

EDITED BY HILDA L. SMITH  
& MELINDA S. ZOOK

GENERATIONS  
OF WOMEN  
HISTORIANS

*Within and Beyond the Academy*



# Generations of Women Historians

Hilda L. Smith • Melinda S. Zook  
Editors

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Cover illustration: The new library at Girton College, Cambridge University (1900). The college, founded in 1869, was the first for female undergraduates.

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*This work is dedicated to Berenice A. Carroll (1932–2018).*

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction: Women’s Scholarship Within and Outside the Academy, 1870–1960</b>	<b>1</b>
	Hilda L. Smith	
<b>Part I</b>	<b>Women and the Medieval and Early Modern Economy</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Ellen Annette McArthur: Establishing a Presence in the Academy</b>	<b>25</b>
	Amy Louise Erickson	
<b>3</b>	<b>Alice Clark’s Critique of Capitalism</b>	<b>49</b>
	Tim Stretton	
<b>4</b>	<b>Julia Cherry Spruill, Historian of Southern Colonial Women</b>	<b>73</b>
	Anna Suranyi	
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Politics and Citizenship in Early Modern Britain</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>“No Leisure for Myself”: C.C. Stopes and British Freewomen</b>	<b>91</b>
	Hilda L. Smith	

<b>6</b>	<b>C. V. Wedgwood: The Historian and the World</b>	<b>115</b>
	Melinda S. Zook	
<b>7</b>	<b>Caroline Robbins: An Anglo-American Historian</b>	<b>137</b>
	Lois G. Schwoerer	
<b>Part III Women and Modern Politics</b>		<b>157</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Arvède Barine: History, Modernity, and Feminism</b>	<b>159</b>
	Whitney Walton	
<b>9</b>	<b>The Historian and the Empress: Isabel de Madariaga's Catherine the Great</b>	<b>181</b>
	Willard Sunderland	
<b>10</b>	<b>Eleanor Flexner: Civil Rights and Feminist Activism and Writing</b>	<b>195</b>
	M. Christine Anderson	
<b>Part IV Alternate Paths to Historical Scholarship</b>		<b>217</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Women's Literary History in Late Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France: Louise de Kéralio and Henriette Guizot de Witt</b>	<b>219</b>
	Mihoko Suzuki	
<b>12</b>	<b>Ruth Benedict: An Anthropologist's Historical Writings</b>	<b>247</b>
	Tracy Teslow	
<b>13</b>	<b>Nancy Mitford: Lessons for Historians from a Best-Selling Author</b>	<b>273</b>
	Judith P. Zinsser	

<b>Part V Conclusion</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>14 Conclusion: Understanding Women Historians' Lives and Scholarly Reputations Both Within and Outside the Academy</b>	<b>299</b>
Bonnie G. Smith	
<b>Index</b>	<b>309</b>

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.1	Early members of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, 1930. (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)	11
Fig. 2.1	Ellen McArthur in the doctoral dress of Trinity College, Dublin, 1905, G. Beresford photographer. (Courtesy of the Mistress and Fellows, Girton College, Cambridge)	28
Fig. 4.1	Cherry Spruill, <i>Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies</i> (1938; reissue, 1972, Norton Publishers). (Photograph by Anna Suranyi)	75
Fig. 5.1	Title page of <i>British Freewomen</i> (Reprint of 1907 edition)	96
Fig. 6.1	C. V. Wedgwood (1910–1997). (Photo of Dame Cicely Veronica Wedgwood by Godfrey Argent, used by permission of the National Portrait Gallery, London)	116
Fig. 7.1	Caroline Robbins (1903–99). (Courtesy of Special Collections, Bryn Mawr College Library)	138
Fig. 9.1	Isabel de Madariaga (1919–1914), younger and older. (Photographs courtesy of Janet M. Hartley)	182
Fig. 11.1	George Peter Alexander Healy (1813–94), Portrait of François Guizot. 1841. Private Collection. (Photo: François Louchat. Used by permission of Association François Guizot)	230
Fig. 11.2	Claire Hildebrandt (act. ca. 1873–98), Portrait of Henriette Guizot de Witt. 1889. Oil on canvas. (Used by permission of Association François Guizot)	231

- Fig. 12.1 Ruth Fulton Benedict (1887–1948). (Photograph from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/95511503/> (accessed November 8, 2017)) 249
- Fig. 12.2 Numbers of men and women receiving PhDs in anthropology, 1901–40 252
- Fig. 13.1 Nancy Mitford in her Paris apartment, May 1956. (Photographed by Thomas Hopkins. © The Hulton Archive/Getty Images) 275



## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction: Women's Scholarship Within and Outside the Academy, 1870–1960

*Hilda L. Smith*

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were periods that held conflicting messages for women who wished to pursue intellectual interests. In the United States, women's colleges were expanding both to train and to offer positions to women faculty.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there was a vibrant women's movement that offered encouragement to those who pursued advanced training or studied women's past accomplishments and restrictions. The "new woman" symbolized the young woman who resisted family-directed marriages and economic dependence, and who could select her own clothing and, to a degree, her own career. Yet, very few women were admitted to degree-granting, co-educational institutions, and even fewer were encouraged to pursue advanced degrees. They held few faculty positions at state or private colleges that admitted men. In addition, society in general still did not recognize women as individuals

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 94–101. The first co-educational college to admit women was Oberlin College in Ohio in 1838.

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who pursued careers, although those who never married and spent their time in women's colleges were more acceptable. Many of the historians, and other professionals discussed in this collection, emerged from this conflicting context, which offered exceptional encouragement and a positive atmosphere while in more practical terms provided little training or employment beyond small numbers at limited institutions.

For readers of this collection, it may sometimes be difficult to grasp the professional context these early women historians and other scholars faced in pursuing their work both within and outside the academy. The world of higher education and scholarship following World War II is so fundamentally different from the one they faced, that while we think we can put ourselves in the place of women who pursued advanced training from 1880 to 1940, in many ways we cannot. First, they were part of a minute percentage of American and European youth. Second, they seldom pursued advanced degrees alongside men and almost never taught at colleges and universities with them. Third, they were considerably wealthier, and came from culturally more sophisticated backgrounds, than the vast majority of the population. And, finally, they were always thought of as outsiders and their careers as secondary to men's successful positions as historians or academics broadly. Their great chance for success came in separate women's colleges where they mingled with others like themselves. It is thus the purpose of this introduction to move beyond the individual biographies of those pursuing historical scholarship included in this volume to provide a broader picture of the intellectual, academic, and professional context in which they worked, were able to publish and gain recognition, but were never able to become leading scholars in their field among academic historians.

From 1870 to 1920, there was a significant increase in the number of women attending college, but the broader reality is that only a tiny percentage of American women ever pursued higher education. In 1870, 21 percent of those attending college were women, and by 1920 it was 47.3 percent, yet most young Americans never received a high school diploma. Among the female college-age population, only 0.7 percent women attended in 1870, and this had increased by 1920 to just 7.6 percent of those aged 18 through 21.<sup>2</sup> Women students even more clearly lacked

<sup>2</sup>Solomon, *Company of Women*, 62–63. In addition, women students were not from the wealthiest families, or from those with long-term wealth, but tended to be from the professional and commercial middle class who had experienced social mobility themselves. While the average income for Americans ranged from \$680 to \$830 per year over the second half

educational opportunities in Britain and France in the late 1800s and early 1900s. British women were excluded from universities and were only slowly admitted through the early decades of the twentieth century; French women were encouraged to pursue learning but seldom for their own sake, but rather to create educated wives and mothers and to counteract the educational backwardness that had contributed to France's loss in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870.<sup>3</sup>

The story of US higher education (and in distinct ways in Europe) was characterized by class, ethnic, and gender restrictions. Colleges and universities in the East were more apt to be private and to possess more elite students, while public universities were being established in the West. Native-born whites dominated student bodies and faculty until after World War II. Disciplines in the liberal arts such as history were even more apt to have traditional students and faculty, while women's colleges were composed of the same class and ethnic background as their Ivy League counterparts.<sup>4</sup> The Morrill Act, signed by President Lincoln in 1862, sought to increase the numbers who went to college and the practicality of the subjects they studied, especially focusing on agriculture. But these institutions were heavily located in the West and they were not the primary public university in a state; for instance, the land grant colleges established by the bill were Iowa State institutions while the more liberal arts programs were offered by the University of Iowa, which was the flagship university of that state. Yet, it was the elite private institutions that gained most of the

of the nineteenth century, college family incomes exceeded \$2000; even so, 34 percent of women students came from families making less than \$1200, and it was a major economic struggle for them to attend college (Solomon, *Company of Women*, 64–65).

<sup>3</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities, 1870–1939* (London: University College, London Press, 1995), 56–84; Anne T. Quartararo, *Women Teachers and Popular Education in Nineteenth-Century France: Social Values and Corporate Identity at the Normal School Institution* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 90–107; Sharif Gemie, *Women and Schooling in France, 1815–1914* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), 55–78.

<sup>4</sup> John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 155–204. African-Americans were, for the most part, excluded from higher education, although there were efforts to establish both private and public institutions to meet the needs of black students. Two white northeastern missionaries established Spelman College in 1881 as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary. They were followed by two additional missionary presidents. However, while emphasizing a religious agenda, these women moved the school to a broader liberal arts curriculum as it evolved into a college from a seminary. Yolanda L. Watson and Shelia T. Gregory, *Daring to Educate: The Legacy of the Early Spelman College Presidents* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2005), 1–37; 117–132.

attention from public media, and even the films of the 1930s portrayed young men clad in tennis gear without an economic care in the world, attending a college or university.<sup>5</sup>

Research into early twentieth-century higher education has recognized these distinctions, but has not often drawn attention to how different disciplines experienced these class and ethnic realities.<sup>6</sup> Some of the most extensive research has centered on the faculty of sociology and social work at the University of Chicago and their settlement counterparts at Hull House and elsewhere. The University is credited with incorporating an independent institution established by leaders of the settlement house movement as the college of Social Service Administration to train social workers, and establishing an early, and highly influential, Department of Sociology, also influenced by settlement leaders. Mary Jo Deegan's comprehensive study, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School*, reveals both the close cooperation between male faculty and the female social service and social scientists living at Hull House and the lack of recognition among university faculty of the women's contributions in these areas. For instance, one of the earliest examples of modern sociological research were the *Maps and Papers* of Hull House which surveyed Chicago's neighborhoods based on demographic and economic data. In addition, many settlement scholars took up residence at the University in the College of Social Service Administration.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *American Cinema of the 1930s: Themes and Variations*, edited by Ina Rae Hark (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 2007, see especially pages 25–47; Andrew C. Miller, "The American Dream Goes to College: The Cinematic Student Athletes of College Football," *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 43:6 (2010); Miller contrasts the more middle- and upper-class sports such as tennis as portrayed in films of the 1920s and 1930s with more diverse sports such as football, 1222–23.

<sup>6</sup> *A Century of Service: Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, 1890–1990*, edited by Ralph D. Christy and Lionel Williamson (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 3–29. Women had a small role at these institutions designed to increase those attending college and to focus on practical subjects; they constituted one third of students, and in 1927–28 only 18 percent of faculty were women (mostly in home economics) based heavily on restrictions against hiring married women. Eighty percent of male faculty were married, but only 10 percent of women. Alison Comish Thorne, *Visible and Invisible Women in Land-Grant Colleges, 1870–1940* (Logan: Utah State University, 1985) [print version of honors lecture], 5–6.

<sup>7</sup> *Diverse Histories of American Sociology*, edited by Anthony J. Blasi (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2005). This collection looks at sociology as part of a reform movement at the turn of the twentieth century and includes an essay by Jane Addams and a study of Robert E. Park, an early African-American sociologist at Chicago; Introductory materials, xii–xix;

Sociology, unlike other fields, allowed women a greater space as it was in its infancy and less moored to long-term academic customs. Or, in Deegan's words: "At that time, sociology was an amorphous area of study ... A little bit of history, a dash of political economy, and a pinch of social amelioration comprised the general hodge-podge of the 'field.'" Deegan thoroughly explores the mutual influence of Jane Addams and other Hull House residents on the development of sociology, especially at Chicago, and their exchange with sociology faculty members on issues of social reform. Not merely does this demonstrate the interactions among those originating social science methodology and social welfare, but it illustrates clearly the continual interactions among scholars, researchers, and activists both within and outside the academy at a time when both higher education and social action were establishing their current intellectual emphases and structure.<sup>8</sup> In a separate example, the labor activist Hilda Worthington Smith established a summer school for working class women at Bryn Mawr College. Such interaction between scholars and activists in the community and academic faculty was not so evident in older liberal arts disciplines such as history.

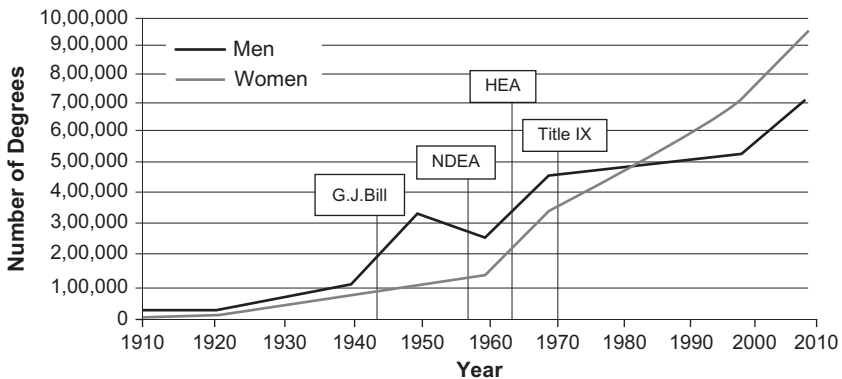
Unlike sociology, however, the discipline of history, while organizing the goals and governance structure of the American Historical Association (AHA), had little space for women, and especially for women of independent ideas and organizations. The few women who were admitted into the circle of those establishing the goals for the field came from women's colleges. The most prominent, Lucy Salmon from Vassar College, continually complained that no other women were included in the "Committee of Seven," which organized the governing rules for the AHA and teaching standards for the discipline. At annual meetings, she protested, female members were expected to engage in social events and meals with socially prominent women or faculty wives rather than with their male colleagues. Most significantly, they were not hired as faculty at the institutions where their male counterparts taught.<sup>9</sup>

1–2. Mary Jo Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 33–54.

<sup>8</sup> Deegan, *Addams and Chicago*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Hilda L. Smith, "A Prize-Winning Book Revisited; Women Historians and Women's History: A Conflation of Absence," *The Journal of Women's History* 3:1 (1992), 133–141; Bonnie G. Smith, "Whose Truth, Whose History?" *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56:4 (1995), 661–668. These two critical essays confront two works, which claim to represent the

The percentage of the population in institutions of higher education remained quite small in the United States and European nations until the period following World War II. It is not until the 1960s that large numbers began to attend colleges. In the United States, men expanded their numbers through the auspices of the G.I. Bill (1944) following World War II, but only with the passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 did significant numbers of women pursue higher education or advanced and professional degrees.<sup>10</sup>



The steady upward trend of women gaining college degrees in the United States began immediately following the passage of the NDEA; while men had benefited from the G.I. Bill following the war their gains were less uniform over the broader period.

essential nature of historical scholarship while essentially omitting women and women's history.

<sup>10</sup>Keith Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1974). Veterans who served in the military for as little as ninety days received tuition and a living subsidy to attend college or vocational school. "By 1947, veterans accounted for 49 percent of college enrollments." Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 200–201; Wayne J. Urban, *More than Science and Sputnik: The National Defense Education Act of 1958* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 2010). Deondra Rose argues that the NDEA of 1958 and the 1965 Higher Education Act offered loans and fellowships that allowed women to receive college degrees and were the basis for women later receiving more degrees than men. "The Public Policy Roots of Women's Increasing College Degree Attainment," *Studies in American Political Development*, 30 (2016), 62–93.

For many of the historians discussed in this volume, their scholarship and college attendance was a marker of elite social and cultural standing. In the United States, there was a close tie between women at Seven Sister institutions and men at Ivy League and other elite, private colleges and universities and among their wealthy families. In reading about the men (and students at prominent women's colleges to a lesser extent) from this elite culture, one is struck by the easy assumptions of superiority and presumed success among an overwhelmingly White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) group. The apex of these men's expected career path is typified in the lives of two men whose papers are held at the Huntington Library. William Bennett Munro and Edwin Francis Gay not merely attended the best schools but parlayed that attendance, and later employment as faculty, into connections with business and government leaders. Munro, who graduated from and became a faculty member and dean at Harvard University and Gay, who also taught at Harvard, and later became director of research at the Huntington Library, were more than prominent academics. They reflected the public ties and positions not available during this period for the most prominent faculty at women's colleges.

Each of these men served on a range of corporate and professional boards, was consulted about major social and economic issues, and had close links to government agencies. Contemporary, and subsequent, views held that they could hardly fail in any endeavor they pursued. While students and faculty at elite women's colleges shared their social standing, they never attained the same markers of success. Although as a Canadian Munro in that regard did not fit the normal pattern, in all other respects he met the stereotype of the "fair haired boy" who attained powerful positions (and reputations). His early years set the stage as outlined in the Canadian newspaper, *The Daily British Whig*; at the age of 46 the newspaper noted that when a boy, he was among those who "like all other young Almonters passed under the scholastic care of the late Dr. P.C. MacGregor." He then attended in order: Queens, Edinburgh, Harvard, Berlin, and the Sorbonne; afterwards, he advanced from an instructor at Harvard to Chairman of the Division of History, Government, and Economics.<sup>11</sup> Munro was also president of the American Political Science Association, founded and served as president of the Harvard Coop, and belonged to exclusive clubs in Boston and Washington DC. After leaving his academic career, he moved to Pasadena and served on the boards of the Huntington

<sup>11</sup> He was a native of Almonte, Ontario; *The Daily British Whig*, February 3, 1921.

Hospital, on four bank boards (one in Cambridge and three in Pasadena), and was chair of the board of Pasadena City College. Interestingly, he saw his greatest accomplishment for the latter portion of his career as furthering nursing education, especially at the College.<sup>12</sup>

Edwin Francis Gay followed a more typical academic career, but again one with wide outreach to important academic and public positions of power. He was an economic historian who taught at Harvard, held important roles in professional leadership, and consulted with the US Census and other agencies. He was born in 1867 to a rich family in Detroit, advanced at Harvard from an instructor to a chair in economic history, served as the first dean of Harvard Business School from 1908 to 1919, and published on profit sharing and *The Rhythm of History*; in addition, a collection of his graduate students' writings was published.<sup>13</sup> A pioneer in economic history, he studied the financial records of the Temple family and contributed to R. H. Tawney's later work on the nature of the gentry. He came to the Huntington as a researcher in 1936 and then research director in 1941; he also lobbied the American government in 1940 to enter World War II on the side of Britain. Gay helped found the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Council on Foreign Relations after serving on several planning boards during World War I.<sup>14</sup> He was called on for advice from the Census Bureau, on economic affairs in South America, and served for years on the Board of Overseers of Harvard University, with much of his correspondence relating to the University. He died in 1946. His daughter, Margaret Gay Davies (also an economic historian), published on gentry payments to London and falling gentry rents during the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup>

The descriptions of, and correspondence about, these two important scholars identified few failings and combined praise and an assumption of perfection seldom found in those characterizing women's lives. The web of connections they maintained, often built on seemingly unrelated scholarly interests, eluded those even within women's colleges. And, while women at such colleges led a privileged life, theirs was a more insular existence, and

<sup>12</sup> Binder of Memorabilia, Munro Papers, Huntington.

<sup>13</sup> Typescript outlining his life, Finding Aid, Edwin Francis Gay Papers, Huntington Library; the *Rhythm of History* was a paper he presented before the Phi Beta Kappa society at Harvard and printed independently by the University in 1923.

<sup>14</sup> Biographical outline, Finding Aid, Gay Papers, Huntington Library.

<sup>15</sup> Whiting Williams to Gay, concerning South American matters, January 3, 1930; his daughter published in the *Economic History Review* in 1971 and in *Midland History* in 1978.

they were not selected for the same kind of leadership roles as these WASP men.<sup>16</sup> This altered only after World War II when prominent women academics (especially university presidents) were asked to serve on foundation and corporate boards, and to consult with government agencies.

The earlier quite small, and economically privileged college population, coupled with the overwhelming number of WASP male students and faculty, created little space for women faculty, or their publications, in both private elite and public colleges and universities. While open discrimination based on race and ethnic identity was common practice, dismissive humor linked to demeaning attitudes on the part of male faculty toward women graduate students and faculty also characterized many history departments. One quite explicit, but not surprising, example comes from the 1940s at the University of Chicago. From its earliest founding, the University prided itself on the admission and advancement of women students. But this did not mean they were valued in the same way as male students. In an internal memo to Dean Napier Wilt in 1944, Avery Craven, an early and prominent historian of the American Civil War, described his experience when asked to participate in a doctoral defense. At the dean's request:

I attended the final examination of Mrs. Mabel G. Benson for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, August 29, 10:30 A.M. Wieboldt. The candidate was attired in a well fitting tailored suit, black in color and relieved at the throat by a suggestion of white ruffles. She wore a black hat, also revealing a touch of white, set off by a small veil drawn artistically to a point in the back.

After assessing her dress, he found her academic skills more problematic, leading to confusion as to her "subject," and "a vagueness as to the approach taken in her thesis" which at times, reached "alarming proportions." And, she failed to appreciate the use of rhetoric in understanding the *Federalist* papers. "The affair ended appropriately in a few well-chosen tears and comfort in the arms of a proud but indignant husband." He concludes that he contributed little and gained little from the experience.<sup>17</sup> While women were systematically excluded from institutions of higher education or professional societies and related recognition, perhaps the

<sup>16</sup> Solomon, *Company of Women*, 172–185.

<sup>17</sup>From Avery Craven to Dean Napier Wilt, "'Informal' Report on the examination of Mabel Benson," Department of History Papers, University of Chicago, special collections, Regenstein Library, August 31, 1944.

most chilling aspect of their experience more broadly was the dismissal of them as serious students, or as individual faculty who were expected to become leaders in their professions. Professor Craven's actions were not unique in this regard.

Women pursuing doctorates, and those working as historians within and outside the academy, leave few records as a group, but there are two sources of materials one can use to gain some sense of their career trajectories as a group. First, there are brief histories of the organizations established to further women's standing in the profession; yet, while we can gain useful information from these, the greatest amount of their attention is devoted to post-World War II generations. Records of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, held at the Schlesinger Library at Harvard, contain valuable information for the earlier years, as this organization of New England scholars has records from 1930. Second, one can analyze the numbers and topics of study for women pursuing doctorates in history through databases of dissertations, and through the list of printed dissertations issued by the Library of Congress from the early twentieth century until 1977. These sources support the argument made here that women followed a more circuitous route to academic training and positions than their male counterparts and were more apt to teach in sex-segregated institutions.

Based on records maintained by the American Historical Association, women increased their numbers of doctorates from 1920 through 1960 but did not improve in terms of percentages of degrees granted. In comparing degrees awarded in 1920 (16 percent), 1930 (19.2 percent), 1940 (15 percent), 1950 (10.3 percent), and 1960 (7.2 percent), the lowest percentage of women PhDs graduated in 1960. Why was this so? These percentages are probably a reflection of several factors: the prominence of women's colleges in the earlier years as prospective institutions for academic employment; the impact of the feminist movement and the suffrage success of the 1920s; the declining attention to women's interests during the 1930s and 1940s; and the impact of the G.I. Bill on the second half of the 1940s and 1950s in supporting men's higher education. During the period before 1960, Columbia University granted the largest number of doctorates to women, with Chicago and Berkeley following with fewer numbers. Otherwise, no women graduated from Ivy League schools except for a small number of women who received degrees from Radcliffe (a women's college affiliated with Harvard), and larger numbers graduated from Bryn Mawr. But Columbia produced significantly greater numbers than

other institutions. The reality alters following 1960 with the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, which provided women with substantial financial aid from the federal government for the first time. The expansion of state universities and especially regional and community colleges during the 1960s and later also increased demand for history faculty. This led to an explosion in history PhDs; in 1960 there were 346 awarded, by 1970 that number had increased to 1031, and in 1975 to 1140 (nearly a tenfold increase). By 2005, the numbers of PhDs awarded had dropped to 882, likely reflecting the declining academic market that had remained strong only through the 1960s, and began a steady decline in the 1970s, which has stabilized today at a lower level (Fig. 1.1).<sup>18</sup>



**Fig. 1.1** Early members of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, 1930. (Courtesy of Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University)

<sup>18</sup> Calculated from “Directory of Dissertations,” The American Historical Association (web publication ongoing). I used recipients’ names to determine sex, and if the name was ambiguous as to gender, I assumed the individual was male.

The Berkshire Conference of Women Historians was established in 1929 to protest the exclusion of New England female faculty from organizations and meetings held by their male counterparts. Many of these meetings were held at institutions that excluded women including faculty clubs and private clubs for academics that did not allow female members or visitors. In many ways, they were fashioned on the British gentlemen's club which provided a refuge from women and families. Even though the women who were excluded were fellow historians, their sex took precedence over any professional degree or position they held. The Schlesinger Library at Harvard contains the early correspondence from Berkshire members documenting both their motivations for joining, and their ongoing complaints against male historians. For example, Louise Loomis of Wells College was bemoaning the difficult situation of a colleague concerning a position and the salary attached: "[she] has set herself a desperately hard task—She has always had courage but I am more sorry for her now than I can say—I only hope that she will eventually get the sort of position she deserves."<sup>19</sup> This letter relates to exchange programs among various northeastern women's colleges organized by the Berkshire Conference to provide women, based on their limited academic options, broader professional and intellectual horizons. A letter accompanying a questionnaire to all women faculty in the region, states: "We all realize that the limited number of positions open to women means that women are likely to remain at the same institutions throughout their teaching careers" and that exchange programs could prove valuable to them. On the whole, the Berkshire Conference, while protesting the limited professional choices for women historians, was trying to ameliorate their situations by offering opportunities for intellectual exchange. Excluded from roles in national historical associations, and often excluded by local organizations of male historians, leaders of the Berkshire Conference made public women's situations and worked to improve them based on their limited resources.<sup>20</sup>

The essays in this collection trace a range of women who pursued scholarship within and beyond the academy. For some, history was their primary professional pursuit. For others, it was an individual interest, but not

<sup>19</sup> Finding aid to "Early Files of Berkshire Conference of Women Historians," Schlesinger Library, MC 606.

<sup>20</sup> Survey distributed by Helen Allen at Vassar College to Berkshire members on March 3, 1931, Berkshire Papers, Schlesinger Library.

one dominating their professional career or writing. All were sufficiently successful to have left intellectual legacies for later scholars to explore. However, they were often seen as outsiders, and were excluded from co-educational institutions or leadership positions in their professions. As Judith P. Zinsser has made clear in *History and Feminism*, historical scholarship until the 1960s (and even after 1970) was a story of men's lives, and centrally a story of men who were politically important during their era. Male historians identified with their subjects and often inserted masculine markers in their writings making such a link specific; for example, Francis Parkman (a nineteenth-century historian of the western United States) described the historian's duty: "Faithfulness to the truth of history involves far more than research ... the narrator must seek to imbue himself with the life and spirit of the time ... He must himself be, as it were, a sharer or spectator of the action he describes."<sup>21</sup>

Those scholars included in the first part of the collection, ranging in interests from the medieval period to the eighteenth century, focused primarily on economic matters thoroughly grounded in social history. Two, Clark and McArthur, concentrated their efforts on early modern Britain, while Julia Cherry Spruill studied primarily white women in the Southern American colonies. The two British scholars flourished at the turn of the twentieth century, while Spruill wrote somewhat later during the 1930s following a college career in the 1920s. None followed the career path of a "successful" academic. Clark had the most tenuous relationship to the academic world as an industrial manager from a prominent shoe manufacturing family, but Spruill never advanced beyond her MA in History from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and McArthur published very little and is known more today as a teacher and administrator at Girton College, Cambridge.

Yet, all three are indicative of the general irrelevance of much of our assessment of academic success. In varying ways, they were highly influential on future scholarship and future scholars even while following an

<sup>21</sup> Judith P. Zinsser, *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 1; and for a broader discussion of traditional history see Zinsser, *History and Feminism*, 5–15. That the story of men's past was so clearly identified with the discipline of history is made clear in Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) in which he argues that objectivity was the goal of professional historians until some began to write women's or black history, or as he termed them "a history of their own" and this led to "Objectivity in crisis." Men writing about themselves never led to such a crisis (ix, 415–521).

unpredictable path themselves. Perhaps most surprising is the long-term prominence of Alice Clark's *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* despite criticism of her from prominent experts in her field. Even in her own time, she was not seen as a serious student in the field. Not only was she an executive in the family's shoe business, she was also involved in Quaker reform movements and suffrage. She held progressive views about the treatment of workers, which contributed to studies on the life of working women during the 1600s.

Those who were knowledgeable about the field of women's social and economic history did not support Clark gaining the Charlotte Shaw Studentship at the London School of Economics (LSE), but Shaw herself (wife of George B. Shaw) chose her as most apt to produce a publishable work in a timely fashion. Yet Tim Stretton terms her an "amateur," and she recognized her own limitations: "This is a work which is quite new to me and I am greatly indebted ... for ... help and advice," she wrote. Alice Clark reflected, if perhaps to a greater degree than others, the dual interests of these women historians; they characteristically combined activism, economic posts, or administrative posts with their historical scholarship. Seldom were they limited to a life of academic teaching and publishing.

As Amy Erickson shows, Ellen McArthur held a prominent place in the history of Girton College. She wrote an influential article on women petitioners during the seventeenth century, and she was a strong influence on subsequent generations of Girton students. Such a role was especially important in the college's early days when women were not admitted to Cambridge broadly, and their educational and social experiences were largely restricted to this women's college under the broader rubric of the University of Cambridge.

In Britain during the early twentieth century there were intellectual connections among many women academics. For instance, McArthur taught Lilian Knowles and Eileen Power, both of whom were later affiliated with the LSE. She had multiple duties at Girton where she served as both an instructor and the "director of studies." As a founder of the Historical Association, she contributed to the organization's effort to distribute teaching materials, and she witnessed it double in size by 1917. Besides her Girton duties, she was a strong supporter of suffrage, linking her as well to the interests of C. C. Stopes, another subject of this collection. Amy Erickson concludes with a list of all the important women historians McArthur encountered during her long professional career. As Erickson claims, "her legacy was her students." It is difficult to imagine this foundational generation of women without Ellen McArthur.

Julia Cherry Spruill was also someone unlikely to have produced a work that still held a prominent place in women's history four decades after it was published. She did not receive a PhD, and remained a faculty wife throughout her life. Her *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* was printed originally in 1938 and reprinted in 1972; it gained limited attention in the 1930s, but as a paperback became a textbook widely used during the 1970s. Even so, we would know very little about Spruill were it not for the efforts of Anne Firor Scott.

Born in 1899, Spruill was part of the generation that often possessed significant aspirations but lacked the institutions and support to pursue them. She accompanied her husband to Chapel Hill where he taught, and devoted much of her energy to furthering his career. Most significant in her work on women's history, other than an early focus on Southern women, was her study of "the unrecorded lives of ordinary women" in a period before social history emerged as a field. However, although it was an innovative study, it was mostly ignored until the 1972 reprint. Spruill's major contribution to social history was a valuable model for those seeking to pursue research concerning a wide class of white women living in the colonial South; and its value was recognized and influential a generation later.

The second part of the collection concentrates on early modern culture, as studied by scholars inside and outside the academy. C. C. Stopes, the oldest of the three women discussed here, was born in 1840 and died in 1929 and gained greatest renown for her scholarship on Shakespeare's life, but she also spent a significant amount of time analyzing women's political past and working for suffrage. C. V. Wedgwood was noted for writing important biographies, and large narratives of major early modern events such as the English Civil War and the Thirty Years War. Caroline Robbins followed a more traditional academic path, receiving a doctorate from the University of London and pursuing a lifetime career of teaching and scholarship at Bryn Mawr College.

Charlotte Carmichael Stopes was educated in Edinburgh and maintained a lifelong attachment to Scotland although the majority of her adult life was spent in London. While she taught and dedicated herself to Shakespeare studies, she was actively engaged in a range of feminist causes. Stopes combined her scholarship with studies on women's past and also advocated rational dress for women, criticizing the unhealthy and debilitating styles of clothing commonly worn in the nineteenth century. She was a strong supporter of suffrage and an advocate of women's learning

and intellectual pursuits. She always combined activism with academic interests. Although acclaimed for her Shakespeare scholarship, she was more excluded from academic institutions than others included in this collection. Stopes most likely provided the most useful research for women's wider causes than any other person discussed in this volume; arguably, she was the most dedicated feminist among these students of history, and her combination of linguistic analysis and detailed research served to distinguish her from others studying women's past.

C. V. Wedgwood was probably the most prominent woman historian in twentieth-century Britain who lacked an academic position. Her books were broadly purchased by the educated public and assigned in undergraduate and graduate history courses. Her work was widely reviewed in venues beyond academic journals, and she herself was known in elite social and educated circles. However, many academic historians had doubts about Wedgwood; they considered her a narrator, not an analytic author, and her works popular rather than scholarly.

Coming from a prominent industrial family (a background she shared with Alice Clark), Wedgwood's family connections enabled contact with some of Britain's leading intellectuals. She was involved in magazine publishing and broader cultural commentary. As a public intellectual, her prominent standing led to some jealousy among academic historians. Melinda Zook documents the mixed views of her as a scholar and a public figure through Wedgwood's private papers, assessments of her work, and extensive comments from academics and public intellectuals. It was hard to dismiss the vast range of her research and publications, and they continued to offer scholarly critiques.

Caroline Robbins, who taught at Bryn Mawr College, was one of the younger women among these historians. Robbins, who was hired by the college in 1929, published her most important work, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman* in 1959 and died in 1999. She had a long teaching career at the college from the 1930s to her retirement in 1971 and influenced a wide range of scholars interested in early modern Britain.

Robbins' masterpiece and highly influential work was her study of the commonwealthman. In this study, which drew extensively from the tract literature of the mid-1600s, Robbins identified the set of values that tied the British reformers of the 1700s to the principles underpinning the founding of the United States. Her commonwealthmen believed in mixed government, republicanism, and expanding the franchise to ensure individual liberty. Robbins established high standards for history at Bryn

Mawr and was an important mentor for others. She combined the qualities of a successful academic: teaching a large number of students, serving as a role model for later scholars, and authoring an important, influential work. In this, she reflected the values of faculty teaching in women's colleges during the early twentieth century.

Part III of this volume focuses on the experiences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this part, Whitney Walton assesses Arvède Barine as a middle-class French author interested in biography and historical accounts especially of women living in France and Britain during the late 1700s and 1800s; Willard Sunderland studies Isabel de Madariaga's biography of Catherine the Great; and Christine Anderson examines the life and work of Eleanor Flexner, especially her *Century of Struggle*, used widely in classrooms to study the nineteenth-century women's movement. Social and political values clearly underlay the scholarship and broad distribution of these historians' works.

Barine held quite positive views of the French middle-class family and women's place at the turn of the twentieth century. Whitney Walton discusses a conflicting picture of Barine's views of her female contemporaries and her assessment of women's lives in the past. While writing on past queens or women advocates, her view of women's appropriate behavior was limited by class and conformed to traditional gender roles; her model for the good woman in the present was centered on the bourgeois female of her generation.

Barine's historical writings were undertaken relatively late in life, having received encouragement from a number of male writers who assisted her in choice of topics and in the style of her works; as with many neophyte authors, she was encouraged to take up biography. The popularity of her work among those she consulted is documented in the vast correspondence held in the Bibliothèque Nationale. She was heavily praised by other authors as well. However, one might ask whether this broad-based praise was predicated on her dealing with popular topics rather than questioning the values of respectable French society. As Whitney Walton states, "She had a scientific and rational orientation to writing that was congenial to history, and many correspondents as well as reviewers characterized her writing as masculine."

Willard Sunderland's chapter looks at Isabel de Madariaga, whom he terms a "prolific" and "influential" historian of modern Russia. She lived from 1919 to 2014 and wrote her "magisterial" biography of Catherine the Great in 1981, some twenty years later than the works by others

studied in this volume, which were published around 1960 or earlier. Nevertheless, she experienced the same exclusion from the British academic world, where she was trained. Sunderland focuses on her close relationship with her subject, Catherine, and her claim that her work would not be “an exercise in debunking.” Sunderland recognizes that Madariaga’s explicit admiration for and felt relationship with her subject raises questions for professional historians. Catherine’s early biographers, however, had been men; Madariaga was determined to concentrate on her reign and her use of power. Sunderland asks whether this had something to do with her being a woman and her place within the historical profession.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Eleanor Flexner’s *Century of Struggle* in providing a foundational text on the history of the suffrage and the broader women’s movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was used in virtually all courses on the history of US women in the 1970s and 1980s. Flexner was a member of the Communist Party from 1936 to 1956, when information emerged about Stalin’s atrocities. She combined her work as a historian with activism on behalf of the working class and African-Americans and these radical sympathies are apparent in her scholarly treatment of them in *Century of Struggle*. Like many others, she was appalled by the obvious inequities of workers and their despair during the Great Depression and she believed something had to be done to overcome the destructive nature of capitalism. Her radical politics is clear through her affiliations; she supported radical labor leaders, and was acquainted with other feminist leaders and historians associated with the Party including Gerda Lerner and Betty Friedan. Interestingly, after Flexner left the Communist Party she became a member of the Catholic Church later in life, which prompted her sister to point out Flexner’s attraction to hierarchical institutions. Yet despite this change, her interest in the cause of women and African-Americans never wavered.

The final part of this collection is devoted to women scholars who were strongly interested in history, and wrote historical works, but were distinct, in varying ways, from professional historians and who pursued other intellectual interests along with the historical. Mihoko Suzuki’s chapter treats two authors, from generations living before most of the others included in this collection, and who wrote literary history during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Judith P. Zinsser’s study of Nancy Mitford considers her style, her mixture of fiction and non-fiction, and the reasons behind the popularity of her works, and Tracy Teslow explores the ways Ruth Benedict utilized historical scholarship in her work as a

professional anthropologist. Each used history as a means to supply context and allow a greater understanding of her subject.

Mihoko Suzuki examines two women who lived generations apart in France but who produced works that were linked in their focus on the writings of earlier women especially in regard to literary history. Louise de Kéralio (1756–1822) produced much of her work following the French Revolution while Henriette Guizot de Witt (1829–1908) was active in the years following the Revolution of 1848 and the period of Napoleon III. Kéralio played a role in the intellectual and political activism following the Revolution and was the first female editor of a French newspaper, *Journal de l'homme et du citoyen*, established in 1789. It was a heady time for anyone, but especially for someone interested in women's intellectual contribution to France's past. As her newspaper's title made clear, the link between men and citizenship was the rallying cry of the Revolution. Henriette Guizot de Witt gained much from her famous historian father, François Guizot, but shared with Kéralio her interest on women's past writings. As Suzuki notes, "Just as Kéralio researched and published excerpts from Christine de Pizan's manuscripts, so Guizot de Witt's historical research was based on the manuscripts of [...] two early modern women" (Charlotte de Mornay and Charlotte Stanley).

Kéralio and Guizot de Witt each produced massive tomes making public the writings of early French women writers who had mostly been forgotten by their generations. In addition, they felt a positive attachment to Britain (the Guizots were exiled in Britain during the period following the Revolution of 1848) and admired Elizabeth I as a strong, independent voice. It is their focus on women's past historical and literary works that is the primary focus of this chapter. In her early work on Elizabeth I, Kéralio not only praised her wisdom and moderation, but also discussed Elizabeth's literary achievements, especially her poetry. Kéralio favored a more gradual, less violent form of political change than that of the Revolution and saw that embedded in the British form of government. Kéralio reproduced writings by women authors in her *Collection of the Best French Works Composed by Women, Dedicated to Frenchwomen* (1786–88), which ran to seventeen volumes. She included a variety of religious and political viewpoints in this collection. Guizot de Witt was interested in the English Civil War and wrote about the Countess of Derby and produced a larger work on women's history, which included literary figures. Her *Les Femmes dans l'histoire* was published in 1888 and surveyed notable women from the past. For this work, and the earlier study of the Countess of Derby, her

father served as her mentor, aiding her by finding sources and sending materials himself. Both Kéralio and Guizot de Witt produced significant works enabling women's past intellectual productions, which had been forgotten by much of French society, to achieve greater prominence.

Tracy Teslow's study of Ruth Benedict combines an assessment of her professional attainments and limitations, her place in the advancement of cultural anthropology, and her highly influential published works. Benedict came late to the study of anthropology, and even with the assistance of Franz Boas, she found it difficult to secure an academic job, and was only promoted to full professor the year before she died. In many ways, this is extraordinary given the broad influence of her works, especially *Patterns of Culture* (1934) and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), a study of Japanese culture. A specialist in belief and spirituality, when a position opened up in her designated field, Benedict was passed over for a male candidate with a different specialty. She taught at Columbia University without pay and also filled in for others on leave. Nevertheless, she became president of the American Anthropological Association, and her ideas were spread far beyond the confines of academic anthropology. History was central to Benedict's anthropology; as Teslow states "a historicized, humanist approach was critical" for her work.

Judith P. Zinsser, writing on an individual who did not indulge in dull, scholarly, historical prose, presents a lively discussion of Nancy Mitford. Nancy Mitford is perhaps best known for her novels, but in the 1950s she wrote two incredibly popular biographies, *Madame de Pompadour* and *Voltaire in Love*. Even though these were popular works, Mitford took her history seriously. As a daughter of a baron and an attractive young woman among the highest social circles during the 1920s, in many ways she understood the atmosphere in which her subjects lived better than her learned contemporaries. She was more greatly endowed with heritage than with wealth, however, and following an unsuccessful marriage, she wrote to supplement her income.

Mitford's novels were known for witty, but often cruel, satire, which in many ways linked her to Voltaire. Zinsser notes "Mitford's popularity, but also her admiration for Voltaire. Like him, she mocked almost everyone in her novels." Resisting long hours in the Bibliothèque Nationale, she turned to the knowledge of others. While giving attention to Emilie du Châtelet, Voltaire's intellectual companion and lover, Mitford concentrated on him and muted any threat to his reputation. Her life had in many

ways prepared her for her future works; the world of eighteenth-century France was a familiar and comfortable space for Mitford, and this emerges from her writing.

The chapters in this collection are varied and unique in a number of ways. First, they cover a wide chronological range spanning the late eighteenth century to the second half of the twentieth. Second, they deal with a range of regions and topics reflecting the diversity of the subjects they are covering. Yet each is devoted to identifying and understanding the serious work of reclaiming women's past historical and intellectual work. Some of this work appeared in traditional academic scholarship, some in historical research and writing outside the academy, and some in a range of genres other than accepted historical scholarship. But taken as a whole, this volume helps us to understand the attraction of history to this varied group of women writers and how often they returned to what earlier women historians, researchers, and writers had been interested in, and had themselves written about.

PART I

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Women and the Medieval and Early  
Modern Economy



## CHAPTER 2

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# Ellen Annette McArthur: Establishing a Presence in the Academy

*Amy Louise Erickson*

*Her sense of justice and her consistency in acting up to her ideal, the absolute sincerity of her belief in the right of human beings to freedom of thought, lead where it may, won for her the respect and admiration of all with whom she came in contact. (M.[innie] B.[eryl] Curran, "Ellen Annette McArthur. 1862–1927", The Girton Review, Michaelmas 1927, 5)*

The majority of published work on the development of economic and social history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ignores women almost entirely.<sup>1</sup> Two historians represent notable exceptions. In 1992, Maxine Berg investigated the prominent role of women in the early

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<sup>1</sup>T. C. Barker, "The Beginnings of the Economic History Society", *Economic History Review*, 30:1 (1977), 1–19; D. C. Coleman, *History and the Economic Past* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Miles Taylor, "The Beginnings of Modern British Social History?" *History Workshop Journal*, 43 (1997), 155–176; Keith Tribe, "Historicization of Political Economy?" In *British and German Historiography, 1750–1950: Traditions, Perceptions and*

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years of the Economic History Society through the pivotal figures of Lilian Knowles and Eileen Power, and she followed this with a biography of Eileen Power.<sup>2</sup> Knowles and Power have relatively high profiles, not coincidentally because they successively held the Professorship of Economic History at the London School of Economics between 1921 and 1940. The second serious consideration of women in the founding of the academic discipline of history is Joan Thirsk's 1995 essay "The History Women", in which she posited "Thirsk's Law": in new, developing fields women may be prominent, until that field becomes institutionalised, at which point "ignoring the women [became] the accepted convention". She had observed this phenomenon in both manufacturing and agriculture of the early modern period, but her more recent example was the nineteenth-century University Extension Service, in which Alice Stopford Green and Louise Creighton played influential roles.<sup>3</sup>

This essay takes Berg's project back a generation earlier to Ellen McArthur, who taught not only Lilian Knowles and Eileen Power at Girton College, Cambridge, but also an extraordinary number of other women who went on to hold academic positions in the early decades of the twentieth century and to publish classic works which are still read today. McArthur was in the first generation to undertake postgraduate research in history; she was later the first woman to hold numerous positions within the peculiar environment of the University of Cambridge, with its independent college structure, its arcane hierarchy and its extraordinary tenacity in refusing for nearly eighty years to admit women on an equal basis.<sup>4</sup>

*Transfers*, ed. Benedikt Stuchtey and Peter Wende (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 211–228.

<sup>2</sup> Maxine Berg, "The First Women Economic Historians", *Economic History Review*, 45:2 (1992), 308–329, and *A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Joan Thirsk, "The History Women", in *Chattel, Servant or Citizen: Women's Status in Church, State and Society*, ed. Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, 1995), 1–2, 10. There is no mention of the extension service in the entries on Stopford Green and Creighton in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), hereafter *ODNB*.

<sup>4</sup> For background on women in Cambridge in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Gillian Sutherland's articles at <http://www.newn.cam.ac.uk/about/history/history-of-newnham/> and <http://www.newn.cam.ac.uk/about/history/womens-education/>, or for a full treatment, Rita McWilliams Tullberg, *Women at Cambridge*, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; originally published London: Victor Gollancz, 1975). Page references are to the revised edition. For background on the univer-

In the early twentieth century, McArthur was one of the most prominent women university academics in Britain, vigorously promoting women's rights to education and campaigning for the vote. McArthur taught a whole generation of historians who had a powerful influence on the academic profession, on school teaching, and on the public perception of history. Her published research, spanning fifteen years, was mostly in medieval and early modern economic and social history, but her best-known article was "Women Petitioners and the Long Parliament", in the *English Historical Review* of 1909. At her death, she left her estate to fund a prize at Cambridge, subsequently augmented to include travel grants, graduate scholarships, and a lecture series that bears her name. Most of the people who have heard of Ellen McArthur today are those who were at one point in their lives the graduate students in receipt of those funds. Even the managers of the Fund, through much of the twentieth century, clearly had no idea whose money they were disbursing. So this essay also examines the process by which, in a field jointly pioneered and established by women and men, "ignoring the women" has become the accepted convention (Fig. 2.1).

This research is made possible through the publication of the *Girton College Register* in 1946, a volume unique in Britain for the amount of biographical detail that was included on "Old Girtonians". McArthur left no papers in any known archive, so with the exception of a handful of letters in scattered collections, the only other source of personal information is her obituaries, including the one quoted in the epigraph. McArthur was the daughter of a clergyman, sent to school in Germany and then to the new St Leonards School in St Andrews, Scotland, founded in 1877 by Louisa Lumsden, who had been one of the first students of Girton College, Cambridge. McArthur became a student-teacher at St Leonards before winning a scholarship to Girton in 1882.<sup>5</sup> Girton had been founded in 1869. Its campaign for the admission of women to university examinations as a matter of right succeeded in 1881, but its students were still not members of the university in the way that the male students in the men's colleges were. So the women did not get degrees from the university: they

sity see Gordon Johnson, *University Politics: F. M. Cornford's Cambridge and his Advice to the Young Academic Politician* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>5</sup>"McArthur, Ellen Annette (1862–1927)", Amy Louise Erickson in *ODNB*.



**Fig. 2.1** Ellen McArthur in the doctoral dress of Trinity College, Dublin, 1905, G. Beresford photographer. (Courtesy of the Mistress and Fellows, Girton College, Cambridge)

got certificates from the college. This was the system in both of the women's colleges in Cambridge, Girton and Newnham.<sup>6</sup>

McArthur studied the new "tripos", or honours degree, in history.<sup>7</sup> Girton was founded with the intention that every student should take the

<sup>6</sup> McWilliams Tullberg, *Women at Cambridge*, chaps. 5 and 6.

<sup>7</sup> History was originally only a part of the moral sciences tripos, then had been combined with law in a joint degree from 1870 and became independent in 1875. For dates of triposes see <http://www.queens.cam.ac.uk/life-at-queens/about-the-college/university/tripos-subjects>

tripos examination for an honours degree, and it was unique in Cambridge in this respect. At Newnham, the other women's college founded in 1871, and among the eighteen men's colleges (that is, in the university), less than half of all students studied for an honours degree, and one fifth did not complete a degree at all.<sup>8</sup> The tripos involved a challenging exam, first in Latin, Greek, and mathematics; then in advanced mathematics; and finally in the student's chosen subject. It was a matter of political principle with Girton College's founder, Emily Davies, in her campaign to get women admitted to the university on the same terms as men, that all her students should pass the initial exams in Latin, Greek, and mathematics before moving on to the third exam in their chosen subject. This was no small task when most girls' schools could not provide a foundation in these subjects.

McArthur passed the exams in classics and mathematics in her first term at Girton, having been well prepared at her school, run as it was by a former Girtonian. She could therefore take full advantage of the history lectures—after the mistresses at Girton had written in advance to ask the lecturer if he would be so kind as to admit a female student, since she was not entitled to attend lectures, not being a university undergraduate. In her final year she studied with William Cunningham, who had just been appointed to a faculty position in history and economics.<sup>9</sup> Cunningham and Frederick Maitland, whose area was legal and constitutional history, shaped the development of the study of history in Cambridge, and both men supported the admission of women to the university and actively encouraged individual women scholars. McArthur gained first class honours in the history tripos in 1885, ranked joint fourth among all candidates. She was not the first woman to achieve better results than nearly all of the male undergraduates in history: Alice Gardner at Newnham had been ranked top of the class list in 1879.<sup>10</sup> McArthur started teaching at Girton immediately upon completion of the tripos, the college's first designated history teacher and for the next decade the only one. Simultaneously, she began postgraduate research under the direction of Cunningham, in a period when postgraduate work was still extremely rare and even rarer for women. Of the Girton and Newnham students in the later nineteenth and

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, *University Politics*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Gerard M. Koot, "William Cunningham, (1849–1919)", or <http://www.hetwebsite.net/het/profiles/cunningham.htm>

<sup>10</sup> "Gardner, Alice (1854–1927)", Gillian Sutherland in *ODNB*.

first decade of the twentieth centuries whose occupation is known (a majority), between 60 and 70 per cent went on to teach school. Only 6–7 per cent became academics.<sup>11</sup>

McArthur contributed to the women's colleges' campaign for admission to the university in 1887, and again in the 1890s. Another push would be made in 1918–19, when the Oxford's women's colleges succeeded. But Cambridge would not formally admit female students until 1948, the last university in the UK to do so.<sup>12</sup> If the university's historians were supportive of the women's campaign for admission as students on the same terms as male students, the man who created the economics department was quite different. Alfred Marshall, who became Professor of Political Economy in 1884 (McArthur's final year as a student) opposed women at every academic level.<sup>13</sup> The dispute between Cunningham and Marshall extended beyond their attitudes to women's higher education. In his 1892 article, "The Perversion of Economic History", Cunningham criticised economists (singling out Marshall) for applying theory irrespective of the circumstances of historical time and place, in terms still familiar to the two professions today. For the economist, "[i]f the facts illustrate his doctrine, he is willing to allude to them; if they do not illustrate it, they merely obscure the great truths he has already formulated in so-called Economic Laws."<sup>14</sup> The insistence on universal laws "prevents the economist from finding out the narrow limits within which his generalisations are even approximately true". The philosophical disagreements between Cunningham and Marshall are rehearsed elsewhere.<sup>15</sup>

McArthur played a role in their feud through the university extension programme. The Cambridge Local Lectures Syndicate was established in 1873 to bring academic lectures to the provinces, at the invitation of

<sup>11</sup> Gillian Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman: Middle-Class Women and Work in Britain 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 24–25.

<sup>12</sup> For the history of the campaigns, see McWilliams Tullberg, *Women at Cambridge*, chaps. 5–10.

<sup>13</sup> Marshall married one of the first Newnham students, and she taught alongside him in economics at Bristol and then at Oxford University, but he became anti-feminist later in life. "Marshall, Mary (1850–1944)", Rita McWilliams Tullberg in *ODNB*. Economics became a separate degree in 1903.

<sup>14</sup> Cunningham, "The Perversion of Economic History", *The Economic Journal*, 2:7 (Sept. 1892), 494.

<sup>15</sup> For different views, see Berg, "First Women", 315–316, Tribe, "Historicization", 220–226, and Alon Kadish, *Historians, Economists, and Economic History* (London: Routledge, 1989), 212–218.

workers' collectives and local groups. London and Oxford started similar programmes a few years later.<sup>16</sup> The extension movement was instrumental in the foundation of several local "university colleges" which became the independent universities of Exeter, Nottingham, Leeds, and Sheffield.<sup>17</sup> Cunningham had started his career in the extension programme, and sat on the syndicate that managed them from the time of his appointment to a lectureship. In February 1893, the syndicate informed the women's colleges that it was "prepared to receive applications from women ... provided they showed exceptional fitness". McArthur was appointed in December of that year.<sup>18</sup> Marshall, also a member of the syndicate, complained that it was unsuitable for a woman to lecture to working men. The syndicate ignored him in McArthur's case, although he succeeded in obstructing at least one other woman's application.<sup>19</sup> However, he was being disingenuous: from at least 1893, the students attending lectures and classes and earning certificates in the extension programme were predominantly female.<sup>20</sup> The conflict was ongoing. In November 1894, it was officially reported that:

the Syndicate have during the past year for the first time placed the name of a woman on their list of available lecturers. The lecturer selected was a former student of Girton College who had been placed in the first class of the Historical Tripos examination, and had had several years' experience of lecturing and other teaching. Some time must elapse before the Syndicate can judge definitely of the success of such appointments, but they do not at present anticipate that it will be found advisable to appoint women as lecturers in other than exceptional cases.<sup>21</sup>

McArthur appears to have given only one series of extension lectures.<sup>22</sup> Her teaching load would have been considerably higher than that of the

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.hetwebsite.net/het/schools/cambridgeuniv.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0265%2FBEMS>

<sup>18</sup> She was recommended on 2 November 1893 to the lectures committee and approved in 1894 by the syndicate. CUL: BEMS 5/1.

<sup>19</sup> McWilliams Tullberg, *Women at Cambridge*, 87–88.

<sup>20</sup> Cambridge University Library (hereafter CUL) Manuscripts: Board of Extra Mural Studies (formerly University Extension Lecture Syndicate) (hereafter BEMS) Annual Reports listing certificates from 1895.

<sup>21</sup> *Cambridge University Reporter*, 13 November 1894, 198.

<sup>22</sup> The records of the extension syndicate list McArthur only for "England under the Tudors", in 1905 in Sussex. CUL: BEMS 17/4/97.

Cambridge men who lectured in the extension programme. The men's colleges had much bigger faculties than the women's colleges. McArthur was both lecturer and "director of studies", a one-to-one coaching relationship, for her students, of whom the annual cohort was around seven. (Because of Girton's insistence on the tripos, with its two exams in classics and mathematics before the final exam, most Girton students studied classics or mathematics all the way through.)

In 1894, McArthur was the first woman appointed as examiner for the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Exams Board, which managed entry to the universities. In the same year, her first article appeared in the *English Historical Review*.<sup>23</sup> And, in 1894 the first volume of Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy* was published, involving more than one hundred economists and historians, including Cunningham, Maitland, and the Webbs. McArthur was one of ten women contributing. Published periodically ever since, Palgrave's is now the standard dictionary of economics. McArthur's twelve articles ranged from the Exchequer (from the Norman period until the mid-nineteenth century) to Sir Anthony Fitzherbert (1470–1538), from the Peasants' Revolt to the Freedom of the City of London and the South Sea Company.<sup>24</sup> The following year saw the publication of a teaching text, *Outlines of English Industrial History* (Cambridge University Press, 1895) jointly authored by Cunningham and McArthur. This was a condensation of his two-volume *Growth of English Industry and Commerce* (1882–92) to make it accessible for schoolteachers and the interested general public.<sup>25</sup> How much of the work on the *Outlines* was McArthur's and how much Cunningham's is unclear, but the fact that Cunningham added a third volume to the *Growth* series in 1896 may suggest that his energies were directed to writing that work rather than the *Outlines*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Founded in 1885, the *English Historical Review* was the only academic journal in the field until the *Economic History Review* in 1927, co-founded by McArthur's student, Eileen Power. See <http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/journals/>

<sup>24</sup> R. H. I. Palgrave, ed., *Dictionary of Political Economy*, 3 vols. (1894–99).

<sup>25</sup> *Outlines* cost only 4 shillings, whereas Cunningham's original cost 16 shillings for the first volume and 18 shillings for the second. Advertisements in the front matter of the *Economic Journal* in 1896, 1897, and 1898.

<sup>26</sup> Originally published as a single volume in 1882, the work had expanded to two volumes in 1890–92, and later to three volumes by the third edition of 1896. <http://www.hetweb-site.net/het/profiles/cunningham.htm>

All but one review of *Outlines* was positive.<sup>27</sup> *The Times* called it a “very lucid and instructive summary”.<sup>28</sup> The *Educational Times* commented:

Now that economics is being more and more generally recognised as the basis of our political, social, and even religious life, it is highly important that our teachers should be able to learn its rudiments, not from the romantics, but from the realists of the Science. Our authors, therefore, deserve hearty thanks for attempting to supply a stepping-stone between Mr Gibbins’s *Industrial History of England*, and the larger works of Thorold Rogers, Professor Ashley, and Dr Cunningham himself, and unstinted praise for performing their task so well.

The anonymous reviewer in *The Athenaeum* found it “excellently written, clear, terse, and restrained both in composition and in doctrine ... always interesting, and often vivid and penetrating. There is a transparent effort after fairness”, which the reviewer distinguished from Cunningham’s earlier writings and may therefore be attributed by implication to McArthur. Apparently in 1895 there was already “almost a superabundance” of handbooks on English industrial history<sup>29</sup>; nevertheless *Outlines* must have sold well, since it went through seven editions in the UK and six in the USA with Macmillan. The 1905 American edition notes that it was “Approved for use in Alberta schools, 1903”, so its influence extended to Canada, and perhaps also to English-speaking schools in the rest of the British Empire.<sup>30</sup> McArthur had long been dedicated to training school teachers in economic history. Although according to its preface the idea to produce *Outlines* came from Graham Wallas (Fabian socialist and co-founder of the London School of Economics in 1895), and Dr George Prothero (lecturer in Cambridge 1875–99) also gave suggestions, it is likely to have

<sup>27</sup> The exception was Henry R. Seager in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 7 (Jan. 1896), 122–124. Other positive reviews not quoted in the text appeared in the British *The Bookman*, 8:4 (May 1895), 47, and the American *The Bookman*, 1:6 (July 1895), 402–403.

<sup>28</sup> Similar reviews appeared in the *Times* and the *Speaker*.

<sup>29</sup> *Outlines* in *The Athenaeum*, 3522 (27 April 1895), 530. Keith Tribe is incorrect in describing Cunningham’s *Growth* volumes as, (a) the first textbook on economic history, and (b) “concise”, in “Historicization”, 214, 220.

<sup>30</sup> Subsequent editions appeared in 1898, 1904, 1910, 1913, 1920, and 1928 in the UK. In New York, Macmillan published editions in 1895, 1896, 1898, 1905, and 1908. For the 1905 edition’s certification, see [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL25931681M/Outlines\\_of\\_English\\_industrial\\_history](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL25931681M/Outlines_of_English_industrial_history)

been McArthur who drove the project forward.<sup>31</sup> In her first year of teaching at Girton (1885–86), she was also a tutor at Norwich House, a private hostel for women who were either studying at the brand new Cambridge Training College for Women Teachers or attending the short courses of Ladies' Lectures.<sup>32</sup> From 1896 she served on the Council of the Training College, and would continue to do so for the rest of her life.<sup>33</sup> In 1906, McArthur was one of the founders of the Historical Association. The organisation was established to help schools with materials for teaching, and McArthur served as one of the original vice presidents along with Cunningham, Alice Gardner at Newnham, T. F. Tout at Manchester, and Hubert Hall, of the Public Record Office and the London School of Economics (LSE).<sup>34</sup> In 1907, the Historical Association had 500 members; by 1917 it had more than doubled to 1300 members.<sup>35</sup>

McArthur's university teaching extended beyond Cambridge. She was also an occasional lecturer at the LSE for at least three years (1897 through

<sup>31</sup> Preface to first edition of *Outline of English Industrial History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895).

<sup>32</sup> For the function of Norwich House, see Peter Searby, "A Failure at Cambridge: Cavendish College, 1877–1891", *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 72 (1983), note 32. The hostel residents may have been at the Training College (founded 1885, now Hughes Hall) but the Ladies' Lecture courses set up by the Sidgwick were suggested to me by Alison Duke in a personal letter of 9 October 1995. All students at Girton and Newnham were accommodated in those colleges. Norwich House is referred to in McArthur's obituaries (*Times* and *Girton Review*) as "a sort of Cavendish College for younger students but an experiment that failed". Cavendish College (1873–91) was an institution to offer affordable education for younger men from farming backgrounds (whose buildings later became Homerton College). Both institutions were developed by Joseph Breton, whence probably arises the confusion.

<sup>33</sup> She served as Registrar 1900–20, as Secretary to the Council 1901–10 and again for three years during the war, as Chairman 1921–22 and then as Vice-Chairman. Hughes Hall Report for the Year 1926–27, Presented at the General Meeting of the College Saturday 19 November 1927, provided by college archivist Peter Brook. Correspondence from McArthur to Oscar Browning, head of the Men's Teacher Training College, is held at King's College, Cambridge Archive, especially PP/OB/1/593/C. For more on the origins of teacher training of both women and men in Cambridge, see Pam Hirsch and Mark McBeth, *Teacher Training at Cambridge: The Initiatives of Oscar Browning and Elizabeth Hughes* (London: Woburn Press, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Original leaflet on the Historical Association in the collection of King's College, Cambridge Archive, Oscar Browning Papers, PP/OB, probably sent to him by McArthur.

<sup>35</sup> *The Historical Association, 1906–1956* (London, 1957), 13, 22.

1899).<sup>36</sup> Founded in 1895 by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Graham and Ada Wallas, and George Bernard and Charlotte Payne-Townshend Shaw, the LSE employed many occasional lecturers, several of them women.<sup>37</sup> The LSE was one of the first institutions of higher education in Britain to open from the beginning on equal terms for women and men. By the mid-1890s, all universities in Britain made “no distinction of sex” at least in undergraduate admissions—with the exception of Cambridge, Oxford, and Trinity College, Dublin (TCD).<sup>38</sup> When TCD finally admitted women in 1904, an enterprising Irish Girtonian immediately proposed that women who had passed the university exams in Cambridge and Oxford should take advantage of an existing reciprocal arrangement between these three “sister” universities to award degrees to each other’s graduates (for a fee). Over the next three years, more than 700 women, many now teaching in girls’ schools as well as coming directly from Cambridge and Oxford, took advantage of the offer.<sup>39</sup> McArthur was awarded the first of six doctorates from TCD in 1905 on the basis of her publications.<sup>40</sup> At that point, her publications consisted of four articles on medieval and early modern wage regulation in the *English Historical Review*, amounting to not more than thirty pages in total, and a dozen entries in Palgrave’s *Dictionary*. Her articles, based on research in the British Library, the British Museum, and the Corporation of London Record Office, were meticulous and fearless. Most of her articles dealt with the significance of late medieval wage rates, a topic that is still debated by medievalists today.<sup>41</sup> In her first article

<sup>36</sup>Sue Donnelly, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2015/03/18/women-at-the-front-pioneering-lse-teachers/>

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/about-lse/our-history>, which omits Ada Wallas and Charlotte Payne-Townshend Shaw and relegates Beatrice Webb to “supporting” her husband. For the women, see Sue Donnelly’s LSE blogs, “An unsung heroine of LSE – Charlotte Shaw” (<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2014/01/24/an-unsung-heroine-of-lse-charlotte-payne-townshend/>) and “Beatrice Webb – the early years” (<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2015/01/22/beatrice-webb-the-early-years/>), and Gianna Pomata, “Rejoinder to Pygmalion: The Origins of Women’s History at the London School of Economics”, *Storia della Storiografia*, 46:4 (2004), 79–104.

<sup>38</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities, 1870–1939* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>39</sup> TCD closed the arrangement in 1907, and with their profits from fees financed a new residence hall for women. S. M. Parkes, “Steamboat ladies (act. 1904–1907)”, *ODNB*.

<sup>40</sup> She was the only DLitt and there were three awards of the DSc in 1905. A further four doctorates in addition to these were awarded on an honorary basis by TCD.

<sup>41</sup> Sandy Bardsley, “Women’s Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England”, *Past & Present*, 165 (1999), 3–29, and the ensuing debate with John Hatcher in *Past & Present*, 173 (2001), 191–202.

(1894) she corrected the major figures in the field (the late Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, Thorold Rogers, her mentor Cunningham, and her contemporary William Hewins, about to be appointed the first director of the LSE) on the extent of a sliding scale in wage regulation dependent on the local cost of food, which was established twice a year by the Justices of the Peace before 1562 (5 Eliz c.4), and securely identified Sir Anthony Fitzherbert as the author of the anonymous *Boke of the Justice of the Peace* of 1510.<sup>42</sup> Her second article (1898) reviewed a recently unearthed wage assessment for Norfolk in 1431, which was buried in a miscellaneous volume in the British Library, and provided further evidence of the governmental concern for wages prior to the reign of Elizabeth.<sup>43</sup> Her third article (also 1898) took issue with Sir William Ashley, then Professor of Economic History at Harvard, in reviewing evidence of active municipal intervention in prices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>44</sup> In 1900, “The Regulation of Wages in the Sixteenth Century” is a comprehensive survey of the evidence for wage regulation, as opposed to what she regards as the casual collection of anecdotal evidence by Thorold Rogers and Hewins, focusing on London. She concludes that “during the greater part of the Elizabethan period the assessment of wages formed part of the regular routine work of the justices in the City of London”, and therefore that similar practices were likely to have been followed elsewhere.<sup>45</sup>

If the subject of medieval and early modern wages sounds arcane today, it was directly related to the conditions of industrial Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to questions of a living wage and state intervention (questions that are once again surfacing in the twenty-first century). This was a period when the contents of the latest issue of the *English Historical Review* were announced in national newspapers.<sup>46</sup> In 1898, *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* ran a series on

<sup>42</sup> “‘The boke longyng to a justice of the peace’ and the Assessment of Wages”, *English Historical Review*, 9 (1894), 305–314, 554.

<sup>43</sup> “A Fifteenth-Century Assessment of Wages”, *English Historical Review*, 13:50 (1898), 299–302.

<sup>44</sup> “Prices at Woodstock in 1604”, *English Historical Review*, 13 (1898), 711–716.

<sup>45</sup> “The Regulation of Wages in the Sixteenth Century”, *English Historical Review*, 15 (1900), 445–455.

<sup>46</sup> *The Standard* (London, England), Wednesday, 18 July 1900; p. 4; Issue 23731. British Library Newspapers Online, Part II: 1800–1900.

“Employments for gentlewomen”, and the article on lectureship opportunities noted McArthur along with five other women as the “best-known lecturers on the staff of the University Extension Societies”.<sup>47</sup> McArthur also reviewed widely: editions of historical documents and analyses of the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries for the *English Historical Review*, the *International Journal of Ethics*, the *Economic Journal*, and the *Cambridge Review*.<sup>48</sup> There were certainly more prolific women reviewers, including McArthur’s student Lilian Knowles in the *Economic Journal*, and McArthur’s close friend Mary Bateson in the *English Historical Review*. But no one else ranged so widely in chronology and subject matter.

In 1902, when Cunningham stopped lecturing in order to concentrate on his clerical duties (he was then vicar of Cambridge’s principal parish and would become an archdeacon), McArthur began lecturing on economic history for the university. Because the two women’s colleges were not part of the university, the teaching staff there had to write to every lecturer in the university asking that their students be admitted to the university’s lecture series. When McArthur started lecturing, the tables were turned and the staff at the male colleges wrote to ask her permission for their students to attend.<sup>49</sup> Gratifying though these small gains must have been, McArthur was clearly not satisfied with the subordinate position of women in Cambridge. In 1897, she had applied unsuccessfully for the post of Principal of Bedford College, a women’s college in the University of London, with references from Lord Acton, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, and Miss Welsh, the Mistress of Girton.<sup>50</sup> She was not on the short list of five candidates.<sup>51</sup> In 1906, she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (RHS), supported by Hubert Hall, whom she knew through the LSE and the Historical

<sup>47</sup> *Myra’s Journal* (published 1875–1912), 1 June 1898, 13. Also included were Jane Harrison of Newnham College, and Eugenie Sellers, McArthur’s contemporary at Girton and a lecturer on Greek sculpture, later keeper of the Duke of Devonshire’s sculpture collection.

<sup>48</sup> Her reviews were mentioned in her obituary in the *Cambridge Review* of 14 October 1927.

<sup>49</sup> There is an acknowledgement of such a request in King’s College, Cambridge Archive, PP/OB/1/1008/A.

<sup>50</sup> King’s College, Cambridge Archive, MS Add. 8119/1/M3.

<sup>51</sup> Personal communication from Sophie Badham, archivist at Royal Holloway & Bedford New College, now Royal Holloway, University of London. The two historic women’s colleges having merged in 1985, the “Bedford” element was dropped from the name in 1992.

Association. Women had been Fellows of the RHS since the 1870s, and a number of McArthur's friends and students preceded her as Fellows.<sup>52</sup> She may have applied at that point with a view to future job opportunities. As it happened, in 1907 her former student Caroline Skeel, head of the History Department at Westfield, another women's college in the University of London, fell ill. McArthur stepped in and took over teaching at Westfield for the next four years, becoming a member of the Faculty of Arts in the University of London.<sup>53</sup>

According to the historian of Westfield, McArthur "continued to live in Cambridge and could only spare one night away each week".<sup>54</sup> She maintained her lecture class in Cambridge throughout, although she gave up coaching students at Girton.<sup>55</sup> But henceforth the bulk of her energies were focused on the suffrage campaign. Her obituary records that "During the most critical years of the final chapter, beginning in 1906, she gave her powers unsparingly to the cause ... she responded untiringly to all the demands which that cause made upon her."<sup>56</sup> Westfield took a back seat in the suffrage campaign, rather than being at the forefront like Girton and Somerville College in Oxford.<sup>57</sup> McArthur was in the vanguard. She served on the Executive Committee of the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) until 1912; in the three years before 1912, the organisation more than tripled its membership. She was also on the committee of the local Cambridge Association for Women's Suffrage, and on the Eastern Counties Federation of the NUWSS list of speakers.<sup>58</sup> In the historic suffrage march to the Albert Hall on 18 June 1908, McArthur carried the banner at the head of the university women's contingent.

It was her interest in suffrage that led McArthur to investigate women's political activism in the seventeenth century. A reader of *The Times* in 1908 asked when the woman suffrage campaign began. McArthur answered with reference to women's demands for political participation in

<sup>52</sup> Archives of the Royal Historical Society, University College London.

<sup>53</sup> When McArthur had taught at the LSE in the 1890s it was not part of the University of London so she had not acquired that status.

<sup>54</sup> Janet Sondheimer, *Castle Adamant in Hampstead* (London: Westfield College, 1983), 61.

<sup>55</sup> Curran, "McArthur", 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Cambridge Review*, 14 October 1927.

<sup>57</sup> Sondheimer, *Castle Adamant*, 66.

<sup>58</sup> Curran, "McArthur", 4. Records of the Cambridge Association for Women's Suffrage, Cambridgeshire County Record Office.

the mid-seventeenth century and for education in the eighteenth century. She went into considerable detail on the pamphlets of the anonymous “Sophia”: “In these eighteenth century writings we perhaps get the first complete statement of women’s rights, but ... anticipation of certain claims are undoubtedly found in the actions and beliefs of diverse well-affected seventeenth-century pioneers whose names have seldom survived.”<sup>59</sup> In 1909, McArthur inaugurated the History Club at Westfield with her paper on women petitioners and the Long Parliament, which appeared in print that same year in the *English Historical Review* (still in 1909 the only academic historical periodical).<sup>60</sup> This appears to have been the first article in the *English Historical Review* to have “women” in the title and there would not be another until 1997.<sup>61</sup> Of course, there were articles throughout the twentieth century on individual queens and noblewomen, but McArthur’s was the only one for a century of publication to take an explicitly feminist perspective. The remaining articles of course do not specify “men” in the title but assume the “false universal”.<sup>62</sup>

Meanwhile, in the *Economic Journal*, Clara Collett and a few other women maintained a feminist focus on contemporary women workers through the later nineteenth century and into the twentieth. In 1910, the year after the publication of McArthur’s article on women petitioners in the seventeenth century, Charlotte Payne-Townshend Shaw changed the terms of the scholarship that she had initiated at the LSE in 1905 so that henceforth it was to be awarded only to women, and only for studying women’s history, in the following year specifically “before the Industrial Revolution”.<sup>63</sup> There were probably multiple reasons for Payne-Townsend Shaw taking this step, but McArthur’s article may have been one inspiration. The winner of the first Shaw studentship for women in 1911 was McArthur’s student, Eileen Power, at the beginning of her thirty-year career at the LSE.

In addition to her political campaigns, McArthur still kept her eye on academic opportunities. In 1908, Edith Morley became the first woman appointed a university professor, in the English Department of Reading

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 3 July 1908.

<sup>60</sup> Sondheimer, *Castle Adamant*, 66. “Women Petitioners and the Long Parliament”, *English Historical Review*, 24 (1909), 698–709.

<sup>61</sup> Search of Jstor and Bibliography of British and Irish History.

<sup>62</sup> Hilda L. Smith, *All Men and Both Sexes: Gender, Politics, and the False Universal in England, 1640–1832* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Pomata, “Rejoinder to Pygmalion”, 79.

University College (after considerable underhand dealing on the college's part).<sup>64</sup> In 1909, McArthur applied for the advertised Professorship of History at the University of Birmingham (founded in 1900), supported by Cunningham, Sir George Prothero, and A. L. Smith, Master of Balliol.<sup>65</sup> Prothero, like Cunningham, had been one of McArthur's lecturers in her undergraduate years and was a past president of the Royal Historical Society. But neither her academic record, nor her eminent connections and support were sufficient to secure McArthur the post. Professor Morley observed in 1914, "At almost all the new universities men and women are nominally alike eligible for every teaching post, in practice, women are rarely if ever selected for the higher positions." Success depended on the "idiosyncrasy" of the head of department.<sup>66</sup> At the old universities of Cambridge and Oxford women were not even nominally eligible.

In 1911, Caroline Skeel returned to her post at Westfield at McArthur's persuasion, according to a rare surviving letter from this period.<sup>67</sup> In 1912, at the age of 50, McArthur suffered a serious but unspecified illness, which might have been due to exhaustion. She made a partial recovery but stopped lecturing in Cambridge except for covering for an absent male economic historian for six months during the First World War.<sup>68</sup> However, she continued her work with the Cambridge Training College for Women (schoolteachers) and the Historical Association. Nor did she relinquish pressure for suffrage during that time, signing a joint letter from prominent Cambridge suffragists (including Jane Harrison, Darwins, Ramsays, Katharine Jex-Blake, "and others") to *The Times* of 25 January 1917 objecting to the continued failure of the Electoral Reform Conference to make a recommendation on women's suffrage, while extending male suffrage to its greatest extent to date.

McArthur played a role in political change (female suffrage was passed with a property qualification in 1918) and in educational change, in terms of the concessions that Cambridge University granted to the women's

<sup>64</sup> Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex*, 158–160.

<sup>65</sup> *The Times*, 6 September 1927. The position went instead to Raymond Beazley. <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/documents/staff-archives-guide.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex*, 134, 139.

<sup>67</sup> Queen Mary, University of London (hereafter QMUL) Archives, PP11/CS/1/1/1: McArthur to Skeele, 24 July 1925. Westfield College was amalgamated to become Queen Mary and Westfield College in 1989, and in 2013 "Westfield" was lost when it became Queen Mary, University of London.

<sup>68</sup> Curran, "McArthur", 4.

colleges between 1880 and 1926, and of ensuring the success of the Cambridge Training College for Women. After her death, the Council of the Training College remembered McArthur's "vigorous, clear, far-seeing mind, her unfailing grasp of business procedure and of precedent, her wise judgment, her absence of all self-interest and pettiness, and withal her sincerity and real kindness. They recognise that it has been she who has ensured continuity of tradition and set a standard of policy and action."<sup>69</sup>

But above all her legacy was her students. So committed to postgraduate research was McArthur that between 1896 and 1903 she personally ran a hostel for women postgraduate students at 3 Green Street.<sup>70</sup> She shared this mission with her friend Mary Bateson, who during the same years was establishing the Newnham Research Fellowships for postgraduate study.<sup>71</sup> In twenty years of teaching at Girton, eleven of McArthur's students went on to academic prominence, which is an extraordinary record for any teacher, unequalled at the time to the best of my knowledge. Two of her students went on to head teacher training colleges: Henriette (Deutsch) Dent (at Girton 1903–6) and M. G. Jones (at Girton 1905–8).<sup>72</sup> Barbara Shore Smith (at Girton 1891–94), later Lady Stephen, became the first historian of Girton College, the College Secretary from 1897, founder of the Women Graduates Union of Calcutta, and an exceptional campaign and charity organiser.<sup>73</sup> Eight of McArthur's students completed postgraduate work at the LSE. Postgraduate work was very difficult for women in Cambridge, where women comprised only 10 per cent of the student population. At the LSE, founded as a postgraduate institution on a gender-equal basis, one third of the student body was

<sup>69</sup> Hughes Hall Report for the Year 1926–27, Presented at the General Meeting of the College Saturday 19 November 1927, provided by college archivist, Peter Brook.

<sup>70</sup> The notice in *The Girton Review*, January 1897, 15, says, "It may interest those old students, who at various times have discussed the possibility of starting a Hostel for advanced students in Cambridge, to hear that Miss McArthur is trying the experiment on a small scale this year. For the present the venture is a private one, but if, as seems likely, the demand for some such house should continue, the scheme may take a more permanent form."

<sup>71</sup> Mary Dockray-Miller, "Mary Bateson (1865–1906)", in *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, ed. Jane Chance (Madison WI and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 72.

<sup>72</sup> K. T. Butler and H. I. McMorran, compilers, *Girton College Register 1869–1946* (Cambridge: Girton College, 1948).

<sup>73</sup> She published *Emily Davies and Girton College* (1927) and *Girton College 1869–1932* (1933). Butler and McMorran, *Girton College Register*.

female throughout the first three decades.<sup>74</sup> All of these eight students published books from their theses that are still referenced today:

- Ellen M. Leonard<sup>75</sup>: Girton 1885–88; LSE 1896–?

*The Early History of English Poor Relief* (1900), awarded LSE medal 1901

- Lilian (Tomn) Knowles<sup>76</sup>: Girton 1890–94; TCD LittD 1906

*The Industrial and Commercial Revolutions in Great Britain during the 19th Century* (1921)  
LSE Lecturer 1904; Reader 1907; 1st Professor of Economic History 1919–26

- Caroline Skeel<sup>77</sup>: Girton 1891–95; LSE DLit 1904

*The Council in the Marches of Wales* (1904) and many other books  
Westfield College 1895–1929, Professor from 1925

- Dorothy (Gordon) George<sup>78</sup>: Girton 1896–99; LSE 1910–13, 1923, LittD 1931

*London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1925)  
Catalogued British Museum’s eighteenth-century prints

- Alice Effie Murray (Radice from 1903)<sup>79</sup>: Girton 1897–1901; LSE DSc 1903

<sup>74</sup>Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex*, 248–249.

<sup>75</sup>Leonard must have remained a student in some capacity because she is recorded as the first female president of the Students Union in 1907 (age 41). <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2016/03/24/ellen-marianne-leonard/>

<sup>76</sup>“Knowles, Lilian Charlotte Anne (1870–1926)”, Maxine L. Berg in *ODNB*.

<sup>77</sup>Skeel’s papers are at QMUL Archive. “Skeel, Caroline (1872–1951)”, Janet Sondheimer in *ODNB*.

<sup>78</sup>“George, (Mary) Dorothy (1878–1971)”, Mark Pottle in *ODNB*.

<sup>79</sup>Awarded for work partly done while at Girton, according to the preface of the thesis at <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/E900040.html>

*History of the Commercial and Financial Relations between England and Ireland from the Period of the Restoration* (1903)

- Annie Abram: Girton 1902–5; LSE DSc 1908

*Social England in the Fifteenth Century: A Study of the Effects of Economic Conditions* (1909)

- O. Jocelyn Dunlop: Girton 1903–6; LSE DSc (Econ) 1912

*English Apprenticeship and Child Labour: A History* (1912)

- Eileen Power<sup>80</sup>: Girton 1907–10; LSE 1911–13

*Medieval English Nunneries* (1922); *Medieval People* (1924)  
LSE Lecturer 1921; Reader 1924; 2nd Professor of Economic History 1931–40

Two of the first three doctoral theses at the LSE were written by McArthur's students: Alice Effie Murray in 1903 and Caroline Skeel in 1904.<sup>81</sup> In 1928 there were forty women with academic positions in history in Britain, twenty-seven of them in Cambridge, Oxford, and the LSE.<sup>82</sup> At least four (Knowles, Skeel, Power in London and Jones at Girton) were McArthur's students. When Skeel was appointed to her professorship in 1925, McArthur wrote to congratulate her:

I feel like a hen whose eggs are exceptionally good and as if I had some (only a small) right to strut about. Perhaps a pea hen wd be the best sort of hen, with its beautiful appendages. Just think of the joy of having *two* Profrs of History [Knowles and Skeel] & one Reader [Power] in one University [London] ... I feel it is better to be a producer of Profrs than to be one – with all the responsibility thereto attached.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Berg, *A Woman in History*.

<sup>81</sup> Jon Adams, "Finding the First Thesis", *LSE Connect*, Winter 2010, 19. Adams' assertion that the third person, Amy Harrison, was also a Girtonian is incorrect. Harrison was an undergraduate at Aberystwyth. Personal communication with a photograph of the Aberystwyth Register from archivist Julie Archer.

<sup>82</sup> Iaria Porciani and Lutz Raphael, eds., *Atlas of European Historiography: The Making of a Profession, 1800–2005* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xvii, 36.

<sup>83</sup> QMUL Archive, PP11/CS/1/1/1: McArthur to Skeel, 24 July 1925.

McArthur could at least enjoy academic status vicariously through her students, if her own efforts in that direction had been shunned. But five of McArthur's students who completed doctorates found academic life unattractive, unwelcoming, or impossible. All were, like McArthur, interested in current economic and social problems as well as historical ones. Annie Abram is described on the title page of *Social England in the Fifteenth Century* as "B.A. Cambridge Hist. Tripos", which is a political statement, since women were allowed to take the examinations but not to take the degree until 1948.<sup>84</sup> Abram went into social investigation and reform with the Women's Industrial Council, contributing to the 1915 report *Married Women's Work*.<sup>85</sup> Jocelyn Dunlop's first book on *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour* included a supplementary section on the modern problem of juvenile labour, co-written with R. D. Denman, MP; her second book, *The Farm Labourer* (1913) was subtitled *The History of a Modern Problem*. Little else is known about Abram, although she does have an ODNB entry, and nothing else about Leonard, Murray, or Dunlop.<sup>86</sup>

In 1923, women students in Cambridge were allowed to attend lectures as a matter of right, rather than privilege, and they were granted the "title" of degree without actually getting a degree (meaning they were still not members of the university).<sup>87</sup> In 1926, university teaching and examining positions were opened to women, along with competitions for university prizes, scholarships, and studentships, but still not full membership.<sup>88</sup> M. G. Jones, who returned from heading the Alexandra College, Dublin teacher training department to Girton as a staff member in 1920, was the first of McArthur's students to hold a Cambridge University faculty position from 1926, the year before McArthur died.<sup>89</sup> Obituaries for McArthur appeared in *The Times*, reprinted from that written by Julia M. Grant for the *St Leonard's School Gazette* (Grant had been a friend of

<sup>84</sup> I am indebted to Jeremy Goldberg for this observation in his unpublished paper "Women in the Later Medieval English Economy" at [https://www.york.ac.uk/teaching/history/pjpg/Women\\_Economy.docx](https://www.york.ac.uk/teaching/history/pjpg/Women_Economy.docx)

<sup>85</sup> Abram, "Newcastle", in *Married Women's Work: Being the Report of an Enquiry undertaken by the Women's Industrial Council*, ed. Clementina Black (London: G. Bell, 1915), 195–203.

<sup>86</sup> "Abram, Annie (1869–1930)", Janet Sondheimer in ODNB.

<sup>87</sup> McWilliams Tullberg, *A Men's University*, 174–175.

<sup>88</sup> Barbara Megson and Jean Lindsay, *Girton College 1869–1959: An Informal History* (Cambridge: Girton Historical and Political Society, 1961), 55.

<sup>89</sup> Butler and McMorran, *Girton College Register*. Jones was awarded honorary doctorates late in her career.

McArthur's since their school days)<sup>90</sup>; in the *Girton Review*, written by former student Minnie Beryl Curran,<sup>91</sup> and in *The Woman's Cause & The Common Cause* (9 September 1927), relying on Curran's; and in the *Cambridge Review* of 14 October 1927. Obituaries did not appear in the academic journals where she published, the *Economic Journal* or the *English Historical Review*.<sup>92</sup>

McArthur does *not* appear in a surprising number of places: not in books focusing on the early days of economic history,<sup>93</sup> not in the four-volume history of Cambridge University,<sup>94</sup> and not in biographical collections of (more than seventy) women medievalists or of (twelve) Cambridge women.<sup>95</sup> Even Maxine Berg, in her article on the first women economic historians focusing on Knowles and Power, gives McArthur only a couple of sentences before moving on to the influence of Cunningham.<sup>96</sup> Cunningham's *ODNB* entry says only that his "volumes owed much to the assistance of the first generation of women economic historians".<sup>97</sup> Although McArthur was one of the founders of the Historical Association and served as one of its vice presidents from 1906 until her death in 1927, *and* her former student, Minnie Beryl Curran, was long-time secretary to the Historical Association, nevertheless she does not appear in the history of the Association published on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. Instead, that pamphlet credits ten men with the founding of the Association alongside Dr Rachel Reid of the London Day Training College who was

<sup>90</sup> *The Times*, 6 September 1927. Personal communication from Jane Claydon, Archivist at St Leonards School.

<sup>91</sup> Curran was long-time secretary and librarian to the Royal Historical Society and the Historical Association. Butler and McMorrin, *Girton College Register*, and *The Historical Association, 1906–1956* (London, 1957), 3.

<sup>92</sup> The *Economic Journal* did publish an obituary of William Ashley by Clapham in December 1927, and the *English Historical Review*, 22 (1907), 64–68, published one of McArthur's friend Mary Bateson.

<sup>93</sup> In D. C. Coleman's *History and the Economic Past* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), McArthur has one index entry, where her name is misspelled in a list of those who taught at the LSE in its early years. Cunningham has nineteen entries.

<sup>94</sup> Christopher Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, vol. IV: 1870–1990 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>95</sup> Jane Chance, ed., *Women Medievalists and the Academy*; Edward Shils and Carmen Blacker, eds., *Cambridge Women: Twelve Portraits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>96</sup> Berg, "First Women Economic Historians", 314.

<sup>97</sup> Koot, "Cunningham".

apparently “instrumental”.<sup>98</sup> In the *ODNB* entries for Lilian Knowles and Caroline Skeel, McArthur is not mentioned. Cunningham and Maitland are credited with mentoring Knowles, and Skeel appears to have been self-taught.<sup>99</sup> Dorothy George “was only loosely supervised by the redoubtable Ellen McArthur”.<sup>100</sup> At least Annie Abram was “spurred on by teachers such as William Cunningham, a pioneer of economic history, and his ally Ellen McArthur”.<sup>101</sup> Dent, Dunlop, and Radice have no *ODNB* entries. In histories of Girton College, McArthur appeared in the first (1933) only as a pupil of and collaborator with Cunningham, together with her college employment history, a profile which was repeated in the second college history (1961), and she disappeared entirely from the third (1969).<sup>102</sup> The *Girton College Register* itself records Lilian Knowles as having been “trained in historical research by Archdeacon Cunningham”, possibly as reported by Knowles herself.<sup>103</sup>

None of McArthur’s students who went on to doctoral work acknowledge her in their books’ prefaces. Seven of the eight books were dedicated to or their authors thanked Cunningham or men at the LSE (Hewins, Hall, Webb) and a Girton contemporary.<sup>104</sup> Dunlop’s was dedicated to Lilian Knowles as “one who has trained many apprentices”, and her preface thanks Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb and others. M. G. Jones’ *The Charity School*

<sup>98</sup> *The Historical Association, 1906–1956* (London, 1957), 1–3. Alice Gardner of Newnham was also written out of the founding history. Reid, with degrees from London, replaced McArthur at Girton in 1908–9 after she had moved to teach at Westfield, almost certainly brought in by McArthur herself. Butler and McMorran, *Girton College Register*, 643.

<sup>99</sup> Berg, “Knowles”, and Sondheimer, “Skeel”.

<sup>100</sup> Pottle, “George”, quoting a report in the *Girton Review*, 187 (1972), 23–24, from a rather catty comment that George made late in life, recollecting her college days.

<sup>101</sup> Sondheimer, “Abram”.

<sup>102</sup> Barbara Stephen, *Girton College 1869–1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 96, 185–186. Barbara Megson and Jean Lindsay, *Girton College 1869–1959: An Informal History* (Cambridge: Heffers for Girton Historical and Political Society, 1961). Muriel C. Bradbrook, *That Infidel Place: A Short History of Girton College* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969).

<sup>103</sup> Butler and McMorran, *Girton College Register*, 65.

<sup>104</sup> Leonard’s was dedicated to Cunningham, and the preface thanks Hewins and Hall at the LSE, and Maud Syson, her contemporary at Girton. Skeel’s thanks Hubert Hall and I. S. Leadam as well as a long list of those who provided archives and help. Knowles’ was dedicated to Cunningham, with thanks to Mrs [Mabel] Buer and Mrs [Dorothy] George who read parts in manuscript. Abram thanked Hubert Hall and Ellen Marion Delf, a contemporary at Girton and at Westfield. Alice Effie Murray thanked Webb and Hall, together with her LSE colleague Amy Harrison.

*Movement: A Study of 18th-Century Puritanism in Action* was admittedly published in 1938, more than a decade after McArthur's death, but thanks only her former pupils Mrs J. H. Clapham, Dr M. D. George, Miss H. M. Cam, Miss I. F. Grant, Dr H. M. Wodehouse, and Prof. Eileen Power.

While it is normal to acknowledge one's postgraduate teachers in the book of one's PhD thesis, this was an era when postgraduate study was extremely unusual and to get to that stage required an extraordinary undergraduate effort. Undoubtedly, Cunningham in Cambridge was extremely encouraging and influential, but for all of these women, McArthur was the only historian responsible for their undergraduate education. Unless we are to assume that McArthur was really an unpleasant or an insignificant character—and nothing else about her life suggests that that might be the case—then there must be some other reason that she was overlooked by her students. She was not literally forgotten: her obituary in the *Girton Review* refers to her being “greatly cheered by the visits and letters of her numerous friends and old pupils”.<sup>105</sup> The Council of the Cambridge Training College for Women remembered the “unique charm and vigour of her personality”.<sup>106</sup> But when it came to memorialising and writing the history, she was obliterated. Her Cambridge undergraduate lectures were never published posthumously, as were those of her younger contemporary at Cambridge, J. H. Clapham.<sup>107</sup> She had no entry in the *ODNB* until the 1990s. One obituary noted that McArthur was “intensely reserved in nature and in manner”, and certainly, that intense reserve is only too evident in her absence from the minutes of the suffrage committees on which she served.<sup>108</sup> The fact she did not deposit her research and personal papers in any public archive may have contributed to her obscurity, but it cannot be the whole explanation because Cunningham also did not leave his papers for posterity. Either McArthur was really just an appendage of Cunningham, only taught “loosely” as Dorothy George reported, and was really rather unremarkable—or this is the kind of memorialisation that many of us teaching today can expect.

I think what we see here is a tradition of thanking male mentors more than female, either through thinking that that is where the advantage lies,

<sup>105</sup> Curran, “McArthur”, 5.

<sup>106</sup> Hughes Hall Report for the Year 1926–27, Presented at the General Meeting of the College Saturday 19 November 1927, provided by college archivist Peter Brook.

<sup>107</sup> *Concise Economic History of Britain from the Earliest Times to 1750* (1949). “Clapham, Sir John Harold (1873–1946)”, Martin Daunt in *ODNB*.

<sup>108</sup> *The Times*, 6 September 1927.

or unconsciously prioritising them in a professional context. Remembering and forgetting are collective, cultural acts as well as individual acts. The occlusion of McArthur, along with many other early women economic historians, appears to be part of a “structural amnesia” whereby “people tend to remember only those links ... that are socially important”.<sup>109</sup> A similar phenomenon, implicit or unconscious bias, has been shown to shape the behaviour of women as much as men still today, and we can observe here women academics forgetting their foremothers. In Joan Thirsk’s words, “ignoring the women became the accepted convention”. But it became the accepted convention not only in the longer term, as Thirsk meant it—as economic history and as women entered the mainstream of academic institutions—but within McArthur’s own lifetime.

This is not to say that McArthur went entirely unremembered. Thanks to her own bequest to the university, Cambridge University Press published a series between 1933 and 1973, “Cambridge Studies in Economic History”, that bears her name inside the front cover. That series consists of the winners of the Ellen McArthur Prize in Economic History: twenty-four men and three women. The Ellen McArthur Fund in the Cambridge History Faculty produced a sufficient surplus to inaugurate a biannual series of lectures in 1968. For nearly half a century, all of the lecturers invited to speak were men. In view of her commitment to postgraduate research, McArthur would undoubtedly have been more pleased with the graduate studentships which her fund started to offer in the 1970s. But at least the advent of the first female Ellen McArthur Lecturer in 2016, Professor Jane Humphries of Oxford,<sup>110</sup> provided the stimulus for further investigation into the career of Ellen Annette McArthur.

<sup>109</sup> John Barnes, *Models and Interpretations: Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) from an essay published in 1947, based in part on E. E. Evans-Pritchard’s concept of “genealogical amnesia”, published in 1940.

<sup>110</sup> For the podcasts of these lectures, see: <https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/research/research-funding/ellen-mcarthur>



## Alice Clark's Critique of Capitalism

*Tim Stretton*

Alice Clark (1874–1934) was an astute and accomplished businesswoman, not a history graduate or professor. Extended periods of ill health hampered her schooling and despite having performed well in Cambridge matriculation exams, at age 18 she joined the (now famous) family shoe business, C & J Clark in Street, Somerset.<sup>1</sup> In 1903, aged 29, she was named as one of five founding directors in the newly reorganized limited liability private company and remained a mainstay of the business until her

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Gillett Trust, Street, Somerset (hereafter AGT) MIL/91/1 diary entry 20 February 1893; Sandra Stanley Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780–1930* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 165, 196, 199.

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death.<sup>2</sup> Yet in 1919 Routledge published her book, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, in which she set out to show the robust independence that characterized the lives of many women in the seventeenth century and to explain how the forces and effects of capitalism (amongst other causes) had worked to erode some of that independence over time. The first development she highlighted was a move away from independent household enterprises towards larger scale production based on wages. The second was the partial or complete exclusion of women from the emerging medical and teaching professions and from the traditionally female vocations of midwifery, brewing, and silk weaving. In many respects *Working Life of Women* remains the most accessible single authored book on its subject, a remarkable achievement for a work that is almost a century old.

However, three questions prompted by her project remain largely unanswered: Why did she think women's position had declined in England, why did she regard the seventeenth century as representing a watershed, and why did she blame the decline largely (but not wholly) on capitalism?

Conventional intellectual history offers scant reward because Clark did not embrace a particular scholarly or political tradition and was not the product of a specific institution or school of thought. Instead, the answers appear to rest in her unusual biography. It appears that Clark wrote *Working Life* because she was an independent thinker disillusioned with the gender inequality of her day, who was inspired by the historical origins of her Quaker faith and influenced by her family and intellectual exchanges with friends and colleagues inside and outside the women's movement. To understand Alice Clark's book you need to understand Alice Clark.

### SCHOLARLY RESPONSES TO *WORKING LIFE OF WOMEN*

The initial reception of *Working Life* was mixed. Most reviewers congratulated Clark on her effort to "break new ground" and "blaze a trail where only a path existed," but a number identified mistakes (in her understanding of the common law, for example), criticized her terminology "that smacks of the new-fangled distinctions of the lecture room," or found the

<sup>2</sup> Mark Palmer, *Clarks: Made to Last: The Story of Britain's Best-Known Shoe Firm* (London: Profile Books, 2013), 123–128.

detail she packed into 308 pages too demanding.<sup>3</sup> In the words of one: "Let it be frankly admitted that this book is not one upon which the person known as the general reader will care to spend much time."<sup>4</sup> Sales were modest, and the book's influence on the increasingly male-dominated discipline of economic history proved negligible.

In 1968, the maverick publisher Frank Cass reissued *Working Life*, not in response to overwhelming demand (although the few feminist historians and students who could get hold of copies treasured it) but as part of a program of republishing long out of print works.<sup>5</sup> The book has subsequently been reissued three times, with scholarly introductions by Miranda Chaytor and Jane Humphries in 1982 and by Amy Erickson in 1992, and in a reprint edition in 2012. The continuing influence of *Working Life* is particularly striking given how few current scholars agree with its main arguments. In reviewing the 1968 reissue, Alice Clare Carter confessed herself exasperated by Clark's omissions and her "unacceptable conclusions, for instance on the relative value of labour productive of goods for family consumption or for sale."<sup>6</sup> In their introduction to the 1982 edition of *Working Life*, Chaytor and Humphries devoted almost twenty pages to questioning Clark's assumptions and interpretations.<sup>7</sup>

For a few decades now, *Working Life* has been the footnote in chief for historians who dismiss the idea that there was ever a "Golden Age" or "*bonne vieux temps*" for women in the medieval or early modern periods.<sup>8</sup> This is despite the fact that Clark never used either phrase or argued that such a thing

<sup>3</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 December 1919; *Manchester Guardian*, 12 January 1920; *The Common Cause*, 19 December 1919, 473–474.

<sup>4</sup> *The Friend*, new series, 60, 30 January 1920, 63–64.

<sup>5</sup> Gerry Black, *Frank's Way: Frank Cass and Fifty Years of Publishing* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Alice Clare Carter, review of *Working Life*, *Economic History Review*, new series, 22:1 (1969), 159.

<sup>7</sup> Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Miranda Chaytor and Jane Lewis (London and New York: Routledge, 1984) [hereafter *Working Life*], Introduction, xxi–xxxviii, xli–xlii.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Earle, "The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," *Economic History Review*, 42:3 (1989), 328–353; Amanda Vickery, "From Golden Age To Separate Spheres: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 383–414; Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

had existed.<sup>9</sup> Her focus was on decline and the depths women of certain classes had reached by her own day, not on any magical heights they had once enjoyed; and much of her book exposes the arduous conditions and discrimination women endured and the depressing poverty and misery experienced by the working poor. Notwithstanding her reservations about *Working Life*, for example, Alice Carter respected Clark's "deep, almost personal, identification with the overdriven, underpaid, and disregarded distaff side of toiling human kind."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, by writing about change and positing decline Alice Clark left herself open to criticism from scholars who emphasize continuities in women's secondary position and are justifiably suspicious of grand evolutionary narratives. In particular, some appear to have a visceral disdain for Marxist interpretations (even though Clark was no Marxist) that suggest a decline in autonomy for the growing numbers of workers reliant on wages.<sup>11</sup>

A number of historians disagree with Clark's pinpointing of the late seventeenth century as a fulcrum of change, arguing that this is too late in terms of capitalist changes to economic organization and too early for change associated with industrialization. Others argue that she overestimated the number of married women who worked in the same fields as their husbands (although the question of how much assistance wives who worked in other spheres gave their husbands remains under-explored).<sup>12</sup> Judith Bennett has rightly stressed that despite the changes Clark identified in the fields of education, medicine, brewing, midwifery, and silk weaving, women's work "remained characteristically low status, low skilled and low profit."<sup>13</sup> Clark would have welcomed Bennett's findings, although what interested her were the wider implications of women's exclusion from transformed professions and industries, and the social and cultural effects that flowed from growing male dominance, profit taking, and women's increased economic dependence on men.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup>For counter views, and defenses of Clark, see Amy Louise Erickson's introduction to *Working Life of Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), vii–xlii; Bridget Hill, "Women's History: A Study in Change, Continuity or Standing Still?" *Women's History Review*, 2:1 (1993), 5–22.

<sup>10</sup>Carter, review of *Working Life*, 159.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Vickery, "Separate Spheres," 401–414.

<sup>12</sup>Earle, "Female Labour Market," 42–53; Hilda L. Smith, "The Legacy of Alice Clark," *Early Modern Women*, 10:1 (2015), 94–104.

<sup>13</sup>Judith Bennett, "Theoretical Issues: Confronting Continuity," *Journal of Women's History*, 9:3 (1997), 73–94.

<sup>14</sup>Bennett, "Confronting Continuity," 84; Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, "Women's Labour Force Participation and the Transition to the Male-Breadwinner Family, 1790–1865," *Economic History Review*, 48:1 (1995), 89–117.

Most books subjected to such consistent and sustained criticism would sink from view. Clark clearly exaggerated the pace and extent of change and made assumptions about the power, respect, and autonomy women's economic contributions brought them that remain open to question. As she herself reflected, in response to criticism by a senior doctor of her sister Hilda's book on tuberculosis treatments, "It is I suppose the Scylla & Charybdis which present themselves to every one who tries to simplify that which is essentially complicated."<sup>15</sup> Yet despite its mistakes, limitations, and the corrections demanded by subsequent research (which Clark foresaw and welcomed on the first page of her preface) *Working Life of Women* continues to engage readers and inspire researchers thanks to Clark's passionate commitment to her subject and the authenticity of her voice. Recent research has vindicated some of her arguments, but puzzles remain: about her motivations for becoming a historian; her choice to highlight the later seventeenth century; and her identification of capitalism as the catalyst for change.<sup>16</sup>

### EARLY LIFE AND ACTIVISM

The clearest influence on Clark's decision to write *Working Life* was her activism. She was born into a tightknit Quaker family that boasted three generations of active political and social campaigners passionate about fighting inequality and promoting reform. Alice's great uncle Jacob Bright had helped initiate a parliamentary bill in favor of women's suffrage in 1870, and she and her family devoted much of their lives to supporting the women's movement.<sup>17</sup> From a young age she showed no tolerance for gender or racial inequality. At 14 she described a separate Quaker women's sitting as "very dull," concluding; "I call it decidedly weak, I hope they soon will have entirely joint sittings."<sup>18</sup> The following year she and

<sup>15</sup> AGT HC/7/38 Alice Clark to Hilda Clark, 15 May 1915, verso.

<sup>16</sup> Laura Gowing, "Girls on Forms: Apprenticing Young Women in Seventeenth-Century London," *Journal of British Studies*, 55 (2016), 447–473, 450 n. 9, 452; Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status, & the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 214–231, 261–274.

<sup>17</sup> Holton, *Quaker Women*, 164–180, 200–221.

<sup>18</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 16 July 1889; Sandra Holton and Margaret Allen, "Offices and Services: Women's Pursuit of Sexual Equality Within the Society of Friends, 1873–1907," *Quaker Studies*, 2:1 (1997), 1–29, 15.

her mother discussed with a family friend, Phoebe Cash, “whether married women should have votes. She said ‘no’ because husband and wife were one. Mother and I disagreed with her.”<sup>19</sup> In 1895 she became intrigued by an article describing the experience of Mormon women in Utah. She reflected that, while “we despise people who practice polygamy,” we “may do well to ask ourselves can we lay claim to a position on any higher moral level,” given the sexual double standard in England and the fact that “Woman Suffrage should have obtained there for long & that there a man is obliged to maintain his wife & family.”<sup>20</sup> In 1900, she toured the southern United States and was taken aback by the extent of racial inequality. It was put to her:

that as children coloured people were as easily educated as white & as clever, but that in a race only exposed to civilization for a few generations the development stopped with childhood while the white man’s went on indefinitely.

She dismissed this racist logic out of hand, noting in her diary that it was “Exactly as some people say that women’s does.”<sup>21</sup>

Alice Clark’s whole life was blighted by periods of ill health.<sup>22</sup> During long periods out of school she educated herself through voracious reading that helped shape her particular worldview. When she was 15, in the space of a few months she read *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* by the Scottish evangelist Henry Drummond, Archbishop French’s *Lectures on Gustavus Adolphus and the 30 Years War*, John Morley’s *Life of Burke*, John L. Motley’s *Dutch Republic*, Lady Lena Logan’s *Sir John Logan and Duleep Singh*, and J. S. Mill’s *Political Economy*. When she finished the latter she wrote that “I feel rather drawn towards Malthus’s *Principles of Population*. Mother discourages me saying it is mostly statistics, but I think I shall try for myself.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, Alice and her aunts corresponded with the influential campaigners for women’s rights, Elizabeth Cady

<sup>19</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 1 May 1890.

<sup>20</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 9 December 1895 (written after reading “Signals From Our Watchtower,” *Woman’s Signal*, 4:101 [5 December 1895], 360–362).

<sup>21</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 27 April 1900.

<sup>22</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton, “To Live ‘Through One’s Own Powers’: British Medicine, Tuberculosis and ‘Invalidism’ in the Life of Alice Clark (1874–1934),” *Journal of Women’s History*, 11:1 (1999), 75–96.

<sup>23</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entries 22 February–7 July 1890.

Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. A remarkable cast of political activists and champions of equality also visited the family home in Street in Somerset, including Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, John Tengo Jabavu, and the future South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts.<sup>24</sup> Ever inquisitive, when Alice met a Parsi named Mr. Jehangir at an informal social gathering she quizzed him extensively about Indian attitudes to British home rule and about the position of women under the world's major religions, diligently recording his responses in her diary.<sup>25</sup>

Alice Clark was only 16 when she authored a column reporting on news of the women's movement. At 19 she was trying "to start a branch" of the Women's Liberal Association, and, by 21 she was already an experienced public speaker, advocating for suffrage and the formation of local associations to achieve it.<sup>26</sup> Entering the limelight did not come easily to her, and in 1895 she expressed her wariness of how "approval from great numbers" could provide "food for vanity & self love, & how foolish pride may be created & fostered by it." As she admitted:

I have felt its influence, for it is something rare that one from so humble a beginning, born & reared in ... a sect by many ridiculed & despised, without real trained education & without wealth & without political influence of any kind, should be permitted with any effect, & with any acceptance, to speak to an assembly so critical, often so hostile to my views, & so powerful in everything affecting the interests not of England only but of the world. I would wish to avoid vanity, & to be rather grateful that I am permitted & enabled to speak in such an assembly – on behalf of peace, of political morality, & to feel how solemn is the responsibility of such a position.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton, "From Anti-Slavery to Suffrage Militancy: The Bright Circle, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the British Women's Movement," in Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds., *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 213–233, 230 n. 7; Sandra Stanley Holton, "To Educate Women into Rebellion": Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Creation of a Transatlantic Network of Radical Suffragists," *American Historical Review*, 99:4 (1994), 1112–1136; AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 15 July 1887; Sandra Stanley Holton, "Segregation, Racism and White Women Reformer: A Transnational Analysis, 1840–1912," *Women's History Review*, 10 (2001), 5–25; Holton, *Quaker Women*, 201.

<sup>25</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 pages inserted at end of 1895 diary.

<sup>26</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 161–182; AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 24 October 1893.

<sup>27</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 19 July 1895.

Later that month her cousin Walter Stowe Bright McLaren, a staunch supporter of women's suffrage, lost his seat in Parliament by 550 votes. Alice noted that it was "extraordinary that intelligent men should have occasion so to change their minds in three years as to turn out an upright experienced member" like Walter "to make room for a boy who cannot make a speech or answer a question & knows nothing about politics." As she concluded, "After this election surely men cannot accuse women of being fickle."<sup>28</sup>

Over her life, Clark endorsed a number of worthy causes, but her commitment to women's rights remained unshakeable.<sup>29</sup> In 1900, she traveled through a snowstorm to speak at a poorly attended meeting in Bristol.<sup>30</sup> In 1907, she generated considerable publicity for refusing to pay her taxes on the grounds that "A Parliament in which no women are represented has no right to levy taxes upon women without their consent."<sup>31</sup> In 1911, she stayed in Dublin at the end of an Irish holiday solely so that she could have lunch with Connie Pim, the secretary of the newly formed association of United Irishwomen, and talk with her "about the suffrage." Then, while in the company of university professors on a visit to Germany in 1914 talk turned "as it always does sooner or later onto the woman's movement."<sup>32</sup>

At 22, Alice Clark contracted tuberculosis of the lungs and throat and had to have painful invasive surgery on her glands and extensive treatment supervised by her sister Hilda, who became a pioneer in the therapeutic use of tuberculin.<sup>33</sup> She might have remained a businesswoman and an earnest campaigner for justice and equality if not for a further bout of tuberculosis in 1909 that forced her to step back from her responsibilities at the shoe company.<sup>34</sup> Her treatment and recuperation extended over many months, during which her doctors ordered her to avoid talk-

<sup>28</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 21 July 1895.

<sup>29</sup> Holton, *Quaker Women*, 202.

<sup>30</sup> *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 17 February 1900, reporting on 13 February meeting.

<sup>31</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 7 March 1907, 3; *Tribune*, 1 March 1907; AGT MIL/90/3 Letter from Slack, Monro & Atkinson to the Tax Office, 18 June 1907; *The Times*, 20 October 1908, 8.

<sup>32</sup> AGT MIL/87/1/AC1 (f) no. 3 Alice Clark to Helen Priestman Bright Clark, 24 November 1911; AGT HC/7/38 Alice Clark to Priestman aunts, 27 and 30 July 1914.

<sup>33</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 22 August 1897; Holton, "To Live"; AGT BC-200/06, [M. C. Gillett], *Alice Clark of C. and J. Clark Ltd.* (c.1934).

<sup>34</sup> Holton, *Quaker Women*, 210–212; AGT BC-837/d Record of A.C.'s Activities in the Factory, 1909–1922, 26 May 1934.

ing, but it did not dampen her spirits. In the final stages of her recovery she traveled through Palestine and Syria with her friend Dr. Matilda MacPhail, met T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia), and traveled down the Tigris from Diabekr to Baghdad on a raft of poles resting on inflated animal skins and then overland to Babylon.<sup>35</sup>

Once back in England Alice decided not to return to work and instead moved to London to work on the suffrage campaign. Starting in the winter of 1912 she also began conducting research that would make its way into her book. She worked tirelessly for the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), attending meetings of the Executive from July 3, 1913. At the end of July, her colleagues appointed her Honorary Secretary of the Election Fighting Fund Committee and Honorary Parliamentary Secretary and co-opted her on to the parliamentary subcommittee as well.<sup>36</sup> *Working Life* is best seen as part of this political project to achieve greater equality for women by demonstrating the historical undermining of female independence. As she confessed in a letter in June 1913, "I believe my research and my suffrage work help each other."<sup>37</sup>

While completing research at the British Museum in 1913 Alice Clark became friends with Eileen Power, holder of the Shaw Studentship at the London School of Economics (LSE) sponsored by Charlotte Shaw, the wife of George Bernard Shaw. Perhaps through Power she also met Edward Cleveland-Stevens, a former holder of the Shaw Studentship (before Charlotte Shaw restricted it to women in 1911) and assistant to Dr. Lilian Knowles at the LSE who was soon to become the first Professor of Economic History in Britain.<sup>38</sup> In November 1913 Clark "was rather interested to meet" Graham Wallas, a political science lecturer at the LSE, and his wife at a social gathering at the famous historian George Trevelyan's house. In December 1913, aged 39 and without formal qualifications, Alice Clark went for an interview at the LSE for the Shaw Studentship.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> [Gillett], *Alice Clark*, 6–7; Alice Clark, "The Way to Baghdad," *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 47 (1913) 482–492.

<sup>36</sup> LSE GB/106/2/NWS/A1/15 Minutes of Executive Meeting 31 July; and see 18 September, 2 and 15 October, 3 November (Special Executive Meeting), 20 November, 4 and 16 December, 1913.

<sup>37</sup> Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek, Germany (hereafter S-HL) Cb54.56.190 (11) Ferdinand Tönnies, to Alice Clark, 9 June 1913.

<sup>38</sup> AGT MIL/87/1 AC/1f no. 6 Alice Clark to Helen Priestman Bright Clark, 26 November 1913.

<sup>39</sup> On the LSE culture that made such a thing possible see Berg, "First Women Economic Historians," 319; Gianna Pomata, "Rejoinder to Pygmalion: The Origins of Women's

In contrast to Eileen Power, who had impressed her interviewers with her “brilliant intelligence” and been their unanimous choice from a field of ten candidates, Clark’s committee (which included Lilian Knowles) were divided over whether to award the studentship to her or to “Miss Stead,” a recent Cambridge graduate and schoolteacher. As they explained to Charlotte Shaw, they felt Alice Clark was the more able and competent candidate who “had already started work on the ‘Economic Position of Women in the 17th Century’ and would continue whether she got the studentship or not,” whereas Miss Stead could not continue without financial support. Awarding the studentship to Alice Clark would mean “she would cover a wider field and do it more thoroughly, paying someone to read manuscripts of the period for her.”<sup>40</sup> Charlotte Shaw did not hesitate in selecting the older and more experienced Clark, preferring a candidate the committee agreed would be certain to produce a good piece of work over a bright graduate whose abilities as a scholar were untested. As Shaw explained in a later letter to the secretary at the LSE, “What I want is a series of monographs on the position of women in England (or Britain) from early days to the present, which are to dovetail with one another finally.”<sup>41</sup>

Alice Clark was in many senses a complete amateur. She had conducted research on her grandfather John Bright for George Trevelyan and became friends with him, but as she wrote in an interim report during her studentship, “This is a work which is quite new to me and I am greatly indebted to Dr Knowles for the help and advice she gives me.”<sup>42</sup> In the acknowledgments to *Working Life* she also thanked M. Dorothy George, who worked as her research assistant and later went on to write *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1925), and other individuals discussed below.<sup>43</sup> When the book appeared, Lilian Knowles wrote to Alice saying how pleased she was to see these acknowledgments, adding that “you owed it to them.”<sup>44</sup>

History at the London School of Economics,” *Storia della Storiografia*, 46:4 (2004), 79–104; Maxine Berg, *A Woman in History: Eileen Power 1889–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 67–68.

<sup>40</sup>LSE 7MGF/A/3/04 Secretary to Charlotte Shaw, 17 December 1913.

<sup>41</sup>LSE 7MGC/A/3/04 Charlotte Shaw to secretary, 22 July 1915; LSE Calendar 1914–15, 275.

<sup>42</sup>LSE 7MGC/A/3/04 Report 20 November 1915, fol. 2.

<sup>43</sup>AGT HC/7/38 Lilian Knowles to Alice Clark, 1 December [1919]; *Working Life*, viii; M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925), vi.

<sup>44</sup>AGT HC/7/38 Letter from Lilian Knowles to Alice Clark, 1 December [1919].

For Alice Clark activism and volunteering always took precedence over research. In June 1913 she expressed guilt at neglecting her research because she felt “obliged to give a good deal to Suffrage work.”<sup>45</sup> When the war started she stepped back even further from her history. Her first efforts at volunteering involved helping to establish and run a workroom on behalf of the NUWSS for young women made unemployed by war. She decided to have them make toys with Christmas in mind, in response to shortages created by the abrupt interruption to German imports, and was soon reporting profits of £50 a week (equivalent to Clark’s annual salary for being a director of C & J Clark Ltd.).<sup>46</sup> In September 1914, she requested a pause in her studentship. Charlotte Shaw “heartily” approved this, although she could not help airing with the LSE board her objection to this particular type of middle class do-gooding;

At the same time I deprecate extremely the orgy of private enterprise we are suffering from at present; when everyone seems to feel it is incumbent upon them to rush single handed into work which should obviously (to every Fabian) be organized by the government: & to do gratuitously what some needy person should be highly paid for doing.<sup>47</sup>

The next contribution Clark made was to the Quaker War Victims Relief Committee. Her sister Hilda, the doctor who had been instrumental in treating her tuberculosis, went to France to organize relief for war victims and established a large hospital in Haute-Savoie. Alice worked tirelessly in London as a member, and then the Honorary Secretary, of the Women Helpers’ Selection Committee, finding and vetting volunteers to send to France.<sup>48</sup> When the shortage of midwives became acute she enrolled in a midwifery course in the hopes of helping out in France herself and, in November of 1915, traveled to Holland to help with refugee projects.<sup>49</sup> This provision of assistance came naturally to Clark, after a life-

<sup>45</sup> S-HL Cb54.56.190 (11) Alice Clark to Ferdinand Tönnies, 9 June 1913 (and see 15 September).

<sup>46</sup> [Gillett], *Alice Clark*, 9–10.

<sup>47</sup> LSE 7MGF/A/3/04 Secretary to Charlotte Shaw, 22 October 1914; Charlotte Shaw to secretary, 23 October 1914.

<sup>48</sup> Friends House Library, Euston, London (hereafter FHL) YM/MfS/FEWVRC/MISSIONS/1/3/2/1 ‘Bessie’ to Hilda Clark, 4 May 1915; *The Friend*, new series 55, 22 October 1915, 828; 29 October 1915, 44.

<sup>49</sup> FHL TEMP MSS 301/COR/1 Alice to Hilda Clark, November 1915; AGT MIL/2 Letter Copy Book 1915–16, fols. 40–50.

time of activism, but it tested the patience of Charlotte Shaw and Lilian Knowles. “What has happened to Miss Clark? I have heard nothing of her since she started her midwifery work,” Shaw wrote to the secretary of the LSE in July of 1915.<sup>50</sup> In December the secretary reported to her that “Mrs Knowles and also the Director” thought Clark was taking “too much licence under the circumstances” and he had written to her for an explanation, adding that “the Director is inclined to suggest that we should withdraw the scholarship unless Miss Clark resumes her work in connection with it at once.”<sup>51</sup> Alice had published an article that September, not about women in the seventeenth century, but concerning the activities of the War Victims Relief Committee. Entitled “The Friends and Reconstruction in France,” it appeared in the new periodical *Y.M. The British Empire YMCA Weekly* and earned her 30s 2d.<sup>52</sup>

The horrors of war recalibrated Clark’s priorities; but her passion for history remained undiminished, and she continued to work on her book whenever circumstances allowed. In December of 1914, for example, she invited Lilian Knowles to dinner and a few days later wrote in a letter to her sister, “I am contemplating returning to my 17th century women as there seems nothing at all pressing for me to do.”<sup>53</sup> In November 1915 she reported to the secretary of the LSE that she had some gaps to fill but “the main part of my research work is ended” and the secretary informed Charlotte Shaw that “I think there is no doubt we shall get a satisfactory book from her quite soon.”<sup>54</sup> In 1916 she spent May 21, “a hot Sunday,” in Cambridge consulting with Eileen Power and wrote to her sister that “Each day there seems an increase of the work I must do before I can leave my book,” adding that “I have got some rather interesting things about midwives this last week.” Four days later she wrote again, saying “I wish

<sup>50</sup> LSE 7MGC/A/3/04 Charlotte Shaw to the Secretary, 22 July 1915.

<sup>51</sup> LSE 7MGC/A/3/04 Secretary to Charlotte Shaw, 15 December 1915.

<sup>52</sup> AGT MIL/2 Letter Copy Book 1915–1916, fol. 19 letter Alice Clark to Hilda Clark; *Y.M. The British Empire YMCA Weekly*, 1:36, 17 September 1915, 847–848. I would like to thank Vicky Clubb, Special Collections’ Searchroom Supervisor at the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham, for her generosity in locating this article.

<sup>53</sup> AGT HC/7/38 Alice Clark to Hilda Clark, 18 December 1914.

<sup>54</sup> LSE 7MGC/A/3/04 Alice Clark’s Report, 20 November 1915; Secretary to Charlotte Shaw, 24 November 1915; and see Smuts to M. C. Gillett in W. K. Hancock and Jean Van Der Poel, eds., *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966–73), vol. 3, 335.

my book would get done.”<sup>55</sup> Soon after, her tuberculosis returned and she traveled to France to recuperate at Hilda’s hospital. She did not work as a midwife, as originally planned, but spent a couple of hours each day taking patients’ and expectant mothers’ temperatures and offered support to her sister who was overstretched almost to the point of breakdown.<sup>56</sup>

Lilian Knowles expressed approval at this precautionary withdrawal. She also provided guidance on finishing the book, urging Clark to:

turn over in your own mind what you really think the whole thing has amounted to. Say it at the beginning & the end. Mackinder [Sir Halford Mackinder, Director of the LSE] once told me in lecturing, say what you want to say, say it (i.e. enlarge upon it) [and] say it again & one would make a good lecturer. This is true of a book. Tell people what you want them to see in what you are going to say, prove it & tell them what they ought to have seen.<sup>57</sup>

In June 1917, Knowles advised Clark to look up the different meanings of the word equity in a good dictionary, recommending that she favor “ordinary language” over “legal language.” She also shared political confidences with her, confiding that, “I don’t forgive my enemies till they can do no harm. I don’t think its good for them to think all people who differ from me are not only foolish but wicked.”<sup>58</sup>

Once the war ended, Alice Clark finished *Working Life* quite quickly and when it was published she mailed copies to Knowles and Charlotte Shaw.<sup>59</sup> Shaw wrote back that “I am glad to hear you are working at other books of the same period, & I hope I shall see them in due course,” having noted the admission in her preface that she planned to write about the history of married life and motherhood, girls’ education, apprenticeship and service.<sup>60</sup> Writing from Cape Town in March 1920, Jan Smuts suggested, in response to reviewers’ criticisms of her book that, “It is only when the whole work is complete that people will acclaim you as the

<sup>55</sup> AGT MIL/2 Letter Copy Book 1916–23, fols 11, 15, Alice Clark to Hilda, 21 and 25 May 1916.

<sup>56</sup> AGT 14 MIL/87/1 AC1f nos. 16e–21 (14 October–19 December 1916).

<sup>57</sup> AGT HC/7/25 Lilian Knowles to Alice Clark, 10 September 1916.

<sup>58</sup> AGT HC/7/25 Lilian Knowles to Alice Clark, 8 June 1917.

<sup>59</sup> AGT HC/7/38 Lilian Knowles to Alice Clark, 22 November [1919].

<sup>60</sup> AGT HC/7/25 Charlotte Shaw to Alice Clark, 2 December 1919; *Working Life*, viii.

Historian of Women.”<sup>61</sup> Once again, however, Clark’s sense of duty took precedence, and soon she was working full time for Quaker refugee and war victim projects in Serbia and Austria before returning to work for C & J Clark Ltd., where she devoted any surplus energies to good causes including improving adult education.<sup>62</sup> Further scholarship on the seventeenth century never materialized.<sup>63</sup>

## QUAKERS

Clark’s deep commitment to the women’s movement came from her family rather than her religion. As her teenage criticism of separate meetings for men and women indicates, Quaker attitudes to women grated on her, and the Society of Friends was surprisingly slow to offer support for women’s suffrage. Individual Quakers embraced the cause, such as Anne Knight in the 1840s, but it was only in 1906 that Emily Manners wrote a letter to the *British Friend* puzzling over Quaker silence on the matter of women voting.<sup>64</sup> Only from 1910 onwards did the subject begin appearing with any regularity in that periodical, usually in letters to the editor not all of which were supportive.<sup>65</sup> In 1910, for example, E. Vipont Brown wrote that “I should like to see it made a criminal offence for any married woman to go out to work” because mothers who work “neglect their homes and their children.” He argued that the suffragists could not destroy “the well marked line . . . ‘between the domain of labour and the duty of the sexes’” because “It is there as God and nature drew it.”<sup>66</sup>

The Clark family did their best to alter Quaker attitudes. In 1910 Alice Clark’s aunt Anna Maria Priestman wrote an appeal from women members of the Society of Friends for the matter of women’s suffrage to be

<sup>61</sup> Hancock and Der Poel, *Smuts Papers*, vol. 5, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton, entry for “Alice Clark” in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>63</sup> Her changing spiritual outlook may also have influenced her decision; Sandra Holton, “Feminism, History and Movements of the Soul: Christian Science in the Life of Alice Clark,” *Australian Feminist Studies*, 13 (1998), 281–293, 289.

<sup>64</sup> Cail Malmgreen, “Anne Knight and the Radical Subculture,” *Quaker History*, 71:2 (1982), 100–113; *The Friend*, new series, 46 (Dec. 1906), 338.

<sup>65</sup> *The Friend*, new series, 50, 1910, 210, 225–226; 242–243; 330; 362; 393; 410–411; 443–444; 480; 712; 743–744; 760–761; 777–778; 794; 850; 883; new series, 51, 1911, 80; 111–112; 128; 144–146; 161; 175–176; 177; 194; 226; 258–259; 276; 293; 311; 312; 379.

<sup>66</sup> *The Friend*, new series, 50, 1 July 1910, 443–4.

considered at the yearly meeting, which Alice and her sisters Esther and Margaret signed, along with Emily Manners who had written the letter of criticism to the *Quaker Friend*. A “Women suffrage meeting” was then held at Devonshire House “in the Women’s meeting-house” followed later that year by the formation of the Friends’ Council for Women’s Suffrage, and in November 1912 by the Friends’ League for Women’s Suffrage.<sup>67</sup> Alice and her brother Roger were Honorary Secretaries of the League in 1912 and 1913, but they withdrew from it before the end of May 1914.<sup>68</sup>

Where Alice Clark did draw inspiration from her faith was from the radicalism of the early Quakers, and her original intention was to write a book about Quaker women. While living in London she returned to the Friend’s House opposite Euston station, which she had visited as a teenager for a few hours in 1894 en route to Germany.<sup>69</sup> On December 8, 1912 she wrote in the Library reader’s book that she was interested in studying “Quaker attitudes to equality.” In 1913 the Friend’s House archivist Norman Penney, with whom she later collaborated, reported that Clark was “making a thorough search for information on the principles and practice of Friends regarding the equality of men and women.”<sup>70</sup> From Penney, Clark learned about the account book of Sarah Fell, Margaret Fell’s daughter, which is the most cited source in *Working Life*. Penney edited the account book for publication, with the assistance of Charlotte Fell-Smith, assembling the manuscript in 1914, save for some notes about names and a glossary that ill health delayed him from completing.<sup>71</sup> When it finally appeared in 1920, it included “A Note by Alice Clark, author of *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*” that reveals Clark’s interest in Fell’s economic activities rather than her beliefs.<sup>72</sup> Emily Manners also worked at the library around this time, editing a volume on

<sup>67</sup> *The Friend*, new series, 50, 10 June 1910, 393.

<sup>68</sup> *The Friend*, new series, 50, 25 November 1910, 794; new series, 52, 15 November 1912, 747; Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866–1928* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 116, 566; AGT MIL/8/8 AC9(k) HPB Clark to Alice Clark [1 June 1914].

<sup>69</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry for 22 August 1894.

<sup>70</sup> FHL LIB/1988/5 8 December 1912; *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 10 (1913), 32.

<sup>71</sup> Annual Meeting notes, *Journal of Friends Historical Society*, 12 (1, 2, and 3), 1915.

<sup>72</sup> Norman Penney, ed., *The Household Account Book of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), xxviii–xxxii.

another defiant Quaker, *Elizabeth Hooton: First Quaker Woman Preacher (1600–1672)*, published as a Friends Historical Journal Supplement in 1915.<sup>73</sup>

The example of early female Quakers had long inspired the women of the Clark and Bright families. In a letter published in *The Friend* in 1910, Alice's sister-in-law Sarah Bancroft Clark had highlighted "upwards of two centuries of the comparative freedom of our women."<sup>74</sup> In 1913, Alice's sister Margaret Clark Gillett spoke about "the Society of Friends and the Woman's Movement" at a Friends' League for Women's Suffrage conference held in York, arguing "that our Society has never taken the conventional view of the position of women. In its early days, women travelled in the service of the Truth sometimes even across the seas, and we do not hear of difficulties being made."<sup>75</sup> When Alice helped select the first female volunteers to send out to France to work with her sister in 1915 the Quaker leadership vetoed the idea. As she wrote to Hilda in October, "The Committee at first threw cold water," worried "about the responsibility of sending a woman to such dangerous places." Alice had countered that "it was strange to hear that from Friends who had in the past upheld the idea that a woman was as free as a man to sacrifice her life to what she believed her duty." She then reminded them "of that quaint woman who had a concern in the 17th century to speak the truth to the Sultan!" referring to Mary Fisher who had traveled alone across Macedonia and Thrace in 1658 to Adrianople in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>76</sup> Respect for the fire that burned within women like Fisher also helps explain Clark's support for militant suffragettes, even though she wondered out loud "whether it is cowardice that still keeps me from joining them."<sup>77</sup>

This admiration for the independent, defiant, and resourceful Quaker women living in the 1650s lay at the heart of Clark's scholarship, and

<sup>73</sup>FHL LIB/1988/5 January 1908, 1–3 April 1912, 9 June 1914. Clark may also have crossed paths with Mabel Brailsford who was also working on early Quaker women; 9 January, 12 February, 10–13 November 1913; 15 April–17 May 1915.

<sup>74</sup>*The Friend*, new series, 50, 25 November 1910, 794; new series, 52, 15 November 1912, 747; Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, 116, 566; AGT MIL/8/8 AC9(k) HPB Clark to Alice Clark [1 June 1914].

<sup>75</sup>*The Friend*, new series, 53, 7 November 1913, 736–737.

<sup>76</sup>AGT MIL/2 Letter Copy Book 1915–16, fol. 24 Alice Clark to Hilda Clark, 29 October 1915. Mary Fisher's story features in Mabel Brailsford's *Quaker Women, 1650–1690* (London: Duckworth and Co, 1915).

<sup>77</sup>Holton, *Suffrage Days*, 166–168.

Quakers form the backbone of her book.<sup>78</sup> In discussing women in agriculture, for example, she lamented the lack of surviving evidence resulting from male neglect and from the social and economic conditions that meant that women “themselves were too busy, too much absorbed in the lives of others, to keep journals” and they were not “sufficiently important” to have their memoirs written by others. Faced with this dilemma Clark reflected that “Perhaps their most authentic portraits may be found in the writings of the Quakers, who were largely drawn from this class of the community.”<sup>79</sup> In fact, Clark’s whole schema of change appears to have originated in the dilution over time of Quakers’ commitment to gender equality alongside the contrast she sensed between Quaker women in the 1650s and women of her own time.<sup>80</sup>

### CAPITALISM

As a Director of C & J Clark Ltd. Alice Clark was a capitalist, existing in London on share dividends and her Director’s stipend. She mixed freely with friends and colleagues of various political persuasions, from her staunchly Liberal family to the Tory Lilian Knowles and the Labour supporting Eileen Power. Her loyalty was to causes rather than to parties or organizations. She was a founding member of the Women’s Liberal Association in her area, yet after the Liberal Party declined to make female suffrage a part of its platform she joined her colleagues on the Executive of the NUWSS in campaigning for Labour candidates.<sup>81</sup> In a similar display of her convictions, when the NUWSS membership refused to make campaigning for peace a central plank of their platform, she resigned from the Executive and turned her attention to the victims of war.<sup>82</sup> Even her

<sup>78</sup> *Working Life*, 17, 32–33, 44–46, 51–52, 63, 67, 114, 125, 153–154, 168, 190, 198–199, 240, 252, 255, 280.

<sup>79</sup> *Working Life*, 44.

<sup>80</sup> Clark also felt that literary depictions of women confirmed this erosion of female independence; *Working Life*, 3, 28, 37–38, 158–159, 240, 254, 257, 304, 306; (in announcing the results of her final exams at school, her sister Margaret had informed her “thou hast come out top of all England in English - boys & girls”; AGT MIL/90/1 Exam results and cover letter from Margaret Gillett Clark).

<sup>81</sup> Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 76–83, 107, 111, 113; Holton, *Suffrage Days*, 163–166; LSE 7MGF/A/3/04 Alice Clark to Aneurin Williams, 7 January 1914.

<sup>82</sup> LSE Correspondence 2LSW/E/11, Box FL294; *The Common Cause*, 7:324 (25 June 1915), 161.

religious affiliation was not impervious to change, and after the war she severed ties with the Society of Friends and found spiritual solace in the Christian Science movement.<sup>83</sup>

A number of people helped shape Alice Clark's writing, from Eileen Power to Jan Smuts (who claimed credit for cajoling her to complete the final manuscript).<sup>84</sup> However, three individuals appear to have influenced her decision to research Quaker equality and then turn to economics and capitalism. The first was the South African novelist and advocate Olive Schreiner whom she thanked in her preface to *Working Life* for her "epoch-making book" *Woman and Labour* published in 1911.<sup>85</sup> Schreiner synthesized existing arguments about the desirability of balancing, rather than choosing between, motherhood and employment (paid and unpaid) and argued that capitalism and modernity had eroded women's productive labor and introduced idleness into the middle classes.<sup>86</sup> In *Working Life* Alice Clark attempted to chart and explain this erosion.

The second influence was Kurt Albert Gerlach, who later helped found the Institute for Social Research (originally to be named the Institute for Marxism), the precursor to the Frankfurt School, before his premature death in 1933 from complications associated with diabetes.<sup>87</sup> He was a lecturer at the University of Kiel when he came to London during the summer of 1912 to conduct research at the LSE under the guidance of Graham Wallas.<sup>88</sup> He sought out Alice Clark at his supervisor's suggestion in July 1912, and the two became lifelong friends and intellectual sparring partners. It was Gerlach who suggested she write a book on the subject of Quaker equality, then, in the preface to *Working Life* Clark thanked him

<sup>83</sup> Holton, "Feminism, History and Movements of the Soul," 281–293; Holton, *Suffrage Days*, 233.

<sup>84</sup> Hancock and Van Der Poel, *Smuts Papers*, vol. 5, 33; Shula Marks, "White Masculinity: Jan Smuts, Race and the South African War," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 111 (2001), 199–233, 206–208.

<sup>85</sup> *Working Life*, viii; Holton, *Quaker Women*, 214. Clark and Schreiner knew each other, perhaps through Schreiner's niece Lyndall who had visited the Clarks in Street, and corresponded; AGT MIL/90/1 Olive Schreiner to Alice Clark, 1912.

<sup>86</sup> Chaytor and Humphries, Introduction to *Working Life*, xvi–xx.

<sup>87</sup> Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 8–9.

<sup>88</sup> LSE WALLAS/1/50 and 52, Kurt Gerlach to Graham Wallas, 13 October 1912 and 24 November 1913.

for giving her the idea to “attempt to supply further evidence” to support Schreiner’s ideas about women’s productive capacity.<sup>89</sup>

The third influence on Clark was the renowned sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, author of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* [Community and Society] (1887). Tönnies was a family friend; and the two corresponded for years, engaging in deep intellectual debates about the influence on communities and individuals of custom, gender, race, class, and religion. Alice was actually staying with him in Germany in August 1914 when war broke out, and she experienced some difficulty getting back to England.<sup>90</sup> He wrote approvingly in 1913 of her initial plan to study Quakers and suggested two 1912 publications, Ernst Troeltsch’s *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* [The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches] and August Jorns’ *Studien über die Sozialpolitik der Quäker* [The Quakers as Pioneers in Social Work].<sup>91</sup> Tönnies had been Gerlach’s supervisor and provided the letter that introduced him to Alice. She read *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* and in September 1913 discussed it with her friend Kurt Marcard, another of Tönnies’ graduate students working in the British Museum. Although she disagreed with Tönnies on specific points, she broadly accepted his thesis that something was lost in the slow shift away from traditional face-to-face interactions focused on individuals towards more modern, urban ones based on impersonal and competitive market-based calculations.<sup>92</sup> In Clark’s formulation of this process, the solvent was capitalism.

Critics have expressed puzzlement at Clark’s valorizing of families and her assumptions about the supposed benefits domestic production brought to women and the rosy view of marital relations this implies. Clark certainly believed in gender difference and the need to support mothers as they bore and brought up children without having to work inhumane hours. Rather than lift women up to the level of “cold, scientific” men, to borrow Tönnies’ words, she dreamt of society itself being transformed by the emancipation of women.<sup>93</sup> However, she was under no illusions about the stifling disabilities women had suffered under the rules of coverture.

<sup>89</sup> S-HL Cb54.56.190 (8), Alice Clark to Ferdinand Tönnies, 16 October 1912; *Working Life*, viii.

<sup>90</sup> AGT HC/7/38 Alice Clark to Helen Priestman Bright Clark, 9 August 1914.

<sup>91</sup> AGT HC/7/25 Tönnies to Alice Clark, Christmas 1912.

<sup>92</sup> S-HL, Cb54.56.190 (12) Alice Clark to Ferdinand Tönnies, 29 September 1913.

<sup>93</sup> S-HL Cb54.56.190 (13), Alice Clark to Ferdinand Tönnies, 15 September 1913.

Moreover, concerns about married women's ongoing loss of legal and economic freedom, and husbands' ability to "drink or gamble away" family income, appear to have influenced her decision, made at a young age, never to marry.<sup>94</sup> In her critique of Mormons' treatment of married women, mentioned above, she stated quite clearly at the age of 21 that "What I could not endure in England I could not endure in Utah."<sup>95</sup> In her book she also highlighted "the subjection of women to their husbands" as a key determinant of women's secondary position and argued that the move to an increasingly capitalist economy hurt married women in particular, even if (at times) it benefited single women.<sup>96</sup> However, she felt that while marriage was bad, wage slavery and gender-segregated workplaces were worse. For the poor this meant dependency and underpayment, while for the wealthy it facilitated something almost unimaginable prior to the seventeenth century, that a husband could or should "keep" his wife.<sup>97</sup> Her cynicism can be detected in her observation to Tönnies that the increasingly anonymous modern British state, "had extended no protection to women in the home" and only when women entered the factories did it ask if they were being worked to death or not "and that is still the only group it protects."<sup>98</sup>

In considering the extensive debates about chronologies of change in *Working Life* it is useful to recognize the degree to which Clark was critiquing the capitalism of her lifetime. As she admitted in her preface, her subject of "women's place in the economic organisation of society ... has its own special bearing on the industrial problems of modern times" and again and again in *Working Life* she contrasts conditions in the seventeenth century not with those in the eighteenth century but in the nineteenth and twentieth.<sup>99</sup> She was a rare female director of a limited liability company—the experienced solicitor who drew up the articles of incorporation "expressed great astonishment" at the very idea of a woman serving as director—and conscious that she owed her position entirely to family connections.<sup>100</sup> She believed that particular forms of capitalist organization

<sup>94</sup> Hancock and Van Der Poel, *Smuts Papers*, vol. 4, 69–70.

<sup>95</sup> AGT MIL/91/1 diary entry 9 December 1895 (and see 12 September); see also Holton, "To Live," 84–85, 95.

<sup>96</sup> *Working Life*, 240, 300, 302.

<sup>97</sup> *Working Life*, 197, 302.

<sup>98</sup> S-HL Cb54.56.190 (13), Alice Clark to Ferdinand Tönnies, 15 September 1913.

<sup>99</sup> *Working Life*, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 69, 139, 159–160, 183, 242, 304, 305.

<sup>100</sup> [Gillett], *Alice Clark*, 6.

had produced this increasing rarity of female executives and a noticeable drop in the percentage of married women who worked, from high levels in the seventeenth century to around 10 percent by her day, vastly diminishing their “productive energy.”<sup>101</sup>

Alice Clark was not alone in sensing this loss. When Lilian Knowles learned of the recurrence of Clark's tuberculosis in 1916, and wanted to express the high regard in which she held her, she wrote:

There are so few really capable sensible women that you do not actually belong to yourself. Women must show capacity & there are so few to do it so I entirely approve of your taking care of yourself.<sup>102</sup>

In selecting volunteers to send to France, Alice regularly revealed her frustrations at the lack of no-nonsense bi-lingual women capable of coping with Spartan conditions in a hospital where her sister joked that “we have killed 10000000000000000000 million bugs & about twice that number of lice.”<sup>103</sup> She was similarly abrupt in describing some of the midwifery students and practitioners she studied and worked alongside, including one who had reported an expectant mother's extremely high fever and checked it three times, but turned out to have rinsed the thermometer in very hot water and not known that it was necessary to shake it down between readings.<sup>104</sup> Her friend and colleague Edith Pye felt the same way, writing to her from the Challon hospital that “Real ‘ableness’ (as distinct from ability which may be in only one direction) seems to me extremely rare.”<sup>105</sup> Alice Clark blamed male attitudes and policies for this dearth of capable women. In 1913 she had suggested to Tönnies “that a topic of great sociological interest might be how men have combined to defend their individual interests while also keeping women under ‘the old primeval patriarchalism’.”<sup>106</sup> She believed that economic circumstances, necessity, and prevailing attitudes had produced a higher proportion of confident

<sup>101</sup> *The New Statesman*, 21 February 1914, 2; LSE GB/106/2/NWS/C4/2 24; *Working Life*, 4.

<sup>102</sup> AGT HC/7/25 Lilian Knowles to Alice Clark, 10 September 1916.

<sup>103</sup> FHL TEMP MSS 301/COR/4/1 Hilda Clark to Alice Clark from Chalons, 4 December 1914.

<sup>104</sup> AGT HC/7/38 Alice Clark to Hilda Clark, 7 April 1915.

<sup>105</sup> FHL TEMP MSS 301/COR/3 Edith Pye to Alice Clark from Chalons, 1 November 1915.

<sup>106</sup> S-HL Cb54.56.190 (13), Alice Clark to Ferdinand Tönnies, 15 September 1913.

and self-sufficient women who could “show capacity” in the seventeenth century than in the nineteenth or twentieth, a belief that inspired and shaped her activism as well as her historical scholarship.<sup>107</sup> She wanted to understand this economic decline, which she saw as distinct from changes in women’s legal status, so that it could be addressed.

In *Working Life* Alice Clark identified “Capitalist organization” as a key driver of the changes she described, working “to deprive women of opportunities for sharing in the more profitable forms of production, confining them as wage-earners to the unprotected trades.” However, the problem as she saw it was not capitalism itself, but inequality. As she explained, “Capitalism is a term denoting a force rather than a system; a force that is no more interested in human relations than is the force of gravitation; nevertheless its sphere of action lies in the social relations of men and women, and its effects are modified and directed by human passions, prejudices and ideals.”<sup>108</sup> It was these “passions, prejudices and ideals” that required attention, and in her own sphere she worked tirelessly to make capitalism more humane, not to replace it. She did more than anyone in her company to ameliorate workers’ conditions and increase their opportunities, including helping to get a school built and advocating changes in company policy to allow 14-, 15-, and 16-year-old employees to attend classes in the afternoons. She also encouraged a policy of profit sharing with workers, despite realizing the unpopularity of this approach with shareholders. In a final gesture she left £5000 in her will to build a community swimming pool in a town where for generations men and boys had skinny dipped in the local river but girls and women had few opportunities to swim.<sup>109</sup> The pool remains a cherished amenity in Street to this day.

Clark regarded industrialization with a similar ambivalence. It is implicated in the story she tells in *Working Life* of the impoverishment wage labor could produce, yet she wrote to Tönnies that she “very much doubts if the position of women and children worsened after the industrial revolution.”<sup>110</sup> The provision of water, steam, and then electric power had made industrialization possible, as without it capitalist owners had little incentive to gather workers in a factory setting. But potential uses of that

<sup>107</sup> *Working Life*, 242.

<sup>108</sup> *Working Life*, 306.

<sup>109</sup> [Gillett], *Alice Clark*, 15–17; Holton, *Suffrage Days*, 235–236; Palmer, *Clarks*, 124–128.

<sup>110</sup> S-HL Cb54/56/190/(11) and (13), Alice Clark to Ferdinand Tönnies, 9 June and 15 September 1913; *Working Life*, 100.

same power drove her sense of optimism. As she explained to Tönnies, “The change which makes freedom & equality possible is the capture of the forces of nature in steam & electricity, which enables women as well as men, the common people as well as the aristocracy to have leisure for culture & self-development.”

Clark’s conclusions remain open to scrutiny, but the relevance of *Working Life of Women* might actually be growing, at a time when multi-national corporations dominate markets, “zero hour” contracts have become acceptable, and even C & J Clark Ltd. have moved all their manufacturing to China to keep their wages “competitive,” a euphemism that would have saddened and troubled Alice Clark. There is still much to learn from her focus on inequality and her lifetime spent seeking to reduce it.



## CHAPTER 4

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# Julia Cherry Spruill, Historian of Southern Colonial Women

*Anna Suranyi*

Julia Cherry Spruill is best known for her 1938 book, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies*.<sup>1</sup> An early social historian, Spruill's research anticipated the methods and interests of later feminist and social historians. Her research was innovative in its detailed analysis of ordinary women's lives based on painstaking examination of primary sources. While not openly advocating a feminist perspective, Spruill's work implicitly endeavored to demonstrate colonial women's abilities and agency, undervalued by both their contemporaries and her own. She revealed many new aspects of white Southern colonial women's experiences, and demonstrated that women had participated in public life in hitherto unexpected ways. Her scrupulously researched book is today considered a classic of historical investigation, and continues to be used. Yet, although her abilities were recognized during her lifetime, Spruill never held more than a

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<sup>1</sup>Julia Cherry Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998 [1938, 1972]).

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part-time academic position, and for most of her life she apparently regarded herself primarily as a wife and mother.

Most of what is known about Spruill's life is available through the effort of Anne Firor Scott, a prominent historian of Southern women, who personally knew Spruill during her lifetime. Scott published introductions to two republications of Spruill's book and also highlighted Spruill in her 1993 book, *Unheard Voices: The First Historians of Southern Women*, which introduced and excerpted selections from the work of five early Southern historians of women's history.<sup>2</sup> Scott, an American historian who held a professorship at Duke University, was greatly influenced by Spruill's work, and was critical of the fact that Spruill had never been sufficiently prominent during her lifetime. Indeed, though Spruill's work is still recognized and utilized by historians today more than seventy-five years after its publication, Spruill herself published only five articles, a few reviews, and one book, and not only did her career stall, but no attempt was made to posthumously preserve her papers (Fig. 4.1).<sup>3</sup>

Julia Cherry was born in 1899, at a time when middle-class white women could not vote, rarely achieved a higher education, and were

<sup>2</sup> Anne Firor Scott has written three pieces that discuss Spruill's life and intellectual trajectory, two introductions to newer editions to Spruill's book: Ann Firor Scott, "Introduction to the Norton Library Edition" in Spruill, *Women's Life and Work*, 1972 edition, pp. v–vii; and a more developed introduction that discusses Spruill's life: Ann Firor Scott, "Introduction" to Spruill, *Women's Life and Work*, 1998 edition, pp. ix–xv; and also in Scott's book which introduces and presents selections from the work of five early women historians, *Unheard Voices: The First Historians of Southern Women* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 33–38.

<sup>3</sup> On the loss of Spruill's papers, see Scott, "A Different View of Southern History" [introduction], *Unheard Voices*, 4. In addition to her book, Spruill's publications included the following: "Mistress Margaret Brent, Spinster," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 29:4 (Dec. 1934), 259–268; "The Southern Lady's Library, 1700–1776," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 34 (1935), 23–41; "Virginia and Carolina Homes before the Revolution," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 12:4 (Oct. 1935), 320–340; "Southern Housewives before the Revolution," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 13:1 (Jan. 1936), 25–46; "Women in the Founding of the Southern Colonies," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 13:3 (July 1936), 202–18; and a few book reviews, of Maria Kimball, *Thomas Jefferson's Cook Book* (1938) in *North Carolina History Review*, 15:4 (1938), 410–411; Helen Bullock, *The Williamsburg Art of Cookery, or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion* (1938) in *North Carolina Historical Review*, 16:4 (Oct. 1939), 460–2; Philip Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773–1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* Homer Dickinson Farish, ed. (1943), in *North Carolina Historical Review*, 21:1 (1944), 77–8; and Adelaide L. Fries, *The Road to Salem* (1944) in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1:4 (1944), 417–421.

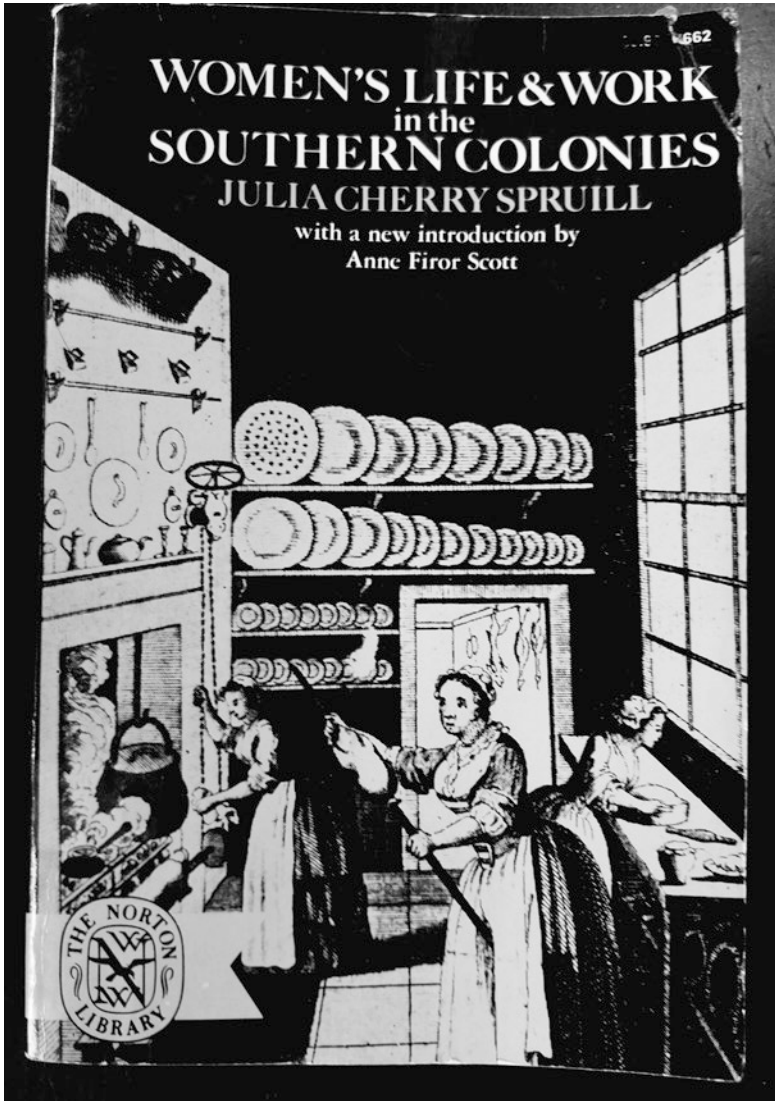


Fig. 4.1 Cherry Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (1938; reissue, 1972, Norton Publishers). (Photograph by Anna Suranyi)

expected to devote themselves to marriage and housewifery. The latter was especially true in the Southern states. Her life both fulfilled and confounded these expectations. From her youth, she defied convention, playing basketball and standing out academically.<sup>4</sup> Her mother was a supporter of women's suffrage and of birth control, and Julia Cherry became one of the few students to support women's suffrage at her high school.<sup>5</sup> From age 16 to 20, she attended the North Carolina Normal and Industrial College (later North Carolina College for Women and eventually UNC Greensboro), a women's public college promoted by suffrage activists, where she was a campus leader and graduated with honors.<sup>6</sup>

In many ways, Spruill lived a conventional middle-class life. She was a devout Christian Scientist.<sup>7</sup> Her life course was significantly determined by the fact of her marriage. Indeed, she once referred to herself as a "housewife who does a little writing and research in history."<sup>8</sup> Even in the 1970s, when women's history was more established as an academic discipline, she was shy and diffident when asked about her work.<sup>9</sup> While in college, she became engaged to Corydon Spruill, an economist and Rhodes Scholar, and they married in 1922.<sup>10</sup> She then moved to Chapel Hill where he was on the University of North Carolina faculty. Yet, nonetheless, Julia Cherry Spruill also consistently exceeded expectations. When she arrived at Chapel Hill, she enrolled in the MA program in history. Even though she was the only woman in her class, Spruill received the highest ranking in her cohort, and in 1923 her thesis (on transcendentalist Orestes Brownson) received the William Jennings Bryan Prize for the best thesis in history.<sup>11</sup> The direc-

<sup>4</sup> Scott, *Unheard Voices*, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Scott, "Introduction" in Spruill (1998), ix and Scott, *Unheard Voices*, 33.

<sup>6</sup> On the college's founding, see Harry McKown, "February 1891: Founding of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; This Month in North Carolina History," February 1, 2009 in *Learn NC: North Carolina Digital History*, <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newsouth/5500>. On Spruill's experience, see Scott, "Introduction," in Spruill (1998), ix.

<sup>7</sup> Scott, "Introduction," in Spruill (1998), ix.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Spongberg, Ann Curthoys, Barbara Caine, eds., *Companion to Women's Historical Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 539; Pamela Dean, *Women on the Hill* (Chapel Hill: Division of Student Affairs, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1987), 16.

<sup>9</sup> Scott, *Unheard Voices*, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Scott, "Introduction," in Spruill (1998), ix.

<sup>11</sup> Scott, "Introduction," in Spruill (1998), ix; Scott, *Unheard Voices*, 33; Dean, *Women on the Hill*, 7.

tor of the new Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, Howard Odum, urged her to study changing attitudes toward Southern women in the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Presumably, this advice suggested itself because of the recent passage of the nineteenth amendment, and also because Spruill herself exemplified the changing role of women in the early twentieth century. She was made one of the first “research assistants” at the Institute, receiving what we would today call a research fellowship.<sup>13</sup>

As Spruill launched her research, she was surprised to find that there was nothing at all written about Southern women (although a book existed about Southern women writers, she was unaware of its existence).<sup>14</sup> This discovery reshaped her intellectual focus, and she decided to write about Southern women’s experiences from the beginning of the colonial era.<sup>15</sup> Her intention was to incorporate an almost limitless breadth of early Southern women’s history:

My purpose was to find out as much as possible about the everyday life of women, their function in the settlement of the colonies, their homes and domestic occupations, their social life and recreations, the aims and methods of their education, their participation in affairs outside the home, and the manner in which they were regarded by the law and by society in general.<sup>16</sup>

However, Spruill was initially unsure about how to conduct such research; social history had not yet been established as an accepted historical approach. She wrote that “such a very limited amount of research had been attempted in the whole field of social history of the South that groundwork would have to be done for every phase of the study.”<sup>17</sup> As a result, she described her first year of research as “sort of scatterbrained” as she attempted to develop a viable historical method.<sup>18</sup> Again, her husband’s career shaped her life; she came along when he was invited to spend two years at Harvard. There she met and was mentored by the great

<sup>12</sup>Scott, “Introduction,” in Spruill (1998), ix.

<sup>13</sup>Eleanore Elliott Carroll, “Julia Cherry Spruill’s New Book,” *Alumnae News* (Greensboro, NC: Women’s College of the University of North Carolina, Feb. 1939), 9 mentions six years as “one of its first research assistants.” Also see Scott, *Unheard Voices*, 33.

<sup>14</sup>Scott, “Introduction,” in Spruill (1998), x.

<sup>15</sup>Scott, “Introduction,” in Spruill (1998), x.

<sup>16</sup>Spruill, “Preface,” *Women’s Life and Work*.

<sup>17</sup>Spruill, “Preface,” *Women’s Life and Work*.

<sup>18</sup>Scott, “Introduction,” in Spruill (1998), x.

American historian Arthur Schlesinger, Sr.<sup>19</sup> Schlesinger was likewise a supporter of progressive causes, including suffrage and birth control, a pioneer of social history, and had become an advocate for research into women's history. Encouraged by Schlesinger, Spruill began painstaking research in Massachusetts archives, especially in the various Harvard libraries and at the Massachusetts Historical Society. Without a clearly defined set of documents or a clearly defined historical method, she set about trying to read every colonial document that she could find holding any relevance. This meticulousness undoubtedly contributed to the length of time it took to publish her book (ten years), though she was also probably slowed down by the fact that she spent much of her time playing the role of hostess, wife, and mother. At the end of the two years in Massachusetts, Spruill and her husband returned to North Carolina with a trunk full of Spruill's notes, and from then on she continued her archival research in their home state.<sup>20</sup>

Spruill did for a time receive financial support from the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences as well as encouragement from academics and also from her husband, but her career trajectory stalled, and she did not continue her graduate studies or receive academic employment. However, Spruill's scholarship transcended this obstacle, pioneering methods and sources that would prompt research projects by later historians. Her focus on the hitherto unrecorded lives of ordinary women made her an innovator in social history. Spruill employed a plethora of historical sources, many of them not previously employed in the study of history, which were to influence the research of later generations of historians. These included parish and court records; assembly and other government records from both the colonies and Britain; land records; historical, geographical, and political tracts; inventories, wills, and guardianship bonds; letters and letter books; advice manuals; travelers' accounts; diaries; and magazines and colonial newspapers. In the course of presenting the results of reading and researching these materials, her work offers enormous quantities of information that present startling fact after startling fact.

In addition to the comprehensive and painstaking quality of her research, Spruill interpreted sources in innovative ways. Letters and diaries proved to be essential sources for understanding what ordinary women thought about their own situations and lives, enabling their voices to be

<sup>19</sup> Scott, "Introduction," in Spruill (1998), x.

<sup>20</sup> Scott, "Introduction," in Spruill (1998), x.

heard. Spruill was one of the earliest historians to understand that in order to comprehend the lives of ordinary people, who were often illiterate, such as backcountry women or servants, she needed to find other sources of evidence than autobiographical documents.<sup>21</sup> For example, she wrote,

Colonial women ... were not accustomed to airing their ideas in print or even in confiding them to diaries or private letters. Therefore, they left few personal records of themselves. If, however, little information regarding them is to be had from what they wrote, revealing evidence is available in the books they read.

She went on to mention “private correspondence, journals, wills, and inventories” and “newspaper advertisements” as additional sources delineating literate women’s interests.<sup>22</sup> For understanding the lives of illiterate women, she employed more indirect sources. Likewise, in studying marriage and domestic strife, she pointed out that while “the matrimonial histories of individual couples have not been preserved ... abundant materials at hand reflect the prevailing conception of proper conjugal conduct and throw light upon the general state of marriage.”<sup>23</sup> Spruill thus investigated court records, conduct books, newspaper advertisements, letters, and many other sources to provide a description of the marital lives of colonial women. Official documents were frequently scoured for hints of women’s experiences. Inventories and wills were used to determine women’s assets, interests, and activities. Court records showed the interstices where the official rules of society failed to operate. Spruill mined newspapers for advertisements which provided information about runaway indentured servants and wives to learn about the runaways themselves, a technique later used by historians to learn about the lives of runaway slaves.<sup>24</sup>

While Spruill’s style of research laid the groundwork for much contemporary historical investigation, her style of interpretation was quite different from the approach of many historians today. Her emphasis was on data, of which the book contains voluminous quantities. Spruill’s encompassing interest in colonial women as a whole contrasts with the narrower focus of much contemporary historical scholarship. In her writing, she

<sup>21</sup> Spruill (1972), throughout; Scott, “Introduction,” in Spruill (1998), xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Spruill (1972), 208.

<sup>23</sup> Spruill (1972), 163.

<sup>24</sup> Spruill (1972), 179–183 and illustrations between 207–208, also discussed in Scott, “Introduction,” in Spruill (1998), xiv.

maintained an objective stance that frequently makes it difficult to judge her particular perspective about the historical material she describes, even in the case of an obvious injustice. In contrast, today's historians tend to prioritize the development of arguments. Theoretical interpretation is not absent from Spruill's book, but it does not comprise the central core, and frequently even when it occurs, it is implicit. Nonetheless, her implied arguments are also a key to the continuing value of her book. Spruill's work successfully demonstrated that colonial women were much more involved in public life than previously believed, or than suggested by the conventional values of the period. Indeed, she described women participating in many unexpected roles, including legal actions; acting as doctors, nurses, and midwives; being involved in rebellions; farming and supervising plantations; acting as translators; preaching; teaching and running schools, managing shops, workshops, mills, taverns, inns, and stables, or official institutions such as ferries, wharfs, and jails; singing, painting, and performing in the theater; publishing newspapers and running printing presses.<sup>25</sup> Spruill also revealed that considerable marital discord persisted in many families, and analyzed sexual behavior and its relation to class in court records addressing fornication, adultery, and illegitimate births.<sup>26</sup> She was one of the first to argue that the professionalization of men led to women's exclusion from professions such as law and medicine, writing that "during the seventeenth century and on into the eighteenth, many occupations considered today as professions were carried on by persons who had little education or special training," including those of "teachers, physicians, and surgeons," as well as "journalists, printers, nurses, and midwives," who "learned only in the school of experience." Consequently, for a time, "these occupations were open to women as well as men."<sup>27</sup> Spruill's work, including her unconventional sources, methods of interpretation, and focus on ordinary and poor women anticipated much modern historiography. Her work clearly influenced many contemporary historians who continue to mine her work for sources, insights, and points of inquiry for researching the lives of colonial women.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Spruill (1972).

<sup>26</sup> Spruill (1972), chap. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Spruill (1972), 255, and see 51, 241–248, 275, and chap. 12. Also mentioned in Scott, "Introduction" in Spruill (1998), xiv.

<sup>28</sup> Ann Firor Scott points to Lois Green Carr, Lorena Walsh, Marylynn Salmon, Donna Spindel, Joan Gunderson, Gwen Gampel, and Linda Speth; Scott, "Introduction" in Spruill

Spruill did not overtly indicate any political leanings in her historical writing. This probably stemmed from both the aspiration of social historians and sociologists during the earlier twentieth century to strive for objective truth, unshaded by the author's preconceptions (or those of society more broadly), as well as from Spruill's own inclination toward self-effacement. The book is so terse about interpretation that it ends abruptly with no concluding chapter. However, implicit scholarly assumptions are nonetheless discernible in her book. In chapter after chapter, Spruill showed colonial women, both prosperous and poor, demonstrating ingenuity, agency, and skill. She uncovered women engaged in activities previously assumed to be exclusively restricted to men. In doing so, she demonstrated not only the capabilities of colonial women, but also of her contemporaries, at a time when women were often assumed to have less ability, intelligence, determination, or skill than men. Poignantly, she herself fell into the category of women whose abilities were underutilized or underestimated.

Spruill published five articles and then in 1938, her major book-length study of colonial Southern women, which was heavily praised by reviewers.<sup>29</sup> Feminist writer and activist Eudora Ramsay Richardson began her review with the phrase "Here is the book for which feminists have been waiting."<sup>30</sup> Somewhat less favorable was a review by a sociologist: T. E. Hulett, Jr., who complained in the *American Sociological Review* that the style was "somewhat dull and unimaginative," while conceding "the importance of such a work as this to the sociologist" because of its "accuracy and objectivity as history."<sup>31</sup> A review in the *Journal of Educational Sociology* was more uniformly positive, while historians were consistently favorable.<sup>32</sup> For instance, in *The Journal of Southern History*, Philip Davidson began, "This book is an important contribution to the social history of

(1998), xiii. Others might include Catherine Clinton, Jacqueline Dowd Hall, Suzanne Lebsock, Marjorie J. Spruill (no relation), and many others, and obviously Scott herself.

<sup>29</sup>In chronological order, Mary Beard, *Social Forces*, 17:3 (1939), 449–450; Philip Davidson, *Journal of Southern History*, 5:2 (1939), 254–255; *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 23:2 (1939), 216–217 (no author); T. E. Hulett Jr., *American Sociological Review*, 4:2 (1939), 293–294; *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 13:8 (1940), 508–509 (no author); Lowell Joseph Ragatz, *North Carolina Historical Review*, 16:2 (1939), 218–220; Eudora Ramsay Richardson, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2nd ser., 19 (1939), 248; Reba Strickland, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 25:4 (1939), 556.

<sup>30</sup>Richardson, 248.

<sup>31</sup>Hulett.

<sup>32</sup>*Journal of Educational Sociology*.

colonial America” and welcomed Spruill’s “serious prolonged research ... presented clearly, lucidly, and soberly.” In contrast to Hulett, Davidson praised Spruill’s prose in “185 pages of detail” contained in the first half of the book, “none of it wearying,” before concluding that Spruill’s book, with its “perfectly delightful illustrations” by Lucia Porcher Johnson, a female artist, comprised “a grand study of women, and by women, but for everybody.”<sup>33</sup>

The book was also proudly touted at her alma mater.<sup>34</sup> However, the volume’s success did not translate into an academic position for Spruill. University jobs for women were sparse. Also she was married; and thus it would have made it difficult to pursue a career at another institution, still a problem today. Indeed, there was little academic recognition or financial support after the funding from the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences dried up during the Great Depression. Spruill went on to teach at the Rocky Mount High School, her alma mater, where her mother had taught before her.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, her economist husband was becoming more recognized, and then became dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UNC Chapel Hill. Julia Spruill took on the role of the dean’s wife—hosting dinners for faculty and administrators. She was also president of the university Women’s Club.<sup>36</sup> She continued to be interested in history, joining the North Carolina Historical Society and the American Association of University Women (as president of the local chapter), and at the end of World War II, in response to the wave of returning veterans, she was given a single graduate course to teach in history.<sup>37</sup> She continued to teach part time until 1949, but was never a full time faculty member.<sup>38</sup> In the main, she seemed to envision herself as a faculty wife and a proper middle-class Southern woman, but with continuing intellectual interests.

Spruill’s work seemed for a time to have left little overt impact on either historical content such as in women’s history, or on historical methods. Nonetheless, the methods and interests pioneered by Spruill, as well as other social historians, slowly came to the fore of the discipline. By the early 1970s, with interest surging in both social history and women’s his-

<sup>33</sup> Davidson. Note that the 1972 edition is 426 pages long, so it appears that Davidson is referring to a particular section.

<sup>34</sup> Carroll, “Julia Cherry Spruill’s New Book,” 9.

<sup>35</sup> Scott, “Introduction” in Spruill (1998), xi.

<sup>36</sup> Spongberg et al., *Companion to Women’s Historical Writing*, 539.

<sup>37</sup> Scott, “Introduction” in Spruill (1998), xi.

<sup>38</sup> Spongberg et al., *Companion to Women’s Historical Writing*, 539.

tory, her book was reprinted by W. W. Norton at the urging of Anne Firor Scott.<sup>39</sup> This time, Spruill's work was received with great interest, and came to be regarded as a foundational work in women's history. With its extensive set of facts and details, it became a training manual at Colonial Williamsburg. Spruill herself, in her seventies at the time, was both gratified and startled by the belated recognition.<sup>40</sup> The book has been reprinted several times since, and is still regarded as a central work of colonial women's history.

Spruill's work can be regarded as a significant influence in the work of many later historians. For example, in Lois Green Carr and Lorena Walsh's 1977 article, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," the authors examined the underlying complexities of issues to which Spruill had initially drawn attention.<sup>41</sup> Although they did not cite Spruill directly, Carr and Walsh employed a social historical approach to assess the role and experiences of white women arriving in colonial Maryland, typically as indentured servants, who then married into planter society after their terms of servitude were finished. Carr and Walsh investigated sources similar to those used by Spruill, such as court records, servants' indenture contracts, tracts promoting colonization, wills and inventories of goods. One significant difference from Spruill's work is that Carr and Walsh discussed not only the varied details of their findings, but also employed social historical tools developed subsequent to Spruill's book. They enumerated the rate of incidence of their findings, for instance calculating the frequency of marriage or out-of-wedlock births, and evaluating comparative ratios of data, providing readers with a more developed understanding of the typicality or importance of particular historical trends. Unlike Spruill, who was pioneering in a new field, Carr and Walsh were also aided in their research by the opportunity to refer to previous historical scholarship, which, though rarely focusing on women in particular, provided a significant source of contextual information and analyses on topics such as the inventories of tenant farmers or of the average number of children in colonial families.<sup>42</sup> Similar to Spruill, Carr and Walsh maintained a strongly objective stance,

<sup>39</sup> Scott, "Introduction" in Spruill (1998), xii.

<sup>40</sup> Scott, "Introduction" in Spruill (1998), xi.

<sup>41</sup> Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 34:4 (1977), 542-557.

<sup>42</sup> For example, see Carr and Walsh, p. 10, fn. 25 or p. 13, fn. 38.

as is typical of social historical scholarship. The generational shift is reflected in the fact that Walsh and Carr both achieved productive academic careers, although they worked as public historians employed by Colonial Williamsburg, the Maryland State Archives, and the Historic St. Mary's City Museum, rather than within a university setting.<sup>43</sup>

Spruill's book had a significant influence on contemporary historians in a number of fields, but recent scholars have also found elements to critique in her work. Theoretical critic and activist bell hooks describes how Spruill's work was recommended to her as an iconic work of feminist history, but that upon perusing it, she found that it dealt almost exclusively with the lives of white women.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Spruill's book neglects, though she does not completely omit, the experiences of women of color, and of slave women, who were central figures of colonial life. She also sometimes seems to demean the contributions of women of color, occasionally, though rarely, employing terms like "wench" for slave women, "savage" for Native Americans, or "half-breed."<sup>45</sup> In her 1944 review of *The Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773–1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, edited by Hunter Dickinson Farish, her use of language displayed more sympathy toward the troubles of enslaved Africans, describing how the eighteenth-century author of the book "was shocked at the loose family relations and the inadequate rations, cruel punishment and other ill usage of the slaves."<sup>46</sup>

Indeed it is difficult to determine her political views or position on race. She wrote very little about herself or her own aspirations in any context, but her husband's activities might be somewhat instructive here. In 1965, during the Civil Rights Movement, her husband Corydon Spruill wrote a letter to David Britt, then a member of the North Carolina House of

<sup>43</sup> John McCusker, "In Memoriam: Lois Green Carr," *Perspectives in History* (December 2015), accessed from <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2015/in-memoriam-lois-green-carr>, and "Foreword" and "Preface" in Lorena S. Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607–1763* (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> bell hooks, "Racism and Feminism," in Les Back and John Solomos, eds., *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 373–388, 381.

<sup>45</sup> Spruill (1972): "Wench"—56; "Half breed"—177; "Savage"—7; and also on "savage" see Scott, "Introduction" in Spruill (1998), xv.

<sup>46</sup> Review of Farish, ed., *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773–1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (1943) in *North Carolina Historical Review*, 21:1 (1944): 77–78.

Representatives (later a judge) to express approval for the findings of the North Carolina Speaker Ban Study Commission, which Britt led.<sup>47</sup> The Speaker Ban was a 1963 law that was later invalidated by the U.S. District Court of the Middle District of North Carolina, Greensboro division, as “unconstitutional, null and void.”<sup>48</sup> The law mandated that communists and subversives be forbidden to speak on the University of North Carolina campuses. In addition to the obvious partisan motivation, the ban was more importantly a disguised attempt to restrict civil rights speakers and demonstrations on campus, as they were widely claimed by their opponents to have communist ties. Many in the University of North Carolina community opposed the ban, including the majority of the student body, a large number of faculty (300 within the North Carolina system), and several among the administration. Ultimately, the student body successfully challenged the ban by inviting two known communists to speak, and then suing the University of North Carolina in federal court after the speakers’ presence on campus was barred. Ironically, one of the communist speakers, a blacklisted historian of African American history, Herbert Aptheker, had cited Julia Spruill’s work in one of his articles in 1940.<sup>49</sup>

However, in the meantime, an earlier challenge had resulted in the convening of a state commission, headed by David Britt, to review the law. The North Carolina Speaker Ban Study Commission had developed a compromise solution, in which individual college campus boards of trustees could decide whether or not to allow certain speakers on campus.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Corydon Spruill, Letter to David M. Britt, November 5, 1965. SR\_Speaker\_Ban\_Correspondence\_Spruill\_to\_Britt\_19651105, North Carolina Digital Collections State Archives of North Carolina, <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p16062coll12/id/138>

<sup>48</sup> “Order of the United States District Court – Greensboro” (February 19, 1968), available at “I raised my hand to volunteer,” Speaker Ban Controversy, Manuscripts Department, UNC Libraries <http://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/items/show/867>

<sup>49</sup> Herbert Aptheker, “The Quakers and Negro Slavery,” *The Journal of Negro History*, 25:3 (1940), 331–362, 341.

<sup>50</sup> W. Lee Johnston, Jr., “Speaker Ban Law,” in William S. Powell, ed., *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (2006) retrieved from NCPedia <http://www.ncpedia.org/speaker-ban-law/>; Maximilian Longley, “Speaker Ban Law,” *NorthCarolinahistory.org: An Online Encyclopedia*, North Carolina History Project, retrieved from <http://northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/speaker-ban-law/>; Robert Spearman, “The Rise and Fall of the North Carolina Speaker Ban Law,” University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013 Gladys Hall Coates University History Lecture, retrieved from [http://library.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2013\\_spearman.pdf](http://library.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2013_spearman.pdf)

Presumably this would have allowed typically conservative administrations to continue the ban without acknowledging it. It was in support of this compromise solution that Julia Spruill's husband, Corydon Spruill, wrote to the chair of the Commission, describing the solution as going "a long way toward ending the difficulties and quieting the controversy which have [sic] been so damaging to our State" and finding "a common ground for the diverse ideas and feelings associated with the Visiting Speakers Law."<sup>51</sup> Spruill, a former administrator (dean) and one of the older members of the faculty, had opposed inviting the communist speakers as "inflammatory," and alleged that the university was being "manipulated" in a "heartless fashion" to "learn how much provocation we can take"; he had apparently been consulted during the Commission's hearings.<sup>52</sup> The term "provocation" sounds suspiciously like "agitation," which was a conservative code word for civil rights activism in the South, though the word is not identical. As dean, Corydon Spruill had in fact spoken out obliquely against integration, claiming that it would transform Chapel Hill to a more "closed" institution as students would avoid an integrated school.<sup>53</sup> Of course, Corydon Spruill's views cannot be taken to be identical, or even similar to Julia Spruill's, but on this issue they provide the only evidence we possess.

We also cannot assume that Julia Spruill's interest in the rights of white women would have led to open-mindedness about other oppressed groups. In the 1930s, Southern feminists often ignored the endeavors of African Americans to gain social justice, although by the 1960s, social progressives were more likely to support both movements.<sup>54</sup> When Spruill had attended the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial College in the second decade of the twentieth century, her contemporaries had included Gladys Avery Tillett, a feminist political activist who had declined to support the cause of African American civil rights.<sup>55</sup> The college itself

<sup>51</sup> Corydon Spruill letter to Britt.

<sup>52</sup> William A. Link, *William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher Education* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 81; Corydon Spruill letter to Britt.

<sup>53</sup> Link, *William Friday*, 82.

<sup>54</sup> On the views of 1930s Southern feminists, see John Thomas McGuire, "The Boundaries of Democratic Reform: Social Justice, Feminism, and Race in the South, 1931–39," *Journal of Southern History*, 78:4 (2012), 887–913.

<sup>55</sup> McGuire, "The Boundaries of Democratic Reform," 888–889; on Tillett's attendance at the college, 896. Note that, as McGuire and others have pointed out, a few white Southern feminists of the era did strive to support a broader conception of rights that included the

had been founded as the result of an 1891 bill “to Establish a Normal and Industrial School for White Girls.”<sup>56</sup> Most essentially, attempting to discern Spruill’s views on racial discrimination is complicated by the fact that a clearly defined political stance on civil rights or any other issue is not evident from her writing, and the fact that her views may have evolved in the decades after her book was published in the 1930s.

On its face value, Spruill’s book is still relevant, not only for the arguments that she pioneered, which are widely accepted today, but for the voluminous compilation of information that still has the power to astonish and enlighten. In truth, it is brilliant and meticulous work—a book absolutely packed with information—of a kind that few scholars now produce. By the time that Spruill died in 1986, her work had been widely recognized as a pioneering accomplishment that was the inspiration for much later historical inquiry. Her legacy has also resulted in recognition for a new generation of women’s historians. Spruill’s husband posthumously endowed the Julia Cherry Spruill professorship of women’s history at UNC Chapel Hill. And, since 1984, the Southern Association for Women Historians has annually awarded the Julia Cherry Spruill Prize for the best published book in Southern women’s history.

Spruill’s legacy has been wider than the academic insights gained from her research. Although we cannot know her social attitudes with any certainty, the prize named in Spruill’s honor has recognized women historians regardless of ethnicity, and has frequently been awarded to books that focused on civil rights, racism, or racial inequity.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, Jacqueline

rights of African Americans; McGuire, “The Boundaries of Democratic Reform,” 887 and following. See for example Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

<sup>56</sup> McKown, “A Women’s College.”

<sup>57</sup> The first award in 1987 was given to Jacqueline Jones for *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985). Others included Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina 1896–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Nancy Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women’s Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s–1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Katherine Charron, *Freedom’s Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Amrita Chakrabarti Myers, *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Katy Simpson Smith, *We Have Raised All of You: Motherhood in the South, 1750–1835* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); LaKisha Michelle Simmons, *Crescent City*

Dowd Hall, the only holder of the Julia Cherry Spruill chair at UNC Chapel Hill, is best known for her 1979 book, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*, which revealed Ames' anti-lynching activism that linked the causes of feminism and racial justice in the South during the 1920s and 1930s—at the same time that Spruill herself was writing her book.<sup>58</sup>

Later historians have used Spruill's work as a jumping off point, exploring her footnotes to discern the location of sources she had revealed, building on the insights available in various sections of her book as a foundation for further investigation, or employing her methods of interpretation in new or more inclusive ways in their own work. In fact, contemporary historians often find themselves writing about a much narrower aspect of history than Spruill's comprehensive work, while *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* continues to be relevant and useful almost eighty years after its initial publication.

*Girls: The Lives of Young Black Women in Segregated New Orleans* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*.

PART II

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Politics and Citizenship in Early  
Modern Britain



## “No Leisure for Myself”: C.C. Stopes and British Freewomen

*Hilda L. Smith*

Charlotte Carmichael (C.C.) Stopes is from that generation of women who were active between 1880 and 1930, and from all available evidence, they were made of sturdier stuff than scholars or activists today. She was born in Edinburgh in 1840 and died in 1929 not long after women finally won the right to vote in Great Britain. While perusing her daily schedule through manuscripts held at the British Library, I grew weary simply listing her activities. In addition, she had her first child, Marie, who has outstripped her in renown, when she was 40 and then had another daughter, Winifred, at age 44. She did this while belonging to so many progressive, cultural, and feminist groups it is difficult to number them, and being a pioneering scholar who documented Shakespeare’s life. In understanding Stopes, one must continually consider the three pillars of her existence: her family dynamics (tied to her bourgeois, Scottish origins), her intellectual career, and finally, her political and feminist efforts. While distinct and linked at once, they each define her as an outsider, and one who worked tirelessly to be accepted as she organized for women to be included in British politics and society.

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In 2002, I dedicated my study of citizenship and political discourse, *All Men and Both Sexes*, to Stopes and to Ruth Kelso, two early women historians, with the hope of making their names familiar to the current generation. After reading *British Freewomen: Their Historical Privilege* by Stopes and remembering again Kelso's *The Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, I am even more impressed with the massive quantity and original nature of their scholarship. Historians today are probably too far removed from Joan Kelly's "Did Women Have a Renaissance" essay, but in reading Kelso one finds detailed evidence anticipating Kelly's thesis.<sup>1</sup> This chapter, though, will concentrate on Stopes and especially on her discussion of women's citizenship throughout British history in *British Freewomen*.<sup>2</sup>

*British Freewomen* is based on archival materials and the printed record, documenting women's past political roles in Britain including local and national voting and office holding. Stopes highlights, as many others have later, the fact that Britain had no document that excluded women from either the suffrage or office holding until the Representation of the People Act, better known as the Reform Bill of 1832 because of its lengthy parliamentary debate before enfranchising middle-class men. It was here that the word "male" appeared first in a constitutional document, as it similarly first appeared in the United States in the Fourteenth Amendment. I have written on the linguistic knots scholars and others have encountered in trying to explain (or ignore) why the word "people" did not mean women. Women were excluded from voting while the numbers of men who could vote increased, based on an expanding economic base in 1832, then 1867, and finally 1884; when women finally gained the vote in 1928, the legislation that granted them suffrage had the same title as the earlier exclusionary Acts, except for an added parenthetical phrase. That Act, overturning the parliamentary and judicial judgments of the 1800s denying that

<sup>1</sup>Joan Kelly questioned whether women were part of the narrative of historical progress that saw the Renaissance as a progressive moment in history that expanded educational opportunities and focused more centrally on the nature and welfare of "man" over the greater emphasis of the medieval period on God and religious matters. Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Stuard (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956); Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *British Freewomen: Their Historical Privilege*, facsimile edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). There were three editions in 1894 when the work originally appeared, and an additional one in 1907 published in London by Swan Sonnenschein & Co, on which this facsimile is based.

women were people politically, was termed “The Representation of the People Act (Equal Representation),” which in many ways signifies the most extreme linguistic contortion.<sup>3</sup>

C.C. Stopes spent much of her life documenting the nature of that conundrum. While doing solid historical research, she was not without moments of sarcasm in arguing her case, such as “man includes woman when there is a penalty to be incurred but never includes woman when there is a privilege to be conferred.”<sup>4</sup> This comment alluded to criminal and civil law that jurists agreed included women as being culpable for their crimes or responsible for their contracts and obligations even though specific legislation employed only men or man and used male pronouns. Judicial decisions and parliamentary debates in British history are full of disputes over when broad terms signifying humanity were inclusive or exclusive; yet, while slaves and foreigners were often excluded from British identity only women embodied the contradictions of language. When did “man” mean “men” and when did it mean men and women, and the same for person and people, or politically, subject or citizen? All of these concerns are linked to why we have the term “women’s suffrage”; why could not women pursue a democratic suffrage just as successive groups of men had? Why did their quest for citizenship need to be linked to their sex and thus require the new appellation of women’s suffrage? We can only presume it was because earlier legislation that had excluded women had employed broad terms that clearly included them, while both their authors and later commentators denied that reality. Thus, suffragists (while opposing the term) were forced to make their quest gender-specific.

*British Freewomen* emerged from two papers Stopes proposed in 1885 to the British Association: one on the history of women’s past political privilege, and the second on the economic effects of women’s exclusion from voting. They were rejected; the selection committee claimed these papers would surely initiate political discussion, and that was to be avoided. This left Stopes determined to dig deeper and to write a longer, in-depth study of women’s past political standing. Her research following this rejection focused on constitutional history, statutes, rolls of parliament, state

<sup>3</sup>Hilda L. Smith, *“All Men and both Sexes”: Gender, Politics, and the False Universal in England, 1640–1832* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 173–202.

<sup>4</sup>Lesley A. Hall, “Stopes, Charlotte Brown Carmichael (1840–1929), feminist and literary scholar,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004–16).

papers, parliamentary writs, journals of the House of Commons, reports of cases, and historical materials both printed and manuscript.<sup>5</sup> Stopes recognized the complexities behind women's being denied the vote and felt obligated to pursue a months-long research effort to seek a "careful verification of details and in grouping apparently disconnected data."<sup>6</sup>

Her work is organized both chronologically and around social distinctions among women; she begins with the ancient period, and next moves to justifications for social and political privilege, and then to royal, noble, and county women, each holding different privileges based on their social standing. Stopes includes a chapter on freewomen, a term most often tied to women's gaining the freedom from various towns and jurisdictions, and concludes with a historical sweep that looks at growing restrictions on women's rights starting with Sir Edward Coke and ending with the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867, the latter adding a number of working-class men to the suffrage.<sup>7</sup> Her in-depth look at the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries opens with a section on "The Errors of Edward Coke." Coke, one of England's most important legal commentators, is seen as particularly culpable since so many "so called" later authorities relied on his *Institutes*; especially his claim that women must follow the law even though lacking any political rights.<sup>8</sup> Coke stated: "[Those] which are not parties to the elections of knights, citizens, or burgesses [being without freeholds]; and *all women having freehold or no freehold*" (Stopes' italics) or men under the age of 21 must simply follow the laws imposed on them. Stopes points out that, "he quotes no record, he suggests no authority, he adduces no precedent." Coke's words were of such significance because from them "has risen all consequent opinion, custom and *law* against the Woman's Franchise."<sup>9</sup> Her argument here, and elsewhere, is that personal judgment and imperfect memory were able to overturn precedent and

<sup>5</sup> *British Freewomen*, preface, v (subsequently cited as *B.F.*).

<sup>6</sup> *B.F.*, vii. She turned to earlier works and research notes taken by those documenting women's past political standing, mentioning especially Sidney Smith, Chisholm Anstey, and, in particular, Helen Blackburn, editor of the *Englishwoman's Review*, whom she credits with greatly contributing to *British Freewomen*.

<sup>7</sup> *B.F.*, 121–129; 163–169.

<sup>8</sup> Sir Edward Coke was the most prominent jurist during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. Scholars have called his *Institutes* the work that laid the foundation for modern interpretations of common law. He is referenced innumerable times by legal scholars from the early seventeenth century to the twentieth century.

<sup>9</sup> *B.F.*, 121–124; she references Coke's original source as *Fourth Institute*, 5. Stopes quotes from a number of sources who argue Coke had no evidence for his statement and notes

historical reality. Stopes uses as one example an election during October 1648 when Simon d’Ewes, who was then the high sheriff of Suffolk, dismissed the votes of single women whose votes had previously been tabulated because it was “a matter verie unworthy of a gentleman” to accept them “*although in law they might have been allowed.*” She sees such examples as undermining the legitimacy and reality of women’s past right to vote (Fig. 5.1).<sup>10</sup>

In chapter six, devoted to defining the term, “freewomen,” Stopes notes that women could become free in a number of ways based on their claims and whether they were granted standing through county traditions or urban institutions. She earlier discussed the greater privileges, such as nominating Members of Parliament, which existed for aristocratic women.<sup>11</sup> But here freewomen could “be freeholders in the country on comparatively small estates,” they could be “freeholders in towns by inheritance or by purchase,” and, they could be free through the auspices of the towns’ livery companies and their guilds. All such standings meant they gained both privileges and obligations based on their status as a free individual; they could be called to manorial courts in the countryside, or made to pay fees and abide by social and economic rules enforced by common councils and guilds in the towns.<sup>12</sup> After a considerable discussion of women’s place in a range of guilds, she emphasizes both the demands placed on them as well as any privileges they might have attained. Freewomen had duties relating to a town’s citizen watches; they, like men, could pay for a substitute to engage in the watch, but they were required to provide the service. “And the freeman, when she is a woman, shall have no excuse from the duties of watch and ward.”<sup>13</sup>

Stopes’ discussion of freewomen was built on a complex and varied foundation. She collected evidence based on property ownership, title holding, local political actions, citizen obligations, and ownership of businesses or skilled trades. She utilized court cases and decisions made by

explicitly that in the 1621 and 1628 parliaments voting was “vested in *inhabitant householders* whether freeholders or not.”

<sup>10</sup> *B.F.*, 130–131.

<sup>11</sup> See *B.F.*, chapter four for her discussion of noble women and their ability to receive honors, hold courts baron, hold a wide range of offices, fulfill military obligations, and nominate curates in churches within their oversight, as well as Members of Parliament. *B.F.*, 40–74.

<sup>12</sup> *B.F.*, 94–96.

<sup>13</sup> *B.F.*, 103–104.

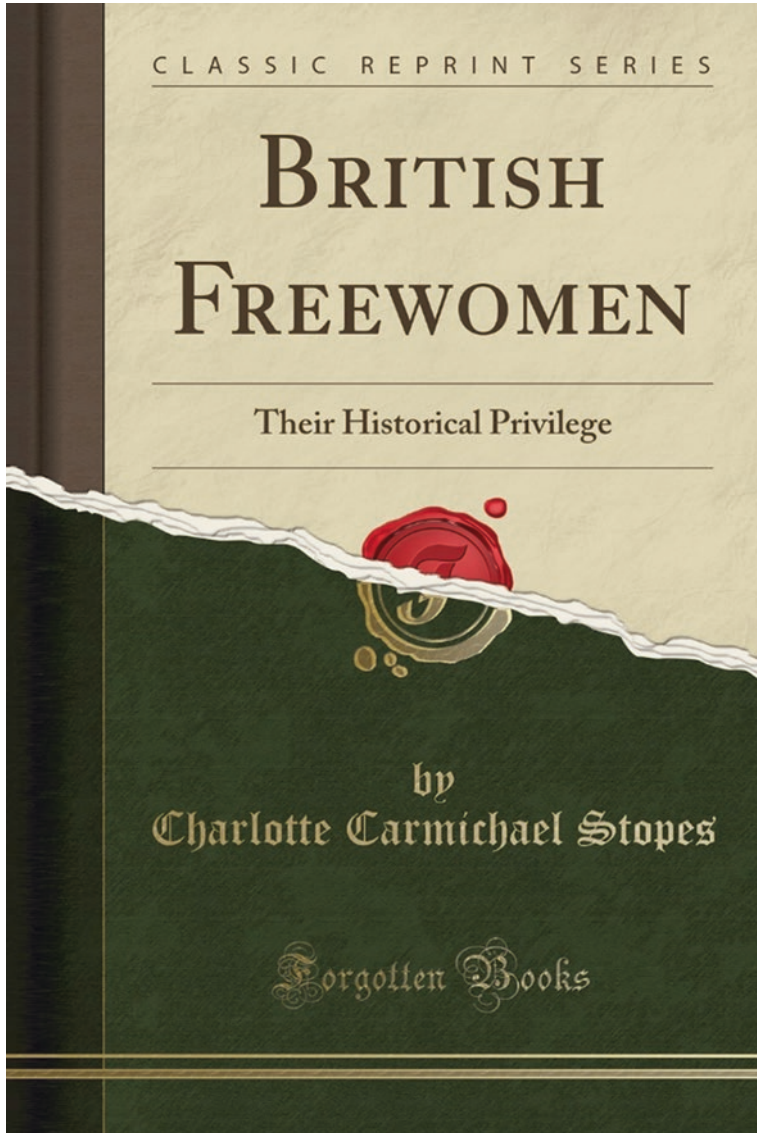


Fig. 5.1 Title page of *British Freewomen* (Reprint of 1907 edition)

institutions with long-term authority in the various towns and counties from the earliest days of British society to the late nineteenth century. Even so, she was hampered in moving beyond collecting individual examples because leading legal and political spokesmen denied women’s political standing despite evidence to the contrary. Thus, she had to confront a consistent and overwhelming narrative that women had never been citizens, had not voted, and had not held office. While she confronted that narrative with contradictory evidence, leading authorities, and secondarily public opinion, would not accept that her research undercut their unquestioned assumptions.

Even though Stopes gives extensive space to women’s long-range political privilege, she identifies the mid-nineteenth century as crucial for inculcating the public with the misconception that women had traditionally been non-political actors and thus required new legislation to grant them suffrage. The tone of Stopes’ work shifts in this section in which her anger is evident against politicians and jurists banding together to deny women’s political status and to reject long-term legal customs that protected them from unbridled male dominance. These men perfected and promulgated a narrative that emphasized both women’s powerlessness in the past and their growing dependence on male relatives for protection in the present. In Stopes’ view, not merely was this ideology untrue but it was also harmful, leaving women more and more at the mercy of male authority in the family and in public.

In confronting this erroneous dogma, suffragists followed a dual path. They fought against the assumption held by courts and officials that women lacked political standing, and, they also acknowledged it in waging an unrelenting suffrage campaign from the 1860s until 1928. The most fundamental shift came in 1832 with the first insertion of the term “male persons” into a constitutional document overturning past royal and parliamentary regulations concerning the vote. After 1832, commentators deferred to this new male-restrictive legislation ignoring the much longer and larger numbers of gender-neutral documents. In addition, following the 1832 Representation of the People Act, women lost “their immemorial right of dower”; and this proved as damaging economically for married women as the inclusion of male persons in the Reform Bill proved politically, and “g[a]ve to husbands the right to leave their wives and children penniless.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>The Reform Act was passed on June 7, 1832, while the Act to remove dower rights was passed during September of the same year; the former being 2 and 3 William, Chapter 45

While in the United States, people are more likely to use the term “rights,” the British employed the term “privileges” to highlight their historical context and the person or entity granting the privilege. In a chapter on “the modern bases of privilege,” Stopes discusses the links between property and men’s early political advantage based on grants of land for military service. A woman, though, was not spared military service but could send a deputy, as could men based on their age or physical condition. For Stopes, the link between property ownership and politics is very much at the heart of her use of the term “privilege” for determining women’s political standing:

The relation between Property and Privilege has been the determining principle in Constitutional Evolution, and the distinction between the sexes in the matter of Property has been the radical cause of the distinction between them in regard to Privilege.<sup>15</sup>

Eldest sons gained the most through primogeniture that left real property (including landed estates) to the eldest male, but daughters and younger sons held similar positions in the family’s legal hierarchy. Even so, she claims, women’s right to inherit was traditionally more limited than men’s, either as widows or single children, but it is not fully “annihilated till the heart of the nineteenth century.”<sup>16</sup> Things only began to improve later in the century with the passage of the Married Women’s Property Acts in 1870 and 1882. The first emphasized women’s access to the income they generated, which before had belonged to their husbands under the common law principle that married women were not independent legal entities, and their legal identity was subsumed under their husbands. Thus any income they earned belonged to the husband. Their ability to inherit and have access to real property was enforced with the second act passed in 1882. In addition, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 gave women some rights over the custody of infant children.

and the latter 2 and 3 William, Chapter 105 in the parliamentary record. *British Freewomen*, 164; and for Stopes’ longer discussion of the retreat associated with the mid-nineteenth century, 163–173. Traditionally, women had been automatically due one third of their husbands’ estates upon their deaths; now this protection ended, and in contentious inheritance disputes, widows had to fight in court for their share.

<sup>15</sup> *B.F.*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> *B.F.*, 24.

Stopes, however, saw the last as a limited victory given the large number of conditions attached to granting women custody.<sup>17</sup>

Social norms and religious strictures also worked against women’s inclusion in a general understanding of the state. Even so, Christianity was not necessarily biased against women, and Stopes argues that the “subjection of women” is “antagonistic to the spirit and teaching of Christ.” However, Christianity was employed during the 1800s to restrict women’s place in society. The furtherance of liberty, and cries for greater justice and democracy, were often linked to the explicit denial of such rights to women, whether through the insertion of “male” in laws allowing new groups of men to vote or the demand of liberty for male slaves in 1833 following the recent passage of the Reform Bill.<sup>18</sup>

Stopes’ documentation of women’s voting, their nomination of Members of Parliament, and their holding of various public offices was undertaken not simply as a research project or academic exercise, but to serve as evidence women suffrage leaders could use to prove that women had historically possessed political standing and did not need a new statute. Her evidence contributed to legal cases regarding women’s voting, but ultimately such precedents were not recognized, and suffragists had to press for new legislation. To document that her views were not farfetched or even particularly unusual before the nineteenth century, the following statement comes from a case heard in Kings Bench, Britain’s highest court in 1739 to determine whether women could both vote and hold office in parish elections. In discussing the position of sexton, Chief Justice Lee of Kings Bench stated: “I am clearly of an opinion that a woman may be sexton of a parish. Women have held much higher offices, and, indeed, almost all offices of the kingdom; as Queen, Marshal, Great Chamberlain, Great Constable and Champion of England, Commissioner of Sewers and Keeper of a Prison, and Returning Officer for members of Parliament.”<sup>19</sup> Another justice stated that he saw “no disability” in women voting for Members of Parliament. But, as greater numbers of men from less privileged classes were added to the voting rolls, the prohibition against women became explicit. It is this prohibition that Stopes rejected.

<sup>17</sup> *B.F.*, 180–185.

<sup>18</sup> *B.F.*, 26–27.

<sup>19</sup> *B.F.*, 118–119; *Olive v. Ingram*, Hilary Term, 12 George 2, 7 Mod. 263, *English Reports*, vol. 87 (Edinburgh, 1832).

To understand Stopes' complex interests in women's citizenship and their omission from nineteenth-century reforms, one needs to examine her own life as well as her research efforts. It is here that we can find the origins of her feminism and activism on behalf of women's causes. They include higher education; a sufficient, independent income; and her persistent struggle to ensure that her daughters, especially Marie, could pursue a professional life. Stopes worked assiduously to prove to others that she was a scholar who could contribute to the family income through her writings, have a successful marriage, and be a loving and careful mother. Unfortunately, Stopes was not very successful in any of these areas.

In understanding the difficulties she faced, some have focused on her rigid habits and Scottish stubbornness. This view is especially prominent among those writing biographies and studies of her daughter, Marie.<sup>20</sup> Yet, such views undercut the historical labor and dedicated organizing, which directed her life. Stopes could back up her strongly held views with logic and historical data; still, her sense of not being appreciated within her family or abroad also contributed to her activism and to justifying her public and private efforts. She clearly had some supportive, professional relationships; but was also resentful that her work did not receive adequate recognition.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Ruth Hall, *Marie Stopes* (London: André Deutsch, 1977); *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950*, ed. Lesley Hall and Roy Porter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); and *Outspoken Women: An Anthology of Women's Writing on Sex, 1870–1969*, ed. Lesley Hall (New York: Routledge, 2005). Other than these collections, Hall authored C.C. Stopes' biography in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (along with Marie's). This is somewhat ironic given that she shares Marie's negative view of her mother, gives more prominent space to Henry Stopes in Marie's *ODNB* entry, and describes Charlotte as a "Shakespearean scholar" and "promoter of women's education," a truncated portrayal of her broad feminist goals including in the political arena. Certainly, the following description of Marie's upbringing is open to question and emphasizes sexual over other areas as opening up women's life choices: "Marie was brought up in a rather dour and puritanical intellectual atmosphere, and dressed according to the tenets of the Rational Dress Society."

<sup>21</sup>When she applied to the Royal Literary Fund in 1902 and again in 1917, she received strong support from male literary figures. In 1902, she gained a recommendation from Dr. F. J. Furnivall (likely the preeminent Shakespearean of the time) who terms her a serious Shakespeare scholar who can be counted on to finish her project, concluding, "She is a person of high character, & I have a great esteem for her." Another letter is from Percy M. Ames: "The soundness of her scholarship, & the importance and value of her research work to literature, are well known to your council"; he continues with her difficult personal situation with one successful botanist as a daughter and the other "a highly skilled book-binder" but "permanently an invalid" with "a heart value disorder." She receives £75 in 1902 and

Charlotte Brown Carmichael Stopes was born in February 1840 in Edinburgh; she came from a successful professional family with her father, James Ferrier Carmichael, being a landscape painter. The family’s finances experienced a serious financial setback, especially given that there were five children, from her father’s death when she was aged 13. Stopes later prepared for a career in teaching and then taught though devoting her later years more to writing and feminist organizing, along with extensive membership in professional and literary societies. After receiving training at a normal school in Edinburgh, following her graduation from high quality preparatory schools in the city, she continued her intellectual development and advanced her learning informally. She joined the Edinburgh Debating Society (a women’s literary group) around 1866. Stopes faced restrictions because of her sex as she advanced to a university education. Throughout the British Isles, women could not attend university on the same terms as men during the late nineteenth century, and access opened throughout the country only slowly and in idiosyncratic ways. In Edinburgh, during the late 1860s, the Society for the University Education of Women secured an agreement that women could take extramural courses, and Stopes was the earliest to receive a “certificate in arts,” a title awarded to women before they could receive degrees, and later a diploma from the University of Edinburgh, still short of a degree.<sup>22</sup>

Charlotte married the younger Henry Stopes in 1879. He was a person of varied interests, but functioned professionally as an architect. His interest in archaeology had a lasting impact on his elder daughter, Marie, and was one of the reasons she pursued a scientific career rather than following her mother’s dedication to the humanities. After the birth of Marie and Winifred, the family lived in the Upper Norwood neighborhood of London, and while there, Stopes held classes and meetings on Shakespeare, logic, and feminism and women’s suffrage. Her assiduous research on Shakespeare and her historical investigations into women’s political past kept her busy daily at the British Museum and the Public Record Office. While receiving limited recognition for this scholarship, as noted earlier, she was awarded a

£100 in 1917. (BL: unbound, Registered Case, No. 2637, 1903; 1917 is in the same folder, and the only date given is 1903 indicating the award date for the earlier application, while containing application and results from 1917 as well.)

<sup>22</sup> “C.C. Stopes,” *ODNB*. Edinburgh granted a degree for women in 1892, but by this time Stopes was married and living in London pursuing her literary and historical career. Throughout the twentieth century, more universities admitted women on similar terms to men, with the University of Cambridge being the last in 1948.

prize from the British Academy and was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.<sup>23</sup> There was less recognition of her historical research on women, but she continued to combine her interests in women's history with her organizing for women's rights and actively worked for women's suffrage until its achievement in 1928 not long before her death.

Stopes garnered the greatest recognition for her scholarship on Shakespeare's life, but even there she was considered a secondary, or minor, figure. Her extensive research into Shakespeare's family and background has, for the most part, been forgotten. This is quite remarkable given that she did more extensive research into historical sources than others who are more widely remembered for their Shakespearean expertise. Her two and a half years of careful notes from research into the Court of Requests are among her papers held at University College, London. She pursued what is, in many ways, the most demanding research historians can undertake, unsuccessfully searching through a lengthy set of records looking for materials.<sup>24</sup>

C.C. Stopes' correspondence, held mostly at the British Library, portrays an ambitious, socially engaged woman, strongly dedicated to scholarship and feminist causes and continually torn between her research and writing, on the one hand, and her family duties on the other. She was a dedicated intellectual who worked extraordinarily long hours pursuing her scholarship, and devoted herself as deeply to her family's needs as well. This led to conflicting demands on her time and concentration. Personally, she was crucial for the family's economic survival, especially as her husband became increasingly ill and made less money, and during the twenty-seven years following her husband's death in 1902. While competitive with other intellectuals, especially men in the circle of Shakespearean specialists from 1890 to 1920, family letters portray an even more fundamental competition between her and her elder daughter. It was a fascinating, but in many ways, difficult relationship. C.C. Stopes died in a nursing home with only £215 to her name and little recognition for her voluminous publications.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "C.C. Stopes," *ODNB*. She received the Rose Mary Crawshay Prize, and according to the British Academy, it is the only literary award designated for women scholars.

<sup>24</sup> Kathleen E. McLuskie, "Remembering Charlotte Stopes," in *Women Making Shakespeare: Text, Reception, and Performance*, ed. Gordon McMullan, Lena C. Orlin, and Virginia M. Vaughan (Bloomsbury: Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 195–206; Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, "Notes on the Court of Requests," Stopes Papers, University College London Archives.

<sup>25</sup> "Charlotte Carmichael Stopes" and "Marie Charlotte Carmichael Stopes," *ODNB*.

The relationship between mother and elder daughter was clearly strained. While encouraging her daughter's career and pushing her contacts to aid Marie or to publish work on her daughter's accomplishments, C.C. complained about money matters and Marie's neglect. As Marie grew more prominent and held, first, professional positions, and then a leading role in the birth control movement, she offered less attention, and even less respect to her mother. Their letters document a competitive relationship, yet one filled with deep affection and admiration, and one that shifted depending on each individual's stage in life.

Marie when young admired her father and loved to spend time with him on archaeological digs; she also worked to please her mother, especially academically, but resented how C.C.'s attention was drawn away from the family and her continual nagging or setting rules for Marie's life. Perhaps most striking about the correspondence between mother and daughter is its parallel nature, at similar stages of their lives. C.C. spent hours away from her family as a young wife and mother while still being close to, and overseeing, her daughters' upbringing. Marie appreciated her mother's encouragement while she was at universities in Britain and Germany and as a young professional, but later in life she seems quite distant, emphasizing how little time she had to spend with her mother while using almost identical language to that which her mother had used earlier when documenting how busy she was.

C.C. Stopes gave greater time and attention to her younger daughter, Winifred, who worked as a bookbinder, but who was ill most of her life and died as a young woman. Marie, however, seemed to lack sympathy for her sister's condition. This chapter focuses on Charlotte, but Marie's growing attachment to eugenics is crucial to the Stopes family dynamics. It is hard to deny that her lack of concern for her sister and later coolness toward her aging mother were influenced by her eugenicist views that society's resources should be devoted to the strong and not to the weak. Such realities emerge as well from her commitment to birth control; there is no strong sense of sisterhood or even a general concern for women. Rather, she wanted to allow prospective parents to view children based on personal interest and for women to have a full and pleasurable sexual existence without fear of pregnancy.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup>A letter on her stationery, but sent by Humphrey, was typed on the following letterhead with her as president: "The Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress,"

The family's dynamics are clear in C.C.'s letters to her children or to those responsible for their care and education. They reveal concern and affection, but this concern is constrained by her daily intellectual life. She writes to her daughters, not on personal stationery, but on letter-head, reflecting her hectic existence. Her first nine letters include missives to her children that are written on the following stationery: British Association for the Advancement of Science, Manchester meeting, 1887; British Association, Bath Meeting; the University Club for Ladies, 32 New Bond Street; and on company stationery, H. Stopes & Co., 23 Southwark Street.<sup>27</sup>

Her correspondence as a mother, especially when her daughters were away at school, was both distant and controlling. Engaged much of every day, Stopes complained to her children about her obligations and her extraordinarily busy life, but even so tried to supervise school decisions and their lives in incredible detail. There is no reason to assume her letters were especially different from those of the upper-middle and upper-class families who sent their children off to distant schools, except for the close supervision she imposed on her children and school officials.

She outlined her daily life in a letter to her younger daughter, Winifred:

Seeing you off – it took me 2 hours just to tidy up & make things straight, then I darned some of father's socks. I went to the National Dress Committee. I staid at the Ladies Club till it was time to go to the Aristotelian Society. I met Professor Brough there. I did not get home till near 12 – very tired – but I slept well. Yesterday morning, I began my usual life again. Go to the British Museum till 1 dinner – black work<sup>28</sup> till dark – then letters for the post, tea & then lighter needlework & writing till I go to bed.<sup>29</sup>

Stopes managed to do all this and still remind Marie to take care in sewing clothes for her doll because “careless sewing is neither good for Dolly or you.” She admonished Winifred for taking her dirty nightgown back to school without her mother having a chance to wash and mend it, and notified the school that neither daughter was to go out at night, as both were susceptible to colds.<sup>30</sup>

President, Marie Carmichael Stopes, B.Sc., Ph.D. F.L.S. (British Library, Additional Manuscript 48451, f. 51, October 26, 1922).

<sup>27</sup> BL, Add. 58449, ff. 1–9.

<sup>28</sup> “Embroidery using black silk on white cloth” (*OED*).

<sup>29</sup> BL, Add. 58449, f. 9. All of these manuscripts are held at the British Library, except for reference 24 concerning her research on the Court of Requests.

<sup>30</sup> To Marie, BL, Add. 58449 (1888–93), ff. 3, 9, and 13.

C.C. Stopes also involved her children in weighty family matters. There is little evidence that she spent a great deal of time either protecting or coddling them. While she did not say so, one gains the impression from her correspondence that she believed her children should confront reality at an early age and that the young should not be kept ignorant of the family's difficulties. In a later letter, and throughout the correspondence, it is clear that she did not keep bad news from her daughters, for example when Stopes wrote: “The lawsuit is postponed. Things still hang in suspense, & father and I are getting quite ill.”<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, she loved her daughters, and they her, and in Marie she had a child who excelled academically and made her mother proud of her accomplishments, which Marie outlined in a letter as a university student:

I am now, Bsc. Not only have I got it I have got it very well, I have got 1st class honours in Botany with the marks qualifying for the scholarship ... [she notes so did one man, but he took two years and she completed the work in one] I also have got honours in geology 3rd class, & am the only candidate with honours, the others [men] all failed. As it is impossible to take one honours in a year, to get 2 is very nice ... Anyway, as far as I can find out I am the first who has taken double honours.<sup>32</sup>

She assures her mother that the family will not owe any fees because she is only doing botany next year, and the fellowship will cover the costs. Marie then includes a telling phrase about her father: “I have told father ... [but] knew no particulars – tell him details if he cares.” In reality, not merely was she close to her father and so wanted to please him, but he was near death when she graduated from university and she got permission to tell her father of her outstanding scores in advance of the official announcement, and he died shortly thereafter. This letter concerning her academic success was dated May 12, 1902 and was addressed to her mother. She later traveled to Germany to pursue a doctorate not open to women in Britain.

<sup>31</sup> BL, Add. 58449, f. 20.

<sup>32</sup> BL, Add. 58449, f. 133; the letter is dated May 12, 1902; the language here begins to imitate her mother's tendency to praise her knowledge and superiority over others in the field even if Stopes was not seen as a leading scholar. C.C. seems to enjoy displaying her knowledge in public, and there is little of the shy or reserved woman in descriptions of her life to her daughters as in folio 111 from April of 1896: “The American Ambassador made a speech yesterday in which he made some slips about Shakespeare. I wrote a letter to the Papers.” This letter to her children is addressed from Stratford upon Avon.

And, while there she complained often about the freezing temperatures, having to break ice in the pitcher in her room upon rising. She enrolled in the University of Munich, and wrote in June of 1904, "I am now a Fraulein Doktor of Philosophy, magna cum laude" and notes that she is the first to accomplish this at her Institute associated with the university.<sup>33</sup> Because of her limited funds, she worked constantly, especially doing research in laboratories, and finished her research and thesis, to enable her to complete her doctorate, in only one year. Her time in Munich is reflected in her correspondence with C.C. as a time of great sacrifice and discomfort, although she and others portrayed it subsequently as a major and unique accomplishment.

Got home at 8, & the temperature was 12o centigrade; You would not find 3 eggs at all too much. One must eat to keep at all warm. I haven't got to eating candles yet, – but today every scrap of water in my room had ice on it, & my jug was splintered up to smithereens & every time I levered up an article, & then put it down, it was frozen to the stand in 5 minutes.<sup>34</sup>

This letter reflects the importance of complaints for both mother and daughter. Following Munich, Marie secured a position at the University of Manchester and was the first woman to present a science lecture there. At the age of 24, she was the youngest doctor of science in Britain.<sup>35</sup> Her accomplishments were truly extraordinary; completing honors degrees in science in Britain, receiving a doctorate in Germany, and one that required her to defend her thesis orally in German which she learned only while there. It was perhaps such accomplishments that led to her superior and distant epistolary tone later in life.

Her mother, throughout this period, offers strong encouragement and useful personal and professional advice; for instance, before it looked as if Marie would be able to pursue her doctoral work, C.C. suggested:

Write your Botany book, in your best style. You know that no Publisher will take rubbish even if agreed to be taken; & that any publisher will take a good popular textbook.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> BL, Add. 58449, f. 177.

<sup>34</sup> BL, Add. 58449, f. 142, October 5, 1903; it is sent from Hess Strasse, München.

<sup>35</sup> *Public Lives*, 117–118.

<sup>36</sup> BL, Add. 58449, f. 144.

Marie Stopes showed great promise as a botanist, and there are still plants named for her today. She enjoyed her years at University College London. She viewed men more as competitive beings than as possible romantic partners. She also lacked her mother’s long-term commitment to feminist causes. Marie Stopes viewed herself as a “pioneer woman scientist” and did not want to associate with others (or even movements) that might detract from her ambitions. “She recognized the women’s movement as a ‘great cause,’ but it was not the cause she thought she wanted to pursue.”<sup>37</sup> Even when she achieved great professional success she blamed her mother for raising her in a prudish household and keeping information about intimate sexual matters from her, and she thought that this led to the failure of her first marriage. However, there is not a great deal of this prudery in her mother’s correspondence. Most of that narrative comes from Marie’s later discussion of her childhood and early womanhood. She complained about dressing in unattractive clothing because of her mother’s commitment to the rational dress movement. And Marie claims she learned little about sex and received a negative impression about her own sex life, which prevented her experiencing pleasure as an adult woman. The rational dress movement, however, was strongly tied to the broader women’s movement and especially opposed the harm done to women’s bodies by tight corsets, the stylish choice, which impeded healthy breathing.<sup>38</sup>

The strongest evidence of her mother’s influence was the fact that Marie gave up her stellar scientific career to help found the birth control movement in Britain and to take on the forces who opposed women’s use of contraception and promoted unequal marital power relationships. It is clear that she had learned the lessons taught by C.C. Stopes about the need to fight in court for what one believed, and in her case, this involved fighting against the closure of her birth control centers. Yet this attachment to her mother and her mother’s concerns was always tempered by her sense that Charlotte had stunted her sexual growth, and that the women’s causes her mother pursued were old fashioned and less important than her own work in establishing birth control opportunities for married women. Marie found her mother tiresome. She resented her mother’s continual complaints about the financial situation she and Winifred faced following Henry Stopes’ bankruptcy and subsequent death. Lacking an

<sup>37</sup> Stephanie Green, *Public Lives of Charlotte and Marie Stopes* (London: Routledge, 2013), 111. Green introduces Marie Stopes’ early life in chap. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Public Lives*, 157–182.

empathetic personality, Marie pursued her interesting life as a young woman and tried to isolate herself as much as possible from family concerns.<sup>39</sup>

Marie Stopes' move from rigorous scientific research to birth control advocate and administrator began when she was in her early thirties; the two leading impetuses for this change were her reading of Edward Carpenter's *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) and the trauma associated with the failure of her first marriage based on her sexual ignorance. At 31, she was an innocent concerning sexual relationships between men and women. She had met and married Reginald R. Gates in 1911, a Canadian interested in genetics. The union was a disaster due to her sexual ignorance and his impotence and she gained an annulment after five years. This experience caused her to resent her mother for her own ignorance and to support sexologists Carpenter and Havelock Ellis. Her push for greater freedom and pleasure for married women led to her birth control efforts and resulted in a declining concentration on science. One important outcome from this shift resulted in her popular work, *Married Love*, which appeared in 1918. Most significantly, however, she established birth control centers around the country and pursued numerous legal cases resisting opponents' attempts to shut them down.<sup>40</sup>

Charlotte Carmichael Stopes wrote about, and organized for, women's education, suffrage, their legal rights, and their recognition as intellectuals and authors. She was intrigued by history and historical documents, but she was drawn as well to principles grounded in philosophy. Her correspondence, as well as her works, equally stress ethics and logic. In her view, there was clearly a rational foundation underpinning the benefits to be gained from justice and equality between the sexes. She identified first as a woman, and then as a mother and an intellectual. Such identities were often in conflict, but they provided a richness to her feminist ideas. As an outsider because of her bourgeois, Scottish heritage, as well as being a woman in intellectual circles dominated by men, she worked tirelessly to

<sup>39</sup> *Public Lives*, 110–116. This was also the time she was receiving recognition for her academic work. According to W. G. Chaloner, in an article on Marie published by the Geological Society of London in 2005, “between 1903 and 1935 she published a series of paleobotanical papers that placed her among the leading half dozen British paleobotanists of her time.” *Public Lives*, 112. In addition, she was the first woman to receive a grant from the Royal Society to do research on fossils in Japan (122).

<sup>40</sup> Hall, *Marie Stopes*, 89–154.

further her goals. But this does not mean that she successfully avoided being overwhelmed by poverty, the serious illness of her younger daughter, and the illnesses she experienced following middle age.

Stopes had a shining jewel in her older daughter who reached the apex of scientific scholarship and became a celebrity in the birth control movement. Even so, one can see sadness and resentment in C.C.’s inability to convince Marie of the importance of her literary and historical research, and especially to appreciate her mother’s feminist goals. These difficulties, apparent through her correspondence, created a tension between her public and private existence and made her rely on help from others; but Marie’s growing distance seems to have troubled her most. Sometimes, C.C.’s anger and resentment virtually jumped off the page in letters to her daughter: “I am sorry you do not spend the same amount of intelligence in understanding my letters, my position, and my difficulties, that you spend on your own work.” She follows this statement by detailing all the problems she was facing in finding rooms for her and Winnie as they were forced to leave the family home. The Stopes family represented that social group and set of values common among those who were trying to hold on to past privileges and who saw themselves sliding from their previous position. And Marie seems to miss any irony in her views concerning her mother’s problem securing a servant. “It is *very* annoying about the maid. How it is so difficult to get servants, when there is such a cry for work I cannot understand – everywhere worthy poor not able to get work, and yet no servants to be had, There is some ridiculous muddle somewhere.”<sup>41</sup>

Finally, C.C.’s extensive research identifying the various offices held by women in the past, and the instances in which they had voted, made her extraordinarily knowledgeable about women’s long-term political roles. While this knowledge would appear a positive for her, it also buttressed Stopes’ resentment towards those who denied such reality and who formed judgments as if she had never uncovered those records. She had scoured historical documents to discover legal and political precedents, but her time-consuming and important discoveries seem to have had little impact on court decisions. Such was especially the case through the 1860s. Perhaps most indicative was the decision of *Chorlton v. Lings*, which determined the legality of the thousands of women who voted in Manchester

<sup>41</sup> BL, Add. 58449, f. 170, April 14, 1904.

and elsewhere after the Second Reform Act, The case's arguments and later decision infuriated Stopes, and documented both her tenacious dedication to suffrage and her difficulties in proving that women possessed political privileges before 1928.

With the nineteenth century, political rights expanded to middle- and working-class men, and to freed slaves, and led to a decline of elite and urban women's privilege. These developments were tied as well to the ideology of separate spheres, directed especially to that group of women who had exhibited political power in the past. In the decade leading up to *Chorlton v. Lings*, Lord Brougham, who supported women's suffrage, authored legislation that passed Parliament in 1850 and tied his fellow parliamentarians in linguistic knots. Brougham's Act stated that broadly generic terms for human, such as man or men, included women unless they were explicitly excluded by legislation. This was, of course, to negate the impact of the word "male" being added to the Reform Bill of 1832. However, the 1867 Act that enfranchised some laborers failed to employ "male" and rather used "men" thus falling under Brougham's inclusive language. Even so, the Court of Appeals decided against the 5000 plus women who had voted in Manchester in 1868.<sup>42</sup>

*Chorlton v. Lings* was heard in Westminster during November 1868, and Stopes analyzed the arguments, introducing them to "the rising generation" as follows: "they show how Sex-bias can blind the eyes of Justice."<sup>43</sup> The lawyers for the women, including the husband of suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst, offered precedents of women's earlier voting and office holding, but those did not sway the Court. Two counter-arguments were made: first, that women being able to vote could threaten marriage – that they would remain single to extend the privilege or they would seek their husbands' deaths to gain voting rights as widows. Second, the chief justice turned to memory as a hedge against the application of Brougham's Act. He stated, as quoted by Stopes:

It is quite possible that there may have been some instances in early times of women having voted. ... Yet the fact of the right not having been asserted for centuries raises a very strong presumption against it ever having had legal existence.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *B.F.*, 164; 170–175.

<sup>43</sup> *B.F.*, 170.

<sup>44</sup> *B.F.*, 173.

He then concludes, “though in many statutes ‘man’ includes woman, it does not in this case.” Thus the 1850 statute that was in place, and clearly relevant, was dismissed. It was this denying of reality, manipulating language, and steadfastly adhering to the narrative of women’s past political impotence that most enraged Stopes, and kept her committed to the cause until the end of her life.<sup>45</sup>

In her own life, she fought for acceptance and respectability, and while she partially found it, especially for her research on William Shakespeare, still, late in life, she was scorned as someone who did not deserve to be considered among London’s intellectuals. Her feminist victories and her usefulness to the constitutional arguments made by suffrage leaders, as well as her scholarship, had made her somewhat prominent during her life, but were subject to ridicule late in life. Stopes was not part of Britain’s traditional elite. She thus had to work hard to insinuate herself into the public debates about, above all, gender roles and Shakespearean scholarship. Even though her work was recognized, she was also treated as someone beyond scholarly respectability. And the pressures of her daily existence continued to interfere with her efforts to forge a lasting place among London’s intelligentsia.

Portions of two letters from 1905 make clear her desperate straits and her efforts to gain funds from any available source. “I have not a penny, & have gone through untold distress for lack of money, but I expect some soon, through a new friend that I have made.” Her needs are linked to wanting a smaller house and money for Winifred’s medical treatment. In writing to Marie, she states: “I shall send Winnie to Manchester from Wednesday to Saturday next week, which is as soon as I can manage sufficient money, if Dr. Cunningham’s promise holds, [and she adds the following cut] though I had meant to spend it in other urgent needs.” Clearly, the daughter did not appreciate the letter, and her mother did not appreciate her response.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *B.F.*, 170–172.

<sup>46</sup> Both letters are to Marie, BL, Add. 58449, f. 228, February 1905 and f. 225; dated February 16, 1905. While one gets the impression that Marie resented her mother’s frequent correspondence, there are also the same obsessive qualities one sees in C.C. Concerning a postcard that did not reach her mother when she anticipated, she states, “I do not at all understand how you should only have got my postcard by Monday—you should have got it on Saturday for it went by the post I always use for the letters [and] it is very annoying for I was in a particular hurry to get it off” (f. 166, March 24, 1904).

An example of her pushing an editor to gain more space for her work, enhanced recognition, and to advertise her other pieces is clear in exchanges with Oscar Wilde (and his wife) when he was editor of *Woman's World*. Stopes was arguing the harmful effects of freezing food in her submitted article; Wilde replies but criticizes her contribution: "Personally I do not like frozen meat; and never use it (to my knowledge). But I don't see that you have any proof that refrigeration is destructive to its nutritious qualities." And, he later notes: "I have been through your articles – more than one of which by the way I have had the pleasure of seeing before – and while recognizing their interest, I am afraid that they are not specially suitable to this magazine." He did publish an essay on dress reform, and praised the care she took with it, and a story about a fisherwoman, but resisted adding more of her Shakespeare scholarship or highlighting her other work. The question of money dominates so much of her correspondence that one can see why some wanted to avoid this woman in need.<sup>47</sup>

Stopes was also skilled at getting close to prominent, older male scholars, and, after her husband's death, persuading them to give her financial support. Her financial situation, however, was distinct from that of the typical poor widow brought low through her husband's death. Henry Stopes, twelve years her junior, after the first years of marriage is often portrayed as a malingerer, and she was already providing more and more of the family's income. The stories she told about having to move because of insufficient money to pay rent, or needing tuition money or medical care especially for Winifred, were legitimate; but there is some discomfort in reading about a person who so strongly defended women's independence but who relied on the kindness of older male associates.

If seeking the ideal female intellectual, one can point to flaws in Stopes' personal and professional life, but it is hard to minimize the importance of her combined scholarly and activist efforts. While constantly writing, for example, she led members of the Scottish Women's Suffrage Society on tours of Scotland. And, although this chapter has not concentrated on Marie Stopes, whatever failures her mother possessed pale in comparison to her daughter's views on eugenics, her smug superiority, and especially

<sup>47</sup> BL, Add. 58454, ff. 43, 52. Marie often had Humphrey, her second husband, respond to her mother rather than herself. He always used a kind and loving tone in his missives. As time progressed, Marie emphasized her packed schedule and her distance from her mother. For example, in June of 1921, she writes to C.C., "We have a perfect duck of a place for you if you would like the second half of August ... I can't be responsible, but it is only a 5 minute walk to the most delightful of cliffs" (June 30, 1921, Add. 48452, ff. 10, 30).

her urging C.C. to save her money and not spend it on doctors for her sister as the latter became increasingly ill; when Winifred died, Marie argued that her sister should be cremated and did not even attend her funeral. Even as a feminist icon, in correspondence with her mother there is much not to like.<sup>48</sup>

In *British Freewomen*, not only did C.C. Stopes unearth invaluable evidence of women’s importance in British politics before 1800; she also made clear the irrelevance of much contemporary and later historical analyses. For example, a reference work on British history noted in 2002 that “by 1897 a majority of MPs had been converted to the general principle of enfranchising women.”<sup>49</sup> This is of doubtful comfort to the hundreds of women yet to be jailed and those who would become hunger strikers, as well as those who continued to confront the Liberal Party and its resistance. The greatest error made by most historians is a failure to recognize the fundamental dispute over language and gender difference in framing the reform bills of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, as Stopes has shown, women’s advocates could counter opponents with a range of historical and legal arguments and realities, but the one charge they could never counter was the fact that they were women.

Despite all of C.C. Stopes’ efforts, this is how, late in her life, she was described in the *Sunday Times*:

A little grey-haired old lady with an old fashioned Bonnet ... she is constantly to be seen in the Public Record Office, or in the Reading Room of the British Museum, where she pursues her studies with unabated enthusiasm.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly, this is not how she wanted herself, or her scholarship and organizing efforts to be remembered.

<sup>48</sup> BL, Add. 58452, f. 23 Winifred died in February 1923, and Marie states, “I know she specially wished to be cremated: please see this is done please.” C.C. responds that she did not get the direction about cremation in time and that the Anglican sisters buried her near a small chapel that she loved (ff. 23 and 74). In June of that year, Marie writes, “The month of June is too awfully crowded! I really don’t know when I can find even an hour” (f. 84).

<sup>49</sup> *Oxford Companion to British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 792.

<sup>50</sup> McLuskie, *Women Making Shakespeare*, 202.



## C. V. Wedgwood: The Historian and the World

*Melinda S. Zook*

The British historian of early modern England and Europe C. V. Wedgwood (1910–97) was one of the most decorated, prolific, and popular writers of the twentieth-century Anglophone world. Her books are still widely read; her masterpiece, *The Thirty Years War*, first published in 1938, remains in print and is also available as an audio book. Her elegant and accessible style lends itself to anyone interested in learning about the past. For the better part of her life, Wedgwood, like Aphra Behn before her, “wrote for [her] bread,” and while she was invested in publishing for a wide market, she felt a sincere duty toward that audience: to engage, inform, and even moralize (Fig. 6.1).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Aphra Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy* (London, 1678), sig. A. Wedgwood sought to live off her writing. She did receive a monthly dividend but it was not until 1966 when she received her share of her father’s estate that she could stop worrying about money. Oxford: Bodleian Library, Wedgwood diary, MS. Eng.d.3338, f. 72.

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**Fig. 6.1** C. V. Wedgwood (1910–1997). (Photo of Dame Cicely Veronica Wedgwood by Godfrey Argent, used by permission of the National Portrait Gallery, London)



Wedgwood never held an academic position. Academics attribute this to her determination to maintain her freedom.<sup>2</sup> Yet, considering the number of editing positions she held, the reviews and essays she wrote weekly, and the lectures she gave throughout the UK, she might have had considerably more free time at a university. What Wedgwood did desire was acknowledgment by the academy, which was not always forthcoming and led to some tension in her life. She chose, however, to be part of something bigger than academia, speaking to a wider audience. In part, this is what it meant to be a Wedgwood. She came

<sup>2</sup>For example, A. H. Woolrych writes, “an academic career was open to her, but she decided against it. She wanted more freedom ...” He wrote this in a sympathetic piece on her shortly after her death, “Cicely Veronica Wedgwood,” *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 97 (1998): 521–534 (quote on 523).

from a prosperous and socially esteemed family with a tradition of public service. Her public-mindedness was also attributable to the broader atmosphere of political engagement among British intellectuals, starting in the 1930s, and continuing through the Cold War.

This was the world of the London intelligentsia, epitomized by the PEN Club, the Society of Authors, the Arts Council, the Book Society, the English Association, and the Royal Historical Society, and whose creative work was disseminated in numerous publications including *Time and Tide*, *New Writing*, *Encounter*, *The Geographical Magazine*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and the *London Magazine*.<sup>3</sup> And, for Wedgwood, it was also the world of the London Library, British Museum, the National Gallery, and the BBC, particularly the Third Programme.<sup>4</sup> She played crucial roles, often as president, in organizations like the English Centre of PEN International; published regularly in cultural periodicals; and was a frequent contributor to the BBC. In many ways, she straddled both the public world of high culture and the dissemination of the arts and learning, as well as that of the academy, giving frequent lectures to university audiences. Yet as her diary attests, she was just as likely to speak to groups of schoolchildren, faculty wives, or “local enthusiasts,” as to academics.<sup>5</sup> Wedgwood lived in the world of poets, artists, writers, journalists, and public servants and sought to deliver learning to anyone willing to listen. She had a profound sense of the responsibility, not only to the past and to the dead, but more so, to the living.

Cicely Veronica Wedgwood (known by her friends as Veronica) came from rich stock. She was descended from the eighteenth-century potter and china manufacturer, Josiah Wedgwood. The Wedgwoods had intermarried with the Darwins in the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, the Wedgwood–Darwin clan was related to the critic and editor Leslie Stephen and his daughter, Virginia Woolf; the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams; the educator and liberal politician H. A. L. Fisher; and

<sup>3</sup> *Time and Tide* is discussed below. John Lehmann’s *New Writing*, a monthly book magazine (later *Penguin New Writing*) debuted in 1936 and was committed to anti-fascism. *Encounter* was a left-wing, anti-Stalinist literary magazine, begun in 1953 by the poet Stephen Spender and American journalist Irving Kristol. *The Geographical Magazine* was founded in 1935 by diplomat Michael Huxley, and is now published as *Geographical*. The *TLS* and *London Magazine* still exist today. Wedgwood published in these periodicals.

<sup>4</sup> The BBC Third Programme aired from 1946 to 1970, and played a significant role in disseminating the arts.

<sup>5</sup> MS. Eng.d.3386, f. 93 (for the quote); also see, f. 85; MS. Eng.d.3387, ff. 30, 60.

the historians Thomas Babington Macaulay and G. M. Trevelyan. They belonged to a nexus of interlocking prosperous professional families that formed, according to Noel Annan, an “intellectual aristocracy” in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. All of them were “high minded, public-spirited” and mostly, Cambridge-educated.<sup>6</sup> Veronica’s father, Sir Ralph Lewis Wedgwood, was a member of the Cambridge Platonists and a highly cultivated man who read T. S. Eliot aloud to his family. He married Iris Veronica Pawson, who became a novelist and travel writer.<sup>7</sup>

The Wedgwood household was lively, visiting similarly cultured families such as the Trevelyans, and receiving guests such as the philosopher G. E. Moore, and novelist Joseph Conrad. Sir Ralph was a railway magnate, but his first love was history and he maintained a great library.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this affinity between father and daughter, Sir Ralph took Veronica with him on his extensive travels throughout Europe.<sup>9</sup> Veronica was also close to her uncle, Josiah Clement, first Baron Wedgwood, a proponent of liberty and individual rights, who defected from the Liberal to the Labour Party in 1919, and who clearly influenced his niece’s political perspectives.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Annan identified these families as the Wedgwoods, Darwins, Stephens, Keyneses, Arnolds, Butlers, and Trevelyans in “The Intellectual Aristocracy,” in J. H. Plumb, ed., *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G. M. Trevelyan* (London: Longman, 1955), 243–287. The Wedgwoods were also related to the Huxleys and Bowens. Also see Stephan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 140–145 (quote from 140).

<sup>7</sup> MS. Eng.d.3386, f. 78, describes Sir Ralph reading *The Preludes* aloud after dinner. Lady Iris Veronica Wedgwood (1887–1982) was the daughter of Albert Henry Pawson, a botanist and member of the Linnean Society of London. Veronica was also close to her grandfather. Lady Iris authored four novels in the 1920s and two works of non-fiction, *Northumberland and Durham* (1932) and *Fenland Rivers: Impressions of the Fen Counties* (1936).

<sup>8</sup> Sir Ralph Lewis Wedgwood (1874–1956), First Baronet, was the first Chief Officer of the London & North Eastern Railway for sixteen years; during the Second World War, he was chair of the wartime Railway Executive Committee. Bernard Burke, ed., *Peerage* (1999), 2963; Geoffrey Hughes, “Wedgwood, Sir Ralph Lewis, first baronet (1874–1956),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). His love for history and his library are mentioned in Elias Canetti, *Party in the Blitz: The English Years*, trans. Michael Hofmann (New York: New Directions, 2005), 18. On the connections between Conrad and the Wedgwoods, see *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, 8 vols. ed. Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 5–8, passim.

<sup>9</sup> Ved Mehta, *Fly and the Fly Bottle: Encounters with British Intellectuals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 197.

<sup>10</sup> Josiah Wedgwood was also instrumental in the founding of the official *History of Parliament* and wrote, with his niece’s help, its first two published volumes, completed in 1936 and 1938. The story of the *History of Parliament* series is recounted in David

Veronica Wedgwood was educated at a day school in Kensington until she was 15. She spent two years in Europe learning German and French and took her BA at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she worked with A. L. Rowse. She then registered to write a dissertation under R. H. Tawney. But a weekend with the Trevelyans, arranged by her father, changed all that. Trevelyan convinced Veronica to forego a “dry as dust” economic study with Tawney and instead write a biography of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, and this she accomplished with the help of Sir John Neale. Wedgwood recalled as critical the influence of Trevelyan at this pivotal junction in her life. Had she written “a thesis with Tawney on some forbidding seventeenth-century subject,” she would have “become a *Why* historian,” rather than a “*How* historian,” she later recounted.<sup>11</sup> But Wedgwood’s talent for narrative writing, for the poignant and picturesque, was evident from the outset of her career. Her first book, *Thomas Wentworth, First Earl of Strafford*, was published in 1935; her second book, *The Thirty Years War*, followed shortly thereafter. She was not yet 30.

Yet Wedgwood remained outside of the academy, supporting herself by writing and editing.<sup>12</sup> In 1942 she met Margaret Haig Mackworth, Viscountess Rhondda, at a small lunch party. Lady Rhondda was duly impressed, telling her companion on the way home, “I want that young woman for *Time and Tide*.” The literary magazine *Time and Tide* was founded by Lady Rhondda in 1920; it was consciously feminist, but without any political affiliation. At first, at least, it was staffed entirely by women. The first editor from 1920 to 1926 was Helen Archdale, who had maintained its clear feminist orientation. But in the 1930s and 1940s, Lady Rhondda herself took over the editorship, devoting more space to international affairs, and while she remained committed to a liberal egalitarianism she minimized feminist content. From the outset of their relationship, Wedgwood made it clear to Lady Rhondda “that history must always come first.” Nonetheless, Wedgwood became the literary editor of *Time and Tide* in 1943 and shortly thereafter, the deputy editor. Her con-

Cannadine, “Piety: Josiah Wedgwood and the History of Parliament,” in his *In Churchill’s Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (London: Penguin, 2002), 134–158; and in D. W. Hayton, “Colonel Wedgwood and the Historians,” *Historical Research*, 84/224 (May 2011): 348–355. C. V. Wedgwood later wrote about her uncle in *The Last of the Radicals: The Life of Josiah Wedgwood, MP* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951).

<sup>11</sup> Mehta, *Fly and the Fly Bottle*, 189.

<sup>12</sup> She was a member of the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton from 1953 to 1968 and a Special Lecturer at University College London from 1962 to 1991.

tributions were significant. In addition to her editing work, she wrote numerous essays and reviews for the magazine, and she enticed a great deal of talent to contribute their work to *Time and Tide*.<sup>13</sup> She was, by all accounts, a gentle, tactful presence, particularly adept at restraining easily slighted egos, such as her former teacher and friend, Rowse.<sup>14</sup>

Wedgwood's own commitment to feminism is difficult to ascertain. Later, in her fifties, Wedgwood reported that, "When I was young, I was left-wing and intolerant, prepared to damn many books and many ways of doing things. Now that I am little older, I can tolerate many points of view and many types of books."<sup>15</sup> Wedgwood matured in the fraught atmosphere of the 1930s and 1940s, among a left-wing intelligentsia, although not often explicitly feminist; her youthful diaries record her assistance to refugees from Nazism. In the more sedate post-war world, she could afford a more relaxed political perspective. Visiting the US in the early 1950s, she recorded her abhorrence for McCarthyism, like all "sensible" people, but also agreed with J. H. Hexter that liberals had brought the problem on themselves for refusing to face the homegrown communist threat<sup>16</sup>

Certainly, Wedgwood was not a feminist historian. She consistently referred to historians as "he" and spoke of "great man history" or the "common man" in history.<sup>17</sup> During her tenure at *Time and Tide*, its femi-

<sup>13</sup>Margaret Haig Mackworth, Viscountess Rhondda, introduction to *Time and Tide Anthology*, ed. Anthony Legeune (London: André Deutsch, 1956), 13; Ornella de Zordo, "London 1920s: Time and Tide Wait for No Man," in *Networking Women: Subjects, Places, Links Europe-America*, ed. Marina Camboni (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 233, 235; Muriel Mellown, "Lady Rhondda and the Changing Faces of British Feminism," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 9/2 (1987): 7–13.

<sup>14</sup>Her colleague at *Time and Tide*, John Betjeman, called her the "saintly backbone of all our lives." For this quote and her attempts to restrain strong personalities, see Richard Ollard, *A Man of Contradictions: A Life of A. L. Rowse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 180.

<sup>15</sup>Mehta, *Fly and the Fly Bottle*, 200–201.

<sup>16</sup>MS. Eng.d.3333, f. 2 records her contributions to refugees; MS. Eng.d.3386, f. 17 on her conversation with J. H. Hexter. Jack H. Hexter (1910–96) was an American historian specializing in early modern English history. Wedgwood would spend time with the Hexter family when visiting the US.

<sup>17</sup>In her lecture "Principles and Perspectives," published in 1960, she does refer to the "deeds and ideas of great men *and* women." But she was not consistent and usually returned the masculine nouns and pronouns. *Truth and Opinion: Historical Essays*, 42. In 1946 she wrote an essay focused solely on women, the story of the Quakers, Katherine Evans and Sarah Chevers during their captivity in Malta, published in a Catholic periodical, *Windmill*. It was obviously meant as a sort of curiosity piece for the educated public.

nist content dwindled. It was, first and foremost, a literary journal by the 1940s, publishing the likes of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. In the early 1950s, Lady Rhondda moved *Time and Tide* to the right, stating in 1952 that the nationalization policies of the government would destroy political liberty, undermine individual initiative, and lead to totalitarianism. She also abandoned *Time and Tide's* independent stance and formally affiliated the magazine with the Conservative Party. Wedgwood may have found Lady Rhondda's lurch to the right disconcerting, but she remained with *Time and Tide* until the end.<sup>18</sup>

Starting in the early 1940s, Wedgwood was also working as a literary advisor for the independent publisher Jonathan Cape, who printed her histories that continued to appear in regular succession. Cape had recruited a galaxy of stars, publishing T. E. Lawrence, Robert Graves, James Joyce, and numerous Americans, including Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and Robert Frost. Through her connections with *Time and Tide* and Jonathan Cape (as well as among her own family), Wedgwood was centered within a large nexus of talent. Her own circle of friends and correspondents was as wide (John Lehman and his sister, Rosamond Lehman, Elizabeth Bowen, Cecil Day-Lewis, Rose Macaulay, G. M. Trevelyan, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, and so on) as it was rich. Wedgwood was also keenly active in PEN. She was president of the English division from 1951 to 1957, addressing the PEN International Congress in her final year.<sup>19</sup> Along the way, Wedgwood helped many people; she discovered writers, recruited them, got them published.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, she wrote reviews and historical essays in numerous English

<sup>18</sup> *Time and Tide*, 24 (May 1952). In her diary for 1952, Wedgwood describes being "fairly shocked" by Lady Rhondda's decisions. MS. Eng.d.3386, f. 85. Wedgwood was still working for *Time and Tide* in 1958, the year Lady Rhondda died. In 1959, Wedgwood records hosting a "Time and Tide party;" it may have been a farewell party since the following year, the magazine was sold to new owners and revamped as a conservative Christian weekly. MS.Eng.e.3336, f. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Wedgwood's 1957 speech, focusing on what historians owe the public, was published in *The Author and the Public: Problems of Communication*, introduction by C. V. Wedgwood (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1957). Wedgwood remained active in PEN for many years after her presidency.

<sup>20</sup> Among those she helped were: the music and theater critic Philip Hope-Wallace; the novelist Friedl Benedikt (Anna Sebastian); the Nobel Prize winner Elias Canetti; and the historian A. L. Rowse. Wedgwood lived with Hope-Wallace and his sister, her partner, Jacqueline. Philip died in 1979. Wedgwood wrote the introduction to a collection of his writings assembled by Jacqueline, entitled *Words and Music: A Selection from the Criticism*

and American venues, often recording in her diary how many words she had written each day. She also worked for the BBC as a consultant, writer, and frequent guest and, in her own words, was a member of nearly “every prize committee.”<sup>21</sup> She was, in short, a public intellectual.

Wedgwood was highly decorated, receiving honorary degrees in both England and America.<sup>22</sup> In fact, she was one of the most awarded English historians of the twentieth century: she received a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in 1956, the Goethe Medal in 1958, and a Damehood (DBE) in 1968; in 1969, when still in her fifties, she was awarded an Order of Merit. All of this recognition came, in part, because of her public work, and in part because of her highly accessible histories. But she was not without critics, and most of those voices came from inside the academy and sometimes from the very people whom Wedgwood had helped to publish.<sup>23</sup>

Wedgwood wrote big history: the actions of great men (and some women); panoramic in scope, literary in style. In the words of one of her sympathetic reviewers, her books were “erudite, readable, imaginative, sympathetic recreations of the past.”<sup>24</sup> She wrote biographies of great men<sup>25</sup>; she began a trilogy entitled *The Great Rebellion* on the English

*and Occasional Pieces of Philip Hope-Wallace* (London: Collins, 1981). Jacqueline cared for Wedgwood who died of Alzheimer’s disease in 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Wedgwood quoted in Mehta, *Fly and the Fly Bottle*, 201. Wedgwood was also a member of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (1953–78), president of the English Association (1955–56), president of the Society of Authors (1972–77), and vice president of the London Library. She served on the Arts Council (1958–61) and the Advisory Council of the Victoria and Albert Museum (1960–69), and was twice a trustee of the National Gallery (1962–68 and 1969–76), and its first female trustee.

<sup>22</sup> At Glasgow, Sheffield and Smith College.

<sup>23</sup> Wedgwood helped both A. L. Rowse and Elias Canetti publish their work through her connections, particularly with Jonathan Cape. Yet both men published uncharitable portraits of her and described her work as “second rate,” as discussed below.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Schlatter, “Review of *Truth and Opinion*,” *Journal of Modern History*, 33/1 (1961): 57.

<sup>25</sup> *Strafford, 1593–1641* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), revised as *Thomas Wentworth, First Earl of Strafford, 1598–1641: A Reevaluation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1961); *Oliver Cromwell* (London: Duckworth, 1939); *William the Silent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946); *Richelieu and the French Monarchy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton for English University Press, 1949); *The Last of the Radicals: The Life of Josiah Wedgwood, MP* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951); *Montrose* (London: Collins, 1952); *The World of Rubens, 1577–1640* (New York: Time-Life, 1967).

Civil War of which only two volumes were completed<sup>26</sup>; her many essays were collected at various points in her career and republished<sup>27</sup>; she wrote about English literature<sup>28</sup>; and she began a global history textbook, although she was unable to finish the third volume.<sup>29</sup> She also translated Karl Brandi's biography of Charles V from the German as well as a modernist novel by Elias Canetti as *Auto-da-fé*.<sup>30</sup> She wrote novels, never published, for her own amusement.

Wedgwood believed that a "historian's first duty is not to his subject but to his audience." The "dead can look after themselves;" it was the living that mattered.<sup>31</sup> Wedgwood's twentieth-century audience lived in perilous times. Writing about her childhood, Wedgwood recorded this glimpse of a 4-year-old's remembrance of the Great War, "One afternoon [at the ballet] a man in a black frock-coat came sidling on between the dancers and said, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, the peace treaty has been signed.'"<sup>32</sup> In her twenties and thirties, she witnessed the rise of right and left-wing extremes. Events in Germany, where she had friends, were particularly troubling to her. She published her history of the Thirty Years War in 1938, the year of the Anschluss when it was becoming evident that her world was about to plunge into chaos again. Her oft-quoted lines at the end of that book about the meaninglessness of the war would seem to refer as much to World War I (and serve perhaps as a warning about the war to come), as to the seventeenth-century conflict: "The war solved no problem," she wrote. "Its effects, both immediate and indirect, were either negative or disastrous. Morally subversive, economically destructive, socially degrading, confused in its causes, devious in its course, futile in its results ..."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *The Great Rebellion: The King's Peace, 1637–1641* (London: Collins, 1955); *The Great Rebellion: The King's War, 1641–1647* (London: Collins, 1958).

<sup>27</sup> *Velvet Studies: Essays on Historical and Other Subjects* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946); *Truth and Opinion: Historical Essays* (London: Collins, 1960); *History and Hope: Essays on History and the English Civil War* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> *Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

<sup>29</sup> *The Spoils of Time: A Short History of the World up to 1550* (London: Collins, 1984); *The Spoils of Time: A World History from the Dawn of Civilization through the Early Renaissance* (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Karl Brandi, *The Emperor Charles V*, trans. C. V. Wedgwood (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939); Elias Canetti, *Auto-da-fé*, trans. C. V. Wedgwood (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946).

<sup>31</sup> "The Historian and the World," originally published in *Time and Tide* (14 & 21, 1942); republished in *Velvet Studies*, quote from page 158.

<sup>32</sup> *Velvet Studies*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> *The Thirty Years War*, repr. ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2005), 506.

Interwar appeasement, the war, and the Blitz could not but impress themselves upon her vision of history; nor did she resist their influence. Above all, her essays, more so than her books, reveal her preoccupation with the rise of dictatorships and their attempts to destroy liberal institutions. Even before the war's end, Wedgwood published two essays on German culture, asserting that Germany's "morbid preoccupation" with their past signified something deeply wrong within the national psyche. Such obsessiveness with a folkloric past, along with the veneration of monuments and mythic heroes, is found "among scattered and broken peoples, among the declining and impoverished, among the parvenu and or recently restored." Germans prostitute their history for "modern 'patriotic' purposes," and their "bewildered reverence for it, their clumsy and repeated attempts to endow their confused political story with symbolic meaning, are symptoms of profound national ill-health." Above all, what raised Wedgwood's ire was the abuse of German history by propagandists. The Nazi ideologue "[Alfred Ernst] Rosenberg reaped what [Leopold von] Ranke had sown."<sup>34</sup>

Wedgwood's fear of the dictator and his propagandists' ability to placate the people while eroding their liberties was a common theme in her essays during the war years and beyond. The authoritarian seduces the people, offering quick and easy solutions: "order, peace, security, national greatness." "You only have to open your mouth and shut your eyes and the benevolent despot will pop a sugar plum between your lips. For nine people out of ten this is gag enough, and for the tenth there are other methods."<sup>35</sup> Those peoples most susceptible to the lure of despotism are those with the least political experience and education. "Fascism is a disease of democracy," she wrote, "it appeared in its most violent forms among those populations which were least politically adult, that is, whose people had had least preparation for the opportunity when it came to them."<sup>36</sup>

It is the responsibility of the historian to educate people. True enough, history was but a "fragmentary record of the often inexplicable action of innumerable bewildered human beings, set down and interpreted accord-

<sup>34</sup> "The German Myth," originally published in *The Tablet* (April 25, 1942), an international Catholic weekly review published in London from 1936 to 1967, and republished in *Velvet Studies*; the quotes are from pages 48 and 52.

<sup>35</sup> "Reflections on the Great Civil War" originally published in *Time and Tide* (August 22 and October 24, 1942), republished in *Velvet Studies*, 121–122.

<sup>36</sup> "Aspects of Politics," originally published in *Time and Tide* (October 21 and November 4, 1945), republished in *Velvet Studies*, 91.

ing to their own limitations by other human beings, equally bewildered.” History could never be written in an antiseptic manner. “We go through life,” she wrote, “with a silt of moral and political prejudice washing about in the brain which has been derived directly and indirectly, by way of text-book and propaganda, school and home and theatre and market-place, from historical writings.” It could not be written without prejudice. Nor should historians step aside from drawing morals: “If the accurate, judicious and highly trained fail to do so, the unscrupulous and unqualified will do it for them.”<sup>37</sup> To explain why something happened is not to justify it; understanding why Cromwell massacred the Irish does not excuse it. Nor should we judge the past “by standards of the age;” historians who do so might be “fair to the past” but “are unfair to the present.” Slavery was an acceptable institution at one time but that does not make it right.<sup>38</sup> Wedgwood was particularly critical of those academics who gave no thought to how their work might be received, presenting their little fragments of the past without a care, “like Shelley’s nosegay – O! to whom?”<sup>39</sup> The popularizers who will use their work, “might be anyone from an upright and learned man to Dr. Goebbels: but usually he is Dr. Goebbels.” “It is not for the scholars burrowing with their noses deep in the past and their eyes dimmed to the pale light of the archives, to notice who is making use of the material they industriously scratch up,” she asserts with irony. “They are no more concerned with ultimate outcome of their studies than is the research-scientist with the use of poison gas in warfare.”<sup>40</sup>

Wedgwood saw the academic’s disinclination to care about their audience, so unlike the popularizer, as deeply troubling. The intellectuals were abandoning their public roles and retreating to the academy and to specialization. Writing in 1942, she stated that writers, from journalists to poets, had become increasingly influential. This was not “the moment for him to go off into abstruse mumblings about art for art’s sake. The artist at all times has a duty towards society ... Of all writers this is truest of the historians ...” There can be little doubt as to what kind of moral Wedgwood thought should be drawn from the past. She was clearly an advocate for

<sup>37</sup> “The Historian and the World,” 154–156.

<sup>38</sup> “Principles and Perspectives,” in *Truth and Opinion: Historical Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 47.

<sup>39</sup> Wedgwood’s amusing reference here is to the last line of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem *The Question* (1820), a dream about gathering flowers in a nosegay, but for whom? “The Historian and the World,” 155.

<sup>40</sup> “The Historian and the World,” 155.

democratic institutions and human rights. Liberalism ran through her blood; it was a family tradition she had inherited along with the intellectual and artist milieu she had inhabited since birth. But it was a Victorian liberalism based on the principles of moderation and egalitarianism. Wedgwood disdained political extremes, right and left, and she certainly saw left-wing doctrine as a regrettable development within the historical profession. Like her father's friend George Trevelyan, she was an admirer of the great liberal historian and Whig politician Macaulay; he may have been "inaccurate and biased; but he preached a good cause eloquently."<sup>41</sup> And like Trevelyan as well, Wedgwood believed in hero-worship and in the inspiration contemporaries might draw from their actions and in England's liberal traditions.<sup>42</sup> There was good reason to celebrate men like John Hampden and Thomas Jefferson. She had no problem stating flatly that the "The Anglo-Saxon contribution to the political evolution of mankind is thus exceptionally consistent and practical. It is also of immeasurable value."<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, she understood the limitations of Western liberalism. In a rather poignant passage about universals, she notes that in the nineteenth century, it was still possible for the US historian George Bancroft to speak of "'immutable principles of morals,' of the 'unchangeableness of freedom, virtue and right.'" But those days were lost. "We cannot speak so today; even our imperfect knowledge of remote and complex civilizations ... reveal variations on the theme of morality and government which reduce or reverse the authenticity of principles once thought of as absolute." Bancroft wrote that "'the heart of Jefferson'" when writing the Declaration "'beat for all humanity.'" Wedgwood responds: "For the negro slaves? For the Russians? For the Chinese ...?"<sup>44</sup> She recognized that her world was not the same as Macaulay's or Gladstone's. There were no simple, one size fits all, solutions. Nonetheless, she maintained that

<sup>41</sup> "The Historian and the World," 156–157.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) was G. M. Trevelyan's great-uncle. Wedgwood and Trevelyan shared many of the same beliefs. David Cannadine points out that Trevelyan believed that history provided readers with "just principles and noble emotions," role models, inspiration, and an understanding of the human predicament. The same can be said of Wedgwood. See his *G. M. Trevelyan: A Life in History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1993), 184.

<sup>43</sup> "Reflections on the Great Civil War," 124.

<sup>44</sup> "Government By Consent," originally published in *Time and Tide* (July 3, 1943), *Velvet Studies*, 124.

historians' obligations were to their readers. Her essays, designed for the educated English public, reinforced England's liberal traditions. The "average living Englishman," she wrote in 1942, had more in common with John Hampden "than he has with Gandhi or Stalin."<sup>45</sup> This is not to say that Wedgwood's vision was parochial; she was widely traveled, lived in the US for a time after the war and died writing a global history textbook before such things were common. But she always knew her audience.

The scholar's retreat to the Ivory Tower, writing for a select few, and often resorting to "pretentious and meaningless verbiage," disturbed Wedgwood.<sup>46</sup> She was also critical of the new economic and social history that had become increasingly influential among historians before and during the war. She saw Marxism as a new religion among scholars, seeking to satisfy their quest for certainty, searching for a pattern within world events, past, present, and future, not unlike Toynbee or Spengler before them. Such determinism, writes Wedgwood, may tell us something about the present but offers little about the past. Economic causes failed to illuminate the whole of the human experience. "We have more to learn today from the spectacle of a great man at a great moment than from any number of monographs on ancient wage-levels," she wrote.<sup>47</sup> The Marxist predilection for searching out the underlying, usually economic, motives of men or groups of men, coupled with a disdainful distrust of what men in former times said or wrote about their actions also troubled Wedgwood. Scholars tell us "our ancestors were no better than ourselves, and that their noble ideals concealed motives which were sometimes personally and almost always politically self-interested. With unconcealed *Schadenfreude*, these debunkers tumble the economic skeleton out of the cupboard and warn us against being deceived by words alone." But "no group, no party has ever acted with motives entirely pure, and it is well to remember that all of us are, in the words of Belloc, 'pretty nearly all day long doing something rather wrong.'" History was simply too important to be lost in a "desert of sociology and economics."<sup>48</sup>

In 1952, Wedgwood traveled to the US for the first time on a fellowship to the Institute for Advanced Study. She found herself in

<sup>45</sup> "Reflections on the Great Civil War," 120.

<sup>46</sup> MS.Eng.c.3338, f. 29. The quote is from her diary where she is referring to Wylie Sypher's *Four Types of Renaissance Style* (New York: Doubleday, 1955).

<sup>47</sup> "Good Company," originally published in *The Spectator* (November 20, 1942), *Velvet Studies*, 81.

<sup>48</sup> "Reflections on the Great Civil War," 123; "Good Company," 82.

something of a time warp. “American dons I find really indistinguishable from English dons 20 years ago,” she noted in her diary. They were “simply intellectuals ... cultivated, sensitive people,” but still battling over grand theories of history (Toynbee and Spengler) and equally incensed by Butterfield’s slim treatise on Whig history published in 1931. One professor “drove me right into a corner about having some kind of theory or philosophy of history.”<sup>49</sup> She took all this in and ruminated upon it. She was fond of saying publicly that she had no theory of history, and that theories like Toynbee’s made little sense to those historians in the archives, “who are writhing like Laocoön in the toils of their own more detailed research.” In private she was more circumspect, writing that she felt “unsure to my opinions (except the facts), and not minding being unsure, full now of resigned and unconstructive doubt, the result of cultivating an open mind!”<sup>50</sup>

It was at the Institute in Princeton that Wedgwood worked on what she thought would be a trilogy on the English Civil War entitled *The Great Rebellion*, echoing the first great study of the war, Clarendon’s *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England (1702–04)*.<sup>51</sup> Her first volume, *The King’s Peace*, appeared in 1955. It was a study of the four critical years preceding the outbreak of hostilities between King and Parliament. Wedgwood was conscious of the weight of Samuel Rawson Gardiner’s multi-volume history of the Civil War and Revolution. Gardiner was a pioneer, plowing through manuscripts at the Public Records Office, the British Museum, and private homes, assembling a thoroughly documented, comprehensive narrative.<sup>52</sup> But he was not an easy read even for the educated. Wedgwood sought to produce a readable history of the seventeenth-century conflict based on her own sifting through the sources, wherever they should lead, with little recognition of all the scholarship on the conflict published

<sup>49</sup> MS. Eng.d.3386, f. 5, 30; Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: G. Bell and Sons, 1931).

<sup>50</sup> *Truth and Opinion*, “Introduction,” 13; and “Literature and the Historian,” 73; MS. Eng.e.3336, f. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Lord Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. D. Macray, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888, repr. 1992).

<sup>52</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, 1642–1649*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1898–1901); Ivan Roots, “Gardiner, Samuel Rawson (1829–1902),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); see also J. S. A. Adamson, “Eminent Victorians: S. R. Gardiner and the Liberal as Hero,” *Historical Journal*, 33/3 (1990): 641–657.

over the last fifty years. Of course, this was typical of her style, unencumbered by interpretative controversies and numerous citations. In 1946, she spoke of “an unwillingness to read the secondary authorities,” but this is not the whole story. As her diary attests, her reading habits were extensive. She was certainly aware of the historical debates of her era.<sup>53</sup>

When *The King's Peace* appeared, Wedgwood's lucid style enamored her to most of her reviewers. Her refusal to weigh into the scholarly debates over the causes of the conflict was rarely mentioned, especially as she addressed this plainly in the introduction, asserting that she was “deliberately avoiding analysis and seeking rather to give an impression of ... [the] vigorous and vivid confusion” of the times. “This book is not a defense of one side or the other, not an economic analysis, not a social study; it is an attempt to understand how these men felt and why, in their own estimation, they acted as they did.”<sup>54</sup> This was enough for many of her reviewers but not all. Wedgwood received a generous review from Raymond Sterns in the *American Historical Review*. He described the book as “an authoritative, fresh synthesis of the immediate backgrounds of the First Civil War.” Yet he also asserted that because Wedgwood had no interest in the “underlying causes” of the war, it was very difficult to discern where she stood. She “grasps other scholars by the hand, clings only to a finger, or relinquishes them altogether.” Others thought she spent far too much time on the events in Scotland and Ireland.<sup>55</sup> Yet, all in all, *The King's Peace* was well received.

But by 1958, when Wedgwood's second volume, *The King's War*, was published, the conflict over the social and economic causes of the war, the so-called “storm over the gentry,” had made offering any contribution on

<sup>53</sup> In her one semi-biographical essay, “The Velvet Study,” Wedgwood speaks to her early love of primary sources, particularly Gibbon and Clarendon, Shakespeare and Pepys, and asserting that she only read “secondary authorities” in fear that some reviewer would pronounce that, “the author appears ignorant of the important conclusions drawn by Dr. Stumpfadel.” *Velvet Studies*, 11. Later in an interview she gave in 1962, she declared that “I don't have much patience with secondary sources which stud the Why historian's pages in the form of bulky footnotes.” Mehta, *Fly and the Fly Bottle*, 119. But Wedgwood's multi-volume diary demonstrates that she clearly did read secondary literature, and was familiar with current historiography, even as she was also very fond of fiction and poetry and tasked to write reviews of many different kinds of books.

<sup>54</sup> *The King's Peace*, 16, 17.

<sup>55</sup> Raymond P. Sterns, “Review of *The King's Peace*,” *AHR*, 61/2 (1956): 388; Harold L. Fowler, “Review of *The King's Peace*,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 13/2 (1956): 286.

the war a dip into shark-infested waters.<sup>56</sup> Academic critics were irked by her refusal to take sides in the ongoing dispute among them; her vision of the war from a royalist perspective; and, above all, her indifference to the subterranean motives of the declining aristocracy (or were they rising?); the rising gentry (or were they declining?); the mere gentry, the greater gentry, country gentry; and court gentry. Wedgwood was well aware of the deepening controversy. She debated these issues with Hugh Trevor-Roper, Christopher Hill, and D. H. Pennington in a BBC broadcast discussion on the causes of the Civil War. In 1958, shortly after this broadcast, she wrote to *Encounter*, raising all the problems associated with the use of the term “class” by social and economic historians and chiding the “devotees” of the “debates over the gentry” for “wrangling over rent rolls and the incomes of the peerage” while losing sight of the larger issues.<sup>57</sup>

Amid this atmosphere, reviews of *The King's War* were less kind. Christopher Hill writing in *The Spectator* asserted that:

Miss Wedgwood's book as a whole is a narrative, not an explanation. It tells us all about the war except what they fought each other for. ... Many of her pages are full of one rather breathless incident after another. ... [But] two hundred facts do not make an interpretation. This is really a great pity, for since Gardiner's day historians asking 'why' questions have given us many new insights; whereas the narrative has been altered only in minor details.<sup>58</sup>

Wedgwood's attempt at conveying the confusion of the times and to “restore the immediacy of experience,” which had garnered praise by reviewers of *The King's Peace*, now left many cold.<sup>59</sup> Hill believed that the reader was “bewildered in a flux of events;” the reviewer for the *New York Times*, who had lauded Wedgwood's first volume, now thought she was

<sup>56</sup> This historiographical debate received its name from J. H. Hexter's piece, “The Storm over the Gentry,” *Encounter*, 10 (May 1958): 22–34. For a review of the controversy, see R. C. Richardson's *Debate over the English Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 120–140.

<sup>57</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Encounter*, 11/5 (November 1958): 81.

<sup>58</sup> Christopher Hill, *The Spectator* (December 12, 1958): 870.

<sup>59</sup> Writes Wedgwood, in the Introduction to *The King's Peace*, “I have sought to restore the immediacy of experience” (16). Wedgwood was deeply influenced by the historian G. M. Young, most famous for his essay on Victorian England, *Portrait of an Age* (London, 1936). He believed that what mattered most in history was what people believed and said about what was happening to them; the history experienced by the participants, not analyzed from on high by the historian.

trying to “cover too much ground” and that *The King’s War* was confusing and at times monotonous.<sup>60</sup> But the most troubling aspect of Wedgwood’s new book was her avoidance of analysis, which according to A. H. Woolrych, left “large questions insufficiently answered and some important developments insufficiently charted. ... Whatever Miss Wedgwood thinks of recent theories as to how the gentry divided her eschewal of generalization, even contemporary generalization, leaves us unsatisfied.”<sup>61</sup>

Later in his peon to academic history, J. P. Kenyon would assert that, “C.V. Wedgwood has gone on her way without a qualm, writing readable history for mass consumption never once asking, let alone answering, any question which modern scholarship would think relevant.” When it became clear that Wedgwood would never complete the third volume of her trilogy, Kenyon gleefully assumed that she “apparently laid down her pen” because of the “cool reception *The King’s Peace* and *The King’s War* received in academic circles.”<sup>62</sup> But this is false. *The King’s Peace* was highly praised by scholars and there were many more positive reviews of *The King’s War* than negative.

Perhaps Wedgwood was unnerved by the criticism she received. Hill’s piece may have been especially hurtful, appearing as it did in *The Spectator* where she herself published and which reached the kind of wide audience she sought to attract. Years later, she told A. L. Rowse that she had simply “lost interest” in the subject, but he believed that her real motives were tied to how the “Civil War had become bogged down in academic controversy and hair-splitting, under the lead of dear, doctrinaire Christopher Hill.” The “dons were very rude to each other” and “dismissive of Veronica’s work,” she was not only “put off” but “frightened off” as a “lady of good manners, tactful and polite.”<sup>63</sup> Austin Woolrych, writing on Wedgwood shortly after her death, believed that Wedgwood was dismayed by the post-war trends within the discipline, from Marxism to cliometrics, both obsessed with social history. Her “understandable revul-

<sup>60</sup> Orville Prescott, “Books of The Times,” *The New York Times* (April 3, 1959), 25.

<sup>61</sup> A. H. Woolrych, “Review of *The King’s War*,” *EHR*, 75/294 (1960): 163. Austin Woolrych (1918–2004) worked with Wedgwood on the Civil War scripts for the BBC in 1959. She wrote in her diary that he was a “particularly nice and intelligent young man.” MS.Eng.e.3336, f. 18.

<sup>62</sup> John Kenyon, *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England since the Renaissance* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 232. *Ibid.*, 284–285.

<sup>63</sup> Rowse, *Historians I Have Known*, 113–114.

sion against the dogmatism and bad manners that some academic historians were displaying in the so-called gentry controversy” made the topic increasingly unattractive to her.<sup>64</sup> But Wedgwood did strive for many years to complete her trilogy. And, while a third volume on the Republic never appeared, she did write a short book on Charles I’s trial and execution which became a bestseller.<sup>65</sup>

Wedgwood had her champions; they were often Americans. The love affair was mutual. She had a large circle of friends and correspondents in the States. And, while she socialized and corresponded with an even larger circle at home, she often felt unappreciated by British dons. Upon hearing Garrett Mattingly’s *The Armada* widely praised, she noted in her diary that it is “a very fine book though not I think quite as original or quite as impressive as [John] Neale and [J. H.] Plumb seem to think.” How could they call it a “new kind of history,” she wondered, when she had been writing in a similar vein for many years? “The sense of immediacy, the day to day change of mood, and outlook, and the wide screen ... I suppose I am annoyed that they say this is ‘new’ when they did not say my *King’s Peace* or *War* was.”<sup>66</sup> She also felt that she was not taken seriously. In 1967 she noted her sense of frustration over a conference on the United Provinces “to which many English historians with no claim to Dutch studies at all have been asked,” but she (the author of *William the Silent*) was not. “Possibly I grow paranoia but I suspect Esmond de Beer of being at the back of this. I fear he regards me as frivolous.”<sup>67</sup>

Wedgwood’s critics often failed to grasp the freshness of her approach. They often linked her to the past, to literary historians, especially Trevelyan, who had fallen out of favor by the second half of the twentieth century. But Wedgwood’s work on the English Civil Wars actually anticipated many agenda items of the British revisionists of the 1980s and 1990s, including the fact that her history of the Civil Wars was a multi-kingdom

<sup>64</sup> Woolrych, “Cicely Veronica Wedgwood,” 529.

<sup>65</sup> *The Trial and Execution of Charles I* (London: Collins, 1964); published in the US as *A Coffin for a King* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>66</sup> MS.Eng.e.3336, f. 45. Garrett Mattingly’s (1990–62) *The Armada*, published in 1959, garnered numerous awards including a Pulitzer prize.

<sup>67</sup> MS.Eng.e.3338, f. 67. Esmond Samuel de Beer (1895–1990) is probably most famous for his edition of *The Diary of John Evelyn*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955). In the 1960s, he was a major figure at London’s Historical Association and the Institute of Historical Research. He also served as a trustee of the National Portrait Gallery. He and Wedgwood would have had plenty of opportunity to rub elbows.

study long before such became fashionable.<sup>68</sup> She did not announce this as the revisionists would, trumpet-like. She simply followed the sources where they led her. Like the revisionists, she too disdained any teleological explanation or determinist model and understood the role of chance, accident, and luck, as well as the importance of the individual over impersonal social groups. Long before the revisionists turned up their noses at printed sources, Wedgwood had scoured London and regional record offices for manuscripts. She walked the battlefields.<sup>69</sup>

Worse still, as a woman and a popular historian, she was often the target of derision by both male academics and male friends. Sometimes the misogyny was just unthinking such as Maurice Ashley's review of *The King's Peace* in the *TLS* wherein he pronounced that Wedgwood, "as a woman," was more interested in "character" than someone like Gardiner.<sup>70</sup> At other times, it was more mean-spirited and personal. A. L. Rowse, her friend for many years until she expressed doubts over his identification of Shakespeare's dark lady, did much to damage her reputation.<sup>71</sup> Rowse claims that Trevelyan exclaimed "grandly" that, "You and I know that Veronica is a historian of the second rank." This quote is gleefully repeated

<sup>68</sup> Yet, tellingly, the revisionists never cited her work. Conrad Russell praised Wedgwood's story-telling style and her resistance to determinism in his 1995 Radio 3 talk (published in *The Guardian*, March 11, 1997, shortly after her death). But he never references her work in his own, including *The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> Wedgwood wrote about the topography of the battlefields in her books on the Civil War and in *Battlefields in Britain* (London: Collins, 1944). This book is still in print in both the UK and the US.

<sup>70</sup> Maurice Percy Ashley, "The Eve of the Civil Wars," *The Times Literary Supplement* (January 7, 1955), 1.

<sup>71</sup> Rowse's portrait of Wedgwood in his *Historians I Have Known* begins, "Veronica Wedgwood was my most eminent early pupil – not the ablest: that was J. P. Cooper." J. P. Cooper (1920–78) was an economic historian, author of "The Counting of Manors," *EHR*, 2nd ser., 8 (1956): 377–389 and "The Fortunes of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford," *EHR*, 2nd ser., 11 (1958): 227–248. He also edited *The Wentworth Papers, 1597–1628* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1973). He wrote a negative review of Wedgwood's revised biography of Strafford which concludes, "it is a pity that modesty and lack of time because of other commitments should have conspired to prevent Miss Wedgwood from giving her full authority as well as her artistry to her first love." J. P. Cooper, "Review of *Thomas Wentworth, First Earl of Strafford, 1598–1641: A Reevaluation*," *EHR*, 79/311 (1964): 377, 382.

in J. P. Kenyon's *The History Men*.<sup>72</sup> But Trevelyan was both a friend to Wedgwood and no gossip, unlike Rowse. In a 1955 speech at Christ's College, Cambridge, he singled her out, "Veronica Wedgwood is the daughter of my oldest undergraduate friend ... she is now one of our most distinguished historians, doing impartial justice to the Cavaliers and Roundheads of that heroic period of our history."<sup>73</sup> Even Richard Ollard, Rowse's biographer, knew he was jealous of Wedgwood's success. "No one who knew her could have any doubts about her loveableness ... she was a character of rare beauty, an intellect and a sensibility of pure quality, a gentle and affectionate disposition, she was for the greater part of her adult life his closest friend."<sup>74</sup> Wedgwood, on the other hand, never sought to embarrass Rowse, although she knew his histories were increasingly "thin," devoid of new learning. She thought his 1966 book on the Wars of the Roses was a "pot-boiler." "Shallow, opinionated, slap-dash without any attempt to rethink the subject or ask serious questions ... miserable when compared with Kendall's *Yorkist Age* ... I have told J [Jacqueline] what I think of it," she wrote in her diary, "... but I must not tell others. I cannot, of course, review it."<sup>75</sup>

The behavior of Elias Canetti was worse still. Canetti met Wedgwood in the late 1930s; he was a recent immigrant and she sought to help him, translating his novel *Auto-da-fé*, and getting Cape to publish it in 1946. Her diary records her respect for Canetti and the many times they dined together.<sup>76</sup> But when he published memoirs of his life in London he defamed her. Like Rowse, he was a misogynist. He hints several times that he knows a secret about Wedgwood but that good taste prevents him divulging it. He probably knew that she was a lesbian, which he assumes would be a mortifying disclosure. The third time he hints at this he also damns her abilities: "These things that were really the essence of her I can-

<sup>72</sup> A. L. Rowse, *Memories of Men and Women, American and British* (New York: University Press of America, 1983); Kenyon, *History Men*, 232.

<sup>73</sup> "The Speech of George Macaulay Trevelyan made on the 12th November 1955 at the dinner in Christ's College, Cambridge," republished in Cannadine, *G. M. Trevelyan*, 234.

<sup>74</sup> Ollard, *A Man of Contradictions*, 87. Richard Ollard knew Wedgwood. She notes in her diary for 1963, "Lunched with R. Ollard, who is now with Collins – a most amiable 40-ish historian, pupil of [David] Ogg." MS.Eng.e.3337, f. 31.

<sup>75</sup> MS.Eng.e.3338, ff. 46–47. Rowse's book was *Bosworth Field and the Wars of the Roses* (London: Macmillan, 1966). Paul Murray Kendall wrote *The Yorkist Age* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1962). She also thought Rowse's *The Elizabethans in America* (London: Macmillan, 1959) was "thin." MS.Eng.e.3336, f. 45.

<sup>76</sup> For example, MS.Eng.e.3336, f. 10; MS.Eng.e.3337, f. 22; MS.Eng.e.3338, f. 41.

not speak of; I do not think much of her own writings, she was unoriginal, had no ideas of her own about anything.”<sup>77</sup>

Canetti and Rowse are known more for their gossipy memoirs than their scholarship. Wedgwood made greater contributions through both her scholarship and her public service to the twentieth-century world. Her books have been translated into German, French, Italian, and Dutch. Many are still cited, especially *The Thirty Years War* and *The Trial and Execution of Charles I*. They read like fiction. In the words of Anthony Grafton, speaking to her book on the Thirty Years War, her “elegant prose, fluid, dynamic, and limpidly clear, evokes the deliberations of saturnine monarchs as vividly as the miseries of mercenary soldiers lying out in the cold and peasants robbed of their animals and crops.”<sup>78</sup> Or, as another scholar also writing in praise of Wedgwood’s *The Thirty Years War* put it, “one can smell the gunpowder, see the blood-soaked fields and street, and shudder at the gargantuan cruelty of archduke, elector and king.”<sup>79</sup> She had that rare ability to connect with her readers, to place them amid the confusion of the times. True, Wedgwood wrote highly readable histories for the mass market, but her voice was that of a scholar: learned, balanced, judicious, as well as poignant and literary.

<sup>77</sup> Canetti, *Party in the Blitz*, 17.

<sup>78</sup> Anthony Grafton, “Foreword” to C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War*, repr. ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2005), vii.

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, “C. V. Wedgwood and Her Historiography,” *Contemporary Review*, 201/1155 (April 1962): 209.



## Caroline Robbins: An Anglo-American Historian

*Lois G. Schwoerer*

Caroline Robbins (1903–99) was an Anglo-American historian whose books and many articles transformed our understanding of the relationship between English and American political ideas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The first woman to earn a PhD in History in 1926 from the University of London, she took the unconventional step of emigrating to the United States to study early American political thought. In 1929, she won appointment as an Assistant Professor to teach European and English history at Bryn Mawr College, one of the Seven Sisters colleges established in the late nineteenth century. She became a naturalized American citizen in 1933 and remained at Bryn Mawr until her retirement in 1971. Her major book, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, published in 1959 by Harvard University Press, brought her national awards and wide recognition. Although the women's movement and the increasing number of women who earned their PhD in history, and who

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<sup>1</sup>I thank Annabel Valentine, Archivist, Royal Holloway College, and Evan McGonagill, Interim College Archivist, Bryn Mawr College for their assistance. I was a graduate student in Caroline Robbins' seminars in the 1950s, and she directed my PhD dissertation.

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**Fig. 7.1** Caroline Robbins (1903–99). (Courtesy of Special Collections, Bryn Mawr College Library)



taught at women's colleges, and published their work, gradually created, among both men and women, a positive perception of women faculty, Robbins was not immune to professional disappointments, and two such incidents, in particular, marred her career.

Robbins' early education prepared her well for the historian that she became. The most important of many advantages that flowed from her wealthy background was the excellent education she received. Her father, Roland Richard Robbins, was a self-taught expert in intensive farming, who with a partner made a fortune growing fruits and vegetables for the London market on a farm located north of present-day Heathrow Airport.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The business was valued at £45,000, which in terms of its value in 2014 as a "Historical Standard of Living" measure, equals £2853.00; as an "Economic power of that income

Caroline and her older brother, Lionel, were tutored privately at home.<sup>3</sup> From 1916 to 1921, she attended Bournemouth Collegiate School, a private school for girls, and entered Royal Holloway College in 1921.

Royal Holloway College was new, having opened in 1897. The goal of its founder, Thomas Holloway, was that the college “shall in all respects be like a college at Oxford or Cambridge.”<sup>4</sup> To ensure its academic excellence, he asked Emily Davies (1830–1921), the founder and mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, to become Lady Principal at Holloway, but she declined. Her refusal, however, should not diminish the importance of his effort to secure a well-known and intellectually accomplished woman to head his new college. He also attended to the architecture of the buildings, visiting colleges in Cambridge and Oxford and chateaux in France, deciding finally on the Chateau of Chambord as a model for his college. He chose to locate his college in the beautifully rural Egham, Surrey. It was an impressive-looking institution, then and now. Queen Victoria dedicated the college in 1886; and in 1898 it was admitted as a school of the University of London. By the time Robbins arrived, Royal Holloway College was well established with two hundred students, a growing reputation for excellence, and a good faculty in History.<sup>5</sup>

Robbins’ years at the college influenced her development as a historian. The Honors curriculum in 1923–24 grounded her in Medieval English and European History, courses she would later teach. Additionally, two new courses, “British Colonial History to 1788,” her first formal exposure, however indirectly, to American history, and “Introduction to the History of Political Ideas,” which arguably inspired her PhD dissertation, were also crucial to her development as a scholar.<sup>6</sup> She formed a close relationship

measure” it is £19,500.00. Lawrence H. Office and Samuel H. Williamson, “Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1284 to Present,” [measuringworth.com](http://measuringworth.com).

<sup>3</sup> Lionel Robbins (1898–1984) was chairman of the Economics Department at the London School of Economics, chairman of the *Financial Times*, director of *The Economist*, director of the economic section of the war cabinet offices during World War II, a prolific author, trustee of the National Gallery of Art, director of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and a life peer. Susan Howson, “Robbins, Lionel Charles, Baron Robbins (1898–1984),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), henceforth, *ODNB*.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Harrison-Barbet, *Thomas Holloway Victorian Philanthropist: A Biographical Essay* (Cornwall: Lyfrow Trelyspen, 1990), 29–31 for following details.

<sup>5</sup> Royal Holloway College (hereafter RHC), Archive for Caroline Robbins, AR2 43/27; The Calendar of RHC, xxx.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, AR2 43/26, 50.

with Helen Cam, the medievalist, who was her professor from time to time and her mentor. Years later, in 1948, when Robbins was arranging for Cam to come to Bryn Mawr to lecture, she explained that she “was very good to me as a student and I like to think of this as a small return ... It will give me a lot of pleasure to entertain her here.”<sup>7</sup> And, later still, in 1960, she published “Helen Cam, an appreciation and bibliography.”<sup>8</sup>

Robbins excelled as an undergraduate, earning a BA with Honors and winning the Christie Fellowship for 1924–26. She immediately began work for the PhD degree. In her first year, the History Department introduced a postgraduate course that strengthened the process: it required regular meetings with an advisor regarding the candidate’s thesis and attendance at a research seminar.<sup>9</sup> Probably the research seminar, among other things, reinforced training in “scientific history,” a technique developed in the nineteenth century based on exhaustive research and copious footnotes and much lauded by male historians.<sup>10</sup> Robbins’ 444-page dissertation, entitled “A Critical Study of the Political Activities of Andrew Marvell,” fully displayed this approach.<sup>11</sup> The research was exhaustive, numerous footnotes marched across the bottom of each page, and the bibliography, over thirty pages in length, listed everything to date written by or about Marvell, including tracts and pamphlets by him and others. Senior Marvell scholars took an interest in Robbins’ work and assisted her with material and advice. Her dissertation foreshadowed her future scholarly interests and methods: a concern for political ideas and the men who espoused them, supported by exhaustive research, including the use of pamphlets and tracts. Robbins was among the first historians to appreciate the value of pamphlets and tracts for understanding how political ideas spread and influenced a wide readership. Why she made no effort to publish her dissertation is unknown; nonetheless, it “received considerable

<sup>7</sup> Bryn Mawr College Archive (hereafter BMCA), HTM [Helen Taft Manning], Box 12, folder 5: Caroline Robbins to Manning, August 1, 1948.

<sup>8</sup> In *International Commission on the History of Representative Institutions*, Vol. XXII (Louvain, 1960), 1–10.

<sup>9</sup> RHC, Archive for Caroline Robbins, AR2 43/31, 51.

<sup>10</sup> Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), chap. 4; Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), chap. 2.

<sup>11</sup> RHC, Caroline Robbins, BA, “A Critical Study of the Political Activities of Andrew Marvell.” Submitted in fulfillment of the PhD, University of London, 1926.

notice.”<sup>12</sup> In 1926 Robbins became the first woman to receive a PhD degree in History from the University of London.

Robbins won the Riggs Fellowship in History from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and she left immediately for the States to take up that post. J. R. Pole thought this “was a very unusual course for a young, middle-class single woman at that time.”<sup>13</sup> For Robbins, it was a mark of her independent spirit, ambition, adventurousness, and interest in early American political ideas. Later, as an amusing comment, she would explain, “England was not big enough” for both her and her brother.<sup>14</sup> Privately, she offered an honest assessment, saying, “Lionel was cleverer” than she and there would not be “room for two Robbins in English academic life.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1928, Robbins wrote to Bryn Mawr College regarding a possible appointment. She knew about the college from posters at Royal Holloway College and from the fact that Helen Cam had held a Bryn Mawr Fellowship. In the event, President Marion Edwards Park interviewed her and was so favorably impressed that she offered her an appointment on the spot to teach English and European history courses at an annual salary of \$2300, starting spring semester 1929. Robbins became the first woman the History Department hired, she wrote later, to “ward off alumnae criticism.” Money was available to do this, thanks to a gift from an alumna.<sup>16</sup>

Bryn Mawr and Robbins were a good academic and social fit. Founded in 1885, Bryn Mawr was located on beautiful rural land outside Philadelphia along the up-scale Main Line. Overall, the buildings were modeled after Johns Hopkins University, but the Thomas Library took its design from Wadham College, Oxford.<sup>17</sup> Bryn Mawr was the smallest of the so-called “Seven Sisters” and was reputed to be “the most serious and intellectual.”<sup>18</sup> It offered no remedial courses and no Phi Beta Kappa chapter, the latter on grounds that all its students would be Phi Beta Kappa. Alone of the women’s colleges, it had a graduate school from its inception. The faculty included women professors, and the college’s presidents in the early twentieth century were powerful women: M. Carey Thomas, Marion Edwards

<sup>12</sup> American Historical Association, *Perspectives*, Feb. 1990.

<sup>13</sup> J. R. Pole, “Robbins, Caroline (1903–1999),” *ODNB*.

<sup>14</sup> Personal knowledge. Date unavailable.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Howson, *Lionel Robbins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 143.

<sup>16</sup> BMCA, “Personal recollections of the Bryn Mawr History Department with limited commentary about the College while I taught there, 1929–1971,” 5.

<sup>17</sup> Alison Baker, *It’s Good to be a Woman* (Exeter, NH: Publishing Works Inc., 2007), 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Park, and Katherine McBride. Young women instructors surely found this environment supportive. The students (about 400 in number in the 1930s and 700 in the 1960s) came largely from wealthy, elite families, and from private schools. From several perspectives, Bryn Mawr College was not unlike Royal Holloway College, University of London. Upon attending a talk by President Thomas, Robbins noted that she “talked just like the head of my English college.”<sup>19</sup>

Robbins stayed at Bryn Mawr for forty-two years. Part of the reason, as she explained, was that in September 1932, at the age of twenty-nine, she married Stephen Joseph Herben (1897–1967), a Professor of Philology in the English Department. President Park invited the couple to be married at her house at teatime, a striking mark of the college’s acceptance of the new Assistant Professor.<sup>20</sup> In marrying, Robbins stood apart from women professional historians, some a bit older than she and some of her generation, whom Bonnie Smith calls “the third sex,” who did not marry.<sup>21</sup> The marriage was another example of her independence and self-confidence: she did not tell her father before the event because she thought he would not approve of her marrying an American. Robbins was very much attracted to Joe. In a candid letter to her brother, she described him as “something of a giant [he was six feet four inches tall] with your own passion for the south of France. Also, Bach, Brahms and the modern French ... He is amazingly well informed and could shine.” She doubted, however, that he would because he “loves teaching and loafing combined.”<sup>22</sup> They complemented one another, and the long marriage added a satisfying dimension to her demanding professorial and scholarly life. Unfortunately, Joe became seriously ill with a heart condition in the 1950s, and for ten years, Robbins carved out time to oversee his care and be with him as much as possible. He died in 1967.

Robbins kept her maiden name and was known as “Miss Robbins” to students and others for forty-two years. In my view, this was not a gesture towards feminism, as some have suggested.<sup>23</sup> Rather Robbins signaled her sense of self and her independent spirit. These same qualities explain

<sup>19</sup> BMCA, Interview with Caroline Robbins, Professor Emeritus of History. Bryn Mawr College, November 9, 1982, by Caroline S. Rittenhouse, 17.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *The Gender of History*, 189 and chap. 7: “Women Professionals: A Third Sex?”

<sup>22</sup> Howson, *Lionel Robbins*, 234.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Arthur Dudden, former colleague, quoted in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 11, 1999), “Obituary of Caroline Robbins, 95.”

the fact that she maintained a strong English accent after years of living and working in America. Robbins explained her long tenure at Bryn Mawr by saying that her “own choice of marriage and other circumstances,” denied her the pleasure, “save for short intervals, of the larger institutions I should really have preferred.”<sup>24</sup> She regretted that the demands of teaching and administration “left half my research projects undone.”<sup>25</sup> In fact, with her remarkable energy, competitiveness, and ambition, she surmounted those restrictions. Starting in the third decade of her tenure, her scholarly productivity was prodigious. Her first book, *The Diary of John Milward, Esq.*, was published in 1938, but no other book for twenty-one years. During this interval, Robbins produced articles, but only four before the 1950s when she hit her stride. Among them were, for example, “The Strenuous Whig Thomas Hollis of Lincoln’s Inn” (1950),<sup>26</sup> “‘When It Is That Colonies May Turn Independent’: An Analysis of the Environment and Politics of Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746)” (1954), and “Thomas Brand Hollis (1719–1804), English Admirer of Franklin and Intimate of John Adams” (1953). The men under discussion figured later in Robbins’ major book and, thus, the articles show her long-term preparation for that book. Writing articles, I think, was what she most enjoyed and did best, and a brief look at her essay on Francis Hutcheson shows that some of the criticism leveled at her book did not apply. Robbins’ method of exhaustive research and deployment of a great many supportive details undergirds the essay, yet the details are controlled. The essay is divided into four parts. The first section announced that she hoped to “estimate Hutcheson’s role in the transmission of liberal ideas in the century between the English and the American Revolution.” The second section presented a review of her subject’s life. The third placed Hutcheson’s intellectual activities in the context of the work of his contemporaries. The fourth succinctly stated his views, stressing his belief in the right of resistance to tyranny in any form, even in

<sup>24</sup> BMCA, “Personal recollections of the Bryn Mawr History Department,” 42–43.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Caroline Robbins, “The Strenuous Whig Thomas Hollis of Lincoln’s Inn,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. VII, No. 3 (July 1950): 406–453; Caroline Robbins, “‘When It Is That Colonies May Turn Independent’: An Analysis of the Environment and Politics of Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746),” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. XI, No. 2 (April 1954): 214–251; Caroline Robbins, “Thomas Brand Hollis (1719–1804), English Admirer of Franklin and Intimate of John Adams,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. XCVII (June 1953): 239–247.

marriage, his insistence on freedom of religion, and his emphasis on the economic basis of power. The article shows Robbins' awareness of the historian's responsibility to select from among the details provided by research, organize them to support an announced thesis, and do so.

Her many articles, to which must be added forty-one book reviews in major journals such as *The American Historical Review*, *The Journal of Modern History*, and *The William and Mary Quarterly*, put Robbins' name before the wider historical community, displayed her considerable talents, and brought recognition. In 1953, she won a Guggenheim Fellowship and in 1957 received the Alice Freeman Palmer Professorship of History at the University of Michigan. Robbins was the first to hold this distinguished professorship.<sup>27</sup>

Robbins had two other complaints about Bryn Mawr College. One was its comparative isolation.<sup>28</sup> She circumvented this problem by regularly attending the meetings of the American Historical Association until she retired.<sup>29</sup> The second concern was a dearth of good conversation. She described the faculty as "very able" but felt that the "actual intellectual life" was "sorely lacking."<sup>30</sup> She admitted that there were exceptions. She admired President Park, who entertained junior faculty and students at Sunday breakfasts and at teas, for skillfully directing conversations to "world affairs, travel, music and books."<sup>31</sup> She was grateful to Professor William Smith and his "enormously well read" wife for their hospitality in entertaining students and faculty.<sup>32</sup> The longer Robbins remained at Bryn Mawr, the less barren the social scene seemed, perhaps because she herself contributed to the college's intellectual life. She enjoyed entertaining and prided herself on her culinary skills, which were considerable and much admired. She also invited undergraduates to tea and graduate students to her "fork dinners" where everyone was expected to circulate and talk with each of the guests. In sum, Robbins' two complaints about the College were resolved over time, in part through her own efforts.

In 1959, Harvard University Press published Robbins' magnum opus: *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission*,

<sup>27</sup> This professorship was established in 1924 with the stipulation that the income from the gift would be used to pay the salary of a woman Professor of History.

<sup>28</sup> The college is about fourteen miles from Philadelphia.

<sup>29</sup> BMCA, "Personal recollections of the Bryn Mawr History Department," 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 17.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. Also BMCA, Interview of Robbins by Rittenhouse, 2, 25.

<sup>32</sup> BMCA, "Personal recollections of the Bryn Mawr History Department," 10.

*Development and Circumstances of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies.* Dedicated to her brother, Lord Robbins, this lengthy study focused on “Commonwealthmen,” a name applied to reformist political thinkers who spanned the eighteenth century in England, admired the work of earlier reformers like John Milton, James Harrington, and John Locke, and wrote in support of such issues as parliamentary reform, extension of the franchise, freedom of religion, secularization of education, opposition to standing armies in peacetime, promotion of a national militia, and a republican form of government with the purpose of securing liberty. They believed a mixed government of three parts was the best political arrangement because the three parts would preserve a balance and prevent any one part from becoming overbearing. They objected to the creation of political parties and Cabinet government, seeing both as destabilizing forces. Robbins identified three generations of Commonwealthmen, also known as “Real Whigs” or “Old Whigs” stretching across the eighteenth century. For example, a prominent figure in the first generation was Robert Molesworth, who published an influential book, *An Account of Denmark*, in which he explained that the Danes lost their freedom because of the presence of a standing army controlled by the king, the absence of balance among the parts of government, and a wealthy, selfish noble class which refused to pay its taxes. The clergy and commons turned to the king for help; taking advantage of the situation, the king, with the help of his army, transformed the government into an absolute monarchy. The Commonwealthmen believed there were cautionary lessons for England. The second generation, featuring Thomas Hutcheson and Thomas Pownall, won Robbins’ praise for keeping alive interest in earlier writers by reprinting their essays and writing about their ideas. Such men and their ideas for change did not prosper in the conservative landscape of eighteenth-century England. But they inspired William Molyneux in Ireland to protest the English Parliament’s rule over Ireland and promote the rights and liberties of his country. In a similar manner, Andrew Fletcher in Scotland used Commonwealthmen ideas to propose a federal union with England in which, among many other provisions, Scotland would enjoy the right to manage its own affairs. Robbins holds that the enduring achievement of the Commonwealthmen was the government of the United States where they influenced ideas on issues such as liberty, law, juries, and the separation of church and state. Robbins describes the background, education, marriage, friendship, and political connections of the

Commonwealthmen in such detail as to overwhelm the reader. Her practice was to share too liberally the fruit of her massive research. Robbins asked and answered the essential question as to how the ideas were disseminated. She showed that academies, teachers, and their students were among those responsible, as were the numerous tracts and pamphlets that were such a prominent part of seventeenth-century intellectual life and, as mentioned earlier, were favored by Robbins. Clubs that brought together men for conversation and sometimes inspired the writing of pamphlets were also vehicles for spreading the ideas of the Commonwealthmen.

Robbins' *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* was a monumental achievement. It changed the way historians, especially American historians, thought about the origins of the political ideas that were embedded in the Constitution and laws of the United States. Robbins was the first to identify and describe these eighteenth-century English thinkers who preserved and expanded earlier republican and reformist ideas that proved to be so useful for Americans as they crafted a new government. Professor Edmund Morgan of Yale University, a scholar interested in political ideas and in the Constitution and law of the United States, characterized the appearance of the book as "cause for general excitement."<sup>33</sup> Robbins' assumed audience (if she thought about it, which is doubtful) was fellow historians who shared an interest in the topic. The wide-flung research in primary documents and tracts and pamphlets, the tremendous amount of detailed information on offer, the focus on individuals, some of whom were of minor importance, the dense style, and the length of the whole were offputting to anyone else. Robbins made no effort to draw in non-specialists.

Every professor whose review appeared in one of nine American, Canadian, and British journals acknowledged the thoroughness of Robbins' massive research, at least in a perfunctory way. The numerous manuscript collections she consulted were in major American repositories and in repositories in England, Ireland, and Scotland. Tracts and pamphlets, eighteenth-century notebooks, book catalogues, occasional papers, and American reprints of English books and pamphlets were among her sources. There is very little Robbins could have missed and she deserved credit, enthusiastically expressed, for this.

<sup>33</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, "Review of Caroline Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*," *The Journal of Modern History*, 32/2 (June 1960): 158.

John N. Norris, a professor at the University of British Columbia, however, was unimpressed by the research and other aspects of the study. The tremendous amount of detail, he wrote, will only “ensure the book’s prominent place among reference works on the eighteenth century.” The problem was that Robbins had not pulled the detail into a “unified, coherent thesis.” Norris ended his review with a dismissive comment about Robbins’ poor writing.<sup>34</sup> His was the harshest judgment that *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* received.

By contrast, the most enthusiastic evaluation came from Edmund S. Morgan, quoted earlier. But even he felt it necessary to excuse her for not “point[ing] up specific connections with American thought.” Morgan explained that to do so “would have required another book” and that “the connections are obvious to any student of the revolution.”<sup>35</sup> Although intended to be exculpatory, the point placed a large responsibility on students of the American Revolution. Another reviewer, W. T. Laprade, faulted Robbins for a similar failure: this time for not correlating the writings under discussion with the circumstances in which they were produced. The result was that the reader has no evidence of “the forces that moved the writer to write, and, thus, of the intended meaning of what he wrote.”<sup>36</sup> Both criticisms are, in my view, legitimate strictures. In a way, however, they are inexplicable, because Robbins believed in locating ideas, political and otherwise, in their appropriate context, and, as already discussed, she practiced the responsibility of the historian to choose appropriate details from research to support a thesis. She alluded to that responsibility in a letter to her brother in 1940: regretting that he had decided not to become a historian, she wrote, “You moved comfortably and intelligibly through the kind of material that down many a professional.”<sup>37</sup> Why she failed to achieve this in her most important book is difficult to explain. Perhaps she waited too long to publish. The quantity of material collected over so many years must have been overwhelming. The book, however, attracted a large enough readership to warrant a reissue in paperback by Atheneum in 1968.

<sup>34</sup> John N. Norris, “Review of Caroline Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, 41/1 (March 1960): 62–63. Infelicitous expressions were present, but in fairness were only occasional.

<sup>35</sup> Morgan, “Review,” 158.

<sup>36</sup> W. T. Laprade, “Review of Caroline Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 17/2 (April 1960): 251–254.

<sup>37</sup> Howson, *Lionel Robbins*, 327.

Notwithstanding some significant reservations among reviewers about *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, the American historical community received it with great enthusiasm. The book brought Robbins more awards of great distinction: in 1960 the prestigious biennial Herbert Baxter Adams Prize from the American Historical Association for the best book in European History; in 1961 an invitation from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton to work there, and invitations to serve on the boards of at least twelve historical organizations, including the Institute of Early American History at Williamsburg, 1964–67; membership of the American Historical Association Council, 1968–69; the Papers of William Penn project’s steering committee (member and later chairman); and President of the Conference on British Studies, 1971–73. Only a person of inexhaustible energy and ambition would undertake so many assignments and responsibilities.

Robbins’ administrative responsibilities at Bryn Mawr multiplied after the appearance of her book. From 1957 to 1968, she served the History Department as chairman, and in 1960 the college elevated her to the Marjorie Walter Goodhart Professorship. Yet, she continued her scholarly life with no apparent abatement in her enormous energy. With institutional awards honoring her achievements, Robbins took up residence at major research libraries in the United States, in summer 1962 at the Huntington Library in California, and in summer 1969 at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. In 1969, Cambridge University Press published her third book, *Two Republican Tracts: Plato Redivivus by Henry Neville and An Essay on Roman Government by Walter Moyle*. In 1971, the year of her retirement, she received further recognition in the form of a Doctor of Laws honorary degree from Smith College and an honorary Doctor of Letters from Wilson College. Writing articles continued to bring satisfaction, and she published six articles between 1971 and 1977 in, for example, the *Journal of the History of Ideas* and the *Harvard Library Bulletin*. She remained in demand as a reviewer, and from 1971 to 1976 published twenty book reviews for such prestigious journals as the *American Historical Review* and *The William and Mary Quarterly*.

At about this time, as further evidence of her continuing interest in active scholarship, Robbins engaged in conversations with Princeton University Press about publishing a book on Andrew Marvell.<sup>38</sup> For ten

<sup>38</sup> BMCA, “Robbins to Ann and Warner,” in Robbins: Letters and Family Information Collected by James Dallett (n.d., n.p., but after 1971).

years, the press had repeatedly urged her to do this, Robbins said. The discussions were detailed, covering the content of each chapter. Robbins declared that the Princeton people knew her plan and understood that fresh material (on Marvell) was “mostly in the new Oxford letters.” With arrangements apparently settled, Robbins requested a contract. The Press, however, without discussing the matter with Robbins, sent her only a “confirmed invitation,” which Robbins admitted, “I was too simple to know.” Within a few weeks came a firm rejection. When she called to ask if Princeton wanted revisions, the Press representative replied in the negative, explaining that their reviewer found nothing new. Robbins was furious and vindictive. She immediately sent her manuscript off to Mary and Richard Dunn, who pleased her by saying they liked it. Encouraged, she said she would begin the “painful” task of rewriting, put the revised version aside for a time, and then send it to a press she thought would accept it. Robbins told only a few close friends about this trauma, saying that she would wait until her manuscript was published, “before spreading abroad my grievances [sic].” She confessed that her “feelings about Princeton [were] bitter.” Her private response to a Princeton editor saying that “University presses must protect themselves” was “I hope their whole outfit goes bankrupt.” Concerned about her slow-growing cataracts and whether her resolution would last, she ended the letter with the hope that she was “indestructible ... and shall persevere [sic].” The Princeton incident was most unfortunate; over the years, Robbins had been generous in sharing her knowledge of Marvell and assisting several aspiring Marvell scholars with their work. To have *her* work turned down was a very bitter pill. In the event, nothing came of her resolution to revise and find another publisher.

Robbins is the most recent of the women historians discussed in this collection; her academic career followed a path that is recognizable to us, one taken by men and women professors today. It combines teaching, administrative responsibilities, and scholarship aimed at publication. Book reviews, articles, and several books published by reputable presses are needed, then and now, to win progression up the academic ladder to full professorship. Recognition by the wider historical community through awards, appointments to boards, and leadership roles in scholarly organizations are desirable. Robbins succeeded in all these areas. Her career, however, had special features. It was spent in a selective, wealthy, intellectually self-conscious, elite women’s college with a relatively small graduate school, but one recognized as excellent. Class size was small, students highly intelligent, and the

relationship between professor and student could be, and often was, close. Robbins' career was a kind of academic model, although few individuals can attain the level of distinction achieved by Robbins.

Robbins was, of course, a professor all during the time she was engaged in scholarship. She said that she "enjoyed teaching and was fortunate in making a good many friends among my students."<sup>39</sup> Her method, she explained, was to prepare each "class talk beforehand" but to write out nothing but "a few quotations or dates." Judith P. Zinnser, an undergraduate in the Honors program, admired Robbins for lecturing without notes and revealing an amazing range of knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Agnes Clark, another undergraduate, described Robbins as "fantastic. She was a wonderful lecturer. She made the material so interesting and understandable. I liked her a lot."<sup>41</sup> Zinnser also admired her use of primary sources, which Robbins began in 1939 as a young assistant professor, justifying her request for money to stencil material on grounds that the department will benefit "in years to come."<sup>42</sup> Throughout her career, Robbins encouraged discussion. She recalled that President Park asked her one time why Room D was always so noisy when I was there. She responded, "Well, you know, I don't like to talk all the time. I like everybody to talk at once if necessary so long as they ask questions."<sup>43</sup>

Robbins supported President Park's initiative in setting up an Honors program in 1937. She described Honors as "more fun to teach than anything else and I have yet to find a good student who doesn't enjoy it."<sup>44</sup> Relations between professor and student, described as "susceptible to private treaty," were, in at least one instance, very warm. Robbins recalled a "gifted student" who accumulated a wide range of sources on early nineteenth-century Irish social history, and posed an equally wide range of questions. The student and Robbins became "so swamped by the charms" of aspects of the topic that they "despaired of a conclusion short of joint labour for two lifetimes." It took "stern planning and questioning" to get

<sup>39</sup> BMCA, "Personal recollections of the Bryn Mawr History Department," 41.

<sup>40</sup> Telephone conversation, 5/10/2016.

<sup>41</sup> Telephone conversation, exact date not available.

<sup>42</sup> BMCA, Park Archive Office files, 1922-42, IDB3/Park.

<sup>43</sup> BMCA, Interview of Robbins by Rittenhouse, 9.

<sup>44</sup> BMCA, *Supplement to Bryn Mawr Alumnae Bulletin*, July 1942, 21.

the project back on track.<sup>45</sup> These approaches may explain why many undergraduate students admired her and filled her classes.

There was, however, another side of her personality as a teacher. Zinnser felt that Robbins assumed that students were more knowledgeable about history than was reasonable. She remembered that Robbins' response to confusion was "Nonsense. Get on with it."<sup>46</sup> Arthur Dudden, a former colleague, remarked at her death that Robbins was a "demanding teacher," who would not tolerate "laziness, stupid remarks and excuses." He felt that "her manner could be intimidating to the more timid students."<sup>47</sup> Jack Pole made the same point in the obituary that he wrote for *The Guardian*, saying that Robbins was "short with sloppiness, laziness and lame excuses."<sup>48</sup> Mary Maples Dunn, who was her undergraduate and graduate student, became one of her dearest friends and whose children knew her as "Aunt Caroline," wrote that when she first met her "I was terrified. I had never met such a commanding woman in my life." However, she wrote, "You know, I loved Caroline."<sup>49</sup> Phyllis Lachs, a former graduate student, pointed out that "Miss Robbins ... was a formidable woman who became beloved by her students."<sup>50</sup>

Robbins' reputation as intimidating seems to have been a first impression, followed by affection, as Dunn and Lachs indicate. Perhaps the reason was that Robbins habitually wore a serious expression and she walked on campus as if in a hurry on important business. Further, this reaction depended in part on the background of the observer. In her personal recollections, Robbins expressed no awareness that students regarded her as formidable. Of course, there is the possibility that she was sanitizing the record, but I think this is unlikely. Her strong ego and self-confidence would have protected her from the thought that students found her forbidding. As she herself said, she made many friends among her students, which was true.

Robbins was no feminist. She made it abundantly clear in conversation that she did not approve of the feminist movement and did not support

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Telephone conversation, 5/10/16.

<sup>47</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 11, 1999), "Obituary: Caroline Robbins, 95, was history professor," quoting Professor Arthur Dudden.

<sup>48</sup> Jack Pole, "Caroline Robbins, Revolutionary History Teacher," Obituaries, *The Guardian* (February 16, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> Letter to author, 11/09/15.

<sup>50</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 11, 1999), quoting Phyllis Lachs.

the idea of assisting women to remove long-standing barriers to equal treatment and consideration with men. She believed that women could succeed without such help if they applied themselves seriously to their work. She felt that assistance demeaned women and diminished their accomplishments. She had no patience with feminist history and no interest in it. Robbins was devoted to studying the political ideas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and it is not too much to say that she had read everything in that field. She was enormously learned. She had no curiosity about feminist studies and certainly no desire to take the time to become informed. When students began to discuss the challenges of combining a career with marriage and motherhood and sought faculty advice, her response was that for students to expect the faculty to discuss their personal development was “egotism run mad.”<sup>51</sup>

Yet, in all fairness, it should be reported that Robbins held some very liberal ideas about student behavior, ideas for which she fought. She recalled an incident in the 1940s when three students, two history majors and the third a Canadian of excellent family, had a “wild party in one of the dorms with booze and boys and who knows what else” the night before Commencement.<sup>52</sup> Self-government vigilantes told on them; the penalty was to deny them their degrees. Robbins and Helen Taft Manning intervened; they agreed that the girls should have gone to the Barclay Hotel, that no one would have cared, and the cost would not have been an issue because the girls were very rich. They succeeded in having the culprits get their degrees but at the cost of being barred from attending Commencement. Such were the distractions of her professorial career.

Robbins, especially as she grew older, thought that the graduate seminar was “one of the more rewarding” aspects of teaching.<sup>53</sup> She declared that she “really preferred graduate seminars, and perhaps they were my most successful offerings.”<sup>54</sup> Her first graduate student, Barbara Bradfield Taft, worked with Robbins on a dissertation about mid-seventeenth-century republicans and won her PhD degree in 1940. The records I have seen show no other graduate student during the 1940s. Graduate students, however, arrived in quantity after World War II, and a number worked with Robbins in the 1950s and 1960s, either taking her graduate

<sup>51</sup> Baker, *It's Good to be a Woman*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> BMCA, Interview of Robbins by Rittenhouse, 15–16.

<sup>53</sup> BMCA, “Personal recollections of the Bryn Mawr History Department,” 35.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

seminars or preparing for an advanced degree. They included Esther Cope, Mary Maples Dunn, Ruth Grun, Isabel Witte Kenrick, and Phyllis Lachs. Robbins followed the careers of these women with interest and support. Reflecting upon her method of teaching graduate students, she said she did not “dictate thesis subjects,” but offered help when needed “for writing, modification, emphasis and so on.”<sup>55</sup>

Robbins conducted her graduate seminars with great seriousness and a near palpable sense that she was training the next generation of historians. She handed out enormously long reading lists, which it is said became collectors’ items.<sup>56</sup> She had an elliptical way of speaking, which required students to grasp her meaning by reading books and articles on the lists. Students’ oral seminar reports received searching questions and sometimes sharp criticism. She promptly returned drafts of thesis chapters, marked up with helpful suggestions. One student recalled, perhaps with some exaggeration, that she would telephone “at dawn on a Monday to inquire whether the next chapter would be on her desk by Friday.”<sup>57</sup>

But, as with undergraduate students, Robbins could be harsh with graduate students. She failed a student whose major interest was a different historical era with a brusque announcement to the distraught woman. She reduced an apparently ill-prepared student to tears in a seminar.

The view of Robbins as a teacher is mixed. She seemed to possess two personae: one of a professor who was passionate about inspiring students to learn and enjoy the things of the mind and sometimes pushed them with a harshness that included unkindness, and the other of a helpful professor, who was kind, understanding, generous with her time, and grew to be an affectionate friend. Students who worked hard and showed deep interest in the subject knew her as the latter. The college recognized the positive aspects of her talents as a teacher and awarded her the Christian and Mary F. Lindback Foundation award for distinguished teaching upon her retirement in 1971.

During the many years that Robbins was at Bryn Mawr College she formed firm views about persons and issues which she did not hesitate to express. She held President Park in high regard, but found little to admire

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Pole, “Caroline Robbins, Revolutionary History Teacher,” Obituaries, *The Guardian* (February 16, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Presentation of Caroline Robbins for the Degree of Doctor of Letters at the 101st Wilson College Commencement, May 23, 1973, by Miss Helen Adams Nutting, Professor and Chair of the History Department.

in President McBride. She favored the liberal arts and opposed large expenditures on science. She believed history was a “valuable discipline,” and “an agreeable study.”<sup>58</sup> It taught one, she said, to learn how to “pose questions” and evaluate answers according to the evidence. It enabled one to recognize the continuities and discontinuities in “the story of mankind.” It helped one to understand better one’s own world and that of earlier periods and to appreciate the difficulty presented by the search for truth. History was the best training for “further academic study or for a lifetime of pleasurable reading.”<sup>59</sup> Some specialization, she thought, was “almost essential for the serious investigator ... [to provide] training in method.” A person well trained in history can read critically in any field and if well trained in method can work in any field. This statement embodies, I think, what Robbins hoped to inculcate in her students. If her way of doing this was sometimes open to criticism, it still stands as an admirable goal worthy of her extraordinary talents as a historian.

After she retired, Robbins continued to offer conversations and assistance to persons in need. This, of course, included her former graduate students, such as Mary Maples Dunn, working on William Penn, and Barbara Bradfield Taft, preparing her seventeenth-century republicans for publication. Moreover, she extended her interest and helped others outside Bryn Mawr. Professor Gordon Schochet of Rutgers University is an example, and he generously shared memories of her kindnesses. In 1958 when he was a first-year graduate student, he met Robbins at a conference, and they engaged in conversation. He described his studies and scholarly aspirations to her and she responded by lending him a copy of the bibliography for *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* before its publication to assist his research. He also took the opportunity to tell her that the supervisor of his research at Cambridge was Peter Laslett, her good friend, as he knew. They met again in 1965–66 at the annual meeting of the North American Conference on British Studies, where Robbins remembered him and his scholarly interests. In 1975, he sent her a copy of his book *Patriarchalism*, and she invited him for lunch and conversation. They talked for several hours about “teaching, research, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and good-natured gossip about prominent scholars,” all the while consuming quantities of bread, wine, and a soup

<sup>58</sup> BMCA, “Personal recollections of the Bryn Mawr History Department,” 43.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

that seemed mostly wine. Schochet recalled the afternoon as inspirational and very helpful for his work, and the wine as delicious!

Robbins directed her remarkable energies into founding or supporting history organizations outside the academic world. She was a founding member of the Middle Atlantic Renaissance Conference in 1958; became President of the Berkshire Conference on Women Historians, 1959–61; held the overlapping presidency of the Radnor Historical Society, 1958–65; and served on the Council of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania starting in 1971 and was elected vice-president in 1977. From 1955 through 1964, Robbins wrote nine pieces for the *Bulletin of the Radnor Historical Society* on such topics as “Changing Taste in Food in Pennsylvania” and “The Burning of the Bellevue, fires and firefighters of Radnor Township.” These activities illustrate her energy, but more importantly, they underline her love of history, her sense of responsibility to take action where she saw the need, and her conviction, which she instilled in her graduate students, that if you know how to find sources for a subject and understand how to write history, you can write on any topic that claims your interest.

As gratifying as the marks of honor that were heaped upon Robbins over the years must have been, she coveted similar recognition in Great Britain. She failed in this because of the fierce opposition of Sir Lewis Bernstein Namier (1888–1960), who had achieved prominence in England for his work in eighteenth-century studies. In recognition of this, Robbins thanked him warmly for his help with her *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*. Namier, a controversial figure in the English historical community, was recognized for his methodology of statistical analysis, which led him to reject the significance of ideas. His personality was belligerent, and his unstoppable loquacity, it was said, would “empty a common room.”<sup>60</sup> Robbins and Namier were at the same meeting in London one hot summer afternoon when he subjected her work to such unrelenting hostile criticism that she was almost reduced to tears.<sup>61</sup> This was an extraordinary event in Robbins’ scholarly career. Her reported reaction to the criticism is entirely unlike her response to disagreements over academic issues at Bryn Mawr where she was known as a determined and tenacious debater. It is also remarkable that no one among the assembled academics defended Robbins’ work. It is the only instance in her long

<sup>60</sup> John Cannon, “Namier, Sir Lewis Bernstein (1888–1960),” *ODNB*.

<sup>61</sup> *ODNB*.

scholarly career that leads one to wonder if a prejudiced attitude toward women historians in Britain played a part.

Namier was merciless. He also blocked her from receiving a D.Litt from the University of London, for which she applied. Her brother had tried to dissuade her, but she persisted and suffered disappointment.<sup>62</sup> Namier, however, was not powerful enough to deny Robbins election as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Sometime in the early 1990s, Robbins began a slow descent into the ever-darkening fog of Alzheimer's disease. Mary Dunn was devastated when Robbins did not know who she was when she visited her.<sup>63</sup> Robbins died on February 8, 1995, at the age of 95. Two posthumous honors kept alive memory of the many contributions that Robbins made over her long career as a scholar, professor, and active friend of history. Bryn Mawr College created a professorship in her name, and the Institute of United States Studies at the University of London set up the annual Caroline Robbins lecture.<sup>64</sup>

Robbins was among a group of women historians of her generation who contributed to the craft of history by their publications, taught at the professorial level in colleges and universities, held key administrative positions, and received high honors from the historical community. Mildred Campbell (1897–1991) and Evalyn A. Clark (1903–2001) were professors at Vassar, another one of the Seven Sisters colleges, while Sylvia L. Thrupp (1903–97) won appointment in 1961 to the Alice Freeman Palmer Chair in History at the University of Michigan. The history profession honored these women. The American Historical Association gave Thrupp its Award for Scholarly Distinction in 1988 and recognized Margaret Judson with the same award in 1990. In 1979, Elizabeth Read Foster (1912–99) received Yale University Graduate School's Wilbur Lucius Cross Medal for outstanding achievement in scholarship, teaching, and academic administration, while the American Historical Association invited her to serve on the board of the *American Historical Review* from 1979 to 1981. All these women trained students who became the next generation of historians. With Robbins, they mark a significant change in the position of women historians in the United States.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Letter to author, 11/09/15.

<sup>64</sup> Pole, "Caroline Robbins, Revolutionary History Teacher," Obituaries, *The Guardian* (February 16, 1999).

PART III

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Women and Modern Politics



## Arvède Barine: History, Modernity, and Feminism

*Whitney Walton*

The entry in French Wikipedia for Arvède Barine, pseudonym of Louise-Cécile Vincens (1840–1908), is short (even shorter in the English language Wikipedia). In three paragraphs readers learn that she was born in La Rochelle, and she was a historian and literary critic. Several of her works were translated into English, including her studies of the duchesse de Montpensier—“la Grande Mademoiselle”—and Alfred de Musset and George Sand. She contributed to many journals, including the *Revue Bleue*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, *Journal des Débats*, *Le Figaro*, and others. She was awarded the Legion of Honor, the Prix Vitet by the Académie Française, the Prix Estrade-Delcros by the Académie des sciences morales et politiques, and was among the twenty-two members of the first all-women jury for the literary award Prix Femina created in 1905. The entry includes a selected list of her many publications, and cites three sources of information in a bibliography.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arv%C3%A8de\\_Barine](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arv%C3%A8de_Barine). Two of the references are listed below; the third is a biographical dictionary of French Protestants published in 2015.

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Scholarship on Barine is limited. In her important book *The Gender of History* Bonnie Smith includes Barine among many women historians from Europe and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who addressed subjects that male historians usually avoided, namely, queens, the laboring poor, material culture, travel, and marginal groups such as substance abusers.<sup>2</sup> An excellent article by Isabelle Ernot claims that Barine's self-effacement and pride in being a respectable bourgeois wife contributed both to her success as a writer and historian at the turn of the century, and to her subsequent oblivion. Ernot also highlights the gender reversals and critique of women's subordinate position in Barine's histories of seventeenth-century France.<sup>3</sup>

So what might we learn from Arvède Barine about early generations of women historians? This essay contends that writing history provided Barine with a means to explore women's agency and achievements as an alternative to feminist activism. Writing history enabled her to exercise her reason, conduct research, and engage with scientific theories of her time through the investigation of unconventional and influential women in the past. Simultaneously cultivating her homemaking skills and wifely responsibilities, she presented no threat to successful men historians who esteemed her. She was immensely popular among readers in France, Europe, and North America, as well as among renowned Parisian literary and intellectual figures, as letters to Barine held in the Département des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale de France reveal. As Karen Offen demonstrates in her comprehensive history of feminism in the French Third Republic, wide-ranging public debates regarding women's rights and social functions permeated the French press.<sup>4</sup> Barine engaged in those debates, expressing several common criticisms of feminism, namely that it

<sup>2</sup>Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). See also Anne Rebecca Epstein, *Gender, Intellectual Sociability, and Political Culture in the French Third Republic 1890–1914*, PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2004. A work that does not mention Barine but presents several different ways that women enacted modernity through writing is Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Jonathan Dewald charts the development of social history among non-academic French intellectuals, though he includes no women in his study: Jonathan Dewald, *Lost Worlds: The Emergence of French Social History, 1815–1970* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup>Isabelle Ernot, "Une historienne 'au tournant du siècle': Arvède Barine," *Mil Neuf Cent* 16 (1998): 93–131.

<sup>4</sup>Karen Offen, *Debating the Woman Question in the French Third Republic, 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), chap. 5.

was a foreign import, it advocated economic competition between women and men, and it threatened the institution of marriage intended to protect women. Nonetheless her historical writing indicates that she was very much interested in ways that women in the past exerted influence and conducted their lives within gendered social and cultural constraints.

### BECOMING A WRITER

Barine came to writing quite late in her life, through translation. It is not clear how or when she learned Russian, Italian, German, Spanish, and English, perhaps as a child with access to her father's library; some sources indicate that she learned Latin from her husband. After her family suffered financial losses at the time of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, she started teaching foreign languages, then translating. Eugène Yung, a family friend and editor of the *Revue Bleue*, engaged her to write on foreign literature in 1876, and subsequently Barine wrote book reviews and essays for several other widely circulated journals in addition to the *Revue Bleue*. According to Barine's friend and fellow literary critic, Ernest Tissot, Madame Vincens devised her pseudonym from the name of a friend, Arvède, that was not clearly masculine or feminine, and the name of a hill, Barine, near Toul where she was walking at the time. The gender ambiguity of the pseudonym was deliberate, and while some correspondents addressed her as Monsieur, friends and professional acquaintances referred to her as Madame Vincens.<sup>5</sup>

Letters to Barine from Yung in the 1880s suggest that he guided Barine successfully toward a writing career, and respected her views and her work.<sup>6</sup> For example, he recommended useful contacts for her various subjects, and he offered advice on writing style and article titles, and praise for her works. On January 29, 1881 he wrote: "I modified the title because I think the title should always indicate the subject under consideration to

<sup>5</sup>Pierre Blanchon, "Mme Arvède Barine chez elle," *Journal des Débats*, November 21, 1908; Ernest Tissot, *Princesses de lettres* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1909), 22–28; Ernot, "Une historienne"; Ernest Tissot, "Sur la tombe d'Arvède Barine," *Revue Bleue*, September 18, 1909: 367; René Doumic, "L'oeuvre d'Arvède Barine," *Revue des Deux Mondes* (Jan.–Feb. 1909): 205–216.

<sup>6</sup>According to an anonymous obituary of Barine, Yung "discovered" Barine through her correspondence to his wife, and he encouraged her to write for publication. X, "Madame Arvède Barine," *Revue hebdomadaire* (November 28, 1908): 469–470.

the reader.”<sup>7</sup> And on February 12, 1881: “What I object to rather is the conclusion; it is banal. Couldn’t it be eliminated? As for the issue of prudery, don’t hesitate too much. We will see if it is necessary to change in the proofs.”<sup>8</sup> He initiated her into the responsibilities of proofreading and figuring out which works would most appeal to the readers of the *Revue Bleue*. He gave Barine a lesson in using pronouns in 1883, and concluded: “As I have told you, pronouns are the plague of the French language. They give me a lot of trouble in the correction of proofs.”<sup>9</sup> In 1881 Yung engaged in a prolonged discussion with Barine about anti-Semitism, a topic that Barine was addressing in her review of *Der Juden Raphael* by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, under the title of “The Anti-Semitic Question in Europe” (a title that Yung approved). Yung encouraged Barine to enlist expert assistance; she corresponded with Isidore Loeb of the Universal Jewish Alliance, who provided her with information on Russian Jews, then praised her article on *The Jewish Raphael* that detailed the persecution of his coreligionists in Russia, and later advised her on the history of Prussian laws in the nineteenth century regarding Jews.<sup>10</sup> Yung praised her review of a book on Napoleon’s attitudes toward and encouragement of marriage: “Bravo on Napoleon I and his marriages.” The correspondence with Yung ended as Barine started contributing to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the *Journal des Débats*, and publishing collections of her biographies and reviews with Hachette publishing house.

By the late 1880s Barine’s biographies and book reviews garnered acclaim and commissions. Author and diplomat Jules Jusserand suggested in 1889 that she write a biography of the naturalist and author Bernardin de St. Pierre for Hachette’s series on Great French Writers, which she did. Subsequently he requested and praised her next contribution to the series on Alfred de Musset: “I need not tell you of the success of Musset; the

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Eugène Yung, January 29, 1881, NAF 18349 (151), Arvède Barine, Lettres reçues, in Département des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Hereafter abbreviated to the call number and page number.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Eugène Yung, February 11, 1881, NAF 18349 (154).

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Eugène Yung, November 22, 1883, NAF 18349 (215).

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Eugène Yung, December 28, 1881, NAF 18349 (166); Letters from Isidore Loeb, December 16, 1881 through 1882, NAF 18345 (243–254). Ultimately the article appeared as: “La Question antisémite en Galicie. Un nouveau roman de M. Sacher-Masoch,” *La Revue politique et littéraire* (July 1881 to January 1882): 811–814.

public has ratified your delightful volume.”<sup>11</sup> Many publishers and editors approached Barine with requests that she write on particular subjects (for example feminism, or versions of her work appropriate for youth or children), and that she contribute to their particular journals.

Barine’s literary reviews and biographies of historical and contemporary figures won her a wide following among other writers and academics and especially the general public, as the large collection of letters written to her reveals. Some readers corrected her facts or challenged her interpretation; many engaged with her on subjects of shared interest and offered or requested additional information; many sent her their own books and hoped she would review them; and still others sought her patronage or support for causes like feminism, temperance, the education of Algerian girls, the propagation of foreign languages in France, and child welfare. She must have been an assiduous correspondent, for follow-up letters indicate that Barine often provided the requested information, support, or assistance. Overwhelmingly readers praised her work and expressed their responses to articles and books that delighted or moved them. Here are just a few representative examples of the voluminous fan mail she received. In 1890 Victor du Bled, historian and editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, expressed his admiration for Barine’s work, describing its qualities as: “the most reliable erudition, the finest irony, and this exquisite thing called gracefulness, that our pedants pretend to disdain because they do not understand it.”<sup>12</sup> Madame Octave Terrillon thanked her in 1895 for providing her dying husband with the only comfort he enjoyed in his mortal illness—reading Barine’s works: “You are my religion, you were the only religion of my husband. He admired your immense talent with fervent devotion, and I owe you, on his behalf, many hours of relief [d’apaisement].”<sup>13</sup> Librarian and historian Frantz Funck Brentano wrote a letter of appreciation to Barine in 1901 for her “fine book, *the Childhood of the Grande Mademoiselle*.”<sup>14</sup> Mme J. E. Carrey, widow of an engineer

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Jules Jusserand, August 4, 1893, NAF 18344 (92). She was, apparently, the only woman among the men who contributed to the series on the great writers of France, according to the list published at the front of *Alfred de Musset*, 2nd ed., 1894 (her title was M. Arvède Barine). Many others were members of the French Academy (women were not eligible for election to the Academy).

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Victor du Bled, April 3, 1890, NAF 18342 (217).

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Madame Octave Terrillon, December 22, 1895, NAF 18348 (310–311). Barine subsequently visited her, for which Terrillon was very grateful.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Franz Funck Brentano, December 4, 1901, NAF 18343 (157).

who sought Barine's encouragement for her own work in 1906 wrote: "I have long admired your great talent, the clarity of your style and its firmness so rare among women."<sup>15</sup>

Published reviews also praised Barine's work, like this review in the literary supplement of *Le Figaro* in 1890 that compared Barine favorably to the historians Hippolyte Taine and Ernest Renan and literary critic Ferdinand Brunetière: "Madame Arvède Barine is of the same fine race as Taine but she does not have the same depressing dryness. The high serenity of her intelligence distances her equally from the Jansenist exclusivity of M. Brunetière and the jovial skepticism of M. Renan. ... she truly and loftily incarnates a triple personality of scholar [erudite], thinker, and writer."<sup>16</sup> While one author called Barine "an elegant vulgarizer," claiming that her work was derivative even though very appealing to middle-brow readers, historians usually wrote favorable reviews, agreeing with her insights and occasionally citing her in their own work, as we will see below.<sup>17</sup>

## WRITING HISTORY

According to Ernest Tissot, Barine never contemplated writing fiction or drama, claiming that that would bore her. In the context of distinguishing herself from other French women writers of her time who, she implied, composed novels in their heads while circulating in high society, Tissot quotes Barine saying: "facts interest me more than people do, and ideas more than facts."<sup>18</sup> History appears to have been her favorite subject among the many she addressed: "No other work conquered me so completely; the danger is that it takes too much time ... a paragraph often costs me weeks, months of research."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the most extensive research appeared in Barine's later works, her histories of seventeenth-century

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Mme. J. E. Carrey, May 31, 1906, NAF 18341 (29).

<sup>16</sup> *Le Figaro*, supplément littéraire, March 18, 1890: 42.

<sup>17</sup> J. Ernest-Charles, "La vie littéraire. Livres d'Histoire," *La Revue politique et littéraire: revue des cours littéraires*, ser. 5, t. 3, n. 1–25 (1905): 536–539.

<sup>18</sup> Ernest Tissot, "Madame Arvède Barine," *Princesses de lettres* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1909), 30. See also Pierre Blanchon, "Arvède Barine chez elle," *Journal des Débats*, November 21, 1908. He wrote: "Mme Charles Vincens hid her life. She had nothing of the bluestocking about her. She was naturally simple, she avoided all that resembled eccentricity or pretention. She would have been horrified to seem like 'a person of letters.'"

<sup>19</sup> Tissot, "Madame Arvède Barine," 37–38. She also wrote on many other topics including zoology, and she translated Herbert Spencer.

France through the aristocratic women, the duchesse de Montpensier and Madame the duchesse d'Orléans.

Letters to Barine from prominent historians suggest relations of mutual esteem, serious engagement with one another's work, and acknowledgment of Barine's significant public influence through her works and reviews. In 1887 Barine consulted with historian of religion Ernest Renan, regarding a book she was reviewing by a German scholar on early church history. Renan disputed two of the author's assertions, and Barine quoted Renan in the published review.<sup>20</sup> Renan also wrote to Barine in 1887, praising her biographical sketch of Saint Teresa of Avila: "I know of nothing better on Saint Teresa than what you have written on her."<sup>21</sup> Historian Ernest Lavisse thanked Barine in 1891 for reviewing his book, *The Youth of Frederick the Great*. Also, in a letter of 1898 he addressed the historical issue of relations between Queen Anne of Austria and Cardinal Jules Mazarin, perhaps in response to a question from Barine, since Barine began publishing a series of articles on Mademoiselle de Montpensier in 1899. In the letter Lavisse asks if Barine has read Mazarin's letters published by Ravenel, and he goes on to say that the letters leave "no doubt concerning the relations between the two." He asserts that Anne was "too pious, too religious (in her own way), and she had too great a fear of the devil and of hell to suppose that she could even consider concubinage [with Mazarin]. No positive proofs of a marriage [between Anne and Mazarin] exist." Yet he offers the fact that many at court and in Paris believed the two were married, and he ends with the question, "Who knows?"<sup>22</sup> The correspondence does not include Barine's response, but her published work cited Ravenel's *Lettres du Cardinal Mazarin à la Reine*, and she wrote that "no proof" of a secret marriage exists.<sup>23</sup> A few years later Lavisse appealed to Barine to contribute articles to the *Revue de Paris*, and he complimented her profusely on the second volume of her study of Montpensier, adding: "the alternative reading of your volume was very useful to me when I was correcting proofs of my first volume on Louis XIV ..."<sup>24</sup> And indeed, he cited Barine in *Louis XIV: La Fronde, le Roi, Colbert (1643–1685)* (Paris: Hachette, 1906). Letters to Barine from

<sup>20</sup> See Arvède Barine, *Essais et fantasies* (Paris: Hachette, 1888), 12–13.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Ernest Renan, May 1, 1887, NAF 18347 (241–242).

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Ernest Lavisse, July 5, 1898, NAF 18345 (84–85?).

<sup>23</sup> Arvède Barine, *La Jeunesse de la Grande Mademoiselle (1627–1652)* (Paris: Hachette, 1901), 249.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Ernest Lavisse, August 24, 1905, NAF 18345 (92).

another historian, Gabriel Monod, indicate an equally cordial relationship with exchanges about German historiography, requests or suggestions for works she might review, and effusive praise for Barine's work: "Your *Grande Mademoiselle* is a masterpiece."<sup>25</sup> Monod also thanked Barine for reviewing his collection of historian Jules Michelet's journals, but he chided her for being "a little unjust" in her presentation of the relationship between Michelet and his young wife.<sup>26</sup>

Barine based her biographical and historical studies on memoirs, written by the subject and by those who knew the subject, as well as correspondence and other manuscript sources, and she often cited published works by other scholars. For the biography of Musset, for example, Barine had access to letters exchanged between Musset and George Sand from Sand's daughter-in-law, as well as unpublished materials from other collections.<sup>27</sup> Barine corresponded with scholars, collectors, and archivists regarding her research, a practice that increased over time as she addressed historical rather than literary figures.<sup>28</sup> Like male historians of the late nineteenth century, she sought archival sources for her writing of scientific history, but access to archives was not always available to women. From 1901 to 1904 she paid a researcher, Paul Hallynck, to look for letters by Montpensier and the duc de Lauzun in the Archives de la Bastille and the Archives de la Guerre. He noted that Barine herself "did not have autho-

<sup>25</sup> Letters from Gabriel Monod, 1883–1908, NAF 18346 (164–188).

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Gabriel Monod, January 2, 1906, NAF 18346 (181–182).

<sup>27</sup> Arvède Barine, *Alfred de Musset* (Paris: Hachette, 1893), v–vi.

<sup>28</sup> For example, P. de Ségur wrote to Barine in 1900 and 1901 that there were few letters (presumably in archives) written by Madame de Montpensier, but that he would continue to look for them when he did research in the War Archives NAF 18351. Isidore Loeb of the Alliance Israélite universelle wrote to Barine several times in 1881 and 1882 regarding information in Jewish archives and publications in England and Germany, and the history of Jews in Russia and Prussia in the nineteenth century NAF 18345. Gustave Macon wrote to Barine in 1903 and 1905 that she was welcome to visit the Archives of Chantilly, but that it would probably be more convenient for her to read the published letters by the Princess Palatine, madame mère du regent NAF 18346. In 1905 Maurice Paléologue offered to lead her through the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so she could look through the papers of the Duc de St. Simon, though he indicated that the many volumes related to St. Simon's memoirs, and there were few letters in the holdings NAF 18347. Louis Battifol, who worked at the National Library informed Barine in 1904 that normally the library did not loan books to patrons; however, the general administrator said "Madame Arvède Barine is so well known that a request from her to borrow books would be favorably received." Battifol helped her with the research on the Princess Palatine, and he also helped finish her posthumously published book on Madame mere du regent NAF 18339.

rization to work on Lauzun in the war archives,” so she had to pay a man to work in the archives that barred women from entry.<sup>29</sup> Correspondence also indicates that Barine was welcome to visit the archives of Chantilly, at the Chateau d’Eu, and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to consult materials by the princess Palatine, la Grande Mademoiselle, and the memoirist Saint-Simon, though in all cases the writers informed her that there were few documents that had not already been published in some form.<sup>30</sup> She and historian Pierre de Ségur shared documentary sources, references, and admiration.<sup>31</sup> Scholar and librarian Louis Batiffol also helped Barine with her research in the Bibliothèque nationale, and he completed her nearly finished book on Madame, mother of the regent, after Barine’s death.<sup>32</sup>

Barine’s gendered identity split in interesting ways, especially in connection with historical practice during her lifetime. While Barine lacked the education and professional training that prepared men for academic positions, she resembled in many ways the “freelance intellectuals” that Jonathan Dewald analyzed in his book on the origins of social history in France before the Annales school. Like Hippolyte Taine and Ernest Renan, Barine held no academic position, and she was a public intellectual associated with wide-circulation journals that appealed to a general reading public.<sup>33</sup> For several of her essays and the book on neurotics she consulted recent medical and scientific works, and medical and scientific professionals, including the criminologist and physician Cesare Lombroso.<sup>34</sup> She had

<sup>29</sup> Several letters from Paul Hallynck, 1901–1907, NAF 18344. Correspondence from Mary F. Sandars in 1907 indicates that Barine referred her to Hallynck for sources on Lauzun in the Archives of the Bastille, and that he copied manuscript letters for Sandars. Several letters from 1907, NAF 18348 (35–39).

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Gustave Macon, March 19, 1903 and August 19, 1905 from the Musée Condé at Chantilly, NAF 18346 (1–2). Letter from Louis Mamert, 1902, on the holdings at the Chateau d’Eu, NAF 18346 (6–7); letter from Maurice Paléologue, April 21, 1905 inviting her to visit the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but indicating that few letters of Saint-Simon were there, NAF 18347 (5).

<sup>31</sup> Letters from Pierre de Ségur, 1895–1908, NAF 18348 (95–122).

<sup>32</sup> Correspondence from Louis Batiffol, 1904–05, NAF 18339.

<sup>33</sup> Dewald, *Lost Worlds*; Epstein, *Gender, Intellectual Sociability*; Smith, *The Gender of History*. Barine celebrated masculine or “virile” education, and she was less optimistic than Ernest Renan that science practiced by women might complement that practiced by men. “Si la Science a un Sexe,” *Journal des Débats*, August 8, 1906.

<sup>34</sup> Barine exchanged publications with the criminologist Cesare Lombroso in 1897, NAF 18345; a Dr. Sollier of the Sanatorium de Boulogne sur Seine sent her his notes on morphine addiction, NAF 18351. Paul le Roux of the Senate wrote to her in 1904 with an eyewitness account of Musset’s alcohol addiction and an assertion that Musset never suffered from epi-

a scientific and rational orientation to writing that was congenial to history, and many correspondents as well as reviewers characterized her writing as masculine, presumably because they thought men were more rational than women. Others suggested that her psychological or human insights derived from an essentialist notion of women as more sympathetic and sensitive than men.<sup>35</sup> Friend and biographer Ernest Tissot accused Barine of lacking sympathy for those who made mistakes in the name of love, but he also associated this with her masculine rationality and almost brutal honesty; she could accept criticism as well as deliver it.<sup>36</sup>

In her longest work, a two-volume biography of the duchesse de Montpensier, la Grande Mademoiselle (1627–93), Barine explains her choice of subject as representative of a significant moment in French history—the change in the French mindset from emphasizing glory to love that accompanied the establishment of an absolute monarchy. Barine asserts that Montpensier embodied this transformation of sentiment in her life: “Mademoiselle illuminates her environment.”<sup>37</sup> She also wrote that Montpensier’s memoirs offered a girl’s perspective on the court of Louis XIII, “a perspective to which [men] historians have not accustomed [readers].”<sup>38</sup> Barine presents Montpensier as a woman of action who controlled her own destiny within the constraints of her time. As a young woman Montpensier thirsted for glory above love, and this meant marrying into power (she was the wealthiest woman in France from birth). She was the pursuer rather than the pursued, and for a time she aspired to marry Louis XIV (who was eleven years her junior) for her own ends.

According to Barine, women were major players in the time of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, both culturally, in their invention of salons, and politically. Barine presents women’s political involvement in the seventeenth century as associated with noble privilege, in contrast to the feminist rights

lepsy, NAF 18345. This last is interesting because Barine published her work on Musset in 1893. An undated letter from Dr. Léonce Manouvrier of the Ecole pratique des hautes études laboratoire d’anthropologie à l’école pratique de la faculté de médecine, Paris, recommended several books on morphine addiction and mental illness, NAF 18346.

<sup>35</sup> In a letter of May 20, 1893, Lina Sand wrote that only Barine’s “woman’s hand could sort out the tangled skein” of the relationship between George Sand and Alfred de Musset, NAF 18348. Madame Hippolyte Taine wrote in 1898 regarding Barine’s work on poets and neurotics that “the charity of women gave you this sympathy for the sufferings of deranged geniuses and allowed readers to understand them,” NAF 18348.

<sup>36</sup> Ernest Tissot, *Princesses de lettres* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1909), 40, 54–55.

<sup>37</sup> Barine, *La Jeunesse de la Grande Mademoiselle*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

claims of Barine's own time. "[Elite women] were all powerful in politics," Barine wrote of Montpensier's time, "as it is doubtful they could ever become again under the most feminist law code because rights inscribed in the law are nothing compared to the privileges conferred by custom."<sup>39</sup> Barine quotes Cardinal Jules Mazarin on the capability for rule of three noblewomen in the seventeenth century: "We have three [women] ... who would be capable of governing or overthrowing three great kingdoms: the duchesse de Longueville, the princesse Palatine, and the duchesse de Chevreuse." Barine then detailed the abilities, achievements, and adventures of the three women, including their common practice of donning men's clothes, and their involvement in the Fronde.<sup>40</sup>

According to Barine the power of elite women peaked with the Fronde (1648–53), five years of unrest and armed conflict during the minority of Louis XIV and the regency of Anne of Austria. Montpensier in particular achieved her moment of glory when in 1652 her father declined to lead a force to the town of Orléans, part of his domain, and Montpensier, assisted by Mesdames de Fiesque and de Frontenac, commanded the opposition troops moving from Paris to Orléans. She won the cheers of the people of Orléans for her speech that she would rescue Louis XIV from the foreigner Mazarin. After a few weeks Montpensier made her way back to Paris to join forces with another Frondeur, the Prince de Condé. Their control of Paris was brief, and to end the unrest Parisians welcomed the return of Louis XIV on October 21, 1652. Barine asserts that Montpensier failed to understand the transformation in French history that followed the Fronde: the rebellion ended aristocratic grandeur and, contrary to "French tradition," ushered in royal absolutism and bourgeois influence. Barine writes: "It is not I who criticize Mademoiselle; it is to her credit that she was not flexible in the age of servility that succeeded the Fronde."<sup>41</sup> She suggested that Montpensier was more heroic than the male Frondeurs who accommodated absolutism: "The Grande Mademoiselle was always

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 238–239.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 239–242. See the recent history of women of the Fronde: Sophie Vergnes, *Les Frondeuses: l'activité politique des femmes de l'aristocratie et ses représentations de 1643 à 1661*, Histoire. Université Toulouse le Mirail – Toulouse II, 2012. Vergnes identifies two streams of action—military and diplomatic—that depended upon the women's family and social networks. She argues that civil war opened a "vector of emancipation" for aristocratic women despite the fact that this same conflict destabilized the regency of Anne of Austria.

<sup>41</sup> Arvède Barine, *Louis XIV et la Grande Mademoiselle (1652–1693)* (Paris: Hachette, 1905), 3.

the Grande Mademoiselle, and if this was sometimes her weakness, it was also more often her claim to glory.”<sup>42</sup>

Barine’s other major work of history also analyzed the seventeenth century through a woman, this time Princess Elizabeth-Charlotte of Palatine (1652–1722), the second wife of Louis XIV’s brother Philippe d’Orléans. Barine framed this study as representing the differences and relations between Germany and France through the correspondence of Madame, who commented extensively on this topic since she was a German transplanted to France by marriage.<sup>43</sup> Barine also framed her story through an unwanted marriage, since Madame’s father essentially forced marriage upon his daughter to try to recoup the fortunes of the Palatine after the devastation of religious wars and his own mismanagement.<sup>44</sup> The similarities between *Madame, Mère du Régent* and the two books on the Grande Mademoiselle are striking. Like Montpensier, Elizabeth Charlotte was “a brilliant amazon.” After her marriage and installation at the French court she became an avid horseback rider, a favored companion of Louis XIV on the hunt, and she was quite comfortable wearing men’s clothes. Similar also to the gender reversals between Montpensier and her father Orléans, Elizabeth Charlotte, or Liselotte, was robust, rustic, and not at all conventionally feminine in appearance or behavior, in contrast to her husband who was foppish, homosexual, and wore his wife’s makeup. Though Montpensier aspired to marry on her own terms, Liselotte hated marriage, an attitude that she shared with most elite women of the seventeenth century, according to Barine. She quotes Liselotte writing that had she been master of herself she would never have married, but she did so because her father required it: “I would have been happy had I been allowed not to marry, and to lead the good life of celibacy.”<sup>45</sup> Liselotte also hated pregnancies because they interfered with hunting and her overall mobility; after three pregnancies and two surviving children she happily acquiesced with Orléans’ proposal that they henceforth occupy separate bedrooms. She was, nonetheless, a caring and involved mother. Barine did not live to complete the final chapter of her history of Madame, but the book suggested that Elizabeth-Charlotte enjoyed some good times, though she also experienced frustration with and alienation from French court life,

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>43</sup> Arvède Barine, *Madame, Mère du Régent*, 4th ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1923), 4.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–57.

and she made the best of a bad job in her arranged marriage. Overall, she was an independent character who fulfilled her own desires whenever possible, though she differed in one significant way from Montpensier.

In contrast to Montpensier Liselotte avoided politics, for, as Barine often noted, the end of the Fronde also signaled the end of elite women's political engagement, and Liselotte, who was very fond of Louis XIV, perhaps even in love with him, hardly wished to interfere with his authority. Also, the conclusion of *Madame, Mère du Régent*, written by Louis Batiffol and probably reflecting Barine's position, quoted Liselotte approvingly for distancing herself from government when her son became regent: "I would not be displeased to give a good example to my son's wife and his daughter, because unfortunately this kingdom is governed by women both old and young; it is high time that we left it to men.' She was not mistaken."<sup>46</sup> Barine's histories represented Montpensier and Liselotte as complex figures, strong and independent but also flawed, who grappled throughout their lives with gendered social, cultural, and political structures.

### HISTORY AND FEMINISM

For Barine, la Grande Mademoiselle represented the entire history of the seventeenth century because she was both heroic and unsuccessful. Readers could interpret her analysis as both critical and celebratory of women's political activism, and in fact two feminist scholars have done so recently. In her dissertation of 2012 Sophie Vergnes includes Barine among other nineteenth-century historians who, she claims, misread the memoirs of the Fronde, and moralized against the Frondeuses for being unpatriotic and self-centered if not frivolous. Vergnes quotes Barine dismissing the women of the Fronde: "one is horrified by these false heroines, these ungenerous women with perverted imaginations ..."<sup>47</sup> By contrast, Isabelle Ernot emphasizes the gender reversals in Barine's history as a challenge to conventional masculine authority and feminine subordination. This was particularly evident in Barine's portrayals of Montpensier and her father, the brother of Louis XIII, Gaston d'Orléans: "he is a coward, she is brave; he has no political backbone." Orléans betrayed his accomplices, and he was submissive. Ernot quotes Barine on Montpensier

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>47</sup> Vergnes, *Les Frondeuses*, 53.

as the opposite of her father: “La Grande Mademoiselle never betrayed anyone, never lied. She was always valiant and generous.”<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Ernot quotes Barine and women of the seventeenth century criticizing and rejecting the institution of marriage because it repressed women.<sup>49</sup> In this history, and in her other writings, Arvède Barine defied easy categorization regarding women and especially feminism.

One way to understand the contradictions in Barine’s work is to consider the conceptual categories she deployed in her biographies and histories: nature or heredity, social circumstances and cultural norms, and individual behavior or psychology. Barine explains and excuses much in terms of inherited disability or sport of nature, consistent with social science theories of her time.<sup>50</sup> For example, she wrote of Montpensier: “It was not her fault if nature, making her a woman, gave her a bearing and inclinations a little too masculine.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly she wrote of the mathematician Sophie Kovalevsky: “She defied nature who made her a woman, because she wanted to accomplish the work of a man.”<sup>52</sup> In her book on neurotic poets, Barine detailed Thomas de Quincey’s addiction to opium and the devastating effects on his family and on himself, and she wrote that he deserved “a little compassion,” because he was “physiologically predisposed” toward addiction since his father died of tuberculosis and he and his siblings inherited from him a morbid temperament.<sup>53</sup> The renowned penologist Cesare Lombroso sent her a copy of his work on genius and degeneracy, and wrote to her: “I thought much of you as I was writing this book; moreover I cited you often and I consider you one my most valiant companions in arms.” Praising her work, presumably on neurotics, he noted: “You have delved so precisely into the soul of these wretches that I feel that I have them at my disposal, as if they were here in

<sup>48</sup> Ernot, “Une historienne,” 113–114.

<sup>49</sup> “Barine brings to light ‘feminist’ positions of seventeenth-century women.” Ernot, “Une historienne,” 122–125.

<sup>50</sup> Jan Goldstein, “The Advent of Psychological Modernism in France: An Alternative Narrative,” in *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences 1870–1930*, ed. Dorothy Ross (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 190–209. Thanks to Tracy Teslow for this reference.

<sup>51</sup> Barine, *La Jeunesse de la Grande Mademoiselle*, 259.

<sup>52</sup> Arvède Barine, “La Raçon de la gloire, Sophie Kovalevsky,” *Revue des Deux Mondes*, ser. 10, v. 123 (May 15, 1894): 348.

<sup>53</sup> Arvède Barine, *Poètes et névrosés: Hoffmann, Quincey, Edgar Poe, G. de Nerval* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), 88–89.

my clinic.”<sup>54</sup> Barine prided herself on being rational and scientifically rigorous (in terms of late nineteenth-century scientific practices), qualities that were essential for the writing of history. This was not inconsistent in her mind with moral judgments on individuals.

While she was clearly not a practitioner of “new biography” as Jo Burr Margadant presents it, Barine also attended to the cultural and social conditions out of which, and sometimes against which, historical figures constructed individual identities.<sup>55</sup> For example, in an article of 1886 Barine located St. Teresa of Avila firmly in the context of sixteenth-century Spanish society and spirituality while also detailing her extraordinary energy, capability, and humane mysticism. When the young Teresa was of marriageable age her father intended her to marry, but according to Barine: “Her character was too independent to marry. To obey God, well and good [passe encore]; but to obey a man! One of her contemporaries the noble Catherine de Sandoval said, ‘it was base to subject oneself to a man,’ and she became a Carmelite to avoid that shame.” Barine asserts that Teresa thought similarly, and she recognized that outside of marriage, there was no place in the society of that time “for a girl without a mother who was beautiful, lively and resistant to controls.”<sup>56</sup> Barine suggests great admiration for St. Teresa, and other biographical subjects, for challenging social and cultural norms in order to lead meaningful and influential lives.

But she held accountable certain women who violated moral norms, such as George Eliot and especially Queen Christina of Sweden. As a young woman Christina was a brilliant student and assertively independent;

<sup>54</sup> Letter from Cesare Lombroso, no date, NAF 18345 (270). See also Cesare Lombroso, *The Man of Genius* (London: Walter Scott Ltd.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891); Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, trans. and intro. by Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004). The helpful introduction by Rafter and Gibson asserts that Lombroso believed women were inferior to men, but he was also a friend of the socialist and feminist Anna Kuliscioff who introduced Lombroso’s daughters to J. S. Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* (13).

<sup>55</sup> Jo Burr Margadant, “Introduction: Constructing Selves in Historical Perspective,” in *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). See also Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians, and Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> Arvède Barine, “Psychologie d’une sainte: Sainte-Thérèse,” *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 3rd. period, vol. 75 (June 1, 1886): 557, 558.

she dressed in men's clothes and refused to marry, preferring to rule as a single woman or not at all. The Swedish population supported her until she came under the influence of a French doctor and started to spend money extravagantly while her subjects were impoverished. After abdicating the throne of Sweden Christina traveled throughout Europe and engaged in increasingly bizarre behavior, including murder. Barine assesses her life as one of blighted potential: "Neither her talents, her superior intelligence, her science, or her courage can save her from a terrible judgment; she is beyond conscientious and responsible humanity." Barine concluded: "The brilliant Christina, almost a genius, was a moral monster."<sup>57</sup>

Barine's biography of Mary Wollstonecraft was more forgiving than that of Queen Christina, for she analyzes her as an uneasy combination of inherited instability and justifiable defiance of social norms. Barine claims that (unnamed) feminists were ashamed of Wollstonecraft, and that it was important to appreciate the unfortunate influence of her father especially and her early family life in general in generating Wollstonecraft's fatal personality flaw that started as poor decision making and eventually manifested as derangement, according to Barine. Barine credits Wollstonecraft for being a pioneering woman author, and while she considers the *Vindication* poorly written and not always logical, she concedes its prophetic power regarding women's capability when they benefit from education. For Barine, marriage, sexuality, and relations with men were Wollstonecraft's downfall: "in her greatest blunders she had only the best intentions; in her greatest errors she sinned by false judgment, not otherwise." She was sincere, Barine asserted, and the moralist must be indulgent. Yet she concludes that since feminists eschew the poor Mary, she should at least enjoy the homage of a group that grows every day: deranged women [Mesdames les détraquées].<sup>58</sup>

Barine's judgments of her subjects in *Portraits de femmes* and *Princesses et grandes dames* (as well as of la Grande Mademoiselle) were often harsh, but the subjects come across as vibrant, intelligent, and passionate individuals, unlike the portrayals by Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve in his book also titled *Portraits de femmes*, published in 1844. In the earlier work Sainte-Beuve presented a wide array of French women writers, mostly

<sup>57</sup> Arvède Barine, "La Reine Christine," *Princesses et grandes dames*, 4th ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1897), 149.

<sup>58</sup> Arvède Barine, "Une détraquée," *Portraits de femmes* (Paris: Hachette, 1887), 193, 194.

from the eighteenth century, as tasteful, refined, and rather static, to whom he paid homage.<sup>59</sup> By contrast, Barine chose more diverse subjects, women who lived exciting lives and made hard choices, and she equally bestowed admiration or condemnation.

In contrast to the historical women Barine portrayed as justifiably and mostly admirably defying social norms, feminists of her own time, for the most part, did not enjoy her approval. She wrote several articles delineating the harmful consequences of equality between the sexes, divorce, and free unions, and she dismissed feminist activists in Britain and Germany. In 1894 Barine prophesied an unhappy future if women gained equal access to education and careers, because there would not be enough positions for women and they would compete with men. “Feminists encourage women to have careers, to desert the home for outside activities, clubs, meetings, councils, a public life of various forms. One would say that their ideal is to put the two sexes into a state of antagonism.”<sup>60</sup> According to Barine this occurred in Germany where bourgeois men no longer wanted to marry educated bourgeois women.<sup>61</sup> Barine also feared that divorce and especially social and legal acceptance of free unions would deprive women of the protections of marriage, and she cited English literature as promoting this development, specifically Olive Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm* and Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*.<sup>62</sup> Although Barine routinely represented marriage as a misery for and limitation on women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she suggested that conditions had greatly improved for women in her own time, notably in France. Her ideal of a fulfilled woman was the French bourgeois housewife, a woman of intelligence with original thoughts who enjoyed maintaining a well-run household and providing good food for her family and friends: “The French

<sup>59</sup> Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits de femmes*, new ed. (Paris: Garnier, 1845). As historian Mona Ozouf writes, Sainte-Beuve and other men who wrote about women portrayed them as ideals, the way men wanted women to be. Mona Ozouf, *Women’s Words: Essay on French Singularity*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), ix–x.

<sup>60</sup> Arvède Barine, “La question féministe en Angleterre,” *Journal des Débats*, September 18, 1894.

<sup>61</sup> Arvède Barine, “Féministes de bon sens,” *Journal des Débats*, May 3, 1899.

<sup>62</sup> Arvède Barine, “La Gauche féministe et le mariage,” *Revue des deux mondes*, 136 (July 1, 1896): 106–131. In this article Barine cites mostly works of fiction, but also August Bebel, *Women and Socialism*, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, works by French moralists including Jacques Bossuet and Louis Bourdaloue, and a work of legal history by Paul Gide, *Study of the Private Condition of Women in Ancient and Modern Law*.

bourgeois woman of my youth ... seems to me the ideal of the homemaker who was also a woman of the world.”<sup>63</sup> Barine stereotyped English bourgeois women as too involved in public life for such domestic bliss, and her German counterparts as domestic slaves rather than intelligent companions to men. She castigated young French women for being overeducated and mere receptacles of the ideas of their professors. Barine definitely favored education for women, but not at the expense of creative thinking and domestic skills. In her own life and in her biographies and histories Barine sought ways for women to lead meaningful lives, fulfill their individual potential, and enjoy marriage and motherhood.

Readers in her own time had difficulty determining Barine’s feminist or anti-feminist leanings. One correspondent, Pastor Edouard Dufour, wrote in 1901, “I do not know if you are a feminist or to what degree,” but he nonetheless sent her a small book, written by his wife, entitled “Jesus Christ liberator of women.” He explained: “Having through reading, experience, and reflection gradually been won over to feminist claims, I am now convinced, like the author [of the enclosed book], my companion, of their legitimacy.”<sup>64</sup> Also in 1901, requesting from Barine another version of her work on Montpensier intended for a broader audience than readers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, publisher René Doumic proposed a series on heroic women with feminist implications that would include the Frondeuses. He wrote: “You would then have a collection giving an impression of women as extraordinary [Romanesque], chivalrous, adventurous, riding in parade, battling, and finally securing a foothold on territory generally reserved for men.”<sup>65</sup> By contrast, L. M. Magnin praised Barine’s critique of feminism in an article published in *Le Figaro* in 1901: “You are right: too many bluestockings, ... not enough women wanting to be women, that is wives and mothers to spread the happiness of the hearth!”<sup>66</sup> Louis Delzons, an editor at the *Journal des Débats* wrote to Barine in 1904: “there are undoubtedly two feminisms, and maybe more than two. It seems that the one I wish to prevail ... with the goal of

<sup>63</sup> Arvède Barine, “Les Idées d’une Ménagère,” *Le Figaro*, July 3 1901.

<sup>64</sup> Letter from Edouard Dufour, June 1901, NAF 18342 (234). A letter of April 24, 1898 from a French woman who married a Croatian professor, Julije Adamovitch, responded to Barine’s articles. Madame Adamovitch thought militant feminism was misguided, though she sympathized with many women’s suffering and advocated reform through educating girls, NAF 18339 (11).

<sup>65</sup> Letter from René Doumic, December 9, 1901, NAF 18342 (178).

<sup>66</sup> Letter from L. M. Magnin, July 1901, NAF 18346 (3).

improving marriage, would win your approval.”<sup>67</sup> Jeanne E. Schmahl, an activist for married women’s property rights and eventually for women’s suffrage, probably characterized Barine’s position well in a letter of April 20, 1895: “I think I read between the lines of your articles on feminism that you are not opposed to certain well-considered reforms, but that you are only an adversary of crazy ideas of these ‘wild women’ [original in English] ... who damage reasonable and moderate elements of the feminist movement.”<sup>68</sup>

Several feminists and women acting on behalf of women approached Barine with mixed results. On behalf of the International Congress of Women, Barbara Hamley invited Barine to participate in a Literature Session at the meeting in London in 1899; the lack of further correspondence and the absence of Barine’s name on the program suggest that Barine declined. Barine shared a brief but affectionate correspondence with Swedish feminist Ellen Key in 1900, with Key thanking her profusely for her hospitality, though Barine also criticized Key’s work in 1907 in a review of her book on love and marriage.<sup>69</sup> Asserting that Key was well intentioned and aspired to the good, Barine warned that Key’s morality of love, including free love and women’s right to maternity, would destroy love and marriage, indeed all morality accrued in Christian history.<sup>70</sup> She was more receptive to an appeal from a group of young French women seeking to support one another as they pursued advanced degrees. Barine also supported Jeanne Schmahl’s efforts to promote women’s entry into professions and legal reforms to benefit women. And in 1905 she joined a group of French women writers to constitute an all-woman jury for a literary prize to compete with the Prix Goncourt, whose jury was all men.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Louis Delzons, March 1904, NAF 18342 (47).

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Jeanne E. Schmahl, April 20, 1895, NAF 18348 (54–55). In a letter of July 22, 1907 Schmahl thanked Barine for supporting the campaign for married women’s property finally approved by both the chamber of deputies and the senate that year, NAF 18348 (60).

<sup>69</sup> Letters from Ellen Key, 1900–01, NAF 18344 (332–335).

<sup>70</sup> Arvède Barine, “De l’Amour et du mariage par Ellen Key,” *Journal des Débats*, July 3, 1907.

<sup>71</sup> Letters from Mme. C. de Reymond de Broutelles, 1905–07, NAF 18347 (251–259). Originally called the Prix la Vie heureuse, after the name of a women’s journal published by Hachette, the name became Prix Femina in 1919, and continues to be awarded. See also Sylvie Ducas, “Le prix femina: la consécration littéraire au féminin,” *Recherches féministes*, 16, 1 (2003): 43–95; <http://www.prixfemina.org/post/130260648330/la-veritable-histoire-du-prix-femina>

In an assessment published in 1918 English author Florence Leftwich Ravenel expressed great admiration for Barine and included her along with Madame de Staël and George Sand as proof of women's capability for politics: "the nation which has produced in one hundred years a Mme. de Staël, a George Sand, and an Arvède Barine may surely maintain with some plausibility that its women are worthy a voice in determining its policies at home and abroad."<sup>72</sup> Yet Ravenel shared with Barine a certain skepticism about feminism, a concern that feminists were trying to be too much like men rather than cultivating the distinctive and admirable qualities of their feminine nature, or that their efforts to address legitimate problems might backfire and actually cause harm to women. Ravenel concluded, "If [Barine] is a feminist at all, she is ... a feminist without illusions," meaning "that some problems ... still await a final word."<sup>73</sup>

Barine's histories of women challenged gendered norms, even though she was selective in her approval of reforms to improve women's education and their economic condition, and she condemned what she considered unreasonable or harmful feminist claims, including alternatives to marriage and a husband's authority. She was not a New Woman in terms of publicly performing new identities, for Barine as a person eschewed the limelight and proudly proclaimed that she was a housekeeper. Yet the women in her histories performed extravagantly and powerfully in public spaces. While Barine herself did not experiment with gender roles, in the sense that she conducted herself as a good bourgeois wife, housekeeper, and mother, she portrayed women in the past who violated norms, exerted influence if not power, and practiced masculine behaviors without undermining their femininity. It may not be coincidental that Barine wrote the history of the original seventeenth-century *frondeuses* at the same time that Marguerite Durand's newspaper, *La Fronde*, fostered new careers and public activities for women.<sup>74</sup> Similar to Durand, Barine celebrated the "Frenchness" of influential French women, though her subjects were not only French women.

Barine sought from the past alternative ways for women to be in the present, or at least to understand different ways that women responded to constraining conditions. She embraced the modernity of social and

<sup>72</sup> Ravenel, "A Woman Critic," 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>74</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). See also Ozouf, *Women's Words*.

psychological sciences, accepting, with some reservations, eugenics, in particular the banning of marriages with and offspring from disabled persons. She detailed individual women's talents, contributions to history, intelligence, and originality. Yet she found many of them wanting in moral rectitude or dignity. Perhaps this contributed to her success; the dispassionate, or rather critical, historian regaled readers with sometimes over-the-top antics of women cross-dressing and subjugating men, including powerful men, through their intellect, will, and passion. Perhaps she sought historical objectivity in the sense of acknowledging women's weaknesses as well as strengths, flaws as well as achievements, thereby avoiding partisanship or blanket generalizations about women's victimization, fallibility, or goodness. In any case Barine succeeded in becoming a popular and well-regarded historian, and she fulfilled her own ideal of a woman with an original mind whose linen was well ordered and her roasts perfectly cooked.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Arvède Barine, "Les Idées d'une Ménagère," *Le Figaro*, July 3, 1901.



## CHAPTER 9

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# The Historian and the Empress: Isabel de Madariaga's Catherine the Great

*Willard Sunderland*

Catherine the Great of Russia was born a Protestant German princess in 1729. She converted to Orthodoxy and married the heir to the Russian throne, the future Peter III, at the age of 15, overthrew him at the age of 33, and then proceeded to rule the Russian Empire for the rest of her life, dying in 1796 at the then venerable age of 67.

Isabel de Madariaga was born in Glasgow 123 years after Catherine's death to a Scottish-British mother and a Spanish father. In 1940, she became the first student to graduate with a degree in Russian language and literature from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies of what is now University College London, returned there for her doctorate in Russian history in the late 1950s, assumed her first permanent academic position some time later at the age of 51, and then proceeded to become the world's leading specialist on Catherine the Great and one of the most

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**Fig. 9.1** Isabel de Madariaga (1919–1914), younger and older. (Photographs courtesy of Janet M. Hartley)

impressive scholars of Russian history more generally in the second half of the twentieth century. She died in 2014 at age of 95, considerably outliving the empress, though not, of course, outdoing her.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For overviews of de Madariaga's life and scholarship, see Janet M. Hartley and Hamish Scott, "Isabel de Madariaga (1919–2014)," *Biographical Memoirs of the Fellows of the British Academy*, 15 (2016): 217–244; Janet M. Hartley, "Professor Isabel de Madariaga: Historian and Inspirational Teacher Who Changed Our Perceptions of Catherine the Great and Ivan the Terrible," *The Independent*, July 16, 2014; Hamish Scott, "Isabel de Madariaga: Obituary," *The Guardian*, July 19, 2014; Rosalind Jones, "Isabel de Madariaga, FRHistS, FBA, 27 August 1919–16 June 2014: Professor of Russian Studies, University of London, Corresponding Member of the Royal Spanish Academy," *Government and Opposition*, 49, 4 (2014): 569–571; Simon Dixon, "Isabel de Madariaga (1919–2014)," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 16, 4 (2015): 1012–1018; Janet M. Hartley, "Professor Isabel de Madariaga (1919–2014)," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 92, 4 (2014): 729–733; Michael Schippan, "Isabel de Madariaga zum Gedenken (1919–2014)," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 62, 3 (2014): 480; A. B. Kamenskii, "Isabel de Madariaga (1935–2013)," *Revue des études slaves*, 85, 3 (2014): 599–602 [Sic: De

What was the relationship between the two women? As with most historians and their subjects, it was not mutual. De Madariaga knew Catherine, while Catherine, naturally, did not know de Madariaga, and even this one-way relationship was stilted and partial as de Madariaga could only approach her subject imperfectly through her various writings and the broader sources of her time. There was a connection, though. Or at least, de Madariaga *felt* a connection. Writing in 2001, she remarked that after devoting so much of her life to studying Catherine (by then, a labor of love of over forty years), she had “grown to like her very much.” The empress had become “a close friend,” even if she was the sort of friend who couldn’t really be a friend in return.<sup>2</sup>

At the crux of the affection de Madariaga felt for Catherine, in addition to a fondness for her curious and forthright personality, was respect for her abilities as a politician. As de Madariaga wrote in the preface to her masterwork *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, first published in 1981 and reprinted thereafter in numerous editions and languages, most studies of Catherine to that point measured the empress by her seemingly promiscuous private life, while downplaying or discrediting her talent for “the art of ruling.”<sup>3</sup> What drew de Madariaga to Catherine, by contrast, was precisely this: not her love affairs or even the discrete achievements of her reign but rather her mastery of politics and government—that elusive mix of personal qualities and institutional know-how that made her into a formidable figure of power.

In taking this approach, de Madariaga was also reacting against the dominant trends of Western and Soviet historiography at the time, which she saw as placing too much emphasis on social and economic history, rigidly censored Soviet scholarship especially. Her stress fell instead on the operations of foreign and domestic policy as well as the history of culture pursued from what she called “the angle of the court.”<sup>4</sup> This wasn’t a return to old-fashioned “great man” or great woman history, however. De Madariaga

Madariaga’s dates appear incorrectly in this title]; and O. Novikova Monterde, “In Memoriam: Isabel de Madariaga,” *Drevniaia Rus’: Voprosy medievistiki*, 4 (2014): 133–134.

<sup>2</sup> Isabel de Madariaga, “Catherine the Great: A Personal View,” *History Today*, 11 (November 2001): 45.

<sup>3</sup> The book first appeared as *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), abbreviated hereafter as *RACG*. All following references are to the US edition that appeared that same year with Yale University Press. The quotation here is from *RACG*, ix.

<sup>4</sup> *RACG*, x.

admired Catherine's rule, but she was careful not to overstate her singular importance, and this extended, it seems, to not making too much of the fact that Catherine was a female ruler. According to her students and colleagues, de Madariaga did not view herself as a feminist, and her scholarship overall does not reflect a special interest in women's history or relations between the sexes.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when gender appeared relevant to Catherine's story, de Madariaga engaged the topic but otherwise had little to say about it. Even as her feminist peers were arguing for gender's critical importance as a "category of historical analysis," de Madariaga seems to have largely ignored the issue.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, on the surface at least, her would-be friendship with Catherine had little to do with their shared experience as women, or more specifically, as cosmopolitan European professional women who made their way to the top in male-dominated terrains. Yet thinking on this commonality more, it is hard to believe that de Madariaga herself would not have noticed it and perhaps been drawn to Catherine precisely because they shared a good deal in common. Towards the end of her life, de Madariaga reflected on the barriers she had faced to establish herself as a woman within the male-dominated British academy of the 1940s–1980s. Catherine, too, came to power by overcoming sexist obstacles and stereotypes, yet like de Madariaga nonetheless made her peace with many of the gendered norms of her time. De Madariaga seems to have seen herself as a historian who happened to be a woman, while her Catherine comes across as a master politician who happens to have been an empress (as opposed to an emperor). The historian did not write about these parallels with her royal friend, but they seem hard to miss.

## THE HISTORIAN

De Madariaga's parents were impressive people. Salvador de Madariaga (1886–1978) was a prominent writer, academic, and diplomat who grew up in Spain but was educated in France, while living principally in Britain and shuttling constantly between posts and assignments to the US and

<sup>5</sup>Hartley and Scott, "Isabel de Madariaga," 243. Rosalind Jones, a friend and colleague of de Madariaga's for many years, described her as "feminine rather than a feminist." See Jones, "Isabel de Madariaga, FRHistS, FBA, 27 August 1919–16 June 2014," 570.

<sup>6</sup>The best known distillation of the argument is Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91, 5 (1986): 1053–1075.

across Europe. Constance Helen Margaret Archibald (1878–1970) grew up and studied at the University of Glasgow but attended graduate school in medieval French history in Paris where she met and married Salvador in 1912. The two were multilingual, Salvador especially. When Isabel was young, the family moved numerous times. From her childhood, she knew Spanish, French, and English fluently, later adding German, Italian, and Russian. Thanks to her mother, she learned piano and developed a love for classical music. Thanks to her father, she found herself exposed from an early age to the regular company of intellectuals and artists.<sup>7</sup>

The family was living in Madrid as the civil war began. Forced to flee because of Salvador's public "center-left-liberal" associations, de Madariaga moved to the University of London to start college, where she concentrated on Russian and German, taking her Russian coursework at the University's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, the headquarters of the British academic study of Eastern Europe and Russia at the time. Her original plan as she began her studies was to pursue a career in diplomacy.

De Madariaga graduated from university during the first spring of World War II in Europe. During the war, she worked for the BBC Monitoring Service, using her linguistic skills to listen in on foreign communications, including radio chatter from Spanish fishing boats and, presumably, other sources as well. (De Madariaga did not reveal much about her wartime work.) During the war, she met and married Leonard Schapiro (1908–83), a lawyer and, like her, another cosmopolitan, the son of a Jewish family from Glasgow who had spent much of his childhood in Russia and Latvia. After the war, Schapiro, with de Madariaga's help, completed a major study of the Soviet Communist Party and soon began a new career as an expert on Soviet politics at the London School of Economics, which he joined as a permanent faculty member in 1955.<sup>8</sup>

De Madariaga embarked on her own academic path around the same time, beginning part-time doctoral studies in diplomatic history at the University of London in the early 1950s and finishing in 1959. Her dissertation, which focused on Russo-British relations during the American Revolution, was a tour de force and displayed the attributes of the scholarship she would go on to produce over the rest of her life: vast in scale (two

<sup>7</sup>For the fullest treatment of de Madariaga's life and career, see Hartley and Scott, "Isabel de Madariaga." Isabel had one sibling, an older sister, Maria de las Nieves (1917–2003).

<sup>8</sup>De Madariaga and Schapiro divorced in 1976. Hartley and Scott, "Isabel de Madariaga," 228.

volumes), founded on meticulous research in multiple languages, insightfully argued, and elegantly composed. When the book (smaller than the dissertation but still almost 500 pages) appeared a few years later, reviewers hailed it as “brilliant,” “brilliant and perceptive,” “more than definitive,” and “well told and certainly well written.” (This is just a short list of the accolades.)<sup>9</sup>

In retrospect, however, perhaps the most revealing aspect of de Madariaga’s dissertation was the portrait it offered of Catherine as a forceful and independent diplomatic tactician. The League of Armed Neutrality had traditionally been seen as the brainchild of Nikita Panin, masterful intriguer and influential President of the College of Foreign Affairs for the first twenty years of Catherine’s reign. De Madariaga argued, by contrast, that the League was Catherine’s idea and the outcome of her own diligent and creative politics, both vis-à-vis the strong personalities of her court (Panin included) and her foreign allies and rivals, most of whom, in particular the foreigners, consistently underestimated her.

With this first book in hand, de Madariaga’s career slowly began to advance. During the 1960s, she moved between temporary academic positions at different universities (Sussex and Lancaster), her reputation building steadily thanks to her publications as well as her close involvement with two journals, the *Slavonic and East European Review* and *Government and Opposition*, as well as the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia, which she helped establish in 1968.<sup>10</sup> The breakthrough came a few years later in 1971, when she was offered a permanent position as Reader at her alma mater, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, located then as it had been when she was student in the imposing Art Deco Senate House in the heart of Bloomsbury. She was promoted to a Chair in 1982 and retired from the School two years later.

<sup>9</sup> Isabel de Madariaga, *Britain, Russia, and the Armed Neutrality of 1780: Sir James Harris’s Mission to St. Petersburg during the American Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962). For the quotes that appear here, see the reviews in *Russian Review* (Robert Paul Browder), 22, 3 (1963): 318–319; *The Journal of Politics* (Victor S. Mamatey), 25, 1 (1963): 172–173; *Slavic and East European Journal* (Daniel Balmuth), 8, 4 (1964): 474; and *Slavic Review* (Andrew Lossky), 22, 1 (1963): 142–144.

<sup>10</sup> Another co-founder was Anthony Cross. For de Madariaga’s description of the early history of the Study Group, see her “Anthony Cross: An Appreciation,” in Roger Bartlett and Lindsey Huges (eds.), *Russian Society and Culture and the Long Eighteenth Century: Essays in Honour of Anthony G. Cross* (Munster: Lit, 2004), 5–6.

Though she does not appear to have dwelled on it much until later in life, de Madariaga experienced the usual difficulties of making a career as a woman academic in mid-twentieth-century Britain.<sup>11</sup> Academia then was an overwhelmingly male preserve, and the men running the domain cultivated and rewarded each other. Thus, male professors were presumed to socialize in university Senior Common Rooms, while women were excluded. Men received permanent positions. Women taught part-time. The top floors of the ivory tower were male; the “ivory basement”—female.<sup>12</sup> Until the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, it was legal for universities to hire, admit, and promote men over women simply because of their sex. Until 1971, it was legal to pay men more for the same work as well.

Precisely because they were considered second best, women had to prove themselves by being *better* than men. One result was that male academics could expect predictable career trajectories—university, then post-graduate study followed by a permanent teaching or research appointment—while academic women like de Madariaga often had to forge “unconventional” paths.<sup>13</sup> It is telling that de Madariaga published her sweeping *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* just three years before her retirement. By the time the book appeared, she had labored over the material for over thirty years, only ten of which were spent in a permanent university position.

<sup>11</sup>For de Madariaga's recollections on this topic, see the remarks in Hartley and Scott, “Isabel de Madariaga,” 243.

<sup>12</sup>For the metaphor of the “ivory basement,” see Nijole V. Benokraitis, “Working in the Ivory Basement: Subtle Sex Discrimination in Higher Education,” in Lynn H. Collins, Joan C. Chrisler, and Kathryn Quina (eds.), *Career Strategies for Women in Academe: Arming Athena* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 3–35; and Tanya Fitzgerald, *Hard Labour? Academic Work and the Changing Landscape of Higher Education* (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2012), 116. This also resonates with the experience of women academics in the same period in other Western societies. For comparisons, see the essays in Eileen Boris and Nupur Chaudhuri (eds.), *Voices of Women Historians: The Personal, the Political, the Professional* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup>For allusions to de Madariaga's “not straightforward” career, see Dixon, “Isabel de Madariaga (1919–2014),” 1013; and Jones, “Isabel de Madariaga, FRHistS, FBA, 27 August 1919–16 June 2014,” 570.

## THE EMPRESS

Why did de Madariaga devote so much of her life to studying Catherine the Great? Knowing that she would later claim her as a friend, it is tempting to assume she felt a certain kinship with the empress from the start and that this might explain why she chose her as her special focus. That said, the explicit reason she gave for this lifelong academic interest was the sense that Catherine's achievements had been unfairly "ignored or distorted" by previous writers. The presumption behind the prevailing disparaging views of Catherine's reign was that only virtuous women could be successful or admirable executives. Having not only overthrown her husband but taken a number of well-known lovers as well, Catherine seemed the opposite of virtuous and therefore, ipso facto, the antipode of a good ruler as well.<sup>14</sup> She might have achieved "glory" for the state, but she had not done it demurely enough. (Needless to say, for male rulers the link between personal virtue and a positive historical reputation was far less restrictive.) De Madariaga was thus correcting the picture. Her work on Catherine does not appear to have been intended as an explicitly feminist exercise, but it nonetheless started from a critique of what was an obviously sexist historiography.

The reviews of *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* acknowledged this abiding prejudice by stressing that de Madariaga's work was indeed a breakthrough. Almost all the major academic reviews of the book praise it as corrective to previous studies that drew for the most part on "political rumor and salacious gossip." As one reviewer noted:

Studies of the reign of Catherine the Great have suffered much from one-sided or indeed obviously biased accounts of her rule. For a long period the censor exercised strict control over access to Russian archives, and thus interfered considerably with historians' study of the period. In addition, Catherine herself was frequently depicted as an element foreign to Russia, as an adventuress, the Messalina of the North, an actress on the political scene who played at being a great monarch whereas she was merely a tyrant. Moscow University's leading liberal historian, A. A. Kizewetter, used to tell his students that Catherine's reign marked the apogee of the privileges of

<sup>14</sup>Hartley and Scott, "Isabel de Madariaga," 244. As to the number of lovers, as de Madariaga points out, Catherine had only twelve documented lovers over roughly forty-four years, which "by modern standards ... was not really promiscuous." De Madariaga, "Catherine the Great," 45.

the nobility, and that Catherine ensured the continuance of serfdom and weakened the authority of the Orthodox Church; while her 'saccharine sweet words' veiled her lack of understanding of Russia, whose tongue she hardly knew. Furthermore there were her sexual orgies: twenty-one favourites in forty-two years! The Empress' only admitted virtue was to have brought to a successful conclusion the traditional policies of the Muscovite rulers: the culmination of the struggle for the steppes of Southern Russia and the pacification of the Crimea. The destruction of Poland was considered her greatest fault.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond this, though, the book was much more than a biography or an "ordinary 'life and times.'"<sup>16</sup> In the words of John T. Alexander, another Catherinian specialist, de Madariaga's tome represented a "comprehensive scholarly treatment" of Catherine's era, the first attempt at a full picture of the country and the reign since the efforts of German historian Alexander Brückner a hundred years earlier.<sup>17</sup>

*Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* is indeed at least two books in one: a biography that makes extensive use of Catherine's personal correspondence and other writings; and a full treatment of the Russian Empire of her time examining topics from imperial expansion and serfdom to the history of the Orthodox Church, the imperial social structure, the Pugachev Rebellion, trade, finance, manufacturing, agriculture, freemasonry, education (including the education of girls), "the birth of the intelligentsia," local and regional administration, foreign policy, and "court and culture." Despite its heft (588 pages of tightly printed text, plus close to 2000 endnotes), the book reads easily because de Madariaga is a graceful writer. But its great achievement is the information offered and the author's interpretation. Drawing on virtually everything except Russian archival sources, which would have been hard to consult in any case because of Soviet censorship, the book presents a clear, methodological

<sup>15</sup> Review of *RACG* by Nikolay Andreyev in *Slavonic and East European Review*, 60, 1 (1982): 113–115, here 113. The quote preceding is from Marc Raeff's review of *RACG* in the *Journal of Modern History*, 54, 3 (1982): 635–638, here 635. In another context, Raeff offers a more colorful description of the pre-Madariaga historiography: "All the other so-called biographies were mere gossip and scandal-mongering hodgepodes of few facts and much fantasy." See his "Introduction," in Roger Bartlett and Janet Hartley (eds.), *Russia in the Age of the Enlightenment: Essays for Isabel de Madariaga* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Dixon, "Isabel de Madariaga," 112.

<sup>17</sup> John T. Alexander's review of *RACG* in *Slavic Review*, 41, 1 (1982): 123–124, here 123. Nicholas Riasanovsky also mentions the parallel with Brückner in his review in *Russian Review*, 41, 1 (1982): 73–74, here 73. The work in question is Brückner's *Katherina die Zweite* (Berlin: G. Grote, 1983).

case for the Catherinian age as a time of profound and largely positive change for the empire.

At the heart of this picture was a new view of Catherine herself as a dynamic and talented politician. De Madariaga's Catherine has her hand in everything. She runs her own *coup d'état*, her own *démarche* against Poland, her own prosecution of the fight against Pugachev, her own public relations campaigns of "genuine nationalistic indignation" against foreign detractors (such as Jean Chappe d'Auteroche), her own patronage networks, staff appointments, and dinner parties. She reads voraciously and studies everything—the Russian language, her new Orthodox faith, laws, literature, economic reports. Even while traveling the country on her famous inspection tours, she never lets up. During her visit to the Crimea and New Russia in 1787, for example, she kept to her regular habit of rising at six to work with her ministers, "then she breakfasted, received foreign envoys, and the whole procession started off again at 9 a.m. Dinner was at 2 p.m. at some convenient pavilion or private house. The journey continued until 7 p.m. The empress then descended at her specially prepared dwelling, spent a few moments tidying her dress, joined the envoys and chatted until 9 p.m. when, since she never supped, she withdrew to work until 11 p.m."<sup>18</sup>

More than anything, de Madariaga's Catherine displays a feel for the tactics of rule. She knows when to curry favor and when to dig in and show "strong nerves."<sup>19</sup> She operates according to plan yet remains flexible enough to bend when required. She courts "the public" yet recognizes the need to uphold her authority and the sources of her power. During the sessions of the Legislative Commission, for example, she purposefully inserts a politically sensitive proposal to create "free estates" into a draft law for the nobility as a way to test noble opinion with regards to the possible reform of serfdom. She then declines to send an official spokesman to defend the proposal once she has heard enough.<sup>20</sup>

Catherine also ably cultivates her servitors, balancing solicitousness with firmness and a quiet faith in her own primacy in the relationship. One senses a hint of this in a letter she wrote to General Petr Rumiantsev in 1764. She had angered Rumiantsev by removing him from his command

<sup>18</sup> RACG, 370. The reference to Catherine's animus against Chappe d'Auteroche appears on page 338.

<sup>19</sup> RACG, 224.

<sup>20</sup> RACG, 178.

in the aftermath of her coup in order to reward one of her supporters and was reaching out now to repair relations. "I think it essential to explain myself to you," Catherine writes to the general, who was in Prussia at the time.

[Y]ou judge me according to past standards of behavior, when the personal-ity counted more than the qualities and services of a man, and you believe that your past favor [with Peter III] will now be held against you ... But let me say, you do not know me well. Return here if your health permits. You will be received with the distinction which your rank and your services to the country warrant.<sup>21</sup>

We see the same engagement and tactical independence in countless other contexts. Thus Catherine devotes "her constant personal supervision" to the implementation of the empire's new provincial reform.<sup>22</sup> In Estland and Livland, she greets the German nobles in Russian rather than German to make clear that she is "a Russian empress" rather than "a German princess on the Russian throne."<sup>23</sup> Finally, though she extends huge powers to Grigorii Potemkin, her Viceroy of the South, and her greatest love, and (almost certainly) secret husband, she never permits him to control her. De Madariaga rejects the much-repeated sexist hearsay that Potemkin supposedly handpicked favorites for Catherine once their own love affair had cooled. Rather, Catherine herself "did the choosing." "The empress imposed her lovers on the Russian court by establishing favoritism as an institution."<sup>24</sup> Thus even in her private life, Catherine appears every bit the politician in charge.

This compelling portrait of Catherine as a monarch who "ruled as well as reigned" departed from the standing view not least because it treated her *womanness* differently.<sup>25</sup> If the prevailing prejudice was to dismiss Catherine's achievements because of her gender, de Madariaga's response was to move her gender to the side. In her narrative, Catherine is a woman who achieves

<sup>21</sup> *RACG*, 73.

<sup>22</sup> *RACG*, 287.

<sup>23</sup> *RACG*, 62. For more on Catherine's careful management of national appearances, see Hilde Hoogenboom, "Catherine the Great (1729–1796)," in Stephen M. Norris and Willard Sunderland (eds.), *Russia's People of Empire: Life Stories from Eurasia, 1500 to the Present* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 82.

<sup>24</sup> *RACG*, 356, 354.

<sup>25</sup> *RACG*, 38.

power in a male power structure by dint of her circumstances, personality, skill, and knowledge. The role of gender in shaping the parameters of her rule is obviously important. In fact, de Madariaga exposes the politics of gender implicitly virtually everywhere in her story. But this is clearly not what she sees as most significant. Only rarely does she make reference to anything special about Catherine's rule *as a woman* in comparison to the rule of men as men, and even then, she does not necessarily challenge gendered stereotypes relating to men and women but rather implicitly accepts them.<sup>26</sup> The book in this respect is not only *not* a critical feminist biography; it is a work with little to say about women or gender relations or perceptions of gender at all, at least not in explicit, analytical terms.

Though de Madariaga does not say it in so many words, the implication that follows from her treatment is that male and female rule are not necessarily meaningfully different, and that when men and women do in fact rule differently, it is less a consequence of their gender than of personality and circumstance. Even as she acknowledges the obvious challenges of women holding power in patriarchal societies, what counts in her telling is the quality of the rule, which is a reflection of the capacity of the ruler, regardless of their sex.<sup>27</sup> Thus Peter III failed as a monarch not because he ruled like a man or didn't rule like a man but rather because "in at least four, if not five, major issues of policy, he succeeded [in less than six months] in alienating the governing elites of Russia." Catherine meanwhile ruled successfully for more than a generation because she demonstrated "application, seriousness, sagacity, good judgment of men, generosity of spirit, and the ability to bring out the best in those who served for her."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> One example: on the next to last page of the book, de Madariaga praises Catherine for her achievements as a patron of the arts. Under the empress' rule, she writes, "learning thrived, and the court itself acted as the source of literary, artistic, and musical patronage." As almost an aside, she then adds, "A hundred years later, and with a lighter touch, as befits a woman, Catherine did for Russia what Louis XIV had done for France ..." *RACG*, 587.

<sup>27</sup> Not all historians would agree with de Madariaga on this, of course. For recent studies that suggest important differences in male and female rule in different contexts in medieval and early modern Europe, see Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Charles Beem, *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). For a study that, like de Madariaga, does not engage feminist theory and tends to downplay differences between male and female rule, see William Monter, *The Rise of Female Kings in Europe, 1300–1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> *RACG*, 21, 581.

In other words, in de Madariaga's view, Catherine was a "highly professional practitioner of the art of ruling." The sexist historiography she was challenging failed to show this or to give Catherine her due. De Madariaga's most important motivation was simply to point out this simple but profound fact and leave it at that.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This matter-of-fact, untheorized, yet intimate and compelling view of Catherine as a successful politician is now the standard interpretation of the field. Over the last forty years, de Madariaga's insights have been steadily digested and internalized by professional historians in Europe and the US, and since the end of the USSR, in Russia as well where specialists like Aleksandr Kamenskii have embraced her "optimistic view" and focused their own attention on "Catherine's extraordinary political skills, her adroit management of power and people, her psychological penetration and ability to spot talent and draw it out and to inspire lasting confidence and loyalty."<sup>30</sup>

Yet it is also true that the history of women and gender relations in Russia in the eighteenth century, not to mention in Europe more generally, has expanded dramatically since the 1980s, all of which makes one wonder whether de Madariaga's largely unproblematized picture of Catherine as a woman in power remains convincing in every respect. With the gathering scholarship on these issues, not to mention the greater attention that scholars have paid to the gendered politics of historical writing itself, it is hard to imagine that the next comprehensive treatment of Catherine's reign after de Madariaga could possibly leave gender and women out to the degree she did.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *RACG*, ix.

<sup>30</sup> Gary Marker, "The Ambiguities of the 18th Century," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2, 2 (2001): 244; and Tony Lentin, "The Return of Catherine the Great," *History Today*, 46, 12 (1996): 16. For insightful reflections on recent reappraisals of Catherine and her time, see Hilde Hoogenboom, "Catherine the Great and Royal Biographies," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* (forthcoming).

<sup>31</sup> For a few suggestive works, see: Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Sue Morgan, "Theorising Feminist History: A Thirty-Year Retrospective," *Women's History Review*, 18, 3 (2009): 381–407; Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Karen Harvey, "The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century," *The*

One has to assume: probably not. One wonders, too, what Catherine might think of all this. She was used to misogyny and the disrespect of being repeatedly underestimated by men. As de Madariaga pointed out, because of this, she took special pleasure in reminding her peers of her intellectual honors and policy achievements as a woman on the throne.<sup>32</sup> By the time she was crowned, three Russian empresses had preceded her in her own century. In that regard, the institution of female rule in Russia, while not uncontested, was also not unusual. European contemporaries saw a problem with her power as a woman; her Russian contemporaries less so.<sup>33</sup> Knowing Catherine's bibliomania, one imagines her avidly reading de Madariaga's magnum opus and appreciating not only the mostly flattering portrait but also the way in which the historian normalized her power not as a woman sovereign but as a sovereign *tout court*. As an expert politician with a keen feel for public opinion, she knew the value of having a talented historian friend in her corner.<sup>34</sup>

*Historical Journal*, 45, 4 (2002): 899–916; Natalia Pushkareva, "Gendering Russian Historiography: Women's History in Russia; Status and Perspectives," in Marianna Muravyeva and Natalia Novikova (eds.), *Women's History in Russia: (Re)establishing the Field* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), 2–15; Vera Proskurina, *Imperiia pera Ekateriny II: literatura kak politika* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2017); E. V. Anisimov, *Afrodita u vlasti: tsarstvovanie Elizavety Petrovny* (Moscow: AST, 2010); E. V. Anisimov, *Zhenshchiny na rossiiskom prestole* (St. Petersburg: Piter, 2008); Tat'iana Evgen'evna Novitskaia, *Pravovoe regulirovanie imushchestvennykh otnoshenii v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka* (Moscow: Zertsalo, 2005); Pavel P. Shcherbinin, *Voennyi faktor v porsednevnoi zhizni russkoi zhenshiny v XVIII-nachale XX v.* (Tambov: Iulis, 2004), esp. chap. 1; Michelle Lamarche Marrese, *A Woman's Kingdom: Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia, 1700–1861* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); Natalia Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), esp. Chap. 3.

<sup>32</sup>De Madariaga, "Catherine the Great," 50. For more on Catherine's own sense of "the strengths of women's roles in society and... [how] these strengths could be ... successfully employed in the management of the state," see Victoria Ivleva, "Catherine II as Female Ruler: The Power of Enlightened Womanhood," *Библиоюка: E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies*, 3 (2015): 20–46, here 46.

<sup>33</sup>Brenda Meehan-Waters, "Catherine the Great and the Problem of Female Rule," *Russian Review*, 34, 3 (1975): 293–307, esp. 302. In contrast to the eighteenth century, misogynistic views of female rule became more pronounced in Russia in the 1800s.

<sup>34</sup>On Catherine's historical writings and her interest in history as well as keeping up with and occasionally criticizing historians, see L. M. Gavrilova, "G. F. Miller i Ekaterina II," in Ditmar Dal'mann [Dahlmann] and Galina Smagina (eds.), *G. F. Miller i russkaia kul'tura* (St. Petersburg: Rostok, 2007), 312, 317; and Proskurina, *Imperiia pera Ekateriny II*.



## Eleanor Flexner: Civil Rights and Feminist Activism and Writing

*M. Christine Anderson*

Eleanor Flexner is best known for her 1959 masterwork, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, which traced the intersections among women's organizing for political rights, economic equity, and racial equality culminating in the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Several historians have examined the way themes in *Century of Struggle* influenced the resurgence of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Others have explored Flexner's biography, especially her involvement in the American Communist Party, as part of broader interpretations of the influence of the Old Left on late twentieth-century

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen Fitzpatrick, introduction to Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1975); Ellen C. Dubois, "Foremothers I: Eleanor Flexner and the History of American Feminism," *Gender and History*, 3/1 (Spring 1991): 81–90; Carol Lasser, "Century of Struggle, Decades of Revision: A Retrospective on Eleanor Flexner's Suffrage History," *Reviews in American History*, 15/2 (June 1987): 344–354; and Leila J. Rupp, "Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle*: Women's History and the Women's Movement," *NWSA Journal*, 4/2 (Summer 1992): 157–169.

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feminism.<sup>2</sup> This chapter is different because it examines Flexner's connections among a broader range of her personal and political experiences in order to contextualize *Century of Struggle* and *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography* (1972), her study of the influences that shaped the ideas of that germinal feminist thinker. Like the other historians analyzed in this volume, Flexner did not have a professional academic career, but her relationship with institutions such as the Communist Party and, later, the Catholic Church, as well as the emerging academic acceptance of the women's movement, were critical to her thought and writing.

Eleanor Flexner was born in 1908 and spent the first half of her life, until 1957, in New York City. She was the daughter of transplanted Kentucky natives Anne Crawford Flexner and Abraham Flexner. Her mother was an 1895 graduate of Vassar and a successful playwright best known for her adaptation of *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* for the stage, the humorous story of a poor, but plucky Kentucky farm woman. Abraham Flexner, a secular Jew, was a well-known Progressive educational reformer instrumental in founding the Institute for Advanced Study associated with Princeton University. Eleanor's parents were proponents of educational equality for girls, and one of Eleanor's earliest memories was while recuperating from rheumatic fever in 1915, waking to see Anne and Abraham dressed in white having just returned from a suffrage parade.<sup>3</sup> From the third through twelfth grades, Eleanor attended the Lincoln School, an experimental school emphasizing individualized instruction founded by her father in association with Columbia University Teachers' College.

Eleanor Flexner's childhood, then, was comfortable and intellectually stimulating. She recalled the Lincoln School as a warm and nurturing environment and said, "I was very happy at Lincoln." She grew up, however, relatively isolated from broader kin networks, religious affiliation, or any organizational life, having few opportunities to develop a sense of

<sup>2</sup>Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Daniel Horowitz, "Feminism, Women's History, and American Social Thought at Midcentury," in *American Capitalism: Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nelson Lichtenstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 191–209.

<sup>3</sup>"Transcript of Interview with Jacqueline Van Voris," January 8, 1977, Folder 29, Eleanor Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, MA (hereafter Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library), p. 9. Cited in Ellen Fitzpatrick, introduction to Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, enlarged edition, xii.

belonging to any particular community.<sup>4</sup> She was ill prepared for the social environment she would encounter when she entered Swarthmore College in 1926.<sup>5</sup> Men's and women's fraternities were central to campus life at Swarthmore. For reasons she could not at first understand, Flexner was not "rushed" by any of the women's fraternities; finally, an older Jewish student explained to her that the fraternities did not admit Jews. Eleanor had not considered her identity as a Jew before this incident, and she recalled being struck by the unfairness of the fraternity system as well as her own isolation and loneliness. Several of her friends eventually assisted her in pledging their fraternity; she discovered, however, that membership included participation in the ritual of choosing new members, which included rejecting applicants who would experience the same devastating loneliness she had felt upon rejection.

Rather than integrating herself into what she saw as an unjust process, Flexner withdrew from her fraternity and, with friends who had also left the fraternity, began to agitate to end the fraternity system. Three years later, Swarthmore's Board of Managers held a meeting allowing graduates to express publicly their opinions on the place of fraternities at the school. "I got an awful lot off my chest," Flexner recalled later, "and [said then] that it was horrible being out [of the fraternities] and no credit to the human race to be in." She sent her membership pin back to the national organization and speculated that "perhaps it explains why I became more radical than I might have otherwise in an effort to make up for it or wipe it out or something because I had great feelings of guilt at accepting and enjoying it as I did for a while." She regretted not assisting other Jewish women who entered Swarthmore while she was there, particularly Barbara Wertheim, later Tuchman. "Everything I heard from the blacks or any other excluded or persecuted minority, always clicked with me," Flexner told an interviewer later, "although I know how much worse off they were. I wasn't denied food or education or anything."<sup>6</sup> Her empathy

<sup>4</sup>Flexner discussed having "no family of my own," in a typed manuscript reflecting on turning 60. Flexner, "Preface" (1968), Folder 32, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 5–6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 19; Van Voris, Interview with Eleanor Flexner, May 11, 1983, Folder 29, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 11–13.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 18–23. Flexner felt she was in a poor position to talk to Wertheim because she had joined a fraternity. Looking back in 1977, she believed Tuchman was "by far and away the most brilliant historian writing today."

would lead her to listen to black communists like Claudia Jones and translate their insights into *Century of Struggle*.

Flexner graduated from Swarthmore in 1930 with high honors in English and history and earned a fellowship to spend the following year at Somerville College at the University of Oxford. During that time and on subsequent trips to England in the 1930s, Flexner became acutely aware of the rise of fascism in Europe. When she wrote a memoir to accompany her papers at the Schlesinger Library in 1988, Flexner interrupted the narrative to emphasize the impression this made on her:

But before I go on with my experiences hereafter, I want to insert one more note about Europe and its relation to my thinking. During several summers I, or with my family, went back to England for visits, and in June 1934 we spent a weekend on the shore of the North Sea near the English Channel. ... We heard on July 1st that a terrible upheaval had taken place in Nazi Germany and some of the leaders had been murdered, ... and communications were broken off with other countries for several hours. I walked down to the shore and looked across the water toward Germany and realized poignantly for the first time perhaps how close England was to the continent, and how vulnerable. ... It was an uncertain time and when I went back to the States I was once again conscious of the enormous expanse of ocean that protected my country.<sup>7</sup>

On these trips to England, Flexner also watched protests against Francisco Franco's right-wing forces in Spain. The only major power to aid Franco's Republican opponents was the Soviet Union; liberal democratic governments including England and the United States were inactive. In fact, the only Americans to support the Republican forces were Communist members of the Lincoln Brigade.

In the United States during these years, the Great Depression caused serious economic hardship, which also had a powerful impact on Flexner despite the fact that her family's status insulated her from deprivation.<sup>8</sup> In her memoir, Flexner indicates that the Depression was the immediate reason for her return to the United States from Oxford: "one morning while I was sitting at my desk in one of the reading rooms of the great Bodleian

<sup>7</sup>Flexner, "Part II" [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>"Transcript of Interview with Jacqueline Van Voris," January 8, 1977, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 13-14.

library, I made up my mind between one moment and the next that I belonged at home. I might not be able to do very much that was useful but I would be *there* and certainly able to do something for those friends of mine who were walking the streets looking for jobs.”<sup>9</sup> She did not identify which friends she was thinking about, but her economic and political fears were combined in the mid-1930s.

Flexner’s response to the urgent sense of crisis surrounding her was involvement in the Popular Front promoted by the Soviet Union, which emphasized cooperation among all groups on the left. In New York, the Popular Front represented a vibrant community that joined labor organizing, civil rights activism, and (to a lesser extent) a critique of conditions facing women. According to Flexner, “what drew me most strongly was working with a group of like minded people to try and do *something* during those appalling years of the depression and the war in Spain.”<sup>10</sup> She joined the Communist Party in 1936, remaining an active member of the party for twenty years. She left the party in 1956 following Khrushchev’s revelations about Stalinism. By this time American anti-Communism was at its height; several of her close friends in the movement had been sentenced to deportation under the Smith Act for their activities; and the Congress of American Women, which she had served as director for two years, had been labeled as a subversive organization by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).<sup>11</sup>

Flexner wrote several alternative versions of her involvement with the Communist Party, all to be released after her death, perhaps because she had such difficulty accounting for what by then seemed a dangerous and disloyal way of life. Personal letters she wrote as a young woman in the 1930s, however, explain her motives much more clearly. She wrote her family from London in 1937, “I’ve just come from an open-air meeting in

<sup>9</sup>Flexner, “Part II” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Flexner, “Part III (alternate)” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. (e). Thomas J. Sugrue describes Popular Front involvement as “a way of life” in *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 23.

<sup>11</sup>Flexner, “Part III” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 4. United States Congress, House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Report on the Congress of American Women*, Washington, 1949. <http://archive.org/details/reportoncongress1949unit>. Horowitz, “Feminism, Women’s History, and American Social Thought,” uses the Flexner Papers for dates of Flexner’s association with the CAW; she herself minimized her membership in the group.

Trafalgar Square on Spain. It was terrifically moving. Ellen Wilkinson of the House of Commons and Monica Whately of the London County Council, both just back” from Spain. She described their accounts as “devastating ... unbearably real and vivid.” Everyone she met that summer seemed to her to be discussing Spain, and “one comes to feel the way people must have felt during the Great War—that one’s individual career is extraordinarily insignificant, and that one must do something active to help.”<sup>12</sup>

Throughout her adult life, Flexner pursued the goal of becoming a professional writer. Although she achieved success in publishing she was never able to support herself through her writing alone. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Flexner held a series of promotional and editorial jobs, including for Hadassah and the Institute of Propaganda Analysis, and volunteered in an “apprentice group” at Eva LaGallienne’s Newport Theater. She became acquainted with radicals, some of them Communists, as a volunteer for *New Theater Magazine* and through writing for the Theater Arts Committee, which was targeted by HUAC.<sup>13</sup> She worked in the theater and wrote under the pseudonyms Betty Feldman and Irene Epstein, names she chose because “I wanted to be Jewish.”<sup>14</sup> In 1939, she worked for a brief time as a union organizer for Lawrence, New Jersey textile workers. Flexner’s letters home capture some of the contradictions facing her in these years. She described attending a party thrown by some of the mill workers, acknowledging that “There is no getting away from it these people are different from our kind ... [A]mong themselves, their jokes and sense of humor can be conservatively called ‘raw’ by our standards.” In a handwritten note at the end of the typed letter, Flexner added, “Daddy—Sorry to say I need to be replenished financially!” At the same time, she obviously found organizing exhilarating and was proud of her ability to overcome proletarian organizers’ suspicion of her upper-class roots.<sup>15</sup>

Despite tensions stemming from the disjunction between her class privilege and her political commitments, Flexner remained an activist. For instance, she supported the Spanish Republican cause in the 1930s, “We raised money for medical aid, we demonstrated against the Embargo, with picket lines around the White House, we wrote and circulated petitions,

<sup>12</sup> Flexner to Dearest Family, June 13, 1937, Folder 9, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>13</sup> Flexner, “Part II (alternate)” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. (c).

<sup>14</sup> “Transcript of Interview with Jacqueline Van Voris,” January 8, 1977, Folder 29, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Flexner to Dearest Family, May 29, 1939, Folder 9, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

and wrote letters to Congress and FDR. It was easily reminiscent of what the Abolitionists had done, but at the time I did not make the connection!”<sup>16</sup> For the next twenty years Flexner marched, distributed leaflets in the snow, took petitions door to door, organized workers, and wrote in support of economic and political causes associated with the Popular Front. She believed these experiences allowed her to empathize with activist women she wrote about in *Century of Struggle*:

[A]ll these things were reflected in the vitality that almost all readers saw in the book itself. ... (I could point to such accounts as Carrie Chapman Catt’s work in the Dakotas, or Susan B. Anthony’s hair-raising winter tour of the New York upstate counties in 1855. I wouldn’t for a moment disagree that their trials and tribulations were harder, but it may very well be that we were less prepared for ours, coming as we did from comfortable and inactive kinds of families and homes!)

Readers of the book will probably be convinced by Flexner’s argument that her experiences were “the red thread of struggle through much of my life, and that led up to *Century of Struggle* was the fact of struggle itself.”<sup>17</sup> Her deprecation of her own trials when compared to Catt and Anthony is somewhat less convincing. For example in 1938, she described campaigning for a primary election, “riding around Second Avenue in a wagon distributing leaflets, and the damned horse trying to eat off every pushcart we passed!”<sup>18</sup> More dangerous was attending the famous Paul Robeson 1949 concert in Peekskill, New York, where members of the audience were attacked by rock-throwing right-wing crowds as they attempted to leave. According to Flexner, she and her companion stood in the bathtub and “plucked glass out of each other’s hair for quite a while” after they returned home.<sup>19</sup>

In 1948, Flexner was “drafted” to be director of the Congress of American Women (CAW), a broad-based women’s organization affiliated with the Women’s International Democratic Federation, a Communist

<sup>16</sup> Flexner, “Part II (alternate)” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. (d).

<sup>17</sup> Flexner, “Part III” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 1–2.

<sup>18</sup> Flexner to Dearest Jean, 1938, Folder 9, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>19</sup> Flexner, “Part III” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 6–9.

organization. Interestingly, this seems to have had little impact on *Century of Struggle*. Kate Weigand discusses the feminism of the CAW, which incorporated the Communist Party's attentiveness to issues of race and, of course, class. According to Weigand, during this period Communist women called attention to male chauvinism in family relations as well as in the party.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the term "male chauvinism" grew out of Communist critiques of "white chauvinism" in the party. Flexner herself indicated several decades later, "This was never a very effective group and I only stayed in it a year or less but it was the feeling that something was being attempted."<sup>21</sup> Surviving documentation does not provide any evidence of Flexner's contributions to the CAW or how its analysis affected her views.

As important to Flexner as Popular Front politics were, she was equally drawn to the sense of community among those on the Left and friendships with other women in Popular Front activities. Many, if not most, of Flexner's friends in the 1930s and 1940s were Communists or "fellow travelers." She recalled a number of women who inspired her and with whom she shared ideas and support. Radical labor organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn whose career began in the Industrial Workers of the World in the early twentieth century had risen to leadership in the Communist Party by mid-century, and Flexner credited her account of the Lowell Mill workers with inspiring her own interest in women's history.<sup>22</sup> Among Flexner's personal friends was the writer Marian Bachrach: "She was a totally unrigid, undemagogic Marxist, one of the few I have ever known, and a wise and compassionate and brilliant woman, and I wish ever [sic] day of my life she was still with us these days."<sup>23</sup> Bachrach was sentenced to deportation for her subversive activities in the 1950s. She was dying of cancer, and Flexner used her family's powerful connections in the publishing industry—Frieda Kirchway, editor of the *Nation* and her husband Evans Clark on the board of the *New York Times*—to get the *Times* to publish an editorial opposing Bachrach's expulsion from the United

<sup>20</sup>Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 53.

<sup>21</sup>Flexner, "Part II (alternate)" [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. (e).

<sup>22</sup>Flexner, "Part III" [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 3; Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 79.

<sup>23</sup>"Transcript of Interview with Jacqueline Van Voris," January 8, 1977, Folder 29, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, n.p.

States.<sup>24</sup> The editorial had the desired effect, and Bachrach remained in the country until her death shortly thereafter.

One woman Flexner spoke of often in later years was Trinidadian Claudia Jones, a leader in Communist organizing who called attention to the super-exploitation of African-American women under capitalism. In speeches and articles Jones examined the triple oppression of black women under slavery as well as in paid employment. Jones did not portray black women as victims but rather used history to reveal their roles in creating families and resisting enslavement, and she used statistics from the Women's Bureau documenting the importance of African-American women's wages in the twentieth century in order to show the imperative for Communists to organize black women.<sup>25</sup> Jones is remembered today for her theoretical insights into what Kimberle Crenshaw has identified as "intersectionality."<sup>26</sup> She also detailed what contemporary scholars and activists might call "microaggressions" in the treatment of African-American women in the Communist Party. For example she noted whites' assumption that black women had to be tutored in organizational skills or white party members' requests that African-Americans in the party refer members of their families to work as domestic servants.<sup>27</sup> As Weigand has perceptively shown, by framing the concerns of African-American women in terms of both white chauvinism and male chauvinism, Claudia Jones "not only brought African-American women's experiences and perspectives to the center of Communists' writings and activities on the woman question, but she helped to create the recognition that women could share gender oppression and still be very different from one another."<sup>28</sup>

Jones' theoretical insights as well as her friendship had lasting significance for Flexner. She was a "formative influence ... which bore fruit long afterward for years and to this day yet." In conversations with Jones, Flexner

<sup>24</sup> Flexner, "Part III" [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Claudia Rosemary May, "Nuances of Un-American Literature(s): In Search of Claudia Jones: A Literary Retrospective on the Life, Times and Works of an Activist-Writer" (PhD diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1997), 27–68; Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 105–109; Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139 (1989): 139–167.

<sup>27</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 105.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

realized that, other than Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, black women were absent from her knowledge of history. Jones also shared her understanding of politics within the Communist Party; although Flexner did not elaborate on why that was of particular significance to her in the late 1940s and early 1950s, her language describing their conversations conveys the political and personal importance of this relationship to her. Jones had contracted tuberculosis as a teenager and never fully recovered her health; this led Flexner to be deeply touched by Jones' "vitality and excitement over issues that were beginning to strike fire in me and [she] planted the seeds that were reflected much, much later in the pages of *Century of Struggle*." Her esteem for Jones, Flexner said later, accounted for her "outrage" when Harper's wanted her to remove much of the material on African-American women from the book. Flexner retained this material and developed it further in the 1975 revised edition of *Century*, a decision that won her praise from black women.

It is the section of the book of which I am most proud and which I feel made the greatest contribution to the history of American women—all American women. I doubt very much that many people realize the horrors of the slave trade, the 'middle passage,' and later outrages of slavery itself. There were books on this but most people didn't read them and here they came across the truth unavoidably, in connection with other material in which they might perhaps have been more interested in the beginning.<sup>29</sup>

Links between race and gender were central to the political purpose and intellectual analysis in *Century of Struggle*.

Another formative influence on Eleanor Flexner's writings on women's history was teaching the subject to workers in evening classes for several years at the Communist-sponsored Jefferson School for the Social Sciences. Her research for the courses consisted of the few books she could find on American women's history: Alma Lutz's biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ida Husted Harper's biography of Susan B. Anthony, *The History of Women Suffrage*, and Hannah Josephson's *Golden Threads* on the Lowell Mill workers. Although it was not a paying position, teaching at the Jefferson School offered Flexner the opportunity to develop her interest in the topic, and "for several years it was my launching pad and spiritual

<sup>29</sup> Flexner, "Part II (alternate)" [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. (h-i).

home.”<sup>30</sup> Herbert Aptheker also taught a course on Negro history at the Jefferson School, which Flexner attended in order to learn more about black women for her own course.<sup>31</sup> In 1953, Flexner and Doxey Wilkerson, the director of the Jefferson School, co-authored a pamphlet, *Questions and Answers on the Woman Question*. Its discussion of African-American women’s position, the importance of women’s employment, and male supremacy anticipated many arguments that would be made by feminists later in the century, but reliance on quotations from Lenin and Stalin were more about integrating feminist concerns with party orthodoxy than original analysis.<sup>32</sup>

While working on the pamphlet for students at the Jefferson School, Flexner also began a more substantial and original effort to write about women. She had already published her book on realism in the theater, and now, over a decade later, she proposed to write a broad history of the organized movements of women in America. Flexner researched and wrote much of the book after leaving the Communist Party and did not publicly discuss her left-wing activism during her lifetime. In fact, she told the local *Daily Hampshire Gazette* after the publication of *Mary Wollstonecraft* in 1972, “A prime motivation for the book [*Century of Struggle*] was her own experience during World War II in being ‘kicked around the job market.’ The fact that she was not able to obtain anything but clerical positions produced an acute sense that there was no such thing as equal pay or equal opportunity for women.”<sup>33</sup> What Flexner did not say was that an important reason she understood the hardships of a sex-segregated labor market was her work for the Office Workers Union, an understanding augmented by another postwar job for the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses.<sup>34</sup> The content and organization

<sup>30</sup> Van Voris interview, p. 10; Flexner, “Part II (alternate)” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. (f–g).

<sup>31</sup> “Notes by EF on Aptheker lectures,” Folder 31, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>32</sup> Irene Epstein and Doxey A. Wilkerson, *Questions and Answers on the Woman Question* (New York: The Jefferson School of Social Science, 1953).

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, Northampton, MA, Thursday, December 7, 1972, Scrapbook, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library; Flexner, “Part II (alternate)” [typescript memoir], Folder 8, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. (f); “Part III,” pp. 2–3.

<sup>34</sup> “Transcript of Interview with Jacqueline Van Voris,” January 8, 1977, Folder 29, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 17–22. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 124–125, material on Negro nurses. Flexner told Van Voris that this experience was directly responsible for an article she wrote on National Federation of Afro-American women’s clubs, “which is verbatim of a chapter in *Century* now.”

of the book, however, as well as her later autobiographical interviews and writings, indicate that her experience in the Left was critical to the project. In the memoir she made it clear that *Century of Struggle* had a political purpose to educate readers about race as well as gender oppression. Essential reading for younger women who became feminists in the 1960s and 1970s, especially those who became feminist historians, *Century of Struggle* achieved Flexner's goal better than she might have hoped.

Two elements of *Century of Struggle* made it successful and valuable for several generations of feminist activists and women's historians. The first was Flexner's emphasis on African-American and white working-class women discussed above. Every chapter includes materials on African-American as well as white working-class women. This was part of her intellectual inheritance from the Communist Party and the "red thread" of struggle that came from her experiences and the influence of Claudia Jones. The other feature of *Century of Struggle* that accounts for its continuing usefulness as a reference and a teaching tool, is its thorough documentation. As Leila Rupp points out, collecting primary sources on black women and white working-class women was not only intentional but also painstaking. It required developing relationships with archivists and librarians that would enable her to incorporate materials from widely dispersed institutions: the Schomburg Collection at the New York Public Library, Howard University's Negro Collection, the Library of Congress, the Women's Trade Union League, as well as the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College and the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College.<sup>35</sup> Flexner's commitment and the effort she invested in accumulating sources can be seen in the dozens of letters she wrote to individuals and libraries inquiring about their collections while she was writing *Century of Struggle*.<sup>36</sup> One of the reasons Eleanor Flexner and her "beloved companion" Helen Terry moved to Northampton, Massachusetts in 1957 was to enable Flexner to spend more time at the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College.

As she began work on the book, Flexner approached Arthur Schlesinger asking whether he believed she would be able to publish such a study. He replied enthusiastically that she could find a publisher, even though she did not have an advanced degree. It did take some time for her to find a publisher for *Century*; the topic, after all, did not seem to have a large audience, and Flexner's emphasis on African-American women activists

<sup>35</sup>Leila J. Rupp, "Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle*: Women's History and the Women's Movement," *NWSA Journal*, 4/2 (Summer 1992): 157-169.

<sup>36</sup>Folder 35, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library. See also Van Voris interview, pp. 24-25.

was not calculated to attract many white readers. The book was picked up by Harvard's Belknap Press based on positive reviews from Arthur Schlesinger and Oscar Handlin, each of whom had his own criticisms. Schlesinger required that she cut the chapter "Negro Women under Slavery," while Handlin wanted more material on immigrant women.<sup>37</sup>

Flexner claimed to have narrowed the topics she covered in the book by focusing on women's organized efforts to improve their status from 1820 to 1920. Nevertheless, its scope was expansive. It included movements "in which limited goals were achieved: the constitutional right to vote; the higher education of women (available at least in theory); the beginning of professional opportunities for women; their appearance in labor unions."<sup>38</sup> This framework was ambitious, but it enabled Flexner to maintain a coherent point of view that most scholars today would call "feminist," even though Flexner did not use that term herself. After a brief survey of women in colonial America (including Anne Hutchinson's forceful defense of her spiritual independence from Puritan governance in Massachusetts Bay colony), Flexner describes all kinds of women's organizations beginning with Esther Reed's Ladies Association of Philadelphia, whose members asserted their political stance by collecting money to support Revolutionary troops. Abolitionists, African-American women's clubs, labor unions, and, of course, the national suffrage associations that emerged in the late nineteenth century find places in a narrative of American women's varied activism.

Flexner emphasizes the importance of coordinated collective action, but keeps the narrative engaging by including quotes from individual women in these movements. For example, in the chapter "Into the Mainstream of Organized Labor," Flexner recounts the speech by the teenaged Clara Lemlich whose impassioned speech sparked the Shirtwaist Makers Strike of 1909:

She made her way to the platform and called on the audience with electrifying effect to have done with talk and to act: "I am a working girl, and one of those who are on strike against intolerable conditions. I am tired of listening to speakers who talk in general terms. What we are here for is to decide whether or not we shall strike. I offer a resolution that a general strike be declared—now!"<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ellen Fitzpatrick, introduction to Flexner and Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle*, xx–xxii.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxi.

<sup>39</sup> Flexner and Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle*, 234. Flexner had heard this story directly from Clara Lemlich Shavelson who, like the author, was a member of the Communist Party, *fn.* 3, 371; Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class*

Throughout the book, Flexner also placed women's activism in social and economic context. She explains the unification of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in 1890 in relation to growing class divisions that made the middle and upper classes suspicious of any kind of radicalism. The earlier uncompromising positions of the NWSA were no longer attractive to white women who feared the influence of immigrant workers. "The steady trend of the suffrage movement toward the conservative and the conventional during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century must be viewed in this setting, in order to avoid the misconception that a few conservative women took it over."<sup>40</sup> Flexner's ability to weave together stories of extraordinary women and explanations of historical context not only makes *Century of Struggle* accessible to a general audience but also a sophisticated introduction to women's history.

While *Century of Struggle* did receive good reviews, it was, Flexner said, "a sleeper" until another woman with left-wing connections cited it four years later. In 1963 in *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan argued that Flexner's history should be required reading for all women college students.<sup>41</sup> Clearly, Friedan's book had a much greater audience of women who, even today, claim "it changed my life." For middle- and upper middle-class white women like the Smith College classmates Friedan queried to mine evidence for *The Feminine Mystique*, her narrative was their own story of thwarted dreams and a vague sense of dissatisfaction, and her brilliance was in proposing a systematic explanation for their condition. Despite her own ties to the Left, Friedan did not include women of color or lower-class women in her analysis. Flexner's book offered black and working-class women a history of their own in which they could recognize themselves as both oppressed and empowered at the very time that feminism as a movement was beginning to be revived. It is not clear, however, that middle- and upper-class white women who read *Century* actually embraced the stories of black and working-class struggles that Flexner hoped they would recognize and confront as part of women's struggle. Educated women were adept at reading themselves into stories that did

*Politics in the United States, 1900–1965* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 118.

<sup>40</sup> Flexner and Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle*, 209.

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, Northampton, MA, Thursday, December 7, 1972, Scrapbook, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

not include them and ignoring parts of the story not related to their concerns.<sup>42</sup> In the early 1970s Flexner criticized “Women’s Lib” for failing to consider the cost for African-American women of educated, white women’s liberation from domestic labor.

While the intellectual influence of the Communist Party of the USA shaped the content and organization of *Century of Struggle*, Flexner had left her institutional affiliation with the party behind. She claimed to have no regrets about leaving the party: “the whole thing happened rather naturally, as life, and my thinking, took their course. What hurt was the breaking of human relationships and the void that left.” In fact, Flexner suffered migraines and entered psychotherapy when severing her ties to the Communist Party, isolated from the friends with whom she had shared political, intellectual, and social commitments.<sup>43</sup>

Religious faith seemed to offer solace to Flexner at this point in her life. She attended Episcopalian services and by 1961 had converted to Roman Catholicism. Responding to a question from her sister, Jean, whether her allegiance to the Catholic Church and the Communist Party indicated that she was drawn to hierarchical discipline or “paternalism,” Eleanor Flexner replied:

I can’t say that authoritarianism seems to me a very basic part of religious faith—and it never irked me particularly in the left movement either. In both instances I think ‘authority,’ so-called, springs from a basic understanding of the principles that the ideology is founded on. As long as one accepts those principles, the authority, or paternalism as you call it, or discipline, seems to me a matter of order and working rules.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps, having centered her previous social and political life on the networks she established in the Popular Front, Flexner was attracted to the similar sense of community of shared beliefs she experienced in Catholicism. She established ties to the Benedictine Monastery of Regina Laudis in

<sup>42</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1984); Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: “The Feminine Mystique” and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Flexner to Dear Jean, October 1, 1961, Folder 9, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library; Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 144–145, 196.

<sup>44</sup> Flexner to Dear Jean, October 1, 1961, Folder 9, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

Bethlehem, Connecticut, which she visited regularly throughout the 1960s. Moreover, Flexner became a Catholic during the pontificate of Pope John XXIII and saw the Church as an advocate of economic and racial justice.<sup>45</sup>

Flexner's awakening interest in religious faith as well as her experience in therapy as she endeavored to recuperate from the emotional losses suffered when she left the Communist Party are both reflected in her final book, a biography of the eighteenth-century feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. The book is as thoroughly researched as *Century of Struggle* and offers an as-complete-as-possible account of Wollstonecraft's family and emotional ties and her struggle to create economic security for herself and her sisters. Despite two research trips to England and one to France, paid for by a Guggenheim fellowship, Flexner could not document the entire fabric of Wollstonecraft's life. In some cases, she explained aspects of Wollstonecraft's poor health and her behavior in psychological terms that are logical but seem to stretch the evidence. For instance, Flexner suggests that Wollstonecraft's illnesses were expressions of repressed anger and frustration.<sup>46</sup> Some reviewers were mildly critical of Flexner's psychological explanations, but were generally positive about the biography, and it was nominated for a National Book Award. Reviewers tended to agree that Flexner's book was the best of several biographies of Wollstonecraft published in the 1970s, citing in particular her effort to explain Wollstonecraft's arguments about women's rational and spiritual equality with men.<sup>47</sup>

One of Flexner's most significant contributions to explaining Wollstonecraft's ideas about women's individual rights is her repeated emphasis on Wollstonecraft's faith in God: "Her faith enabled her against great odds to accept and bear a heavy load of responsibility and unhappiness. ... This is not a point of view which commends itself in modern skepticism or indeed to many of her own contemporaries." According to Flexner, religion was key to Wollstonecraft's arguments about female

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, "Northampton," *Springfield Catholic Observer*, Summer, 1966; and "On Critics and Charity: Leo and Wills Don't Have It," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 1965; Scrapbook, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>46</sup> Eleanor Flexner, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972), 34, 51.

<sup>47</sup> Janet M. Todd, "The Biographies of Mary Wollstonecraft," *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society*, 1/3 (1976): 721-732; Alice Green Fredman, "Review," *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 25 (1976): 135-149; Lee Holcombe, "Mary Wollstonecraft (Book Review)," *American Historical Review*, 80/2 (1975): 407.

rights; it impelled her to assert that women's equality to men lay in the ability to reason:

For if "thinking is ... necessary to make us wise unto salvation," it is just as crucial for women to learn how to use their minds as it is for men. ... The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* would be an eloquent plea to recognize the presence of reason in women, as well as men, and to tend it, because it was a divine gift.<sup>48</sup>

As Flexner acknowledged, her willingness to take religious faith seriously and to credit its influence on Wollstonecraft's feminist ideas may partly account for why the biography attracted little attention within the feminist movement or among women's studies scholars.

The second outstanding element of Flexner's analysis of Wollstonecraft's thought was in illuminating the connections between Wollstonecraft's lived experiences and her writing. Flexner examined the intellectual currents of the Age of Reason, but concluded, "To distill as she did from her life (and the lives of other women she knew) the basic principles she put into the *Vindication* was an extraordinary imaginative feat." The biography contains vivid descriptions of the concrete economic and social realities of eighteenth-century women's lives. Based on what she had seen firsthand, Wollstonecraft revealed the narrow superficiality of women in upper-class society. Wollstonecraft's descriptions of the physical costs, financial insecurity, and lack of independence that haunted poor women like herself were the bedrock that shaped her opinions.

As she researched and wrote *Mary Wollstonecraft* in the 1960s Flexner shifted her activist disposition from radical politics in New York City to advancing improvements in her new residence in Northampton and her parish church, and in writing letters to the editor in western Massachusetts newspapers as well as Catholic publications. She remained committed to racial equality, but focused her efforts on local and Catholic discussions of the topic rather than the national Civil Rights struggle. For example, she wrote to the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* in 1965 responding to an earlier letter about urban, black riots arguing that whites could not understand the causes of African-American rioters without also recognizing the costs of poverty and discrimination. The following year

<sup>48</sup> Flexner, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, 145; "Transcript of Interview with Jacqueline Van Voris," January 8, 1977, Folder 29, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 18.

Flexner made similar arguments in a letter to the *Springfield Catholic Observer* and expressed disappointment that parish churches showed so little interest in civil rights issues.<sup>49</sup>

Her papers also contain comprehensive notes she made in preparation for leading a League of Women Voters program on race and civil rights in 1963 and 1964. Her notes indicated that Flexner relied on the popular literature on poverty that was current at the time, including Michael Harrington's recently published *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*. On the one hand, Harrington's book was a searing challenge to the belief that America was a classless society; on the other hand *The Other America* introduced the term "culture of poverty" to debates about race, poverty, and urban violence. Flexner used the term in her discussions, but like Harrington, a former member of the Catholic Worker movement concerned about social justice, she meant to highlight the difficulties facing the poor struggling to improve their situation rather than on the more precise anthropological term meaning a subculture of behavior and attitudes.<sup>50</sup> Flexner did not mention the special problems of women of color until the last page of her notes. This section began with a critique of Friedan, "The problem posed by the 'feminine mystique' ... seems largely irrelevant to this group [African-American women]," Flexner argued. "Partly because their problems are in the first instance economic?—or because a far more immediate trap than housekeeping responsibilities is the prejudice they encounter trying to get 'interesting' jobs—even dull ones!"<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, in this new stage in her life, Flexner's methods had become more moderate, but it is difficult to know whether her commitment to justice and equity had changed significantly. In a letter to the *National Catholic Reporter* written about the same time, she defended the Second Vatican Council but also explained her decision not to sign a protest of the Church's "silencing" of peace activists Fathers Daniel and Philip Berrigan.

<sup>49</sup> "What 'Causes' Riots?" *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, Summer 1965 and "Northampton," Letter to the Editor signed Eleanor Flexner, Scrapbook, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>50</sup> Flexner, "Outlines for Discussion groups mostly of LWV units, 1963–4," Folder 31, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library; Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1962); Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000); Maurice Isserman, "Michael Harrington: Warrior on Poverty," *The New York Times*, June 19, 2009, sec. Sunday Book Review. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/21/books/review/Isserman-t.html>

<sup>51</sup> Flexner, "Outlines for Discussion groups mostly of LWV units, 1963–4," Folder 31, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

“I do not think marches, sit-ins, protest ads, are the way to fight the battle for reform *within the Church*,” she said. “They may be completely valid in Selma, but I question their propriety *or their effectiveness*, outside the New York chancery. ... I would like to see some measured and *loving* consideration given to the *methods* by which reform may continue to be pressed.”<sup>52</sup> In a reflection on aging she wrote as she turned 60 in 1968, Flexner began to explain her changed perspective on activism and change:

I had been an “activist” ... in my late twenties [and] for the next twenty years. I was successively absorbed, and a part of, the art, politics, trade unionism, and World War II. Then as I began to write again after a long gap, I drew back from participation and watched, from the newspapers and the library. And when I once again became “involved,” the scale was minute and the stance a very tentative, humble one.

Her evaluation of what her generation had achieved can best be described as one of discouragement, and she shifted her attention to young people, suggesting that a gift of aging was being “available.” She particularly believed that older people should listen to youth and try to understand them on their own terms, listening to their words and their music. “I suggest to them that all adults do not dislike rock. ... It may even accomplish something to point out that the Goldberg Variations have as strong and varied rhythms as The Cream.” She put her money where her mouth was, and in 1969 was listed as one of the sponsors of a regional “battle of the bands” that drew 600 teenagers from the region.<sup>53</sup>

Flexner’s essay on aging is in many ways a brave document attempting to take stock of changes in her life that have occurred or will occur in the future. She stopped writing in March 1969: “why? I do not remember whether the telephone rang, or my thought curled in on itself.” She returned to the essay a “painful” year and a half later. Several disturbing events had occurred, the worst an undisclosed upheaval at the monastery in which twelve members of the community left within a few months. This triggered some of the same symptoms that cutting ties with the Communist Party had caused. By the time she wrote the brief coda to the essay in August 1970, however, she had reestablished her equilibrium and resolved

<sup>52</sup> “Hold your fire,” *National Catholic Reporter*, Letter to the Editor signed Eleanor Flexner, January 5, 1966, Scrapbook, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>53</sup> Flexner, “Preface,” Folder 32, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 10, 12; Scrapbook, Flexner Papers.

to adapt to the changing conditions and difficulties she faced.<sup>54</sup> Yet the tone of a speech that students at Smith College invited her to give several months later, on “Women’s Rights (Nineteenth-Century Style) vs. Women’s Lib,” did not suggest openness to young “second-wave” feminists.

Her talk began with what students may have interpreted as a note of condescension: “These days it is not fashionable or conducive to popularity, to differ with or criticize Women’s Lib, especially if one agrees with many of its goals.”<sup>55</sup> In essence her disagreements with “Women’s Lib” were not only that it was strident but also that it would be better to address economic inequalities, primarily those facing working-class and black women, rather than make radical critiques of existing systems of family, sexuality, and reproduction. She believed the revived women’s movement’s inattention to African-American inequality was a “playback” of the controversy over the introduction of the word “male” into the Constitution in the Fourteenth Amendment when “women leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton allowed their anger to lead them into outright racism.” Flexner also raised questions about the economic and psychological costs of day-care for small children, again critiquing the class privilege inherent in the feminine mystique.<sup>56</sup>

Flexner continued to be productive in the field of American women’s history in the 1970s. She co-authored a thoroughly revised edition of *Century of Struggle* with Ellen Fitzpatrick in 1975 and wrote twelve entries for *Notable American Women*. Yet a vein of irascibility ran through her interviews and writings. Daniel Horowitz notes that:

In the late 1960s, she did not identify with the new generation and called, at times angrily, on its advocates to balance liberation with responsibility. From the mid-1960s on, Flexner felt that key people—including young feminists, women’s historians, and faculty members at Smith College—did not adequately acknowledge her contribution.

She attended the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women twice (once to give the keynote address), but her assessment of her reception was negative. Horowitz attributes her attitude to a personal sense of trag-

<sup>54</sup> Flexner, “Preface,” Folder 32, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, pp. 20–21.

<sup>55</sup> Flexner, undated, paginated typescript, Folder 32, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

edy, but it seems to have had much to do with the intersections in her life between activism and intellectual pursuits.<sup>57</sup>

Through much of her adult life Eleanor Flexner was involved in collective efforts to achieve justice. While her activism was linked to a community that shared values and purpose, as a member of the Communist Party from the 1930s to the mid-1950s and as a Roman Catholic communicant for at least a decade starting in the early 1960s, Flexner's political engagement in the labor, civil rights, and feminist movements also led her to the essentially solitary pursuit of scholarship and writing. There were costs to her changed course. She had no graduate training nor did she ever hold an academic position, and lack of recognition from feminists whose scholarship was based in academic institutions from which she was excluded was one source of bitterness in her later years.<sup>58</sup>

Professional status may have been less significant than the loss of a community, especially with other women. In her thirties and forties she formed close friendships with other women, including her life partner Helen Terry, through her activism. Flexner called Terry her "beloved companion." Horowitz and Weigand use Flexner's term, but Bettina Aptheker, who grew up in and then joined the Communist Party objects to that formulation: "That Eleanor Flexner was a lesbian is a significant fact influencing her consciousness, her identity."<sup>59</sup> But Flexner clearly did not connect feminist politics with issues of sexuality or reproduction.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, she did expect her family and friends to accept Terry's central place in her life, and she revealed the importance she ascribed to loving friendships among women in her writing, intentionally or inadvertently. In *Mary Wollstonecraft*, she described Wollstonecraft's love for her friend Fanny Blood this way:

The greatest gift Fanny brought to her new friend was the experience of loving without fear or self-consciousness. ... To live with Fanny now became

<sup>57</sup> "Transcript of Interview with Jacqueline Van Voris," 8 January 1977, Folder 29, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 18; Horowitz, "Feminism, Women's History, and American Social Thought," 206.

<sup>58</sup> Flexner, "Preface," Folder 32, Flexner Papers, Schlesinger Library, p. 5—.

<sup>59</sup> Horowitz, "Feminism, Women's History, and American Social Thought," 192; Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 202; Bettina Aptheker, "Red Feminism: A Personal and Historical Reflection," *Science and Society*, 66 (Winter 2002/2003): 534.

<sup>60</sup> According to Helen Terry, Flexner was nonplussed by students' focusing the discussion after her talk at Smith College on abortion. Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 202.

her dream. Although she had shown some normal teen-age interest in boys, we hear no more of them. From now until Fanny married and left Mary, she thought only in terms of a life shared with one whom she loved.<sup>61</sup>

Flexner's descriptions of dinners with Claudia Jones, too, show a tenderness and emotional security unusual in Flexner's usually reserved writing about her personal life.

Not only struggle, but also activism linked to a web of women shaped *Century of Struggle*, a work of enduring stature. Although Flexner hid her early political affiliations during her lifetime; her experiences were radical by the Cold War ideal of womanhood in the 1950s. Similarly, her biography of Wollstonecraft rethought the life of a woman angry at the status quo who struggled against gender conventions. Like other feminist writers in the 1960s and 1970s—Gerda Lerner, Betty Friedan, Aileen Krador—Eleanor Flexner developed a feminist politics in the space afforded by a movement that was not necessarily sympathetic to women's rights or liberation. Ironically, the FBI, which hounded the Left throughout the mid-twentieth century and kept tabs on the "WLM" (Women's Liberation Movement) in the 1970s because of the subversive potential of its ideology, paid little attention to Eleanor Flexner. Her file indicates only that she was on the executive committee of the Stuyvesant Club (one of number of neighborhood organizations affiliated with the Communist Party) and calls her activities while she lived in New York City "innocuous."<sup>62</sup> This was a questionable evaluation of her activism and particularly of her scholarship. By emphasizing women as actors in a struggle, the connection between economic and political equality for women, and the complex relationships among groups of women, Flexner created a framework for future scholarship in women's history. The FBI underestimated her significance. Her books remain elegantly researched, comprehensive studies useful to academic and non-academic readers seeking a map of the origins of the American women's movement.

<sup>61</sup> Flexner, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, 26. As one who had seen the difficulties facing Communists who were publicly exposed in the McCarthy era, Flexner may have been reluctant to identify other lesbians in her circle of friends.

<sup>62</sup> United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, Eleanor Flexner, 1944–1959, Schlesinger Library.

PART IV

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Alternate Paths to Historical  
Scholarship



# Women's Literary History in Late Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France: Louise de Kéralio and Henriette Guizot de Witt

*Mihoko Suzuki*

This chapter will examine women's literary histories produced by Louise de Kéralio (1756–1822), the first female editor of a French newspaper, *Journal de l'homme et du citoyen*, established in 1789, and Henriette Guizot de Witt (1829–1908)—the daughter of the prominent politician and historian François Guizot—who published over one hundred volumes on history and other subjects. On the eve of the French Revolution, Kéralio published some of the planned volumes of *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages français*:

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*composés par des femmes, dédiée aux femmes françaises* [Collection of the Best French Works Composed by Women, Dedicated to Frenchwomen] (1786–89), a multi-volume history of women's literature in France.<sup>1</sup> A century later, Guizot de Witt wrote *Les Femmes dans l'histoire* [The Women in History] (1888), which included women writers—both French and English—active during the French Wars of Religion and the English Civil Wars.<sup>2</sup> While Kéralio's history was inflected by the historical context of the French Revolution, Guizot de Witt's was inflected by her experience of the Revolution of 1848 during which she, along with her father, was exiled in England. Both writers' careers were enabled by the precedent of their fathers and mothers who were also writers, though the fathers had a much greater impact—both positive and negative, as I will show.

### LOUISE DE KÉRALIO

Louise de Kéralio was the daughter of Louis-Félix Guinement de Kéralio (1731–93), celebrated for his valor during the War of the Austrian Succession, and subsequently a Professor of Tactics at the Royal Military School in Paris as well as an elected commander of the National Guard. The author of numerous works on military history and other subjects, as well as a translator, he was a contributor to the *Journal des savants*, and was elected to Sweden's Royal Academy of Sciences and to the Paris Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Kéralio's mother, Marie-Françoise Abeille de Kéralio (1727–95), was a novelist and the translator of John Gay's *Fables*, which became a bestseller. Like her husband, she was a member of the Royal Academy and a contributor to the *Journal des savants*. She was included in Abbé Joseph de la Porte's five-volume *Histoire*

<sup>1</sup> For recent assessments of Kéralio see Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 81–103; Annie Geffroy, "Louise de Kéralio, Traductrice, Éditrice, Historienne et Journaliste, Avant 1789," in *Lectrices d'ancien régime* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 103–12; Annie Geffroy, "Louise de Kéralio-Robert, pionnière du républicanisme sexiste," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 344 (April–June 2006): 107–124.

<sup>2</sup> The only scholarship on Guizot de Witt to date is the Introduction by Catherine Coste to François Guizot, *Lettres à sa fille Henriette 1836–1874*, ed. Laurent Theis (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 7–72. Gisela Bock, *Women in European History* (London: Blackwell, 2002), 257 includes one brief sentence on Guizot de Witt; she does not mention Kéralio.

*littéraire des femmes françoises* [*Literary History of French Women*] (1769), as a translator from the English.<sup>3</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that their daughter—who was praised by the contemporary historian Hilaire-Alexandre Briquet for having “the knowledge of a jurist and the wisdom of a politician”<sup>4</sup>—became an author and translator in her own right. She presented her first publication, the five-volume *Histoire d’Elisabeth, reine d’Angleterre* [*History of Elizabeth, Queen of England*] (1786), which, she stated, was based on “original English writings, acts, titles, letters, and other unpublished manuscripts,” as the fruit of ten years of research in archives—especially State Papers—and English historical scholarship.<sup>5</sup> Researching and writing this work on the eve of the French Revolution, Kéralio significantly finds parallels between the reign of Elizabeth I and “the principal revolutions of many European states”—in France the reign of Catherine de’ Medici and the League’s opposition against Henry IV, and in the Low Countries “the spirit of liberty, of justice and patriotism, which posed limits to Spanish power.”<sup>6</sup> According to Kéralio, the birth of Elizabeth “preceded and followed astonishing revolutions”; in the midst of the ruins of all the European states, the English queen revitalized her own country by “a sage and prudent administration,” in contrast with her father, who reversed civil laws, weakened natural law, and led the state to its destruction.<sup>7</sup> Again, at the conclusion of the fourth volume, Kéralio stresses the “intrigues, conspiracies, and traps” that were laid for Elizabeth by her

<sup>3</sup> See Rotraud von Kulesa, “La femme auteur dans la critique littéraire du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Critique, critiques au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Malcolm Cook and Marie-Emanuelle Piagnol-Diéval (New York: Lang, 2006), 295–308.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in L. Antheunis, *Le Conventionnel Belge François Robert (1736–1826) et sa femme Louise de Kéralio (1758–1882)* [sic] (n.p.: Editions Bracke Witteren, 1955), 81. This, the only monograph on Kéralio and her husband, devotes more attention to him. Antheunis’ favorite adjective for Kéralio, Robert’s “petite femme,” is “remuante” (bustling); he states, however, that Kéralio “was by her superior intelligence his evil genius” (87). This and all translations from French are mine.

<sup>5</sup> Louise de Kéralio, *Histoire d’Elisabeth, reine d’Angleterre*, tirée des écrits originaux anglois et autres pieces manuscrites qui n’ont pas encore paru, 5 vols. (Paris: Levranger, 1786–88), title page, 1:i.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:iii. On this point, Kéralio anticipates Patrick Collinson’s influential “The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 69 (1987): 394–424.

enemies, which she eluded by her “prudence, moderation, and economy.”<sup>8</sup> Kéralio excuses even the “exercise of her absolute will” because “she thought it necessary for the essential good of the nation.” By contrast to Mary Stuart, who possessed the “charms of her sex,” Elizabeth was successful due to her masculine traits—“firmness, force, and grandeur”—which, Kéralio avers, “placed her in the rank of the great kings.” The almost unequivocal celebration of Elizabeth—the sole “stain” on her memory being the execution of Mary Stuart—contrasts markedly with the unequivocal condemnation of *all* French queens in the work Kéralio would publish in 1791.<sup>9</sup> However, her admiration for the “English form of government, and the ancient laws of a kingdom, which perhaps is the only one in the world where civil liberty is the unique point of view and the only goal of the constitution” would inform her post-1789 writings, in which she presented the English Civil Wars as well as the Glorious Revolution as models for the French to follow.<sup>10</sup>

Kéralio did not confine herself solely to Elizabeth’s political achievements; she also concerned herself with the queen’s literary accomplishments, for example her expertise in many languages and her many translations—though Kéralio assesses her poetry to be inferior. This interest in women’s literary output and the concept of the “woman writer” in literary history and criticism find extensive treatment in her projected forty-volume *Collection of the Best French Works: Composed by Women, Dedicated to Frenchwomen* (1786–89), of which fourteen volumes were published.<sup>11</sup> Although the two projected volumes that were to include the writers during the Fronde, such as Mme de Motteville and Mlle de Montpensier, were never published, the volumes including Mme de Sévigné’s letters did appear, suggesting either that the censors prevented the publication of the Fronde volumes or that Kéralio gave precedence to

<sup>8</sup> Kéralio, *Histoire d’Elisabeth*, 4:664.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:666–667.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:iv–v. To this end, Kéralio promoted the translation of Marchamont Needham’s *The Excellencie of the Free State, Or, The Right Constitution of a Commonwealth* (1656); reported on the centennial celebration of the Glorious Revolution and reproduced the Bill of Rights; and proposed to create the position of prime minister after the model of England, suggesting Danton for the position. See *Mercure national et Révolutions de l’Europe*, 4 (January 14, 1791), 223 (mispaginated for 123); *Mercure national, ou Journal d’Etat et du citoyen*, 2.4 (May 9, 1790), 236–242; *ibid.*, 3.6 (August 16, 1790), 361–366; Anthéunis, *Le Conventionnel Belge*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Louise de Kéralio, *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages: composés par des femmes, dédiée aux femmes françaises* (Paris: Lagrange, 1786–89), 14 vols.

women writers who emphasized their domestic roles.<sup>12</sup> As her title indicates, Kéralio proposed to construct a community of women authors that would serve as an example to her contemporary female readership. She also conceived of the *Collection* as “a monument to the glory of French women distinguished in literature.”<sup>13</sup> And while she dedicated this work to her mother, she also praised her “wise and virtuous father” who “cultivated the mind” of his daughter.<sup>14</sup>

The *Collection*, which anthologized excerpts from the writers discussed, reintroduced the political, as well as literary, writings of Christine de Pizan, which were considered important in her own time and during the early modern period, but had fallen into obscurity by the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Beginning her literary history with Christine, Kéralio claimed to have consulted “almost all [her] manuscripts,” thereby becoming, if not the first literary historian to recover the works of Christine, the first to assert her importance as a pioneering French woman writer.<sup>16</sup> She includes excerpts from *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* [*The Book of Deeds and Good Practices of the Wise King Charles V*] (1404), to which she appends a critical assessment, reflecting the extensive research that she

<sup>12</sup> On the vicissitudes of censorship during the years before the French Revolution, see Nina Gelbart, *Feminine and Opposition Journalism in Old Regime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 11–12, and *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Kéralio, *Collection*, 1:ix.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:viii.

<sup>15</sup> See Earl Jeffrey Richards, “The Medieval “femme auteur” as Provocation to Literary History: Eighteenth-Century Readers of Christine de Pizan,” in *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Glenda K. McLeod (Lewiston: Mellen, 1991), 101–126. Richards points out that Christine’s tradition of readers was more continuous than other medieval writers (e.g. Chrétien de Troyes, Charles d’Orléans) because some of her works were available in print; yet, since most of her works were not published, her readership was limited to those who were able to read medieval manuscripts (102–103). He characterizes Kéralio’s assessment of Christine as “balanced and impartial” (115).

<sup>16</sup> Kéralio, *Collection*, 1:1. Despite this claim, Nadia Margolis states that Kéralio “relie[d] on early printed texts—even the 1549 prose edition of the *Chemin de long estude* [*The Book of Long Study*] rather than on good original manuscripts”; and that her concern was “to make those texts uncovered by her philological brethren (like [Claude] Sallier and [Jean] Boivin [de Villeneuve]) accessible to women.” “Modern Editions: Makers of the Christianian Corpus,” in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003), 251–270, 255. On Boivin and Sallier, see 253–254. Kéralio, however, explicitly acknowledges that she is using the printed edition in this instance; elsewhere she states that she will focus in particular on those works transmitted solely in manuscript, such as the *L’avisioin-Christine* [*Christine’s Vision*] (*Collection*, 2:167).

conducted in writing her *History of Elizabeth*: “Christine would have been capable of doing better, even in this difficult genre, if she had employed ... a little more time, research, care, and choice.” Nonetheless, she agrees with her predecessor that her subject was “a prince whom we should regard as one of our greatest and best sovereigns.”<sup>17</sup> After her summary of the *Le Livre des faits d’armes et de chevalrie* [*The Book of the Feats of Arms and Chivalry*] (1410), she provides an extended commentary, judging the work to have “passed the limits of [Christine’s] abilities” and the military subject to have been “above her reach”; she therefore assesses it to be inferior to her other writings, stating that “it would not be in the works of a woman that the soldiers would learn their métier.”<sup>18</sup> This statement is ironic in light of the fact that Henry VII commanded William Caxton to translate Christine’s work so that he could require all his peers to read it. However, she praises Part III of Christine’s work by comparing it to Pufendorf’s for treating “the law of nature and people, of war and peace,” although she believes that he did not consult Christine’s writings.<sup>19</sup> Kéralio’s praise of Pufendorf, rather than Christine, for his discourse on “the rights of sovereigns among themselves and towards their peoples ... the treatment of prisoners ... all the details of military art” and “the wise principles of justice, humanity, the good mores of natural law, *which honor Christine*,” calls attention to her reluctance to credit Christine directly and explicitly, even though (or more likely because) Kéralio’s own father was a military scholar.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, she manifests a notable ambivalence towards a female author who had written on a subject matter that was considered a masculine preserve; it is for this same reason, I suggest, that Kéralio declines to include *Le Livre du corps de policie* [*The Book of the Body Politic*] and *Le Livre de paix* [*The Book of Peace*] among the sixteen works by Christine she anthologized and discussed.<sup>21</sup> Yet, in her own writings,

<sup>17</sup> Kéralio, *Collection*, 1:295–296. See Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, “Louise de Kéralio Reads the Biography of Charles V Written by Christine de Pizan: A Comparison of Two Female Intellectuals Who Lived Four Centuries Apart,” *Imago Temporis, Medium Aevum*, 5 (2011): 101–115. On Christine de Pizan as a historian, see Natalie Zemon Davis, “Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400–1820,” in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia H. Labalme (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 153–182, 157–60.

<sup>18</sup> Kéralio, *Collection*, 3:107–108, 110, 109.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:108.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:109, emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> Claire le Brun-Gouanic, who gives a detailed account of Kéralio’s anthologizing of and commentary on Christine, characterizes the “distance between Christine and Kéralio” as

Kéralio concerned herself with precisely some of the topics she encountered in Christine—sovereign prerogative and the institution of prisons.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, Kéralio bookended her assessment of Christine's writings in the same volume by calling attention to the decidedly feminist story ten in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* (1559) on the problematic courtship of Florida by Amador. Now considered an exemplary work by contemporary anthologists and scholars, this story demystifies courtly love and its violence against women. In the tragic conclusion of the prolonged courtship, Amador assaults Florida, even after she has disfigured her face with a rock in order to discourage his obsession with her.

At the beginning of volume five, Kéralio contextualizes her literary history by interrogating the Salic Law, explaining that “[t]he times of troubles before the accession of Henri IV, during the regency of Marie de Medici and under the reign of Louis XIII, encouraged a salutary curiosity concerning our rights, their origin and their antiquity ... to seek what right we had as men, citizens, and French; what established the inalienable rights of the crown and those of the subjects towards one another.”<sup>23</sup> These comments, prophetic of the issues to be debated a few years later during the French Revolution, indicate that Kéralio found the years leading up to the Revolution a productive time to reflect on women's rights and writing. As a case in point, her discussion of Mme de Scudéry emphasizes the civil war context of her life and writings: “The fortune of her family was reversed by the civil wars. She came to Paris without money, and profited from the resources of her mind to pay great debts that she never contracted.” Kéralio then goes on to explain that even though Scudéry “for a long time hid herself under the name of her brother,” it was only his name that she borrowed—that is, he did not contribute to her writing in any way.<sup>24</sup>

“esthetic, rather than intellectual or psychological.” “Mademoiselle de Kéralio, commentatrice de Christine de Pizan au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, ou la rencontre de deux femmes savantes,” in *Christine de Pizan: Une femme de science, une femme de lettres*, ed. Juliette Dor and Marie-Elisabeth Henneau (Paris: Champion, 2008), 325–341, 341.

<sup>22</sup> On sovereign prerogative, see Kéralio, *Observations sur quelques articles du projet de constitution de M. Mounier* (1789), 13–14. Kéralio published an anonymous translation of John Howard's *The State of Prisons in England and Wales* (1777) as *L'État des Prisons* (1788); the work also included discussion of the deplorable state of French prisons and hospitals.

<sup>23</sup> Kéralio, *Collection*, 5:501.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:5.

In her discussion of the works of Countess of Saint Balmont, famous for cross-dressing, Kéralio is severely critical, calling her play *Les Jumeaux martyrs* [*The Twin Martyrs*] (1650) “excessively mediocre,” concluding that her works constitute an insult to the age of Corneille.<sup>25</sup> This example makes evident that Kéralio’s intent is not to champion women writers, but to write a literary history in which women are placed in the context of the existing literary history of canonical male writers. She does, however, comment on Balmont’s “singular character, in the extraordinary admixture of the virtue of the two sexes. She loved masculine exercises: to take up arms, ride horses, draw the pistol, as familiar for her as wielding a needle or spindle.”<sup>26</sup> While asserting that Balmont also possessed virtues distinctive of her own sex and lived harmoniously with her husband, Kéralio recounts the story of how in masculine guise she challenged a cavalry officer to a duel and defeated him.

As is evident from these examples, as well as from her monumental work on Elizabeth, Kéralio’s focus is on women who exhibit what were considered masculine qualities—writing on military matters, such as Christine de Pizan; writing under her brother’s name, as in the case of Mme de Scudéry; or being accomplished in military activity, as was Mme de Balmont. She thus promotes the ideal of the androgyne, implicitly challenging the Salic Law that excluded women from politics, and anticipating the recent scholarship by Sarah Hanley and Elianne Viennot.<sup>27</sup>

In August, 1789, during the debate concerning the abolition of feudalism, and a few weeks before the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, Kéralio founded the *Journal de l’Etat et du citoyen*, clearly marked as being published “Chez mademoiselle de Kéralio.” Even after her marriage to François Robert, who became her co-publisher, she continued to sign her articles, which always preceded those by her husband. Although she signed these as Louise Robert, she continued to be referred to as “Mademoiselle de Kéralio” and was better known under her maiden name.

In 1791, Kéralio anonymously wrote and published *Les Crimes des reines de France, depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu’à Marie-*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:409.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:408.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Hanley, “Identity Politics and Rulership in France: Female Political Place and the Fraudulent Salic Law in Christine de Pizan and Jean de Montreuil,” in *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, ed. Michael Wolfe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 78–94; Elianne Viennot, *La France, les femmes, le pouvoir*, vol. 1: *L’Invention de la loi salique (V<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Perrin, 2006).

*Antoinette* [*The Crimes of the Queens of France, from the Beginning of the Monarchy to Marie-Antoinette*], which was reissued in 1793 with additional material concerning the queen's trial and execution.<sup>28</sup> In this work she excoriates *all* women who sought or wielded power—from the surprising example of Blanche of Castile for making her son Saint Louis into a “bigot,” a religious fanatic, “one of the nation's worst kings,” to the more expected one of Catherine de' Medici, for bringing about civil war: “young men drag in the streets old men, women and young women, and massacre and push them into the Seine; women plunge their hands in blood; ten-year-old children crush infants with hammers.”<sup>29</sup> As another case in point, she faults *both* Anne of Austria and the aristocratic women who opposed her and Mazarin—the *frondeuses*. Kéralio's indiscriminate critique of royal and aristocratic women strongly contrasts with her earlier praise of Elizabeth as a prudent and moderate ruler; yet it is of its time in anticipating the association made between aristocrats and women as the source of disorder in the body politic that led to women being robbed of their political rights. Kéralio's *Crimes of the Queens* thus constitutes an inversion and parody of her earlier work on Elizabeth and on the history of women writers; in attacking women who assumed public roles, it exemplifies—and in responding conforms to—the strictly patriarchal gender politics of the French Revolution. However, even in that earlier work, as I have suggested, she presented a fraught notion of a proto-feminist community of women writers, given her ambivalent assessment of Christine de Pizan, whose political engagement in fact served as an example for her.

Contributing to the “black legend” surrounding Isabeau of Bavaria, one of Christine's patrons, Kéralio excoriates her “disorders”—her adulterous relationship with her brother-in-law, her love of luxury, and the hatred of the people directed against her—as forerunners of Marie Antoinette's.<sup>30</sup> Kéralio's political accusation that Marie Antoinette had pursued a traitorous pact with her brother Joseph II of Austria to “sacrifice France ... [and] to dismember the kingdom” is overshadowed by her rehearsal of the pornographic scapegoating of the queen: she accuses her

<sup>28</sup> On the political context for the publication of this text, see Lynn Hunt, “The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution,” in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. Hunt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 108–130, 120–121, 125.

<sup>29</sup> [Louise de Kéralio], *Les Crimes des reines de France, depuis le commencement de la monarchie jusqu'à Marie Antoinette* (Paris: au bureau des révolutions, 1791), 116, 312.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

of lesbian relations with her ladies, insinuates her “familiarity” with her brother-in-law Artois, and questions the legitimacy of her children.<sup>31</sup> As Lynn Hunt states, Kéralio’s accusations “reflect a fundamental anxiety about queenship as the most extreme form of women invading the public sphere ... [t]he queen, then, was the emblem (and sacrificial victim) of the feared disintegration of gender boundaries that accompanied the Revolution.”<sup>32</sup> Addressing “Antoinette” in the second person (using the familiar “tu”), Kéralio claims to write on behalf of the freedom of the press and to speak for her fellow citizens.

In July 1790, Condorcet’s “Sur l’admission des femmes au droit de la cité” [“On the Admission of Women to Citizenship”] had cited queens regnant—who belied the assumption that women lacked “strength of spirit or courage of mind”—as well as the acceptance of female regents in France as reasons to grant women equal political rights.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, Kéralio’s *Crimes of the Queens* participates in the literature that contributed to Marie Antoinette’s trial and execution.<sup>34</sup> However, her condemnation of all queens—with the implication that women should not involve themselves in politics—backfired on revolutionary women, including herself. Indeed, two weeks after the queen’s execution, the National Convention passed a decree suppressing “women’s societies and popular clubs,” because they brought about disorder.<sup>35</sup> This decree affirmed that women could *not* “exercise political rights and take an active part in affairs of government,” because “they would be obliged to sacrifice the more important cares [of

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 445, 439–440, 443.

<sup>32</sup> Hunt, “The Many Bodies,” 123.

<sup>33</sup> Condorcet, “Sur l’admission des femmes au droit de la cité,” *Journal de la Société de 1789*, 5 (July 3, 1790): 1–13; 4, 12. As examples of queens, he cites Elizabeth I, Maria Theresa, and the two Catherine of Russia. On Condorcet’s writings on the rights of women, see Candace E. Proctor, *Women, Equality, and the French Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1990), 111–116.

<sup>34</sup> Dedicating her *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* [*Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*] (1791) to Marie Antoinette, Olympe de Gouges, who was executed in 1793 for being a royalist, explicitly states that she will defend the queen even though “the whole Empire accuses you [*vous*] and considers you responsible for its calamities” (1). Germaine de Staël published, anonymously, *Reflexions sur le procès de la reine par une femme* [*Reflections on the Trial of the Queen by a Woman*] (1793), against the execution of Marie Antoinette, emphasizing her role as a “suffering mother.”

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed account of how the Society of Revolutionary Women was banned on the grounds of its anti-Jacobin politics, though allegedly because of its female membership, leading to the proscription of *all* women’s clubs, see Proctor, *Women, Equality*, chap. 9.

their families] to which nature calls them” and because their “moral education is almost nil ... [and they are] less enlightened concerning principles ... [and] more exposed to error and seduction.” The decree reached the conclusion that women’s societies were “deadly ... to the public peace” and therefore must be prohibited, “at least during the revolution.”<sup>36</sup>

Kéralio and her husband survived the Terror. Robert became a successful provisioner with a lucrative business supplying the army; he later worked for Napoleon as an Inspector General of Waters and Forests. Carla Hesse has argued that Kéralio retreated from her political activism; Leigh Whaley similarly states, “she was a far less active participant in the later years of the Revolution than she had been between 1789 and 1791.”<sup>37</sup> This is not surprising, since the political status of women after the Revolution suffered a considerable decline, even in comparison to that during the *ancien régime*.<sup>38</sup> Kéralio did not stop writing, however; she published novels between 1808 and 1810 that have the common theme of civil war—*Amélie et Caroline* (1808) is set during the English Civil Wars and *Rose et Albert* (1810) during the Wars of Religion. In these works, she displaces her own experience of the French Revolution onto earlier historical periods, “domesticating” her politics by writing in the genre of the novel. Although these novels are of interest for the indirection with which Kéralio negotiates her political writing under Napoleon, her most important legacy, then, remains her energetic writings about the politics of the

<sup>36</sup>Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 213–217. See also Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 28–29, 135–139. For a detailed account of the rise and fall of women’s revolutionary clubs, see Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, trans. Katherine Streip (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 97–174: “Louise Kéralio was the most conspicuous woman in the club [Fraternal Society of Patriots of Both Sexes, Defenders of the Constitution]” (105).

<sup>37</sup>Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*, 92; Leigh Whaley, “Partners in Revolution: Louise de Kéralio and François Robert, Editors of the *Mercur National*, 1789–1791,” in *Enlightenment and Revolution*, ed. Malcolm Crook, William Doyle, and Alan Forrest (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 114–131, 131.

<sup>38</sup>Proctor, *Women, Equality*, chap. 10, argues that the post-revolutionary *legal* exclusion of women from politics and government was more decisive than that of the *ancien régime* by custom. She also suggests that the Revolution’s destruction of convents adversely affected women’s education.

French Revolution in her newspaper, as well as her pre-Revolution writings on Elizabeth and the literary history of women in France.

### HENRIETTE GUIZOT DE WITT

Henriette Guizot de Witt was the daughter of François Guizot (1787–1874), a prominent politician who served as minister of education and prime minister under Louis Philippe, and was also a celebrated and prolific historian of France, England, and Europe (Figs. 11.1 and 11.2). She was the wife of Conrad de Witt (1824–1909), descendant of the



**Fig. 11.1** George Peter Alexander Healy (1813–94), Portrait of François Guizot. 1841. Private Collection. (Photo: François Louchat. Used by permission of Association François Guizot)



**Fig. 11.2** Claire Hildebrandt (act. ca. 1873–98), Portrait of Henriette Guizot de Witt. 1889. Oil on canvas. (Used by permission of Association François Guizot)

notable Protestant Dutch family. The republican political leader Johan de Witt (1625–72) and his brother Cornelis (1623–72) were brutally murdered either under orders of, or with the connivance of, William of Orange; Alexandre Dumas used this gruesome incident to introduce his novel *The Black Tulip* (1850).<sup>39</sup>

Sainte-Beuve included his article on François Guizot’s first wife, “Mme Guizot (née Pauline de Meulan)” (1836) in *Galerie de femmes célèbres*

<sup>39</sup> Both her maiden and married names proved to be assets for Guizot de Witt. In a letter dated December 28, 1871, Thomas Guthrie (1803–73) wrote: “Your signature is made up of two famous names; I will regard it as a great advantage to the *Sunday Magazine* to have such colours nailed to its mast.” Cited in Coste, “Introduction,” 67.

[*Portraits of Celebrated Women*] (1862), which also features Mme de Lafayette, Mme Roland, and Mme de Staël. De Meulan (1773–1827)—journalist, literary critic, and translator from English—was a contemporary of Staël, and enjoyed a distinguished career as a woman of letters before her marriage to Guizot, fourteen years her junior. Sainte-Beuve praised her as an independent thinker with sound judgment, comparing her educational treatises to Rousseau’s *Emile*. He concludes his chapter by celebrating her “*inquisitive reason* [that] searched the depths of every subject” (emphasis in the original), and her “powerful influence,” by praising her as a “gifted, sagacious, exemplary, and virtuous woman, who had no superior, in our generation, save Mme de Staël, and whom even she did not excel as a thinker, but only in a few special gifts.”<sup>40</sup>

After de Meulan’s death, François Guizot married her niece, Eliza Dillon (1804–33), who wrote articles for Guizot’s *Revue Française*, and who became the mother of Henriette and her younger sister Pauline (1831–74). Pauline, who married Cornelis de Witt, the brother of Henriette’s husband Conrad, also became a scholar and writer. Henriette Guizot de Witt therefore resembles Kéralio in her membership in a family of writers—though Guizot de Witt’s father and his first wife (Henriette’s great-aunt) were much more prominent public intellectuals than Kéralio’s parents.

François Guizot wrote substantial works on and around the English Revolution before, during, and after his career as a politician. Before entering the government of Louis Philippe, he published a two-volume study on the reign of Charles I (1827), and edited the 25-volume *Collection des mémoires relatifs à la révolution d’Angleterre* [*Collection of Memoirs Relative to the English Revolution*] (including Ludlow, May, Clarendon, and Burnet [1827]). Volumes ten and eleven of this collection include the memoirs of Lucy Hutchinson—published in 1806 from her manuscripts by her descendant Julius Hutchinson. Guizot’s essay on Hutchinson—which originally appeared in his volume on Monk and his contemporaries (1837)—was used to introduce the 1908 Everyman edition of her memoirs. As we will see, Guizot’s work on Hutchinson evidently exerted an influence on his daughter’s later work on “women in history.” In 1846, while Guizot was prime minister, his *Histoire de la révolution d’Angleterre* [*History of the English Revolution*] was published in a new edition. After his ouster at the Revolution of 1848 (he escaped to England and spent

<sup>40</sup> Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, “Mme Guizot (née Pauline de Meulan),” in *Portraits of Celebrated Women*, trans. H. W. Preston (Boston: Roberts, 1868), 344–384, 384.

two years there), he published *Pourquoi la révolution d'Angleterre a-t-elle réussi?* [*Why Was the English Revolution Successful?*] (1850), translated by William Hazlitt (the son of the literary critic) and published in England in the same year. In quick succession, he published in the space of five years: *Etudes biographiques sur la révolution d'Angleterre* [*Biographical Studies on the English Revolution*] (1851); and a pair of two-volume studies on the *Histoire de la république d'Angleterre et de Cromwell* [*History of the English Republic and Cromwell*] (1855) and the *Histoire du protectorat de Richard Cromwell et du rétablissement des Stuarts* [*History of the Protectorate of Richard Cromwell and the Reestablishment of the Stuarts*] (1856). Guizot's close engagement with English history and politics had a large impact on his daughter, who wrote a book on Charlotte Stanley, countess of Derby, drawing on her father's works on the English Civil Wars.

From his youth, François Guizot was interested in education, publishing with Pauline de Meulan *Annales de l'éducation*; as Minister of Education during the July Monarchy, he promoted primary education. Although his policies did little to expand the education of girls, his daughters were taught Latin, Greek, Italian, music, drawing, and dance. Even when she was a young girl, Henriette's studies in history were directed by her father, who wrote to his mother that Henriette should not read Michelet, because his work is "very inaccurate, and the deductions [he draws] are those of an ill-regulated, though honest mind."<sup>41</sup> Instead, he advised her to read in tandem the histories of England [by Hume and John Lingard—who based his history on documents and argued for carefully sifting evidence and guarding against one's assumptions in writing history.<sup>42</sup> Guizot thereby steered the young Henriette away from romantic historiography, at the same time impressing upon her the importance of judiciously weighing the historical record in developing historical interpretation and analysis.<sup>43</sup> Guizot de Witt later assisted her father in his

<sup>41</sup> Henriette Guizot de Witt, *Monsieur Guizot in Private Life, 1787–1874*, trans. M. C. Simpson (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1881), 202.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>43</sup> On the importance of Guizot as "the first great modern historian of France" and on his historiography, see Douglas Johnson, *Guizot: Aspects of French History, 1787–1874* (1963; Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1975), chap. 7, 320. Johnson notes the value Guizot placed on archival research and documentary evidence, as well as his "detached and objective style" that "conceal[s] both his dislikes and attachments" (353, 328–329); these qualities distinguished his historiography from that of Michelet and Macaulay (353, 327–328). On Guizot's promotion of the Comité de travaux historiques that undertook the project of tracking down

historical publications, especially on the multi-volume *History of France* toward the end of his life. After his death, she completed, edited, and brought to publication the two final volumes of the *History*, covering the period from 1789 to 1848.<sup>44</sup> The final volume describes the Revolution of 1848 that brought Guizot's political career to an end, leading to his exile in England. Unlike Kéralio, then, who staked out an independent writing career from her father, Guizot de Witt's career continued to be closely tied to that of her prominent father.

Guizot de Witt did publish notable works of history under her own name: an edition of Charlotte de Mornay's memoirs and a book on Charlotte Stanley, née Trémoille, the countess of Derby, based on her recently discovered letters.<sup>45</sup> Just as Kéralio researched and published excerpts from Christine de Pizan's manuscripts, so Guizot de Witt's historical research was based on the manuscripts of these two early modern women.<sup>46</sup> In preparing these volumes on Mornay and Stanley, Guizot de Witt received extensive guidance and mentorship from her father; unlike in the case of Kéralio, substantial documentary evidence of this relationship between father and daughter is extant. For example, in the introduction to the second volume of the Mornay edition, Guizot—as president of the Société d'Histoire de France, under whose auspices the edition was being published—explains how his daughter came to receive the commission to edit it. Although a “M. Poirson” pointed out the inadequacy of the first edition of the memoirs—marred by numerous errors—he declined to

and publishing manuscripts bearing on the history of France and opening the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the public, see Pim den Boer, *History as a Profession: The Study of History in France, 1818–1914*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 66–68.

<sup>44</sup>This work was based on Guizot's recounting of French history to his grandchildren: *L'histoire de France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'en 1789* (Paris: Hachette, 1872–76), 5 vols.; *L'histoire de France depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1848 racontée à mes petits enfants* (Paris: Hachette, 1878–79), 2 vols.

<sup>45</sup>Henriette de Guizot de Witt, *Charlotte de La Trémoille, comtesse de Derby, d'après les lettres inédites conservées dans les archives des ducs de La Trémoille, 1601–1664* (Paris: Didier, 1870).

<sup>46</sup>Nadine Kuperty-Tsur, the recent editor of Duplessis-Mornay's memoirs, states that she found evidence of Guizot de Witt's work in the manuscript held in the Musée de Chantilly, in the form of small pieces of paper with historical notes that were included in her edition. *Les Mémoires de Mme de Mornay* (Paris: Champion, 2010), 15–16. Davis, “Gender and Genre,” briefly discusses Mornay's memoirs as historical writing, mentioning in passing “Guizot's daughter” as its nineteenth-century editor (162–163).

work on a new edition himself, pleading ill health; Guizot then proposed Guizot de Witt as the editor, promising “to give, on this subject, to my daughter, the necessary information and advice.”<sup>47</sup> In a letter to his daughter after reading a draft of her work, he expresses approval and offers praise: “I have read the five first chapters ... Very good, especially the first and the fifth.”<sup>48</sup> He also provides an assessment and a critique: “The historical and moral interest are very well combined. It lacks, in the last chapter, some details on the life of [Philippe de] Mornay after the death of his son and his wife. Mornay alone with God. If it’s possible to find some details of this situation, they need to be added.”<sup>49</sup> Guizot later informs his daughter that her manuscript was well received by the Société, and that 1200 copies would be printed (though the usual print-run was 800). He tells her that he wants to check the Mornay papers at the Sorbonne before sending the manuscript to the printers, in case he should find something to add to the work.<sup>50</sup> He even corrected the galley proofs.<sup>51</sup> For the second volume, to which he wrote an extensive introduction, he assiduously sought unpublished letters, succeeding in “despoiling” them from Léon Audé, who had them in his possession.<sup>52</sup>

For her project on “lady Derby,” Guizot directs his daughter to the materials she needs to consult, specifying where she may find each volume in his library: “not only the history of Clarendon (of which the last and good edition is, I think, in the mahogany bookcase in my office, on the top shelf) but the *Clarendon State-Papers* ... Thurloe, *State Papers* ... the *State-Trials*, the trial of lord Derby ... *Fairfax Papers and Letters*, *Somer’s Tracts*.” He cannot recall the exact titles of some of the works, but can tell her exactly where she would be able to find them: “in the large bookshelf, among the English books.” He further directs her to use the index of proper names: “that will facilitate your research.” Not only does he

<sup>47</sup>François Guizot, “Notice sur Mme de Mornay et sur ses mémoires,” in *Memoires de Charlotte Arbaleste de La Borde Mornay, édition accompagnée de lettres inédites de M. et de Mme Duplessis Mornay et de leurs enfants*, ed. Henriette Guizot de Witt (Paris: Société d’Histoire de France, 1868–69), 2:xlii–xlix.

<sup>48</sup>Guizot, *Lettres*, 884 (January 27, 1868).

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 885 (January 29, 1868).

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 888 (February 5, 1868).

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 899 (March 9, 1868).

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 913 (April 7, 1868); see also 888 (February 5, 1868). Audé (1820–70) was the mayor of Roche-sur-Yon, and the secretary general of the Vendée prefecture; he produced a *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de la ville de Napoléon-Vendée* (1857).

promise to send her a “volume that includes a pamphlet on lord Derby,” he will find out whether the library in the Institute (of France) holds the *Words of the House of Derby*. If not, he will have it sent from England—since (the current) Lord Derby is ill, he will ask Lady Alice Peel; or, he will have the librarian of the Institute order a copy. This letter provides ample evidence of the detailed direction Guizot provided to his daughter to further her research.<sup>53</sup> His letters also indicate that he materially assisted the project: in three letters, he eagerly anticipates dining with the present duke of Trémoille to advance her work, stating forcefully, “I will pay whatever price so that you will lack nothing for your work on the countess of Derby.”<sup>54</sup> When the meeting finally takes place, he asks the duke, on his daughter’s behalf, questions that arose in the course of her research as well as whether he is in possession of additional letters to fill the gap between 1633 and 1646 (we learn in this letter that the duke has already provided her with originals of the letters—presumably those found “in a barrel at the bottom of a cellar,” according to Guizot de Witt in the introduction to her volume).<sup>55</sup> He also asks the duke to provide a chronology and the motto of his family.<sup>56</sup> Although Guizot learns to his disappointment that the duke cannot provide further letters by Derby, he is in possession of letters by the Mornays, which can be included in the second volume.<sup>57</sup> As he contemplates expanding the Mornay edition into two, he muses, “That will be very advantageous for you.”<sup>58</sup>

For her part, Guizot de Witt writes to her father to tell him that she has reread his *History of the English Revolution* and is filled with indignation

<sup>53</sup> Guizot, *Lettres*, 897 (March 7, 1868). See also 899 (March 11) for further bibliographical advice. On March 13, Guizot informs his daughter that he has sent her three volumes that include information on Derby; he explains their relevance for her work, and that he will write to the current Lord Derby for the *Historical Account of the House of Derby* if the Institute’s librarian cannot order the volume from London (901).

<sup>54</sup> Guizot, *Lettres*, 898 (March 9, 1868). See also 871 (August 22, 1867); 899 (March 11, 1868); 901 (March 13, 1868). According to Gabriel de Broglie, the duke of Trémoille was married to the daughter of Guizot’s close political associate, Charles Duchâtel. “L’itinéraire Guizot,” Marina Valensise, ed., *François Guizot et la culture politique de son temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 293–308, 300.

<sup>55</sup> Guizot, *Lettres*, 902 (March 15, 1868). See Mme [Henriette de] Guizot de Witt, *The Lady of Latham; Being the Life and Original Letters of Charlotte de la Trémoille, Countess of Derby* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1869), vi.

<sup>56</sup> Guizot, *Lettres*, 898 (March 7, 1868), 905 (March 24, 1864).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 902 (March 15, 1868).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 898 (March 7, 1868).

against Charles I by contrast to “her heroes,” the count and countess of Derby. Despite his advice to be “sparing” in historical details, Guizot de Witt counters that she needs to provide the context of the state of France during Charlotte de La Trémoille’s youth, and of England during her life as countess of Derby: “three English historical tableaux: the accession of Charles I and its aftermath, then the Republic, and the Restoration. Her life encompasses all that.” Without the historical context, her French readers will have difficulty comprehending the work, and it will be easy for her to supply it “because I have you as the guide.”<sup>59</sup> Guizot in turn responds by voicing approval of this intention of hers to clarify and enhance the biography through historical context: “Your plan seems good to me.”<sup>60</sup>

Taken together, these letters between father and daughter provide a detailed and vivid picture of his role as mentor, who closely directed and helped advance her research, but also as collaborator. The final letter, however, reveals not only Guizot de Witt’s appreciation of her father’s guidance but also her increasing self-direction in expressing her own opinion on the methodology of her work. Thus it is notable that Guizot voices dissatisfaction with a generally positive review of his daughter’s book on Derby—“it is a great shame that this excellent man does not have more judgment and tact.” This dissatisfaction is apparently motivated by the reviewer’s concluding statement: “Without her saying so, one sees that she was schooled by the worthy and illustrious father of whom she honors herself in bearing the name”—a statement Guizot tactfully withholds from his daughter.<sup>61</sup> It is nevertheless the case that Guizot de Witt’s works were published in France by Hachette, and in the United States by Estes and Lauriat, the same publishers that issued her father’s works.

In 1888, Guizot de Witt published a book on women in history (*Les Femmes dans l'histoire*), several of whom are literary figures. Unlike Kéralio, who confined her *Collection* to French women, Guizot de Witt includes a number of English women: Lucy Hutchinson, Ann Fanshawe, and Rachel Russell. These women lived during and wrote concerning the English Civil Wars and the political division during the Exclusion Crisis, when Parliament unsuccessfully sought to exclude the Catholic James II

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 900 (March 12, 1868).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 901 (March 13, 1868).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 977 (February 14, 1870). The offending sentence, following an unquestionably positive assessment of the quality of “Mme de Witt’s” narration and reflections that bespeak “a great maturity of mind,” is supplied by the editor in a footnote.

from succeeding Charles II. Guizot de Witt's interest in English history and proficiency in English can be traced to the time she spent in London with her father after the Revolution of 1848, as well as to Guizot's encouragement of his children to study English. Indeed, the letters between father and daughter to one another include many English phrases.<sup>62</sup>

Guizot de Witt also includes French women in her history. The strong commitment to Protestantism explains her celebration of Jeanne d'Albret, the author of the *Ample Déclaration* (1568) that justified her actions as leader of the Huguenots, at the expense of her more famous mother, Marguerite de Navarre, whom Kéralio had included in her literary history. Yet Guizot de Witt does not focus on Jeanne's writings but praises her as a good mother to Henri de Navarre. By contrast, she criticizes Marguerite for being a bad wife (though admittedly, she concedes, to an unworthy man) and a bad mother to Jeanne. This judgment of these figures according to whether they hewed to traditional female roles—as wife and mother—is one that she uses as a touchstone throughout the work. While promoting this essentialist view of gender difference, Guizot de Witt at the same time celebrates women's intelligence and achievements. This contradiction closely approximates Kéralio's similar ambivalence concerning women's private and public roles that I have already discussed.

While Guizot de Witt implicitly refers to the Wars of Religion through her inclusion of Jeanne d'Albret, she declines to feature women of the Fronde or the French Revolution. She translated a historical novel by Charlotte Mary Yonge, *Stray Pearls: Memoirs of Margaret de Ribaumont, Viscountess de Bellaïse* (1881–83), under the title, *La Fronde: mémoires de Marguerite de Ribaumont, vicomtesse de Bellaïse* (1884).<sup>63</sup> This translation of an English novel that focuses on marriage and the family—rather than on the political conflict indicated in the revised title—bespeaks a double

<sup>62</sup> Guizot and his daughter address one another in English especially during periods of heightened emotion. See, for example, *Lettres*, 213 (February 25, 1848), in which Guizot writes to his daughter concerning his ouster from power and concludes: “Adieu, encore, my dearest.” Her letter of July 17 of the same year states that “it is useless to tell you that I love you,” concluding, “j’espère fort à être (I strongly hope to be) *af few words*” (214). See also 1021 (June 17, 1873), with news of her sister Pauline's illness that led to her death: “Adieu, *Father beloved. God bless and keep you.*”

<sup>63</sup> Yonge had queried Guizot concerning historical details in order to write one of her novels. Guizot delegated the response to his daughter, who entered into an extended correspondence with Yonge. Yonge later helped to disseminate Guizot de Witt's works to the Anglophone readership. Coste, “Introduction,” 67. Thus Guizot de Witt's collaboration with Yonge also originated from her father's reputation as well as his support.

displacement: rather than write a historical work that focuses on the Fronde, Guizot de Witt chose to translate an English novel that shifts the focus from politics to the domestic sphere. Guizot de Witt's use of the novel form to indirectly address politics closely resembles Kéralio's similar domestication of her political writing in the novels she wrote under Napoleon.

Although Guizot de Witt dedicated *The Women in History* to her mother—as did Kéralio her literary history of women in France—her reverence for her father is everywhere evident, just as Kéralio's judgment on Christine de Pizan was impacted by a similar filial reverence. In fact, Guizot de Witt at times allows her father to usurp her own work: most egregiously, she introduces her chapter on Mornay by the statement: "I do not know how I can do better than to reproduce here his words."<sup>64</sup> In keeping with his abiding criticism of fanaticism throughout his works, Guizot (and Guizot de Witt in "reproduc[ing] his words") praises Mornay and her husband for their moderation even during the religious wars.

As I have noted earlier, Kéralio initially intended to include the women of the Fronde in her literary history, but those projected volumes, for whatever reason, were never published. Among the women in her history, Guizot de Witt for her part includes neither the *frondeuses* nor women who wrote during the French Revolution or in its wake, such as Staël—a notable omission.<sup>65</sup> Instead, she includes lesser-known women of the English Revolution, such as Hutchinson and Fanshawe, both of whose memoirs appeared in her father's collection of civil war memoirs. She therefore displaces her interest in women writers who lived through times of social upheaval—as she herself had done—geographically to across the channel, just as her father returned repeatedly to the subject of the English Revolution.

Guizot de Witt had already expressed her unease with political women while she was working on Derby in a letter to her father, where she stated

<sup>64</sup> Guizot de Witt, *Les Femmes dans l'histoire* (Paris: Hachette, 1888), 161.

<sup>65</sup> Guizot corresponded with Staël and refers to and quotes from Staël many times in his work, for example, in his introduction to the Mornay edition, "Notice," xiv. His views concerning the French Revolution were close to Staël's, as expressed in her *Considerations sur les principaux événements de la révolution française* [*Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*] (1818). Moreover, Guizot's close associate, Victor de Broglie, was married to Staël's daughter, Albertine; Adèle Vernet, baroness de Staël, widow of Ludwig August Staël von Holstein, Staël's son, was a close friend of the family, who is mentioned numerous times in Guizot's letters to his daughter.

that the count of Derby was a “true soldier” while “his wife was not political at all”—implicitly affirming the strict division of labor between the sexes and the consequent exclusion of women from politics.<sup>66</sup> This astounding statement is belied not only by the countess’ defense of Latham House against parliamentary forces, for which she is best known, but also by the letters concerning the political situation during the English Civil Wars that she exchanged with her sister-in-law, Marie de la Tour d’Auvergne, duchess of Trémoille, which Guizot de Witt included and discussed in her book on Derby.<sup>67</sup> In keeping with this reluctance to acknowledge Stanley’s role as a political actor, Guizot de Witt explains Stanley’s “anxiety for public welfare and the desire to see peace re-established between France and England” as arising from “her natural human interests in the character of wife and mother,” rather than from a properly political interest.<sup>68</sup> By contrast to this restriction of Stanley to the role of wife and mother, contemporary newsbooks notably refer to her as one who “stole the Earles breeches” and “prov[ed] her selfe of the two, the better Souldier.”<sup>69</sup>

In keeping with the negative judgment—shared with her father—concerning the disorder brought about by revolutions, Guizot de Witt praises Lucy Hutchinson’s memoir for centering on her husband rather than more broadly on the English Revolution, while acknowledging John Hutchinson’s role as a regicide who signed Charles I’s death warrant. She judges Hutchinson’s memoir positively because it focuses on Nottingham’s “municipal events,” which she characterizes as “simply domestic,” rather than on the “historical events” in London and “in the sphere of Parliament”—revealing her assumption that politics that occurred in the capital was the proper purview of men.<sup>70</sup> This assumption—erroneous because momentous events of the English Civil Wars were not limited to London or to Parliament—was most likely based on the contrast between

<sup>66</sup> Guizot, *Lettres*, 900 (March 12, 1868).

<sup>67</sup> On the political nature of Charlotte Stanley’s correspondence with her sister-in-law Marie de la Tour Auvergne, see my “Political Writing Across Borders,” in *A History of Early Modern Women’s Literature*, ed. Patricia Phillippy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 364–381.

<sup>68</sup> Guizot de Witt, *Lady of Latham*, 31.

<sup>69</sup> *The Scottish Dove*, 112 (December 3–10, 1645), 887; *A Perfect Diurnall*, 123 (December 1–8, 1645), 990.

<sup>70</sup> Guizot de Witt, *Les Femmes*, 190.

Paris, the locus of Guizot's political life, and Val Richer, his country estate and retreat where Guizot de Witt lived with her family.

At the end of the chapter on "Mistress Hutchinson," Guizot de Witt compares Hutchinson to Mornay, as mothers who wrote memoirs concerning their husbands for the sake of their children. She judges the Mornays more favorably than the Hutchinsons because the Mornays were "modest, a virtue unknown to revolutionaries." The Hutchinsons were, as revolutionaries, "presumptuous," having a "vain confidence in themselves."<sup>71</sup> This judgment is almost verbatim the conclusion of Guizot's comparison of the two in his essay on Hutchinson, although Guizot's discussion is more extensive than that of his daughter, judging Mornay to be "superior to" Hutchinson in "rectitude of judgment and moral gravity."<sup>72</sup> Both judge the Hutchinsons less favorably because they were revolutionaries, despite Charlotte de Mornay's attribution in her memoirs of *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579)—an anonymous tract that advocated popular resistance to tyrants—to Philippe de Mornay.<sup>73</sup>

By contrast to Hutchinson, Ann Fanshawe was a royalist, whose hewing to the role of a loyal wife Guizot de Witt strongly endorses: "Lady Fanshawe had traversed with her husband many dangers and had suffered a great deal ... She did not meddle at all in [public] affairs and limited herself to caring for her husband and her children ... Lady Fanshawe lived solely for her husband, simply and loyally."<sup>74</sup> Unlike "Lady Fanshawe," Charlotte de la Trémoille was, according to Guizot de Witt, a "great soul ... born for great things."<sup>75</sup> However, just as her father had affirmed the Glorious Revolution as necessitated by the tyranny of James II, she excuses Trémoille's military action as necessitated by circumstance. Moreover, she domesticates Trémoille's "heroic defense" by likening it to the "cares of her household or the education of her children."<sup>76</sup> Thus Guizot de Witt expresses admiration for, but is loath to unequivocally affirm, Trémoille's taking on of traditionally masculine roles; this assessment of Trémoille

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>72</sup> François Guizot, "Introduction," *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* (London: Dent, 1908), xxi–xxvi.

<sup>73</sup> On Mornay's authorship of *Vindiciae*, see Hugues Daussy, *Les Huguenots et le roi: Le combat politique de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1572–1600)* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 241–254.

<sup>74</sup> Guizot de Witt, *Les Femmes*, 203.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 204–205.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 210.

exemplifies Guizot de Witt's ambivalence concerning women going beyond conventional gender restrictions.

Lady Rachel Russell was another figure on whom François Guizot had written a book, *L'amour dans le mariage: étude historique* [*Love in Marriage: An Historical Study*] (1862).<sup>77</sup> Her husband, William Russell, was convicted of treason and executed for his part in the Rye House Plot, against Charles II and his brother James; Rachel Russell acted as his secretary during the trial, and worked assiduously, though unsuccessfully, to avert his execution. Although in her own account of Russell, Guizot de Witt repeatedly stresses the likemindedness of husband and wife, she significantly judges the wife to be superior to her husband in some respects: she "shared the beliefs, sentiments, and ideas of Lord Russell; she had, like him, a proud heart patriotically preoccupied with the fate of her country, but a mind more just and free, less prejudiced and more clear-sighted."<sup>78</sup> Quoting from one of the letters in which she counseled her husband, and on which Russell recorded the date and the place where he received it, she states that "it was not the first time that Lady Russell addressed her husband in such language," though noting that he habitually did not follow her advice.<sup>79</sup> After his death, she became the means through which he gained posthumous fame, by publishing his last words and keeping his legacy alive. Although Guizot de Witt introduces her final paragraph on Russell as quoted from Guizot, she has, in fact, edited his conclusion—omitting his tirade against contemporary mores—just as she had edited his relative assessment of Mornay and Hutchinson. Guizot de Witt had similarly edited her father's posthumous volumes on French history from 1789 to 1848. In doing so, Guizot de Witt's relationship with her father closely resembles Rachel Russell's relationship with her husband—by editing and publishing her father's works, Guizot de Witt sought to keep his memory alive.

It is disappointing that after producing two important volumes contributing to the history of early modern women's writing, Guizot de Witt's

<sup>77</sup> Guizot, *Lettres*, 484 (January 26, 1858) informs his daughter that Hachette has published 20,000 copies in six editions, the fifth having sold out.

<sup>78</sup> Guizot de Witt, *Les Femmes*, 219.

<sup>79</sup> Guizot de Witt's description of this marriage cannot but recall her own in which she far outshone her husband in ability and accomplishment; see Coste, "Introduction," 62. According to Coste, Guizot de Witt's novels frequently include the demise of men responsible for ruining their families; her husband Conrad repeatedly fell into serious debt in pursuing agricultural projects (53–57).

entries on women writers in her *Women in History* essentially ventriloquized her father's work—quoting extensively from his introduction to her edition of Charlotte de Mornay's memoirs, and reproducing his conclusion concerning the relative merits of Hutchinson and Mornay. This subordination of her writing to her father's finds a parallel in her political work, in which she managed the elections of first her brother-in-law and then her husband<sup>80</sup>—though of course, as a woman, she could not run for office herself. Guizot de Witt's self-limitation as a historian vis-à-vis her father recalls Kéralio's harsh judgment on Christine de Pizan's writing on military matters, negatively impacted by her father's expertise on the subject. Guizot de Witt notably does not include Christine in her history, even though she indicates a familiarity with her works in *Les Vieilles histoires de la patrie* [*Early Stories of the Fatherland*] (1887)—which she published a year before *The Women in History*. In this work, she cites Christine (along with Froissart) as a source for her chapter on “Quarrel between Uncles: A Child King,” on the civil war between the Burgundians and Armagnacs.<sup>81</sup> The omission of Christine de Pizan from *The Women in History*, then, parallels the similar omission of Staël—both notable women of whom Guizot de Witt was evidently aware.

Paradoxically, then, Guizot de Witt's close association with her father, a prominent historian, produced two contradictory results: it enabled her to publish over 120 volumes spanning a career of almost forty years, but it also led her to venerate her father to such an extent that after his death she essentially reproduced his judgments on a book on the history of women.<sup>82</sup> This reverence is in keeping with the works she produced to keep his memory alive: *Monsieur Guizot dans sa famille: et avec ses amis, 1787–1874* [*Monsieur Guizot among his Family and with his Friends*] (1881), which went into six editions; letters from Guizot to his family and friends; an

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, 47.

<sup>81</sup> Guizot de Witt, *Vieilles histoires de la patrie* (Paris: Hachette, 1887), chap. 7. The title of each chapter (which she calls  *récits* ) is followed by a parenthetical indication of her sources; she explains this presentation and methodology by the historiographical principle of valuing the judgments of historians contemporary with the events she is recounting (Preface, n.p.).

<sup>82</sup> For a list of Guizot de Witt's works, editions, and translations, see Guizot, *Lettres*, 73–78. Guizot de Witt's publications met—though only partially—financial exigencies caused by her husband's improvidence. The most profitable were the *History of England* and the *History of France* that Guizot de Witt completed on behalf of her father, each netting 20,000 francs. See Coste, “Introduction,” 71.

anthology of his selected works; and a selection of articles by Pauline de Meulan and Guizot that appeared in *Le Publiciste* before their marriage.<sup>83</sup>

After her father's death, a pronounced conservative turn characterizes Guizot de Witt's later career, during which she published numerous devotional works as well as her *Early Stories*, a popular work promoting a decidedly masculinist and nationalist view of history that went into six editions.<sup>84</sup> In its preface, she expressed her intention to educate children on "the men who left their imprint and traces on the history of their fatherland," so that the young readers "would learn to serve and love it."<sup>85</sup> Taken together with *The Women in History*, which she published the following year, the two works exemplify a strict division of "history" (assumed to be centered on men) and "women's history" (or, as she put it, "the women in history")—especially since she emphasized the ways in which the women she chose to include in the latter volume fulfilled their roles as wives and mothers, judging them according to this criterion.

## CONCLUSION

Indeed, the career of Louise de Kéralio also manifests a conservative turn, much like Guizot de Witt's, as we have seen. After providing intellectual support to the Revolution in her *Journal*, the rise of Napoleon led Kéralio to domesticate her political writing by turning to fiction. While Kéralio and Guizot de Witt were both clearly enabled by their fathers to further their career as writers, neither was able to escape patriarchal social constraints that prescribed limits to women's achievements. Although she celebrated Elizabeth I and the tradition of women writers in France, Kéralio was unable to affirm the achievement of Christine de Pizan in writing about military matters, a subject closely associated with her father; in addition, her work on the history of evil queens in France contributed to the exclusion of women from politics during the Terror. Guizot de Witt not only edited the memoirs of Charlotte de Mornay and wrote a book on Charlotte Stanley based on newly discovered letters, but also published a

<sup>83</sup> *M. Guizot dans sa famille: et avec ses amis* (Paris: Hachette, 1880); *Lettres de M. Guizot à sa famille et à ses amis* (2nd. ed., Paris: Hachette, 1884); *Pages choisies de Guizot* (Paris: Perrin, 1897); *Le Temps passé* (Paris: Perrin, 1887). Only the first of these four works was translated into English.

<sup>84</sup> This conservative turn can also be seen in François Guizot's later years, in which theological writing became predominant.

<sup>85</sup> Guizot de Witt, *Vieilles histoires*, Preface, n.p. The sixth edition was published in 1905.

book on women in history. Yet she invariably praised them for hewing to the roles of wife and mother, even when they involved themselves in politics—the very reason they were included in her history. She thereby registered her ambivalence concerning an expanded role for women that encompassed the public political sphere. Both Kéralio and Guizot de Witt, then, prescribed limited domestic roles for women that contradicted their own careers and achievements as successful writers and historians.

It fell to Guizot de Witt's daughter, Marguerite de Witt-Schlumberger (1853–1924), whose education she closely supervised, to escape the vexed social prohibition against women's public roles that cast a shadow on these women who wrote during the century following the French Revolution. Although Witt-Schlumberger did not herself pursue a writing career, she became the president of the French Union for Women's Suffrage, which sought to advance women's entry into the workplace during World War I, as well as the rights of mothers in order to alleviate the decline in the birth rate. She also served as vice president and was elected president of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, which sought for women's equality to be incorporated in the treaties signed at the Paris Peace Conference. For her service to the government, she was awarded the Grand Croix of the French Legion of Honor.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup>On Witt-Schlumberger's work in these organizations, see Linda Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 262–263, 278–280. James H. McMillan, in discussing Witt-Schlumberger's "social feminism"—public philanthropy on the rehabilitation of prostitutes and against the white slave trade and alcohol abuse—concludes that her "feminism was a means rather than an end, the real goal being the reform and regeneration of French society." *France and Women 1789–1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 203. On Witt-Schlumberger's involvement in pronatalism—the movement to reverse depopulation by recognizing maternity as a social function and national service—see Anne Cova, "French Feminism and Maternity: Theories and Policies, 1890–1918," in *Maternity and Gender Politics: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s to 1905s*, ed. Gisela Bock and Patricia Thane (London: Routledge, 1991), 119–137, 131; and Karen Offen, "Body Politics: Women, Work and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920–1950," 138–159, 145.



## Ruth Benedict: An Anthropologist's Historical Writings

*Tracy Teslow*

In June 1946, in an article entitled “Racism is Vulnerable,” published in *The English Journal*, from the National Council of Teachers of English, Ruth Benedict argued:

English teachers have a strategic position in helping to create a new world able to free itself from the curse of racism. They have not usually recognized their special opportunity. Yet the help English teachers could give does not require curriculum changes or even the assignment of different books for study. It requires only that English teachers *understand a little more of the nature and history of racism* and what is needed to unseat it. They need to see that, in spite of its terrible potency in the world today, racism is vulnerable.<sup>1</sup> [Author's emphasis]

As evidence of this “terrible potency,” Benedict cited four recent, “massive consequences of racism”: the “martyrdom of the Jews under Nazism;” the

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Benedict, “Racism is Vulnerable,” *The English Journal*, 35, no. 6 (Jun., 1946): 299.

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“conditions in South Africa and our own southern states;” the “wartime evacuation of the Japanese from the Pacific coast;”<sup>2</sup> and the struggle to enact a federal law to prohibit employment discrimination. This last was a reference to the 1941 Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Act, and the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) created by the Act, which applied only to national defense industries and training programs. In 1948 and 1950 efforts to make the FEPC permanent were blocked by Southern Democrats, who united with Republicans against Harry Truman’s efforts to reduce discrimination and advance civil rights, including a push for federal anti-lynching legislation and the abolition of poll taxes in federal elections. In the end, there was no serious federal employment discrimination law until passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Faced with this state of affairs across the globe, racism seemed an “inevitable condition of society,” Benedict argued. “We can hardly help believing that antagonisms between races are as inescapable as the facts of fair hair and dark skin, of slanting eyes and prominent noses.” But, she continued, it was not inevitable. Historical knowledge would demonstrate that despair over seeming intractable racism was misplaced. History offered a fuller understanding of human variety, and the capacity for change. Study of the past, she argued, offered hope and the possibility of change, the possibility of creating a different world.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, anthropologist Ruth Benedict, like many of her colleagues, felt an urgent obligation to use her social scientific expertise to intervene in pressing affairs of the day, especially imminent threats posed by racism at home and abroad. She viewed anthropology as especially well positioned to instruct the public on the nature of human diversity, and to disabuse Americans of their misguided notions. In her writings for the public on race and racism we can clearly see the historicized approach to the study of culture she had learned from her teacher, Franz Boas, as well as her own innovative comparative method, through which she uncovered and analyzed broad patterns of thought and practice. In her work as a public intellectual, Benedict produced her most historical writings, and revealed the combination of science and humanism that characterized her anthropological perspective.

<sup>2</sup>Benedict published her study of Japan, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1946), as an attempt to help Americans understand Japanese culture. She undertook the project while working for the Office of War Information toward the end of World War II.

## RUTH BENEDICT: A SEARCH FOR MEANING

Pioneering historian of anthropology George W. Stocking, Jr., has argued that Ruth Fulton Benedict “was surely among the most important woman [sic] intellectuals of the [twentieth] century” and “one of the few anthropologists who mattered outside the discipline”<sup>3</sup> (two others being Franz Boas, her teacher, and Margaret Mead, her student). Yet, Benedict came to anthropology indirectly, as many did in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Fig. 12.1).



**Fig. 12.1** Ruth Fulton Benedict (1887–1948). (Photograph from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/95511503/> (accessed November 8, 2017))

<sup>3</sup> George W. Stocking, Jr., “Character as Culture,” *New York Times*, May 22, 1983, BR 12.

Born in New York City in 1887, she grew up on her maternal family farm in Norwich, New York, and in other Midwestern and New York towns, where her mother worked as a teacher and librarian following the death of her father, a physician, when Benedict was less than two years old. She graduated from Vassar College in 1909 with a degree in English Literature, as Mead put it “a Phi Beta Kappa, without the sense that her period offered her any intellectual or broad social role which had any meaning.”<sup>4</sup> Benedict traveled Europe with two friends for a year and upon returning to the United States settled for a few years in California where she worked as a high school teacher. In 1914, she married Stanley Benedict, a professor of biochemistry who finished his career at Cornell University Medical College.<sup>5</sup>

In her twenties, Benedict struggled to find a purpose. While she and Stanley tried and repeatedly failed to start a family, Benedict explored varied professional occupations, including social work, poetry (which she wrote all her life), and literary studies of feminists Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller, and Olive Schreiner (a political activist in South Africa) which she ultimately abandoned.<sup>6</sup> As she entered her thirties, Benedict decided in 1919 to take anthropology courses with Elsie Clews Parsons and Alexander Goldenweiser at the New School for Social Research in

<sup>4</sup>Margaret Mead, “Ruth Fulton Benedict (1887–1948),” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 51, no. 3 (July–September, 1949): 457–468.

<sup>5</sup>The leading biographies of Benedict are: Judith Schachter Modell, *Ruth Benedict: Patterns of a Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Margaret M. Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); and Virginia Heyer Young, *Ruth Benedict: Beyond Relativity, Beyond Pattern* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). In addition, there are a number of other texts that explore aspects of Benedict’s life and work, including: Margaret Mead, *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959); Margaret Mead, *Ruth Benedict: A Humanist in Anthropology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Lois W. Banner, *Intertwined Lives: Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Their Circle* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); Dolores Janiewski and Lois Banner, eds., *Reading Benedict/Reading Mead: Feminism, Race, and Imperial Visions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Richard Handler, “Vigorous Male and Aspiring Female: Poetry, Personality, and Culture in Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict,” in *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 127–155; and Regna Darnell, *And Along Came Boas: Continuity and Revolution in Americanist Anthropology* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1998).

<sup>6</sup>Stocking, “Character as Culture.”

New York.<sup>7</sup> In 1921, she continued her studies, enrolling in anthropology at Columbia University, where she studied with the man who would become her professional mentor, Franz Boas. At Columbia, she studied Native American spirituality and mythology, doing fieldwork with Apache, Blackfoot, and Zuñi tribes in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> After completing her degree, she made a foray in southern California among the Serrano, under the supervision of leading anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, himself a Boas student who earned his PhD from Columbia in 1901. In 1930s, she returned to the Southwest, conducting more fieldwork with the Zuñi and Pima tribes, but the work was a struggle. Partly deaf since childhood, Benedict required interpreters or English-speaking informants, and favored visual observation over interviews and listening. She did a limited amount of fieldwork after her initial dissertation work, with a few later trips to the Southwestern tribes, especially the Zuñi, whom she featured in her most influential book, *Patterns of Culture*.<sup>9</sup> Benedict earned her PhD in 1923, one of only forty women to earn a PhD in the social sciences nationwide, and joined the Columbia faculty as an instructor (Fig. 12.2).<sup>10</sup>

Benedict struggled to find a foothold in the profession for the next several years. Franz Boas sought positions for her, but was initially unable to procure her a permanent teaching or faculty job. Like many anthropologists, especially women without independent financial means, Benedict cobbled together a series of teaching and research positions, often funded with soft money, in an attempt to make her way in the profession. From 1923 to 1925, while she tried to find a permanent position, she was supported through a grant from Elsie Clews Parsons' Southwest Society, to assist Parsons with her study of Southwest Zuñi mythology. For three years running, between 1924 and 1926, she was turned down for

<sup>7</sup> Mead, "Ruth Fulton Benedict," 458; Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 95.

<sup>8</sup> Mead, "Ruth Fulton Benedict," 458; Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 101.

<sup>9</sup> For more detail on Benedict's fieldwork, and its limited nature, see: Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*; Modell, *Ruth Benedict*; George W. Stocking, Jr., "The Ethnographic Sensibility in the 1920s and the Dualism of the Anthropological Tradition," in *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 276–341. Benedict's principal published ethnography was collected by Margaret Mead in *An Anthropologist at Work*.

<sup>10</sup> Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 103. Data in graph from Caffrey, 270, based on Ruth Landes, "A Woman Anthropologist in Brazil," in *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences*, ed. Peggy Golde (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970), 120, 123, and Virginia Wolf Briscoe, "Ruth Benedict, Anthropological Folklorist," *Journal of American Folklore*, 92, no. 366 (October–December 1979): 472.

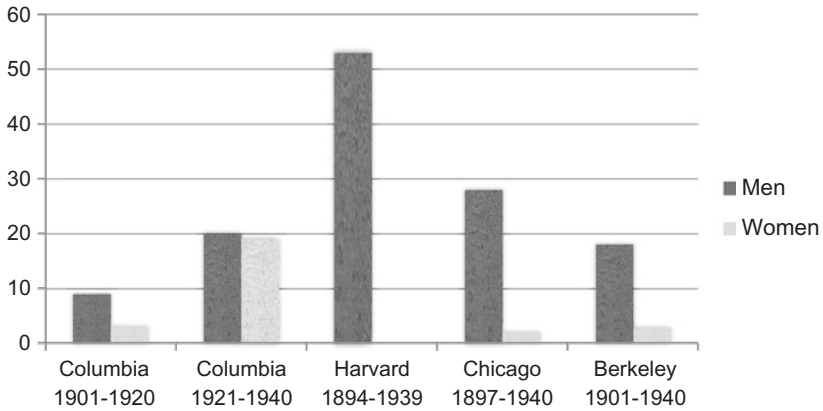


Fig. 12.2 Numbers of men and women receiving PhDs in anthropology, 1901–40

fellowships from a series of federal agencies. The National Research Council (NRC), which had supported Margaret Mead's work in Samoa and Melville Herskovits' work for four years before he got a tenure-track job at Northwestern, turned down Benedict in 1924 stating that at thirty-seven she was too old. This was despite an intervention from Parsons, who argued that the whole purpose of fellowships was to develop researchers "with the idea of assuring succession to university appointments." The NRC responded that it had been their experience that someone not established in university work by thirty-five was "not very promising material for development." In 1926, the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), which had given Boas large grants for language study, turned down Benedict's application for \$500 to work on Zuñi mythology, claiming her proposal was too narrow. That same year, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) also turned her down, even though they funded her peer, Ruth Bunzl.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these setbacks and obstacles, Benedict began to establish herself professionally in this period. In 1924, she began to receive regular (though unpaid) teaching appointments at Columbia University, and in 1926–27 filled in teaching at Barnard while Gladys Reichard was away in

<sup>11</sup> Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 111–112.

Europe on a Guggenheim fellowship. Boas made Benedict assistant editor, and then editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*, and she served on the Council of the American Anthropological Association. In 1927, Boas continued his efforts to get her hired as faculty at Columbia, to no avail. He put forward a funding proposal to establish faculty positions for women at women's colleges and "associate" positions at co-ed colleges, which was rejected by the Rockefeller Foundation. The Dean at Columbia rejected his request to hire Benedict, who had been studying Zuñi spirituality and mythology, to teach a new religion concentration in the Anthropology Department. To stay afloat, Benedict taught in the extension program and in summer school. Margaret Mead later commented that in the 1920s "the idea that a woman might become a member of the faculty did not then occur to the administration."<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in the 1930s, Benedict's career in anthropology began to take off. In 1931, Boas' efforts succeeded, and at the age of forty-four Benedict was appointed an assistant professor in the Anthropology Department at Columbia. In the early 1930s, Boas increasingly leaned on Benedict to assist him in running the department, and to take charge in his absence, both while he was away on sabbatical, and during periods of illness that increasingly beset the aging scholar.<sup>13</sup> In 1936, she was promoted to associate professor, but in 1937 was passed over for head of the department when Boas retired, in favor of Ralph Linton, who received the position against Boas' wishes. Linton had been hired away from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was a respected anthropologist. He had received his PhD from Harvard University, under the tutelage of Earnest Hooton, Alfred Tozzer, and Roland Dixon. He also was a critic of Boasian anthropology and Benedict's work on personality and culture.<sup>14</sup> Although Benedict was a beloved teacher, served her profession tirelessly, and published important work in the 1930s and 1940s, she was not promoted to

<sup>12</sup>Mead, *Ruth Benedict*, 29.

<sup>13</sup>Boas retired from Columbia in 1937 though he remained active in the profession, and died in 1942, aged 84. Boas was the first professor of anthropology at Columbia, appointed to the permanent position in 1899, after spending three years as a lecturer while he worked as a curator at the American Museum of Natural History.

<sup>14</sup>David H. Price, *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) and Jonathan Marks, "Race Across the Physical-Cultural Divide in American Anthropology," in *A New History of Anthropology*, ed. Henrika Kuklick (New York: Blackwell, 2008).

full professor until 1948, after Ralph Linton left Columbia.<sup>15</sup> She was the first woman in the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia to achieve that rank.<sup>16</sup>

Benedict is best known for *Patterns of Culture*, the 1934 study that established her as a creative force in the field of anthropology. She also published two works rooted in her fieldwork in the American Southwest, *Tales of the Cochiti Indians* in 1931 and *Zuñi Mythology* in 1935. In 1938 and 1939, she used her sabbatical to write *Race: Science and Politics*, at the urging of Boas. That work was followed, in 1943, by *The Races of Mankind*, written with her colleague Gene Weltfish. A measure of her influence and creative intellect, both *Patterns of Culture* and her 1946 book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* remain in print.

Her standing in the field was recognized with a series of honors. In 1927, only four years after receiving her PhD, Benedict served as President of the American Ethnological Society. She served as editor of the *Journal of American Folklore* for more than ten years, from 1928 to 1939. In 1933, she was one of the first women included in the Biographical Directory of American Men of Science, selected as one of three leading women scientists in the United States.<sup>17</sup> Her inclusion in that directory led to interviews in newspapers and *TIME* magazine, elevating her profile in the public sphere. In 1946, Benedict was honored by the American Association of University Women with their Achievement Award, which came with a \$2500 prize, a sum equivalent to nearly a year's income.<sup>18</sup> In 1947, she was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and served as President of the American Anthropology Association. In the autumn of 1948, Ruth Benedict died of a heart attack

<sup>15</sup> Mead, "Ruth Fulton Benedict," 458.

<sup>16</sup> Vassar Special Collections, Benedict papers, Biographical Note, [http://specialcollections.vassar.edu/collections/manuscripts/findingaids/benedict\\_ruth.html](http://specialcollections.vassar.edu/collections/manuscripts/findingaids/benedict_ruth.html), accessed April 20, 2016. In 1948, Columbia University departments were organized into three divisions, or faculties: Political Science, Philosophy, and Pure Science. The Faculty of Political Science included the departments of Economics, History, Mathematical Statistics, Public Law and Government, and Sociology. See <http://guides.library.columbia.edu/uarchives/gsas>, accessed December 13, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Modell, *Ruth Benedict*, 214. Modell notes that *TIME* magazine remarked, "Dr. Benedict was 'shocked' at the small number of women named." *TIME*, March 20, 1933, 36.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Federal Census for 1946, the average income of non-farm families was about \$3000. In 2017, that is equivalent to almost \$34,000. "Current Population Reports, Consumer Income," Department of Commerce, *Bureau of the Census, Series P-60, No. 1 Revised*, Washington, DC, January 28, 1948.

in New York City, at the age of 61, barely five months after having been finally promoted to the rank of full professor.<sup>19</sup>

### RUTH BENEDICT AND THE USES OF HISTORY

Benedict was regarded in her lifetime, as well as by posterity, as one of the most influential theorists of her generation. She is best known for her comparative “socio-psychological” approach to the study of cultures, in which she explored how the particularities and historical trajectory of a given people manifested themselves in distinctive cultural configurations. Her most famous work, *Patterns of Culture*, is a study of three tribes—the Dobu of Melanesia, the Kwaiutl of the North American Northwest coast, and the Zuñi of the Southwestern United States. Benedict hoped that the recognition of cultural relativity explored in this book would create in readers an appreciation for “the coexisting and equally valid patterns of life which mankind has created for itself from the raw materials of existence.”<sup>20</sup> Margaret Mead called *Patterns of Culture* “one of the great books of the second quarter of the twentieth century, acquainting students, scholars, and scientists with the Boasian idea of ‘culture.’” The work teaches readers, Mead argued, “how an understanding of culture could increase an understanding of life.”<sup>21</sup> In 1958, Mead remarked, “The modern world is on such easy terms with the concept of culture, in very great part due to this book.”<sup>22</sup>

One of the key features of *Patterns of Culture* was its comparative approach, taking three disparate indigenous tribes and assessing them as “cultural wholes,” deploying an analytical rubric that sorted them into primarily “Apollonian” or “Dionysian” cultural patterns.<sup>23</sup> Benedict’s

<sup>19</sup> Mead, “Ruth Fulton Benedict,” 457; Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 337.

<sup>20</sup> Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, preface by Margaret Mead, foreword by Louise Lamphere (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005), vii–xii.

<sup>21</sup> Mead, “Ruth Fulton Benedict,” 460.

<sup>22</sup> Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, vii.

<sup>23</sup> Benedict borrowed the categories “Apollonian” and “Dionysian” from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*. For a discussion of Benedict’s reading of Nietzsche, see Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict*, 53–58. Caffrey notes that Benedict also was deeply influenced by Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Encountered by Benedict as a student at Vassar, Caffrey argues *Birth of Tragedy* “gave her a framework to understand her past,” and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* “gave her a sense of freedom from that restrictive past and a purpose for living out her future.” Caffrey also notes that Benedict was deeply influenced by Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Women and Economics*, “the Bible of the student body” in that era, from which

comparative method was in part an outgrowth of and further development of her Boasian methodological training, in part a reflection of her creative intellectual orientation, and in part a matter of pragmatics. Her most influential works were not the precise empirical compilations of ethnological data gleaned through extensive fieldwork that her mentor was famous for (or infamous for, in some quarters), but rather, the more sweeping comparative works where she sought and found broad patterns of cultural formation. In part, this was because fieldwork was so difficult for her. Her analysis of the Dobu and Kwaikutl was based on the fieldwork of others, Rio Fortune in the case of the Dobu, and Franz Boas for the Kwaikutl. Even her study of the Zuñi, whom she had spent some time with, was supplemented by the work of others. But it was also because she became increasingly fascinated by the relationship between individuals and their cultures, interpreting that problem in terms of psychology, and coming to the view that “A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action,” or, as Margaret Mead put it, a culture was a “personality writ large.”<sup>24</sup>

*Patterns of Culture* spoke to its intended American public at a moment of social crisis, in the midst of the Depression, which would shortly be followed by descent into world conflict. Historian George W. Stocking, Jr., summarizing Benedict’s critical argument, noted that *Patterns* presented primitive cultures as “‘a laboratory of social forms’ in which the ‘problems are set in simpler terms than in the great Western civilizations.’” Studying them should teach us not only “a greatly increased tolerance toward their divergencies,” but could also train us “to pass judgment upon the dominant traits of our own civilization.” Stocking echoed the common assessment of Benedict’s contribution when he wrote that it was “a powerful statement of the anthropological conception of cultural plurality, integration, determinism, and relativity, and it did a great deal toward accomplishing Benedict’s goal of making Americans ‘culture conscious.’”<sup>25</sup> Although Margaret Mead is far more widely familiar to Americans today,

Benedict took lessons about the importance of economic independence for women, as well as a comparative approach to questions of social and biological evolution.

<sup>24</sup> Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, vii, 46. Mead claimed the idea of “personality writ large” was developed in conversations they had in the winter of 1927–28 about “how a given temperamental approach to living could come to so dominate a culture that all who were born in it would become the willing or unwilling heirs to that view of the world.” Mead, *An Anthropologist at Work*, 206–212.

<sup>25</sup> Stocking, “Ethnographic Sensibility,” 300; Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 17, 37, 249.

Benedict's efforts to popularize an anthropological way of thinking about society and its challenges appeared earlier, were arguably more effective, and more wide reaching.<sup>26</sup>

The comparative approach Benedict favored not only illustrated the complex, contingent nature of cultural formation, but also stressed the hazards of making judgments about other peoples and cultures based on fealty to one's own. Critics then and now accuse of Benedict of exaggerating both the coherence of a given culture and the contrasts among the coherent wholes she described.<sup>27</sup> Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has offered an incisive and influential, if idiosyncratic, reflection on the appeal of Benedict's comparative, psycho-social ethnography, and what it has accomplished. In an essay entitled "US/NOT-US: Benedict's Travels," Geertz compared her to Jonathan Swift in her use of a rhetorical strategy that juxtaposes

the all-too-familiar and the wildly exotic in such a way that they change places. In her work ... the culturally at hand is made odd and arbitrary, the culturally distant, logical and straightforward. Our own forms of life become strange customs of a strange people: those in some far-off land, real or imagined, become expectable behavior given the circumstances. There confounds Here. The Not-us (or Not-U.S.) unnerves the Us.<sup>28</sup>

This kind of contrast, found in *Patterns of Culture* and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, as well as in her later work on race and racism, was a key aspect of the Boasian method. Anthropological linguist Edward Sapir, a Boas student and close friend of Benedict, called this approach the

<sup>26</sup>In a sense, it was Ruth Benedict, and Boas before her, who laid the groundwork for Margaret Mead's later prominence as a public intellectual proffering an anthropological, cultural critique of American society, and its place in the world.

<sup>27</sup>Benedict's interpretations and conclusions about the Dobu and Zuñi in *Patterns of Culture*, and of the Japanese in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, have been sharply criticized since her work appeared. See Alfred G. Smith, "The Dionysian Innovation," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 66, no. 2 (April 1964): 251–265; Susanne Kuehling, *Dobu: Ethics of Exchange on a Massim Island, Papua New Guinea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005); Pauline Kent, "Japanese Perceptions of 'The Chrysanthemum and the Sword,'" *Dialectical Anthropology*, 24, no. 2 (June 1999): 181–192; Ezra F. Vogel, Foreword, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1989), ix–xii.

<sup>28</sup>Clifford Geertz, "US/NOT-US: Benedict's Travels," in *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 106.

“destructive analysis of the familiar.”<sup>29</sup> It is meant, as Geertz reflects upon in his essay, to destabilize comfortable certainties about the anthropologists’ and their readers’ own stance.

Early in his career, as Boas wrestled with the profound epistemological problem of how an anthropologist can understand the workings of another culture, he formulated an idea that came to be called “secondary explanations,” the apparently reasoned rationales people use to justify their culture’s habits, customs, and philosophies, which purport to explain the origins and purpose of them, but which in fact do not. More recent analyses have described them as “historically specific fictions” that are an “act of cultural mystification” rather than transparent elucidation, and which tend to be marshaled to justify the status quo and resist change.<sup>30</sup> As Stocking has described it, “The character of such secondary explanation depended not on the actual historical basis of the custom, which was either unconscious or long since obscured, but rather on the context of ideas in which it existed in the present.”<sup>31</sup> Boas came to see human behavior and custom as the result of a historical, contingent process operating on a fundamentally unitary human psyche. In the period when Boas was developing these ideas, the most commonly accepted explanation for the vast differences observed among human groups was that differences among cultures were rooted in the fundamentally different mental abilities of “primitive” and “civilized” peoples. Social evolutionists advocated a system of fixed stages of human development—savage, barbarian, civilized—and viewed cultural differences as an expression of essential psychic differences. As Stocking has forcefully argued, Boas turned that argument upside down, asserting that human beings shared the same mental capacities. For Boasians, “the behavior of all men, regardless of race or cultural stage, was determined by a traditional body of habitual behavior patterns passed on through what we would now call the enculturative process and buttressed by ethically tainted secondary rationalizations.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, for Boasians, cultural differences were the result of varied, historically contingent trajectories and environments acting on a fundamentally unified human psyche.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Sapir, *Language* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1921), 255–257.

<sup>30</sup> Matti Bunzl, “Boas, Foucault, and the ‘Native Anthropologist’: Notes Toward a Neo-Boasian Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 106, no. 3 (September 2004): 435–442.

<sup>31</sup> George W. Stocking, Jr., “Franz Boas and the Culture Concept in Historical Perspective,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 68, no. 4 (August 1966): 867–882.

<sup>32</sup> Stocking, “Franz Boas and the Culture Concept in Historical Perspective,” 877.

Anthropologists' ability to understand varied cultures, and the enculturation process more broadly, was complicated not only by the mystifying rationales that informants in other cultures offered to explain their customs, but also by the tendency of anthropologists to privilege their own cultural formations. Critical to Boasian anthropology was the presumption that one's own cultural customs and philosophies were contingent and changing, not universal, and that, therefore, other cultures should not be evaluated against one's own, consciously or unconsciously. This was part of the rationale for conducting fieldwork, and for works of comparative ethnography. Through exposure to new, different cultures, the anthropologist—or the reader—would constantly re-think familiar forms and habits, and with a new perspective on his or her own culture, confront different societies anew. Anthropologist and historian Richard Handler has compared *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* in the way it attempted to teach Americans about themselves through a comparison to another society thought to be fundamentally different, in de Tocqueville's case the French aristocracy, for Benedict the Japanese in the immediate post-World War II period.<sup>33</sup>

The culture concept Benedict did so much to elaborate, institutionalize, and popularize, was one she initially learned from Franz Boas, one of the most important figures in shaping American anthropology. And *history* was critical to Benedict's Boasian approach to the anthropological study of human beings and their cultures. As I've argued elsewhere, Boas believed that in order to understand groups of people, in all their variety, cultural and physical, anthropologists had to attend not only to the elements of their lives that we now define as "culture," but also to heredity, environment, and history. He advocated a judicious, methodologically rigorous investigation of human physical and mental variation, along with a similarly serious study of culture, language, history, and environment, which he believed would lead to an informed understanding about the hereditary and social bases underlying human diversity in bodies and cultures.<sup>34</sup>

Variouly referred to as historicist, historical particularism, and the American Historical School, the Boasian method was an outgrowth of Franz Boas' own historicist orientation rooted in a German humanist

<sup>33</sup> Richard Handler, "Boasian Anthropology and the Critique of American Culture," *American Quarterly*, 42, no. 2 (June 1990): 252–273.

<sup>34</sup> Tracy Teslow, *Constructing Race: The Science of Bodies and Cultures in American Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

intellectual tradition that included Johann Gottfried Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt.<sup>35</sup> From them Boas absorbed the idea that each human group had to be understood as the product of a particular historical trajectory and a unique “genius” of its people. In an early foundational statement of his scientific philosophy, “The Study of Geography,” Boas described his historicist understanding as a “cosmography” that “considers every phenomena as worthy of being studied for its own sake.”<sup>36</sup> He continued, “its mere existence entitles it to a full share of our attention; and the knowledge of its existence and evolution in space and time fully satisfies the student, without regard to the laws which it corroborates or which may be deduced from it.” Historian of anthropology Matti Bunzl has argued that, for Boas, “the reason to explore cultural phenomena was not that they were ‘Other’ but that they were ‘there.’ ... Ultimately, it was

<sup>35</sup>There is quite a bit of scholarship on Franz Boas’ methodology, and that of his students and other Boasians who followed his lead. For his own statements regarding the foundations of his anthropology, key works include Franz Boas, “The Study of Geography,” *Science*, 9 (1887): 137–141, reprinted in *Race, Language, Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1940); “On Alternating Sounds,” *American Anthropologist*, 2 (1889): 47–53; and *Anthropology: A Lecture Delivered at Columbia University in the Series on Science, Philosophy and Art, December 18, 1907* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908). George W. Stocking, Jr., authored the most nuanced analyses of Boasian thought and practice. The most notable of these that explore the historicist method are: “Franz Boas and the Culture Concept in Historical Perspective”; *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); “Introduction: The Basic Assumptions of Boasian Anthropology,” in *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); and “Ideas and Institutions in American Anthropology: Thoughts Toward a History of the Interwar Years,” in *The Ethnographer’s Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992). On the German intellectual roots of Boas’ method see Matti Bunzl, “Franz Boas and the Humboldtian Tradition: From *Volksgeist* and *Nationalcharakter* to an Anthropological Concept of Culture,” in *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 17–78. Ruth Benedict’s view of Boas and his approach to anthropology can be found in two obituaries she penned: “Franz Boas,” *Science*, New Series 97, no. 2507 (January 15, 1943): 60–62 and “Franz Boas as an Ethnologist,” *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, 61 (1943): 27–34. In the mid-twentieth century, with the re-emergence of theorists who advocated finding and describing universals among cultures, Boasian methods came under criticism. Notable among his critics was Murray Wax, who argued that Boas’ “dominant convictions ... constricted creative research in anthropology” and limited the development of the field. Murray Wax, “The Limitations of Boas’ Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist*, New Series 58, no. 1 (February 1956): 63–74.

<sup>36</sup>Boas, “Study of Geography,” 642.

not their difference that made them interesting, but the fact that they contributed to the plenitude of humanity.”<sup>37</sup> The fundamental anthropological questions for Boas were defined in terms of human history: why and how had dramatic differences among human groups developed? The answers to those questions lay in precisely documenting all aspects of human cultures in their particular historical, environmental, and physical specificity. It was an effort, in league with cultural informants, to reconstruct the elusive history and particular manifestations of a people's beliefs and customs.

In the popular imagination, and among many anthropologists, Boas is viewed exclusively through his cultural relativism. But throughout his career, Boas was as interested in the vexing problems of human “race” as he was in the ethnology of language, kinship, and mythology. For Boas and his students, race was just one part, albeit an important and interesting one, of a broad picture of humanity. In the Boasian view, race, if approached appropriately, with reasoned empiricism, was not a source of invidious distinctions or oppressive action. Muddled, subjective racial studies were another matter, as were a range of folk notions about race and culture that fostered prejudice. Boas spent more than forty years mounting arguments against misbegotten notions about race, culture, and human behavior. Toward the end of his life, Ruth Benedict was among those who took up and continued that work. Benedict employed a fundamentally Boasian philosophy in which individuals and cultures could only be understood as simultaneously products of heredity, social relations, environments, and history.

For Benedict, as for Boas, a historicized, humanist approach was critical. In a paper given to the American Anthropological Association in 1947, as out-going President of the organization, Benedict called upon her colleagues to embrace the methods and orientations of the humanities, something she feared they might view as “heretical,” in an age preoccupied by the methods of natural and social science.<sup>38</sup> Anthropology and the humanities, she said,

<sup>37</sup> Bunzl, “Boas, Foucault, and the ‘Native Anthropologist,’” 437.

<sup>38</sup> Ruth Benedict, “Anthropology and the Humanities,” *American Anthropologist*, 50, no. 4, part 1 (October–December 1948), 585–593. Address of Retiring President, American Anthropological Association, December 1947.

... deal with the same subject matter—man and his works and his ideas and his history. To my mind the very nature of the problems posed and discussed in the humanities is closer, chapter by chapter, to those in anthropology than are the investigations carried on in most of the social sciences.<sup>39</sup>

For Benedict, human history functioned as a methodological foundation and as a reservoir of knowledge about the vagaries of human behavior, ideas, and sociocultural forms. History was a vehicle for exploring and understanding human variability, as well as human commonalities, across time and space. Its study provided lessons that mitigated the sciences' tendency to flatten human complexity in their eagerness to find universal formulations. Much of Benedict's work was an effort to find patterns without losing the rich complexity of human experience.

### THE SCIENCE AND POLITICS OF RACE

Written at the behest of Franz Boas, in 1939 just as World War II began in Europe, *Race: Science and Politics* was Benedict's effort as a "citizen scientist" to intervene more forcefully to shape public attitudes toward race, culture, and discrimination.<sup>40</sup> The book was intended not only for a broad reading public, but also as a "handbook" for "tolerance education" in schools, churches, and clubs throughout the United States.<sup>41</sup> Though pushed by Boas to write on a topic outside her area of expertise, Benedict felt compelled to comply, not simply because it would have been difficult to spurn such a request from a revered mentor and a colleague who had worked so tirelessly himself to fight racism, but because she also hoped to combat inaccurate, racist distinctions that promoted a divisive ideology and undermined society. "Racism," she wrote, "is an *ism* to which everyone in the world today is exposed; for or against, we must take sides. And

<sup>39</sup> Benedict, "Anthropology and the Humanities," 585.

<sup>40</sup> Ruth Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, with a foreword by Margaret Mead (New York: Viking Press, 1959 [1940]), vii. Prior to its publication, Benedict's preferred title for her book was "Race and Racism," deeming it an accurate representation of her topics and intentions. The editors at Modern Age Books rejected her title, and after extended debate, settled on "Race: Science and Politics," which Benedict reluctantly accepted.

<sup>41</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 5.

the history of the future will differ according to the decision which we make."<sup>42</sup>

To this end she emphasized the importance of history and culture in creating the differences commonly attributed to race, continuing to press the anthropological culture concept first tackled in *Patterns of Culture*. Her argument against racism proceeded from two critical assumptions: first, that individual prejudice was the critical locus of racism, and second, that such prejudice could be eradicated by disabusing people of their misguided notions about the nature of race and the superiority of their own culture. From Benedict's perspective, anthropology offered a scientific approach to both bodies and cultures that allowed comparison across time and space. Through her comparative approach, Benedict hoped to make readers doubt their complacent sense of racial and cultural superiority. In an era of great faith in the ability of science to proffer objective truth and clear-eyed solutions to social problems, Benedict, like many of her peers, believed an unvarnished exposition of the scientific and historical facts, purveyed by a leading authority, would be effective in combating social ills.

Benedict, like Boas, attempted to move anthropology away from biological essentialism and hereditarianism while retaining the idea that morphological, biologically-based classifications and investigations of human variation were meaningful and useful. She saw the methods of physical anthropologists as a scientific way to describe evident physical differences that arose via migration, isolation, and intermixing over the course of human history. "Race," she asserted, "is a subject which can be investigated by genealogical charts, by anthropometric measurements, by studies of the same zoological group under different conditions, and by reviews of world history."<sup>43</sup>

*Race: Science and Politics* framed the problem of racism as a kind of category error, a failure to appropriately distinguish between race and culture. Race, Benedict argued, was exclusively an issue of bodily characteristics that were inherited and which physically distinguished one group of human beings from another. Culture, the "socially acquired" traits displayed by an individual or a group, was ontologically and conceptually distinct from

<sup>42</sup> Ruth Benedict to Louis P. Birk, Modern Age Books, October 27, 1939, Folder 51.3, "Race: Science and Politics: Correspondence," Race: Science and Politics (1940), Series IV, *Writings of Ruth Benedict, Benedict Papers*.

<sup>43</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 97.

race. And yet they were constantly confused and conflated. To exemplify this distinction, at a time when Germans propounded a theory of Aryan supremacy, Benedict emphasized the difference between race and language: language was learned, while “[r]ace is biologically transmitted.” Drawing examples from Siberian Manchus who adopted Chinese, Africans who spoke Arabic, and members of the African diaspora who spoke Spanish, English, French, or Portuguese depending on which part of the western hemisphere they settled, Benedict argued that “race and language have had different histories and different distributions.”<sup>44</sup> Benedict argued that the complexities of human history belied any causal relationship between the inheritance of distinctive somatic characteristics and the “primitive” or “civilized” quality of a given culture. The Manchus, Benedict wrote, “were a rude and unnoted nomadic Tungus tribe,” which, through contact with the Mongols and their conquest of China, ultimately ruled a dynasty “unsurpassed in riches and glory.”<sup>45</sup> Such varied fortunes were typical, Benedict argued. “Wherever we look—to the Malays, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Arabs, or to the Nordics—the same story repeats itself over and over.” She did not contest Nordic racial identity but instead pointedly argued that “their participation in civilization” was due to “the universal processes of history” and not to “their racial type.”<sup>46</sup> “The lesson of history is that pre-eminence in cultural achievement has passed from one race to another,” Benedict wrote, and those achievements were neither “mechanically transmitted” nor guaranteed “by any racial inheritance.”<sup>47</sup>

The racist “dogma” which imputed superiority and inferiority to individuals and whole peoples on the basis of hereditary differences was not scientific doctrine according to Benedict. Developed in the nineteenth century, erected upon a body of scientific knowledge about human evolution and variation, it was an expression of a much older human penchant for privileging one group over another, in-groups against out-groups. Drawing on anthropological and historical evidence extending from human pre-history through the ancient world to the history of Europe, Benedict reconstructed a long story of discrimination based on various rationales, none of them reliant on inherited physical differences. Even more recent forms of discrimination, which rooted their claims in hereditary superiority, upon closer examination revealed the use of race and heredity to be a mask

<sup>44</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 16–17.

<sup>46</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 17.

<sup>47</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 18.

for class and nationalist conflicts. Racism “stemmed not from the sciences—which have repudiated it . . .,” Benedict asserted, “but from politics.”<sup>48</sup>

In 1943, Ruth Benedict continued her efforts to reach a broad American public on the subjects of race and culture, this time with a shorter, more accessible version of *Race: Science and Politics*. Benedict, with her colleague Gene Weltfish,<sup>49</sup> crafted a 31-page, ten cent pamphlet, *The Races of Mankind*, that distilled key facts and arguments from Benedict's book and paired them with evocative illustrations by Adolph Reinhardt, an artist known for cartoons and abstract expressionist paintings. The pamphlet was one in a large educational series published by the Public Affairs Committee, a non-profit organization in New York dedicated to disseminating “in summary and inexpensive form the results of research on economic and social problems to aid in the understanding and development of American policy.” The booklet was widely distributed to schools, churches and synagogues, and civic organizations; by 1945, 750,000 copies were in circulation. In 1944, the Cranbrook Institute of Science, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, spurred in part by recent riots and racial violence in nearby Detroit, opened an exhibition based on the book. In 1947, the United Auto Workers hired an animation studio to produce a film based on the pamphlet with the hope that it would help ease racial tensions in recently desegregated union branches in the South.<sup>50</sup> The popular eleven-minute film, *The Brotherhood of Man*, was then transformed in 1948 into *In Henry's Backyard*, a small 50-page book, heavily illustrated in the manner of a children's book, with illustrations adapted from the film.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 138.

<sup>49</sup> For more on Gene Weltfish, see Juliet Niehaus, “Education and Democracy in the Anthropology of Gene Weltfish,” in *Visionary Observers: Anthropological Inquiry and Education*, ed. Jill B. R. Chenerff and Eve Hochwald (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 87–118.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher P. Lehman, *The Colored Cartoon: Black Representation in American Animated Short Films, 1907–1954* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 105. The film was for sale in cities around the country, including Boston; Providence, Rhode Island; Hartford, Connecticut; New York; Baltimore; Atlanta; Tampa; Detroit; Cleveland; Toledo; Cincinnati; Columbus, Ohio; Lexington, Kentucky; Indianapolis; Milwaukee; Racine, Wisconsin; Minneapolis; St. Louis; Kansas City; Wichita; Austin, Texas; Dallas; Houston; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco; and Los Angeles. “Points of Service for Brotherhood of Man Throughout the United States,” Folder 76.2, General Subject Files: In Henry's Backyard, Series X, *General Subject Files, Benedict Papers*.

<sup>51</sup> Ring Lardner, Jr., Maurice Rapf, John Hubley, and Phil Eastman, “‘Brotherhood of Man’: A Script,” *Hollywood Quarterly*, 1, no. 4 (July 1946): 353–359 [353]; Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, *In Henry's Backyard: The Races of Mankind* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1948), n.p.

*Race: Science and Politics* stressed the importance of understanding and tolerating both racial and cultural diversity. Like Boas, Benedict argued that human beings shared a fundamental psychic unity that underlay the wide variety of cultural solutions that different groups of people devised for common problems of living. Similarly, Benedict argued that while human beings could generally be sorted into broad groups based on physical differences, those differences were neither uniform nor fixed. Human beings had proved enormously malleable not only in their social and cultural formations, but in their physical constitutions. Looked at broadly, human variation was largely a matter of local variations on a theme and constant change in response to changing conditions, both human and environmental. Rather than essentializing racial and cultural differences, Benedict urged readers to focus on human commonalities and the possibility of change and improvement that a study of history and cultures offered.<sup>52</sup>

*The Races of Mankind* distilled this message into the idea of “brotherhood.”<sup>53</sup> In the face of a “steadily shrinking” world fraught with conflict at home and abroad, Benedict and Weltfish wrote their pamphlet to combat directly what they viewed as inaccurate, racist distinctions that promoted a divisive ideology and undermined society and the war effort.<sup>54</sup> They hoped to use their anthropological expertise to convince their readers of the fundamental unity of all human beings. The pamphlet noted, for example, that diverse peoples from around the world were fighting fascism together, showing how “the whole world has been made one neighborhood.”<sup>55</sup> “White men, yellow men, black men, and the so-called ‘red men’ of America, peoples of the East and West, of the tropics and the

<sup>52</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 37–38, 63.

<sup>53</sup> The idea of a shrinking world and the humanist notion of a “brotherhood of man” were becoming commonplace in the early 1940s. For example, at the 1944 Social Studies Conference “Diversity Within National Unity,” presided over by Alain Locke, a number of speakers argued for the importance of diverse people realizing they “are truly brothers,” including Carey McWilliams, author of *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1942), psychologist Otto Klineberg, and Howard E. Wilson, Chair of the Department of Education at Harvard University. Following travels in Britain, the Middle East, Russia, and China, Wendell Willkie wrote the widely read *One World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1943), an account of his meetings with leaders, citizens, and soldiers, that pressed the common interests of people around the world.

<sup>54</sup> Lardner et al., “Brotherhood of Man”: A Script,” 354.

<sup>55</sup> Benedict and Weltfish, *Races of Mankind*, 2.

arctic, are fighting together against one enemy.”<sup>56</sup> This shrinking world, with its modern perils, made harmony and tolerance a necessity. The world could not afford for “hard feeling” among “different races and nationalities” to leave the Allies defeated.<sup>57</sup> Robert T. Hatt, Director of the Cranbrook Institute, captured Americans’ sense that they were living in a rapidly changing world, and deployed history to make his point.

Though four centuries ago it took Magellan over 1,000 days to circumnavigate the globe, and only a century ago a clipper ship required 150 days, the airplane has shrunk our earth to a size that requires but seven days for encirclement. This with radio and international commerce has indeed again made neighbors of all men and broken down all but the social barriers between races.<sup>58</sup>

*The Brotherhood of Man*, and the subsequent illustrated book, *In Henry's Backyard*, also stressed the importance of human commonalities, and peaceable coexistence. In the film, this idea is illustrated with examples of human life that spanned geography and time, using Benedict's favorite method of comparing cultural practices across space and time. Toward the end of the film, the narrator educates Henry, a white American man, about the history and anthropology of human invention and behavior, prompted by Henry's observation that his house seems superior to the thatched hut of his new neighbor.

**Henry:** Wait a minute. I got a question. How come we live like this? [Henry gestures toward his own tidy frame house, with a car in the driveway]  
And, uh ...? [gesturing toward a thatched hut with a hole in the side, where Mexican, Chinese and African men are peering inside]

**Narrator:** It wasn't always that way. For instance, at a stage in history when the so-called pure whites of northern Europe were little better than savages, the darker-skinned mixed peoples of the Near East and Africa had flourishing cultures. And the great civilization of northern China had begun to develop. All people contributed to civilization, reaching high levels at different times, and each learning from the experience of the other. [a series of wheeled vehicles move past: ox drawn cart, horse drawn chariot, man-powered water wheel, steering wheel on a wooden

<sup>56</sup> Benedict and Weltfish, *Races of Mankind*, 1.

<sup>57</sup> Benedict and Weltfish, *Races of Mankind*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> “Valuable Racial Exhibit,” *Hobbies*, 49 (March 1944): 22.

sailing ship, Calistoga wagon wheels, airplane wheels] But there were certain basic ideas which were common to all branches of the human race: belief in a supreme being, in the home, and the family. How civilized a person is depends on the surroundings in which he grows up. The differences in the way people behave are not inherited from their ancestors. They come from something called “cultural experience,” or environment. Suppose you could somehow switch two newborn infants from entirely different backgrounds. They would not inherit their real parents’ cultural experience or ideas or mechanical aptitudes. Those are things you acquire. [We see the two infants grown to adults, one, a Chinese baby grown up in the United States, the other a white American boy raised in China, meeting. The Chinese-born American says, “Got a match, bud?” to the American-born Chinese man, who responds in Chinese, much to the American’s surprise.]

*Scene segues to Henry, seated on his stoop, surrounded by his neighbors representing peoples from around the world (Inuit, European, Arab, African, Chinese, Mexican).*

**Henry:** I get it. But now that we’re living so close together, we can get used to each other’s ways, and work together peacefully! [Neighbors cheer]

*Henry walks over to shake hands with his African neighbor.*

**Henry:** All we need is a little real understanding, and what I said before, brotherhood. [other men begin shaking hands with each other]

In *Race: Science and Politics*, Benedict repeatedly made the point that diverse races and cultures had reached great heights of invention and art, and these innovations were diffused from one group of people to another, so that no “civilization” could claim any special superiority. She illustrated her point with examples from world history. Though Americans might think of steel and gunpowder as western innovations, they were wrong. Steel was invented in India or Turkestan, she noted, and gunpowder in China, as was paper and printing. Cultivation of grains and animals originated in Neolithic Asia, she continued, while corn and tobacco were first domesticated by Native Americans. Even our numerical system of mathematical notation was invented in Asia and introduced to the west by the Moors, she added.<sup>59</sup> These stories were a favorite conceit of anthropolo-

<sup>59</sup> Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, 15.

gists, who could draw on their encyclopedic knowledge of world history, cultures, and commerce to place supposedly “American” or “Western” genius into its proper context (and another instance of Clifford Geertz’s Us/Not-Us rhetorical tactic).

Ralph Linton is credited with one of the more entertaining versions of this approach. Linton illustrated how “certain insidious ideas have wormed their way” into American civilization despite strenuous efforts to preserve “Americanism at all costs,” by following a “typical” man through his day. He begins with the man in bed in his pajamas, an East Asian garment. He drinks his morning coffee, an African plant discovered by Arabs in Ethiopia, and heading out into the rain, picks up an umbrella, invented in India. Before meeting his train, an English invention, “he pauses for a moment to buy a newspaper, paying for it with coins invented in ancient Lydia. Once on board he settles back to inhale the fumes of a cigarette invented in Mexico, or a cigar invented in Brazil. Meanwhile, he reads the news of the day, imprinted in characters invented by the ancient Semites by a process invented in Germany upon material invented in China. As he scans the latest editorial pointing out the dire results to our institutions of accepting foreign ideas, he will not fail to thank a Hebrew God in an Indo-European language that he is one hundred percent ... American.”<sup>60</sup>

In what seems to have been an attempt to link scientific facts about race and culture to another presumably unassailable truth and a deeply shared past, Benedict and Weltfish in *The Races of Mankind* asserted that “The Bible story of Adam and Eve, father and mother of the whole human race, told centuries ago the same truth that science has shown today: that all peoples of the earth are a single family and have a common origin.” This sort of claim also offered an evolutionary account of human unity, in the guise of the biblical origin story. The accompanying illustration offered a biblical-evolutionary tree of race, one that evoked Johann Friedrich Blumenbach’s taxonomic system of Negroid, Malayan, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid,

<sup>60</sup>Otto Klineberg, “Cultural Diversity Within American Unity,” in *Diversity Within National Unity: A Symposium*, ed. Alain Locke et al. (Washington, DC: The National Council for the Social Sciences, February, 1945), 17–18. Klineberg adapted it from a longer, original version first published by Ralph Linton in *The Study of Man: An Introduction* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936).

though left aside his American race, “the so-called ‘red men.’”<sup>61</sup> The Cranbrook Institute of Science crafted a similar image that joined scientific racial categories and biblical imagery, with the heading “All Mankind is of One Family.” By employing Albrecht Dürer’s famous sixteenth-century Adam and Eve, and calling its grouping of Renaissance imagery and photographs of children a “family,” Cranbrook was able to drop the genealogical/evolutionary tree and yet convey the same mix of biblical origins and racial taxonomy.<sup>62</sup> Using living children as models also suggested that the races (here three) were, if not the product of God, at least the progeny of an ancient evolutionary process.

In all four iterations of Benedict’s exposition on race and culture—*Race: Science and Politics*, *The Races of Mankind*, *The Brotherhood of Man*, and *In Henry’s Backyard*—human history not only provided evidence for her anthropological arguments about human commonalities, the importance of context, and the extent of human variability across time and space, it also represented a Boasian theoretical framework for understanding the nature of human beings. By studying humans in history, as well as in their contemporary incarnations, Benedict, like Boas, undermined narratives of superiority and inferiority, replacing them with an almost endless variety of cultural complexes adapted to particular times and places, yet underlaid by the basic problems of life—kinship and reproduction, social organization, communication, subsistence, conflict, spiritual belief, creativity.

<sup>61</sup> Benedict and Weltfish, *Races of Mankind*, 1, 3–4. Benedict noted in *Race: Science and Politics*, “‘Three’ is not a sacred number” in classifying the major racial divisions, noting that Polynesians “may be a well-marked variant” on the usual triumvirate: Caucasian, Negroid, Mongoloid. Interestingly, Adam and Eve were not illustrated as white, but rather as an intermediate tone, in keeping with Benedict’s and Weltfish’s assertion elsewhere in the pamphlet that most people had an “intermediate” skin tone. This also was implied in *In Henry’s Backyard* in an illustration of the peopling of the world which begins in central Asia, not in Africa, as it would today, nor in Mesopotamia, given the Adam and Eve genealogy.

<sup>62</sup> The Adam and Eve images were copied from Albrecht Dürer’s Garden of Eden engraving, *Adam and Eve*, 1504. Cranbrook’s image lacks the snake from the biblical narrative, which was included in the pamphlet illustration, although it retained the apple which makes the narrative legible as Adam and Eve. Dürer was an ironic choice, as the Nazis embraced him as a pure Aryan, “the most German of all German artists,” and displayed his self-portrait and art throughout the regime. Jane Campbell Hutchinson, *Albrecht Dürer: A Guide to Research* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2000), 15–17.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Ruth Benedict and other cultural anthropologists were not interested in the past *per se*. They were not really interested in unraveling historical events—examining the past itself to understand how and why events unfolded; how people acted, lived, and thought; how social, political, and economic structures arise, persist, or collapse—the way historians are. Instead, Benedict's use of history reflects a Boasian historicist approach to the study of humanity, a view of “anthropology as the history of the present.”<sup>63</sup> Boas and those, like Benedict, who adopted his philosophy, believed that living humans and their cultures could not be understood without also understanding their physical and social environments, and their histories. The perspective afforded by the particularities and vagaries of human history provided a longer perspective for understanding contemporaneous peoples, revealing the varied trajectories of human groups. Anthropologists documented profound differences among cultures, but also demonstrated how they confronted the same basic problems of living. History narrated with an anthropological eye foregrounded the way all human groups experienced periods of power and turmoil, success and failure—and underlined anthropologists' contention that these were neither the exclusive province of one group (or race), nor the result of an inevitable developmental path from savage to civilized.

Benedict saw herself as a humanist and a scientist, and in that was at odds with many of her colleagues. Some have dubbed her a “transitional” figure, both as a woman at the forefront of her discipline, and as a leader in institutionalizing and popularizing Boasian cultural anthropology. Taking a cue from Richard Handler and his reading of David Hollinger's work on “cosmopolitan” attitudes in the first half of the twentieth century, we might think of Benedict's work on racism as a kind of cosmopolitan anthropological historicism.<sup>64</sup> In the 1930s and 1940s, Benedict's comparative, historicized ethnographic interventions promoted an appreciation of diverse cultural forms, and their inevitable change over time, as a way to navigate between the extremes of a universalizing ethos that might flatten cultural diversity and a parochial pluralism that might aggravate divisions. In the era of “brotherhood” and fears for the fate of

<sup>63</sup> Bunzl, “Boas, Foucault, and the ‘Native Anthropologist,’” 439.

<sup>64</sup> Handler, “Boasian Anthropology and the Critique of American Culture,” 267, n35. David Hollinger, *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

democracy in the United States and Europe, Benedict employed Boasian historicism to advocate a culturally relativist position.

In the end, the application of historicist ethnological methods to contemporary race problems in Benedict's published work was an anthropological intervention more than a historical one. Like Boas, Benedict believed, contra the historian, that human actions, ideas, and institutions had to be confronted "in the flesh," tackling in the lived world what Boas had called "the life of the individual as controlled by culture and the effect of the individual upon culture."<sup>65</sup> Writing of Boas after his death, Benedict noted that "Though he had spent many years of his life on historical reconstruction, he recognized clearly that even if we could obtain complete knowledge of how a trait or an institution came into being, that knowledge would not help in the solution of these functional problems. Institutions 'affect the individual and he affects them only *as they exist today*.'"<sup>66</sup> History offered context and insight into how diverse peoples and cultures arose, succeeded, and failed. Her ethnological training enabled her to marshal comparative evidence, analyze the functioning of American society, and the place of the individual in it. Combining her interest in psychology with the broader mid-century social scientific "race relations" analytic, led her to focus on individual bias as the core social problem to be solved, a mindset and behavior to be changed. But by making plain what was a matter of unthinking custom—in the past, as in the present—she hoped to thereby open up the possibility of conscious social change.

<sup>65</sup> Benedict, "Franz Boas," 61.

<sup>66</sup> Benedict, "Franz Boas," 61.



## Nancy Mitford: Lessons for Historians from a Best-Selling Author

*Judith P. Zinsser*

### PREFACE

Today's eighteenth-century scholars may not have heard of the English writer and European socialite, Nancy Mitford (1904–73). Yet in the 1950s and early 1960s she wrote two of the era's best-selling biographies. Her *Madame de Pompadour* and *Voltaire in Love* were praised in all the major newspapers, often by revered historians of the day. Her triumphs, though more modest in terms of sales, continued with the publication of the first “coffee table” book, a lavishly illustrated, large format story of Louis XIV and Versailles. Similarly, her readers could enjoy the same treatment of Frederick the Great of Prussia, complete with maps, family trees, and a full range of portraits, etchings of battles, photographs of palaces, and pictures of the decorative arts so much a part of royal life.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Sun King: Louis XIV at Versailles* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) and *Frederick the Great* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

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Ironically, of all of her writings, few, if any, of Mitford's nine novels are read today, but her histories, particularly her dual biography of Voltaire and his companion Emilie Du Châtelet, are still cited by reviewers when considering the new scholarly works on Du Châtelet. And the seductive pace and enthusiasm of her prose cannot be resisted, even by a reader who knows that her words tell a story that is more fabrication than fact.<sup>2</sup> As Louis Auchincloss, the popular novelist of New York society wrote: "She seems to have brought a new talent to the study of history that of the sophisticated, worldly, wise observer, who is able to penetrate old archives with a fresh eye for qualities in the dead that she is especially qualified to recognize."<sup>3</sup> Auchincloss highlights what makes Mitford's approach so special and her skills so essential to study. For historians and their publishers who now bemoan the fickle book-buying public and even the lagging library market for their learned efforts, Mitford offers two object lessons: one, writing well is paramount; and two, acknowledging one's subjectivity is not always a misplaced attribute in an author.

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### MITFORD IN LOVE

Fifty is not the kind of age a Nancy Mitford heroine would like to be—neither young nor old, a sort of solid middle to late. But it was 1954, the worst of the wartime shortages were over. Mitford had her apartment in Paris with its garden and its flowers; her *venduse* at Dior to advise her about which dresses in the new collection to buy; and her lover, Gaston Palewski, her hero of de Gaulle's Free French government, now a Deputy and soon to be a cabinet minister. Their wartime romance had become familiar if not always happy. And fifty was not a bad age to embark with confidence, also born of familiarity, on a second adventure with biography, the dual portrait that would eventually be called *Voltaire in Love*. Already famous as a novelist, Mitford was fresh from her first great success as a biographer. Her *Madame de Pompadour* had just appeared and had delighted her fans. Accustomed to her brittle, merciless wit, and to plots

<sup>2</sup> See Judith P. Zinsser, *Emilie Du Châtelet: Daring Genius of the Enlightenment* (New York: Viking/Penguin, 2006) for the latest critical biography of the *philosophe.stet*

<sup>3</sup> Quote "On This Day," July 1973, Obituary, *New York Times*. Accessed August, 28, 2016.

**Fig. 13.1** Nancy Mitford in her Paris apartment, May 1956. (Photographed by Thomas Hopkins. © The Hulton Archive/Getty Images)



that turned neatly around the lives of the aristocracy and the wealthy bourgeoisie in England and France, her readers found the same glamor, characterization, and controlled drama in her history (Fig. 13.1).

The famous historian of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European diplomacy, A. J. P. Taylor, also known for his clever, cutting critiques, reviewed *Madame de Pompadour* for the *Manchester Guardian*: “All those who admired *The Pursuit of Love* will be delighted to hear that its characters have appeared again, this time in fancy dress. They now claim to be leading figures in French history. ... In reality they still belong to that wonderful never-never land of Miss Mitford’s invention, which can be called Versailles as easily as it used to be called Alconleigh. ... Certainly no historian could write a novel half as good as Miss Mitford’s work of history. Of course he might not try.” Other reviewers took her history more seriously and praised her efforts with less irony. G. P. Gooch, a historian of Germany, recommended it as “authentic history ... without tears”; Sir Lewis Namier, another of the old master historians, complimented her: “only a specialist like myself can realize what a lot you know about the 18<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>For a sampling of quotations from reviews of her *Madame de Pompadour*, see: Selina Hastings, *Nancy Mitford: A Biography* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985), 220; *Love from Nancy: The Letters of Nancy Mitford*, ed. Charlotte Mosley (New York: Houghton Mifflin,

Mitford, though never trained as an historian, appreciated that she could capitalize on the affinity she felt for the long ago times of eighteenth-century France. It should be no surprise that Evelyn Waugh, another English novelist and master of the satirical portrait, was one of her closest friends in these years. She had dedicated her novel *The Blessing* to him in 1951. They commiserated, and it was to him she confided what they both knew—that they were living in a world no longer congenial or appreciative of all that they valued. To go back to France in the eighteenth century meant returning to a world she believed was not that dissimilar from the one she had known where class was taken for granted and financial worries seemed to melt away. She wrote to Waugh in February of 1953: “I suppose we belong to the last generation which will be able to understand the mentality of a man like Louis XV. He was not so different from—say—my father or Eddy Devonshire [the elder Duke of Devonshire], in outlook and prejudices, but the type will soon have died out I imagine.”<sup>5</sup> When she came to write *Voltaire in Love* the comparisons came easily. One of Voltaire’s haunts, King Stanislaus’ court in Lorraine, reminded her of her own experiences when young: “its atmosphere,” she wrote, “was that of a large, rather silly, country-house party.”<sup>6</sup>

I went back to Mitford’s writings one summer because the other half of the couple in *Voltaire in Love*, Gabrielle Emilie le Tonnelier de Breteuil, the marquise Du Châtelet, is the subject of my own efforts as a biographer. Just like Mitford’s admiring reviewers, I had raced through her account of their affair. Why did I return to this popular author nearly thirty years later when the shelves are filled with far more scholarly tomes on Voltaire and his circle? You see, there is a problem writing about the marquise Du Châtelet, especially if you are a feminist. Mitford and Du Châtelet’s other modern biographers have not done her justice. Yes, they tell a story of an exceptional woman who, despite the lack of a formal education, managed to write a book of “natural philosophy,” translate Newton’s *Principia* from Latin into French, and much more. These

1993) nn. 1–4, 319–321; *The Letters of Nancy Mitford and Evelyn Waugh*, ed. Charlotte Mosley (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), Mitford to Waugh, January 9, 1958, 408. For another collection of letters, see: *The Mitfords: Letters between Six Sisters*, ed. Charlotte Mosley (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007) and for her life, see also Mary S. Lovell, *The Sisters: The Saga of the Mitford Family* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002) and Laura Thompson, *The Six: The Lives of the Mitford Sisters* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Mitford to Waugh, February 24, 1953, *Letters*, 306.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy Mitford, *Voltaire in Love* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 252.

accomplishments do receive brief mentions, but they are lost in the more vivid descriptions of her sexual liaisons.<sup>7</sup>

However, Du Châtelet was not the Shakespeare's sister of Virginia Woolf's *Room of One's Own* who died unnoticed with projects unrealized. Quite the opposite. With the publication in the 1740s of her *Dissertation on the Nature of Fire* and her *Foundations of Physics* she was accorded the recognition and intellectual status she sought. As a woman, she was a unique figure in the French Enlightenment, called a *philosophe* by her elite male readers, and considered a member of their Republic of Letters, despite her sex and their traditional assumptions about women's incapacities. Du Châtelet read on her own; she badgered the learned to tutor her. She wrote; she asked for correction; she published. She improved her prose and amended the work's explanations with each subsequent edition. The *Journal universel* in 1746, commenting on her election to the Bologna Academy of Science, called her "our indefatigable Marquise," who had not only mastered "the obscurity of Philosophy," but had also "developed her own, and entered into dispute with the most famous Philosophes of her time." The *Journal encyclopédique* distinguished Du Châtelet from other women known for their learning as "une vrai femme savant." Thus, all of the usual references to women with intellectual pretensions were dismissed by the addition of a single word; the young marquise Du Châtelet was "a true woman of learning."<sup>8</sup> If we needed more to vindicate the marquise in her own time, there is also the mention of her in the entry for "Newtonisme" in Diderot's famous *Encyclopédie*. She is listed along with six other prominent "physicists" and "mathematicians" of her day, part of the group who made Newton's work known and accessible throughout Europe.<sup>9</sup>

It is evident from *Voltaire in Love* that Mitford knew nothing of these eighteenth-century learned journals and did not take the time to read Du Châtelet's writings. Not surprising, as the focus of her history was Voltaire

<sup>7</sup> On the historiography, see Judith P. Zinsser, "Betrayals: An Eighteenth-Century *Philosophe* and Her Biographers," *French Historical Studies*, 39/1 (February 2016): 3–33. For Du Châtelet's writings, see for example: Emilie Du Châtelet, *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, ed. Judith P. Zinsser, trans. Isabelle Bour and Judith P. Zinsser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> *Le Journal universel*, vol. X (August 1746): 411–21; *Le Journal encyclopédique*, vol. VI, part 3 (September 1759): 3–17.

<sup>9</sup> "Newtonisme," *Encyclopédie des Arts et Métiers* (Lausanne: Les Sociétés typographiques, 1778–82 edn.), vol. XXII, 414.

and the years that he and Du Châtelet spent together from 1733 to 1749, as lovers, intellectual collaborators, rivals, and friends. Voltaire was the hero, Du Châtelet *his* heroine, not meant to be the central figure of the book. The opening lines of *Voltaire in Love* set the tone and explain why the dual biography became an instant best-seller. “The love of Voltaire and the Marquise du Châtelet was not an ordinary love. They were not ordinary people.”<sup>10</sup> I still just want to sit back and enjoy the read. I marvel at Mitford’s prose style. Who else could work such wonders by using two passives in a row?

To be fair to her, Mitford never claimed to be a scholar. Quite the opposite. She enjoyed explaining that her education consisted of learning to ride horses and speak French, and that her father, Lord Redesdale, refused to allow formal schooling for her or her five sisters. They were to be decorative, companionable, and marginally competent. As their mother Lady Redesdale explained, they would always have maids. In that pre-1914 world of serene confidence, their mother went about her household duties and quieted the worst of their father’s rages. Once the Great War was over, she arranged their debut and their presentation at court. Mitford enjoyed the life of an “Hon [Honourable],” as the daughter of a baron was called, and spent her early 1920s as a “Bright Young Thing,” the London society group known for wit, partying, and drinking. She also began to write short gossipy articles for the London editions of *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* and published two novels in quick succession. She needed pocket money. Lineage and a modest landed estate counted for little, especially with six daughters. Much to her parents’ relief in 1933 she married the very acceptable Peter Rodd, son of a prominent diplomat. The marriage was a disaster. It did not take long for her to realize that her handsome, well-born husband was not only pompous, but also financially irresponsible and unfaithful. Even so, never as much the rebel as her sisters—Diana left her first husband, the heir to the Guinness fortune, for the notorious British fascist, the married Sir Oswald Mosley; Unity joined Hitler’s circle in Germany; Jessica ran off with her Spanish Civil War enthusiast cousin—Nancy remained “Mrs. Rodd” for the rest of her life, even after the formal divorce.<sup>11</sup> In her straitened circumstances, she returned to her stories, breezy novels about her family and friends.

<sup>10</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Two sisters wrote their memoirs: Jessica Mitford, *Daughters and Rebels: The Autobiography of Jessica Mitford* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960); Deborah Mitford,

*Highland Fling* (1931) and *Christmas Pudding* (1932) gained her a modest success as the daughter of a peer with a certain flair for humor.<sup>12</sup> However, it was not until her move to Paris in 1945 at the end of World War II that she had her first best-seller as a novelist.

*The Pursuit of Love*, published in 1946, established her reputation for the brittle comedy of manners genre. As before, she used her own family as a model for the hilarious, but nonetheless insane, Radlett clan, and a composite of their succession of modest country estates for scenes very like her own growing up. “[T]heir emotions,” Mitford explains in the voice of her narrator, the bland and conventional Fanny, “were on no ordinary plane, they loved or they loathed, they laughed or they cried, they lived in a world of superlatives.” There is even the opportunity for references to her own bizarre education: “Had they been poor children, they would probably have been removed from their roaring, raging, whacking papa and sent to an approved home, or, indeed, he himself would have been removed from them and sent to prison for refusing to educate them.”<sup>13</sup>

Fanny offers a description of the young man modeled on Mitford’s husband. He is wealthy, handsome and apparently learned:

Tony, in those days, and to unsophisticated country girls like us, seemed a glorious and glamorous creature. ... he was in his last year at Oxford, ... a splendid young man with a Rolls Royce, plenty of beautiful horses, exquisite clothes. ... he has already a faint touch of pomposity, a thing which Linda [the heroine] had never come across before, and which she found not unattractive.<sup>14</sup>

Linda is the exquisitely beautiful woman who will, like her creator, leave the suitable, but boring husband for her own adventures. In contrast,

Duchess of Devonshire, *Wait for Me* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010). Both also wrote for a living.

<sup>12</sup>Other novels and projects in this period: *Wigs on the Green* (1935) and *Pigeon Pie* (1940); two edited volumes of family papers: *Ladies of Alderley* (1933), *Stanley of Alderley* (1938).

<sup>13</sup>Nancy Mitford, *The Pursuit of Love* in *Love in a Cold Climate and Other Novels* (New York: Penguin, 2000 edn.), 15. Mitford openly admitted the use of her experiences, her family, and her friends in her novels. For examples see: Hastings, *Nancy Mitford*, 29–36, 166–167, 187–189, 199, 202–203; Harold Acton, *Nancy Mitford: A Memoir* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), 21, 53–54, 61, 74–75, 77.

<sup>14</sup>Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 46.

conventional Fanny speaks for all that Mitford and her 1940s and 1950s equivalent of the “jet set” despised and rejected. Fanny, also in love, describes herself “swimming away in a blue sea of illusion towards, I supposed, the islands of the blest, but really towards domesticity, maternity and the usual lot of womankind.” Fanny will be happy, “as happy as married people can be,” she explains. The sum total pleases, but considered “day by day, hour by hour, it seems to be composed of a series of pin-pricks.” There are nannies, cooks, the drudgery of housekeeping, “the nerve-racking noise and boring repetitive conversation of small children (boring in the sense that it bores into one’s very brain).” Fanny concludes with this lackluster summation of these “components of marriage, the wholemeal bread of life, rough, ordinary, but sustaining.”<sup>15</sup>

Anyone would rather go to Paris, where, as Grace, the breathtakingly attractive heroine of Mitford’s novel *The Blessing* explains: “At least she had felt alive, she had been made to use whatever mind she possessed, and there had seemed to be point and purpose to each day.”<sup>16</sup> It is easy to see what appealed to Mitford in Voltaire’s and Du Châtelet’s eighteenth century. Theirs was a world in which “the behavior of civilized man really has nothing to do with nature, that all is artificiality and art more or less perfected.” Mitford portrays first in her novels and then in each of her history books, “*la haute société*,” the people she and her heroines admire. One of her novel heroes describes the appeal: “... *les gens du monde* are the only possible ones for friends. You see, they have made a fine art of personal relationships and of all that pertains to them—manners, clothes, beautiful houses, good food, everything that makes life agreeable.”<sup>17</sup>

At the height of her popularity as a novelist in the 1950s with *Pursuit of Love* and two more novels—*Love in a Cold Climate* (1949) and *The Blessing* (1951)—some called Mitford the modern Jane Austen.<sup>18</sup> No one today would make the same comparison. Her plots are contrived, including the device of recurring characters, and the endings abrupt and simplistic. They always stop abruptly just before the real complications would have begun. For example, in *Pursuit of Love*, arguably the best of her novels, the hero *and* the heroine simply die. Thus, their creator avoids the

<sup>15</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 210, 126.

<sup>16</sup> Nancy Mitford, *The Blessing* in *Love in a Cold Climate and Other Novels* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 436.

<sup>17</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 107.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Philip Hensher, intro, *Love in a Cold Climate and Other Novels* (New York: Penguin, 2000), xi.

nasty unraveling of real life in postwar England and France, what to do with their spouses, and the future of their illegitimate child.

All of Mitford's writing, however, demonstrates her gift for quick, brutal characterization, and for dialogue that is reminiscent of the best Evelyn Waugh, that special 1930s kind of English humor, like a Noël Coward song, P. G. Wodehouse gone ironic and viciously satirical. "Quiet cruelty," one of her more recent literary admirers called it.<sup>19</sup> I find them far more effective than the skim across the surface figures and predictable situations that Voltaire used to ridicule his enemies. But, their purposes were the same and explain not only Mitford's popularity, but also her admiration for Voltaire. Like him, she mocked almost everyone in her novels. Ugly young women were easy targets: "Marjorie was an intensely dreary girl, a few years older than Tony, who had failed so far to marry, and seemed to have no biological reason for existing."<sup>20</sup>

Leading members of the British aristocracy offered her most humorous portraits. Lady Montdore, wife to a former Viceroy of India, in *Love in a Cold Climate* loved to entertain displaced royalty. This, however, necessitated curtseys, which, "owing to the solid quality of her frame, did not recall the graceful movement of wheat before the wind. She scrambled down like a camel, rising again backside foremost like a cow."<sup>21</sup> She believed herself responsible for all of her husband's successes: "Montdore's only got me to thank if he's not in the same condition as most of his contemporaries, creeping about the Marlborough Club like dying flies and hardly able to drag themselves as far as the House of Lords."<sup>22</sup> He happily takes naps and sinks into old age only when she goes on to other projects.

Despite her successes, Mitford was wise to seek new sources of inspiration. Her last novels sold in her own day. They are tight and neat, but almost lifeless. Her stable of characters—the young woman with beauty as her principal asset, the idealized Frenchman hero-lover, the older aristocrat, the infidelities of husbands, the Oxford don's sensible and practical wife—all sound hollow on the third or fourth telling. Mitford herself realized that she could not keep writing about what she knew, reconfiguring and rearranging personalities and experiences from her own past. "[N]o

<sup>19</sup> Hensher, intro, ix.

<sup>20</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 259.

<sup>21</sup> Mitford, *Love in a Cold Climate*, 204.

<sup>22</sup> Mitford, *Love in a Cold Climate*, 215.

use writing dreary pot-boilers and lowering the level,” she wrote to her elderly friend, Vi Hammersley.<sup>23</sup> So, she decided to try biography, to use someone else’s memories instead. Her *Madame de Pompadour*, published in 1954, confirmed that she had made a brilliant choice and had found a new, lucrative career as a biographer. It only took her and her publisher three years to bring out the next one, *Voltaire in Love*, in 1957.

For her life of Pompadour Mitford had worked her way through most of the obvious secondary and memoir literature of eighteenth-century French history. This may partially explain her choice of Voltaire and Du Châtelet as the subjects for her next historical work. She could draw on the same sources. For her second biography, she also went to memoirs specifically devoted to their time together, like those of Voltaire’s valet, Longchamps. But Mitford did not find long hours of research that easy. She wrote to her friend, the London political hostess Lady Pamela Berry, in November 1952 when she had just embarked on the research for *Madame de Pompadour*: “I must try & do as little Bibliothèque Nationale as possible because my poor old brain doesn’t function much in such places.”<sup>24</sup> Mitford blamed the haphazard education she and her sisters had received. Her heroines mirror this concern. Mitford portrays them perpetually trying to catch up, to acquire the vast background of cultural knowledge that they had missed in their youth. In addition, “while they picked up a great deal of heterogeneous information, and gilded it with their own originality, while they bridged gulfs of ignorance with their charm and high spirits, they never acquired any habit of concentration, they were incapable of solid, hard work.”<sup>25</sup>

Mitford preferred instead to talk to friends: the curator of the Wallace Collection about Pompadour’s tastes and projects with porcelains; her lawyer about the function of the French *parlements*; and her local bookseller about the authors that Louis XV’s *maîtresse en titre* patronized. Mitford had the basic idea of what was involved in doing research. She prided herself on verifying all that she put in her histories. For example, she consulted the leading Voltaire scholar of her day, Theodore Besterman, who, in the 1950s, was scouring every likely archive and attic for letters to and from Voltaire.<sup>26</sup> In the course of his Voltaire collecting, he had also

<sup>23</sup> As quoted in Acton, *Nancy Mitford*, 106.

<sup>24</sup> Mitford to Lady Pamela Berry, November 12, 1952, *Letters*, 303.

<sup>25</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 13.

found letters to and from Du Châtelet by people in their circle. But these had not yet been published when Mitford started on her dual biography. She dutifully contacted him, went to Geneva, visited him at his Voltaire Foundation, felt an instant aversion to him, and “suffered.” She wrote to her mother on April 15, 1957 after all the work was done: “I’ve seldom disliked anybody so much.”<sup>27</sup>

The antipathy was not mutual. I like to imagine Besterman charmed by her off-hand aristocratic manner, her fluency in French, and her celebrity. He even let her see his precious new discovery, Voltaire’s love notes to his niece, Mme. Denis. Mitford acknowledged their existence in her book, but like many other Voltaire admirers, never used them or the insights they provided on Voltaire and Du Châtelet’s relationship in the 1740s. She thought instead of how much their discoverer annoyed her. Yes, he was “NOBLE” to share his discovery. She doubted she would have done the same in his place, but she wrote to her sister Diana that Besterman was “driving me mad.” She explained: “Can you imagine giving your life to Voltaire without having one ray of a sense of humour?”<sup>28</sup>

Mitford had no sophistication as a historian and decried all the scholarly trappings anyway. In French the same word, “histoire,” means “history” the discipline, and the creation of the storyteller’s art. The great masters of narrative history, Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Babington Macaulay, her childhood favorites, became her models. When Hugh Thomas, the renowned historian of Spain and Cuba asked about her project, she quickly dismissed any idea of it being a serious biography. “Oh, good gracious no, I know my place I hope. Not a life of Voltaire, just a Kinsey report on his romps with Mme Du Châtelet & her romps with Saint-Lambert & his romps with Mme de Boufflers & her romps with Panpan & his romps with Mme de Graffigny. I could go on for pages ...”<sup>29</sup> She did, after all, write to make a living. On the strength of her success with Pompadour, a Hollywood studio offered her a lucrative weekly contract to write screenplays.

Where other writing, including the biography of Pompadour, had come relatively easily for Mitford—with “a welter of books on the floor all round me”—the Du Châtelet/Voltaire project gave her difficulties.<sup>30</sup> She

<sup>27</sup> Mitford to Lady Redesdale, April 15, 1957, *Letters*, 362.

<sup>28</sup> Mitford to Diana Mosley, March 10, 1957, *Letters*, 361.

<sup>29</sup> Mitford to Hugh Thomas, March 15, 1956, *Letters*, 348–349.

<sup>30</sup> Mitford to Joy Law, November 29, 1965, *Letters*, 443.

confessed to a friend, the literary critic Raymond Mortimer, towards the beginning of her reading in April 1956:

I'm in a very bad way—simply cannot work. What can it be, it's not like me. I've cleared the decks to any extent, refused all invitations ... warned everybody off the telephone etc. & then I sit playing the wireless & gazing sadly at *La Jeunesse de Voltaire* and other tomes & simply can't get on. Of course I'm sure really in my heart that Voltaire is too unattractive ... & Du Châtelet even worse. I can't say they bore me exactly, but they don't inspire me. I don't know whether to go pegging on or chuck the whole thing.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, one of her society friends, Victor Cunard of the shipping fortune, suggested that she go to Torcello, one of the larger islands in the Venetian lagoon. There, during June and July of 1956, she wrote in the morning, took the *vaporetto* over to the Lido, the fashionable resort, had an afternoon swim, and then returned to her island retreat. Once a week she allowed herself a dinner with friends who had come to stay in the palazzos and grand hotels that lined the canals.

In fact, she did exactly what Du Châtelet had done when she was trying to finish her commentary on Newton's *Principia* in the summer of 1749. Du Châtelet described sequestering herself in much the same way, having to give up the pleasures of the court, the royal entertainments, *la société* of Paris, the opera, Mme. De Branca's *salon*. The marquise rose at eight or nine and worked straight through to three in the afternoon; a *café*, a quick dinner at 10 p.m., time for an hour's conversation with Voltaire, and then more work into the early hours of the morning. For both writers, the relative isolation gave them the time and space they needed. By the end of June 1956 and her first month in Torcello, Mitford could write to her sister Diana, "Voltaire is whizzing along." These weeks also changed her opinion of the heroine of her dual biography. Mitford continued, "He is lovely, & she extraordinary."<sup>32</sup>

What changed her mind? What had transformed Du Châtelet so dramatically? Perhaps Mitford needed more than just the historian's perspective to give life to her eighteenth-century characters. As with the heroes and heroines of her novels, she needed to find that identification with her subjects that enlivened her other writings. Mitford was not unaware of this

<sup>31</sup> Mitford to Raymond Mortimer, April 16, 1956, *Letters*, 352.

<sup>32</sup> Mitford to Diana Mosley, June 25, 1956, *Letters*, 354.

conscious and unconscious process. She thought “all history ... subjective” and historians “pompous” and “dull” as they had only their own boring families to describe.<sup>33</sup> Mitford was accustomed to drawing on her own experiences for her novels, and now she could mix them all together: her life, stories she had imagined and those she discovered in the eighteenth-century memoirs and letters she read. She acknowledged her affinity with Mme. de Pompadour: “exactly like ONE, that’s the truth!”<sup>34</sup> Perhaps this explains why Pompadour sounds very much like Linda in *The Pursuit of Love*, Polly in *Love in a Cold Climate*, or Grace in *The Blessing*. These can be the stop-you-in-your-tracks, take-your-breath-away variety of beauty, a woman who “requires, above all things, a great deal of concentration.”<sup>35</sup> But more often, like Pompadour, there is some other quality that the hero compliments. Are we listening to Mitford when she has Linda exclaim to Fabrice, her dashing French lover: “If you don’t like my clothes and don’t like my hair and think my eyes are so small, I don’t know what you see in me.” He replies: “Quand-même, j’avoue qu’il y a quelque chose [Even so, I confess there is something].”<sup>36</sup>

Like Pompadour, schooled by courtiers to please the king, these young women scramble to learn what to say, how to dress, the etiquette of a new culture, all in order to please their heroes. Mitford herself compared Louis XV with her longtime lover, Colonel Gaston Palewski. For Grace in *The Blessing*, Charles-Edouard, Palewski’s fictional counterpart, “was the forty kings of France rolled into one, the French race in person walking and breathing.”<sup>37</sup> In fact, Palewski appears in Mitford’s novels in different shapes and sizes. Like Fabrice de Sauveterre, he was a pilot during the war; Fabrice even knots his tie just as the Colonel did. Like Linda and her bowler-hatted nobleman, Mitford and Palewski had almost a year in London together before he left with de Gaulle for Algeria. They met in London in 1942 when he served as director of de Gaulle’s Free French cabinet. He remained de Gaulle’s closest advisor, and even his contemporaries saw echoes to another French king, calling him “the General’s *Eminence grise*.”<sup>38</sup> It was because of Palewski that Mitford went to Paris as

<sup>33</sup> *Letters* [Mosley as editor], 243.

<sup>34</sup> As quoted in Hastings, *Nancy Mitford*, 218.

<sup>35</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 82.

<sup>36</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 107.

<sup>37</sup> Mitford, *The Blessing*, 360.

<sup>38</sup> The seventeenth-century Jesuit advisor to Louis XIII’s principal minister. For the “Colonel” see Jacques Bernot, *Gaston Palewski: Premier Baron du gaullisme* (Paris: Edition

soon as she could after VE Day. Mitford's Sauveterre, and Charles-Edouard de Valhubert, like her Colonel, know everything about fashion, about France, about the world. Connoisseurs of women, they are unfaithful, but counter any of their lovers' questions with: "My relationship with you is perfect, is it not?" He queries: "Then why do you complain if I am with other women?" His presence, his logic, reassures Mitford's heroines as perhaps such qualities reassured her in real life.<sup>39</sup> These men love their mistresses for their beauty, but more importantly for their ability to entertain. These heroes always want to hear "des histoires." "You must tell me stories," Charles-Edouard instructs Grace, "about what happens during your day, to amuse me. Do go on."<sup>40</sup> It is easy to imagine how the novelist, Mitford, would have spun out tales for her lover, tales that ultimately turned into *histoires* of another sort, the biographies that delighted a new generation of readers.

Perhaps, like Albertine Marel, Charles-Edouard's former mistress in *The Blessing*, she "had endless tales to spin."<sup>41</sup> It was in Mitford's biography of Pompadour that I first read of the royal mistress's unflagging efforts to find yet something else to keep the king awake after his return from hunting. Perhaps Mitford imagined herself as a similarly gifted lover continuing to amuse her king. I can see how she could write about these trials with such energy. I also now see why she has the king turn away "tears pouring down his cheeks" as Pompadour's body is carried away from Versailles, late one rainy night. Just as in the end of her novels, the hero came to appreciate the heroine, but again there is no page to turn. The story ends, and all are spared having to live out the inherent difficulties of the situation. Instead, Mitford writes: "After this a very great dullness fell upon the Château of Versailles."<sup>42</sup>

Although she briefly refers to "Col. Voltaire," in a letter to Evelyn Waugh, more often she flatly denied any connection with the principal characters of *Voltaire in Love*. "As for Emily," she wrote to Waugh, "heaven

François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010) and two memoirs: Gaston Palewski, *Mémoires d'action: 1924–1974*, ed. Eric Roussel, and *Hier et aujourd'hui: 1974* (Paris: Plon, 1975). The biography mentions Nancy Mitford, and the two memoirs, only in passing. See also Lisa Hilton, *The Horror of Love: Nancy Mitford and Gaston Palewski in Paris and London* (New York: Pegasus, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> Mitford, *The Blessing*, 395, 410–411.

<sup>40</sup> Mitford, *The Blessing*, 367.

<sup>41</sup> Hastings, *Nancy Mitford*, on Albertine Marel from *The Blessing*, 199.

<sup>42</sup> Nancy Mitford, *Madame de Pompadour* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 308.

preserve ONE from being like her.”<sup>43</sup> A comparison with Voltaire might have pleased her. Like him, she mocked her own society, in a style as laconic and witty as he described his own. She admired him for “[H]is intolerance of stupidity and superstition, his hatred of cruelty, his love of teasing and his desire to be read.”<sup>44</sup> She could have been describing herself. Like Voltaire, Mitford loved to take on the most hallowed institutions of her day. Not the Church, but almost its equivalent in the England of the first half of the twentieth century, the University of Oxford. She sees it as an anachronistic community of men once meant to be celibate, now married with the result that “dons are quite used to bad food but become paralyzed in mixed company.”<sup>45</sup> These wives “all had the same cross, white guinea-pig look, thought alike, and led the same sort of lives ... Their dresses were in shades of biscuit, and so were they.” Some couldn’t even raise their children properly, “the arty-crafty ones with modern ideas, and ghastly children who had never been thwarted or cleaned up by the hand of a nanny.”<sup>46</sup>

Mitford loathed the United States: mighty, victorious, and rich in the 1950s world of postwar Europe, when orange juice was still a luxury in London. With Voltaire’s gift for the outrageous and provocative, she delighted in taunting America’s citizens whom she saw as boorish and annoying. She once remarked to an interviewer “Isn’t Dulles a wonderful name for an American?” And then went on to compliment John Wilkes Booth for making “one less” of them with his assassination of Lincoln.<sup>47</sup> Americans provide the caricatures for the subplot of *The Blessing*. Carolyn and Hector Dexter—yes, that really is his name—are the know-it-all couple. Carolyn is the English head-girl grown up with a new mission and new groups to bully. Hector is the US representative for the Marshall Plan, spouting platitudes and pontificating about the remedy for all the world’s problems: “a bottle of Coca Cola on every table in England, on every table in France ...” And not just the literal bottle. “When I say a bottle of Coca Cola,” he continues, “I mean it metaphorically speaking, I mean it as an outward and visible sign of something inward and spiritual, I mean it as if each Coca Cola bottle contained a djinn, and as if that djinn [sic]

<sup>43</sup> Mitford to Evelyn Waugh, October 19, 1956, *Letters*, 357.

<sup>44</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> Mitford, *Love in a Cold Climate*, 260.

<sup>46</sup> Mitford, *Love in a Cold Climate*, 258, 259, 263.

<sup>47</sup> As quoted in Acton, *Nancy Mitford*, 100.

was our great American civilization ready to spring out of each bottle and cover the whole global universe with its great wide wings.”<sup>48</sup> Mitford’s revenge: the Dexters, unmasked as Communist spies, flee to Russia, a neat bit of nasty irony for her 1950s audience.

Her parallels to the marquise Du Châtelet are also obvious. Both came from the minor aristocracy and enjoyed all that it represented and that it once entitled its members. Mitford grew up in a typically privileged household. She told the *Daily Express* in an interview that “men didn’t matter to her as much as a maid.” Thus, she had no trouble explaining the situation when Voltaire’s valet thought Du Châtelet’s behavior immodest and provocative when he brought hot water to his partially clad employer for her bath. Mitford understood. Du Châtelet was simply indifferent to his presence: a “lackey” necessary for one’s comfort, but otherwise essentially invisible. In Mitford’s collection of essays entitled *The English Aristocracy*, published in 1955, she coined the phrase “U and non-U” to define who was “in” and who was “out” not only because of their birth, but also because of prescribed behavior, concepts Du Châtelet would have endorsed. The “Utopia,” Mitford described to a friend, Du Châtelet assumed to be reality: “[it] consists of cottagers, happy in their cottages while I am being happy in the Big House.”<sup>49</sup>

Though neither identified with other women—Mitford even referred to “my anti-feminist hobby horse,”<sup>50</sup> both criticized the constraining traditions of their cultures, that intended women to be decorative, concerned only with “les choses frivoles [frivolous things],” as Du Châtelet described it. Both women worked hard to make up for the consequences of their lack of formal education. I like to believe that Mitford’s conversations with her lawyer about the nature of the *parlement* were similar to Du Châtelet’s efforts to seek out the expertise of Paris’ leading mathematicians. Mitford and Du Châtelet both loved clothes and the activities that accompanied creating an elegant wardrobe. Mitford’s trips to the best Paris couturiers and her Dior dress had their equivalent in Du Châtelet’s crimson satin brocaded court dress from her *marchand de mode*, Alexandre. For Mitford, as for Du Châtelet, the state to be avoided at all costs was “ennui,” boredom. She wrote her friend Lady Pamela Berry, from Paris in April 1951: “... [it] is a really terrible complaint, I know because I’ve

<sup>48</sup> Mitford, *The Blessing*, 437.

<sup>49</sup> Quote in Hastings, *Nancy Mitford*, 224.

<sup>50</sup> See Mitford to Waugh February 24, 1953, *Letters*, 306.

suffered so much from it in my life. One of the reasons for liking to live here, I am never bored ...”<sup>51</sup> Then there were all the amusements Paris had to offer, evenings with the beautiful society hostesses, Lady Diana Cooper and Dolly Radziwill, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Jean Cocteau, assorted French political leaders and a prince or princess or two. Mitford makes Du Châtelet sound like an amusing member of her own twentieth-century circle: “Everybody was entranced by Emilie, her singing at supper, her dancing at the ball and the enormous quantities of food she ate.”<sup>52</sup>

It must be Mitford’s new sense of identification that led her to defend Du Châtelet. That June of 1956 when Mitford described the marquise to her sister Diana as “extraordinary,” she also complained about the unfairness of Du Châtelet’s historical reputation. “All the French books about them entirely overlook the fact that she was so learned that even modern physicists know about her work. She translated Newton—imagine it.”<sup>53</sup> Mitford particularly noted the instances where others had been given credit for Du Châtelet’s writings. For example, Voltaire could not be the author of the *Foundations of Physics*: “This, of course, simply shows up the stupidity of those who believed it. Voltaire could no more have done her work than she could have written [the poem] *Le Mondain*.”<sup>54</sup> She bristles at the suggestion that Du Châtelet was not the sole author of the *Foundations*. “The whole thing was unfair because all the scientists knew that Mme Du Châtelet was perfectly competent to write such a book.” Despite Mitford’s denial of any feminist sentiment, she continued: “Perhaps they would have been more ready to take her side, had she not been a woman.”<sup>55</sup>

I admit, I did not expect Mitford in her eighteenth-century pseudo-Kinsey report to dwell on Du Châtelet’s intellectual accomplishments, identification or not. The book is, after all, thanks to Evelyn Waugh, entitled *Voltaire in Love*.<sup>56</sup> What did surprise me, however, was my realization

<sup>51</sup> Mitford to Pamela Berry, April 9, 1951, *Letters*, 276.

<sup>52</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 192.

<sup>53</sup> Mitford to Mosley, June 25, 1956, *Letters*, 354.

<sup>54</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 180–181.

<sup>55</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 163.

<sup>56</sup> Mitford rejected his more facetious suggestions like *Brain & Heart*, *Sense & Sentiment*, and “Emily’s thorny bed.” Besterman had suggested *Love & Genius*. See Waugh to Mitford, October 23, [1956], *Letters of Mitford and Waugh*, 399; Mitford to Waugh, October 19, 1956, 398.

that it really should be called *The Marquise in Love*. Just about halfway through, when the focus should shift to Voltaire's new affair, with his niece, Mme. Denis, it stubbornly refuses to do so. Instead Mme. Du Châtelet's affair with her young army officer-poet, Saint-Lambert, consumes the narrative, rather like that moment when novelists claim their characters just start acting on their own. And it is a much better story than the sad images of Voltaire in exile, holding court, but growing old with his shrewish, much younger companion. In contrast to this dreary succession, Mitford allows the story to follow Du Châtelet and the younger man, "the grand passion of her life." In one of a number of letters written from Paris in May and June of 1749 to Saint-Lambert, the marquise wrote: "I adore you, I don't know, I don't feel, I don't see anything but that." In another letter she wrote: "I love you ... *à la folie*," and "it's certainly madness, but it is for life."<sup>57</sup> Mitford could have written the words herself. This is Linda in *The Pursuit of Love* after her time in Paris with Fabrice, "feeding on honey-dew": "I've had eleven months of perfect and unalloyed happiness, very few people can say that."<sup>58</sup>

All of the biographies of Du Châtelet lead to these events of the last year, the affair, and her death at 42 as consequence of childbirth. It is very much like one of those stories where you know the ending, but not how the characters will get to it. Much like one of Mitford's own, in fact. For, as in her novels, Mitford chooses to end the story abruptly with Du Châtelet's death. The rest of Voltaire's life is consigned to one page that he has to share with the subsequent activities of Saint-Lambert. In *The Pursuit of Love* where the heroine Linda has her great affair and then dies in childbirth, Mitford carefully laid the groundwork: a difficult first pregnancy, the warning never to have another baby, the grand affair, pregnancy and death. So with Du Châtelet, Mitford has the end in view from the very earliest pages. Imagining the romance and the death gives her no problems, but this denouement offers its own challenge. Mitford has to explain how Du Châtelet could have turned from the great Voltaire to a minor *philosophe* and forgotten poet like Saint-Lambert. Mitford makes the misogynist's choice. Like those of earlier eras who denigrated intellectual women with an independent claim to recognition, Mitford, right at the beginning of the book, identifies the fatal flaw in Du Châtelet's character.

<sup>57</sup>For a description of Du Châtelet's affair with Saint-Lambert, see Zinsser, *Emilie Du Châtelet*, chapter 6.

<sup>58</sup>Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 126.

She dismisses the marquise in one simple sentence: “she always had something of the whore.” Mitford then attributes every affair she can think of to Du Châtelet, even some that neither the marquise’s contemporaries nor other biographers ever suggested.<sup>59</sup>

But this characterization presents another dilemma: how could a “whore” be worthy of Voltaire? In a set of sentences that now seem ridiculous, Mitford imagines Du Châtelet’s transformation from “whore” to devoted lover: at 27, she “settled down to the study of mathematics. She was waiting, unconsciously, for that revolution which often comes in the life of a woman no longer young & directs the future course of her existence.”<sup>60</sup> That “revolution” of course, was Voltaire. Here Mitford’s previous plots, both real and imagined, have intruded and altered the past. Twenty-seven was not old in the eighteenth century, and not even the nastiest of Du Châtelet’s contemporaries ever described her as “waiting.” If anything, her vivacity and energy had increased with the new intellectual excitements of her life. Rather, the telling is reminiscent of Mitford’s own life. I see her recalling images of her friends in the 1930s, the aging debutantes she mocks in her novels, or of their mothers in late middle age, dieting, coloring their hair, having their faces tucked. Mitford had her disastrous marriage, but came away from it with her youthful romantic fantasy intact—to be Lady Caroline Lamb swept away by Lord Byron. Mitford was like Linda in the *Pursuit of Love* who “proceeded to fritter away years of her youth, with nothing whatever to show for them ... all was frippery and silliness.” Past the age to be interested in “casual affairs,” “she is, subconsciously, waiting for an irresistible temptation.”<sup>61</sup> And the events of the novel mirrored reality. In 1942 Mitford was 38, marking time, considering that she might no longer be young, and then the dream came true: “the great love of her life,” Gaston Palewski appeared.<sup>62</sup> Those opening lines of *Voltaire in Love* suggest her drama: “The love of Voltaire and the Marquise du Châtelet was not an ordinary love. They were not ordinary people.”

Unlike her admission of Palewski’s similarity to Louis XV, Mitford’s published correspondence contains only one explicit comparison between Palewski and Voltaire: “Voltaire is so like you. No heart ... He collected

<sup>59</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 27; see also 58, 184.

<sup>60</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 28.

<sup>61</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 71, 72.

<sup>62</sup> Phrase from Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 110.

PICTURES.” Like Linda’s Fabrice de Sauveterre, Palewski ignored Mitford whenever his business—his service to de Gaulle—called him away. He never said he loved her. Given her sisters’ ties to German fascism, he feared any public acknowledgment of their liaison. However, like the novels’ heroines, Mitford accepted “these closed doors,” and imagined herself as “philosophical about it and thankful for the happiness she did receive.”<sup>63</sup> She stayed in Paris, her apartment on the rue Monsieur only a few minutes from his, so that she could “run in & out” whenever he wished. Like the heroines in her novels, she always wanted to be with him and so she waited for him to appear on the way to somewhere else, or to summon her for a brief visit as he dressed to go out with others.<sup>64</sup> In September of 1954, she explained to him her refusal of the Hollywood screenwriter’s contract: “Dearest, so I decided against Hollywood after 2 days of slight hysteria. I realized that it’s not a question of whether you need me or not—the point is I can’t live without you.”<sup>65</sup>

Thus, Mitford understands Du Châtelet’s situation and her behavior after the excitement of the first years of the marquise’s affair with Voltaire had been lost. Mitford sees the danger signs. The lovers disagree: Du Châtelet favors Leibniz, Voltaire does not. “Her thought was beginning to run counter to that of her lover, so unusual in a woman.”<sup>66</sup> Du Châtelet did not leave Voltaire when he was thoughtfully neglectful in his flirtation with Frederick of Prussia, when his affections cooled, not even when he began his sexual liaison with his niece. Mitford explains: “Any other woman would have detached herself long ago, but Emilie’s sensibilities could not be extinguished and she will never be reasonable.”<sup>67</sup> Du Châtelet’s inability to be “reasonable” then becomes the theme for the description of the affair with Saint-Lambert. She is unreasonable in her love for another, yes, but Voltaire has been cruel. As Mitford explains with uncharacteristic sympathy: “Emilie’s betrayal of Voltaire was spectacular: his of her was fundamental.”<sup>68</sup>

In 1956 Mitford was the first of Du Châtelet’s biographers to know of Voltaire’s affair with Denis, and to have access to the letters he wrote to her. Although they are just notes, most of them about arrangements or the

<sup>63</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 122; see also Acton, *Nancy Mitford*, on this attitude, 190.

<sup>64</sup> See Hastings, *Nancy Mitford*, 173, 203.

<sup>65</sup> Mitford to Palewski, September 1954, *Letters*, 330.

<sup>66</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 132.

<sup>67</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 207.

<sup>68</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 263.

brief affectionate greeting, they do show just how “fundamental” the deception must have been, and how much Du Châtelet would have had to accept. I guess it should not surprise Mitford’s readers that she chose to ignore Voltaire’s “betrayal,” going from niece in the afternoon to Du Châtelet in the late evening. Instead, Mitford focuses on Du Châtelet’s grand passion and makes of it a tragedy, bordering on the comic. Mitford tells this half of the story in her best acerbic tone: “Mme Du Châtelet, excessive in everything, now behaved with an ardour embarrassing to contemplate.”<sup>69</sup> The letters they exchanged are “these endless scribblings” and “Neither lover comes well out of them: Saint-Lambert is shown to have been cold, neglectful, not in fact, loving; Mme Du Châtelet possessive, self-pitying and a terrible nag.”<sup>70</sup> Mitford’s letters to her own lover, Palewski, are often notes, short, pleading, humiliating, just what she finds so easy to criticize in Du Châtelet’s. As early as 1943, Mitford misses his letters, like “life-giving oxygen” for her. In August of 1950, she wrote: “Oh dear darling this silence! I tried to ring you up but no reply, so I hope you are on holiday somewhere but I mind terribly now knowing. Do just send a post card won’t you saying I AM ALIVE AND WELL so that I can read it.” She was in England in October of 1955 and wanted him to join her: “If you don’t come, I implore you to send me a word there to say how you are. I worry & fuss & fidget about you.”<sup>71</sup>

I assume it was the writer, Mitford, who made the shift to the *Marquise in Love*. She knew from experience that this change in emphasis led to a neater ending. Like the heroines of the novels, Du Châtelet died, and Mitford could avoid playing out the rest of the Kinsey plot: with Voltaire and his niece, she and Saint-Lambert, and so on. But, Du Châtelet was not a tragic figure. The publication of her translation and commentary on Newton would have only enhanced her already considerable reputation as a *philosophe*, a mathematician, and physicist. The tragedy was Du Châtelet’s early death, not her life. No, it was Mitford who had to live to the end of the story. In 1957 when *Voltaire in Love* appeared, she was 57. It was the success she hoped and led her publishers to lavish assistance for her “coffee table” biography of *The Sun King: Louis XIV at Versailles* (1966), and for her *Frederick the Great* (1970). Evidently, given the density of the text, she

<sup>69</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 261.

<sup>70</sup> Mitford, *Voltaire in Love*, 287.

<sup>71</sup> Mitford to Palwewski, May 1943, as quoted in Bernot, *Gaston Palewski*, 125; Mitford to Palewski, *Letters*: August 15, 1950, 261; October 1955, 345.

wanted to be taken more seriously as a historian, but her gift for witty, cruel characterization and her snobbish prejudices enliven what otherwise might become boring old-fashioned history. Harper & Row also provided Mrs. Joy Law, whose acknowledgment by Mitford probably barely begins to describe what she did—compiling the rich selection of over 150 illustrations for each book and perhaps doing much of the research for the biography of Frederick when Mitford was dying from a rare, very painful form of Hodgkin's disease.

However, even these successes failed to give her a happy ending. Her Colonel continued to disappoint her. Fearing that his numerous concurrent affairs with married women might bring publicity, Palewski had asked and was granted the French ambassadorship to Rome. From 1957 until 1962, he allowed Mitford only one discreet visit a year. Recalled to Paris to take office with de Gaulle, he remained attentive but like Voltaire, a companion more than a lover. In 1969 he married one of his younger mistresses. Mitford's friends died. As one character put it in *Love in a Cold Climate*: "It's the dropping off the perches, ... I've always dreaded when that begins. Soon we shall all have gone ..." <sup>72</sup> Despite a successful reissuing of her novels in 1956, Mitford watched her kind of story fall out of fashion by the end of the next decade. Linda in *The Pursuit of Love* seems to have expressed her fear: "I don't want to be a literary curiosity." <sup>73</sup> Had there been only her fiction, she would have become such a footnote. The plots seem dated. The characters she mocks are very far from people's understanding or experience today. Ironically, in the biographies, the anachronisms seem part of the atmosphere and are not as jarring. The plots, though skewed by her preconceptions, omissions, and lack of information, follow real events and though sometimes fantastic, never sound contrived, and always the style flows across the pages and takes over.

This ability to tell a story in a writing voice so similar to the way she spoke in conversation and wrote in her letters—that brittle English tone and phrasing—this voice was her great gift. Raymond Mortimer, in his review for the London *Times*, explained it: "Your narrative style is so peculiar, so breathless, so remote from what has ever been used for biography ... I feel as if an enchantingly clever woman was pouring out the story to me on the telephone." <sup>74</sup> "Pouring out the story to me on the telephone,"

<sup>72</sup> Mitford, *Love in a Cold Climate*, 225.

<sup>73</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 147.

<sup>74</sup> As quoted in Hastings, *Nancy Mitford*, 219.

like the twentieth-century Scheherazade her heroines compared themselves to, when once again asked by their dashing lover to “racontez des histoires.” Grace asks Charles-Edouard in *The Blessing*:

“And when I am old like your grandmother, will you love me still?”

“It depends.”

“How horrid. Depends on what?”

“It all depends, entirely, on you.”<sup>75</sup>

“*Histoires*,” Fabrice told Linda in *The Pursuit of Love*, “are only of interest when they are true, or when you have made them up specially to amuse me.”<sup>76</sup> History gave Mitford a few more stories to amuse and engage her “tall, dark and elegant Frenchman,” and to hold his interest as she continues to hold mine.

<sup>75</sup> Mitford, *The Blessing*, 341.

<sup>76</sup> Mitford, *Pursuit of Love*, 106.

PART V

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Conclusion



## Conclusion: Understanding Women Historians' Lives and Scholarly Reputations Both Within and Outside the Academy

*Bonnie G. Smith*

Women historians have wandered through multiple genres in their writing, relied on diverse sources, and studied various subject matter. As a group, they have also moved from amateur to professional status across the past 200 years. Most of the women discussed in this volume did not enjoy the normal academic trajectory that men increasingly had: that is, a tenure-track appointment supported by a regular salary. Until recently, women's engagement with and approach to history followed amateur pathways associated with writing books and essays as a means of support. Indeed, only one historian in this collection had anything approaching a conventional academic appointment, though some held irregular university positions or were appointed at an age several decades older than that of men. Finally, as usual with women historians outside of academia, many had eventful and otherwise interesting lives or faced daunting personal and career challenges—the latter mostly because they were women.

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The lives of these “irregulars” or “amateurs” displayed great enthusiasm for history; only occasionally did they receive advanced professional training; and they experienced peculiar relations with the academy that were particular to women. Some, like Nancy Mitford, had virtually no training except for what she provided herself. As Amy Erikson says of the hard-working Ellen McArthur in the late nineteenth century, women in this period rarely had doctorates, and even half a century later very few women did either. Women might write volumes of history either on their own or under their husband’s name, with their sisters, often without direct access to archives in the early days or without jobs or public critical acclaim to push them toward success.<sup>1</sup> Arvède Barine was not alone in employing male researchers to access the many repositories that would not admit women.

Those who *were* praised for their scholarship, thoroughness, or style, lacked the institutional ties that perpetuated their renown or enshrined their names as valuable members of the community of serious, permanently important intellectuals. Caroline Robbins was the only scholar among this book’s writers who followed what might be considered a male trajectory in terms of having a full-time academic appointment.<sup>2</sup> Usually busy making money to support themselves, few had time to craft an autobiography or memoir that would keep them and their work in the public eye. Nor did they have students who did so for them, the exception being Caroline Robbins’ appreciation of her mentor Helen Maud Cam in 1960. The general pattern and problem of missing biographies is first raised in this volume once again with Ellen McArthur who mentored many women. One understands how those mentored forgot or avoided mentioning her even in the acknowledgments to their books: while fully present in their lives, women were invisible and secondary practitioners of the historian’s craft.

Many also lacked the professional networks that recognized women’s value enough to insert them into the historiographical canon, and of course many wrote outside of the canon altogether. There were exceptions: Arvède Barine, Julia Spruill, C.C. Stopes, Caroline Robbins, and Ruth Benedict all had scholarly connections of varying degrees of helpfulness. C. V. Wedgwood, Nancy Mitford, Isabel de Madariaga, Louise

<sup>1</sup> Even Margaret Judson, trained at Harvard and a full-time academic, had a guard posted by her in a British library.

<sup>2</sup> There are exceptions among the amateurs too, such as Barbara Tuchman who is still quoted today. Others are promoted by publicists and manage large staffs of researchers such as Doris Kearns Goodwin. Both of these authors had notable relatives in the US presidential administration.

de Kéralio, and Alice Clark had a range of mentors but none that provided ease of entry into full-time employment; some, such as Alice Clark and C. V. Wedgwood, did not even seek such employment. When they did write about now canonical topics such as economics (McArthur and Clark, for example), the law (in the case of Stopes), the advance of liberalism (Robbins), or the Thirty Years War (Wedgwood), these works did not automatically credential them as major historians even though Wedgwood received much acclaim. There were flares of attention for some, and for others such as Barine, Wedgwood, and Mitford even real renown as their books appeared. They received fan mail and fame, even if not long lasting. Even with public recognition, however, professional networks still failed to recognize them in an enduring way although some were accepted into honorary professional societies. There was also scorn: that Barine was “an elegant vulgarizer” is just one example of the dismissive reaction to women’s writing that remains to this day. Again, the cult of celebrity and the use of marketing agents have pumped up the occasional woman to new heights. Doris Kearns Goodwin, despite her massive plagiarism and “outsider” status, is often introduced on television and to large public audiences as “the greatest living historian.” The professional and pathbreaking historian Lucy Maynard Salmon of Vassar College, though the subject of a biography by an admiring student in 1943, only received an entry in the *American National Biography* in 2016, later even than McArthur’s entry in the *DNB* in the 1990s! That said, the consummate amateur scholar Leslie Stephen, father to Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, in fact did enshrine some women amateurs in the British *Dictionary of National Biography*. It is not as if the women intellectuals and researchers in this volume were completely unknown. Many of them had good contacts and were recognized even beyond them. Most of them had friends in power, while Wedgwood, Mitford, and Alice Clark came from wealthy, even celebrated families. A few—Châtelet, Spruill, and Wedgwood—were members of an intelligentsia, but a diverse one. Still, none could erase the fact of gender that in the long run automatically relegated them to the category of second rate. That said, Ruth Benedict, not a historian, is still a luminary some seventy years after her death. Emilie Du Châtelet, again an intellectual rather than a historian, is newly remembered for her translation of Newton’s *Principia*. Most of those in this volume are recently remembered, while in the subjects they studied they are now seen as pioneers.

What then did these successive generations of women study that makes them appear so worthy in our own times? The interesting point is that they generally studied topics that were or have become of major importance. Some, such as Madariaga, pored over the accomplishments of Catherine the Great to study her politics and ideas, uniquely avoiding her personal intimacies—the theme of earlier studies—in favor of her policies. Stopes sought out legal documents and political papers as sources of the prohibition of women holding office and voting, while Robbins published *The English Commonwealthman*—a study of those who advanced liberal ideas. Her book, like Madariaga's, was widely acclaimed. What was more important than Julia Spruill's study of the American South or Flexner's biography of Mary Wollstonecraft and studies of US feminism more generally? As Anna Suranyi rightly notes, Spruill's investigation of Southern women's lives was reborn with the rebirth of feminism and women's history in the 1970s and 1980s. The variety is quite striking as is the pivotal nature of many of the questions these works address. Still, most, though not all, failed to make it into the canon of enduringly important works. Many had to be and were revived.

Why did these women study and write? Whitney Walton contends that Arvède Barine studied history as “a means to explore women's agency and achievements as an alternative to feminist activism. Writing history enabled her to exercise her reason, conduct research, and engage with scientific theories of her time through the investigation of unconventional and influential women in the past.” Walton sees her as working in this way in order not to engage with feminism as a positive force because she had so many negative reactions to it. Almost a century later Madariaga similarly denied being interested in Catherine as a woman or because she herself was a woman. Other writers were expressly feminist in the topics they engaged. One has the image of Stopes chewing up pencil after pencil and opening file after file over many years to solve the mystery of why, although there was direct/indirect prohibition of women voting or holding office in 1832, women were still denied those rights in her era. Her motivation was feminist, as was that of McArthur and decades later that of Flexner. Louise de Kéralio before the French Revolution was an anthologist of women's writing, but as the Revolution unfolded she wrote diatribes against Queen Marie Antoinette and other women.

The struggle for black women's rights and human rights more broadly inspired another author not in this collection but whose work exemplifies commitment to illuminating the past. African American Anna J. Cooper

(1858–1964) embarked on her successful quest to earn a PhD in history at the age of 56. Cooper, a high school teacher of Latin and the fourth black woman to receive a doctorate, and who defended her thesis at the Sorbonne in 1925, “L’Attitude de la France à l’égard de l’esclavage pendant la Révolution” (The Attitude in France regarding Slavery during the French Revolution), reminds us of several common features of amateurs’ situation. For one, the widowed Anna J. Cooper cared for five children because of the death of their parents—one of whom was a relative of hers. She also wrote her thesis in a foreign language and made quite a number of trips to French archives, all the while arranging as a single parent for childcare and supporting everyone with her full-time job. Along the way the context for her research was one of racism, sexism, and financial precarity, yet also one where a mentor now and again championed her work. Finally and most important Anna Cooper’s accomplishments show just how prescient or pathbreaking amateurs could be. It is only in the past decade, or perhaps a bit more, that the Haitian Revolution and the issue of slavery during the French Revolution have become topics too important to be ignored in teaching the Age of Revolution or the history of the Atlantic world.

There were more sub-rosa examples of crypto-feminist, outright feminism, and reformist intent behind histories undertaken by amateurs. Nancy Mitford, Judith Zinsser maintains, though writing a book entitled *Voltaire in Love*, actually produced a study focused on Voltaire’s companion, Emilie Du Châtelet. For all her problems with feminism, Barine wrote an enormous amount about women and about gender, the latter in her work on male neurasthenics—a condition worrisome to fin-de-siècle militarists who feared a crisis in masculinity. Eighteenth-century liberalism, as researched by Robbins, became the intellectual backbone of the modern women’s movement in the West.

One characteristic displayed along the rocky path of writing history was women historians’ doggedness—apparent in the biographies of the twelve women in this volume. Many were self-supporting and thus tireless workers: Barine turns to writing after her family’s financial difficulties; C.C. Stopes was always hard up for funds because of the ill health of both her husband and a disabled daughter. Though a handful were backed by family resources at least to some extent, the need for funds to be a historian was often extreme. Aside from the quest for funds to support themselves, woman amateur historians without jobs were relentless in pursuit of their subject to the point of monomania. Once again, C.C. Stopes is a

primary example of assiduous seeking of funds and of facts. There was of course variety, but the relentless determination to write history is palpable in these essays.

Another dogged amateur, though not an actual writer, Marie-Louise Bouglé, born in 1883, spent virtually her entire adult life devoted to collecting books and ephemera on the politics of women in her day and on the history of the feminist movement. I bring her up to point out the extraordinary financial and intellectual inventiveness of these seekers after history. When she died at age 53 in 1936, she had amassed close to 7000 books, 27 meters (that is, close to 100 feet) of files, dossiers on hundreds of feminists, the accounts of fifteen or more feminist congresses, artifacts, photographs, and other unique historical material. To finance her collection she worked two jobs—first as a secretary (for which she qualified by going to night school and learning several languages) and second as an accountant for a restaurant which paid her in free meals. She reportedly wore the same skirt for eight years also in the cause of the history of women. Bouglé opened a room in her apartment so that scholars could consult her amazing collection of sources. When she married at age 50, her husband helped care for her collection and after her death, finally succeeded in donating it to a library. The Historical Library of the City of Paris accepted it, but it remained uncatalogued for decades. The excuse for the lack of interest in obtaining or cataloguing what has turned out to be a unique and valuable collection was that it had “little of interest.”

All of these efforts—from those of Louise de Kéralio to those of Alice Clark and Julia Cherry Spruill—suddenly burst onto the scene once again almost as new productions with the feminism and rebirth of women’s history from the late 1960s on. It was still not plain sailing. The more professionalized and better organized male academics literally told women to go back home; additionally they called women’s history a third- or fourth-rate enterprise. Still, Alice Clark’s study of women’s work virtually compelled aspiring historians of women to stay the course; Julia Spruill’s study of Southern women opened pathways that were said not to exist. My teacher of Renaissance and Reformation and editor of the papers of a Renaissance Italian pope, Leona Gabel (1895–1980), took up writing a biography of Anna J. Cooper. In this regard, though a professional with a doctorate, she followed an amateur’s twisted intellectual path similar to that of Barine, Stopes, and Mitford: that is, from noble seventeenth-century women to neurotic nineteenth-century men (Barine); Shakespeare to women’s legal rights (Stopes); and novels such as *Christmas Pudding* to

a study of Voltaire (Mitford). The breakthroughs in women's history by these pioneers, indeed its creation as a distinct field, were often made more palatable by designating such efforts as "recovering the voiceless" or historicizing humanity as a whole.

Eleanor Flexner of course was part of the transition to women's history's adoption by the university as well as by a committed amateur and activist. *Century of Struggle* (1959) unusually united in the same book the story of black and white women's labor activism and their struggle for political rights. Like Bouglé, Flexner was a collector of primary materials and like most of the other writers in this book an assiduous researcher. Mentored by a renowned father and by his colleagues, Flexner was usually on the lookout for funds as she moved from cause to cause. Her book, however, was one spark that made historians, especially women of this generation, see things differently and take discarded works and topics seriously.

From the profession, then, work by women historians became transformative and indeed revolutionary. Christiane Klapish-Zuber's interpretation of fifteenth-century Italian lives showed patriarchy, not individualism, as the accompaniment to mercantile development. Her ability to decipher the gross subordination of women at the foundation of the system stems, one author suggests, from women intellectuals' positioning at the margins of society and power themselves. From that vantage point, they make breakthroughs that men do not, among other things by seeing important details that men overlook. Others such as Frances Yates took detail in revolutionary historiographical directions, crossing boundaries and working to understand "the other." The most common trend among women historians then is that they take side paths away from the mainstream and that their innovations give us a way to make generalizations as the branches merge into a mighty river called "new directions." Amateur innovation and foreshadowing has been present over the course of women's writing: whose work was more impactful in the 1970s than that of Alice Clark?

Nadia Clare Smith judges that women historians' political engagement in the topics they chose and the activism they undertook has generally been overlooked, with an emphasis instead on their cultural and social inventiveness and their focus as historians on presenting the history of women. Such is not the case, Smith finds, in her excellent study of Irish women historians and she is correct that perhaps too much has been made of the non-political in women's historical scholarship. Unlike others, Irish women eschewed women's history and went for a history of the (mostly) Irish political past. One might quibble with this judgment despite the

overwhelming evidence about Irish women. That is, for the modern period we can begin with Mlle. Lézardière and Louise de Kéralio writing during the period of the French Revolution, and continue through Daniel Stern, Stanton and Anthony, and many English and US writers. Politics is well-represented in women's work in this book. It runs the gamut from conservative to revolutionary and feminist in political inspiration not to mention the work of C. V. Wedgwood on the Thirty Years War or Leona Gabel on Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (Pius II) and Anna Cooper, and many others including the work of historical cataloguing by librarians and archivists. Some of this work, such as Viola Barnes' thesis (ultimately a major book) on British colonial policy, was so superb that it was plagiarized by senior men. At about the same time, Lilian Knowles of the London School of Economics and the University of London wrote her history of the British overseas empire. All this being said, one cannot ignore the vast numbers who in one way or another worked women into their books and essays often for political reasons.

As Hilda Smith points out in her magnificent essay in the anthology *Voices of Women Historians*, it is surprising and has been from the 1970s on that the intellectual life—the ideas and theorizing by women over the centuries—is a much neglected field, especially in the United States and especially given the attention to men who write and have written history over the past millennia. There is variation: early on—say the 1980s—it appeared that Scandinavian historians were more interested in women's intellectual history than were Americans or the British. In fact, to use a personal anecdote, an AHA article on women historians in 1984 hardly moved anyone. When I decided to add male historians to essays and finally a book, people took notice. The men in the book attracted far more general scholarly attention than did the women. Hilda Smith's question seems an excellent topic for discussion.

A newer debate might apply to all of us. Some maintain that women's history should serve as critique, not a replication of male narrative with women substituting for men. It should not—for example—seek to write women into historiography or any other kind of history for that matter. Such a replication of masculinist narrative, flipping the equation to make it feminine, shores up hierarchy and power. Rather, women's history should serve as criticism, challenging the universalist claims to truth of history generally. Others maintain that when women write history they should consider that masculinity is at work overall. Judith Zinsser's essay makes the strongest statement on behalf of the aesthetic satisfaction drawn

from Mitford's narrative. Those advocating a narrative and compensatory approach believe in the plenitude in women's lives that needs to be revealed in historical scholarship. No aspect of history should be ignored—neither women's political, social, and philosophical thought nor the daily life of parturition, work, and politics. For centuries, women historians have mostly attempted to fill in the narrative, but in fact there is commonly a critique embedded in their historical work. Take Christine de Pizan, who charts women's worthy activities. At the same time, she begins her narrative discussing her profound grief at a noted male scholar who denigrates women from many angles. She begins her account with critique, as do quite a few of the historians studied here.

For all that much has changed, most notably the number of women with full-time appointments in departments of history, it becomes apparent in *Reshaping Women's History: Voices of Nontraditional Historians* (2018) that the struggles to become a historian remain intense for many women. The first chapter alone tells a tale of a homeless mother whose husband has left her and their three children with all of thirteen cents. After having supported his college degree and arranged to obtain her own degree piecemeal, she then goes on welfare as a single mother. In the meantime, she is gathering women friends, many of whom come to work with her on books about their lives as Mexican farm workers, African-American textile workers, and others, like her, struggling to survive. Eventually author-historian Fran Buss gathers up all her hundreds of interviews to deposit at the Schlesinger Library at Harvard and, by the way, with the cooperation of some of her informant-friends, authors books so unique that they are translated into many foreign languages. Despite the tortuous paths, these twenty contemporary authors, beginning with Buss, have taken to history; the originality seen across their writing maintains the creativity of this present volume's scholars from the past.

# INDEX<sup>1</sup>

## NUMBERS AND SYMBOLS

1880–1940, 2

## A

Abram, Annie, 43, 44, 44n85, 44n86, 46, 46n104

Age of Reason, 211

*All Men and both Sexes*, 92, 93n3

Amateur, 299–301, 300n2, 303–305

*Amélie et Caroline*, 229

American Anthropology Association, 254, 261

American Association of University Women, 82, 254

American Communist Party, 195

American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), 252

American Ethnological Society, 254

American Historical Association (AHA), 5, 10, 141n12, 144, 148, 156

American Historical Association Council, 148

*The American Historical Review*, 144, 148, 156

American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), 208

*Ancien régime*, 229, 229n38

*Annales de l'éducation*, 233

Annan, Noel, 118, 118n6

Anne of Austria, 227

Anti-Semitism, 162

Aptheker, Herbert, 85, 85n49

Archdale, Helen, 119

Archibald, Constance Helen Margaret, 185

Archives de la Bastille and Archives de la Guerre, 166

*The Armada* (1959), 132

Ashley, Maurice, 133, 133n70

Auchincloss, Louis, 274

Austen, Jane, 280

*Auto-da-fé* (1946), 123, 134

<sup>1</sup>Note: Page numbers followed by ‘n’ refer to notes.

**B**

- Bachrach, Marian, 202, 203  
 Balmont, Madame de, 226  
 Bancroft, George, 126  
 Barine, Arvède, 159–179  
 Barnes, Viola, 306  
 Baxter Adams Prize, 148  
 The BBC, 117, 122, 130, 131n61  
 Behn, Aphra, 115, 115n1  
 Benedict, Stanley, 250  
 Bennett, Judith, 52, 52n13, 52n14  
 Berg, Maxine, 25, 26, 26n2, 43n80, 45, 45n96, 46n99  
 Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, 10–12, 155  
 Berry, Pamela, 282, 288  
 Besterman, Theodore, 282, 283, 289n56  
 Bibliomania, 194  
 Bibliothèque Nationale, 167, 282  
 Biographical Directory of American Men of Science, 254  
 Biological essentialism, 263  
 “Black legend,” 227  
 Blanche of Castile, 227  
*The Blessing* (1951), 276, 280, 285–287, 285n37, 288n48, 289n39–41, 295, 295n75  
 Blumenbach, Friedrich, 269  
 Boas, Franz, 248, 249, 251–254, 256, 257, 257n26, 260n35, 260n36, 262, 263, 266, 270–272  
 Bodleian library, 198  
 Bologna Academy of Science, 277  
 Booth, John Wilkes, 287  
 Botany, 105, 106  
 Bouglé, Marie-Louise, 304, 305  
 Bournemouth Collegiate School, 139  
 Bowen, Elizabeth, 118n6, 121  
 Bright, John, 58, 64  
 British Association, 93, 104  
*British Freewomen: Their Historical Privilege*, 92  
*British Friend*, 62  
 British Museum, 117, 128  
*Brotherhood of Man*, 265, 267, 270  
 Brougham, Lord, 110  
 Bryan, William Jennings, 76  
 Bryn Mawr College, 137, 137n1, 141, 142, 142n19, 144, 153, 156  
 Bunzl, Matti, 252, 258n30, 260, 260n35, 261n37, 271n63  
 Burgundians and Armagnacs, 243  
 Buss, Fran, 307  
 Butterfield, Herbert, 128, 128n49
- C**  
 C & J Clark, 49, 59, 62, 65, 71  
 Cam, Helen Maud, 140, 141, 300  
 Cambridge Local Lectures Syndicate, 30  
 Cambridge Training College for Women Teachers, 34, 40, 41, 47  
 Cambridge University, 8, 13, 14, 26–30, 32–35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43–45, 47–49, 58, 118, 134, 135, 139, 148, 154  
 Campbell, Mildred, 156  
 Canetti, Elias, 118n8, 121n20, 122n23, 123, 123n30, 134, 135, 135n77  
 Cape, Jonathan, 121, 122n23, 134  
 Capitalism, 49–71  
 Carlyle, Thomas, 283  
 Carpenter, Edward, 108  
 Carr, Lois Green, 80n28, 83, 83n41, 83n42, 84  
 Carter, Alice Clare, 51, 51n6, 52  
 Catherine the Great, 181–194  
 Catt, Carrie Chapman, 201  
*Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United*

- States* (1959), 17, 18, 195–196,  
 195n1, 196n3, 198, 201, 202,  
 204–206, 208–210, 214,  
 216, 305  
 Certificate in arts, 101  
 Certificates, 28, 31  
 Challon hospital, 69  
 Charles I of England, 132, 232,  
 237, 240  
 Charles II of England, 145, 238, 242  
 Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor,  
 123, 223  
 Chateau of Chambord, 139  
*Chorlton v. Lings*, 109, 110  
 Christian Science, 66  
 Christina, Queen of Sweden,  
 173, 174  
*Christmas Pudding* (1932), 279  
*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword:  
 Patterns of Japanese Culture*,  
 248n2, 254, 257  
 Civil Rights Act (1964), 248  
 Clarendon, first earl (Henry Hyde),  
 128, 129n53, 235  
 Clark, Agnes, 150  
 Clark, Evalyn A., 156  
 Cocteau, Jean, 289  
 Coke, Sir Edward, 94, 94n8, 94n9  
*Collection des meilleurs ouvrages  
 français: composés par des femmes,  
 dédiée aux femmes françaises*  
 [ *Collection of the Best French  
 Works Composed by Women,  
 Dedicated to Frenchwomen* ]  
 (1786–88), 219  
*Collection des mémoires relatifs à la  
 révolution d'Angleterre*, 232  
 Colonial Williamsburg, 83, 84  
 Columbia University, 10, 20, 251,  
 252, 254n16  
 Columbia University Teachers'  
 College, 196  
 Comparative method, 248, 256  
 Condorcet, Marie-Jean Caritat,  
 marquis de, 228, 228n33  
 Congress of American Women (CAW),  
 199, 199n11, 201, 202  
 Conrad, Joseph, 118, 118n8  
 Cooper, Anna J., 302–304, 306  
 Cooper, Lady Diana, 289  
 Cope, Esther, 153  
 Council of the Historical Society of  
 Pennsylvania, 155  
 Coward, Noël, 281  
 Craven, Avery, 9, 9n17, 10  
 Criminal Law Amendment Act, 98  
 Cultural relativism, 261  
 Cunard, Victor, 284  
 Cunningham, William, 29–34, 30n14,  
 32n25, 33n29, 36, 37, 40,  
 45–47, 45n93, 46n104
- D**  
 d'Albret, Jeanne, 238  
 d'Auvergne, Marie de la Tour,  
 240, 240n67  
 Davies, Emily, 29, 139  
 Davies, Margaret Gay, 8  
 Day-Lewis, C., 121  
 De Beer, Esmond, 132, 132n67  
 Deegan, Mary Jo, 4, 5, 5n7, 5n8  
 De Madariaga, Isabel, 181–194  
 De Madariaga, Salvador, 184, 185  
 De Meulan, Pauline, 231–233,  
 232n40, 244  
 Derby, Countess Charlotte Stanley,  
 233, 234, 236, 237  
 d'Ewes, Simon, 95  
 Devonshire, Eddy (elder Duke of  
 Devonshire), 276  
*The Diary of John Milward, Esq.*  
 (1938), 143  
*Dictionary of National Biography*, 301  
*Dictionary of Political Economy*, 32  
 Diderot, Denis, 277

“Did Women Have a Renaissance,”  
92, 92n1

*Dissertation on the Nature of Fire*  
(1739), 277

Dobu, 255, 256, 257n27

Doctor of science, 106

*The Doctrine for the Lady of the  
Renaissance*, 92, 92n2

d’Orléans, Madame the duchess, 165

Douglas, Frederick, 55

Doumic, René, 161n5, 176

Dower, 97, 97n14

Du Châtelet, Emilie (Gabrielle Emilie  
le Tonnelier de Breteuil), 274,  
276, 277n7, 280, 282–284,  
288–294, 290n57

Dudden, Arthur, 142n23, 151, 151n47

Dumas, Alexandre, 231

Dunlop, O. Jocelyn, 43, 44, 46

Dunn, Mary Maples, 149, 151, 153,  
154, 156

Dunn, Richard, 149

Durand, Marguerite, 178

Dürer, Albrecht, 270, 270n62

## E

*Early Stories*, 244

Edinburgh, 91, 101, 101n22

Edinburgh Essay Society, 101

*The Eighteenth-Century  
Commonwealthman* (1959),  
16, 137, 144, 146–148, 154,  
155, 302

Eliot, George, 173

Eliot, T. S., 118, 121

Elizabeth-Charlotte of Palatine, 170

Elizabeth I of England, 19, 221, 244

Ellis, Havelock, 108

Elsie Clews Parsons’ Southwest  
Society, 251

*The English Aristocracy* (1955), 288

English Civil Wars, 15, 19, 123,  
128–132, 220, 222, 229, 233,  
237, 239, 240

Ernot, Isabelle, 160, 160n3, 161n5,  
171, 172, 172n48, 172n49

Eugenics, 103, 112, 179

## F

Fair Employment Act, 248

Fair Employment Practices  
Commission (FEPC), 248

“False universal,” 39

Fanshawe, Ann, 241

Fell, Sarah, 63

*The Feminine Mystique*, 208, 209n42

Feminism/feminists, 10, 13, 15, 16,  
18, 39, 51, 73, 81, 84, 86, 88,  
91, 100–102, 107–109, 111,  
113, 119–120, 142, 151, 152,  
159, 160, 163, 168–178, 184,  
188, 192, 195, 196, 202,  
205–216, 225, 227, 250, 276,  
288, 289, 302–306

Fisher, H. A. L., 117

Fisher, Mary, 64, 64n76

Fletcher, Andrew, 145

Flexner, Abraham, 196

Flexner, Anne Crawford, 196

Flynn, Elizabeth Gurley, 202

Folger Shakespeare Library, 148

Forster, E. M., 121

Foster, Elizabeth Read, 156

*Foundations of Physics* (1740), 277, 289

Franco, Francisco, 198

Franco-Prussian War, 3, 161

*Frederick the Great* (1970), 273n1

Frederick the Great of Prussia,  
273, 292, 294

French Legion of Honor, 245

French Union for Women’s  
Suffrage, 245

- Friends' League for Women's Suffrage, 63, 64  
 Fronde, 161, 169, 171, 178, 222, 238, 239  
*Frondeuses*, 227, 239  
 Frost, Robert, 121
- G**
- Gabel, Leona, 304, 306  
*Galerie de femmes célèbres*, 231  
 Gay, Edwin Francis, 7, 8  
 Geertz, Clifford, 257, 257n28, 258, 269  
 George, Dorothy, 42, 42n78, 46, 46n104, 47  
*The Gender of History*, 160  
 Gerlach, Kurt Albert, 66, 67  
 Germany, German culture, 124  
 Girton College, 26–29, 31, 41, 46, 139  
*Girton College Register*, 27, 46  
 Gooch, G. P., 275  
 Goodwin, Doris Kearns, 300n2, 301  
 Grafton, Anthony, 135, 135n78  
 Graves, Robert, 121  
 Grun, Ruth, 153  
 Guggenheim Fellowship, 144  
 Guizot, François, 219, 230–233, 242
- H**
- Hachette publishing house, 162, 237, 242n77  
 Hadassah, 200  
 Hall, Jacqueline Dowd, 81n28, 87–88, 87n55, 88n58  
 Hammersley, Vi, 282  
 Hampden, John, 126, 127  
 Handler, Richard, 250n5, 259, 259n33, 271, 271n64  
 Harper & Row, 294  
 Harrington, James, 145  
 Harrington, Michael, 212, 212n50  
 Harvard University, 137, 144  
 Hatt, Robert T., 267  
 Hemingway, Ernest, 121  
 Henry VII of England, 224  
 Herben, Stephen Joseph, 142  
 Hexter, J. H., 120, 120n16, 130n56  
*Highland Fling* (1931), 279  
 Hill, Christopher, 130, 130n58, 131  
*Histoire de la république d'Angleterre*, 232  
*Histoire d'Elisabeth, reine d'Angleterre*, 221, 221n5  
*Histoire littéraire des femmes françaises*, 221  
 Historical Association, 34, 34n34, 37–38, 40, 45  
 Historical Library of the City of Paris, 304  
*History and Feminism*, 13, 13n21  
*The History Men: The Historical Profession in England since the Renaissance* (1984), 134  
*History of France*, 234, 243n82  
*The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (1702–1704), 128  
 Hitler, Adolf, 278  
 Holloway, Thomas, 139  
 hooks, bell, 84, 84n44  
 House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), 199, 200  
 Hull House *Maps and Papers*, 4  
 Human diversity, 248, 259  
 Humanities, 261, 262, 271  
 Huntington Library, California, 148  
 Hutcheson, Francis, 143, 143n26  
 Hutcheson, Thomas, 145  
 Hutchinson, Anne, 207  
 Hutchinson, Lucy, 232–233, 237, 239–241

## I

Independent household enterprises, 50  
*In Henry's Backyard*, 265, 265n51,  
 267, 270, 270n61  
 Institute for Advanced Study,  
 Princeton, 148, 196  
 Institute for Research in the Social  
 Sciences, 77, 78, 82  
 Institute of Early American History at  
 Williamsburg, 148  
 International Congress of Women, 177  
 Intersectionality, 203

## J

Jefferson School for the Social  
 Sciences, 204  
 Johns Hopkins University, 141  
 Jones, Claudia, 198, 203–204,  
 203n25, 206, 216  
*Journal de l'homme et du citoyen*,  
 219, 226  
*Journal des savants*, 220  
*Journal of American Folklore*, 251n10,  
 253, 254  
*The Journal of Southern History*, 81  
 Joyce, James, 121  
*Jude the Obscure*, 175  
 Judson, Margaret, 156

## K

Kamenskii, Aleksandr, 182n1, 193  
 Kelly, Joan, 92, 92n1  
 Kelso, Ruth, 92, 92n2  
 Kenrick, Isabel Witte, 153  
 Kenyon, J. P., 131, 131n62, 134,  
 134n72  
 Kéralio, Louise de, 19, 20, 219–245,  
 301, 302, 304, 306  
 Kéralio, Louis-Félix Guinement  
 de, 220  
 Key, Ellen, 177

Khrushchev, Nikita, 199

Kings Bench, 99  
*The King's Peace, 1637–1641* (1955),  
 128–133  
*The King's War, 1641–1647* (1958),  
 129–131  
 Kizewetter, A. A., 188  
 Klapish-Zuber, Christiane, 305  
 Knowles, Lilian, 14  
 Kovalevsky, Sophie, 172, 172n52  
 Kwaikutl, 255, 256

## L

Lachs, Phyllis, 151, 151n50, 153  
 Lamb, Caroline, 291  
 Laprade, W. T., 147, 147n36  
 Laslett, Peter, 154  
 Lavissee, Ernest, 165  
 Lawrence, T. E., 121  
 League of Women Voters, 212  
 Legion of Honor, 159  
 Legislative Commission, 190  
 Lehman, Rosamond, 121  
 Lemlich, Clara, 207, 207n39  
 Leonard, Ellen M., 42, 42n75,  
 44, 46n104  
*Les Crimes des reines de France, depuis  
 le commencement de la monarchie  
 jusqu'à Marie-Antoinette*,  
 226, 227n29  
*Les Femmes dans l'histoire*, 220, 237,  
 239n64  
*Les Jumeaux martyrs*, 226  
 Lewis, C. S., 121  
 Lewis, Sinclair, 121  
 Lézardière, Mlle, 306  
 Lincoln, Abraham, 287  
 Lincoln School, 196  
 Lingard, John, 233  
 Linton, Ralph, 253, 254, 269, 269n60  
 Liselotte, *see* Elizabeth-Charlotte  
 of Palatine

Locke, John, 145  
 Loeb, Isidore, 162, 166n28  
 Lombroso, Cesare, 167, 167n34, 172, 173n54  
 London School of Economics (LSE), 26, 33–37  
*London Times*, 294  
 Louis XIV of France, 273  
 Louis XV of France, 276, 282, 285, 291  
*Love in a Cold Climate* (1949), 280, 281, 281n21, 281n22, 285, 287n45, 287n46, 294, 294n72  
 Lumsden, Louisa, 27

## M

McArthur, Ellen, 25–48  
 Macaulay, Rose, 121  
 Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 118, 126n42, 283  
 Mackworth, Margaret Haig, Viscountess Rhondda, 119, 120n13  
 MacPhail, Matilda, 57  
*Madame de Pompadour* (1954), 273–275, 275n4, 282, 286n42  
 Maitland, Frederick, 29, 32, 46  
 Male chauvinism, 202, 203  
 “Male persons,” 97  
 Malthus, Thomas Robert, 54  
 Manchus, 264  
 Manners, Emily, 62, 63  
 Manning, Helen Taft, 152  
 Margadant, Jo Burr, 173, 173n55  
 Marital discord, 80  
*Married Love*, 108  
 Married Women’s Property Acts, 98  
 Marshall, Alfred, 30, 30n13, 31  
 Marvell, Andrew, 140, 148, 149  
 Marxism, 127, 131  
*Mary Wollstonecraft: A Biography*, 196  
 Mattingly, Garrett, 132, 132n66

Mead, Margaret, 249, 250, 250n4, 250n5, 251n7, 251n8, 251n9, 252, 253, 253n12, 254n15, 255, 255n19, 255n20, 255n21, 256, 256n24, 257n26, 262n40  
 Medici, Catherine de, 221, 227  
 Michelet, Jules, 166, 233, 233n43  
 Mill, John Stuart, 54  
 Milton, John, 145  
 Misogyny, 133, 194  
 Mitford, Fanny, 279  
 Mitford, Jessica, 278, 278n11  
 Mitford, Nancy, 273–295  
 Molesworth, Robert, 145  
 Molyneux, William, 145  
 Montpensier, duchesse de, la Grande Mademoiselle, 159, 168  
 Moore, G. E., 118  
 Morgan, Edmund S., 146, 147, 147n35  
 Mornay, Charlotte de, 234, 234n46, 236, 241, 243, 244  
 Mornay, Philippe de, 235, 236, 241  
 Morrill Act, 3  
 Mortimer, Raymond, 284, 294  
 Mosley, Sir Oswald, 278  
*Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, 196  
 Munro, William Bennett, 7  
 Murray, Alice Effie, 42–44, 46n104  
 Musset, Alfred de, 159, 162, 166, 167–168n34, 168n35

## N

Namier, Sir Lewis Bernstein, 155, 156, 275  
 National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, 205  
 National Book Award, 210  
 National Convention, 228  
 National Defense Education Act (NDEA), 6, 6n10, 11

- National Research Council (NRC), 252  
 National Union of Women Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), 38  
 National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), 208  
 Navarre, Marguerite de, 225, 238  
 Nazi/Nazism, 120, 124, 198, 247, 270n62  
 Neale, Sir John, 119, 132  
 Neolithic Asia, 268  
 Newnham, 28, 29, 30n13, 34, 34n32  
*New Theater Magazine*, 200  
 Newton, Sir Isaac, 276, 277, 284, 289, 293  
 “New woman,” 1, 178  
 Nineteenth Amendment, 195  
 Norris, John N., 147, 147n34  
 North American Conference on British Studies, 154  
 North Carolina Normal and Industrial College (later North Carolina College for Women and eventually UNC Greensboro), 76  
 Norwich House, 34, 34n32  
*Notable American Women*, 214
- O**  
 Objectivity, 81  
 Odum, Howard, 77  
 Offen, Karen, 160, 160n4  
 Ollard, Richard, 120n14, 134, 134n74  
*Outlines of English Industrial History*, 32  
 Oxford University, 30–32, 30n13, 35, 36, 40, 48, 119, 139, 141, 149, 198, 281, 287
- P**  
 Palewski, Gaston, 274, 285–286, 286n38, 291–294, 293n71  
 Panin, Nikita, 186  
 Pankhurst, Emmeline, 110  
 Park, Marion Edwards, 141, 142, 144, 150, 153  
 Parkman, Francis, 13  
 Pasadena City College, 8  
*Patriarchalism* (1975), 154  
*Patterns of Culture*, 251, 254–257, 255n20, 256n24, 257n27, 263  
 Peel, Lady Alice, 236  
 The PEN Club and PEN International, 117  
 Penn, William, 148, 154  
 Pennington, D. H., 130  
 Peter III, 181, 191, 192  
 Phi Beta Kappa, 141  
 Philippe, Louis, 230, 232  
 Pima, 251  
 Pizan, Christine de, 223, 223n15, 224n17, 225n21, 226, 226n27, 227, 234, 239, 243, 244  
 Plumb, J. H., 132  
 Pole, J. R., 141, 141n13, 151, 151n48, 153n56, 156n64  
 Pompadour, Mme de, 282, 283, 285, 286  
 Popular Front, 199, 199n10, 201, 202, 209  
 Potemkin, Grigorii, 191  
 Power, Eileen, 14  
 Pownall, Thomas, 145  
 Primogeniture, 98  
*Principia* (1687), 276, 284  
 Privilege, 93–95, 97–99, 109, 110  
 Prix Femina, 159, 177n71  
 Prix Goncourt, 177  
 Proto-feminist, 227  
 The Public Records Office, 128  
 Pufendorf, Samuel von, 224  
 Pugachev, 189, 190  
*The Pursuit of Love* (1946), 279, 279n14, 280, 280n15, 280n17, 281n20, 282n25, 285, 285n35, 285n36, 290, 290n58, 291, 291n61, 291n62, 292n63, 294, 294n73, 295, 295n76

## Q

- Quaker, 50, 53, 62–67, 64n73  
 Quaker War Victims' Relief  
     Committee, 59  
 Queen Victoria, 139  
*Questions and Answers on the Woman  
 Question*, 205, 205n32

## R

- Race: Science and Politics*, 254, 262,  
 262n40, 263, 265, 266, 268,  
 270, 270n61  
*The Races of Mankind*, 254, 265,  
 265n51, 266, 269, 270, 270n61  
 Russell, Lady Rachel, 237, 242  
 Racism, 247–248, 257, 262–263,  
 265, 271  
 “Racism is Vulnerable,” 247  
 Radnor Historical Society, 155  
 Radziwill, Dolly, 289  
 Rational dress movement, 107  
 Redesdale, Lady Sydney Bowles, 278  
 Redesdale, Lord David Freeman-  
 Mitford, 278  
 Reform Bill of 1832, 92, 97, 110  
 “The Regulation of Wages in the  
 Sixteenth Century,” 36  
 Reinhardt, Adolph, 265  
 Renan, Ernest, 164, 165, 167  
 Representation of the People Act,  
 92, 97  
 The Representation of the People Act  
 (Equal Representation), 93  
*Reshaping Women's History: Voices of  
 Nontraditional Historians*, 307  
 Revolution of 1848, 220, 232,  
 234, 238  
*Revue Bleue, Revue des Deux Mondes,  
 Journal des Débats, Le Figaro*,  
 159, 161, 162  
*Revue Française*, 232  
 Robbins, Caroline, 137–156  
 Robbins, Lionel, 139, 139n3

- Robbins, Roland Richard, 138  
 Robeson, Paul, 201  
 Rodd, Peter, 278  
 Roman Catholicism, 209, 215  
*Room of One's Own* (1929), 277  
 Rowse, A. L., 119, 120, 121n20,  
 122n23, 131, 131n63, 133–135,  
 133n71, 134n72, 134n75  
 Royal Academy, 220  
 Royal Historical Society, 156  
 Royal Holloway College, 137n1, 139,  
 139n5, 141, 142  
 Royal Society of Literature, 102  
 Rumiantsev, General Petr, 190  
*Russia in the Age of Catherine the  
 Great*, 183, 187–189  
 Russian Empire, 181, 189  
 Rutgers University, 154  
 Rye House Plot, 242

## S

- Saint Teresa of Avila, 165  
 Salic Law, 225, 226, 226n27  
 Salmon, Lucy Maynard, 5, 301  
 Sand, George, 159, 166, 168n35, 178  
 Sapir, Edward, 250n5, 257, 258n29  
 Schapiro, Leonard, 185, 185n8  
 Schlesinger, Arthur, 78, 206, 207, 307  
 Schlesinger Library, 10, 12, 198, 206,  
 207, 307  
 Schmahl, Jeanne, 177  
 Schochet, Gordon, 154, 155  
 Schomburg Collection at the  
 New York Public Library, 206  
 School of Slavonic and East European  
 Studies, 181, 185, 186  
 Schreiner, Olive, 66, 66n85, 67  
 Scott, Ann Firor, 74, 74n2, 74n3,  
 76n4, 76n5, 76n7, 76n9, 76n10,  
 76n11, 77n12, 77n14, 77n15,  
 77n18, 78n19, 78n20, 80–  
 81n28, 82n35, 82n37, 83,  
 83n39, 83n40

- Scottish Women's Suffrage Society, 112  
 Scudéry, Madame de, 225, 226  
 Second Vatican Council, 212  
 Senior Common Rooms, 187  
 Seven Sisters colleges, 7, 137, 156  
 Sex Discrimination Act (1975), 187  
 Sexton, 99  
 Shakespeare, William, 129n53, 133, 277  
 Shaw, Charlotte, 57–61  
 Shaw studentship, 39  
 Smith, Bonnie, 140n10, 142, 142n21  
 Smith College, 148  
 Smith, Hilda Worthington, 5, 5n9  
 Smith, Nadia Clare, 305  
 Smith, William, 144  
 Smuts, Jan, 55, 61, 66, 66n84  
 Social evolutionists, 258  
 Social Science Research Council  
 (SSRC), 252  
 Société d'Histoire de France, 234  
 "Socio-psychological," 255  
*Somer's Tracts*, 235  
 Somerville College, 38, 198  
 Southern Association for Women  
 Historians, 87  
 Spanish Civil War, 185, 199, 278  
 Speaker Ban law, 85  
*The Spectator*, 130, 131  
 Spengler, Oswald, 127, 128  
*Springfield Catholic Observer*,  
 210n45, 212  
 Spruill, Corydon, 76, 84, 85n47,  
 86, 86n51  
 Staël, Mme de, 232, 239, 239n65, 243  
 Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, 204, 214  
*State Papers*, 235  
 Stephen, Leslie, 301  
 Sterns, Raymond, 129, 129n55  
 Stocking, George W., 249, 249n3,  
 250n5, 250n6, 251n9, 256,  
 256n25, 258, 258n31, 258n32,  
 260n35  
 Stopes, Charlotte Carmichael (C.C.),  
 91–113  
 Stopes, Henry, 100n20, 101, 107, 112  
 Stopes, Marie, 91, 100, 100n20, 101,  
 103–106, 104n26, 104n30,  
 107n37, 108n39, 109, 111–113,  
 111n46, 112n47, 113n48  
*Story of an African Farm*, 175  
 "Structural amnesia," 48  
 Stuart, Mary, 222  
 Study Group on Eighteenth-Century  
 Russia, 186  
*Sunday Times*, 113  
*The Sun King: Louis XIV at Versailles*  
 (1966), 273n1, 293  
 Swarthmore College, 197
- T**  
 Taft, Barbara Bradfield, 152, 154  
 Tawney, R. H., 119  
 Taylor, A. J. P., 275  
 Terrillon, Madame Octave, 163  
 Terry, Helen, 206, 215, 215n60  
 Thirsk, Joan, 26, 26n3, 48  
 Thirsk's Law, 26  
 Thirty Years War, 123, 135, 301, 306  
*The Thirty Years War* (1938), 115,  
 119, 135  
 Thomas, Carey M., 141  
 Thomas, Hugh, 283  
*Thomas Wentworth, First Earl of*  
*Strafford* (1935), 119  
 Thrupp, Sylvia L., 156  
 Tillet, Gladys Avery, 86, 86n55  
*Time and Tide*, 117, 117n3,  
 121, 121n18  
*The Times Literary Supplement*, 117  
 Tissot, Ernest, 161, 161n5, 164,  
 164n18, 164n19, 168, 168n36  
 Tolkien, J. R. R., 121  
 Tönnies, Ferdinand, 67–71

Tout court, 194  
 Toynbee, Arnold J., 127, 128  
 Trevelyan, G. M., 57, 58, 118, 119,  
 121, 126, 126n42, 132–134,  
 134n73  
 Trevor-Roper, Hugh, 130  
*The Trial and Execution of Charles I*  
 (1964), 135  
 Trinity College, Dublin, 35  
 Tripos, 28, 28n7, 29, 32  
 Tuberculosis, 53, 56, 59, 61, 69  
*Two Republican Tracts,*  
*Plato Redivivus by Henry*  
*Neville and An Essay on Roman*  
*Government by Walter Moyle*  
 (1969), 148

**U**  
 University of British Columbia, 147  
 University of London, 137, 139,  
 140n11, 141, 142, 156  
 University of Michigan,  
 141, 144, 156  
 University of Munich, 106  
 University of North Carolina, Chapel  
 Hill, 76, 85

**V**  
 Vassar College, 250  
 Versailles, 273, 275, 286  
 Vincens, Louise-Cécile, 159  
*Voices of Women Historians*, 306  
 Voltaire, 274, 276, 278, 280–284,  
 287–291, 293, 294  
 Voltaire Foundation, 283  
*Voltaire in Love* (1957),  
 273, 274, 276–278, 276n6,  
 278n10, 282, 282n26,  
 286, 287n44, 289, 289n54,  
 289n55, 291, 291n59, 291n60,  
 292n66–70, 293

**W**  
 Wage labor, 70  
 Wallas, Graham, 33, 35  
 Walsh, Lorena, 80n28, 83, 83n41,  
 83n42, 84  
 Wars of Religion, 220, 229, 238  
 Waugh, Evelyn, 276, 281, 286,  
 287n43, 289  
 Wedgwood, Cicely Veronica, 115–135  
 Wedgwood, Iris Veronica Pawson,  
 118, 118n7  
 Wedgwood, Josiah, 117, 118n10  
 Wedgwood, Josiah Clement, first  
 Baron Wedgwood, 118  
 Wedgwood, Sir Ralph Lewis, 118,  
 118n7, 118n8  
 Weigand, Kate, 196n2, 202, 202n20,  
 202n22, 203, 203n25, 203n27,  
 209n43, 215, 215n59, 215n60  
 Welfish, Gene, 265  
 Wentworth, Thomas, Earl of  
 Strafford, 119  
 Wertheim, Barbara, (Tuchman),  
 197, 197n6  
 White Anglo-Saxon Protestant  
 (WASP), 7, 9  
*William the Silent* (1946), 132  
 Williams, Ralph Vaughan, 117  
 Wilson College, 148, 153n57  
 Winifred, 91, 101, 103, 104, 111–113  
 Witt, Henriette Guizot de, 219–245  
 Witt-Schlumberger, Marguerite de,  
 245, 245n86  
 Wodehouse, P. G., 281  
 Wollstonecraft, Mary, 174, 210, 211,  
 216, 250, 302  
 Women Helpers' Selection  
 Committee, 59  
 “Women Petitioners and the Long  
 Parliament,” EHR, 27, 39  
 Women's Lib, 209, 214  
*Women's Life and Work in the Southern*  
*Colonies*, 73, 75, 88

*Woman's World*, 112

Woolf, Virginia, 117, 277, 301

Woolrych, A. H., 116n2, 131,  
131n61, 132n64

*Working Life of Women in the  
Seventeenth Century*, 50, 51n7, 63

World War I, 8, 40, 67, 123, 200,  
245, 278

World War II, 2, 3, 6, 8–10, 82, 152,  
185, 205, 213, 259, 262, 279

## Y

Yale University, 146, 156

Yonge, Charlotte Mary,  
238, 238n63

Yung, Eugène, 161, 161n6, 162

## Z

Zinnser, Judith P., 150, 151

Zuñi, 251–253, 255, 256, 257n27