Celebrating 100 years of women's voices

Book

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Celebrating 100 Years of Women's Voices

Edited by Madeleine Davies and Elizabeth Conaghan

University of Reading

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The Editors

Madeleine Davies is an Associate Professor of Women's Writing in the Department of English Literature at the University of Reading. She leads modules focusing on critical theory and on the work of Virginia Woolf and Margaret Atwood and she has published in a range of fields including British Television Drama, Contemporary Drama, as well as Women's Writing (Daphne du Maurier, Margaret Atwood). In partnership with the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication and the 'Real Jobs' programme, Madeleine has led award-winning collaborative book projects showcasing students' work. *Celebrating 100 Years of Women's Voices* is the latest book to be produced within this initiative.

Elizabeth Conaghan is a lecturer at the School of Law, University of Reading. Her undergraduate degree was in psychology and physiology, but a serendipitous and unexpected turn of events meant that she found herself taking a postgraduate diploma in law and going on to train as a barrister. She spent time in independent practice as a tenant in Gray's Inn Square, London, before moving to the House of Lords (now the Supreme Court) to work as a judicial assistant. This was followed by a position at the Treasury Solicitor, and then a career break to raise a family. She joined the university in 2014 and teaches undergraduates on the LLB programme.

Anna Harding began her undergraduate degree studying Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading in 2018. In the summer of 2019, Anna was part of a Gold Medal winning Exhibition at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, designing the information displays for the garden and presenting the message of the project to the public. She is currently the lead designer of the Technology Society at the University and is enjoying the variety of design and communication challenges that her degree course has already provided. *Celebrating 100 Years of Women's Voices* is her fourth 'Real Job', and all of the typefaces she has chosen for this book were designed by women.

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Introduction

Elizabeth Conaghan
School of Law

It was in 2017 that I first heard about the remarkable life of Gwyneth Bebb. I happened to be listening to BBC Radio 4 during an interview with the playwright and dramatist Alex Giles. He had written a play which was due to be performed in the austere surroundings of Middle Temple, one of the Inns of Court in London that barristers join as part of their admittance to the Bar. The play recounted how Bebb and others had challenged the Law Society's refusal in 1913 to allow them to take the preliminary exams to qualify as solicitors. The decision of the Law Society was based purely on the grounds of sex: at that time, women were simply not allowed to become lawyers. Bebb lost her case in the High Court, she lost in the Court of Appeal, and then had to wait until 1919 for Parliament to finally change the law. After that, Bebb largely disappeared from history.

It was Alex Giles' account of the re-emergence of Bebb's story that kindled the idea for a collaborate project with students at the University of Reading. Alex Giles explained that his inspiration for the play could be directly attributed to a research article penned some years previously by my colleague, Professor Rosemary Auchmuty, on the life of Gwyneth Bebb. Given the play's provenance, it seemed apt that we, as the School of Law, should also attempt to perform the play and tell the story, but this time to a different audience.

The inaugural performance at Middle Temple had been in the style of a radio play with celebrity actors reading the parts of the protagonists to an audience of esteemed members of the legal community. By contrast, I embarked on our re-telling of Bebb's life with no finance, no venue, no actors and no idea how to stage a play. Thankfully, these chal-

lenges were overcome with the help of others. It was Alex Giles who first offered a way forward by giving us use of his script without charge. The Department of Film, Theatre and Television at the University offered the use of their theatre space and the expertise of their technicians. We assembled a large cast of students; some were willing volunteers and others I begged, borrowed or stole from their studies with the promise of free pizza and a chance to do something different.

Most of our cast had no previous acting experience, and rehearsal time was limited to a few brief days during the mid-term break in November 2019. However, our director, Phil Rowlandson, somehow managed to transform our disparate ensemble into a company of actors, worthy of the attention of its audience. Phil brought new dimensions to the play through the introduction of movement, props and costumes, and the cast took on ownership of the production as they began to inhabit their roles and grow in confidence. Four members of academic staff joined the cast in cameo roles, including Rosemary Auchmuty, whose research had been the original inspiration for the play. Together, their performances informed, educated, and inspired, creating a fitting tribute to mark the centenary of women being allowed to practise law.

The re-emergence of these voices from the past prompted further reflection. What were some of the other stories over the last century that deserved to be told? How far had we really come in the quest for parity in the opportunities that life affords us, and what are some of the struggles still facing women today? We decided to bring all of these strands together in a cross-disciplinary symposium and art exhibition called, simply, '100 Years of Women's Voices'. Speakers from across the University and from local charities offered their perspectives on 'Past Protagonists', 'Present Challenges', and 'Future Hope'. Staff and students exhibited their artwork; paintings, collages and sculptures offered a visual representation of their many and varied stories. Researchers from the fields of economics, business, art, literature, law and science described some of the continuing inequalities in relation to life at home and at work, but they also drew our attention to the lives of other women who, like Gwyneth Bebb, had confronted (and/or been defeated by) the status quo.

The charities, 'Parents and Children Together' and 'Women in Prison' offered practical insight into the continued challenges facing many women in relation to poverty, domestic abuse and the criminal justice system. And yet these insights were not without hope; we heard how the same women had begun to tell their stories through the medium of art, photography and poetry. We learnt how the provision of opportunities to acquire new skills was improving employment prospects, and we heard how children who had witnessed domestic violence were benefitting from specialist support. Students and colleagues listened to these diverse perspectives and we could not help but be moved by their collective power.

It became apparent that telling our stories is and of itself a form of empowerment. It is for this reason that we decided to commit to paper the contents of the symposium, also including material from all of the Law School commemorative events. This book, I am pleased to say, is the result. Staff and students were encouraged to write freely, using any style they felt to be appropriate to their topic. The combination of student perspectives, together with the multi-disciplinary and cross-sector nature of the symposium, produces a chorus of voices, each contributing an individual viewpoint. We have not sought to impose conformity on these contributions, even retaining subject-specific referencing styles.

I am extremely grateful for the time that staff, students and our partners in charitable organisations committed to this book. Particular mention must be made to Dr Madeleine Davies and to Anna Harding for their artistic vision and invaluable efforts in relation to editing and typography, and without whom this book would not exist. A common narrative emerges – we are better when we work together; we become more than the sum of our parts.

Section One:
The Disappearance of Miss Bebb

Programme

Who was Gwyneth Bebb?

One hundred years ago, the law was changed to allow women to join professions from which they had previously been barred including law, accountancy and veterinary medicine. Prior to this change in the law, there had been various campaigns to open these professions to women. In relation to the legal profession, it was Gwyneth Bebb who gave her name to a landmark legal case in 1913 which challenged the Law Society of England and Wales's refusal to allow women to become solicitors.

Gwyneth Bebb was born in the centre of Oxford on 27 October 1889. A few years later, her family moved to Wales but, in 1908, she returned to Oxford to begin studies at St Hugh's Hall which became an incorporated college of the University in 1911.. Bebb studied Law and was only the seventh woman at Oxford to embark on a degree in Jurisprudence. For most of her studies she was the only woman in a cohort of almost 400 men. Women studying Law at that time received the same teaching as men, they sat the same exams, but they were not actually awarded their degrees (Oxford did not award women degrees until 1920 and women at the University of Cambridge had to wait until 1948).

It is not entirely clear why Bebb chose to study law at University because she would have been aware that she could not, at that time, go on to qualify as a lawyer. Women were excluded from the legal profession on the same grounds as from national suffrage and public office. There was no precedent for women in these roles and it necessitated an Act of Parliament to change the status quo.

In 1911, Bebb passed the Law finals with first-class honours, the first woman at Oxford ever to do so. In 1912 Bebb sent off an application to the Law Society asking to take their preliminary examinations to qualify as a solicitor. She was refused. Bebb and three other women, Karin Costelloe, Maud Ingram and Nancy Nettlefold, challenged in the courts the Law Society's refusal to admit women to its examinations. They lost in the High Court before Mr Justice Joyce, and they lost again in the Court of Appeal in December 1913. The case was widely reported by a largely sympathetic and supportive press.

It was not until Christmas Eve in December 1919 that the Sex (Disqualification) Removal Act was passed which finally allowed women to become lawyers. After that, Gwyneth Bebb largely disappeared from history. She changed her name on marriage to Thomson and she was never able to fulfil her ambition to become a lawyer. She sadly died aged 31 following complications after childbirth.

Writing the play

Alex Giles

Playwright and dramatist

Many of today's lawyers may remember the symbolic case 'Bebb v the Law Society', but how many are familiar with the actual woman who gave her name to the case? The fact is that a hundred years ago Gwyneth Bebb was not just a symbol of change but, along with others, helped bring about that change.

It was Professor Rosemary Auchmuty of the University of Reading who first introduced me to the woman, Miss Bebb. My own research then took me to the wonderful Women's Library Archive at the LSE, and to other contemporary accounts (this is one advantage of working in a law school library). *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb*, adapted from my screenplay *Justice*, is my attempt to bring this truly courageous woman to life.

The basic facts of Gwyneth Bebb's life are known, largely due to Auchmuty's research, but little more. What was she really like? What drove her? How did she keep going in the face of such obstacles? She reminds me of one of the heroines in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*:

> So they kept at her like the crowd at a fence on the race-course, and it was her trial to take her fence without looking to right or to left. If you stop to curse you are lost, I said to her; equally, if you stop to laugh. Hesitate or fumble and you are done for. Think only of the jump, I implored her, as if I had put the whole of my money on her back; and she went over it like a bird. But there was a fence beyond that and a fence beyond that. Whether she had the staying power was doubtful, for the clapping and the crying were fraying to the nerves. But she did her best.

I am not for a moment suggesting that Gwyneth Bebb and the other 'persons' in the play were solely responsible for changing the law; they are necessarily representative of the many 'disappeared', but their contribution deserves acknowledgement and serves, I hope, as an inspiration. As Auchmuty writes, Miss Bebb's story 'demonstrates the usefulness of history in reminding those involved in current struggles that women usually have to fight for their rights, that men will usually cling to their privileges… and that reason and justice are often irrelevant in the face of institutional power'.[1]

References

1 'Whatever happened to Miss Bebb? Bebb v The Law Society and women's legal history'. *Legal Studies*. Vol.31 No.2

Cast

Director	*Phil Rowlandson*
Producers	*Sarah Lister & Elizabeth Conaghan*
Miss Gwyneth Bebb (later Mrs Thomson)	*Manon Williams*
Reverend Bebb, Gwyneth's Father	*George Skinner*
Mr Harry Jeffries, suitor (later husband) to Louise Bebb	*Jack Dunlop*
Mrs Mary Bebb, Gwyneth's mother	*Jemma Kamalova*
Miss Louise Bebb (later Mrs Jeffries)	*Sarah Turner*
Miss Karin Costelloe (later Mrs Stephens)	*Fern Ellen Anderson*
Miss Nancy Nettlefold	*Kamsi Ibe*
Miss Maud Ingram (later Mrs Crofts)	*Seethalakshmi Muralikrishnan*
Mr Stanley Buckmaster QC, barrister to Gwyneth	*Thomas Fuller*
Mr Justice Joyce, Judge in the High Court	*Professor Chris Newdick*
Mr (later Major) **Hills**, Conservative MP for Durham, supporter of Gwyneth's cause in the Commons	*Jack Dunlop*
Mr Thomas Thomson, a country solicitor, suitor (later husband) to Gwyneth	*Samuel Carson*
Lord Birkenhead, supporter to the cause in The Lords	*Harry Stewart*
Lord Halsbury, opposer of the cause	*Emeritus Professor Richard Buckley*
Lord Finlay, Chair of The Law Society (later Lord Chief Justice)	*Ray Duncan*
Mrs Chrystal MacMillan, Women's Suffrage activist	*Professor Rosemary Auchmuty*
Reporter (and other roles)	*Nurhanissa Binti Zed Zariman*
Newspaper Girl (and other roles)	*Jessica Lane*
Law Society Official (and other roles)	*Oyinoluwa Arikawe*

What did this play mean to me?

Cast Members

Phil Rowlandson (Director)
Directing *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb* was a really exciting time for me, affording me the opportunity to return to the University for the first time since I graduated with a Masters in Film Studies in 2015. It was particularly special because it had been a while since I was involved in a production, despite performing being my oldest love. It was a joyous return, even if I wasn't on the stage itself.

I became involved in the production when Liz, who was the driving force behind the show, asked me for my thoughts a year before the show won approval. I offered my services if it should ever come to fruition and here we are! My only other directing experience, outside of plays for church youth groups, was a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Theatre Royal Winchester in early 2014, so moving from an all-singing, all-dancing, show-stopping spectacular to a small radio play was a welcome challenge but one that could not be overcome alone.

I've always believed that working with non-performers is more rewarding than working with seasoned actors, and my experience of directing *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb* confirmed that view. I'm extremely proud of every member of the cast, all non-performers, for throwing themselves into this production and for giving it everything despite numerous other commitments. Because of their hard work, Gwyneth Bebb, someone many of us had never heard of, will be known and remembered by many more. It is due to her, and a multitude of others like her, that we enjoy several of the rights we have today. Her story is an inspiration, but also a reminder; there is still great inequality in society today and Gwyneth Bebb's life reminds us that even the smallest change does not come easily but is worth fighting for, if not for ourselves, then for generations to come.

Sarah Lister (Producer)
I had the privilege of being closely involved in the production of *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb*. Not only was this play an amazing way to commemorate the centenary of women being allowed to practise law, it was also a great opportunity to work closely with various members of staff and different students.

From the first meeting about the '100 Years of Women in Law' celebrations, I wanted to be involved in the staging of Alex Giles's play; unfortunately, I could not perform in the play as I had a commitment during the second performance but I was asked to be a producer. I was so excited to have the opportunity to encourage more people to become involved and to shape this experience. I was very proud to be spreading word that the play was going ahead and that Elizabeth had set up auditions. We saw so much talent that day. Many members of staff also became involved; it was inspiring to see Rosemary perform, knowing what a great influence she had been on the playwright. It was a fantastic environment to be a part of with students of all ages coming together, working hard and forming friendships. What really stood out was the excitement and passion of the students from across the year groups.

I went to rehearsals and watched the director shape the play through his vision; he really brought it to life and his enthusiasm, as well as the commitment of the actors, impressed me greatly. Though I had never done tech before, I volunteered to help so that we could add even more to the performance. Though nervous, we had a great time in the tech box and we learnt a great deal. Phil, the director, was jumping with excitement up in the box with us.

Staging the play was such a brilliant idea and it couldn't have happened without Rosemary's remarkable research, Elizabeth's inspiring leadership and without the hard work of all the actors and helpers on and off the stage. I am proud to say that I was a part of such a moving and successful play.

(Above): Cast of the play with Alex Giles

Manon Williams (Gwyneth Bebb)

My name is Manon Williams and I am a Final Year Law Student at the University of Reading, originally from South Wales. I was fortunate enough to be cast in the lead role of Gwyneth Bebb in the play, *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb*. This was slightly terrifying as I had no previous acting experience except for Year Nine drama class and a few plays in primary school. However, Gwyneth Bebb was a fantastic character to play: she was such an intelligent, determined and caring woman, who was not afraid to fight for what she believed in. She battled for women of the future to be given the opportunity to enter the legal profession, and it is such a shame that she was unable to achieve this ambition herself.

I became involved with the play after speaking to one of my lecturers and I am so glad that I did. I met some great people who I have kept in touch with. I have also developed a far better understanding of how difficult it was for women to enter the legal profession one-hundred years ago. My favourite scene was when Thomas presents Gwyneth with a book. At first she is thrilled, but then she realises that there is a deeper meaning and that he is trying to control her which she does not like at all. She proceeds to storm off the stage, making it clear that she will not put up with this kind of behaviour. She ensured that she was always treated as an equal, never anything less. I would like to be more like Gwyneth Bebb.

The play was a great way to become involved with the '100 Years of Women in Law' celebrations and I am proud to have been a part of it. I learnt that it is good to step out of your comfort zone and I think that being in the play increased my confidence. There were, of course, challenges: remembering stage directions was not as easy as I expected, and there were a lot of lines with which to familiarise myself. The hardest part, though, was performing in front of friends and lecturers. Luckily all the feedback I have had was positive! My friends loved the play and said it was informative and really made them think about how the legal profession has changed over the last hundred years.

When considering equality in relation to the play, I have realised that equity is needed before equality can truly be achieved. It is important that everyone has the tools and opportunities they need in order to succeed because, as the play so clearly demonstrates, life is not a level playing field.

Sarah Turner (Louise Bebb)

> ***Editor's Note:*** Sarah helped with the production but was not originally a cast member; owing to a last-minute crisis, Sarah volunteered at extremely short notice to step into the role of Louise Bebb. Her performance was excellent and all were grateful for Sarah's courage and acting skill.

My name is Sarah Turner, a third-year law student, originally from Windsor, and I played Louise Bebb, sister of Miss Bebb. I have participated in other productions during my upper-school career but this was the first play that I have participated in at university.

Whilst preparing for the play, everyone was very friendly and it was an amazing team to work with; the other actors and also the crew ensured that the play went smoothly on both nights. The expe-

rience helped increase my confidence with performing in front of an audience, and friends who came to watch the play thought it was an amazing, inspiring story and seemed to learn a great deal. One of the main takeaways of the play is the story of how women before me have allowed me to stand where I am today. The pioneering years of patience and dedication were vital in winning the right for women to complete a law degree, become lawyers, and fight injustice.

This experience has been one that I will never forget and I am very grateful for the opportunity to perform and work alongside many other amazing students, teachers and volunteers.

George Skinner (Reverend Bebb)

My name is George Skinner and I played Reverend Bebb, the father of Gwyneth Bebb. I completed my undergraduate degree in law at The University of Reading and I am currently studying for my masters in international law.

Although I have always fancied myself as an actor, I have never really had the opportunity to act, especially in front of a live audience. Taking part in the play was unlike anything I have ever done and so completely different from anything involved in my law degree or masters. Through my involvement I learned that I really enjoy acting and that I want to do more. The thrill of the nerves before going on stage, and then having people compliment your performance afterwards (which was totally unexpected), was something I really enjoyed.

My character was a brilliant part to play. Reverend Bebb was supportive of his daughter and he would often encourage her in her pursuits, even when his own wife was expressing frustration with Gwyneth. The play itself taught me a great deal about equality and the sometimes unimaginable struggle that women had to endure in an era which is not even that far back in time. This made me realise how essential it is that we strive for equality in today's society; it is something that we still haven't quite achieved.

My family had previously told me that they weren't able to come to the performance and I was a little disappointed because I was really excited to show them the play and the great story of Gwyneth Bebb.

However, on the final night of the play, my family surprised me and turned up to watch. This was a little disconcerting to begin with when, as the lights went up, I saw the faces of my mum, dad and sister beaming from the audience. They were really impressed with the story, the actors and the way the show ran so professionally. One of the things that they particularly enjoyed was that, although dealing with some difficult subject matter, the show was still comical and they engaged fully with the story throughout.

Seethalakshmi Muralikrishnan (Maud Ingram)

> '"This novel and somewhat startling application". Dullard! Old Joycie couldn't do anything unprecedented!'

This line, among many others, was one that I had rehearsed well and it was equally well received: it has stuck with me ever since. *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb* was a wonderful experience for me, from finding out about the auditions through flyers, to rehearsals with cast members and directors, all the way through to bowing in front of the crowd as 'Maud Ingram' (later, Crofts). Maud is the epitome of the woman who does what needs to be done and says what needs to be said. As Miss Bebb's confidante, she is supportive, outspoken, and brilliantly true to herself. She became quite a favourite with the cast, crew, and crowd.

I auditioned for the play with no expectations whatsoever; I hadn't any previous acting experience and I felt that I should just try my luck and play 'Tree' if necessary (fortunately for me, there was no 'Tree'). Being cast as the second lead was amazing to me; it helped me grow back some confidence and I learnt a great deal through performing as Miss Ingram. I particularly liked repeating 'pompous idiot' several times throughout the play. That aside, being able to revisit such important pieces of history which I had completely overlooked gave me an insight that I could not stop sharing with my friends and family. To my surprise, no one I talked to about this had even heard of Miss Bebb and that opened my eyes. This is the struggle of a group of women who fought through a whole decade before simply vanishing, and it was

only right that something was finally done to honour them and their struggle. Personally, I feel that the play brought some justice.

Of course, it was no easy task; we had less than three days of rehearsal time and very few of us had any familiarity with stage movement. But all that hard work which everyone put in truly paid off. Friends who came to watch the play not only thoroughly enjoyed it but also developed an admiration for the women and men who fought for women to be the lawyers that we can be today. What's more, I had an amazing director, group of friends and course-mates as the cast and crew. I've only known them for a few months (since I came from Malaysia for my final year at the University of Reading), and yet they are all such warm and welcoming individuals who supported me and worked hard with me. I'm so grateful to have collected such wonderful memories! Truly unforgettable.

Fern Ellen Anderson (Karin Costelloe)

My name is Fern Ellen Anderson and I played Karin Costelloe in the play. I am a 20-year-old first-year law student from Surrey. Prior to the play I had never acted before, which is one of the reasons I was so keen to take part. Public speaking has always been something I have greatly enjoyed and it is an invaluable skill to have. Upon hearing that the University was putting on such an informative play, I could not wait to get involved. Acting has always been slightly outside of my comfort zone but the play has helped me discover just how rewarding it is to overcome a fear and now I cannot wait to act again.

Rehearsing for the play was so much fun and I have made such wonderful friends from all years of the degree programme. I love to keep busy and over half term I was also taking part in a mediation course; balancing everything was a struggle but I enjoyed it immensely. The message the play conveys is so important and it allows the audience to learn of the obstacles that women had to overcome a hundred years ago. To allow female law students such as myself a chance to do something that we feel so passionately about is vitally important. I am now incredibly appreciative of the women who did not allow such inequality to continue and who fought so hard for something that we now take

for granted. The play has taught me to never give up and it has inspired me to achieve my goals, no matter how far away from them I am or how difficult they are to accomplish.

My family and friends beyond Reading travelled to see the play. They were all shocked to learn about the lack of equality for women in the law, not so long ago. Although not studying law themselves, they all really enjoyed the play and were engaged throughout. My mum said that the production was particularly effective in demonstrating such important history, especially impressive given we are law students, not drama students.

(Above): the cast backstage

I am so grateful for the opportunity that the university has given me to help share the story of Gwyneth Bebb and the other amazing women represented in the play. It has been a rewarding experience and I have acquired so many invaluable skills that I hope to build upon throughout the rest of my studies as a law student and forward into my career.

Thomas Fuller (Lord Buckmaster)

My name is Thomas Daniel Fuller and I am a third year law student at the University of Reading. I'm originally from London and I played the role of Lord Buckmaster in *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb*.

I had done a little acting before taking part in this play but nothing as significant as this; I had never been part of a full production. I became involved in the play because I knew a couple of the people who were performing in it and I was also available on most of the rehearsal days during Week 6. I'm glad I took part because I met many new people on my course and learnt about women's fight for recognition as lawyers and how the change of law finally came about. This play helped me to understand the impact of the law much better because it took the cases I learn about in textbooks and transferred them into real life enactment.

As a male actor, taking part in the play helped me to understand the stereotypical roles which woman were forced into, but also how our own contemporary society is still not equal: the play made me realise that a divide still exists within workplaces. At the same time, whilst the play highlighted the perpetual struggle for equality, it also showed how much society has advanced in trying to achieve equality.

I learnt from taking part in the play that I enjoy public speaking and that I do not mind performing in front of an audience. Further, in relation to working as a group towards the final production, I discovered that helping each other to overcome any difficulties is great fun because you all celebrate the success together. One of the challenges we faced was not always having everyone at rehearsals, which made it harder to practise all the scenes. Sometimes, it felt as though we were cutting it fine in terms of making sure all the actors knew what they were doing but everyone worked together and kept an eye out on scene changes, making sure that people were in the right position with the correct outfit or prop.

My family was not able to attend the play but several of my friends did; they all really enjoyed watching us perform and found it very informative. Some of my friends are writing their dissertation on inequality within society so they found the play particularly helpful.

Kamsi Ibe (Miss Nancy Nettlefold)

I played Miss Nancy Nettlefold who was based on a real and influential powerhouse of a woman. She dedicated her life to social justice and made key contributions to the cause of equal pay and to the anti-apartheid movement.

I am currently in my first year of studying law at the University of Reading; my interest in taking part in the play was sparked by its relevance to me as a woman currently studying law. At first, I intended to play a much smaller role but, when I was asked to play Nancy, I rose to the challenge. I am so glad that I did. Prior to this role I hadn't actually done any acting since my theatre GCSE; this role reminded me of how much I love the art form and theatre.

It was very exciting to be a part of the production; I really enjoyed the experience and I would definitely do it again if the opportunity arose.

Ray Duncan (Lord Finlay of Nairn), staff

My name is Ray Duncan and I played the part of Lord Finlay of Nairn, who was Lord Chancellor from 1916 to 1919. I did some research on him and found that he changed parties twice, moving from Gladstonian Liberal to Conservative.

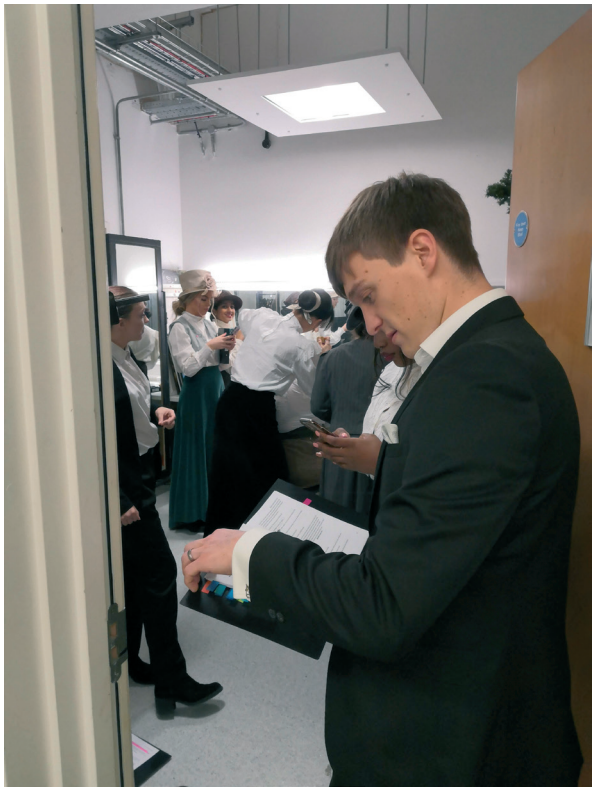
I found the play both inspiring and very moving in places. I think that the student cast performed admirably, especially as the whole production was put together in an incredibly short time.

I had done some amateur drama in the dim and distant past and was very glad to be asked to take a cameo role. I'm looking forward to the next time.

Rosemary Auchmuty (Chrystal Macmillan), staff

I was flattered to be asked to play the small role of Chrystal Macmillan because this was the part taken by Lady Hale in the first production of Alex Giles's play at Middle Temple in 2017. I was less pleased, however, to learn that, although a radio play, this production was to be semi-staged and I was expected to appear in costume – 'a long dress with sleeves', the director wrote airily. I have not possessed a dress for almost 40 years so this would have presented a problem had I not been

able to compromise with a rug wrapped round me and a blouse and tie ('think 1920s', Phil had said), modelled on a photograph of Macmillan I found online.



(Above): the cast preparing backstage

My previous acting career was short and a very long time ago. I played the role of Jaques in our school production of *As You Like It* when I was 14. I can still remember my big speeches ('A fool, a fool, I met a fool i' the forest' and 'All the world's a stage') and thanks to the hours of rehearsal I made lifelong friends of the girls who played Celia

and the Duke. This made a huge difference to my attitude to school, which had previously been quite lukewarm. That play changed my life, I now realise.

Being part of this production of *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb* was very moving. It was lovely the way the students (and my colleagues) threw themselves into their roles. I was particularly touched by the way that the young men (and the older ones) were such enthusiastic participants in a play about women and feminism. It made me very aware of how much has changed since I was young, when women and women's issues did not really matter. It made me feel positive about the future. Seeing the audience's appreciation was great too. I reflected that this kind of event, which does not 'count' towards the students' final degree (or the staff's workload allocation), is really what higher education is all about.

Although Chrystal Macmillan (1872–1937) plays a minor role in this play, she was very important in the suffrage movement and the campaigns to open the legal profession to women. A Scot (I did not attempt the accent), in 1908 she became the first woman to present her own case before the Bar of the House of Lords, to argue for women graduates (she had a first-class BSc from Edinburgh) to be able to vote for university seats in Parliament (in those days, the ancient universities had their own MPs). She lost, the House of Lords holding that the word 'persons' did not include women for the purpose of the franchise. This was, of course, the same issue upon which Miss Bebb's case turned a few years later.

During the First World War, Macmillan's pacifism meant that she parted company with most suffragists who supported the war. She played an important part in the International Congress of Women in 1915 which drew up peace proposals to be implemented when the war ended, many of which formed part of the peace settlement and led to the formation of the League of Nations.

Macmillan was called to the Bar in 1924, conducting a largely criminal practice in the western circuit in England. At the same time, like most feminists then and now, she was involved in many causes. She belonged to the 'equal rights' wing of interwar feminism, opposed to

protective legislation that barred women from certain occupations. She co-founded the Open Door Council and Open Door International whose aim was to remove all legal restraints from women's participation in public life. Other concerns were campaigns against the trafficking of women for prostitution and for the right of married women to retain their nationality after marriage, which led after her death to the British Nationality Act 1948. She also stood unsuccessfully for Parliament as a Liberal.

Chrystal Macmillan's life gives us some insight into the lives and work of Miss Bebb's associates, and some indication of what Miss Bebb might have achieved had she lived. It was an honour to represent her.

Chris Newdick (Mr Justice Joyce), staff

In one of my lines for Mr Justice Joyce, I am bewildered how Miss Bebb's claim could ever have arisen. Explaining why she was not qualified to be admitted, I state as a simple proposition: "the disqualification of sex"! Astonishing as that is today, since Miss Bebb's case, how many more are still disqualified by sex, race, religion, nationality, caste, class, poverty, and so on. And as global inequality becomes more extreme, should we expect things to get better or worse? The play provokes uncomfortable thoughts about the future every bit as much as it prompts reflection on the past.

Oyinoluwa Arikawe (Law Society Official and other roles)

I really enjoyed being part of the play. I haven't done any drama since secondary school so it was nice to get involved in the arts again. I was given multiple roles, which was thrilling as I was constantly changing in and out of different costumes during the performance. I learnt a great deal about the history of women being allowed to become solicitors and barristers and it made me proud to be an aspiring female solicitor! I met a lot of amazing people during this project and I hope I can work with them again in the future. It was especially fascinating to see my lecturers taking on an acting role too.

Jack Dunlop (Mr Henry Jeffries and Mr Hills)

My name is Jack Dunlop and I played the role of Henry (Gwyneth Bebb's brother-in-law) and Mr Hills MP in *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb*, part of the Law School's centenary celebrations marking one-hundred years of women in law. As a second-year law student, I originally saw the opportunity of taking part in the play as a chance to practise public speaking and to gain some confidence within that area. I have had no previous acting experience, except for a few bits here and there at GCSE level.

The play gave me two things: firstly, it helped build my confidence, as I hoped it would; secondly, it gave me a new understanding, based on English legal history, of women's struggle for equality. Alex Giles's script led me to embark on further reading into women's fight for rights; since taking part in the play, I have read parts of Professor Rosemary Auchmuty's original research and this has further developed my knowledge of women's struggle for equal rights in the UK.

I also made some very good friends while preparing the play; we formed a real comradery which I believe shone through in the last-night performance. We all carried each other through and helped out where we could and we displayed some really good team-work.

It was a real privilege to help tell the story of Miss Bebb; I can certainly say that I came away from it gaining a lot more than I originally intended and it has given me a whole new perspective on the society we live in today. If there was a sequel to the play, I would definitely put my name into the hat again!

Richard Buckley (Lord Halsbury), staff

My name is Richard Buckley and I played Lord Halsbury, the smallest part and the most misogynistic. Indeed, Lord Halsbury's words, taken (I assume) from Hansard, were so extraordinary ("with the greatest respect for the sex… it is not easy to get a woman to understand any other side but her own") that another member of the cast suggested to me that, even at that time, they cannot have been meant entirely seriously but were said, at least partially, 'tongue in cheek'. I should like to think that that was the case, but I doubt it.

I was familiar in outline with the events described in the play from the work of Professor Auchmuty and others, and was very pleased to be approached to take part, not least because, over a decade after I retired from full-time teaching, it was good still to be considered a member of the Law School 'team'. Inevitably the play prompts reflection on the glacial pace of the move towards equality. I recall that when I started my academic career in the early 1970s at King's College London, the female student intake was limited to 20% of the whole. Moreover, there were

(Above): the cast preparing backstage

separate and mutually exclusive senior common rooms for men and women, the latter having a few battered old chairs that had seen better days while the former was palatial with comfortable arm-chairs beautifully upholstered in green leather. As a young lecturer, the contrast struck me as rather bizarre. Although now nearly half a century has passed since those days, the point is that even then over half a century had passed since the events chronicled in *The Disappearance of Miss Bebb* and the 1919 Act.

The play was my first experience of acting since my school-days and infinitely more enjoyable. I confess to some apprehension that I might fluff my lines (even though I was reading them) or that, being slightly deaf, I might miss my cue, but I was rewarded with a ring-side seat in the audience in return for less than two minutes of performance. I had all the pleasure of participation with none of the pain of preparation and rehearsals put in by the student cast and production team in an astonishingly short time and to such superlative effect.

Finally, I should add that my daughter came to the play and said afterwards that I must have been typecast for my reactionary views. I think she was joking. I certainly hope so!

Section Two:
The Symposium

1.1 Granny Sybil

Dr Madeleine Davies

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> 'But, you may say, we asked you to speak about one hundred years of women's voices – what has that got to do with Granny Sybil? I will try to explain.'

This is, of course, a direct echo of Virginia Woolf's famous opening lines to the 'foundational' text of feminist critique, *A Room of One's Own*, first published in 1929.[1] Woolf uses the space of her text to represent unheard women's voices: she produces a fable of Judith Shakespeare, a woman of equal talent to her brother William, but doomed by her womanhood to obscurity and suicide. Judith was not a real person but my Granny Sybil was. In telling you her story, I am, like Woolf, giving an unheard woman a voice.

The details of Sybil's early life are hazy but it seems that, in or around 1910, she went to Cambridge University to study Mathematics. In or around 1914 she graduated but she did not leave with a degree because Cambridge did not admit women to degrees until 1948.[2] Until then, women could study there if they were determined to do so, but they would leave without formal evidence of educational attainment. Sybil was certainly a determined woman and she insisted on studying; she then took her education and what should have been her degree to the Bank of England where she became a typist and one of the 64 women employees out of a staff of 1004.[3] She stayed in this position until 1916.

With so many men leaving the Bank for the trenches of World War One, and with so many failing to return, female typists were re-deployed as clerks, roles previously reserved only for men. Sybil was asked to take on one of these roles and she remembered managing sensitive work and compiling statistics, work more commensurate with her education and ability. Two years later, as 1919 drew to a close, with men returning from the war, and with society keen to reassert the 'proper order' of things where women were not occupying men's professional roles, Sybil was returned quietly but firmly to the typing-pool.

No wonder, then, that in 1920 Sybil decided to marry as a way out of grinding, intellectually unsatisfying work, low pay and absurd rules (the dress code and working arrangements for female employees at the Bank were quite extraordinary).[4] Since marriage was just about the only respectable 'profession' for a middle-class woman, she married my grandfather. There is a photograph of the newly-weds taken on their wedding day; they both look furious, particularly her. Sybil settled down to a life of house-keeping, child-bearing, and tight-lipped domestic hostility, maintaining her wedding-day facial expression for the rest of her life.

Judith Shakespeare's story does not end well and Sybil's story does not have a feminist-fairy-tale-ending either. One hundred years on from Sybil's brief, unrecorded career at the Bank of England, and ninety years on from *A Room of One's Own*, we need to ask two questions: how did women finally break through, and how far have we still got to go?

Taking that first question: a history lesson seems in order but, in the interests of brevity, I will take a broad view. Superficially, World War One seems to have been the breakthrough for women; the equalities legislation follows from their demonstration that they were anything but fragile and inferior, incapable of wielding a pen, understanding a ballot paper, or participating in public life. 'Payback' for good behaviour during World War One, when women demonstrated their skill and proficiency in undeniable terms, arrived initially in the form of the partial female franchise in 1918. This laid an important milestone which helped women to enter the professions: the 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act helped women too and so did the full franchise ten years later.

All of this is true but it does not do full justice to the complexity of the issues in play.[5] Class matters, for example. Working-class women

had always worked (factory-workers and servants were not volunteers, after all) but middle-class women were expected to marry as quickly as possible. Sybil was more or less an 'old maid' marrying, as she did, at the mature age of twenty-eight. Where did the taboo on middle-class women entering the professions come from and why did it persist long after the franchise and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in 1919?

Woolf provides answers in *A Room of One's Own* and in its furious sister text, *Three Guineas* (1938). In both extended essays she argues that the establishment's reluctance to admit women to the professions was a matter of money and power. While only men had the right, and society's approval, to practise the professions, only men could accrue the money on which their power was based. Patriarchy is maintained.

It should not be assumed that this power was easily surrendered. Even on the brink of World War Two in 1938, Woolf spends much of *Three Guineas* demonstrating that women are still not full citizens of the country and still effectively barred from the professions, apart from a few extremely rare exceptions. She quotes from three letters she has found in *The Daily Telegraph*: each letter, probably written by a polite and reasonable man, complains of women in the workplace and in the public sphere:

> Women have too much liberty. It is probable that this so-called liberty came with the war…They did splendid service during those days. Unfortunately they were praised and petted out of all proportion to the value of their performances.
>
> – *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 1936 (*Three Guineas*, p.149)

> There are today in Government offices, post offices, insurance companies, banks and other offices, thousands of women doing work which men could do […] There is a large demand for woman labour in the domestic arts and, in the process of regrading, a large number of women who have drifted into clerical service would become available for domestic service.
>
> – *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 January, 1936 (*Three Guineas*, p.149)

> Homes are the real places of the women who are now compelling men to be idle. It is time the Government insisted upon employers giving work to more men, thus enabling them to marry the women they cannot now approach.
>
> – *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1936 (*Three Guineas*, p.150)

Woolf rounds off the sequence with a characteristically magnificent flourish:

> There! […] The cat is out of the bag; and it is a Tom.
>
> – (*Three Guineas*, p.150)

To be fair, the letters from which Woolf quotes are written within the context of high unemployment and severe social distress: 1936 was the year of the Jarrow March. Some men felt that their difficulty in finding work had been at least partially caused by women 'flooding' the workplace and taking their jobs (discourses of this kind repeat themselves across time, in different contexts and in response to diverse socio-cultural anxieties). Nevertheless, despite this pressing economic context, the sense of outraged entitlement in these letters is clear, as is the belief that women's sphere, even twenty years after the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, should be the domestic ('Homes are the real places of the women'). And power is clearly lurking within the outrage: the writers of these letters deeply resent women's growing 'so-called liberty' (from them), and the challenge to their right to wed/rescue whomsoever they chose. Woolf amplifies this issue of power through one last quote:

> There are two worlds in the life of the nation, the world of men and the world of women. Nature has done well to entrust the man with the care of his family and the nation. The woman's world is her family, her husband, her children, and her home.
>
> – (*Three Guineas*, p.151)

The bombshell is that this last quote is the 'German Dictator'. Where, Woolf asks, is the difference between the tyrant at home and the tyrant abroad:

> Are they not both the voice of dictators?'
> – (*Three Guineas*, p.151).

So when we are talking about the history of women in the professions, we need to remember that we have had a long, uphill slog. Legislation helped, the vote helped, but change and acceptance have taken a very long time and there have been many casualties along the way. This leads me to my second question at the beginning which was, 'how far have we still got to go'?

We need to ask ourselves why there is a stubborn pay-gap one hundred years on. We need to notice that corporate executive boards are light on women; we need to notice that positions 'at the top' are filled mainly by men. In Parliament, even after the 2019 General Election which saw a steep increase in the number of female MPs, there remains a one-third/two-thirds split between female and male MPs. In our own context, the Higher Education sector, the several inequalities in workload, promotions processes, and gendered expectations about women's role (excellent teachers and researchers) and men's role (researchers), as well as the lack of female representation on University Executive Boards, together demonstrate the persistence of a woefully uneven playing-field.

Woolf's solution to the situations she discusses in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* include changing the shape of education and the professions to allow women to enter and thrive within them, and encouraging women to write 'themselves' in acts of determined self-representation to ensure that their voices are finally heard. The result will be that they will be able to afford to pay for a room of their own (with a key to lock the door), Woolf's recurrent symbol of creative, literary and political agency. When women have financial autonomy, they will be free.

Are we there yet? No: it will take decades more. This is why we continue to fight.

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2 https://www.cam.ac.uk/TheRisingTide

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4 Ibid.

5 See, for example, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/document_packs/women.htm (accessed January 2020)

1.2 Uses and abuses of heroines

Professor Rosemary Auchmuty
School of Law

Late last year I was at an event at the Law Society to celebrate the centenary of women's admission to the legal profession in December 1919. One of the speakers, a senior woman lawyer, mentioned our debt to Gwyneth Bebb and her pioneering work in opening the profession to women. I was, of course, pleased that the name of Miss Bebb has now become well known within the legal profession, since it was my research that uncovered her story at a time when no one had heard of her or knew anything about her. But I was also annoyed that she was being presented to the public as some kind of heroine who had single-handedly won her cause, and as a role model for aspiring young women lawyers to follow. I wondered how many people in the audience knew what Bebb had actually done.

There are certainly arguments for claiming Miss Bebb as a heroine. Women and girls have few enough heroines compared to men and boys, and legal women even fewer. We do need to show girls that women can succeed in occupations previously closed to them and to do things we never thought we could do; for example, when I was young, women could not aspire to be orchestral conductors or professional footballers, and when I started teaching law it was unthinkable that a woman would ever become President of the Supreme Court. We need to encourage girls to expect to have equal access to the profession and equal treatment with men.

Indeed, as the sexes become more and more 'equal', at least formally, we need to show younger people that this has not always been the case; we need to remind young women, or even tell them for the first time, that there has always been male resistance to women sharing the public sphere with them and pressure to confine women to the private, where they can be more easily controlled. And that historical advances can be reversed, and women shoved back into their proper place whenever there is an excuse to do so. We need to know our history so we can learn from it, as well as be proud of those who paved the way.

But it seems that whenever we are dealing with history we tend to revert to old practices where individuals are idealised and romanticised and the past is presented as one upward sweep towards equality. Historically, heroines have always been selected (and their lives carefully crafted) to encourage young women to be noble, caring, and feminine. The heroines we seize today perform a different purpose – to inspire us to more radical acts – but they are still not without their problems.

First, this characterisation tends to isolate the person and to suggest that she acted alone rather than as a part of a much wider group pressing for reform. Miss Bebb was but one actor in a long and widely supported campaign to get women into the legal profession. We don't know why she was chosen to be plaintiff in the test case to which she gave her name (Bebb v Law Society) but we do know that she was only one in a group of eligible young women who were in turn supported by a movement which had been active for fifty years. Entry into the profession would not and could not have been achieved through the work of a single person but, if you reduce the struggle to individual effort, you give later generations the idea that they too can succeed on their own and you discourage them from forming alliances (which are not only more effective, but also more threatening to the status quo). And you suggest that the reform was won in the lifetime of your heroine whereas in reality it took generations of struggle before her and probably after as well.

Second, it is all too easy for someone we have put on a pedestal to be knocked down from it. Opponents of women's liberation in the 1970s were desperate to find out the names of the leaders so that they could discredit them and target them for personal attack. Germaine Greer, author of *The Female Eunuch* (1970), suffered in this way. But the organisers of the Greenham Common demonstrations in the 1980s (when women occupied an American military base to protest against

bringing nuclear weapons to Britain) were careful to have no leaders. A mass movement is much harder to demolish. There were no heroines of Greenham Common but the women succeeded in keeping nuclear weapons out of Britain.

Third, people named as role models often turn out to be so different from those invited to model themselves on them that emulation is impossible. Most pioneers of women's legal participation have been relatively affluent, well-connected, Oxbridge-educated and white. These women still faced hostility and opposition for trying to make it in a man's world but they were not starting from the less advantaged position that many students and young lawyers are today. Class, race, education, and family and social connections all play a role in negotiating the arcane structures of the profession.

Fourth, we expect that heroines will help others coming up after them but this does not always happen. Some successful women embrace the myth of merit; that is, they believe that they achieved what they did because they were simply the best and that, if other women do not achieve the same result, then it is because they were not good enough.

Fifth, we assume that, once our heroine has pushed her way through the barrier, things will be fine for women from then on. This is rarely the case. There is almost always a backlash – a token woman or even a few are fine, but we don't want too many. So rules are changed and discrimination becomes covert rather than overt (for example, 'there just weren't any good female candidates').

Sixth, identifying heroine qualities ('she strove, and she got there') over-simplifies the difficulties the woman probably went through and underplays the amount of strategising that women had to undertake to get past the formal and informal barriers that men placed in their way.

Heroine narratives encourage young women to see the woman's achievement as the end of the struggle and the start of a new dawn in which, provided they are determined enough, they too will succeed. But the truth is that it takes more than determination; even with all the strategising in the world, they may still not succeed. Then they will see themselves as personal failures rather than as victims of a system that is weighted against women. The effect is to disempower young women and stop them from trying to change that system. Seen this way, the heroine idea is still a trap designed to preserve a status quo that benefits men and keeps women in their place.

So how should we write about any woman we want to remember from our history? Here are some guidelines for an alternative narrative. We should give her a background, and note her particular advantages and disadvantages, so that those coming after can make a true comparison with her. We should show where her drive and ambition come from: there will almost always be an inspirational teacher, book, or movement. We should explore what she is up against, and try to recreate the times accurately, rather than just resorting to generalising clichés about the 'bad old times' (with the implication that we live in 'good new times'). We should describe what passed for normal attitudes and behaviour (like sexual harassment, which was routine at the Bar in the 1980s) and note the efforts people made to preserve the status quo, which ranged from acquiescence and unwillingness to rock the boat to outright hostility expressed in words and deeds. And we shouldn't make excuses – 'it was like that then' (not like that now?).

We need to place the woman within the movement we will almost certainly find if we look closely enough at her friends and associates. This will include allies both female and male. (Women needed male allies before 1919 because they could neither sit in Parliament nor act as lawyers or judges. But we must not imagine that men were leaders of the movement, as old history books used to suggest with John Stuart Mill and the Victorian suffrage movement.) We should observe how strategic women were, with multi-pronged attacks through courts, Parliament, public meetings and the media, regrouping again and again in the face of setbacks. We should never imagine (as traditional histories would have us think) that reforms were simply handed to women for good behaviour or because men were nice.

And if they failed, we must acknowledge it. Miss Bebb actually lost her case and never became a lawyer. She was clearly not a success in historical terms and, as a role model, what she really stands for is the truth that life is never the same for women as it is for men. She was doubly denied the opportunity to become a lawyer simply because she

was a woman: first because the law discriminated against her sex, and second because she died in childbirth, which could never happen to a man. This is the lesson we should take from her life.

2.1 Enduring inequalities: the story of financial inequality upon relationship breakdown

Professor Thérèse Callus

School of Law

According to the latest national statistics, the most common type of family is the married family, making up two-thirds of the 19.2 million families in the UK. The fastest growing type of family is the cohabiting couple.[1] Within almost half of these families, the most frequent arrangement is for women to undertake paid work part-time (average 23 hours per week) compared to men who work full-time (average 38 hours per week).[2] Women on average carry out 60% more unpaid (caring) work than men.[3] Inevitably, this has important consequences in terms of respective current income generation and future earning capacity and, crucially, the impact is carried through into older age and pension provision. In general, the average man accumulates five times the pension pot of the average woman.[4] If this is concerning in and of itself, it is all the more so when placed in the context of relationship breakdown and divorce. Sadly, despite apparent developments in the law, the reality is that divorce or relationship breakdown has an enduring, disproportionate, and negative financial impact on women as compared to men.

On divorce:

The Chartered Insurance Institute highlights the vulnerability of women following the consequences of joint decisions made during long-term relationships. Unhelpfully, the media often has a field day with headlines which suggest that gold-digging women are getting a

good deal on divorce, with so-called 'meal tickets for life'.[5] Yet the cold reality of the statistics paints a very different and somewhat bleaker picture. Although over the last twenty years we have seen moves to recognise the importance of caring within intimate family relationships, and in particular the financial burden shouldered by those (predominantly women) who are the main child carers, the economic impact of divorce and relationship breakdown continues to provoke concern and produce what has been termed the 'motherhood penalty'.

The statistical reality of the motherhood penalty

In part, the motherhood penalty can be explained by inequalities in the labour force. However, it is also the result of law made and interpreted for men, by men. At all levels of the judiciary, women still only account for a minority of judges[6] and it is the judges who interpret and apply the statutory framework. Interestingly, the current law dates from 1973, a time when the social status of women was very different to that of today, so we might question how the real effects of absence from the labour market and caring responsibilities can be taken into account.[7]

The motherhood penalty results in reduced earning capacity and lower savings and pension accumulation. The average divorced woman has one-third of the pension pot of the average divorced man. The average age for divorce is 43 years for women and 45 years for men; often, the presence of young children means that the potential for income and savings accumulation is limited.[8] Upon divorce, the level of household income falls for both men and women but, because women are still the majority child carers, the size of their household reduces by just one when the father moves out; for the father, his household reduces by more and he only has himself to cater for. In real terms, then, one study has shown that the father's household income actually increased by 23% on divorce, whereas the mother's income fell by nearly one-third.[9] In terms of salvaging the situation, the most significant recovery for women is when they re-partner, although the long-term effects on women's income remain more significant than those for men.

What does the law say?

What does the law say about this in making financial provision upon divorce? In the past, the 'homemaker' wife's reasonable requirements were simply met, leaving the 'breadwinning' husband with the huge surplus of any assets gained during the marriage. The case of *White v White*[10] sought to change this announcing that fairness must be the overarching principle and that there was no place for discrimination between the homemaker and the breadwinner. In the words of one of the Law Lords: 'whatever the division of labour chosen by the husband and wife [...] fairness requires that this should not prejudice or advantage either party [...] There should be no bias in favour of the money-earner and against the homemaker and child-carer.'[11] Fine words indeed. But how does this play out?

In reality, we see insistence upon the need to encourage a return to independent living which, whilst desirable, denies the real long-term effects of childcare on women's financial situation. We see categorisation of 'business' assets (assets generated by the sole acumen of one spouse) not always perceived to be of equal value to the homemaking contribution and therefore not considered for sharing upon divorce; we see that a woman who both earns a wage and takes on the majority of the childcare and domestic chores will not gain more than a 50% share of the assets.[12]

In fact, we see that the effects of inequalities in the workplace, coupled with choices made for the benefit of the family and the home, result in long-term economic detriment which falls disproportionately upon women. Their return to the employment market will often be to lower paid, part-time employment, with a greatly reduced earning capacity and pension provision.

Even bleaker for cohabitants

If the position of married women is not all rosy, the situation for informal cohabitants is even bleaker. Cohabiting couples are the fastest growing type of family; in the UK in 2019, 3.4 million families fall into this category and over half have dependent children.[13] Unlike the statutory regulation of divorce, there is no formal framework to

provide for financial remedies upon relationship breakdown.[14] As a result, a woman who has given up earning capacity to look after the children cannot claim any financial provision for herself when the relationship breaks down. Importantly, many people who cohabit are not even aware that there is no protection. Research shows that still, today, many people continue to believe in the 'common law marriage myth', the idea that the law protects those who cohabit in the same way as it does for spouses. *The British Social Attitudes Survey* 2018 found that 46% of respondents believed in this myth and, more worryingly, 55% of those had dependent children (and therefore were more likely to suffer long-term financial consequences).[15] This means that many people expect there to be some sharing of fruits and compensation for economic detriment generated from how the parties organised their life together.

So, relationship breakdown remains a source of inequality between men and women with women disproportionately affected by a combination of a focus on homemaking/caring and by the reality of the labour market. The law has recognised the entitlement of women on divorce as reflective of the joint endeavour or partnership that marriage entails, but the reality is that, to date, awards struggle to recognise the ongoing financial detriment generated by the way that the parties decide to organise their finances and familial obligations and the consequential economic sacrifices which have to be made. Moreover, a focus on the nature of the relationship as giving rise to legal protection denies the functional reality of an increasing number of cohabiting parents who are not provided for at all by the mere fact that they have not entered into a formal marriage (or civil partnership).

A way forward to a brighter dawn?

It is perhaps not surprising that in the traditional context of the male, unencumbered breadwinner, unpaid private care work has taken second place. Married women are provided for insofar as they are unable to return to the dominant model of the full-time worker. Caring in and of itself is not seen to have the same value as paid work outside of the home. By restricting some financial provision to spouses only, it is the parents' relationship status which leads to some entitlement. The idea of a partnership of equals is not borne from functional reality but rather from the simple fact of the formal institution of marriage.

A focus on the function of the relationship and the fact that parenting continues post-separation would enable a fairer apportionment of the risks associated with intimate relationships, particularly where caregiving is a central feature of that relationship. It would also contribute to furthering fathers' uptake of caring responsibilities and would recognise the value of care in its own right.

Social structures have a part to play – addressing inequalities in the employment market; providing affordable childcare; an increase in adaptability and flexible working; more advice for women on career breaks/pension consequences, and so on. For the law, more consistency by the courts in making specific pension orders would be welcome, as would a better understanding overall of the importance of pension provision. According to the Government, only 36% of all financial provision awards included a pension order.[16] When we know that pensions may sometimes be the biggest asset that the breadwinner partner in a relationship can build upon, often at the expense of the other who concentrates on unpaid home and childcare work, this must surely be something with which we should engage in order to ensure more equality in outcome following relationship breakdown.

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1 *Families and Households in the UK, 2019*, Office for National Statistics: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019.

2 *Families and the Labour Market 2019*, Office for National Statistics: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/familiesandthelabourmarketengland/2018#how-did-families-structure-their-economic-activity

3 *Women shoulder the responsibility of 'unpaid work'*: Office for National Statistics, November 2016. Report available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsand

workinghours/articles/womenshouldertheresponsibilityofunpaidwork/2016-11-10.

4 *Risk exposure and resilience to risk in Britain today – Women's Risks in Life, an interim report*, Chartered Insurance Institute, 2019. Available at: https://www.insuringwomensfutures.co.uk/uploads/2017/03/COH_J012648-IWF-Womens-Risk-in-Life-Report-Update-C1.pdf.

5 For a critical analysis of the lack of foundation for such headlines, see for example, E. Hutchings, J. Miles, Meal tickets for life? The need for evidence-based evaluation of financial remedies law. (2018) *Family Law*, pp.993–1005.

6 *Judicial Diversity Statistics 2019*: https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/judicial-diversity-statistics-2019-2/.

7 *Matrimonial Causes Act 1973*. It is, of course, one of the beauties of the common law system that an Act of Parliament can withstand the test of time where it is sufficiently flexible to allow judges to interpret the provisions in the light of evolving mores. Nevertheless, the predominantly male composition of the judiciary has determined how this interpretation has been developed in the context of financial provision.

8 *Risk exposure and resilience to risk in Britain today – Women's Risks in Life, an interim report*, Chartered Insurance Institute, 2019.

9 H. Fisher, H. Low, Who wins, who loses and who recovers from divorce? In J. Miles, R. Probert (eds) *Sharing Lives, Dividing Assets: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Hart 2009) at p.254.

10 *White v White* {2001} AC 596.

11 *Ibid.*, at para 605.

12 For a practitioner critique, see A. Murray, Women in the law, arise! *Family Law*, October 2019: https://www.familylaw.co.uk/news_and_comment/women-in-the-law-arise.

13 *Families and Households in the UK, 2019*, Office for National Statistics: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2019.

14 Despite clear recommendations from both the Law Commission and professional bodies, no government has been willing to introduce any formal regulation for the financial consequences of cohabitation breakdown. See *Cohabitation: The Financial Consequences of Relationship Breakdown*, Law Commission for England & Wales, Report No.307, Cm 7182 (2007). Available at: https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lawcom-prod-storage-11jsxou24uy7q/uploads/2015/03/lc307_Cohabitation.pdf.

15 G.Fraser, Cohabitation reform: what recent statistics mean for the cause [2019] Family Law 717.

16 *Gender equality at all stages: a road map for change?* Forward by Penny Mordaunt, Minister for Women, 2019. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/821889/GEO_GEEE_Strategy_Gender_Equality_Roadmap_Rev_1__1_.pdf. Other studies suggest an even lower percentage of pension orders being made: see H. Woodward, 'Everyday' financial remedy orders: do they achieve fair pension provision on divorce? (2015) 27 *Child & Family Law Quarterly* 151.

2.2 Women's equality: the business case

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> In the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders.
> – Sheryl Sandberg

Sadly, we have not yet reached this ideal state of equality in leadership. Recent work by the World Economic Forum noted that the estimated average global time-frame in which we are likely to arrive at gender parity is 99.5 years. This ranges from a 'mere' 54 years in Western Europe to 163 years in East Asia and the Pacific. It is not even as if progress is just slow; in some areas, including North America, it has stumbled or reversed.

This is a depressing view of the gender equality landscape. In some countries, it is still not possible for women to work outside of the home, or own property, or participate in the freedoms which we take for granted in our context. According to the World Economic Forum, (2019) the four most gender balanced countries (out of 153 measured) are in Scandinavia, with Iceland enjoying almost total gender parity. South Africa is 17th, the UK 21st and the USA 53rd on a balance of four measures: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Political Empowerment, and Health and Survival. The bottom four countries are Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen where 99.4% of gender privilege is held by men.

The population of the world is 51% women. Brain power is distributed evenly throughout global citizens without prejudice to one sex or the other, so why do people put artificial barriers in the way of fully utilising 51% of that worldwide talent?

There is now a wealth of research which demonstrates a strong business case for gender diversity against a whole array of parameters: profit, growth, innovation, employment rates, sickness absence, turnover, and even climate change. Diverse boards, constituted by a mix of gender, age and cultural backgrounds, have been shown to make 87% better decisions. Even where companies did not particularly enhance their profits, they improved turnover and kept more people in employment; that means more people retaining their dignity in paid work and supporting their families.

In terms of global impact, empowering women and girls could add $12 trillion to the global economy (Woetzel et al., 2015). So does the urge to block out women from business over-ride the desire for a business to flourish? Do men resist bringing more women into the various levels of their organisation and onto the Board in the face of evidence which suggests that the organisation would be more successful if they did so?

Cultural pressure

Imagine being a man and being forced to stay at home as a result of cultural pressure; imagine not being allowed to use your talent to engage in something meaningful, whether as a nurse, a counsellor, a lawyer, an entrepreneur or whatever your talent might be. In all cultures this would be a ridiculous thought and yet this has been the status quo for women in so many places for so long.

Generally, in Western Europe, men don't tend to like it if their female partners have a higher-powered job than they do, or if they earn more, or if they work longer hours or travel extensively for their work. Might we remind them that this is the situation that women have had to tolerate for eons. Of course, there are enlightened men who celebrate their partner's success but they are still in the minority.

When it comes to family life, once a child is born, a woman is not uniquely skilled to nurture that child: both parents are able to do that. In fact, it is easily demonstrated that where both parents engage jointly in childcare, children grow up to be more rounded, less dependent and certainly less likely to experience lasting mental illness or harm.

The value of diversity

In almost all countries now, the consumer is diverse, so why wouldn't the producer be equally diverse so as to better understand their market? Wouldn't businesses want to understand the buyers of their goods and services so as to tailor them more closely to their needs? What better way to do that than to have those very consumers being equal partners in the creative and management process?

Clearly there are some powerful forces operating to create the glacial rate of change. There are some very deep-rooted traditions that are hard to overcome; centuries have passed during which things have been done in one way and now businesses are being asked to change within a matter of decades (and, preferably, more quickly). It is part of the human condition to stick with the traditional because it is quicker, easier, less risky, more comfortable, eases communication and provides a solid platform of familiarity. However, it does not bring the accelerated benefits that diversity would bring.

Where progress is being made

In 2010, the 30% Club was created in the UK by Dame Helen Morrissey who had the backing of eight male FTSE350 Chairmen. This group of people pledged to increase the number of women in director positions in the FTSE350 to 30% by 2020. Over time, the number of Chairs (not only men) grew into a global mission with chapters in 14 countries/regions. At today's date (28/01/2020) the figure stands at 31.5% in the UK (US 23.6% S&P100, Australia 30% ASX-200, Canada 26.6% TSX Composite). In the UK, this is the first time these figures have been seen since the London Stock Exchange was formed in 1571.

There is still a way to go and more work is being done, but not only does women's increased presence in director positions represent enhanced economic prospects for those countries achieving 30% (why not now 40% or 50%?), it also means that there are many more women who can help other women through the pipeline. Diverse leadership teams will tend to nurture further diverse teams at other levels of the organisation, thus building diversity into the future.

Five factors to create a replicable formula for success

In order to promote progressive diversity in those countries lagging well behind the Scandinavian top four, many things need to happen. Some of them may be almost impossible where deep-seated cultural or religious traditions hold firm and where it is illegal for women to do so many things that we take for granted, such as acquire education, find paid work outside the home, and participate in ownership and decision-making.

For those countries where the cultural norms tend towards equality, there are things that can be done to bring the goal somewhat closer. These include:

- a measurable goal with a defined timetable
- supportive public policy which acknowledges that the status quo is unacceptable
- change driven by those in power
- openness to collaborate
- a concerted and consistent series of actions and programmes.

Three things made the difference in the UK:

- government mandated targets
- focused development programmes to bring equity
- lobby groups such as the 30% Club to build awareness and take tangible action.

Research also suggests that a number of specific areas of action will help, such as:

- the creation of flexible working patterns
- showcasing strong role models and having them tell their stories of empowerment
- eradicating the gender pay gap
- actively managing the pipeline.

Allies

When you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression.

We need to find allies and champions to further the work of gender equality. There are men out there, though not enough of them yet, who agree that we should use 100% of the talent available in organisations and that our differences are our strengths. Gender equality in the workplace cannot be achieved without the active support of men.

In 2014, the United Nations launched its #HeForShe campaign which has engaged over a billion people globally in the discussion on this topic. Even seemingly small actions can have disproportionately positive consequences, such as calling out sexist or derogatory language, speaking up to ensure women get credit for their ideas, and sharing the office administrative load so that men do their share of note-taking in meetings or of making the tea. Women need men to support us in this cause and we need to recognise and celebrate their contributions to building gender balance at home and in the workplace.

A rounded approach

The solution to equality in business is not easy and it is not simple. There will be some big breakthroughs but most of the important steps towards equality will be taken through millions of small individual actions.

Where men champion the cause, where development programmes support equity, where women support other women by being role models and mentors, where the case for diversity is heard and promoted, progress will be made. We must all be active and approach the problems from a number of angles; and we must pick our battles, focus on results and not be embarrassed to claim the ground.

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2.3 Why we need to be serious about gender stereotyping

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In this piece I present evidence that gender stereotyping is an important pervasive force that underlies many of the persistent gender gaps which we observe in outcomes of various kinds, and I argue that unless we take them seriously, make conscious efforts to teach our children about their existence and effects, and equip them to combat them adequately, we will not make progress in reversing gender inequality and fully realise women's rights. I will focus on the areas I know best through my research and practice, namely education and the world of work and women's wellbeing, and I will argue through the lens of my expertise in labour and behavioural economics. I will make use also of my experience as a Diversity and Inclusion Lead at the University, my outreach activities in schools, my role on the Women's Committee of the Royal Economic Society, and my life as a woman.

Let me begin with some facts about gender gaps in education.

Although the story of girls' success in education is reported everywhere in the news, and although the international evidence on educational attainment generally highlights a closure of the gender gap in education (http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016), and although girls systematically report more positive educational attitudes and aspirations than boys (Rampino and Taylor, 2013), there remain key differences in the subjects boys and girls choose to study at higher level. In particular, the UK, which already has one of the lowest shares of 15-year-olds intending a STEM career among the OECD countries, actually lags behind most OECD countries in women's aspirations to study a STEM subject and engage in a STEM career (see OECD, 2012). Indeed, Mendolia and Walker (2012) have shown that the UK ranking of 15-year-old pupils in Mathematics and Science in the OECD's PISA tests has been falling from 2000 to 2009 and was just below the OECD average in Mathematics and only slightly above in Science. A key contributing factor to the UK's deficit is the very low General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) performance at 16 in Science and Mathematics subjects. High level GCSE passes in these subjects are a pre-requisite for further study in these areas so understanding what happens at this level is clearly important. What is really striking about the statistics is that after GCSEs girls select out of maths even when they actually do better than boys in these subjects (Institute of Physics, 2013; Smith and Golding, 2015; Reuben et al, 2014). This suggests that girls' beliefs about their own performance may be biased and not based on their actual abilities.

Before we turn to how these beliefs are formed, let us consider the consequences of this 'choice' by girls not to study mathematics further than is compulsory. Evidence from a large body of research shows that maths skills play an important role in determining earnings over and above their level of overall educational attainment (Joensen and Skyt Nielsen, 2009). Opting out of maths, of course, also affects the selection of women out of STEM subjects at University and in the labour market, with important effects on pay gaps (STEM jobs pay better). These effects continue into career and pension gaps and of course determine a range of other decisions within couples (who will stay home with the baby; who will arrange their working patterns around school and other activities for a couple of decades thereafter?). These decisions are driven by financial considerations as well as by the relative bargaining power of women and men (Petrongolo and Olivetti, 2006; Ceci and Williams, 2010).

So being better paid is not just good in itself but it affords a different negotiating platform for the division of household chores and, importantly, it makes families and kids better off in the long run also. This is the time frame that is clearly in their mind when couples are taking out mortgages but, for some reason, not when deciding on parental leave and work arrangements; this is evidenced by the child penalty

data which for mothers stands (in the long term) at a whopping 44% (Kleven et al., 2019). This is by no means a UK story: UNESCO reported in 2017 that women represent only 35 percent of all students enrolled in STEM-related fields of higher education, and only 28 percent in the critical information and communications technology field, which means that any support to these critical fields unintentionally benefits men more than women. Collective welfare suffers too: as neuroscientist Gina Rippon explains so well in *The Gendered Brain*, science itself is impoverished by not having enough women in it, given they bring not just more talent but different perspectives and directions of research (Rippon, 2019). Moreover, as a report commissioned by the IMF (Ostry et al., 2018) attests, countries where the gender gap is higher have lower productivity and innovation.

Science finds no evidence of 'innate' gender differences in ability (for example, spatial ability, intuition, and so on, see Gina Rippon, 2019). The evidence rather suggests that gender gaps in maths are closely aligned to the following:

- gender norms of the hosting society: more gender equal societies have lower gaps (Giuso et al., 2008)
- parents' expectations: more gender equal parents have daughters that do better at maths (Cornwell and Mustard, 2013; González de San Román and De La Rica, 2012; Fryer and Levitt, 2010)
- teachers' expectations: teachers who have positive expectations increase the performance of pupils (Figlio, 2005; Sprietsma, 2009; Campbell, 2015; Hannah and Linden, 2012) and more gender egalitarian teachers increase the performance and uptake of STEM by girls (Alan et al., 2018; Carlana, 2018)
- school composition: in gender segregated schools girls choose STEM more and boys choose humanities more (Favara, 2012)
- pupils' expectations: these affect performance independently of previous attainment and parental and other characteristics (Jacob and Wilder, 2010).

As the evidence reveals, gender stereotyping clearly has a great deal to do with all this.

Stereotypes are cognitive shortcuts; we use them automatically to generate expectations of others' behaviour, and we thus attach the expectation of what we think a group does to a person who comes from that group (Kahnemann, 2011; Schmader, 2010; Schneider, 2005). Cerebral networks used to process self-identity are different to those used to process more general knowledge and they are harder to change: a direct consequence of this is that correcting identity-related stereotypes with direct experience is difficult (Rippon, 2019).

The relevant example in the present context is the gender and maths stereotype. Bohren et al. (2018) have shown through experiments in Mathematics Stack Exchange, an online forum of maths Q&A with ten million participants, that for some users providing more information on the competence of a female user changes the stereotype and even reverses it; however, for other users, this does not happen and instead they question the rating mechanism of the forum.

What happens at the receiving end of stereotyping? Stereotype threat affects performance both in positive terms (if it is manipulated to convince pupils to believe that they belong to a group which has a natural advantage, they perform better) and in negative terms (if pupils are reminded of their gender, they do worse in the subjects in which they are expected to do badly) (Johns et al., 2005; Jussim et al., 2015). This starts early: girls aged 4 have worse performance in spatial skills tests if they colour in a girl playing with a doll before taking the test (Shenouda & Danovitch, 2014). Evidence shows that exposure to bias toward one's group affects effort, self-confidence, and productivity (Carlana, 2018; Bordalo et al., 2018; Glover et al., 2017), and bias is not just found in subjective elements of evaluation but in algorithms too (Schelsinger et al., 2018). This is perhaps unsurprising given that they are designed by humans and fed human produced data.

The message is, I hope, clear: we need work to identify and combat bias and stereotyping, including in making schoolchildren aware that it exists and in preparing them to face it (teacher training reading

lists on gender should include Rippon, 2019, Criado-Perez, 2019 and Bohnet, 2016).

We do not rely on chance when our children cross the road; we tell them it is dangerous and we hold their hands for many years before we let them do it by themselves. We should do the same with gender stereotyping and help our girls (and our boys) step into life prepared to deal with the oncoming traffic.

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2.4 Women in the labour market: disappointment and challenge

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Introduction

In the past one-hundred years we have undoubtedly witnessed phenomenal progress in terms of women's participation in the labour market. This is evidenced most effectively in the crude figures that demonstrate a growth in women's physical participation – currently just over seventy percent of working age women are in paid employment.[1] We have certainly come a long way since the days of marriage bars and the acceptability of dismissal once married.[2] Indeed, many feel that we now have gender equality at work; one in five men apparently believes that women's equality has gone too far.[3] Of course, that is not the case and gender equality at work is not yet a lived reality for the majority of women in the UK. Despite decades of women's participation in the labour market, despite several legislative interventions that have slowly offered rights and protection for women at work,[4] and despite the staggering efforts of many individual women (and some men) to challenge misogyny and push for legal reforms or enforce these hard-won legal rights, we know that equality is not what we have.

In this paper it is demonstrated that we do not have as much to celebrate as we should at this moment in our history. Indeed, if Miss Bebb were here today she would at best be disappointed and at worst be furious at the lack of real progress. In what follows, three likely causes of that disappointment and fury are outlined: sexual harassment, the gender pay gap, and pregnancy-related discrimination at work.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment in the workplace is understood, under international agreements and national laws, as sex discrimination and a form of violence against women.[5] Whilst the government does not collect data on the scope and nature of sexual harassment in workplaces in the UK, there are indications that it is fairly widespread. There have been various surveys and much media exposure[6] of sexual harassment in the UK, especially in the wake of the #MeToo campaign. It is thought to be experienced by around half of UK female workers: the range in studies is from 40%–53%.[7] Younger women are more likely to experience sexual harassment at work[8] but many women do not report incidents and so the true extent of it remains hidden.[9]

Sexual harassment can include unwelcome jokes, displays of pornographic material, receiving comments of a sexual nature or serious sexual assault. The following is an example of one woman's experience, cited in a recent report by *The Women and Equalities Select Committee* in 2019:

> I have been asked directly for sex while at work by a superior. I have been shown a pornographic video and asked for oral sex while at work by a line manager. I have been stalked by a line manager. I have been verbally harassed by a pair of male colleagues whose comments were sexually explicit and concerning the rape of women and intended to cause intimidation and distress for their personal amusement while at work. These are some of the most serious experiences but casual chauvinism and comments about my appearance, sexual desirability, and conversations that are demeaning or intended to insult women, alongside inappropriate physical contact and inappropriate gaze, have been a commonplace throughout my working life.[10]

Its impact on individual women is clearly unacceptable. It is also noteworthy that *The Women and Equalities Committee* investigation found that 'sexual harassment can be considered both a cause and consequence of sex inequality, and some of the evidence we received drew links between sexual harassment and other manifestations of gender inequality in the workplace such as the gender pay gap and the under-representation of women in leadership roles'.[11]

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the percentage difference between average hourly earnings for men and women. In the UK this currently stands at 17.3% for all employees, although there are differences between sectors.[12] This has reduced over the years – it was 27.5% in 1997.[13] It is significant that the graduate gender pay gap is actually growing; median earnings for men five years after completing their undergraduate degree was £28,300 compared with £24,700 for women. After 10 years, average male earnings were £35,300 compared with £26,900 for female graduates, a 31% difference.[14] At the current rate, it will take about 60 years to close the gender pay gap in the UK.[15]

This gap is largely caused by the fact that it is women who predominantly take time out of the labour market or reduce hours or move to more flexible and lower paid jobs in order to accommodate childcare (and, more recently, eldercare[16]) responsibilities. It is, however, also due partly to discrimination at work. The latter continues despite legal protection against it and despite many high-profile cases[17] which have gained media attention and which ought to serve as a warning to employers who insist on paying men more than women for undertaking the same or similar work.

National Unequal Pay Day[18] and obligatory gender pay gap reporting[19] help keep the issue of equal pay in the public eye and are to be commended, but much of the narrative around the issue remains problematic. One CEO commented that in order to challenge unequal pay it is women who need to get better at negotiating their salaries: 'often, when men are offered a job there will be a back and forth on pay, holiday and other benefits. Women tend to simply accept offers, because of absurd notions about being too pushy and outspoken'.[20] This notion that women's behaviour is the 'problem', and that if only they were more 'like men' in the workplace there would be pay equality, is a convenient way for employers to avoid responsibility for this

outrageous reality of working life, a reality that exists 50 years after the enactment of the Equal Pay Act in 1970.

Pregnancy and maternity related discrimination at work

Legislation protects women against poor treatment at work as a result of pregnancy or maternity leave.[21] However, the ineffectiveness of the available legal protection is starkly reflected in research findings:[22] it is estimated that every year around 54,000 women are dismissed, made compulsorily redundant, while others are treated so poorly that they feel they have to leave their jobs. Around 100,000 women a year experience harassment and negative comments relating to pregnancy from employers and colleagues; 1 in 3 women felt unsupported by their employer at some point when pregnant or returning to work and 1 in 10 women are discouraged from attending ante-natal appointments which are of great importance for their health and for that of their unborn babies. This type of discrimination is a longstanding and common problem which has yet to be effectively addressed.[23] Unfortunately, many women are reluctant to legally challenge this behaviour when faced with the prospect of doing so. The 2015 research found that only 1 in 5 of those who experienced problems at work while pregnant, on maternity leave or returning following maternity leave, formally or informally raised issues with employers. A key point of contention is the overwhelming onus on individual women to enforce the law and, relatedly, the inadequacy of the dispute resolution procedure.[24]

This type of discrimination highlights how, in 2020, pregnancy and childcare are still triggers for poor employment practice and it also demonstrates how as a society we continue to undervalue procreation and caregiving.[25] The consequences of these realities are felt by families (who lose an income stream) and by the economy in general (which loses talent) but are felt most severely by working women themselves.

Conclusion

> Take your foot off our necks, then we will hear in what voice women speak[26]

Women in 2020 are able to enter and exist in the workplace in a way that was unimaginable 100 years ago. Hard won legal rights have secured formal equality, and these ought not to be underestimated, but the relevant laws are failing to bring about substantive equality. Women continue to be subjected to, and penalised as a result of, outdated assumptions and practices; although not always as accepted or as transparent as they were in Miss Bebb's day, these assumptions and practices perpetuate the status quo and continue to act as a metaphorical foot on women's necks. The key challenge for the next generation is to finally remove that foot and to let the full extent and diversity of women's voices be recognised and heard.

References

1 See Powell, A (2019) *Women and the Economy: House of Commons Briefing Paper no. CBP06838*, House of Commons Library, London available at file:///C:/Users/lbs01cgj/Downloads/SN06838.pdf. See also Roantree, B and Vira, K (2017) *The Rise and Rise of Women's Employment in the UK*, The Institute of Fiscal Studies, London.

2 See discussion in Fredman, S (1997) *Women and the Law*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and Busby, N and James, G (2020) *A History of Regulating Working Families: Strains, Stereotypes, Strategies and Solutions* (Chapter 2), Hart Publishing, Oxford.

3 Fawcett Society (2017), *Sounds Familiar Report*, Fawcett Society, London, p.11.

4 Many of which have their origins in EU law, hence a looming Brexit is a cause of great concern for those interested in gender issues: on this issue see, for example, N Busby, 'The Evolution of Gender Equality and Related Employment Policies: the Case of Work-Family Reconciliation' (2018) 18 *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 104; C Fagan and J Rubery, 'Advancing gender equality through European Employment Policy: the impact of the UK's EU membership and the risks of Brexit' (2018) 17 *Social Policy and Society* 297; R Guerrina and A Masselot, 'Walking into the footprints of EU Law: unpacking the gendered consequences of Brexit' (2018)17 *Social Policy and Society* 319; M Weldon-Johns, 'Brexit and Work-Family Conflict: a Scottish Perspective'

in M Dustin, N Terreira and S Millns (eds), *Gender and Queer Perspectives on Brexit* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) 305.

5 The Equality Act 2010. Section 26 defines sexual harassment as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' which has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or 'creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment'. Certain types of sexual harassment can also constitute a criminal offence: for example, harassment and stalking may be contrary to the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, sexual assault and voyeurism is unlawful under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and image-based sexual abuse (sometimes called 'revenge porn') is captured under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. See also the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Article 40 of the Istanbul Convention (as yet not ratified in the UK but there are plans to do so). The UK has also signed the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5), requiring the elimination of all forms of sexual and other violence against women by 2030.

6 See broad discussion in Women and Equalities Committee (2018), *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Report*, House of Commons, London.

7 *Ibid* pp.7–8.

8 Trade Union Congress (2017), *Still Just a Bit of Banter?*, TUC, London.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Women and Equalities Committee (2018), *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Report*, House of Commons, London p.6.

11 Women and Equalities Committee (2018), *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Report*, House of Commons, London p.7.

12 For detail see ONS (2019), Gender Pay Gap in the UK: 2019 at https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2019

13 *Ibid.*

14 For discussion, see Adams, R (2019) 'Graduate Gender Pay Gap is Widening Official Figures Reveal', *The Guardian*, 29 March 2019.

15 See further, discussion in TUC blog: Gibson, E (2019) 'Women's Pay: Time to Close the Gender Pay Gap' Trade Union Congress blog at https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/womens-pay-time-government-action-close-gender-pay-gap.

16 See, generally, G James and E Spruce, 'Workers with elderly dependants: employment law's response to the latest care-giving conundrum' (2015) 35 *Legal Studies*, 463 and particular discussion of gendered aspect in Carers UK, *Caring for your future: The Long-Term Financial Impact of Caring*, (2018, London, Carers UK).

17 For example, the successful claim by thousands of women against Glasgow City Council; Carrie Grace and, more recently, Samira Ahmed's successful cases against the BBC and the ongoing claim against ASDA by thousands of shop workers.

18 This is the day in the year when women effectively start to work for free. It is calculated based on the gender pay gap and it usually falls in November.

19 Since 2017 detailed obligations apply to companies with 250 or more employees re the annual reporting of gender pay gaps (The Equality Act 2010 [Gender Pay Gap Information] Regulations 2017). It seems clear that this legislation fails to tackle the broader underlying causes of pay inequalities between men and women: such concerns were raised and discussed in an earlier parliamentary cross party *Women and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry* (See https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/gender-pay-gap-15-16/).

20 Webber, A (2019) 'Gender Pay Gap Day: Men Earn 15% more than Women' *Personnel Today* March 29 2019.

21 Pregnancy and maternity are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and section 18 clearly states that it is discriminatory to treat a woman unfavourably during the 'protected period' because of pregnancy, illness suffered as a result of pregnancy or because she is on compulsory maternity leave or is exercising, seeking to exercise or has exercised or sought to exercise the right to ordinary or additional maternity leave. Dismissal because of pregnancy/maternity leave is also automatically unfair under the Employment Rights Act 1996 section 99.

22 See, in particular, The Equality and Human Rights Commission / Dept. of Business, Innovation and Skills (2016) *Pregnancy and Maternity Related Discrimination and Disadvantage Investigation* available at https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/managing-pregnancy-and-maternity-workplace/pregnancy-and-maternity-discrimination-research-findings.

23 James, G (2016) 'Family-friendly employment laws (re)assessed: the potential of care ethics' *Industrial Law Journal* Vol. 45 No 4 pp.477–502.

24 The Equality and Human Rights Commission / Dept. of Business, Innovation and Skills (2016) *Pregnancy and Maternity Related Discrimination and Disadvantage Investigation* available at https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/managing-pregnancy-and-maternity-workplace/pregnancy-and-maternity-discrimination-research-findings.

25 See James, G (2016) 'Family-friendly employment laws (re)assessed: the potential of care ethics' Industrial Law Journal Vol. 45 No 4 pp.477–502; James, G (2009) *The Legal Regulation of Pregnancy and Parenting in the Labour Market* Routledge, London. For a broader assessment see, for example, Herring, J (2013) Caring and the Law, Hart Publishing, Oxford.

26 MacKinnon, C (1987) *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, Harvard University Press Cambridge, Mass, p.45.

3.1 The impact of inspirational women scientists' discoveries on our lives: Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin

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Professor Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin (1910–1994) continues to serve as a heroine within the scientific and wider communities, due both to her scientific achievements which led to her Nobel Prize for chemistry and her pioneering attitude during her career. It is clear that she valued support provided by others and was passionate to provide support for others, especially those who may find themselves in challenging circumstances.

Education

It is reported that Dorothy showed an interest in science from an early age and was supported by family, friends and teachers to succeed in this area despite it being seen as a career more suited to males than females. For example, during Dorothy's early education, she was one of only two girls in her school who was allowed to study chemistry with the boys. Also, as her local school did not teach Latin, but because this was required for admission into Oxford, her headmaster gave her personal tuition to allow her to apply. This hard work paid off and Dorothy won a place at Somerville College, Oxford, to study chemistry in 1928.

In 1932 Dorothy graduated with a first-class Honours degree, the third woman to achieve this distinction. Dorothy was awarded a

Research Fellowship by her college in 1933, and this allowed her to spend one year at Cambridge and one year at Oxford. During her time at Somerville College, Oxford, she tutored Margaret Thatcher who herself read chemistry at Somerville. Dorothy also commenced her research on crystallography and X-ray analysis where she studied the photographic images of the patterns formed when X-rays were passed through a crystalline substance. She continued to develop and apply this technique throughout her career, including during her PhD at Cambridge, applying it to molecules of biological and therapeutic importance. These molecules were of increasing complexity and included penicillin (a now widely used antibacterial drug), vitamin B12 (important for the treatment of pernicious anaemia), and insulin (the mainstay treatment for Type 1 diabetes). Many of these structures took years or decades to decipher, demonstrating Dorothy's resolve and attention to detail. Dorothy Hodgkin's contributions to this area were recognized by the award of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1964, 'for her determinations by X-ray techniques of the structures of important biochemical substances'.

Dedication to her family

Dorothy married Thomas Hodgkin in 1937 and they had three children together. It is apparent that those who knew Dorothy valued her ability to combine her passion for her science with her dedication to her family. For example, a close friend is quoted as saying: 'Some women intellectuals regard their children as distracting impediments to their careers, but Dorothy radiated motherly warmth even while doing scientific work. Concentration came to her so easily that she could give all her attention to a child's chatter at one moment and switch to complex calculations the next'. Indeed, when Dorothy was asked to name her three heroines she named the medical missionary Mary Slessor, the Principal of Somerville College, Margery Fry, but first and foremost, her mother.

Tackling health challenges

From her late twenties, and throughout the rest of her career and life, Dorothy suffered with rheumatoid arthritis. This affected her joints and caused swelling in her knuckles. The recommendation of 'rest' soon after diagnosis was incompatible with Dorothy's experimental schedule and she found alternative ways to tackle the challenge. For example, her condition made it uncomfortable for her to use the main switch of the X-ray equipment so she had a longer lever made to ensure that her research would not be affected.

Support for peace and humanitarian causes

Dorothy was involved in a wide range of peace and humanitarian causes and was especially concerned about the welfare of scientists and people living in nations defined as adversaries by the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1970, Hodgkin was elected Chancellor of Bristol University, and she took a personal interest in individuals, particularly if she thought they had been disadvantaged. She supported the establishment of a Hodgkin Scholarship for a student from the Third World, and Hodgkin House to accommodate overseas students.

Long-lasting legacy

In addition to Dorothy's many contributions noted above, her legacy is evident in numerous additional ways. For example, specialist synchrotron facilities around the world have beamlines dedicated to the technique she pioneered. As a result, over one hundred years after Hodgkin was born, the Protein Database lists over 56,000 structures solved using the technique she pioneered. The Royal Society also awards Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships 'for outstanding scientists at an early stage of their research career who require a flexible working pattern due to personal circumstances, such as parenting or caring responsibilities or health-related reasons'. An annual memorial lecture has been presented since 1999 by the Oxford International Women's Festival, through a collaboration between the Oxford Association for Women in Science and Engineering, Somerville College and the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Buildings have also been named after Dorothy, including a science block within her former school.

It is reported that at her memorial service a highly esteemed, long standing collaborator stated: 'She radiated love: for chemistry, her family, her friends, her students, her crystals and her college … Her love was combined with a brilliant mind and an iron will to succeed, regardless of her frail and later severely crippled body. There was magic about her person'.

Conclusion

Dorothy is the type of scientist, colleague and friend that I would aspire to be. Traditionally, careers in the physical sciences were seen as male-dominated professions but this view has now largely changed and we have scientists such as Dorothy to thank for leading by example. I hope that Dorothy's life story and the many contributions that she made will inspire you all to embrace every opportunity that comes your way.

Further information on this inspirational scientist can be found at:

https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/chemistry/1964/hodgkin/biographical/

http://www.rsc.org/diversity/175-faces/all-faces/dorothy-hodgkin-om-frs/

https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/diversity-in-science/scientists-with-disabilities/dorothy-hodgkin/

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-professor-dorothy-hodgkin-1373624.html

3.2 The herstory of art: the empowerment of the female artist teacher and the use of contemporary female-made art in the primary art classroom

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The sphere of art in today's western world continues to perpetuate a patriarchal legacy and ideology (Stromquist, 2014). At the turn of the millennium, statistics revealed that of 297 solo exhibitions in New York galleries, only 23% were by women (Hoban, 2007). In the spring of 2016, *The Sunday Times* 'Culture' section published an article titled '100 best art works to love'; 12 women featured alongside 88 men (Januszczak, 2016). Within an art educational context, Tate Publishing currently sells 'Art in a Box', a resource aimed at primary aged children and primary school teachers with an intention to 'introduce children to the world of art and inspire their creativity' (Richardson, 2010). 20 cards are contained in the kit; just 3 feature work by female artists. In 2006, contemporary artist, Tracey Emin canvassed a 'vox pop' outside Tate Britain, asking visitors to name three artists:

> Their answers were depressingly predictable. Toulouse-Lautrec is by far the most popular, followed by Stubbs, Turner, Monet, Constable, Picasso and David Hockney. The latter is the only contemporary artist mentioned and, crucially, not one woman springs to anyone's mind.
>
> – Emin cited in Leiris, 2006

These examples epitomise an ingrained gender imbalance and a continued pattern of a patriarchal system in the world of art education. Emin's lament echoes the marginalised significance and legacy of women's art (Meskimmon, 2003), stemming back to the invisibility of the female artist addressed throughout the 1970s (Parker & Pollock, 1995). Some 50 years on from these initial feminist waves of protest, a female 'invisibility' culture continues to impact on the world of art and, crucially, on the art that is identified and studied within primary school education (Vahter, 2016).

A re-imagined 'herstory' focus aims to examine what impedes a gender balanced approach in primary art, with a particular focus on newly qualified art specialist primary school teachers, whilst Dalton's dated patriarchal theory (Dalton, 2001) continues to reverberate within today's 'phallocentric and formulaic school cultures' (Mindel, 2018, p.177). A long overdue exigency to examine the legacy of female artist identities within a male-dominated and linear primary art curriculum (Jarvis, 2011) is paramount. Educators in art must offer an alternative and dialogic way of looking at gender-balanced art in the classroom (Nind, 2012) which challenges the 'male-default setting' of primary school art (Hames, 2016: 14).

As female art tutors we seek to underpin a form of communicative practice as a model for the undergraduate and postgraduate artist student teachers who we work with, the vast majority of whom are female. The students' university, studio-based work embraces and reflects their growing and confident artistic identities through impassioned discussions, critiques and celebrations of influential and contemporary female artists. Their confidence, however, significantly dwindles once they are back in the conformity of the classroom, often reverting to the same centuries-old, safe, 'acceptable' artists. We seek to challenge this norm and arm our skilled and dynamic female artist teachers of the future to influence and challenge emerging generations of pupils, and to redefine the image of an influential, successful and inspiring artist. We are committed to empowering the students to transfer their contemporary knowledge and confidence as female artists into the primary classroom and the current male-dominant curriculum (Walker, 2007).

Historically, those female artists who were successful (in that their work was exhibited and written about) were often considered oddities, curiosities, and even sexual deviants (Hopper, 2015). These 'recognised' artists were the exceptions rather than the norm (Steadman, 1999). Artist Sonya Boyce invoked this historic norm when interviewed back in 1987: 'the materials of history are not fixed; we can choose to refashion what we are given to reflect better our understanding of those historical references from our perspective now' (Boyce as cited in Roberts, 1987).

In acknowledgment of the inculturation of the female artist, Steadman proposed that the 'past is prologue' (1999, p.276) and Burgess debated the dismantling of male hierarchies (1999). It was time for women to reposition their place in art and gain public acceptance as professional artists (Borzello, 2000), validating the female art memoire (Dreidger, 2004). To the present day and Hoekstra suggests a move away from this patriarchal omnipresence by inciting confidence in primary art teachers to be 'guides in the world of female-made art' (Hoekstra, 2015, p.354) and so infuse their classrooms and colleagues' practice with critical and contemporary thinking (Knight, 2010, Hyde 2007).

Into the 21st century and there is an increasing awareness relating to the social constructs of gender (Hames 2016, Vahter 2016) within the art world and subsequently art education. Owing to the ongoing protests and determined remonstrations of leading feminist artists, the non-linear gender movement (Jarvis, 2011) continues to grow, evolve and challenge the norm. The Turner Prize has more female artists nominated, galleries such as Saatchi (Champagne Life exhibition, 2016) present female-made exhibitions, and Rochdale's Touchstones Gallery offered a significant 'Herstory' exhibition in 2018 featuring only female artists. Searle celebrated this show as being 'full of variety, humour and confrontation, women objectified, invisible women and women refusing to disappear [...] its stories have no end' (Searle, 2018).

Concurrent with this changing dynamic, there is evidence that female art students are more conscious of their own power in determining who they are and how to negotiate their developing artistic identity (Nind, 2012). Addison discusses the issue of 'self-hood' (2005, p.22) as female art students relinquish male-orientated imitation and start their own process of becoming (Gordon, 2006). Their university-based art studios encourage and house constructions of who they are, what they see and what they want to convey. Their confidence and determination to express the inner something (Addison, 2007) allows them to successfully sustain their artistic identity and 'make a mark', as it were, with their own important and changing artistic memoires (Driedger, 2004).

Confidence in self, as Stromquist suggests, can be brought about through the resurgence of women's empowerment, in acknowledgement of Freire's original writings on the subject. It can be defined as an 'attribute, a leverage that guarantees that gender equality will be initiated, respected and maintained.' (Stromquist, 2015, p.308).

The question remains, however, as to how to relate a resurgence of empowerment to the female university art students who are training to become primary teachers. The dual role of artist and teacher can often attract students who, though lively, dynamic and forward thinking, can lack confidence to be 'active' in challenging institutional norms in art education (Hallam, 2007, Hoekstra, 2015). How can the empowerment they experience as artist-teachers in their studios be then transferred into their classroom practice thereby challenging patriarchal structures and gender bias within primary art education?

Our task as tutors is to instil in our students a collaborative courage and collective conscious-raising (Mindel, 2018) in order to advocate and aspire to a more heterogeneous outlook in their art lessons, thereby richly enculturating the art in their schools. Echoing the wise words of Hopper (2002), we seek to raise the consciousness of our students:

> As informed and reflective practitioners, such teachers will be able to introduce the important and thought-provoking work of women artists, and provide future generations not only with reflections on essentially female experiences but also with women as artist role models (p.318)

Hames discusses empowerment within a collaborative paradigm, referring to it as collaborative conscious raising (2016). This model advocates a collective and dialogic voice, and offers possibilities of support and a liberation from the hegemonic norm (Nayak, 2006). Collective and collaborative discourses offer a space and place for the transformational power of dialogue (Thornton, 2013) and so disturb and disrupt a norm or a mainstay, making way for the empowerment of self, identity and multi-modal narratives (Addison, 2007, Nind, 2012). Scheib discusses the dialogic reaffirmation at play for the artist in such a scenario: 'To reattach in a profound, deliberate, and official way to their craft as an artist' (Scheib, 2006: 9).

Discursive disturbance and change disrupt and successfully offer a plurality of outcomes (Vahter, 2016). Collective dialogue which challenges the norm purposefully ignites contradiction, disjuncture and often dislodges and disrupts schools and their orthodoxies (Nayak 2006, Hall 2010, Mindel 2018). As Hall states, 'openness and uncertainty contrast sharply with the enduring rationality of curriculum and assessment' (Hall, 2010: 107). A culture that explores and liberates uncharted territories and collective agency (Stromquist, 2015) can interpellate new beginnings and provide a locus for our emerging, young and inspirational female artist teachers (Addison, 2007).

The impact of this collective and discourse rich, university-based culture is now being lived and experienced across the country as students take up their professional teaching roles in primary schools. Their own empowered artist-teacher identity continues to develop (Hall, 2010) and, with it, an increased determination to introduce and maintain a gender balanced art curriculum in their classrooms. They are championing a dynamic diet of art 'herstory' in primary education, inspiring both the children they teach and the other educators with whom they work. In the words of one alumnus:

> I feel like we, as young women, are still being silenced; that is what my art is about. I don't want the girls (and boys) I teach to ever think they have to be quiet about anything, especially what is important to them and belongs to them. I can help them to think about that through their art. I hope.
>
> – Molly, 2019

In a recent article in *The Guardian*, women discussed the need to hold onto hope in the current political and educational climate. Passionate and proactive stories and manifestos offer a sense of positive progress for the future of women and ensure that the voice of the female artist will be heard loud and clear for generations to come:

> I hope that the coming decade will be one where humanity reconnects to creativity, compassion and community, and moves away from the patriarchal and competitive mind-set that is dulling society.
>
> – Minna Salami, 16.12.19, *The Guardian*, from the article on 'How to be hopeful'

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3.3 How a gender specific approach to supporting vulnerable women with complex needs can make a difference

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Alana House Women's Centre, part of Parents and Children Together

From an Alana House woman's perspective:

> Just like so many, if not all, of the women who go to the centre, we are survivors of some form of abuse and trauma going way back to early childhood. And just as my support worker reminds me so often, 'you are a survivor – you are a strong woman – you have come through so much and are still here moving forwards'.
>
> The loving kindness and shared experience and openness and honesty has helped me move on from an angry woman to one who is more open to learning and absorbing any help and skills and shared experiences I can.
>
> Having been in toxic, abusive and violent relationships most of my life, I'm now learning 'only I can give myself the happiness, health, love and compassion and appreciation I need'.
>
> It's a work in progress, especially maintaining self-awareness and making healthy positive choices for myself and others through the course of each day. But Alana House is now the highlight of each day. A hub of love, activity, nurturing and where I can grow in so many positive ways. Thank you.
>
> – Alana House service user

In 2007 Baroness Corston was invited by the Ministry of Justice to conduct a review of women in the criminal justice system. Her report and recommendations set out the requirement for there to be a different approach for women at risk or in the criminal justice system, introducing a gender specific approach and a wider women's centre network across the country.

The charity Parents And Children Together (PACT) responded to this recommendation and was successful with a grant from the Ministry of Justice, opening the doors of the Alana House women's centre in Reading in 2010. Alana House is an innovative women's community project which uses a holistic approach to support vulnerable and disadvantaged women with complex needs. Since its launch, Alana House services have developed and now focus on vulnerable women in distress, including those whose lifestyles put them at risk of offending and also women who have previously been involved with the criminal justice system. In addition, Alana House provides an outreach programme across Berkshire for vulnerable women.

Alana House is a non-judgemental and inclusive space where support workers work in partnership with marginalised women on a one-to-one basis, in group support, and through outreach and signposting to partner agencies for specific intervention.

> I have received all the support I need – physical, emotional, practical. You are always there to support me in difficult meetings when I have too much information or am confused. And I can come to Alana and switch off, chat, do crafts or whatever to take my mind off the stress of it all. In counselling we have covered everything and it has been good.
>
> – Alana House service user

We provide a safe space where any woman can access support. Our service users' needs, demographics and experiences are diverse, so there is no typical service user. However, most of our service users have experienced trauma either in their childhood, adulthood or both. Women have often not had opportunities to heal from their trauma and the repercussions are still being felt in their everyday lives and

choices. Through forming trusting relationships with their Alana House support worker they are given opportunities to heal, to move forward and make positive choices about their lives and their families.

When women first enter Alana House they may be greeted by a service user representative or a member of the support team. After a welcoming cup of tea, they will meet privately with a support worker to discuss their current needs. A support plan is put together with each woman which ensures that it is clear what steps she can take to make positive improvement and how their support worker can assist them in achieving their goals. Women will continue to meet with their support worker regularly (it will range from weekly to monthly dependent on need), whilst reviewing their needs and celebrating their progress. Women may also access a range of groups such as parenting, domestic abuse courses, drugs and alcohol support, English and Maths classes, cooking, sewing and physical fitness activities. We also offer regular drop-in sessions where any woman can meet with a support worker without an appointment. Support workers may also suggest that counselling sessions could be beneficial and, if agreed, they will access weekly sessions from our in-house counselling students.

In 2019 the Alana House community café opened, providing opportunities for women to be trained as baristas and achieve their food hygiene level 1 and 2 certificates: real-life skills that can get them real jobs. The community café is proving to be a great success and we look forward to seeing it continue to grow.

In 2017 Alana House won the Howard League for Penal Reform Community Award in the 'women' category for its innovative partnership Enrich Programme. It is the second time Alana House has received this national honour, gaining the same award in 2014 in recognition of the positive impact it has on the women it supports and on their wider communities. The Howard League for Penal Reform is a national charity working towards less crime, safer communities and fewer people in prison.

The difference attending Alana House can make includes:

- Improved skills and employment prospects
- Improved self-esteem, confidence and motivation to become independent
- Safer lifestyles including stable accommodation and managing addictions
- Improved interpersonal skills including parenting skills and safeguarding children
- Reduced offending behaviour.

What this actually means for a woman:

I was completely broken – my dignity had been ripped up and everything around me felt like it was falling apart. Coming here has given me my confidence back. Right from the start I was made to feel welcome and everyone accepts you for who you are. To be honest, the way I was, if I hadn't found Alana House I think something very bad would have happened. Through doing this it has made me realise how strong I am. I am still determined to do great things.

– Alana House service user

People have lifted me up when I was down. Now it's nice when I can do the same for others.

– Alana House service user

[Name removed] has experienced many years of abuse and struggled for so long without any help or anyone to speak to. Seeing her now growing so much in confidence and having faith in herself has been very inspiring.

– Alana House Support worker

Alana House is the only women's centre in the whole of the Thames Valley and it supports hundreds of women and their families every year, helping them to make better-informed choices and to rewrite their futures, keeping families together and women out of prison. We cannot do this on our own and we work with amazing volunteers,

students as well as a number of local partner agencies, providing accessible, safe support in the community.

Alana House is part of the charity Parents And Children Together (PACT). PACT was founded by the Oxford Diocese in 1911 and has been supporting and strengthening families ever since. PACT provides community support to vulnerable and underprivileged families across London and the Thames Valley, as well as 'outstanding' adoption services (Ofsted 2017) and award-winning specialist therapeutic support.

References and further information

www.alanahouse.org

www.pactcharity.org

http://criminaljusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Corston-report-2007.pdf

3.4 Women affected by the criminal justice system

Sarah Smart

Women in Prison

I want to begin by introducing you to a little girl called Samantha. Samantha lives in a small flat with her mum and dad and older brother, Lenny, who is 13. She is 5. She loves unicorns and swings. Samantha's dad is a long-distance lorry driver and away from home a lot. Her mum struggles to cope when he is away, entering long bouts of depression. Samantha dreads her father returning home as he is often violent towards her and her mum and locks her under the stairs with no food, although, like any young child, she craves the attention and time of her father. She loves school and initially thrives but as she turns 6, her brother, Lenny, starts to take a new interest in her, visiting her room at night and sexually abusing her. She starts to find it hard to concentrate and feel safe at school. At 13, she expresses a sexual interest in girls. One evening, her mum arranges for their next door neighbour, John, to come around and he subjects Sammy to a corrective rape. How do you feel about Sammy?

Now I want you to imagine you are shopping one evening in the local supermarket. There is a sudden commotion and a masked woman runs in brandishing a shotgun. Everyone cowers in fear for their lives as she points the gun at the shopkeeper demanding the contents of the till. No-one moves. The terrified shopkeeper hands everything over. The masked woman lurches round wildly with the gun, pointing it at you as she backs out of the shop with the bag of cash. 'Hurry up, Wilkie', you hear a male voice shout from the street. The police quickly arrive and arrest Wilkie. How do you feel about Wilkie?

You probably feel very differently about these two individuals but they are in fact the same person. Vulnerable, abused, scared, traumatised, violated Samantha has grown into the 'scary', 'violent' and traumatising Wilkie. She has turned to drugs to deal with the trauma of her childhood, she has changed her name to try and leave broken Samantha behind, she has joined a male gang to feel the acceptance and belonging that she has craved all her life and to obtain the drugs she needs to supply her trauma-induced habit. The gang have told her that if she robs the local shop at gunpoint, she will earn their undying respect and a free wrap of heroin. She in fact earns herself a ten-year prison sentence.

Of course, Samantha/Wilkie is just a fiction, but the complex interplay of factors leading to crime are not a fiction. The facts in this scenario are all based on real stories from real women we have worked with at Women in Prison. The trajectory from childhood and domestic abuse to prison is sadly not hard to map out. Contrary to some media portrayals, crime is not a clear-cut issue of 'good' and 'evil'; it doesn't come from nowhere but from a murky grey cesspit of poverty, domestic abuse, adverse childhood experiences, poor mental health, inequality and racism, lack of support, under-education, as well as substance and alcohol misuse. However, the root causes of offending are rarely publicised or properly tackled, even though they are well documented. Female offending is in many ways a feminist issue because so much of it stems from gender-based violence, abuse and trauma and because women are judged by a criminal justice system designed by men for men. Self-harm rates in our prisons are currently at their highest levels ever and women account for a disproportionate number of self-harm incidents in custody; despite making up less than 5% of the prison population in 2018, they accounted for 19% of custodial self-harm. The fact that the Samanthas of this world, taking delight in the park as a child, end up as the Wilkies of this world, taking their own lives in a prison cell, is a terrible indictment on us all. Society has failed them twice.

Women in Prison was set up by Chris Tchaikovsky in 1983 after she was imprisoned in Holloway Prison and saw first-hand the damage

inflicted by custodial sentences on marginalised and often traumatised women, most horrifyingly after the woman next to her died having set fire to her cell. On her release, Chris joined forces with the international criminologist Pat Carlen to found the charity and ensure that the forgotten voice of women in prison was heard and the issues around imprisoning women featured in public and political discourse. Chris Tchaikovsky believed the idea of sending a woman to prison as punishment was shameful and absurd. In her words:

> Taking the most hurt people out of society and punishing them in order to teach them how to live within society is, at best, futile. Whatever else a prisoner knows, she knows everything there is to know about punishment because that is exactly what she has grown up with. Whether it is childhood sexual abuse, indifference, neglect, punishment is most familiar to her.
>
> – Chris Tchaikovsky

Now, over thirty years later, the charity is still campaigning for change and providing frontline support in prison and women's support centres. Our main job is not to point out the problems, profound though they are, but to bring hope and solutions through people, policy and campaign for systemic change. Building on the model first proposed by Baroness Corston in 2007, one of our primary solutions is for every local authority area to have a women's centre where women can receive gender-specific, holistic support. This model is outlined in the Ministry of Justice's women's strategy and the money could be made available through the use of proceeds from the sale of HMP Holloway: the site is a piece of prime London real estate and has sold for £82 million.

The average annual cost of sending a woman to a local prison is £51,792. Women's centre costings from 2017 show that as many as 50 women could be supported by the services of a women's centre for the same amount as keeping one woman in prison for a year. We can therefore see that £80 million would go far further in women's centre spending than prison places. Investment in women's centres would also be far more effective than prison places or prison building in terms

of helping women and families to re-build their lives and in terms of creating safer communities.

The vast majority of women in prison are there for non-violent crimes, mainly theft but also for poverty-related offences such as non-payment of council tax and TV licences. Scandalously, the debtor's prison is not a feature of the Dickensian past. The majority of women in prison are also on short prison sentences which we know are counter-productive on every level: a short sentence never affords enough time to address addiction and to access therapy but often means women lose their home, their job and, as predominantly the primary caregivers, their children. Sending women to prison is incredibly costly – for them, for their children (either in utero or on the outside) and for society.

Part of Women in Prison's work in supporting marginalised women to find a platform for their voices is printing a national magazine, made available to every woman in prison, with content from women affected by the criminal justice system, including those in prison. I finish with a poem published in one of our recent magazines, written by Leanne, one of the incredible women we work with, which I think outlines powerfully and eloquently so much of what I have spoken about here:

I Was a Child a While Ago
by Leanne

I was a child a while ago
If you can call it that anyway
Everyone's brought up
Different I know
I wasn't happy, or was I?
I don't even know
But I was a child a while ago

Mummy I wasn't blind
I saw them needles

Above your bed
Where you always laid your head
You took a bath of hours
We never did go swimming… It's okay Mummy
Daddy does it too
I just really miss you
And I hate your lies
Please get help mummy
You're going to lose

I was an addict a while ago
I thought it would help take my tears away
I thought it made things easy
And I forgot the day
I thought wrong but…
I was an addict a while ago

If I don't attend SMART* religiously
I slip back to the old me
I don't like her much
I don't like her at all
I have the Women's Centre by my side
And that helps me achieve and
Stay that Mum I wanna be
Everyone's different but it's up to you
And what you want to do
You have a choice like I do
I like being sober because
That's truly me

I was a parent a while ago
That makes me happy
That makes me glow
My boys need me
They are my drug now

I chose you over everything that makes me down
I am a parent and
I stand strong

Don't be an addict
It is so wrong
It hurts your children more than you know
When they're sitting in their room
To never know
What's behind the door
What's behind the cough
Please be happiness Mummy
I don't want you to have an ouch
I love you deeply and I need
You too
Please don't be selfish
I know you need me too
Don't lose me – it will destroy you more
Don't forget I need my Mummy more

*Self Management and Recovery Therapy group for substance and alcohol misusers

Section Three:
The Exhibition

1 Artwork by Students at the Institute of Education

Suzy Tutchell

Institute of Education

A major component of the art specialism pathway on the BA Ed primary education degree is the art students' studio-based work. Over the three years of their degree it embraces and reflects their growing and confident artistic identities through impassioned discussions and critiques of influential and contemporary female artists. Their exhibitions reflect and celebrate the development and confidence in their skills and conceptual thinking. Their oeuvres of work are testament to their empowered art practice where the space and security of the studio allows them to flourish and push boundaries.

Each year, collections showcase a consolidation of all that they have learnt and explored individually as well as defining a collaborative creative spirit which resides inside the busy hubs of the studios, illustrated in this publication. As artist-teachers, they strive to embed their own contemporary art identities into their school practice, thereby inspiring and motivating the children they teach and, importantly, challenging a staid and male-dominated primary art curriculum. As tutors, we are continually both proud and humbled by the courage and innovation of our students and feel assured that each new generation of female artists will continue to interrogate and disrupt the gendered boundaries of art and art education.

Laura Knighton

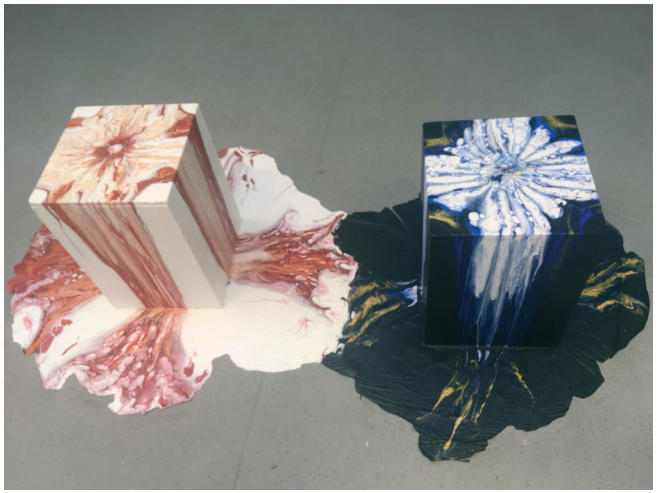
Exploring body language, my drawing and sketches are instantaneous translations of the wide array of emotions which surround me. The body communicates thoughts which cannot be verbalised. All of these actions are masks that we wear in public which, much as we try, do not hide the complexity of our emotional human self. The slightest way we position ourselves in certain situations visually exposes the reality of the life we have lived. These fast and organic self-expressions can be shared through a glance, a gesture or posture.

Molly Waring

A celebratory landscape of the unseen female body is defined both two-and-three-dimensionally with painted abstract lines reflecting body shape and gesture and vaginal-shaped ceramic sculptures. The latter incorporates a rich statement of colour and contour to be celebrated, not hidden or mocked.

Grace Henry

My photo documentation tells an autobiographical story of me and my family growing up in Northern Ireland over time, like opening an album onto my life. I responded to and was influenced by photographers Nan Goldin and Richard Billingham whose honesty and truth about their subjects disturbs and provokes the viewer.



Jennifer Blundell

My art aims to encapsulate the sensation of 'hope', specifically through the portrayal and use of light. To take more risks, I have experimented with the unpredictability of paint and projected the effects of this alongside my paintings, suggesting that the process of creating art is just as important, if not more so, than the final product.

Paige Johnson

The increase in young women and even teenage girls having plastic surgery has been significant in recent years. The influence of social media sites such as Instagram *and* Snapchat *regarding self-image are at the heart of this. I wanted to expose this highly controversial issue through a series of photographs which are uncomfortable and raw and, at times, hard to look at.*

Charlie Atkins

Inspired by Alice in Wonderland, *this project captures a dream-like interior using a surrealist perspective and composition, and which incorporates the repurposing of ready-made and found objects. I decided to add colour to the windowed views to introduce a further theme of climate change. However, the theme is turned on its head so that the interior's man-made objects are the only things affected, and not the natural world.*

Sienna Fontaine Augustin

Social media presents girls with a definition of what is 'perfect' and 'beautiful'. As a result, from a young age, girls can experience body-image issues and develop a distorted, often unrealistic perception of what they need to look like. This morphed perception continues throughout their adult life, disregarding the idea that they are beautiful just the way they are. It is this notion that I wanted to express in my work.

Emily Cannon

Creating these needle-felted sculptures almost became part of a daily routine, with each one developing its own personality in the process. I was inspired to explore individual personas and focused on creating intricately detailed facial features and expressions. These brought new life to each figure and suggested a story to tell, creating an authentic sense of character and emotion through body gesture and shape.

Imogen Mulvenna

A beautiful rug of dyed tampons, the rosette of tampons signifies the celebration of young, fertile, healthy women.

Esme Weston

My original inspiration was exploring sexual identity, particularly within the LGBT community, which led me to investigate my relationship with the wider world.

Alexandra Finnegan

I explore portraiture by stripping back my work and focusing solely on the foundations of colour, shape and line in order to build a portrait. South African artist Marlene Dumas inspired the initial stages of my body of work with portrayals of portraiture and emotion which used the contrast between light and dark colours and a variety of brush strokes.

Lydia Parsley

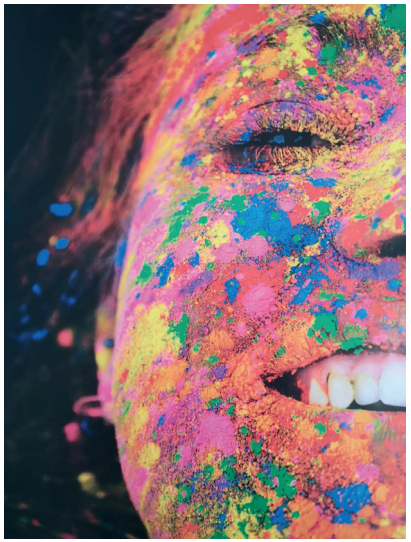
With 235 million items of clothing being thrown into landfills every year, my work aims to promote discussion and reflection regarding consumer habits in the fashion industry. Retailers are selling clothes cheaply in a bid to encourage increased spending. In response to changing trends, these clothes are quickly discarded. This movement, described as 'fast fashion', is having a detrimental impact on the environment.

Fifi Banham

My prints examine the seemingly mundane and ordinary aspects of society that many people pass by as they go about their day-to-day life. Scenes that, to the casual observer, appear conventional, are highlighted through photography to show that they are not everything that they seem. The sequential development of the screens and the process of colour composition offer an additional narrative to the images within the photographs.

Alena Davis

My work aims to express the words I am unable to communicate to those around me. The hanging glass is very still and calm with a slight movement juxtaposed with the sharp edges of the glass – a calm and chaotic symbiosis.



Alyssia Whitelaw

I believe that a vibrant and aesthetic mix of colour draws out a happiness in people and me – it is the answer to my anxiety. My images capture female happiness, camaraderie and celebration. I was also very interested in how colour could be applied to skin in unique and personal patterns, ultimately using the body as a canvas.

Jessica Gough

This installation reflects an autobiographical investigation of self by expressing and responding to who I am; stripped back to where I came from. The table represents my mother, illustrating her need to feed and provide. The corresponding wall refers to my father who has managed the building of our family home. The wall is also a representation of the barriers we build to protect ourselves and our personalities, depicted here in a fallen state to reveal what is 'behind'.

Amelia Luckett

My work fuses the exposed fragility of facial features with the ubiquitous Instagram *'snapshot selfie'. Eyes are windows into the soul and tell many stories and yet they also protest and stare at the observer. The photo-shopped bruising accentuates a real internal struggle that is hidden from the gaze of social media.*

Lucy Campbell

There are many controversial issues and extreme appearances present in the fashion industry which I have represented in this work by experimenting with digital photography and various forms of mixed media. I used larger found objects in my photography to replace parts of the body, and digitally manipulated different areas of the face to create a sense of illusion and a lack of realism.

2 Artwork by Noel Huntingford

Noel Huntingford
School of Law

A self-taught artist and craftsman, Noel Huntingford is currently working in the Support Centre in the School of Law, University of Reading. Although he was born in the UK, he has lived most of his life in southern Africa, particularly Zambia and South Africa, where he was inspired to develop his artistic skills through watching local artists at work. Besides art and craft, he is skilled across a variety of other disciplines including carpentry, steelwork, painting, shopfitting and construction. He is particularly enthusiastic about recycling/upcycling and the repurposing of salvaged items.

The vivid colouring of the pieces he has produced in England is his natural reaction to the often bleak weather.

Dispatched Queen
This mixed media piece is made from wire, fabric, raffia and wood. Despite the extravagant colours, it has a dark theme; it was inspired by the fate of the wives of Henry VIII who were executed.

African Village

This scene was inspired by artwork I saw in a remote rural village in Malawi. Different elements of this piece are activated when the handles are turned and the trolley slides backwards and forwards on the rails.

Francis of Assisi/Clare of Assisi

This piece was inspired by ecological justice; it is influenced by the traditional paintings of Francis of Assisi which depict his close relationship with the natural world. However, the artwork has a deliberately androgynous aspect to it in order to acknowledge the association between Francis of Assisi and his follower, Clare of Assisi.

Shades of Klimt

This piece was inspired by Gustav Klimt, the Austrian artist famous for paintings such as, 'The Kiss' and 'Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer'. There are five figures arranged in a pentagon with a central pillar adorned with flowers and leaves.

3 'My View' by Women at Alana House

Natausha Van Vliet

Alana House

The charity, PhotoVoice, has worked with women who are members of Alana House, PACT. Through weekly workshops which explored technical photography skills, visual literacy, portraiture and storytelling, participants were supported to produce their own photographic and narrative based photography.

Anne

The Life of a Chair

My 'go to'
place to be at one with nature.
The white noise of distant traffic
and aeroplanes soothes my tinnitus
that other people perhaps don't realise,
or hear.
What bliss to sit with my crocheting,
and books and a cup of tea.
My tranquil place of calm and safety.

Anne

Quiet whispers,
Gentle breeze, leaves rustling,
Birdsong so sweet.

Trains glide efficiently,
Clickety clack,
Dogs running round and round,
A haven... Palmer Park.

Children and walkers,
Sandpits and swings,
Mindfulness poses,
Car boots... lots of things.

Sandwiches in boxes,
Cups of tea in flasks,
Rugs spread out nicely,
Cricketers... till dark.

Fresh air so beautiful,
Enjoyed by all,
Every age and every gender,
While children run and call.

Carol

This was a picture of a nice meal I had with my daughter and her partner.
It reminded me of a community venture called 'Adopt a Grandparent',
where they match you up with someone who may be lonely and who doesn't have a family of their own.

It gives the idea that if anyone in your neighbourhood is in need or going through a bad time, it would be nice to invite them into your home for a lovely meal.

Carol

This is a very lovely safe and friendly place to come for women in the community.

I have done lots of projects here over the many years.
I have been attending workshops like this photo class.
I have been on lovely outings to other places and I have made new friends.

Here, they have been very supportive in times of need for so many women.

Clare

Golden leaves shining in the sun.
Forbury Gardens, a quiet place to sit,
Spend time with the children and picnic.

A hidden place of calm in Reading.

Clare

As I walk, I hear the buzz of chatting voices,
I smell the food from nearby restaurants.
I can almost taste it,
I missed breakfast getting my children ready for school.

A leaf lying on its own,
I wonder how it came to be there.

Rose

The beads that I love with all my heart,
that I cherish.
They are the beads that changed my life,
with supplication.

Rose

The moment my princess
came into the world,
my whole life changed.
I thanked God,
for sending my little princess
to change me so that I can cherish
our memories together.

Zahra

My light, radiant and
embracing.
My hope, in the
darkness of despair.
My solace, to heal and comfort.
My companion, from
near and far.
My guidance, opening
my wisdom.
My courage, tackling
my fears.
My strength, building
me up.
My love...
My faith and me.

Zahra

'The rose is without explanation,
she blooms because she blooms.'
– Angelus Silesius

Roses were a gift for mother,
My perfect rose is my mother, who needs no explanation.

Section Four:
The Poetry Competition

Dr Anne Thies
School of Law

The poetry competition on the theme of 'Equality' was launched by Dr Anne Thies (School of Law) in 2019, bringing together her initiatives Arts@Foxhill and '100 Years of Women in Law'. The poetry competition was open to students from all parts of the University, strengthening inter-departmental links and exchange. Students submitted their poems on equality, focusing on some challenging contemporary issues including migration, racial, sex, and gender discrimination. The quality of these poems is impressive. In January 2020, students and staff celebrated them with readings, an art exhibition, a presentation and an Indian classical dance performance.

We are proud of our undergraduate students, postgraduate students and colleagues who have shown amazing talent, and we are grateful for the opportunity to publish some of the poems in this book.

YTILAUQE – *the winning entry*

Equality is not possible
How can you sit here and say
You and I are the same
All the evidence suggests
That's a massive lie
Certain people are just better than others
Men and women are equal
Black and white are not different
LGBT people are normal
Young people aren't stupid
Old people aren't lifeless
Don't make me laugh
Just those thoughts alone make me sick
If you're not a straight white male under 60 then tough luck
If you read between the lines of society you will see that
Minorities do not deserve equality
The biggest lie I ever heard is that
Equality is a possibility and it will soon be total
That the share of wealth will spread to all and be global
Fantasising doesn't work, but realism does, therefore I believe
The advantaged will prosper whilst the rest fall further behind
As we've been told
It will definitely happen
Men and women on the same fair pay?
All races and religions treated the same?
All sexualities seen as acceptable?
Keep dreaming.
So
The powerful do and the weak do not
It is all you can do.
Stop dreaming
You will never hear me say
Equality is you and I
Equality is real
Equality is alive
Equality is one love, one heart
This is what equality means to me.

– Alex Ojo

Now read from the end to the beginning

Creation

Darkness. Does the universe explode from nothing?
Could it be created on inky canvas?
From love? From passion?
Each spec carved, then meticulously placed, or scattered haphazard?

Each of us - thrust into this world. What choices define our creation?
Blasted into the light,
Bombarded with a cacophony of new senses.
Bloody. Naked. Screaming.

The universe grows infinitely - the paradigm of life and death.
We grow too - but bound:
'Don't grow outside this box. Humanity created it for you!'
The box is Tetris blocks. Grown so high yet accumulating higher,
Colour where there was none. Tri-chromatism is the curse.
'Block out the canvas we were painted on.
Ignore the boring black base. Be hypnotised by each bright shape,
Let the cover blind - after all equal is the same.'
Boxes become airless. Drowning in the packaging we parade in,
Clawing for freedom.
Can the brilliance of the universe guide us?
The black spaces can bind us – after all, is not our canvas one?
Rise above the ever-growing walls. Then break them down,
Leave the bricks scattered.
View the earth as we view the stars. Individuality glorified!
Technicolour light shines from within you.
Differences cannot divide us.
Equal is not 'the same'.

– Agnes McLoughlin-Weekes

Equality

My biggest fear is not feeling accomplished,
Defeating my demons to find that they were my only accomplice.
Falling in love - only to be told, so,
They didn't break your heart, they broke your torso.
But in the deepest of dejection,
My enemy will never be in my reflection.
Because victory tastes sweet even when your enemy can throw salt,
So look yourself in the mirror and tell yourself it's not your fault.
How can you really believe that?
Does the magician really believe he can pull the rabbit out the hat?
Take this oath.
The past is supposed to be uncomfortable - it's called growth –
and the world outside isn't so nice,
but that's the price
when your future's so bright
that you might go blind before you blink twice.

– Azeem Khan

Inherent Vice

Equality,

The rocking of the boat
lulling the child to sleep
as its mother weeps
for better days and tomorrows,
bearing the consequence
of decisions made by foreign men.

Equality,

The eight-letter word whispered across the sea,
The idea laughed and sneered at by those too protected with their rose-tinted glasses,
The act that brings leaders wagging their threats, their sanctions, their guns, their 'thoughts and prayers' passes.

Equality,

Man-made borders decided by the lucky few
who protest against the hardships of the immigrant view
but fail to see
no one decides they want to cross the sea of war-torn sorrows,
no one decides if they get another chance of a safe tomorrow,
no one decides where their hunger goes,
no one decides where they're born.

Equality,
For everyone,
For you and me?

– Iman Amira

वृहद्दर्शी *Vrihad-darshi* **– Undiscerning**

In Devanagari:

मैं सोंचू की बूंद छोटा हैं और सागर बशिाल हैं

ये क्यों न सोंचू की दोने के रूप गुण समान हैं

मैं सोंचू की कण छोटा हैं और पहन बशिाल हैं

ये क्यों न सोंचू की दोने के रूप गुण समान हैं

मैं सोंचू की दूभ छोटा हैं और वृक्ष बशिाल हैं

ये क्यों न सोंचू की दोने के महता समान हैं

मैं सोंचू की रंग लाल हैं और रंग नीला हैं

ये क्यों न सोंचू की उनका मशि्रण प्रकाश हैं

In Latin alphabets:

Main sonchoo kee boond chhotaa hain aur saagar bishaal hain
ye kyon n sonchoo kee done ke roop guna samaan hain
main sonchoo kee kana chhotaa hain aur pahan bishaal hain
ye kyon n sonchoo kee done ke roop guna samaan hain
main sonchoo kee doobh chhotaa hain aur vriks bishaal hain
ye kyon n sonchoo kee done ke roop mahataa samaan hain
main sonchoo kee rng laal hain aur rng neelaa hain
ye kyon n sonchoo kee unakaa mishrana prakaash hain

Translation:

I am discerning that drop is small and the ocean is vast.
Why am I not resolved that ocean is made of drops and that they are equal?
I am discerning that particle is small and the mountain is vast.

Why am I not resolved that mountain is made of particles and
that they are equal?
I am discerning that grass is small and the tree is vast.
Why am I not resolved that landscape is made of both and that
they are equal?
I am discerning that colour is red and the colour is blue.
Why am I not resolved that their mixture is the light?

In words:

The poet expresses anxiety that the human mind (society) sees in dichotomies and understands that this produces confused thoughts. The mind sees drops as different from the ocean without seeing that the ocean is made of drops and that the drop and the ocean have the same property and are equal. The mind sees a particle as different from a mountain without seeing that a mountain is made of particles. Similarly, we mindlessly discern individuals without resolving that each individual bears an equal value in forming a society. The mind sees grass as different from trees without seeing that landscapes embrace both. The mind sees red as a different colour to indigo without seeing that, to produce light, it needs both. Similarly, we mindlessly discern individuals without resolving that each individual, regardless of their gender, colour, and ethnicity, contributes to the fabric of society and that the combined efforts show us the path of progress.

– *Varun Ojha*

The Scream

I used to stay silent in social gatherings.
I'd swallow my words, and I dreaded eye contact.
'God's prophet said it is favoured to be shy,' they'd say.
But I knew I wasn't one of the favoured ones.
God knew: I was terrified, not shy.

Because speaking out of place meant
Hospital halls, a black eye, a broken rib,
Lowered whispers of my mother saying, 'He can't control his
anger, sweetheart, forgive him.'
A withered mind, broken vases, midnight prayers:
'Take my soul, God, release me.' *Why does he want to break me?*
One day at a time, I saw where I went wrong; nothing went
wrong, except for
A society that created men who would define their masculinity
by the obedience of their women.
I now know why he chose me:
I carry the honour of his ancestors within my fingers. I can play
with it and
Destroy it. Men who break women know this.
So now I sing the songs of my silenced foremothers
In poetry, in courts, at dinner tables.
I no longer stay silent in social gatherings. I speak out of place
To summon the hard work of all the women who fought genera-
tions before me, for me
To be emancipated.

I look at the monster in his eyes, and see
He is not even a monster. He breathed the ashes of his ancestors
And wanted to exhale them onto me.
I sing the songs of my silenced foremothers
In poetry, in courts, at dinner tables.
I no longer stay silent in social gatherings. I always speak out of
place.

– *Alia S. F.*

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Before we can think about the next 100 years we have to see what lessons we can learn from the past.

– Baroness Hale