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‘HOME’

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**Editorial**

**Discovering Home:**

**The Multifaceted Aspects of Home Throughout Space and Time**

Samantha Armstrong

Co-Editor

Journal of History and Cultures

This issue the editors decided to go a different route and have a thematic issue. After discussing at length, the theme was decided as ‘Home.’ Home can be seen and lived in a variety of different ways and through a variety of different instances as the articles in this issue will showcase. The journal traverses geographically from Europe to North America to Africa. The journal also traverses chronologically from early modern to modern.

Steven Woodbridge in ‘Land, Home and Nation: The Ideologies and Activities of the Land and Home League, 1911-1918’ explores the concept of home through the concept of nationalism and war effort in First World War England.

Matilda Blackwell in ‘Mind, Body, Room: Alternative Forms of Dwelling for Women in Early Twentieth Century’ explores domestic spaces of single women through two semi-autobiographical accounts.

Traversing back to the sixteenth century, Julie Fox-Horton in ‘The Devil is in the Kitchen: Transforming Domestic Space into Heretical Space in Sixteenth Century Venice’ explores the residency and methodology of witchcraft in domestic spaces.

Crossing over to North America, Barbara Miceli in ‘A.M Homes’s *The Safety of Objects*: People and Feelings as Objects in the American Suburban Home’ explores people’s emotions in the home as expressed in Homes’s novel.

Traversing back to the nineteenth century, Catherine Bateson in ‘Forward For Our Homes!’ Lyrical Expressions of Home Heard in Irish American Civil War Songs’ explores the nationalistic expressions of home and country in wartime songs.


These authors together describe ‘Home’ as beyond the definition of it being a domestic space that people live in. Rather, these authors show that ‘Home’ is ideological, nationalistic, vocalized expressions, with expanding and contrasting spatial dimensions. Furthermore, ‘Home’ is not confined to one geographic space or time, but rather connecting humans across the spectrum.
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EDITORIAL ARTICLES

Europe

“Land, Home and Nation: The Ideology and Activities of the Land and Home League, 1911-1918” by Steven Woodbridge, Kingston University

Land, Home and Nation: The ideology and activities of the Land and Home League, 1911-1918

Steven Woodbridge
Kingston University

Introduction: Defending Land and Home

In the run-up to the First World War, the issue of the ‘land’ in Britain, and its position and fortunes in public and national life, was very much a source of anxiety for those who felt that traditional rural communities and village home-life were in serious decline. Land ownership, inequality in land holdings, rising rents for small types of family property in villages, and exploitation of agrarian workers by greedy rural landlords, all constituted major issues, and were causes increasingly taken up by politicians at local and national levels. At the same time, and not unrelated to this putative unease over the land, there were growing concerns voiced about the nation’s ‘efficiency’, and whether the country could maintain sufficient food cultivation and supply to a hungry home population in the event of any future war, especially if an enemy shipping blockade was imposed on the British Isles and key trade routes

1 Dr. Steven Woodbridge is Senior Lecturer in History at Kingston University, Surrey, and has research interests in the politics and culture of radical right, fascist and middle-class movements in early 20th century Britain, together with the nature of the contemporary extreme right. His publications include a chapter on ‘History and cultural heritage: the far right and the Battle for Britain’ in Nigel Copsey and John E. Richardson (eds.): Cultures of Post-War British Fascism (Routledge, 2015).
were cut.

Various parliamentarians and other worried commentators made rather flamboyant claims that the centuries-old mystical ‘bonds’ of the countryside, with small cottage-based home life at its core (often viewed as settled and organically harmonious arrangements that had supposedly produced the very backbone of the sturdy English ‘yeoman’ type of character over the centuries) were now under assault from a relentless combination of modernity, encroaching urbanism, and constant industrial change.¹ Just as the educated elites supposedly required protection from the suffocating rise of the city and its new uniform industrial masses, the ‘small man’ in the countryside, usually presented in cultural imagery as an agricultural worker or unskilled labourer living very simply with his family in a modest rural village home, and with only a humble cottage-garden or rented allotment to his name, also needed defending from too much social change.

As far as the ‘Back to the Land’ movement and other pro-countryside advocates saw it, unpretentious craftwork in the home, personal thrift, and pride in hard graft in the fields and on the soil offered the average village-dweller a better and more wholesome quality of life, one that was self-evidently superior to mere submission to commerce and the atomistic ‘chaos’ of rampant liberal materialism.

One fairly typical example of a defender of the ‘land’ was the Land and Home League, an organisation which has received little scholarly attention. In the following discussion, an outline and critical analysis of the main ideas and policies of the League will be given. In addition, in order to draw out further points about the League and its activities, a brief case study will be provided of a notably successful local branch of the organisation, one which - somewhat surprisingly perhaps - operated not in the countryside, but in the London suburbs. Moreover, in a number of ways, it sought to translate the National Land and Home League’s ‘national’ vision of the prime importance of the ‘land’ into very real practice in districts one would not usually associate with the countryside.
The Politics of the ‘Land’

During the period just prior to the Great War, foreboding over the ‘land’ and its seeming decline could sometimes unite politicians from across the political spectrum, with worries about its inhabitants, rural traditions and future often bringing political rivals together; in fact, lobbying at Westminster on these issues was frequently shared by Conservative and Liberal politicians through cooperation or via temporary alliances of convenience.

Sometimes, though, land issues led to some markedly serious internal tensions within the main political parties. The Liberal party, for example, saw some heated debates between ‘classical’ Liberals and the new Edwardian-era ‘social’ Liberals - in other words, between those members who welcomed the continued drive for liberal Free Trade and those who, in contrast, sought a more protectionist policy stance, with the imposition of a greater number of tariffs, measures designed to protect the nation’s home markets, including agriculture.

The latter type of activists desired to somehow slow the pace of relentless industrialization, have the nation rely much less on the importation of food, and safeguard rural communities in a more considered and planned policy approach. Similar ideological tensions were also on display in the Conservative party, with classical laissez-faire views sitting uneasily alongside more traditional and (often aristocratic) paternalistic attitudes. More generally, the ‘land’ question raised all sorts of challenges for the main political parties about democracy, ownership and social justice. Progressive and other politicians increasingly wrestled with the thorny challenge of land democratisation and the possible need to bring about further and more enforced re-distribution of land ownership and holdings.

In this charged political atmosphere, the question of the right to own or rent a small ‘holding’ of land loomed large in local and national affairs. Significantly, The Times newspaper reported in April, 1911, that a joint meeting of the Central Small Holdings Society, the Land Club League, and the Wiltshire Land and Home League had been held at the House of Commons in London, ‘with a view to the formation of a new
society which would make a more powerful appeal to the public than a number of smaller societies, and prevent wasteful duplication of effort. This led to the foundation of what became known as the National Land and Home League, an organization which went on to play a considerable role in making the case for the greater ‘unity’ of the land and the home across all levels and social classes of society. In this sense, the League was not just a mere ‘Back to the Land’ type of organization. It evidently also wanted to restore the value and dignity (as it saw it) of the ‘rural’ mode of individual life back into those districts that had undergone major change (such as the outer borders of the towns) but still sat close to ‘countryside’ areas. League activists sought to re-inject the precious ‘wisdom’ of country life into the impersonal landscape of the towns and cities and, moreover, wanted to introduce such models into what they regarded as the ‘soulless’ suburbs.

In fact, after the outbreak of war in 1914, the Land and Home League appeared to find for itself an even grander sense of purpose: to persuade as many people as possible, including in urban and suburban areas, that small-scale land cultivation, with many more citizens being given the opportunity to own or rent land, and to gain or regain ‘lost’ food-growing skills and thus tend small gardens and allotments, could play an essential role in the overall British war effort, boosting the general supply of food in a situation of increased shortages and scarcity. Access to a small plot of land was seen as essential to the cultural makeup and identity of the individual, fomenting both dignity and a patriotic love of nation.

As part of this, the League’s ideology and activities evolved into a determined attempt to bring small-scale ‘rural’ practices into the life of the city and the suburbs. Its members argued that the smallholder in urban areas could acquire new cultivation skills and, in consequence, help play an invaluable and strongly ‘patriotic’ role in increasing the general physical well-being of the domestic population. This, they believed, would enhance both the quality and quantity of available basic foodstuffs, and ensure the very survival of the nation in face of the relentless German U-boat campaign and the associated pressures on Allied military and
merchant shipping.

This ambitious vision of uniting the ‘land’ with the suburban ‘home’, with the objective of restoring the sanctity of the soil, and thus the ‘wholeness’ of the individual and his family through a great ‘national effort’, can be explored in more detail through a mixed methods approach. This entails analysis of texts, ideological statements, newspaper reports, official files and other forms of archival evidence. First of all, though, we must consider some of the current historiographical research on the topic and the period.

**Scholarly Debates: Edwardian Society and a ‘Lost’ England**

The pre-1914 Edwardian age, together with the years of the First World War, has often been seen by historians as a period of ‘Leagues’ and associations of all kinds in Britain, a time when both middle-class and newly educated working-class activists in politics, sport, culture, gender rights and many other areas of society combined in numerous and diverse Leagues, Legions, Fellowships, Societies and Associations, both in Britain and across other parts of the Dominions and Empire.

In truth, civil society in the Edwardian period was abundant with such activity. There has been considerable scholarship on what has been termed as the ‘age of the Leagues’, especially on those organizations on the patriotic right of the political spectrum during this period. However, there is still considerable research that needs to be conducted on some of the less well-known Societies and ‘League’-style movements that espoused views on countryside and rural matters, including more investigation of those Leagues whose founders were seemingly motivated by a strong concern to restore - and vigorously defend - the interests of ‘the land’ in a rapidly changing society, and what might be termed the ‘purity’ and inviolability of the countryside and small-scale rural life. There has been surprisingly little scholarship, for example, on organizations such as the National Land and Home League and other similar exponents of the ‘rural’ vision. This article seeks to address this lacuna in the available scholarly literature.
Why did the National Land and Home League emerge? Some important contextual clues can be found in the growth during the Edwardian period of a certain nostalgia and heartfelt longing for a more romanticised and ‘rural’ vision of the countryside across parts of the British Isles, an image that arguably conveyed an almost sacrosanct picture of national life that seemed, to its advocates, to be slipping away (if, indeed, it had ever really existed, which is doubtful). It constituted a colourful version of life in the home where hard-working smallholders spent much of their limited leisure time tilling the soil of their cottage gardens or rented allotments; in this vision, such tenants were poor but contented individuals who were both productive and self-sufficient when it came to the growth of food. The small cottage kitchen and garden, or rented plot of small land, through which families could supplement their inadequate wages and consume, or sell on locally, the grown products of their own hands, was seen as one of the essential foundation-stones of settled family and community life in the village, something that was being undermined or lost with the unremitting expansion of the towns and cities and the suffocating march of the monotonous suburbs.

The available historiography is helpful here. The emergence of this kind of heartfelt longing for an enchanted ‘rustic’ mode of life, which tended to downplay the very real rural poverty that often existed, is captured well in the historian Martin Wiener’s now famous thesis, as set out in his book *English culture and the decline of the Industrial Spirit* (1981), where he argued that Edwardian society had turned away from the Victorian glorification of industrial enterprise and had become entranced by the myth of England as a pre-industrial ‘Garden of Eden’. In like vein, Alun Howkins, in an essay on ‘The discovery of rural England’ in 1986 and in his study *The Death of Rural England* (2003), argued persuasively that the origins of the still-powerful vision of ‘real’ English society as an idealised rural community can be traced to the period from the 1880s to 1914.

Importantly, there has been some critical, if brief, attention in the historiography to the functions of allotments and smallholdings in Edwardian society, topics which (as
we shall see) were especially close to the hearts of those who ran the National Land and Home League. The historian P.J. Waller, for example, has pointed to how allotments and small-holdings ‘were advocated by agriculturalists concerned about levels of rural emigration and poverty’, and also by urban politicians ‘alarmed about housing and employment shortages’. Edwardian land lobbyists claimed that allotments and smallholdings ‘might restore the attractions of rural work’, encourage personal thrift and enterprise, and ‘maintain the national character and physique’. Moreover, noted Waller, sections of both radical and conservative opinion could find encouragement in such a programme: ‘It might lead to the break-up of great estates and the decay of landlordism; or it might safeguard social stability by multiplying the number of proprietors’.7

However, as Waller rightly pointed out, the amount of land that had been released by legislation was ‘insufficient to test either hypothesis, owing to the obstructions of interested parties in both local and national government; and for as many smallholding and allotments as were created, others were lost to urban building’. Thus, in Waller’s trenchant estimation:

‘Probably the imagined social benefits of the policy account for its attractiveness to the professional classes. Land-cultivation conjured up pictures of contented peasants dancing around maypoles. Certainly, the economic credentials of the policy were dubious… the ability of peasant proprietors to exceed the productivity of large tenant farmers was questionable’.8

More recently, the historian Paul Reedman has cogently set out how the politics of the ‘land’ between 1880 and 1914 played an instrumental role in shaping notions of ‘Englishness’ and national identity, and how the question of the land became a major conundrum for the Liberal and Conservative parties, together with the (newly emerging) Labour party.9 In many respects, one can argue that the new National
Land and Home League created in 1911 was a typical product of this period and the types of ideas and climate discussed above, as it was founded by men who shared the desire to ‘revive’ and reinvigorate country life for the wider benefit (in their view) of both the individual and the nation. Yet, in hindsight, it also became something more than this: its reactionary vision of an idealized community rooted in the ‘land’ and numerous countryside smallholdings was altered somewhat by the advent of war, a conflict which saw the League also focus more and more of its attention on urban and suburban life.

The Foundation of the National Land and Home League

The meeting of the ‘Small Holdings Movement’ reported on by The Times in April, 1911, had been chaired by Mr. Philip Morrell, (1870-1943), formerly the Liberal party MP for Henley, who now sat for the same party as representative for Burnley. He had recently spoken in Parliament in defence of smallholders of land in Wiltshire, people who had been forced out of their cottages by local authorities engaging in compulsory purchase of land. Another Liberal Member of Parliament at the meeting, Captain Frederick Guest (1875-1937), moved a resolution which approved the formation of ‘a new amalgamated society’, having for its objects ‘the provision of small holdings, the encouragement of co-operation and credit banks, the provision of public village halls, and other means of reviving social life and improvement of the conditions of rural labour’.

After the resolution was passed, it was suggested that the new body should be named the ‘National Land and Home League’. Sir Horace Curzon Plunkett was nominated as the League’s President, Lord O’ Hagan as the treasurer, and Mr. C. Roden Buxton as secretary pro tem. A provisional council for the new movement was also created. The involvement of Sir Horace Plunkett (1854-1932), even if only on paper, was especially significant; he was a Unionist MP and an active agricultural reformer in Anglo-Irish affairs, with a keen interest in the creation of co-operative movements on the land.

A further report in the same newspaper two weeks later noted that, at the first
meeting of the new League’s council, now called the Provisional Executive Committee, Mr. C. Roden Buxton was appointed chairman, Mrs. Edward R. Pease as the honorary secretary, and Mr. Herbert G. Carleton as assistant secretary.\(^{11}\) Added to this, the following month saw these same three write to *The Times* on behalf of the League’s Executive Committee, expressing their satisfaction at the government’s appointment of six additional Small Holdings Commissioners, although they also complained that this was still not enough in itself, and called for more improvement of government policy concerning the land. More importantly, their letter was also an instructive, albeit brief, early statement about the League, as it also described the organisation’s nature and key objectives:

‘The National Land and Home League represents the united forces of three organizations which have lately amalgamated. It includes in its scope, besides small holdings, rural housing and education, co-operation and the improvement of village conditions more generally. We should be glad to hear from any of your readers who sympathize with these objects and would like to help the central society or to start branches in their own villages’.\(^{12}\)

In June, 1911, the League, fervently in favour of better wages for agricultural labourers, issued an appeal in the press ‘to those interested in rural reform for money and workers’.\(^{13}\) The League described itself as ‘a non-party body’, and their statement also revealed that Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, MP, was now the organization’s President instead of Sir Horace Plunkett. Cavendish-Bentinck (1863-1931), who was the Conservative MP for Nottingham South, came from a more aristocratic ‘landed gentry’ type of background and had pursued a distinguished military career. Interestingly, he was more known for his ideas on municipal rather than agricultural reform, and his appointment appears to indicate there was some volatility at the top of the organization in its initial stages.
However, over the next few years, while it is very difficult to obtain reliable information on branches and actual membership numbers, the League clearly experienced some growth, with early branches appearing in a number of typical market towns across England, especially those which still had sizeable local farming communities, such as Grantham in Lincolnshire. Moreover, ‘Annual Reports’ were issued by the League in 1911, 1912, and 1913, with a full statement of creed published in book form from their London headquarters in 1914. In addition, in 1912, the League felt sufficiently confident to be able to finance the launch of a new journal, entitled For Land and Home. An exploration of some of the core ideas and policy themes in this journal can provide further important insights into the nature and activities of the League, including in the years after the outbreak of the First World War.

Land, Home and Garden

Published through the League’s head office in John Street, London, the new journal was a predictable combination of updates on the main personnel on the League’s executive, assorted articles on land-themed topics, and useful information on the growth of branches and affiliated groups. There were also fairly regular statements of ideological priorities and objectives, which can help us to build up a picture of the League’s internal culture and creed.

The June, 1912, issue of For Land and Home, for example, offers the historian some noteworthy evidence on what the League sought to achieve and, furthermore, on the sheer scale of its ambition. A list of six ‘Objects’ included the ‘provision of small holdings and allotments for suitable applicants’, a call for ‘Better housing in country districts’, the ‘encouragement of co-operation, co-partnership housing and credit banks’, an ‘improved system of rural and general education’, the ‘provision of public village halls and other means of reviving social life’, and, lastly, the ‘improvement of conditions of rural labour’.

A 3-page article in the same issue, written by ‘E.R.P.’, looked back over the
previous four years and considered how the Small Holdings Act, despite the fact that some County Councils had ‘left undone very much’, had still led - as a whole - to ‘real progress’ being made in England. Embracing a suitably optimistic tone, the author noted how over 12,000 applicants for smallholdings ‘have had their land hunger satisfied’. According to the writer, more village tradesmen and skilled workers now had a bit of land to work on in their spare time, ‘something to add extra comfort to their homes, and live things to watch and tend, and to buy and sell. For all those men, women and children, life is fuller and richer than it was before’.¹⁷

The same issue of the League’s organ also provided an update on ‘Branches, Land Clubs and other Societies affiliated to the National Land and Home League’, with 63 in total. Interestingly, this included branches and clubs in Counties that were not predominantly ‘agricultural’ in nature, such as some of the Home Counties, areas that were experiencing significant urban growth. In Surrey, for example, there were branches or affiliated clubs in Beddington, Carshalton, Caterham, Limpsfield, Merrow, Reigate, and Wimbledon.

The March, 1913, issue of For Land and Home, in addition to revealing that the League had now moved to a new HQ at Queen Anne’s Chambers, Westminster, also furnished readers with news about the 1913 Annual meeting of the League, which had taken place at Caxton Hall in London, with delegates from 30 branches in attendance. A variety of ‘land’ topics were debated. Tellingly, there was also some description in the journal of the strength of feeling that some members clearly held about the superlative value and educational impact of ‘gardening’: a ‘Mrs. Cobb’ apparently spoke ‘of the good effect of gardening on backward children. Boys taught gardening wanted to be gardeners instead of soldiers or sailors. It was a pity new cottages so often had insufficient gardens’.¹⁸ Quite what the League’s President, and former decorated soldier, Cavendish-Bentinck, thought about this was not recorded.

**Land, Home and War**

With the outbreak of war in August, 1914, the League, as with numerous other
organizations, decided to scale down its activities but not close down completely. In fact, within months of the outbreak of the Great War, the League had published a ‘Special War Number’ of For Land and Home, where the editor explained the League’s stance during wartime. Reflecting on the early stages of the conflict, the journal stated:

‘It was deemed unwise in the disturbed and pre-occupied condition of the country to hold meetings and to carry on the general propaganda of the League. Many of our Branches have suspended business, and many of our members, both in London and in the villages, are already or soon will be at the Front’.

Nevertheless, the League’s Executive had still met regularly. Moreover, despite the uncertain outlook and palpable sense of foreboding about the war as it slowly dragged on (initial high hopes that it would all be over by Christmas, 1914, had been quickly dashed), at the same time there were early indications that the League increasingly saw the conflict as offering a range of new opportunities to make its case for the ‘land’ and land-based home life. It was thus developing a new sense of ‘patriotic’ purpose, based on its message about the hallowed importance of cultivating soil for the health of the nation.

In an article on ‘Home Grown Sugar’, for example, the author counselled: ‘Now the first thing we have to remember is that under present conditions we cannot produce all the food we need on our own island’. Essential foodstuffs still had to be imported, ‘and a good deal of it’. The writer continued: ‘In fact we import eggs, poultry, butter, fruit, vegetables and even flowers; as well as meat and corn and cheese’. In the author’s estimation, there was a lesson here: ‘Now it seems obvious that we should endeavour to grow at home all those products which are bulky and therefore costly to move…’. Reflecting on the real possibilities available for more home-grown produce, the author pointed to sugar as an example. On sugar, the writer argued,
there was ‘no doubt’ that we could grow beet in England, as our soil was ‘good enough’ and the beet could be grown by small holders. Twenty

Six months later, in June, 1915, *For Land and Home* provided further revealing testimony of how far this emphasis on maximising the possibilities of home-grown food cultivation was now being pursued and lobbied for by the League at every opportunity. At the League’s Annual meeting, which was followed by an open Public meeting, held once again at Caxton Hall in Westminster and attended by some 100 or so members and friends of the organization, various speeches were delivered, including an address by Mr. Christopher Turner on ‘The War and the Land’. According to the journal:

‘He said that the chief economic developments of the 19th century were in urban industries, and the land was neglected, but in the beginning of the present century people began once more to realise that the land was the nation’s greatest asset, that a large and healthy rural population and a flourishing agriculture was essential to the well-being of the nation. The importance of food supply in war, and the cessation of party politics will lead to further consideration of land problems’.

This Annual and Public meeting also saw leading members of the League express views about how the problems of the land would be a major issue after the war, and how it was wise to start planning for this as soon as possible. Thus, Christopher Turner argued that: ‘After the war thousands of men will desire to settle on the land, and we must devise plans for helping them before the need arises. Moreover it is essential to fill up with our own people the unoccupied areas of our overseas dominions’. Twenty-One He also claimed that there would be ‘an alien influx’ into Britain’s Colonies ‘and the remedy would be to fill the unpeopled areas with English-speaking agriculturalists’. He suggested the creation of a government department, with colonial representatives, to organise all emigration agencies. Twenty-Two
The same gathering also saw some frustration voiced on the role of women in the nation’s war effort. At one point, Dr. Lilias Hamilton, Warden of Studley College, Warwickshire (which had been founded in 1903 as an educational centre aimed at middle-class women), said ‘they were becoming alive to the fact that women in the country districts were not doing their full share of work on the land’. In contrast, the budding efforts of some women in the city of London and its suburbs was met with more approval. To this end, the League’s journal provided its readers with stirring information on how a new emphasis on uniting patriotism, the small kitchen, and the lost rural skills of general food cultivation was now spreading into the consciousness of the nation, mainly via determined individual middle-class women in a network of like-minded societies, clubs and associations.

A report was provided, for example, on ‘The Patriotic Kitchen Garden Association’. It was noted that: ‘A new society has been established by Mrs. Bovey, a Canadian lady now resident in London, which we think will interest our members. Its object is to encourage the cultivation of unused land, lent for the purpose, and to provide seeds, plants, etc. for the purpose’. The society also intended to promote the keeping of poultry, bees and also the bottling of fruit and vegetables, ‘and to give instruction in the arts of doing these things’. The journal also recorded approvingly that Mrs. Bovey had joined the National Land and Home League.

It is worth noting that the League’s growing concern with land issues in a post-war world can be seen at other stages during the conflict, and there is evidence that the organization lobbied the government directly on these questions. The League was especially keen to ensure, for example, that soldiers who had loyally served their country were given every opportunity to return back to or settle afresh on the land, if they so wished. In August, 1918, for example, Mrs. Marjory Pease, the League’s honorary secretary, penned a letter on League-headed notepaper (motto: ‘For Promoting the Revival of Country Life’) to the national Ministry of Reconstruction on the topic of training discharged and disabled ex-service men for the land. Pease pointed out that, ‘for some time past’, the League had been collecting information on
the provision of this by Local War Pensions Committees and had drawn up a
detailed report by Mr. T. Hamilton Fox on the result of their investigations, a report
which she included with her letter to the Ministry.

Pease also stated: ‘My Committee feel very strongly that every effort should be
made to encourage and facilitate the training of ex-service men for work on the land
and the schemes so far prepared by Local War Pensions Committees appear to us
to be very meagre and quite inadequate for dealing with the “after the War” problem’.
The report by Hamilton Fox included in its concluding sections the claim that ‘a very
large number of the men now in the services desire on demobilization a life on the
land’, and he argued that it seemed ‘a matter of grave importance’ to establish
training centres ‘to give to at any rate a portion of these men the training required to
secure a fair prospect of their ultimate success’.

Nonetheless, the question of also finding some of these men suitable holdings of
land elsewhere in the Empire remained a thorny issue. As we noted earlier, it was an
ambition that had first been voiced by the League at its 1915 Annual meeting, and it
continued to pursue this objective as the war evolved. Yet, by the later stages of the
conflict, the National Land and Home League found itself competing for the ear of
the government on this matter with other like-minded associations, particularly the
British Empire Land Settlement League. Indeed, the British Empire Land Settlement
League sent two separate deputations, in early and mid-1918, to press Ministers to
take stronger action on the issue.

According to the Settlement League, in Britain alone, the government needed to
take steps to ensure the provision of land holdings for some 750,000 men who ‘had
expressed a desire to settle on the land after demobilisation, and for others who
might wish to do so’. Mr. Rowland Hunt, MP, speaking for the Settlement League,
argued that: ‘The men for whom the land was required had saved the country, and
were entitled to a bit of it after the war, and it was the duty of the Government to
provide it for them’. Otherwise, he warned gloomily, if the government did nothing,
‘there would be a danger of very serious industrial disturbance’. The government, he
said, needed to do this for those men who wished to settle at home and those who wished to settle in the Dominions.  

Government Ministers trod carefully on the issue, however. While they politely listened to the National Land and Home League, and saw the organization’s desire to help increase food cultivation as a good and positive message, on the issue of distributing land to ex-servicemen the government line was more circumspect. Moreover, as one government Minister, Rowland Prothero (who was President of the Board of Agriculture) pointed out in response to the rather immoderate demands of other organizations like the British Empire Land Settlement League, ‘in this crowded old country you cannot put down 750,000 men on the land without displacing a large portion of the existing population’. The problem was not, he explained, an easy one.  

The National Land and Home League’s own emphasis on ‘training’ men for the land in preparation for a new post-war world tied in comfortably with the League’s more general philosophy about the need for the education, or ‘re-education’, of British citizens about the benefits of land-based and countryside skills. As we observed earlier, education as a theme had been voiced originally in the ‘Six Objects’ of the League published in June, 1912, and it remained a major premise in League ideology and activities during the war. League activists felt this process should start with the very young, and regularly called for pupils in both rural and suburban schools to receive instruction in ‘practical gardening’ of all kinds. Similarly, a series of public meetings were held for the general public on educational matters but again, while these meetings could attract some quite eminent speakers, such events tended to be predominantly for those who lived in the central London area and its surrounding boroughs. It is thus difficult to see how the League’s message could genuinely reach out to and inspire people residing in the more remote rural districts of the nation. After all, many families were busy and more preoccupied with worrying about day-to-day economic survival, and whether their loved ones would return back safely from military service.
A good example of one such League meeting was a gathering organized on ‘Rural Education and the War’ in April, 1916, held at the Caxton Hall in Westminster, and chaired by Colonel Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, the League’s president. The speakers on this occasion included the Rt. Reverend Lord Bishop of Oxford, Colonel Lord Saye and Sele, and Mr. Chistopher Turner. Although perfectly reasonable points were made in the speeches about the importance (as the League saw it) of countryside values, it is difficult to discern the extent to which the League’s arguments were able to reach a wider audience, especially under difficult wartime conditions.

Tellingly, some of the League’s more experienced adherents appeared to be aware of the League’s image problem and how its critics could perhaps dismiss it as a rather narrow, elitist and predominantly London-based organization. In order to overcome the challenges involved in the dissemination of the League’s fundamental ‘land’ message in wartime, some of the movement’s leading officers began to pen regular letters to local newspapers and publications across the country in order to try and reach out both to farmers and smallholders, sometimes suggesting - in a subtle way - that the League could help create networks of like-minded pro-countryside groups.

The League’s Mr. T. Hamilton-Fox, for example, wrote one such letter in June, 1916, to the Sussex Agricultural Press on the need for ‘Rural Organisation’. He noted that there were a number of men and women ‘trying to improve rural conditions, both economic and social, but the results are disappointing owing to the lack of some system of co-ordination to prevent the existing waste of time, energy, and money’. He suggested the formation of a federation of ‘non-party rural betterment societies’, to be called the Rural Organisation Society. Revealingly, towards the end of his letter, Hamilton-Fox noted that the Hon. Secretary of the National Land and Home League would gladly reply to any query and forward details to enquirers.

On the other hand, despite the progressive-sounding emphasis on both education
and co-operation with other groups that was expounded in the League’s publications and meetings, and its patent determination to play a major role in helping to spread the ‘lost’ skills of general food cultivation across the nation, there were also times when the mask appeared to slip from certain League members. A much more ‘defensive’ and (arguably) quite reactionary vision was discernible in the League’s ideology and culture. Advocacy of, or nostalgia for, a more idyllic, archaic-sounding and controversial interpretation of the past appeared at certain junctures in the League’s philosophical evolution. This was especially the case with some of the statements of the League’s president, Lord Cavendish-Bentinck.

In March, 1917, for example, presiding at a public meeting called by the League at Westminster Central Building in London, Cavendish-Bentinck lamented on the ‘isolation’ of the labourer in the modern-day countryside and asserted: ‘We want to make our rural districts more like what they were in mediaeval times’. In those days, he claimed, ‘the people in those districts lived with common interests in a common life’, and the National Land and Home League had set out to ‘break up the isolation which now ruled in those parts where the labourer resided’.30

The League and the Fight for More Food

Further clues on the nature and possible impact of the League in some parts of the country, especially in suburban areas, can be pointed to through a brief case study of a particular branch. While food supply for the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in Belgium and France was maintained relatively successfully during the early stages of the war, the Liberal Prime Minister H.H. Asquith and his government were slow to grasp that, by the second year of the struggle, food stocks for the domestic population in Britain were running dangerously low. As one historian, Wendy Tibbitts, has pointed out, the harvest of 1916 was also disappointing, and the country was soon facing a food crisis.31

When Lloyd George took over as Prime Minister in December, 1916, he quickly convened a War Cabinet where domestic food production was given much greater
priority. The government were also keen to avoid having to introduce food rationing, and sought to encourage the public into voluntary rationing as far as possible.\[^{32}\] In May, 1917, the Board of Agriculture encouraged County War Agricultural Committees (which had been created by the government in 1915) to identify more land that could be ploughed up and cultivated by farmers for the growth of more crops. In addition, a series of directives from the government also gave the County Committees responsibility for finding more land for the use of allotments by many more ordinary citizens, in both the villages and in the towns. Indeed, as Tibbitts has noted:

‘To increase the food supply further, people were also exhorted to grow food in their gardens and allotments. The Food Production Department suggested to County Committees that they set up a sub-committee for horticulture with the object of supplying advice, assistance and encouragement for the cultivation of allotments and small-holdings, and to organise the collecting and marketing of surplus produce’.\[^{33}\]

Ironically, the Land and Home League had been voicing precisely this kind of message and a demand for urgent action since the early stages of the war. In 1915, for example, League press releases and other comments on the topic had appeared in newspapers in various parts of the country, ranging from the more rural areas of Yorkshire to the rapidly industrializing city of Birmingham.\[^{34}\] Yet, with a change of Prime Minister and a greater sense of official urgency to overcome the national food crisis, the League now suddenly found that its creed and standpoint had a much more receptive audience in parish Councils or the Town Halls of local municipal and other authorities. The call for more citizens to be able to take on rented allotments and smallholdings, to appropriate unused land, and to exploit the potential of small kitchen gardens in the family home, was embraced and pursued with renewed
energy by League branches in towns and villages. The importance of being ‘educated’ in the skills of soil cultivation was held up by the League as a way for civilians on the Home Front to take the war directly to the ‘Hun’ enemy.

It is clear from a number of editions of the League’s publication *For Land and Home* that one of the most successful local branches of the League, and one very determined to help boost access to allotments and smallholdings, and thus stimulate general food cultivation by the ‘small man’, was not - ironically - a countryside branch, but one located in the leafy south-west London suburbs of Surbiton and Kingston-on-Thames in Surrey (Surbiton was sometimes referred to as the ‘Queen of the Suburbs’). A brief case study of the branch can help illustrate this suburban dimension to the League and round off our discussion.

Evidence of the emergence of the League in this very middle-class and suburban area during the Great War can be detected as early as January, 1915, when a ‘Mr. Dean’ wrote to the local authorities in Kingston on behalf of the ‘Surbiton and Kingston’ branch of the League. He thanked the Properties Committee of the Town Council for the provision of some new allotments in Kingston. However, a more organized and expanded presence for the League in the area can be seen with the appearance of a ‘Norbiton Branch’ in the Norbiton area of the town shortly afterwards, and the full inauguration of a ‘Kingston branch’ a few months later in May, 1915. Members of the new Kingston branch included some local elected Councillors, who appeared to see no conflict of interest between their own positions as sitting members of the Town Council and membership of an independent local lobby group: ‘During the course of the evening Councillor Beebe gave a number of particulars concerning the allotment and small holding movement, and pointed out the benefits to be derived from it’.

Over the course of the next 2-3 years, the Surbiton, Norbiton and Kingston branches of the League effectively became one large single branch in the area (often called the ‘Norbiton branch’), and managed to generate considerable and regular publicity concerning their campaign for the creation of many more allotments for food
cultivation in the Kingston area. In fact, the commitment and energy of local officers of the branch (especially its chairman, Mr. J.A. Marshall) served to ensure that the local *Surrey Comet* newspaper carried news about the League and its local activities on a near-weekly basis. Moreover, many of the objectives pursued by the League at national level were on full display in the local Kingston branch, despite some resistance and a somewhat resentful attitude on the part of some members of the local authority to the League’s intense lobbying efforts in the area.

In addition to its own monthly branch meetings for members, the branch began to organise open public meetings on ‘land’ issues, such as one held in Kingston Market Place (in the heart of the town) in October, 1916, where a resolution was passed that called for Kingston Corporation to provide more permanent allotments, not just extra temporary rented ones. The implication of this was clearly that the League believed that the wartime rental of new allotments or smallholdings by individuals should be replaced with eventual permanent ownership of that land, an assertion that undoubtedly undermined the League’s frequent claims to be a ‘non-political’ organisation.

By December, 1916, the local Council had (rather grudgingly, it seems) come round to the view that it could delegate some responsibility to the League for both identifying potential new areas of land for food cultivation in Kingston and also to playing a key role in the ‘training’ of new allotment holders in essential gardening skills. Interestingly, by the end of the same month, the local press had also become notably open in its praise of the League in the Kingston area, and an editorial in the *Surrey Comet* reminded its readers that ‘the association… has been actively engaged during the past twelve or eighteen months in obtaining garden ground for its members, and is able to show fully one hundred and ninety garden plots of various sizes now under cultivation’. The newspaper declared that ‘good returns’ could be obtained by all who came forward ‘in the national interest’ to ‘take a hand in this important movement’. This was high praise indeed.

Above all, investigation of the League at this local suburban level can help illustrate
how the organization more generally envisaged a ‘new Britain’ based on the restoration of the importance of the ‘land’ in national consciousness and, in particular, the creation of a harmonious synthesis of the ‘land’ and the ‘home’. In October, 1917, for example, Mr. Peter Wilson Raffan, the Liberal MP for Leigh in Lancashire (a mainly agricultural town near Wigan), was invited down to Kingston by the League to distribute special prizes to the local allotment holders for their cultivation of the many new ‘war food plots’ of the Borough.

In a passionate speech, Wilson Raffan told League members that, while the brave men at the Front were ‘facing danger and death daily for our sakes’, it was the duty of those at home to see that they neglected no effort which would support the soldiers in their task, and help bring the nation to triumph: ‘Of all the national efforts, he was sure none could be of greater importance at the present time than that of stimulating food production’. Significantly, the speaker went on to say that ‘while the present work was going on they required to think ahead of the war’. They in the League, he said, were keeping in mind ‘the necessity of developing the great natural resources of the country and more particularly the land of the country. It would be equally essential that when men came back they should see this land for which they had fought so gallantly should no longer be treated as the preserve of the few but as a storehouse of the people’.

Adding further detail to his vision of an unspoiled post-war future, he added that the ‘ideal system would be that instead of having a house at one place and allotment at another, they should so arrange matters that a house should have a sufficient piece of garden to enable a man to do without having an allotment’. He beseeched them as ‘plot holders’ and as citizens to do some thinking as to how ‘the problems associated with the land were to be faced in the future’.

**Conclusion: Land, Home and Myth**

The preceding discussion and critical evaluation of the Land and Home League has fulfilled two functions. Firstly, it has enabled us to re-visit and consider the nature
and impact of an organisation that has been relatively neglected by scholars, a movement that, although not large, was arguably a good example of the veritable ‘explosion’ in the growth of Leagues and other kindred groups and associations in both the Edwardian and First World War periods.

Secondly, the discussion has tried to pin down and capture the essence of some of the core ideas, culture and policies of the League while, at the same time, subjecting them to necessary critical scrutiny. It was noted how the League was motivated, fundamentally, by an overriding desire to somehow defend the ‘land’ in all its forms and reconnect the land with the ‘home’, but also how this creed was, at the best of times, quite obtuse and often contained glaring contradictions. The League’s stance was, in fact, a curious medley - an uneasy blend of the old and the new.

Indeed, in many ways, the League’s creed contained palpable tensions between its forward-looking, radical ambitions (on education, land democratization and redistribution, better housing, and so on), and the continuing adherence of some members to a rather backward-looking, antiquated and hopelessly mythologised vision of the past, one that was rooted in and shaped by a rural and harmonious England that never really existed in historical reality. Moreover, the League’s claims that it was a ‘non-political’ movement should also be treated with caution. Self-evidently, political views and attitudes ran steadfastly through the National Land and Home League’s, both in its creed and its activities.

Finally, given that the League placed so much faith in the ‘land’ and in the supposed rural wisdom of village life, it seems ironic that - in hindsight - the organisation’s impact was patchy and weak in most parts of the countryside where it appeared. It remained a largely metropolitan, city-based movement, which saw some of its most successful activities occur in a chiefly suburban environment.

Notes

1. A good survey of such ‘new growths’ is contained in P.J. Waller: *Town, City and Nation: England 1850-1914* (1983) (1999 ed.), chapt. 4, pp.127-184. Fears about these changes voiced by the intellectual elites in Britain are analysed very


7. Waller: *Town, City and Nation*, p.190.

8. Waller: *Town, City and Nation*, pp.190-91.


17. ‘Four Years of Progress’, *For Land and Home*, June, 1912, pp.1-3.


24. ‘The Patriotic Kitchen Garden Association’, *For Land and Home*, June, 1915, p.7. A number of other women from similar class backgrounds were also keen advocates of the role that could be played in the war effort by ‘Kitchen Gardens’. See, for example, a detailed letter from Rose T. Patry, of Hampstead in London, published in the *Surrey Comet*, August 11th, 1915, p.5.


26. ‘Note of Proceedings at a Deputation from the British Empire Land Settlement League received by Rt. Hon. R.E. Prothero, MP, on Wednesday 23rd January, 1918’, TNA T172/848/60-68 (1918), The National Archives, Kew.

27. ‘Mr. Prothero’s reply to a Deputation from the British Empire Land Settlement League, received by him on Wednesday, 5th June, 1918’, TNA T172/848/49-52 (1918), The National Archives, Kew.


32. Ibid, p.196.

34. See, for example: ‘Allotments and Food Supply in War’, *Yorkshire Post and Intelligencer*, November 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1915, p.3; ‘Allotment Land’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1915, p.10.


36. ‘Progress with the Provision of Allotments’, *Surrey Comet*, January 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1915, p.7.


40. ‘War Food Plots’, *Surrey Comet*, October 31\textsuperscript{st}, 1917, p.2.
“Mind, Body, Room: Alternative Forms of Dwelling for Women in Early Twentieth Century” by Matilda Blackwell, University of Birmingham

Mind, Body, Room: Alternative of Dwelling for Women in the Early Twentieth Century

Matilda Blackwell¹
University of Birmingham

‘You’re a girl, my dear, unspoiled by worldly women, the dearest I know - with a man’s mind,’ so Miriam Henderson is told in the ninth volume of Dorothy Richardson's semi-autobiographical novel-sequence Pilgrimage.²

Charting more than twenty years, Richardson describes the life of a working woman at the turn of the century, reflecting her own struggle for independence and a room of her own.

First published in 1925, though set two decades earlier, The Trap details the life of two ‘bachelor women’ living in shared ‘diggings’ in London.³ After several years of living alone in a boarding-house, Miriam decides to undertake a social experiment: that is, to live with another woman in a ‘marriage of convenience; a bringing down of expenses that would allow them both to live more comfortably than they could alone’.¹ Selina Holland is the chosen partner, a social worker and the ‘châtelaine’ of the pair.² Miriam, in contrast, is a writer with an artistic mind, a ‘man’s mind’, through which we see much of the New Woman’s life in early twentieth-century London.

This novel-chapter opens at a threshold moment: Miriam arriving at her new digs in a three-storey house in Bloomsbury. Split into rooms and rented by anonymous strangers, these houses symbolise the alternative domestic structures available to independent women in the early twentieth century. Miriam and her ‘châtelaine’ partner

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³ Ibid., pp. 428-9.
⁴ Ibid., p. 441.
are branded ‘artistic’ and, almost with tongue-in-cheek, called a ‘cult’. These digs signal a certain ‘architectural impermanence’ that echoes the liminal position of women like Miriam; they exist outside traditional ideas of a private space controlled by a patriarchal figure and provide alternative domestic structures for those who want to (or have to) exist outside the social norm. As a cult or ‘a spectacle’, these dwellings were seen as a hazardous or precarious domestic space, as well as a threat to social order.

Firm opponent of lodging-houses for women, Christabel Osborn, writing in *The Contemporary Review* in 1911, notes that ‘man wants a lodging, but woman wants a home’. Osborn argued that lodging-houses, by their very nature, were ‘anti-social’ spaces that stunted the ‘development of character’ in ‘men and women, rich and poor alike’, and cited lodging-house dwellers’ lack of ‘domestic, social and civil responsibilities’ as the key problem. In direct contrast to the association of lodging-houses with dirt and debauchery - Friedrich Engels called them ‘hot-beds of unnatural vice’ - the family home was aligned with ideals of morality, propriety and control, and women had a specific and well-defined place within them.

This unorthodox form of home, then, symbolises Miriam’s decision to place herself outside the stability of the patriarchal family home. Looking at a reflection of her own digs in the windows of the house across the courtyard (W. B. Yeats’ flat, though she does not realise it at this point), Miriam concludes that ‘she and Miss Holland were not the only aliens’ that straddle the boundary between man and woman, taking on multiple male and female roles. They were not the only ‘bachelor women’ in the neighbourhood. Miriam is part of an emerging group of socially and economically independent women, whose independence is echoed in the increasing number living outside traditional domestic structures. As Terri Mullholland argues, this places them outside socially and culturally defined domestic roles. In fiction as in reality, the New Woman ‘carves out a

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5 Ibid., p. 415.


6 Ibid., p. 711.


8 Richardson, *The Trap*, p. 415. W. B. Yeats (1865 -1939) was a canonical Irish poet. In *Pilgrimage*, he embodies the successful writer who has the freedom to explore his own artistic nature because of his position as a man of independent means.

9 Ibid., p. 415.

private space for herself’ in the form of the lodging-house, bedsit or ‘spinster flat’. Women’s emerging independent identities, then, are inherently bound up in alternative spaces of their own which become a ‘valuable trope in which to understand the nature of women’s place in modernity’.

This article offers a re-evaluation of women’s digs in the early twentieth century through Dorothy Richardson’s novel-chapters *The Tunnel* (1919) and *The Trap* (1925) and Rosamond Lehmann’s novel *The Weather in the Streets* (1936). The lodging-house, bedsit or flat has often been read as a utopian or liberating space for women, offering a site of privacy for some of modernity’s marginal individuals. In more recent years, critics have begun to explore the isolation and loneliness that often faces the single woman living outside the family home, as well as the patriarchal conventions that invade these seemingly liberatory spaces. In line with the latter, then, I want to consider ‘diggings’ from a more affective perspective as a way to explore ideas of public and private, insider and outsider, home and homeliness.

In this article, I use Richardson and Lehmann’s semi-autobiographical accounts of alternative domestic spaces to explore the lived reality of the single woman, examining their claustrophobic and, to some extent, dangerous potentialities. These domestic spaces are filtered through their protagonists’ mind; I consider how the symbolism housed in their narratives echoes the ambivalent position of the independant woman in society at this time. For Richardson, the room is ‘full of her untrammelled thoughts’; these spaces collect and contain female identity. Indeed, as Diana Fuss suggests, every house is ‘an outer embodiment of the inner life of its occupant’. Both authors use domestic spaces to think through the lived reality of their protagonists. Both authors merge the psychological and architectural through sensual experience which is imbued into their narratives through unusual stylistic, syntactical and formal choices. Looking at these two texts side by side, then, I draw together the alternative interiors of the mind, the body and the dwelling; three ‘expansive’ spaces that Fuss identifies as ‘encompassing both the psychological and the


13 Terri Mullholland suggests that the lodging-house became a space into which women were able to escape. For an in-depth study of the lodging-house and gender see: Mullholland (2017).

14 For more on isolation, loneliness and patriarchal conventions invading lodging-houses see: Mullholland (2017).


architectural meanings of interior life’. Through the liminal spatial metaphors of the shared bachelor flat, the female ‘man’s mind’ and the pregnant body, I examine how these porous interior spaces interconnect to reflect the precarious social, sexual and economic position of the single, independent woman in the early twentieth century.

Dwelling in the Mind

In 1897, after several years of living as a governess and teacher, Miriam moves into a boarding-house in London: Mrs Bailey’s attic room at 7 Tansley Street. First published in 1919, the fourth part of Richardson’s novel-sequence, The Tunnel, is a fertile narrative for exploring the ambivalent nature of the lodging-house for women. Moving into this small, private space, Miriam feels the room full of sunlight: ‘shut off by its brightness from the rest of the house’. The light streaming in through the window adds an imagined layer of privacy for Miriam, suggesting a blockage preventing the flow of light from reaching the rest of the boarding-house. The skylight - ‘blue and gold with light, its cracks threads of bright gold’ - fills the room with ‘brilliant’ chinks of gold light.

The windows become a focal point for Miriam: an egress to the outside world. In more than just a literal sense, Miriam imbues the window with the possibility of connecting her to what she would consider real life. The light takes on tangible qualities as she imagines the room ‘noisy with light’. In a symbolic act of liberation, Miriam breaks the ‘heavy’ bars and iron lattice off the window: a ‘push set it free and it swung wide’. This action shatters the boundary between inside and outside, and the city streets invade the domestic interior. Sitting by the window, Miriam can hear the ‘plonk plonk and rumble of swift vehicles’, the ‘cheeping of birds’ and the ‘sound of an unaccompanied violin’. In a fragmented, solitary paragraph Miriam observes: ‘London, just outside all the time, coming in with the light, coming in with the darkness, always present in the depths of the air in the room’. A coda to the opening scene, this sliver of narrative echoes the shards

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17 Ibid., p. 1.
18 Richardson, The Tunnel, p. 12.
19 Ibid., pp. 12-3.
20 Ibid., p. 12.
21 Ibid., p. 15.
22 Ibid., p. 15.
23 Ibid., p. 16.
of light that render Miriam ‘frightfully happy’; both symbols of a porous, unbounded potentiality psychologically imbued into the architecture of the room.\textsuperscript{24}

In a similar manner, upon entering her new shared room at Flaxman Court in the opening pages of \textit{The Trap}, Miriam imbues this sense of potentiality into its architectural features; Richardson’s narrative blends sensual stimulus with the physical and architectural. Returning to her new rooms shortly after the Church Army men have delivered her furniture, Miriam spends a moment taking in her surroundings. The room is ‘peopled’ with furniture.\textsuperscript{25} From the ‘wide high window’ daylight ‘generously’ illuminates the furniture in new ways.\textsuperscript{26} Miriam observes:

\begin{quote}
Pools of light rested on the squat moss-green crockery of the wash-table, set, flanked by clear wall and clear green floor, between the mirror and the end of the small bed which skirted the wall as far as the door opening on to the landing. The unencumbered floor made a green pathway to the window. It was refreshment merely to walk along it, between clean sightly objects. Squalor was banished. No more smell of dust. No more sleepless nights under a roof too hot to grow cool even in the hour before dawn.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

Miriam takes in the crockery, the wash-table, the mirror. Peppered with prepositions, the lengthy sentence echoes the expansiveness of the space whose novelty is opening up new possibilities in Miriam’s mind. Past memories of sleepless nights imprinted in the furniture are ‘banished’, liberated by the ‘unencumbered’ new setting. Seen in this new light, Miriam’s old furniture loses its ‘squalor’, instead becoming ‘clear’, ‘clean’ and ‘sightly’, offering their owner ‘refreshment’. The room is suffused with natural imagery. Miriam fixates on the furniture’s green colouring; the crockery is ‘moss-green’, the ‘clear green floor’ makes a ‘green pathway to the window’. This infiltration of nature into a distinctly urban setting is out of place. Richardson emphasises the dissolution of boundaries between interior and exterior, nature and city; the mingling of urban and anti-urban reflects the liberatory potential Miriam sees in her new home.

Sunlight also illuminates the ‘polished surfaces of the little bureau’ upon which dance ‘bright plaques of open sky’.\textsuperscript{28} Richardson’s attention to sunlight in both \textit{The Tunnel} and \textit{The Trap} becomes coded for a metaphorical potential. Flaxman Court, based on Richardson’s time at Woburn Buildings (now Woburn Walk), is suffused with sunlight in the opening of \textit{The Trap}, a psychological marker of the (temporary) utopia Miriam sees in her new digs. In his survey of London’s Georgian architecture, John Summerson describes

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 23.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 410.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 410.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 410.
\textsuperscript{28} Richardson, \textit{The Trap}, p. 410.
\end{quote}
Woburn Walk as ‘small three-storey stuccoed houses with shop-fronts on the ground floor’ designed by Thomas Cubitt with leases dating back to 1822.29 Woburn Walk is a narrow, densely built road, unlike the wide open square of her boarding-house in The Tunnel, Tansley Street (actually Endsleigh Street in Bloomsbury), and these rooms, particularly the attic rooms which Miriam and Miss Holland occupy, would have been dark and dingy at the turn of the century. Indeed, Richardson describes life in this area in a letter to Yeats’ biographer:

the alley was in some respects a terrifying dwelling-place for one unaccustomed to certain of the worst products of poverty & miseries, & the mere presence of the poet was a source of comfort & light. The postman rarely passed further down the court than our two respective doors.30

Miriam ignores the material reality of the room and its architectural surroundings, leaving readers to wonder why these shared rooms are preferable to her earlier private room in Mrs Bailey’s boarding-house. Yet, unlike the boarding-house, Flaxman Court offers the chance to form a female community rooted in independence. It is this utopian ideal that shapes our first impressions of Flaxman Court and, as in The Tunnel, it is the sunlight that metaphorically opens up the architecture, forming a thread between Miriam’s consciousness and her impression of the space.

The open sky is captured on the surface of the bureau. Much like the natural imagery with which Richardson imbues the room, the open sky denotes her ability to escape the confines of her small shared rooms during the process of writing. The coupling of the sunlight and the writing table suggests a potential for thinking and writing and working. The ‘polished surfaces’ of the bureau echo the ‘strip of mirror’ and ‘pools of light’.31 Reflective surfaces fill the room, throwing back light and images without absorbing them. These surfaces are reflective in more than one sense: both visually and physically, allowing Miriam the space and furniture needed for the mental reflection of writing.

The bureau is not just an inanimate object to Miriam, it becomes suffused with subtle associations in the text. Miriam contends that ‘the bureau was experience; seen from any angle it was joy complete’ 32 The bureau is central to Miriam’s construction of her sense of self as a writer; it becomes an anchoring device used to centre her sense of identity in the upheaval of moving houses: a symbol of the writer’s mind. Retreating into the privacy of her interior mind, Miriam finds an escape from Miss Holland, the daily grind of household tasks and, when she needs it, the busy London streets outside. And, although


31 Richardson, The Trap, p. 410.

32 Ibid., p. 410.
she had earned her keep as a governess and dental assistant since her father’s bankruptcy, writing now offers her the possibility of financial independence too. Around these implicit associations stored in the bureau, then, Miriam constructs her sense of self as a subject in modernity.

As the novel-chapter progresses, however, and her shared home becomes more claustrophobic, the bureau, as well as the books ‘stacked in piles on the mantelshelf’, become the only ‘relief for her oppression’. Books provide a sense of comfort in the darkness of her increasingly incommodious digs; the ‘minute gilded titles of some of the books […] gleamed faintly in the gloom, minute threads of gold’. From their golden titles unwind intricate threads to other times and places, imagined lines of connections to the sort of mental stimulation that Miriam craves. Threads weave their way throughout the rest of Richardson’s novel-chapter; the threads of gold, which Miriam identified when she first moved into Mrs Bailey’s attic room, can be traced through Richardson’s narrative to this moment. With such claustrophobic titles (The Tunnel and The Trap), these ‘threads of bright gold’ connote a sense of potential: a light at the end of the tunnel. Threads become a subtle metaphor that links Miriam’s mind and room; her mind is constantly reaching beyond her interior dwelling, beyond Miss Holland’s silence - ‘the broken fabric of their intercourse’ - to the noisy world outside. The minute threads extend beyond her shared digs, capturing (in her mind) real life outside the window.

Richardson suggests that Miriam’s unfixed life, travelling between places and homes, has caused her link to real life to break: the ‘small frayed’ ‘thread had been snapped’. Although she is untethered, a single, independent woman living in the city, her ‘marriage of convenience’ is, in fact, as entrapping as a traditional domestic setting. And, because Miss Holland does not understand Miriam (who feels ‘so different’), the shared digs are as isolating as a room in a boarding-house. Miriam is still shackled by tea times and domestic routines. Yet this question of domestic rootedness (or unrootedness) is an interesting one, leaving us to ponder to what extent Miriam still desires the traditional domestic life of her childhood. Moving away from an unrooted and unhomely boarding-house to a more permanent shared space, we see Miriam caught in an ironic double-bind; for readers, the boarding-house at Tansley Street is the locus of Pilgrimage, remembered today as the home of Miriam, and this brief interlude in a potentially more fixed space

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33 Ibid., p. 440.
34 Ibid., p. 440.
36 Ibid., p. 430.
37 Ibid., pp. 417-8.
38 Ibid., pp. 428-9.
39 Ibid., p. 432.
renders Miriam caught in the trap that the novel-chapter’s title suggests. Indeed, the ‘broken fabric of their intercourse’ for which she listened ‘breathlessly’ on her first night in the room is also that which separates her from reality; Miss Holland, encroaching on and policing her privacy, prevents Miriam from experiencing the ‘deep places to be invaded by unsummoned dreams’: that which her writing is made of.\textsuperscript{40}

Richardson’s obsessive descriptions of domestic interiors echo a need for privacy denied women in the public sphere. In her excellent re-evaluation of the importance of domestic space for modernist (and female, I would argue) subjectivity, Morag Shiach suggests that Miriam’s ‘aspiration is for protection from the coerced and the casual encounter, a protection she represents here as the “treasure” of security’.\textsuperscript{41} Miriam desires protective boundaries. In her economic position, however, these boundaries cannot be fully realised. She has the option of living in a boarding-house, where the miniatures of her everyday life are policed by a landlady, or form a ‘marriage of convenience’ with Miss Holland and share a room she could not otherwise afford alone. What starts out with utopian aims - the affordable, shared space - gradually becomes more and more oppressive.

Filtered through Miriam’s mind, the room becomes imbued with her emotions. Although its architectural reality does not change, it is held, as if by a thread, to Miriam’s consciousness and the way she experiences the space. Miss Holland’s furniture comes to embody the oppressive presence that Miriam sees in its owner and, crowded with Miss Holland and her belongings, and experienced somatically by Miriam, the domestic interior becomes increasingly claustrophobic when Miriam realises that she is sharing her home with a ‘châtelaine’ and not the like-minded ‘bachelor woman’ she had hoped.\textsuperscript{42} She ponders on their domestic roles:

Always, in relation to household women, she felt herself a man. Felt that they included her, with a half-contemptuous indulgence, in the world of men. Some of them, those to whom the man’s world was still an exciting mystery, were a little jealous and spiky.\textsuperscript{43}

Miriam is separate from ‘household women’, indulgently included in the category ‘man’ by women who strive to fulfil their traditional domestic roles. Miriam’s ‘man’s mind’ is an exciting mystery for Miss Holland, who tidies their digs, declares Henry James ‘a little

\textsuperscript{40} I\textit{bid.}, pp. 430, 417-8.


\textsuperscript{42} Richardson, \textit{The Trap}, pp. 441, 415.

\textsuperscript{43} I\textit{bid.}, p. 412.
tedious’ and pronounces Schopenhauer ‘Shoppenore’. Miriam laughs at ‘the châtelaine’s response to Schopenhauer’.

Yet the châtelaine becomes unbearable for Miriam. Her earlier somatic responses are intensified. Their digs radiate pressure and a palpable tension sparks from their conflict in domestic roles. Miss Holland is an ‘infection’. A ‘hot pressure’ burns on each side of their bedroom, partitioned by a curtain. Miss Holland’s presence renders the room silent, ‘rebuked’ into an engulfing ‘dead stillness’; Richardson describes the room as ‘close’ and ‘full’. This ‘dead stillness’ is fuelled by Miss Holland’s candle, whose light flickers around the edges of the curtain - a fiery dance reminding Miriam of the ‘immense discomfort’ instilled in her by Miss Holland. The room is pervaded by images of contagion. The infection expands, seeping over the edges of the curtain like the candlelight, into Miriam’s (not so) private space.

The ‘dividing curtain’, ‘suspended in a deep loop from the top of the window frame to a hook in the wall above the connecting door’, takes on connotations of a sick-bay curtain. The curtain is literally and figuratively ‘suspended’: both physically hanging from the wall and temporarily preventing (or suspending) the spread of infection. Yet, Richardson tells us, the curtain is ‘porous’. Unlike a solid wall, the curtain has minute interstices through which sounds, smells or shadows may pass: entities coded as infection. The infection oozes through the curtain. Noise and bodily smells infiltrate the air and, even with the window ‘wide open’, the ‘air is stifling’ for Miriam.

Here, this claustrophobic room is a symptom of the entrapment of women suspended between the entrenched gender roles available to them. Richardson depicts Miriam’s gradual entrapment through an emphasis on sensorial experience. If, as Fuss suggests, senses ‘stand at the border of what is inside and outside consciousness’, then they form a ‘critical bridge between the architectural and the psychological interior’.

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44 Ibid., pp. 479, 411-2, 462.
46 Ibid., p. 432.
47 Ibid., p. 432.
48 Ibid., p. 432.
49 Ibid., p. 432.
50 Ibid., p. 404.
51 Ibid., p. 500.
52 Ibid., p. 499.
53 Fuss, p. 6.
Breaching the boundary between the literal and the figurative, then, Miriam’s increasingly claustrophobic sensorial responses to her domestic interior reflect both the compact physical reality of the space and her own affective response. More than this, they reflect the architectural and psychological entrapment experienced by independent, single women living in alternative domestic spaces, as well as their struggle to construct an autonomous subject within this society.

The narrative reaches a hot, ‘close’ climax. Richardson details the nightly routine of the pair ‘shut in, maddened’ together, set against the ‘real, exciting’ ‘street sounds’ outside. The sounds of Miss Holland’s toilette seeps through the curtain:

To sleep early was to wake to the splutter of a meth and see the glare of candlelight come through the porous curtain. To hear, with sense sharpened by sleep, the leisurely preparations, the slow careful sipping, the weary sighing, muttered prayers, the slow removal of the many unlovely garments, the prolonged swishing and dripping of the dismal sponge. All heralding and leading at last to the dreadful numb rattle of vulcanite in the basin.

This is a sensorial experience for Miriam; although it is dark, and Miss Holland is shielded by the curtain, Miriam hears her movements and watches her shadow lit by the ‘glare of candlelight’. Her senses are ‘sharpened’ in the dark. The passage is suffused with sibilant sounds: ‘sense sharpened by sleep’, ‘sipping’, ‘sighing’. Coupled with the onomatopoeic ‘swishing’, these sybaritic prosodies emphasise Miriam’s aural perceptions, endowing the passage with an almost sensual aura. The excess of present participles (‘heralding’, ‘leading’) and gerunds (‘swishing’, ‘dripping’) imbue the scene with a sense of movement. Here, Richardson’s syntax acts as a mirror to Miriam’s imagining of Miss Holland’s ‘leisurely preparations’ behind the curtain. For Miriam, these quotidian sounds ‘filled the room with the sense of death and the end’. These sounds ‘never varied’. Each sound was collected in the quiet room. Centring on the imagined spectacle of the teeth waiting in their saucer for the morning.

Accumulating sounds and odours and images, Richardson crafts a suffocating atmosphere. The ‘imagined spectacle’ of Miss Holland’s private bodily routine, rendered public by the

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54 Richardson, *The Trap*, p. 432.
55 Ibid., p. 500.
56 Ibid., pp. 500-1.
57 Ibid., p. 500.
58 Ibid., p. 500.
59 Ibid., p. 500.
shared domestic space, is stifling. For Miriam, the slow sluice of the sponge ‘spoke of
death’.60

Yet this claustrophobic domestic routine retains a trace of life for Miriam. The
sounds filtering through the open window mingle with the sounds of the dripping sponge
and turn ‘this stuffy little black room into a refuge’.61 Miriam hears the ‘thick, distorted
voices’ to which Miss Holland remains utterly ‘unaware’.62 These heterogeneous sounds
‘were life’, ‘real, exciting’.63 Miriam revels in this ‘dailiness’: she ‘seemed to be within it
and to breathe its thick odours as she listened’.64 Sounds and smells amalgamate to form
a sensual onslaught of experience with the aural taking on an odour in her mind. Unlike
Miss Holland’s toilette routine, which Miriam finds repetitive and predictable, the street
sounds are ‘fierce and coarse’.65 These unrefined noises hold an authentic potential for
Miriam. The sounds, smells and shadows that are cast up through the window act as a
thread to ‘real life’, just like her books and writing bureau.66 The porosity of the room,
then, reflecting the porosity of Miriam’s writer’s mind, is its redeeming feature; the
claustrophobic ‘marriage of convenience’, in which Miriam’s private space is invaded and
policed, contrasts to the only truly private space available to women at this time: the mind.

Dwelling in the Body

This sense of claustrophobia is extended in Rosamond Lehmann’s novel The Weather in
the Streets, which revolves around a theme of entrapment. Olivia Curtis, Lehmann’s
protagonist, lives a semi-Bohemian life sharing a flat with her ‘discreditable’ cousin
Etty.67 Olivia is twenty-seven years old, separated from her husband and about to embark
on a love affair with Rollo Spencer, a married man. Lehmann narrates a time ‘confused
with hiding, pretence and subterfuge’; for Olivia, ‘being in love with Rollo was all-
important, the times with him the only reality; yet in another way they had no existence in
reality’.68 Her affair with Rollo emphasises the ‘odd duality’ of her existence, and its
location in enclosed, temporary interior spaces echoes the liminal position of Lehmann’s

60 Ibid., p. 500.
61 Ibid., p. 500.
62 Ibid., p. 500.
63 Ibid., p. 500.
64 Ibid., pp. 508-9.
65 Ibid., p. 500.
66 Ibid., p. 500.
68 Ibid., p. 174.
protagonist who strives for sexual autonomy at a time when dominant social and cultural narratives, steeped in patriarchy, render her and her body constrained and restricted.\textsuperscript{69}

According to her biographer, Lehmann intended the title of the novel ‘to convey the impression of “a crowd of people today, unprotected, ordinary & various, moving along the streets in every sort of weather, stopping to talk, lingering to make love, disappearing to be sad, to die”’.\textsuperscript{70} Lehmann’s novel captures a snapshot of this interwar malaise, subtly exploring the social, sexual and economic position of the middle-class, independent woman in the thirties. Olivia is part of a generation that ‘despite being modern, is still under constraining forces of patriarchy, marginalized and exploited in a society that protects traditionalists’.\textsuperscript{71} She exists in a liminal position in society: estranged from the middle-class yet never fully living the Bohemian London life of her artist friends. Olivia, along with a whole generation of New Women, is imprisoned in a double-bind. The ‘new post-war opportunities which promise so much, particularly university education and greater sexual freedom,’ Diana Wallace remarks, ‘lead nowhere because of the lack of new alternatives to the wife/mistress/spinster roles’.\textsuperscript{72}

Unlike Miriam’s determined protection of her own privacy and independence, and whose unusual rejection of men places her outside these roles, Olivia, as part of a heavily gendered Bohemian world, measures herself in relation to men: her independence is set on their terms.\textsuperscript{73} Under the guise of liberation, the Bohemian promise of greater sexual freedom in fact possesses more danger for women, taking away other forms of protection whilst encouraging men to have less responsibility. The ambiguity of Olivia’s sexual freedom leads us to question just how enabling this unorthodox lifestyle is for a young, single woman at this time struggling to find a role not defined by men.

Lehmann herself describes feeling ‘nowhere’ at this time.\textsuperscript{74} In her biography, Lehmann notes that what ‘with the general post-war fissuring and crack-up of all social

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p. 174.


\textsuperscript{73} Elizabeth Wilson discusses the problems of Bohemia for women: ‘From its earliest days Bohemia had appeared to offer women greater freedom from the social restrictions of respectable society, and recognition as autonomous individuals in their own right [...] but since women throughout the whole of society suffered restrictions that were different from and more severe than those affecting men, their relationship to Bohemia was necessarily also different from that of men, their search for authenticity more problematic’ (p. 86). Women ‘continued to be defined in gendered terms which denied female creativity. Pregnancy and motherhood, it was asserted, limited women’s mental capacities’ (p. 96). E. Wilson, ‘Women in Bohemia’, in \textit{Bohemians: The Glamourous Outcast} (London, 2003), pp. 85-99.

and moral structures, coupled with the abject collapse of my private world, it was easy to fear I was nowhere’.\textsuperscript{75} Olivia, too, has this feeling of being rootless, of existing in a placeless ‘extension of the mind’s loathing and oppression’.\textsuperscript{76} She is trapped in ‘glass casing’ watching ‘pictures of London winter the other side of the glass - not reaching the body’.\textsuperscript{77} For the interwar woman, then, her sense of place or placelessness is a valuable trope through which to understand the nature of her place within modernity. The novel’s interior spaces reflect and, at times, facilitate the double-bind of women, trapped in a liminal position by social and cultural restraints.

The novel opens in a fog drenched London, where Olivia is woken by the shrill ring of a telephone. Olivia’s body and mind are submerged; the grogginess of her waking state and the dense fog that curls around her merge. She is shrouded in a thick, murky darkness that stings her nose and eyelids. Fog laces this opening page with uncertainty, echoed in Lehmann’s use of the modal verb ‘might’: Olivia is caught in an unknown in-between time of day.\textsuperscript{78} With her senses dampened by the fog, she cannot be sure if it is day or night. The opening passage is interspersed with imagined thoughts. Olivia imagines Mrs Banks, their housekeeper, arriving to answer the telephone:

\begin{quote}Click, key in the door; brown mac, black felt, rabbit stole, be on your peg at once behind the door. Answer it, answer it, let me not have to get up …\textsuperscript{79}\end{quote}

The sentences flit between the present moment and Olivia’s imagination, dredging up the thoughts she has upon waking. This narratological impermanence is coupled with Lehmann’s fidgety punctuation to accentuate the scene’s instability. Lehmann’s repeated use of ellipsis mirrors Olivia’s gradual awakening. The excess of colons and semicolons sharply break up the paragraph like the shrill telephone that pierces Olivia’s sleep. Her punctuation renders the syntax jolty as readers are thrown between multiple short clauses. This abrupt temporal switching and jittery punctuation submerges readers into the text; Lehmann momentarily renders us as confused as Olivia.

Making her way downstairs to answer the telephone she enters ‘Etty’s crammed dolls’-house sitting-room’ which feels ‘unfamiliar’ in the early morning light:

\begin{quote}dense with the fog’s penetration, with yesterday’s cigarettes; strangled with cherry-coloured curtains, with parrot-green and silver cushions, with Etty’s little chairs, tables, stools, glass and shagreen and cloisonné boxes, bowls, ornaments, shrilled a peevish reproach over and over again from the darkest corner: withdrew into a\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{75} Lehmann, \textit{Swan in the Evening}, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{76} Lehmann, \textit{Weather in the Streets}, p. 219.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 138.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 1.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 1.
sinister listening and waiting as she slumped down at the littered miniature writing-table, lifted the receiver and croaked: ‘Yes?’

The curtains are anthropomorphised into a murderous form; they threaten to strangle the ‘dolls’-house sitting-room’. Alluding to a rose-tinted view of the domestic space, Etty’s ‘cherry-coloured curtains’ suggest a sickly sweet and, in Olivia’s eyes, ‘frail’ form of femininity. Olivia perceives this fragility as a threat to her independence; the domestic interior (repeatedly referred to as Etty’s and distinctly not Olivia’s) is stifling, coded as confining by Lehmann. This sense of entrapment is mirrored in Lehmann’s syntax. Her lists of furniture and ornaments are overwhelming and these objects crowd both the text and the room. Olivia imagines the furniture personified, glaring at her with ‘peevious reproach’ and enacting a ‘sinister listening and waiting’ game. These household objects look at Olivia with rebuke; Lehmann imbues the scene with the claustrophobic feeling of being watched by a crowd of disapproving eyes.

Much like Miss Holland’s policing of Miriam’s private space, these imagined eyes echo Etty’s (even unwitting) surveillance of their shared space. In a similar manner, Miriam focuses on Miss Holland’s ‘cheerless things’:

From a low camp-bed with a limply frilled Madras muslin cover, her eyes passed to a wicker wash-stand-table, decked with a strip of the same muslin and set with chilly, pimpled white crockery. At its side was a dulled old Windsor chair, and underneath it a battered zinc footbath propped against the wall. Above a small shabby chest of draws a tiny square of mirror hung by a nail to the strip of wall next to the window. No colour anywhere but in the limp muslin, washed almost colourless.

Miriam’s eyes move ‘above’, to the ‘side’ and ‘underneath’ as she observes the changes to the room with intricate detail. The room is ‘decked’ with objects whose materiality crowds the page: they are ‘muslin’, ‘wicker’ and ‘zinc’. Yet Miriam also observes their textures, as if physically feeling the items in her mind. The words ‘limply frilled’, ‘chilly, pimpled’ and ‘battered’ suggest the sensation of touch; their surfaces are palpable to the reader. The phrase ‘chilly, pimpled’, usually collocated with skin, juxtaposes with the ‘white crockery’, whose smooth, shiny surface is here mottled and cold to the touch. Everything seems ‘dulled’ and ‘old’, ‘washed almost colourless’. Richardson repeats the words ‘limp’ and ‘limply’ as if emphasising the room’s lack of vigour or strength; Miss Holland’s shabby belongings, supposedly the backbone of the room, instead fill their digs with a ‘huge ugliness’. Unlike the bright, open sky that reflects in Miriam’s own bureau, Richardson’s chiaroscuro effect highlights the ‘faded’ and ‘colourless’ nature of Miss

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80 Ibid., p. 1.
81 Ibid., p. 5.
82 Richardson, The Trap, pp. 403-4.
83 Ibid., pp. 403, 440.
Holland’s belongings. Miriam attaches these values to Miss Holland herself, tarnishing her with the same brush as her domestic interior. Both are ‘filmed and dull’ as if coated in a thick layer of dust that Miriam, the anti-châtelaine, refuses to wipe away.

In both Miriam and Olivia’s minds, then, their roommates’ furniture and their roommate merge; both take on traits that leave the protagonists feeling imposed upon, watched and claustrophobic. Indeed, sitting in the ‘darkest corner’ of the sitting-room, Olivia imagines she is under surveillance. This domestic setting echoes the later spaces that her affair with Rollo forces her to inhabit; their affair takes place in a series of enclosed, temporary spaces. These spaces are unhomely, disconnected from any place or time, and, in describing their relationship, Lehmann reverses the earlier anthropomorphisation; this time it is Olivia and Rollo who become furniture that has to be ‘fitted in’, ‘arranged’ and ‘spaced out’ in the already ‘occupied’ rooms of each other’s lives.

Olivia becomes trapped by the interiors her affair inhabits. Fearing the watching eyes of Etty and her neighbours, this shifts from Etty’s flat to the temporary spaces of hotels, restaurants and friends’ houses. The affair transforms Olivia into a static ‘listening machine’, rendering her body ‘frozen’, ‘waiting’ for Rollo to visit in the early hours of the morning. Olivia waits in isolated rooms, looking down at the street outside. Unlike Richardson’s Miriam, for whom the window provides a ‘thread’ to real life, Olivia is separate, a static image in the window frame. Lehmann constructs the windows of her narrative as partitions, severing her protagonist from reality and enclosing her in ‘glass casing’ watching ‘pictures of London winter the other side of the glass’. As the novel progresses, this separation becomes entrapment.

Olivia reflects on the differences between her life and Rollo’s, charting their dissimilarity through the space she inhabits. For Olivia, they are isolating:

- those evenings alone in Etty’s box of a house, waging the unrewarding, everlasting war on grubbiness - rinsing out, mending stockings for to-morrow, washing brush and comb, cleaning stained linings of handbags […] Not the book taken up, the book laid down, aghast, because of the traffic’s sadness, which was time, lamenting and pouring away down all the streets for ever; because of the lives passing up and down outside with steps and voices of futile purpose and forlorn commotion:

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84 Ibid., p. 440.
85 Ibid., p. 440.
87 Ibid., p. 191.
draining out my life, out of the window, in their echoing wake, leaving me dry, stranded, sterile, bound solitary to the room’s minute respectability, the gas-fire, the cigarette, the awaited bell, the gramophone’s idiot companionship, the unyielding arm-chair, the narrow bed, the hot-water bottles I must fill, the sleep I must sleep. […]

Do I exist? Where is my place? What is this travesty I am fixed in? How do I get out? Is this, after all, what was always going to be?  

The reality of Olivia’s more Bohemian lifestyle is starkly contrasted to earlier portraits of the middle-class family home; Lehmann sets this description of Olivia’s precariousness during a dinner party at Rollo’s family home, a symbol of conformity and propriety in the novel. Olivia’s experience of domestic space is mapped onto the ‘everlasting war on grubbiness’, on the perpetual ‘rinsing out, mending stockings’ and ‘cleaning stained linings of handbags’. The acts through which she pictures her life reveal her economic status, yet, more than that, they emphasise her particular experience of living as a woman without a husband or a home. These worries about stockings and handbags, mending and cleaning, are worries that Rollo will never experience as a middle-class man. For Olivia, on the other hand, they become overwhelming.

Olivia watches as time pours away down the street and life drains ‘out of the window’. She is left ‘dry, stranded, sterile, bound solitary to the room’s minute respectability’. The window is a frame which detaches Olivia from reality; she watches on as actions occur around her, yet she is fixed in the room. Lehmann’s sentences have a rolling effect, her words ‘pouring’ and ‘draining’ across the page. Her short clauses are filled with domestic objects that seem caught in rotation, echoing Olivia’s own entrapment in the flat: ‘the unyielding arm-chair, the narrow bed, the hot-water bottles I must fill, the sleep I must sleep’. Her syntax is like a reel of film, the window a screen and Olivia the lone viewer trapped in an endless cycle of watching and waiting. As an independent, single woman in this period, then, these metaphorically and literally oppressive domestic spaces reflect her liminal social position. Unlike Miriam, who in her refusal to have her life dictated by men is trapped only by her economic reality, and who will choose to return to a boarding-house to be liberated from Miss Holland, Olivia’s trap is her sexual partner. Her dual Bohemian and middle-class ideals - existing as a mistress but wanting to be the wife - reassert a male authority that leaves Olivia subjugated, and Lehmann’s interiors are coded with these precarious social, sexual and economic realities.

This entrapment echoes Olivia’s later pregnancy, where her body becomes caught in the ‘female conspiracy’. ‘We’re all in the same boat,’ she muses, ‘all unfortunate women caught out after a little indiscretion’. Olivia sees women’s bodies as a threat: the ‘female, her body used, made fertile, turning, resentful, in hostile untouchability, from the

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90 Ibid., pp. 71-3.
91 Ibid., p. 227.
92 Ibid., p. 227.
male, the enemy victorious and malignant’.

Women’s fertility, in the hands of the ‘victorious and malignant’ male, threatens their sexual autonomy; all women are confined by the ‘common risks and consequences of female humanity’. Her pursuit of sexual autonomy is thwarted, then, because its actions fall outside dominant narratives of marriage and the family home: Olivia is unable to achieve freedom because it is always on a man’s terms.

Lehmann’s confining domestic interiors are aligned with the female body, then, through illness; both spaces become metaphorically infected, echoing Richardson’s descriptions of Flaxman Court. Lehmann writes:

To be alone, sick, in London in this dry, sterile, burnt-out end of summer, was to be abandoned in a pestilence-stricken town; was to live in a third-class waiting-room at a disused terminus among stains and smells, odds and ends of refuse and decay. She sank down and existed, without light, in the waste land. Sluggishly, reluctantly, the days ranged themselves one after the other into a routine. [...] Rouge, lipstick, powder... do what one might, it wasn’t one’s own face, it wasn’t a face at all, it was a shoddy construction, a bad disguise.

Olivia attempts to ‘disguise’ the evidence of her pregnancy that is painted on her body. ‘Rouge, lipstick, powder...’ she thinks. This robotic syntax echoes Olivia’s detachment from her body and from the city. Instead, her bedroom becomes a public space; Olivia compares Etty’s flat to a ‘third-class waiting-room’, a public space for waiting that is aligned with the mingling of bodies and the spread of germs. The scene is suffused with ‘smells’ and ‘waste’ and ‘decay’. Lehmann’s use of ‘pestilence’, with its allusions to the plague, infects Olivia’s body, the room and the city outside with connotations of contagion. Here, the windows are porous, letting smells and sounds and, more importantly, illness, penetrate. Both the ‘hateful burden’ of her pregnant body and the ‘waste land’ of her bedroom are contaminated with metaphorical illness. Her body is infected with an unwanted pregnancy caught, as it were, from Rollo. Her bedroom is polluted by the ‘smells’ and sounds and ‘refuse’ of a ‘pestilence-stricken’ London from which her changing (unmarried) body forces her to hide.

This porosity renders Olivia’s body and her domestic space insecure, both can be penetrated by ‘malignant’ substances’ and both are patrolled by society’s dominant, patriarchal economies. Olivia, existing outside traditional female gender roles, inhabits a liminal position in society, trapped in a double-bind between her desire for sexual

93 Ibid., p. 219.
94 Ibid., p. 226.
95 Ibid., p. 251.
96 Ibid., p. 251.
97 Ibid., p. 219.
autonomy and the role imposed upon her by society. Lehmann’s alignment of the body and the home, through the imagery of infection, suggests that the female body can be ‘bought, arrayed, displayed and enjoyed’ like an object in her home. These porous interior spaces reflect women’s precariousness at this time; dripping with allusions to illness, they suggest that women’s struggle for sexual autonomy is futile, blocked by the physical reality of the female body and the social distaste that Olivia’s rejection of the traditional family home elicits.

This noxious spatiality is also present in Richardson’s *The Tunnel*. Miriam, sitting reading the *British Medical Journal*, turned to the ‘last page of the index’: Woman. As we watch Miriam read the ‘five or six’ entries, Richardson’s prose becomes increasingly fragmented, plagued by unanswered questions and ellipsis and chopped into truculent paragraphs. Men can, Richardson writes, with ‘all the facts’ of modern medicine, ‘examine her’ (the female subject) at their ‘leisure’. Using italics, Richardson emphasises the ‘scientific facts’: women are ‘inferior; mentally, morally, intellectually, and physically’. Women are ‘creatures; half-human’.

The journal’s ‘hideous processes’, ‘frightful operations’ and ‘wonders of science’ evoke a psychosomatic response in Miriam: ‘every day a worse feeling of illness’. This psychological or bodily reaction, much like Lehmann’s contagious spaces, permeates the London landscape, which, ‘for women’, becomes ‘poisoned’. Richardson writes:

> Streets of great shuttered houses, their window boxes flowerless, all grey, cool and quiet and untroubled, on a day of cool rain; the restaurants were no longer crowded; torturing thought ranged there unsupported, goaded into madness, just a mad feverish swirling in the head, ranging out, driven back by the vacant eyes of little groups of people from the country.

London forms a sterile backdrop to Miriam’s sickness. The colourless, ‘flowerless’ window boxes and greyscale houses seem brittle, almost masculine, in their descriptions.

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100 Ibid., p. 220.
101 Ibid., p. 220.
102 Ibid., p. 220.
103 Ibid., pp. 220-1.
104 Ibid., p. 222.
105 Ibid., p. 221.
The vacant-eyed tourists swarming the city’s streets echo the ‘mad feverish swirling in the head’.

The ‘inferior’ woman, then, whose body is infected with illness and dissected on the pages of the *British Medical Journal*, juxtaposes with the anonymous ‘old man’ who ‘lives quite alone in a little gas-lit lodging’. Miriam identifies with this solitary man, able to earn enough money for his own independence. Polysyndeton renders her syntax expansive, like the possibilities of a life as a man with money. Miriam thinks: ‘He can live like that with nothing to do but read and think and roam about, because he has money’. Like Virginia Woolf, then, who, upon gaining the right to vote and five hundred pounds a year at about the same time, writes that the money seemed ‘infinitely’ more important, Richardson is explicit in stating that it is economic instability, as well as gender, that renders the single, independent and perhaps Bohemian life inaccessible to women.

Reading these two novels together - Richardson’s set before World War I, Lehmann’s set after - we would expect to see some form of progression for their female protagonists: evidence of women gaining more independence or autonomy. Despite being set thirty years apart, and with Lehmann’s protagonist several years older than Richardson’s, in actuality, these novels work against this. Through this textual collocation, I wanted to tease out the interrupted or non-linear progression of female independence, exploring how both authors depict different forms of autonomy (or lack of). Richardson and Lehmann both suggest that an unorthodox or Bohemian lifestyle is heavily gendered, posing more risk for a woman due to her sexual, social and economic position, as well as her bodily reality. Yet Miriam works around these risks. Not reliant on men and with no real familial ties, she lives a frugal life of financial independence, alternative in some ways but also resolutely ordinary in others. In contrast, Olivia straddles the boundary between her Bohemian London friends and middle-class upbringing, pulled in opposite directions by both. Her family’s expectations of marriage and conformity weigh on her heavily. Despite her Bohemian lifestyle, and perhaps because of her traditional family, Olivia finds security based on men. Yet Lehmann’s collection of (figuratively) impotent men - unavailable, dying or unable to take care of their wives - reveal this to be an unstable form of security. Olivia’s reliance on men thwarts her independence, rendering her less autonomous than her counterpart thirty years earlier.

Miriam does gain a form of independence in *The Trap*; after this experiment in shared living, she moves back into Mrs Bailey’s boarding-house (documented in the 1931 chapter *Dawn’s Left Hand*) regaining, to some extent, the privacy stolen by Miss Holland. She returns to that halcyon time of ‘no interruption, no one watching or speculating or treating one in some particular way that had to be met’.

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106 Ibid., pp. 220, 223.
107 Ibid., p. 223.
then, becomes a container for this psychological process. Miriam’s time in the shared digs allowed her to understand herself and her needs better, and, although the architectural and psychological reality of the rooms were claustrophobic, the lasting effects move Miriam towards greater autonomy and self-actualisation.

Defying dominant structures of domestic space in an attempt to find economic independence and sexual autonomy, Miriam’s ‘man’s mind’ and Olivia’s unmarried, pregnant body both exist outside of the traditional gender roles available to women at this time. When Miriam looks across at the flat across the courtyard, imagining it filled with artistic potential, Richardson is writing with the knowledge that it belongs to W. B. Yeats. Idolised by Miriam, this flat contrasts so sharply to her own claustrophobic digs because it is occupied not by ‘bachelor women’ but by simply ‘a bachelor’, with all the freedom that his position, as simply ‘a bachelor’, entails. What Richardson and Lehmann’s novels reveal, then, is that the independent, single man living a Bohemian life can resist the traditional family home, living like W. B. Yeats in ‘artistic’ lodgings. For women, however, placing themselves outside the prescribed gender roles poses a threat, be that on the body (through unwanted pregnancy) or on the mind (through the risk of economic instability and the need for a room of one’s own in which to write). For both Richardson and Lehmann, it is clear that living in unorthodox domestic spaces reflects women’s social, sexual and economic position, in that, while it holds a liberatory potential, these alternative homes are more often than not precarious, claustrophobic and even dangerous.

110 Richardson, The Trap, p. 479.
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“The Devil is in the Kitchen: Transforming Domestic Space into Heretical Space in Sixteenth Century Venice” by Julie Fox-Horton, East Tennessee State University

The Devil is in the Kitchen: Transforming Domestic Space into Heretical Space in Sixteenth Century Venice

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Because of the lack of available sources, modern scholars often struggle to understand the spatial qualities of the homes of the laboring popolani of Venice in the early modern period. The frequency with which people changed residences and the variable lengths of their residency only exacerbates the difficulty. Given that the vast majority of people did not own their homes, laborers living in early modern Venice could change neighborhoods or move residences with relative ease. Trial dossiers of those accused of witchcraft before the Holy Office in the sixteenth century suggests that the home in early modern Venice was more than simply a private space where the laboring popolani sought safety from the elements. Using witness testimony and an evaluation of the use of domestic space, new dimensions in the understanding and uses of the home in early modern Venice reveal that the definition of domestic space includes practices that often involve sacred and heretical ritual. Witnesses, when describing a magical performance to the tribunal, often reveal a wealth of information about what went on within the confines of domestic space and some of the uses, and abuses, of domestic space. By repurposing common household items and spaces through the use of supernatural entities and heterodox practices, the defendants brought before the tribunal often challenged the Venetian secular and ecclesiastical authorities. The defendants’ utilization and the designation of domestic space created suspicion not only among neighbors but also the Inquisition. In order to understand this use and transformation of domestic space those suspected of witchcraft created, it is important to realize the general nature of domestic space in the sixteenth century.

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Theorizing Domestic Space

For the last several decades, scholars have sought to distinguish between a house and a home. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezai offer a functional summary of domestic space writing that the ‘history of the house is the history of the dialectic that emerges between the two imperatives of shelter and identity’.\(^2\) Traditionally defined, the house is the physical, built structure categorized as ‘shelter’. As the more complex of the two concepts, the home, although defined in part by its material contents, is made distinguishable from a house because of the complexity of the emotional, or psychic, connections occurring between the space and its inhabitants. Themes that emerge from recent scholarship tend to focus on the material contents of the home, the physical structure of the house, the composition of the household, the personal attachment to the home that people often develop, and issues of social class and gender. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber contends that the home, or casa, in the early modern period was both a physical dwelling for people, and a representation of the ancestry of the generations that lived within the home.\(^3\) Since most early modern homes contained multi-generational families, homes could also serve as a genealogical map.\(^4\) Therefore, domestic space may be considered a mélange of house and home and the negotiation that occurs between the space and the inhabitants.\(^5\)

A common point of discussion in recent studies, the stratification of the social classes, frames much of the social and economic structure of the early modern household.\(^6\) Regardless of class, the primary purposes of the home for all social classes was, and still is, to provide protection from the elements and to serve as a place of refuge and safety from the outside world. More in-depth study of the home, however, reveals the importance of its function as a place, whether for entertaining guests, engaging in private religious devotion, or conducting business.\(^7\) Yet, scholarship remains focused predominately on

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\(^3\) C. Klapisch-Zuber, Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy (Chicago, 1985), p. 117.


\(^7\) For studies centered on domestic space and devotion see, D. Webb, ‘Domestic Space and Devotion in the Middle Ages,’ in A. Spicer and S. Hamilton (eds.), Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (Burlington, 2005); A. Ricketts, C. Gapper, and C. Knight, ‘Designing for Protestant Worship: the Private Chapels of the Cecil Family’, in A. Spicer and S. Hamilton (eds.), Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (Burlington, 2005), p. 115. Ricketts and her colleagues write about the prevalence of private chapels in England before and after the Protestant Reformation writing that, ‘Before the Reformation private chapels were common and might be consecrated, thus permitting the celebration of the sacraments, though it was also possible for Mass to be celebrated in such unconsecrated places by episcopal license. After the
the upper class of early modern Venetian society, primarily due to the availability of primary sources for this patrician class. For instance, the lavish artwork that adorned many of the homes of the upper classes provides useful evidentiary material. Wills and other notary documents, which survive in abundance, contain information about the contents and the bequests from the homes of the Venetian noble class. Using these materials, scholars often examine the significance of artwork, architectural design, and the symbolic meaning of material possessions within the early modern home. Margaret Morse, in her article on the visual and material culture of the homes of the patrician and artisan classes, writes that ‘the kinds of objects and images that Venetians commonly kept in their everyday spaces, and their functions, were often particular to the geographic, economic, and religious climate’ during the Renaissance. Religious objects also have a profound influence on the domestic space of the Venetian home, which is often portrayed as a virtuous and moral place where individuals and families could worship in the Christian tradition within their own private space. Using ‘pious objects, many of them blessed and sanctioned by the Church’, to decorate their homes, served as one means through which early modern Venetian inhabitants could prove devotion.

In opposition to these themes of the use of early modern domestic space, homes of the laboring popolani reveal additional dimensions to the use of domestic space in Venice. Defining domestic space remains a difficult task for scholars because there are many dimensions and unusual circumstances that often interfere with standardizing the term. The Inquisition operating in Venice in the early modern period also faced this problem, especially when a precise definition was needed in cases of witchcraft and superstition. The variety of defendants and circumstances among the trials made Reformation, consecration appears to have ceased, for there are no records of private chapels being consecrated during the Elizabethan period.

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9 In many instances, scholars have available: formal portraits, legal documents, such as wills, inventories, diaries. For an overview of poor and poverty in early modern Europe in general see, R. Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 62-71. Jütte devotes considerable time to discussing the domestic conditions of those that lived in extreme poverty.


11 For sources that use wills to understand the domestic space see, A. Smith, ‘Gender, Ownership and Domestic Space: Inventories and Family Archives in Renaissance Verona’, *Renaissance Studies*, 12 (1998), pp. 375-391.


14 Ibid., p. 158.
developing a narrow definition difficult. However, without witness testimony, ascertaining
unorthodox practices in ordinary spaces, such as the home, would be near impossible for
the Inquisition because during a walk-through of the home of the accused many objects
and spaces used for heterodox beliefs and practices would appear to be so ordinary as to
warrant little, if any, suspicion. The same type of difficulty with determining domestic
space was also an issue in establishing misuse of sacred space.

Contrary to the distinctive aspects that visibly mark a church as a sacred space,
domestic space as a sacred space was more difficult to discern. Considering the home as
a type of sacred space is not a novel concept. Mircea Eliade views the home as *imago
mundi* as ‘it is symbolically situated at the center of the world’ in the eyes of an
individual. The sacred nature of the home is a personal universe that the inhabitant
creates for themselves. Yet, while churches and other institutions possess distinctive
aspects that visibly marked them as sacred space, homes lack such visual features, which,
in turn, can impede individuals’ abilities to identify those spaces as sacred. Being able to
identify the sacred nature of Venetian spaces was not the issue for the Inquisition and
neighbors *per se*, but rather, it was the unorthodox nature of the heresy and therefore the
unconventional spatial markers that people were not able to read. The fear derived from
the possibility of unidentifiable markers, which could exist anywhere, indicates a
frightening alternative meaning to these Venetian spaces.

When considering sacred space, altars and private chapels tend to come to mind; however, dimensions other than physical structures also give space sacred meaning. Individuals often designate a space as sacred through ritual or specific behavior within the space. Previous scholarship tends to focus on religious, devotional space in relation to the homes of the upper classes. In the case of early modern Venice, the homes of the laboring *popolani* were also imbued with sacred meaning, and had places reserved for such practices. Jeanne Nuechterlein believes that most late medieval and Renaissance homes and castles contain some type of space reserved specifically for religious devotion. Though

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15 S. Hamilton and A. Spicer, ‘Defining the Holy: the Delineation of Sacred Space’, in A. Spicer and S. Hamilton (eds.), *Defining the Holy, Sacred Space in the Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, 2005), p. 6. Hamilton and Spicer write that churches and cathedrals are typically the most obvious places to characterize as sacred space because ‘a church’s external appearance, and its place in the landscape, often helped distinguish it from the surrounding buildings and pointed to its status as a sacred site’.


17 Ibid., p. 56.

18 The traditional home of the working class is difficult to standardize, primarily due to occupation and marital status. Chojnacka, *Working Women of Early Modern Venice*, pp. 1-25, in her chapter on residence, offers brief scenarios regarding the domestic space of the working class. For example, the bride, in a newly married couple, would be given several items from her parents. Many of the items were ‘light’ and ‘portable’, as Chojnacka describes them, and additionally, bedding and clothing (ibid., p. 5). Women that worked as servants often lived within the home where they worked. These women, the majority of whom were *nubile*, typically ‘shared a bed’ with other servants and often had very little possessions (ibid., p. 22). This indicates that, although women could have larger items, and even accumulate larger items within their homes, many of these possessions were not too large, due to the frequency of movement. Therefore, religious devotional items would typically be small and easy to transport.
common additions in wealthier homes, these ‘non-consecrated religious spaces’ are ‘not reserved to the nobility or the extremely wealthy alone’.\(^{19}\) One of the essential differences between the religious devotional space of a wealthy and a working class person’s home is the physical size of the space. According to Nuechterlein, the areas reserved for religious devotion in the homes of working people amount to little more than a corner or a small area in a room, rather than an entire room devoted to worship. As witness testimony reveals in trials before the Inquisition, ordinary space, like a fireplace, could serve as a makeshift altar. Repurposing ordinary domestic space was a common element in witchcraft practices in early modern Venice, and the use of ordinary spaces, such as the fireplace, the washroom, referred to throughout as the bathroom, or even the walls of a room, was just one of the aspects that makes witness testimony essential for the Inquisition when determining culpability.

**Transforming Domestic Space into Heretical Space**

Three trials in particular focus on the transformation of ordinary, domestic space into non-traditional sacred space through ritual: the trials of Maddalena Bradamonte (1584), Lorenza Furlana (1584), and Elizabetta (1587).\(^{20}\) Maddalena Bradamonte, bought before the tribunal in 1584 after Valerio Fasennino denounced her, used the fireplace within her home as an essential element in her witchcraft practices. In order to transform the fireplace for her practice, Maddalena enacted a ritual involving candles, another seemingly innocuous element of the home. While explaining Maddalena’s wrongdoings to the tribunal, Valerio stated that she often bought candles, meant for the person that she intended to bewitch and also for the ‘Grande Diavolo’ who was supposed to control the bewitched person. Valerio also testified that the fireplace, or the hearth, acted as a makeshift altar for Maddalena during the bewitching process. After using the fireplace to light the candles, Maddalena placed religious images upon the mantle of the fireplace as part of her ritual.\(^{21}\) Maddalena’s activities were deemed so diabolical that Valerio referred to her in his testimony as ‘the most evil and wicked woman who is alive today’.\(^{22}\)

Transforming the ordinary space of a fireplace, meant to provide warmth and fire for cooking, into a space for the practice of witchcraft, demonstrates not only the repurposing of space for ritual, but also the difficulty for authorities when determining misuse of space.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{20}\) In order to keep the names of the accused clear, I include the date of the trial in parentheses when necessary.

\(^{21}\) ‘Et prima, come compra o fa comprar una certa quantità di candelle in nome di colui che ella intenda stregare et fatturare, et in nome similmente del Grande Diavolo, c’habbi dominio e potestà sopra tal persona...quai candele havendo accese sotto il suo camino... (p. 88)...detta imagine al camino’ (p. 89), M. Milani, ed., *Streghe e diavoli nei processi del S. Uffizio: Venezia 1554-1587* (Bassano del Grappa, 1994), ‘Maddalena Bradamonte’, pp. 88-89.

\(^{22}\) ‘Io Valerio Fasennino bolognese, mosso da zelo di charità, acciò che tanta iniquità non resti senza colpa, comparer riverentemente avanti il suo Santissimo Office et denonciar una certa Maddalena Bradamonte, sta a S. Paternian per la più iniqua et scelerata donna c’hoggi di viva’. Ibid., p. 88.

In addition to proving that the fireplace was a location for making an altar for ritual, the trial of Lorenza Furlana (1584) demonstrates that the bathroom could serve as a type of sacred space within the home for the practice of witchcraft. Moreover, Lorenza’s trial reveals that using domestic space for the purpose of sacred ritual was not always confined to the home of the practitioner; a person could transform the homes of others for such sacred practice. In 1584, Lorenzo Domenego claimed in a letter of denunciation presented to the Holy Office that Lorenza practiced witchcraft by throwing, or casting beans, and her delinquent behavior posed a great threat to their community of San Moisè, in the *sestiere* of San Marco. Cecilia, a fellow resident of the neighborhood of San Moisè, and witness in the trial against Lorenza, indicated that she was well acquainted with the accused, and, when asked about the nature of their relationship, she responded that she had known the defendant for about ten or twelve years. Although Cecilia was unaware of Lorenza’s bean casting, she offered the tribunal a much more detailed account of Lorenza’s practice of witchcraft than the original denunciation by Lorenzo. Cecilia, in her testimony, recalled a time that Lorenza had visited the home of Paula, whose husband was a cobbler. Admitting to the tribunal that she was an actual witness to Lorenza’s practices, Cecilia testified that she saw the accused perform one of her practices within Paula’s bathroom. Using the ordinary space of the bathroom and common items, Lorenza managed to repurpose an ordinary domestic space for the purpose of conducting her ceremony. According to Cecilia, Lorenza’s ritual began with her measuring the bathroom ‘with reverence’ with a needle stuck in the center of some type of cover. After Lorenza finished her ritual in the bathroom, she went into the kitchen where, under the hood of the fireplace, she began to conjure demons. After invoking the demons, Lorenza then took a broom and swept the floor in the pattern of a cross. After she finished making the image

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24 ‘Comparo davanti a questo Santissimo Tribunal io Lorenzo q. Domenego de Lisandro et per non voler consenter alle cosse che sono contra la divina maestà et in dispreggio delle sue santissime leggi denuncio contra de una Lorenza furlana, la quale non havendo rispetto alla maestà de Iddio né alle sue santè leggi continuants butta fave et altre strigarie diaboliche, per le quale lì homini cascano nelli errori’. Milani, *Streghe e diavoli*, ‘Lorenza Furlana’, pp. 133-34.


26 ‘Interrogata se lei sa cosa alcna dela ditta Lorenza che concerna la nostra santa fede catholica circa el butar fave o altro; respondit: Mi non so né ho inteso a dir che la ditta Lorenza habia butado fave’. Ibid., pp. 134-35.

27 ‘So ben questo che ’l puol esser de 3 anni in circa che me inbatì andar a casa de una vesina che sta là in contrà de San Moysé, la qual ha nome Paula mogier de Gasparo zavater come la dise essa’. Ibid., p. 135.

28 ‘et visti questi Lorenza che giera là da essa et spanava con reverentia el destro indrio e inanzi con un aguio ficado in mezzo del coverchio’. Ibid.
of the cross on the floor, she took the broom and returned it to the corner of the kitchen.\textsuperscript{29} Given that Lorenza used innocuous items in her ritual, such as a broom and the floor, the Inquisition would have a difficult time determining the use of these items for heterodox practices if it merely saw them in the home. By themselves, the bathroom, the fireplace, the broom, and the floor were non-threatening and ordinary, but by repurposing their uses for heretical practices, the defendants were causing alarm for the Inquisition, which means witness testimony was paramount for determining misuse. Like many of the accused, Lorenza repurposed the bathroom and kitchen into sacred spaces within the home for the purpose of heretical ritual. Using the kitchen as a sacred space was not as farfetched as it seems, because the fireplace and the hearth were typically located there in an early modern Venetian home.\textsuperscript{30} Thus, the fireplace served as an important element in the practice of conjuration, perhaps due to the chimney, which offered access to the outside.

In addition to the fireplace and the chimney, the walls of the home could also be transformed by those accused of witchcraft for heretical use, as demonstrated in the trial of Elisabetta, which began in the summer of 1587.\textsuperscript{31} Her denouncer, Isabella, appeared before the tribunal on 26 June 1587 to confess that she learned some witchcraft from lady Betta for the purpose of winning the heart and the affections of a young man.\textsuperscript{32} The first time, Isabella went to the home of the said Betta with her mother, Agnola, to learn a love spell; the next time, Betta came to Isabella’s home and taught her how to cast beans.\textsuperscript{33} Betta also teaches Isabella a spell requiring that the fingers be placed upon a wall while an incantation is recited.\textsuperscript{34} While discussing this particular conjuration, called \textit{spannar il muro}, Ruth Martin explains that each of the fingers laid upon the wall are intended to

\textsuperscript{29} ‘Et come la hebbe compido de far questo, la tolse una schova et scomenzò a scovar tutti i quattro cantoni in crose, et poi se la strassinò drio et la lasso in un canton de quella cusina’. Milani, \textit{Streghe e diavoli}, ‘Lorenza Furlana’, p. 135.


\textsuperscript{31} Elisabetta is referred to as Betta by witnesses throughout her trial; therefore, I refer to her as Betta and Elisabetta as the witnesses dictate.


\textsuperscript{34} ‘Di più, m’ha insegnato di tore un puoco di sale et spannare il muro. Et diceva: Sì come io spano questo muro così io spanno il cuore et la mente di quel tale perché venga da me. Et questo a nome del Diavolo. Et poi buttava questo sale per la strada o sul camino, et diceva: Tio’, che ti pago. Ménamelo qua’. Ibid., p. 219.
represent a particular devil.\textsuperscript{35} Another element to this particular conjuration required salt and demonstrated the use of the saltcellar in the performance of certain sacred, albeit heretical, rituals. The same ritual requiring the placing of hands upon the wall could also be performed by placing hands upon a chimney. Using ordinary salt to complete her practice, Elisabetta is able to transform ordinary domestic space, and ordinary household items for purposes that suited the needs of the performance.\textsuperscript{36} According to Martin, the practitioner threw the salt into the fireplace in order that the devils could fly away through the chimney to reach the person for whom the conjuration was intended.\textsuperscript{37}

**Repurposing Household Items for Heretical Purposes**

While the Inquisition expressed concern over the use of ordinary spaces and objects for heterodox practices, it appears that inhabitants’ repurposing of religious space and items were even more problematic than initially determined. Frequently, people decorate spaces reserved for sacred ritual with items deemed religious. Philip Mattox, in his article on sacral space within palaces in Renaissance Florence, writes, ‘Sacral space within the domestic interior could well manifest itself simply as a dedicated devotional area, with candles, holy images, a crucifix, and holy water vessels’.\textsuperscript{38} The witness testimonies from the trials of the Holy Office demonstrate that the homes of the laboring popolani in early modern Venice often contain items of religious devotion similar to those Mattox describes; these spaces and items, however, are not always used for orthodox purposes.

The possession of sacred items by ordinary people was no cause for alarm in early modern Venice. David Gentilcore concludes that the majority of early modern homes ‘would have contained religious articles’, which were ‘meant to protect the house and household from harm, deriving their power from interaction with the sacred’.\textsuperscript{39} Since these items were imbued with ‘sacred power’, Gentilcore notes the Inquisition did not always approve of the uses to which ordinary people put them.\textsuperscript{40} The denunciation of Donna Fior in August of 1554 demonstrates the inverted use of such sacred items for heretical purposes.\textsuperscript{41} According to the denunciation, Donna Fior made ‘the profession of conjuration’ with ‘an image of our lady and with a lit candle’.\textsuperscript{42} Images or statues of saints were believed to give ‘a direct link to the saints themselves’ but, as Gentilcore states, women thought to have been practicing ‘satanic witchcraft were known to despise them’.\textsuperscript{43} Donna Fior made use of sacred images for more sinister witchcraft than irreverence for the saint. In testimony given on 7 May 1556, the witness claimed that Donna Fior used a sacred image and lit candles to perform the spell of ‘far martello’, or to give the

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\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 101.


\textsuperscript{42} ‘Lei fa profession di scongiurar una imagine de una nostra dona co(n) una candela inpizada’. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{43} Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*, p. 100.
The use of sacred images, such as the one of Our Lady that Donna Fior used, demonstrates another challenge to the issue of repurposing items, not only to the ecclesiastical authority of the church, but also to the sacred power that the saint in the image holds. Defying the ecclesiastical authorities by repurposing images of saints, however, was not the only misuse of sacred items.

The trial of Donna Fior introduces the notion that a person accused of witchcraft found in possession of sacred items could pose a potential threat to orthodoxy. This was especially true if the accused had procured the items in secret, as demonstrated in the trial of nineteen-year-old Giulia. Giulia appeared before the tribunal 24 August 1584. After accusing Giulia of conjuration, neighbors also called into question the young woman’s character. According to the trial dossier, Giulia resided in the parish of San Maurizio on the street of San Vio in the *sestiere* of San Marco, but when Giulia gave her testimony to the tribunal, she revealed that she had not been to San Maurizio, where she lived in the home of Antonio Bono the Greek, for two or three months. Giulia’s defense testimony begins with her telling of an altar boy who came to her house one day; she does not know his name, but she guessed that he was between twelve and fifteen years of age. The son of a boatman, the young boy lived in the parish of San Moisè. Given that Giulia did not offer the tribunal the reason for the visit from the altar boy, he may have come to visit Antonio or another person residing within the home. Regardless of the impetus for his arrival, Giulia planned to benefit from his visit. She asked him for some of the oil from his Confirmation, which was an essential element in a magical practice she was attempting. Lady Lucia told Giulia that, taking the blessed oil and anointing herself on the lips and under the eyes would prevent two lovers from leaving one another. Giulia’s plan was to conduct the love spell with the oil in order to maintain her love affair with Antonio Bono.

Giulia’s use of blessed oil certainly constituted an inverted use of sacred items, an action of which the ecclesiastical authorities most certainly would not approve. Based

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44 ‘una in magine pinta in chartta et ivi chon una chandelle appiciatta dice molitte parole pianamentte che non se fano et cio fa ad effetto de far marttello’. ‘Donna Fior da S. Barnaba’, ASV, SU b. 12, fasc. 24 folio 5.


47 ‘Padre, son da doi o 3 mesi incirca che essendo io a Santo Mauritio, dove che io habitava in casa del signor Antonio Bono grecco’. Ibid.

48 ‘qui in questa città vene un giorno in casa mia un zaghetto, di cui non so il nome ma sta per stanza a San Moisè dalla speciaria della Borsa et officio a Santa Maria Zobenigo, è filio d’un barcharolo, quale è scarmo e barba negra, di iusta statura, et ello può havere da 12 o 15 anni incirca’. Ibid.


50 ‘perché m’era stato insegnato che è bono da farsi voler bene, che non si può mai lassare li morose, cioè ungendosi con detto olio le labra della bocca, et le parti di sotto dali tutti doi li occhi; et questo me lo disse una Madonna Lucia, qual sta a San Mauricio al traghetto et è maritata’. Milani, *Streghe e diavoli*, ‘Giulia’, p. 118.

on Giulia’s testimony, however, it appears she truly did not understand the gravity of her acts involving the blessed oil, although tone was not expressly conveyed in the recorded account. A later section of the trial transcript reveals that Giulia believed she held supernatural abilities and was capable of finding lost items with the help of a carafe of holy water. In her own testimony, Giulia stated that below the carafe, ‘there was a blessed gold wedding ring’. During the ritual, while kneeling and holding a candle, Giulia recited the following statement: ‘White Angel, Holy Angel, for your holiness and my virginity let me see truly and the truth, who owned these things that were found’. The trial of Giulia reveals the abuse of the holy objects within the confines of the home, but also brings into question the awareness of the practitioner and their understanding of their role in performing such heterodox acts.

**Transforming Domestic Devotional Space**

In addition to repurposing religious items, individuals brought before the Inquisition also converted sacred space to suit the needs of their heterodox practices. The trial of Diana Passarina, brought before the Holy Office of Venice in the summer of 1586, reveals that private devotional space within the home was not always used for traditional Christian piety. These types of sacred space could also be repurposed for heretical practices. Although Diana used her private devotional space for practices she considered sacred, the Holy Office considered those same practices unorthodox. Accused of ‘predicting the future’ with the assistance of her personal demon, Arcan, Diana challenged the traditional use of private religious devotional space by exploiting a tabernacle for the conjuring of a supernatural entity. Margarita, the wife of a carder, who lived in the parish of San Tomà, in the *sestiere* of San Polo, denounced Diana to the Holy Office. At the time of her trial, Diana lived in the parish of San Pantalon, in the *sestiere* of Dorsoduro, which is not far on foot.

In her testimony, Margarita admitted to the tribunal that she was not a personal acquaintance or a neighbor of Diana. Yet, Margarita’s denunciation of Diana, which was based on hearsay, was sufficiently compelling to warrant the tribunal’s pursuit of further witness testimony. Margarita’s information regarding Diana originated from Orsa, a close

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52 ‘respondit: Io mi raccordo essendo putta pizzennina mi ingenochiai, come mi fu insegnato, per ritrovare una cosa rubata, et vi era una ingestara piena d’acqua santa, et sotto al fondo del’ingestara vi era una vera benedetta d’oro, che fosse d’una donna maridata’. Milani, *Streghe e diavoli*, ‘Giulia’, p. 120.

53 ‘et io teneva una candela benedetta ardente in mano, et io stave in zenochion et diceva: Angelo biancho, Angelo santo, per la tua santità et la mia virginità fammi vedere il vero e la verità, chi ha hauto quelle robbe trovate...’ Ibid.


55 The name of the demon that Diana kept in her cup is spelled several different ways throughout the trial. I use the spelling ‘Arcan’ for clarity and consistency.

neighbor of the accused, and widow of a neighborhood pharmacist. As Margarita told her story to the tribunal she revealed that Orsa had told her that Diana was the ‘greatest witch in Venice’ and that she kept a chalice made of crystal, inside of which there was a ring where Diana kept the demon, Arcan, confined. Margarita’s testimony also told that Diana had a sort of tabernacle inside her home that she used for her conjurations. The tabernacle served as a designated sacred space within which Diana would keep the sacred items she used for conjuration. As divulged later in the testimony of the witness Ursula, Diana kept the tabernacle lit, indicating that she maintained reverence for its contents. Unlike most early modern representations of such sacred spaces, which exalted a saint or a Christian-based sacred entity, such as the Virgin Mary or Jesus, Diana’s astrologically themed tabernacle housed the chalice containing the demon on which Diana called for her heretical performances.

Often, as was the case with the misuse and repurposing of sacred items, those accused of witchcraft conjured devils for the purpose of completing the heretical ritual. As discussed, a common belief held in the early modern period was that those accused of witchcraft were in league with the Devil. However, proving the presence of the Devil, or some type of supernatural entity, was difficult since it was nearly impossible to witness the entity in the flesh. Although simply conferring with the Devil was unorthodox, using a demonic presence in tandem with sacred items and within spaces repurposed for sacred use compounded the offense the accused were charged with committing. Another commonly held belief in early modern Europe was that witches who intended to do harm

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57 ‘Io intesi sto genaro prossimo passato da donna Orsa...la qual sta alla crusera di San Pantalone, et ch’è la maggior striga che sia in Venetia’. Milani, Streghe e diavoli, Ibid., p. 192.
58 Orsa’s, or Ursula as she is named when she testified herself, testimony began on 19 July 1586. ‘Domina Ursula filia quondam Laurentii caristiari de Muriano et relictà Ioannis Antonii aromatharii ad insigne Trium Vexilorum’. Ibid., p. 197.
59 ‘che l’ha un gotto di cristallo di montagna et dentro li è un anello con un spirit, che ha nome Arcamh’. Ibid., p. 192.
received their power from the Devil, whether by choice or by force from Satan himself.  

Robert Rowland claims that the trial of the *benandanti* in front of the Venetian Inquisition led to the western European belief that ‘the witch’s power to do harm’ meant ‘that by placing herself, even implicitly, in the service of the devil she had renounced allegiance to God and to the Church and had placed herself outside and against Christian society’.  

As mentioned, Diana kept her personal demon, Arcan, confined within a chalice she kept in her private, devotional tabernacle. Margarita, a witness in the trial, described how Diana used her demon for the purpose of communicating with her deceased brother. In one instance, when Diana was performing her conjuration ritual, a knock at the door signaled the arrival of a young man in foreign dress. When Diana opened the door to the young man, he gave her a letter that was apparently from her brother. Margarita testified that ‘the young man that brought the letter was a devil’. Margarita’s testimony indicated that Diana created sacred space within her own home for personal use and not for performing diabolical acts against others, but intention was difficult to discern. It is apparent, however, that Diana performed rituals that used demonic forces and that she had transformed a traditionally sacred space within her home into a place for the practice of her conjurations. The presence of devils and demons appear to be common in the trials of those accused of witchcraft. As demonstrated in the trial of Lucia Furlana (1582), drawing on and keeping supernatural entities within the confines of domestic sacred space proves that these women were bold in their challenges to orthodoxy. Lucia was anonymously denounced to the Holy Office in a letter presented to the tribunal in June of 1582. Aside from claiming that Lucia lived an inappropriate life free from the fear of Holy Laws, the denunciation also claimed that she could see the future with the help of the devil,  

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Buranello.\textsuperscript{66} Angelica, another witness in the trial, testified that Lucia communicated with her spirit Buranello in a deep voice in order to fulfill her visions.\textsuperscript{67}

The explicit details given by witnesses in the trials of Diana and Lucia were certainly alarming for the Inquisition. Not only did witnesses testify that these two women were in league with demons, but they kept these demons in their homes, and they referred to them by specific names, posing an additional dimension to their threat to the community and further problems for authorities. Once again, if authorities were to visit the homes of these women, the tabernacle would appear innocuous and their demons would remain unseen, harnessed in their containers, which would also appear ordinary.

**Entertaining the Devil**

Several of the trials examined demonstrate the presence of a supernatural entity within domestic space. Accusing Maddalena Braddamonte (1584) of being in league with the Devil, in his denunciation to the tribunal, Valerio stated that Maddalena used her home for the purpose of sacred ritual and summoning the presence of the Devil, and that through her ‘diabolical commerce’ she was a most heretical woman.\textsuperscript{68} Lorenza Furlana (1584), according to the witness Cecilia, also conjured devils as part of her heretical practices. Although Cecilia testified that she could not hear specifically what Lorenza said in front of the fireplace because she was speaking in such a low voice, she was sure that Lorenza had called upon devils and demons as part of her ritual.\textsuperscript{69} Finally, the trial of Elisabetta (1587) contained elements of the presence of a supernatural entity, specifically devils. As previously mentioned, Elisabetta taught Isabella a spell, called *spannar il muro*, that required that the fingers be placed upon a wall while reciting an incantation.\textsuperscript{70}

The only male accused of witchcraft used for this research also exploited supernatural forces. Ruggero (1582) the illuminator was in love with the young Anzola Azzalina, who had managed to earn quite a reputation within the neighborhood of San Moisè in the* sestiere* of San Marco, for her morally lax lifestyle. Ruggero was denounced to the Holy Office in 1582 under suspicion of bewitching Anzola, a young widow, and causing her to fall ill. According to the testimony, Ruggero bewitched Anzola using a book

\textsuperscript{66} ‘di scongiurar diavoli fingendo con sue chimere et pensamenti chiamarne uno per nome Buranello’. Milani, *Streghe e diavoli*, ‘Lucia Furlana’, p. 46.


\textsuperscript{68} ‘Ove per non saper distintamente il procedure suo in tal diabolico negotio, ne dirò in parte tal cose, che anno stupire’. Milani, *Streghe e diavoli*, ‘Maddalena Braddamonte’, p. 88.

\textsuperscript{69} ‘Et come lei hebbe compito questo spanar l’andé sotto la nappa del camin della cusina et senti che la sconzurava i squartai, ma la parlava piana che non possi ben sentir, et diseva diavoli, la sconzurava di demonii’. Milani, *Streghe e diavoli*, ‘Lorenza Furlana’, p. 135.

of demonology. Paula, a witness in the trial against Ruggero, claimed that Anzola had lived with Ruggero in his house and that they were lovers. After a short period, Anzola left Ruggero’s home and went to stay in the home of Pasqualina, where she became ill. In what appears to be an attempt to draw his lost love closer to him, Ruggero performed rituals within the confines of his home in order to scare Anzola into submission. The tribunal then questioned the witness Adriana, who was asked whether or not she knew if Ruggero had a book or any other items in his hands at the time that he conducted this ritual; she responded yes, he had a wooden baton and a book of demonology in his home. Paula also added that Ruggero had threatened Anzola with his powers of conjuration by asking her if she wanted him to prove his ability by showing her the devils that were in Hell. Although Ruggero did not actually produce a supernatural entity, his threat was believed to have been powerful enough to scare Anzola into fleeing the home. Ruggero’s taunts and possession of a book of demonology and the wand of a necromancer, were menacing both to the person of Anzola and to the orthodoxy of the church. As expressed by witness testimony, members of the neighborhood were aware of the reputation of Anzola and the treatment she received at the hands of Ruggero.

As a focal point within the community, the home was under continual scrutiny from both the neighbors and the Inquisition. Witnesses brought before the tribunal often detailed the place of the home within the neighborhood and the reputation of the inhabitant of that space. In the trials discussed, defendants used domestic space for purposes and actions that the Inquisition deemed suspect and often heretical, but that the inhabitant, or in this case the defendant, considered sacred. Through heretical ritual, those accused of practicing witchcraft were able to transform ordinary domestic space into heretical space through the practice of witchcraft, superstitious deeds, and other heterodox beliefs. The gravity of these rituals varied greatly from simple love magic rituals to malicious attempts to harm a person or to cause them to fall ill. In opposition to religious rituals designed to connect a person with God, heterodox rituals and demonic connection allowed those accused of witchcraft to inflict harm and bring about retribution upon a person. Yet, just as a priest would perform rituals on behalf of another person, those accused of witchcraft often conducted their rituals at the request of other people.

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71 ‘Contra Ruggier miniador, sta a San Moisé in salizà passà quel dale Madonna qual ha fatto inspiritar con un suo libro Anzola Azzalina, qual sta in la ditta corte del Basegò ai Carmini, mogier de Paolo Colona tagiapiera’. Milani, Streghe e diavoli, ‘Ruggero Miniatore’, p. 54.
72 ‘Ei dictum se sa o habia inteso dire che detta Anzola sia stata guasta o herbata o maleficiata, et da chi; respondit: Questa donna stave in casa con questo Ruggier et venne in casa de sua madre donna Pasqualina, che sta in corte dal Basegò, et stete sana 4 o 5 mesi et poi se butò in malatia’. Ibid., p. 55.
73 ‘Ei dictum se ‘l ditto Ruggier haveva in man libro o altro; Respondit: La me disse che ‘l haveva un legno in man allhora, ma che ‘l haveva ben un libro del Demonio in casa’. Milani, Streghe e diavoli, ‘Ruggero Miniatore’, p. 57. Milani states, in a footnote, that this wooden baton was thought to be the wand or the baton of necromancers.
The trial of Lucia Furlana (1582) demonstrates one type of future-telling ritual performed on behalf of another person. The ritual that Lucia performed in order to see the future for these people required the invocation of Buranello, her demon. During the ritual, Lucia closed her eyes and, with a swollen throat and in a deep voice, spoke with the demon.\(^{76}\) The witness Angelica described the words that Lucia said as she performed her ritual. Although Lucia’s voice would change during the ritual, she would call to Buranello ‘By virtue of God’, and would implore him to tell her all of the things that she wanted to know.\(^{77}\) Lucia also engaged in other acts that caused her neighbor, Valeria, concern. Several times, on the Sabbath, Valeria saw Lucia out on her balcony eating pork that she claimed Buranello had given to her.\(^{78}\) It appears that Lucia had frequent contact with Buranello and that he instructed her in her own life as well. Using a demonic entity in any way was against orthodoxy, and therefore a punishable offence; however, Lucia’s use of God and the demon compounded the offence.

The popularity of the generally benign fortune telling and love magic rituals allowed some people to amass quite a following. In many instances, news of a person’s abilities spread throughout the neighborhood, as demonstrated throughout the trial of Giovanna the Astrologer (1554). Giovanna’s reputation in early modern Venice meant that she was a proven healer and fortuneteller. Given the length of her trial, Giovanna’s case proved to be a difficult case for the Inquisition. Pasqualinus, a 30-year-old textile worker and neighbor of the accused, testified in front of the tribunal on 8 May 1564, claiming that he was well aware of Giovanna’s reputation as an ‘indivina’. In his testimony, Pasqualinus also mentioned seeing in her home items, such as a mug of water and a candle, with which she practiced her fortune telling.\(^{79}\) Another witness, Paul, who was also a textile worker living on Balote Street, closely adhered to the testimony of Pasqualinus, adding minute details such as the use of a rosary in Giovanna’s divination ritual.\(^{80}\) According to the testimony, in order to conduct her ritual for telling the future, Giovanna used a mug of


\(^{77}\) ‘In virtù de Dio dimi sopra la tal cosa’. Ibid., p. 52.

\(^{78}\) Subdens ad interrogationem: Sono 6 o 8 mesi in circa, che non mi ricordo el tempo, che un zorno, che era giorno di venere o di sabbado, che non mi ricordo ben qual giorno el fusse, ma el fu un// de questi giorni, che, facendomi io al suo belcone, che é basso, visti che la manzava. Gli domandai che cosa manzasse et lei mi disse: “Io manzo un pieno fatto con la carne de porcho”. Et io li dissì: “Oh, donna Lucia, che féu che ’l é venere o sabado”? Et lei me disse: “Se ’l lasso fino a domenega, el spuzerà o i sorsi el magnerà e Buranello me darà”’. Ibid., p. 49.


\(^{80}\) ‘In un goto de agua con una candela. et anche la conta una corona’. Ibid., p. 27.
water, a lit candle, and counted the beads on the rosary. Paul, when asked if he had ever been to her house, answered yes and that he had been there to have his fortune told.\textsuperscript{81} Little was revealed throughout the lengthy trial, however, regarding the actual rituals that Giovanna performed.

Women practicing magic for their neighbors was a common occurrence in early modern Europe, according to Jacqueline Van Gent, ‘Magic was an important part of daily social interactions between women in early modern Europe’ and was particularly useful for issues of health and fertility.\textsuperscript{82} Similar to the mug and candle present in Giovanna’s trial, ordinary items featured heavily in other accused individuals’ trials as elements necessary for fortune telling or love magic. In the trial of Lorenza (1584), her neighbor Cecilia testified that at times she witnessed Lorenza use a string-like item, perhaps a shoelace, in order to cast love spells for the lady Paula, whose apparent lover, Piero, served as the shoemaker in the campo at San Moisè. Cecilia claimed that Paula would often pay Lorenza four soldi for her ritual practices that involved Piero.\textsuperscript{83} During the ritual, after measuring a certain amount of the string, Lorenza took it into her hands and then said, ‘This is him and this is you, go on your way, he will come’, as she cast it onto the ground.\textsuperscript{84} Writing on witchcraft and the Venetian Inquisition, Martin claims that a woman who wanted her lover to come to her generally performed this type of conjuration but, in the trial of Lorenza, it appears that another person could perform the spell on behalf of someone else.\textsuperscript{85}

While many of the accused used their practices for the benefit of themselves or their neighbors, others engaged in heretical practices with intent to cause emotional or physical harm. In the trial of Ruggero (1582), Paula, a witness, explained the bewitching ritual that Ruggero performed to make Anzola ill. Though not present during the ritual, Paula learned the particulars from Anzola. According to Paula, Ruggero had Anzola draw a circle in the middle of the room. Ruggero then coaxed Anzola into entering the circle, telling her not to be afraid. At that point, Ruggero spoke to Anzola and told her that he would show her the number of devils in Hell. Anzola told Paula that she rushed into the arms of Ruggero because she was very afraid.\textsuperscript{86} Another witness, Adriana, gave testimony

\textsuperscript{83} ‘Et questa dona Paula ogni volte che la ditta Lorenza ghe feva ste cose la ghe deva 4 soldi, un da dodese al dorno et fina 3 volte al dì, cioè la matina, a hora de nona et all’avemaria de sera’. Milani, \textit{Streghe e diavoli}, ‘Lorenza Furlana’, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{84} ‘Un’ altra volta l’ho vista a spanar una posta, et la ha saro tuta in man, et poi la trete in terra et disse: “Questo ‘l è esso, questo ti è ti. El fa la strada, el vegnerà”, parlando de un homo de quella dona Paula, el qual ha nome Piero et ‘l è el calegher che sta sul campo de San Moysè’. Ibid., pp. 135-36.
\textsuperscript{85} Martin, \textit{Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550-1650}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{86} ‘Mi ghe dissi: “Perché, cara comare”? Essa me respose et disse: “Questo Ruggier el me ha fatto un cerchio in mezo la camera et me disse: Varda, Anzola, non haver paura, che te faria veder quanti diavoli è in l’Inferno,” che essa Anzola ando in mezo del cerchio et che l’hebbe paura et se ghe slanzò in brazo al ditto Ruggier, perché la me disse che la hebbe paura granda’. Milani, \textit{Streghe e diavoli}, ‘Ruggero Miniatore’, p. 55.
that she had great fear of the acts Ruggero committed within his home. Speaking about the
practice that Ruggero conducted in the presence of the frightened Anzola, Adriana
described the performance. After making a circle upon the floor, Ruggero, in a taunting
manner, asked Anzola if she thought that he did not have the courage to conjure the devils
in Hell. Following this menacing display, as Adriana described, Anzola was seized with
great fear, screamed, and was once again forced into his arms.87

Other trials demonstrate acts within the home that were considered disrespectful
to the Christian faith, or hateful to God and the saints. According to the witness Valerio,
Maddalena (1584) took candles, lit them from the fire within the fireplace, and then said
‘despicable’ words that were offensive to both God and Jesus Christ. In the final and most
offensive portion of the ritual, she took an image of Jesus Christ and placed it upside down
on the mantle. Then Maddalena, ‘in dispreggio di Dio’, recited a portion of the Sunday
prayer to the inverted image of Jesus while she made obscene gestures behind her back.88
It was not uncommon for those performing witchcraft to ‘invert Catholic practices’ for the
purpose of their perverse rituals, Maddalena also used her home to join in league with the
Devil.89 Although Valerio’s claim against Maddalena was that she was diabolical and
heretical, the Inquisition formally charged her for love magic and bean casting.90 In the
trials discussed here, it is apparent that the ambiguity of many of the magical practices of
those accused of witchcraft performed made it difficult for the tribunal to uphold charges.

Conclusions
During the early modern period in Venice, several of those accused of witchcraft often
repurposed ordinary household objects and domestic spaces for the purpose of conducting
their magical practices and rituals. According to Joseph Hermanowicz and Harriet
Morgan, ‘by ritualizing the routine’, and drawing ‘upon the ordinary’, the practitioner
meant to reaffirm the purpose of the ritual.91 The rituals and actions performed within
ordinary domestic space, like the conjuration of demons and rituals for the common good
could prove difficult for the Inquisition to ascertain. The same, however, could also be
said about rituals performed in ordinary domestic space for the purpose, or intent, to cause

87 ‘Respondit: Questa puovera dona Anzola steva con questo Ruggier e una sera la hebe paura, per
quanto essa me disse quando era sana// che una sera questo Ruggier el ghe fese un cerchio in terra et ghe
disse: “Credistu che, se vogio, me basta l’animo de far vegner quanti diavoli è in l’inferno qua?” Essa
disse: “Non fé, per l’amor de Dio, che non me fé vegnir qualche spasemo!”’ El ghe fé paura, essa trete un
88 ‘Quai candele havendo accese sotto il suo camino, dove ha habitato et habita, con parole
essercrabili offende il Santissimo Nome di Dio et del Salvator nostro Giesù Christo. Oltre di ciò (quel
che più aggrava), la scelerata donna bestemmiando piglia una imagine del N.S. Giesù Christo
benedetto et con li piedi all’insù et col capo all’ingiù attacca detta imagine al camino, dicendo in
dispreggio di Dio una parte dell’oratione dominicale, né contentandosi haver sì fattamente offeso
sua divina Maestà, gli fa anco gli figli dietro la schena, mettendo così ogni giorno di nuovo il N.
Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries (Oxford, 1990), p. 34.
90 ‘PER HERBARIE STRIGARIE E BUTAR FAVE’. Milani, Streghe e diavoli, ‘Maddalena Braddamonte’,
p. 115.
91 J. Hermanowicz and H. Morgan, ‘Ritualizing the Routine: Collective Identity Affirmation’,
harm. Visually, these ordinary objects and spaces would appear benign to the Inquisition, but witness testimony revealed that witches sometimes repurposed these items and these spaces for unorthodox practices.

The home was an important component in the overall well-being of early modern society, and, as Sarah Rees Jones states, this makes the household ‘the foundation stone of a civilized society’. This importance placed upon the home and its place within society is evident in Venice during the sixteenth century. Living in a city as dense as Venice, with its diversity of religions and cultures, often created an atmosphere of suspicion. Given that the Protestant Reformation was widespread by the latter half of the sixteenth century, the infiltration of Protestantism was of grave concern to the Papal Curia and Catholics in Venice. Inhabitants of the city also experienced this suspicion and the anxiety stemming from unknown activities taking place within their neighbors’ homes as evidenced by witness testimony and denunciation. The fright and suspicion of the neighbors of those accused of witchcraft should come as no surprise, especially when demons or the Devil were invoked, given that awareness of the presence of the Devil increased in the latter half of the sixteenth century, an increase sometimes attributed to the Protestant Reformation.

Because of this awareness and the association of witchcraft with the Devil, general suspicion existed among the people of early modern cities such as Venice. Adding to this sense of unease was the possibility that practitioners could turn domestic space, other than their own, into sacred space. For the early modern Venetian, the ability or perceived ability to turn the homes of others into sacred space for the practice of heterodox ritual, as was the case in the trial of Lorenza Furlana (1584), meant that any home could pose a threat to morality. Another general fear presumed that these heretical beliefs spread from neighbor to neighbor. Thus, due to considerable suspicion regarding heretical practices and practitioners residing within the neighborhood, the home often served as a place of suspicion for both neighbors and the Inquisition. In order to ensure the stability of Venice, the authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical, were forced to confront these popular notions and suspicions relying wholly on witness testimony.

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North America

“A.M. Homes’s The Safety of Objects: People and Feelings as Objects in the American Suburban Home” by Barbara Miceli, Uniwersytet Gdański

A.M. Homes’s The Safety of Objects: People and Feelings as Objects in the American Suburban Home

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Abstract

A.M. Homes’s 1990 collection of stories, The Safety of Objects, deals with the theme of life in the American suburbs, those residential areas where upper middle-class live in houses that project an idea of perfection and well-being. Homes’s stories, anyway, show a more miserable reality in which those families have become obsessed with things, not only as a symbol of their social status, but also as a substitute, or a surrogate, of feelings and familiar affection they do not feel anymore.

The origin of these neighborhoods and their inner dynamics may be retraced looking back to the Cold War period, when the wide array of consumer goods represented the essence of American freedom and an outpost of security in a time of great incertitude. Moreover, as Stephanie Coontz maintains, consumerism does not only regard material goods, but also emotions and roles, and “our personal identities and most intimate relations”, so “we experience a blurring of the distinction between illusion and reality, people and goods, image and identity, self and surroundings” (176).

The aim of my contribution is to highlight all the above-mentioned features of the suburbs’ population through some of Homes’s stories, showing how objects cause their greatest anxieties, elicit their truest feelings, and constitute, after all, the core of their very being.

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Keywords: A.M. Homes, Suburbs, Objects, Consumerism, U.S.A.

1. Introduction

The golden life in the American suburbs, residential areas where the upper-middle class live, have always been linked to the consumerism culture. Their “polished veneer”95 and apparently perfect surface, hides very often aspects of misery and a disconcerting set of issues such as “boredom, restlessness, and despair… intermingled with alcoholism, philandering and divorce,”96 all elements suggesting that for the people living in these places “their lives are meaningless.”97

This is the picture that the 1990 collection of stories by the American author A.M. Homes, *The Safety of Objects*, depicts through characters whose lives are full of objects but devoid of authentic aims, genuine relationships (even within their own family) and love. They live in the suburb of Westchester, New York, and their apparently normal lives conceal neuroses, fears, spousal issues, drug abuse and a controversial relation with their homes and the objects they contain. In all the stories, objects are the only reliable part of their lives, something that gives them a status, emotions, and, as in the story the closes the collection, “A Real Doll”, also a romantic relationship. It is not accidental, then, that the author decided to set her stories in a suburb, the land *par excellence* of consumerism. To comprehend such situation, it is necessary to provide a historical background.

At the end of the Fifties, in a moment of incertitude and danger caused by the Cold War between U.S.A. and URRS, the suburban home had become a way to counterpoise a purely American lifestyle to the Soviet one. In 1959, the famous “kitchen debate” between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushev set the features of the American model, which resided “on the ideal of the suburban home complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles for family members.”98 The roles Nixon was referring to were well defined: “the man would bring wages home from his good job to a wife more than ever occupied with her feminine duties of household management and child care.”99 The wife had also the duty of keeping herself attractive while living in a house adorned with “a wide array of consumer goods.”100 All this represented the essence of the American freedom. Moreover, that family structure, and that kind of home, epitomized, in the

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97 McDonald, cit., p. 35.
100 Tyler May, cit., p. 7.
propaganda of the era, an outpost of security in a time of incertitude\textsuperscript{101}, and a national symbol\textsuperscript{102}.

The Sixties were the golden age of the suburbs: areas made up of entirely upper-middle class inhabitants, obviously white, who became an example for all the races and social classes that lived in America\textsuperscript{103}. These areas were dominated by the consumerism culture, not only of material goods, but also of emotions and roles. As Stephanie Coontz writes, consumerism does not only regard objects, but also “our personal identities and most intimate relations,” so that “we experience a blurring of the distinction between illusion and reality, people and goods, image and identity, self and surroundings.”\textsuperscript{104} This blurring is present in most of the characters of Homes’s collection of stories, which takes stock of the situation of the early 90’s suburbs, just to show that life in these places has not evolved very much from their golden era, since suburban people are still seduced by the “consumerism’s promise that one can become anything one wishes.”\textsuperscript{105}

2. “Adults Alone”

The first short story in the collection is a good example of Coontz’s idea of suburban people’s confusion regarding themselves, their possessions and even their children. It is the story of Paul and Elaine, a married couple with two sons, Daniel and Sammy, who are left in Florida at their grandmother’s house “like they’re dry cleaning,”\textsuperscript{106} allowing the couple to be alone at home for the first time after their birth. This occasion gives them the chance to rethink their marriage and to realize how their feelings are shallow and unstable.

The first element that is evident from this story is how the couple, especially Elaine, differs from most of the suburban families in the way they treat their children. The very fact that they leave them in another State as if they were dry cleaning, gives them the status of objects, and lacks the usual fanaticism for kids that dominates the suburban families. Elaine is not the typical housewife only caring for her children, and she certainly does not “spend more time on child-oriented activities.”\textsuperscript{107} She does not follow the model of those parents “too obsessed with their children” and she does not consider them as “the new American religion,” where they are “worshiped with too many toys” and “too much attention.”\textsuperscript{108} This lack of attention is evident when Elaine goes to the

\textsuperscript{101} Hawes and Nybakken, cit., p. 160.  
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., p. 177.  
\textsuperscript{107} Hawes and Nybakken, cit., p. 170.  
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 171.
grocery store and consciously buys “items that are strictly for adults only, food her children would never let her buy.” She does not feel guilty, and she realizes a few hours later, when Sammy calls her crying, that she is annoyed by her own child. Only at that point she artificially builds her sense of guilt:

She’s annoyed, and then she can’t believe how selfish she’s being. This is her child, her baby. How could she be angry? How could she have gone to the grocery store and not bought anything for him, no animal crackers. Ho-Ho’s, nothing he likes?

“Oh, baby, it’s all right. I miss you too, you’re my boy, I’ll call you again later. Tell Grandma to give you another cookie.”

Elaine’s sense of guilt passes through the action of not buying something for her children, and not through the fact that she does not miss them, and she even feels annoyed by one of them crying on the phone. The only practicable solution to stop her guilt and calm down the child is, once again, distracting him with something: a cookie.

Another feature of this story is the relation the characters have with their house, where they had moved six years before from the city (presumably New York):

She feels like she’s been having an extramarital relationship with their home. It isn’t even an affair, an affair sounds too nice, too good. As far as she’s concerned a house should be like a self-cleaning oven; it should take care of itself.

The last time she was happy with the house was the day before they moved in, when the floors had just been done, when it was big and empty, and they hadn’t paid for it yet.

The attitude of Elaine towards her home is “subjugated to the same accelerated obsolescence of any other object of luxury” which makes the house “an object of consumption.” The house, which had elicited feelings comparable to “an affair,” has ceased being something desirable in the very moment the family has moved in. Now it is something to take care of, to clean, something Elaine is tired of.

In another section of the story, the house becomes rather a symbol of their status. When Paul and Elaine are in their car observing the landscape, she asks her husband if he had

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109 Homes, cit., p. 122.
111 Ibid., p. 16.
ever imagined being “like this.” When he questions her about what being “like this”
means, she answers: “Here, in a house, with a station wagon.”\footnote{Homes, cit., p. 19.}
The house and the station wagon designate their status of middle-class family, an integral part of the establishment. It is something Paul had always fantasized about: “In his fantasy about suburban life the whole family is always in the car together, going places, singing songs, eating McDonald’s.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 18.}

But, despite the possession of the car and the house, this latter considered as a liberating space of “self-expression and self-development, particularly through the consumption practices of interior design, home improvement and gardening,”\footnote{D. Southerton (Ed.), \textit{Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture, Vol 1} (London, 2011), p. 1398.} the result is quite disappointing. The image that he projects is totally different: “He looks like a demented version of the suburban man, the Playboy man, the man in his castle.”\footnote{Homes, cit., p. 23.}

This is a reference to an article that appeared on the magazine \textit{Playboy} in 1956, where a bachelor apartment was confronted with a family house. The apartment was defined as “the outward reflection of his [owner] inner self- a comfortable, livable, and yet exciting expression of the person he is and the life he leads.”\footnote{E. Fraterrigo, \textit{Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America} (Oxford, 2009), p. 84.}

The environment where the couple lives forced them to bury their identity as a couple, something that emerges pitilessly as soon as they remain alone at home: “She can’t stand him. She can’t stand anything about him: the way he thinks, talks, looks, all of it. She knows he hates her too and that makes it even worse. It makes her nuts. She should be able to hate him without any backlash.”\footnote{Homes, cit., p. 24.}

The only antidote to their stagnant situation seems to be that of coming back to the time they were younger through the consumption of illegal drugs, which, anyway, do not give them the same thrill. The story ends with the couple forced to collect their children ahead of time, because they do not fit with their grandmother anymore, and resume their usual life. Homes decided to write a sequel to this story, and in 2012 she published the novel \textit{Music for Torching}, where Paul and Elaine find the solution to their boredom at the beginning of it: they destroy its symbol, the house, setting it on fire.

3. “Looking for Johnny”

There is an object that can be considered the protagonist of this story as much as the kid, Erol, who recounts in first person what happened to him when he was nine. This object is the TV, which seems to be an obsession both for Erol and his sister Rayanne, a “retarded” girl who talks to the TV as if it were an actual person\footnote{Ibid., p. 35.}. 

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] Homes, cit., p. 19.
\item[114] Ibid., p. 18.
\item[116] Homes, cit., p. 23.
\item[118] Homes, cit., p. 24.
\item[119] Ibid., p. 35.
\end{footnotes}
Erol is kidnapped by a man called Randy and held captive in his house for a couple of days. His house lacks the variety of objects that adorn any normal house, but most of all it does not have a TV. The reason is explained by Randy when he says “Don’t say television to me. It’ll kill you. It makes you so you can’t think. Can you think, Johnny?” Randy gives the kid, although he makes clear several times that his actual name is Erol. In the two days they spend together, Randy tries to instruct the boy to practice less passive activities, such as fishing and splitting wood. Even if he is reluctant, always dreaming of coming back home, “put on dry clothes, talk to my mom, and watch TV,” Erol eventually finds a little bit of pleasure in those activities that are more authentic than the ones he usually practices at home with his mother and his sister. The reason is the absence of any connection to the outside world in Randy’s house, such as a phone, which he explains with what can be defined as the only explicit criticism to the cult of objects in the whole collection:

...Everyone has a phone and a television, and every other one has a videorecorder and washing machine. And they have microwave ovens. It doesn’t mean they’re smart. Start collecting things and you get in trouble. You start thinking that you care about the stuff and you forget that it’s things, man made things. It gets like it’s a part of you and then it’s gone and you feel gone also. When you have stuff and then you don’t it’s like you’ve disappeared.

The concept expressed by the man can be equaled to John Kenneth Galbraith’s idea that society “evaluates people by the product they possess…the more that is produced, the more that must be owned in order to maintain the appropriate prestige.” Yet, even if Randy does not possess any object, he kidnapped the only one he was really interested in: Johnny/ Erol. The boy is something he can shape at his own will, that is why he gives him a new name and he tries to introduce him to new activities he has never practiced before. Even the way he eventually decides to set him free is exemplifying of this attitude. He says that “[y]ou’re not the kid I thought you’d be” and he uses the expression “taking you back,” which would be used for an object that does not live up to someone’s expectations in terms of performance.

Once free, Erol develops a sort of Stockholm Syndrome towards his kidnapper, because everything that he used to like before those days seems different and boring. This feeling reveals itself, once again, through the objects, in this case the clothesline of one of his neighbors, Mrs. Perkins: “I wanted to rip it down. I wanted to take everything down and

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120 Ibid., p. 42.
121 Ibid., p. 48.
122 Ibid., p. 44.
124 Homes, cit., p. 54.
torn it into a million pieces,”¹²⁵ thinks the kid. The symbolic destruction of something Erol used to like, a physical object, is a metaphor of the new and more authentic life he has discovered in an unexpected place. In the final part of the story, once Erol approaches the house he had missed so much during his captivity, he decides to run away. Perhaps to come back to his kidnapper? Homes, in her vague finale, lets the reader decide it.

4. “Jim Train”

This story is probably the quintessential example of life in the suburbs as the “dysfunctional fringe of the economically and culturally dynamic city.”¹²⁶ The protagonist, Jim, is a lawyer who works for a firm in New York City, and he commutes by train every day from Westchester to his office. He is a member of the traditional “white middle-class family made up of a male breadwinner, a full-time wife and homemaker, and children.”¹²⁷ One day, after he has received a plaque that celebrates his being “Man of the Year” at his firm, the office is evacuated due to a bomb alarm, and Jim finds himself with nothing to do but coming back home. Before he leaves, the author shows how the job and the objects related to it are the only things that build Jim’s identity and personality. Leaving the office, he is only worried that the briefcase, the jacket and the plaque are still inside of it, which makes him feel “rejected, disconcerted by the absence of his jacket and briefcase.”¹²⁸

Although he comes back home, at a quite unusual time, he is forced to stay outside, because the house is empty and his key breaks into the lock. This gives him again a sense of being lost when he sees his belongings and their familiarity from the outside, but he cannot get them.

When his family returns, the reaction of his older son Jake expresses perfectly how the relationships inside the family, probably due to the daily absence of Jim, are not dominated by affection. His daughter Emily hugs him, while Jake only asks him if he has brought him something. When he answers, “Just me”¹²⁹ the boy looks disappointed.

The same type of relationship is the one he has with Susan, his wife. She seems to have created a life of her own, filling the house with “all new furniture” where “nothing is familiar” and “nothing is comfortable.”¹³⁰ This makes him suspicious, especially when he realizes that she does not wear the wedding ring, the physical substitute for the marriage itself. His function as a husband and a man seems to be only that of

¹²⁵ Ibid.
¹²⁷ Zaretsky, cit., p. 5.
¹²⁸ Homes, cit., p. 69.
¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 73.
¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 76.
breadwinner, because, when they realize the dishwasher is broken, and he offers to fix it, Susan says “You certainly can’t fix it. You have no idea of what to do.”

The next day, Jim is more and more depressed by the fact that the office is still closed. But people working there, his secretary and a colleague, have found a better way to spend their day: shopping. They are both quite excited by a big sale at Macy’s, the famous American clothing chain, and they feel that buying stuff will give them a great day, supplying them with what Baudrillard calls “the rapturous satisfaction of consumption” which makes people clinging to objects “as if to the sensory residues of the previous day in the delirious excursion of a dream.” But this is not enough for Jim who “is not himself. Without his work, he is a dark and depressed man.” The lack of an accepted familiar identity, where he can express himself beyond his role as a lawyer, makes him decide, at the end of the story, that if the office is still closed the next day “he will go anyway. He will simply arrive at the office. If the guards won’t let him upstairs, he will refuse to go home; he will throw himself on their mercy,” probably a better perspective than staying home where he has no function, no role and no authentic familiar bonds.

5. “Esther in the Night”

This story is about a mother, Esther, who lives an everlasting tragedy following a car accident in which her eldest son, Paul, has fallen in a permanent vegetative state. The family has decided to bring him home to his room, where he floats in his coma, surrounded by machines that keep him alive and a mattress that keeps him constantly moving. The comatose boy has become the center of her life, and the story is set in a night which looks as a normal and routine night. Esther’s routine is connected to a series of actions she carries out to be sure that everything is in its right place and that nothing bad will happen. These actions regard the objects that make a house safe: the thermostat, the doors and the smoke detector. The “safety” of these objects makes her harbor the illusion that the chaos that can always break through in a normal life, in the guise of what happened to her son, will be avoided double-checking all the devices that keep her house safe. While she does this, she starts fantasizing about a burglar breaking in the house and stealing things that, she is aware of this, are themselves symbols and not only objects: “He would take things: the television, the VCR, the silver, my jewelry, things I’ve collected over the years, collected as symbols of my marriage, things that sometimes seem as though they are the marriage. I would help him pack. He would take the things that make me who I am, and then I would be able to be someone else.” Esther is also conscious of the fact that the burglar, as soon as he saw Paul in his bed, would flee leaving the things he has stolen behind, because no one wants to “hold anything that had

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131 Ibid., p. 77.
132 Baudrillard, cit., p. 57.
133 Homes, cit., p. 81.
134 Ibid., p. 85.
135 Ibid., p. 117.
been touched by the magic of the living dead.” In this way, the boy, still as an object, becomes the most precious burglar alarm they have.

Esther has another fantasy, that of the house on fire. It would be, in her dreams, a way to destroy all that the house has become after the accident and, conversely, what she has become. She imagines everything melting in the fire, including the tubes that keep her son alive. She focuses her imagination on the oxygen tank, an object that has both the function of life-saver and surrogate of Paul: once Esther had mistaken the tank, standing next to the bed, for her son, and she “thought that everything was all right.”

There are no major differences between the tank and Paul, they are both still, and both part of what the house has become after the accident: The Museum of the Modern Dead. Esther compares the house to a museum that contains all the objects which, the night of the accident, had some meaning or function. She imagines a guided visit where she shows visitors the phone that rang to warn them about the accident, the dress she was wearing that night, Paul’s medical charts, and all the bills they have paid for the boy’s therapies.

The main piece of the museum is Paul in his bed. Esther describes how her daughter Cindy used to show her brother to her friends, leaving him naked in front of them and hearing their marveled remarks when they touched him, and they felt he was warm. “He is not dead”, she would answer, and he is not an object.

The actions that Esther has carried out at the beginning of the story are ideally connected to the final part. She does not want to see her house robbed or destroyed by the fire, but she realizes that the only way to free her family and the house from the identity it has given them, that of a family in grief, frozen forever in the night of the accident, is by getting rid of the main piece of the museum. Esther kills her son using a plastic bag to suffocate him and comes back to her bed to lie beside her husband Harold. Life can resume from where it had stopped.

6. “A Real Doll”

The last story of this collection is about a boy who, out of the blue, falls in love with his sister’s Barbie doll and starts dating her when the girl is out. The fact that Homes chose a Barbie, and not any other doll, might be yet another symbol of the suburban obsession for consumerism, since Barbie, which was introduced in 1959, “embodied a far-ranging faith in the American economy because its sole purpose was to acquire more clothing and accessories.” That is why there are several kinds of Barbie, and the protagonist of this story, who has a voice and is able to speak her mind, introduces herself as “Tropical,” in the same way “a person might say I’m Catholic or I’m Jewish” for her

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136 Ibid., p. 118.
137 Ibid., p. 119.
138 Ibid.
clothes that are “a one-piece bathing suit, a brush, and a ruffle you can wear so many ways”\textsuperscript{140} define her identity.

This story gives also a view to another aspect of life in the suburbs, and it probably justifies the boy’s hallucinations. It is the massive consumption of drugs by underage people, which is more frequent in suburbs than in urban areas\textsuperscript{141}. The boy from this story regularly makes use of Valium to calm down and be less anxious, and he gives it also to Barbie to overcome the awkward feeling they both have. He begins taking it at every date, and after a while he develops an addiction to the drug, so that it does not work unless he takes a double dose of it.

In this story, the author emphasizes the difference between real and fake things. The comparison between the boy, with his real genital organs, and Ken, who possesses only “a little plastic bump”\textsuperscript{142}, is what makes real things triumph, since Barbie unmans her toy companion for not having real genitals.

The logic of consumerism enters the bizarre relationship between the doll and the boy when he decides to buy her a present. To do that, he goes to a toy shop where he experiences the already mentioned “rapturous satisfaction of consumption,”\textsuperscript{143} mixed with the sexual arousing deriving from the vision of an entire row of Barbie dolls. The boy almost faints, but eventually he decides to buy a piano, which Barbie welcomes with the comment “[y]ou must really like me.”\textsuperscript{144} In this story, as in others in the collection, gifts are considered the gauge of one’s interest towards his or her romantic partner. The fact that the boy has bought a piano, a precious gift in Barbie’s opinion, shows his interest in the doll more than anything else. This attitude can be linked to Baudrillard’s concept of “gift.” An object, when it is given to someone as a present, is no more an object, but “it is inseparable from the concrete relation in which it is exchanged, the transferential pact that it seals between two persons: it is thus not independent as such.”\textsuperscript{145} When an object is given, “it can fully signify the relation”\textsuperscript{146}, but in this case the relationship is between a human being and an object, hence the romantic partner of the boy becomes immediately disposable after the sexual intercourse between them has happened. The final part of the story sees the boy walking away from the doily on top of the dresser of his sister’s room, where Barbie lives, finally tired and completely uninterested in the object he had loved and desired.

7. Conclusions

The stories in the collection \textit{The Safety of Objects} show people that, as Baudrillard put it, “are surrounded not so much by other human beings...but by objects.”\textsuperscript{147} These people

\textsuperscript{140} Homes, cit., p. 152.
\textsuperscript{142} Homes, cit., p. 154.
\textsuperscript{143} Baudrillard, cit., p. 57.
\textsuperscript{144} Homes, cit., p. 164.
\textsuperscript{145} Baudrillard, cit., p. 58.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., p. 25.
tend to consider even the other people, their family or partners, as objects, and they live in what the philosopher calls “object time,” a time where people live at the pace of objects. Some of the characters in Homes’s stories are slave to the objects and full of an emotional void that condemns them to repeat their actions over and over in an everlasting succession. This is the case of Paul and Elaine from the story “Adults Alone.” The failure of their marriage, left bare from the absence of their children, is, in a certain way, accepted in the name of what they have built: a family and, most of all, a home. The final part of the story shows them relieved to come back to their routine and engaged in the cleaning of the house before the kids come back home. It is only a temporary relief, since, as it has already been said, in the sequel of this story, the characters’ restlessness will bring them to set the house on fire.

The same concept applies to Jim from the story “Jim Train.” Unable to fulfill the void he feels as a husband, a father and a man, he longs to resume his normal life, to go back to an office where he has a role, something to do every day, and a meaningful life where he can have only a taste of a few hours of a home where he means nothing for anybody.

For the other characters, there is hope. Their hope stems from the rebellion that makes them the iconoclasts of their own religion of objects. They realize that the “safety” granted by them is not safe at all, because objects cannot save them from the emotional sterility they have felt for a long time. So, the only way to save themselves is through the destruction of the objects that symbolize their empty and sometimes desperate lives. As Baudrillard writes: “The consumer society needs its objects in order to be. More precisely, it needs to destroy them. The use of objects leads only to their dwindling disappearance. The value created is much more intense in violent loss.”148 The way the characters lose, or voluntarily destroy, the objects that enslave them is rather violent for each of them.

Erol, the kid from “Looking for Johnny,” endures a kidnapping to decide that he does not like so much his life as a boy brainwashed by TV. At the end of the story, he repudiates his former life with the instinct to rip off the clothes line of his neighbor, the symbol of what his old and unauthentic life was.

Esther, the mother from “Esther in the Night,” kills her objectified son and, knowing that her family and her house will never be under that “living dead” spell again, she is able to feel something again: the breath of her husband on her hair while he sleeps beside her, as pleasant as a breeze.

Finally, the kid from “A Real Doll” has a glimpse of recognition when he realizes that his lovely Barbie is not real at all. What gives him this epiphany is the fact that her owner, his sister Jennifer, has mutilated and burnt Barbie, making her unrecognizable. The girl has operated a destruction of the fetish object of her brother, and he is the one who gets saved from being obsessed by a plastic partner.

The end of these stories shows, even if not clearly and explicitly, the author’s belief that people can recover from their obsession for objects just destroying them to come back to

148 Baudrillard, cit., p. 65.
more authentic emotions and values. Because an object is just an object and, as Baudrillard claims, “it is in destruction that it acquires its meaning.”

References:


149 Ibid.
As the United States reunited at the end of the American Civil War in 1865 and the nation began to look to its future reconciled prosperity, a grandmother sat ‘in her rocking-chair’ in New York City, ‘relieved from work, each happy hour is spent’. She was Mrs. Malloy, mother to one Pat Malloy, the fictional Irishman depicted in two ballads produced during and after the conflict. Pat’s mother appeared in the second ballad called Return of Pat Malloy. The final verse portrayed Mrs. Malloy sitting carefree in her chair in a house where ‘her childer [children] pay the rint [rent]’. Her family surrounded her, including Pat Malloy’s son, named ‘young Pat’ after his father. This older migrant to the United States now spent her days with her grandson ‘on her knee’ as she ‘sings a good old Irish song’ to him while he sits there. The ballad concludes with this scene, where ‘she sings, and talks, and plays with him, both morning, noon and night’, settled in her new residence.¹⁵¹

Placed in an American home setting, Return of Pat Malloy highlighted what the United States had come to represent to members of the Irish diaspora who resided in the nation in the middle of the nineteenth century. During the Civil War (1861-1865), some 200,000 Irish-born, and an even greater number of second and third generation Irish Americans fought for the Union and Confederate causes. Countless more experienced life on the home front as families resided in the warring states. The eponymous Pat Malloy who appeared in both Pat Malloy (c.1860) and Return of Pat Malloy had, according to the ballad lyrics, migrated ‘from Ireland to America across the seas’ to ‘roam’, work, send ‘every shilling that I get’ to his family over the Atlantic. Eventually, he returned to his birthplace to bring his fiancé Molly and his mother back to the United States at the end of the conflict.¹⁵² Countless of his brethren did likewise, many of them migrating during

¹⁵⁰ Dr Catherine Bateson, Lecturer and Tutor in US History/Research Assistant on Victorian Electoral Violence, Durham University, University of Gloucestershire, Vice-Chair Scottish Association for the Study of America (SASA), Co-founder War Through Other Stuff Society

¹⁵¹ Unknown lyricist, Return of Pat Malloy (Boston, c.1865). All song and primary source quotations are in the original US-English spelling.

¹⁵² Unknown lyricist, Pat Malloy (Boston, c.1860). The songs cited here are gathered from archival collections and published wartime song-books held at the British Library (London), Boston Athenaeum
Ireland’s Great Famine years of 1845-1852, when approximately 1.5 million Irish migrants moved to North America. They were followed by steady waves of Irish men, women and children to American shores throughout the rest of the 1850s and 1860s. These migrant communities all worked, settled and fought in their new American homeland. Additionally, throughout this period, the experiences of this Irish American diaspora group were written into song.

This article will draw attention to one of the underlying sentiments heard in many of the Civil War ballads produced during the conflict by and about the Irish experience of living, serving and settling in the Union states in the mid-nineteenth century. Out of the approximately 11,000 songs written during the conflict, over 200 related directly and indirectly to the Irish involvement on the front-line and home front. Of these, several sang directly about how America had become an Irish home nation, and that its cities and regions were now homes to live in and to defend while Confederate secession threatened to break up the country. As the war came to a close, these songs reflected how willing the Irish diaspora was to help build and shape the country after 1865. This article will show how Irish American Civil War songs reveal the fact that the United States had become home to the diaspora by the outbreak of the conflict. It will note how references to the American Union as a home nation appeared in wartime balladry, how they compared to personal individual articulations of the same concept, and how the fictional image of Mrs. Malloy singing in her New York home by the end of the war came about as her son and fellow countrymen and women aided in United States nation building in the late nineteenth century.

**Irish American Home Identity in the United States**

Irish American Civil War songs produced in the Union states articulated the expression of American home identity as part of their overall message of Irish loyalty to the nation on the battlefield and on the home front. One lyric in *War Song of the New-York 69th Regiment*, sung from the perspective of New York’s Irish soldiers marching to war, gave the cry: ‘Then forward! For our homes and altars, all we hold most dear’. This rousing sentiment was designed to rally other members of the diaspora to fight and support the Union cause. Although such lyrics were only singing about one specific regiment, this view could be expressed by any soldier in either army, Union or Confederate, Irish or otherwise. They were marching forward to fight for and defend what they all held closest

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(Boston), Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.), and Duke University (Durham, North Carolina). The author is grateful for funding from the Eccles Centre at the British Library and the Boston Athenaeum for access to their special collections to aid this research project.

153 Unknown lyricists composed the majority of songs written during the American Civil War. Music hall and stage theatre performers, publishers, home-front citizens and mostly soldiers themselves penned wartime ballads, but often did not include biographical details on song-sheets or music scorebooks. The examples quoted in this article were written by both members of the Irish American diaspora and non-Irish Americans – all of whom contributed to the wider milieu of Irish songs and music in nineteenth century American singing culture. They were written for commercial and cultural reasons (as all contemporary American songs were), articulating wartime sentiments and viewpoints from a variety of standpoints. For analysis of the various types of wartime songs and music and the reasons behind their publication, see C. McWhirter, *Battle Hymns: The Power and Popularity of Music in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 2012).

to them. Their homes and families mattered above all else. In wartime ballads, these families resided in American homes.

One fundamental aspect missing in Irish American historiography is the serious consideration that by the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the diaspora was well-established in the United States. Many immigrants had been in the country for several years, decades and generations. Even the Famine migrants of the 1840s and 1850s had been resident for at least a decade before Confederate secession and fighting broke out. They established families and livelihoods for years before 1861. While they retained a sense of Irish cultural heritage, such as Mrs. Malloy teaching her grandson traditional Irish songs, they also expressed American identity because they had come to share an inherent association with the nation by the 1860s. Whilst national identity is personal and fluid, especially amongst immigrants, there has been too much of a sense in scholarship that the Irish fighting and living through the Civil War used the conflict to express various aspects of their ‘dual’ Irish identity and a developing American home identity. This has led a confused impression of the diaspora being Irish and being American, and simultaneously finding ways to articulate their Irishness and their Americanness.

For example, Lawrence J. McCaffrey argued that the Civil War ‘gave Irish Americans an opportunity to prove their patriotism’ by fighting and supporting respective Union and Confederate causes.¹⁵⁵ Bernard Aspinwall, however, stated that even before the war ‘American patriotism was firmly established among Irish Americans’.¹⁵⁶ These two opinions create a binary position along a spectrum of the question: ‘when did the Irish become American?’ More recently, Christian Samito raised complex challenges to this sense of national identity articulation. He suggested, ‘some Irish Americans gained a greater appreciation for their American identity’. Thus, the Irish in the United States ‘increasingly felt they could be considered Americans’. It was, according to Samito, a long process of identity evolution in a ‘climate’ where the diaspora ‘increasingly recognised the American component of their identity and allegiance’.¹⁵⁷ By extension, the diaspora recognised and demonstrated greater appreciation for their American homes, a sentiment enhanced during the Civil War.

As the song lyrics quoted in this article will illustrate, the Irish in the American Union during the Civil War fought and contributed to the cause because they were defending their home nation and were invested in their home nation’s future. Through these lyrics, Irish American national identity formation came to the fore. It was an identity framed through a firm understanding of the United States as more of a home to them than their Irish birthplaces. This has implications for the way in which the Irish American diaspora understood its own cultural and national identity through the formation of lyrical constructs about being in, and contributing to, a new homeland. It also shows how migrant

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groups saw the United States as their home within a few years of their settlement, even during tumultuous periods of civil warfare.

**The Lyrical Appearance of Home in Irish American Civil War Songs**

The Irish who served and fought in the Union Army during the Civil War began depicting and singing about the United States as their home nation and place of residence from the earliest days of the conflict. In May 1861, members of the Irish-dominant 69th New York State Militia, formed by Irish-born and descended men from New York City’s largest diaspora population, offered up their service to the Union cause. They did so after President Abraham Lincoln called for troops following Confederate secession and firing upon Fort Sumter, South Carolina, the previous month. Within days of mustering and preparing to march to the Union’s defence, the ballad *Glorious 69th* was written in their honour. Its lyrics were to be sung from the perspective of one of the militia’s Irish soldier members. Several lines described how he felt about leaving New York City. By extension, it described how he felt about leaving his home. Depicting the militia’s mobilisation, march down Broadway through the city and embarkation onto boats that would sail southwards to the nation’s capital of Washington D.C., the song’s singing soldier offered up a ‘Farewell unto New-York’.

In the very first weeks of the war, no one in American society could know how brutal the conflict was to become. Even so, the soldier sang of his understandable concern about possible death in battle while fighting, questioning: ‘shall I never see it more?’ Here, ‘it’ meant his home of New York City. He continued by describing how ‘it fills my heart with pity, to leave its sylvan shore’, a grand lyrical and sentimental expression that painted the city in a poetic, heartfelt light. This portrayal would have been understood and shared by many of New York’s Irish residents who would have heard this song performed in the music halls, theatres and home-front settings where Civil War ballads gained most attention. Yet, for all the seeming lament about having to leave home to go to war, the singing *Glorious 69th* volunteer soldier told audiences that he was leaving because ‘our President [Lincoln] commanded us to sail another way’, namely towards the capital where the 69th New York State Militia arrived. They then took up a new temporary residence around Arlington Heights outside the city. From there, they defended Washington D.C. and prepared to face the Confederates in the first major engagement of the Civil War on 21 July 1861 at the First Battle of Bull Run, close to the nearby railway town of Manassas, Virginia.

The unknown lyricist of *Glorious 69th* could not have foreseen the outcome of this engagement when the ballad was penned in the weeks before it occurred, where many of the militia fought bravely and some were either imprisoned, wounded or killed. Those who survived returned to New York City before the unit was subsumed into the newly established 69th New York Regiment, the founding part of the Union Army’s official Irish Brigade, in the late summer of 1861. Considering the fact that this song was one of the very earliest produced in the conflict, and certainly one of the first about Irish fighters in this period, it is interesting to observe how its final verses actually included reference to a future image of returning soldiers and a postbellum reunited country. These lyrics focused on an expansion of the ‘sylvan’ impression heard earlier in the ballad about the home Irish-
born and descended immigrants had made by 1861 in New York City specifically, and the United States more broadly. The song hoped that ‘when the war ended, may Heaven spare our lives’, soldiers ‘then...will return to our children and our wives’ on the home front. As the nation’s peace was restored, in an image not so dissimilar to that of Pat Malloy’s home scene with his son and his mother in her rocking chair, Glorious 69th concluded by describing how returning soldiers would ‘embrace’ their families ‘in our arms...both night and day’. Furthermore, they would ‘hope Secession is played out in all America!’ and that civil conflict would not tear the nation apart again. The fighting men of the Irish diaspora had done their duty to the country they resided in and would not leave their homes and loved ones anymore.

Glorious 69th articulated the idea that members of the 69th New York State Militia joined the war effort in 1861 because they were commanded to do so by President Lincoln and were obligated to serve at their leader’s behest. The following year, one of several ballads written about the Irish Brigade, which included militia veterans, gave a further reason to Irish wartime service. Their motivation was grounded in a fundamental association with the American Union itself and Irish immigrant adoption in the belief that the United States represented the best hope on earth, as Lincoln believed, for democratic republican liberty, peace, freedom and a flourishing home front. The Irish Brigade, written by a Kate C.M. and published in the Union-produced songbook The Continental Songster, presented the same sentiments heard throughout the collection, only this time with an Irish accent. Lyrics declared that ‘the Union forever’ was the diaspora’s war cry, extolled by those fighting until their ‘last dying breath’ and by their family members.

The Irish Brigade also told the diaspora to ‘let the Stars and the Stripes be henceforth your boast’, with the flag both embodying the ideals of the nation and symbolising their American loyalty. This metaphor was emphasised further by the following line: “And the Union forever”, the Irishman’s toast’, a direct lyrical reference to The Battle Cry of Freedom. This popular and widespread Union wartime anthem, written in 1862 by George F. Root, told Americans in the Northern states to ‘Rally ‘round the flag’ and shout ‘the Union forever! Hurrah, boys, hurrah!’ Kate C.M.’s lyrics reveal that the Irish were co-opting that same message of devotion to their American home nation because they too rallied around the Star-Spangled Banner.

Irish American Civil War songs produced throughout the conflict in the Union states often used the American national flag as the symbolic image of home, and they associated it with the ideals of the country that they adopted as their own. These lyrical articulations strengthened the bond Irish migrants had with the new homeland nation they had come to, enhanced by the wartime climate where these ideals were used to strengthen and show loyalty to the United States and for all that it stood. In 1862, for instance, the music hall performer Kathleen O’Neil wrote and produced No Irish Need Apply. This was one of several contemporaneous ballads with the same title written in response to anti-
Catholic Irish sentiment that saw sections of American society attempt to restrict migrant employment and success. In O’Neil’s song story, she praised America for welcoming her and letting her contribute to the nation through successful work. She concluded her ballad by presenting her own personal display of American Union devotion and thanks to the country ‘now [that] I’m in the land of the “Glorious and Free”’. Her American dedication extended to stating that she was ‘proud I am to own it, a country dear to me’, singing about how the American nation belonged to her. This was an articulation that she saw the country as her home; her heart was now American, not Irish. Indeed, so committed to the American Union was O’Neil, that, in the middle of the Civil War, she pledged her wish that ‘long may the Union flourish’ in the conflict and in its future. She also hoped that the Union ‘ever may it be, a pattern, to the world and the “Home of Liberty”’ for future generations of immigrants who would make it their home in America during the second half of the nineteenth century.161

The 1863 ballad Corcoran’s Irish Legion echoed the same sentiments heard in O’Neil’s No Irish Need Apply. It sang about how the wider diaspora were committed to the American Union. Music hall performer and songwriter Eugene T. Johnston, who composed several wartime ballads that sang of the Irish experience, wrote this song in honour of the Irish-dominant New York regiments that formed part of Corcoran’s Legion in the middle of conflict. Their leader was General Michael Corcoran, originally from County Sligo, Ireland, who had joined the 69th New York State Militia not long after he migrated to the United States in the late 1840s. He was elevated through its ranks and became its colonel by the outbreak of fighting in 1861. At the First Battle of Bull Run he was captured by Confederate forces and spent thirteen months, between July 1861 and August 1862, in various prison holdings in the Southern states. Upon his release and return to New York City, he set about organising a new de-facto Irish Brigade so that more of the city’s, and the wider New York State’s, Irish diaspora sons could serve in ethnic-Irish units. Johnston’s song was one a few written about Corcoran’s new military leadership and men. Its lyrics stressed to American society that they were as loyal and committed to fighting for the Union cause and keeping the country united as their fellow Irish regimental brethren elsewhere in the army.

Just as O’Neil had sung, Corcoran’s Irish Legion’s singing soldiers stated that ‘it’s the Flag that we love, and by it we’ll stand’, pledging their own loyalty to the Star-Spangled Banner. They would remain in military service ‘til the bonds of Rebellion we sever, and peace is restored to our dear adopted land’, which revealed the Legion’s desire to see Confederate secession end and national reconciliation come about. However, the reason behind this articulation of loyalty and commitment was not just because the Irish-born and descended soldiers under Corcoran’s command were ardent American Unionists. One lyric stated clearly that they had joined the war effort ‘to fight for our home, our dear adopted land’. This was a direct lyrical equation of the United States being an Irish homeland, settled in by thousands of migrants in the years before the Civil War.162 The

161 K. O’Neil, No Irish Need Apply (Boston, 1862).
162 E.T. Johnston, Corcoran’s Irish Legion, (Boston, 1863).
men of Corcoran’s Legion fought for the nation that had become their home and they were ready to sing and die for it throughout the second half of the conflict.163

It is important to stress that the Irish were not unique in extolling lyrical sentiments about their loyal association and devoted relationship to their United States homeland. In the first months of the war, the ballad *Free and Easy of Our Union!* sang about general wartime pro-Union stances, namely about how committed volunteers were to ending Confederate secession as quickly as possible, and to bring about reunited national prosperity. It also contained lyrics that were specific to New York regiments mobilising for the war effort, including comment about New York City’s Irish sons’ enlistment. Within this ballad though, were also broader articulations about Union loyalty that spoke to all volunteers’ reasons for donning Union uniform. These statements were aimed at home-front families, as if the soldiers themselves were explaining why ‘to the war [we] are going’. In the song’s words they were ‘Patriots’, following in the spiritual footsteps of their American Revolution ancestors, even if some were born in another country long after the events of 1776 and the War of Independence from Great Britain. Once again, like O’Neil and Corcoran’s Legion soldiers would later sing in their own examples, Union soldiers including the Irish were ‘fighting for our glorious Banner’ of the Stars and Stripes. For this flag, and for all that the nation stood for, these soldiers were ‘leaving happy homes behind’. The inference was that they were also fighting in defence of these ‘happy homes’ and to ensure such entities continued to exist after the war ended.164 This lyrical depiction of a ‘happy’ home-front would no doubt be familiar to the one Pat Malloy’s mother would find herself in by 1865 after Union victory.

**Michael Corcoran and Individual Irish Examples of American Home Association**

If general wartime songs and specific Irish related ballads were singing about devotion to the American Union homeland, and Corcoran’s Legion were singing about their regimental association to the nation, then they were also doing so because their own leader shared and articulated the same sentiments. Michael Corcoran had lived in the United States for over twelve years before the conflict began. The country had truly become his

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163 These sentiments continued to be expressed in ballads throughout the war, especially after the introduction of Union Army enrolment in 1863. Irishmen were drafted into military service, though the decision earned hostile reaction in some sections of the diaspora. In July 1863, New York Irish residents participated in the New York Draft Riots – the bloodiest civil unrest of the conflict in the Union. Rioters cited objection to drafted conscription, and economic, social and racial concerns about recent African American slave emancipation. The New York Draft Riots dominate Irish American historiography as a sign of Irish resistance to the war. However, further study is needed to re-address the balance of contemporary disagreement over diaspora grievances in the middle point of the war. The overwhelming sentiment in popular culture song articulations by and about the Irish in relation to issues of the draft and Draft Riots was one of fervent public support and loyalty to the wartime policies of the American Union home. Indeed, many across the country opposed their riotous New York brethren, and Civil War songs by the Irish themselves criticised their actions. *Paddy the Loyal*, written ‘by Himself’ in the aftermath of events in July 1863 (published in *The Continental Songster*, pp. 36-37), chastised rioters and anti-draft diaspora members. Its lyrics argued how riots would aid Confederate secession and undermine the Union:

> Hould your hush, that my advice is;
> If ye’s won’t fight, don’t talk disloyal,
> Nor aid the scamps who would destroy all.

164 Unknown lyricist, *Free and Easy of Our Union!* (Boston, 1861).
home nation in that period. This was apparent in the way in which he wrote regularly about America, not Ireland, being his home. At the same time as he set about establishing the Legion named after him in 1863, Corcoran also published a brief account of his time in various Confederate prisoner of war holdings in the Southern states. This memoir was full of rhetorical references and statements about his American homeland.

For instance, Corcoran often described how ‘my heart constantly yearned for home’ while he was imprisoned. This was most apparent when he was moved to different prisons in Virginia and the Carolinas, further southwards into the Confederacy and away from the North and New York City. He noted that ‘the greater the distance from the latter [New York] became, the stronger grew the tie that still held me to it’. The ‘home’ he described was his home in New York, not his County Sligo birthplace. His American home was foremost in his mind. Certain instances also enhanced this home association during what Corcoran described as ‘the most pleasurable moments of my captivity’. Here, he was referring to occasions ‘when I received a letter from friends at home’, again meaning New York City and not from family and friends in Ireland. New York City was where his first wife Elizabeth and his close friends resided, which included many of the Irish diaspora’s elite members who worked to free him from his Confederate holdings. Corcoran would describe their messages from home as ‘angel’s visits, few and far between’ during his thirteen months away.

Corcoran’s joy at returning to his home city in the summer of 1863, some fifteen months after leaving it with the 69th New York State Militia before the First Battle of Bull Run, was tantamount in the final passages of his memoir. Relating his boat journey back to the North and to New York City after he was released from being a prisoner of war, he commented how ‘eagerly, very eagerly, did I strain my eyes down the river to catch the first glimpse of the Starry Flag’. When, finally ‘in due time I saw it, as my eyes fell upon its bright stars and stripes, my soul thrilled to its center’. After so long away, Corcoran described seeing ‘Home’ again. Within that homely construct of his New York were all his ‘friends and loved ones’, which ‘sprang up before my eyes like an enchanting vision’. He concluded that the sight of the city and the knowledge that his heart, now ‘welled up with emotion’, was back safe in familiar surrounds, ‘swept [away] every trace of care’.

Effectively, Corcoran was endorsing the concept that home is where the heart is, and that family and the hearth are more important than birthplace. Many of his fellow Irish brethren in the diaspora would have likely agreed.

His thirteen months of prison captivity notwithstanding and following his ‘journey home’, Corcoran informed his American public readership at the conclusion of his account that he had once ‘again taken up the sword’ for the Union Army. He alluded to the fact that he was now at the head of his Legion. Corcoran stressed he would continue to fight for his home country and see Confederate secession defeated. He stated that he would

165 M. Corcoran, The Captivity of General Corcoran: The Only Authentic and Reliable Narrative of the Trials and Suffering Endured, During his Twelve Months’ Imprisonment in Richmond and Other Southern Cities, by Brig-General Michael Corcoran, The Hero of Bull Run (Philadelphia, 1864), p. 45.
166 Ibid., p. 49.
167 Ibid., p. 100.
'never sheathe [his sword] until victory perches upon the national banner of America, or Michael Corcoran is numbered among those who did not return home from the battlefield'. 168 This was in keeping with his own belief that soldiers fighting for the Union should defend the United States to their very end. For Corcoran, giving his life for his American home was a sentiment he expressed whole-heartedly and without question because it meant dying for the defence of home, loved ones, and the higher concept of nationhood and obligated duty to one’s country. As he mentioned earlier in his memoir, he went to Bull Run, faced his captivity and returned to military service because he knew that whatever happened, ‘dying for one’s country is glorious’. 169 He would fulfil that ideal, though not in heroic glory on the battlefield but after falling from his horse in December 1863.

Corcoran’s personal expressions of his devotional home ties correlates with the overall image of the Irish American Union Army commander as a loyal, gallant Irish-born American heroic patriot serving his country. This impression was emphasised particularly in Irish American Civil War wartime songs. Although his prisoner-of-war memoir was written with a wider readership in mind, showing his national devotion to the American public beyond the diaspora, it was not the only display of such sentiment. Corcoran’s dedication to the country and his commitment to the military fight against the Confederacy were reoccurring expressions heard in Irish wartime ballads. The intimate way song lyrics portrayed his character demonstrated his inherent sense of Americanness, developed over a decade of living in New York City before the conflict. The ballad Corcoran’s Ball! was written in 1863 by the Irish songwriter John Mahon. He portrayed Corcoran as the ultimate faithful American officer. Aimed at the whole nation, one verse of the song exclaimed:

You’ve all heard of the Great Michael Corcoran,
That true Son of Erin, so brave in the strife;
The National cause he was ever a worker in,
And the Union to him was more precious than life.
When dastard Secession raised its dark crest upon
This Glorious Country, he answered her call. 170

He answered the call to defend the American Union, Mahon’s lyrics were singing, because it was his own home country’s call for defence and protection. ‘The National Cause’ to keep the country united was as much Corcoran’s as it was every other Union citizen, whether they were foreign-born or not. Corcoran’s Irish Legion quoted above likewise expressed the same sense that Corcoran was fighting to defend ‘the National cause’ of American Union reconciliation and the peaceful future of a united country.

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168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., p. 27.
170 J. Mahon, Corcoran’s Ball! (New York, 1863).
The continual focus and return to Corcoran’s example raises the question of whether the County Sligo native turned ardent American citizen was atypical of wider Irish fighting service and wartime experiences. Certainly, Corcoran himself was more vocal and lyrical in his expressions of what the American Union meant to him than most, but his sentiments could be heard in the accounts of other Irish-born and descended serving soldiers and in other outputs from the home-front. In addition, the description of Corcoran going to fight in *Corcoran’s Irish Legion* applied not just to the 69th New York State Militia who went with him in 1861, but all those of Irish descent who fought across the Union. If the sentiments were reversed to one that extolled Confederate defence, then these lyrical views could extend to all on both sides of the divided nation. Love of country and nationality is a malleable construct. Corcoran provided the diaspora with a solid example and impression that could be used to inspire everyone. He may have been one man, but his wartime experience and sentiments, especially in his expressions of devotion to his home of the United States, could apply to anyone in the diaspora. Ballads helped stress this association.

Moreover, Corcoran was not the only Irish-born Civil War soldier who had come to see the United States as home by the time of the conflict. James Shields, a Democrat, three-time Senator (of three different U.S. states) and Union Army general, had migrated in the 1820s. Originally from County Tryon, this Irishman-turned career American politician and military figure had made a national name for himself in the 1840s during the Mexican-American War, and served for a time leading regiments in the American Civil War. When he died in 1879, lyricist Daniel Moran penned *Lamentation of Gen. James Shields* in his honour. This ballad obituary sang about how ‘he emigrated to America when sixteen years old’ and ‘for his adopted country fought vigorously and bold’, just like other Irish-born and descended soldiers. The song continued by noting how Shields had ‘proved to be a true citizen’ to the country that had been his home for almost fifty years. His own personal ‘history relates’ that American devotion. On the battlefields, debating floors, and across the country, Shields ‘fought a hard battle for the United States’. He was thus lamented as a key figure of nineteenth century assimilated Irish migrant society.\footnote{D. Moran, *Lamentation of Gen. James Shields* (unknown, 1879), quoted by R.L. Wright, *Irish Emigrant Ballads and Songs* (Bowling Green, 1975), p. 478.}

Fictional Irish individuals, like Pat Malloy and his family, also appeared alongside their real-life contemporaries in Irish American Civil War songs to sing about their American home nation association. Micky O’Flaherty was another such fictional Irish-born soldier employed in a ballad to be an example for his fellow Irishmen and diaspora members in America relate to in relation to articulating their loyalty to the Union cause. He appeared in the song *Off for a Soldier*, also produced around the middle of the war in 1863, composed by a S. Leonce. In this lyrical story, O’Flaherty ‘marched with the boys ‘till rebellion is done’ in the Southern states with ‘the stars and the stripes’ floating ‘over my head’. In a mock-Irish brogue, O’Flaherty described the reason he headed to war to his wife, telling her: ‘Peggy, you know I must help save the country [country] that affords me protection and gives me my bread’. Here, O’Flaherty was making the rhetorical point that his American home nation cared for him and fed him, and thus it was only right to repay a debt of duty and aid the country in her hour of wartime need.
By going to war and safeguarding the United States as an all-protecting nation of liberty and freedom welcoming migrant populations, O’Flaherty would ‘return a hero to be pointed at as America’s pride’. He would be an honoured veteran soldier who had defended his home when called upon. Furthermore, *Off for a Soldier*’s lyrics described how O’Flaherty defence of his family on the battlefield was more important than defending them in the home-front because the severity of American unity was at stake. The song stressed this fictional Irish soldier would not return to his family and give ‘a kiss for his wife and his children three’ until the Civil War was ended and Confederate ‘traitors have fired their last gun at the flag of the free’. In a similar vein to Michael Corcoran’s fervent belief in Union victory, only success would bring O’Flaherty home. He would march to the beating drums and under flying regimental colour banners ‘with the soldiers’ who had fought alongside him for their fellow Americans and ‘for the flag of the faithful and free’.172

**The Return Home and Building the Postbellum American Nation**

As the American Civil War drew to a close in the spring of 1865 and Union victory looked assured in the wake of Confederate Army surrenders, contemporary song writers began to turn attention to the aftermath of the conflict, hinting at the future directions the reunited United States of America would go in over the postbellum period and late nineteenth century. The return home from the fighting would bring about prosperity, opportunities and new events for all those living in the country. This was laid out clearest in the ballad *There’s A Heap of Work To Do*, written by Edward Burke in 1865. It was ‘sung, nightly, by James Gaynor, the celebrated Banjoist, at Tony Pastor’s Opera-House, Bowery, New York’. Audiences, including members of the diaspora who lived close to this music hall and who heard its frequent ballad performances about their war service and experiences during the conflict, would have been listened to a list of postbellum issues to tackle. ‘Now, the war is gone and past’ and the ‘Reunited Country’ was reconciling its former warring states, ‘there’s a heap of work to do’ Gaynor wrote.

First was the issue of Reconstruction, slave emancipation and giving African Americans the right to vote, the most pressing concern of the Civil War era. ‘Next, there’s Max, in Mexico’ to contend with, referring to Maximilian I of Mexico, brother to Emperor Francis Joseph I of Austria. Maximilian had been proclaimed emperor himself in 1864, becoming Emperor of Mexico, and was supported in this claim by French Emperor Napoleon III. Maximilian, according to the song, had come ‘here [to the United States] like a sneak, when you thought our people weak – but you’ll find them getting stronger, if you stay’. These lyrics were highlighting the international diplomatic machinations that had been playing out south of the border while the Civil War raged. Now that the conflict had ended, the United States would attend to nearby territorial sovereignty affairs as national focus moved further westwards. All those living in the county would help

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172 S. Leonce, *Off for a Soldier* (unknown, c.1863).
Irish-born and descended residents of the diaspora in the postbellum United States would aid in ensuring the nation kept afloat and advanced after they returned home from the war. Having fought to defend America, they then sang about how they would keep contributing to their reunited homeland. This enhanced their commitment to their American home by talking about serving in future causes, a sentiment mentioned both in passing and in more specific ballads about the Irish American Civil War experience produced in the 1860s. For example, Timothy B. O’Regan wrote and ‘dedicated to the 9th Conn. Volunteers’ the ballad *Save the Constitution*. The 9th Connecticut Volunteers were another Irish-dominant regiment in the Union Army, comparable to their New York counterparts. This ballad sang about the unit’s commitment to the Union cause and the fight to keep the country united. In its final verse, O’Regan described what would happen ‘when peace once more will bless this shore for what it was intended’. Advancement of American liberty, democracy and prosperity would flourish. The Connecticut Irish, as well as the whole country, would then contribute to domestic and international ‘trade and commerce’, and national economic and social developments that ‘will revive’ once ‘civil war is ended’ across the home nation.

Tony Pastor, the owner of the New York Bowery neighbourhood music hall where *There’s A Heap of Work To Do* was first performed, and who penned many of his own Civil War ballads as well as facilitating their recital and dissemination during the 1860s, also produced the song *Gay is the Life of a Fighting American* at the end of the Civil War. Its lyrics were sung from the perspective of any former Union Army soldier, Irish-born, descended or otherwise; the inference was that by fighting for the home in America, American identity would be enhanced. It too included expressions about future developments and fights to come in the American homeland when the singing veteran described how he was ‘now…out where grass is no scarcity, but there’s a plentiful lacking of trees’. This was an observation about the American West, where many postbellum Irish families migrated after settlement in eastern seaboard enclaves in the first half of the nineteenth century. The veteran, who was singing to those in crowded cities along the Atlantic, urged them to move their homes westward with him: ‘to my friends in adversity’, he sang, they should ‘carry light hearts and be lively as fleas!’ by migrating to the open range. Pastor’s lyrics then turned to another postbellum military issue to contend with by making direct reference to ‘your Mormons’, in other words Latter-Day Saints in Utah. There was a lyrical warning that now the Civil War was over, ‘here comes Uncle Samuel, marching his men to the liveliest tune’. Many Irish-born and descended soldiers continued to serve in military forces after the war, serving with the United States Army. However, they did not bother Mormon residents to any great extent in the late 1800s. Attention turned toward ongoing Native American tribal subjugation and destruction. The

173 E. Burke, *There’s A Heap of Work To Do* (New York, 1865).  
175 T. Pastor, *Gay is the Life of a Fighting American*
American Indian Wars through the late 1860s and 1870s up to the turn of the twentieth century saw American home expansion carried out at the continued expense of the country’s oldest inhabitants. That was a subject excluded from Irish American Civil War balladry.

Conclusion
As the lyrical examples quoted in this article have shown, the concept and understanding of the United States as an Irish home ran through Irish American Civil War songs and articulations about their loyalty, commitment and desire to bring forth American Union prosperity and continued existence in the 1860s. The fact that America was an Irish home by this period in the diaspora’s history was reinforced through the performance of these ballads before and after the war. As noted, Pastor’s songs and music hall were close to Irish communities who would have heard this reinforced expression of home and spread this message to the wider American society to which they belonged. The ballads about Pat Malloy could also highlight how well-established migrant communities had come to be in the United States.

*Pat Malloy* was ‘sung by D.J. Maginnis, of Morris Brothers, Pell and Trowbridge’s Minstrel’ performing group. This troupe included Harry Pell, who was also his own producer and protagonist of Irish music and songs in American culture. Return of *Pat Malloy* was subsequently ‘composed for, and sung with unbounded applause by William H. Lindsey’ in New York and American music halls. Placed together, these two ballads reveal how far members of the diaspora had come over the course of the Civil War era. Across the both songs, it was possible for audiences to trace and become familiar with the fictional Malloy’s transition. Throughout the verses, he returns to Ireland after he establishes himself in American society, raising enough money to bring his family back with him and look after his mother. The fact he pays Mrs. Malloy’s rent is indicative of that. In addition, the ballads’ refrains alter to show how his home had moved from Ireland to America. In both, listeners and performers were told: ‘Ould Ireland’ is my country’. This continues until the final line of *Return of Pat Malloy*, when the notion of Ireland being Pat Malloy’s home disappears from the lyrics altogether. It was New America that now took on that mantel and identity. Michael Corcoran’s own example provided a real-life counterpart to this same national home association.

Irish American Civil War songs provide one of the clearest contemporary popular and public articulations of the American Union being an Irish home nation. The reason that Irish-born and descended soldiers fought for the country, adopted its ideals, upheld and bled for the flag, was because they were the manifestations of their American homeland. It was home that was ultimately being fought for and sung about during the conflict. Civil War songs by and about the Irish who fought in the war pulled together all the strands of American loyalty, identity and home nation association that returned continually to rhetoric of innate kinship with the United States through expressions of sharing and defending American ideals. As demonstrated, the constant collective association of viewing the United States as the Irish American home in writings and lyrics

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176 *Pat Malloy.*  
177 *Return of Pat Malloy.*  
178 *Pat Malloy.*
reveals how an inherent sense of Americanness pervaded the diaspora’s understanding of their place in the country by the 1860s.

Fighting for the Irish American home in the conflict gave the Irish opportunities to demonstrate this through song. Ballad proclamations that America and its ideals were entities that belonged to the diaspora, and articulations of sentiments about how the diaspora shared in the collective citizen body contributing to the war effort and the country’s future prosperity, reveal how Irish identity had become American in the mid-nineteenth century. The American Civil War, and their own lyrical song productions, provided the platforms onto which this home identity could be observed amongst the Irish diaspora American community to which Michael Corcoran, Mickey O’Flaherty and the Malloy family all belonged and extolled through singing.

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Africa


Colonial Child Survival Initiatives in Southern Cameroons:
A Challenging Multi-actor Sector, 1922-1961

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Abstract
Alarming infant mortality in Southern Cameroons greatly troubled the colonial administration, since colonial agents saw it as an impediment to the attainment of colonial agenda. In collaboration with mission agencies and Native Administrations, the colonial administrative and medical staff sought to address the welfare of children through social and educative measures aimed at their care, hygiene, and nutrition. Practically, these socio-educative solutions, entrusted in the hands of missionaries, nurses, traditional rulers, teachers, midwives, medical doctors, and the peasant population, were enforced in maternities (child welfare clinics), hospitals, schools, and in homes. This paper critically examines those child welfare interventions, paying close attention to the rationale, actors, nature, and challenges of child survival in Southern Cameroons. Primary sources from the National Archives Buea, Cameroon and existing literature were consulted and from them, the paper contends that the dynamics and travails of child welfare hinged on encounters, negotiations, and hybridization of the ideas and interests of Europeans and Southern Cameroonians. In as much as child survival was heightened, this study reveals a picture of an ill-intentioned, poorly conceived, makeshift and self-serving child welfare system at the service of the colonial imperative.

Keywords: Colonialism, infant mortality, child welfare, Southern Cameroons

Introduction
The provision of health services was an accompanying feature of European colonialism considering that ill health was a threat to the exploitative colonial agenda. It was in this light that disease control and public and private health programs were

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developed in Africa and elsewhere by colonial powers. As a hallmark of colonialism, preventive healthcare was intended to ease colonialism by ensuring that both Europeans (in their various categories: administrators, troops, missionaries and exploiters) and Africans (mostly labourers and rarely the general population) were medically fit for colonial tasks. This required that particular attention be accorded to the welfare of children through public health measures. Across colonial Africa, there were initiatives to roll back infant mortality by developing child welfare services. Hinged on colonial exigencies, child welfare programs expanded in Africa in the context of a threatened population. In British possessions, the prevalence of disease and poor social conditions amounted to an embarrassingly high infant mortality; a situation that was detrimental to the colonial project. Developing child health and welfare programs to ensure the survival of children thus became imperative, and the colonial medical services in the colonies went to work. Back in Britain child welfare had already been associated with the training of the medical staff destined for the colonial medical service. Some of them had to undertake a specialist course on child health in the London and Liverpool Schools of Tropical Medicine before deployment to the colonies.

In Southern Cameroons where child health problems loomed large, with huge impacts on population growth and labour availability, infant welfare was quickly built into the colonially-motivated healthcare system, which was a mere exportation from neighboring Nigeria. The colonial medical service which was styled as the Department of Medical and Sanitary Services, under the headship of a Senior Medical Officer (later renamed as Principal Medical Officer), was charged with overseeing and supervising the child health services that were provided by government, Christian mission agencies and Native Administrations. The engagement of the trio in the sector largely took the form of opening and running maternity centres and the creation of special wards for children in hospitals and dispensaries. These child health services thus resulted in the surveillance of children in the territory by expatriate workers who were consistently assisted by locally trained staff in subordinate roles. In the 1920s, the Senior Medical Officer made an observation linking child health and colonialism. He described infant mortality as the loss of would-be generations of labour. This is indicative that child welfare programs in Southern Cameroons were informed by the colonial imperative, which, I believe, should serve as an analytical base for this study.

Interestingly, several important histories of colonial medicine have provided analytical foundations to this study. Scholars such as Michael Gelfand and Ransford wrote positively about colonial medicine, presenting it as a voluntary gift that improved the

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183 NAB, File No. 930, Maternity and Child Programme.
The 1980s witnessed a scholarly shift when colonial medical histories criticizing Western medicine in Africa appeared. These critics (Thomas McKeown, David Baronov, Jonathan Roberts, and Olumwullah Osaak) are unanimous in associating the motivations of colonial medicine with the exploitative colonial enterprise. These laudatory and anti-laudatory conflicting academic positions which informed analyses on child welfare programs marginalized the complex encounters between Europeans (administrators, medics, and missionaries) and Africans (chiefs, dispensers, nurses and peasant men and women). The negotiated process which was a hallmark of child welfare programs was either ignored or missed. Studies appearing from the late 1990s are filling this gap by tilting attention to such marginalized encounters and ensuing negotiations. These histories represent a new (but minority) scholarly trend as they underline the complex negotiations that marked the colonial child welfare sector. This paper cues from these studies to contribute to the academic debate by situating infant welfare in Southern Cameroons in the broader discourse of maternal and infant welfare. Subscribing to the new trend, the paper documents the complex negotiations and interactions between colonizers, colonial subjects, and local intermediaries that characterized efforts to address the welfare of children.

Regarding Southern Cameroons so far, child welfare has been swept away into the march of mainstream colonial medical history. Existing scholarship reveals that too much generalization in colonial medicine histories has veiled and obscured some events that had an equally great impact in the history of medicine in Southern Cameroons. Child health in colonial Southern Cameroons remains one of such marginalized and overlooked areas of Cameroon’s medical history. This paucity of child welfare history in Southern Cameroons contrasts with the abundance of colonial medical studies. Without doubt and as already established, existing scholarship serves as a lens for analyzing the intentions, nature, complex interactions and travails of child welfare in Southern Cameroons.

This paper looks at the story of child welfare initiatives in Southern Cameroons. It focuses on the underlying motives, encounters, and changing direction of child welfare and to discuss its service to the agendas and interests at play in Southern Cameroons – initially one small part of the German Protectorate called Cameroon from 1884 to the World War One era. The territory became part of British Cameroons as a mandate of the

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League of Nations (and later the United Nations) under British administration until independence in 1961. British Cameroons was broken up into Northern and Southern Cameroons and both were administratively attached to Nigeria. In Southern Cameroons, interventions in child welfare began in the 1920s, taking shape as British colonial rule coursed. Through child welfare programs, European colonial agents considered themselves entitled, by their expertise and in the name of their civilizing mission, to interfere with the private child welfare world of the various ethnic communities in Southern Cameroons. It was a world where women conceived and gave birth to children; babies were bathed, clothed, and fed to ensure their survival. Hence, it is the history of this development of colonial infant survival as a product of encounters, negotiations, hybridization of the ideas and interests of Southern Cameroonians and Europeans that is examined. It opens up with the underlying motives for the focus on child welfare before going on to discuss the aura of actors who were pushed by their separate agendas to negotiate and engage in child welfare interventions. This will be followed by an analytical discourse on the child welfare programs that were developed by the participating actors. A final section will deal with the challenges of infant survival efforts.

**Rationale for Infant Welfare Services**

To understand the rationale for infant welfare services in Southern Cameroons adequately requires an analytical framework informed by the academic debate on the intentions of colonial medicine in Africa. The reasons why infant health services were developed and expanded in Southern Cameroons were necessarily diverse. The British Colonial healthcare system accorded significant attention to the welfare of infants with a view to ensuring survival. There was indeed an emphasis on children’s welfare which amounted to the establishment of Maternity Centres where antenatal and post-natal preventive measures were undertaken. The Maternity Centre was understood as a preventive healthcare facility for small children and their mothers. The medical doctors who manned the medical service in Southern Cameroons presented infant health services as an effort to improve the health of children and general well-being. This view enjoys support in some colonial medicine literature, especially by those who celebrate colonial medicine, presenting it as effective and beneficial to Africans. In his *Tropical Victory*, Gelfand holds a popular image of Western biomedicine in Africa, seeing it as a voluntary gift that improved the health of Africans.\(^{187}\) No wonder colonial medical reports on Southern Cameroons present infant welfare services as a successful response to alarming infant mortality, with no hidden agendas.

Such a heroic image of Western biomedicine in Africa, as earlier emphasized, has been criticized and associated with baseless euro-centrism by scholars such as McKeown, Olumwullah Osaka, Baronov, Prins, Curtin, and Echenbeng. These critics are unanimous in associating the motivations of colonial medicine with the exploitative colonial enterprise. Across Southern Cameroons, the high mortality among children was a cause for concern for the colonial administration which had interpreted it as an obstacle to the

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\(^{187}\) Gelfand, *Tropical Vistory*. 

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The undeclared fear was that the high death rate among children could lead to a drop in population. This could have had a negative bearing on the availability of labourers for the execution of various colonial projects. The British medical staff attributed these deaths to preventable diseases such as malaria, small pox, and to poor childcare habits. As a central part of government’s strategy to swell the workforce in Southern Cameroons, maternal and infant care became more highly medicalized than any other component of health and healing in the territory. This coincided with the international crusade for the promotion of child welfare. In 1924, the Geneva Declaration urged Western nations to invest in the welfare of children in their possessions the world over. The declaration caused Western colonial powers in Africa to pay more attention to the welfare of children. This yielded the International Conference on African Children held in Geneva in 1931 at a time when infant mortality in Southern Cameroons had reached alarming proportions. This focus on the welfare of African children during the heydays of colonialism, despite mounting international interest on children’s wellbeing, is further evidence that infant survival programs were informed by exploitative colonial agendas.

With the fear that poor child health could result in population reduction with injurious outcomes on the colonial agenda, the British colonial administration, in collaboration with missions and NAs resolved to bring expectant mothers, new born babies and small children at the centre of their medical services. As an infant care provider, the British colonial government can be accused of lacking a genuine sympathy for sick and vulnerable children and a wish to relieve their suffering. Hence the decisive argument for improving the infants’ health, though publicly declared by British colonial officials as a natural increase in attention to children’s plight, was not for the good of Southern Cameroons, but the economic and political interests of the colonial power.

On humanitarian and holistic missionization grounds, missionary medicine was promoted in Southern Cameroons, with preventive and curative approaches to child healthcare. In their medical reports, missionary medics underlined their commitment and sensitivity to the high incidence of infant mortality in the territory. They understood their interventions in child welfare as a mechanism to win Christian converts and to present Christianity as an enhancer of the wellbeing of Southern Cameroonians. This dual humanitarian and religious agenda was central to the training and engagement of midwives and nurses whose role it was to man the maternity centres that were opened and operated by mission agencies. To the missionary agendas should be added the interests of the local population: men, women, traditional rulers, trained nurses and dispensers. In such a complex context of colonial child welfare programs, the local population sought to attain more survival chances for children, while ensuring the sustenance of existing indigenous child welfare services.

Yet, however multifarious these motivations were, certain common themes can be identified as informing the decision of colonial agents to focus on infant welfare. Obviously, as already shown, some of the reasons were economic (ensuring future

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availability of labour through improved infant health); some humanitarian (especially Christian missionaries who saw the reduction of child mortality as their responsibility); some were religious (easing conversion to Christianity); and all were colonially determined (in its exploitative, civilizing and racial superiority perspectives). In aggregate, the provision of child welfare services was underpinned by the colonial circumstances of the period in which they were developed. As such, the rationale for the promotion of child care yields the thinking that it was a medical response marred by tensions between increased attention and novel endeavours to contain disease and roll back mortality among children on the one hand, and the need to ease the attainment of masked colonial agendas on the other. This thinking, informed by the already highlighted triumphalist and non-laudatory currents of the colonial medicine academic debate, should gain credence when the actors, nature, priorities, and challenges of infant welfare in Southern Cameroons are analyzed.

**Actors in the Colonial Infant Survival Interventions**

With a rationale underpinned by a complex web of intertwining agendas, the reduction of infant mortality in Southern Cameroons required rigorous efforts that involved an aura of actors: colonial government, mission agencies, Native Administration, nurses, teachers, dispensers, and the male and female peasants. But the key actors in the child welfare sector were the colonial government, mission agencies and Native Administration. The engagement of the trio in the development of child welfare was a negotiated process, initially motivated by the realization that the alarming infant mortality which had been neglected by the Germans was an impediment to their agendas. The British government portrayed itself as committed to enhancing the wellbeing of the Southern Cameroons population in accordance with Article 2 of the Mandate Agreement.\(^{190}\) The missions whose presence in Southern Cameroons came only after World War One (with the exception of the Basel Mission) following Britain’s recourse to the policy of terminating the work of German missions saw intervention in child survival as a catalyst for conversion to Christianity. The Native Administrations headed by traditional rulers involved in child welfare within the blueprint of the indirect rule policy.\(^{191}\) As local government representatives, traditional rulers raised funds with which they promoted socio-economic development, including child welfare. These chiefs interacted with government and missions in the development of child welfare programs.

The three actors were charged with the implementation of child welfare programs which involved the training and recruitment of staff, construction of the necessary infrastructure, and ensuring that the staff and services were at the service of the population. In medical schools in Britain, Nigeria and Southern Cameroons, prospective child health medical staff (health sisters, midwives, community nurses, and dispensers) took courses on how to roll back maternal ignorance of infant care, hygiene, and feeding, which

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\(^{190}\) The Mandate Agreement in its article 2 made Britain responsible for the promotion to the utmost of the material and moral well-being and the social progress of Southern Cameroonians. For more on this subject, read N. Rubin, *Cameroon: An African Federation* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1971), pp. 199-203.

\(^{191}\) Indirect rule was a British colonial administrative policy through which Africans were constituted into local administrations and administered through their chiefs.
according to the colonial medical doctors were responsible for infant mortality. The white medical officers were supplemented by local recruits. The 1924 Geneva Declaration and 1931 International Conference on African Children in which Britain participated raised concerns about infant welfare. This together with Britain’s interests resulted in efforts to end what was wrongly described as inadequacies in indigenous mothering and child rearing. Resulting from these child welfare inadequacies which accrued from surveys conducted in the 1920s was government commitment to turn the situation around in partnership with missions, traditional rulers, and local population. Thus, rolling back maternal and child rearing ignorance became a hallmark of child welfare programs that were developed. No doubt, the centrality of the child welfare interventions rested on baseless and culturally ignorant assumptions which portrayed Southern Cameroonian women as failing in the duty of child care.¹⁹²

Building on such flawed assumptions, the British reached the conclusion that the development of child welfare would take the form of infant welfare centers with the task of providing knowledge and advice to mothers on infant care. This required collaboration between the medical department, mission agencies, Native Administration, and the education department as infant welfare workers and hospital nurses had to visit schools and teach pupils about hygiene and child care. This was the context in which infant survival interventions were launched in the 1930s. It was to involve a plurality of actors and varying agendas which eventually accorded credence to the view that the development of child welfare services in Southern Cameroons was a negotiated process between colonial administrators, missionaries, medical officers, nurses, traditional rulers, and African dispensers. What follows is an attempt to examine the plethora of child welfare services, showing how they were shaped by encounters and negotiations between Europeans and Southern Cameroonians.

Infant Survival Interventions

Child welfare programs in Southern Cameroons spanned from the 1930s to 1961, and involved the establishment of maternities (child welfare centers), deployment of personnel, and organization of tours. These interventions which were intended to address infant mortality by rolling back what was ignorantly or arrogantly referred to as “mother ignorance” were the negotiated and collaborative efforts of government, missions, and Native Administration. Surmounting mother ignorance as a leeway to checking infant mortality resulted in a child welfare policy that privileged infant care, feeding and hygiene.

The implementation of the infant welfare policy began in 1934 with the opening of an infant welfare center at Victoria by some European women resident in the town. This was purely a private initiative.¹⁹³ Expectedly the efforts of these European women most of whom were wives to colonial administrators ended without any meaningful infant

¹⁹² It was noted in the introduction to this paper that Southern Cameroonians were not ignorant of proper ideas and practices of infant care. Before the introduction of Western child care methods, Southern Cameroons was a world where women conceived and gave birth to children; babies were bathed, clothed, and fed to ensure their survival.

welfare service provision. Justifying its reluctance to invest in child welfare services, the government medical staff argued that “such services would not be beneficial to the women folk who were so tied to their traditional system of child care that they rejected all foreign interference.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 38.} Government medical staff thus retired into simply providing advice to expectant mothers who by chance showed up in government hospitals in Bamenda, Mamfe, Kumba and Victoria. Accruing from this reticence was heightening infant mortality which could not allow missions and NAs indifferent. Consequently, Christian missions and NAs took upon themselves to promote infant welfare in the territory by establishing and operating maternity homes.

Missions’ involvement in child welfare services came only in 1935 when Catholic sisters established a maternity home at Shisong in Nso. The Shisong centre whose management was headed by Reverend Sister Camilla maintained high standards of cleanliness and organization. The maternity staff conducted prenatal, delivery and post-natal interventions and regularly advised women on good children feeding habits. In 1939 for instance, a total of 220 deliveries were recorded from a total of 240 expectant mothers who visited the facility.\footnote{T. Nehethega, ‘Health Services in Bamenda Division’, DIPES II Dissertation in History (HTTC Bambili, 2014), p. 70.} In an effort to beef up its services, the Shisong Maternity Centre engaged in the training of midwives who were engaged by the Catholic Mission and other providers of infant welfare services upon graduation. This training began in 1952 when a female medical doctor and two expatriate nurses were added to the staff of the child welfare facility. After visiting the facility in 1952, the Inspector General of Medical Services Dr. S. L. A. Manuwa, appreciated the work of the Catholic staff, observing that “Deliveries last year were 495, with no maternal death and are expected to exceed the 500 mark this year.”\footnote{NAB, File No. Sc/a(1955),1, Inspection Notes by Inspector General of Medical Services.}

In the dying years of British administration, the Catholics established another maternity center at Nnjikom which had an orphanage section. The orphanage at Nnjikom which accommodated forty infants in 1960 offered child welfare services which included the prevention of obstetric complications and malnutrition. Sadly fifty percent of these children died of an epidemic due to the absence of prompt preventive care.\footnote{Ibid.} In Soppo and Fiango where the Catholics also operated maternity centres, preventive medical services were offered to children and expectant mothers. In these centres, much attention was given to infant nutrition which, according to the Health Sisters, was central to the wellbeing of children. They also made available ante-natal services to expectant mothers, ensuring that the baby’s growth in the womb went well. But the high rate of apathy which was registered among the Bakweri and Bafaw indigenous population acted as a hindrance to the success of infant welfare services.\footnote{NAB, File No. B99, Annual Medical Report for Southern Cameroons, 1954, p. 22.}

Protestant missions, notably the Basel and Baptist missions also operated a few maternity homes. Regarding the Basel Mission, its maternity centres were located in
Nyassoso and Bafut, with a total of eight beds. On their part, the Baptists had maternity centres at Belo and Mbem. Just like the Baptist ones, their maternities had very few beds and offered only minimum ante and post-natal services.\footnote{Ibid., p. 23.} In total therefore, Christian missions operated nine maternity centres across Southern Cameroons. The territory’s 1954 annual medical report resumed the infant welfare services of Christian missions in these words:

> The Christian missions were active in the field. Maternity centres were conducted by the Cameroons Baptist Mission at Banso (15), Belo (4), Mbem (4); by the Roman Catholic Mission at Shisong (12), Soppo (12), Njinikom (4), Fiango (4); by the Basel Mission at Nyassoso (4), Bafut (4). The figures in brackets indicate the number of beds. The busiest of these was Shisong (439) Banso (399) Njinikom (212) Soppo (149). The figures in brackets indicate the number of deliveries in the nine months ending on 31. 12. 54. At Shisong there were 15 Grade II Midwives in training.\footnote{Ibid., p. 23.}

This excerpt from an annual medical report is indicative of government’s recognition of the role missions played in child welfare.

Initially, as earlier stressed, neither the colonial government nor NAs appeared very interested in child welfare. But from 1942 onwards, NAs began to sponsor the training of midwives in Nigerian medical institutions in preparation for engagement in the provision of child welfare services.\footnote{Forkusam, ‘The Evolution of Health Services’, p. 38.} This shift in health policy by NAs came on the heels of heightening infant mortality from diseases that could be prevented. But this initiative did not immediately transition into the establishment of NA maternity centres due to the lack of funds and discouragement from the government. The fear of the government was that the supervision of NA maternities was likely going to be a difficult task. But such reluctance did not discourage NAs from remaining consistent in their request for authorization from government to be associated with the child welfare sector. Acknowledging this lobby for the creation of NA maternities, the annual report on the Cameroons to the Trusteeship Council for 1947 noted, \textit{inter-alia}, that;

> There is an ever-increasing demand for the establishment of maternity homes and ante-natal clinics, but such a demand has to be watched with care owing to lack of supervision. There is also a great demand for the personal attention of doctors and midwives at child birth, but the lack of accommodation in the institutions and the small staff available precludes the development of this very important work.\footnote{NAB, File No. AB78, Report on the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship to the Trusteeship Council, 1947, pp. 86-87.}

By 1947, as the above citation reveals, missions were the only providers of infant welfare services in the territory, with government showing little or no concern in the sector. Under the weight of pressure from NAs, the government resolved to open up a bit.
In 1947, the medical staff in government hospitals and NA dispensaries were permitted to open in their facilities child welfare centres if and only there was space and funds. This resulted in the availability of medical services for children in the government hospitals and some NA dispensaries. This factoring of infant welfare into curative healthcare at hospitals and dispensaries was problematic, given that it gave attention to treating diseases instead of their prevention. The curative services that were offered in these facilities were unimaginably inadequate, and in most of these hospitals, there were no midwives to advice mothers on proper childcare, feeding and hygiene.

For the time being, government remained glued to its policy of providing infant welfare services in its hospitals. But other measures were taken to encourage mothers to take proper care of their children. The most noticeable of these measures was the holding of baby shows in divisional headquarters. In Bamenda and Banso for instance, Baby Shows were held in 1953, at which there were 106 and 150 infants who were presented respectively. During the shows, there were awards to the best children of various ages as well as prizes for regular attendance at infant welfare clinics. Extra points were given to clean, healthy, and vaccinated children. Lobbies for more attention to child welfare caused government to institute a mobile Maternity and Child Welfare Unit in the Victoria Division. It was through this mobile unit that prenatal and maternity services were offered to expectant mothers and children in areas of population concentration in the division. Mothers took their children to the mobile child welfare staff, for routine investigation during which they were weighed each time and treated for minor diseases diagnosed. They were also educated on better methods of feeding and general management including toileting.

Indeed, the mobile unit which was under the charge of a European Health Sister was efficient and consisted of one government midwife and five Native Administration Community Nurses. The unit toured the villages in the Victoria Division and operated on occasional basis centres in places such as Tiko, Muyuka, Buea, Muea, Bakingile, Ekona, Lysoka and Modeka. In 1954, child welfare statistics for the Victoria Division were encouraging as there were 4850 attendances and 825 home visits.

In government hospitals, the attendance of children increased, especially in the Victoria Hospital which had qualified midwives and a paediatrician. In 1955 for instance, the Victoria Division registered an admirable attendance rate of 728 new patients, 3,983 attendances at the antenatal clinics, 226 new patients, and 3,083 attendances at the child welfare clinics. Across the territory as already pointed out, each government hospital

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203 Ibid., p. 87.
205 Ibid.
reserved a certain number of beds for maternity cases. Child welfare clinics were conducted once a week in each government hospital. In these clinics, children were routinely checked and weighed. For the year 1960, maternity units in government hospitals across Southern Cameroons registered 46,933 attendances and 3,083 deliveries. But government child welfare services were concentrated in divisional headquarters which hosted its hospitals. This left expectant mothers and children in localities far-off from towns such as Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe, and Victoria in a dire health situation.

It was only in the 1950s that NAs were permitted to establish and operate maternity centres. The rule was that such NA centres had to be subjected to supervision by government medical officers as was the case with their dispensaries. In 1954, two NA maternity centres were already in operation in two NAs (one at Ndop in Bamenda Division and the other at Wum in the Wum Division). In that year, these two dispensaries that were the first to be operated by NAs registered 229 deliveries and 1477 ante-natal cases.\(^{209}\) As the years passed, other NA maternity centres opened in the territory, though under tough conditions. The Bali Native Authority operated a maternity centre and was unable to afford the services of a midwife. This caused the Medical Officer for the Bamenda Division to close the maternity centre in 1957.

Irrespective of these difficulties, especially the acute lack of midwives and government reluctance, NA maternity centres increased to seventeen by 1961 when the British left the territory. The annual medical report of Southern Cameroons for 1961 lamented about the deficient child care services offered by most of the NA maternity centres.\(^{210}\) The only efficient NA maternity centres, as per the Director of Medical Services, were those of Ndop, Bali (which had been reopened), Victoria, Tiko and Buea.

Bamenda Division had the highest number of NA maternity centres while Mamfe Division had only one NA maternity centre at Wedikum which did not record ante-natal and delivery cases in 1961. This may be indicative of the apathy of the people or the grossly ill-equipped and ill-staffed nature of the centres. Curiously, infant mortality from preventable illnesses was highest in Mamfe Division. In fact, the dilemmas in the Mamfe Division can be built upon to represent an overall picture of the deficient nature of NA maternity and child welfare services. Most of the centres functioned without midwives and were too poor financially to engage the services of midwives as well as to finance the tours of visiting government medical staff. These visits were also scarce, with some NA maternity centres going for more than a year without being visited. Consequently, some NAs engaged the services of dressers and dispensers in the maternity centres. This was pathetic given that these dressers and dispensers had no knowledge on childbirth and childcare and were of little or no service to would-be mothers and children. Generally, child welfare services that came in the form of maternity homes, maternity wards in government hospital and mobile childcare units encountered numerous difficulties.

Difficulties


The efficient functioning of child welfare services was limited by the absence of adequate supervision from qualified European nurses or doctors. This was due to transport problems which made it tortuous for medical doctors stationed in the divisional headquarters to pay regular visits to infant welfare centers. In 1954, the Medical Officer for the Bamenda Division raised this problem when he informed the Principal Medical Officer that the vital infant welfare service in his division had no adequate professional supervision. The work was abandoned in the hands of locally-trained indigenous staff and traditional rulers who relied on limited knowledge to address issues pertaining to child care, hygiene and nutrition. Evidently, rural communities in Southern Cameroons depended on child welfare programs made available to them by indigenous welfare workers engaged by government and NAs. Writing on this subject in 1959, barely two years to the termination of British administration, the Director of Medical Services, Dr. G. G. Dibue, revealed that NA medical services had far outpaced the recruitment of Professional and Technical Staff to supervise them.

Transport problems did not only stall the supervision of child welfare centers as attendances in such centres were equally affected. It was extremely difficult for pregnant women and mothers to tortuously trek from distant localities to the maternity centres. In terms of reach and coverage therefore, the centres’ balance sheet was not admirable. Indeed the staff of the centres was faced with the inability to prevent diseases that were common among children in the area. The annual medical report of Southern Cameroons for 1960 noted the increase in child mortality due to the inability of maternity centres to address a dysentery epidemic.

Inadequacies in staff and equipment also had a negative bearing on the efficacy of child welfare interventions. The welfare workers that were trained and engaged by the intervening institutions were hardly sufficient. This explains why it was only in the Victoria Division that an efficient Child Welfare Mobile Unit existed. Rural localities in the rest of the divisions lacked such units, with child welfare left in the hands of a few native workers who interacted directly with their mothers, sisters and children. There was the overworking of the few welfare workers that were engaged by the government, NAs, and missions. Indeed, there was lack of personnel with a consequent pressure upon those who were in post. This lack of health personnel negatively affected the healthcare system in multiple ways. It is probable that the actions of these indigenous welfare workers shaped the encounter between traditional child welfare and the Western version. But the work of these welfare workers was stalled by deficiencies in infrastructure and equipment. Caused by limited resources and no real commitment, inadequate welfare facilities resulted in low quality care services for children. This was worsened by inequities in the distribution of child welfare facilities between urban and rural communities.

Another obstructing element on the path of child welfare in Southern Cameroons was indigenous indolence. The promotion of child welfare along Western lines was

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212 NAB, File No. Sc/a/1959/4, Native Authority Medical and Health Services, 1959.
preceded by an established traditional blueprint for the welfare of children. It consisted of antenatal and postnatal approaches to child care, hygiene, and nutrition, with the intent of limiting mortality. The encounter between both approaches, though negotiated between Europeans and Southern Cameroonians, met with indigenous reticence. This hinged on the fact that European actors in the sector failed to understand child welfare as a socio-cultural event, which could not be successful without being tied to the local context. Traditional Midwives who had been intervening in child care were not associated with colonial interventions. This was either a product of colonial arrogance or insufficient knowledge of the local culture. The lack of trust expressed by the local population ensued from this European attitude, with a negative imprint on child welfare.

Some remarks on childcare in the 1955 medical report concurred with the persistent indigenous indolence, revealing that “Apathy was most noticeable among the indigenous Bakweris.”\(^{214}\) Such apathy always found expression in child welfare clinics, domiciliary visits, and mothercraft sessions. Some mothers, by their lack of trust and continued attachment to traditional child welfare, boycotted the colonial child care facilities. Continuous reliance on traditional midwives, whom their European welfare workers ignorantely described as “unqualified”, was common across the territory. This in part explains why child care services were initially not well-perceived and trusted by community members. This produced tensions between young welfare workers and older mothers. But some women, especially in the major towns such as Bamenda, Buea, Victoria, Mamfe, and Kumba, trusted the colonial child welfare and fully participated in the various schemes even though they were not sufficiently funded to offer state-of-the-art care. This trust heightened over time and circumstances as improved care, hygiene, and nutrition amounted to declining deaths among children.

In aggregate, colonial child welfare in Southern Cameroons faced problems that limited its attainments. Welfare programs, as noted already, were implemented in a context of conflicting agendas, deficient facilities, professionally inadequate staff, and colonial arrogance and cultural ignorance. As such the improved standard of childcare that was expected to be introduced via the colonial childcare policy was met only in a meagre way. The colonial and missionary medical personnel concentrated their activities in the main towns, while abandoning medical work among children in the rural areas to NAs. On the whole, inadequacies in staff and equipment as well as indigenous people’s apathy and inequitable distribution of child care facilities were features that ruined the improvement of childcare in Southern Cameroons. So while infant mortality dropped among children who were privileged to benefit from such services in major towns, the death toll among the unfortunate ones in rural communities whose mothers lived far away from the children’s health facility remained a cause for concern.

Conclusion

Scholars have noted the colonial intervention in child welfare and survival in Africa. Some see it as intended for Africans, lauding its efficacy and outcomes. For others, it had a colonial imperative and was embarrassingly deficient, with little benefits accruing

to local people. A recent current, while upholding that child welfare hinged on a colonial imperative, adds that the interventions and outcomes were products of encounters and negotiations between European and African child welfare actors. This paper has built on the colonial imperative and negotiated perspective of colonial medicine to examine the development of colonial infant welfare in Southern Cameroons, concluding that its dynamics and travails hinged on encounters, negotiations, and hybridization of the ideas and interests of European and indigenous actors in the sector. The encounter and ensuing negotiations are understood in the light of the underlying motives of the aura of actors that engaged in child welfare interventions. Hence, what is usually considered as Western child welfare in Southern Cameroons is nothing but a hybrid of Western and indigenous child welfare cultures which ensued from complex interactions between indigenous peoples and colonizers. Though child welfare programs were negotiated and beneficial to the welfare of children and to its European propagators, this study reveals a picture of an ill-intentioned, poorly conceived, makeshift and self-serving child healthcare system at the service of the colonial imperative.

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BOOK REVIEWS

“Homeland and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763 by Jeffers Lennox,” Krystl Raven, University of Saskatchewan

Homelands and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763


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Jeffers Lennox’s book provides invaluable insight into the history of Acadia, Nova Scotia, and Mi’kma’ki revealing how France and Britain negotiated their empires in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century by using maps as an essential tool in their understanding of the region. Acadia and Nova Scotia were, according to Lennox, imagined spaces “with brief histories and thin populations, placeholders for the aspirations of European powers” (p.19). However, for that to happen not only did borders and maps needed to be agreed to by both France and Britain; but also they could only gain control of the region through alliances with the Indigenous people of the area. Lennox demonstrates the importance of maps as a tool of imperialism and how one can understand empires as a collection of geographic identities; whose boundaries expanded, retracted, and overlapped at different times.

France and Britain each had differing maps, cartographic abilities, and understandings of geographic spaces. They both relied on the information of geographers and cartographers to negotiate and claim land. Although Acadia and Nova Scotia existed on European maps, “confusion over boundaries and internal competition among settlers and officials prevented New England or New France from making defensible claims to territory beyond their forts and limited local settlements…” (p.33). These confusions and distractions prevented establishing firm control over the regions until 1763 when the Treaty of Paris and settlement began.

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Lennox takes a chronological approach from 1690 to 1763 to demonstrate how Acadia and Nova Scotia can be “understood as a collection of competing geographic identities” (p.253) and that maps were an essential tool in colonialism, not just settlement and conquest. Chapter one explores why Nova Scotia and Acadia remained mostly imagined spaces before 1710, outlining the challenges that both France and Britain faced in creating and maintaining settlements in the area. Chapter two highlights the way the Indigenous peoples of the area, particularly the Wabenacki confederacy, continued to maintain control the region while Britain and France negotiated and created treaties from 1710 to 1726. Chapter three covers the years 1726 to 1744, where the three parties competed for control over the areas, with France beginning to have a better relationship with the Indigenous people of the region. In this period Britain worked to appease the Indigenous people and Acadians in the area creating new allies, as both “Acadians and the Mi’kmaq were well aware that they could resist British expansion, but they could not remove the British altogether” (p. 139). Chapters four and five recount the expansion of Britain’s power through the settlement of Halifax and how this reawakened conflicts over the region’s boundaries. There were two attempts to resolve the uncertainties around Acadia and Nova Scotia: The Boundary Commission of 1760-1753, and diplomatic negotiations between 1754 and 1755. These negotiations relied heavily on maps and both sides wrote detailed memoirs over the existing maps while negotiating areas that were overseas and unseen by France and Britain’s diplomats. Lastly in Chapter Six, Lennox examines the Seven Years’ War revealing that by 1763 Nova Scotia was well established and victory over Acadia was completed with the Treaty of Paris; expelling the Acadians and removing the power of the French and Indigenous alliances.

While demonstrating the importance of maps, Lennox also explores the cartographers and geographers themselves, showing how the quality and accuracy of maps determined Britain and France’s power in negotiations. Cartographers were not neutral; their politics influenced the maps they created as shown through the ways their maps represented regions. Through the period of 1710 to the end of the British-Wabanaki treaties in 1726, both Britain and France questioned where the region named Acadia was located and commissioned new maps to determine the land controlled by each empire. French maps such as the one created by Henri Chatelain in 1719, for example, emphasized the complex nature of French concepts of empire and Indigenous homelands. He applied the word ‘Acadie’ across the Bay of Fundy and into what France claimed was Canada. In contrast, the map produced in the same era by British geographer Herman Moll, portrayed Acadia as uninhabited and ready for settlement. Each map revealed how these cartographers imagined Acadia; ultimately representing the region to justify the aims of their country. The negotiations over who controlled land, and if maps were accurate representations, continued until the ending of the Seven Years War and the Treaty
of Paris. As well, Lennox spotlights how Indigenous concepts of land and representations through maps differed from European concepts.

A principal strength of this book is Lennox’s commitment to ensuring that Wabanaki and Mi’kmaq agency is featured throughout, allowing a more nuanced understanding of imperial expansion in North America. Lennox develops a narrative of not two empires, but instead of three, whose control and sovereignty of the region was fluid and changing over the period. Not only was this period of a conflict between Britain and France, but the Wabanaki and Mi’kmaq peoples were also active participants and influenced the expansion of the European empires. The Wabinaki Confederacy also had goals of seeing their land expand, rather than contract, and were able to prevent access of the European surveyors to maintain their sovereignty over the land for quite some time.

Overall, Lennox demonstrates that European empires did not expand only through settlement and conquest of lands. Instead, maps were an essential tool in the understandings and conceptualizations of land that empires wanted to control. Using maps as a lens into this region allows the reader not only a unique way to understand the tensions between empires during this period but also will cause readers to be more critical in their understanding of maps. This well researched book is well suited on the reading list of a variety of scholars beyond that of Atlantic studies; including Indigenous history, early Canadian history, and imperial history.
“Conquering Sickness: Race, Health, and Colonization in the Texas Borderlands by Mark Allan Goldberg,” Evan C. Rothera, Sam Houston State University


Evan C. Rothera
Sam Houston State University

Conquering Sickness explores Spanish, Mexican, and United States understandings of health and medicine in the Texas borderlands. Conquest was never just about armed force and Mark Allan Goldberg, currently Associate Professor of History at the University of Houston, analyzes how ideas about health, healing, and medicine allowed colonizers to create a sense of superiority about the alleged benefits of their particular brand of civilization. In other words, colonizers juxtaposed their “healthy” practices with “unhealthy” indigenous practices. However, as he correctly notes, this story contains a profound irony. Although colonizers attempted to impose their viewpoints on indigenous people and often regarded them as backward, they nevertheless utilized and appropriated native health practices. Thus, borderlands health and medicine not only blended practices from different cultures but became sites of exchange and of control. At its heart, this book “is a story about people, how they lived, and how they navigated their rapidly changing world” (pp. 15).

Goldberg begins by discussing Spanish efforts to create healthful settlements and Spanish medical therapies in Texas. Smallpox, as in the rest of the Americas, exacted a heavy price from Texas and outbreaks “forced the crown to attempt medical treatment on a grand scale” (pp. 23). This included establishing regulations for proper behavior during outbreaks and attempting to inoculate people. Colonists themselves, once settled, “preserved their health by praying, watching what they ate, and administering effective curative practices when sick” (pp. 27). As stated above, Spaniards saw “their forms of medicine as markers of civilization, as the right and proper way to treat patients and tackle disease” (pp. 17). However, despite the pronounced efforts of some Spaniards, the boundaries between Spanish and native healing were fluid. Indeed, “healing in New Spain shows that Spanish-Indian interactions resulted in hybrid medicine, that Spanish colonists relied on multiple healing customs, and that Spanish physicians borrowed from Native healers,” (pp. 38).

If the Spaniards worried about their own health, and they most assuredly did, they also focused on the health of indigenous people. Priests played a vital role in colonization because of their strenuous efforts, through missions, to transform “sickly” indigenous

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people into “healthy” Spanish subjects. Most priests did not distinguish between saving souls and preserving Indian health. Spaniards used food stores to attract coastal Indians to missions. They made Indians wear specific types of clothing, which highlighted the links between physical and moral health in the Spanish mind. Mexican independence from Spain marked the end of missions because many Mexican officials believed the mission project outdated and “Tejano elites did not dwell on improving Indian health” (pp. 59).

Texas under Mexican rule was both similar and different to Texas under Spanish rule. Goldberg employs an 1833 cholera epidemic in the state of Coahuila y Texas to analyze health and medicine’s role in Mexican nation building. As with Spaniards, Mexicans believed their medicine and healing practices superior to indigenous practices. In addition, also like Spaniards, they considered indigenous people backward because of their medical practices, among other reasons. However, in the midst of a terrible cholera epidemic, “healing practices that made the Indians ‘backward’ and ‘not Mexican’ suddenly became relevant, as state officials witnessed the mortality rate skyrocket and public health initiatives fail. Physicians sought new healing knowledge to combat the devastating disease, and they ultimately turned to mission Indians in Tamaulipas” (pp. 66).

In essence, medical and state authorities appropriated indigenous healing practices to fix a national public health crisis. Cross-cultural interactions continued to influence the practice of medicine. However, as physicians appropriated indigenous therapies such as peyote, they made them “Mexican.” In other words, Mexicans, like the Spanish and, later U.S. colonizers, appropriated indigenous medical practices and claimed them as their own. These appropriations had important consequences because they allowed Mexican doctors to “participate in contemporary global medical innovations” (pp. 93).

In 1836, Texas seceded from Mexico. The United States annexed Texas in 1845. Thus, a new group of colonizers quickly arrived on scene: Anglos from the United States. Goldberg contends, “a focus on health in central Texas during the antebellum period highlights how U.S. westward expansion, Comanche displacement, and black chattel slavery were interconnected” (pp. 100). He argues that Anglo depictions of Comanche unhealthiness allowed them to arrive at a more definite understanding of their own health and future in Texas. However, “as in Spanish missions, the U.S. government was trying to teach Comanches how to be healthy on the reservation while simultaneously contributing to unhealthy living conditions for Indians both on and off of the reserves” (pp. 122). In other words, when Anglos discussed Comanche health, they often overlooked other factors for Comanche sickness. In addition, cross-cultural exchange helped enslaved healers address slave health in Texas.

Anglos exhibited prejudice against Mexicans, describing them as unhealthy, although Anglos often relied on Mexican women’s labor. It seemed that each new group of colonizers held negative attitudes about indigenous people as well as former groups of colonizers. However, as in previous eras, “Anglo migrants and doctors felt they could learn a lot about healthy living in this unfamiliar place by observing the local Mexican population” (pp. 133). Medicine again became a site of cross-cultural exchange. Thus, even though “Anglos saw ethnic Mexicans as unhealthy, they still looked to their Mexican neighbors’ medical knowledge when grappling with sickness in their new surroundings” (pp. 150). Military surgeons relied on local populations for plant knowledge and local healing. Critically, “even though military physicians stationed in south Texas referred to ethnic Mexicans as ignorant and superstitious and decried their so-called unhealthy living,
they never disparaged Mexican medicine in their reports” (pp. 157). Just as Mexicans had appropriated Indian health practices, so Anglos appropriated Mexican health practices. Surgeons employed the use of maguey juice to cure scurvy. Goldberg notes, here and throughout the book, that the colonized had a profound impact on the attitudes and practices of the colonizers.

*Conquering Sickness* illustrates “that between the late colonial Spanish period and the first decades after the United States annexed northern Mexico, health shaped cross-cultural encounters and Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American colonial projects” (pp. 164). Goldberg does an excellent job, in this subtle and nuanced book, of exploring how ideas about health and medicine played a role in conquest. He is quite attentive to the role of irony and charts how new groups of colonizers replicated both older attitudes and older practices of appropriation. He makes an important contribution to borderlands studies as well as to analysis of public health measures in the nineteenth century. In sum, this book will appeal to readers in many disciplines and will be useful in graduate seminars when discussing race, environment, public health, and expansion and empire.