920-21, FACS/14/5.
14. Annual Report, 1913, FACS/14/5.
15. Annual Report, 1915, FACS/14/5.
16. Annual Report, 1940-41, FACS/14/5.
17. Annual Reports, 1940-41 and 1942-43, FACS/14/5.
18. Miss Jebb's letter to supporters, Nov. 1945, *Correspondence of Miss Eglantyne Jebb pertaining to Somers Town Nursery School*, 1945, FACS/14/5. Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies, University of Roehampton.

Spotlight on Research

Rainbows in the Windows: an Oral History of Young Families in the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020-2022

Dr Alison Chand
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'Real and hugely disruptive and incredibly overwhelming'[1] – these words, from a mother from South Wales I interviewed in early 2021, will open my upcoming book, *Rainbows in the Windows: An Oral History of Young Families in the COVID-19 Pandemic*, to be published by Palgrave, and represent well the emotions of many in Britain about the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which changed the lives of people globally in unprecedented ways. On a personal level, as a mother of three young children, then aged seven, four and one, newly returned to work from maternity leave, I remember clearly my sense of disbelief on hearing then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson announce the first UK national lockdown on 23 March 2020, which closely followed the closure of all schools and nurseries in the country. With the focus of my book on young families and the lives of parents during the pandemic, analysing the consequent effects of the restrictions imposed on the British population on the lives of parents with young children, this work was different from any oral history research I had previously undertaken. I have worked extensively in oral history for over a decade, as a freelance oral historian and as a trainer with the Scottish Oral History Centre (SOHC) and, from January 2020, the British Library and Oral History Society. Carrying out the oral history interviews for this project was, though, very different from my previous experience, not just because I was interviewing remotely for the first time – it was prompted and underpinned by my own personal experience, often challenging and emotional, of a unique juncture in history.

The origins of this oral history research and the book lie near the beginning of the first UK lockdown and the major restrictions introduced on everyday life, social spaces, work, domestic spaces and schools, and the book

Fig. 1: Children in lockdown, photo courtesy of Alison Chand

takes its name from the many rainbows that appeared in windows across the country in response to the lockdown and first school closure, coming to be associated with children and families.[2] Indeed, for some months, a picture of a rainbow painted by my own children adorned the living room window of our house, and spotting rainbows was a prominent feature of our permitted daily hour of exercise outside the house in the first months of the pandemic.[3]

Before 2020, I had been doing some interviews for NHS at 70, a project exploring experiences of the UK National Health Service. When lockdown began in March 2020, I was asked if I would do some remote interviews for a new arm of the project, which would become NHS Voices of Covid-19.[4] I had never interviewed remotely before and decided to do some initial interviews with friends to practise with the technology involved. These friends happened to be parents and, because we had just entered the first national lockdown, I asked them about the impact of the period on their lives. The practice interviews ended up longer than the ten-minute sessions I had in mind. We discussed the interviewees' feelings and emotions about the childcare closure and lockdown announcements of March 2020 and how they dealt with the subsequent aftermath. I decided to continue and interview one or two parents each week, moving beyond those I knew already. In September 2020, I was fortunate to receive a British Academy/Leverhulme small research grant to aid me in continuing the work over a two-year period. In all, between April 2020 and September 2022, I completed 130 remote interviews and a further thirty follow-up interviews, mostly in person, now archived at the SOHC at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. The findings from these interviews, representing the only oral history study undertaken in the UK during the pandemic itself with a specific focus on the experiences of parents and families, will be set out in my book.

The primarily oral history methodology adopted for the research made extensive use of testimonies from oral history interviews, incorporating the 130 remote interviews and further thirty follow-up interviews, mostly conducted in person, which I carried out between April 2020 and September 2022, now archived at the SOHC. Alessandro Portelli has described a 'sense of fluidity, of unfinishedness, of an inexhaustible work in progress, which is inherent to the fascination and frustration of oral history – floating as it does in time between the present and an ever-changing past' – a description that indicates the particularly appropriate nature of oral history as a methodological approach for this study with its focus on parents' emotional responses to their experiences in the pandemic.[5] The fundamental historical processes of change and continuity, examined in relation to how parents of young children experienced the pandemic, are explored through a prism of individual subjectivity, personal experience and emotion. How people feel about the events in their lives is indeed fluid and unfinished, continuously evolving, and the oral testimonies discussed capture a snapshot of these feelings at a time when, as the pandemic progressed, this notion was particularly relevant.

All of the 130 interviews I carried out between April 2020 and March 2021 were, because of circumstance, conducted remotely, mostly over the telephone using an Olympus TP-8 telephone microphone connected to my Zoom H4N audio recorder. This was the same interviewing approach initially used by the NHS Voices of Covid-19 project and had the advantage of being GDPR compliant, unlike recording on most cloud-based platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams (which involve personal data being transferred in recording to US-owned companies). It was also a straightforward method for interviewees themselves to use, only requiring them to pick up their phone to answer the call. While these recordings are mono files rather than stereo files, and their sound quality is not as good as that of recordings captured via face-to-face interviews using suitable audio recorders (the files I collected were wav. files but were condensed down a phone line), the archivists at the SOHC agreed that they could be stored with full accompanying transcripts.[6]

In March 2020, remote interviewing was entirely new to me and, indeed, I had always believed it to be inferior to in-person interviewing. One of the first articles I read on the subject during the Covid-19 pandemic, though, challenged my thoughts on this. Sarah Dziedzic, a New York-based oral historian, published an article entitled 'Immunodeficiency and Oral History' in April 2020, in which she discussed her experiences of remote medical appointments in the early part of the pandemic and related these to the practice of remote oral history interviewing.[7] These words quoted caught my attention:

> Interviewing remotely. [A tweet she had read] framed it as 'much worse' than any in-person interview. Earlier that day, I had seen a doctor over a video call who was genuinely helpful, even though the lab had lost my test results and she couldn't tell me

> the answers to my biggest question: was my immune system compromised or not? She listened to my other questions and gave me helpful answers. I saw her look up answers she didn't know, and commit to call me back with more details, which she did that evening. She simply treated me like a person, a feature that in my experience cannot be faked. But was my appointment actually 'much worse' than any meeting we could have had in person? Our interaction was good because she listened to me explain my unique, embodied experience, and listened respectfully – and in turn, I respected and trusted her. Isn't *this* the fundamental core of oral history? How had being in the same room with someone become the only predictor of quality?[8]

With these thoughts in my mind, I began to ask my interviewees from mid-2020 how they felt about being interviewed remotely, particularly because, without interviewing face-to-face or using video conferencing software, I was unable to see my interviewees and they could not see me, meaning that I lost my usual ability to demonstrate that I was listening through body language. While some interviewees did say that they preferred talking face-to-face and felt awkward speaking on the phone, others indicated that they had become used to remote communication over the year, and, perhaps more surprisingly, others reported feeling less self-conscious on the phone. Fraser Black, for example, a teacher living in Perth, observed that, 'I'm probably a wee bit more verbose over the telephone than I am in person … In person I can be a bit abrupt, but on the phone I get carried away and deviate off the topic a little bit as you probably heard so you probably got more information out of me over the phone than you would have in person'.[9] In all, I was surprised by how well most of my interviewees responded to being interviewed remotely and I believe that this kind of interviewing will have a bigger part to play in the oral historian's toolkit for the future, representing another factor to take into account in the intersubjective relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

The chapters presented in the book will hopefully provide a useful structure for examination of the experiences of key groups of parents during the Covid-19 pandemic and consideration of important areas of their lives, focusing on, first, experiences of pregnancy, birth and early parenthood during the pandemic, before exploring parents' experiences of childcare and education, work, notably changes imposed by the pandemic on parents' working lives, leisure in the context of horizons closing in on the family home, and, finally, health.

The oral history testimonies of the parents interviewed are always at the heart of this research, revealing the complex range of emotions they experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, related to their lives with their children. In exploring these testimonies, the book will present the first in-depth account of how parents in Britain experienced this major and unique juncture in history, reflecting meanings and emotions relating to the pandemic at particular times. The many future oral history studies of the Covid-19 pandemic that will surely be undertaken can also be examined in conjunction with this book to reveal key findings on how the passage of time, and all the complex factors involved in that, influences memory and emotion. As Sara Ahmed asserts, 'emotions are the very "flesh" of time' and can 'open up futures' to others in connecting them with the past.[10]

Notes

1. Remote interview with RT, recorded by Alison Chand, 8 Jan. 2021.
2. For an example of a news story covering this, see BBC News, 'Coronavirus: Rainbow Pictures Springing Up Across the Country' [online], https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-51988671, accessed 13 Mar. 2023.
3. When the first national lockdown was announced on 23 March 2020, it was stipulated that people could leave their homes for one hour of exercise, walking or running, per day, to take place near the home. This rule remained in place during April and May 2020.
4. The testimonies collected for these projects, incorporating over 2,400 interviews, are now archived, catalogued and publicly accessible at the British Library as the collection Voices of our National Health Service.
5. Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop Journal* 12:1 (1981), vii.
6. I wrote this blog post on recording using the Olympus TP-8 microphone for the Oral History Society in 2021: https://www.ohs.org.uk/regions/scotland/remote-interviewing-over-the-phone-the-olympus-tp-8-mic/. Meanwhile, in this video, recorded in 2020, I explain my early use of the Olympus TP-8 microphone: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjVjI13panQ&list=PL95K8m2vHNAUcze9Gc91FMXgp4oz4Z2BD&index=7&t=281s.
7. Sarah Dziedzic, 'Immunodeficiency and Oral History' [online], 7 Apr. 2020, https://medium.com/@sarahdziedzic/immunodeficiency-and-oral-history-85695925dd43, accessed 2 March 2023.
8. Ibid.
9. Remote interview with Fraser Black, recorded by Alison Chand, 6 Aug. 2020.
10. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 202.

Elisabet Björklund and Solveig Jülich (eds), *Rethinking the Public Fetus: Historical Perspectives on the Visual Culture of Pregnancy*. Rochester Studies in Medical History.
Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2024. £40.00, 9781648250712 (paperback), pp. 354.

Cara Delay
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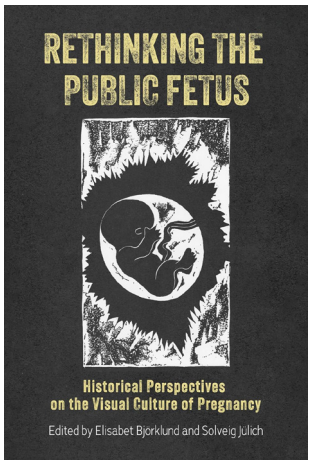


In late 2022, *The Guardian* published photographs attempting to depict what an early pregnancy (9 weeks or less) *actually* looks like: in this rendering, a clump of unformed white tissue with no visible human characteristics. In a post-*Roe* world, *The Guardian* combatted the more common depictions of foetuses as human-like – the 'unborn' – popularised by anti-abortion activists since the 1970s. Like *The Guardian*, scholars have long been reminding us that representations of foetuses, past and present, do not reflect truth but rather the contexts in which they were created. Published in Rochester's Studies in Medical History series, Elisabet Björklund and Solveig Jülich's recent edited collection, *Rethinking the Public Fetus: Historical Perspectives on the Visual Culture of Pregnancy,* continues to do this important work.

In eleven chapters plus an introduction, this collection offers specialised research by scholars studying Europe and the United States from the eighteenth through to the late twentieth centuries. The chapters analyse obstetrical models, photography, sculpture, wet specimens, film, atlases, medical journals, pamphlets, and more, chronicling the development and effects of what Rosalind Petchesky famously called 'the public fetus' in 1987 and, subsequently, the 'emergence of the unborn citizen' in anti-abortion rhetoric. (Kosmin, p.53)

The overall strengths of *Rethinking the Public Fetus* include the diversity and calibre of its contributors and the various methodologies and sources that each author utilises. Each chapter is carefully researched and written, offering detailed notes. Overall, the collection asks important and timely questions, including: how and in what circumstances do bodies become objects? Is there any truth in representations, and if not, then what do they mean? Where and how do we find the origins of twentieth- and twenty-first century representations of foetuses? Addressing the latter question, the editors and authors collectively and effectively argue that 'visualizations of pregnancy and fetuses have a much longer and more varied history' than we think. (p.3) Another notable feature of the text is the excellent and detailed images, both in black-and-white and colour, that feature in each chapter, which make the book particularly useful for undergraduate teaching.

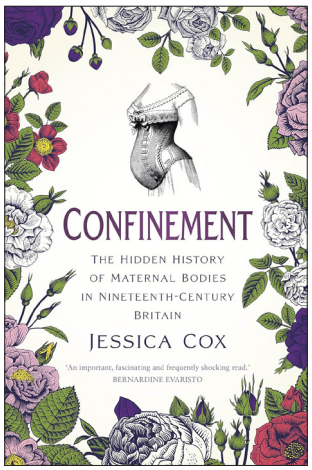
Like many edited volumes arising from conferences or symposia (in this example, a workshop in Sweden in 2019), *Rethinking the Public Fetus* benefits from featuring a breadth of scholarship by notable historians but also suffers at times from that very breadth and a corresponding lack of cohesion. Rather than covering three centuries evenly, for example – an impossible task – the book offers only three chapters covering the pre-twentieth-century world. As well done as these earlier chapters are, the volume may have held together more effectively without them, thus making a case for the importance of modernity in the development of foetal imagery. While the volume's editors have written a clear and effective introduction that attempts to link the scholarship in the text, more thematic unity in the actual chapters would have worked well. Pulling together and elaborating on some of the intriguing threads brought up in individual chapters, including how the visible foetus brought about the invisibility of the maternal body, the relationship between religion/churches and foetal imagery, or the links between representations of foetuses and nationalism, would have been helpful. Moreover, the introduction's brief but welcome discussion of race and colonialism (p.4) in foetal imagery throughout the early modern and modern Global North unfortunately is not examined in the rest of the chapters – a puzzling oversight.

One benefit of such a volume is that each chapter could be read, or even assigned to students, in isolation, and that is certainly the case with *Rethinking the Public Fetus*. Some individual pieces also work well in pairs or groups: Kosmin's and Dandona's chapters, for example, which engage with the interplay between representations of foetuses and the senses; the trio of chapters – six, seven, and eight – that engage with responses to Lennart Nillson's famous 1965 *Life* magazine photographs; or those – one and twelve – that examine public and private collections of foetuses and foetal representations.

Overall, *Rethinking the Public Fetus* has much to offer to scholars and students interested in how technology and material culture helped make the modern world as well as for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of foetal and reproductive visual culture.

While the editors and authors here problematise reality and objectivity in past representations, their critique also applies today. For example, for *The Guardian*'s 2022 photos, reproduced on page thirteen of *Rethinking the Public Fetus*, tissue samples clearly were cleaned of blood and isolated from the bodies in which they originated before being photographed. Here, again, as this collection consistently reminds us, we must ask: can there be any truth in visual depictions of foetuses and foetal tissue?

Jessica Cox, *Confinement: The Hidden History of Maternal Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Britain*
Cheltenham: The History Press, 2023. £25.00,
ISBN 9780750998574 (hardback), pp. 1+320
Sydni Zastre
University of Birmingham



In the introduction to *Confinement,* Jessica Cox reminds us that the drastic population growth of nineteenth-century Britain – from around 10.5 million in 1801 to almost 37 million in 1901 – 'has frequently been discussed in relation to industrialisation and urbanisation, but rarely with reference to the *maternal* labour behind it' (p.13). Once pointed out, this omission is striking. Where did all those millions of people come from? The answer, of course, is mothers, and Cox's aim is to put them, and their labour, back into the picture.

Societal discomfort with the intimate, messy, and, for most of history, *feminine* nature of motherhood has done much to obscure those recorded experiences that do survive, if not to preclude their creation in the first place. This presents a difficult task for the historian: 'the maternal experiences of women in nineteenth-century Britain have been largely unrecorded, lost, or overlooked … This, then, is a history which is mostly undocumented, often absent from the archive' (p.13). Nevertheless, Cox assembles an impressive source base, from the letters of aristocratic families and the diaries of Queen Victoria to newspaper reports of infanticides and working-class autobiographies.

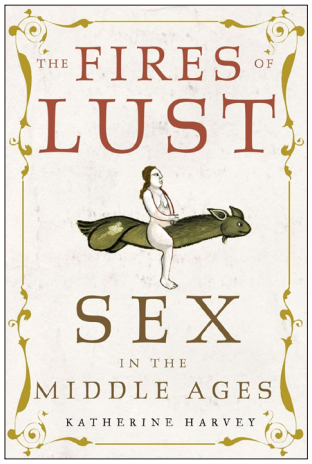
Like other works in the field of motherhood studies, such as Judith Schneid Lewis' *In the Family Way* (1986), *Confinement* follows the reproductive process sequentially from (pre)conception to postpartum. Chapter one addresses fertility and infertility – 'for most women of the time … as much a matter of luck as … of choice' (p.29). Chapter two considers pregnancy in all its contradictions; one elegant choice of case study is the perhaps surprising example of a Lanarkshire factory worker who, in 1852, fell pregnant as an unmarried teenager, and reported that she had 'never loved life more dearly' (p.56). By chapter three we arrive at confinement (labour) and delivery, followed soberingly by a chapter addressing maternal mortality. Chapter five deals with unwanted pregnancies and their consequences, namely abortion, abandonment and infanticide, sources of great concern and sensation to nineteenth-century courts and newspapers. Chapter six provides a survey of midwifery, maternity care and lying-in hospitals; chapter seven's focus on miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death reminds us that even those women who could access these medical interventions still faced heart-breaking losses. In many cases, admission to a lying-in hospital or the assistance of a doctor made a mother and baby's chances *worse,* not better. Chapters eight and nine cover what is now termed 'the fourth trimester': the complex and delicate landscape of 'postnatal bodies and minds' as well as infant feeding.

Confinement is positioned within the tradition of 'history from below', and largely succeeds in its aim of moving away from many social histories' narrow focus on the middle and upper classes. Cox notes that these works can often give a 'misleading … impression of an almost entirely white British population'; she states, therefore, that her aim 'was to make this book as representative as possible', but notes that even when the archives do yield 'information about the lives of people of colour', 'their histories of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood remain largely elusive' (pp.18-9). I was surprised, then, to find that the only definitively non-white woman's case study was included at the end of a chapter, almost as an aside, with minimal context and little sustained analysis. In April 1817, three Surrey women were charged with infanticide; one of these was a 'negro woman', a 'servant' referred to only as Amelia. Cox reveals that Amelia was 'born into the family she worked for in the West Indies', making it likely that she in fact had been enslaved (p.152). She mentions Amelia's acquittal – and then moves on, without addressing the fact that if Amelia *was* indeed enslaved, she would have had even less bodily autonomy than was typical of the time. This would undoubtedly have influenced her actions and her infant's fate. Black feminist historian Jennifer L. Morgan has explored the reproductive politics of slavery with compassion and grace in her article '*Partus sequitur ventrem*: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery'. The inclusion of this scholarship could have provided additional nuance here.

The book's thematic rather than chronological arrangement, with interwoven case studies from across the century and the social spectrum, makes Cox's work flow smoothly, and very effectively demonstrates the continuities and changes of nineteenth-century British women's maternal experiences. Cox's prose is accessible even as her work is solidly grounded in the field, such that *Confinement* is ideally poised to become an introduction to the topic for both academic and lay readers. While some case studies are horrific and shocking – mothers dying in agony after grisly 'instrumental' births; workhouses ordering single pregnant women to wear yellow 'felon's dress' to make visible their shame – there are also glimpses of joy, such as the Lanarkshire woman cited earlier, or Lady Lyttleton's delight at her sister Catherine's pregnancy in 1839: 'I am longing to tell every one that a sapphire eyed babby is on its way with a white soft skin & dark hair, how I shall love it' (p.55). The occasional inclusion of Cox's personal experiences of motherhood, both joyful and harrowing, is a welcome touch. So many of her subjects were denied the chance to voice their own stories, and this study feels like a step towards redress.

Katherine Harvey, *The Fires of Lust: Sex in the Middle Ages*,
London: Reaktion Books, 2021. £20, 9781789144895 (hardback), pp. 1+296, 17 illustrations.

Roslyn Potter
University of Glasgow



The road to 'sexual freedom' is sometimes understood in the popular imagination as a straightforward linear progression: before the sexual revolution of the 1960s, people of the past were repressed by strict social mores based on oppressive religious structures. It is easy to think that our forebears engaged in a passionless and clinical procreative act which has only recently become available as an indulgence rather than a chore. The further back we go, the more difficult it becomes to imagine how people actually *had* sex, let alone *enjoyed* it. However, scholars across multiple disciplines are challenging this narrative and exposing new and fascinating ways to interrogate the history of sex. Katherine Harvey's *The Fires of Lust* provides an accessible and in-depth look at attitudes towards sex and sexuality in the Mediaeval period.

The scope of Harvey's book covers western Europe from circa 1100 to 1500 – an ambitious task that Harvey magnificently delivers in less than 300 pages. Clearly sectioned chapters, covering broad themes such as 'Guiding Principles', 'Reproduction', and 'Sex in Culture' are further subdivided into more manageable sections: 'Mechanisms of Control'; 'Love Magic'; and 'Sex with Demons'. The book's sharp structure makes for the surprisingly easy absorption of a potentially overwhelming amount of information. A curious reader approaching this material for the very first time will appreciate the clarity in which Harvey anticipates and answers questions within these subchapters, including unexpected questions such as: what cures the erection of one with too much wind? Now we know: eat boiled chickpeas (p.57). *The Fires of Lust* shows us how diverse, colourful, weird, wild, but also ordinary mediaeval sex lives were.

As many will recognise, the challenge of talking, let alone writing, about a range of sexual experiences and attitudes is not consistent; what some people find taboo, others find titillating. From the beginning, Harvey is up-front about not trying to identify one homogenous standpoint on sex and sexuality in the Middle Ages. Through a wide range of primary sources, we learn of medically endorsed sexual positions to aid conception in the less well-endowed; of ecclesiastical attitudes to sex work; and of the widespread belief in *coitus interruptus*. We understand that marital sex in a lawful union was encouraged, and discover Thomas Aquinas' definition of 'unnatural vice' (p.118) and Hildegard of Bingen's views on the composition of 'holy semen' (p.12). While many other mediaeval heavy-hitters' views are represented, Harvey also seeks personal testimonies and everyday attitudes found in, for example, court records, mediaeval medical books, contemporary literature and theological treatises.

Harvey has carefully scoured and analysed primary sources for anecdotal witnesses of the lives, loves, priorities and responsibilities of the people who lived in the Middle Ages. We find that the elderly prior at Sant Joan de la Fonts kept a woman named Ermesenda and, according to other monks, the two spent much of their time reading in the kitchen (p.95). Many readers might resonate with the account of young women in the 1200s who were warned against 'painting with the colours of the rainbow', i.e. wearing too much makeup. A financial record shows that every young woman in Wakefield was fined in 1316 for being 'deflowered' or marrying without a licence. Reading between the lines, Harvey affirms that the record 'almost certainly reveals a lot about the lord's financial situation, and nothing about the women's sexual behaviour' (p.38). Thomas of Chobham (c.1158–c.1233) commanded a penitent who admitted to bestiality to walk barefoot for life. The fate of the goat is unknown (p.115).

Harvey admits that uncovering 'sexual non-conformity' in the Middle Ages can be a 'challenging and depressing task' (p.116). A substantial portion of the book takes care to address attitudes towards same-sex relationships, religion and race, and the complicated prejudices that existed in the mediaeval period and, sadly, remain in contemporary society. When approaching difficult material, such as testimonies of sexual violence, homophobic attitudes and racial prejudice, Harvey writes with moving sensitivity and forthright honesty. The presented primary material conveys a myriad of witnesses whose tales need to be told.

The Fires of Lust is a comprehensive and accessible overview of this challenging subject that still offers the opportunity for the readers' independent thoughts; the well-compiled bibliography is an excellent place for readers to access further resources (pp.269-82). Harvey overturns stereotypes of medieval sexual violence and 'deviance' that have permeated popular representations of the Middle Ages for decades. *The Fires of Lust* is also available as an audiobook, but purchasers of the physical version will enjoy scans of mediaeval manuscripts depicting early anatomical studies, erotic scenes, and curious marginalia. Providing a thorough picture of mediaeval love and lust, Harvey allows modern audiences to consider what lessons might be learned from our distant ancestors' bedroom antics.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW: CALL FOR REVIEWERS

The following titles are available for review, so if you would like to review any of the titles listed below, please email the Book Reviews Editor, at bookreviews@ womenshistorynetwork.org
You don't have to be an expert to review, if you have a general interest and knowledge of the relevant historical period or territory then that will count for a lot. The ability to summarise a work (within the word limit!) and write interestingly about it is the most important thing. Any suggestions for books to review are also welcome – just email the book reviews editor as above.

Alexandra Rimer, *Seduced by the Light: the Mina Miller Edison Story* (Lyons Press, 2023)

Amy McElroy, *Women's Lives in the Tudor Age* (Pen & Sword, 2024)

Betty Houchin Winfield, *We Few, We Academic Sisters: How We Persevered and Excelled in Higher Education* (WSU Press, 2023)

Bronagh Ann McShane, *Irish Women in Religious Orders: 1530-1700* (Boydell and Brewer, 2022)

Deanne Williams, *Girl Culture in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Performance and Pedagogy* (Bloomsbury, 2023)

Elizabeth Cobbs, *Fearless Women: Feminist Patriots from Abigail Adams to Beyoncé* (Harvard University Press, 2023)

Filippo Forlani, Silvia Mas and Lukasz Zak (eds.), *Between Freedom and Submission: The Role of Women in the History of the Church* (Aschendorff Verlag GmbH & Co, 2024)

Gill Clarke and Steve Marshall, *Parallel Lives: Eight Women Artists* (Samson and Co., 2023)

Graham Watson, *The Invention of Charlotte Brontë* (The History Press, 2024)

Hugh Firth and Loulou Brown, *Love, Loyalty and Deceit: Rosemary Firth, a Life in the Shadow of Two Eminent Men* (Berghahn Books, 2024)

Jo Willett, *Sarah Siddons: The First Celebrity Actress* (Pen and Sword, 2024)

Joyce Milambiling, *Skyscraper Settlement: The Many Lives of Christodora House* (New Village Press, 2023)

Katherine Manthorne, *Fidelia Bridges: Nature into Art* (Lund Humphries, 2023)

Magdalene Keaney (ed.), *Francesca Woodman and Julia Margaret Cameron: Portraits to Dream In* (National Portrait Gallery, 2024)

Maggie Andrews, *Political Women: Fifteen Campaigns that Shaped Twenty-First Century Britain* (Pen & Sword, 2024)

Michael Carny and Kate Murphy, *Hilda Matheson. A Life of Secrets and Broadcasts* (Handheld Press, 2023)

Tayo Agunbiade, *Untold Histories of Nigerian Women: Emerging from the Margins*, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023)

Virginia Cox and Lisa Sampson (eds.), *Drama, Poetry and Music in Late-Renaissance Italy: The life and works of Leonora Bernardi* (UCL Press, 2023)

Wendy Moore, *Jack and Eve: Two Women in Love and At War* (Atlantic Books, 2024)

Zoe Fairbairns, *Feminism before the First Wave* (Five Leaves Publications, 2022)

In Profile

Sally Alexander
Emerita Professor of Modern History, Goldsmiths University of London
Founding Editor of History Workshop Journal

Tell us about your area of expertise?

I'm a historian of modern Britain. I have written about social movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, aspects of feminism, of Chartism, the labour movement and socialism, the history of psychoanalysis in Britain, and social democracy. I used oral history to discover the history of showmen and fairs, the lives of Londoners between the first and second world wars and more. Oral histories raised questions of sexual knowledge, dreams and what gets silenced or overlooked in memory work and subjectivity. Luisa Passerini the Italian historian, Ron Grele (New York) and Mary Chamberlain on the Caribbean have been inspirations. Recently (the past twenty years or more!) using the British psychoanalytic archives, in particular the work of paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (held at the Wellcome Trust) has led me to reconstruct child analysis in London at the turn of the twentieth century, the mother as the source of mental life, and the significance of the family to both British social democracy and feminism from the 1920s. These themes are central to the EU funded 'Who Cares in Europe?'. History borrows from other disciplines, and from other nations' and peoples' histories.

What motivated you to become an historian?

An accident! As a child (second of four, born in 1943) I always wanted to know more about the world around me. I was an avid reader, making out letters and words is one of my earliest memories. I went to Ruskin College, a trade union College in Oxford in 1968. I was 25, the mother of a three-year-old, mid-divorce. Raphael Samuel, a history tutor at Ruskin, encouraged me to study history! I met Alun Howkins, the historian of the countryside while at Ruskin; became closer to Sheila Rowbotham whom I'd met in London in 1967. I served my historical apprenticeship at Ruskin, in the women's liberation movement and teaching in adult education for the WEA (Workers' Educational Association) and the extra-mural department of London University. (Alison Light's *A Radical Romance* gives a brilliant portrait of Raphael).

What achievement are you most proud of?

Oh my goodness. Teaching – helping to found the *History Workshop Journal.* I am proud of a few essays, though conscious of my modest output (and the three unfinished books cluttering my files!). I've

never forgotten the joy that ran through me when I first wrote an essay and realised that I was thinking my way through – with the help of the archives, others' readings and conversations – ideas and questions which changed as I worked through and thought about them, which had not been written in that way before. All history is collaborative – the teaching seminar is a great gift - but there are moments of pure aloneness.

If you could choose five historic figures to enjoy dinner with, who would they be, and why?

This is difficult. Caroline Norton, the woman who campaigned for child custody for mothers when she lost all rights over her own children when she left her husband in the 1830s. Either Mary Wollstonecraft or Josephine Butler. John Maynard Keynes, because his *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, 1919 still reads like a revelation. Virginia Woolf because how could I not, and her essays and letters introduce us to so many other worlds. Toni Morrison. I know that's the sixth, but I might have Sigmund Freud or Charles Dickens on standby in case anyone dropped out.

What book about women's history has most inspired you?

At the moment I'm reading Catherine Hall's *Lucky Valley, Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism*. It's a detailed, absorbing study of the trade in the enslaved, Jamaica's plantation economy, natural history and geography, written in wonderfully lucid prose. Chapter five on the Reproduction of the Long Family is gripping. I'm also reading and learning from Lyndsey Stonebridge's *We are free to change the world: Hannah Arend's Lessons in Love and Disobedience.* I'm a big fan of Lyndsey Stonebridge. Jenny Erpenbeck's novels, especially the *Visitation*, and her most recent *Kairos*. Both tell the story of Eastern Europe in the twentieth century, through, respectively, different generations and people who live in one house over time, and a love affair in Berlin after the fall of the Wall. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which I read at Ruskin. I'm still haunted by the issues she raised then, in her novels - and her letters speak directly to you. The *Vindication* links the 'weak father' to the weak king and suggests that 'the desire of being always woman is the very consciousness that degrades the sex', that 'women ought to have representatives', be educated with boys and men to become citizens because women have reason and natural rights, and much more.

What important piece of advice would you impart to a budding historian?

Marc Bloch in *The Historian's Craft*, written from memory while he was a prisoner of war in occupied France and published posthumously, quotes his friend Henri Pirenne: 'I am a historian therefore I love life'. *The Historian's Craft* is the book to which I always return when questioning what it is that history can do in the world.

THE WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

SUMMER SEMINAR SERIES 2024

An online series dedicated to women's and gender history

3 July (4pm BST)
Dr Emily Rees Koerner (Science Museum Group)
Transnational Collective Action by Women in Engineering and Applied Science in the 1960s and 70s

24 July (4pm BST)
Chandrica Barua (University of Michigan)
Subaltern Victorias: The Queen and Her 'Poor Little Princesses'

10 July (4pm BST)
Lottie Whalen (Independant)
Postcards from the Smock Colony: Jessie Tarbox Beals' photographs of Bohemian Greenwich Village

Unless otherwise indicated, all seminars take place via Zoom at 4pm UK time.

For further details and information on how to sign up please visit
https://womenshistorynetwork.org/category/conferences/seminars/
or follow us on Twitter at **@WomensHistNet**

WHN Committee Meeting Report

The Steering Committee met via Zoom in April. This year is shaping up to be a busy year for members, with plans for our first in-person conference since the pandemic well under way. This year's conference, scheduled for 5 and 6 September 2024, will be hosted in collaboration with the Bedford Centre for the History of Women and Gender at Royal Holloway, University of London, on the theme 'Curating the Female Self'. Bursaries are available for postgraduate students, early career scholars and independent researchers wishing to apply. There has been an excellent response to the call for papers and the Conference Team is putting together what promises to be a fantastic programme. There will be papers from a wide variety of perspectives and disciplinary approaches.

The network's journal, *Women's History Today*, continues to thrive. An index of the 259 articles that have been published in the journal thus far will be launched at the conference. The index will be a vital research guide for women's history going forward.

Our seminar series saw two excellent sessions in our Spring series; we plan to host some in the summer as well. The WHN continues to offer academic support in the form of writing retreats, which are well attended and have recently had some new faces.

Despite challenges, the WHN's social media engagement continues to grow – with followers now at 10,000 on X (previously Twitter). During Women's History Month, daily content platformed old and new blog and journal articles, receiving 41.8K impressions. This is alongside the continued emphasis of the relevance of women's history throughout the year. The newsletter has been reaching over 1,270 subscribers.

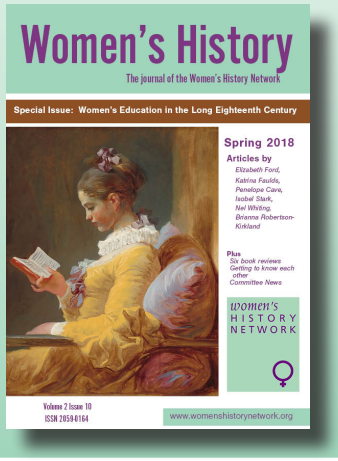
We are keen to expand the temporal and thematic range of blogs on our website, so please do send proposals our way. We eagerly look forward to an enriching Conference this September, which is poised to be a stimulating start to the next academic year.

Women's History Back Issues

Print copies of back issues of *Women's History* and *Women's History Today* are available to buy (in very limited quantities) for:

£7.50 (UK), £10.00 (Europe),
£12.00 (Rest of World)

Archived digital issues are available free to download from
womenshistorynetwork.org/womens-history-magazine-download-page/
Discover the contents of each issue at
womenshistorynetwork.org/category/magazine/editions/



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 new Members' Account page at www.womenshistorynetwork.org/my-account/

Do you pay your subscription by standing order? If so, please check that the payment details reflect the 2024 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 2024 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.

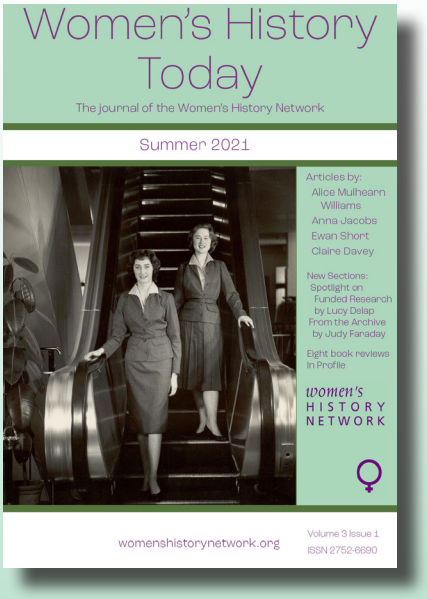
Has your email address changed? If we don't have your current details, you may not receive the monthly e-newsletter, included in your membership fee. If you have changed email addresses since joining, or recently acquired a new email address, please update your details by logging into your account at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

All information (or queries) about membership, or changes to personal details, can be arranged by logging into your account at womenshistorynetwork.org OR by emailing membership@womenshistorynetwork.org

Publishing in *Women's History Today*

Women's History Today seeks to publish new and ongoing research into all aspects of women's history. We welcome contributions from established academics, less experienced scholars, postgraduate students and people from beyond academia. As well as academic articles, which are peer reviewed and subject to editorial standards, we also welcome articles about funded research projects, about using archives to explore women's history and about community/public history projects that focus on women's and gender history. We also welcome suggestions for themed issues on broader topics related to women's history.

For more information and to submit ideas please see our webpage: https://womenshistorynetwork.org/womens-history-today/ or email the editor direct at: editor@womenshistorynetwork.org



Women's History Network National Steering Committee and Other Contacts—2024

Chair—Sarah Richardson

Charity Rep—Hazel Perry

Blog Editors— Kat Perry, Lisa Berry-Waite

Social Media— Vicky Igilkowski-Broad

Membership Secretary—Susan Cohen

Treasurer—Vacant

(Archive) Secretary—Urvi Khaitan

Conference support role— Alexandra Hughes-Johnson, Hazel Perry

Website and publicity—Maria Georgouli Loupi

Prizes and Grants—Anna Muggeridge

Journal—Kate Murphy, Samantha Hughes-Johnson, Catia Rodrigues, Kate Terkanian, Angela Platt, Amanda Norman, Joy Burgess

Newsletter Editor—Tayo Agunbiade

Community Liaison Vacant and Helen Antrobus

Diversity Officer—Norena Shepherd

Schools Liaison—Tahaney Alghrani and Mary Feerick

Seminar Organisers — Rose Debenham, Anna Harrington

Co-opted Members of the Committee

WHN Book Prize Panel Chair —Krista Cowan
bookprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

WHN Journal Editor: Kate Murphy
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

IFRWH rep—Gillian Murphy

To join the WHN just go to
***womenshistorynetwork.org/join-us/** and follow the instructions.*
Donations and Gift-Aid declarations can all be
accessed online as well

Why not join the Women's History Network?

The **Women's History Network** is a national association and charity for the promotion of women's history and the encouragement of women and men interested in women's history. Following our establishment in 1991 we have grown year by year and today we are a UK national charity with members including working historians, researchers, independent scholars, teachers, librarians, and many other individuals both within academia and beyond. Indeed, the network reaches out to welcome women and men from any background who share a passion for women's history. The WHN is controlled by its members who elect a national steering committee who manage our activities and business.

Conference

The annual WHN conference, which is held each September, is a highlight for most of our members. It is known for being a very friendly and welcoming event, providing an exciting forum where people from the UK and beyond can meet and share research and interests. Each year well known historians are invited as plenary speakers and bursaries are offered to enable postgraduate students or those on a low income to attend.

Prizes and Grants

The WHN offers annual community history and book prizes, grants for conferences and ECR and independent researcher fellowships.

Networking

Of course, talking to each other is essential to the work and culture of the Women's History Network. We run a members' email list and try to provide support for members or groups who organise local conferences or other events connected to women's history that bring people together.

Publication

WHN members receive three copies of our peer reviewed journal, *Women's History Today*, each year. The content of the journal is wide ranging from articles discussing research, sources and applications of women's history, to reviews of books, conferences, meetings and exhibitions, as well as information on calls for papers, prizes and competitions, and publication opportunities. The journal is delivered electronically in PDF form to all members via email, but members can elect to receive a printed hardcopy of Women's History for an increased membership fee.

WHN membership

Annual Membership Rates January 2024 - Journal option - Download / UK / European / Rest of World

Community Group member	£15 / £30 / £40 / £45
Student or unwaged member	£15 / £30 / £40 / £45
Low income member (*under £20,000 pa)	£25 / £40 / £45 / £55
Standard member	£40 / £50 / £65 / £75
Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy)	£375 / £425 / POA/ POA
Retired Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy)	£195 / £245 / POA / POA

The easiest way to join the Women's History Network is online – via our website – go to
https://womenshistorynetwork.org/join-us/

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