

**Reconsidering Jessie Pope: The Writer Before “A Certain Poetess”**

by

Madelyn Michelle Cook

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Auburn University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama  
December 12, 2015

Copyright 2015 by Madelyn Michelle Cook

Approved by

Paula Backscheider, Chair, Professor of English  
Jonathan Bolton, Professor of English  
Jeremy Downes, Professor of English  
Megan Haselschwerdt, Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies

## Abstract

In four chapters, I present a case study of Jessie Pope's early career, focusing on her use of women in her writing for adults. Her women are smart, and their situations are orchestrated by Pope in ways that lay bare negotiations of space, silence, voice, and autonomy for the Edwardian woman. I move from examining broadly her women as they were published in *Punch* and collected in her first two anthologies, *Paper Pellets* and *Airy Nothings*, to a look at how she engages in the conversation surrounding women's suffrage and the Women's Social and Political Union and finally an examination of how Pope critiques the language surrounding the rise of the automobile. All draw attention to the situation of women.

## Acknowledgments

My journey toward discovering and recovering Jessie Pope has been a long and often frustrating one. I'd like to thank Mary McCormack for introducing me to Wilfred Owen when I was an undergraduate. "Strange Meeting" put me on the path to finding Pope, but I would not have known what to do with her without the guidance of Paula Backscheider. Her seminars in feminism and cultural studies made me the researcher I am today, and I am grateful. Without her patience and knack for knowing just the sort of encouragement I needed, this project would never have been finished.

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Jeremy Downes and Jonathan Bolton, for their feedback and willingness to meet Jessie Pope. I owe as much to Amelia Lewis as I do my committee. Long nights in the library, emergency trips to the office, and her very firm advice helped me focus and refine my ideas; Amelia knows Pope as well as I do now. Weekly snark and insights from my Auburn writing group—Heather Finch, Kirsten Iden, and Amelia Lewis—gave me confidence in my work and my perspective. My friends in the East Alabama Community Ballet kept me busy, dancing, and sane.

Finally, without the love and support of my parents, my brother, my sister-in-law, and my Aldy, I never would have made it this far. Thank you for believing in me.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
List of Figures .....	v
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: From <i>Punch</i> 's Women to Pope's Women .....	32
Chapter 2: Crossing Lines of Communication: Jessie Pope's <i>Airy Nothings</i> .....	119
Chapter 3: "They Can, and They Will": Pope's Suffragist Women .....	192
Chapter 4: "I Motor": Pope's Women Take the Wheel .....	281
Coda .....	335
Bibliography .....	340
Appendix 1 .....	355
Appendix 2 .....	356
Appendix 3 .....	357
Appendix 4 .....	358
Appendix 5 .....	359
Appendix 6 .....	360
Appendix 7 .....	361

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Prehistoric Shakespeare. No. 3. “Macbeth.” .....	55
Figure 2. Boadicea Monument. ....	209
Figure 3. “A Boadicea of Politics.” .....	223
Figure 4. “Dorothy Levitt: Her Favorite Photograph.” .....	238
Figure 5. Two Photographs from <i>Ladies’ Golf</i> , by May Hezlet. ....	239
Figure 6. “Division of Labour.” .....	263
Figure 7. “Any Woman” and “Any Suffragette” as they appear in <i>Airy Nothings</i> . .....	271

## Introduction

When I began this project in 2013, I had planned to treat all of Jessie Pope's writing using feminist recovery and cultural studies methodologies. However, as I began primary research, I slowly discovered that Jessie Pope was a far more prolific writer than I had ever imagined. Not only did she write the war poetry for which she is vilified, she wrote light verse, children's books, short stories, nonfiction, songs, anecdotes, and letters. To date, I have found 593 individual poems, stories, articles, and anecdotes; 326 of these were not collected in any way, and 283 of them (possibly more) were published before the war. This number does not include her children's books, poetry collections, or short story collections. Pope was more prolific than I could have imagined and more famous before 1914 than I estimated. She worked as an editor for Grant Richards, becoming his go-to writer when books submitted to his firm required editing. As I uncovered the magnitude of her bibliography, it became clear that it would be unfair to focus solely on the writing she accomplished during the First World War. I realized that to recover best Jessie Pope as a woman and as a writer I would need to study her early career, something no other scholar has done.

My project is unique in that it not only reads Jessie Pope's early career, 1900 through 1913, but that it also reads her texts with an open mind. When the only scholars reading Jessie Pope are First World War scholars, it is assumed that her poetry is shallow, petty, and jingoistic. I will demonstrate that this assumption is rarely, if ever, questioned. What I found as I read and reread her poems and stories was a clear focus on the situation of women in the Edwardian historical moment. Within the light humorous voice for which she was famous, there is buried a sharp critique of patriarchy and misogyny.

Pope's women, as I call them, are never as silly or frivolous as they may seem from their positions in Pope's heavily metered couplets; rather, Pope carefully orchestrates, as I argue, the critique with the punchline. The result is a subtle, yet strong feminist message concealed in plain sight in the pages of an often sexist publication like *Punch*.

When they recover her in the context of Wilfred Owen studies, mid-century scholars mention disparagingly that she wrote on "women's topics"; one even calls her the "poetess of curling pins." I found that on one level, Pope does write the way later critics claim: her verses are light and airy and fun. They seem frivolous. But beneath that rhyming surface, we can see Pope grappling with real women's concerns; we can see her deliberately playing with silence, space, and evasion as modes of resistance and escape. I have found that Pope was so much smarter than even I was giving her credit for. I was amazed, and I continue to be impressed as I keep peeling back the layers of her writing.

A focused reception history reveals how firmly lodged in 1914-1918 Pope remains and tracks how critical perceptions of her solidify dangerously from 1931 forward. Further, the need for scholarship on Pope herself becomes clear as we discover how Pope is repeatedly brought to the table only to be abused, then silenced. While it is true that we know Pope today due to the connection to Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est," the link becomes problematic when it is taken to be the sum of Pope as a woman and as a writer. The link remains problematic when it is used as permission to abuse and silence her, when the link defines Pope in a way that complements the construction of Owen by destroying Pope.

Over the course of nearly a century, one woman's career is sacrificed on the altar of war poetry. As Owen comes to be constructed as a doomed, tragic hero, Pope is set up

as a tangible representation of the object of Owen's righteous anger. She is consistently boiled down to what scholars unquestioningly accept as her true essence, ignoring everything she was before the war and everything she became after the war. With rare exception, for these scholars, Pope remains at the door to the recruiting office, shaming young men into coming inside, and presenting those who refuse with white feathers.

### **Jessie Pope as Villain: The Creation of "A Certain Poetess"**

In a sick sense, Wilfred Owen and Jessie Pope are the Adam and Eve of First World War poetry. Owen's is the story most often told to encapsulate the senseless waste and tragedy of war. As a poet, he came into his own in what became the final year of his life. Reading his letters and poems with that knowledge is a heart-breaking exercise. His is the name most often known, his poetry the most widely and frequently anthologized. Jessie Pope, though she obviously existed and published before the war, is lifted from within Owen, like a rib, as if he alone gave her life and existence, and from a single cancelled "dedication," another creature is created. But she is not allowed truly to separate from the man from whence she came.

The early criticism on Wilfred Owen accomplished important work in the field of First World War literature. It established a vocabulary for discussing the poetry of conflict; it gave us the first clear pictures of Owen as a man, putting a personality with the poems he left behind; it emphasized the great losses of the war, especially poignant and important in the middle of a century dominated by conflict and war.

With the exception, perhaps, of Cecil Day Lewis and Edmund Blunden, these are the early texts still most-often cited in contemporary work done on Owen: D.S.R. Welland's *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study*, first published in 1960 and reprinted in 1969;



Lewis's introduction to his *Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen* from 1963, which re-issues Edmund Blunden's "memoir" on Owen, originally published in Blunden's own collection of Owen's poems in 1931; W.G. Bebbington's 1972 article in *Ariel*, "Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen"; Arthur Lane's 1972 study of Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, *An Adequate Response: The War Poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon*; and Jon Stallworthy's landmark biography of Owen, published in 1974.<sup>1</sup> While these men did important work, they also created a discourse that enabled later critics to dismiss Jessie Pope and other writers like her, especially women, as irrelevant voices and invisible people. The longevity and scholarly weight of their texts is part of the reason that it remains difficult for scholars today to do more than observe that Jessie Pope has been "an extremely useful straw woman."<sup>2</sup> Very few scholars seem to be seeking Pope's voice and context or willing to listen carefully to what may be going on beyond the surface of her poems. Even fewer wish to acknowledge the power and importance of her pre-war career. A focused reception history locates the origin of Pope's post-war reputation and charts how the conjectures of Owen's earliest academic readers took on lives of their own and came to be read as fact. It will reveal how technologies of gender are perpetuated in subtle ways to enable the continued suppression of women's writing.<sup>3</sup>

Pope is constructed in opposition to Owen, and marking how Owen is constructed in these early texts reveals several useful categories. First, war poetry is

---

<sup>1</sup> D.S.R. Welland, *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960); Cecil Day Lewis, ed., *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, By Wilfred Owen (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963); Edmund Blunden, ed., *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931); W.G. Bebbington, "Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen," *Ariel* 3, no. 4 (1972): 82-93.; Arthur Lane, *An Adequate Response: The War Poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972); Jon Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Tim Kendall, "Combat Gnosticism and the Woman Poets of the First World War," *War Poetry* (blog), April 10, 2009, <http://war-poets.blogspot.com/2009/04/combat-gnosticism-and-woman-poet-of.html>.

<sup>3</sup> I am using this term with an awareness of Teresa de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender" in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987): 1-30.

consistently defined in terms of experience, truth, and facts. “Experience,” in this case, should be read as combat experience. This definition privileges the voices of the “soldier-poets” as the more authentic ones, excluding the voices of those who experienced the war years anywhere other than the front lines. Not only does this privilege the writing of soldiers above civilians, but it also privileges male experience over female. According to this definition, women did not experience the war. However, Margaret Higonnet reminds us that “employed or not, all women have had to deal with food shortages, rationing, and evacuation.”<sup>4</sup> All suffering is not in the trenches. Second, Owen is frequently described in terms of victimhood, of helplessness. Lane explores this more than the other critics treated here and renders an Owen “appalled by [his own] complicity” in the war.<sup>5</sup> Because Owen was a front-line soldier, his body was vulnerable, but his status as an officer made him helpless in the face of direct orders to lead his men in dangerous maneuvers. Third, Owen is connected to Keats in a way that emphasizes parallels Owen saw between them, strengthens Owen’s authority to speak by linking him with the canon, and highlights further the brevity of Owen’s life, making his poetic talent seem even more extraordinary.<sup>6</sup> Fourth, Owen’s death is described in mourning terms as a promising life cut short, as a great loss for the world. Fifth, Owen is described in somewhat biblical terms. He becomes saintly and something of a martyr. Stallworthy goes so far as to declare, “It is possible to see that his gifts were not only gifts of genius, but other gifts

---

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Higonnet, Introduction to *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Higonnet et al (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Lane, *An Adequate Response*, 31.

<sup>6</sup> It can be argued that, at first, Owen needed the additional help of being associated with the canon. Unlike his now-famous peers, Owen did not attend university. Lewis describes, “Had Wilfred had the benefit of a University education, for instance, his intellectual development would have been more rapid; but his poetry would not necessarily have been the better for it” (13).

that only the gods bestow.”<sup>7</sup> All of these categories help construct Owen as a sensitive man, pre-destined to be a poet, the death of whom was a great loss both to literature and the world. The consistent use of these themes in criticism of Owen’s poetry help to set the stage for Pope’s entry as villain.

In order to register the rolling snowball that overtakes Owen scholarship as far as Jessie Pope is concerned, it is necessary to examine carefully each foundational text in chronological order. I will demonstrate how Pope is culled from the manuscripts, pulled from editors’ footnotes, given a prominent role in the composition of one of Owen’s most famous and frequently anthologized poems, “Dulce et Decorum Est,” and molded by conjecture to become one of the most hated villains of the First World War.

The very first collection of Wilfred Owen’s poems was edited and introduced by his friend Siegfried Sassoon in 1920. Sassoon’s edition gives no notes on the text, nor does it offer any commentary. Sassoon’s introduction gives the bare facts of Owen’s life, leaves the intricacies of the poems’ composition to critics, and creates a clear definition of war poetry: “this [Owen’s own “Preface,” printed after Sassoon’s introduction], and his Poems, can speak for him, backed by the authority of his experience as an infantry soldier, and sustained by nobility and originality of style.”<sup>8</sup> From the very beginning, “experience” is privileged; it is what grants Owen his “authority” to speak. For the early definers of war poetry, “experience” means “combat experience,” and without it, a writer is not really writing about war. Instead, she, for this definition is used to dismiss women’s writing, is writing from her imagination and not the (male) reality that matters.

---

<sup>7</sup> Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen*, 281.

<sup>8</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, ed., *Poems*, by Wilfred Owen (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), v.

Sassoon's edition gives "Dulce et Decorum Est," along with twenty-two other poems, without comment. Edmund Blunden's collection of 1931 provides notes from Owen's manuscripts in the end-matter of the text. The note for "Dulce" reads: "Another version—it was a poem over which the author took much trouble—is addressed 'To a Certain Poetess'—i.e. to the type of those who provided the public from day to day with cheerful patriotic jingles."<sup>9</sup> This is the first appearance of Jessie Pope in Wilfred Owen scholarship. She is a note, not even named, and Blunden describes her as a poet of a particular "type." Her work is comprised of "cheerful patriotic jingles," as opposed to poetry.

C. Day Lewis, Owen's second editor, offers a relatively thorough introduction in his 1963 *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*. Nowhere does he discuss Pope. She is noted, however, at the bottom of the page showing "Dulce": the "[British Museum] has two drafts, the earlier which gives, beneath the title, *To Jessie Pope etc* (cancelled), and *To a certain Poetess*. [Harold Owen] has two drafts, one subscribed *To Jessie Pope etc*, and the other, *To a certain Poetess*."<sup>10</sup> There is nothing out of the ordinary about this note; all of the other poems in this collection have manuscript details noted as well. This note is a simple statement of fact.

The post-war reputation of Jessie Pope was cemented as early as 1960 in *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study* where D.S.R. Welland claims that Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" was "the immediate product of the white-hot indignation to which he had been brought (as one manuscript reveals) by the patriotic lines of Miss Jessie Pope that

---

<sup>9</sup> Blunden, *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, 123.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, 55.

frequently graced the popular newspapers.”<sup>11</sup> In this declaration, he accomplishes several things. First, he makes clear the link between Pope and Owen’s poem, calling attention to Owen’s reference to Pope in a manuscript. This link is the reason that we still know Pope today, but this link is also problematic. Second, he paints Pope as the catalyst for the poem, but Welland is writing before scholars like Daniel Hipp source much of the poem in Owen’s own experiences in France.<sup>12</sup> Third, he belittles Pope in relation to Owen. Even by 1960, Owen, along with Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Rupert Brooke primarily, had been installed as the representative voices of the First World War, and Welland’s brief mention of Pope in the context of Owen’s work villainizes her, laying the foundation for other critics to read her consistently as such. Welland also silences her and reads her quite broadly, for no specific mention of her work is made. While he conjectures Owen’s reaction to Pope’s words, those words are not given. No evident attempt is made to find the source of Owen’s “indignation,” and instead of being written as the popular author of hundreds of poems, Pope is reduced to a name and defined as the villain to Owen’s hero.

It is not until W.B. Bebbington’s 1972 article, “Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen,” that we get any details of Pope’s publications, or, indeed, her words themselves; it is for this reason that Bebbington’s is a very important article.<sup>13</sup> After 1972, Bebbington is a

---

<sup>11</sup> D.S.R. Welland, *Wilfred Owen*, 60. See appendix 1 for the text of “Dulce et Decorum Est.”

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Hipp, “By Degrees Regain[ing] Cool Peaceful Air in Wonder’: Wilfred Owen’s War Poetry as Psychological Therapy,” *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 35 no.1 (2002): 25-49.

<sup>13</sup> Despite offering important information on Pope at a time when she was little more than a footnote in Wilfred Owen studies, Bebbington hurts Pope as much as he helps her. For example, this article’s first paragraph considers the mystery of the Pope dedication in early drafts of “Dulce,” then poses some interesting questions. Bebbington writes that “Nowhere else in any of the poet’s manuscripts and letters is the lady named or referred to, and there is no evidence that she ever knew anything about him. As for the ‘dedication’ itself, editors and anthologists have either not quoted it or have relegated it to a note. But why? On whose authority?” Using a common scholarly strategy—identifying a gap in the literature and addressing it—Bebbington seems to want to unpack the omission he has noted. The question of “authority”

critical footnote for anyone mentioning Jessie Pope or writing on “Dulce.” However, while it is a crucial article, it is presented as a methodology for dismissal. Bebbington builds Pope up so that other scholars may tear her down. First, Bebbington conjectures Pope’s politics, creating them from Owen’s poem and manuscript drafts: “We can assume that Jessie Pope was the ‘friend’ of the poem who had been telling with ‘high’—though perhaps not with ‘noble’—‘zest’ to ‘children’—or ‘small boys’—‘ardent for some desperate glory,’ what she apparently accepted as an old truth but Owen believed to be an old lie.”<sup>14</sup> Why look for the woman herself, then, when Pope may be found in Owen’s words? Second, Bebbington makes it clear through his word choice and tone that it is not enough that Pope’s politics and beliefs are the wrong ones; it is troubling for him that they were published where anyone could read them: “...we can also assume that she had been doing this [writing] during the war itself and in places where her words were seen not only by the ‘children’ but by Owen also” (82). Again, he makes an assumption, self-consciously labeling it so, and instead of offering clear evidence, rests the authority of proof on what he has excerpted from Owen’s poem. But here, he also associates Pope with children, claiming that children could be exposed to her bad influence and that Owen encountered it as well.

Bebbington takes up the thread of Pope’s work for children in his next paragraph, describing her audience for a small poem in 1917’s *Chuckles* as “very young children,” placing emphasis on the now seeming inappropriate nature of the idea that Pope wrote for

---

here is interesting, especially as Owen scholars up to this point have very carefully defined the poet’s authority in terms of his experience. Bebbington seems bothered by Pope’s constant relegation to the “note”; but he pulls her from note status only to place her in a vacuum, enabling other scholars to do the same. We should also pay attention to the language used to refer to Owen and Pope: They are “the poet” and “the lady,” the latter term obviously emphasizing gender. The binary set-up indicates that one may not be both.

<sup>14</sup> Bebbington, “Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen,” 82.

such an audience (82). Bebbington assures us that these “versicles” were unlikely to have “aroused Owen’s indignation,” but then immediately returns to his indictment of them: “In any case, however much as war might have been glorified even in some of these versicles, the small boys who read them would have to live longer than the war was likely to last before they could confidently run to the recruiting offices to tell plausible lies about their ages” (82-83). Bebbington first notes that Pope wrote very simple poems for “very young children,” then says that they are basically irrelevant to the Owen discussion before turning around on himself to bring the fact of Pope’s writing for small children back to the center of the issue. Bebbington gives a stanza from *Chuckles* as if it is the only example of children’s literature from Britain that makes reference to soldiering:

When soldiers go to war, you’ll find  
The doggies won’t be left behind.  
Quick march! The brave procession comes,  
While rub-a-dub-a, play the drums. (83)

Obviously for children who are read-to rather than reading, the tone of the excerpt from Pope’s contribution to the picture book is not unusual in children’s literature of the early century at all.<sup>15</sup>

Jane Potter reminds us that in the late nineteenth century, especially around the time of the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), “the indoctrination of the young with the values of martial imperialism was also of paramount importance to the ruling class.”<sup>16</sup>

Popular writing at this time “assumed the moral superiority of Britain” (14). The

---

<sup>15</sup> The text also seems to indicate that the illustration on the page is arguably more important, especially in the context of the children’s picture-book.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women’s Literary Responses to the Great War, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 10.

publications examined by Potter, even ones for children—*The Boys' Own Paper* and *Girls' Realm*, for example—demonstrate that awareness of conflict was high, but Potter explains that “These people were not simply war-mongering or ignorant, but a colourful generation who wanted to know what was happening and who wanted to be distracted from these same events by books that both entertained and reassured them” (8). Without charting any changes in tone in the literature for children from the turn of the century to the end of the First World War, Bebbington’s assertion here cannot carry much weight, for Bebbington makes it sound like Pope’s quatrain about dogs going to war along with soldiers is unique in its content.<sup>17</sup> That constructed uniqueness, Pope in a cultural vacuum, serves to make Pope the villain in this story, actively recruiting children and pushing them toward the Line.

Much of Bebbington’s language indicts Pope for Owen’s eventual enlistment, even after Bebbington establishes that Owen probably did not know Pope’s children’s verses, even the one from *Chuckles*, cited as if it is both unique and influential.

Bebbington, again, presents conjecture in a dangerous way: “There were, nevertheless, parts of some poems [of Pope’s] which—if [Owen] saw them—must have nagged at his civilian separation from the awful thing that was invariably tempting him in its

---

<sup>17</sup> M. Daphne Kutzer reminds us that “The rise of imperialism is roughly contemporaneous with the golden age of children’s literature (approximately 1860-1930), and the two grew up together. [...] Authors are not conscious of presenting empire in a positive light in their books, but they cannot help doing so: empire had as prominent and largely unquestioned a place in British society then as Disney does now. Empire and its effects where a part of everyday British life, and appear matter-of-factly in fiction for children. Like most imaginative literature, these classic children’s texts do not set out consciously to propagandize for nation and empire, but they do nonetheless” (10). While Kutzer’s work examines more well-known texts for children by writers like Rudyard Kipling and A.A. Milne, her observation about the pervasiveness of all things empire holds true when considering a writer like Pope. Further, one could argue that in a picture book like *Chuckles*, the illustration takes more hold in the pre-literate child’s imagination than the short poem beneath it. *Empire’s Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children’s Books* (New York: Garland, 2000).



direction.”<sup>18</sup> We do not know—we still do not know—which examples of and in what context Owen encountered Pope’s work. But this small conditional is lost, even as Bebbington’s argument proceeds to its most influential and long-wearing statement.

It is Bebbington who makes the connection between “Dulce” and Pope’s “The Call.”<sup>19</sup> After establishing that “Dulce” was composed in October, not August of 1917, as previously thought, he claims, “there had been one poem in the *Daily Mail*, 26 November 1914, which might have remained in his memory and, even, after so long an interval, been the chief prompter of ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’” (82, 87-88). This assertion requires Owen to have remembered a poem encountered in a newspaper three years from his maybe having read it. Bebbington then gives the full text of “The Call” without comment. This use of “The Call” comes after Bebbington has given three pages to sweeping generalizations about Pope and her poetry, which he does locate in the *Daily Mail*, observing that “Such was the sentimental and provocative theme of almost sixty poems.”<sup>20</sup> Bebbington summarizes: “England stood in peril, and it was unthinkable that the ‘lads’ of her own day were less patriotic and brave than the men who had ‘fought and bled’ to make that England ‘Merrie’” (85). These quoted words and phrases come, we are to believe, from Pope’s poetry, but Bebbington supplies neither titles nor full stanzas, and the stanzas he does provide are used to villainize Pope as dangerously and shockingly pro-war.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Bebbington, “Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen,” 87.

<sup>19</sup> See appendix 2 for the text of “The Call.”

<sup>20</sup> Even though he does give first-publication sources for Pope’s poetry referenced in the essay, Bebbington does not discuss the nature of the newspapers themselves or the locations of the poems on the page, which, when considered, changes drastically the tone of Pope’s poems. “The Call,” for instance, appears on an editorial page of the *Daily Mail*, alongside letters specifically addressing recruitment and what can be done to make it more efficient.

<sup>21</sup> This use of Pope is hurtful not only to the poet herself, but to Owen as well, for locating the source of his poetry in knee-jerk reaction rather than experience does trivialize the experience and divert attention away

Pope sits uneasily with Bebbington toward the end of his article. He cannot seem to situate her. He has moments where Pope seems to be misunderstood, that she's doing more subtle things that some readers might not notice: "As for her own sex, there was plenty for them to do if they were not already nurses, and [Pope] could give them some examples, but, again, in her own manner, a manner which, because it was not solemn, ran the risk of being misunderstood by her more sophisticated readers" (86). Pope, here, is novel, and reading her in a vacuum makes her the lone voice saying such things, and as the lone voice, she may be dismissed as an anomaly.<sup>22</sup>

When he praises Pope, it is through intensely gendered language, and Bebbington continues to use this language as he returns to Pope's work as a writer for children—as if to prevent the reader from liking Pope too much. We must be reminded of her underhanded and crafty conscription of small children, who, in Bebbington's hands, become victims of her "thin nib" the same as Owen:

For the 'laddies' and 'lads' of 1914, 1915, and 1916 were the 'small boys' who, with small girls, had been her audience for the verse which she wrote as captions to the pictures in many pre-war children's books. Very young children were, indeed, her other main public throughout her life, and she provided the texts, usually in verse, for a large number of illustrated books whose characters were, of course, animals and birds: Bunnies, Bobbity

---

from Owen's admission to Craiglockhart with neurasthenia, or shell shock, a condition, even at the time Bebbington was writing, still contested as a valid wounding. Even during the Vietnam era, visible wounds are privileged as the only wounds. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was not defined until 1980 when the American Psychological Association finally listed it in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, third edition. Mark A. Herberle, *A Trauma Artist: Tim O'Brien and the Fiction of Vietnam* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 10. Later scholars, notably Daniel Hipp, do source much of Owen's war poetry in his front line experience.

<sup>22</sup> I read this in light of Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

Flop, Cat Scouts, Flip and Fuzzy, Toddles, the Tracy Tubbses and many more. One cannot help but wondering if Owen ever saw any of these when he was a small boy. (90-91)

Enclosing ‘small boys’ in quotation marks recalls Bebbington’s previous use of language from Owen’s early manuscript copies of “Dulce” and makes the children of the poem Pope’s target audience, using the phrase again to describe Owen makes the child Owen part of that audience. The long list of her characters’ names juvenilizes Pope, ties her most firmly to her children’s books, and conflates the adult audience intended in her war poetry with the children intended in picture books. Furthermore, not only does it sound as if Pope is the only writer for children before the war, it sounds as if “very young children” are spending their own pocket money on books by their favorite authors.

Without knowing whether children consuming picture books chose their books by the author or by the pictures on the cover or inside—if they even chose their own reading material at all—this section requires too much suspension of disbelief. And not only does the mention of Owen wildly conjecture at what he might have read as a child, it paints him as a victim, not uncommon in early biographical writing about Owen, and, here, Pope is the one making him so.<sup>23</sup> Bebbington follows up with “It seems that we shall never know,” but this does not stop Bebbington’s contemporaries and future scholars, especially Michael Williams, from giving great credence to these conjectures and treating

---

<sup>23</sup> Owen may well have read or been read Pope’s earlier children’s books or any of the publications mentioned by Potter. Growing up at the turn of the century, Owen would have been exposed to martial, imperialist stories for children, especially boys. Stallworthy gives photographs of a very young Wilfred Owen dressed first as a soldier, then as a sailor. Childhood reading material and play-costumes are hegemonic devices as much as wartime propaganda, but no one has ever placed blame on Susan Owen, his mother, for her son’s enlistment and death.

them as truth. Indeed, the conjecture that Owen read “The Call” and it inspired “Dulce” is taken up by Stallworthy as fairly true.

As Bebbington’s article draws to a close, the link between “The Call” and “Dulce” is firm. He asks useful questions, but does not seem to care whether they are answered because he has not really tried to answer them himself. Bebbington seems to offer Pope a reprieve when considering potential reasons why Owen struck the initial dedication of “Dulce” to her:

Perhaps he [Owen] came to know her better and to see a tongue in a cheek. Perhaps he realized how clever she was after all. Or perhaps he realized what *The Times* had meant when it said each of her poems hit “a different point on the head,” and that it was unfair to generalize. Perhaps he decided to give her the benefit of the doubt. (92)

The rest of the paragraph asserts that Pope “has no place in the history of literature,” while “Owen, of course, has his place” (92). Bebbington’s article is clearly the most damaging of the early treatments of Pope and Owen, especially as it is the first to attempt “details” of Pope as a woman and as a writer. It is Bebbington, his article founded largely on conjecture, who gives the critics writing after him newer and sharper tools for the construction, dismemberment, and silencing of Jessie Pope.

In 1972, Arthur Lane furthers the theme begun in Welland and Bebbington by conjecturing that Owen was worried that the audience he wanted to reach was “being reached only by patriotic versifiers such as Jessie Pope, the ‘you’ of ‘Dulce et Decorum Est,’” for it was Pope “who had the public ear, and her jingling voice was a lie no less

terrible for the inanity it displayed.”<sup>24</sup> Although he laments that her poetry appeared in “newspaper after newspaper,” like Bebbington and Welland before him, Lane does not consider the other content of those papers in his discussion of both “The Call” and an excerpt from “A Cossack Charge,” calling the former “more threatening than encouraging” and using the latter as an opportunity to recommend the reader “laugh off Miss Pope as the faintly ridiculous lady she was” (46-47). Lane’s language here is that of utter certainty; as far as *An Adequate Response* is concerned, Pope is “ridiculous” in her tone, her subject matter, and, it is not a stretch to say, her very existence.

Lane builds upon the predatory image of Pope first constructed by Bebbington by emphasizing the helplessness and victimhood of the soldier, especially Owen: “All but helpless, he watched the toll that war was taking from his people, his men, and himself” (47-48). Owen is a victim, while Pope wields the power of the popular press and holds “the public ear” (47). Her distance from the conflict is damning. While Owen “was in a position to see the human resources of his nation (and of the ‘enemy’ nation) being destroyed daily,” writers like Pope “sought to describe the war from the perspective of a war-intoxicated capital” (47).

The gap of experience between the front lines and “home” is nothing new in discussions of any war, the First World War especially. Lewis, for instance, is particularly pointed in his description of the “gulf between fighting man and civilian at home”: “To the soldier, those on the other side of the barbed wire were fellow sufferers;

---

<sup>24</sup> Lane, 47. In the edition of this book I checked out from Auburn University’s Ralph Brown Draughon Library, the “you” of Lane’s sentence, as well as two instances of “you” in the excerpt Lane gives from the poem, is circled in blue ink. This seems emblematic of the way scholars have built on the conjecturing of their colleagues to establish and perpetuate a narrow reading of Pope and her work, also emblematic of the way Pope has become a common noun in critical discussions of writing from the First World War, representing and held accountable for an entire discourse.

he felt less hostility towards them than towards the men and women who were profiting by the war, sheltered from it, or wilfully ignorant of its realities.”<sup>25</sup> These three categories of civilian, it could be argued, encompass the entire non-combatant population, even children. Although there is truth in Lewis’s statement, there is dramatization as well, and the earliest works in First World War studies are not writing with the wider, more inclusive scope of some late twentieth century and early twenty-first century scholars.<sup>26</sup> Yet it is still important to observe how the “gulf” is constructed here and how it is especially an issue in discussions of Pope in terms of Owen. Pope becomes representative of the war-profiteers, the “sheltered” women, the “ignorant,” while Owen is made to champion the suffering soldier, the young man in pain. Pope, then, betrays not only the soldier, but her gender as well by abandoning what should be a “nurturing nature.”

Although Stallworthy does not spend a great deal of time on Jessie Pope in his 1974 biography of Owen, what he does is interesting and sometimes troubling. Stallworthy conjectures that Pope’s name came up in conversation among Owen, Sassoon, and Graves. Further, Stallworthy states firmly that Owen “would have encountered other poems subsequently collected” in Pope’s volumes of war poetry.<sup>27</sup> Stallworthy makes this encounter sound inevitable, but it is still conjecture to strengthen the already conjectural tie between Pope and Owen.

---

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> See also: Gilbert and Gubar, “Soldier’s Heart”; Higonnet, *Behind the Lines*; Potter, *Boys in Khaki*; Jane Dowson, *Women, Modernism and British Poetry, 1910-1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Diana Condell and Jean Liddiard, *Working for Victory: Images of Women in the First World War, 1915-18* (London: Routledge, 1987); Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907-1948* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen*, 227. This is entirely possible. There were three collections of Pope’s war poetry: *Jessie Pope’s War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915); *More War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915); *Simple Rhymes for Stirring Times* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916).

While his wording is less accusatory than Bebbington's or Lane's, Stallworthy actually makes much of Pope's having written children's books by discussing this aspect of Pope's bibliography alongside "Dulce"; however, Stallworthy takes it a step further to employ more of a pointed gender critique. First, he prefaces the text of Owen's poem: "As with his 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and other poems that were to follow, Owen's strong adverse reaction to someone else's poetry or prose would seem to have released his nightmare memories and his poem" then we get the first three stanzas of "Dulce," breaking for Stallworthy to set up the final stanza with: "This *exemplum* is followed by a *moralitas* of passionate indignation, as the poet who loved children addresses himself—with superb rhetorical suspension—to the children's poet who exhorted them to 'play the Game,'" then Stallworthy gives the final stanza (228).<sup>28</sup>

The language of a children's morality tale, the reminder that Owen got along well with children, Owen's desire to "educate" the ignorant to the "actualities of war," and the classification of Pope as a "children's poet" all work together to make Pope something monstrous. Stallworthy reads the "game" language in a way that sees "game" as something exclusively for children, whereas Paul Fussell reminds us that calling the war a "game" was not unusual during the First World War.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Stallworthy does not indict others and other publications for their use of the "game" language; doing so would free Pope from the convenient vacuum in which scholarship of this type places her and force scholars to think of her in context, in her historical moment. It is also interesting to note that here, Owen "loved children." Compare this assertion, which is true, to the one about Pope, that she would rather send those children to war. Now Owen

---

<sup>28</sup> Stallworthy is playing on the title of Pope's war poem, "Play the Game." See appendix 3 for the text of this poem.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

is not only proper in his love of children, he is maternal in his love of them. Pope is betraying her gender by forsaking the children. Owen, now, must perform two roles: defend them as a soldier, but speak out against women like Pope who would have them become soldiers.

After the 1970s, the damage is done, and Pope is always prefaced with a qualifier to remind readers exactly how a reference to her should be understood. Despite the groundbreaking nature of the 1981 anthology *Scars Upon My Heart*, even Judith Kazantzis is not immune to the common critical practice as she, in her preface, names Pope “the jingoistic Jessie Pope.”<sup>30</sup> In their 1986 *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar call her “the propagandist Jessie Pope” before using her as representative of a type, saying that “popular women writers like Jessie Pope . . . distributed white feathers to large audiences of noncombatant readers.”<sup>31</sup> Typical examples the treatment of Jessie Pope in criticism from the 1990s and early 2000s include: Pope as a poet who “specialized in verse that exhorted lads to join the forces”<sup>32</sup>; Pope as a “specimen of the corrupting older woman”

---

<sup>30</sup> Judith Kazantzis, preface to *Scars Upon My Heart: Women’s Poetry and Verse of the First World War*, ed. Catherine W. Reilly (London: Virago, 1981), xxii. I am taking “jingoistic” as a negative, the way each critic surely means it, given previous and most current scholarship mentioning Pope. The reader should first be reminded of Merriam-Webster’s definition of the term as “extreme chauvinism or nationalism marked especially by a belligerent foreign policy,” then the reader should note that the rhetoric at work in the popular press of the First World War was overwhelmingly jingoistic. In 1915, the *Times* allowed advertising, for instance, from Schweppes, asking readers to “leave alien waters alone” and another from Perrier posing the question: “Are you drinking German waters?” Further, well-known poster campaigns pictured the Germans as ruthless, animal-like “Huns” against the rather saintly depictions of Tommy and Poilu. Additionally, widely-read magazines like *Punch*, famous for its cartoons, especially, frequently reinforced these War Office-approved images. Clearly, to publish in the mainstream was to echo the jingoistic policies of the British government and the War Office, so Pope *was* a jingoistic writer of propaganda, as far as she was writing within the dominant discourse of her historical moment, but her use of a language does not necessarily mean her belief in it.

<sup>31</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, “Soldier’s Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War” in *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), 283.

<sup>32</sup> Douglas Kerr, *Wilfred Owen’s Voices: Language and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1993), 238.



(238); Pope as “a strident propagandist for victory and national glory, no matter what the cost”<sup>33</sup>; Pope as a poet whose work displays “Crashing cynicism about wounds and disablement” and whose “War Effort trivializes the damage done to soldiers.”<sup>34</sup> We are reminded “that not all women war poets were, like Jessie Pope, the jingoist specifically addressed in early drafts of Wilfred Owen’s ‘Dulce et Decorum Est,’ rabidly pro-war activists who were eager to send men to die in a hellish war from which their gender sheltered them”<sup>35</sup>; she is called “the unrepentant sentimentalist Jessie Pope (author of war poems for children back in England, to whom ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ is dedicated)”<sup>36</sup>; she is taken to task for the “jingoistic excess of [her] recruitment poems”<sup>37</sup>; she is “the glib pro-war poetess.”<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, the reader is never allowed to forget that Pope is “a writer commonly and accurately labeled ‘jingoistic’” whose poetry is now “despised.”<sup>39</sup> Each of these critics neglects the other voices at work alongside Pope’s and Owen’s; each pulls her poetry from its historical moment with little reference to how that historical moment may affect a reading of the texts. It is surprising and disheartening to see the persistence of such dualistic ways of reading in the late twentieth-century.

---

<sup>33</sup> Joan Montgomery Byles. *War, Women, and Poetry, 1914-1945: British and German Writers and Activists* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1995) 62.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Williams, “Wilfred Owen: A Poet Re-Institutionalized,” *Critical Survey* 2, no. 2 (1990): 194-202. 197.

<sup>35</sup> James Campbell, “Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism,” *New Literary History* 30, no.1 (1999): 203-215. 206.

<sup>36</sup> Rick Anthony Furtak, “Poetics of Sentimentality,” *Philosophy and Literature* 26, no. 1 (2002): 207-21. 210. Interestingly, Furtak does not read Pope as the only addressee in Owen’s poem. He interprets “my friend” to refer also to a younger incarnation of the poet himself, the one who wrote quite Pope-ish verse in 1914. What continues to be problematic here is that Furtak keeps Pope firmly as the addressee of the poem while at the same time perpetuates Williams’s polemic emphasizing Pope’s former work writing for children; this time, alarmingly, Furtak assumes Pope’s war poems—all of them—were addressed to and written for children.

<sup>37</sup> Tim Kendall, *Modern English Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 58.

<sup>38</sup> John Hughes, “Owen’s ‘Dulce Et Decorum Est,’” *Explicator* 64, no. 3 (2006): 160-62. 160. The structure of this phrase uses Pope’s name as a nonessential appositive, hinting that readers should know the identity of this “poetess” even without the use of her name.

<sup>39</sup> Janis P. Stout, *Coming Out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2005), 19.

But not all references to Pope are damning ones. Margaret Higonnet's 1999 anthology, *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I*, includes Pope with no mention of Owen at all. While Higonnet does give a very fair biography of Pope, resisting any urge to preface her in the manner of past critics, she still lists Pope, along with Isolde Kurz, under the umbrella of "jingoistic" verse.<sup>40</sup> It is important to note that Higonnet chose "Socks" to represent Pope in the anthology, rather than other of her poems more well known because of their assumed association with Owen.<sup>41</sup>

In her 2002 study, *Women, Modernism and British Poetry, 1910-1939*, Jane Dowson writes that women's poetry from this period is readily perceived as false and irrelevant because the dominant voice of this period is male. Dowson puts Pope in context, saying that her "Go!" fell into line with the "Women of Britain say, 'Go!'" recruiting campaign, and that the "superficiality of [her] dog-trot verses may register the borrowed nature of the writing when women assume the identity created for them by men."<sup>42</sup> Refreshingly, Dowson discusses how Pope's work is commonly perceived, and, as Bebbington so long ago recommended, gives Pope the benefit of the doubt, referencing explicitly the historical moment in which Pope lived and wrote.

In his first book on Owen, 1986's *Owen the Poet*, Dominic Hibberd uses Owen's tag for Pope, modifying her name with "a certain Poetess,"<sup>43</sup> but in his landmark 2002 biography of the poet, Pope is never mentioned, not even in the context of "Dulce et Decorum Est."<sup>44</sup> Instead, Hibberd reinforces more recent, and accurate, readings of the poem, sourcing it in Owen's war experiences, in the influence of Sassoon, and in the

---

<sup>40</sup> Margaret R. Higonnet, ed. *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I* (New York: Plume, 1999), 451.

<sup>41</sup> See appendix 4 for the text of "Socks."

<sup>42</sup> Dowson, *Women, Modernism and British Poetry*, 51.

<sup>43</sup> Dominic Hibberd. *Owen the Poet* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 114.

<sup>44</sup> Dominic Hibberd, *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002).

encouragement of Arthur Brock, his therapist at Craiglockhart who encouraged his writing as therapy. The acknowledgement of the separation between Owen and Pope by such a prominent and well-respected Owen scholar as Hibberd seems to open further the door for critics to examine Pope in her own right. Perhaps Hibberd began a new trend for biographers of Owen, for Guy Cuthbertson's 2014 biography of Owen, like Hibberd's, does not mention Pope at all.<sup>45</sup>

In the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Jane Potter gives readers a brief picture of a living, breathing Jessie Pope, rather than the bloodthirsty jingoist imagined by past critics.<sup>46</sup> Potter shows Pope as a prolific writer, publishing widely and to good reviews before the war.<sup>47</sup> Pope also worked her own exercise in recovery, helping to bring Robert Noonan's novel, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, to the public eye through her own publisher, Grant Richards.<sup>48</sup> Pope's reputation, however, centers around her First World War poetry, and although Potter aligns herself with critics who read Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" as a poem with its source and address in Pope, she leaves room for readers to realize, for instance, that the speaker of "The Call," among other poems, is not Pope herself.<sup>49</sup> Most importantly, and for the first time, Potter lets us hear Pope's own words: "In an interview in 1915," Potter records, Pope

---

<sup>45</sup> Guy Cuthbertson, *Wilfred Owen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

<sup>46</sup> Potter's faculty webpage at Brookes University, Oxford, mentions her forthcoming biography of Pope: '*A Certain Poetess': A Biography of Jessie Pope*. Dr. Jane Potter, *Oxford Brookes University*, <http://ah.brookes.ac.uk/staff/details/potter/> (accessed April, 30, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Jane Potter, "Pope, Jessie (1868–1941)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oct 2008; May 2014), accessed August 10, 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/98109>.

<sup>48</sup> Potter writes that Pope convinced Grant Richards to take on the project, but Richards insisted that Pope edit the 250,000 word manuscript down to 100,000 words. Although some decried Pope's editing as destructive to the novel, Potter reminds us that without Pope, Noonan's novel probably would not be known today. Another function of this example is that it demonstrates the publisher's confidence in Pope as a writer and editor; if she may edit someone else's work, so much more would she have been in charge of her own.

<sup>49</sup> "'The Call,'" Potter says, "seemingly showed little regard for the suffering of soldiers." Potter's use of "seemingly" lets us consider that more than one reading is possible for the poem.

made light of her talent for topical poetry saying, ‘if you take a pen and sit and stare at a piece of blank paper long enough, something in the shape of a poem will come on it sooner or later,’ although she did list ‘solitude and silence, a sense of rhythm, a fairly fluent vocabulary, and a patient determination not to be beaten by false starts’ as other attributes for the would-be versifier.<sup>50</sup>

Potter’s important entry opens the door for readers and scholars to begin to reconsider Pope, though those who focus on the First World War have a harder time doing so than others. This work is difficult when the prevailing opinion on Pope is still that she was a stone cold jingoist and a white feather woman. This is what is repeated as uncontested fact in scholarly journals, what is printed in textbooks, what is memorized for exams and reported in essays.<sup>51</sup>

While Higonet rightly observes that in times of war, “Images of femininity, nurturance, and the family can be involved to restore the balance and protect our faith in social order” and that these images promise the “possibility of postwar normalization,” I find that postwar critics desire the wartime Pope to return to her prewar occupation. That she writes about the war in a way that is not what current scholarship would term “anti-

---

<sup>50</sup> Potter, “Pope, Jessie.”

<sup>51</sup> In an online study forum thread from 2006 titled “WWI A2 exam – poetry, prose and quotes,” one student posted notes with the request that others do the same. Jessie Pope is “a.k.a. Owen’s arch nemesis!,” complete with a devil-face emoji. It is noted that she is “incredibly pro-war.” Other students add their notes to the thread, calling Pope “very jingoistic,” noting that she was “despised by many soldiers, especially Owen,” and remembering Owen as the poet “who famously directs *Dulce et decorum est* at Jessie pope [sic].” In his blog entry, “Poor Old Jessie Pope,” George Simmers observes how students treat Jessie Pope in their exams, frequently crediting her with the power of a general and the influential popularity of a megastar celebrity. According to students, Pope’s poems were so “persuasive and potent that thousands of naive young men enlisted entirely because of them, apparently having no idea that war might turn out to be more horrible than a game of football.” Given the critical history of Pope in terms of Owen, for First World War studies, these are the right answers. *The Student Room*, <http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=239939>, accessed May 20, 2015. George Simmers, “Poor Old Jessie Pope,” *Great War Fiction* (blog), July 7, 2009, <http://greatwarfiction.wordpress.com/2009/07/07/poor-old-jessie-pope/>.

war” makes her still a contested figure and possibly a site where conflict over outdated gender roles in a discourse as heavily gendered as that of war can be seen more readily.

Although it is relatively easy to find the roots of Pope’s alleged villainy in these texts from the 1960s and 1970s, they indicate a larger problem: too frequently have other scholars accepted blindly and unquestioningly conjecture presented with the aura of fact. Kendall’s observation that Pope is an “eternally useful straw woman” is a true one. In the context of Owen scholarship, Pope has been useful. It is difficult to grasp a protest against such a nebulous entity as “War,” but an attack on a single person is more easily understandable. The point here is not that Pope should have been left in the manuscripts and footnotes. Blunden did important work when he opened the door for discussion of Pope in 1931.<sup>52</sup> The point is that the dualistic system perpetuated by the creation of the Pope and Owen conflict is limiting. Discussions surrounding literature of the First World War are often polarized in this way because the figures in question have often become characters in the war story. But sometimes, it is necessary to rethink how a character has been constructed, to recognize, indeed, that she has been constructed. Part of my aim in recovering Pope’s pre-war career is to reconstruct the woman she was before the war, enabling us to reconsider her entire career.

### **Methodologies and Chapter Breakdown**

My project is a feminist recovery project. I am demonstrating Jessie Pope's consistently feminist interrogation of the early twentieth century situation of women by focusing on her use of body, space, and performance in her prewar writing. I rely upon a

---

<sup>52</sup> Without the connection to Owen, it is likely that Pope would have faded into obscurity after her death in 1941. The only notice of her death is given in *The Times (London)*: “On Dec. 14, 1941 at Chadford, Jessie, the very dearly loved wife of Edward Barrington Lenton, of Ivy House, Fritton, Suffolk. No flowers. Cremation Plymouth to-morrow (Wednesday).”

familiar configuration of feminist and cultural studies tools. My dissertation will depend upon models of feminist recovery developed since the 1970's; upon the theories of Foucault-influenced feminists including Teresa de Lauretis, Gayle Rubin, and Judith Butler, and upon the sophisticated models that have been developed by theorists including Toril Moi that are aimed both at developing more precise understandings of the situation of women in specific time periods and at producing a new kind of critical biography that focuses at every moment on the "making of the writing woman." The cultural studies practices of Raymond Williams and others working in his thematic and methodological footsteps raised my awareness of, for instance, how something like the coming of the automobile affects all aspects of society. His work and Stuart Hall's on identity and John Fiske's on everyday life studies are lenses through which we can see Pope's analysis of the "inescapably material" nature of culture and lived experience, as well her awareness of the construction of identity.<sup>53</sup> As I will demonstrate, Pope was highly aware of the narratives written for women to perform, and her women take those narratives and not only perform them but they also transform them in order to "produce themselves anew and differently."<sup>54</sup>

Jessie Pope consistently returns to instances of women performing gender. In this way, she critiques the arbitrariness of cultural expectation while at the same time underscoring the necessity of performing to that expectation. My reading of Pope's awareness of the technologies of gender is indebted to Teresa de Lauretis. She writes:

---

<sup>53</sup> John Fiske, "Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life," *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 154-173. 156.

<sup>54</sup> Stuart Hall, "Culture, Community, Nature," *Representing the Nation: A Reader*, ed. David Boswell and Jessica Evans (New York: Routledge, 1999), 33-44.

for the understanding of one's personal condition as a woman in terms social and political, and the constant revision, reevaluation, and reconceptualization of that condition in relation to other women's understanding of their sociosexual positions, generate a mode of apprehension of all social reality that derives from the consciousness of gender. And from that apprehension, from that personal, intimate, analytical, and political knowledge of the pervasiveness of gender, there is no going back to the innocence of "biology."<sup>55</sup>

Pope's women consistently bear out the understanding that gender is a performance both problematic and necessary. In many cases, as Judith Butler notes, maintenance of the performance means safety and survival. Pope's women may cross the boundaries of transgression, but they are aware of the performed nature of their gender so that they are able to maintain their places in the world. They are able to shrug off the labels that would negatively contain them—spinster, suffragette, wife—because they are aware that the meanings assigned to those labels come from outside forces. Her use of humor allows this double-sided stance and enables her to deploy what Frederic Jameson terms "manipulation and containment." Jameson reads the film *The Godfather* to illustrate his concept, surmising: "The drawing power of a mass cultural artifact like *The Godfather* may thus be measured by its twin capacity to perform an urgent ideological function at the same time that it provides the vehicle for the investment of a desperate Utopian fantasy."<sup>56</sup> Although her texts lack the cult following of a text like *The Godfather*, Pope's

---

<sup>55</sup> de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender," 20.

<sup>56</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* no. 1 (1979), 130-148. 147.

texts operate in a similar way, serving both the status quo and the fantasy of its overthrow.

Locating Pope and her work within this theoretical framework is of vital importance in recovering Pope's life and career as is correcting our perception of her from a bloodthirsty jingoist to a capable humorist who offers complex cultural commentary in smart, perceptive ways. My reading of Pope's often feminist humor is informed by writers like Regina Barreca, who gives this assessment in her discussion of women's comedy:

When you see the humor in a situation, it implies that you can also then imagine how the situation could be altered. Once you can imagine altering a situation that is not to your liking, you confront your own desire for change. That, in turn, makes it increasingly more difficult to put up with what you don't like or to accept as a given what you are in the process of questioning. [...] Once we realize that what we've been told is an unalterable truth [...] is actually manufactured and perpetuated by someone who will benefit by our believing it, then we can escape its confines.<sup>57</sup>

In her light verse, Pope works continually toward escape for her women. Pope's humor made her famous in her day, and it takes a very smart and talented writer to offer up the kinds of social critique Pope did—taking on patriarchy, the marriage market, courtship performances—and remain popular in contemporary mainstream media. Before she was

---

<sup>57</sup> Regina Barreca, *They Used to Call Me Snow White ... But I Drifted: Women's Strategic Use of Humor* (New York: Viking, 1991), 19-20.



“a certain poetess,” Pope was “an almost unique example of an Englishwoman’s gift for light verse.”<sup>58</sup>

In four chapters, I present a case study of Pope’s early career, focusing on her use of women in her writing for adults. Her women are smart, and their situations are orchestrated by Pope in ways that lay bare negotiations of space, silence, voice, and autonomy for the Edwardian woman. I move from examining broadly her women as they were published in *Punch* and collected in her first two anthologies, *Paper Pellets* and *Airy Nothings*, to a look at how she engages in the conversation surrounding women’s suffrage and the Women’s Social and Political Union and finally an examination of how Pope critiques the language surrounding the rise of the automobile. All draw attention to the situation of women.

**My first chapter**, then, covers Pope’s first collection of poetry for adults. *Paper Pellets* was published by Elkin Mathews in 1906, followed three years later by *Airy Nothings*. I track the topics Pope returns to most—the situation of women as they negotiate their relationships with men—and reveal her strategies of resistance, both in her own situation as the “poetess of *Punch*” and as the orchestrator of female speakers and objects who observe and critique male behavior.

**Chapter two** builds on these strategies of resistance and reads Pope’s second collection of poems for adults, *Airy Nothings*, published in 1909 by Elkin Mathews. I find that Pope refines resistance and silence to continue her critique of gendered behavior especially as it affects women’s lives. In this book, Pope’s women often stand on the brink of engagement and look toward what their future will likely hold as married women. They do not like what they see, but they are also bound by a cultural expectation

---

<sup>58</sup> “Paper Pellets. By Jessie Pope. (Elkin Mathews),” *The Athenaeum*, March 1907, 319.

to marry. Pope explores this precipice carefully, delivering a powerful critique of gender norms and expectations, while maintaining the popular, nonconfrontational voice of the “poetess of *Punch*.” Other women speak from within a married relationship, using a language of silence and gesture to communicate with their husbands. This chapter also includes a section on how Pope orders the poems in her collections in order to temper her more overtly feminist voices with ones that sounds more along the lines of the “domesticated woman” her male readership at the time would expect.

Chapters three and four work together to show Jessie Pope’s engagement with her historical moment. In explaining Pope’s style to my students and colleagues, I frequently say that were she alive today, she would write for *The Onion*, *Saturday Night Live*, or *The Daily Show*; she would be a powerhouse on Twitter, and her blog would be so popular that she would option books from its content. Pope is deeply engaged with the voices she hears in the periodical press of her day, and her writing, while maintaining its lightness and humor, dissects the minutia of Edwardian social culture as it affects and is affected by women. Each of the texts examined in this chapter and previous ones was first published in a popular publication, which meant that it needed to appeal to the widest possible audience.

**In my third chapter**, I look at Pope’s use of suffragists and suffragettes to examine further women’s use of and access to all kinds of spaces: personal, public, and political. Following the example of Toril Moi, I use information about the school Pope attended (and its founder and faculty) to make a case for understanding the feminist leanings of Pope’s politics. This chapter is especially important because scholars frequently attempt to infer Pope’s politics from her war writing. Instead of assuming her

politics from reading a single poem in a contextual vacuum, I read a selection of her texts on the subject of women's suffrage and the Women's Social and Political Union alongside other contemporary sources to reveal a fairer summary of Pope's politics. This chapter also takes into consideration the anxiety over women becoming masculine by taking up activities that draw attention to the body, such as motoring, golfing, and smoking, as Pope's women unapologetically do.

Where chapter three focuses on Pope's use of a cohesive group of women, **chapter four** examines her use of one particular object, the motor car, to expose the situation of women. This is crucial in that it demonstrates how Pope is able to return to one object again and again, while each time nuancing her analysis. This chapter also reads several texts from Pope that are not poems, which is important for demonstrating her talents over a range of genres. It also shows Pope's awareness of the potential an object like the motor car holds for women's movement and agency; her women use the motor car to contest their confinement to certain social and physical spaces. Again, this chapter places Pope's texts alongside other popular texts of her day in order to demonstrate that she is not writing in a contextual vacuum, as most critics of her war writing would have readers believe. With this chapter, the shape of my dissertation becomes one that brings together the many voices of Jessie Pope, while still following the thread of her women. It shows Pope's concern for and awareness of women and women's questions, as well as her continued negotiation of the line between propriety and subversiveness.

What is remarkable about Pope is that she disseminates her voice so widely while still maintaining a sharp, perceptible critique of the ways women are bound, mentally,

socially, and physically. Taken as a whole, my project gives a fuller vision of Pope as a writer than has been possible before now. It shows that Pope is not the wild-eyed jingoist, dipping her pen nib in the blood of the countless Tommies she sent to the trenches; rather, it shows that Pope is a successful, popular, and prolific writer who managed continually to conceal scathing feminist examinations of culture and society within publications that made their money by maintaining the status quo. My project reclaims Jessie Pope as a woman and as a writer, and it is the first such study to examine her early career.

## Chapter 1

### From *Punch*'s Women to Pope's Women

Jessie Pope fits none of the categories we often use to confine writers of her historical moment. She is neither modernist nor experimental, neither part of an artists' circle nor at the center of a contemporary scandal. Unlike Wilfred Owen, she is not the object of a family or historical legacy; she had no children or extended family who supervised her publications and copyrights after her death. Any extended family she did have, including her husband, might not have found this to be a necessity; would it have occurred to them to protect the integrity of Pope's name and writing? Would they have seen her "message" as urgent as Owen's family saw his? It is likely they perceived no message, for unless Pope collected them herself, the numerous poems and stories she published in various contemporary magazines remain uncollected and unread today.

Throughout her career, Pope's output was tremendous. Above all things, she was a writer. Among her first major publications were song lyrics, published as sheet music by J. Bath.<sup>1</sup> She had sixteen to seventeen children's books published on both sides of the Atlantic with four different firms, most importantly Grant Richards and Blackie and Son.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these, her short verses for children appeared in numerous gift books which were usually compilations published around Christmastime. Frequently mentioned in advertisements for these volumes, it was her name that helped sell these books. She is mentioned among contributors to *Ward, Lock and Co.'s Wonder Book* for 1912:

"Skillfully edited by Mr. Henry Golding, the contributors include such well-known

---

<sup>1</sup> Jessie Pope, *Ten Thousand a Year. Humorous song or duet for lady and gentleman with accompaniment for pianoforte or banjo* (London: J. Bath, 1897). *Six Plantation Songs with Choruses and Accompaniments for Pianoforte or Banjo* (London: J. Bath, 1900).

<sup>2</sup> Many of her children's books were also published in America through Dodge Publishing Company. These were frequently books published in the UK with Blackie.

writers for children as Jessie Pope, Margaret Batchelor, Z. Topelins, Agnes Grozier Herbertson, Emily Klickmann, etc., etc.”<sup>3</sup> It is important to note here that these authors are not listed alphabetically, and in this instance, Pope is first. By 1912, Pope had become a name associated with humor, light verse, and children’s literature.

Her first volumes of collected verse for adults, *Paper Pellets* and *Airy Nothings*, were published by Elkin Mathews in 1907 and 1909, respectively. The poems represented in these anthologies were collected from among the over 164 of Pope’s individual publications that appeared in *Punch*, *The Pall Mall Magazine*, *The Windsor Magazine*, *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, *The Idler*, and elsewhere between 1895 and 1909. Many of these would not be collected until 1920’s *Hits and Misses*, published by Grant Richards. Newspapers to which she was not a regular contributor frequently pulled her poems from their original places of publication to fill column gaps.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, she had already begun to develop a following in New Zealand and Australia as her poems and stories were reprinted in this manner by publications like the *Auckland Star*, the *Poverty Bay Herald*, and *The Press*.<sup>5</sup> Her short stories were lightly revised and collected only three times: *The Tracy Tubbses*, *The Shy Age*, and *Love—on Leave*.<sup>6</sup> Many

---

<sup>3</sup> “Ward Lock and Co.’s Wonder Book,” *The Bookman*, December 1912, 186.

<sup>4</sup> Altick notes that the *Times* was borrowing items from *Punch* to fill column space as early as 1842 (11). While this practice certainly added to the readership of writers like Pope and attested to their popularity, it was often undertaken without the author’s permission. Correspondence between Grant Richards and Jessie Pope indicates that Pope monitored the appearances of her work in print as best should could; she seems to have asked Richards to investigate the appearance of an unnamed work of hers published in local newspaper apparently without her knowledge. Richards writes to Pope on October 27, 1915 to tell her, “I have written to the ‘Sheffield Weekly Telegraph.’” Another letter from Grant Richards to Jessie Pope dated November 11, 1915 mentions “the matter of the wrongful printing” of Pope’s work in the *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph* for which Richards seems to have secured a correction including “the proper acknowledgement of its source.” Grant Richards to Jessie Pope, October 27, 1915 and November 11, 1915, *Archives of Grant Richards, 1897-1948* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., 1979), Reel 23.

<sup>5</sup> This popularity in New Zealand and Australia never waned during her career; in fact, a New Zealand books blog is one of the few places on the internet one can find fair, non-condemnatory words about Pope.

<sup>6</sup> Jessie Pope, *The Tracy Tubbses* (London: Mills and Boone, 1914); *The Shy Age* (London: Grant Richards, 1914); *Love—On Leave* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., 1919).

fictional letters and skits, among the 182 separate items she contributed to *Punch* from 1903-1916, were left uncollected, as were her several observational articles and many short stories in *The Windsor Magazine*. During the First World War, she remained as prolific as ever, contributing sixty-four poems to the *Daily Mail* and fifty-one to the *Daily Express* and collecting selections of them three times in *Jessie Pope's War Poems*, *More War Poems*, and *Simple Rhymes for Stirring Times*.<sup>7</sup>

She was one of the most versatile writers of her day, one who was keenly attentive to the topics of the moment and able to respond to them quickly and memorably. This is one of the reasons critics are quick to discount Pope and her writing: the very fact that it was popular, that she was not, nor was she trying to write what critics of her day or ours would term “literature.” Pope was a writer concerned with production and marketability over art, one who clearly knew how to market herself and how to deal with publishers. She was insistent about her money and monitored how well or poorly her independently authored works sold.<sup>8</sup> She was a freelance editor for Grant Richards. She arguably reached the height of her popularity in the first years of the Great War and finished her career with a return to children’s books, her last published as late as 1930. Whatever else she may have been, Pope was, first and foremost, a writer, a famous one. We owe it to her to read her as such.

---

<sup>7</sup> Jessie Pope, *Jessie Pope's War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915); *More War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915); *Simple Rhymes for Stirring Times* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., 1916).

<sup>8</sup> Many of Grant Richards’s letters to Pope are related to payment negotiations. For instance, at the start of her work on a long history of England for children, Pope asks for a great deal of money—“three guineas per thousand words”—for the type of writing under consideration. Richards estimates this be over fifty pounds at the book’s completion, which the firm cannot pay. He offers half that, which is still competitive, for Richards “would far rather have [Pope’s] work than anybody else’s.” Grant Richards to Jessie Pope, December 16, 1911, *Archives of Grant Richards, 1897-1948* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., 1979), Reel 19.

A look at Pope's career can demonstrate that little has really changed for women in publishing and in humor.<sup>9</sup> Her reputation as a humorist was well-established in the first years of her career. Even in this early success, she is marked as not just a humorist, but a female one, which to critics of the day makes her exceedingly rare.<sup>10</sup> Humor is for men, while light verse is for women. However, each title page for her first two collections of poetry includes the words "humorous verse" just beneath the title. Pope knows what it means to insist on labeling her work "humorous verse," and what praise she earns in her early reviews is earned in spite of Pope's sex, which marks her out as different and as warranting a closer observation, for a woman's success at "male gender-typed work" is a "violation of gender-prescriptive norms."<sup>11</sup> Even today, the prevailing notion is that women should not hone the "barbs" necessary for effective humor or satire.<sup>12</sup> Regina Barreca summarizes the way female humor violates gender norms:

When a woman demonstrates her anger through humor, however, she is seen as losing self-control, because she isn't meant to have any angry feelings in the first place. [...] a woman's joke is seen as evidence of feelings she's not supposed to have in the first place. The understanding is that women employ humor as a last resort rather than as a first step, and so

---

<sup>9</sup> Women are still assessed according to criteria not applied to men. They are encouraged to use pen names or less feminized names to foster a wider readership, especially if their protagonists are male. J.K. Rowling is an example here; her publisher recommended using her initials rather than her first name when initially publishing her first Harry Potter novel.

<sup>10</sup> If she were alive today, the blogosphere and Twitterverse would still question whether she has the ability to be truly funny. Debates over the relative success of female comedians in terms of their male counterparts never seem to end.

<sup>11</sup> Madeline Heilman, Aaron Wallen, Daniella Fuchs, and Melinda Tamkins, "Penalties for Success: Reactions to Women Who Succeed at Male Gender-Typed Tasks," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 3 (2004): 416-427. 417.

<sup>12</sup> *Punch's* review of *Airy Nothings* defends her as a female humorist by assuring readers that her satire is "gentle" because "her shafts are never barbed." C.E. Hughes, H.W. Lucy, and Owen Seaman, Review of *Airy Nothings*, "Our Booking Office," *Punch*, December 8, 1909, 414.



a woman's humor is seen as evidence of the fact that she is 'unfeminine' in wishing to challenge someone.<sup>13</sup>

We can easily see evidence of the perceived "violation" in reviews of Pope's work. Her reviewers almost always note that Pope somehow manages to maintain her femininity while still delivering effective humor.

A review of her first collection of poems, *Paper Pellets*, makes Pope's sex the primary topic of discussion. It opens: "Those who anticipate a feminine [Charles] Calverley in the author of this, 'the first volume of humorous verse ever published by a woman,' will be disappointed."<sup>14</sup> The reviewer expects her simply to be a female version of a very different writer.<sup>15</sup> Arthur Waugh notes the difference between Charles Calverley and the humor more typical of *Punch*, the source of the main body of Pope's humorous poetry, and reminds readers that "it must be remembered that Praed and Calverley wrote for a little class—the public school, university, society class—to whom, for the most part, their public is still confined."<sup>16</sup> It is understandable, then, that a more highbrow publication like *The Athenaeum* would expect humor to resemble itself rather than "the world," for its audience is, as Waugh observes of Calverley's, educated, higher class society (xv). Pope's intended audience is not.

---

<sup>13</sup> Regina Barreca, *They Used to Call Me Snow White ... But I Drifted: Women's Strategic Use of Humor* (New York: Viking, 1991), 94

<sup>14</sup> "Paper Pellets. By Jessie Pope. (Elkin Mathews)," *The Athenaeum*, March 1907, 319.

<sup>15</sup> Educated at Oxford and Cambridge, Calverley became known for his 1862 book *Verses and Translations*, which comprised "gently parodic poems concentrated upon a comfortable and leisured upper-middle-class world." His second humorous work, *Fly Leaves*, included a parody of Robert Browning's "The Ring and the Book," along with scholarly writing about "witty verse." *Verses and Translations* was in its fourteenth edition by 1894, ten years after Calverley's death, and *The Athenaeum* "wished that 'some of our prolific small poets would write as good poetry in earnest as Mr. Calverley does in play.'" Leslie Stephen, "Calverley, [formerly Blayds], Charles Stewart (1831-1884)," revised by Katherine Mullin, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed February 27, 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4409>.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Waugh, introduction to *Later Poems from Punch* (London: George C. Harrap and Co., 1909), xv.

However, if Pope were a man, *The Athenaeum* would not lament that she is not another Calverley; she would be expected to be different. She would, perhaps, be read on her own terms, and more attention would be given to the content of the book rather than the sex of its author. Nearly half of *The Athenaeum*'s review is given over to a description of Calverley as the standard of humor only to set up how Pope has missed the mark, assuming all the while that she considers herself one of Calverley's "disciples" because "we suppose, from the nature of these verses, that Miss Pope is such a one," again emphasizing her sex.<sup>17</sup> *Punch*'s review of the same book addresses this critique, playfully and pointedly defending Pope:<sup>18</sup>

The critics, not always very expert judges of technique in this school [of humor], have employed their usual formulas about the obvious influence of Calverley. It may interest them to know that Miss Pope makes no secret of the fact that she has never had the curiosity to read a line from the work of that admirable exemplar. She will, of course, waste no time in making good this defect in order to find out where she got her originality from.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> "Paper Pellets. By Jessie Pope. (Elkin Mathews)," *The Athenaeum*, March 1907, 319. *The Athenaeum* does gender male writers as well. On the same page as Pope's review, the magazine treats *New Poems*, by William H. Davies, referring to him as Mr. Davies; *Poems*, by John Bannister Tabb, referring to him as Mr. Tabb; and *My Garden, and other Poems*, by John Gregory, referring to him as Mr. John Gregory. For *The Soul's Progress, and other Poems*, by Louis V. Ledoux, the editors refer to Ledoux only as "the author of this volume," possibly because his is a very unfavorable review indeed, even more so than Pope's. In the context of the page, referring to Pope as Miss Pope is remarkable only because she is the only female author in question.

<sup>18</sup> It should be acknowledged here, obviously, that *Punch* is reviewing one of their own, and having published so much of her writing for so long, the editors realize and understand Pope's humor, for it does, indeed, fit the aesthetic of the magazine. This does not discount, however, the importance and relative weight of a review in *Punch*, whose space devoted to publication review is very limited. Grant Richards writes to *Punch* in 1907 that "There is no paper in which a review is so valuable as 'Punch.' The publisher who knows his business turns naturally every week to see if one of his books has received notice." Grant Richards to The Proprietors of *Punch*, March 15, 1907, *Archives of Grant Richards, 1897-1948* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., 1979), Reel 10.

<sup>19</sup> C.E. Hughes, H.W. Lucy, and Owen Seaman, Review of *Paper Pellets*, "Our Booking Office," *Punch*, December 12, 1906, 432. Each week, the writers of "Our Booking Office" changed. Some contributors, like Owen Seaman or H.W. Lucy, contributed to as many as fourteen or twenty-five, respectively, in a six

*Punch* rightly acknowledges that the genre is more than the one man considered artful enough to define it, and while the editors here do note Pope's novelty "as an almost unique example of an Englishwoman's gift for light verse," they declare that she "needs to make no apology either for her sex or for the brevity of her experience."<sup>20</sup> For *Punch*, here, Pope is a capable writer of successful "light verse," for even though Pope uses "humorous" to describe her writing, it is interesting to note that *Punch* reminds readers that both books—*Paper Pellets* and *Airy Nothings*—are comprised of "light verse," rather than humor.<sup>21</sup>

### Mr. Punch's "Girl Friday"

With these two reviews, we can see the primary object of discussion when it comes to Pope's early work: her sex and the issue of how to situate her within an already established canon. Is she different from Calverley only because she is female? Her experience as a woman certainly excludes her from living the experiences to which Calverley may refer—public school, Oxford and Cambridge, the male society of the smoking room and the club—but it does not prevent her from observing, thinking, and

---

month period, while others like R.C. Lehmann contributed to only two in that same six months. The reviewers each month may change slightly, but their sex never changes: the staff of "Our Booking Office" are always male.

<sup>20</sup> Pope is 38 years old at this time. The "brevity of her experience" could refer to single-authored books for adults. By 1906, Pope has been publishing in adult periodicals for eleven years, but *Paper Pellets* is her first collection of light verse for adults.

<sup>21</sup> It is also worth noting that *Punch*'s review of *Paper Pellets* comes below a review of *The Crackling of Thorns*, by Captain Kendall, or "Dum-Dum" as he is named in *Punch*. Kendall, like Owen Seaman himself, is one of the rare writers whose texts are identified by an author's name outside of the index. The review of Kendall comprises three paragraphs to Pope's one, and the reviewer uses "light verse" and "humour" interchangeably. The first sentence calls Kendall's book "a really remarkable collection of light verse" and is followed by a second sentence claiming that "No writer of to-day can get more fun out of an elaborate form of humour." The rest of the review discusses Kendall's content, form, and style, as opposed to the treatment of Pope's sex, her "dainty touch," and her ignorance of Calverley in the review of *Paper Pellets*. Further, while Kendall's review ends with the "[commendation that] 'Dum-Dum's' volume [is] the best kind of Christmas gift to those who have a palate for the rarer vintages of English humour," directly linking author to text, Pope's review ends with a turn toward Mr. Punch himself: "*Mr. Punch*, who has enjoyed an intimate observation of her growing talent, ventures to give a guardian's blessing to what he knows to be an earnest of even better things to come."

speaking. Further, when her poems are removed from their original publication context, primarily *Punch* for her first two anthologies, it becomes very clear indeed that Pope is asking women's questions and addressing women's concerns. Her interests are less evident when Mr. Punch is the mediating voice. Reviewers and critics are unsure where to file Pope, this woman who can write for a male and female audience, who can elicit grudging praise from *The Athenaeum*, and who can hold her own and then some in the boy's club of *Punch*.<sup>22</sup>

Pope finds her stride quickly among her *Punch* peers. Examples of her poetry from as early as 1903 were collected in *Later Poems from Punch*, to which she is the only female contributor.<sup>23</sup> In the book's index, her name is given as "Pope, Jessie," which is consistent with *Punch*'s magazine indices at that time. Of the book's twenty-nine contributors, only eight are identified by both a first name and a surname. This is not an uncommon practice for the Edwardian popular press, *Punch* in particular. Men are more likely to be identified with either initials only or an initial followed by a surname. Owen Seaman, for instance, is more frequently cited as O.S. than by his full name; moreover, he is one of the very few whose contributions to *Punch* are credited on the page they appear, rather than in the index alone.<sup>24</sup> In the *Daily Mail*, more often than not, female poets' names are given—Adelaide Anne Proctor, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Beatrice M. Berry—while male poets are more frequently identified with initials—R.E. Vernede, J.B.

---

<sup>22</sup> The editors of *The Athenaeum* do admit that Pope "has the gift of smooth and facile versification" and find that "the best pieces in the book are those which are not exclusively 'humorous.'"

<sup>23</sup> *Later Poems from Punch* (London: George C. Harrap and Co., 1909). Of the 29 contributors to this volume, I can verify the sex of all but 5. Of the 24 identified, Pope is the only female.

<sup>24</sup> Captain Kendall as "Dum-Dum" is probably second to Seaman, whose contributions elsewhere, including the *Daily Mail*, are signed "O.S." "The Day." August 19, 1914.

Hamilton, J.D.G., T.R.E. McInnes.<sup>25</sup> Readers are rarely allowed to overlook the sex of female writers. The December 1903 index of *Punch*, for instance, lists sixty-nine contributors of “Articles.”<sup>26</sup> Of this number, thirty-four are identified by initials—P.G. Wodehouse, R.C. Lehmann, W. Senior—and the remaining thirty-five list full names.<sup>27</sup> Only five of these are clearly women, and only one of those women is feminized in the index: Miss May Just.

In fact, *Punch* does not begin feminizing all of their female writers until December 1911. This index lists sixty-five “Articles” contributors with thirty-five identified by initials, seventeen with clearly male names, and ten female names.<sup>28</sup> Each of these ten includes “Mrs.” or “Miss,” even if, in Pope’s case, the woman had been published in *Punch* before this volume. This trend persists for *Punch* for the duration of Pope’s affiliation with the magazine with the exception of the December 1913 index in which Pope is listed, as before, as “Pope, Jessie.” This index lists only four women: Jessie Pope, Ina Garvey, Mrs. Torin, and Miss Mackellar. Perhaps Garvey and Pope, both having appeared in the pages of *Punch* numerous times before, asked to have the “Miss”

---

<sup>25</sup> The exception to this seems to be F. Tennyson Jesse, a woman writer whose name appears masculinized. Something about how this does not take into account how these writers for whom it would be an understatement to describe as obscure for today’s readers may be using a pseudonym. But that also seems unlikely, as the poems submitted under their names are hardly controversial. Indeed, it is possible today to Google the majority of poem contributors for the *Daily Mail*, and none of the writers’ names have turned out to be pen names. J.K. Rowling, who is a good example of using initials to disguise from one’s sex, published a book under a clearly male pseudonym, Robert Galbraith, not that the anonymity lasted long. Nora Roberts publishes often under J.D. Robb, but again, as with Rowling, readers know that Robb is Roberts, the name chosen to help the well-known romance writer reach a wider audience. She has written under another female name as well, Jill March. Stephen King has published under the name Richard Bachman; the fiction here was that Bachman’s publication was posthumous.

<sup>26</sup> *Punch* indexes are always divided three ways: “Articles,” “Cartoons,” and “Pictures and Sketches.” Contributors of the latter two seem to be exclusively male.

<sup>27</sup> Only two of these are unclear as to the sex of the author: H. Devey Brown and C. Turley Smith. While Devey and Turley could be male middle names, they could also be surnames for married women.

<sup>28</sup> Three names in this index may be considered unclear—W. Hodgson Burnet, W.W. Blair Fish, and T. Anstey Guthrie—but each identifies a male author. One woman in this index is listed under a name that follows a similar pattern, but her name is feminized: *Miss* E. A. Seaforth.

dropped from their names. Perhaps it was a mistake in compiling the index. We cannot know for sure. But the feminization of female names resumed with the next index and continued beyond the end of Pope's affiliation with *Punch* after December 1916. Never are men's names masculinized; never is Owen Seaman indexed, for example, as "Seaman, Mr. Owen." It is unclear why *Punch* made the move in 1911 toward feminizing their female contributors. *Punch* was publishing the same average number of female contributors during this time, between five and seven in each volume. In the overall scope of the magazine, *Punch* counts very few women among its contributors and even fewer among its regular contributors. Considering the language of the reviews of the day, it is more unusual for *Punch* not to feminize Pope's name, especially in the index of a major collection like *Later Poems from Punch*. Like some of Pope's critics, perhaps *Punch*, at times, struggles with the question of how to consider a woman writer like Pope. She is included, but excluded; she is assimilated, but marginalized; she is embraced, but distanced.

While Waugh's introduction to *Later Poems from Punch* may congratulate Mr. Punch on having "no prejudices," observing that "there is nothing snobbish or exclusive about his *entourage*" as represented by the contents of the book, it should be noted that Waugh describes those who write with a sense of humor as belonging to an exclusive men's club where "if vice is to be rebuked, it shall be done with manly vigour."<sup>29</sup> Although his language reflects the use of the masculine pronoun as all-inclusive common in the twentieth-century, there is no mistaking that the humorist is gendered as male. Waugh finds the lineage of the humorist tracing back to Shakespeare's Falstaff as "a man whose humour is of the essence of his character" (xiii). The presence of a woman in this

---

<sup>29</sup> Waugh, introduction to *Later Poems from Punch*, xiv.

company, then, is novel indeed. Pope may be invited to sit at the table, but her place there is not taken for granted as it would be if she were male. She must work constantly to maintain her access to the group.<sup>30</sup> But Waugh correctly acknowledges that the sense of humor represented in the book is, perhaps, wider-reaching than humor has previously been, for “Mr. Punch writes for the world, and [...] he is without the slightest assumption of the airs of the pedagogue, educating the whole nation in the ways of taste.”<sup>31</sup> However, Waugh maintains the illusion that the primary voice represented in the pages of the magazine, and therefore in the pages of the book, is that of Mr. Punch. This unity of voice and point of view has always been a key identifying characteristic of *Punch*.<sup>32</sup>

We can read Pope’s integration into the *Punch* group as an unsteady one, for Pope must work constantly to maintain that rapport with her fellow contributors. Never able to integrate herself fully into the group because of her sex, she remains on the obvious gender margin of *Punch*. In the language used to describe her role at the magazine in reviews in *Punch* or elsewhere, it becomes clear that in the world of humor, Pope is a token, a mascot, or a pet, that her “status as a female overshadowed” her status as

---

<sup>30</sup> Joan Neff Gurney, “Not One of the Guys: The Female Researcher in a Male-Dominated Setting,” *Qualitative Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1985): 42-62. Gurney discusses the tricky and unstable situation of women working on the margins of male-dominated groups. She notes that during her experience conducting field research among members of an economic crime unit in the early 1980s, she had to negotiate her own feelings of gratitude for access to information not made free to the public alongside her recognition that she was still actively excluded from meetings that would have been important to her research. She concludes from her own experience that the feminist researcher, aware of the sexist environment within which she works, must choose her battles: “If the researcher is a feminist, her exposure to sexism may challenge her values, since she must decide whether to openly object to sexist remarks and treatment or try to ignore such insults and say nothing in order to maintain access to the setting” (58-59).

<sup>31</sup> Waugh, introduction to *Later Poems from Punch*, xv-xvi.

<sup>32</sup> Richard D. Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841-1851* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997). From its inception in 1841, the assumed voice behind the pages of *Punch* has always been Mr. Punch himself. The creators of *Punch* wanted to maintain “a strict policy of anonymity” (Altick 47). As the early issues coalesced into what would establish the key characteristics of the magazine, it was found that the use of a single figure representative of the magazine was very useful indeed. According to Altick, “one result was that the strong opinions that constituted the paper’s editorial policy could be attributed not, as they would otherwise have been, to the anonymous men in the office but to an individual, however fictive, person—crotchety perhaps, but always on the right side of an issue and a doughty champion of that cause” (60).

writer.<sup>33</sup> In the review of *Paper Pellets*, Mr. Punch makes a point of “[giving] a guardian’s blessing” to her publication. Later, when reviewing *Airy Nothings*, consistently diminutive and sexist terms are used, ones that would never be applied to the work of a male writer: “modest in size as in title,” “neat and nimble,” “easy as the shelling of peas,” “this little volume,” and “clean and pretty wit.”<sup>34</sup> Writing from the margins, Pope seems to have maintained her access to the group by modulating her own voice so that it sounded no different from the mouth of Mr. Punch than Owen Seaman’s or any of the other dominantly male contributors. When it is collected and removed from the context of *Punch*, consequently, it becomes imperative to male reviewers to remind readers that these selections are of female authorship as a way to devalue those contributions and separate them from the more serious contributions to the genre of humor by her male counterparts. Couching Pope’s success in terms of differentiation—that Pope is the only female humorist, or one of the very few—causes the audience to consider Pope in terms of violation rather than success.<sup>35</sup> She is an aberration.

While no account of Pope’s time with *Punch* exists aside from her own writing and the language used in writing about her, it is not hard to imagine, in the early years of

---

<sup>33</sup> Gurney, 44. Gurney uses this language to describe the inescapable nature of one’s gender in a male-dominated research environment.

<sup>34</sup> Hughes, Lucy, and Seaman, Review of *Airy Nothings*, 414.

<sup>35</sup> Included in *Airy Nothings* is a selection of excerpts from reviews of *Paper Pellets*. The *Evening Standard* admits that “Miss Pope has earned her place beside “O.S.,” Mr. St. John Hankin, and Mr. Mostyn Piggott, and a few other modern writers of true and happy satirical verse.” The *Tribune* calls her work “almost unique” for a “woman writer,” and states that “Miss Pope stands alone among her sex, and may fairly challenge comparison with her masculine rivals.” The *Daily Mail* reminds readers that “*Punch* [has] a poetess.” The *World* writes that “Miss Jessie Pope has the unusual gift in a young lady of expressing humour in verse” and notes that her work has been read “side by side with the work of masculine cynics and jesters of reputation.” The *Evening News* begins “Humorists are rare, poetic humorists are rarer, poetic humorists of the fair sex are rarest of all.” The rest of the excerpts use terms like “dainty,” “sparkling,” “graceful,” and “bright and light” to describe Pope’s words alongside modifiers like “attractive,” “slim,” “little” to describe the physical presentation of her book. Each review remarks about Pope’s rarity as, in the *Evening News*’s terms, “our one woman humorist.” These are all very good reviews, but they are dangerous as well, for they set Pope up as an object of rarity and fascination, and this is but one way, according to Joanna Russ, that women writers are silenced.



the twentieth century, what her experience in such a staunch boys' club must have been like. In her reflection on her experience conducting field research in an economic crime unit during the early 1980s, sociologist Joan Neff Gurney identifies that the "gender-related problems female researchers have addressed can be divided into two categories: sexual hustling and sexist treatment."<sup>36</sup> While we have no evidence that Pope experienced the former, descriptions of her in the pages of *Punch* and elsewhere provide ample evidence of the latter. Many may argue that the sexist treatment she experienced in print was status quo in her day, and they would be correct. Even today, the first line of defense against a talented female writer is still to indict her for her sex.<sup>37</sup> We must pay attention to the patronizing, paternalist sexism Pope faced in order to understand fully how remarkable her talents were.<sup>38</sup>

Pope was a popular fixture in *Punch* for the duration of her time with the magazine; readers knew her name in connection with humorous prose and verse, as well as with children's books. She appeared in *Punch* more frequently than any of her female contemporaries, but at the same time, Pope is a token female. She is, as Carol Brightman describes Mary McCarthy in the early days of the *Partisan Review*, a "girl Friday among

---

<sup>36</sup> Gurney, "Not One of the Guys," 46.

<sup>37</sup> Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

<sup>38</sup> This kind of language persists today in readings of Pope; she is dismissed for her sex or her "feminine" subject matter. In his *Great War Fiction* blog, George Simmers reads Pope's *Love—On Leave* and quickly dismisses it because he finds Pope's use of the courtship story mode distasteful and needlessly frivolous. Of his reading the stories, he states, "I could only manage so many at a sitting; the reading experience was rather like working through a very sickly box of chocs." As ever, the bulk of his post on *Love—On Leave* is a reminder to the reader that "Jessie the poetess, of course, is famous for bossing about the wimpy men of England" before giving, without context, the text of Pope's November 1915 poem "Who's for the Game?" Still, as with *The Athenaeum*, Simmers reluctantly admits at the end of his post that he "enjoyed" the stories, only after asserting that "they are far from serious literature." George Simmers, "Jessie Pope's *Love—On Leave*," *Great War Fiction* (blog), July 9, 2009, <http://greatwarfiction.wordpress.com/2009/07/09/jessie-popes-love-on-leave/>.

the pirates.”<sup>39</sup> Like McCarthy, in joining the ranks of *Punch*’s frequent contributors, Pope became part of “a self-proclaimed elite” at a magazine that was already legend (145). She is remarkable for her rarity, and one wonders whether Pope encountered feelings similar to Gurney’s when Gurney notes that “it is often easier for tokens to accept the roles to which they are assigned than to fight them. It is easier to keep silent when one is offended or insulted than to confront the offender and risk an argument,” especially when an argument might mean a loss of access to the group and rapport with its members.<sup>40</sup> It is clear from *Punch*’s reviews—in which he describes himself as a “guardian”—that Pope becomes a sort of daughter for Mr. Punch, one of whom he is proud and whose talents he encourages (50).<sup>41</sup>

This daughter status cements Pope’s marginality in the publication. It allows the editorship of the magazine to read her work from that paternal perspective and also, perhaps, to discipline and contain Pope’s writing through its placement on the page as we shall see with the *Punch* poem “Another Pair of Sleeves.” This is also a position within the group that one does not choose and that one cannot shake. The father-daughter relationship is backed by the “legitimacy of traditional sex role relationships” and “offers older males—threatened by young women or unable to interact with young women as peers—a safe, predefined interactional context.”<sup>42</sup> It gives Pope a diminutive and precious status within the group. This is a role to which she must have adapted, for Pope remains with *Punch* and is prolific within its pages from 1902 until 1916. As this chapter

---

<sup>39</sup> Carol Brightman, *Writing Dangerously: Mary McCarthy and Her World* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1992), 145.

<sup>40</sup> Gurney, “Not One of the Guys,” 56.

<sup>41</sup> The role of “surrogate daughters of paternalistic male administrators” is a role identified by Easterday, cited by Gurney.

<sup>42</sup> Lois Easterday, Diana Papademas, Laura Schorr, and Catherine Valentine, “The Making of a Female Researcher: Role Problems in Field Work,” *Urban Life*, later, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 6, no. 3 (1977): 333-348.

demonstrates, however, Pope recognized the precarious line she must walk and made her protest in subtle ways. Luckily for her, it was a protest that sold.

Despite her fraught position in the world of humor, there is no denying Pope's popularity and success in the genre. Her best and best-selling writing, her correspondence with Grant Richards seems to indicate, was her light and humorous verse, and the collections of 1907 and 1909 cement her reputation as an able humorist. By 1912, Richards is able to declare that "as a matter of fact [Pope's] name is sufficiently well known not to require additional identification" other than the titles for which she is best known, *Paper Pellets* and *Airy Nothings*.<sup>43</sup> But even as she gained fame and readership in the genre, she still had to tread lightly.

The titles of Pope's first two collections participate in a tradition with a history dating to Sappho and beyond in which woman apologize for their writing or attribute their talents to muses, gods, or necessity, never locating their talents in themselves. Sappho calls to her instrument "Come, my sacred / tortoiseshell lyre, / speak; let my music / give you voice."<sup>44</sup> Sappho's words give "voice" to the lyre, but they are not heard from Sappho herself, rather mediated through the lyre. Marie de France begins her *Lais* with the claim that "Whoever has received knowledge / and eloquence in speech from God / should not be silent or secretive / but demonstrate it willingly."<sup>45</sup> Here, her ability to speak and write is divine. She writes because she must. Charlotte Smith wrote for years under the alibi that she was merely biding her time until her children could legally

---

<sup>43</sup> Grant Richards to Jessie Pope, July 2, 1912, *Archives of Grant Richards, 1897-1948* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., 1979), Reel 20. They are discussing the publication of her 1912 children's book, *How England Grew Up*.

<sup>44</sup> Sappho, Fragment 118, in *The Sappho Companion*, by Margaret Reynolds (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Marie de France. "Prologue," trans. Robert Henning and Joan Ferrante, *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, volume 1A, ed. Christopher Baswell and Anne Howland Schotter (New York: Longman, 2010), 201-203.

come into their inheritance.<sup>46</sup> She was prolific, but to her public, she was first a mother. Cheryl Nixon discusses the modest apology—what these women, their contemporaries, and women following them for centuries have done—as a strategy used by women writers

to ward off criticism from her reading public by, variously, admitting that her writing is an artless diversion not to be taken seriously, acknowledging that her sex's writing is naturally inferior to that of the male sex, acknowledging her lack of formal education, and claiming that the primary purpose of her writing is to instill the idea of virtue in the minds of her female readers.<sup>47</sup>

Joan Radner and Susan Lanser classify this persistent trend as a method of claiming “incompetence” to “express resistance to patriarchal expectations” and “say on her own behalf what she expected her audience to think: that she had a right to be writing and that her work was bound to be inferior.”<sup>48</sup> While Pope's titles do not apologize for her education or stroke the egos of her male counterparts, they do hint that the poems within those volumes are “artless diversions.” They allow her to “[deflect] criticism for undertaking the ‘masculine’ act of writing [for Pope, writing humor] and set the stage for surprised pleasure that she could in fact write well” (22). But they do not stop there. Both *Paper Pellets* and *Airy Nothings* are phrases with considerable meaning behind them.

---

<sup>46</sup> Sarah M. Zimmerman, “Smith, Charlotte (1749-1806),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007, accessed August 17, 2013. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25790>.

<sup>47</sup> Cheryl L. Nixon, “‘Stop a Moment at this Preface’: The Gendered Paratexts of Fielding, Barker, and Haywood,” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 32, no. 2 (2002): 123-153. 124.

<sup>48</sup> Joan N. Radner and Susan S. Lanser, “Strategies of Coding in Women's Culture,” in *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture*, ed. Joan N. Radner (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1-29. 22-3.

These titles are coded, as Pope's poems often are, one thing on the surface, but quite another thing underneath.<sup>49</sup>

Most obviously, *Paper Pellets* invokes the idea of paper bullets. In 1663-4, Richard Atkyns, writing about the rise of the popular press in England, describes the power of fast-moving news publications and propaganda: "these paper-pellets became as dangerous as bullets."<sup>50</sup> While there is no guarantee that Pope read an obscure history of the English press and such reading inspired her title, the phrase persists in various other forms. Andrew Marvell, for instance, writes that the lead in type is more dangerous than the lead in bullets in *Rehearsal Tranpros 'd*.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, "Paper bullets" is also a phrase Benedick uses in *Much Ado About Nothing*, which is the most likely source of Pope's title since the relationship between Benedick and Beatrice is composed entirely of wordplay and cleverness, just as Pope's relationship with Mr. Punch.<sup>52</sup> Benedick uses the phrase after overhearing Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato discussing Beatrice's love for Benedick, which is, at this moment, a fiction. The three want Benedick to believe the falsehood, hoping that his belief will turn it true.<sup>53</sup> Benedick questions the values he has held forth his entire life and concludes:

I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me  
because I have railed so long against marriage; but doth not the appetite  
alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age.

---

<sup>49</sup> I am using coded as it is discussed by Radner and Lanser. My reading will demonstrate that Pope deploys nearly every strategy they identify in "Strategies of Coding."

<sup>50</sup> Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>51</sup> N.H. Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-century England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), 127.

<sup>52</sup> Pope's references and allusions point toward wide reading. See chapter 3 for my discussion of Pope's education at North London Collegiate School.

<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, Beatrice is being fed a similar story in a similar way.

Shall the quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No. The world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.<sup>54</sup>

Here Benedick moves to dismiss the “paper bullets,” but dismissing the power of words is moot in this scene where his entire life philosophy has been changed because of a few well-chosen words. At this moment, Beatrice does not want to marry him. But Benedick has heard that she does and believes it. Words have power. This is a fact that Jessie Pope knows well. She understands that while the paper bullets here may seem harmless, they can cause quite an explosion however underestimated they may be. The same applies to Pope’s poetry. In *Punch*, it seems fairly innocuous, but when the poems are grouped together, they have a definite message to send. At the same time, because they’re humorous, that message is unexpected and can therefore slip through a reader’s defenses. Humor, as Radner and Lanser note, is a move toward what they term “trivialization,” and it is the one most frequently used; they write that humor can “buffer the acerbity of a message not only for the audience but for the performer herself.”<sup>55</sup> Note, however, that humor does not undermine the message. The reader would be careless indeed to dismiss Pope’s paper bullets as harmless.<sup>56</sup>

Like the first collection, the title of the second, *Airy Nothings*, has a connection to Shakespeare. Near the end of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Theseus muses on the active

---

<sup>54</sup> William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al (New York: Norton, 1997), 1381-1444. II.3.208-215.

<sup>55</sup> Radner and Lanser, “Strategies of Coding,” 20.

<sup>56</sup> One familiar with Pope only as she is filtered through the lens of traditional First World War criticism would be quick to remind me that her jingoist wartime poetry did plenty of harm; however, as I demonstrate here and will further argue later, Pope’s writing is always more than it first appears. A careful reader can find moments of protest and pain in her war poetry as poignant as those of the most celebrated voices of the war.

imaginings of “The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,” going on to say that “The Poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling / Doth glance from heaven to hearth, from earth to heaven, / And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen / Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing / A local habitation<sup>57</sup> and a name. / Such tricks hath strong imagination [...]”<sup>58</sup> Never gendered as male or female in this speech, the poet has great power here; the poet imagines and then creates, taking what was “airy nothing” and giving it shape and reality. The title, as the modest apology, indicates that the poems within are still at the first stage, still “airy nothing,” unable to become more and hints, as Pope’s critics often do, that the author is no poet at all. It is this second collection that gives Pope’s most pointed feminist critiques; it is also the worst reviewed of the two. Throughout both collections, but especially in *Paper Pellets*, Pope plays with silence and escape and how they are deployed by the single woman to maintain her selfhood.

An examination of both *Paper Pellets* and *Airy Nothings* reveal the subversion of the *Punch* perspective as a means to ask women’s questions. The poems Pope chooses to include in the first collection lay the foundation for what is to come in the second. In *Paper Pellets*, we see unapologetically independent women who, for the *Punch* reader, are objects of surveillance. As ever, Mr. Punch observes these baffling women and offers his patriarchal wisdom. The best examples are “To A Stout Shepherdess” and “A Vain Appeal,” both addressing women’s fashions and behavior. Mr. Punch’s commentary, meant to contain these women, fails because, like Mabel with her new sleeves in

---

<sup>57</sup> *Punch*’s review of *Airy Nothings* alludes to this Shakespearean reference, noting that Mr. Punch is “[...] glad that these ‘airy nothings’ have been fixed with so pleasant a ‘habitation.’” December 8, 1909.

<sup>58</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al (New York: Norton, 1997), 805-863. V.1.12-17.

“Another Pair of Sleeves,” the women here do not care that they are the objects of surveillance and commentary. This male studying of women cannot be challenged overtly in the popular press of Pope’s day, but it is taken for granted that women’s behavior, by definition, must be policed, guided, and contained. The women here may be silent, but their silence is resistance and evasion.<sup>59</sup> Pope’s critiques culminate in the ending sequence of this collection, “Men I Might Have Married,” with its questioning of what is considered to be “normal” male behavior and what women’s reactions to it are and ought to be. When collected, revised, and arranged in this way, we can see how Pope’s arguably feminist concerns were hidden under Mr. Punch’s nose. But even in her own book, in order to appeal to the widest possible audience, Pope must continue to exercise her considerable skills of misdirection.

It may be argued that I am reading Pope’s intention here, and to a certain extent I am, but I am doing so through the lens of Radner and Lanser’s work on coding in women’s writing. They explain that “given the impossibility (especially with respect to coded performance) of any certainty about an individual’s desires, intention must be conferred from the contextual knowledge available, and this knowledge includes an understanding of the conventions for aesthetic production in a given cultural circumstance.”<sup>60</sup> I have demonstrated the prejudice Pope encountered in the eyes of reviewers for writing the kind of texts she dared to write, yet she still managed to elicit a measure of praise from those same reviewers. If Pope wants her writing to do more than make readers laugh, and we can infer that she does, she must rely on these coding

---

<sup>59</sup> Patricia Laurence, “Women’s Silence as a Ritual of Truth: A Study of Literary Expressions in Austen, Bronte, and Woolf,” in *Listening to Silences*, ed. Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin (New York: Oxford, 1994), 156-167.

<sup>60</sup> Radner and Lanser, “Strategies of Coding,” 7.



methodologies to communicate her message to readers who can comprehend the code. In a popular interview, excerpted and reprinted in New Zealand and Australia, Pope is asked if she has “any ambition to write in a serious vein,” to which Pope replies, “Of course I have. Did you ever hear of a clown who did not secretly wish to play Hamlet? But once a clown always a clown seems to be the law of literature.”<sup>61</sup> For Pope, her famous sense of humor works both for and against her. It keeps her name prominent in booksellers’ stalls and readers’ sitting rooms, but it also prevents her critics from assuming that she can do more.

### **Pope’s Orchestration of the *Punch* Woman: Revising Judy**

Pope’s texts say one thing in the context of *Punch* and something quite different when removed from that context. The first ten poems in *Paper Pellets* are selections from *Punch*. This choice can work in several ways. First, for a first collection and an early entry in a series designed to make literature accessible and easily consumable to a mass audience, Pope chooses a recognizable reference to the source of her current popularity as an opening.<sup>62</sup> Second, in these first poems, Pope establishes many of the contemporary topics to be examined throughout the rest of the collection, including the motor car and driving, nature and the weather, and seaside bathing. The more nuanced themes Pope returns to most, however, are issues directly touching women’s lives in large and small ways: courtship, fashion, shopping, other women, and gender equity. Planting these seeds

---

<sup>61</sup> “The Poet of Punch,” *The Colonist* (Nelson, New Zealand), April 16, 1914, 2.

<sup>62</sup> James G. Nelson, *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). *Paper Pellets* is part of Elkin Mathews’s “Satchel Series” of books. Of the 17 books in the Satchel Series, only three were written by women, and two of those were Pope’s. The other woman in the series was Mrs. Hamilton Syngé. A mixture of poetry and prose, Mathews’s “Satchel Series” was one of five series established by the publisher between the late 1890’s and the start of the First World War: the Shilling Garland, the Vigo Cabinet, the Satchel, the Savile, and the Burlington series. The books were designed to be an inexpensive, distinctive, and portable way to introduce new or relatively unknown writers, especially poets, to a wide readership.

in her first collection allows Pope to grow them into more fully realized discussions of single, independent women, suffragists, and suffering wives in her second collection. Many of these topics are explored through the motif of the “*Punch* woman,” the version of woman as constructed in the pages of *Punch* as an object of humor, ridicule, and gender discipline.

The *Punch* woman, as Pope encounters her, has roots in the New Woman of the *fin de siècle*, with whom Mr. Punch had a complicated relationship. Tracy J. R. Collins studies illustrations from the *fin de siècle Punch* as it depicts the New Woman consistently in athletic/practical garb. The magazine, Collins argues, gives a body to the New Woman, whose physicality had previously been left undescribed in other literature in which the New Woman is featured. Most importantly, Collins observes that each cartoon’s image and caption serve different purposes. The illustrations always depict the woman’s body in perfectly proportioned terms. While a caption may hint that her feet or hands are mannishly large, for instance, the illustration never bears this out. So the illustration itself may show the New Woman as fit, confident, and capable, but the captions are always moves toward containment. It is the captions rather than the illustrations, Collins rightly asserts, that “signify the anxieties patriarchal culture had about [the New Woman’s] social personality and politics.”<sup>63</sup> The captions carry the weight of authority, translating the image for the reader. Pope, arguably a New Woman herself, comes to *Punch* as this manner of depicting women has already been firmly established, and she situates herself within this oppositional textual discourse in which a

---

<sup>63</sup> Tracy J.R. Collins, “Athletic Fashion, *Punch*, and the Creation of the New Woman,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 43.3 (2010): 309-335. 310.

“patriarchal text [is juxtaposed with] a liberating and even quite appealing female image” (314). Pope’s texts are oppositional in a different direction.

In the context of the magazine, bereft of her name on the page to identify the work as her own, Pope’s poems often sound patriarchal, yet removed from *Punch* and situated deliberately among other poems of similar subject and tone, readers can perceive Pope satirizing not the female subjects of her poems, but how those women must be portrayed in *Punch*. Removing the “*Punch* woman” from the containment of *Punch* and placing her alongside depictions of more reasonable, realistic women first published elsewhere allows Pope’s eye for satire to do double the work by now skewering not only this type of woman and the people who would let her represent all women, but also *Punch*’s consistently misogynistic perspective.<sup>64</sup> Pope takes what could be read as her contribution to that misogyny and turns it into a reading of Mr. Punch himself.

The opening poem of *Paper Pellets*, “Another Pair of Sleeves,” is an ideal example. Here, readers meet Mabel from the point of view of what I am terming a flexible speaker. Most of Pope’s neutral or androgynous speakers can actually be gender-flexible, causing the poem to change in tone whether the reader assumes a male or female speaker.<sup>65</sup> The predominantly male readership of *Punch* would likely read from a male perspective, for not only is the illusion of the magazine that it is all from the mind of Mr. Punch, but the women’s voices in *Punch* issue from a distinctively male mouth.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Counting “Men I Might Have Married” sequence as five distinct poems, *Paper Pellets* collects forty-three total poems, eighteen of which originally appeared in *Punch*.

<sup>65</sup> This flexibility becomes of great importance for her Great War output, for most scholars tend to read her poetry as having strictly a strictly female voice, then, of course, that voice becomes conflated with Pope’s own.

<sup>66</sup> The two best-known female characters from the early years of *Punch* are Tom Taylor’s “Unprotected Female” and Douglas William Jerrold’s Mrs. Caudle. A series of twenty skits published between November 1849 and April 1850, “Scenes from the Life of an Unprotected Female” follows the title woman, Miss Martha Struggles, through such mundane adventures as navigating a train station or boarding a bus. In

In its original *Punch* context, “Another Pair of Sleeves” appears on a page directly beneath a cartoon entitled “Prehistoric Shakespeare, No. 3. ‘Macbeth.’”



Figure 1. “Prehistoric Shakespeare. No. 3. ‘Macbeth,’” *Punch*, September 28, 1904, 231.

his history of *Punch*, Richard Altick reads her kindly, calling her “a spirited lady [who] knew what she wanted, but in these early appearances she was regularly frustrated if not actually victimized by noncooperative officials, clerks, and other supposed servants of the public” (515-516). Altick assesses *Punch* as “neither misogynist nor feminist” and finds that Martha Struggles encounters more unhelpful people than problems because of her own innate incompetence. This does not dismiss the fact, however, that Martha Struggles is an “unprotected female,” who by the very nature of the term needs protection and guidance. She is a female anomaly, presented here for humorous observation by readers who may presume they “know better” than Martha, who is literally struggling in the wider world. Additionally, Jerrold’s “Mrs. Caudle’s Curtain Lectures” preserve the bedtime lectures of Mrs. Caudle to her husband. She is certainly a memorable, distinctive character who becomes quite popular in *Punch* and in publications for Jerrold elsewhere, both authorized and unauthorized, but it is important to note the circumstances of the lectures (11). Mrs. Caudle does not speak in the pages of *Punch* during her own life; it is her husband who records her voice after her death, and the lectures he records are from thirty years of marriage. If Mr. Caudle aims to quote his now-dead wife, he will be unable to do so accurately, for her lectures are filtered through the “henpecked” husband who writes down the words of his “hectoring” wife only so he won’t hear them in his head anymore (13). It is not preservation, but exorcism. So while someone like Altick might read these apologetically, one can see how the creation of Mrs. Caudle and Martha Struggles are still moves toward the containment of outspoken and capable women. Like Collins’s reading of the relationship between illustrations and captions, these are subtle modes of containment. These are the women who form the foundation of the *Punch* woman, and in every instance, they are bound. When women like Pope begin writing for the magazine, their women must, at least ostensibly, fit the mold already in place. Pope is able to bend this mold with the flexible speaker and a keen editor’s eye for sequence in her own collections.

Lord and Lady Macbeth are dressed as stereotypical “cave people,” but their body language is wrong. Macbeth’s back is curved; he is thin to the point of weakness, while Lady Macbeth stands straight-backed, her chin raised. Her arms are muscular, her body the masculine ideal that should be Macbeth’s. Nothing about this Lady Macbeth reads as feminine, and that is the point. More than Macbeth’s purpose seems infirm here. We are meant to take this Lady Macbeth as a farce and a bit of a monster, and that is easier to stomach when the “prehistoric” setting removes Lord and Lady Macbeth from polite Edwardian society. Prefaced by this Lady Macbeth, we meet Jessie Pope’s Mabel, who like Lady Macbeth, is acting on her own and, to Mr. Punch, takes her actions to the point of absurdity.

Time was, not very long ago  
When Mabel’s walking skirt  
Trailed half a yard behind to show  
How well she swept the dirt.  
But “short and sweet” are in again;  
No more the grievance rankles,  
For Mabel’s now curtailed her train  
And shows her dainty ankles.

But Mabel has a thrifty mind  
To supplement her charms.  
The frills that once she wore behind  
She fastens on her arms.

Her sleeves are made in open bags  
Like trousers in the navy;  
No more she sweeps the streets, but drags  
Her sleeve across the gravy.<sup>67</sup>

It is easy to read Mabel as a silly woman after observing Lord and Lady Macbeth. She is attempting to keep up with changing tastes in fashion, but from Mr. Punch's perspective, she is doing it wrong. She is doing it in a way that takes up too much space and draws too much attention to herself. By the end of the first stanza, it would seem that Mabel has realized her offense and corrected the "grievance" by "curtail[ing] her train," but the second stanza ends with Mabel at the table, "[dragging] / Her sleeve across the gravy." She may have moved to a more feminine space, the dining room, but her sleeves now behave exactly as her skirt did. The "grievance," then, has only changed location. Reading through the lens of Mr. Punch, we focus on the spectacle that is Mabel. She is an object of observation and humor as she attempts and fails to affect clothing that is both fashionable and convenient to others.<sup>68</sup>

When we no longer read the poem from a *Punch* perspective, when the preface of "Prehistoric Shakespeare" is removed, we are able to see Mabel as more capable than Mr. Punch may be willing to see. First, blouses of the early century, as Pauline Thomas notes, showed "conspicuous waste and conspicuous consumption," no different, really, from the rest of women's fashions which required yards and yards of fabric and trimmings.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Jessie Pope, "Another Pair of Sleeves," *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907), 7. Previously published as "Another Pair of Sleeves," *Punch*, September 28, 1904, 231.

<sup>68</sup> The inconveniences suffered by men due to women's fashions is a frequent story told in *Punch*'s illustrations.

<sup>69</sup> Pauline Thomas, "Edwardian Embellished Blouses," *Fashion-Era.com*, last modified 2001, accessed June 18, 2013, [http://www.fashion-era.com/the\\_seamstress.htm#Edwardian%20Embellished%20Blouses](http://www.fashion-era.com/the_seamstress.htm#Edwardian%20Embellished%20Blouses).

While the speaker may poke fun at the wide opening of Mabel's new sleeve, likening it to "trousers in the navy," this sleeve is actually on trend for 1904. Second, the more important information about Mabel and women like her is buried in the center of the poem. She has an awareness of her body and is able to affect the shorter skirt in a flattering way. Further, when the new skirt "shows her dainty ankles," it also allows greater freedom of movement. The most important detail comes at the start of the second stanza where we learn that Mabel is "thrifty." Like Pope herself, Pope's women know the importance of their own money. Bookending the poem with humor—the skirt that showed "how well she swept the dirt" becomes a sleeve that "drags / [...] across the gravy"—distracts the reader from the confident, self-aware, and economically capable woman.

Even the title focuses the reader on the garment rather than Mabel herself, but the faux pas is not the drape of the sleeve itself, it is in Mabel's reach. Mabel presumes to occupy space and move her body freely in that space—first the street, then the dinner table—and is admonished for it. The structure of the poem highlights this restriction, enclosing Mabel in the home, or at least as the dinner table, by the end. Although Mabel may be quietly capable and clever, *Punch* needs her to be contained—for a woman enjoying the full and overt exercise of her own power and body is not a "*Punch* woman"—therefore, Mabel must be contained to fit the template of the *Punch* woman and become, by definition, an object of humor. We are meant to laugh at her, not with her, but Pope often lets the women in her poems in on the joke.

If we read carefully, we can hear their laughter, too. Notice that in "Another Pair of Sleeves," our laughter is directed at the clothing, not at the woman wearing it. Our

attention is directed away from the fact that Mabel dares to be expansive: she takes up as much literal, physical space as she wants. In other words, Mabel places her body in the world with the same confidence as a man.<sup>70</sup> Mabel's confidence and utter conviction in what she chooses to wear protect her from the mocking eye of Mr. Punch. On the surface, then, Mabel is a *Punch* woman, but really, she is a Pope woman. Her clothing, behavior, and physical presence push the boundaries of what is acceptable for women. She draws attention to herself to focus on her transgression against the norm, however mild it may be. And while it may seem that Mr. Punch is able to confine her by the end of the poem, we find that Pope's women, especially those she chooses to collect separately, are always able to escape. It is here that the interplay between silence and escape is seeded, and the rest of the collection explores this theme as it works in opposition to the *Punch* woman.<sup>71</sup>

The arbitrary labeling of women's clothing as appropriate or inappropriate is a technology of gender that functions to police and contain women, disciplining them for any infractions.<sup>72</sup> In her frequent return to issues of fashion and women's dress, Pope demonstrates an awareness of the problems that arise when women are turned into objects of humor when they dress according current fashions, as well as when they dress against those fashions.<sup>73</sup> "To a Stout Shepherdess" combines several of Pope's most frequently heard voices in *Punch*: the advice-giver, the fashion critic, and the double-

---

<sup>70</sup> We will see later how men take up space in destructive ways in "A Vain Appeal" and the "Men I Might Have Married" sequence.

<sup>71</sup> I am using silence here with an eye toward Patricia Laurence who writes that silence in women's writing "may be read as a strategy of resistance and choice," which is what it becomes for Pope and her women. "Women's Silence as a Ritual of Truth: A Study of Literary Expressions in Austen, Bronte, and Woolf," in *Listening to Silences*, ed. Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin (New York: Oxford, 1994), 156-167. 157.

<sup>72</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender" in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987), 1-30.

<sup>73</sup> In *Airy Nothings*, we meet a woman who favors Rational Dress. Pope's women always dress quite deliberately. See my third chapter for more discussion of clothing.



edged satirist. The woman addressed in the poem attempts fashion trends deemed inappropriate by a flexible speaker for both her age and body. The speaker's voice here is patronizing, offering unsolicited advice, but the "stout shepherdess" does not acknowledge the critique. She wears what she wants, how she wants. So in the pages of the magazine, readers get to experience the patronizing advice from Mr. Punch, but they do not get the satisfaction of the lady's scrambling to change her ways at the first hint of disapproval.<sup>74</sup> Like Mabel, this woman unapologetically draws attention to herself but avoids the containment that her behavior would otherwise provoke, making "To a Stout Shepherdess" another study in silence, expansion, and escape.

Dear lady, are you open to a hint  
As down our sober pavement you display  
A costume reminiscent of a print  
Of Valenciennes and shepherdesses gay?  
When Watteau, master of Rococo art,  
Depicted nymphs in pastoral disguises,  
His cunning pencil only could impart  
A charm to graceful shapes and slender sizes.

That saucy Watteau hat where rosebuds twine  
Is not the sort a florid dame should wear,  
Although tip-tilted at the proper line  
Upon your own, or someone else's, hair.

---

<sup>74</sup> Other of Pope's female recipients of advice do scramble to change themselves, but it is often the imaginary women from whose perspective Pope writes letters to Mr. Punch who usually demonstrate this behavior. For instance, "Physical Exercise for Women," *Punch*, August 26, 1903, 140.

Those panniers of Pompadour brocade,  
That scanty skirt, although no doubt *de rigueur*,  
That corsage laced, with ruffles overlaid,  
Are not, I think, intended for your figure.

Go home, dear lady, lay your gauds aside,  
Afflict no more your feet with Louis heels,  
Wear ample garments, flowing, full and wide—  
Take my advice, and see how nice it feels.  
Accommodate your features with a veil,  
And let your hat be quietly trimmed, and shady:  
Though as a *shepherdess* you frankly fail,  
You may be more successful as a *lady*.<sup>75</sup>

This voice, of course, still persists today, as do the women who flout it.<sup>76</sup> The object of this poem is advised, essentially, to hide herself. She should “go home,” an order tempered with “dear lady,” but one that is nonetheless direct. She should cover her face “with a veil” and adorn her head with a “quietly trimmed” hat wide enough to be “shady.” Essentially, because this woman’s shape is neither “graceful” nor “slender,” it should not be seen at all. While the speaker here does grant that the woman’s hat is “tip-tilted at the proper line” and that her skirt is “*de rigueur*,” the second stanza ends with the assertion that these styles are “not the sort a florid dame should wear” and are not

---

<sup>75</sup> Jessie Pope, “To A Stout Shepherdess,” *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907), 12-13. Previously published as “To A Stout Shepherdess,” *Punch*, July 19, 1905, 42.

<sup>76</sup> This format remains pervasive. Women and men, though more the former than the latter, are shouted at from voices in all media to conform to arbitrary standards. From the perspective of those doing the shouting, refusal to acknowledge and conform, often for women, is a denial of morality or values.

“intended for your figure.” She should be prevented from wearing fashionable clothing because she does not have the body or youth of a fashion plate sketch. Not only does her body occupy literal space, she draws attention to that fact by refusing to diminish—indeed, refusing to appear to diminish—that space. The speaker would rather that she, as the mothers in Katherine Mansfield’s 1922 story “Her First Ball,” resign herself to the position of a verbally and physically silent spectator, but Pope’s woman refuses to leave the dance floor, as it were.<sup>77</sup>

As in “Another Pair of Sleeves,” the object of this poem does not address the speaker directly, yet Pope’s choice to keep the “stout shepherdess” silent still speaks. Her retort is her silence. In not responding to the speaker’s unsolicited advice, she does not acknowledge whatever power the speaker imagines himself to have, and thusly she negates that power. Although this poem, especially as it appeared in *Punch*, assumes that the woman dresses for those who see her, that her presence on “our sober pavement” invites censorship of her choice of clothing, Pope’s choice to keep the shepherdess silent shows that this is not the case.<sup>78</sup> This woman does not exist for those observing her; she dresses for herself. Her eccentricity makes her, in the pages of *Punch*, an object of humor and ridicule, but alongside other women in Pope’s collection, we can see a trend of women in Pope’s poetry who neither solicit nor heed the advice of men or others, a group of single women living their lives as independently as they can.<sup>79</sup> It is this woman’s

---

<sup>77</sup> Katherine Mansfield, “Her First Ball,” *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 115-120.

<sup>78</sup> It also has a headnote in its original form in *Punch*: “Watteau, at the present moment, is the only wear, but we should like to remind a certain class of modish people that it is becoming only to the slender.” The “we” of the headnote is typical to denote the voice of Mr. Punch. Removing the headnote for *Paper Pellets* gives the poem a different focus, shifting it from the clothing to the woman wearing the clothing. Pope deploys this strategy frequently.

<sup>79</sup> All of the women in *Paper Pellets* are single women except the women in “Love in a Mist” and “The Wooing,” both of whom are engaged by the end of their poems. Since some headnotes, as the one on “A

brazeness with which the speaker takes issue. She “display[s]” her clothing, inappropriate for “our sober pavement.” The possessive “our” here indicates that she is trespassing. Whether she is literally trespassing is unclear, but what is clear is that her manner and dress form the trespass. She is an older woman wearing clothing ostensibly more suited to someone younger and, we are to believe, thinner. She is visually loud. There are two options offered to her in the final lines of the poem. She can remain a failing “*shepherdess*,” or she can be a “*lady*.” There is no middle ground for a “woman of a certain age.” She must be a shepherdess maiden, or she must be a matronly lady. She must choose which female behavior to perform, but Pope’s women, as this one does, use their performance in resistant ways.

### **Winning Isn’t Everything: Pope’s Competitive Women**

A popular scenario for female performance in *Punch* is the sale; here Mr. Punch is able to observe and mock the women who compete with each other over such seemingly frivolous things as scarves and muffs.<sup>80</sup> When Pope collects these ostensibly competitive women, however, we can see that the competition is not the point; rather, these poems are about highlighting the ways women use their performance as resistance. Often, Pope maintains a *Punch*-appropriate voice, by allowing a man to have the last word. In “A Muff,” he is the speaker’s brother, and in the pages of *Punch*, therefore allowed to silence the female first-person speaker, but she has already made other plans.

I wanted a muff

On an up-to-date scale,

---

Close Finish,” are kept, in whole or in part, we can assume that Pope wrote them. An author as aware of her “brand” as Pope was would not have permitted words that were not her own.

<sup>80</sup> From January to March 1904, *Punch*’s illustrations included 73 women and girls by themselves, with other women, or with men. Thirteen of these women carried muffs. The other 96 illustrations featured men or boys in groups or on their own.

Of some soft fluffy stuff,  
With a head and a tail;  
So simple and innocent-hearted  
I started to go to a sale.

My muscles are tough,  
I'm not sickly or pale;  
But that shop was enough  
To make Hercules quail.  
The ladies were snatching and gripping,  
Each using her arm like a flail.

My passage was rough  
And as slow as a snail.  
In attempting to luff  
I was pinned to a bale,  
And asked "to mind where I was pushing"  
By a frowsy and frenzied female.

They ruined my ruff  
And twitched off my veil;  
The shopman was bluff  
When I told him my tale,

And I vowed that next time I played football  
I would wear a costume of chain mail.

I went home in a huff,  
Looking feeble and frail,  
Still minus a muff  
With a head and a tail—  
But my brother politely informed me  
I *was* one, to go to a sale.<sup>81</sup>

Like Mabel, this speaker dares to take up space, but unfortunately for her, every other woman she encounters has the same idea. This scene works in Mr. Punch's favor because the women in this poem work against his construction of women as silent, compliant, beautiful, and physically quiet. Because the women in "A Muff" are none of these things, they are humorous. The speaker seems never to have been to a sale before, and given the emphasis of the title, we are meant to read her motivation as frivolous. The word "muff" also has an alternate meaning of which Pope's readers would certainly have been aware. In addition to the winter fashion accessory, a muff can also refer to a person: "a foolish, stupid, feeble, or incompetent person," particularly "one who is clumsy or awkward in some sport or manual skill."<sup>82</sup> So this speaker who, in the start of the second stanza, describes herself as having "muscles [that] are tough"—a physically fit New Woman—is, by the poem's end, confined by her brother's assessment when he "politely

---

<sup>81</sup> Pope, Jessie, "A Muff," *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907), 20-21. Previously published as "A Muff," *Punch*, January 31, 1904, 19.

<sup>82</sup> "muff, n.5". OED Online. December 2013. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123289?rskey=D5U8ss&result=5&isAdvanced=false> (accessed March 04, 2014)

informed me / I *was* one [a muff].” Moreover, in that final stanza, she finds herself “Looking feeble and frail” as opposed to her earlier assertion that “I’m not sickly or pale.” The spectacle of women “snatching and gripping” and “pushing” in the shop is a *Punch* caricature of the active and assertive New Woman, a woman who knows what she wants and works hard to get it.

But how does Pope work against this containment of the female speaker within her own poem? The two men in the poem, the shopman and her brother, dismiss her completely, the latter without even hearing what she has to say. The choice, then, to use a first person speaker rather than a third person speaker is a choice to give a voice to a woman rather than merely to tell a story about a woman. It is important that we get the woman’s story in her own words. That the speaker embarks on her shopping trip as “simple and innocent-hearted” can have a broader meaning than her literal state of mind. She could be the Victorian woman shedding her angel’s wings and venturing into the world. In the penultimate stanza, the speaker “vowed that the next time I played football / I would wear a costume of chain mail.” Pope’s choice of language is, as always, important here. She “vow[s],” rather than merely deciding; further, she looks ahead to a “next time.” This is not the last time she will be out on her own.

She discerns the type of environment she will encounter and reads it as “football,” recognizing rightly that in 1904 the world outside of the home is still largely a masculine domain.<sup>83</sup> Dressing herself for battle is a powerful moment here for it fits with suffragist groups’ later use of fierce warrior women like Boadicea and also hints not only at the

---

<sup>83</sup> The women’s league founded by Nettie Honeyball and Lady Florence Dixie enjoyed considerable popularity in the early twentieth century in the face of press coverage that asserted that the woman succeeding at football is clearly a cross-dressing man while the woman who fails at football is evidence that women should not play in the first place. James F. Lee, “The Lady Footballers and the British Press, 1895,” *Critical Survey* 24, no. 1 (2012): 88-101.

impractical nature of women's clothes for most practical activities but also at an awareness of women like those in the Rational Dress Society, founded in 1881 in London. Her chain mail can also refer to the kind of courage required to be a New Woman at the turn of the twentieth century. She must arm herself against the jibes and ignorance of men like the "bluff" shopman and her condescending brother. Pope's misdirection, then, comes in how she allows the first person speaker to be silenced and insulted by her brother, but the careful reader remembers the promise made in the penultimate stanza. As ever, Pope's women slip the confinement that the men in her poems imagine they enforce.

The competition that the speaker faces as she encounters other women in the shop becomes indicative of the boundaries women encounter as they face the forces in their lives that seek to contain them. As Pope's women discuss their competition with other women, they do so while winking knowingly at the reader. They don't really care about the competition; they care about drawing attention to or flouting outwardly the expectation that they should be competitive: over men, over clothes. These women use the motif of competition to demonstrate the ways that they must perform in order to live.

In *Punch*, women do not compete only for shopping bargains; they frequently compete for the affections of men as well. It is through this trope that Pope critiques the potentially dehumanizing and relentless performance of the courtship game by allowing her female speaker to escape it and to make the escape read like a triumph. "A Close Finish" is a good example. It opens with a headnote, shortened from its original appearance in *Punch*, declaring that "A marriage is arranged between Miss Diana Dashington and Lord Broadacres"; the original headnote included an additional sentence



giving the premise of the poem: “Such announcements should occasionally be followed by the reflections of the unsuccessful lady competitor.”<sup>84</sup> The female speaker and her rival, Diana, have been competing for the affections of Lord Broadacres over the course of the sporting season, and their competition is described in horse-racing terms.

The race of the season is over;  
I’ve lost and Diana has won;  
She’s feasting on Broadacres’ clover,  
And I am right out of the fun.  
Though Di was the one to begin it,  
She soon found me making the pace;  
I thought all along I should win it,  
And only backed her for a place.

At Ascot Diana was leading,  
At Henley I spurted ahead;  
At Cowes side by side we were speeding;  
At Trouville I fancy I led.  
Neck to neck we ran, shoulder to shoulder,  
The pack was too killing to last—  
(If the weather had only been colder!)—  
I flagged, and Diana shot past.

---

<sup>84</sup> Jessie Pope, “A Close Finish,” *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907), 34-35. Previously published as “A Close Finish,” *Punch*, September 14, 1904, 187.

My heart's not by any means broken;  
I hope I'm not wanting in pluck;  
A tear or two, low be it spoken,  
Then I kissed her and wished her good luck.  
Di won the race fairly as stated;  
But when her attractions are reckoned,  
My own must not be underrated—  
*I finished a very good second!*

For the speaker, it is less about the reward of ultimately “feasting on Broadacres’ clover” than the race itself. Indeed, in line five, the speaker admits that she only started chasing Broadacres because “Di was the one to begin it.” The poem follows the race of the women through the season. The language of the racing motif is disturbing. It allows the reader to see the perspective of the *Punch* reader, a spectator at a horse race while the women keep pace along the track. Moreover, if readers are inclined to imagine Di and the speaker as human women, line three’s image of Diana “feasting on Broadacres’s clover” forces us to see them as racing animals first, women second. To underscore this motif, the second stanza reads like a racetrack announcer’s call of the race: Diana is “leading” until the speaker “spurt[s] ahead” and they run “side by side” then “neck to neck” and “shoulder to shoulder” until the speaker “flag[s], and Diana [shoots] past.” Here, we are to laugh at the women’s behavior as they throw themselves before Lord Broadacres, hoping to catch his fancy, become his wife, and enjoy the bountiful pasture of his “clover.” Pope’s contemporaries will find an additional layer to the situation, knowing that in this social set—the class with the money to travel to Ascot, Henley, Cowes, and

Trouville to see and be seen—it is not the women who compete for and win the men, but the men who benefit from matches carefully negotiated and “arranged,” as the headnote reminds us. The struggle between Diana and the speaker is moot.

In choosing to describe these women in terms of a horse race, Pope makes a very deliberate statement. Gina Marlene Dorré summarizes that “horses in Victorian literature are ubiquitous and yet inscrutable tropes that often collude with women to occupy margins of texts.”<sup>85</sup> Horses and women are frequently described in similar terms:

Like the Victorian horse, woman is often regarded as a mere vehicle for the conveyance of property; her poise, gait, and carriage indicate her breeding and class standing, which in turn affect her market value, and a gentle disposition marks excellence in both the feminine and the horse.

[...] Not only do arbiters of Victorian taste describe feminine characteristics in horse-like terms, but publications by equestrian experts fetishize the very lineaments of the animal, articulating its features through erotic codes that correspond to the female body. (160-161)

A sporting woman herself, Pope would be aware that racehorses are trained to their task. It is not a stretch, then, to see the analogy Pope perceives between racehorses and women on the marriage market. A horse must be trained from an early age to become a race horse; indeed, a horse must be from the proper stock to be trained. Likewise, a girl is trained from an early age to perform as an eligible item on the marriage market, and in certain circles, her family—read, her breeding—is of utmost importance. Active race horses and women of marrying age live short lives performing their respective tasks, and

---

<sup>85</sup> Gina Marlene Dorré, “Horses and Corsets: *Black Beauty*, Dress Reform, and the Fashioning of the Victorian Woman,” *Victorian Language and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2002): 157-178. 160.

a woman who fails to marry, like a horse that fails to win, traditionally cannot look forward to a happy retirement.<sup>86</sup> A horse could be euthanized or abandoned; a woman could be considered a tragic failure as a woman and labeled a spinster. But even as Pope marks the racing circuit as analogous to the marriage market, she allows her speaker an opportunity to escape the race and her fate.

As in the case of Mabel, it is important to note this speaker's perception of herself. Her self-esteem and sense of identity are separate from Broadacres, meaning that she does not go to pieces and lose herself when Broadacres ultimately chooses Diana. The speaker admits that "Di won the race fairly" and opens the final stanza by stating, "My heart's not by any means broken." The speaker and the reader know that this marriage was "arranged," that the speaker really wasn't a contender from the start. What makes this speaker a *Punch* woman is her competitiveness, the fact that she threw herself into the race for the sake of the race, for the "fun" of it.<sup>87</sup> Further, she thinks of the pursuit in terms of a race: the final line of the poem is "*I finished a very good second!*" Additionally, the racetrack language of the poem would be much more disturbing if it were from the perspective of a male speaker, perhaps Broadacres himself, watching these women-as-horses compete in an arbitrary struggle for his favor.<sup>88</sup> Her perception of the situation is what Mr. Punch needs it to be, but her good humor about it, her detachment from it, her awareness that her "own [attractions] must not be underrated" pull her above

---

<sup>86</sup> Nancy Fix Anderson notes that even in the Victorian era, "animal rights advocates protested that horses were ridden too hard, making racing an act of animal cruelty. Many horsemen, not bothered by issues of cruelty but rather by the viability of the sport, also warned of the dangers of over-racing, with horses entering too many races and at too young an age. [...] These fears, however, were not translated into measures for change" (32). *The Sporting Life: Victorian Sports and Games* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010).

<sup>87</sup> "Fun" is a term Pope frequently uses ironically to describe courtship and marriage interactions.

<sup>88</sup> There are other examples of Pope using animals as a way to discuss women. See also "Dogs and Dodges," *Punch*, April 26, 1905, 296-297. "Bilkington Squire," *Punch*, August 16, 1905, 116. "The Beach Dog," *Punch*, July 18, 1906, 44-45. Each of these remains uncollected.

the stereotype of the frivolous society woman angling for a husband. She is laughing at the situation and her participation in it, and the reader is able to laugh with her.

The speaker's awareness that she is playing a game and Pope's choice to put the words in a female speaker's mouth rather than that of a male speaker allow the woman here to escape the reins and bit of confinement. It is the single woman who really wins here. From the first stanza, Diana is restrained by the animal language of the poem, while the speaker is able to end the poem with a self-aware assessment of herself and her state of mind. Further, as the poem is from her point of view, she is the one who recognizes Diana's containment in a marriage already arranged for her. The speaker is able to move on and forward. One could even read her as relieved by the poem's end; for her, as for most of Pope's women, to be unmarried is not a tragic end. As in "Another Pair of Sleeves," the escape of the single woman is easy to miss when it is hidden behind the skirts of the *Punch* woman. Pope questions and dissects this template of the *Punch* woman, as *Paper Pellets* and later *Airy Nothings* will show, in large and small ways. She continues to subvert the image of the *Punch* woman and other female stereotypes like her throughout her career.

### **Edwin and Angelina: Negotiating the New Woman**

As Pope returns to the same strategies again and again, she also favors certain names that link her characters to a long history of humor and satire. As a couple, Edwin and Angelina appear three separate times in *Paper Pellets*. Strephon and Chloe, another repeated couple, appear once in *Paper Pellets* and again in *Airy Nothings*. These are name pairs dating to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. The former feature in "The Hermit," included in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and the latter in

Jonathan Swift's eponymous satirical poem. In their respective poems, both women are admired from afar, then betrothed to their well-to-do young man, and finally joined as husband and wife—by marriage or by consummating a marriage—after a brief period of separation, unquestionably the fault of the woman. For Swift's Strephon, the fault lay in Chloe's literal, breathing, sweating body, but Goldsmith's Angelina drove her Edwin away through her "constancy," which was as fleeting as "The dew, the blossom on the tree."<sup>89</sup>

A quick look at the structure of each poem reveals what likely drew Pope's attention. Goldsmith's Angelina is introduced as a cloaked, nearly silent traveler. While the first two of the poem's forty stanzas deliver Angelina's voice, she does not speak again until stanza twenty-four, and then for thirteen stanzas. It is in these thirteen stanzas that Angelina tells the story of her courtship with Edwin, but she only speaks after the Hermit who offers her refuge goads her into telling her story, all the while mistakenly believing that she is a man. He calls her "my son," in line nine, describes love as "the modern fair-one's jest" in line seventy-eight, and exhorts her to "spurn the sex" in line eighty-two. The Hermit believes that he is commiserating with a sympathetic equal, not a "fair-one" he'd rather "spurn." It is not until the story has been told that the mistaken identity is revealed. Edwin is the Hermit, and Angelina, of course, is the traveler.

Given her awareness of how women are silenced and her use of silence as a strategy of resistance, Pope may have been interested in, first, Angelina's being mistaken for a man, then in how the Hermit talks over the moment he provides for his guest's response: "'And whence, unhappy youth,' he cried, / 'The sorrows of thy breast?'" The

---

<sup>89</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, "The Hermit, or Edwin and Angelina," accessed February 11, 2014. [http://literaryballadarchive.com/PDF/Goldsmith\\_3\\_Edwin\\_and\\_Angelina.pdf](http://literaryballadarchive.com/PDF/Goldsmith_3_Edwin_and_Angelina.pdf)

Hermit prattles on for five stanzas, filling in likely answers to his question. In a first reading of “The Hermit,” this strikes the reader as nothing more than a comical moment as the Hermit asks a question then proceeds to answer it in a rambling, listing way. But after it is revealed that the traveler is actually Angelina in disguise, it becomes clear that the Hermit’s words occupy space in a silencing way. If he continues to talk, Angelina cannot speak. The Hermit’s words fill the entire poem. He reads Angelina initially as the type of person he assumes to find wandering, he addresses her as he would address the man he assumes her to be, and then claims ownership of her after revealing his true identity. He reads her until she gives herself away by blushing, and then he claims her as a prize after hearing her tale. Pope would see the possessive language used in the poem’s final stanzas. He “clasp’d her to his breast,” says he will “hold thee to my heart,” and calls her “My life—my all that’s mine.” It is this sense of possession and of one partner misreading the other that Pope plays with when she constructs her own referential versions of Edwin and Angelina.

The story of Goldsmith’s Angelina sets her up as a prize to be won—“To win me from his tender arms, / Unnumber’d suitors came”—and though her father has wealth and power, the suitor she entertains is Edwin, the one with “wisdom and worth” alone. A full eight lines of her speech Angelina devotes to a description of Edwin’s words before it is revealed that Angelina delighted in toying with Edwin and “triumph’d in his pain.” She continues this behavior until he, “quite dejected with my scorn,” leaves her for “solitude forlorn,” where she assumes that he died. It is important to remember here that it is Angelina who seeks Edwin’s final resting place where she hopes to die for him as he died for her. Angelina returns to Edwin, even if Edwin is dead. Here, then, is a sincere and

good-hearted man who would woo the wealthy girl not with his own riches and fame, for he has none, but with his beautiful words and wisdom. He is rebuffed by the shallow, callous woman who cares only for herself—she is her father’s only heir and will inherit—and flees.<sup>90</sup> She pursues him, but not to marry him, to die for him. They are only reunited when she is willing to deny herself entirely, when she is willing literally to die for him. Pope, as evidenced by her speakers especially in *Airy Nothings*, as we shall see, would not miss this condition for marriage: that the woman must cease to exist as a human being, if she ever legally existed as such a thing before, in order to become a wife. And this is exactly what Angelina does in Goldsmith’s poem.

Pope’s Angelinas, for she has several, “scorn” Edwin much as Goldsmith’s Angelina does, but unlike Goldsmith’s Angelina, Pope’s does not pursue her Edwin after he has fled. There are three Angelinas in *Paper Pellets*. The first, in “Love’s Sacrifice,” tests her Edwin by asking him to shave his moustache. The second, in “A Vain Appeal,” smokes a cigarette while her Edwin implores her to stop, and the third is mentioned among two other couples in “Love in a Mist.”<sup>91</sup> It is safe to assume that the first person female speaker of “Love’s Sacrifice” is Angelina, for Angelina is a name Pope never uses without Edwin, and Edwin is never paired with another woman’s name.<sup>92</sup> Like Strephon

---

<sup>90</sup> When summarized in this way, Goldsmith’s Edwin and Angelina sound very similar to Shakespeare’s Benedick and Beatrice.

<sup>91</sup> Because it differs fundamentally from both “Love’s Sacrifice” and “A Vain Appeal” in that it is a series of rain-soaked love scenes rather than an extended look at a moment in a couple’s relationship, “Love in a Mist” is outside the scope of this particular discussion. Each of the poem’s three stanzas illustrates a different couple’s romantic, rainy day encounter. Strephon and Chloe are first, trapped “Beneath an Ilfracombe [bathing] machine” during a thunderstorm; ‘Arry and ‘Arriet are “up on ‘Ampstead ‘Eath” in the second stanza; while Edwin and Angelina find that “Hampton Court was like a sponge” in the final stanza. “Love in a Mist” also references not only Edwin and Angelina, but also Chloe and Strephon, who have their moment in *Airy Nothings*, will be discussed in my next chapter.

<sup>92</sup> For Edwin and Angelina mentioned to refer to a “type” of couple, see: “Thereby Hangs a Tail,” *The Pall Mall Magazine*, March 1912, 397-402; “The Picture Palace,” *The Pall Mall Magazine*, May 1912, 693-698. Both texts are articles describing crowds queuing at theatres and music halls. Edwin and Angelina meet at the seaside in “An August Idyll,” *The Pall Mall Magazine*, August 1912, 210. Angelina longs to marry



and Chloe, these two are always a set, and they are always found in courtship situations. The implied Angelina of “Love’s Sacrifice” certainly descends from Goldsmith’s Angelina, and it is a lineage made clear in the first four lines of the poem. Angelina recognizes Edwin’s “devotion,” like that of a “slave,” and puts him on “trial,” never dreaming for a moment that he would refuse to play her game. It is interesting to note here that the sacrifice Angelina asks of Edwin seems relatively minor to her: shave your moustache. It is not the same as asking a partner to take up less space or to silence his or her responses to daily life.<sup>93</sup> Later, in “A Vain Appeal,” the implications of Edwin’s requested “sacrifice” are much more severe. In Pope’s body of work, men ask considerably more of their women on a matter-of-fact basis.

When I asked my dear Edwin to shave  
I’d never a thought of denial;  
He’d been such an absolute slave,  
I put his devotion on trial.  
But his eye threw a sinister dart,  
His features grew dogged and grave;  
Still—I hardly expected to part  
When I asked him to shave.

---

Edwin in the one pairing of Pope’s where they most resemble Goldsmith’s pair: “An Unposted Christmas Appeal,” *Punch*, December 29, 1909, 463.

<sup>93</sup> All of these things happen in “Men I Might Have Married.” In “Mere Vacuum,” a story published May 18, 1904 in *Punch*, the first person male narrator deliberately kills Flipsie, the dog of his would-be fiancé Mabel, because the dog does not like him and, as he sees it, stands between himself and Mabel. The narrator feeds Flipsie into a vacuum cleaner tube, and when the punchline of the story is delivered: the vacuum company complains to Mabel and her mother that the dust and debris from their home clogged the tubes whilst Mabel laments that poor Flipsie is missing. The narrator, gloating that he and Mabel are now betrothed, never tells the truth about what happened to Flipsie. Behind the humor of the punchline, it is easy to miss the violent, lying behavior of the narrator. Here, he does not merely ask Mabel to get rid of Flipsie; rather, he takes the initiative himself to kill the dog. Even for the sake of a punchline, Pope’s women can never resort to such extremes without being taken for monsters.

He refused, and seemed eager to jest,  
Till he saw my determined expression.  
A moustache, he said, suited him best,  
And helped in his budding profession.  
“What! Like *Yours!*” I replied with a sneer.  
He smiled when my temper grew hot,  
And when I indulged in a tear  
He said, “Certainly not.

‘Twas enough, and I said what I felt,  
Indignant and adamant-hearted,  
On some of his drawbacks I dwelt—  
He took up his hat and departed.  
I waited and waited in vain.  
Disconsolate, haggard and white,  
I wrestled each day with my pain  
Till Saturday night.

Then I wrote and confessed I was wrong,  
My hand with emotion was shaking,  
I prayed him to come before long  
To the heart that was his and was breaking.

Three terrible hours did I wait;  
He came—and my reason was saved.  
Then I saw what had made him so late—  
*My Edwin had shaved.*<sup>94</sup>

The Angelina of “Love’s Sacrifice” reads as manipulative and petty, but because this Angelina is a Pope woman, this Angelina can also win. As does Goldsmith’s Edwin, Pope’s Edwin leaves Angelina, at most for a week, but unlike Goldsmith’s couple, not only does this Edwin return to Angelina, this Angelina does not seek out Edwin. She writes him a letter and waits. There are nods toward Angelina’s repentance—that her “hand with emotion was shaking,” that she “wrestled each day with [her] pain”—but these, like her language elsewhere—Edwin’s “dogged and grave” expression, his description as “an absolute slave”—are so theatrical and melodramatic that they tell us that we are meant to read this as the performance of a lover’s quarrel, not a true disagreement. For Pope’s couple here, the shaving or not shaving of a moustache is not “deal-breaker” behavior, and we are not meant to take it as such.

Pope’s Angelina here is comical, but realistic; likewise, Edwin’s initial refusal to shave is reasonable. In the mid-nineteenth century, a beard came to symbolize “martial vigour” and even into the new century, Susan Walton explains that “civilian men could, and frequently would, advertise their virility through the growth of luxuriant facial hair” while “a clean-shaven chin [became] the marker of modernity” as “lush” beards fell out

---

<sup>94</sup> Pope, Jessie, “Love’s Sacrifice,” *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907), 16-17. Previously published as “An Idyll,” *Punch*, June 17, 1903, 428.

of fashion.<sup>95</sup> Edwin may, as Evangeline Holland supports, have worn the moustache to appear older,<sup>96</sup> for his response to Angelina's request is that the moustache "suited him best, / And helped in his budding profession." Walton observes that in the 1850s, as the full beard came into respectable fashion, men were exhorted to wear a beard as an outward manifestation of their place outside the home. She quotes "Atrium Magister"—which in turn quotes Andrew Wynter in an 1860 *Edinburgh Review*—on the necessity of the beard: "How clearly is it the property of *man* exposed in his outdoor toil, in contradistinction to the *woman*, whose province it is to be a keeper at home."<sup>97</sup> Just as a woman's wardrobe at the time restricts her physical movement, Walton reads, a man's beard signifies the impossibility of similarly restraining him. Regardless of whether Pope was aware of these particular texts, she would have been aware of the beard debate and have seen its decline in the young men of her day.<sup>98</sup>

Neither Angelina's request that Edwin shave, nor Edwin's initial refusal, nor again his ultimate acquiescence is a sensational or dramatic event. With the fashion of men's facial hair in flux in the Edwardian moment, any of these actions is a reasonable one. As the dynamic between this couple has roots in the eighteenth century, so does the trope of the trial of virtue, as Lovelace's trial of Clarissa. At first glance, Angelina's trial of Edwin is not a moral test, but it could be. How will this man react if a woman asks him

---

<sup>95</sup> Susan Walton, "From Squalid Impropriety to Manly Respectability: The Revival of Beards, Moustaches and Martial Values in the 1850s in England," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 30, no. 3 (2008): 229-245. 242, 229.

<sup>96</sup> Evangeline Holland, "The Mustache," *Edwardian Promenade*, March 9, 2008, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://www.edwardianpromenade.com/men/the-mustache/>

<sup>97</sup> Walton, "From Squalid Impropriety to Manly Respectability," 232.

<sup>98</sup> In a story published in *The Pall Mall Magazine* in 1909, Pope remarks of a character called Major Ponderbury that his "moustaches were the fiercest part about him"; he speaks in boasting terms about the military, despite that he "had seen very little active service" (579). Pope clearly recognizes the effort of Ponderbury to retain his martial appearance. Jessie Pope, "Joan and the Whale," *The Pall Mall Magazine*, October 1909, 579-585.

to do something to his body, the way a husband expects a wife to alter her own body: initial intercourse, pregnancy, restrictive clothing. Clearly, as a woman, she cannot ask something drastic of him, so maybe Pope tests the waters here with something that sounds quite minor but is really an alteration of how others see him and how he may see himself. She asks him to sacrifice an outward sign of masculinity. Through the moustache, Edwin performs masculinity, the way a woman is asked to perform femininity. Angelina, then, asks Edwin whether he can realize that his masculinity is a performance.

But Edwin's is not the only potential sacrifice; Pope's Angelina could be sacrificing here, too.<sup>99</sup> Her test of Edwin is her sacrifice. She is, perhaps, willing to sacrifice the man she loves to test him to see if he is worthy of her, for she clearly has no trouble being in charge, being outspoken, but even when it seems that he will not come back, she does not chase him down. She trusts in what she's written and sent to Edwin. She lets her final word stand, no matter what it may cost her: "'Twas enough, and I said what I felt." She knows that it is all she can do. It is up to Edwin, the man, to decide whether he will meet her demand in order to pass his trial. If he cannot, then he is the problem, not Angelina. As we will see in "Men I Might Have Married," from the male perspective, the *Punch* perspective, women are consistently the problem. If a relationship fails, it is her own fault, and we see this trope in the eighteenth-century forbears of Edwin and Angelina. Pope inverts that expectation, especially here in "Love's Sacrifice." This pattern in Pope is more complicated in "A Vain Appeal."

---

<sup>99</sup> It follows that we read closely the object of sacrifice here, for Pope changed the title of this poem from "An Idyll" to "Love's Sacrifice."

Of the poems in *Paper Pellets*, “A Vain Appeal” most sets the stage for the female aversions of male attempts at containment that occur in “Men I Might Have Married.” When read alongside the “Men,” Edwin definitely appears to have been cast from the same mold. Like the “Shepherdess,” Angelina unapologetically occupies space with the added wrinkle that she is participating in an activity that at the start of the twentieth century is still considered inappropriate for women: smoking. At the turn of the century, there were certainly women smokers, but smoking was a “minority female practice in 1900, by 1949 41 per cent of women aged 16 years and over, from across the social-class spectrum” were smokers.<sup>100</sup> These early smokers did so very deliberately, for smoking carried with it connotations of the New Woman and “female emancipation.”<sup>101</sup> Most importantly, smoking was often viewed as a “challenge to masculine privilege,” which is how Edwin reads Angelina’s smoking behavior (27). Cigar and cigarette smoke permeates the air in a room, marking it as the space of the smoker; anyone in the room not smoking still must breathe the smoky air. It follows then that smoking had been widely considered a masculine practice with the tobacco trade “tied up with the masculine ideals of enterprise and adventure” and conquest (13). Tobacco as the object of conquest also fits with the sultry, often exotic ladies painted on cigar boxes and the “attribution of feminine characteristics to tobacco,” although the image of a woman lifting the cigarette to her lips and taking the tobacco smoke into her body was in the late nineteenth century, an obvious “metaphor for other immorality” (15-16). Given this historical context, Edwin’s opposition to Angelina’s smoking is clear. Angelina, as would any man, is claiming her space, occupying it unapologetically, causing Edwin to fall in

---

<sup>100</sup> Penny Tinkler, “Refinement and Respectable Consumption: the Acceptable Face of Women’s Smoking in Britain, 1918-1970,” *Gender & History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 342-360. 344.

<sup>101</sup> Rosemary Eliot, *Women and Smoking since 1890*, New York: Routledge, 2008. 27.

stature as no longer “wearing the pants” in the relationship. Angelina’s smoking claims and maintains her position of power. She does not need to speak; her smoking speaks for her.

The very brief headnote for “A Vain Appeal” makes it clear that the poem is “From Edwin,” the poor *Punch* man whose girlfriend has turned into a New Woman, the very thing Mr. Punch abhors. This headnote was not present in the poem’s original publication in *Punch’s Almanack* for 1903.<sup>102</sup> The revision of the poem to include this new headnote, firmly naming the speaker as Edwin, shows that the focus of the poem should be Angelina and her responses to Edwin’s pleading. It is rare for Pope to change a headnote so completely; usually it is merely shortened version of the original. The original headnote concentrates on the issue of smoking, rather than the interchange between Edwin and Angelina. For *Paper Pellets*, we observe Pope shifting that focus to Edwin’s “vain appeal.” It is in vain because it is futile, and it is vain because the appeal is wrapped up in Edwin’s ego, which shudders at the threat “to traditional male sexual ascendance and political privilege” that the New Woman presents.<sup>103</sup>

Now, Angelina, put it down.  
Let me entreat you not to smoke it;  
You dread your Edwin’s lightest frown,  
Or so you say—well, don’t provoke it.  
No—*No*—I’m serious just now,  
Great weight to every word attaches;  
What’s that you ask me? *Anyhow*

---

<sup>102</sup> The original headnote reads: “It is stated that the cigarette habit is gaining such a hold on young ladies of the present day that it bids to outweigh all other considerations.”

<sup>103</sup> Collins, “Athletic Fashion,” 311.

*To pass the matches!*

You shall have chocolates to eat  
Of every possible description;  
Those rosy lips are much too sweet  
To soil with Yankee or Egyptian.  
Your smiles with trinkets I'll entice  
Or silly frillies made of chiffon,  
Till once again you say I'm nice  
And not a griffon.

Among those violet-scented curls  
The smell of stale tobacco lingers,  
And oh! to think my best of girls  
Should go about with yellow fingers.  
Are you aware that stain will spread  
Right up your arm and past your shoulder  
And ruin . . . . What was that you said?

*You'll use a holder!*

No, Angelina, I insist—!  
Come, darling . . . what, you're surely joking?  
*You are not anxious to be kissed!*



*You'd sooner give up me than smoking!*

So be it . . . . take your cigarette

And smoke it, love and homage scorning,

But suffer me, with much regret,

To say, "Good morning"!<sup>104</sup>

This poem is a man's attempts to police and change the behavior of a woman backed only by whatever natural authority is perceived as inherent in manhood. Angelina must obey Edwin because he is the man in the relationship. Every word spoken by Edwin here is an order, a plea, a bribe, or an attempt to shame. He speaks to Angelina in a tone that expects instant obedience, the way one speaks to a child. It is clear that Edwin does not consider Angelina to be his equal or even a full adult. Already, this Edwin is markedly different from the Edwin of "Love's Sacrifice." Tellingly, Angelina does not speak in this poem, but rather her responses are repeated by Edwin in indignant italics. He is clearly surprised at her behavior. Most alarming is the threat given in lines three and four after Angelina has been given two chances to comply to Edwin's orders: "You dread your Edwin's lightest frown, / Or so you say—well, don't provoke it." This could hint at the mental abuse seen in "Men I Might Have Married" and several entries in *Airy Nothings*; it could also be a sarcastic, throw-away remark. But "dread" coupled with the superlative gives us cause to read it more seriously, especially if she is cautioned "don't provoke it." The fact that Edwin resorts to threats so early in his appeal demonstrates how serious it is that Angelina is not only smoking, but also using the activity to replace Edwin. The sexual connotations of inhaling tobacco smoke coupled with the fact that Angelina

---

<sup>104</sup> Jessie Pope, "A Vain Appeal," *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907) 28-29. Previously published as "A Vain Appeal," *Punch's Almanack*, 1903.

ultimately says she would “*sooner give up [Edwin] than smoking*” takes Angelina into dangerous territory indeed. Here is Angelina finding what can be read as sexual satisfaction on her own. Without Edwin.

The space between the first and second stanza seems to be a deep breath, as if Edwin is trying to calm down after the exclamatory italics ending stanza one. He tries a different approach here; instead of the blatant orders of stanza one, stanza two is a list of bribes, coupled with a patronizing appeal to Angelina’s beauty. Every other line here is enjambed, instead of the constant stops and pauses of the first stanza, indicating, perhaps, a sweeter tone, but it is the more unctuous voice that often says the more sinister things. In this attempt, he also assumes that Angelina can easily trade one indulgence for another, that consuming one thing is quite the same as consuming another. The chocolates, according to Edwin’s logic, are more appropriate for her “sweet” lips than the tobacco of her cigarettes, which “soil” her. It is not a stretch to read the full meaning of soil here to include shadings of morality and purity.

The act of smoking and the consumption of tobacco smoke, to Edwin, casts aspersions on Angelina’s body and character. When the entire poem is dedicated to Edwin’s attempts to declare ownership of Angelina’s body and behavior, it follows for Edwin to appeal to her not to “soil” the body. Edwin’s first stanza assertion that “Great weight to every word attaches” hints that every word in the poem, in his appeal, is a brick in the enclosure within which he tries to pen Angelina, who, like many of Pope’s other women, refuses to be contained. But Angelina’s continued smoking demonstrates her ownership of her own body, and it is this silent act that allows her to escape Edwin’s attempts at confinement. Further, the bribes of this stanza would be gifts from Edwin

rather than the tobacco, we can assume, Angelina procured for herself. Edwin's word choice betrays his attitude here, for to "entice" is to tempt, not to inspire a true and sincere change in behavior or attitude. He is not trying to reason with Angelina or to approach her on equal terms. He is not speaking to her as if he considers her an adult and an equal. Naming the things that she might like in such diminutive terms as "trinkets" and "frillies" and describing them as "silly" shows that he considers her far beneath him, that he thinks she can be won over by something shiny. The internal rhyme of the phrase "silly frillies" only underscores his condescending attitude. Further, these bribes are only a short-term measure, for Edwin hints that they will continue "Till once again you say I'm nice." After that moment, Edwin seems to assume that their relationship will return to or attain a state where Angelina's immediate obedience—the obedience he expects in line one—is a given. In other words, he needs Angelina to fall back into line.

The final stanza finds Edwin scrambling to hold his ground in the face of an Angelina who now fights back. He returns, at first, to his initial order-giving strategy, but is cut off: "No, Angelina, I insist—!" She stops him. He tries again, and her interruption here is marked by ellipses. Edwin is dumbfounded. Angelina is not living up to the expectations placed upon her. Angelina is supposed to be a *Punch* woman, a woman in need of and desiring a man's guidance and presence, but she forsakes Edwin and all he represents in favor of pursuing her own pleasure for her own reasons. She knows exactly what she is doing. For Edwin, this is unthinkable, as his italics indicate. When he speaks again, mid-line ellipses show him again taking a figurative deep breath and re-grouping, but note that Edwin makes this acknowledgment of Angelina's desire to end their relationship an order—"So be it . . . . take your cigarette / And smoke it [...]." In Edwin's

eyes, the affront is personal, and the poem is still about him because her behavior reflects upon him. When he says “Good morning” in the final line, he views this as the actual end of things. Edwin has had the last word, not Angelina, though it was she who ended the relationship four lines earlier when she declared she would rather give up Edwin than her cigarettes.<sup>105</sup> As before, this Angelina is willing to sacrifice the man she is with—there is no indication that she loves him—and as before, she stands by her actions. The trial Edwin asks of Angelina here is not simply to give up smoking, but to give up her autonomy, to give up herself. He asks her to perform the action that Goldsmith’s Angelina seems prepared to do: to die for the love of her Edwin.

For Angelina, it seems that this relationship was over when she asked for the matches in line eight. Edwin never had a chance. His appeal is vain in that it is futile, and it is vain in that it is wrapped up in Edwin’s own vanity. But Edwin leaves the moment of the poem confused, bewildered, and angry that not only has Angelina rejected his authority, but that she has rejected him as a man and potential partner. If their roles had been reversed, if Angelina had been pleading with Edwin to stop smoking, the poem would be an absurd comedy, and Edwin’s noncompliance would be neither surprising nor shocking. A man may do as he pleases. Like Mabel and the stout shepherdess, Pope’s Angelina may have originated as a version of the *Punch* woman, but outside the pages of *Punch*, she becomes an independent woman in her own right, flouting what is expected of her. While Mabel and the shepherdess are silent, we hear more of Angelina’s voice, if filtered through Edwin’s perspective, proving that behind the stanza breaks, dashes, and

---

<sup>105</sup> This pattern will be repeated in “Men I Might Have Married,” where the speaker often needs the decision to end the relationship to appear to have been made by the man.

ellipses, Pope's women are active, aware, and assertive. But the women's communication is so terse that it continues silence as the Pope woman's effective, deliberate strategy.

### **Pope's "Cogent Cause": "Men I Might Have Married"**

These strategies culminate in the closing poem of *Paper Pellets*, "Men I Might Have Married," which is really a series of five related poems, each featuring a description of a different man with a focus on what led to the end of his relationship with the speaker. It is important to note here that the speaker is the same across all five poems, so not only is this a poem that continues Pope's agenda of critiquing the sort of socially acceptable bad behavior that is condoned in men but abhorred in women, it is also a poem that gives readers what is perhaps the most realistic of Pope's female speakers. She is a sensible woman working to realize then evade the social constraints that require her silence in favor of her man's expansiveness. She is a woman learning to escape the grasping hand of the fiancé who seeks to own and control her, and, in the end, she succeeds. Like the others, she knows herself and actively looks after her own best interests. Her eventual "spinsterhood" is anything but tragic.

While the five poems share a speaker, they differ in every other way: length, tone, rhyme scheme, stanza structure, scansion. Additionally, it is very likely that this sequence is a response to, or at least inspired by, a similar one by Owen Seaman called "Women I Have Never Married," published in *Punch* from August 3 through August 24, 1904. Seaman's speaker works his way through only four women, as opposed to Pope's speaker's five. In each of Seaman's four poems, as the title indicates, the male speaker describes a woman he could have married and goes on to reflect on why he decided against each. His first rejected woman, Janet, whom the speaker admired as a boy, had

the audacity to age.<sup>106</sup> The second, Di, was assumed by the speaker to have “barely lived before I came,” but she actually knew many other men, none of whom she had married, which is read by the speaker that there is something wrong with Di herself.<sup>107</sup> Grace, the third would-be wife, wanted to get to know the speaker’s true self, the one beyond the veneer of his flirtatious “ribald air,” and this level of intimacy was too much for him.<sup>108</sup> Finally, there is Emmeline, and when she proves that not only can she eat with an appetite but she can also speak knowledgeably about food, the speaker decides that she is not for him.<sup>109</sup> Her “special knowledge,” he says, is “appalling.” So Seaman’s speaker wants his woman to bear a fair resemblance to the angel in the house; she should be submissive, quiet, and attentive to his every need. She should complement his tastes and knowledge without overshadowing them and without demonstrating any passion or initiative of her own, unless it suits his own needs. After reading the rest of *Paper Pellets*, one can imagine how Pope, with her finely honed skill toward subtle, cutting critique, saw a clear opportunity.

The first poem of “Men I Might Have Married” finds a speaker who, continually silenced by her fiancé, fakes the onset of deafness to drive him away.

I.

The pauseless cawing of the rooks

Fills me with secret agitation,

---

<sup>106</sup> Owen Seaman, “Women I Have Never Married, I,” *Punch*, August 3, 1904, 74.

<sup>107</sup> Owen Seaman, “Women I Have Never Married, II,” *Punch*, August 10, 1904, 92. The operative question of this second poem is “*Do girls of twenty-eight remain / Spinsters without a cogent cause?*” I read it as the question that Pope’s poem seeks to answer. I also read Di’s situation as important to Pope, who remained legally single for most of her life; for a real modern woman, to have several suitors over the course of her being on “the marriage market” is not unusual. But this situation remains problematic even for contemporary women for whom having had many partners is still looked down upon while those men are encouraged still to “play the field” and have many partners.

<sup>108</sup> Owen Seaman, “Women I Have Never Married, III,” *Punch*, August 17, 1904, 110.

<sup>109</sup> Owen Seaman, “Women I Have Never Married, IV,” *Punch*, August 24, 1904, 128.

The murmuring of mountain brooks  
Renews in full an old sensation;  
And when in woodlands moist and thin,  
Where yesterday the mavis carolled,  
I hear the crickets' ceaseless din,  
Instinctively I think of Harold.

The first stanza is full of nature sounds that trigger the speaker's memory of Harold. But the sounds that bring on the recollection are not pleasant ones, nor are they described in pleasant terms. The opening two lines establish the theme of noise, the steady rhythm of iambic tetrameter, and the continual subtext of the speaker's experience. Pope's choice of "cawing" is onomatopoeic, as "caw" mimics the sound of a rook's call, and it is "pauseless," repeating the same monosyllable over and over again. The four beats of the first line are predictable and easy to hear; however, in reading the second line, the rhythm becomes less clear. The two single-syllable words, each a crucial part of the grammar of the sentence—the verb and the direct object—could each make a case for the necessity of a stress. To follow the iambic tetrameter pattern of the rest of the first stanza in the first three words of this second line would throw off the clearer rhythm of the last two words, "*secret agitation*." By disrupting the pattern, Pope is able to underscore the words of her speaker. We focus, then, on the effect of the bird sounds on the speaker rather than the sounds themselves; they "fill [her] with secret agitation." And this, of course, is the point of the poem. The rest of the stanza continues this pattern, though without the rhythmic disruption. Many moments of alliteration—especially the hissing s, hard c, and humming m—paint an auditory picture of the speaker's "woodlands" (5). The final two lines of the

stanza pair the truth of the noise with the man whose memory it invokes: “I hear the crickets’ ceaseless din, / Instinctively I think of Harold.”

He was a man of ample views,  
Of lofty brain and noble presence;  
Incited by the *Daily News*,  
He sifted tariffs to their essence;  
Or in a voice of rolling sound  
He thundered out tit-bits of Browning.  
On “primal law” he would expound,  
Or how to save the nearly drowning.

The second stanza gives readers Harold in full flow, his “ceaseless din.” The speaker eye-rollingly describes him as “a man of ample views,” a man whose “brain,” but not thoughts, is “lofty,” a man with a “noble presence.” He is the kind of man who has an opinion on everything and never hesitates to share. The first half of this stanza shows Harold inspired by news and economics, but the second half of the stanza shows more precisely what an evening with Harold may be like. The “sound” of his voice carries through these last four lines in the repeated vowel sounds of “expound,” “Browning,” and “drowning.” Ending the stanza with “drowning” indicates, perhaps, the speaker’s perspective as she is overwhelmed by his endless “rolling” voice. The added fact that Harold’s voice “thundered” likens the man to a storm or God; for the speaker, it seems, at least early in their relationship, waiting it out seemed the best strategy.

The punster’s wit he did abhor,  
He loathed an atmosphere of laughter,



A waiting hush must fall before  
He spoke, and silence follow after.  
And so he walked with me apart,  
With facts and figures plied and proved me.  
Mine was till then a simple heart,  
Nor had I nerves till Harold loved me.

The third stanza tracks Harold's behavior as it begins to lean toward mentally abusive. Like Pope's own critics—in her day and today—he dismisses humor on principle: “The punster's wit he did abhor, / He loathed an atmosphere of laughter.” A comment or statement that provokes laughter, of course, invites the participation of the listener, encourages a dialogue, something Harold cannot abide. The punster makes the pun to hear the laughter. Harold makes statements to bask in what he assumes is impressed silence. The next two lines make this expectation clear, and in the enjambment and caesura here, we can hear Pope's smirk in the voice of the speaker: “A waiting hush must fall before / He spoke, and silence follow after.” This speaker is one who has realized her past naivety and recognizes what she learned from her relationship with Harold. In the final two lines of this stanza, she admits that hers “was till then simple heart, / Nor had I nerves till Harold loved me.” So not only does she recognize how she has matured, she recognizes that Harold's silencing behavior made her nervous. It is important to note here that the speaker's “nerves” are not crippling to her and that they are not recognized by Harold at all. Further, this condition did not exist until “Harold loved [her].” Again, the speaker places herself in the direct object position. Harold is the actor here. Interestingly, we can consider “nerves” here to indicate “nerve,” for a woman

with a “simple heart” would not concoct the relationship-ending lie of self-preservation that the speaker does in the next stanza. This speaker did not realize her own voice until Harold assumed she had none.

I was his choice, when all was said,  
And if I ventured to dispute it,  
He proved by logic we must wed,  
And I was powerless to refute it;  
But ere the wedding day drew near,  
My hand in sad farewell extending—  
I told him I could hardly hear,  
And total deafness was impending.

As before, Harold’s word is the only word: “I was his choice, when all was said.” The fourth stanza opens with a reference to the stereotype that men are logical while women are emotional. When Harold “proved by logic we must be wed, / [The speaker] was powerless to refute it” though she “ventured to dispute it” two lines earlier. Harold refuses to hear her, so the speaker turns this to her advantage. Very soon, she tells him, she will be unable to hear him because “total deafness was impending,” the very same deafness Harold seems to have toward her: a deafness that would silence Harold. Silence and agency cross paths in this stanza. Here is where the speaker takes action against Harold, but it is also where she takes the only physical action of the poem: “My hand in sad farewell extending—” It is crucial that this is a silent gesture. Even in the telling of her own story, the speaker only summarizes for her audience what she told Harold: “I told him I could hardly hear, / And that total deafness was impending.” But at the same

time, Harold is silenced in the body of the poem as the speaker was silenced in the time of their relationship. Harold is never directly quoted; rather, his words are retold through the words of the speaker. In this gesture, the speaker is performing sadness. She will not lose the relationship so much as she will gain freedom from Harold's thunderous domination, but just as she cannot break the relationship overtly, she cannot appear to be relieved at the break.

For once he answered not a word,  
Beneath the blow he fairly staggered;  
That he should speak and not be heard,  
It was enough to make him haggard.  
He conjured up our married days,  
The vision made his bosom harden,  
When—"What?" "Can't hear you." "What d'you say?"  
Would alternate with "Beg your pardon!"

Harold does not have a ready reply to the speaker's news of her "total deafness." The final line of the stanza comes to a full stop; there is a gap, and then the fifth stanza begins with an underscoring of Harold's unusual silence: "For once he answered not a word." The news "That he should speak and not be heard"—as he has assumed the speaker would do for the rest of her life, if Harold had ever recognized that his intended did, indeed, possess a voice of her own—shocks him so thoroughly that it comes as a "blow," as if the speaker had hit him. The only words he imagines her speaking are interrupting words, ones that, from her, would imply that she had not heard him, was not listening, or was not paying attention, all things Harold cannot abide, for as we learned

before, he must have a captive, rapt audience. When he imagines his monologues punctuated with “‘What?’ ‘Can’t hear you.’ ‘What d’you say?’” and “‘‘Beg your pardon!’” he ends the betrothal, believing that this outcome was his idea completely.

So Harold left me with a kiss—  
His heart was firm, he did not falter—  
And very shortly after this  
He led another to the altar.  
And though with ill-befitting haste  
I cast aside that threatened illness  
It left behind a settled taste  
For absolute unbroken stillness.

We can imagine the speaker shrugging at the start of the final stanza. The “So” indicates that this was the expected reaction; this is the outcome the speaker orchestrated. That Harold seems to lose nothing from the end of the relationship indicates that the speaker had read him correctly: he wanted a silent, captive audience, not a partner. He finds one “very shortly after this,” and it is important to note the action in line 44, that “He led another to the altar.” We can wonder whether the new fiancé came willingly or whether she was easier to silence than our speaker. The speaker ends the poem professing a preference for “absolute unbroken stillness,” but it is important to realize that this is a silence the speaker has chosen, not one chosen for her.

Like so many of Pope’s women, this speaker realizes her power and uses it; she may not be able to escape the patriarchy whose pressure she feels, but she can find a way to loosen her bonds. This first poem in the “Men I Might Have Married” sequence sets a

standard of women circumventing the abusive behavior of the men in their lives, woman who find the courage to take action, but women who take action in ways that do not necessarily upset the system. Patricia Laurence reminds us that “women outwardly conform to social roles, but they develop strategies of silence and expression to resist these roles and fill inner needs.”<sup>110</sup> The speaker’s method of resistance is escaping what would be a crushing power dynamic by making her fiancé believe that the choice to end the relationship originated with him, not the speaker herself. Further, in removing her speaker from the action of the poem—she recounts her memories, not her experiences as she lives them—Pope lets the aware reader find “the subversion of the woman’s conventional role” (165). Pope, as always, walks a delicate line between overt feminist critique and the popular press. The second poem in the sequence deploys the common early century trope of the girlfriend jealous of her boyfriend’s motor-car to temper for the popular reader the violent turn in the boyfriend’s behavior.<sup>111</sup> Unlike the motor-car trope, it is not the car that is the problem here, but the man who owns the car.

## II.

To Geoffrey I was much attached,  
His ardour was unshaken,  
Our friends declared us nicely matched,  
Nor were our friends mistaken.  
Indeed, we never had a spar  
Until he bought a motor-car.

---

<sup>110</sup> Laurence, “Women’s Silence as a Ritual of Truth,” 164.

<sup>111</sup> This is a common trope in Pope’s early century writing. See also: Jessie Pope, “Motor Car for Hire,” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* (April 1900): 412-423; “My Rival,” *Punch*, February 25, 1903, 143; “The Mote in His Eye,” *Punch*, June 10, 1903, 411.

At first my joy was unconfined,  
The prospect was unclouded.  
I wore a coat, chinchilla lined,  
A cap with chiffon shrouded.  
Diurnal spins with lunch for two  
I planned—alas! I little knew!

The carburetter spoilt our fun,  
Then something started squeaking,  
Or else exploded like a gun.  
The tyres were always leaking.  
We had a puncture, then a burst,  
But Geoffrey's *temper* was the worst.

The opening stanza shows a mutually affectionate relationship. The speaker is “much attached” to Geoffrey, while his “ardour” for her is “unshaken.” The first stanza’s ending couplet, matching “spar” with “car,” underlines the catalyst of their break-up. They never fought, the speaker tells us, “Until he bought a motor-car.” The second stanza introduces the motor-car trope. The speaker is at first excited about the fashion opportunities the car presents, though especially for cars before 1906, these garments—the “coat, chinchilla lined” and “cap with chiffon”—were practical as well as fashionable. These details, in the central lines of this stanza, along with the next line’s mention of “Diurnal spins with lunch for two,” overpower the foreshadowing in the first two lines.

The use of “unconfined” and “unclouded” hint that the speaker’s “joy” will shortly be both “confined” and “clouded.” Stanza three gives an escalating progression of things going wrong, both with the car and with Geoffrey. The parts of the car occupy the subject position in the sentences here, indicating that the car is malfunctioning of its own accord, perhaps due to inherent mechanical problems or user error, we do not know which. It is not until the end of the stanza that the speaker reveals the effect these things had on Geoffrey. This stanza is the turning point in the poem. As the car malfunctions, so does Geoffrey. The speaker can identify the source of the first problem, the “carburettor,” but after that her language becomes vague: “something started squeaking, / Or else exploded like a gun.” The use of “gun,” ostensibly an easy rhyme to pair with “fun,” is a surprisingly violent escalation from “squeaking,” just one line earlier. After the full stop here, another end-stopped line—“The tyres were always leaking.”—pulls the reader’s attention away from the exploding gun. A slow leak is a quiet problem. The increasingly choppy phrases of the final two lines, using alliteration to link “puncture” to the couplet of “burst” and “worst,” distract the reader from the gravity of what is happening and the loss of control experienced by the speaker. Geoffrey is likened to the tire here: the car provided the “puncture,” causing Geoffrey’s anger to “burst.”

He stifled with a muttered growl  
Attempts at conversation,  
And hurtled over flesh and fowl  
To reach his destination.  
A look of crime was on his face,  
His finger nails were a disgrace.

Like Harold before him, Geoffrey's actions are silencing. The language here is destructive and violent. "Stifled," for instance, directed at the speaker's "attempts at conversation," is both silencing and suffocating. Geoffrey no longer speaks, but communicates with "a muttered growl." His driving becomes dangerous as he "hurtle[s] over flesh and fowl," paying no attention to living things in the path of the car. As with Bob later in this sequence, Geoffrey occupies as much space as he pleases with no thought for the things or people with which he might be sharing that space. The final couplet here pulls readers from Geoffrey's violence with the mention of a superficial detail: "His finger nails were a disgrace." This line, meant to bring back the superficial woman concerned with what to wear on a lunchtime drive, is outweighed by the language of the rest of the stanza. Geoffrey wears "a look of crime." Clearly, there are more disgraceful things about Geoffrey here than the state of his fingernails. But Pope walks this line lightly. It is easy to imagine Geoffrey as a regular man overreacting hilariously and cartoonishly as his car misbehaves, but when read alongside texts, by Pope and others, that regularly feminize the motor-car as this one does in line 26 and take for granted that men are the only rightful drivers, it becomes clear that Pope has more in mind here than a man upset with his car. Geoffrey's behavior is a clear red flag; this "temper," as Pope identifies it, is dangerous.

That car despoiled him of his youth,  
He'd brood on her for hours,  
And yet he seldom spoke the truth  
When bragging of her powers;  
And if the traffic wouldn't clear



His language wasn't fit to hear.

He bought her such expensive things,

And lavished every penny

On hoods and bonnets, belts and rings,

—He never bought me any—

His manner grew absorbed or rough,

Until I said I'd had enough.

Stanzas five and six temper the violence of the earlier stanzas, returning overtly to the jealous girlfriend trope: “He bought her such expensive things, / And lavished every penny / On hoods and bonnets, belts and rings, / —He never bought me any—” On one level, this is an expected reaction from the jealous girlfriend, but when Pope’s female speakers know the value of their money and guard it carefully, Geoffrey’s spending can be read as impulsive and unwise. If the two of them are in a relationship close to marriage, as the title of the sequence indicates, the speaker is right to critique Geoffrey’s extravagant expenditures. It is one thing to buy a car; it is quite another thing to buy a car in need of constant repairs. The speaker is not upset that she is not the recipient of the “hoods and bonnets, belts and rings,” but that Geoffrey “lavish[es] every penny” on the car. She is not a factor in his spending, and tellingly, it is the issue of money that is the last straw. As Geoffrey’s “manner grew absorbed or rough,” the speaker delivers an ultimatum.

I told him frankly to decide—

I spoke without emotion—

Between a motor and a bride,  
I'd share no man's devotion.  
—The lack of me his life would mar—  
He said—*but thought he'd choose the car.*

In the final stanza, the speaker “[tells] him frankly to decide / [...] Between a motor and a bride.” She preserves the illusion that it is Geoffrey's choice, when in fact, she has already “had enough.” She's resolved to end it, but the public decision to end the relationship must be his. As with Harold, the speaker lets it seem to the reader, and the would-be husband, that the final decision is his. It is at the end of the poem that the speaker becomes what the car is not. Where the car, following the woman-as-car trope, is passive, seductive, and in need of a driver, the speaker delivers her ultimatum “frankly” and “without emotion,” saying that she would “share no man's devotion.” She is forthright and independent. As the end of her relationship with Harold shows her that she prefers quiet, the speaker discovers here that she deserves fidelity and respect from her potential husband. This speaker will not abide being silenced.

Pope carries the theme of being silenced through the third poem, though it is treated in a different way here. Bob is praised in the first stanza as “sympathetic,” generous, courteous, and successful, but this praise ends as the first stanza ends: “And yet at games I must confess / His clumsiness was past correction.” On the whole, the story of Bob is a humorous one. He's terrible at golf in stanza two, then billiards and shooting in stanza three. He's hopeless at dances in the fourth stanza, always stepping on his partner's dress and bumping in to other dancers. The speaker reappears in the final stanza to relate Bob's proposal and her refusal where she “gently intimated that / [she] thought it

safer to be single.” When compared to Harold or Geoffrey, Bob seems to be an absolute catch. However, like Harold and Geoffrey, he lacks awareness, and while he does not silence with his voice, he silences with his body. These actions, however much they may be unintentional, demonstrate that Bob acts from a place of privilege, and his actions, from the perspective of Pope’s speaker, are every bit as violent as the male behavior she has endured already.

### III.

Bob was a sympathetic soul,  
His generosity was noted;  
I can’t sufficiently extol  
His courtesy, so often quoted.  
His work achieved a marked success,  
His brain was keep,<sup>112</sup> his nerve perfection,  
And yet at games I must confess  
His clumsiness was past correction.

At golf he’d mutilate the ground,  
His strength was huge but unadjusted;  
He’d swing himself completely round,  
And sit upon the tee disgusted.  
He’d back the bunkers right away

---

<sup>112</sup> “Keep,” here, means that Bob’s brain is “in good condition.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “keep,” accessed November 12, 2013, <http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/102775?rskey=pz7iCK&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid40075594>.

While club-heads through the air went hissing,  
And after Bob had had a day  
The links themselves were mostly missing.

Pope's male golfers are frequently inept in one way or another; Pope almost always focuses her attention on what happens when a metal head of a club makes contact with the soft earth of the course. Bob is a big man, a strong man. As he "mutilate[s] the ground" playing golf, the speaker notes that "His strength was huge but unadjusted." Using the prefix here, as Pope did in a foreshadowing way in the second stanza of Geoffrey's poem, indicates that the behavior here could be "adjusted," but it has not been. The potential is there for correction, but the adjustment would have to be instigated by Bob himself, something he has not done. Bob is capable of controlling his strength, but Bob lets his strength turn destructive through his lack of control. He "sits[s] upon the tee disgusted," breaks his clubs with the brute force of his swing. The swing, it is important to note, is a humorous moment. Just as it is easy to imagine a cartoonish Geoffrey shouting at his car, the image of Bob "swing[ing] himself completely round" on a tee shot is pure slapstick. It is a strategic deployment of humor, designed to help the reader overlook the "mutilate[d]" course, the "unadjusted" strength, the "disgusted" attitude, and the "hissing" of flying clubs. Bob destroys the course during his day on the links: "And after Bob had had a day / The links themselves were mostly missing."

Though Bob was loved by not a few,  
Yet billiards won him savage strictures;  
He'd burst the pockets with his cue,  
Or make his ball bombard the pictures.

Or when with oscillating gun  
He aimed at partridges or plover,  
He'd make the other sportsmen run  
Like rabbits for the nearest cover.

The third stanza continues this pattern and opens with an attempt to give Bob the benefit of the doubt, reminding the reader that he “was loved by not a few,” but the second line returns to an examination of his behavior. His friends notice what is ostensibly his poor gamesmanship at billiards and give him “savage strictures” for it. As before, to avert the eye from the violent, expensive language of his billiards game—“savage strictures,” shots that “burst the pockets with his cue,” and his ball “bombard[ing] the pictures—the exaggerated image of Bob hunting in a way that “make[s] the other sportsmen run / Like rabbits for the nearest cover” ends the stanza with a vivid, funny image, rather than the truth of Bob’s expansive lack of control. Pope’s choice of games to include here is not accidental. Each of these—golf, billiards, and shooting—requires extreme awareness and control. In golf, a player must be able to read the environment, the course, the weather; choose the appropriate club for a particular shot, swing that club correctly, and make contact with the ball precisely; predict with some sense of accuracy where the ball will land, always planning several shots ahead. The player operates in the present, but also several moments in the future, reading and anticipating. Likewise, in billiards, a player must anticipate not only where the cue ball will go, but also the movement of the other balls on the table; judge where to make contact with the cue ball in order to apply the appropriate English; use the sides of the table and the lay of the balls in play to advantageous effect, strategically blocking the

other player's next shot if possible. As with golf, a billiards player must have a light and precise hand. Shooting uses all of these ways of reading with the added difficulty that one's target is already in motion; one must anticipate the target's trajectory and speed, hitting it cleanly, while maintaining an awareness of the others in the hunting party. As in golf, the shooter must know the capabilities of the weapon in hand and act accordingly. These sports are all about precision, awareness, and reading. The player here must anticipate correctly the most likely sequence of events and act accordingly.

Nor was he different at a dance—  
For like a hulk that rolls and pitches,  
He cleft a cumbersome advance  
Amid the sound of rending stitches.  
And when, with innocent intent,  
He frolicked as the tune went faster,  
And fell—as fall he must—he sent  
A baker's dozen to disaster.

Pope's move to dance in the fourth stanza builds on this foundation. Here, Bob is a "hulk that rolls and pitches, / He cleft a cumbersome advance / Amid the sound of rending stitches." He moves through a crowded floor of dancers with all the grace and awareness of a wrecking ball. While he dances with "innocent intent," he falls during a faster number, causing "a baker's dozen" to fall as well. Pope writes that "he sent" this falling group "to disaster." Again this is a comical image, dancers falling like dominoes, but this is another example of Bob's silencing behavior. He refuses to hear what his environment is telling him. At the dance, he must read the room, hear the music and

recognize the steps it calls for. He must read his partner and lead her through the dance, moving in harmony with her and adjusting their movement not to collide with other couples sharing the space. But Bob can do none of these things. He refuses to recognize and read the signals all around him.

So when he vowed with tragic voice,  
His heel upon my flounces setting,  
I was his one and only choice—  
(All former love affairs forgetting)  
And on the tray unwisely sat  
Where claret-cup and ices mingle,  
I gently intimated that  
I thought it safer to be single.

The final stanza gives us the proposal. Like the others, he declares his intention to possess the speaker—"I was his one and only choice." Like the others, his behavior is confining; here, "His heel upon my flounces setting" holds her in place. To move is to rip a likely expensive dress. He's not catching her attention with a gentle touch on her hand; he is holding her captive by treading on her clothes. Even in an intimate moment, Bob has no consciousness of his surroundings. In his single-minded focus on the speaker, he sits on a tray "Where claret-cup and ices mingle," but we know from the rest of the poem, he would have sat on that tray anyway. Bob's actions indicate that he has been trained with a right to take up space. The speaker, on the other hand, must get out of his way. She is the one recognizing his expansiveness for what it is, and her refusal of Bob's proposal is the least forceful of the five: "I gently intimated that / I thought it safer to be single."

Here she must be quiet and small, for she already knows that Bob will remain “unadjusted.” The speaker views each man’s role in the relationship as a possessive one, one that will not end well for the speaker herself. Each time, she dodges a noose. Unlike Bob, the speaker is able to read the behavior of these men, follow the trajectory ahead to the future, and act accordingly.

The fourth poem in the sequence introduces the readers to Montagu, who, in twenty-first century terms, can be described as a “mansplainer.” Rebecca Solnit usefully describes the attitude of the man explaining things and what his confidence—reinforced by patriarchy—can do to women:

On two occasions [...], I objected to the behavior of a man, only to be told that the incidents hadn't happened at all as I said, that I was subjective, delusional, overwrought, dishonest—in a nutshell, female. [...] [B]illions of women must be out there on this 6-billion-person planet being told that they are not reliable witnesses to their own lives, that the truth is not their property, now or ever. This goes way beyond Men Explaining Things, but it’s part of the same archipelago of arrogance.<sup>113</sup>

This is exactly what Montagu does here, asserts time and time again that the speaker cannot authoritatively communicate her experiences. He assumes his voice carries an authority that the speaker must recognize and to which she must submit.

This poem is full of hidden protests. While the third line declares, “And yet to no man will I yield,” something the speaker of “Men I Might Have Married” has certainly demonstrated over the course of this sequence, this line is enjambed into “My liberty to

---

<sup>113</sup> Rebecca Solnit, “The Problem with Men Explaining Things,” *Mother Jones*, August 20, 2012. Accessed March 4, 2014. <http://www.motherjones.com/media/2012/08/problem-men-explaining-things-rebecca-solnit>



grumble,” hiding the more outspoken assertion behind something more easily dismissed. The ending couplet repeats this pattern and introduces Montagu, who “my temper sorely tried / By always looking on the sunny side.” Like Bob before him, this complaint about Montagu does not, at first, seem terrible enough to be a deal-breaker. Montagu is optimistic. Many people are. But Montagu uses his optimism to silence the speaker and deny her feelings, and the back and forth structure each stanza emphasizes Montagu’s drive always to have the last word.

#### IV.

A sense of humour is my shield,  
My jokes are glib, if humble,  
And yet to no man will I yield  
My liberty to grumble;  
And Montagu my temper sorely tried  
By always looking on the sunny side.

If I anathematized the rain,  
My grief he never heeded,  
Remarking that to swell the grain  
Another inch was needed.  
“of picnics,” he’d observe, “we’d had our share,  
and disappointments we must grin and bear.”

Or when at golf I met defeat,  
His fortitude was fearful.  
He made my misery complete;  
No wonder I was tearful.  
“The best must always win in every strife,”  
He said—“and patience is the salt of life.”

When I was grossly overcharged  
For frocks that never fitted,  
And on my grievances enlarged,  
He neither helped nor pitied.  
“Annoyances like that,” he said, “were small  
Some human beings had no clothes at all.”

Or if, when toothache racked me through,  
My cheek became inflated,  
He always took a Spartan view  
Of ills so over-rated.  
“What was my pain?” he’d answer with aplomb,  
“To that of people shattered by a bomb!”

I broke my vows, when all was done,  
From sheer exasperation.

I really failed to see the fun  
Of lifelong resignation.  
And when he argued, angry and distress,  
I merely said—“Whatever is, is best.”

The structure of the first stanza recalls the opening stanza of Harold’s poem with its emphasis on the speaker, though here it is a description of her personality, something thus far the reader has only been able to infer. The reference to the speaker’s “sense of humour” in the opening line here highlights the fact that each poem in this sequence shares the same speaker, for Harold disparages “wit” and “laughter” in the third stanza of his poem, and it is that stanza where the speaker begins to take offense at Harold’s silencing behavior. The speaker claims her humor and is proud of it, but she still displays the tendency to take up less space as she does at the end of Bob’s poem, for she admits that her “jokes are glib, if humble.”

In the second stanza, the speaker complains about the rain, but her words are relegated to one line only. The rest of the stanza is given over to how Montagu “never heeded” her “grief.” The “never” here does not necessarily have to refer to this situation, as it serves as just an example of a consistent trend. He counters her complaint with a statement about how rain is necessary for the growth of crops, and the stanza ends with a direct quote of Montagu waxing philosophical. The complaints grow closer to the speaker herself as the poem progresses, and this structure is a good strategic move for Pope, for it shows the quality of escalation often found in cases of domestic violence.<sup>114</sup> Emphasizing

---

<sup>114</sup> See also: Zvi Eisikovits, Zeev Winstok, and Richard Gelles, “Structure and Dynamics of Escalation from the Victim’s Perspective,” *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services* 82, no. 2 (2002): 143-152; Sandra M. Stith, Yvonne Amanor-boadu, Marjorie Strachman Miller, Erin Menhusen, Carla Morgan, and April Few-Demo, “Vulnerabilities, Stressors, and Adaptations in Situationally Violent

the “last word” of Montagu each time, the speaker is relegated to the safe area of the “frivolous woman” who only wants to complain about frivolous things: the weather, her golf game, shopping. He outweighs her in every stanza, and the reader is to take for granted that the speaker’s concerns *are* frivolous, that Montagu’s responses are reasonable. However, in stanza five, where the object of complaint is real, physical pain—“toothache racked me through, / My cheek became inflated”—we can begin to see Montagu’s dismissal of the speaker’s experience when she is literally “racked” with pain. He calls these “ills so over-rated” and asks her what is her pain compared to “that of people shattered by a bomb!”, a non sequitur comparison. It is this dismissal that allows us to reconsider all the others, and it is this one that is the last straw.

In the final stanza, she counters him with the same silencing, mansplaining move he has deployed against her the whole time. His reaction becomes what hers has been, “angry and distress,” when she tells him that “[she] really fail[s] to see the fun / Of lifelong resignation.” This mid-stanza enjambment, mirroring the first stanza, is a statement that defines what marriage to any of these five men would have been. The speaker would have been resigning herself to a life of being silenced, bullied, and emotionally and verbally abused. Her final rebuttal, and the last word in the poem, “Whatever is, is best,” not only throws a maxim back at Montagu, it also indicates that the speaker has an awareness for what is “best” for herself.

---

Relationships,” *Family Relations* 60 (2011): 73-89; Susan H. Horwitz, Lizette Santiago, Joan Pearson, and Michelle LaRussa-Trott, “Relational Tools for Working With Mild-to-Moderate Couple Violence: Patterns of Unresolved Conflict and Pathways to Resolution,” *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 40, no. 3 (2009): 249-256; Karen H. Rosen, Jennifer L. Matheson, Sandra M. Stith, Eric E. McCollum, and Lisa D. Locke, “Negotiated Time-Out: A De-Escalation Tool for Couples,” *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 20, no. 3 (2003): 291-298; Zeev Winstok, “From a Static to a Dynamic Approach to the Study of Partner Violence,” *Sex Roles* 69 (2013): 193-204; Carolina Øverlein, “‘He Didn’t Mean to Hit Mom, I Think’: Positioning, Agency and Point in Adolescents’ Narratives about Domestic Violence,” *Child and Family Social Work* 19 (2014): 156-6.

While Owen Seaman's "Woman I Have Never Married" deals with the man deserting potential wives for daring to have lives outside of the male fantasy, Pope's sequence depicts a woman learning the reality of the patriarchy and the situation of women. She had no grand expectations for each man, at least none are given in the poems. She is not being awoken from a fairy tale. Each of her potential husbands presents normal male behavior, and the reader is to recognize it as such. And it is possible to read these poems as the oblivious Bob would, without seeing the hurtful reality of this behavior. It is this fact that lets Pope bring such a high level of feminist critique to her commercially popular works. As in this fourth poem, her protests are cleverly hidden among diversions of enjambment and rhyme. Even the sequence itself is organized in a way that allows the more cartoonishly comical men of the middle poems (Geoffrey, Bob, and Montagu) to mask the more overtly abusive ones bookending the sequence (Harold and McNeill).

Praise for the final potential husband, McNeill, occupies two lines only. The speaker "admired" him, which implies distance from the first line, and notes that "He'd won International laurels." Unlike her stanzas for Bob, the speaker's indictment of McNeill, or Mac, is consistent and unrelenting from line three forward. The detail of his "aggressively red" hair in the first stanza may facilitate the rhyme scheme, but it is a weak distraction from what is a very different man as compared to the others.<sup>115</sup> Pope's use of alarmingly violent language begins in the first stanza and remains consistent

---

<sup>115</sup> McNeill can be an Irish or a Scottish surname. The red hair and the hot temper rely on stereotypes and can also distract the reader from the reality of McNeill's behavior, allowing one to explain it away as part of the man's "nature." But this does not disguise the fact of McNeill's abusive and dangerously possessive behavior. The point here is not that McNeill's hair is red, but that the speaker describes it as "aggressive." Pope deploys a more overt reference to physiognomy in "A Weak Point" in *Airy Nothings*. See my next chapter for this discussion.

throughout the poem. All day Mac “spoiled for a fight,” and “He sneered at a life lacking in bloodshed and strife, / Or a peaceable death in his bed.”

Each stanza finds Mac picking a fight where there is none. He sees himself as the speaker’s “stalwart protector” while on a train, which may seem thoughtful, but only serves, early on, to establish Mac’s perception of possession. The speaker is his property; therefore, he guards her, imagining threats where there are none. The “ticket collector” and the “cabby,” who does nothing more than “ask more than his fare,” were “Very soon [made] to perceive [their] mistake.” Based on the other interactions in this stanza, ones quite normal when traveling, I read this as the cabby asking mundane questions about the weather, for instance. If it were an inappropriate question, one can assume Mac’s reaction would be more than is discussed in the stanza here. Unlike the previous relationships, there are no elements here to distract the reader from the man’s abusiveness, and the result is a jarringly shocking poem from Pope, one that ends this first collection not with a laugh, but with a sense of uneasiness. The speaker, again silenced by the actions of her male companion, only relates that on these journeys taken for “pleasure,” that she “was most of the time on the shake,” or fearful and nervous, an understandable reaction to time spent with a man of volatile temper. Even more so than Geoffrey’s, Mac’s behavior presents red flags from the beginning.

V.

McNeill was a man I admired,

He’d won International laurels,

But his bosom was easily fired

With a passionate craving for quarrels.

From morning till night he spoiled for a fight,  
His hair was aggressively red,  
He sneered at a life lacking bloodshed and strife,  
Or a peaceable death in his bed.

If I went a short journey by train  
With Mac as my stalwart protector,  
With the guard he would wage a campaign,  
Or fall foul of the ticket collector.  
If the cabby should dare to ask more than his fare,  
Very soon he perceived his mistake;  
And wherever we went, upon pleasure intent,  
I was most of the time on the shake.

I quarreled with numerous friends,  
Or Mac did the quarrelling for me,  
And rather than offer amends,  
To cut every one, he'd implore me.  
Though a challenge he hurled at the rest of the world,  
Dissension with me he would shun.  
Till it grew rather tame to be out of the game,  
So I entered the lists just for fun.

I forget how the quarrel began;  
I remember quite well how it finished;  
How high personalities ran,  
While our tender affection diminished.  
With visages flushed to the combat we rushed;  
Of course we said more than we meant;  
Then I told him to go—all was over—and so,  
To my utter amazement, he went!

The start of the third stanza presents an abused woman covering for her abuser—  
“I quarreled with numerous friends,”—before she recovers herself and amends the  
assertion, revealing that “Mac did the quarrelling for me.” And what is more important is  
that Mac stands by his actions here; he does not “offer amends,” to the speaker or to her  
friends, but rather “implore[s]” her “to cut every one.” Another red flag: Mac is asking  
her to cease contact with all of her friends.<sup>116</sup> While he never hesitates to throw “a  
challenge” at “the rest of the world,” Mac seems to temper his behavior toward the

---

<sup>116</sup> “Red flag” behaviors are commonly noted in current literature on dating violence. Some red flags listed by the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance on their “Red Flag Campaign” website include partners who “are always angry at someone or something; try to isolate you and control whom you see or where you go; [...] don’t listen to you or show interest in your opinions or feelings... things always have to be done their way; ignore you, give you the silent treatment, or hang up on you.” The “Men I Might Have Married,” as well as many of Pope’s other men, easily fit this description. Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, “Red Flags for Abusive Relationships,” *Red Flag Campaign*, Accessed July 23, 2015. <http://www.theredflagcampaign.org/index.php/dating-violence/red-flags-for-abusive-relationships/>. See also: Judith W. Herman, “There’s a Fine Line... Adolescent Dating Violence and Prevention,” *Pediatric Nursing* 35, no. 3 (2009): 164-170; Lynn M. Short, Pamela M. McMahon, Doryn Davis Chervin, Gene A. Shelley, Nicole Lezin, Kira Sue Sloop, and Nicola Dawkins, “Survivors’ Identification of Protective Factors and Early Warning Signs for Intimate Partner Violence,” *Violence Against Women* 6, no. 3 (2000): 272-285; Marcus Juodis, Andrew Starzomski, Stephen Porter, and Michael Woodworth, “What Can Be Done About High-Risk Perpetrators of Domestic Violence?” *Journal of Family Violence* 29 (2014): 381-390; “Layra Bowyer, Jennifer Swanston, and Arlene Vetere, ‘Eventually You Just Get Used to It’: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of 10-16 Year-Old Girls’ Experiences of the Transition Into Temporary Accommodation After Exposure to Domestic Violence Perpetrated by Men Against Their Mothers,” *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 20, no. 2 (2015): 304-323.



speaker, who says that “Dissension with [her] he would shun.” It is in this exception to his aggression that the speaker finds her opportunity, and the final two lines of this stanza take on the most light-hearted tone of the poem: “Till it grew rather tame to be out of the game, / So I entered the lists just for fun.” With the lilting rhythm and internal rhyme, these lines are pure Jessie Pope, and they set up a lighter final stanza after the darkness of this poem. As with the others, the speaker turns the Mac’s strategies on himself and picks a fight with him, calling it first a “quarrel,” then later, “combat.”<sup>117</sup> It is a shouting match, and while the speaker does not remember how it began, she “remember[s] quite well how it finished.” After one reference to their former “tender affection,” evidence of which is nowhere to be found in this poem, she delivers her ultimatum and “[tells] him to go—all [is] over.” It is interesting here that the speaker tells Mac to leave rather than letting him come to that decision himself, as she does with Harold, Geoffrey, and arguably, Bob. Montagu does not seem to understand why she wants to leave, but Mac, quite possibly surprised that his beloved instigates a fight with him, does not hesitate to leave. He can’t take her standing up to him.

Of the “Men I Might Have Married,” Mac is the most like Owen Seaman’s speaker, who drops his women as soon as they deviate from the fantasy he has constructed around them. Mac seems to imagine a silent damsel in distress and fancies himself her protector. His behavior indicates as much, as does the language of “bloodshed and strife,” “lists,” and “combat”: medieval terms for a medieval attitude. When the speaker proves that she will not be that damsel, Mac balks. The issue at the

---

<sup>117</sup> The use of “quarrel” may be a move to soften the story of Mac’s violence—instead of using “fight” or “shout,” for instance—but both the noun and the verb definitions for “quarrel” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* reference violence. As a noun, it indicates “a violent contention or altercation with another person, or between persons,” while as a verb, it means “to control violently [...] to become inimical or hostile, to disagree violently.”

core of the five poems remains the same: this speaker craves a relationship where her voice is welcomed and heard, where she is treated as an equal partner and, most importantly, as a human being. Ending the collection with this poem, with the speaker alone rather than the speaker married,<sup>118</sup> reiterates the independence of the Pope woman, a theme developed throughout. It is important to note here that the speaker is alone, but not lonely. We are not to read her as tragically single. In five escalating poems, Pope answers the question in Seaman's second "Women I Have Never Married": "*Do girls of twenty-eight remain / Spinsters without a cogent cause?*" Through Pope's speaker, we learn that the "cogent cause" may not be with the woman, as Seaman's speaker imagines it to be, but with the man.

As her women, bounded in on all sides by patriarchy, are able to locate and press modes of resistance, Pope's marginal status in the *Punch* group allows her, as Gurney and Easterday et al. would argue, insight and freedom to read the group without the influencing factors that would come with true membership in the group. Through her female speakers and subjects, Pope observes and critiques the men who encourage and publish her work. While they may always return to the fact that Pope is an example of the rare female humorist, from their own positions of power, they are unable to see the real work Pope accomplishes under their radar and upon their pages. Blanche Greer asserts, "The most handicapped observer is the one doing [observing] people and situations he/she is closest to. Hence, women are in luck in a male-run world. They can see how few clothes the emperor has on, question the accepted, and what is taken for granted."<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> This entire sequence is unusual in that it depicts a woman negotiating her way out of a betrothal situation. Usually, when Pope includes a male/female relationship in a text, the story ends in a betrothal or marriage.

<sup>119</sup> Easterday et al., "The Making of a Female Researcher," 345.

This is exactly what Pope does. She takes her marginal status as a “girl Friday among the pirates” and lets it feed her satire. She recognizes the limitations of her various labels as the “poetess” of *Punch* and the only female humorist and places them at the center of her poems. She subverts the male fantasy of the woman and the woman writer and creates moments where, at least on the page, her women are free. Though she is always remembered as the woman of *Punch*, Pope is her own woman.

## Chapter 2

### Crossing Lines of Communication: Jessie Pope's *Airy Nothings*

The Jessie Pope at the helm of *Airy Nothings* is a writer with an agenda, further, a writer more empowered than ever before to make that agenda clear.<sup>1</sup> The poems here cover at least seventeen years of Pope's career and are collected from original appearances in *Punch*, *The Pall Mall Magazine*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Windsor Magazine*, and elsewhere. Some of the poems in *Airy Nothings* were published concurrently with those collected for *Paper Pellets*, demonstrating that Pope chose deliberately which texts to collect and ordered them carefully. Like *Paper Pellets*, *Airy Nothings* was published as an entry in Elkin Mathews's Satchel Series, designed to make new literature accessible—in both content and price—to a wide reading public. It should be noted here that none of the other books in the Satchel Series focus on women to the extent that Pope does. Of the seventeen books in the series, published between 1904 and 1918, only three books are by female authors—two of those books are Pope's. The other female author is Mrs. Hamilton Synge, a popular prose writer whose previous two books, *A Supreme Moment* and *The Coming of Sonia and Other Stories*, were published to lukewarm reviews.<sup>2</sup> Of the first ten poems in this collection, seven are culled from Pope's *Punch* offerings. Only three more of the thirty nine total poems here are from *Punch*. This small number directly correlates to the more overt women's agenda that Pope

---

<sup>1</sup> *Airy Nothings* is Pope's last publication with Elkin Mathews. Because Pope's correspondence with Mathews was not preserved—on either end—we cannot know for sure why she moved to Grant Richards for her next single-author book for an adult audience, but she was in communication with Richards as early as 1904, which predates her association with Mathews. Pope accepts numerous paid editing jobs from Richards throughout her association with the firm. Her other primary publisher at this time was Blackie and Son, whose firm was primarily dedicated to books for children.

<sup>2</sup> James G. Nelson, *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

pursues in this collection. Because *Airy Nothings* has a more overt focus on women and women's questions, Pope's evasive strategies must evolve.

Many of the female speakers in *Airy Nothings* are cut from the same cloth as Mabel in "Another Pair of Sleeves," the first poem in *Paper Pellets*, but what marks the *Airy Nothings* women as different is that they are collected in a way shows them as a network or a community of women.<sup>3</sup> One woman thinking critically about marriage as an institution, one woman calling for women's suffrage, one woman exposing her husband's abusive behavior: on their own, these women represent isolated incidents; their voices can be easily ignored. But when they are collected and presented together, their voices become harder to ignore. They validate each other; the critiques they level no longer register as isolated incidents, but as evidence of trends and truths. These women are not remarkable for their outspokenness or their brazenness; they set the standard, not the deviation, for Pope's women. *Airy Nothings*, more so than *Paper Pellets*, is a collection where women think out loud. These women recognize the ways that they are, could be, or have been silenced and work against those tactics. Yet, they, like Pope herself, must still modulate their voices carefully in order to speak their minds.

These poems often point a finger at the institutionalized inequity and sexism that prevent women from being understood as human beings, further enumerating the "cogent cause[s]" for a woman to choose to remain single.<sup>4</sup> The first poem in *Airy Nothings*, "Second Thoughts," collected from the 1908 edition of *Punch's Almanack*, sets the tone for the collection. This speaker is emblematic of the women in *Airy Nothings*. They are women who have seized upon the new freedoms available to them in their historical

---

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 5 for the table of contents from *Airy Nothings*.

<sup>4</sup> Owen Seaman, "Women I Have Never Married I," *Punch*, August 10, 1904. 92.

moment, but they remain aware that they must not show their liking for such things too much, or appear to be too enthusiastic about “[facing] the world alone.” There is too much at stake for them. Embracing independence, even voicing opinions frankly, edges into masculine territory. In *Airy Nothings*, Pope collects women whose voices, actions, and even silences work together to offer serious critique of gender as it is taught, performed, and policed. She returns often to the question of marriage because it was, and remains, understood as one of the most significant and formative events in a woman’s life.

Harry, when you proposed to me last night  
In that unpolished way of yours, although  
It was not unexpected, I took fright  
And answered No.

The wedding-ring has terrors for me, Harry;  
Its apparition sets me in a whirl;  
But, all the same, I don’t want you to marry  
Some other girl.

The very thought torments me; though prepared—  
Nay, satisfied—to face the world alone,  
My future will be black if yours is shared  
By Grace or Joan.

Don't look upon the thing as settled, will you?

Why should we, either of us, suffer pain?

And I, for one, can't eat or sleep until you

Ask me again.<sup>5</sup>

At first glance, the speaker of "Second Thoughts" seems to be a regular *Punch* woman, boy-crazy and marriage-focused, perhaps a bit flighty, but a closer reading reveals her to be content with her status as a single woman. The language here counters the ideal of the stereotypically blushing bride and shows us, instead, a woman negotiating a prospect in which she would have very little legal power. This is a step farther down the courtship road than Pope usually takes her readers. Many of her short stories, for instance, end at the moment of betrothal rather than in marriage.<sup>6</sup> The female partner never contemplates her future the way the women chosen for *Airy Nothings* do. In selecting these women in particular, Pope is sending a very clear message. Her women may desire or choose a single life, but the social and cultural climate of their historical moment dictates that they must still reckon with the prospect of marriage and marriage proposals.

Pope's speaker here does not fear Harry or life with him, which is key when many of her previous speakers have done everything in their power to avoid even engagement.

Indeed, the latter half of the third stanza, while it serves to paint the speaker as jealous,

---

<sup>5</sup> Jessie Pope, "Second Thoughts," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1908), 7. Previously published as "Second Thoughts," *Punch's Almanack*, 1908.

<sup>6</sup> An uncollected story, "Joan and the Whale," concludes with a conversation between Joan and Tony, who has recently rescued Joan from being stranded atop a dead whale floating off the coast of Scotland. Joan is able to sell the whale, for she is the one who found it, for £100. The story ends with a quiet conversation between Joan and Tony: "'Then I've got £70 left. What shall I buy with it?' Tony pressed the hand he had been holding in his for a long time. 'Your trousseau, of course,' he said simply. And though Joan blushed a little and did not answer, she thought it was rather a good idea, all the same" (585). While it is never stated explicitly that Joan goes on to marry Tony, the implication is that she does. There is more to read in this story, of course, but it is a good example of a trend, especially in Pope's prose, toward ending with a clear or implied betrothal between the two primary male and female characters. "Joan and the Whale," *The Pall Mall Magazine*, October 1909, 579-585.

demonstrates her sadness if Harry were to spend the “future” with another woman. It is important to note that Pope does not use the word “marry” or “marriage” here; she chooses to focus on the “future” that the two would “[share].” It is not the marriage, then, that is the issue, but how marriage may change the relationship. This is a common concern for the early-century woman. John Gillis quotes a music hall song by Marie Lofus that demonstrates concern over a potential husband’s behavior as well as an awareness that for many girls, marriage is unavoidable:

When first they come courting,  
How nice they behave  
For a smile and a kiss  
How humbly they crave  
But when once a girl’s wed,  
She’s a drudge and a slave  
I think we would all prefer  
Marriage with strife  
Than to be on the shelf  
And be nobody’s wife.<sup>7</sup>

With lyrics like these in popular music of the day, Pope’s choice for her speakers to contemplate marriage becomes an important one indeed. The speaker in “Second Thoughts” seems to want to pursue something more along the lines of a twenty-first century domestic partnership; she may not even want to live together. As readers, we cannot be sure. The Edwardian historical moment does not have a language to describe a

---

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 233-234.



long-term, intimate relationship between a man and a woman that does not ultimately become a married relationship.<sup>8</sup> This speaker is “satisfied—to face the world alone—” revising her language from line nine’s use of “prepared,” but a woman cannot be so independent without seeming somewhat monstrous, so the final stanza ends with a request to “ask me again.” She seems to be addressing the proposal problem on her own terms, but she has placed the ball in Harry’s court again. This final stanza is divided, ending with what would be the voice of the *Punch* woman, the woman who “can’t eat or sleep” until Harry proposes again. As we have seen frequently in her other poems, Pope tempers the point of the poem in the final line, leaving the real kernel of meaning buried more near the beginning.

Gillis notes that in popular literature and conduct books, women are encouraged to fall in love, and Pope’s women follow this trend. As a writer of what would be considered the romance genre today, Pope writes women who fall in love easily, often multiple times, and each love, while it lasts, feels like true love. Gillis observes that this is necessary training for a “marriage market in which men are choosers” (278). Vicki Howard puts it another way: “men proposed, women got engaged.”<sup>9</sup> Pope seems aware of this dynamic as well; the speaker in “Men I Might Have Married” makes it clear each time that the man in question chose her. Both “Second Thoughts” and “A Weak Point” deal with strategies for a reluctant potential bride to come to terms with a proposal she

---

<sup>8</sup> Common-law marriage dropped significantly in the mid-nineteenth century as working class couples “were accepting the assistance of the church in returning to marital conformity” and posting banns became popular again (Gillis 231-2). In the mid-century, women were pressed out of employment until “from the 1870s onward, the percentage of women listed as employed in the census began to fall,” and the increasing “domesticization of women” caused them to be “yoked to their families in subordinate roles, first as daughters and then as wives” (245). Gillis’s study concerns primarily working class couples, but he notes the trickle-down effect of the aristocracy’s habits and new traditions.

<sup>9</sup> Vicki Howard, “A ‘Real Man’s Ring’: Gender and the Invention of Tradition,” *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (2003): 837-856. 843.

should probably not refuse. A male reader may find the speaker's consideration a sign of flightiness, but a female reader will recognize immediately the perilous situation in which the speaker could find herself; "permanent bachelors were to be pitied, but old maids despised. For men celibacy was assumed to be a matter of choice. [...] But for women, celibacy was a sign of failure, something unnatural, which subjected them to the taunts of local children and the scorn of married neighbors."<sup>10</sup> A female reader may align herself more readily with the speaker because she recognizes the ways in which they are both bound.

Pope's humor is funny because it is true, sometimes tragically so. Regina Barreca explains that

humor doesn't dismiss a subject but rather opens that subject up for discussion, especially when the subject is one that is not considered 'fit' for public discussion. Humor breaks taboos by allowing us to talk about those issues closest to us. We should see humor as a way of making our feelings and responses available to others without terrifying our listeners. When we can frame a difficult matter with humor, we can often reach someone who would otherwise withdraw.<sup>11</sup>

In this first poem, Pope opens the door for just such a situation. Consistently throughout *Airy Nothings*, she uses her light humor to give two pathways into her poems. One pathway takes the poetry at face-value; the other is located the real message concealed

---

<sup>10</sup> Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, 278. Jessie Pope's "The Boy in the Street"—published January 26, 1910 in *Punch*—features a boy who shouts insults and criticism at women. In her June 1909 story, "The Cat Out of the Bag," published in *The Pall Mall Magazine*, a boy tauntingly shouts "votes for women!" at a dowdy older woman who is pursuing her escaped cat across a heath.

<sup>11</sup> Regina Barreca, *They Used to Call Me Snow White ... But I Drifted: Women's Strategic Use of Humor* (New York: Viking, 1991), 201.

beneath “a mask of social acceptability. You have to decipher the code to understand the real message underneath” (17).

Critical for the speaker of “Second Thoughts” and for her leading position in *Airy Nothings* is the language used to describe the prospect of marriage in the second and third stanzas. “Terrors,” “apparition,” then “torments” are serious words coming from a speaker with cold feet. The structure of the second stanza—the first two lines full of horror followed by two more lines with an abrupt change in tone—demonstrates, again, the strategies of misdirection necessary to publish a speaker like this one in the pages of *Punch*. This stanza reminds the assumed male reader that the speaker is just a young woman, after all, and perhaps not so in tune with her real desires. After all, she changes her mind in each stanza.

The “wedding-ring” is the source of the speaker’s “terrors,” or, more precisely, what the wedding ring represents, the wedding ring as an outward symbol of a binding and legally stifling contract in which the woman, as she has lived up to that moment, ceases to exist. If she still lives at home, after the wedding, she will pass from her father’s control to her husband’s control. Gillis summarizes an instance in which

One father was so outraged that his daughter was buying furniture for her marriage on hire that he rang the firm to tell them (falsely) that the groom was under age. His patriarchalism was extended a step further by the new husband. When he decided that his wife should no longer work for the Air Ministry, he sent in her resignation without her knowledge. She was

furious, but, because he held a high position in the Ministry, there was nothing she could do.<sup>12</sup>

While there is no guarantee that her prospective fiancé would behave in such a way, there is enough common knowledge precedent for the speaker to be wary. She realizes what her married reality could likely be. For her, the wedding ring symbolizes the performance that will be involved on her part, in the wedding ceremony as well as in playing the part of wife. Wearing the wedding ring will mark her as married, and “it is the woman by far who carried the greater social and symbolic burden in maintaining the proprieties that society expected of matrimony” (299).<sup>13</sup> The speaker fears performing as a wife after being marked as one, but she faces an existential dilemma. To refuse the proposal will be to “fail to do [her] gender,” but to accept the proposal and not perform as a wife would be a gender failure on her part as well.<sup>14</sup>

A bride at this historical moment entered a marriage that fell somewhere on a spectrum ranging from patriarchal to companionate. A. James Hammerton focuses his discussion on the mid-Victorian period, but his findings regarding the changing definition of cruelty in divorce proceedings are still relevant for the would-be Edwardian bride and the way she would understand the contract into which she was entering at the altar.<sup>15</sup>

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Hammerton finds, the law’s understanding of

---

<sup>12</sup> Gillis, *For Better, For Worse*, 264.

<sup>13</sup> Unlike today, at this moment, a groom’s ring was not taken for granted as part of the wedding ceremony. Jewelry retailers worked hard in the mid-twentieth century to brand groom’s rings as masculine, and this was especially difficult with the subtext connected to a woman’s engagement or wedding ring, meant to communicate that this woman is “taken,” protected, or “off the market.” Giving the ring is masculine; accepting the ring is feminine. But Howard finds that “the availability of groom’s rings in catalogs by the late 1920s and the appearance of the double ring ceremony in a 1937 etiquette book suggest that the practice was becoming more common, perhaps in response to a growing awareness among retailers of its profitability” (Howard 844).

<sup>14</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-531. 522.

<sup>15</sup> A. James Hammerton, “Victorian Marriage and the Law of Matrimonial Cruelty,” *Victorian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1990): 269-292.

marriage evolved slightly from a patriarchal perspective to a companionate one, meaning that in divorce proceedings, rather than demanding that the wife prove her husband's "grave and weighty" cruelty that "threaten[s] bodily harm," judges began to examine more closely the sexual politics of the domestic disputes cited as grounds for divorce (273-275).<sup>16</sup> Toward the end of the century, "judges responded to accumulating evidence of intolerable levels of nonviolent cruelty," for instance, "cases where men spat in their wives' faces or treated them like prostitutes" (291). So while it became relatively easier to extract oneself from an abusive marriage as judges changed their perception of what constituted cruelty, the fact that female submission and male domination continued to be assumed as a natural and religiously consecrated part of the marriage arrangement—indeed, a part without which the marriage would fail—made marriage an understandably frightening prospect.

Even into the twentieth century, "a 'reasonable husband' was the essential prerequisite to a harmonious companionate marriage; a woman's future hung on that 'reasonable' qualification, which, it seems, implied a man who was unwilling to exercise powers that remained his by right" (270). Men of this historical moment, including the men encountered in Pope's poems, especially "Men I Might Have Married," understood that the law was on their side, that there was an "ideological support system that sanctioned their authority," and that they had "publicly sanctioned patriarchal authority"

---

<sup>16</sup> Hammerton quotes Sir William Scott's discussion of cruelty given in the 1790 case of *Evans v. Evans*, which provided the standard definition of cruelty and was relied upon in other cases even into the twentieth century. It is important to note that physical evidence of cruelty is given primacy over mental abuse: "What merely wounds the mental feelings is in few cases to be admitted where they are not accompanied by bodily injury, either actual or menaced. Mere austerity of temper, petulance of answers, rudeness of language, a want of civil attention and accommodation, even occasional sallies of passion, if they do not threaten bodily harm, do not amount to legal cruelty: they are high moral offences in the marriage state undoubtedly, not innocent surely in any state of life, but still they are not that cruelty against which the law can relieve" (273).

to keep their wives obedient and submissive (276). While the model of marriage is slowly changing at the turn of the twentieth century, it is not changing quickly enough for Pope's women to rush headlong into such a commitment. These women, like Pope herself we imagine, understand what marriage means for their agency, their money, and their humanity. There is no guarantee that the man who seems "reasonable" at the start of an engagement will remain that way.<sup>17</sup> The wedding ring contemplated by the speaker in "Second Thoughts" represents the possibility of losing everything, and it is in this possibility that Pope establishes the current that will run beneath the poems in *Airy Nothings*.

### **"I'm Rather Perplexed": At the Mercy of Marriage**

Pope's women are almost always ready to fall in love; many of them seek love actively. They have been socialized to a marriage market where men still have most of the agency, so these women are constantly working to read the men around them, interpret the signals received, and prepare responses appropriate to any given situation. "A Valentine" is a poem about gender and behavior expectations overlapping as changes in communication create new modes of propriety. In the first stanza, the speaker receives flowers from a man she names a "friend." It is not until she sits down to write him a thank you note that she realizes it is Valentine's Day and that the flowers may mean more

---

<sup>17</sup> Pope's men who purchase motor cars seem especially prone to this change. In *Paper Pellets*, Geoffrey, of the "Men I Might Have Married," is a prime example. In *Airy Nothings*, Reginald, of "Love in a Car," undergoes a similar behavioral change. His behavior becomes "querulous"; he remarks that the speaker's weight makes the car "extra heavy" and therefore slower; he gives her looks of "lightning" and demands that she stop her "chattering." However, unlike Geoffrey, when the speaker here delivers her ultimatum, demands to be "set down" to "[return] to London by train," Reginald seeks her out shortly thereafter and "implored me to wed, / With a fondly adoring humility." The speaker stands her ground, objecting to the match while the "car stands between us," to which Reginald replies that he has "sold it!" This speaker, unlike her counterpart in "Men I Might Have Married," believes that "It was really the motor-car that married us." This is a key change in male behavior for this collection, for not only does Reginald return to the speaker, not the other way around, he has recognized the change the motor car wrought in his behavior and sold it. Jessie Pope, "Love in a Car," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1908), 28-30. Previously published as "Love in a Car," *Punch* September 26, 1906, 229.

than she initially expected. It is her responsibility to discover their meaning and determine what action to take.

Spring flowers from a friend,  
In a mossy box penned,  
Carnations, narcissus and phlox;  
White lilac as well,  
How delicious they smell!  
And his card at the top of the box.  
In a nice little note I'll convey  
My thanks without any delay:  
"The 14<sup>th</sup> of Feb.,  
"My dear Mr. Webb—"  
Good gracious! It's Valentine's Day!

In her introduction to a corrected edition of Kate Greenaway's *The Illuminated Language of Flowers*, Jean Marsh acknowledges that while the language of flowers was a vogue for Victorians especially, there were so many variations of flower dictionaries on the market that the meanings in each book often conflicted so much so that "a bouquet recipient, left to decide which meaning was intended, probably shuddered at the thought of making the wrong choice."<sup>18</sup> A translation of Pope's flower choices here reveals that

---

<sup>18</sup> Marsh, Jean, "A Manner of Speaking," Introduction to *The Illuminated Language of Flowers*, by Kate Greenaway (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 9-18. 15-16. The most recent royal wedding, Kate Middleton to Prince William, featured flowers chosen not only because they were seasonal, but also because they represented key meanings. The description given in *The Guardian* also reflects the difficulty in finding two agreeing interpretations of any given flower: "All of the flowers were chosen by Middleton with reference to the rather twee 'language of flowers,' a floral code made popular by Queen Victoria. So the signature lily of the valley means 'trustworthy,' myrtle 'hope and love,' hornbeams 'resilience,' and field maples 'humility and reserve.' Not only twee but also pitfall-laden: lilac is for 'youthful innocence' or 'disappointment,' depending on which version you believe, or just how distrustful you are." Lia Leendertz,

the translation of messages concealed in floral gifts is tricky indeed. The meaning of a carnation, for instance, can vary wildly and changes depending upon coloring. A “deep red” carnation laments, “Alas! for my poor heart”; a striped carnation indicates “refusal,” and a yellow one reveals “disdain” (24). Another dictionary gives nine distinct meanings for carnations, varying from “fascination, devoted love” to “I’ll never forget you,” to “admiration” and “capriciousness” or a simple “yes.”<sup>19</sup> A third source includes six meanings for carnations, among them “pride and beauty, health and energy,” “maybe, indecision,” and “endearment.”<sup>20</sup> Pope’s speaker does not note the color of the carnations she received, indicating perhaps that she may not be aware of the multitude of meanings possible. The woman’s being unsure of what the flowers mean, especially when coupled with the day of their arrival, can indicate that she, like the speakers before her, is looking past outdated gender norms and toward a new sense of selfhood.

Now what does he mean?  
Does he hail me as queen  
Of his heart, of his future the star?  
If I swear I’ll be true  
As a maid used to do,  
Perhaps I’ll be going too far.  
It’ll be more discreet to postpone  
Any protest like that of my own,

---

“Kate Middleton’s Homegrown Bouquet of Lily of the Valley Follows Royal Code,” *The Guardian*, April 29, 2011, Accessed July 8, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/apr/30/kate-middleton-homegrown-bouquet-wedding>

<sup>19</sup>“Language of Flowers,” *Victorian Bazaar*, 2000. Accessed May 8, 2014. <http://www.victorianbazaar.com/meanings.html>

<sup>20</sup> Larry Roof and Annette Hatley Roof, “Flower Meanings, Flower Sentiments,” *The Language of Flowers*, Accessed May 8, 2014. <http://www.languageofflowers.com/flowermeaning.htm>



But I'm rather perplexed  
As to what to do next,  
So I'll just ring him up on the 'phone.

The second stanza shows a complicated thought process. She must wonder what Webb intends, not just in sending flowers, but also in sending them on Valentine's Day. She recognizes what someone of her mother's or grandmother's generation would do, but dismisses it as an outdated option. Note that she works up to a "protest" as her ultimate answer, but she recognizes that she must do so in the right way at the right time. She must be "discreet" to preserve her reputation and, as we shall see in other of Pope's couples, his feelings. Because she is still a modern Pope woman, she takes matters into her own hands and takes the initiative to call Webb on the telephone, her slang—"phone"—indicating some familiarity with the technology.

"Mayfair, 462.  
Hullo! Is that you?  
Oh! thanks for the flowers, they are sweet!  
Nonsense! What—I forget!  
No! *Don't* tell me yet!  
I'd much rather wait till we meet.  
Yes, I think so. Of course, yes, I *dare*!  
I promise. Yes, yes, I'll be there.  
Good-bye. What? Not *what*?  
—*Au revoir*—I forgot."

Now the question is, what shall I wear?<sup>21</sup>

It is a poem full of questions with very few clear answers, but more importantly, it is a poem with a female speaker who seems as shallow and easily confused as a regular *Punch* woman. This speaker is confined to questions of flowers, courtship, and clothing; in other words, this is a domesticated woman. “A Valentine” looks back to traditions of gender behavior that dictate propriety. It is important that the speaker decides against behaving like a “maid” of old, but her action is tempered by the confusion of the final stanza; the fragmented telephone conversation distracts from the agency of the call itself and the need for clear information. The poem ends with the speaker not clarifying the meaning of the flowers, but rather wondering what to wear to her meeting with Webb. She remains superficially focused and also fails to translate the flowers she has received. Her mistake is flexible, however. It can be read as a gender failure, the rejection of a gender norm, or a problem of communication between men and women. All are topics Pope treats frequently.

Where the recipient of the Valentine’s Day flowers is able to speak her concern plainly, other women are not so lucky. “A Weak Point” is a poem that does subtle work for Pope. On the one hand, it is obviously humorous. The speaker’s only complaint with her Theodore is “the shape of his nose,” and she repeats it at the end of each stanza.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, it hides a plea for help. The repetition in the poem functions in a way Annette Kolodny observes in Susan Glaspell’s short story “A Jury of Her Peers.” In Glaspell’s text, a woman, Minnie Foster, has killed her husband, but the men in charge of

---

<sup>21</sup> Jessie Pope, “A Valentine,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 44-45.

<sup>22</sup> Of the forty poems in *Airy Nothings*, eight of them employ the end-of-stanza repetition used here. See also: “A ‘Divotee,’” “Cherries Are In,” “Off His Game,” “The Doom of the Club,” “With the Beagles in Herts,” “The Rubber Bottel,” and “Well-Bred Whines.”

investigating the murder cannot fathom her motive. The women in the story, Minnie's friends, easily decode her home environment and discern Minnie's reasoning. Kolodny explains,

Glaspell's narrative not only invites semiotic analysis but, indeed, performs that analysis for us. If the absent Minnie Foster is the "transmitter" or "sender" in this schema, then only the woman are competent "receivers" or "readers" of her "message" since they alone share not only her context (the supposed insignificance of kitchen things) but, as a result, the conceptual patterns that make up her world. To those outside the shared systems of quilting and knotting, roller towels and bad stoves, with all their symbolic significations, these may appear trivial, even irrelevant to meaning; but to those within the system, they comprise the totality of the message: in this case, a reordering of who in fact has been murdered and, with that, what has constituted the real crime of the story.<sup>23</sup>

For Pope's text, Kolodny's analysis lets us read the speaker's reference to Theodore's nose as more than a shallow complaint. It indicates a worry that the speaker cannot name overtly.

Ending each stanza with a return to the speaker's dislike of Theodore's nose is important for two reasons. First, it makes the speaker seem silly, flighty, or shallow to reject a perfectly "dear" suitor because of a superficial flaw.<sup>24</sup> Second, it references the

---

<sup>23</sup> Annette Kolodny, "A Map for Rereading: Or, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts," *New Literary History* 11, no. 3 (1980): 451-467. 462.

<sup>24</sup> A popular episode of the cult classic sitcom *Seinfeld*, "The Bizarro Jerry," features the title character's date with a woman, Gillian, who has "man hands." After his first date with her, Jerry says Gillian has, "the

pseudo-science of physiognomy, which assesses character through one's facial features. John Caspar Lavater's influential text, *Essays on Physiognomy*, was widely read from the late eighteenth-century through the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> While Lavater's intention for the book was, as Sharrona Pearl summarizes, to show physiognomy as "a way to access the invisible internal through the external and to provide additional information about the works of the Creator," the book's use evolved as its popularity grew.<sup>26</sup> Pearl additionally notes that "although Lavater established the language, it was those who followed who built it" (11). His books became "status symbols," the first editions "made to be seen rather than to show how to see," but as "Lavater's ideas caught on," the nature of the books changed (12). Published in the nineteenth-century as "cheap and accessible pocket books," the language of Lavater became spoken in the streets, readers began "using a Lavaterian framework to describe their judgments and explain their reactions. Their judgments and reactions were not new," Pearl reminds, "but their language was" (12).<sup>27</sup>

---

hands of a man. It's like a creature out of Greek Mythology, I mean, she was like part woman, part horrible beast." Later, he proclaims, "Those meaty paws, I feel like I'm dating George 'The Animal' Steele. [...] Maybe I'll chain her to the refrigerator and sell tickets." While the main characters do not assess Gillian's character based on the size of her hands, the incongruousness of large hands on an otherwise small-framed woman becomes the flaw Jerry cites in ending the relationship with Gillian. Interestingly, the episode involves a side-story in which Jerry becomes the nagging "wife" to Kramer's overworked "husband." This situation, however, is not directly tied to the "man hands." The "man hands" do make the woman sound monstrous in Jerry's descriptions of her. *Seinfeld*, "The Bizarro Jerry," season 8, episode 3, directed by Andy Ackerman, aired October 3, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> John Graham surmises that "the book was reprinted, abridged, summarized, pirated, parodied, imitated, and reviewed so often that it is difficult to imagine how a literate person of the time could have failed to have some general knowledge of the man and his theories"; by the early nineteenth-century, there were at least twenty English translations. John Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1979), 62.

<sup>26</sup> Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 11.

<sup>27</sup> The language of physiognomy was used frequently to justify race-based prejudices. See Pearl's chapter on "Caricature Physiognomy: Imagining Communities," in *About Faces*.

Although Pope's speaker participates in this discourse, it is important that Pope leaves the details of the nose vague. The nature of the nose is not the point; rather, it is the distress signal embedded in the repetition. The only clear description offered of Theodore is that his "hair has an auburny hue / And when it grows long enough, curls." Pearl notes the role *Punch* played in the establishment of a consistent visual vocabulary through which "mocking images of the Irish Paddy became truly ubiquitous" (117-118). The regular *Punch* caricature of a Scotsman had him kilted and golfing. Again, Theodore's physical description remains unclear because Pope has an alternate agenda in this poem.

Theodore is a dear, I admit—  
And it's one of the sweetest of names—  
He's ready with sympathy, wisdom and wit,  
And he's perfectly splendid at games.  
And I can't fail to see he has taken to me,  
For his feelings he openly shows;  
But he's got one defect which he cannot correct:  
I don't like the shape of his nose.

His hair is an auburny hue,  
And when it grows long enough, curls;  
His eyes are so dreamy and wistful and true—  
At least when he's talking to girls.  
When he dives in the scrum he makes everything hum

And mincemeat of most of his foes;  
He knows how to dress, and his work's a success,  
But—I don't like the shape of his nose.

Yet I haven't the heart to refuse  
If he ever suggests we should meet  
Up that strip of red baize between whispering pews—  
The prospect, in fact is quite sweet.  
But it may be, oh dear, when I'm shaking with fear  
From my veil to my white satin toes,  
And the church is quite still, I shall answer "I WILL;  
But, I don't like the shape of his nose!"<sup>28</sup>

The nose, for Lavater, is the feature that holds a face together, the primary indicator of temperament and character, "the foundation, or abutment, of the brain."<sup>29</sup> Lavater writes that "There are, indeed, innumerable excellent men with defective noses, but their excellence is of a very different kind" (391). For the physiognomist, the nose tells all. An 1817 edition of *The Pocket Lavater*, summarizes the shapes a nose can take in this way:

An aquiline nose designates an imperious temper, and ardent passions. A nose, the ridge of which is large, denotes a mind endowed with qualities of a high order. When the sides of the nose are flexible, and perfectly

---

<sup>28</sup> Jessie Pope, "A Weak Point," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 19-20. Previously published as "A Weak Point," *Punch*, February 26, 1908, 154. I have preserved the change of the font size in the final line as it appeared both in *Punch* and *Airy Nothings*.

<sup>29</sup> John Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, translated by Thomas Holcroft (London: William Tegg and Co, 1878), 390.

disconnected, it betrays a proneness to sensuality. A nose curved at the root, announces a personage born to command, firm in his purposes, and ardent in the pursuit. Small nostrils disclose timidity of the soul. A sharp pointed nose is characteristic of a passionate man.<sup>30</sup>

Although it is clear which qualities are meant to be welcome or unwanted, nearly any of these qualities can be understood in a positive or negative manner. The numerous parodies of Lavater bear this out, including George Jabet's *Nasology, or Hints Towards a Classification of Noses*, published in 1848 under the pseudonym Eden Warwick. Jabet's book dedicates a chapter to each "type" of nose: Roman, Greek, Cogitative, Jewish, and Snub and Celestial. Each chapter is written in a way that indicates that there all types of people who have all types of noses. Despite the book's opening statement that "THE NOSE IS AN IMPORTANT INDEX TO CHARACTER," its content demonstrates, as Pearl observes, "the experience of the individual physiognomist was of paramount importance, be that person a king, a minister, or a more humble observer."<sup>31</sup> The point is that physiognomy as a discipline, though its language entered the public discourse, was "hardly developed"; Pearl explains that "the amount of ink spent justifying the legitimacy of physiognomy, from Lavater onward, speaks to the amount of opposition it received."<sup>32</sup>

Pope leverages the flexibility of the nod toward physiognomy in her speaker's constant reference to Theodore's nose to let that speaker voice a concern in a way that seems benign, but there are other clues embedded in the text that let us decode the nose

---

<sup>30</sup> *The Pocket Lavater, or, The Science of Physiognomy, to Which is Added, an Inquiry into the Analogy Existing Between the Brute and the Human Physiognomy, from the Italian of Porta* (New York: Van Winkle and Wiley, 1817), 27-28.

<sup>31</sup> Respectively, George Jabet, [Eden Warwick, pseud.] *Nasology: or, Hints Toward a Classification of Noses* (London: Richard Bentley, 1848), 5; Pearl, 50.

<sup>32</sup> Pearl, 12.

for ourselves. The speaker highlights that Theodore can put on a show, “at least when he’s talking to girls.” He can be charming. This caveat comes in the second stanza where we also learn about Theodore’s physical strength and prowess at violent sports like rugby. Putting these two aspects of Theodore’s character in the same stanza could indicate that they prove a dangerous combination for the speaker. When the speaker begins the final stanza saying she “[hasn’t] the heart to refuse” if he were to propose marriage, her use of “heart” could indicate a reluctance to hurt Theodore’s feelings as well as a lack of courage on her part. Not marrying Theodore is not an option. This speaker, like many women, finds herself in a dangerous situation. Women are often understood to be responsible for the emotional management of the men in their lives, especially a husband.<sup>33</sup> Frequently, the first impulse when a woman makes accusations of domestic abuse is to wonder what she did to “deserve it.”<sup>34</sup> This kind of management silences the women who must perform it, as the speaker hints she does. Failure to perform that management effectively can be disastrous, in a marriage or any relationship, for “women who continue living with their violent partners construct the process [of attempting to manage their partner’s escalation from anger to violence] in a manner that affords them a measure of control and responsibility at every stage of the process. This

---

<sup>33</sup> See Francesca Cancian, *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Francesca Cancian, “The Feminization of Love,” *Signs* 11, no. 4 (1986): 692-709; David M. Newman, *Sociology of Families* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Hammerton summarizes that husbands could “[interpret] their wives’ resistance as provocation, or if their wives had at any time forgiven them and hence ‘condoned’ acts of cruelty, knotty legal complications could result” (276). Indeed, the “neglect of [marital duties] was often cited as provocation for violence,” and these duties could range from having sex to “[refusing] to get up at 4:00am to make coffee for Thomas [the husband of Emma Baker, a woman seeking divorce] and a friend he brought home” (278-279).



enables them to remain in the relationship despite the violence.”<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Pope’s speaker, already trapped in the relationship, has not yet found her process.

Indeed, the possibility of marriage is not mentioned until the final stanza, and in this imagined future, she sees herself “shaking with fear” standing next to Theodore at the altar. The interruption of “oh dear” in the fifth line of the final stanza can be read as the true indicator of her fear, for not only does it rhyme internally with the end of the line—“fear”—it also is the only line that breaks the pattern established in the fifth lines of the two preceding stanzas. The final stanza’s fifth line is the only line using an expletive phrase enclosed in commas. That interruption, coupled with the internal rhyme, draws additional attention to the situation of the imagined wedding.

The change in type-size at the end of the poem adds another underscore to the speaker’s performance and code. From the start of the poem, the speaker’s description of Theodore reads as if she is attempting to convince herself of Theodore’s worthiness. The first instance of internal rhyme highlights that she has been chosen: “And I can’t fail to see he has taken to me.” From this moment of choosing, the speaker has reconciled herself to life with Theodore, the constant reminder that she does not “like the shape of his nose” the only indicator that things may not be as good as they appear to be. There is a narrative to which we do not have access running beneath this poem. On the surface, Theodore has “sympathy, wisdom and wit”; he is a talented athlete, a snappy dresser, and a successful worker. Yet underneath these qualities, the speaker has found something she fears, but cannot escape.

---

<sup>35</sup> Zvi Eisikovits, Zeev Winstok, and Richard Gelles, “Structure and Dynamics of Escalation from the Victim’s Perspective,” *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services* 82, no. 2 (2002): 143-152. 146.

The woman in “A Weak Point” cannot name what it is in Theodore that she fears. It is no coincidence, then, that Pope places “A Divotee” immediately next in the collection. Here, an unnamed male golfer does everything wrong, but his redeeming quality—the source of the humor in the poem—is that he replaces his divots on the golf course, as a conscientious golfer should. Otherwise, however, this type of man is a man to be avoided. The headnote for this poem reminds readers that “the restored divot covers a multitude of sins.” What these sins can include, Pope leaves to the readers’ imagination, but in placing this poem after “A Weak Point,” she invites readers to understand that some of these qualities are ones to be feared.

He may be a somnolent slacker,  
He may cause his colleagues distress,  
He may show a lack of the lacquer  
That makes for a social success,  
His work may be rotten, his money ill-gotten,  
In meanness he may be encased,  
But one virtue he owns that redeems and atones—  
The turf he has ever replaced.

When divots in dozens are dropping,  
When scarred is the face of the earth,  
When his sensitive partner is stopping  
His ears up for all he is worth;  
When mashies lie broken, and by the same token

For life both the caddies have raced,  
When the feverish sweat of his brow blinds him, yet—  
The turf he has ever replaced.

His courage may come out at zero,  
He may be a scandalous fraud,  
*En famille* a bit of a Nero,  
A fatuous bore when abroad;  
But when the sand's run, and all's said and done  
And he stands with his sins face to face,  
When, in short, he goes hence, this shall be his defence—  
“The turf I did ever replace.”<sup>36</sup>

In nearly every other aspect of his character, this man is one to be avoided. He is a liar, a cheater, a shouter, a bully, a “Nero,” and a “bore,” but he knows how to manipulate his surroundings to perform the part of the good sportsman, the good steward of the golf course, the good man. The repetition of the final line serves as a replaced divot itself, covering the sins enumerated in each stanza. This is a man of whom to be cautious. Placing this man immediately after “A Weak Point” reminds the reader that even ostensibly mild-mannered Theodore may just be hiding behind some well placed turf.

“Farewell to the Fair” has the same surface lightness as “A Weak Point,” playing again on reading character through physical features. Here, “prospect[s] will be truly dark / When men are darker still.” The use of “prospect” can indicate the future as well as available, single men. The speaker here uses the romantic language of a fairy tale to

---

<sup>36</sup> Jessie Pope, “A ‘Divotee,’” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 21-22.

respond to the assertion that “the fair type of Englishman is fast disappearing is a matter for much regret among his admirers.”<sup>37</sup> The headnote, “the statement of an ethnographer,” is a vital part of this poem, allowing Pope’s tongue-in-cheek to be fully realized. This speaker imagines her ideal man in physical terms only, focusing primarily on the color of his “manly locks.” He is a “flaxen-haired hero,” “her hero from the skies, / Her golden-tressèd god.” This is the quintessential superficial, flighty girl, much like the speaker of “A Weak Point” appears to be. In the final stanza, though she envisions a future filled with dark-haired men, she is still possessed of “trustfulness devout,” secure in the knowledge that those dark-haired men “will also dye” to replace the “fair [who] are dying out.” If she cannot get the actual article, she will accept the appearance of fair hair. In short, she is willing to accept a performance. In this text, there is no allowance for a single life lived independent of the opposite sex. Just as the speaker of “A Weak Point” cannot not marry Theodore, this speaker cannot not consider a heterosexual relationship.

Eheu! Eheu! Can it be true!  
My spirits sink to zero.  
Then must I say adieu to you,  
My flaxen-haired hero?  
Swart gallants, I may here remark,  
Could never make me thrill.  
The prospect will be truly dark  
When men are darker still.

---

<sup>37</sup> For these three poems—“Farewell to the Fair,” “The Doom of the Club,” and “A Valentine”—I have not yet been able to find original publication information.

For let a man be short or tall,  
Round-shouldered, fat, or bandy,  
Some maiden's heart he'd hold in thrall  
So long as he was sandy.  
What matter if his greenish eyes  
Were quaintly matched and odd,  
He was her hero from the skies,  
Her golden-tressèd god.

But when all manly locks are black,  
Though hearts may beat impassioned,  
Flirtation will annoy, alack,  
And kissing grow old-fashioned.  
Yet still, with trustfulness devout,  
I'm sanguine, while I sigh,  
That, since the fair are dying out,  
The dark will also dye.<sup>38</sup>

In another way, one can read the pun on “dye” as a claim to single life, a status which many of Pope’s speakers in *Airy Nothings* are considering. If the desirable men, perhaps the ones who would make reasonable husbands, disappear, the ones left, regardless of what or who they appear to be, would not be any more desirable. Nothing will change the fact that they were not desirable in the first place. While “fair” refers overwhelmingly to the color of the man’s hair in this poem, the other meanings of “fair”

---

<sup>38</sup> Jessie Pope, “Farewell to the Fair,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 40-41.

remain. With desirable men gone, the speaker could be bidding “farewell” to the “fair” as “a periodical gathering for the buying and selling of goods, at a place and time set out by charter, statute, or ancient custom”: the “fair” as the marriage market.<sup>39</sup> More likely, her alternate meaning of fair is more in terms of character: “free from moral imperfections,” “honest, just; reasonable,” and “free from serious fault or objection; of acceptable but not excellent quality; moderate, reasonable, satisfactory.”<sup>40</sup> This last seems most in line with the question women of Pope’s day women consider as they navigate the marriage market: who will make the least objectionable husband? But those readers who consider themselves to be reasonable husbands or potential husbands, the purpose of the poem, as we will see with “Invincible Hanky-Panky,” becomes to laugh at the speaker’s passive and superficial reaction to an authoritative statement. The humor of the woman’s “farewell” to light-haired men remains the primary subject here. Readers may miss the speaker’s passivity. Her implicit recognition that if she is to marry, she is at the mercy of the man she may marry. That Pope’s women wish for extra time to make the decision or look actively for ways to escape the situation in which the proposal question places them indicates that these women are expected to decide quickly whether to change their lives irrevocably by committing to marriage and legally binding themselves to a man who may turn out to be covering his behavior merely by replacing his divots.

### **For the “Fun” of It: Catching Women Unaware**

---

<sup>39</sup> "fair, n.2". OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/67703?rskey=hcNZmW&result=1&isAdvanced=false>  
(accessed May 06, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> "fair, adj. and n.1". OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/67704?rskey=hcNZmW&result=2&isAdvanced=false>  
(accessed May 06, 2014).

Part of the problem in the proposal situation as Pope sees it is that immediate action is required. Another part seems to be that women are expected to be passively accepting of the ways men are encouraged to engage with them, even if those ways involve a violation of space or body. This concern is present in the ways Pope's women consistently work to side-step male advances. But at the same time, women cannot completely escape the social expectation to make themselves attractive, quite literally to draw men toward them—something that men are socialized to take for granted. As her texts indicate, Pope's awareness of the problematic nature of gender is complex to say the least. It is relatively easy for her, as a female humorist, to appear to critique female behavior; her women, however, are always cheekily aware of their performance. But when Pope critiques male behavior, she must do it very carefully. Several times in *Paper Pellets*, for instance, she draws attention to problematic male behavior in how her women react to the men near them, as in "Men I Might Have Married."

One way she heightens the critique embedded in her previously published poems is in how she orders them in her collections. The sequence leading up to "A Crepe-de-Chine Rose," situated midway through *Airy Nothings*, makes a useful case study in Pope's orchestration. Originally published in *Punch*, "A Crepe-de-Chine Rose" describes Strephon's approaching Chloe, the object of his affection, only to be rebuffed by a hatpin. It is a humorous poem, and in this collection, it remains humorous; however, a perceptive reader can sense the problem with Strephon's behavior when the topic of persistence and courage is introduced as early as "A Valentine," three poems before "A Crepe-de-Chine Rose."

In “A Valentine,” the speaker is caught off-guard by the delivery of flowers from her male friend, Mr. Webb. Following “A Valentine” is “With the Beagles in Herts,” which gives a hunt from the point of view of the dogs and then “On the Brink,” about a speaker deciding whether to take a cold bath in the morning. These lead to the disturbing scene described in “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose.” As a preface to “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose,” it is important to note two qualities praised in the preceding poems: persistence and courage, persistence in the pursuit and courage in taking the plunge and doing what is expected. “With the Beagles in Herts” is one of two examples in *Airy Nothings* of an animal’s point of view, a point of view Pope often aligns with women. Likewise, the beagles use language, such as “fun,” that Pope uses to describe courtship.

There isn’t much scent,  
And the going’s not good;  
But Autumn has lent  
Her gems to each wood;  
The landscape looks fine  
With scarlet besprent,  
Still, hounds lose the line,  
For there isn’t much scent.

There isn’t much scent,  
But plenty of wire,  
Which causes a rent  
In Diana’s attire.



We long for a run,  
With dull discontent,  
But checks stop the fun,  
For there isn't much scent.

There isn't much scent,  
But a view—which we bless—  
And the Master gives vent  
To his pain as we press.  
Come—come along now,  
Never show that you're spent!

\* \* \*

So we killed in the plough,  
Though there wasn't much scent.<sup>41</sup>

The beagles, for instance, are powering through an unsuccessful hunting outing, conscious of the fact that they cannot show their true exhaustion and frustration to their “Master,” a word Pope uses elsewhere to refer to one’s husband. Like “A Weak Point,” Pope uses a repeated line, “there isn’t much scent,” to remind the reader why the beagles are struggling: the fox is eluding them. Because Pope frequently uses animals and children as avenues to present women’s issues to her readers, especially issues of agency, it is not a leap for a reader to see the hint in this poem that though the pursuit may be the

---

<sup>41</sup> Jessie Pope, “With the Beagles in Herts,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 46-47.

primary element of fun for those involved in the hunt, the fox does not live the same hunt as the dogs.<sup>42</sup>

Following “With the Beagles in Herts” is “On the Brink” in which the speaker debates whether to “take the plunge” into a cold bath; the entire poem is a male speaker’s effort to screw up his courage enough to prove himself an “heir” to the “shades of bold Britons.”

To bath, or not to bath—ah, there’s the rub.

To show a Briton’s stamina and grit,

Or, alien-like, to shuffle and omit

The morning tub?

While thus I parley, feeling pinched and old,

Dawn frames the bath-room window grey and dim.

I hear the water lapping at the brim

So deadly cold.

For pride forbids a single drop of hot,

“Cold” is the tap I bade the menial turn,

Though for the other one my feelings yearn,

No—not a spot!

That cordial and invigorating glow,

Reward of him who glories in the plunge,

---

<sup>42</sup> In *Airy Nothings*, see “My Comforter” and “Well-Bred Whines.”

And sports about with frost-encrusted sponge,  
I never know.

A wide imagination must be his,  
Mine, as I cringe, is narrowed to a streak,  
Besides, I think my heart is rather weak,  
I know my courage is.

My feet are getting numb about the toes.  
Shades of bold Britons, though more softly made,  
You shall not find your heir a renegade.  
Heigh-o, here goes!<sup>43</sup>

Taking initiative is linked here to patriotism, to “show a Briton’s stamina and grit.” The speaker does what he imagines is expected of him and makes the choice to ask for a cold bath instead of warm one. A cold bath is not necessary. He is not forced into it. We are meant to laugh at his proud ownership of the tub of cold water, at how he perceives himself as courageous for dipping into it. But he has made the choice to perform this bravery, and we as readers recognize that it is a choice he need not have made. This speaker serves as a humorous and benign preface to Strephon, who likewise screws up his courage to take the “plunge” in approaching Chloe. The reader carries this focus on persistence and courage to “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose” and finds Strephon initially sympathetic as he approaches Chloe uninvited and violates her personal space only to be

---

<sup>43</sup> Jessie Pope, “On the Brink,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 48-49.

driven away by the rose that attracted him in the first place. In boldly approaching Chloe, Strephon is a true “heir” to the “shades” of the past.<sup>44</sup>

Young Chloe reclined in a Chippendale chair,  
The tilt of her hat slanted down to her nose;  
From the *cachepeigne* behind, on her radiant hair,  
Peeped a *crepe-de-chine* rose.

The chapeau was *chic*, with diaphanous crown,  
And piquant the cut of her *chiffon*, coatee,  
While even her rivals admitted her gown  
Was *le dernier cri*.

Young Strephon approached from behind, and the sight  
Of the *crepe-de-chine* rose pleased his decadent eye  
Far more than the kind that is open to blight,  
Not to mention green fly.

The maid never moved—one might fancy she slept,  
So suiting the deed to the will, with a smile,  
On his black patent tip-toes he stealthily stept  
O'er the Axminster pile.

---

<sup>44</sup> Strephon's taste is described as “decadent” in line 10. It is unclear whether we are meant to question his masculinity or read his taste as indicative of a gender failure.

A courtly and elegant mode of attack,  
As he knew, was to whisper his suit from the rear,  
So he stood by her chair, leaning over the back,  
Bending down to her ear.

Perhaps she was wakeful and wily—who knows?—  
But she started away, with a shy little shriek,  
And the hatpin concealed in the heart of the rose  
Lacerated his cheek.

The victim retreated, aggrieved and upset,  
Rejecting his Chloe's contrition with scorn,  
And in future this maxim he'll never forget:  
Every rose has a thorn.<sup>45</sup>

Part of Pope's move to problematize Strephon's behavior, in addition to embedding it in the two poems preceding this one, is in her use of the named couple, Strephon and Chloe. Like Edwin and Angelina, Strephon and Chloe are a couple whose names Pope uses elsewhere, and like Edwin and Angelina, Strephon and Chloe have eighteenth-century roots.<sup>46</sup> Here, Pope alludes to Jonathan Swift's "Strephon and Chloe."<sup>47</sup> Everett Zimmerman notes that Swift's poem finds a "precedent" in Ovid "for at

---

<sup>45</sup> Jessie Pope, "A Crepe-de-Chine Rose," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 50-51. Previously published as "A Crepe-de-Chine Rose" *Punch*, August 1, 1906, 87.

<sup>46</sup> See also: "Love in a Mist," *Paper Pellets* (London: Grant Richards, 1907), 36-37. And "Our Natural Enemies," in *Airy Nothings*, discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Swift, "Strephon and Chloe," 1734, *Eighteenth-Century Resources*, ed. Jack Lynch. Last updated January 7, 2006. Accessed February 19, 2014. <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/texts/Strephon.html>

least some part of what Swift recommends in these [scatological] poems—the exposure of a woman’s faults as a remedy for male love or lust.”<sup>48</sup> This is essentially what happens in Pope’s poem: Strephon gets too close to Chloe and is rebuffed by the sharp pin concealed within her rose. It is Chloe’s responsibility to stop Strephon’s violation of her space. Swift’s Chloe, like Pope’s Chloe as well as many of her other women, exists in two modes: fantasy and reality. The fantasy woman is the woman who aligns with what the patriarchal male needs her to be at any given moment—the Chloe luxuriously “reclined in the Chippendale chair” as glimpsed by Strephon—while the real woman is an actual living, breathing, functioning human—one who does not appreciate being the object of a “mode of attack” no matter how “courtly and elegant” it may seem: the rose and the pin.

In Swift’s poem, we find that performing perfection is problematic, to say the least. The Chloe here is allegedly so perfect that she seems to produce “No Humours gross, or frowzy Steams, / No noisom Whiffs, or sweaty Streams, / Before, behind, above, below,” when the reality is that she “Would so discreetly Things dispose, / None ever saw her pluck a Rose” to mask the smells of her body. Because Chloe so deftly hides everything that makes her body a functioning human body, she is incredibly desirable. The speaker sees her as competition even for Venus, imploring the goddess “not to let her loose to spoil your Trade. / [For] While she engrosseth ev’ry Swain, / You but o’er half the World can reign.” The speaker recognizes that Chloe must be contained, and that containment appears in the form of Strephon, who “bravely drove his Rivals down / With Coach and Six, and House in Town.” Chloe’s father then “commands” that the two be

---

<sup>48</sup> Everett Zimmerman, “Swift’s Scatological Poetry, A Praise of Folly,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1987): 124-144. 125-26.

married. So far in Swift's poem, Chloe is an object of fascination and observation. She is a precious commodity to her father, who makes the most prosperous match he can. Even down to the detail of the rose, Pope's Chloe resembles Swift's. Both are objects of a fascination and an observation that takes the more sinister overtones of surveillance. She, likewise, has no say in accepting or refusing the attentions of the man interested in her.

The description of the marriage ceremony is short. Swift focuses on the spectacle of the ceremony and the clothes worn by the couple.<sup>49</sup> The real focus of the poem, however, is the wedding night. Strephon, having been socialized to understand Chloe as a "Goddess," as "Venus-like," and as a "Deity," struggles with the question of "how with so high a Nymph he might / Demean himself the Wedding-Night." Swift's speaker intervenes with some advice for parents of daughters, to "forbid" young women from "guzzling Beer" or drinking tea in the afternoon so they will not "Be often forc'd to rise at Night" to urinate. Likewise, the speaker admonishes parents not to "let them taste what causes Wind." He goes on to say that the performance of masking bodily functions should heighten after marriage:

Since Husbands get behind the Scene,  
The Wife should study to be clean;  
Nor give the smallest Room to guess  
The Time when Wants of Nature press;  
But, after Marriage, practise more  
Decorum than she did before;  
To keep her Spouse deluded still,  
And make him fancy what she will.

---

<sup>49</sup> Pope does this as well. See also "Second Thoughts" and "A Weak Point" in this chapter.

To a certain extent, this wisdom is still practiced through the late Victorian era and into the early twentieth century. Matters of women's health, like menstruation and childbirth, are still hidden from husbands.<sup>50</sup> Women's bodies are still considered unclean, their functions kept secret and wrapped in a silence that indicates shame.<sup>51</sup> In Swift's poem, we see Chloe following this advice, fending off Strephon's "first Attack." The language of his first attempt to initiate intercourse is important for reading Pope's Strephon and Chloe: "*Strephon*, who had been often told, / That Fortune still assists the bold, / Resolv'd to make his first Attack." Pope's Strephon chooses "a courtly and elegant mode of attack," which her Chloe rebuffs with her hatpin. Strephon's cheek is "lacerated." Remember also that Pope's Strephon and Chloe follow "On the Brink," an entire poem given over to the idea that "fortune favors the bold." Further, like Swift's Chloe, of whom all we know from the outset is that she is beautiful and goddess-like and that she succeeds in hiding her bodily functions, Pope's Chloe is described in terms of fashion alone in the poem's first two stanzas. Like Swift's Chloe, Pope's Chloe is hidden behind layers of performance meant to mask the body underneath, but unlike Swift's Strephon, Pope's

---

<sup>50</sup> When discussing signs of pregnancy, Judith Flanders explains that "As early as the 1830s it had been known to doctors that the mucosa around the vaginal opening changed colour after conception, yet this useful piece of information did not appear in lay publication until the 1880s, and the doctor who wrote it was struck off the medical register—it was too indelicate, in its assumption that a doctor would perform a physical examination. Neither doctors nor their patients felt comfortable with this. Discussion itself was allusive. Mrs. Panton [author of the household guides, including *From Kitchen to Garret*], at the end of the 1880s, felt she could 'only touch lightly on these matters [of pregnancy]' because she didn't know who might read her book" (15). Judith Flanders, *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* (London: HarperCollins, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Gillis writes about how a woman becomes marked as a mother and finds that "A Preston woman, born in 1919, recalled that she never went out when she was pregnant: 'I used to feel ashamed, because I knew they would think what I'd been doing and I used to think it was terrible.' Even in the 1950s, mothers in London's East End were still insisting that their daughters 'church' themselves after birth" (300). Churching is a ritual blessing for women recently recovered from giving birth. This persistent attitude, as well as the insistence on churching "went along with the general assumption that sexuality was somehow polluting" (300). Flanders also reads Mrs. Panton, who describes pregnancy as "a time ... when the mistress had perforce to contemplate an enforced retirement from public life" (15). For Victorians, and Gillis shows that this attitude carried over into the early century, "Pregnancy [...] was a condition to be concealed as far as possible" (15).



Strephon abandons Chloe after his first “attack.” He is “aggrieved and upset.” Pope calls him a “victim,” and he “reject[s]” what is likely Chloe’s performance of “contrition.” He learns that “Every rose has a thorn,” just as Swift’s Strephon learns that every goddess has a urinary system.

Given the violence evident in many of the heterosexual relationships found in Pope’s work, the language Swift uses to describe Strephon’s first sexual approach to Chloe would have resonated with Pope.

How could a Nymph so chaste as *Chloe*,  
With Constitution cold and snowy,  
Permit a brutish Man to touch her?  
Ev’n Lambs by Instinct fly the Butcher.  
Resistance on the Wedding-Night  
Is what our Maidens claim by Right:

Comparing the virgin wife to a lamb and the husband to a butcher uses a power dynamic evident in Pope’s poem. Swift’s next stanza pulls focus away from the violence of lambs and butchers by drawing attention to what breaks down Chloe’s façade of perfection: she has to urinate. After “Twelve Cups of Tea,” she “must either void or burst,” so she “Steals out her Hand by Nature led, / And brings a Vessel into Bed.” This action is also what Strephon is attempting to perform. Nature leads him to take a wife, a vessel to bear his children, but in order to bear his children, she must first be taken to bed. The “Vessel” Chloe takes is described as a “Fair Utensil, as smooth and white / As *Chloe*’s Skin, almost as bright.” That the woman takes a vessel and fills it, as a man is expected to do with a wife, is scandalous, and at first, Strephon reacts accordingly, but after he realizes

what Chloe's urination means—that she is “As *mortal* as himself”—he takes his own vessel from his side of the bed and fills it himself. After this, they “Find great Society in Stinking.” Pope's Strephon behaves in an opposite way. Chloe's rose, the item most attractive to Strephon, is appealing because it is not “the kind of that is open to blight / Not to mention green fly.” It is not real, just like Swift's goddess is not real. This rose does not decay or otherwise function as a living thing would. Pope's Strephon, like the other men implied in Swift's poem, does not want reality, only fantasy.

The rest of Swift's poem addresses men, reminding them not to be fooled by a “glitt-ring” woman who seems to be “some Goddess from the Sky / Descended,” because those “fine Ideas vanish fast, / While all the gross and filthy last.” Swift's speaker ends by advising men:

On Sense and Wit your Passion found,  
By Decency cemented round;  
Let Prudence with Good Nature strive,  
To keep Esteem and Love alive.  
Then come old Age whene'er it will,  
Your Friendship shall continue still:  
And thus a mutual gentle Fire,  
Shall never but with Life expire.

This is helpful advice, but in the context of the rest of the poem, it is not realistic.

Without the attraction of Chloe's seeming perfection, Strephon would never have been interested in her in the first place. After marriage, conduct books advise wives to maintain their appearance, calling it “our duty to make the best of ourselves in the eyes of

the man we love.”<sup>52</sup> When Swift’s speaker reminds the reader that “Women must be decent” and “each Blemish hide,” he highlights the double-bind of women. Swift’s poem demonstrates how women are asked to do two opposite things at once, and the impossibility of the task is not questioned.

Butler reminds us that because of “the limits of a discursively conditioned experience,” it is difficult to critique gender, for “these limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality.”<sup>53</sup> That Chloe should be both complicit in her body’s grosser functions as well as in the hiding of them, in the context of Swift, is perfectly reasonable, just as Pope’s Chloe, in the context of that poem, is to blame for Strephon’s flight from her. It is her fault, Strephon understands, that the hatpin in the rose cut his cheek, not his own. *The Lady’s Dressing Room* implies as much: “if the [wife] makes the most of her natural gifts, and knows how to enhance them by the care of her person and her dress, her husband will not be conscious of the fascinations of others.”<sup>54</sup> It is up to the woman to prevent her husband’s straying. If Chloe had not performed her gender by hiding her functional body, she would never have been married to Strephon. Swift’s speaker highlights the fact that women are asked to do two very different things in this situation. In this poem, women are advised not to hide their bodily functions, not to hide what is “gross and filthy,” but at the same time, women are reminded that the appearance

---

<sup>52</sup> Baroness Blanche Staffe, *The Lady’s Dressing Room*, translated by Lady Colin Campbell (London: Cassell and Co., 1893), 285, *The Dictionary of Victorian London*, ed. Lee Jackson. <http://www.victorianlondon.org/index-2012.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 13.

<sup>54</sup> Staffe, *The Lady’s Dressing Room*, 286.

of the “gross and filthy” will shock the men who could become their husbands—or who are already their husbands.

Pope’s Chloe faces a similar situation. She is expected to dress beautifully, and when that mode of dressing does its job—attracts Strephon’s attention—Strephon then blames the clothing, and by extension Chloe, for the injury he receives from it. Her clothing should flatter her own body, but at the same time, the maintenance of her appearance is vital for the well-being of others as well; *The Lady’s Dressing Room* warns that “it is not wise to neglect our appearance, even for a moment, if we value our own happiness and that of our husband or children” (286). Pope’s twist on the situation is that Strephon approaches Chloe in a rape-like scene; his approach toward Chloe is a demonstration of power and ownership, allowing us to read Chloe’s hatpin as her defense against Strephon. Her choices of clothing acts as armor. Chloe’s “contrition” at the end of the poem, as well as the lines where the speaker is uncertain whether Chloe was truly asleep, allows readers to forget that she may have consciously defended herself against Strephon.

Like Swift’s Chloe, Pope’s Chloe both attracts and repels, and she is blamed for both. Chloe, one can argue, takes the materials available to her as a woman—fashionable clothing—and makes work for her own purposes.<sup>55</sup> However, when her clothing both attracts and repels the object of the performance, Chloe is blamed by that object:

---

<sup>55</sup> John Fiske, “Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 154-165. Fiske writes that “the everyday culture of the oppressed takes the signs of that which oppresses them and uses them for its own purposes. The signs of money are taken out of the economic system of the dominant and inserted into the culture of the subaltern and their social force is thus complicated” (157). Arguably, this is what happens with Chloe’s rose. Her rose, primarily a symbol of love, but also variously of English womanhood, purity, and beauty, is a tool of the dominant patriarchal system that marks her as beautiful and sexually available. But when Chloe creates her own rose from a hatpin and displays it as if it were a real rose, its meaning becomes quite “complicated” in that it attracts and repels Strephon, inciting alternately, his fascination and his “scorn.”

Strephon. Closing this poem with the cliché that “Every rose has a thorn” places a punchline on what is otherwise a disturbing poem about surveillance and near-rape. Chloe remains silent throughout, subject to Strephon’s gaze.<sup>56</sup> With her elegant clothing, she becomes an art object for the viewer’s consumption, but in the context of conduct manuals like *The Lady’s Dressing Room*, this is the goal because “a badly-dressed woman is only half a woman.”<sup>57</sup> To be a whole woman depends upon the approval of an outside party to judge that the woman in question is, indeed, well-dressed.

In reading “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose” in sequence with “With the Beagles in Herts” and “On the Brink,” the problematic nature of the hunter and prey relationship imagined between men and women becomes clear. Considering “A Valentine” as the start of this sequence gives readers the woman’s point of view in the situation. The recipient of the flowers must immediately discern not only what the flowers mean, but also what her reaction will be. She is like the fox being hunted in “With the Beagles in Herts”; the pursuit is not fun for her. It is a situation in which she has very little, if any, control. She may throw off the “beagles” pursuing her, but those beagles will just keep coming, imagining that she is playing “hard to get.” “On the Brink” demonstrates just how embedded is the idea of courage and persistence in the male imagination as well as highlights the nature of gender expectation. A “real man” would not balk at a cold bath, or at any difficult situation. With “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose,” then, Pope delivers the payoff for this sequence with its use of an updated version of Swift’s satirical couple Strephon and Chloe. Her Strephon, read through the lens established in the preceding poems, is more creepy than admirably persistent. Her Chloe’s position allows a more

---

<sup>56</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18. I use “gaze” as Mulvey does to discuss the “pleasure and privilege of the ‘invisible guest’” (18).

<sup>57</sup> Staffe, *The Lady’s Dressing Room*, 301.

flexible reading; it is not her fault that Strephon pursued her or that he got hurt. Chloe uses what is available to her to her advantage and lets her choice to remain silent throughout the encounter speak for her. These are ways of communicating that Strephon does not comprehend. Like the rest of Pope's women, Chloe understands not only the modes of communication available to her, but she also recognizes the ways men learn to communicate. She must be multi-lingual in this way; men like Strephon, however, are often unaware that these other languages exist.

### **“Husbands Harder”: Controlling the Escalation from Anger to Violence**

In reading Pope as she was published in weekly publications like *Punch* or monthlies like *The Pall Mall Magazine*, it was perhaps easier to miss her critiques, but in her collections, it becomes clear that so many of her women bring variations on the same problem to the table. When we read these women's voices together, their concerns become quite clear. “An Ugly Mug,” a *Punch* offering in which the female speaker appears jealous of a souvenir mug her husband purchased from a tavern, fits easily alongside those women who are jealous of cars, and may cause a reader to wonder if Chloe would be as jealous if Strephon admired and approached another woman.<sup>58</sup> Ostensibly, this speaker is another wife in the home, another wife complaining about her husband, but when she follows “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose” in the collection, her situation serves another purpose.

He bought you with good money

In spite of my advice;

Indubitably done, he

---

<sup>58</sup> See also, “My Rival,” *Punch*, February 25, 1903, 143.; “The Mote in His Eye,” *Punch*, June 10, 1903, 411.; “Motor Car for Hire,” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, April 1900, 412-423.

Paid down the dealer's price.

On you alone he gazes,  
And wastes his precious breath  
In gushing over glazes,  
Till I am bored to death.

You, who did daily duty  
Upon a tavern shelf,  
He calls "his greatest beauty"  
(I shrink from you, myself).

Yet why should I despise or  
Declare you dearly bought?  
The fact that you're an eyesore  
Suggests a sudden thought,

That turns contempt to pity,  
While hope revives again;  
For, if he calls you pretty,  
How can he call me plain?<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Jessie Pope, "An Ugly Mug," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 52. Previously published as "An Ugly Mug," *Punch*, October 24, 1906, 294.

This speaker seems jealous and self-centered. She is angry not only with her husband's expenditure of money on the mug, but also jealous of the attention her husband lavishes on the mug. It is easy to imagine the image this poem might caption. Further, with the husband's constant talk of "glazes," it is evident that he views the mug as an art object rather than a useful mug. By making art of the tavern mug, the husband turns it into something his wife lacks the apparent expertise to understand. Her jealousy then becomes silly. The mug also represents a space that the female speaker is not welcome to enter and serves as a reminder that as a woman and a wife, there are spaces she cannot go, spaces to which her husband alone has access. When she craves his attention, she becomes implicit in objectifying herself and aspiring to the status of the admired art object, a status Strephon readily bestows on Chloe, who rejects it. Because each stanza underscores the speaker's jealousy and seeming narcissism, the reader takes from this poem the idea of a petty, nagging wife, one who craves her husband's undivided attention and perhaps misses the critique of gendered spaces.

With that sort of woman forward in the mind, the reader moves on to "Invincible Hanky-Panky." And when the caricature of the nagging wife is foregrounded, the reader of "Hanky-Panky" is less likely to focus on the implicit abuse present in either poem; the reader will hear, instead, another nagging wife. This is Pope deploying silence in order to allow her women to speak. The overt focus of the poem allows for a striking subtext. "An Ugly Mug," with its title pun, ends with a punchline that implies that the husband may be right to call his wife "plain," for she is self-conscious about her appearance.<sup>60</sup> Unlike

---

<sup>60</sup> "Mug" has been used to refer to "unattractive" faces since the early eighteenth century. "mug, n.3". OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/123327?rskey=vNiOQD&result=3&isAdvanced=false> (accessed May 19, 2014).



Chloe before her, this woman does not attract her husband's eye. Focusing on the wife's rivalry with the mug lets Pope allude to the assumption of male freedom of movement and the male domain of the club. The wife has little say in where the husband goes or how he spends his money. As we have seen with motor cars, depicting the mug as a romantic rival allows the reader to imagine a scenario in which the man is unfaithful to the speaker. These are questions that would concern any wife or woman, and Pope brings them to the table carefully. The most dominant voice in the poem, however, remains the ostensibly jealous speaker, and this is the mood carried over to "Invincible Hanky-Panky." Here, as previously discussed, the female speaker illuminates how women have created a language of tears and handkerchiefs, all ostensibly to manipulate men, but in reality to protect themselves. This speaker, like many of Pope's other women, finds herself less mobile than her husband and less free. Her function is to be a beautiful object, but like Chloe, she protests and rebuffs inevitable male violence in small, necessarily quiet ways.

It is not difficult to see how most of the men in Pope's texts behave in ways that are at best problematic, and at worst abusive. Pope writes with an awareness that men's behavior, however hurtful it can be, is often excused as being the expected way for men to behave. After all, the attitude persists that "boys will be boys." It is the woman's fault, not the man's, for finding a problem with the behavior. Pope's women, as we have seen in "A Weak Point" and elsewhere, devise ways to communicate their critique, and sometimes their fear. This communication, as Kolodny observes, can only be recognized by those aware of the language. In "Invincible Hanky-Panky," Pope again walks a careful line between laying bare the woman's experience of male abuse while planting small

moments of distraction that make the female speaker, especially in the context of *Punch*, seem like just another petty, manipulative wife. A further wrinkle comes by the fact that the husband here, Benedick, seems merely moody. Like Theodore, his behavior does not read as overtly abusive, but the wife's reaction to the proposition that a line of defense between her and her husband may be undermined demonstrates that the performance of "reasonableness" may be just that, a performance.

When times are hard and husbands harder,  
And quite convinced that woman's mind,  
To nursery, needlework, or larder,  
Must be exclusively confined,  
Another blow we have to face,  
For now the very latest crank is,  
To ban those scraps of lawn and lace,  
Our elegant embroidered hankies.

The first stanza does important work to outline the situation of women in 1908, when "Invincible Hanky-Panky" was first published in *Punch*. To the speaker, it is a time when "husbands [are] harder" and wish to "confin[e]" women's "mind[s]" to traditionally feminine activities. This is another arguably feminist moment for Pope, reminding the reader, especially the *Punch* reader, that women are human and capable of more than what the marriage model dictates for them. It is also another moment where Pope plays the male's perspective against the female's reality. The husbands and "lords" in "Invincible Hanky-Panky" operate under the assumption of a patriarchal marriage or

relationship, while the wives and women lean otherwise.<sup>61</sup> To appeal to the *Punch* reader, Pope lets the focus of the poem fall on the subterfuge of the handkerchiefs, of the seeming manipulation of the men by their women, but when viewed as the critique it is, we see Pope's concerns more clearly. The plural pronoun in the second stanza, "our," takes the solidarity of the first stanza and turns it to resemble something more in line with what Mr. Punch expects of his women—"The problem facing Miss and Mrs. / Is how to bring our lords to heel"—taking for granted that tears shed in a relationship are always crocodile tears, that they are meant to be manipulative.

Robbed of their pitiful appeal,  
The problem facing Miss and Mrs.  
Is how to bring our lords to heel  
And change their coldness into kisses.  
Down well-worn ways of sobs and sighs  
May we without effect go plodding,  
If forced to dab our welling eyes  
With bits of medicated wadding.

For instance, when my Benedick  
Is proof against caress or pouting,  
My handkerchief will do the trick,—

---

<sup>61</sup> Helen Wojtczak's website features commentary on the situation of women, as well as a collection of newspaper excerpts that demonstrates how widespread was the discussion of spousal abuse in the Victorian era. The prevailing wisdom allowed that husbands had a right to beat their wives for offenses such as disobedience, but while this was not universally condoned, few challenged it until later in the century. "Wife Beating," *British Women's Emancipation Since the Renaissance*, 2009, accessed July 7, 2015. <http://www.historyofwomen.org/wifebeating.html>

Inscribe the cheque or fix the outing.  
It cures his churlish words and looks,  
Referring to a lacking button,  
His grumbles at the tradesmen's books,  
His discontent about the mutton.

In the second stanza, the men are referred to as “our lords,” and they behave with “coldness” to the women. Further, in the third stanza, Benedick grows “churlish” and “grumbles” to express “his discontent” over such things as a “lacking button,” the “tradesmen’s books,” and “mutton.” These are all things that fall under the wifely job description given in the third line of the poem—“nursery, needlework, or larder.” The grumbling husband here takes for granted that his wife’s mind is best suited to tasks that fall under these categories, and to him, and to most husbands of the day, when she does not perform these tasks well, he is within his rights to express his displeasure. The speaker understands this situation and expects it, just as Benedick understands that he has “the backing of [...] patriarchal authority” and is allowed to go “to extreme lengths to enforce obedience” from his wife.<sup>62</sup> The handkerchief, she argues, is her only defense against it, but she must be very careful in how she deploys it. As Hammerton notes, often in divorce proceedings, a wife’s resistance to her husband’s abusive behavior was read as provocation; therefore, the choice whether to fight back sometimes could backfire (276). With a handkerchief, a wife wordlessly communicates with her husband; it is the only thing she can control, and it, by extension, controls her husband.

It draws a dainty veil at will  
O'er eyes that brim with lachrymations,

---

<sup>62</sup> Hammerton, “Victorian Marriage,” 276.

As well as eyes that fail to fill  
In spite of pumping operations.  
Then leave our handkerchiefs, we plead,  
For though they carry germs about them  
They are to us a crying need,  
And married life's no fun without them.<sup>63</sup>

The poem ends with a humorous sort of punchline—"And married life's no fun without them"—meant to pull focus from the surety of Benedick's psychic violence, but the title reminds the reader that this is an ongoing issue. "Hanky-panky" was not used to indicate sexual activity until the 1930s. Pope's knowledge of the term is probably more aligned with connotations of dishonesty: "Jugglery, legerdemain; trickery, double dealing, underhand dealing."<sup>64</sup> It is this sort of behavior that the poem calls "invincible." Reading from a male perspective, it seems that the "trickery" is on the part of the woman, manipulating her husband with her handkerchief. But read from the female speaker's perspective, the "double dealing" comes in the form of a husband who may be pleasant in public but abusive at home, or a patriarchal establishment that works consistently to silence women, this time by declaring the performative object of the handkerchief unsanitary. Either way, as Pope demonstrates, the woman protests that silence in equally consistent ways.

---

<sup>63</sup> Jessie Pope, "Invincible Hanky-Panky," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 53-54. Previously published as "Invincible Hanky-Panky," *Punch*, April 22, 1908, 289.

<sup>64</sup> "hanky-panky, n." OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/84009?redirectedFrom=hanky-panky> (accessed April 03, 2014).

The British patriarchy had been dealing with “the Woman Question” since the 1880’s and found itself faced with “the beginnings of militancy in 1905.”<sup>65</sup> Elaine Showalter observes that “opposition to the women’s movement in an attempt to preserve traditional definitions of sex roles was an obvious reaction” to the growing social acceptance of women’s increased agency and mobility (9). The confidently abusive men in Pope’s poetry, alongside the women who evade them, bear this out convincingly. Marriage, as Pope’s poems demonstrate clearly, remains a patriarchal institution with an “unchanged and traditional division of roles” that, Kate Millett explains, “necessitates male supremacy by preserving specifically human endeavor for the male alone, while confining the female to menial labor and compulsory child care.”<sup>66</sup> At the same time, it is described in the flowery, romantic language of a chivalry meant to disguise how in marriage, the woman legally and silently disappears behind her husband’s name. When this norm, among others, is challenged, “the existence of sexual hierarchy [is] re-affirmed and mobilized to ‘punish’ the female” (36-37).

The handkerchief has a literal and literary history of speaking and silencing. In this way, it is a performative object. Its role as a key player in a domestic argument is a ready allusion to Shakespeare’s *Othello*, a text with which Pope would have been familiar, especially given her subtle deployment of Shakespeare elsewhere in her work. In the play, Desdemona’s handkerchief, an early gift from Othello, goes from an accessory that demonstrates Desdemona’s affiliation with Othello to one that, in Othello’s eyes, proves her infidelity so thoroughly that Desdemona cannot defend herself

---

<sup>65</sup> Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990), 6-7.

<sup>66</sup> Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 159.

against its testimony. The physical artifact trumps the woman's words.<sup>67</sup> Performance trumps reality. This situation is demonstrated in Pope's poem when the speaker admits that if women's handkerchiefs are "ban[ned]," then women will be "Robbed of their pitiful appeal": denied a language they use consistently to communicate with their husbands. The handkerchief described by the speaker is one used only for gesture and communication. It is one of "lawn and lace," one "elegant[ly] embroidered" and used to "dab our welling eyes."<sup>68</sup> This is not a practical handkerchief for blowing one's nose.<sup>69</sup> Pope's final stanza reveals the performance of the handkerchief; it is a "dainty veil" that can hide eyes that are either dry or full of tears, turning the absence or presence of tears into a text that means what the woman wants it to mean. Without the handkerchief, the speaker argues, tears cannot become a controllable text. The final stanza addresses the understood male reader: "Then leave our handkerchiefs, we plead." The speaker recognizes that, especially as a wife, she has no legal power to challenge effectively this

---

<sup>67</sup> Will Fisher writes about an incident in which Leicester snatches a handkerchief from the hand of Queen Elizabeth I to wipe the sweat from his brow during a tennis match with Norfolk. Leicester's action angers Norfolk, and the two men come to blows over the incident. The Queen's handkerchief, at this moment, becomes emblematic of her much-discussed virginity, and Norfolk reads Leicester's action as inappropriately sexual. Both men are, at this time, vying for the Queen's hand. As handkerchiefs become a practical and popular fashion accessory in the sixteenth century, they also become gendered and codified objects. Even at this time, they are "well-known tokens of love. But they were also objects that were involved in regulating the body and keeping it 'pure'" (203). In this climate, it is easy to understand how Leicester and Norfolk fought over Leicester's commandeering of Elizabeth's handkerchief. Fisher also notes that the handkerchief is an "artifact that helped to produce the patriarchal ideology that figured women as 'leaky' vessels" (203). Will Fisher, "Handkerchiefs and Early Modern Ideologies of Gender," *Shakespeare Studies*, 28 (2000): 199-207.

<sup>68</sup> Fisher cites Stephanie S. Dickey who notes that the handkerchief's "costliness as a material object, finely woven, embroidered and sometimes even adorned with pearls" clashes with "its implicit function to absorb bodily fluids, foul odors, and other dignities"; therefore, "to employ a costly, elaborately decorated article like the embroidered handkerchief...for actually blowing the nose would be...unthinkable" (205).

<sup>69</sup> As handkerchiefs and pocket squares find themselves now on the margins of fashion in the twenty-first century, newcomers to the practice of carrying a handkerchief are often unaware of performance versus practicality. Andrew Martin tells a friend that he has "taken to wearing a handkerchief in my handkerchief pocket. 'You have another one in your trouser pocket, right?' [the friend] asked. 'No,' I said, 'why would I?' Steve [the friend] then explained that you didn't blow your nose on the hanky you kept in your handkerchief pocket. That was for show only. [...] 'Edward VII,' Steve went on with a sigh, 'and any other well-dressed man, would have had the second handkerchief up his sleeve'" (63). Andrew Martin, "I stick a handkerchief in my jacket pocket and think I look aspirational," *New Statesman*, October 4, 2004, 63.

decree backed with the authority of “medical experts.” The action of stealing the handkerchief adds another layer to the silencing of women.

In the poem as in the play, the absence of the handkerchief reads as permission for male violence. It places responsibility for the husband’s behavior with the wife.

Benedick’s third stanza grousing could escalate to more overt forms of domestic violence if his wife can no longer rely on her handkerchief to regulate his anger.<sup>70</sup> Likewise, in act 3, scene 4, Othello tells Desdemona one story of the handkerchief’s origin. In this telling, his mother’s handkerchief was a gift from an Egyptian woman, who said that it would

make her amiable and subdue my father  
Entirely to her love, but if she lost it  
Or made gift of it, my father’s eye  
Should hold her loathed and his spirits should hunt  
After new fancies.<sup>71</sup>

Of course, this is exactly what happens. Desdemona no longer holds the handkerchief; therefore, Othello “hold[s] her loathed.” To Othello, the situation is Desdemona’s fault entirely. Indeed, Desdemona’s possession of the handkerchief keeps Othello’s anger at bay, but once that handkerchief is stolen from her, her voice is stolen as well. Without the handkerchief in her hand, there is nothing Desdemona can say to Othello to defend herself, and the male power that put this scheme in motion—Iago—gives the accusation

---

<sup>70</sup> Each of the suitors in “Men I Might Have Married” demonstrates escalating abusive behavior, especially Geoffrey, whose temper in his motor car shows a marked tendency toward physical violence. In *Airy Nothings*, even the sequence from “A Weak Point” to “A ‘Divotee’” shows that men are rarely what they seem.

<sup>71</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello, The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al (New York: Norton, 1997), 2091-2174. III.4.59-63. Fisher notes that Othello changes the story in act five, and the handkerchief becomes a gift to his mother from his father and writes that “these conflicting accounts highlight the handkerchief’s ability to move between differently gendered hands” (205). Either way, it does not change the dynamic of men to women in the play, a dynamic that is mirrored in Pope’s poem.



an ironclad authority that Desdemona cannot challenge, even if she were to regain the handkerchief from Cassio.

In their study of domestic violence, Zvi Eisikovits, Zeev Winstok, and Richard Gelles interviewed a series of women who found that their male partner's behavior exhibited a "movement from nonviolence to violence" that could be described as "processual."<sup>72</sup> Pertinent for our reading of Pope, the authors observed in their interviews that "women present their capacity to control escalation as contingent on their ability to identify the men's threshold of self-control (breaking point) and to assess, in real time, the relationship between their own actions and their partner's levels of anger" (144). One interviewee described her interaction with her partner in tense situations in the following terms: "I prefer not to answer him at all, because I know that if I answer back it'll only get worse. Slowly I understood that if I shut up his anger would be less than if I answer him back" (145). The authors analyze her statement to highlight how she "learned gradually ('slowly'), by trial and error, how to regulate her partner's anger. Not answering back ('if I shut up') prevents or diminishes his anger, and hence the violence" (145). Similarly, Pope's speaker has learned that her manipulation of her handkerchief, in conjunction with the presence or absence of tears, is an effective way for her to manage her husband's anger. The poem does not state overtly whether Benedick has ever escalated to physical violence, but it also does not state that he has not. As we observed with the speaker of "A Weak Point," a woman may not always make her case overtly.

The potential removal of the object by which this speaker manages her husband, then, is threatening indeed, and the vocabulary used to describe the recommendation that

---

<sup>72</sup> Eisikovits, Winstok, and Gelles, "Structure and Dynamics of Escalation," 142.

women replace their handkerchiefs with “medicated wool dabbers” is very telling.<sup>73</sup> The headnote of this poem is altered for its inclusion in *Airy Nothings*; here, it reads: “Medicated wool dabbers are suggested as substitutes for handkerchiefs.” In *Punch*, the headnote was longer: “Medicated wool dabbers are suggested as substitutes for handkerchiefs, which, according to a medical expert, should never touch the eye, as handkerchiefs, however clean apparently, are stated to be infected with germs.” Pope chooses to describe this medical declaration as “the very latest crank.” In the late nineteenth century, a “crank” could refer to “A machine for the punishment of criminals sentenced to hard labour, consisting of a revolving disc to which a regulated pressure can be applied, and which the prisoner is required to turn a certain number of times each day.”<sup>74</sup> But even definitions that are not linked to prison equipment have psychic or verbal violence in them: “An eccentric notion or action; a mental twist put into practice; a crotchet, whim, caprice”; “A twist or fanciful turn of speech; a humorous turn, a verbal trick or conceit.”<sup>75</sup> Any of these fits with the overall sense of the inescapability and inevitability of male violence in the poem. It is also crucial that this declaration comes

---

<sup>73</sup> The debate over the relative sanitary quality of handkerchiefs over disposable tissues continues today. On *Mumsnet*, an British online discussion group for parents, one thread includes seventy responses to this initial post from the user kdk12: “it’s hayfever season and i want some washable hankies. i am fed up of using tissues, i inevitably try and use them more than once anyway, so they end up stuffed up my cuff (!) or in my pocket. the thing is, if i saw someone else using one i think it might gross me out a bit. so perhaps i should just use them at home, where nobody will see? i mean, it’s hayfever snot so it’s not contagious or owt” [sic]. Responses to this post range from assertions that hankies are “the grossest thing going” to declarations that washable hankies are “greener” than disposable ones, but most contributors agree that if one must use a washable hanky, that it should be boiled to be cleaned. “Washable Hankies,” Mumsnet Talk, *Mumsnet* (London: Mumsnet Limited, 2014), Accessed April 16, 2014, [http://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/am\\_i\\_being\\_unreasonable/a1494739-washable-hankies](http://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/am_i_being_unreasonable/a1494739-washable-hankies)

<sup>74</sup> “crank, n.1”. OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/43822> (accessed March 26, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> “crank, n.2”. OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/43823> (accessed March 26, 2014).

from “a medical expert,” as Pope writes in the poem’s original headnote, giving the stealing of women’s handkerchiefs the “cachet of science.”<sup>76</sup>

In 1904, the relative hygienic nature of the handkerchief is questioned by Dr. Albert Calmette, the director of the Pasteur Institute at Lille, France.<sup>77</sup> Handkerchiefs, he asserts, have been “neglected,” especially “when one considers the zeal which has been shown in destroying disease germs in all of the other utensils of daily life.”<sup>78</sup> Pope notes that handkerchiefs “carry germs about them” both in her headnote and in the last stanza of her poem. While the short piece summarizing Calmette does not suggest wool dabbers, it does cite Calmette as suggesting using “handkerchiefs made of Japanese silk paper or some cheap cotton stuff. As the material is cheaper to purchase new than it would be to have it washed, the handkerchiefs are burned after being used, so that all danger of

---

<sup>76</sup> Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 203. A handkerchief was not an unusual accessory for an Edwardian man or woman to have. While Fisher notes that fluidity of the handkerchief as the gender of its holder changes, there is nothing inherently gendered in the possession of a handkerchief. Pauline Stevenson lists eighteen handkerchiefs among other essential items, including seven nightdresses, six pairs of black hose, and a dozen towels, to be found in a “reasonably priced Bridal Trousseau” from 1907 (15). The towels listed are not bath towels, but sanitary towels. A less modest trousseau even “came with a mention of Southalls’ and Hartmann’s sanitary towels” which were used for menstruation (15). By 1906, there were advertisements using carefully coded language publicizing sanitary towels and other women’s health items, including birth control and abortifacients. Kate Macdonald explains that in these advertisements, “medical authority was frequently invoked, with the use of ‘Nurse’ or ‘Doctor’ in the address, or in the advert.” Pope’s “medicated wool dabbers” appear to be similar to sanitary towels which, Jennifer Carnell records, were touted as “antiseptic” and the “greatest invention of the century for Woman’s Comfort” in various advertisements. It is possible that Pope’s headnote refers to a similar notice or advertisement for sanitary or disposable handkerchiefs, for they are certainly a topic of discussion in the early century. Pauline Stevenson, *Edwardian Fashion* (London: Ian Allan Ltd., 1980). Kate Macdonald, “Women and their Bodies in the Popular Reading of 1910,” *Literature and History* 22, no. 1 (2013): 61-79. Jennifer Carnell, “Victorian Sanitary Towels and Menstrual Products,” *Victorian Advertising* (Hastings, UK: Sensation Press, 2013). Accessed April 3, 2014. <http://www.sensationpress.com/victoriansanitarytowels.htm>

<sup>77</sup> Calmette did groundbreaking work toward creating a vaccine for tuberculosis. After meeting Robert Philip at a meeting of the British Medical Association in 1896, he established the Emil Roux dispensary in Lille “for the early diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis and for the education of patients in habits which would minimize the familial spread of disease” in 1901 (319). This was the first such dispensary to be established apart from Philip’s own in Edinburgh, which opened in 1887. A similar dispensary opened in London in 1909. C.J.M., “Léon Charles Albert Calmette 1863-1933,” *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* 1, no. 3 (1934): 315-325. doi: 10.1098/rsbm.1934.0015.

<sup>78</sup> “The Hygiene of the Handkerchief,” *Public Opinion* 36 (1904): 597.

infection is avoided.”<sup>79</sup> It is also possible that the “medical expert” of Pope’s headnote is Robert Philip, who founded the first tuberculosis dispensary in Edinburgh in 1897, the Victoria Dispensary for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest.<sup>80</sup> In “Rules for Consumptive Patients and Those Looking After Them,” an instructional leaflet from Victoria Hospital for Consumption, instructed outpatients that they “should not use handkerchiefs for expectoration. If this even has to be done, the handkerchief should be of an inexpensive material, that it may be burned after use. Squares of rag or paper, which may be used for convenience, should be similarly treated.”<sup>81</sup> Regardless of the real source of Pope’s headnote, it is clear that the relative cleanliness of handkerchiefs is a matter of public awareness and discussion.

While these notices are obviously not assuming the use of an expensive, elegantly embroidered handkerchief edged in pearls for “expectoration,” part of the evasive humor of Pope’s poem comes in the female speaker’s missing this distinction. As a naïve *Punch* woman, the speaker assumes that all handkerchiefs must be burned, that the disposable, cheaper option will take the place of the elegant handkerchiefs of the trousseau: the equivalent of Kleenex on a Macy’s bridal registry. That Pope trims the headnote of its explanatory second half for inclusion in *Airy Nothings*—“[...] which, according to a medical expert, should never touch the eye, as handkerchiefs, however clean apparently, are stated to be infected with germs”—is a diversionary tactic. In *Punch*, the clarification

---

<sup>79</sup> “Hygiene,” 597. It should be noted here that *Public Opinion* is an American publication, but in England, “wool” can often refer to “Any fine fibrous substance naturally or artificially produced.” “wool, n.”. OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/230119?rskey=DFfRPj&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed April 03, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> Steve Sturdy, “Philip, Sir Robert William (1857–1939),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35505>, accessed 3 April 2014]

<sup>81</sup> “Treatments for Tuberculosis – The Edinburg Scheme,” *Lothian Health Services Archive*, accessed April 3, 2014. [http://www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk/exhibits/tales/tb\\_x.htm](http://www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk/exhibits/tales/tb_x.htm)

about handkerchiefs touching the eye is necessary to give the speaker a reason to be upset. The subject of the poem then becomes wiping away tears. Removing this language from the headnote as it is collected tempers the critique delivered by the unchanged poem by diminishing the rationality of the speaker's argument, making it seem as if the speaker's protest is misplaced. When readers are not asked to focus on the unsanitary nature of the handkerchief in question, as they are under the original headnote, they are in a better position to read the commonplace nature of the husband's verbal abuse. The true underlying point of the poem—its critique of normalized male behavior—remains the same.

The “crank” of the campaign against handkerchiefs is not only a “blow,” it is “another blow” in a series of strikes against women. The second half of that line—“we have to face”—can indicate either that the women have no way to avoid the medicalization of their behavior or that women must “face” this problem and deal with it, for the entire first stanza reads as a sort of call to arms with its allusion to the growing concern for women's rights in the early twentieth century. Moreover, the first line of the poem takes for granted that a husband's behavior is going to be “harder,” that he is going to be verbally abusive and potentially violent. Indeed, the violence inherent in “blows” and “crank” underscores that a violent husband is more likely than a nonviolent one.

The comedy of this poem comes in the acknowledgment that women's tactics, like crying, are “well-worn.” With the loss of her handkerchief, the crying woman becomes comical as she “dab[s] [her] welling eyes / With bits of medicated wadding.” Her tears are rewarded with a “cheque” or an “outing,” a nod toward what is perceived as the wife's goal in crying. A reader aware of the wife's language, however, understands

that her tears and the handkerchief represent much more. The final line's claim that "married life's no fun without" a handkerchief now becomes disturbing. On one level, the speaker is in on the handkerchief joke; she is admitting to the *Punch* reader that women use their tears and handkerchiefs to trick men into giving in to their desires for money, new clothing, or trips. But on the level of Pope's critique, we see the "fun" in marriage as the fox sees the "fun" in the hunt. Escalating arguments are to be nearly unavoidable in many of the relationships Pope writes, and the responsibility for defusing those situations, in every case, lies squarely with the woman.<sup>82</sup> Pope shows us both sides of women's tactics: what the men perceive and what the women live.

After "Invincible Hanky-Panky," the reader finds "A Fog," which describes another wife responsible for managing her husband and presents readers another angle on the idea of women's tactics. The opening stanza here has a more overt lightness than the poem preceding it, but, again, the women are the butt of the joke. Here, the goddess's anger drives her husband out of their home in Olympus and down to earth "to join the mortals." This is a wife, then, who cannot manage her husband; he flees from her, letting the reader imagine a shrewish wife. The entire situation of the poem is to be read as her fault.

Olympus is a charming place  
When goddesses are cheerful.  
At times they show an angry face,  
Contemptuous or tearful.  
It chanced that, tired of bickerings,

---

<sup>82</sup> Many of the women interviewed by Eisikovits, Winstok, and Gelles understand "violence as a natural phenomenon prevalent among intimate partners" (145).

A god passed through the portals,  
And, opening his rainbow wings,  
Flew down to join the mortals.

Beneath him lay a steeped town  
Cleft by a silver river.  
His goddess saw him flashing down—  
She started with a shiver.  
She tore her hyacinthine locks,  
Bewailed earth's fascination,  
Then stayed her sobs, and oped a box  
With sudden inspiration.

And from that box a darkness flew  
With neither pause nor pity,  
And swift a murky curtain drew  
About the shining city.  
The sun shrank to a tiny disc,  
The air grew dense and denser—  
She shut the box lest Jove should risk  
A touch of Influenza.

Arrived in town, the god, distraught,

Groped here and there bewailing,  
His iridescent wing got caught  
Upon a garden paling.  
Alas! alas! to find the sky  
He'd give celestial ransoms,  
He cannoned, when he sought to fly,  
Against belated hansoms.

He cried to mortals, all in vain,  
They groped their way unheeding;  
He fluttered at the window-pane  
With broken-hearted pleading.  
At last, on flowers no longer fair,  
He slept 'mid coster barrows;  
Until Aurora cleared the air  
With golden-pointed arrows.

Then, like an arrow from the bow,  
He spurned the city's clamour,  
Left tower and terrace far below—  
Full well he knew their glamour.  
His goddess spied him through the blue,  
She mourned his draggled beauty,



But when he sought her arms she knew  
The fog had done its duty.<sup>83</sup>

First, the women on Olympus are pictured as wildly moody, moving from “cheerful” to “tearful” within the space of three lines. Placing “tearful” last shows that tears are a weapon of last resort. Women’s moods can change the entire environment of Olympus. Wives are admonished in advice literature to “keep the home free from disagreeable reminders,” to be the Angel in the House, to “[make] the machinery of the household move in complete silence.”<sup>84</sup> The wife who brought domestic concerns to her husband’s attention was considered “selfish, foolish” because “Women’s greatest task was the home, but it was not proper to acknowledge it” (175-176). While the man owned the house, the woman ran it under the advice that her husband “should physically as well as mentally be shut away from domestic nuisances” (175). Second, female moodiness leads to “bickerings” with men, and that they are “bickerings” lets the reader know the relative importance of the subject of the argument, especially when the reader is assumed to be male as is the norm for Edwardian humor. Third, here and elsewhere in the poem, the man in the relationship has unlimited mobility. The “tired” god leaves Olympus while the goddess stays behind and works a scheme to make him return. She does not physically leave the site of the argument, nor does she leave to pursue the man when he does. Similarly, the female speaker in “Invincible Hanky-Panky,” and women like her, is “confined” to the home, dependent upon her husband even to “fix [an] outing.” Her tears and a handkerchief are, like the goddess’s fog, the only tools she has to “bring [her] [lord] to heel.”

---

<sup>83</sup> “A Fog,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 55-57.

<sup>84</sup> Flanders, *The Victorian House*, 176, 174.

The prodigal god does return to Olympus, using language that reinforces the norm of male mobility and female confinement: “he sought her arms.” As a wife, she should await her husband’s return from wherever he has gone; she must wait patiently and unquestioningly; he is the one with mobility here, able to seek her out on his own time, not hers. This goddess is to be read as pulling her husband’s strings, but when it follows “Invincible Hanky-Panky,” the reader’s attention is directed to a return to the status quo. Here is a wife who uses her “feminine wiles” to manipulate her husband and ultimately, to win the argument. Her emotions drove him from Olympus, out into the world, but her powers are what bring him back home in the end. This end implies that the household structure cannot work without a stationary female and a mobile male who is subject to the emotional whims of the female. As a follow-up poem, “A Fog” does not present a solution to jealous or nagging wives who drive their husbands from the female space of the home; instead, it tempers the critique of that very division of spaces by ostensibly preserving it. When these poems are considered together, not only is it apparent that they temper each other, but it also allows a more unifying critique to rise to the surface.<sup>85</sup>

“The Doom of the Club” presents a similar situation, but this time, Pope offers a different agenda. Situated in *Airy Nothings* before “A Valentine,” this speaker can be read as a woman who toes the line of transgression in that she delivers a warning to men that their spaces may not always be as gender-segregated as they are at the current moment. She carefully balances her outspokenness with an awareness that in her argument, men still hold all the cards, walking a line between passivity and agency. This

---

<sup>85</sup> As previously stated, Pope does this in *Jessie Pope’s War Poems*, the grouping surrounding “The Call,” for instance, becomes a critique of recruitment and conscription rather than the mindless jingoism most critics find when considering the poems individually.

poem delivers one of Pope's most obvious feminist statements.<sup>86</sup> Following a headnote that claims, "Club life is decaying," the speaker of "The Doom of the Club" enumerates the reasons why this statement may be true, and the primary one is repeated at the end of each stanza: "Because you will not share it with the ladies." Like the men of "Invincible Hanky-Panky" and "A Fog," the husbands here leave their homes when they feel "discontented," and their diminutively described "little better half" is left to "sit at home and fret." The speaker describes a new quality for the reasonable man; he "prefer[s] to dine in restaurants" rather than at a club because restaurants allow ladies. There are "scores" of these men, the speaker claims, and these men do not agree with the type of husband addressed here. The "growl[ing]," club-going husband values his mobility in that his wife does not share it.

The time is past, my masters, when with discontented threat

You growled, "I'm going out to get some grub!"

No more your little better half need sit at home and fret,

For the bell will soon be tolling for your club.

Its speedy dissolution may be virtually assumed,

No matter what its station or its grade is.

Your selfish club, that emblem of antiquity, is doomed,

Because you will not share it with the ladies.

You are sick, you say, of chatter, and annoyed by the *froufrou*,

---

<sup>86</sup> In *Airy Nothings*, as previously noted, there are more examples of overt feminism than in *Paper Pellets*. Pope's Suffragettes—found in "Any Woman to Any Suffragette," "Any Suffragette to Any Woman," and "A Cry from Clement's Inn"—will be discussed alongside other non-collected Suffragettes in my next chapter.

And the swish of silken draperies around;  
But, remember, there are scores of men who don't agree with you,  
And who nowadays in clubs are rarely found.  
They refuse your invitations, you must admit the fact,  
And the reason why, to call a spade a spade, is  
They prefer to dine in restaurants—club dinners don't attract,  
Because you will not share them with the ladies.

Though at present we've not absolutely got the upper hand—  
Even Rome was not erected in a day—  
We are playing with the fish that ere long we mean to land,  
For a woman's pretty sure to get her way.  
And the message, in conclusion—I'm afraid it will appall—  
To the clubman, from each mother, wife, and maid is:—  
There's a club in dear old Westminster, the cosiest of all,  
And you'll shortly have to share *that* with the ladies.<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, In *The Gentlemen's Clubs of London*, Anthony Lejeune defines a club as “a place where a man goes to be among his own kind.”<sup>88</sup> He extends this opinion in a 1992 article called “Clubmen and Ladies Who Lunch” and finds that “[it] is a clubman's joy to be at ease among old friends with home he was at school or university or in the army. His club is an extension of the common room and the mess. Such a texture of relationships cannot, by its nature, be opened up to a different sort of person,” meaning

---

<sup>87</sup> Jessie Pope, “The Doom of the Club,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 42-43.

<sup>88</sup> Anthony Lejeune, *The Gentlemen's Clubs of London* (London: Bracken Books, 1979), 19.

women and members of a lower social class.<sup>89</sup> Both of Lejeune's texts are in vehement opposition to women like Pope's speaker who foresees the "doom" of clubland because of its chauvinism, a value clubmen even into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries still hold unapologetically. In an introductory note to Lejeune's *Gentlemen's Clubs of London*, the Duke of Devonshire admits in 1979, "In this respect, I am unashamedly a male chauvinist pig. Gentlemen's clubs are meant for men; by all means let ladies have their own clubs, but I view with dismay the steady progress of the female sex into what once was, and should remain, a male preserve."<sup>90</sup> Amy Milne-Smith's article supports Devonshire's and Lejeune's sentiments; in her research, she finds that "men referred to their clubs with a great degree of emotion, and the gender segregation only enhanced the feeling of community."<sup>91</sup> She also observes that the London homes of upper-class men were frequently near-public spaces, "accessible to strangers visiting for business, pleasure, or politics," adding that "anyone whose family was even on the fringes of Society would have their family dinners, teas, or 'at home' gatherings reported in the papers as public events" (797). Fleeing to the club, for many men, was motivated by a need for privacy. The club "embodied the promise of a space free from both the worries of family life and the worries of the world," like the ideal household, and "club staff," like the ideal wife, "were coached in keeping the troubles of the larger world away from members" (808). Ultimately, Milne-Smith finds that "gentlemen's clubs may well be considered a flight from women and their social events" (818). Pope's speaker implies as much. Pope's speaker is looking toward inclusion in what the club represents, an

---

<sup>89</sup> Anthony Lejeune, "Clubmen and Ladies Who Lunch," *National Review*, July 20, 1992, 56.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Lejeune, *The Gentlemen's Clubs*, 8.

<sup>91</sup> Amy Milne-Smith, "A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen's Clubs of London, 1880-1914," *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 796-818. 807.

alternate domesticity, but a domesticity in which a home's inhabitants are equals. Like many of Pope's other men, this type of husband hears women's voices as "chatter" and is "annoyed by the *froufrou*, / And the swish of silken draperies" of women's clothing.<sup>92</sup>

The "scores of men" who, apparently, do not agree with the "clubman" support the speaker's argument, and this support is crucial in this context. Male support gives the speaker's argument a validity that, in the world of Edwardian English humour, it does not have on its own. The final stanza is full of concessions. The speaker admits that "we've not absolutely got the upper hand," which makes male backing so important. She also uses the language of leisured, privileged male activity to describe the political and social struggle for women's equality. Working toward the abolition of club culture is "playing with the fish that ere long we mean to land, / For a woman's pretty sure to get her way." This latter line fits with the women's tactics deployed in "Invincible Hanky-Panky" and "A Fog," and these are women who "get [their] way" eventually. But at the same time, it is this one line—"For a woman's pretty sure to get her way"—that tempers the speaker when she finally takes the argument all the way to government in the closing lines of the poem: "There's a club in dear old Westminster, the cosiest of all, / And you'll shortly have to share *that* with the ladies." If the votes for women question comes down to the petty-sounding outcome of "a woman getting her way" through her usual means of crying, nagging, or manipulation, then this signals to the male reader that the desired outcome is equally petty and worth ignoring. The club, the male reader chuckles from his favorite armchair in his favorite corner of his London club, is safe. Pope's women, meanwhile, know better.

---

<sup>92</sup> For instance, Benedick in "Invincible Hanky-Panky," Reginald in "Love in a Car," any of the "Men I Might Have Married."

### Miss Proctor to the Rescue: The Power of the Spinster

When she chooses to open *Airy Nothings* with “Second Thoughts,” whose speaker fears an inescapable marriage more than she fears men, and close it with “Our Natural Enemies,” where Miss Proctor is both a punchline and a heroine, Pope gives readers a spectrum of women, but all of her women are focused on variations of the same thing.<sup>93</sup> All of the women treated in this chapter have information—about marriage as an institution, about their husbands, about what is expected of them as women—but their ability to communicate that information openly varies. In her recognition and negotiation of gendered behavioral norms, Miss Proctor especially is relevant to the women placed before her in the collection: the women in “A Weak Point” and “Invincible Hanky-Panky” who must carefully code their messages, Chloe in “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose” who speaks through her silence, the forthright suffragist in “The Doom of the Club,” and the locked-in wives of “A Fog” and “An Ugly Mug.” These women’s voices and actions point back toward the opening poem, “Second Thoughts,” where the speaker fears the change that marriage may bring to her relationship with Harry. Throughout this collection, Pope has shown us the ways that communication, especially between men and women, is both crucial and fraught. Miss Proctor’s performance of eccentricity and her exploitation of the label of spinster give her a freedom to communicate that the other women in this collection do not have.

Miss Proctor possesses a wonderful nose

To scent a suspicion of scandal,

---

<sup>93</sup> Miss Proctor appears as the last installment in a five-part sequence called “Our Natural Enemies.” Each stand-alone poem features a different character: Dick, whose mania for photography costs him a fiancée; Verena, whose only flaw is her lack of tact; Mrs. Driver, an overbearing wife; Dunn, a pushy salesman; and Miss Proctor, who represents the stereotype of the busybody spinster. With “Men I Might Have Married,” Pope ended *Paper Pellets* with a similar structure.

From friend to acquaintance she eagerly goes,  
Exploiting with relish their family woes;  
Not a soul is exempt from her underhand blows,  
From the old and decrepit, with hair like the snows,  
To the babe she's permitted to dandle.

When the chain of evidence isn't quite clear,  
She'll easily manage to guess it.  
At afternoon tea, when Miss Proctor was near,  
I remarked, "I must get some new tea-things, I fear."  
She reported with joy to a neighbouring ear,  
"—wants some new teeth in; so young, too—dear, dear;  
I heard her distinctly confess it!"

When baby was cross, "Never mind, let him cry,  
He must open his lungs!" said the doctor.  
It chanced at that moment the lady went by,  
And the horribly ominous rumour, that I  
Had wired to a Harley Street surgeon to try  
Some strange operation or baby would die—  
Was the tidings divulged by Miss Proctor.

She'd softly bear down on a cosy settee,



Her heels being carefully rubbered,  
And mention to Chloe—while Strephon would flee—  
The blot on his otherwise fair pedigree.  
In conclusion, wherever she happens to be,  
Our heroine carries a skeleton key  
For everyone's skeleton cupboard.<sup>94</sup>

As a spinster, Miss Proctor represents a gender failure. It is a woman's occupation to marry and bear children, and since Miss Proctor has aged without doing either of those things, she is an object of humor and pity. But this status, especially as an old woman, gives her a freedom that younger women do not have.

Catherine Silver explains how aging can, counter-intuitively, work to women's benefit:

Women also face losses, but since they have less resources, power, and authority to start with, their sense of loss is quantitatively and qualitatively different. The changes primarily affecting women, such as menopause, the "empty nest," "widowhood," are defined as losses and are thought to bring about self-doubts and depression in women. By defining these changes as losses, society legitimizes and reinforces an ageist ideology. In men's eyes, the loss of physical beauty and reproductive power made women into social rejects and useless sexual objects. Actually, these changes have only a short-term negative impact on women, who psychologically gain after such "losses." What these changes have in common is the lifting of social and symbolic controls around sexuality, femininity, and family

---

<sup>94</sup> Jessie Pope, "Our Natural Enemies: V," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 77-78.

obligations. It is this transformative process that creates a potentially disruptive situation in existing gender relations.<sup>95</sup>

For Miss Proctor, being both old and a spinster work to her advantage. Because she has already failed to become a wife and mother, she loses legitimacy in the eyes of the people she meets. The speaker of the poem indicates some frustration with Miss Proctor's busybody tendencies, but otherwise considers her to be harmless, and this is where her power lies. Where moves are made elsewhere in Pope's texts to contain potentially transgressive women, either by the actions of others or in the structure of the stanzas themselves, Miss Proctor is never contained because it is assumed that she does not need containment. She continues moving freely in the final stanza of the poem: "wherever she happens to be." She could be anywhere.

Although it may seem that she merely enjoys ferreting out "scandal," Miss Proctor knows that information is valuable. She chooses her battles carefully. In each stanza, there is an example of something Miss Proctor overhears, then miscommunicates to another person. This garbling of the message is meant to distract the reader from the final stanza, which notably does not deliver a misheard bit of gossip. Here, Miss Proctor seems to enter the action of "A Crepe-de-Chine Rose." She approaches Chloe to tell her that Strephon, at the moment "flee[ing]" the scene, is not what he appears. She can name "the blot on his otherwise fair pedigree." It is important that this is the one piece of information in the poem for which we do not get the original statement along with Miss Proctor's interpretation as we do in stanzas two and three. This news, delivered under the guise of the busybody, gossiping spinster, is the most important. When final two lines tell

---

<sup>95</sup> Catherine Silver, "Gendered Identities in Old Age: Toward (De)Gendering?" *Journal of Aging Studies* 17, no. 4 (2003): 379-397. 387.

us that Miss Proctor essentially knows the truth about everyone, we can realize the possible truth about Miss Proctor's seemingly misheard information given earlier. Perhaps she performs the role that is expected of her, "eagerly" gossiping and spreading rumors, so that it is easier for her to deliver crucial information covertly to those who need it most.

The first two stanzas of this poem give the reader reason to ignore Miss Proctor and her garbled information, but the final stanza shows that she has a veritable rolodex of information on everyone, her "skeleton key" that gives her access to "everyone's skeleton cupboard." She is making a deliberate choice to give Chloe information about Strephon. In the final two lines, the speaker seems to realize this choice and what it could mean. Miss Proctor represents a minority for Pope's women, who are more frequently young women navigating the marriage market or wives of varying ages managing their husbands or children. We do not know how Miss Proctor came to be a spinster, if, like Verena earlier in "Our Natural Enemies," she drove her suitors away or if, like the speaker in "A Close Finish," she simply was not chosen, but what matters for this context is that Miss Proctor can observe, analyze, and take action with an impunity to which the other women in this collection do not have access.

In *Airy Nothings*, she presents an alternative femininity. Where, earlier in this collection, the speaker of "A Bachelor Girl" enjoys her single life with the caveat that she is waiting for the right man to propose marriage, Miss Proctor is an unapologetic single woman.<sup>96</sup> She is neither married nor looking for a husband. She is an example of the kind of woman that women are warned not to become. Miss Proctor is a "heroine," which could be read as a sarcastically applied title, but in helping Chloe avoid Strephon—

---

<sup>96</sup> See my third chapter for a discussion of "A Bachelor Girl."

helping a young woman avoid a manipulative, possessive man—Miss Proctor really is a heroine. She can state her concerns plainly without having to code them, as we saw in “A Weak Point,” or without having to distract attention from them, as we saw in “Invincible Hanky-Panky.” As an older woman, she has more mobility than a younger woman because as an older, single woman, she is invisible, and as a unmarried woman, she is able to take advantage of the spinster stereotype, using it as a sort of undercover identity.

Pope chooses to end *Airy Nothings*, a book of many marriages and near-engagements, with an assessment of a likely spinster, a woman who by her happily unmarried status transgresses against her gender. But all of Pope’s women, in some way, are transgressive. From the women openly avoiding marriage at the end of *Paper Pellets* to the women considering how to negotiate a marriage relationship in the early years of the twentieth century, Pope’s women consistently perform in unexpected ways. *Airy Nothings* is Pope’s last collection of verse for adults until the first of her three collections of First World War poetry is published by Grant Richards in 1915, and it is her last publication with Elkin Mathews. A frequent assessment of Pope after her death is that she was a “poetess of curling pins,” that the woman herself was as frivolous as her topics, but her collections reveal that while she does frequently return to women’s topics and women’s questions, she does so in a way that reveals the life or death issues involved. To some, Pope’s topics may seem “airy,” but what she does with those topics reveals that they are not “nothings.”

## Chapter 3

### “They Can, and They Will”: Pope’s Suffragist Women

Jessie Pope dwells often on issues of space. Her women recognize hurtful ways in which men dominate figurative and literal spaces, and they also work to maintain their own physical boundaries and to push back the fences that bound them socially. Pope’s suffragists present a case study in women who explore space in a variety of ways. These women take up auditory space with their loud voices and reasoned arguments; they occupy physical space by positioning their bodies in public places and dressing in carefully curated ways; they claim social space by taking up the behaviors, habits, and movements that are gendered as male and therefore ostensibly off-limits to well-behaved women; and they intrude into mental space by commandeering the scripts written for them and subverting those narratives. Like the rest of Pope’s women, the suffragists collected in *Airy Nothings* understand the roles they are expected to perform, and they use that understanding to manipulate their audience.<sup>1</sup> Pope’s suffragists, often aligned with the militant Women’s Social and Political Union, are smart women who use the tools of social and cultural containment to free themselves from that containment. Pope uses both suffragists and sporting women in ways that demonstrate her awareness of the subversively disruptive actions such women could take. Using Frederic Jameson’s discussion of manipulation and containment in reading Pope’s handling of such women allows us to see the deliberate orchestration involved in presenting these resistant women

---

<sup>1</sup> I am following the example of Laura E. Nym Mayhall and others by using suffragette to refer to women who were members of militant suffrage organizations like the Women’s Social and Political Union. Suffragist refers not only to those belonging to constitutional suffrage organizations like the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, but also “to all those engaged in political activism directed at gaining the parliamentary franchise for women in Britain” (336). Laura E. Nym Mayhall, “Creating the ‘Suffragette Spirit’: British Feminism and the Historical Imagination,” *Women’s History Review* 4, no. 3 (1995): 319-344.

to a mainstream audience, especially when considered alongside other suffragist women found in Pope's uncollected texts.<sup>2</sup>

With her many examples, even just in the collected poems, of clever, independent women, their careful negotiation of gender expectations, and their awareness of what marriage can mean for middle class women, the only real assumption we can safely make about Pope's politics is that they fall on the feminist spectrum. Pope's women would not be as consistently feminist as they are if their author were not so herself. Like many popular writers of her generation—and the publications that carried them—Pope understood the fraught situation of women in the media: that money can be made and readers gained by appealing to a woman's desire for independence and her capacity to make it on her own, but, at the same time, money can be made in exhorting her not to "make it" at the sacrifice of her femininity.<sup>3</sup> A woman, however independent she may be, must not become a mannish woman. Pope's women maintain this line. They flout societal expectations, but they do it with feminine charm. They shout down their detractors and fight back, sometimes physically, against male aggressors, but they also deploy silence and performance in strategic ways.

### **Pope's Politics and The North London Collegiate School**

To understand the extraordinary nature of Pope's women and the poet's own masterful orchestration of them, it is important to understand at least one way Pope herself had an extraordinary experience. Pope attended the North London Collegiate

---

<sup>2</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* no. 1 (1979): 130-148.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Beetham and Kay Boardman, eds., *Victorian Women's Magazines: An Anthology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

School for Girls from 1883-1886.<sup>4</sup> She was fifteen. At this time, the revolutionary school had been open for thirty-three years under the direction of headmistress and founder Frances Mary Buss.<sup>5</sup> Pope did well in school, winning prizes for needlework, English, and scripture, all acceptably feminine pursuits; she also “passed the senior Cambridge certificate.”<sup>6</sup> The teenage Pope would have been aware of the unexpected nature of this achievement.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, we should note that Pope passed three formative years at a school which, while it may not have described itself as such, was certainly feminist. Kitty Anderson, headmistress of North London from 1944 to 1965, notes that “the part the school played, through Miss Buss’s inspiration and guidance, in the attainment of academic distinction was one of the factors in the public recognition of the worth of a woman’s mind and in her potentialities.”<sup>8</sup> For Buss, it was important not only that women achieve, but also that other women, especially her young students, understand the weight of those accomplishments. “[Winning] recognition for their achievements in a man’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Jane Potter, “Pope, Jessie (1868–1941),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Oct 2008; May 2014), accessed August 10, 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/98109>.

<sup>5</sup> The prospectus for the school at its founding in 1850 lists the “course of education” as consisting of “Religious Instruction. Scripture. History and Geography. English Language and Literature. Elements of Latin. Writing and Arithmetic. French Language and Literature. Drawing, from Models and Nature. The Principles of Perspective. Singing upon the System of Mr. John Hullah. The Leading Facts of Natural philosophy and other Branches of Science and Art taught by means of familiar Lectures. Plain and Ornamental Needlework.” (Appendix II). in *The North London Collegiate School, 1850-1950*, ed. R.M. Scrimgeour (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

<sup>6</sup> Potter, “Pope, Jessie.”

<sup>7</sup> She would likely have been aware that the opportunity for girls to take the Senior Cambridge Certificate had been won for her by her own school: “After a successful trial in 1863 by candidates from the North London Collegiate School and a subsequent petition to the University, girls were officially allowed to enter for the Cambridge Local Examinations on the same basis as boys” in 1868. “Our Heritage,” *Cambridge Assessment*, 2015. <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/our-heritage/> Accessed June 11, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Kitty Anderson, “Frances Mary Buss, The Founder as Headmistress, 1850-94,” in *The North London Collegiate School, 1850-1950*, ed. R.M. Scrimgeour (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 25-54. 37. The testimonies and essays collected in *The North London Collegiate School, 1850-1950* are obviously selected to show Buss and the school in the best possible light. That is the point of such a book. There is no denying, however, that the women represented—teachers, administrators, and classmates—comprise an impressive roster of remarkable women.

world” was crucial as well, something Buss understood and taught her students.<sup>9</sup> M. Gertrude Frodsham, who entered North London in 1890 and went on to serve as headmistress of St. Savior’s and St. Olave’s Grammar School for Girls in Southwark, remembers when Miss Buss

made the stupendous announcement that a woman, Phillipa Garrett Fawcett, had been declared at Cambridge to be ‘above the Senior Wrangler.’ Then, to explain the full significance, [Buss] told us the story of how, in 1865, she and Miss Emily Davies had been summoned to give evidence before the Schools Inquiry Commission, when she was seriously asked, ‘Do you think women can learn Mathematics?’ ‘Yes,’ said Miss Buss. ‘Have you any girls in your school learning Mathematics?’ ‘No, I have no pupils sufficiently advanced,’ she replied. ‘But yet you think women can learn Mathematics?’ she was asked. ‘Yes, I am sure they can, and they will,’ was the answer. Then, she almost shouted, ‘Today, these gentlemen have their answer,’ and more quietly, ‘I wonder how many of them are remembering, as I am remembering, their question to me twenty-five years ago, and my answer!’<sup>10</sup>

Because Fawcett was a woman, Cambridge would not award her a degree, but the announcement of her place “above the Senior Wrangler” meant that she finished first

---

<sup>9</sup> Jihang Park, “Women of their Time: The Growing Recognition of the Second Sex in Victorian and Edwardian England,” *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 1 (2001): 49-67. Park examines the evolution of the reference books *Men of the Time* and *Who’s Who* as the latter changes its name to *Men and Women of the Time* in 1891 and both begin recognizing the achievements of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>10</sup> Edith Cross, ed., “Reminiscences of the School in Its Early Years,” in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 55-70. 63-64.



among mathematics students at Cambridge.<sup>11</sup> It is important that Buss repeated to her students the anecdote containing the implied question of whether women can learn. Buss's students were constantly reminded that their society at large doubted them; likewise, they were made aware, especially in the earliest days of the school, that they were all breaking new ground for women.

Another student, Alice M. Stoneman, who left North London in 1890 and later became headmistress of the Park School in Preston, said that “we were conscious that the staff were pioneers too, as from time to time at Prayers, a mistress would appear in her newly won cap and gown. Our applause was especially hearty when Mrs. Bryant achieved her Doctorate of Science and thereafter donned a gorgeous scarlet gown on great occasions.”<sup>12</sup> In 1884, Mrs. Bryant, who would later become the second headmistress of North London, became the first woman to earn a Doctor of Science degree from the University of London.<sup>13</sup> Many of Pope's women distinguish themselves in their activities and decisions, and Pope treats their pioneering behavior as if it is natural to expect such radical behavior from women. This naturalization of their progressive behavior is important for an audience that may not yet be completely comfortable with the idea of women voting, for instance.<sup>14</sup> Along with her trailblazing faculty, Buss, whose character and values “permeated the whole institution,” set high

---

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Thomas Bennett was named Senior Wrangler for 1890, despite having finished second to Fawcett. C.M. Neale, *The Senior Wranglers of the University of Cambridge, from 1748 to 1907* (Bury St. Edmonds: F.T. Groom and Son, 1907; archive.org, 2010) 50.

<https://archive.org/details/senoirwranglerso00nealrich>

<sup>12</sup> Edith Cross, ed., in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Eleanor Dooley, “Mrs. Bryant,” in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 71-91. 76

<sup>14</sup> A regular feature in *Votes for Women* in 1908 was a page headlined “Progress of Women” which detailed occupational and political achievements of women and women's campaigns all over the world. The inclusion of this such a feature was inspired. It is important for women to recognize the potential of other women to achieve and to see other women succeed.

examples of feminist thought and action for her students to follow and emulate.<sup>15</sup> A newspaper observed that at her school, Buss was “fitting women for the battle of life,” and through high level courses, opportunities to sit prestigious exams, a “thoroughly progressive” perspective on women and their holistic education, she succeeded.<sup>16</sup>

Buss’s work as an educator is important for many reasons, not least of which being the faith she had in the daughters of middle class families. When she founded the school, there were no serious educational opportunities for middle class girls. Anderson states that “the educational needs of the middle-class girl had been a clarion call to Miss Buss” and quotes Buss herself from 1850: “...whilst their [reformers’] attention was directed to the poor man, they altogether forgot the tax and rate payer, the voter and that middle class of the community in whose hands our lives, our prosperity, nay, even our liberty depends.”<sup>17</sup> Buss recognized, as did Pope, that the situation of women in the middle class was dire, even with an education. Middle class women in the latter half of the nineteenth-century had the least agency, the least mobility, and the least power.<sup>18</sup> Anderson writes that middle class parents “might struggle to raise the necessary money for payment of their boys’ education; already boys’ schools of educational standing were being opened with moderate fees,” but until Buss’s school, there was no similar move toward the affordable education of middle class women.<sup>19</sup> Education, in Buss’s eyes, could “lighten ... the misery of women brought up ‘to be married and taken care of,’ and

---

<sup>15</sup> Cross, ed., in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 60.

<sup>16</sup> Respectively, K. M. Reynolds, “The School and Its Place in Girls’ Education,” in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 107-138. 134; Anderson, in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 29-29.

<sup>18</sup> Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989) 101.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 29. This attitude continues later into the twentieth century. See also: Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925* (New York: Penguin, 1989) and Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006).

left alone in the world destitute,” in other words, daughters of the lower-middle and middle classes, especially those who do not marry.<sup>20</sup>

As has been shown, Buss made it a point to give her students many examples of women succeeding on their own. While she did not dismiss the social education a girl gained in her parents’ home, Buss wanted women to realize their potential and succeed under their own power. This lesson, Pope’s women bear out, is one the poet took to heart. I.M. Drummond, headmistress of North London from 1918-1944, observed that Buss stood at a historical moment when tremendous changes for women were underway, and “she was filled with a sense of urgency to fit women to play a worthy part in a world which she could partly envisage, but would not herself experience. Her saying to a young colleague, ‘I cannot speak in public, but you shall!’” demonstrates her optimism and vision, training her students and young faculty for future opportunities not yet realized.<sup>21</sup> With Buss, young women also came to understand their fraught situation, the importance of maintaining feminine performance whilst venturing into the very masculine environment of secondary and higher education.

Given this feminist environment, that some of the women from North London would support the suffrage movement is not surprising. Annie E. Ridley, an early biographer of Buss, asserts that “Miss Buss placed the Suffrage Question in the forefront of things likely to help the position and moral power of women. She saw no discrepancy between the possession of a vote and the development of the domestic virtues.”<sup>22</sup> The

---

<sup>20</sup> Annie E. Ridley, *Frances Mary Buss and Her Work for Education* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896; Google Books, 2008), 93.  
[https://books.google.com/books/about/Frances\\_Mary\\_Buss\\_and\\_her\\_work\\_for\\_educ.html?id=p3C27qc8xS0C](https://books.google.com/books/about/Frances_Mary_Buss_and_her_work_for_educ.html?id=p3C27qc8xS0C)

<sup>21</sup> I.M. Drummond, Epilogue, in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 202-205. 203.

<sup>22</sup> Ridley, in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 301.

second headmistress, Sophie Bryant, was involved with the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the constitutional suffrage movement, and "in 1908, as president of the Hampstead Suffrage Society, she was one of the four leaders of the march of the National Union of Suffrage Societies with Emily Davies, Millicent Fawcett, and Frances Balfour."<sup>23</sup> Additionally, "she was one of the first women to sign the declaration in favour of women's suffrage in 1906 which later obtained wide support."<sup>24</sup> According to Doorly, even when Bryant was a teacher at North London under Buss's leadership, "it never entered *her* head that teachers should take no part in politics."<sup>25</sup> Pope left North London in 1886, but she would have heard Buss's lectures during assemblies and Prize Day presentations, and it is likely she would have had Bryant as a teacher. Her consistently independent, fearless, clever women—and the fact that they evade social containment—is a strong testimony to the influence of women like Buss and Bryant on a student like Jessie Pope.

The direct influence teachers like Buss and Bryant had on their students, especially in a unique environment like North London, cannot be underestimated. Civic education researcher Judith Torney-Purta summarizes that adolescents are more susceptible to political socialization than adults and that it is "the teacher's role to keep challenging entrenched responses in the interest of growth."<sup>26</sup> But a teacher's challenge means nothing if the youth is not empowered to believe in her "ability to make a difference in the social environment" (474). It is this sort of environment, we can assume,

---

<sup>23</sup> Claire Barwell, "Bryant, Sophie (1850-1922)," *Historical Dictionary of British Women*, ed. Cathy Hartley (London: Routledge, 2014), 145-46. 145.

<sup>24</sup> Doorly, in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 84-85.

<sup>25</sup> Doorly, in Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 78. Both Buss and Bryant supported the Liberal party and Home Rule.

<sup>26</sup> Judith Torney-Purta. "Adolescents' Political Socialization in Changing Contexts: An International Study in the Spirit of Nevitt Sanford," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 3 (2004): 465-478. 471, 474.

Pope and her classmates found at North London. At a time when women were achieving more than ever before, North London students were sitting at the feet of those very women with an awareness of the precedents set by their accomplishments. Nevitt Sanford writes that “once the student is aroused by social and political issues, he [sic] needs not only the support of a sympathetic group, but confidence in his [sic] own thought, judgment and decision-making—a confidence born only of practice. Instead of trying to avoid controversial issues ... [we should] promote analysis of them.”<sup>27</sup> With faculty attaining their college degrees while continuing their work at North London, with a headmistress whose eye was firmly fixed on preparing her students for the future, it seems to be a reasonable assumption that girls at North London were not taught to avoid controversial or difficult work.<sup>28</sup> Questioning and challenging this interplay between “tradition and government” was part of the aim of the suffrage movement. It becomes

---

<sup>27</sup> Nevitt Sanford, “The Development of Social Responsibility,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 37, no. 1 (1967): 22-29. 28. See also: Eugenie Dostie-Goulet, “Social Networks and the Development of Political Interest,” *Journal of Youth Studies* 12, no. 4 (2009): 405-421; Susie Weller, “‘Teach Us Something Useful’: Contested Spaces of Teenagers’ Citizenship,” *Space and Polity* 7 no. 2 (2003): 153-171; Robert D. Hess and Judith V. Torney, “The Development of Political Attitudes in Children,” in *Political Socialization*, ed. Edward S. Greenberg (New York: Atherton Press, 1970) 64-82; Herbert H. Hyman, *Political Socialization: A Study in the Psychology of Political Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1969). Since the political scientists in the conversation surrounding political socialization in the 1970s are examining the teaching of civics primarily in the American system, their research can only inform my reading of North London, since at that time, there was no comparable, standardized type of instruction in the British political system.

<sup>28</sup> Using the work of John J. Patrick, we can understand that the political education girls received at North London went “beyond socialization,” for it seems that students learned “systematically [to] raise questions and examine alternative answers about modal values and traditions or appraise the gap between societal ideals and realities” (190). A political education, Patrick argues, differs from socialization in that the “scope” of the former “may be much broader than” the latter; a “learning experience may be designed to foster competence to think critically and independently, which could lead to rejection of established political beliefs and practices” (192). Political socialization is more aligned with the idea of hegemony as critiqued by Antonio Gramsci, although Patrick and others discuss moving toward a model of education that encourages critical thinking about tradition and government. What matters most in my reading of North London is the discussion of teachers’ role in creating an environment in which a student learns by example and context rather than by rote learning and study. John J. Patrick, “Political Socialization and Political Education in Schools,” *Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research*, ed. Stanley Allen Renshon (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 190-222. Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony, Intellectuals and the State,” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, ed. John Storey (Harlow: Pearson, 2009), 75-80.

clear when we read Pope's suffragists and sporting women in the context of her education and the assumptions we can make about her politics that Pope is actively considering "tradition and government" and the relative transgression of the women who challenge them.

### **The Struggle Over the Suffragist's Body:**

#### **Boadicea and "A Cry from Clement's Inn"**

Like their real-life counterparts, Pope's suffragists must challenge the popular conception of suffragists in order to be taken seriously as politically-minded women. The first of Pope's four suffragists in *Airy Nothings*, the speaker of "A Cry from Clement's Inn" does this. Pope is able to use humor to her advantage in having her speaker reference Boadicea as she echoes the frequent refrain heard in *Votes for Women*: that the government would take suffragists' complaints more seriously if those complaining were men.<sup>29</sup> The point of militant action, she proclaims in the final stanza is for "the Guards to up and at us," for the Guards to take the women seriously enough as a threat, as an

---

<sup>29</sup> For instance, in her contribution to "Messages of Encouragement to Women" in the November 1907 issue of *Votes for Women*, Mona Caird observes a gap between women campaigners and their male detractors: "admitting the logic of the woman's claim, they [men] smile a superior smile at her determination to possess the franchise. 'Why make such a fuss about a mere vote?' they ask. Alas! when women are in question, it is 'a mere vote.' When men are concerned, it becomes 'the safeguard of their dearest rights and liberties.' Women, indeed, have no rights and liberties to safeguard, and the reason of this, of course, is that they have always been politically non-existent."

opponent, as people, to respond to them as such.<sup>30</sup> They do not want to be dismissed as insignificant. The speaker acknowledges the struggle inherent in fighting against an intangible force.

Lisa Tickner recognizes that “ridicule is a potent weapon in the maintenance of hegemony, and the ideological import of tendentious jokes is enhanced by their capacity ‘to turn the hearer into a co-hater or co-disposer’ and offer the comforts of collusion,” and this strategy, as we shall see, is carried out in any number of contemporary caricatures of suffragists.<sup>31</sup> Pope and other suffragist women, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence included, recognize alternatively that ridicule can be transformed. In the March 1908 issue of *Votes for Women*, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence declares that “ridicule is a searchlight, and as such is part of our armoury. It is feared only by the powers of darkness. It is not only upon suffragettes that ridicule falls. It falls upon [the government and its representatives]” as well.<sup>32</sup> She goes on to say, “to us, ridicule is welcome. [The seemingly silly militancy of the suffragettes] arrests attention and arouses thought and quickens perceptions of a wrong hitherto ignored or slothfully accepted. Doing something silly is the woman’s alternative for doing something cruel” (81). While Pethick Lawrence

---

<sup>30</sup> In “The Militant Campaign,” a transcript of Christabel Pankhurst’s speech at Albert Hall on March 19, 1908, published in *Votes for Women* in April 1908, Pankhurst quotes Herbert Gladstone: “‘The time comes,’ says Mr. Gladstone, ‘when political dynamics are far more important than political argument.’ [Pankhurst continues,] It is upon a recognition of that fact that these new tactics of ours are based. We know that relying solely on argument we wandered for forty years politically in the wilderness. We know that arguments alone are not enough, above all, with a Government like this one, and that political force is necessary. [...] It is because we are recognized to-day as women who are ready to *act* that the movement stands where it stands now. You may not like our methods, some of you, but these methods are a success” (101). Elsewhere in *Votes for Women*, the WSPU details and defends the early militant strategies they adopt. In the May 14, 1908 issue, there is an installment of a series called “Answers to Correspondents,” which features versions of the same questions in each issue. “Are all members of the Union expected to take part in militant action?” is one question. The Union replies that militant action is not required, but “undertaken by special volunteers for this form of service” (165).

<sup>31</sup> Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987) 163.

<sup>32</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, “Tactics of the Suffragettes,” *Votes for Women*, March 1908, 81.

is defending the WSPU's militant tactics, she rightly explains one of the effects of satire and humor; it can lay bare existing conditions of oppression and exploitation. Her finger on the pulse of contemporary thought, always alert for a way to make her women's voices heard, Pope knows this, too.

In "A Cry from Clement's Inn," Pope uses the caricature of the suffragist already prevalent in the popular media of the day, one deconstructed by Mary Phillips in *Votes for Women*.<sup>33</sup> Phillips's short piece, "A Typical Suffragist," describes its title figure as

a gaunt, unprepossessing female of uncertain age, with a raucous voice, and a truculent demeanour, who invariably seems to wear elastic-sided boots, and to carry a big 'gampy' umbrella, which she uses as occasion demands either to brandish ferociously by way of emphasizing her arguments, or to belabor any unfortunate member of the opposite sex who happens to displease her.<sup>34</sup>

This suffragist is akin to the text-based depictions of the New Woman, a mannish woman with loud, vulgar behavior.<sup>35</sup> Collins notes that these text descriptions never line up with visual images or real life New Women, but Tickner admits that the "power of that

---

<sup>33</sup> Lisa Carstens includes two key images of stereotypical suffragettes in her article "Unbecoming Women: Sex Reversal in the Scientific Discourse on Female Deviance in Britain, 1880-1920." One postcard from 1909 depicts five cartoonish, long-necked women, each wearing a high-necked dress and a large hat. Their horsey faces are meant to appear unattractive. Their expressions and clothing, as well as obvious wrinkles, are meant to indicate their age. It is captioned "Suffragettes who have never been kissed" (89). Another postcard, dated 1905-1914, is captioned "The Suffragette nails her colors to the mast" (89). Here, a masculine woman has rolled up her sleeves to attach a "Votes for Women" flag to her umbrella. Drawn in a more life-like style than the other five women, this woman wears a two-piece outfit modeled on a man's suit. Her skirt is wide, and she wears a man's bowler hat. In both cases, the women's physical appearance is an outward manifestation of her politics. If they were not suffragettes, the two images assume, these women would be normal women: attractive, stylishly dressed, and, ideally, married. Lisa Carstens, "Unbecoming Women: Sex Reversal in the Scientific Discourse on Female Deviance in Britain, 1880-1920," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (2011): 62-94. Also see Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*.

<sup>34</sup> Mary Phillips, "A Typical Suffragist," *Votes for Women*, December 1907, page 35.

<sup>35</sup> Tracy J.R. Collins, "Athletic Fashion, Punch, and the Creation of the New Woman," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 43.3 (2010): 309-335.



imaginative prototype was considerable, and constitutionalists and militants alike were touchy on the question of personal appearance because of its damaging effects.”<sup>36</sup> This kind of woman, Phillips rightly explains, “does not exist outside the imagination of newspaper artists and the uninitiated public for whom they cater.”<sup>37</sup> The public demands this kind of woman as a suffragist, so that’s the kind of woman they are given. Pope uses this stereotype to catch her readers’ attention.

When Boadicea fought and died  
Did Britons laugh? Ah, no—they cried.  
Those tears we rather grudge her.  
She didn’t give her Vote a thought  
Or used her chances as she ought—  
A little slack, we judge her.

How puerile, also, was her cause  
Compared to ours! With man-made laws  
We’re mercilessly fighting;  
We’ll yet strew England with our dead,  
Although, alas, no blood’s been shed  
Up to the time of writing.

---

<sup>36</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 166. Tickner continues that “there is some evidence that the growth of the suffrage movement and its increasingly public presence, together with the suffragists’ own objections to the ways in which they were portrayed, weakened the popular stereotype of the flat-footed and angular spinster in the Edwardian period. Pictorial journalism was giving way to photographs, which in so far as they appeared to be a more truthful record were more likely to challenge received accounts of what the suffragists were like” (166). It is important to note, also, that the WSPU published photographs of their members. One good example is in preparation for their demonstration at Hyde Park in June 1908. An article in the May 7, 1908 issue of *Votes for Women*, “To Hyde Park!”, offers flattering portrait photographs of the twenty women in charge of the demonstration.

<sup>37</sup> Phillips, “A Typical Suffragist,” 35.

Oh! of this scorn we've had enough—  
These constables who won't be rough,  
But gently pinch and pat us;  
We want the military out,  
We want, with martial sword and shout,  
The Guards to up and at us!<sup>38</sup>

The suffragist speaker of this poem seems, at first, to be the stereotypical, heckling suffragist. From the first line, she invokes Boadicea as a warrior and martyr, one who “fought and died,” and the following line reminds readers of her status as a popular British heroine: “Britons ... cried” when she died.<sup>39</sup> The fourth line caricatures the suffragette speaker's seeming single-minded focus on female suffrage in her reading of Boadicea: “She didn't give her Vote a thought.” For an informed suffragette, versed in what Boadicea means to her cause, this line does not track. It is in this fundamental misunderstanding of Boadicea that the distraction is placed.<sup>40</sup>

Even in 1909, a reference to such an ancient figure as Boadicea would not have been an obscure one. Pope's readers' perception of her would have been colored by the

---

<sup>38</sup> Jessie Pope, “A Cry from Clement's Inn,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1908), 25.

<sup>39</sup> Jodi Mikalachki provides a useful introductory description of Boadicea and what becomes her legendary status: “Unrelenting in her violent resistance to Rome, she began her uprising with the undeniably legitimate grievances of her own shameful flogging, the rape of her royal daughters, and the despoiling of her people by Roman soldiers. Her patriotic orations appear prominently in classical and early modern accounts [...]. [...] A British queen of the Iceni tribe who led a widespread revolt against Claudian rule in the mid first century, she was acknowledged in classical sources as having very nearly driven the Romans out of Britain. Her revolt eventually failed when she suffered defeat by Suetonius, and her own life ended shortly thereafter, either from grief and illness or suicide” (12). Jodi Mikalachki, *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>40</sup> For Pope, the punchline nearly always comes at the end of the poem. In *Airy Nothings*, see also: “The Amende Feminine,” “A Crepe-de-Chine Rose,” “A Divotee,” “The Doom of the Club,” “Farewell to the Fair,” “Invincible Hanky-Panky,” “Our Natural Enemies,” “Second Thoughts,” “A Weak Point,” and “When Cissie Swims.”

more famous depictions of her in the cultural imagination. At this time, they are likely the poems by Tennyson and William Cowper. The source material we have for understanding Boadicea as she lived and died are male, and those men both praise and dismiss her. Given her fluency in Shakespeare and contemporary politics, it can be argued that Pope would have been familiar with not only the Boadicea depicted in Tennyson and Cowper, but also, perhaps, Holinshed and Tacitus as well.<sup>41</sup>

The alleged words of Boadicea, communicated in various sources through history, speak to themes Pope favors. The story goes that Boadicea moved her people to rebellion through the “power of her oratory.”<sup>42</sup> Tennyson’s 1859 “Boadicea,” one Pope certainly would have known, was written with oral performance in mind.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, the poem begins and ends with the poet’s voice, not Boadicea’s. Tennyson has the last word here. A man may be comfortable with a woman in power as long as he is able to speak through her, as long as it is his voice heard through her mouth, or as long as he is able to preface and conclude her words. Cowper’s poem follows a similar pattern. The only words Boadicea speaks are found in the final four-line stanza, and here she merely paraphrases the words of the druid whose counsel she sought.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> She does not, however, treat Boadicea in her own *How England Grew Up*, a history of Great Britain for children, published by Grant Richards in 1912.

<sup>42</sup> Mikalachki, *The Legacy of Boadicea*, 120.

<sup>43</sup> Tennyson’s “Boadicea” was written between February 1859 and April 1860 and published in *Experiments* in 1864. *The Poems of Tennyson*, vol. 2, ed. Christopher Ricks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 613-616. Jason Nabi marks the “metrical multitudes” of the poem, noting that “a reader cannot help running out of breath repeatedly. These exhausting lines seem to be pushing for cardiopulmonary as well as perspectival collapse” (191, 189). He also quotes Tennyson saying of the poem, “I cannot publish her yet—perhaps never, for who can read her except myself?” (191). I find Tennyson’s perception of ownership and proprietorship over the Boadicea he has created very interesting. The 86-line poem, with the exception of 23 lines, is spoken by Boadicea herself; that Tennyson preferred his own reading of the woman’s words that he wrote underscore the fraught position of powerful women, as does the fact that those 23 lines encompass the first and last stanzas. Jason Nabi, “Tennyson with the Net Down: His ‘Freer’ Verse,” *Victorian Poetry* 51, no. 2 (2013): 177-200.

<sup>44</sup> William Cowper, “Boadicea: An Ode,” *The Poems of William Cowper* 1: 1748-1782, ed. John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 431-432.

Further, Tennyson describes Boadicea's voice as one that "yell'd and shriek'd," terms that fit the "shrill" labels later thrown at speaking suffragettes.<sup>45</sup> Tennyson uses these terms twice, once at the beginning and again at the end, and in bookending the intervening dramatic monologue this way, he assures that the reader will remember Boadicea's speech with that connotation. The brutality of the language elsewhere—"Take the hoary Roman head and shatter it, hold it abominable, / Cut the Roman boy to pieces ... / Lash the maiden into swooning ... / Chop the breasts ... dash the brains ... / ... trample them under us"—loses some of its ferocity and becomes a speech questionable because it is one delivered by a woman who "yell'd and shriek'd."<sup>46</sup> Judging from this language, Tennyson's Boadicea is in near hysterics. This is a woman, then, who is impressive for her ability to unify her people through her pre-battle speech, but she is still a female awkwardly wielding a type of power gendered as male; therefore, her voice cannot resonate with authority and calm. It must shriek, as Pope's speaker seems to do here.

The Boadicea of literature is not the only one familiar to Pope's readers. Important for the growing momentum of women claiming public and political space is the monumental bronze body of Boadicea on the Embankment by Westminster Bridge near the Houses of Parliament. This is likely the Boadicea most prevalent in the minds of suffragists as they walk across Westminster Bridge: the Boadicea they can see, the one

---

<sup>45</sup> Dio Cassius described Boadicea's voice as "notably harsh," but then, Antonia Fraser reminds us, he is working from what he assumed a "Celtic Warrior Queen" must sound like. Antonia Fraser, *Boadicea's Chariot: The Warrior Queens* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988) 59-60.

<sup>46</sup> Sharon Macdonald reads an "expressly sexual content to Boadicea's savagery" in Tennyson's poem and argues that "the analogy at work here, through the figure of Boadicea, is that a warring woman, who by definition flouts sexual conventions, also flouts conventional morality. This is demonstrated particularly directly through the sexual dimension to that immorality; and we might also note this as a device for distinguishing (decent, moral) 'war' from 'savagery'" (52-53). "Boadicea: Warrior, Mother, and Myth," in *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden, and Shirley Ardener (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 40-77.

who became a national heroine during the reign of Queen Victoria.<sup>47</sup> A temporary plaster model of Thomas Thornycroft's "Boadicea Group" was placed at the Embankment in January of 1898 where it remained for about a month before it was removed. It was not replaced by the permanent bronze sculpture until the summer of 1902.<sup>48</sup> The placement of the permanent monument meant a reappearance of Boadicea near the Houses of Parliament. Suffragists who already looked to Boadicea as a historical heroine would have seen this as fortuitous, especially as so many of the WSPU's demonstrations understandably focused on Westminster.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Fraser, *Boadicea's Chariot*, 5. Fraser and others note that the likely spelling of her name, Boudica, has roots in "various Celtic words for victory, notably the Old Welsh *bouda*," a link Victoria publicized

<sup>48</sup> Martha Vandrei, "A Victorian Invention? Thomas Thornycroft's 'Boadicea Group' and the Idea of Historical Culture in Britain," *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 2 (2014): 485-508.

<sup>49</sup> Mayhall summarizes one WSPU movement that became controversial in October of 1908: "the WSPU issued a handbill inviting Londoners to join the organization in a deputation to the House of Commons, setting off a chain of events that culminated in the arrests and public trial of three Union officials, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and 'General' Flora Drummond. Within days of its release, the handbill's wording—'help the suffragettes to rush the House of Commons'—prompted the Home office to initiate proceedings against the women on the grounds that they were inciting crowds to violence. On the evening of 13 October, thousands of people and some five thousand police constables scuffled for house in Parliament Square as groups of suffragettes attempted to make their way to the House of Commons. About three dozen men and women were arrested. The trial of the women, held in the Bow Street Police Court, and Christabel Pankhurst's celebrated examination of two members of the cabinet present in Parliament Square that day, David Lloyd George, chancellor of the exchequer, and Herbert Gladstone, home secretary, brought the women's claim to public attention as never before. [...] This protest, initiated by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, has been seen as a turning point in the development of WSPU militant strategy, but it paled in comparison next to the dramatic courtroom scenes resulting from Christabel Pankhurst's cross-examination of Lloyd George and Gladstone" (46-47). In 1908, the WSPU was gaining visibility and momentum. They and their cause were in the public imagination as never before. Laura E. Nym Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).



Figure 2. Boadicea Monument. Photograph by Angela Fowler. May 30, 2015.

Boadicea’s protective, powerful stance, coupled with the inscription from Cowper’s poem on the base of the statue, can be read as a suffragist Boadicea fighting for the vote against the brutal foe of the British government. Her victory against that foe would reverberate through history: “Regions Caesar never knew / Thy posterity shall sway, / Where his eagles never flew, / None invincible as they.” With early suffragists like Buss cited saying things like “I cannot speak in public, but you shall,” it is easy to imagine how later campaigners would have read both the inscription and the victorious stance of Thornycroft’s Boadicea. Macdonald supports this assertion, writing that they “were by no means insensitive to the ambiguous potentiality of Boadicea as a symbol; and the possibilities were drawn out in consciously divergent ways by the constitutionalist and militant suffragists [...] [WSPU members] saw Boadicea in her chariot as advancing threateningly on the Houses of Parliament.”<sup>50</sup> The NUWSS

---

<sup>50</sup> Macdonald, “Boadicea: Warrior, Mother, and Myth,” 55.

reimagined the statue and presented drawings of it to WSPU members recently released from Holloway Gaol:

In the borders of the drawing are inset two cameos: one of a Madonna-like mother and baby, the other of a mother and child perusing a book together. The female figures in the chariot itself are not so wild as Thornycroft's originals, and Boadicea's speech is transformed into a banner reading 'Votes for Women.' In Boadicea's other hand are scales of justice, and an angel presents her with a laurel crown (symbol of victory). The message to the militants was conveyed very clearly through this image of Boadicea.

(55)

Cowper's lines, spoken from the druid to Boadicea, are meant to give the wounded queen hope as she faces the Roman army, that even though she may not live to see the effects of her fight, those actions will ripple outward and affect the future.<sup>51</sup> Even adult women who, at the time, seemed satisfied to remain in their "protected shell" would later take advantage of the vote won for them by the women on the front lines, as it were, women who saw themselves as twentieth-century Boadiceas, protecting their fellow women and daughters from legal and political violations perpetuated by the government.

This visually loud, space-devouring monument to Boadicea is a visual metaphor for everything suffragists like Pope's speaker are attempting to do.<sup>52</sup> If not physically violent, these women were socially violent—upsetting the smooth running of the patriarchy by refusing to perform their prescribed roles as quiet, demure, submissive

---

<sup>51</sup> In *Votes for Women*, the WSPU writes very self-consciously about the future for which they are fighting.

<sup>52</sup> In bronze today, Boadicea stands ten feet tall in her scythe-wheeled chariot pulled by two horses. Her arms outstretched, she holds a spear aloft in her right hand, her daughters kneeling behind her, shielded by their mother. That the monument does not allow the viewer to separate and compartmentalize Boadicea as woman, warrior, and mother is important. She is each of them, and she is all of them.

wives and mothers. They see themselves in Boadicea, even calling her “the earliest suffragette.”<sup>53</sup> Pope’s suffragists use space and performance in ways that transgress against their gender, and they, like Boadicea rallying her troops, know exactly what they’re doing.

Pope has her speaker open the poem with a reference to Boadicea that seems flippant. This speaker is narrowly focused on the “Vote,” which while important, was not the only issue for suffrage campaigners, as frequently explained in *Votes for Women*.<sup>54</sup> It is a childish, simplistic understanding of a complex issue. Placing this reductive view of both the suffrage movement and Boadicea early in the poem can pull the reader’s eye from the subtle work Pope does in the second and third stanzas. It allows the casual reader’s perception to be shadowed by the negative image of a “typical” suffragette and, in turn, provides a safer platform for this unapologetic suffragist to have her say in Pope’s anthology.

If Phillips’s text admonishes us that “generalizations of any kind are notoriously unsafe,” then Pope’s text reminds us that generalizations can be made to serve an alternate purpose. Pope uses the generalization of the suffragist as a way to communicate

---

<sup>53</sup> The November 1907 issue of *Votes for Women* reports that “the Kensington committee is responsible for the invention of a new card game, called Suffragette. Although it may be recommended as a novel form of propaganda, let it not be thought that there is no fun in it. The sense of humour which lends so much force to the enthusiasm of the W.S.P.U. is very obvious here, too. Suffragette may be played as a round game, or in sides—Suffragists v. Anti-Suffragists—its object being to gain the highest number of votes by making up the cards into sets, each set being worth so many votes, and finally to secure the Bill. [...] As examples of the kind of question and answer by which the game is carried on we may quote the following: — [...] 3. Do women want the vote? No, the sign suffrage petitions for fun. 4. What has the woman’s vote done in New Zealand? Granted old-age pensions instead of talking about them. 5. Who was the earliest suffragette? Boadicea, and the House of Commons smiles upon her statue.”

<sup>54</sup> In *Votes for Women*, see also: Evelyn Sharp, “Woman’s Suffrage and the Child,” November 1907, 16; Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, “What the Vote Means to Woman as Wife,” November 1907, 17; F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, “What ‘Votes for Women’ Means to Men,” February 1908, 65; .



the goal of militancy, and she does it through her use of Boadicea.<sup>55</sup> Pope's speaker follows her misreading of Boadicea with the verdict that the Icenian queen was "a little slack." She reads Boadicea's cause, well known to the educated British public, as "puerile" when "compared to ours." This is a condemnation of Boadicea that stands in opposition to the perception of Boadicea in the popular British imagination, but Pope's suffragist draws a distinction between the tangible foe of the Roman army and the intangible opponent of "man-made laws." Pope is smart to emphasize the nature of the battle, because it is infinitely more difficult to battle policy, hegemony, and the naturalized and scientifically explained inferiority of women than it is to kill a man with a sword or trample an enemy with a chariot. Here is the satire at work. The speaker misses this distinction and cries that the suffragists will "strew England with our dead," probably with the massive bloodshed of Boadicea's final battle in mind. The bloodthirsty suffragist here appears to expect to bring literal blood from her intangible opponent, despite having clearly drawn the distinction between Boadicea's flesh and blood enemies and the suffragist's "man-made" ones.

The reader can easily imagine this speaker swinging her "big 'gampy' umbrella" in the fray. "Gampy" references Charles Dickens's character, Sarah Gamp, a nurse in his

---

<sup>55</sup> In *Airy Nothings*, "A Cry from Clement's Inn" follows "My Comforter" and precedes "The Artful Dodger." Both "My Comforter" and "The Artful Dodger" were previously published in *Punch*. As I have argued previously, reading the poems in sequence can alter or temper the tone of a poem that would be otherwise subversive or controversial. "A Cry from Clement's Inn" is openly referencing the WSPU by giving the location of its headquarters in the title. The poems on either side of "Clement's Inn," however, do tempering work. "My Comforter" is from the point of view of an infant, lamenting that his pacifier has been legislated away by adults who cannot know his situation or his pain. The infant cannot speak in a way that can be recognized as legitimate communication by the adults around him. Compare his situation and language to the wife in "Invincible Hanky-Panky" who faces an eerily similar situation surrounding her use of a handkerchief in a communicative way. Because the final three stanzas are on a page facing the entirety of "A Cry from Clement's Inn," one wonders if Pope meant her readers to find the infant speaker of "My Comforter" analogous to a woman. "The Artful Dodger" describes an agile rugby player able to dart between players and score a goal quickly. This poem, occupying two facing pages, serves to bring the reader back to the lightness implied in the title of this collection.

1843-44 serial novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, who “became synonymous with the perceived ‘black’ side of midwifery and nursing: obesity, dirtiness, drunkenness, incompetence, garrulousness and stupidity.”<sup>56</sup> That Phillips places not just an umbrella, but a “gampy” umbrella in the hands of her “typical Suffragist” is important because it indicates an understanding that the media and the public perceives Suffragists as incompetent and transgressive caricatures of proper, well-behaved women. Indeed, many articles in *Votes for Women* remind readers to be aware of what their opponents are saying, to bear in mind how their actions reflect on the larger perception of the female suffrage movement. Alternatively and more realistically, Pope herself may have in mind a metaphorical body-count as the “man-made laws” that prevent women from voting fall in the wake of a suffragist victory. It is clear, however, that this level of thinking is meant to be understood as beyond the speaker.

Especially important in this stanza is the speaker’s lamentation that “no blood’s been shed / Up to the time of writing.” “Up to the time of writing” is a good reference to publications like *Votes for Women* which give weekly or monthly updates on the progress of “the cause,” often using similar language to remind readers of the progress of long-term campaigns in progress. It can also serve to nudge readers’ minds toward what they have been reading in the news elsewhere. Published with *Airy Nothings* in late 1909, “A Cry from Clement’s Inn” can be read in the context of the force-feeding controversy that began in September of 1909. Pope, as she writes in ways that explore women’s deliberate placement of their bodies in space and that expose ways those women are often denied access to space or speech, would note, as do her contemporaries, that layered ways that forcible feeding was problematic. Andrew Rosen summarizes:

---

<sup>56</sup> Annette Summers, “Sairey Gamp: Generating Fact from Fiction,” *Nursing Inquiry* 4 (1997): 4-18, 5.

During the previous two and a half months, thirty-seven women had managed to terminate imprisonment by hunger-striking. On 13 August 1909, Herbert Gladstone had received word from Marinenbad that ‘His Majesty would be glad to know why the existing methods for dealing with prisoners who refuse nourishment, should not be adopted.’ When, six weeks later, the seven women in Winson Green began hunger strikes, a new policy was instituted: under orders from the Home Secretary, the medical officers of the prison began to use force to feed women who refused food.<sup>57</sup>

Elizabeth A. Williams’s explanation of how “medical men played [a] crucial role” in the implementation of forced feeding for imprisoned suffragettes demonstrates that the choice to forcibly feed hunger-striking women was not one based on a concern for the women’s health: “the forced feeding of suffrage prisoners was approved by outspoken physicians such as William Morton Harman, who characterized militant women as ‘abnormal excitable individuals’ and praised the government for ‘maintaining the discipline of places which are, after all, for evildoers.’”<sup>58</sup> Harman is speaking, of course, of the prisons where the women were held. The imprisoned women are “evildoers” because they are refusing to perform the gendered role to which they have been socialized. To use Michel Foucault, “discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedient)”; therefore, when the

---

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Rosen, *Rise Up, Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women’s Social and Political Union, 1903-1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) 123.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth A. Williams, “Gags, Funnels and Tubes: Forced Feeding of the Insane and of Suffragettes,” *Endeavour* 32, no. 4 (2008): 134-140. 134.

women cease to be obedient women and engage in militant political action—down to using their bodies to protest the nature of their imprisonment—they must be disciplined in hopes of returning them to a docile, obedient state.<sup>59</sup> *Votes for Women* notes that forcible feeding “deprive[s] the women of the effective weapon of hunger-striking.”<sup>60</sup> It disarms and silences them. Forced feeding is less about introducing nourishment to the body and more about introducing discipline. Indeed, Caroline J. Howlette affirms that the “value [of forced feeding] to the government was not that it saved life but that it inflicted pain and had a perceived ability to decimate the [suffrage] movement.”<sup>61</sup>

On October 1, 1909, *The Manchester Guardian* quoted the *British Medical Journal*'s defense of forcible feeding procedures: “The operation is at first decidedly disagreeable to the person fed, but quickly becomes tolerable and finally a matter of complete indifference.”<sup>62</sup> This evolution of the experience, of course, relies entirely on the person being fed. On the same day *Votes for Women* reports that

it is well understood in the medical profession that this process [forcible feeding] constitutes an operation, and as such cannot lawfully be performed on any sane person without his consent. [...] Where the patient is deliberately refusing food, and where, contrary to his consent, he is

---

<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979) 138.

<sup>60</sup> “Government’s Assault on Suffragettes,” *Votes for Women*, October 1, 1909. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Caroline J. Howlette, “Writing on the Body? Representation and Resistance in British Suffragette Accounts of Forcible Feeding,” *Genders* 23 (1996): 3-41.

<sup>62</sup> This kind of language indicates that “giving in” is crucial to surviving violation. In “Texas Candidate’s Comment about Rape Causes a Furor,” the *New York Times* reported on March 26, 1990, that then Texas gubernatorial candidate Clayton Williams “compared the cold, foggy weather spoiling the event to a rape, telling ranch hands, campaign workers and reporters around a campfire, ‘If it’s inevitable, just relax and enjoy it.’”

being forced to take it, as is sometimes the case in lunatic asylums, the patient has to be held down by force by several attendants.<sup>63</sup>

The repetition of “consent” here would have resonated with suffragists and their allies, though these women would not have said outright that the experience of resisting force feeding was like being raped. Howlette’s study examines two categories of suffragettes’ stories of enduring force feeding: “accounts that use the metaphor of rape (which center around the term ‘outrage’) and accounts that use the metaphor of an operation.” She notes that stories in the former category involve resisting being force fed, while the latter do not resist. Suffragettes did not use the term “rape.” Tickner explains that

it is not hard to understand how the instrumental invasion of their bodies by force, in a process accompanied by great pain and personal indignity, was felt as a kind of rape by the women who suffered it (though the word was not used directly), and that the sexual analogies present in their descriptions cannot be dismissed as the turn of a phrase, but were present to both parties in the experience.<sup>64</sup>

Using a vocabulary flexible enough to allow this reading of literal oppression in her historical moment shows Pope’s skill and awareness, as well as her mastery of humor. In her hands, light verse can be very heavy indeed. In this context, then, the opening line of the final stanza—“Oh! of this scorn we’ve had enough!”—operates with a dual purpose. Ostensibly, it’s the call of the suffragette to be taken as seriously as Boadicea; she misunderstands the “scorn,” and seems to desire “rough” treatment from “these constables” for its own sake. More realistically, however, the “scorn” points more toward

---

<sup>63</sup> “Forcible Feeding,” *Votes for Women*, October 1, 1909. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 107.

the inhumane treatment of protesting, imprisoned suffragists. It is the “scorn” of the “government [feeling] that in effectively allowing women to end their own prison sentences [by hunger-striking] they made a mockery of the law” (105). Women pushed, and the patriarchy pushed back.

Of primary note in this final stanza is what Pope does with the speaker’s description of the constables’ current treatment of suffragists: “gently pinch and pat us.” This language draws attention to the physical presence of female bodies in a public, protesting space and underscores that they are treated as women, as sexual or criminal objects, rather than as political offenders. This distinction, of course, is an important one for the WSPU, whose members consistently protested their imprisonment as regular criminals rather than political prisoners, and Pope’s speaker’s reference to “scorn” can work as an allusion to this argument. The words chosen to describe the constables’ actions are not only alliterative, drawing attention to the words themselves, they are also ones that seem to indicate contact understood to be inappropriately sexual in nature, and here, obviously, unwanted and uninvited.<sup>65</sup> “Pinch and pat” is not how a man would be treated. “Pinch and pat,” like forced feeding, is used as a display of power and authority over a “misbehaving” woman’s physical body. In choosing to put her body in danger—by demonstrating, marching, or hunger-striking—the woman is often read as being complicit in her own violation.

---

<sup>65</sup> The words “pinch and pat,” especially the latter have received a lot of attention in the context of airport security screenings in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. In a *New York Times* article dated November 2, 2004, Joe Sharkey describes the outrage of Rhonda Gaynier, a real estate lawyer, after she was forced to submit to an invasive pat-down in order to board an airplane. Gaynier told the security official that she was being “treat[ed] like a common criminal” and that they “ha[d] no probable cause to be searching [her] like this. This is how a criminal gets treated.” While Gaynier’s protest is still political in that she is arguing for authority over her own body, her language brings to mind WSPU protests in the handling of Suffragette arrests as criminal, rather than political arrests. WSPU members protested their being jailed with regular criminals rather than those whose crimes were of a political nature, as they argued theirs were.

It is important to note in this context that “a significant number” of the police assaults WSPU women during the “Black Friday” incident of November 18, 1910, were “not only violent but also sexual in nature.”<sup>66</sup> H.N. Brailsford and Jessie Murray, who took testimonies of the women mistreated during the Black Friday incident summarized their findings:

The action of which the most frequent complaint is made is variously described as twisting round, pinching, screwing, nipping, or wringing the breast. This was often done in the most public way so as to inflict the utmost humiliation. Not only was it done as an offence against decency; it caused in many cases intense pain... The language used by some of the police while performing this action proves that it was consciously sensual.<sup>67</sup>

Tickner explains that when WSPU members found that a Conciliation Bill had been “shelved” on 18 November 1910, “a deputation of 500 women set out for the House of Commons and attempted to rush past the police who held them back. On this occasion they were treated with expected and quite exceptional brutality, and after six hours of struggle and confusion 115 women and four men were arrested.”<sup>68</sup> In their attempt to arrest and restrain the women, these police officers saw the women as female bodies

---

<sup>66</sup> Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement*, 101.

<sup>67</sup> Rosen, *Rise Up, Women!*, 139. Rosen quotes from Brailsford and Murray’s *The Treatment of the Women’s Deputations by the Metropolitan Police*. 1911.

<sup>68</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 120.

within a patriarchal system that gives men implicit control over those bodies.<sup>69</sup> One officer told a demonstrator, “you have been wanting this for a long time, haven’t you”; another declared that he “can grip you wherever I like today.”<sup>70</sup> This is the language of rape. According to this language, in choosing to take up space as a body in a political protest, these women are choosing to be assaulted in this way. The reported language of the officers aligns with the language used to make a woman seem complicit in or desiring of her own rape. Nina Philadelphoff-Puren revisits Judith Butler’s examination of the language used in the 1983 New Bedford gang rape trial.<sup>71</sup> She reports that

the attorney put the following statement to the plaintiff: “If you’re living with a man, what are you doing running around the streets getting raped?”

Butler notes that the grammar here constructs the woman as actively seeking to be raped. I [Philadelphoff-Puren] would add that this grammar also erases the subject positions and actions of the men who raped her.

They quite literally *do not take their place* in the space of this representation, which poses the woman as the agent of her own destruction. (50)

---

<sup>69</sup> Joyce Kay, “It Wasn’t Just Emily Davidson! Sport, Suffrage and Society in Edwardian Britain,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 10 (2008): 1338-1354. Kay summarizes that “By the time the first hunger strike [by imprisoned Suffragettes] occurred in 1909, the situation had deteriorated into a war between militant suffragettes and the state. The Asquith government responded by sanctioning forcible feeding, a tactic that would not surprise feminist historians who have identified, and written widely on, the theme of male power over the female body. A medical profession that had increasingly sought to control and regulate women’s bodies at the end of the nineteenth century may have experienced little compunction some years later in employing a range of invasive techniques intended to prevent suffragettes from becoming martyrs to the cause. That this could be condoned in a ‘civilized’ state says much about the attitude of a society that was still essentially patriarchal” (1339). See also: Elizabeth A. Williams, “Gags, Funnels and Tubes: Forced Feeding of the Insane and of Suffragettes,” *Endeavour* 32, no. 4 (2008): 134-140.

<sup>70</sup> Rosen, *Rise Up, Women!*, 140.

<sup>71</sup> Nina Philadelphoff-Puren, “The Right Language for Rape,” *Hecate* 29, no. 1 (2003): 47-58.



A similar move happens with the officers' molestation of the suffragist demonstrators. They blame the women for their very presence and use that presence to justify whatever treatment the women may encounter.<sup>72</sup>

While this event comes after the 1909 publication of *Airy Nothings*, these encounters, like the ones alluded to in "A Cry from Clement's Inn," carry with them the weight of the patriarchal status quo, that these male police officers are entitled to touch the women's bodies wherever they like under the guise of crowd control.<sup>73</sup> The point is that police action against women of the WSPU could be overtly and "consciously" sexual. The women want to be seen as political entities, not as mere bodies. Just as the women here fight intangible laws, they want to be understood in a way that transcends the tangible as well. They want to be understood as political entities fighting "manmade laws" instead of being understood as bodies inferior due to their sex fighting something which is beyond the scope of that sex. This, of course, is easier said than done. Pope herself, as plainly seen in her other work, writes with an awareness of this aspect of the situation of women in her historical moment. The speaker here rises above the caricature to illustrate that patriarchal society only sees a woman as a body to be silenced, consumed, and policed.

---

<sup>72</sup> Philadelphoff-Puren summarizes Lesley Stern's "rape myths," which include several explanations for the inevitability of a woman's rape—"she asked for it"; "women secretly want to be raped"; "all she needs is a good fuck"—it should be noted that the officers' language aligns with these patriarchal defenses of rape (49). Further Joyce Kay and others note a similar patriarchal assertion of power over the female body exercised in the act of force feeding suffragette prisoners. See also: Elizabeth A. Williams, "Gags, Funnel and Tubes: Forced Feeding of the Insane and of Suffragettes," *Endeavour* 32, no. 4 (2008): 134-140.

<sup>73</sup> Rosen concludes that the "great majority of women who took part in militant demonstrations were in their twenties and thirties"; therefore, he continues, "by attempting to rush through or past police lines, these women were bringing themselves repeatedly into abrupt physical contact with the police. That the police found in the youthful femininity of many of their assailants an invitation to licence, does not seem, all in all, completely surprising" (142).

In context, then, we are able to see how the early deployment of Boadicea in Pope's poem can serve to distract a reader from the potential buried in later stanzas. Forming an early image of a suffragette similar to the one described by Phillips, a reader can easily miss the other side of Boadicea and hence, the importance of a woman like her to a group like the WSPU whose members suffer legal torture in Winson Green Gaol and violation in the streets. Tickner observes that "Boadicea was for [suffragists] not the embodiment of 'an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity' as she was for British nationalism, but like Joan of Arc a type of militant femininity."<sup>74</sup> Reading the poem with the latter image of Boadicea in mind changes the poem entirely. Ultimately, "A Cry from Clement's Inn" highlights the political/criminal distinction the suffragists make about their militant actions. The "cry" then is for female bodies not to be seen as criminal, transgressive objects to be made "docile" by patriarchal authority, but rather as politically active humans arguing for access to rights that other humans have already been granted.

#### **"The Most Girlish of Womanly Women": Negotiating Physicality and Femininity**

The nature of the presentation of suffragists in the Edwardian mainstream media is evident in a sketch of Christabel Pankhurst published in *The Bystander*, April 1, 1908, in which like Pope's speaker protests, Pankhurst is silenced and reduced to inhabiting an attractive body. Entitled "The Boadicea of Politics," the illustration by Canadian artist R. G. Mathews is a profile sketch, Pankhurst looking away from the viewer, toward her left shoulder, apparently lost in thought. The image dominates a full page of the magazine. In

---

<sup>74</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 126. Among the historical women represented in the Women's Coronation Procession in June of 1911, for instance, were the powerful women in the "pageant of queens: Bertha, Boadicea, Ethelflaed, Eleanor, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Lady Jane Grey, Mary Queen of Scots and Henrietta Maria" (128).

very small font at the bottom of the page, there are three blocks of text. One calls Pankhurst “The leader of the fight for woman suffrage.” A second gives the circumstances under which the sketch was taken: “she was in the throes of preparing for her great meeting at Sheffield, immediately after the Peckham election, in which she played so conspicuous a part.” It is a textual image of Pankhurst working and thinking. The third block of text, enclosed in a rectangle and floating just beneath the sketch, gives a different textual image of Pankhurst.

# A Boadicea of Politics



### Miss Christabel Pankhurst: A Fascinating Suffragette

It has been recently remarked in THE BYSTANDER that the public opinion of woman, created by woman, is always in the end singularly effective. If this be true, then public opinion of the Suffragettes, as created by Miss Christabel Pankhurst, must be singularly happy; for Miss Pankhurst, the shining light of the Woman Suffrage movement, is popular even with her bitterest opponents, and irresistibly potent, in spite of an unobtrusively active mind and beam. Orator, organizer, tactician, and "martyr," Miss Christabel chiefly fascinates by a clever combination in one small body of all the wiles of woman with some of the mind of man.

STUDY AT A SPECIAL SITTING BY R. G. MATHUEWS  
 MISS CHRISTABEL PANKHURST, THE LEADER OF  
 THE FIGHT FOR WOMAN SUFFRAGE

This sketch was made by the well-known Canadian impressionist artist, Mr. R. G. Mathews, at a fifteen-minute sitting granted to him by Miss Pankhurst while she was in the throes of preparing for her great meeting at Sheffield, immediately after the Peckham election, in which she played so conspicuous a part. One hundred framed artist's proofs (autographed), twice the size of the above, are obtainable from the Graphic Fine Art Gallery, 199, Strand, at half a guinea each.

Figure 3. R.G Mathews, "A Boadicea of Politics," *The Bystander*, April 1, 1908, 19

Here, Pankhurst is described in terms that make her unnatural, that call to the fore her physical femininity and remind readers that she is remarkable because she is a smart

woman. She is praised, then dismissed simultaneously. A large part of the dismissal comes in the final sentence. Pankhurst possesses “all of the wiles of woman,” meaning that she is to be understood as participating in all of the stereotypical and sexist behaviors assumed to reside in the woman’s arsenal. The use of “wiles” before “mind” marks her as duplicitous, cunning, prone to “amorous or playful trick[s].”<sup>75</sup> It is a word more associated with women like Mata Hari or the biblical Delilah, and it is a word deployed in this instance to contain Pankhurst.

It is here that the popular media’s view of suffragists is apparent. Pankhurst is likened to Boadicea, praised for her powers of oratory and organization, but in the same stroke, she is emphasized as inferior, possessing “some of the mind of man” in her “small body.” The final assessment is of her as a physical body unfit to contain real intellect in its full capacity. After all, it is a miracle that her “active mind and brain” have not diminished the features that mark her as “irretrievably pretty.” Pankhurst is not as threatening as she would otherwise be because she fits traditional, patriarchal ideas of physical beauty and femininity. Her political mind marks her as different. She is extraordinary, we are to understand; not all women are like this. It is hardly unexpected or unusual to find that male writers and recorders of history struggle to situate powerful women in their narratives.

For Mathews to entitle his portrait of Christabel Pankhurst “A Boadicea of Politics” is a complicated move, for Boadicea will mean different things to a man who describes Pankhurst in diminutive terms than she does for a woman campaigning for the vote. In his description of Pankhurst, Mathews mentions that while he was sketching her,

---

<sup>75</sup> “wile, n.” OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/229024?rskey=nSBsFW&result=2&isAdvanced=false> (accessed July 24, 2015).

Pankhurst was in “the throes of preparing for her great meeting at Sheffield.” Using “throes” in this way gives the preparation a frenetic quality that aligns the female subject more with unbalanced emotion equated with “the wiles of woman” rather than with “the mind of man.” It cuts Pankhurst down immediately after building her up. She is “irretrievable pretty, *in spite of* an undeniably active mind and brain.”<sup>76</sup> Mathews’s Pankhurst, like most Boadiceas, is two irreconcilable things.<sup>77</sup> Pope, whose own women are often working multiple agendas, would have recognized this structure with discussions of Pankhurst and with Boadicea as well. She would also have recognized, as frequently as she returns to issues of space, how the issue of the woman’s body being recognized as female makes that body’s occupation of public space at once noteworthy and unacceptable.

At all costs, women are told, they must remain feminine. Here, what is understood as feminine is defined by men. Todd Crosset rightly observes that a woman moving her entire body in a powerful way when playing sports or doing other activities is seen as transgressive.<sup>78</sup> This is what Pope’s women do; they exert control over their own bodies, and her suffragists pursue activities that draw attention to the presence of their bodies in public and political space. At the same time, they demonstrate the struggle involved in gaining and maintaining autonomy over one’s own body, for the patriarchal male will always seek to control, discipline, and contain the female body.

---

<sup>76</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>77</sup> Mikalacki notes that the Italian historian Polydore “inferred the existence of two queens. The one ‘Voadicia,’ he endowed with warlike spirit and patriotism, while the other ‘Bonduica,’ he depicted as the savage perpetrator of war atrocities and barbaric resistance to the enterprises of the Romans” (119).

<sup>78</sup> Todd W. Crosset, *Outsiders in the Clubhouse: The World of Women’s Professional Golf* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 87.

“A Bachelor Girl” relies on the structure of manipulation and containment to conceal its feminist slant, for, as Jameson explains, “genuine social and historical content must first be tapped and given some initial expression if it is subsequently to be the object of successful manipulation and containment.”<sup>79</sup> Pope exercises the fantasy of a bachelor girl before containing her with the prospect of marriage in the final stanza. An initiated reader can recognize, however, that this speaker is attempting to escape the normalized gender of her historical moment. Like the suffragists alluded to in “A Cry from Clement’s Inn,” this speaker’s action draws overt attention to the physical presence of her body as she uses it to occupy political, social, and mental space. Pope underscores the physicality of the activities she aligns herself with and alludes to the perceived danger of those activities, highlighting the female body in the public space. At the same time, however, she has her speaker toe the line between performing appropriate heterosexual femininity and swinging her “gampy umbrella” as a stereotypical suffragist.

I’m a bachelor girl in a flat;  
And “spinster” ’s my title and rank;  
It’s a glorious title at that—  
And I’ve got an account at the bank.

I motor, I golf, and I ride;  
I’m seasoned with up-do-date plays;  
In my slang and my smokes and my stride  
I cultivate masculine ways.

---

<sup>79</sup> Jameson, “Reification and Utopia,” 144.

While the first stanza opens with the name the speaker calls herself—“bachelor”—she follows up with the “title and rank” given her by others, “spinster,” highlighting it with quotation marks. Favoring the masculine term “bachelor” over the negative connotation associated with the female label of “spinster” is important.<sup>80</sup> It demonstrates a recognition of the social value and cultural capital inherent with each title. When she returns to the use of “bachelor” in the penultimate line of the poem, she reinforces for the reader how she sees herself: her single status is acceptable, as it would be for a man, not tragic, as it would be for a woman. Highlighting the masculine term rather than the negatively connoted feminine one, the speaker underscores something that suffragists harken back to again and again: if they were men, they’d have been taken seriously by now. Their challenging of the political status quo is no different, they argue, than when lower class and working class men challenged their own disenfranchisement and won the vote for themselves.

I’ve a *penchant* for Rational dress,  
My manners are open and free.  
I write for the halfpenny Press,  
You won’t get much change out of me.

At ancient conventions I mock,

---

<sup>80</sup> In OED, bachelor girl is a term: 1906 *Queen* 10 Nov. 808/2 “The term ‘old maid’ is now seldom or never heard; the expression ‘bachelor girl’ has taken its place.” One of the source texts noted is a text Pope published in. It’s very possible that “Bachelor Girl” was published at the same time that this definition was published in *Queen* in 1906. [The whole note says “Old maids are dying out. In a few years’ time the typical old maid of our youth will rarely be seen, and a hundred years hence she will probably be dead altogether. The term, ‘old maid’ is now seldom or never heard; the expression ‘bachelor girl’ has taken its place, and many and happy are the bachelor girls in Britain to-day, with their independence, their little homes, and their own well-arranged lives.” This is republished in the *Harbor Grace Standard*, November 24, 1906, page 10.]



I don't mend my clothes, for I can't,  
And I'm quite a continual shock  
To my mother and grannie and aunt

While the Rational Dress Society “protest[ed] against the introduction of any fashion in dress that either deforms the figure, impedes the movement of the body, or in any way tends to injure health,” its clothing styles were sometimes as impractical as the styles against which they protested.<sup>81</sup> Further, the term “rational” in Rational Dress was meant to ally the movement with “everything modern and rational,” with “science” (52). For some Rational Dress reformers,

a view developed that decoration of all kinds, but particularly in matters of dress, was irrational and therefore should be done away with, [...] Nevertheless the stress on function and utility led to a neglect of the complex social meanings which dress conveys. From the point of view of dress reform, the pleasure that a beautiful garment can give was disregarded, or deemed suspect and unworthy, for there undoubtedly was a puritanical side to rational dress. (52)

Pope's choice to align her speaker with Rational Dress is important. It adds another layer to her caricature; she is not, perhaps, as stylishly dressed as famous women like Dorothy Levitt. Further, the reference ages her, which can add to her caricature as well. Rational Dress was more popular in the 1880s than it was around 1909.

Also key here is the use of “penchant,” which when linked to Rational Dress, can make this self-proclaimed “bachelor” more of an aging spinster than a “girl.” One expects

---

<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth Wilson and Lou Taylor, *Through the Looking Glass: A History of Dress from 1860 to the Present Day* (London: BBC Books, 1989) 53.

to glimpse a “gampy umbrella” in this speaker’s hand when she is dated by her use of Rational Dress. What is more important for this speaker is her active lifestyle, which is where “penchant” can open the poem. Penchant indicates “a strong or habitual inclination; a tendency to do something; a taste or liking for a person or thing.”<sup>82</sup> The bachelor girl has developed a taste for the kinds of freedom her male counterparts have enjoyed for generations. In pursuing these habits and activities, she has turned her back on the proper feminine behavior to which she has been socialized, and it is this which makes her a threat to the status quo and “quite a continual shock” to her female relatives, the ones responsible for training her in the ways of womanhood.

I’m an orator born—on my day;  
I flutter a Suffragette flag,  
And I walk over Westminster way  
When I think there’s a chance of a “rag.”

Still, that banner I’m willing to furl;  
My heart’s not so hard as my voice.  
*Entre nous*—I’m a bachelor girl  
From circumstance rather than choice.<sup>83</sup>

This speaker links herself directly to the larger suffrage movement, specifically the WSPU, with her “Suffragette flag” and her participation in demonstrations at Westminster in the fifth stanza, and we are meant to read the sixth as a retraction of the five preceding stanzas. As a suffragette, the speaker takes up space of all kinds: auditory

---

<sup>82</sup> “penchant, n.” OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/140011?redirectedFrom=penchant> (accessed June 14, 2015).

<sup>83</sup> Jessie Pope, “A Bachelor Girl,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1908), 36-37.

space as an “orator,” visual space with her “flag,” physical space as she “walk[s] over Westminster way,” and imaginary or mental space in the minds of those who observe her living her life as publicly as she pleases. Even after letting her speaker participate in militant demonstrations with the WSPU, Pope is able to create an image of a politically active woman by removing the threatening nature of such a woman in the poem’s final stanza.

After it moved to London in 1905, the WSPU “underwent a remarkable metamorphosis,” distanced itself from the Labour Party, and “adopted militancy as a political tactic.”<sup>84</sup> Laura Mayhall explains that militant strategies are what brought the WSPU to the forefront of the suffrage movement and cemented the WSPU’s hold on the cultural imagination especially as “suffragettes utilized the courtroom to great advantage in 1908” when Christabel Pankhurst and Flora Drummond stood trial for “inciting demonstrators to ‘rush’ the House of Commons.”<sup>85</sup> In court, the women were able to speak for themselves and be heard by a wide audience, “using the courtroom as a platform from which they could both make a case for women’s right to citizenship and critique the government’s hypocrisy in excluding them” (74). Mayhall continues that they were “confronting the law on its own turf and on its own terms,” while “the press obligingly provided suffragettes with a national audience for their protest, extensively covering the trial and highlighting Christabel Pankhurst’s assiduous arguments in the language of radical protest” (74). With this kind of oratorical display at work in the courtroom and in newspaper coverage of the courtroom, the suffragette as competent, intelligent speaker became a reality which the public could not deny outright. Still

---

<sup>84</sup> Leslie Parker Hume, *The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies: 1897-1914* (New York: Garland, 1982) 28.

<sup>85</sup> Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement*, 74.

though, the negative opinion of their militant strategies remained. H.G. Wells, among others, dismisses the “ragging” of the more militant section,” choosing the word “rag” for its frivolous connotation.<sup>86</sup> That the bachelor girl herself uses the dismissive term “rag” is important as it can indicate for a conservative reader that she sees the meetings, marches, and rallies she attends as frivolous, but embedded in the definition of “rag” is a pushing back against authority: “a noisy debate or rowdy celebration, esp. as carried on in defiance of authority or discipline.”<sup>87</sup> This aspect of the definition is apt not only for the bachelor girl’s WSPU activities, but also for her athletic interests. They are things she involves herself with despite the condemnation of the patriarchy.

The poem’s final stanza seems to hint that the speaker is merely biding her time until she can marry, at which point she will “furl” her “banner” and be effectively contained within what some readers would understand as her proper place. However, note that all she is willing to “furl” is the “banner”; she promises no change in her politics or behavior or dress. She does not promise silence. The banner, for that matter, does not even necessarily refer to her “Suffragette flag”; it can be read as the “title and rank” she has of “bachelor girl” or “spinster.”<sup>88</sup> She ends by reminding the reader that she is “a bachelor girl / From circumstance rather than choice,” but this can refer to her marital status alone. She is her own woman, ostensibly with her own money and her own room.<sup>89</sup> A conservative reader may see her here as a tragic victim, forced from her rightful place

---

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement*, 57.

<sup>87</sup> “rag, n.4”. OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com.spot.lib.auburn.edu/view/Entry/157421?rskey=9OLaPU&result=4&isAdvanced=false> (accessed October 14, 2014).

<sup>88</sup> A banner can also be “A flag awarded as a distinction,” which is how she refers to “spinster” in the second line as her “title and rank,” as if it is something she has earned or something bestowed upon her. “banner, n.1”. OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/15281?rskey=0jCwSV&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed March 11, 2014).

<sup>89</sup> Virginia Woolf does not publish “A Room of One’s Own” until 1929.

of quiet comfort in the home, from her role in which she is a cherished and protected wife. Perhaps the “circumstance[s]” are the tumultuous politics of the day or the “surplus woman” situation; regardless, the final stanza is really the first and last nod toward the life the bachelor girl “should” be living. Her “heart,” she says, is “not so hard as [her] voice,” but she does not deny her own voice. Despite the small nods toward her awareness that she would otherwise be contained, this speaker is able to slip through that confinement and silence. She plays upon what the popular press seems to believe about suffragettes, that they are young women who will soon grow out of their suffragette leanings. It is in this final stanza that the fantasy is neatly contained.

Before the last line of the second stanza where the speaker actually claims to “cultivate masculine ways,” Pope encodes for the reader the declaration that the speaker is engaging in “masculine” behaviors, and the fact that she has to state overtly at the stanza’s end that they are, in fact, masculine, demonstrates her knowledge that by taking part in these activities, the speaker is challenging the gendered status quo. Setting up so strongly the strength of this speaker early in the poem allows the careful reader to see the punch in the poem’s ostensible punchline, that the speaker is “willing to furl” her “Suffragette flag” if only the right man were to present himself. It is the same sort of reasoning as we find in police treatment of WSPU protesters, that women are just waiting for a man to give them what they “really need.” It assumes that the sex-gender system will reassert itself eventually; hence, this Rational dress-wearing, cigarette smoking,

loud-talking Suffragette is merely biding her time for the right man to woo her.<sup>90</sup> And since she is biding her time, we as readers are able to excuse her behavior for what it appears to be, a childish phase. But, given the pattern of women set elsewhere in *Airy Nothings* and throughout Pope's bibliography, we can assume that this speaker, already so firmly living her independent life, will hardly be impressed by the antics of men like Strephon or any of the "Men I Might Have Married."

At its core, then, "A Bachelor Girl" is about the freedom of speech and movement this young woman is able to have as a bachelor rather than a spinster; she is doing exactly what the single men of her own age are doing. Even if the speaker were to marry later in life, it follows that she would not abandon completely the politics she held in her bachelor days.<sup>91</sup> While she indicates that she may not have chosen the life she currently lives, there is nothing definitive in the preceding stanzas to support the argument that she would choose another life now that she has enjoyed the freedom and independence of bachelorhood. Instead, she describes herself confidently and contentedly throughout the body of the poem aware of what her choices and activities say about her.

---

<sup>90</sup> The fictional narrative in which the rebellious, politically minded woman is forced to "grow out of it" is especially popular in later imaginings of the Edwardian moment. The 1970s television show *Upstairs, Downstairs* introduced Elizabeth Bellamy who, followed by the parlor-maid, Rose, participates in militant suffragette activities, including breaking windows in the series' second season. Along with Rose, she is arrested and jailed. The end of the episode finds her chastened; over the course of her time on the series, she goes on to become a wife and mother and moves to America. In the third season, after Elizabeth's disappearance to America, another politically passionate young woman, Georgina Worsley, is introduced. She serves as a nurse during the First World War. As a flapper in the 1920s, she drives recklessly and kills a man with her car. She ends the series forced into an unhappy marriage. This sequence of release and contain is found in the wildly popular *Downton Abbey* as well. Sibyl, the youngest daughter, shocks her family in one episode where she appears for dinner dressed in a Paul Poiret inspired harem pants outfit. In later episodes, she insists on hearing candidates speak before a by-election only to be injured in a riot. She also expresses interest in women's rights, and she works as a nurse during the First World War. By the end of the second season, she has scandalously married the chauffeur and moved with him to Ireland. Her next and final appearance on the show has her pregnant, and she goes on to die in childbirth. Of the three Grantham daughters, she is immediately the most rebellious, the most feminist, and the most engaging. Of the three, also, she seizes the most agency. Her character is effectively punished in her marriage, pregnancy, and death.

<sup>91</sup> Especially true when we place this speaker in line with Pope's other female speakers fiercely clinging to the space and agency they have created for themselves.

It is true that the move toward containment in the final stanza erases the bravado of the other stanzas; Pope contains her bachelor girl because she must. In 1909, Jessie Pope is already a famous writer with a reputation as not just a humorist, but the foremost female humorist in the nation, one with the lightest touch and whose “shafts are never barbed.” In collecting poems for her second anthology of humorous verse, she must choose and arrange her selections carefully. Displaying too overt or too sharp a critique could have, for instance, ended her relationship with *Punch* or others. It is important for her readership, too, for as we have already seen, Pope’s poems can seem one way in the context of their original publications and quite another when collected and placed alongside other of her poems with similar subject matter. Pope makes an important decision to include several poems displaying sympathy with the WSPU, an organization always making headlines and consistently stirring up discussion and debate as their militant protests gained momentum and visibility in 1909. Publishing *Airy Nothings* in November of that year, Pope was surely aware of the potential risks she was taking in aligning her collection and her women with not only the suffrage movement, but with the WSPU. This risk is why it is important for Pope’s collection that the bachelor girl is contained in the final stanza; her readership needs to see the WSPU-aligned suffragette ostensibly yearning for a return to her gender role. They need the bachelor girl to want to be a wife and mother, even if it is, as Pope cleverly allows us to assume, a performance.

Pope uses the tension between class and femininity embedded in the bachelor girl’s activities to demonstrate the careful negotiation of femininity in an environment that is scrutinizing her and looking for ways in which she transgresses in an effort to shut her down completely. We cannot gloss over the fact that her lifestyle is enabled primarily

by her social class. One must have money to live this life. Pope's most complex handling of the bachelor girl comes in her allusions to her speaker's class status as it can be read from her interests. Everything in this poem points toward potentially expensive, highly visible, and often transgressive forms of social and physical mobility. All of the things in Pope's speaker's list of activities—"I motor, I golf, and I ride"—are ones that require independent means.<sup>92</sup> It is important that first stanza ends with the declaration that "I've got an account at the bank" because "when it comes to access to the driving wheel it is economic independence that has always been a woman's best guarantor of gaining that position" (47). Golf, likewise, was and remains an expensive hobby. The golf club at St. Andrews, for instance, had become "fashionable" by the late nineteenth century and remains so today, from the 1890s, "belonging to a golf club 'was far too expensive a pastime for working-class women.'" <sup>93</sup> Further, attempting to join a golf club was socially prohibitive as well: "those who did not fulfill the social requirements and the sponsorship of two members need not consider applying as entry fees and annual subscriptions were

---

<sup>92</sup> Sean O'Connell reads Dorothy Levitt as a good example of this circumstance, describing her "atypical and privileged 'bachelor girl' lifestyle, waited on by two servants in her flat in London's West End" (47). The first chapters of Levitt's book detail the expense required to purchase and maintain a motorcar, and she admits that her suggestions are at the upper range of what one may expect to spend. In nearly every chapter, Levitt discusses the money involved in maintaining and driving a car; she includes complete chapters detailing "Hints on Expenses" and "Tips—Necessary and Unnecessary." Like many of Pope's women, Levitt, however privileged her lifestyle may be, understands that careful management of her money helps maintain the mechanism of her independence. The point here is, however, that this speaker is seizing what agency and mobility is available to her. This speaker, further, exists at a time of uncertainty for the single woman. Her status as a bachelor girl is precarious, for she is still expected to marry eventually, sooner rather than later. The poem explores this tension in its final stanza. Her single status is considered a means to an end, not a life. Sean O'Connell, *The Car and British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring 1896-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>93</sup> Jane George, "'Ladies First?': Establishing a Place for Women Golfers in British Golf Clubs, 1867-1914," *Sport in History* 30, no. 2 (2010): 288-308. 292.



beyond their means.”<sup>94</sup> In her 1903 riding manual, Alice Hayes exhorts women who ride in hunts to pay their own subscription and entrance fees.<sup>95</sup> The bachelor girl’s hobbies are not her only potentially expensive activities.

Like motorist Dorothy Levitt, who is an “inveterate first nighter,” Pope’s speaker frequents the theatre.<sup>96</sup> She can afford to have Rational dress items made, or she purchases them ready-to-wear. Most telling is her declaration about her clothing—“I don’t mend my clothes, for I can’t”—indicating that she can afford either to have someone else, perhaps a maid, perhaps an outside seamstress, mend her clothes, or to purchase new garments when her current ones need mending. Her work for the “halfpenny Press” would not have been lucrative enough to support this expensive lifestyle. The tension between making money and having money is important to understanding the precarious situation of the public femininity of these women. Byng-Hall makes a point to remind readers that despite her undeniable driving skill, Levitt “has remained an amateur, accepting no money prizes,” adding another layer to the acceptability he builds around her (5). What keeps her most feminine is that she is not

---

<sup>94</sup> George, ““Ladies First’?” 292. Hezlet warns that having “nice boots” for golfing is of utmost importance, and boots “will make a large hole in the average girl’s allowance” (227). “A few extra shillings spent at the shop of a thoroughly reliable bootmaker,” she promises, “need never be grudged, as it is well-spent money” (228). She touts the importance of well-made boots for practical reasons, not fashionable ones, as the boots need to “withstand the wettest grass” and offer “great protection” (228). As Hezlet does for golfers, Levitt offers suggestions as to which fabrics wear best in all weather conditions and which headgear and shoes prove most practical for motorists. Hayes goes so far as to discuss why riding habits tend to be expensive: “Tailors who make a habit for five guineas, doubtless give the best value they can for that sum; but when we consider that a good Melton cloth costs about a guinea a yard, we can understand that it is impossible to get material of that class in a cheap garment” (89). Melton, Hayes attests, “lasts for several years,” making it more worth the money than a cheaper habit made of lower quality material (89). Alice M. Hayes, *The Horsewoman: A Practical Guide to Side-Saddle Riding*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. M. Horace Hayes, F.R.C.V.S. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903). May Hezlet, *Ladies’ Golf* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1907). Dorothy Levitt, *The Woman and the Car: A Chatty Little Handbook for All Women Who Motor or Who Want to Motor* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909).

<sup>95</sup> Hayes, *The Horsewoman*, 306. She does not, however, discuss the costs of owning or maintaining a horse, assuming that her readers are not directly footing the bill for animal maintenance.

<sup>96</sup> C. Byng-Hall, in Levitt, *The Woman and Her Car*, 7.

taking money for her driving. She is supported by other means. To be most feminine, then, is not to be truly and financially independent. Pope uses the tension created with the reader's assumed knowledge of what a girl "in a flat" with "an account at the bank" means. In each stanza, the speaker spends money rather than making money.

Even if she only seems to control her money, the bachelor girl exercises actual control and ownership of her own body, not only through her brazenness, but also through her intensely physical pursuits. Pope's insistence in the poem on the relative masculinity of these activities faces head-on the anxiety over the masculinization of women. Edwardian women who gained fame for the success in masculine activities like golfing or driving were nearly required to assert their femininity. Byng-Hall highlights motorist Dorothy Levitt's appearance, clearly noting her traditional femininity and how she is the opposite of what the public may expect a female driver to be. "The public," Byng-Hall writes, "in its mind's eye, no doubt figures this motor champion as a big, strapping Amazon" (4). The reality, he continues, is that "she is the most girlish of womanly women. Slight in stature, shy and shrinking, almost timid in her everyday life, it is seeming a marvel that she can really be the woman who has done all that the records show" (4). Not only has Levitt somehow, miraculously been able to maintain her femininity, she is a superlative woman. As we found with the description of Christabel Pankhurst earlier, Levitt is saved from freakishness by her looks: a "slim and very graceful" body, her "girlish but expressive face," and "a straight nose that has the bare inclination of a saucy upward tip" (6). He goes on to describe her allegedly "timid" behavior and the fact that she is "also famous" for hosting "many little luncheon parties" (7).



DOROTHY LEVITT  
Her favourite photograph

Photo by Foulsham & Banfield, Ltd.

Figure 4. “Dorothy Levitt: Her Favorite Photograph,” in Dorothy Levitt, *The Woman and the Car: A Chatty Little Handbook for All Women Who Motor or Who Want to Motor*, (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909).

Levitt herself must participate in this reassertion of traditional femininity. Of the twenty-eight photographs included in her book, twenty-four of those show Levitt herself with her car, either in the driver’s seat or in a posture of work alongside the vehicle. In fact, Levitt is careful to include photographs of her working on her car. These photographs are important because they show the female driver donning her coverall and getting to work, but they also show the physical attractiveness of Levitt herself. She is a competitive driver and a talented driver, but she is also a beautiful woman. The public can accept her as the former because she maintains her performance of the latter. The photograph given as the frontispiece of the book is marked as, “Dorothy Levitt: her favorite photograph.” It is a glamorous shot. A fur-wrapped Levitt, chiffon veil billowing behind her, leans forward over her steering wheel, glancing coyly at the camera. It is a posed photograph, taken in the studio of Foulsham and Banfield, Ltd., and labeling it as

“her favorite” does important work toward reinforcing the performance of Levitt’s femininity. May Hezlet does the same. In her golfing manual, she includes thirty-three total photographs, twenty-seven of well-known women golfers in action.<sup>97</sup> Only six of the photographs are of women posed and seated; the rest show women in action on the golf course.

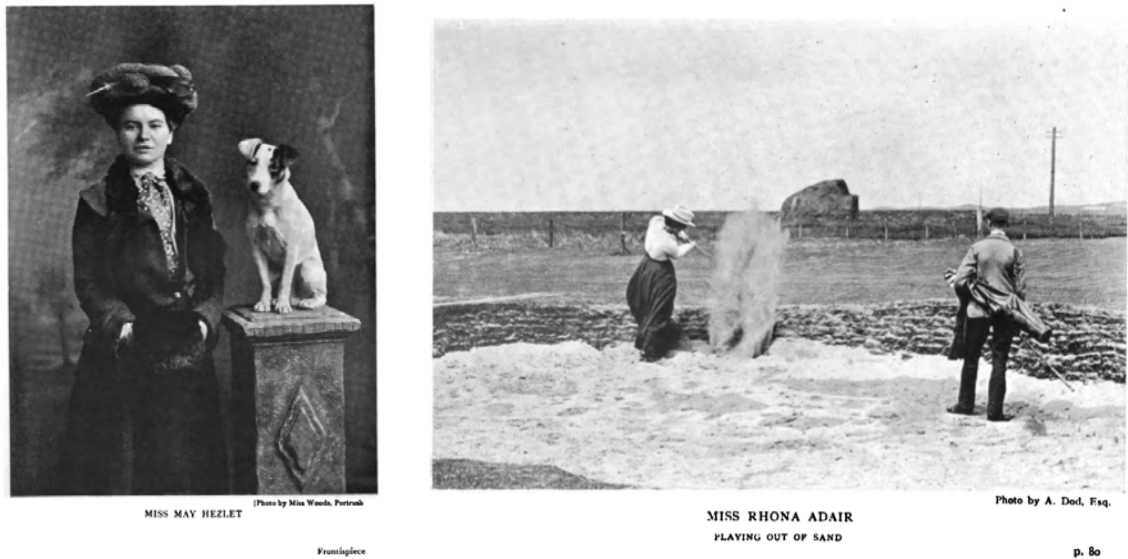


Figure 5. Two types of photographs in May Hezlet, *Ladies' Golf*.

In her 1910 manual *Lawn Tennis for Ladies*, Dorothea Chambers challenges criticism aimed at photographs of female athletes in motion meant to be proof “that strenuous

<sup>97</sup> Chapter on “Famous Lady Golfers”: Miss Rhona Adair, Miss May Gerarrd, Miss C. Adair, Mrs. Moutray, Miss Cox, Mrs. Hezlet, Miss V. Knox, Miss M.E. Stuart, Miss May Hezlet, Miss F. Walker Leigh, Miss J. Magill, Miss Bryan, Miss V. Hezlet, Miss N. Graham, Hon. K. Prittie, the Misses Gregg, Miss Knox, Mrs. Knox, Miss Dickson, Miss Dod, Miss Exham, Miss V. Magill, Lady Margaret Scott, Lady Margaret Hamilton Russell, Miss Issette Pearson, Miss E.C. Nevile, Mrs. Lyndhurst Towne, Miss L. Smith, Miss Pascoe, Mrs. Willock, Mrs. Stanley Stubbs, Miss Stringer, Miss D. Evans, Mrs. Wilson Hoare, Miss Lloyd Roberts, Miss Sant, Mrs. G. Hunter, Mrs. Hammond, Miss Sparrow, Miss F. Macbeth, Miss Buckley, Mrs. Jessop Hulton, Mrs. T.H. Miller, Miss L. Dod, Miss M.A. Graham, Miss K.G. Moeller, Miss B. Thompson, Miss E. Steel, Miss N. Firth, Miss Orr, Miss A. Glover, the Misses Whigham, the Misses Orr, the Misses Park, Miss Blanch Anderson. “I feel that in this chapter very inadequate justice has been meted out to those golfers whose names I have mentioned” (260). She writes another chapter entirely for women in American golf. Dorothy Levitt includes a similar chapter on female motorists in her manual. See chapter 4 for my discussion.

games mar the appearance of girls.”<sup>98</sup> Chambers, a champion tennis player herself, acknowledges that “girls are doubtless in the ungraceful position represented [in photographs] for a fraction of a second” before reminding readers of the reality that “though a girl should always try to be as neat and look as nice as she possibly can, even when playing a strenuous game, it is hardly possible or natural to be ‘just so’ every second of a long struggle” (12). Chambers asserts, “I would prefer that [a female athlete] should show some signs of excitement, that her muscles should be strained and her face set” (13).<sup>99</sup> She is, after all, an athlete. Pope’s women seem more aligned with Chambers.

Cartriona Parratt asserts that sporting women “stepped outside the limits of conventionality and, challenging the image of passive, fragile womanhood, they inevitably forced the redefinition of what it meant to be female.”<sup>100</sup> This is part of Pope’s aim with her suffragists as well. Pope presents in “A Bachelor Girl,” not only a marching suffragette, but an athletic woman.<sup>101</sup> It is in her negotiation of her independence, her physicality, and her desire for a heterosexual relationship that Pope maintains the flexible image of a suffragette who can be read either as freakish or as normal. Without an illustration of the speaker, the reader is free to imagine her as Phillips’s “Typical Suffragist” or as Mathews’s “Boadicea of Politics.” Further, Pope forces the reader to

---

<sup>98</sup> Mrs. [Dorothea] Lambert Chambers, *Lawn Tennis for Ladies* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1910). 11-12.

<sup>99</sup> Chambers further reasons that “public speaking and singing may distort the mouth and disturb the facial muscles to a most ludicrous extent and give the eyes quite an unnatural appearance; but I have never yet heard it said that a man or woman should give up either because of its effect upon the appearance. Why, then, should women abandon athletic exercises, which they enjoy so much, and which do them so much good, merely because, just for a moment or two perhaps, their appearance is distorted?” (13).

<sup>100</sup> Cartriona M. Parratt, “Athletic ‘Womanhood’: Exploring Sources for Female Sport in Victorian and Edwardian England,” *Journal of Sport History* 16, no. 2 (1989): 140-157. 150.

<sup>101</sup> Pope’s women participate in a variety of sporting activities. They skate, ride, and swim, as well as play tennis and field hockey. For instance, see: “An Afternoon at the Rink,” *The Pall Mall Magazine*, February 1910, 535-553; “My First Jump,” *Punch*, August 24, 1910, 142; “A Riding Lesson,” *Punch*, September 21, 1910, 214; “On the Beach,” *Punch*, August 18, 1908, 124; “My Old ‘Burnt Straw,’” *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907) 75-76; “The Wooing,” *Punch*, March 18, 1903, 189.

reconcile the speaker's seizure of masculine activities with the reality of the last masculine activity she pursues, but has not yet achieved: voting.

Pope and other athletic women are working against medically-backed ideas like those of Leonard Williams, "a doctor who specialized on obesity, [and who] claimed that the new female fashion of 'extreme slimness' was not 'dictated by a desire to attract normal manly men,' but rather a 'ruse to find favour in the eyes of the degenerates and homosexuals.'" <sup>102</sup> This, for physicians like Williams, is an argument against women's participation in sports and other physical activities that may slim, tone, or add muscle to the body. Activities like those of the bachelor girl were perceived as "totally unsuited to [women's] physique," and "Williams claimed that 'ultra-athleticism' might 'seriously compromise' young women's 'prospect of maternity,' and he warned that 'violent exercises,' 'athletic contests' and 'combative games' risked transforming a potentially 'good wife and mother into a homosexual creature despised of men and scorned of women'" (308). Women still fight against the regulation and government of their bodies by the patriarchy. Pope contains her speaker by having her wait passively for a potential husband—her only nod toward passivity.

Participation in these activities, coded as male activities, was tricky for women, and advice for women pursuing these physical activities often leaned toward

---

<sup>102</sup> Ina Zweiniger-Bargilowska, "The Making of a Modern Female Body: Beauty, Health and Fitness in Interwar Britain," *Women's History Review* 20, no. 2 (2011): 299-317. 307-308. Leonard Williams published in the 1920's, but that ideas like these were still backed by the medical establishment after the First World War demonstrates how firmly embedded those ideas were in the culture of the Edwardian moment.

containment.<sup>103</sup> Though Georgine Clarsen writes about women driving cars, her findings can apply to other activities coded as masculine: the “whole body engagement with unfamiliar machinery and new physical skills” meant something different for a male body than it did for a female one, for “it also threw into question received beliefs about appropriate female bodily comportments.”<sup>104</sup> A woman putting her body on display by golfing or smoking or driving was at once dangerous and vulnerable: dangerous because her actions are transgressive against what is prescribed for her gender, vulnerable because she is under the gaze of onlookers. Voices of both men and women contesting women’s participation in any number of masculine activities frequently cited this danger to the woman, the wish that she not be seen. For instance, Penny Tinkler quotes from a March 1922 issue of *Girls’ Favourite* in which the brother of a girl who smokes admits, ““most of us men don’t like to see girls whom we think a great deal—our girl chums and our sisters—smoking in public places. I don’t know how to explain it, but it seems to take the girlish freshness away from them.””<sup>105</sup> A woman’s body will always draw attention to itself as a woman’s body, and upon that body is written the expectations of gender.

---

<sup>103</sup> Women could defend their sports activity by appealing to health benefits gained from participating in outdoor activity, but the anxiety over women’s bodies and potential lesbianism remained. Parratt observes “swimming, like other sports, could be and was justified on the grounds of health and utility, but it is also a means of extending the female sphere of action and of acknowledging woman’s corporal side,” as does the speaker here (150). Golfer May Hezlet reminds her readers that “exercise in the open air is a necessity” to the modern woman, “and when combined with healthful bodily exertion, so much the better” (1). Women can also tout the strength of character that comes with dedication to a sport. Hezlet declares that in sports, girls “are taught self-reliance and dependence, adaptability, broad-mindedness, and other useful characteristics, besides the fundamental principle of not being easily provoked into losing their tempers” (3). But even in pointing toward improved strength of body and mind as a benefit of sporting activity could be dangerous, because a sportswoman must then balance what seem to be these masculine outcomes with an overt maintenance of performed femininity.

<sup>104</sup> Georgine Clarsen, *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>105</sup> Penny Tinkler, “Rebellion, Modernity, and Romance: Smoking as a Gendered Practice in Popular Young Women’s Magazines, Britain 1918-1939,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 24, no. 1 (2001): 111-122. 119.

Women motorists, for instance, felt the “coercive weightiness of social difference” every time they got behind the wheel or peered under the hood.<sup>106</sup>

When Hezlet recommends her readers practice their golf game alongside male players, she infers an awareness of the containment inherent in the athletic activities to which women have access: “nothing is better for a girl’s golf than to play constantly on long links with men; she learns to hit out freely, and is always forced to display her best form.”<sup>107</sup> Her mention of “long links” refers to the fact that courses designed to be appropriate for women were shorter, since women were to be discouraged from striving for a long drive. On women’s links, Hezlet says, “there is always the dread of overdriving the hole; and brassy play is usually out of the question—the majority of holes being either a drive or an iron shot, or simply a drive” (38). In order to play and play well, according to Hezlet, herself a successful golfer, a woman must recognize that playing along with the restraints built into ladies’ play will only hinder the sportswoman’s game and will prevent her from being taken seriously. Crosset observes that “the very act of swinging a club is an unfeminine movement. The activity that is the least conflicted with the societal understandings of femininity is putting. It requires insight, thoughtfulness, and in many ways mimics the restricted movements defined as feminine.”<sup>108</sup> A woman like the bachelor girl, who pursues golfing, motoring, and riding, understands the transgressive but necessary physicality of her activities.

These activities draw attention to the physicality of women’s bodies, emphasizing their strength and the stamina it takes to learn a sport or activity. They also highlight the visible ways women are able to prove themselves alongside their male peers. This must

---

<sup>106</sup> Clarsen, *Eat My Dust*, 4.

<sup>107</sup> Hezlet, *Ladies Golf*, 8.

<sup>108</sup> Crosset, *Outsiders in the Clubhouse*, 87.



resonate for Pope as well. Not only do her women participate in a variety of sporting and athletic activities, but they also communicate an awareness that in pursuing these activities, they have discovered that the prescribed differences between behavior appropriate for each gender are arbitrary and constructed. A good example can be found in “A Proposal.”

I can golf with you, row with you, swim with you, ride with you,  
At cutting a Q I can beat you,  
At tossing the spool, as you know, I have tied with you,  
And that without trying to cheat you.  
So I make at Love’s game an equivalent claim,  
And frankly come half-way to meet you.

Maids of old, when in love, fell to shrinking and swooning,  
Like lilies they palèd and drooped,  
But to-day we’ve no use for such feeble buffooning,  
Hysterics and nerves we vote stupid.  
When love comes along, we stand steady and strong,  
In fact, we buck up Master Cupid.

Of this magical year I am taking advantage  
To declare, with sufficient emotion,  
That the passing of time and eternity can’t age  
My love, which is wide as the ocean.

I don't tremble and sigh, but I hope your reply  
Will reveal an exchange of devotion.<sup>109</sup>

While not a suffrage poem overtly, “A Proposal” does present a woman as a forthright speaker and as a woman who has turned her back on the gender role to which she has been socialized. In the second stanza, she declares, “Hysterics and nerves we vote stupid,” noting that these are learned behaviors, as is her confidence to “stand steady and strong.” This woman stands alongside the rest of Pope’s women, including the bachelor girl, as one who knows what she wants and who presses back against the constricting gender dynamics of her day in order to get it. This speaker implies that her vote will have an effect on the sex gender system.<sup>110</sup>

This speaker, hardly a timid, “shrinking and swooning” girl, seems aggressive as she takes the initiative and proposes. In all her athletic activities, she reads like an early version of “A Bachelor Girl.” This speaker, like the bachelor girl, attempts to escape her gender role and redefine it. Every bit her man’s equal in physical activities—ones that require strength, thought, and strategy—there is no reason why such a woman could not be his equal in decision-making, here in the decision to propose. Note two important things here. First, the speaker does not propose marriage; Pope’s women have consistently demonstrated their critique of marriage as a legal institution. She never uses the word, but readers are meant to see “an exchange of devotion” as indicative of marriage. Second, the speaker does not “tremble and sigh” as she awaits his answer to her proposal. She is calm, reasoned, and collected. It is key in this poem that the awaiting of the man’s answer and the nod toward traditional marriage come from a speaker who is

---

<sup>109</sup> Jessie Pope, “A Proposal (1908),” *The Windsor Magazine*, November 1908, 781.

<sup>110</sup> The speaker in “A Fair Warning,” discussed later in this chapter, makes a similar claim.

arguably more transgressive than the bachelor girl. Perhaps this is a reason why “A Bachelor Girl” made the cut for *Airy Nothings* while “A Proposal” did not. The former represents a more effective containment of the fantasy of the independent woman and a maintenance of the femininity of the active women than the latter.

An obvious part of the anxiety over the public physicality of women comes from her performing a task coded as masculine, as does the speaker in “A Proposal.” Claudia Breger notes that in the early century, “discourses of women’s emancipation, antifeminist responses, and emphatic assertions of masculinity overlapped with the categorization of ‘perverse’ and ‘normal’ sexuality in science and literature.”<sup>111</sup> Consistently in her work, Pope demonstrates an awareness of this conversation as well as an acknowledgement of the arbitrariness of such problematically gendered categories. The actions the body performs are the same regardless of the sex of that body; it is the cultural perception of those actions that changes depending upon the sex of the body. Clarsen rightly observes that while the tasks of driving do not differ depending upon the sex of the driver, the actions seemed inseparable from the properly constituted maleness and femaleness of those bodies. [...] So, when a woman crawled under a car to make a repair or adjustment, or when a woman was driving alone, crank-started a car [...] a whole constellation of meanings was called into being that did not apply to precisely the same action performed by a man.<sup>112</sup>

What seems dangerous to early century critics, then, is the slippery slope that wonders what will happen to men when the women become masculinized through their participation in male pursuits. Breger summarizes that “in the context of the fierce

---

<sup>111</sup> Claudia Breger, “Feminine Masculinities: Scientific and Literary Representations of ‘Female Inversion’ at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, nos. 1/2 (2005): 76-106. 76.

<sup>112</sup> Clarsen, *Eat My Dust*, 26.

debates on female access to university education,” debates which Pope would have witnessed firsthand while at North London, “the ‘invert’ designated women who, according to misogynist discourse, were ‘masculinized’ by their entry into previously male realms of research and professional life.”<sup>113</sup> This line of reasoning carried easily over into discussions of women in sports or women participating in anything coded as masculine.

This worry and anxiety over the loss of femininity perceived in girls and women who pursue “masculine ways” manifests in Pope’s writing as a patronizing male who mourns the loss of a type of femininity he has understood to exist only for the observation and enjoyment of men like himself. One of Pope’s uncollected poems from 1909, “The Extinct Crocodile” is from the point of view of male office worker, waxing nostalgic about how schoolgirls no longer get their exercise from walking in crocodile formation.<sup>114</sup> In his younger days, he says, he “knew [the crocodile’s] time of coming to a tick” because he watched the girls pass by each day. Now that he is older, he says, the crocodile is “dead,” though its “vertebrae” may be found on “hockey fields.” But Pope’s distaste for the voices of men like this one is found in the final stanza.

When I was young, in fact a callow ass,  
Of idle brain and fancy volatile,  
Before our office window used to pass  
Miss Proctor’s animated crocodile.  
  
Ah! how my neck I’d crick to catch a view

---

<sup>113</sup> Breger, *Feminine Masculinities*, 80.

<sup>114</sup> Jessie Pope, “The Extinct Crocodile,” *Punch*, October 27, 1909, 293. The headnote for the poem reads: [“The imagination of schoolmistresses and their pupils recoils nowadays from the idea of a return to the Noah’s Ark promenade which was their grandmothers’ winter exercise.”]

Of those young damsels walking two by two.

Thick chestnut pigtails, fluffy flaxen curls,  
Delicious peeps from shyly lowered lids—  
In front, a vanguard of the bigger girls,  
Rearward, the ranks of lively little kids—  
I knew your time of coming to a tick  
And thought your pace in passing far too quick.

No more our youngsters' hearts do you disturb  
As when, diurnally, you used to trail  
Your undulating length along the curb,  
A drift of maidenhood from head to tail.  
The academic crocodile is dead;  
To hockey fields its vertebrae have sped.

I am too old to carp at such a change  
Or to criticise the frenzied female rout  
Who up and down the muddy meadow range  
Where "Hack it through!" and "Bully!" is the shout;  
And so upon the poor departed's bier  
I simply shed a crocodilish tear.

While the speaker admits that he has no stake in the issue of physical education for girls, that he is “too old to carp ... or criticise,” the fact remains that the entire poem is his carping and criticizing. He laments that girls are now able to run freely on athletic fields—beyond the purview of his office window, that he can no longer observe them. But the ferocity with which he clings to his memory of the girls’ passing beneath his gaze remains.<sup>115</sup> His gaze sexualizes the young schoolgirls and reifies their femininity in his memory, and although he states that these memories are from his younger days, admitting rightly that he was “a callow ass” for having these thoughts, the fact remains that he longs to continue watching these girls, no matter his age now. For him, the crocodile represents a slow procession of female bodies presented for his consumption. His clinging to the memory is important for Pope because it indicates that the days of the crocodile are indeed gone. Those girls are gone as well, evolving into women like the speaker of “A Proposal” or the bachelor girl, and beyond the reach of speakers like this one.

For the women themselves, regardless of their male observers, the physical, emotional, and mental effects of taking up sporting activities were crucial. For early century women participating, perhaps for the first time, in strenuous exercise and moving their bodies freely without the restrictive undergarments of their Victorian mothers, the sense of empowerment that came with reclaiming the body was immense. For instance, Erica Munkwitz writes that “To become knowledgeable and proficient in horsemanship, women riders had to learn inner strength and confidence, to rely on no one but themselves when mounted. The authority women gained by taking control of their

---

<sup>115</sup> I use “gaze” intentionally with an awareness of Laura Mulvey’s initial problematizing of it. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18.

mounts—and, by extension, the direction of their own lives—was certainly inspiring if indirectly empowering.”<sup>116</sup> However empowering such activities may have been, they came with a social price. In order to maintain an appearance of traditional femininity, adult women who were motoring or golf enthusiasts, for instance, often worked twice as hard to maintain their gender performance.

Writing in the 1990s about the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), Todd W. Crosset focuses on the performance of gender for the women on the tour and observes that the performance of femininity is extremely important as the women are all but required to present their athletic skill in the least disruptive manner possible.<sup>117</sup> The women on the tour recognize how they are bound by societal expectations. Nancy Lopez, an LPGA player “well known on the tour [in the 1980s and 1990s] for her traditional femininity and excellent play,” is aware of the “conflictual” relationship between “being feminine and moving athletically” (84-85). Lopez said in a press conference, “When I stand over the ball, something clicks in and I become like a machine” (85). Her language carefully reminds those listening that she is something other than a woman when she plays golf. When she returns the club to her bag, it follows, she returns to femininity. The same may be said for Pope’s bachelor girl. She “cultivates masculine ways” in her activities, but by the end of the poem, she presents herself as just another girl waiting to be chosen by a man for marriage. Yet, as with an athlete like Nancy Lopez, despite whatever performance the woman makes, the athletic knowledge and skill remain. Pope’s speaker may be biding her time until marriage, but she will still retain driving knowledge, applicable both to motorcars and golf balls.

---

<sup>116</sup> Erica Munkwitz, “Vixens of Vinery: Women, Sport, and Fox-Hunting in Britain, 1860-1914,” *Critical Survey* 24, no. 1 (2012): 74-87. 78.

<sup>117</sup> Crosset, *Outsiders in the Clubhouse*, 107.

Joyce Kay notes that women who advocated physical education for girls often spoke in favor of women's suffrage.<sup>118</sup> Buss was one of those women. At North London, Buss worked to free her students from those restraints by requiring non-restrictive clothing and by requiring her students to participate in physical education, including calisthenics and gymnastics.<sup>119</sup> There is no denying the link between physically active women like Pope's bachelor girl—and Pope herself—and the suffrage movement.<sup>120</sup>

Munkwitz states that

whether or not [women riders] supported such political movements [as women's suffrage], they brought their activities into the larger public sphere and gaze and helped make those images and pursuits acceptable and even admired. While suffragists were typically portrayed as rallying support for the cause rather than taking part in recreations, these women were also interested in sports and the possibilities inherent in these activities for further female emancipation. Whether or not those campaigning for women's rights agreed politically with women riders in the hunt field, and vice versa, both groups of women helped advance

---

<sup>118</sup> Kay, "It Wasn't Just Emily Davidson," 1347.

<sup>119</sup> *The North London Collegiate School, 1850-1950*, ed. R.M. Scrimgeour (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

<sup>120</sup> Pope "is a very much outdoor young lady. She rides, swims, walks, and most important of all (because it is intimately connected with her literary career), she beagles. Every Saturday she goes out with that sporting pack, the Bushey Heath Beagles. It was a humorous article on her experience in beagling which first introduced her to 'Punch' readers some eight years ago. Much interest was aroused in the sporting manner in which it was written, and a master of beagles up in the North wrote to the editor asking him to get his 'sporting man' to write some more beagling articles" (2). It is important here not only that Pope is a sportswoman, but also that she can pass as a man when writing about her experiences. "The Poet of Punch," *The Colonist*, Nelson, New Zealand, April 16, 1914. 2.



strong, positive female identities over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>121</sup>

It is important that even if sportswomen do not necessarily support the suffrage movement or participate in suffrage activities, their presence in the public eye, fighting, however subtly, for their right to be taken seriously as participants in these sporting activities, contributes to the overall argument in favor of women's suffrage. These women know what they are doing when they start a car, mount a horse, align a tee shot, or even light a cigarette.

In 1913, the first acts of WSPU vandalism were carried out against sporting targets.<sup>122</sup> Kay records, "During February and March golf courses were attacked with corrosive liquids such as acid, which destroyed the greens, or digging implements, used to make holes in the turf or to carve 'Votes for Women' in the grass" (1341).<sup>123</sup> These acts of vandalism were widely covered in newspapers, keeping the suffragettes and their slogan present in the minds of the public. Kay notes that "there is no evidence that targets were definitely gender-specific; tennis and golf clubs, where female membership was more likely, were not immune from attack" (1345). Furthermore, "influencing politicians,

---

<sup>121</sup> Munkwitz, "Vixens of Vinery," 83.

<sup>122</sup> Kay notes that they were often sportswomen themselves, despite the prevailing mythology now. History remembers the women who led the WSPU, the ones who were arrested, but Kay reminds us that "the campaign for the vote could not have succeeded without this dedicated army of anonymous foot-soldiers" and asks, "if their political contribution has gone unheralded, how much less is known about their day-to-day existence and their recreational pursuits?" (1347). We cannot make an assumption about the group, Kay argues, when we know the most about only a few members.

<sup>123</sup> Kay anticipates the reader's wondering why, when considering "the connections between the WSPU and the sports community," sporting venues were targeted by this particular militant campaign (1345). She answers, "perhaps the most plausible reason why sports premises were attacked was that they were very easy targets, nearly always empty and unguarded at night. Many were located in suburban or semi-rural areas [...]. Targets were therefore easily flammable, easily accessible and not well protected; they were also situated in areas to which suffragettes able and willing to engage in arson could travel without difficulty. Applying these criteria to sports premises, private sports pavilions often fitted the bill, being of wooded construction, relatively isolated by grounds even if suburban, and lacking adequate defence against intruders. Press reports certainly suggest that few women were caught attacking such buildings" (1345).

rather than upsetting ordinary club members, male or female, was uppermost in the minds of the suffragettes (1345). Kay quotes Hannah Mitchell, a WSPU member who participated in golf course vandalism: “here did seem something to laugh at in the idea of the plus-foured MP toddling along to his favourite golf links, to find, cut in the sacred sward, the terrible slogan ‘Votes for Women’” (1345). It cannot be denied that these sporting targets “symbolized male leisure” and that the most popular spectator sports during “Edwardian times were overwhelmingly masculine pursuits, horse racing largely excluded women and while golf clubs tolerated female participants they forced them to abide by male rules and rendered them second-class citizens of the links—as they were of the state” (1346).

While these suffragette activities did not take place until 1913, long after “A Bachelor Girl” and “A Proposal” had been published, there is no denying the awareness of the situation for women like the bachelor girl, Pope herself, and the pioneering women scholars, athletes, and drivers who forced their way into masculine territory and held their own there.

### **The “Typical” Suffragist and the “Typical” Woman**

When the WSPU separated itself from the NUWSS, the latter group had to redefine itself in light of this new group that was quickly gaining fame and followers. The WSPU’s first militant movements were primarily ones that utilized auditory and visual space: “not going beyond heckling Cabinet ministers, interrupting public meetings, and holding large processions and demonstrations.”<sup>124</sup> However, after eleven WSPU members were arrested and imprisoned in October of 1906, the NUWSS decided that the

---

<sup>124</sup> Hume, *The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies*, 29.

militant group “could not be ignored” (30). Millicent Garrett Fawcett, after the arrests, expressed her support for the women arrested and their common cause:

I hope the more old-fashioned suffragists will stand by them; and I take this opportunity of saying that in my opinion, far from injuring the movement, they have done more during the last twelve months to bring it with in the region of practical politics than we have been able to accomplish in the same number of years. (30)

She added privately that “I feel that the action of the prisoners has touched the imagination of the country in a manner which quieter methods did not succeed doing” (30). By 1909, however, the tides were turning. The militant methods of the WSPU had grown violent.<sup>125</sup> It was important that the more constitutional NUWSS distance itself from the WSPU and “remind the public and the Government that the majority of those who worked for women’s suffrage were not militant” (30). Hume observes that “the issue of militancy had divided the suffrage movement itself and vitiated its strength,” but

the fact remained that, by the end of 1909, neither the NUWSS nor the WSPU had found a way of convincing the Liberals to sponsor a measure to enfranchise women. The extraparliamentary activities of the suffrage organizations had not secured the passage of a measure of women’s suffrage, and it now appeared unlikely that women’s suffrage could ever be rescued from this parliamentary impasse. (59-60)

---

<sup>125</sup> Hume describes the events of September 1909: “On September 5, three members of the WSPU accosted Prime Minister Asquith as he was leaving church, and later that same day the same women pursued Asquith and Gladstone on the golf course. That evening, stones were thrown through a window of a house in which Asquith was dining. Twelve days later, in Birmingham, while Asquith was speaking at Bingley Hall, Mary Leigh and Charlotte Marsh, members of the WSPU, who had positioned themselves on a roof near the hall, interrupted the meeting by chopping up slates from the roof and hurling them down on the police and then on Asquith’s motor car. Asquith was not injured, but Parliament was outraged” (54). Four years later, in 1913, members of the WSPU bomb Lloyd George’s nearly-finished house.

This is the historical moment in which Pope is writing her suffragists. From any perspective, it is tricky to be a suffragist. Pope is able to give her readers humanized, realistic depictions of not only suffragists, but overtly WSPU-aligned suffragettes. She is able to make her readers hear what these women have to say; she communicates their complicated situation in such a way that exposes the diverse forces against which women must work. Most importantly, Pope works to problematize and erase the arbitrary line drawn to separate women from suffragettes.

Pope references only one (that I have found) specific instance of militant violence explicitly: the February 1913 bombing of Lloyd George's nearly finished house, Pinfold Manor. The headnote for the uncollected poem, titled "A Clue"—"A Walton Heath Reflection"—names immediately the poem's object of reference. In the body of the poem, however, Pope does not address the action of bombing the house, choosing rather to focus her eye on the challenge to traditional femininity that militancy consistently offers.

Time was when, walking in the street,  
Or sitting in a room,  
A simple sight my glance would greet  
And chase away my gloom.

A bit of bifurcated wire  
That thrilled me to the core  
And fanned a flame of tender fire—  
A hairpin, nothing more.

I fain would guess what plait or curl  
Had cast its shackle free,  
And conjured up a charming girl,  
For all were fair to me.

But, young or old or plain or fair,  
I knew, in any case,  
A woman's presence had been there  
And sanctified the place.

O Dead Sea fruit upon the bough!  
O false and perjured promise!  
When I espy a hairpin now  
I wonder where the bomb is.<sup>126</sup>

Especially in Pope's suffrage texts, there are frequent references to what anti-suffrage men—and sometimes women—imagine they stand to lose if these daughters of the New Woman win the vote. To illustrate, I will discuss “Sandwich Women” and “A Fair Warning” in addition to “A Clue.” We have already seen one man's lamentation in “The Extinct Crocodile.” The speaker of “A Clue” is cut from similar cloth. Like the schoolgirls' crocodile, the solitary hairpin, for this speaker, acts as a fragment of a woman's body, calling to mind for him “a charming girl.” His memory is nostalgic, but like the grown man gazing longingly at schoolgirls, the gaze of this man is problematic in

---

<sup>126</sup> Jessie Pope, “The Clue,” *Punch*, February 26, 1913. 159.

its fixation. The sight of a hairpin and its association with the “[sanctifying]” presence of women make the speaker feel both sensual and happy. This is, of course, as long as the hairpin has been doing a hairpin’s job, securing a “plait or curl” on a woman passing by demurely. In the final stanza, the speaker is disillusioned that his association no longer holds entirely true, for now a hairpin can indicate the presence of a suffragette who may have placed a bomb on the premises. This kind of woman does not have leave sanctification and purity in her wake, no woman does. The woman imagined by this speaker is an “angel in the house” kind of woman, the kind of woman kept on a pedestal and admired. This woman, as Phillips says of her “Typical Suffragist,” does not exist.

The man here and the one earlier in “The Extinct Crocodile” mourn the passing of a type of woman who only existed in fantasy and fiction, the kind of woman who embodies traditional femininity. He reads the women’s failure to sanctify the space in the final stanza as a betrayal, her “false and perjured promise.” The presence of her hairpin should indicate that her purifying presence has washed over the space. Instead, the hairpin has now been redefined by the women who left them behind at Walton Heath. Now, this man, like his fellow mourner in “The Extinct Crocodile,” finds that what he once held dear has been taken from him; it has turned to “Dead Sea Fruit upon the bough,” turning to ash in his mouth. The male speaker’s reaction indicates his sense of ownership over the found hairpins and, by extension, the women who dropped them in the past. The women who dropped the hairpins are, literally and figuratively, attempting to destroy this man’s world in which women exist as beautiful objects for him to gaze upon. This is a dangerous prospect, causing him to re-exert what ownership and control

he can. But in the light that suffragists like Pope's women shine on the situation of women, that man's perspective is exposed for the violence it perpetuates.

Surveillance and scolding judgment, something to which marching suffragists were no strangers, are acts of violence that Pope uses to lay bare the division imagined between traditionally "feminine" women and the suffragists who are forging a new femininity. In an uncollected poem from *The Pall Mall Magazine*, "Sandwich Women," Pope describes a suffragette from the point of view of a flexible speaker. Like "A Fair Warning," this poem's tone changes tremendously. Notice that while the tone of the poem may change depending on the type of speaker employed (male, female, suffragist, anti-suffragist), the critique in "Sandwich Women" is leveled at the wearing of sandwich boards, not at the driving force of the movement itself.

You are the very latest thing  
In modern femininity;  
You pass—a parti-coloured string—  
Down West, and the vicinity,  
With sandwich boards that soil the wing  
Of womanhood's divinity.

I wonder if you're bribed by cheques  
For all the jibes and laughter you  
Invoke, bemired by muddy specks,  
The passing taxis waft to you,  
With horses sneezing down your necks

And urchins calling after you.

Or if domestic duties bore  
And fill you with satiety,  
If politics you would explore  
Regardless of propriety,  
Then know—your cause will never score  
By gutter notoriety!<sup>127</sup>

Like the speakers of “The Extinct Crocodile” and “A Clue,” this speaker, when read as male especially, laments the passing of a type of femininity. He sees marching suffragists using their bodies as billboards and acting against their gender. He sees them “soil[ing]” their women’s bodies by drawing attention to them in what he understands is a vulgar way. Here, again, Pope alludes to the purifying presence angel in the house, this time giving her a “wing” and “divinity.” The speaker cannot understand why these women act in this way when they should be sheltered in their homes and protected by their men—protected from, Pope would add, men like this speaker. This perspective is easy to imagine from either gender. Indeed, as we shall see with “Any Woman to Any Suffragette,” this kind of admonition can easily come from one woman to another. It is admitted in the November 1907 issue of *Votes for Women* that demonstrators often hear variations of “We quite believe in women’s suffrage, but we feel the cause is being put back by these extremists.”<sup>128</sup> The definition of extremism can vary, of course, to include simply marching to planting bombs.

---

<sup>127</sup> Jessie Pope, “Sandwich Women,” *The Pall Mall Magazine*, October 1910, 632.

<sup>128</sup> “Women’s Suffrage Demonstration in Manchester,” *Votes for Women*, November 1907, 29.



However, we could also imagine a suffragist woman as the speaker. Now, the first two lines sound proud; marching women are a new type of woman. They are the new feminine. They walk despite the “jibes and laughter” described in the second stanza, and they continue to walk, “regardless of propriety,” like an updated crocodile, one with a mind of its own. “Regardless of propriety” now becomes the operative phrase in this poem. For each type of speaker, it will mean something different. For the conservative speaker, propriety becomes something against which the women are transgressing; conversely, propriety can indicate something consciously flouted. From both sides, it is a transgression, but whether the transgression is something worth punishing varies.

Although there is not much exercise of fantasy in the poem, the final two lines act as final containment, for they seem not to change regardless of the political inclination of the speaker. An anti-suffragist surmises that militant tactics will ruin the cause, yet the marching suffragist knows that the act of marching will convince no one. For the cause to win, the men in power must be convinced. Instead, marching gains notoriety and plants the seed of women’s suffrage in the minds of the public, which, judging by the impetus of the poem, has already been accomplished. No one would be telling the women to stop if what they were doing was not already working on some level.

Pope never seems to doubt that women will win. Published in *The Windsor Magazine* in 1909, “A Fair Warning” ostensibly warns the men of the “House” that women are on the way, coming to change the rules of the political game.

When women get the vote,  
You men take this to heart,  
The “House” will wear

A gallant air,  
And members must be smart.  
For *looks* will be the passport there  
When women get the vote.

New toyshops you will note  
More than there were before,  
For you in toys  
Must find your joys,  
Since Mary, Constance and Lenore  
Won't be your playthings any more,  
When women get the vote.

The marriage laws will show  
The trend of female views.  
You Benedicks,  
In sorry fix,  
Must mind your "p's" and "q's,"  
You'll all be shaking in your shoes  
When women get the vote.<sup>129</sup>

In only three stanzas, Pope repeats the phrase "When women get the vote" four times. The language looks ahead to a definite future: it is not a matter of whether women

---

<sup>129</sup> Jessie Pope, "A Fair Warning," *The Windsor Magazine*, 1909. 696.

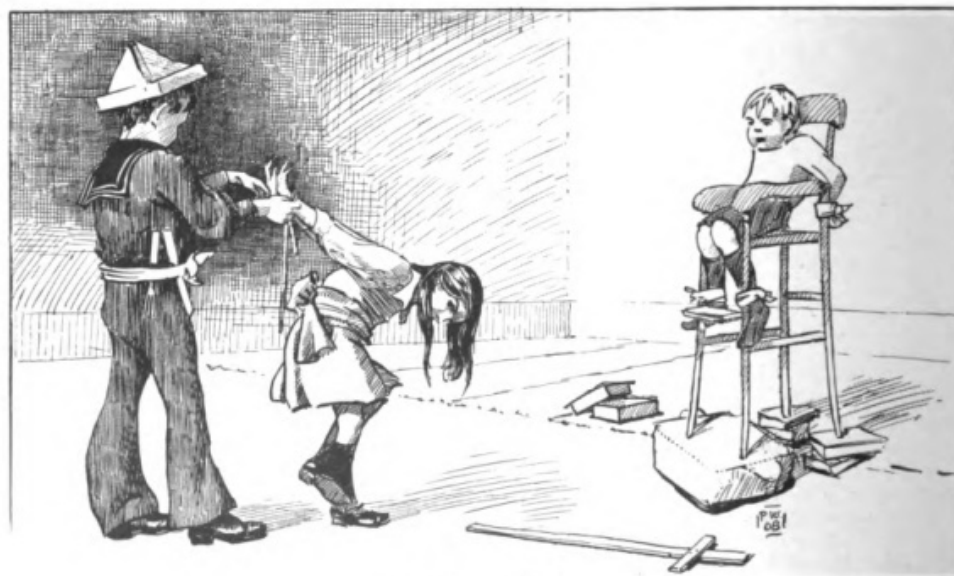
get the vote, the poem says, but rather it is a matter of time.<sup>130</sup> The first stanza reads like the containment in the final stanza of “A Bachelor Girl,” but in “A Fair Warning,” the second two stanzas deliver as overt a critique of gender relationships as Pope can make in 14 lines, especially the second stanza. A female speaker addresses a male audience, declaring outwardly that women’s suffrage is a step toward changing the status quo in heterosexual relationships: women “won’t be your playthings any more.” The final stanza, too, references how women’s votes will be able to effect change in marriage laws. Voting women must be counted as citizens, and citizens must be considered to be sovereign human beings, not the property, legal or otherwise, of fathers, husbands, or brothers. The speaker here surmises that in the political power women could wield with their vote that anti-suffrage men, recognizing that power themselves—otherwise why would they campaign to stop women’s gaining it—will “all be shaking in [their] shoes / When women get the vote.”

Although this poem does employ some evasive strategies, like most of Pope’s texts, it is far more overt in its stand on women’s suffrage and in its address to the male opposition to the cause than the ones included in *Airy Nothings*. It opens and closes with references to what male detractors assume are women’s primary concerns: looks and manners. But the final stanza lacks the containment found in “A Bachelor Girl.” In *The Windsor Magazine*, whether intentionally or not, the placement of an illustration beneath Pope’s poem acts as containment. It is likely that the containment present in the final stanza of “A Bachelor Girl” is one of the reasons it appears in *Airy Nothings* rather than a slightly more pointed poem like “A Fair Warning.

---

<sup>130</sup> Another poem from *Airy Nothings*, “The Doom of the Club,” discussed in my second chapter, indicates a similar optimism.

Accompanying “A Fair Warning” in *The Windsor Magazine* is an illustration, titled “Division of Labour,” depicting three children, two boys and a girl. At the far left, the oldest child, a boy, wearing a folded newspaper hat and a sailor outfit with a toy sword stuck in his belt, binds the hands of the girl. The older boy, captioned as the “Pirate King,” has pulled the Little Girl’s hands roughly upward, nearly to level with his own shoulders, forcing the girl to bend double to accommodate the angle. Her arms are straight and probably at the maximum range of movement for her shoulder joints. The youngest child, the other boy, is bound, wrists and ankles, to a tall chair perched atop books and boxes.



DIVISION OF LABOUR.

LITTLE GIRL (just captured): Not so tight! Oh! not so tight, you're hurting!  
 PIRATE KING (consolingly): Be a man. Never mind a bit of pain; that's half the fun.  
 PREVIOUS CAPTIVE (bound on marooner's rock): What about all my chocolates? You've eaten every one.  
 PIRATE KING: Ah! that's the other half. See?

Figure 6. “Division of Labour,” *The Windsor Magazine*, 1909, 696.

The Pirate King advises the Little Girl—who even in playing with the boys is only ever a girl, even the little boy gets renamed “Previous Captive”—to “Be a man,” that the pain she’s experiencing is “half the fun.” It is more fun, obviously for him than for her, as was, we assume, the consumption of the Previous Captive’s chocolates. The

“Division of Labour” here seems to be that the Pirate King gives the orders and everyone else follows them. Positioned on the page beneath Pope’s “A Fair Warning,” “Division of Labour” seems to offer the following message: if this Little Girl wants to play with the boys, then she must abide by the boys’ rules, not seek to change the game herself. The title of the illustration could reference the WSPU’s distancing itself from the Labour Party in 1907. The issue of women’s suffrage did create a division in the party.<sup>131</sup>

It is unclear whether Pope’s speaker in “A Fair Warning” is male or female, but this is an important blank that Pope lets us fill in for ourselves. In the context of the poem’s sharing a page with the “consoling” Pirate King in “Division of Labour,” it is easy to imagine this speaker as an adult version of the child Pirate King, feeling himself quite clever for playing on the stereotype of a shallow woman and a militant, man-eating suffragette. In his hands, the warnings are accented with eye-rolling, but told with an assumption that this is an accurate foretelling of the future. He places his emphasis on the first and final stanzas, on the more outwardly humorous details, the “looks” of the MPs and their now having to mind their manners. Contrarily, it is just as easy to hear this poem in a female voice, one supportive of women’s suffrage. Her foretelling of the future could be accurate, too. In her voice, the second stanza becomes especially pointed. Further, a female voice lets us hear a critique of the casual sexism pervasive in everyday language as the “Benedicks” of government learn they “must mind [their] ‘p’s’ and ‘q’s’.” Such men may well be “shaking in [their] shoes / When women get the vote,” not because women will ruin it for the men, but because women, or at least Pope’s women, seek to change the status of received notions of gender. So, yes, in a way, these women

---

<sup>131</sup> Rosen, *Rise Up, Women!*, 85.

will ruin it for the men by holding them accountable for resting on the cultural and social privilege their sex provides them.

As the question of suffrage became ubiquitous, many arguments were offered in opposition; the ones Pope addresses most frequently, as demonstrated in this chapter, revolve around the relative femininity of a woman's body and the relative transgressiveness of what a politically-aware woman chooses to do with her body: how she chooses to dress it, where she chooses to place it. Lisa Carstens finds that "prominent medical authorities" of the Edwardian moment argued

that the pursuit of masculine activities could actually damage or retard women physiologically, an unsexing that harmed mental and reproductive health. [...] The anonymous 1906 editorial on women's suffrage published in the *British Medical Journal* suggested that [as informed by Freud] underlying hermaphroditic constitution could affect basic gender identity, expressing itself in hermaphroditic personalities.<sup>132</sup>

The fear was that one could literally lose one's sex. Carsten further observes that "for a short time, coinciding with the most intense years of the British suffrage campaign, mainstream science in Britain genuinely entertained the possibility that patterns of social behavior could trigger physiological sex reversal, particularly in women" (65). It is during this moment, all before the First World War, that Pope is writing her suffragists. As we have seen elsewhere and will see with Pope's most well-known suffrage poems, "Any Woman to Any Suffragette" and "Any Suffragette to Any Woman," published in *Airy Nothings*, the line drawn between the genders becomes additionally problematized when an additional line is drawn between "normal" women and suffragists.

---

<sup>132</sup> Carsten, "Unbecoming Women," 62-64.

One of Pope's uncollected suffrage texts from *Punch*, 1910's "Purple, Green and White," depicts a woman horrified that passersby mistake her for a suffragette.<sup>133</sup> Written as a letter to Mr. Punch, this first person narrator, signed "Stock Size," immediately reassures Mr. Punch that she "think[s] politics are silly things" and "[doesn't] want a vote." She goes on to explain that she has been mistaken for a suffragette—an association that has been "most painful" for her—due to the color scheme of her "spring costume." She felt the outfit was "quite *chic*" and "duckie," until she noticed that "my own sex shrank from me, while the other one glared at me with repugnant curiosity, and the street boys, almost without exception, shouted 'Votes for Women' when I passed."<sup>134</sup> She put up with the attention for three days, she writes, before deciding to stay indoors and writing a letter explaining her plight to a local newspaper. "Whether the public most wished to relieve a deserving case or to show their antagonism to the Suffragette movement, I cannot say," she writes. Readers sent her "fifteen new frocks." She writes to Mr. Punch that she doesn't want or need any more new dresses, and she closes her letter saying "that though purple, green and white may be unpopular colours, I at least own them, indirectly, a debt of gratitude."

The final sentence is the one hint that the text isn't meant wholly to deride the suffrage movement. The overall focus on clothing is key, for it highlights how successful the WSPU's use of a color scheme as a type of branding has become. The WSPU adopted purple, green, and white as their signature colors in May 1908.<sup>135</sup> Doing so becomes a

---

<sup>133</sup> Jessie Pope, "Purple, Green and White," *Punch*, March 23, 1910, 214.

<sup>134</sup> Pope deploys this type of shouting scenery in "Cat Out of the Bag," in which an older woman who rather resembles Phillips's "Typical Suffragist" chases her escaped cat over the heath. In a short story that otherwise has nothing overtly to do with the suffrage movement, Pope keeps the refrain "Votes for Women" in play.

<sup>135</sup> Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, 265

sort of visual shorthand, allowing passersby to do exactly as they do in Pope's text here, identify women—and some men—as sympathetic to the cause, keeping it ever present in the minds of the public, visibility and the deliberate occupation of space being key to effecting change. The female narrator here seeks to draw a line between herself—performing the role of the flighty, fashion-obsessed woman—and the more transgressive form of woman found in the Suffragettes.<sup>136</sup> Part of what makes the latter women dangerous, of course, is the attention they draw to themselves in the name of the suffrage movement and the way they seek out audiences to hear their voices. Although this narrator writes what is ostensibly a private letter to Mr. Punch—"in your private ear only"—we must remember that she first told the story of her colors-wearing experience to a newspaper, publishing, we must imagine, her contact information with it in order for the donated dresses to be delivered to her. Now, a second time, she tells the entire story to another audience, this time acknowledging the "gratitude" she bears toward the colors, and by extension, what the colors represent. This narrator, then, behaves as a suffragette, not only wearing the colors, but also loudly telling her story. Furthermore, she never says that she wears the dresses sent to her by the newspaper readers. Ultimately, Pope's text shows, there is no measurable difference between a suffragist woman and a "normal" woman.

It is important to notice how different the speakers in Pope's uncollected poems are from the speakers in the poems she chooses to collect in *Airy Nothings*, her second and final collection of humorous poetry for adults until the publication of *Hits and Misses*

---

<sup>136</sup> On the same page as "Purple, Green and White" is an illustration of a woman boasting not only a muff with six tails, but a six-tailed stole as well. The caption reads: "One of the things which the Spring weather will remove from our aching vision." *Punch*, of course, never relents in its critique of women's fashion, and that critique often edges toward ridicule.



in 1920.<sup>137</sup> Read on their own, some of these uncollected poems, especially “Sandwich Women,” do seem more critical of the suffrage movement than the ones included in *Airy Nothings* like “A Bachelor Girl.” The validation of the suffrage movement is more deeply embedded, more difficult to parse out in a text like “Sandwich Women” than in something like “A Bachelor Girl.” Note that the suffrage voices included in the 1909 anthology are clearly female ones, all in the first person. This works in Pope’s favor by allowing readers to see what they want to see. Those opposed to suffrage will hear shrill arguments from flighty women who are only biding their time until they are married anyway, but those who support the cause will find the treasures Pope has buried for them. “Any Woman to Any Suffragette” and “Any Suffragette to Any Woman” are special in that they are presented on facing pages in *Airy Nothings*. A dismissive reader can understand that these women are talking only to each other, that they cancel each other out, but an open reader is able to see that these women are really two sides of the same coin.<sup>138</sup>

The first of the two, “Any Woman to Any Suffragette,” is from the point of view of an ostensibly anti-suffragist woman. She approaches the “Campaigner” for a *tête-à-tête*, a whispered women’s conversation. I will refer to this first speaker as “the Woman.” The second, “Any Suffragette to Any Woman,” responds directly to the Woman of the first poem, defending the necessity of militancy and looking ahead to the future, certain

---

<sup>137</sup> Of course, she published three collections of poetry during the First World War, and while many of the poems included here do speak to women’s questions, the majority of them are more clearly focused on the issue of the war. *Jessie Pope’s War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915); *More War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915); *Simple Rhymes for Stirring Times* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916).

<sup>138</sup> In her entry for Pope in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Jane Potter writes that “it could be argued [that these two poems] show Pope taking a balanced view of the controversial fight for the franchise.”

that the vote will be won for all women, those fighting for it and those not. I will refer to this latter speaker as “the Suffragette.”

The titles of these poems do important work to appeal to a conservative readership. By drawing a distinction between Woman and Suffragette, the immediate impression of these poems is that they fall in line with traditional understandings of gender and gender roles. The Woman, after all, speaks first, and she exhorts the Suffragette to return to her proper, gendered place. The Suffragette, whose voice is left ringing in readers’ ears, sees the Woman’s place for what it is, a “protected shell,” simultaneously fragile and firm. She recognizes that the unquestioning adherence to the doctrine of separate spheres—by both sexes—is the root of the problem.

Like so many of Pope’s female speakers, both the Woman and the Suffragette walk a careful line. The orientation of these poems on facing pages lends the illusion that each should be read as antagonistic toward the other, and that critics continue to read them as two opposing sides of the argument proves that this strategy works.<sup>139</sup> Where the

---

<sup>139</sup> Before these two poems in the collection is “A Frost,” a six-stanza poem which takes up two facing pages on its own. In “A Frost,” a third person speaker watches the “Child Spangle-Frost” as she “throws her kisses all about / In half-a-million spangles.” Described as a “slender maid,” the frost fairy “decks the lawn” and everything else in “brave array.” In her wake, the land looks “new and glittering.” All the words used to describe her activity are feminine ones: “sparkle,” “bridal feather,” and “daintiest of dangles.” It is important that Frost “hesitates” at first, but then moves with freedom and joy through the public landscape. The final stanza is a warning for her to “fly faster” as an inevitable “rival lurks behind [her].” Her “rival” is “That ill-conditioned spoil-sport, Thaw,” and he is gendered as male. Their relationship, hinting that Frost beautifies but Thaw ruins, depicts a sort of battle of the sexes. It is important, however, that they share space rather than having certain areas circumscribed for their independent use. Here, Frost enters the public space while Thaw removes the traces of what she has done. Thaw, effectively, silences Frost. But, as a thing of nature, Frost will return to do it all over again. She is feminine persistence.

voice of the Woman may feel more restrained as she writes from a place within the female norm, the voice of the Suffragette is more overtly angry. The Suffragette's immediate use of "you" and "we" emphasizes the differences between the more traditionally behaved Woman and the more transgressive Suffragette. The titles of the two poems set up a dichotomy. A woman, by this logic, is not a suffragette, and a suffragette, then, is not a woman. The first stanza of "Any Woman" does not assume that the women not shouting and demonstrating are not aligned with the ultimate goals of the suffragettes, something that the "Any Suffragette" understands. The Suffragette knows that the Woman will take up the vote that the Suffragette has won for her, and the Woman, operating from a place more aligned with the bachelor girl's "mother and grannie and aunt," offers advice rather than condemnation. The Woman wants to make it clear "Why [the suffragettes] don't see us fighting beside you," but this does not preclude that women like her are not fighting. They are, perhaps, fighting in other ways; indeed, the second line here declares that the speaker is "not going to flout or deride you." This speaker is an ally. The question of militancy is at the heart of these two poems.

---

Following these two poems is the short "Well-bred Whines." Written from the point of view of ladies' dogs, this three-stanza poem is a plea to ladies to "Remember your [little dog], / Who is shivering and whimpering outside." Given Pope's history of communicating women's questions through the use of animal and infant speakers, choosing to follow her uninterrupted suffrage debate with the dogs of shopping ladies can be read as a calculated move. Each stanza follows the same pattern. The first three lines indicate a purpose for an outing—shopping for various items or meeting people—and the last three lines are the request from the dogs not to be forgotten. That the dogs are "shivering and whimpering outside" is repeated. Here, the dogs can be read as women kept outside of the political arena. Their careless owners may align with members of Parliament, who give only lip service to supporting votes for women. For some readers, however, this return to the stereotypically flighty woman—shopping for "pretty frillies plain and pied"—could also serve as an orchestral move ostensibly to contain the political discussion that precedes it in the anthology.

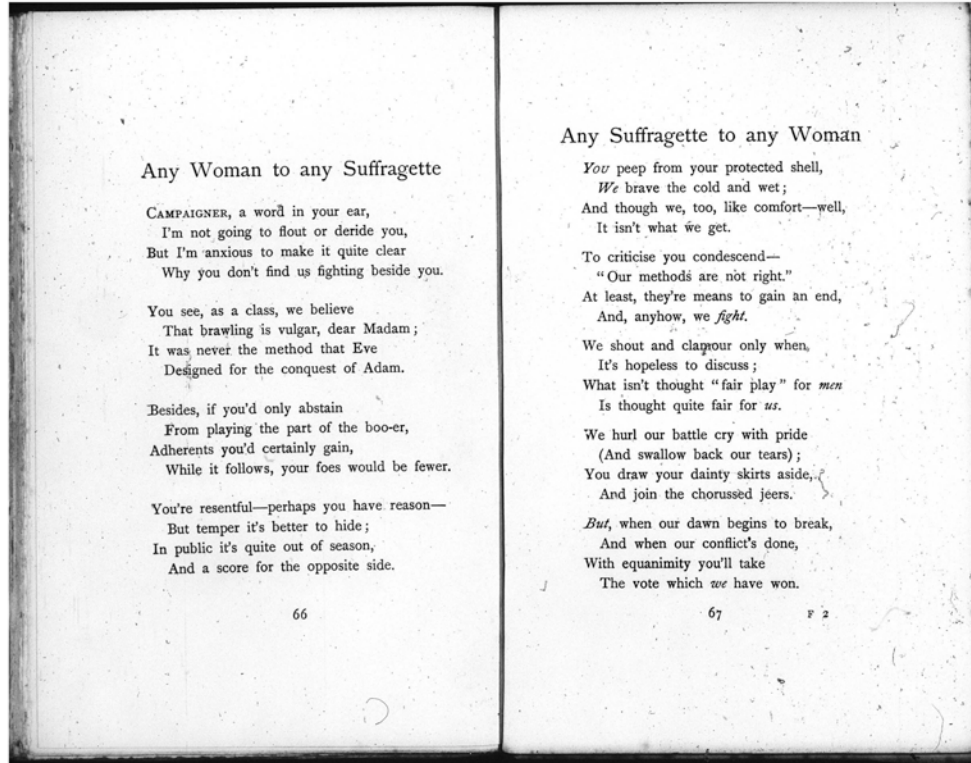


Figure 7. “Any Woman to Any Suffragette” and “Any Suffragette to Any Woman” as they appear in *Airy Nothings*.

These poems appear on facing pages: “Any Woman” on the left and “Any Suffragette” on the right, essentially giving the Suffragette the final word. Presenting them on facing pages isolates their voices and allows Pope to allude to the complexity of the issue without polarization.

“Any Woman to Any Suffragette”

Campaigner, a word in your ear,

I’m not going to flout or deride you,

But I’m anxious to make it quite clear

Why you don’t find us fighting beside you.

You see, as a class, we believe

That brawling is vulgar, dear Madam;  
It was never the method that Eve  
Designed for the conquest of Adam.

Besides, if you'd only abstain  
From playing the part of the boo-er,  
Adherents you'd certainly gain,  
While it follows, your foes would be fewer.

You're resentful—perhaps you have reason—  
But temper it's better to hide;  
In public it's quite out of season,  
And a score for the opposite side.<sup>140</sup>

The Suffragette, on the facing page, responds to the Woman. Her poem is longer, five stanzas to the Woman's four. She also utilizes italics for emphasis seven times. These italics also feed the popular antagonistic reading of these two poems as they emphasize binary differences: "*You*" and "*We*" in the first stanza; "*men*" and "*us*" in the third, for instance.

"Any Suffragette to Any Woman"

*You* peep from your protected shell,  
*We* brave the cold and wet;  
And though we, too, like comfort—well,  
It isn't what we get.

---

<sup>140</sup> Jessie Pope, "Any Woman to Any Suffragette," *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1908), 66.

To criticise you condescend  
“Our methods are not right.”  
At least, they’re means to gain an end,  
And, anyhow, we *fight*.

We shout and clamour only when  
It’s hopeless to discuss;  
What isn’t thought “fair play” for *men*  
Is thought quite fair for *us*.

We hurl our battle cry with pride  
(And swallow back our tears);  
You draw your dainty skirts aside,  
And join the chorussed jeers.

*But*, when our dawn begins to break,  
And when our conflict’s done,  
With equanimity you’ll take  
The vote which *we* have won.<sup>141</sup>

Both women appeal to history and tradition and indicate clearly that they understand how their gender roles have been constructed and enforced. The Suffragette, like most of Pope’s women, has given up on performing the norms, while the Woman

---

<sup>141</sup> Jessie Pope, “Any Suffragette to Any Woman,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1908), 67.

searches for an appropriate balance between fighting and femininity. The Woman claims that “brawling,” a very masculine term, “was never the method that Eve / Designed for the conquest of Adam.” It is important to note here that the speaker uses two terms usually gendered as male: “brawling” and “conquest.” It is the male who finds a “conquest” in a woman, who claims new lands in his country’s name, not the other way around. Men are brawlers, not women. While the Woman characterizes the “brawling” behavior as masculine, she recognizes that the political and social campaign must be conducted as a “conquest,” even with the violence that the term implies. This war-like language also conjures images of Boadicea and Joan of Arc, both popular with suffragist groups. The use of these terms, further, could indicate the position from which the Woman speaks, as if she has to whisper her concerns to the Suffragette, afraid that someone, her husband perhaps, may overhear and censure her. If she uses discourse that a man may use to describe the Suffragette’s ostensibly mannish behavior, then she, by her vocabulary, seems to align herself with the masculine point of view.<sup>142</sup>

Another reading of this line focuses on the allusion to the biblical book of Genesis, which tells in its opening chapters of the creation of the Earth and the first humans, Adam and Eve, their brief life in the Garden of Eden, and their expulsion from the garden as a result of Eve’s succumbing to the temptation to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Most interpretations of Christianity point toward this moment as the fall of all humankind, the reason women are subjugated to men. It is Eve, Genesis tells, who convinces Adam to eat the fruit after she does. Most interpretations of this creation myth blame Eve, and therefore all women, for the sins of humanity. It is

---

<sup>142</sup> My reading of discourse here is indebted to Jane Dowson, *Women, Modernism and British Poetry, 1910-1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

possible, then, that the Woman here is thinking of Eve as a skillful talker, as one who tricked Adam into sinning along with her. This reading follows the common anti-suffrage argument that since a wife is able to convince her husband of a great many things, her political influence is most effectively served by whispering in her husband's ear rather than casting a vote for herself. But it is also this sort of influence that is lampooned in places like *Punch* and against which men are warned.

Moreover, embedded in this reference to Eve is the problematic assumption that women embody Eve's temptation of Adam. Pope's "Invincible Hanky-Panky" examines exactly this sort of situation. It is assumed that the wife can manipulate her husband into doing nearly anything by using her handkerchief in conjunction with her tears. The *Punch* humor in the poem rests on the assumption that the wife's concerns are frivolous and distracting for the man, who should know better than to fall victim to his wife's manipulation. In *Punch* and elsewhere, the husband who can resist his wife is most successfully performing manhood. After all, as most interpretations of the Bible teach, Adam should have resisted Eve's temptation. Eve, and by extension all women, embodies temptation. Pope adds an additional element to this line of thinking here by having her Woman whispering in the Suffragette's ear rather than that of her husband.

In having the Woman use a biblical allusion in an attempt to dissuade the Suffragette from militant action, Pope actually complicates their conversation by subtly reminding readers that the WSPU "often located their actions within a religious framework."<sup>143</sup> Carolyn Nelson writes that "the suffragettes' militant actions were supported by, and given credibility by, their many references to traditional Christian

---

<sup>143</sup> Carolyn Christensen Nelson, "The Uses of Religious in the Women's Militant Suffrage Campaign in England," *Midwest Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2010): 227-42. 227.



experiences and beliefs”; members of the WSPU “were well aware of the religious dimension of the campaign” (227). But this rhetoric went both ways. The appeal to Eve is also a gesture of containment, for like the use of “wiles of woman” in Mathews’s description of Pankhurst, it identifies a pattern of women’s behavior—the manipulator, the amorous seductress tempting man to his downfall—that is still condemned. Women should act like women, this speaker advises the Suffragette; she cannot see another way. She recognizes that she is bound, as the Suffragette describes, in a “protected shell,” yet she cannot find a way to break free. Her coded support is all she can offer to the Suffragette.

In Pope’s text, the Woman advises the Suffragette to “hide” her “temper,” essentially to silence herself, though she admits that “you have reason” to feel “resentful” of the situation. The Woman seems to be negotiating a new understanding of her received notion of her gendered place as a wife. From this perspective, the Woman maintains propriety, while still holding potentially subversive views. She is in the conflicted camp that wants to maintain the status quo even while working toward a political action that will upset it. Indeed, the Woman’s use of this language falls in line with Mayhall’s observation that the anti-suffrage position “was founded on the disabling paradox that the mobilization of women opposed to women’s suffrage was itself a political act, which led them to write pamphlets, address meetings, administer branches, and thereby undermine the credibility of their own case.”<sup>144</sup> Note that the Woman does not want to prevent the suffragettes gaining people to their side; if anything this speaker is trying to help them, but at the same time, she appeals to tradition and norms of behavior that the suffragettes are intentionally working against because those norms are oppressive in the first place.

---

<sup>144</sup> Mayhall, *The Spectacle of Women*, 99.

Yet, even in voicing an opinion one way or the other and seeking out an audience for her words, the Woman has acted politically. She struggles, perhaps, to reconcile herself to the truth that the Suffragette she addresses is on her side after all.

The Suffragette seems to have a better understanding than the Woman about social institutions that promote the silencing of women. After all, silence and patience are what the Woman advises, however sympathetic to the cause she may be. The Suffragette recognizes that the Woman—especially as she is termed a “woman” rather than a “girl” or a “spinster”—is most likely a married woman who, she says “peep[s] from [her] protected shell,” not only the legal shell encasing married women but also a married woman’s home. The Suffragette, we can assume, has a mobility and freedom that the Woman does not have, for she “brave[s] the cold and wet.” Even if she is married, we can assume her to have a progressive, supportive husband; or, conversely, she could be taking a risk by flouting an unsupportive husband. That Pope allows this flexibility is important.

The Suffragette also defends the methods used by the militant branches of the suffrage movement, saying “they’re a means to gain an end.” And they were chosen by the WSPU because other methods, as the Woman recommends, did not work. The Woman’s language here could indicate that she may not necessarily like the militant methods that the WSPU has been compelled to use, but she still understands the usefulness and necessity of them. Consequently, her more pervasive war-like vocabulary carries a violence that the other poem lacks: “brave,” “fight,” “hurl our battle cry,” “when our conflict’s done.” The primary method of fighting here is through the voice. The Suffragette says they resort to “shout and clamour only when / It’s hopeless to discuss,” noting in that same stanza that how men treat other men in contentious situations is not

how the men in power treat women: “What isn’t thought ‘fair play’ for *men* / Is thought quite fair for *us*.” This can also simply refer to how men in power refuse to see women as equal voices in the debate even if the women follow the men’s rules.

Lastly, the Suffragette counters the Woman’s recommendation that they silence themselves with the reminder that while they “hurl our battle cry with pride,” they “swallow back our tears.” The Suffragette sees herself and those like her as fighting on the front lines, as does the speaker of “A Muff” in *Paper Pellets*, who envisions herself in chain mail. The situations are obviously different, but the associations are the same. It is not uncommon for women involved in this conversation to discuss their battle dress, and Pope’s awareness of Boadicea as a figure of female power and strength makes this tendency even stronger in her suffrage writing. The final stanza sees no other outcome but victory and reminds the Woman that she will “take / The vote which *we* have won.” This final “we,” especially as it is italicized, is meant to be taken as an exclusionary we: we as opposed to you. The entire final stanza is constructed in this way; all of the pronouns are in opposition.

In keeping the conservative reader, it is important for Pope to set these poems up so that they read as oppositional voices. “Any Suffragette” reads as a response and rebuttal to “Any Woman,” and “Any Woman” reads as a condemnation of “Any Suffragette.” If the women are constructed as fighting amongst themselves, then the larger goal they claim to be working toward can never be achieved. It is important here to depict women as petty and incapable. But, as ever, Pope hides moments that reveal the true situation. Distracted by the in-fighting highlighted by the italicized pronouns in “Any Suffragette,” the reader may miss the certainty with which Pope mentions the winning of

the vote, a certainty in which she is consistent. So sure that “Any Woman” is anti-suffrage, a reader may not notice that she never once says anything of the sort. In this way, silence is utilized as a mode of distraction; silence is not negation. The Suffragette recognizes that all of her weapons are in her words: the “battle cry” is what she “hurl[s],” just as the bachelor girl admits she’ll “furl” her “banner” or her “spinster” title, but not her politics. These women choose what they silence and what they do not silence; they are not, as are many women in *Paper Pellets*, bullied into silence or forced into silence before they realize what is happening.

Consistently, Pope’s women, especially her suffragists here, stride confidently through the streets of London and the pages of Pope’s collections, keenly aware that they are being watched and scrutinized. They understand the precarious nature of their new situation in their cultural moment, and they use this to their advantage. Pope and her women would agree with Regina Barreca’s assertion that “many women disguise their wit under a mask of social acceptability. You have to decipher the code to understand the real message underneath.”<sup>145</sup> As a writer and orchestrator, Pope uses her razor sharp humor to peel back and expose the layers of gendered, cultural expectation. Her cuts are so fine that the objects of her critique feel no pain, unaware of the scrutiny she has turned on them. As artifacts of popular culture, her texts are dangerous, for they demonstrate the disparity between the world as it is and the world as it ought to be. Paula Backscheider puts it this way: “creators [of pop culture texts] often want something in the world to be recognized—like the emperor with no clothes. They have found something seriously

---

<sup>145</sup> Regina Barreca, *They Used to Call Me Snow White ... But I Drifted: Women’s Strategic Use of Humor* (New York: Viking, 1991), 17.

wrong and want to change the world.”<sup>146</sup> It is this deep engagement with their historical and cultural moment that makes popular texts like Pope’s so deceptively difficult and yet so rich at the same time, and it is also what makes the voices of Pope’s women still so resonant today.

---

<sup>146</sup> Paula Backscheider, “The Paradigms of Popular Culture,” in *The Eighteenth Century Novel, Essays in Honor of John Richetti*, ed. Albert J. Rivero and George Justice (New York: AMS Press, 2009), 19-59. 33.

## Chapter 4

### “I Motor”: Pope’s Women Take the Wheel

In her 1909 manual, *The Woman and the Car: A Chatty Little Handbook for All Women Who Motor or Who Want to Motor*, Dorothy Levitt includes a chapter on “Distinguished Women Motoristes,” which lists and describes many women of privilege who drive their own, or their husband’s, cars. This chapter, which recalls Buss’s litanies of groundbreaking women at North London Collegiate School, includes portrait photographs of Isabel Savory, Baroness Campbell de Lorentz, The Honorable Mrs. Assheton Harbord, and Mrs. George [Marjorie] Thrupp. Each woman is discussed in terms of her driving skill, not her physical appearance or her fashion sense, though each image shows each woman at her best. Levitt ends the chapter admitting that “there are other names which at the moment have slipped the memory but which have as good a claim as these to have inclusion in the catalogue of distinguished women motorists. The list is long enough, however, to show the ardour and success with which women have applied themselves to the mechanical details of automobilism.”<sup>1</sup>

Levitt writes with a cognizance not only of the importance of her female readers’ understanding that there need be nothing extraordinary about a female driver, but also of her own lived experience of being a female driver in a historical moment when she is “an

---

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Levitt, *The Woman and the Car: A Chatty Little Handbook for All Women Who Motor or Who Want to Motor* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909), 92. Levitt lists twenty nine total women in this chapter: the Duchess of Sutherland, the Countess of Kinnoul, Lady Wimborne, Lady Viola Talbot, Lady Beatrice Rawson, Lady Muriel Gore-Brown, the Honorable Mrs. Maurice Gifford, Lady Plowden, Baroness Campbell de Laurentz, Miss Muriel Hind, Mrs. Herbert Lloyd, Miss Daisy Hampton, Mrs. E. Manville, Mrs. Locke-King, Miss Muriel Thompson, Miss Christabel Ellis, Miss N. Ridge-Jones, Mrs. J. Roland Hewitt, Miss Isabel Savory, Mrs. George Thrupp, Mrs. Edward Kennard, Miss Hunter Baillie, Mrs. Mark Mayhew, Miss Schiff, Mrs. Claude Paine, Mrs. Nicol, Mrs. Weguelin, Mrs. Charles Jarrott, and Mrs. Edge.

object of curiosity or unsympathetic observation and restraint.”<sup>2</sup> Levitt understands, obviously, what men see when they encounter her as a female driver, and she makes it a point to illustrate for her female readers that they are not alone in their interest in or their participation in motoring. The woman taking charge of machinery, mobility, and environment is a potentially transgressive thing. Sean O’Connell observes that the automobile’s “arrival at the time of great controversy over the issue of women’s role in society, with the debate over women’s suffrage raging, made the woman driver a powerful symbol of potential equality.”<sup>3</sup> From her earliest writing on motorcars, “Motor Car for Hire” in 1900, Jessie Pope recognizes that potential.

As her women move from passenger to driver, Pope writes their negotiation of space and their performance in it carefully because, as Sarah Wintle finds, modes of transportation, whether they be horses, bicycles, or cars, “when seized by women” become “a trespass on traditionally masculine territory.”<sup>4</sup> Cars, especially, are “both economically significant and symbolically resonant, of status, class and masculinity” (69). Early women drivers, taking the road in an environment where every reasonably competent female driver is a marvel worthy of newspaper attention, are well aware of their seizure of understood masculine space and mobility. As Pope learned at North London and observed every time she opened a newspaper, the struggle, then, is to reconcile evolving femininity with new activities and opportunities. Through an exploration of both prose and poetry alongside other contemporary texts, this chapter

---

<sup>2</sup> Georgine Clarsen, *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Sean O’Connell, *The Car and British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring 1896-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Wintle, “Horses, Bikes, and Automobiles: The New Woman on the Move,” in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin de Siècle Feminisms*, ed. Angeliqe Richardson and Chris Willis (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 66-78. 66.

demonstrates how Pope's use of cars and motorists exposes the problematic gendering of the motor car as well as how both the car and the motorist can be read as a site of struggle over female agency and visibility.

Motoring is an important move toward mobility and agency, and for an early century woman, this is avant-garde behavior indeed.<sup>5</sup> Women drivers at this time are aware that the cultural imagination is against them, that by driving on one's own, one is transgressing against one's gender role. The speaker in "A Bachelor Girl" is aware of her own act of construction in how she participates in hobbies expected of leisured male bachelors of Pope's generation. She has chosen her "masculine" activities, and she self-consciously "cultivate[s]" them: —"I motor, I golf, and I ride; / I'm seasoned with up-to-date plays; / In my slang and my smokes and my stride / I cultivate masculine ways." She is aware that she has a choice in what to do with her money and how to move her body through space, and she makes the conscious choice to do those things in the "masculine" way. In every way she can, she takes control of her own body, actively taking up auditory, visual, social, and political space. The act of driving, further, embodies several deliberate acts that help the woman form a new, independent identity and seize agency in a way that early century women struggled to do consistently. In driving a car, these early century women take up space, both physical space on the road and mental space as they

---

<sup>5</sup> That is not to say, however, that women did not drive. Julie Wosk explains that "women were among the earliest drivers when steamers and electric automobiles were first introduced during the 1890s, though the exact number of women who drove was never easy to establish since women often drove automobiles owned by their husbands or registered in their husbands' names, and the earliest automobile licensing did not take place until 1900 in America and 1903 in England" (115-116). Julie Wosk, *Women and the Machine: Representations from the Spinning Wheel to the Electronic Age* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).



plant themselves in the minds of those who would rather see them married and in their sitting rooms.<sup>6</sup> They are everything the patriarchy fears.

### **Learning to Drive: The Struggle for Power**

Published in *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* in 1900, Jessie Pope's short story, "Motor Car for Hire," gives Kit's first-person account of her ride in a motor-car with her cousin Geoffrey.<sup>7</sup> This story demonstrates at this early moment that Pope can see that motorcars will be an important vehicle to enable a discussion of the gender questions she raises throughout her career, but that at this early moment, she is not quite sure where her focus will lie. In "Motor Car for Hire," we see a Jessie Pope looking with a far-reaching eye at a new technology that will become nearly ubiquitous within two decades. We see a Jessie Pope aware of the tremendous opportunity that the motorcar can represent to the women who are able to seize it and how their seizure of it will affect the women who will follow them. We see a Jessie Pope already realizing the problematic ways that the motorcar is spoken of as a feminine object to be manipulated by masculine hands, and we see a Jessie Pope beginning to formulate the ways in which she will dismantle that machinery and lay bare its inner workings.

Two wealthy teenagers on holiday from school, Kit and Geoffrey bully the town's saddler, Mr. Morgan, into letting them take his motor-car against his better judgment.

---

<sup>6</sup> The backlash against female drivers from the 1930s onward clearly shows just how much patriarchy feared the motoriste, as Dorothy Levitt calls her, and what she represented. See Wosk for a discussion of how the consistent trope of the hopelessly inept female driver arose later in the century in advertising as a backlash against the increased mobility and independence that independent driving offered women. E. Michele Ramsey observes in her study of automobile advertisements in *Ladies Home Journal* that advertisers "consistently co-opted the rhetoric of liberation of the woman suffrage movement, used problematic definitions of 'freedom,' constructed 'woman's' public role apart from the traditional public sphere, and diminished women's roles in World War I" (96). In the ads, "'Woman's' freedom is therefore limited because the amount she gains is decided by a man" (98). E. Michele Ramsey, "Driven from the Public Sphere: The Conflation of Women's Liberation and Driving in Advertising from 1910 to 1920," *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2006): 88-111.

<sup>7</sup> Jessie Pope, "Motor Car for Hire," *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, April 1900, 412-423.

Their wild ride takes them through the center of town, up and down hills, and through a “crocodile” of school-girls before the car stalls out due to the ineptitude of its privileged young driver. The story ends with the machinery literally getting away from Geoffrey, the driver, and the two teens returning home on foot. From her position in the passenger seat, Kit narrates the story in a way that not only causes the reader to doubt her ignorance, but also hints at Pope’s awareness of the problematic ways in which a woman is required to negotiate her gender performance when she shares the stage with a motor-car.

The primary nature of Kit’s performance is in how she must negotiate her reactions to Geoffrey’s mistakes, even in her telling of the story: “I fancy, however, he found straightforward driving easier than turning corners. The first we took so sharply that I’m sure we skidded round most of the way on two wheels, and the next—well, the wonder to me is that we didn’t all three of us make our appearance in the ‘Bull’ bar parlour” (414). Kit notices that “Geoffrey’s jaw relaxed” only once they “found a fair level stretch” of road (414). This is an important tell for a dangerously novice driver. Later, Geoffrey stops the car on a hill and makes a business of checking the car and adding “more petrol stuff, or something, into the works” (417). Kit notices him “[jam] on the brake” before he “[takes] a long time fiddling about first with one thing and then another” (417). Kit’s language is important to notice here. She calls the fluid what it is, “petrol,” then adds additional vocabulary to hide her knowledge. Where before she “confess[es] at once that, though I always felt that motor cars were fascinating things, I know very little about them. How they go and what the things inside are called I haven’t the haziest notion,” but her observations of Geoffrey beg to differ (413). She recognizes

the brake as a brake; she knows what it is for, where it is located, and what pulling the brake lever will do to the motion of the car. Her trivialization of Geoffrey's work on the car, "fiddling about first with one thing and then another," does not necessarily reflect her own knowledge, rather, it indicates that Geoffrey is keeping his hands busy, making a show of tending to the car.

When the crocodile of girls approaches and Kit's annoyance grows, Geoffrey uselessly "began to pull other handles and taps and things" while Kit "began to feel terribly embarrassed" (417). The source of her embarrassment seems obvious at first, three paragraphs previous, she and Geoffrey rudely and dangerously disrupt the crocodile as it "sedately [parades] along the road" (417). Kit enjoys the sight of the "girls [scurrying] to each side of the road in disorder," noting "how supercilious [she] felt as [she and Geoffrey] hurtled by with short leaps and bounds and fierce snorting noises" (417). It is clear that Kit expects to buzz by them with impunity, but the herky-jerky motion of the car here should also be noted as further evidence that Geoffrey is a terrible driver. He clearly cannot handle the clutch. Another source of her embarrassment should be read as Geoffrey's abysmal handling of the car. Because he does not realize he has pulled the parking brake—and because Kit is too much of a lady to tell him so—the car grows noisier and noisier, "it gave vent to its inward tumult and sickened us with its fumes" (417). When Geoffrey finally remembers to release the brake, the car "[leaps] forward with a jerk that nearly shot [Kit] out altogether" (418). It is clear that Kit was aware what was happening this whole time, for after Geoffrey admits his mistake, Kit says "I was so thankful to be going once more that I spared all reproach" (418). Kit is aware, but Kit remains silent.

Immediately next, Kit adds:

Of course certain little things happened to add to the interest of the run, as, for instance, when Geoffrey seeing half a mile of loose granite ahead suddenly decided to turn back, and took such a generous curve that we not only collided with the bank but got up on the path with both our front wheels. As Geoffrey said, the steering bar was stiff, and I could see the difficulty he had in turning it. Happily there's not much traffic on our roads—if we had been in Piccadilly we might have come to grief. (418)

The use of “for instance” here alerts the reader to the list of incidents Kit could have chosen from. Kit also recognizes what Geoffrey probably never will, that it's best that their ride occurred in the country rather than in London, for Geoffrey's driving is that dangerous. Not only is he dangerous, he does not realize how dangerous he is, preferring instead to blame the car rather than his own lack of mechanical knowledge.

At the end of their ride, at a point in the road that Kit says “is a mile to be looked forward to all through a bicycle ride” is where everything goes irrevocably wrong (418). As the car coasts along “a nice gentle down grade,” Geoffrey lets the car build up too much speed (421). Kit notes that they “had reached that part of the road called ‘the cutting,’ where the down grade is very gentle and the banks sheer and unsympathetic” (421). Note that Kit knows exactly what this area is called and the characteristics that mark it. Kit, an avid cyclist, knows these roads better than Geoffrey. She describes their journey-ending accident in this way:

...it's possible he may have made a mistake and pulled the wrong handle—and considering there were about twenty of them, and all wanted

pulling, it's not very wonderful if he did. Anyhow we were going pretty fast when the thing swerved right to one side. Geoffrey wrenched round the steering-handle to pull us back, with the result that we went hard across into the opposite bank.

I *knew* that something was going to happen, and it did! Before I had time to feel frightened there was a thud and a recoil, and the next minute I was rolling down the bank, catching at thorns and brambles on my way. (421)

Again, Kit makes a clear judgment on Geoffrey's driving—he pulls the wrong handle—then immediately softens it with what is meant to be read as her feminine lack of knowledge—there were so many handles! The real problem, however, is how he “wrenched round the steering-handle.” This kind of over-compensation is described by A.J. Wilson in “How to Drive a Motor-Car” as one typically made when a driver is more used to bicycling and has not taken “some little time to unlearn the art of the balance, because every vehicle except a bicycle must sway or lean from side to side on any road that is not perfectly level transversely.”<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Alfred C. Harmsworth names Geoffrey's mistake as “side-slip,” saying that “nearly every motor accident one reads of is an exaggerated account of a side-slip, but nearly every side-slip is avoidable.”<sup>9</sup> Avoidable only, however, when the driver is aware of his or her actions and their consequences.

---

<sup>8</sup> A.J. Wilson, “How to Drive a Motor-Car,” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, 1902, 254-260. 255.

<sup>9</sup> Alfred C. Harmsworth, “The Motor-Car Question,” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, January 1902, 1-8. 7.

Without fail, every motoring manual of the early century stresses the slow process of learning to drive. Some make the task sound more difficult than others, but all experienced motorists, even those who rely more upon a chauffeur than upon their own skills, emphasize that “a powerful engine is not a thing to be played with” (7). Alfred C. Harmsworth likens driving a car to driving a team of spirited horses: “I regard a twelve horse-power automobile as almost as dangerous as a four-in-hand. I object to driving behind a spirited team unless in proper hands. I refuse to drive in a motor-car unless I know the abilities of the driver” (7). Poor Kit may feel the same way, but it is unlikely that she can make such an overt judgment on her Geoffrey’s driving or endanger his pride by refusing his order to “get in the other side, Kit” (414). With driving instruction and warnings available in popular publications like *Badminton* and in more specialized ones like *Motoring Illustrated*, *The Autocar*, and *The Automotor Journal*, Geoffrey has been fairly warned about the dangers of driving and the importance of gaining experience.<sup>10</sup>

After coming to their senses along the side of the road, Geoffrey and Kit discover that the car has abandoned them and find it, “bustling contentedly along” a short distance away.”<sup>11</sup> While the car is not as heavily gendered as cars are elsewhere in later texts from Pope and others, the car here is referred to in explicitly feminine terms only twice: First when they approach the saddler’s shop with the objective of driving the car—“There she

---

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey’s primary sin here, however, is his pride. Mr. Morgan, the owner of the car, is in a position to teach Geoffrey to drive, but Geoffrey, so assured of his prowess in the form of his nerve, virtually steals the car from Morgan. When Wilson advises the wealthy novice driver to “despise not your mentor! Humble though his station may be,” Geoffrey does the opposite (260). Wilson admonishes his readers—the set that would include a young man of means like Geoffrey—to “recollect that [your “*mécanicien*,” your mentor] understands the one particular thing that you do not, and that the wise man will not experience any false feeling of humiliation at acknowledging, for the time being, that he is only a beginner at this particular art of motor driving. Pump your man, therefore; ask him endless questions. Insist upon being told what to do, why you are to do it, what happens when you do it, and what would happen if you did otherwise? Thus, and thus only, can you become an efficient motor-car driver” (260). Kit, in her relation of Geoffrey’s actions, seems more aware of Wilson’s questions here than does Geoffrey.

<sup>11</sup> Pope, “Motor Car for Hire,” 421.

stood, a gaudy beauty in black and yellow, and our hearts leapt at the sight of her”—and again toward the end of their ride when the car begins to coast down the final hill—“We breasted the other side slowly and noisily, then suddenly, as she felt the incline, the tumult ceased and we slipped along rapidly in delicious silence” (413, 418). When the car, unencumbered by its riders, finds its way to the bottom of the hill, the mostly likely comparison for the 1900 reader is that the car very much resembles a horse at this moment. Under the poor handling of its rider, a horse will resist until, fed up, it refuses the rider, sometimes even bucking the rider off. A poor rider, of course, will blame the horse, as Geoffrey does the car. He claims “the accident would never have happened if the steering had acted properly” (422).

It should be noted that Kit, as ever, has an answer for this assertion, too, saying “It was remarked from another quarter that the accident would never have happened if Geoffrey had known how to drive; but that’s absurd, for it seems to me that what he does not know about machinery of every description isn’t worth knowing” (422). Likely Kit agrees with “another quarter,” yet she must maintain her silence for Geoffrey’s sake. But Kit recognizes the horse in the car, just as she has been cognizant of Geoffrey’s poor treatment of the car throughout their ride, and though the car is “snorting fussily,” as would a horse, Kit “start[s] forward” to “stop it” (422). Geoffrey, however, “[holds] her back” because he has “had enough of the beast,” and Kit must defer to his judgment (422). What follows this is a long paragraph detailing Mr. Morgan’s finding the car driving on its own then being chased by the car. It is a funny paragraph full of physical humor, and it is meant to pull the reader’s focus from Geoffrey’s mistake and his subsequent orders to Kit. Readers end the story, instead, dwelling on the runaway car and

the fact that now the sign on the car which gave the story its title now reads “Motor Car for Sale.”

The mild feminizing of the car is especially interesting in this very early example of Pope’s motoring writing. The vocabulary Kit uses to describe the car could be applied to nearly any one of Pope’s flamboyantly independent women: “a gaudy beauty,” “bustling contentedly,” “silly,” “self-important,” “pert and gaudy” (413, 421, 423). These are examples of how the observer is invited to view the woman, of course. Mabel with her sleeves and Chloe with her cigarettes, for instance, would balk at the terms in which Kit describes the relationship between Mr. Morgan and the car, “his unenviable possession,” a “charging, snorting horror” that turns Morgan into an “unhappy master” (422). When she aligns the car with a living thing so early in the sequence of her motoring writing, it is clear that Pope perceives more than machinery when she considers the car.

When the same gender dynamic as always plays out within the car, Pope is able to use both to examine the situation of women in heterosexual relationships in the early century. Women like Kit, wealthy enough to be educated and to have leisure time to experience the physical and psychic independence that go along with bicycling, find themselves at the threshold of unprecedented freedom, but still bound by societal expectation defined by the men in their lives. Kit is aware of every one of Geoffrey’s mistakes during their outing; she has a better sense of listening to the car, a better awareness of cause and effect than does Geoffrey. But Kit is bound by the silence Geoffrey expects of her; she is bound by his definition of what is ladylike and, more importantly, what is “unladylike” (414). Geoffrey’s idea of his own masculinity is made



clear from the opening paragraph of the story in which Kit declares: “Geoffrey and I don’t often quarrel, but we were pretty near it that morning when he made the contemptuous remark: ‘I suppose it’s natural [Mr. Morgan] should play tricks on a girl’s machine. He’d know better if he had a man to deal with’” (412).<sup>12</sup> What is most important here is the distinction Geoffrey makes between a “girl’s machine” and what is be expected in dealing with “a man.”

From the first page of her story, Pope keeps Kit’s awareness of her gender and the perceived and understood inadequacy of her understanding of machinery at the front of readers’ minds. Kit bites back at Geoffrey’s misogynist remark, telling Geoffrey, “So *you’re* not safe yet either” (412). This jab at Geoffrey’s masculinity implies that Geoffrey is still considered a boy in some circles. Further, it implies a judgment against Geoffrey’s masculinity due to his knowledge, or lack thereof, of machinery and technology, an understanding of which is taken for granted to be masculine territory. Indeed, even at the very start of the story, Kit is the one who owns and rides a bicycle, however broken it may be. Kit’s insistence on her ignorance may very well be part of her performance. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that Geoffrey knows much less than he pretends about driving and the machinery of the car. Kit, though she must hide it, seems more competent than Geoffrey.

### **Cars as Women, Women as Cars**

Even as early as 1900, Pope recognizes the importance of the motor car for women, not only is the car important for what it represents, for Pope, it is also important for the discussions it can enable. When the car is gendered as female, the struggle for

---

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey blames Morgan for Kit having to replace her tire, when more likely, the wear on the tire was a consequence of Geoffrey’s always borrowing Kit’s “machine” in “muddy weather” and Kit riding it with a punctured tire.

control becomes a struggle for control over the woman herself, over female agency.

When Pope's men take the wheel, they often become consumed by the kind of behaviors for which motoring was criticized very early on. Pope's eye, as ever, is on how the violence of motoring language, behavior, and expectation affects women. For instance, the second speaker in Pope's "Men I Might Have Married" series seems to have three problems: Geoffrey, Geoffrey's car, and Geoffrey's turn toward abusive behavior. The humor in the poem lies in Geoffrey's calling the speaker's bluff when she delivers an ultimatum in the poem's final stanza:

I told him frankly to decide—  
I spoke without emotion—  
Between a motor and a bride,  
I'd share no man's devotion.  
—The lack of me his life would mar—  
He said—*but thought he'd choose the car.*<sup>13</sup>

The car is the locus of a complex problem here. The car itself is not the source of Geoffrey's bad behavior nor is it breaking up their engagement. He is not literally choosing the car, as the humor of the punchline would have you believe, he is choosing what the car represents for him. Mastery of an object that serves him without talking back.<sup>14</sup> Though, perhaps these men find it easier to ignore it when the car "talks back," for every one of Pope's driving men drives poorly enough to instigate tremendous noise

---

<sup>13</sup> Jessie Pope, "Men I Might Have Married. II.," *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907), 81-82.

<sup>14</sup> Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991). Wajcman would agree; "for men," she writes, "cars afford a means of escape from domestic responsibilities, from family commitment, into a realm of private fantasy, autonomy and control" (134). Wajcman is discussing the marketing of cars toward men, but her observation about cars as metaphors "for sex and something wild" is pertinent for a reading of automobile advertising as well as Pope's early century writing about cars (134).

and smoke, indicators from the car itself that things are going wrong. Contained within the object of the car is a struggle that is not present in the bicycle.

The ability to manipulate machinery is emblematic of power, and Judy Wajcman argues that “this technical expertise is a source of men’s actual or potential power over women. It is also an important part of women’s experience of being less than, and dependent on, men” (159). Early century critics of female drivers—of bicycles and automobiles alike—fear their loss of femininity and take for granted that they will be unable to manage repairs on their own because “maintenance of machinery was assumed to be a man’s task because of its complexity and dirtiness.”<sup>15</sup> These attitudes are clear in Pope’s negotiation of Kit and Geoffrey. Levitt counters these pervasive thoughts, admonishing women that “a few hours of proper diligence, provided you are determined to learn” is all it takes to master automobile maintenance.<sup>16</sup> Levitt and other female drivers like her must continuously work with an awareness of the ideal that “technical competence is central to the dominant cultural ideal of masculinity, and its absence a key feature of stereotyped femininity.”<sup>17</sup> In taking up driving and in the maintenance of one’s own automobile, an early century woman very self-consciously trespassed into male territory.<sup>18</sup> To some extent, it can be argued, learning to care for a car’s inner workings becomes akin to having autonomy over one’s own body, especially when we examine the

---

<sup>15</sup> Wosk, *Women and the Machine*, 130.

<sup>16</sup> Levitt, *The Woman and Her Car*, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology*, 159.

<sup>18</sup> It is a territory which male drivers are quickly claiming has been theirs all along. In *The Happy Motorist*, Young argues that men are socialized from boyhood to develop the attitudes necessary to handle machinery: “Thus, the child who has been taught not to pick his toys up by the wrong end, and to know the difference between a thing upon which he may and a thing upon which he may not throw his weight, becomes a boy who instinctively handles tools in the right way, and may afterwards be trusted with guns, boats, and motor-cars” (166-167). A.P. Filson Young, *The Happy Motorist: An Introduction to the Use and Enjoyment of the Motor Car* (London: Grant Richards, 1906).

many ways feminine pronouns are used to describe the car in ways that naturalize male mastery over it.

Pope's women, like Levitt, are aware of the assumed masculinity of their behavior and the line they walk between freakishness and acceptability when they show interest in a motor car. In learning to drive, the early century driver learns several new languages and codes of etiquette. Most motoring manuals include some instruction on listening to the car and learning how to respond to its needs. Levitt advises her readers to allow no one else to drive their cars, for "all cars have their individual idiosyncrasies, and if you alone drive, you get to understand every sound; but if you allow any one to drive you are ignorant of what strain the car has been put to. As a matter of fact, a strange hand on the wheel and levers seems to put the car out of tune."<sup>19</sup> She advises, essentially, mastery and ownership of space and machine.<sup>20</sup> The car becomes personal. For A.P. Filson Young, the car is personal only so far as it is owned as property.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Levitt, *The Woman and Her Car*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted here that while Levitt advises her female readers to learn the proper methods for maintaining their own machines, Young does nearly the opposite. In his *Happy Motorist*, he describes some of the processes vital for a car's continual upkeep, but he does this more for the car owner to be able to keep an eye on his chauffeur rather than to work on the car himself, for "the owner is too often ignorant of his servant's duties" (132). After disparaging the class of men attracted to apply for chauffeur work, Young models a talk that an employer should have with a potential chauffeur: "[whenever] I want the car, it and you must be ready. You may have to stay up all night getting it ready: I want to know nothing about that; all I care about is that it should always be ready and in good condition—which means that whenever it comes in you must not leave it until it is cleaned, washed, filled, and ready for the road. You may expect a whole day off every week, and you will often not be required for days at a time; but you must always be ready. If not, it will be understood that you have failed in the performance of your duties, and that you go" (136). Throughout *The Happy Motorist*, it is often implied that the key to being a happy motorist is having a good chauffeur. The difference between the attitude of a female driver like Levitt and a male driver like Young is the latter's obvious attitude of expectation and privileged entitlement. Only three years separate their manuals.

<sup>21</sup> Young asserts that "the sense of responsibility is always greater in the man who is driving his own car than in the man who is paid to drive his master's; he is more considerate, more careful, if only of the car; and therefore, provided he knows how to drive at all, his driving is less offensive and more safe for the general public than that of the ordinary chauffeur," simply because he owns the car (*The Happy Motorist*, 165).

The language of machinery and noise that the early century driver must learn is continually gendered as a male domain, Wacjman argues, since technologies are understood as tools. Levitt gives a glossary of terms, “the motor woman’s dictionary,” at the end of her manual, listing terms for the parts of the car like “induction-coil” and “bearings,” as well as terms that describe actions the car may take like “backfire,” and terms used to describe the qualities of the car itself like “horse-power.”<sup>22</sup> In learning the automobile, the woman learns what is understood to be male, not female, for “the driver’s seat was seen as a naturally male position.”<sup>23</sup> The car is passive, but also petulant and moody, which makes it immediately female. It is easy to understand how early century male drivers must have understood their relationship with their car when reading Horace Plunkett’s letter to Young, printed in the 1904 manual *The Complete Motorist*. Here, Plunkett describes his mastery of his “10 h.p. Panard” in disturbing terms: the car’s “humours and tantrums frightened me not a little at first and made me speculate irreverently upon its sex. Even now it has its moods, and I will have to look after its health to be sure that it will glide along with a contented hum, raising its note slightly and appreciatively when it is given its head on its highest speed.”<sup>24</sup> It takes a man’s steady hand to make the petulant, female car run smoothly. Tellingly, Levitt does not describe

---

<sup>22</sup> The inclusion of such a glossary is not unusual in motoring manuals of the day. That Levitt calls hers a “motor woman’s dictionary,” however, is unusual. It invites women to take ownership of their new language.

<sup>23</sup> O’Connell, *The Car and British Society*, 45. Even Pope’s other texts that deal with the automobile, the car is gendered as a female thing, dependent on men for smooth operation and masterful handling. Levitt, at the end of a chapter detailing “The Mechanism of the Car” and the “preliminary things” necessary before “starting off on a run,” counters the “non-motoriste, and even perhaps the intending motoriste [who would] say, ‘If I have to do all those troublesome things it will take up all my time, so I think I had better have a chauffeur’; but let me assure you that while it has taken some little time to explain these things in the plainest possible language, it will take you but a few minutes to carry them out” (39-40). A woman can easily start, drive, and maintain a motor-car.

<sup>24</sup> Qtd. in *The Complete Motorist*, 274. A.P. Filson Young, *The Complete Motorist: Being an Account of the Evolution and Construction of the Modern Motor-Car; With Notes on the Selection, Use, and Maintenance of the Same; and on the Pleasures of Travel upon the Public Roads* (London: Methuen & Co., 1904).

the car in similar terms; rather, she reminds her reader that the car is entirely under her control:

Take your time and get in sympathy with your motor as you would the horses you drive or ride. Gain confidence slowly. Once you have confidence in yourself the battle is nearly won. Bear in mind that when riding or driving a horse it is only partly under your control. As it has a brain and will of its own it can bolt if it wishes to—but with a motor-car you rely upon yourself alone—you are master (or should I say mistress) of the situation.<sup>25</sup>

The car, then, becomes fluid depending upon the driver, a potential Pope uses, as we will see in “Car Coming.” Most frequently, however, cars are referred to using feminine pronouns which become problematic when paired with language indicating male ownership. Cars are even referred to by women in terms of being romantic rivals, which solidifies the car’s position as female while undermining the credibility of the human woman. When women are written to understand a car as a romantic rival, a critique of the cultural norms surrounding male ownership, entitlement, and the legal position of each member of a marriage rises to the surface.

Published June 10, 1903 in *Punch*, “The Mote in His Eye” is meant to look like a letter from a reader to Mr. Punch himself.<sup>26</sup> Dolly writes to Mr. Punch to tell him that she was “rather fond of [her boyfriend, Algernon]” until “[she] overheard a conversation which convinced [her] there’s no believing a man even when he has been trying to show

---

<sup>25</sup> Levitt, *The Woman and Her Car*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Jessie Pope, “The Mote in His Eye,” *Punch*, June 10, 1903, 411. This style of text in *Punch* is very common. Between 1903 and 1913, Pope wrote 19 of them. “The Mote in His Eye” is her first such text in *Punch*.

you for weeks you are the only girl he as ever loved.” From the outset of this text, Pope presents what is ostensibly a conflict between two girls, the actual human girl Dolly, and the figurative girl, the car. The situation is problematic in two ways. First, it’s unclear whether Dolly is aware that the object of her jealousy, the “other woman,” is really a car. The body of the conversation she overhears has nothing in it to mark it obviously as being about a car, especially if the woman overhearing it is predisposed to jealousy. Second, Dolly’s behavior is meant to be perceived as rude. She is eavesdropping on a conversation between Algernon and his friend Captain Sparks, a men’s conversation about men’s concerns.<sup>27</sup> Not only is she eavesdropping, she is jumping to conclusions. Dolly is constructed here to be a caricature of a jealous, competitive woman, and her type is well-represented in Pope’s body of work.<sup>28</sup> What is most important here is the opportunity that a stock type like Dolly presents to a writer like Pope.

The stock type of the jealous, yet clueless woman undermines the validity of the human woman she’s meant to represent. In an area as contested as technology in the early century, it is especially important to notice these moments and how writers like Pope use them to critique the situation. In her letter, Dolly relates to Mr. Punch that she overheard Algernon saying to Captain Sparks:

Yes, I took her down to Richmond on Sunday; we had quite a good time going, but coming back, just out of Putney, she seemed to get a little noisy and refused to go an inch further. I took off her bonnet for a bit and loosened her belt, and finally got her to start again; but she’d no go in her,

---

<sup>27</sup> It could be assumed, however, that Algernon’s behavior has given Dolly a reason to suspect him of infidelity.

<sup>28</sup> See also: “Our Cross-Country Run,” *Punch*, April 10, 1907, 254. “Percy’s People,” *Punch*, October 30, 1907, 322. “The Bandbox,” *Punch*, March 31, 1909, 222-223. “A Private Note,” *Punch*, August 10, 1910, 107.

and I had a very slow time. Charlie took her out yesterday, and they had a great time by all accounts. She *can* be fast enough. She wants a couple of new rings, but I really can't spend any more money on her at present. I rather want to take her out on Saturday, but the question is, how much more the hub will stand— (411)

Dolly ends her letter: "Oh, dear *Mr. Punch*, who would have thought it!" indicating that Dolly thinks Algernon is cheating on her with a real woman. The em dash at the end of the paragraph is presumably where Dolly stepped away from her listening post, but the flow of Algernon's speech, his mention of "hub," makes it seem as if Dolly had kept listening, she would have heard next Algernon's speculations about the life of his tires, which even a narrator as seemingly clueless as Dolly would recognize as language describing a motor car, not a woman.

The pun of the title lets the reader in on Dolly's misunderstanding and see Dolly as a silly woman being jealous for no reason. Dolly's own name, doubling as a common name for a child's doll, plays into this as well. Dolly, the clueless woman behind the letter based on a misunderstanding of the difference between a conversation about a car and a conversation about a woman, is named after a literal, inanimate plaything. In her name, she becomes as much of an object as a car. The misleading conversation highlights the uncomfortable closeness of language used to describe motor cars and their accessories. The additional fact that it is overheard indicates that the language in which it is spoken is not a language to which Dolly has ready access. It is not a vocabulary that she is invited to learn.



Pope's choices in the motoring vocabulary words included here are deliberate, and they give an overtly sexual connotation to Algernon's complaints about his car. While this may sound like he is being "a bit of a lad," there is a linguistic violence present in the words chosen to describe his handling of the car, an object firmly feminized as early as the fourth word of Algernon's speech. At first, the car becomes "noisy," a frequent complaint heard by Pope's women, especially when motoring with a man. From there, Algernon's active undressing of the car—"I took off her bonnet for a bit and loosened her belt"—moves into a language that is close to rape.<sup>29</sup> Algernon is the one doing the undressing, and Pope's choice to have Dolly overhear this language and easily mistake it as describing a human woman becomes clear. There are many problems a car may have, many parts that may want repair over the course of even a short journey, but very few of them have names reminiscent of women's clothing or bodies. Further, that Algernon "had a very slow time" because the car had "no go in her" for him, but proved with Charlie "yesterday" that "she *can* be fast enough" demonstrates a deliberate and conscious double entendre.<sup>30</sup> It makes Dolly uncomfortable because she does not understand the puns; she takes it all at face value.

---

<sup>29</sup> Sally Hacker observes that "controlled erotic expression finds its most creative outlet today in the design of technology. The phallic imagery of missile systems and the reproductive metaphors surrounding creative destruction have escaped no one" (46). She describes the talk of many men involved with such projects as "sexy and gendered" (46). Sally Hacker, *Pleasure, Power, and Technology: Some Tales of Gender, Engineering, and the Cooperative Workplace* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

<sup>30</sup> "Go" can have sexual connotations. The first is obscure, the most recent use in 1616: "b. Of female animals (occas. of male): *to go to (the) bull*, *to go to (the) cow*, *to go to (the) horse*, etc. = to copulate with." Another isn't first observed in the Oxford English Dictionary until 1928, "To experience a sexual orgasm. *slang*." In terms of a car's movement, the definition is more obvious: "power of going, mettle, spirit. Hence of persons, etc.: Dash, energy, vigour." The word "fast," likewise, has a sexual connotation by the early century: "Often applied to women in milder sense: Studiedly unrefined in habits and manners, disregardful of propriety or decorum."

"go, v.". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/79544?rskey=onLBGX&result=4&isAdvanced=false> (accessed February 05, 2015). "go, n.1". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/79541> (accessed February 05, 2015).

But that Dolly does not understand highlights for an observant reader the extra layer of critique Pope has built in to “The Mote in His Eye,” that the gendering of motor cars as feminine is problematic in more ways than one. If the car is a woman, is it natural, then, for a woman to control one, to own one, to engage in the physical processes involved to make one “go”? Levitt would say yes. In her chapter on “Troubles—How to Avoid and to Mend Them,” she tells her reader that “prevention is better than cure, and the careful motoriste who looks after her car as she looks after herself will have little use for the hints in this chapter of mine.”<sup>31</sup> Never does Levitt use feminine language to refer to her car, nor does she use language that indicates the necessity of mastery over the car. Caring for one’s car as one cares for one’s own body is a form of agency for the early female motorist. For a male motorist, it is understood that he will employ people to care for the car for him; indeed, Young’s technical advice is included primarily so the car owner may supervise his chauffeur. Levitt, contrarily, makes no such assumptions. Her “motoriste” will be both driver and mechanic.

Joan Acker, in writing about the casual sexism present in the corporate world, notes that “symbolically, a certain kind of male heterosexual sexuality plays an important part in legitimating organizational power.”<sup>32</sup> It is the same in the early century language surrounding the motor car. Gendering the car as female heightens the sense of male entitlement already implicit in the technology. The car, described in terms of a stereotypically moody woman, becomes an object that only a man can truly control. What

---

"fast, adj.". OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/68420?rkey=eMKSKw&result=5&isAdvanced=false> (accessed February 05, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Levitt, *The Woman and Her Car*, 61.

<sup>32</sup> Joan Acker, “Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations,” *Gender and Society*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1990): 139-158. 153.

Pope notices is that there is no equivalent for women. There is no reversal of “The Mote in His Eye” in which an Algernon would eavesdrop on a Dolly telling a similar story to a Lady Sparks and experience the same uncomfortable misunderstanding. Acker would say that this is because “symbolic expressions of male dominance also act as significant control over women in work organizations because they are per se excluded from the informal bonding men produce with the ‘body talk’ of sex and sports” (153). It is up to the female motorist, then, to understand best the car as woman, as an extension of and an analog for herself. In Pope’s texts, advocating for the car is akin to advocating for herself.

A similar situation is at work in “My Rival,” though here the speaker is aware that she is ostensibly competing with a car for Dick’s affections. In four stanzas, Pope delivers many of her ongoing concerns—the silencing of women, dangerous male behavior, the precarious nature of romantic relationships with men—but here, she takes the absurdity of the situation in “Mote in His Eye” further to write from the point of view of a woman actively competing with a car for the affections of her boyfriend, Dick. Here, Pope recognizes that the ways male car owners are encouraged to think about their cars is very close to the way they socialized to think about women.

I’m most dissatisfied with Dick—  
I don’t suppose he’ll ever know it—  
His conduct cuts me to the quick,  
And yet I’d rather die than show it.  
My maiden meditations are  
Disordered by one constant riddle:  
Why should I—to a motor car—

### Play second fiddle?

Pope accomplishes a lot of work in this first stanza. First, there is the self-silencing of women; the speaker would “rather die than show” her “[dissatisfaction] with Dick.” She is resolved that he will never know her complaint. Secondly, she sets up the bad behavior of the man in question as “his conduct [cutting her] to the quick.” Third, the speaker is dismissive of herself, saying that her “maiden meditations” are “disordered.” Finally, the overt conflict of the poem occurs in the last two lines of this first stanza; she speaker recognizes that she “play[s] second fiddle” to the car. Both the comedy and the critique come in this conflict between the woman and the car. At this historical moment, in the eyes of most men, women are still just another possession, or at least, they are not seen as fully human on the same level as men are. Women and cars, it is implied, are more equal to each other than women and men. Equating the woman with the car lessens further the position of the woman even farther in the relationship. Pope underscores this situation in the second and third stanzas in which the speaker physically competes with the car for Dick’s attention.

In vain I toss my curls to show  
The sweetest pair of turquoise earrings;  
His thoughts are wandering, I know,  
With silencers and friction gearings.  
If I could find some magic drug  
To change me to a carburetter,  
A cylinder or sparking plug,  
He’d like me better.

And when I sing of tears the rest  
Entreat for more and praise my brilliance,  
But Dick returns with cheery zest  
To themes of rubber and resilience.  
When rosy dusk to moonlight melts,  
And all have vanished save the lovers,  
Is it time to talk of belts and outer covers?

Obviously meant to be read as humorous, the speaker's behavior is nevertheless sad since she recognizes that "He'd like me better" only if she "could find some magic drug" to change her into a car or one of its component parts. Perhaps she has heard Dick speak of the car in the same terms that Dolly's Algernon speaks of his car. That this speaker has resigned herself to competing for attention seems to indicate that perhaps she is in a position where she cannot end the relationship. After all, as Vicki Howard reminds us, women are socialized to be chosen, not to do the choosing.<sup>33</sup> Like Dolly, this speaker just wants kind attention from the man who's chosen her.

Further, when this speaker "sing[s] of tears"—following a stanza mentioning a "silencer"—it is important to note that Dick immediately changes the subject away from

---

<sup>33</sup> Vicki Howard, "A 'Real Man's Ring': Gender and the Invention of Tradition," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2003): 837-856. And when we fold this understanding of a courtship dynamic into "The Mote in His Eye" and the later discussion of "My Rival," the idea of the car as a woman and the woman as a car takes on another problematic dimension because it is the buyer who chooses the car, not the car who chooses the buyer.

the speaker and her talents and back to the car, “To themes of rubber and resilience.”<sup>34</sup> Not only does he transfer his focus from her “tears” to his car, he does it “with cheery zest.” The speaker is ignored. Dick clearly takes it for granted that she will be there for him when he is done with the car, as if she is another possession in his garage that he can take out for a spin when he is ready. In his 1906 manual, *The Happy Motorist*, Young praises the car for, among other things, how it can free the commuting businessman from the “imprisonment” of planning one’s day around a railway timetable; “part of the charm and benefit of a car for the business man,” he claims, “will consist in the faithfulness and regularity with which it serves him.”<sup>35</sup> A car—alternately a cold piece of technology and a living thing—surpasses a horse since a horse “has his appetites and fatigues, which must be recognized and satisfied; his humours also, and weaknesses of the flesh; all of which things mean expenditure of time and money on the part of his master” (98). A car, by comparison, “is ready at any moment to make a large or a small journey” (100). In highlighting the problematic nature of the feminization of the car, Pope critiques the expectation that the woman passively await the pleasure of a man, that she must always operate on his time and his time alone, that whenever he is ready for her, she must be

---

<sup>34</sup> A silencer is “a piece of mechanism attached to a motor vehicle and used to silence or reduce the sound naturally caused by its working.” It is interesting, given the context in which this motor accessory is mentioned, that a silence is meant to “reduce the sound naturally caused by its working,” because Dick makes immediate moves to silence the natural sounds and movements of the woman beside him. The importance name of this particular motor accessory would not be lost on Pope. “silencer, n.” OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/179649?redirectedFrom=silencer> (accessed February 05, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Young, *The Happy Motorist*, 85-86.

ready for him.<sup>36</sup> Dick clearly has similar expectations for this speaker, and she knows it, naming love as the reason for her tolerating his bad behavior.

My amber voile came home to-day,  
I'm really too upset to wear it.  
My heart is sore, yet, strange to say,  
Day after day I grin and bear it.  
He doesn't worry if I'm stiff,  
Or if I snub or talk above him;  
I'd break it off to-morrow if—  
I didn't love him.<sup>37</sup>

The strain of waiting is especially evident in the final stanza. Here, the speaker gives up on the only way she has to attract Dick's gaze, beautifying her own body with clothing and accessories—and, resigned to perpetual invisibility, finds an empty solace in her love for him, regardless of whether it is returned. The longer pause of the semicolon leading to the penultimate line causes the reader to dwell over her promise that she would “break it off to-morrow if—”. The em dash here seems to indicate that she has given some thought to ending the relationship, but the best reason she finds for staying is one

---

<sup>36</sup> One chapter in Young's earlier book, *The Complete Motorist*, offers excerpts from letters solicited by the author from prominent motorists and motor-enthusiasts of the day. Several of them note human qualities of the motor car. Lady Jeune notes the “almost human consciousness of the machine” and finds it as “companionable as any living being” (272). Rudyard Kipling makes liberal use of feminine pronouns to describe the car and differentiate it from a horse: “when a man is more drunk than usual drunk the beast [horse] will steer him home. Not so the car. She demands of her driver a certain standard of education, the capacity of unflickering attention, and absolute sobriety. Failure to comply with her intent means death, mutilation, or find in the shape of a heavy repair bill. There is no argument: there is no coercion: above all, there are no carrots. She is a condition, not a theory” (287). While Kipling recommends “unflickering attention” be paid to one's car while driving, it should be noted here that Dick does follow his advice, but he does so at the sacrifice of the human woman who remains dedicated to him.

<sup>37</sup> Jessie Pope, “My Rival,” *Punch*, February 25, 1903, 143.

that puts all of the onus of responsibility on herself.<sup>38</sup> In Dick himself, she finds no reason to stay. The speaker, because of her “love” for him, resigns herself to the position of third wheel in the relationship.

Together with “The Mote in His Eye,” “My Rival” is emblematic of a lot of the negative critiques that Pope has for the idea of the car. Again, Dick and Algernon are not literally choosing to love the motorcar above the women they loved before they purchased the motorcar; rather, they are choosing to love what the motorcar represents to them: an object that exists for and serves them at their pleasure, without complaint or blemish, an object that will elevate others’ opinions of them and make them the envy of their peers. For male motorists like these, cars, while described by some as perfect companions, are only ever tools to be used, machines to be dominated.

In *The Happy Motorist*, Young relates the story of purchasing his first car in troubling metaphors: “Cars yellow, green, and red, of every price, shape, and size, lying in polished repose in the show-room, or gliding noiselessly about in and out of the driving-school—there they were in intoxicating variety. Presently, I saw the car for me;

---

<sup>38</sup> “The instincts, prejudices and inclination of most English women in the nineteenth century,” writes Joan Perkin, “favoured making the best of their marriages, by making their lives useful and purposeful to themselves and to others, even when their relations with their husbands seemed completely stultifying. It is unjust to regard women who stuck with a bad bargain as craven or without spirit: in their eyes, the cowardly thing was to run away from one’s duty, however unpleasant that duty might be” (238). It is to a similar idea that Pope’s speaker would have been socialized. Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989).



and like one would buy a slave in a market, knew instantly that I must possess it.”<sup>39</sup> Cars are women, “lying in polished repose” and “gliding noiselessly,” while at the same time they are “slave[s] in a market.”<sup>40</sup> In confronting them with similar language and expectations, Pope lets her women react in ways that are not only humorous enough for the pages of *Punch*, but also serious enough to lay bare the problematic nature of talking about cars in terms of women and women in terms of cars.

Not all of Pope’s women are as patient as the speaker in “My Rival” or as naïve as Dolly. In “Love in a Car,” the speaker recognizes, over the course of seven stanzas that the behavior of Reginald, her beloved, is adversely affected by the car he drives. This poem is an important example of a female motorist’s reaction to accepted male motoring behavior.

When Reginald asked me to drive in his car  
I knew what it meant for us both,  
For peril to love-making offers no bar,  
But fosters the plighting of troth.  
To the tender occasion I hastened to rise,  
So bought a new frock on the strength of it,

---

<sup>39</sup> Young, *The Happy Motorist*, 215-216. Interestingly, the 2000 movie *Gone in 60 Seconds* describes cars in similar terms when the protagonist, Memphis Raines, explains to his brother, Kip, why he started stealing cars as a young teenager: “I didn’t do it for the money. I did it for the cars, gleaming in Marina Blue, Sunfire Yellow, Marlboro Red, begging to be plucked. And I’d do it. I’d boost her and just blast to Palm Springs, instantly feeling better about being me.” Throughout the movie, the group of car thieves uses women’s names to refer to the specific cars. The climax of the movie features a car chase in which Memphis drives a 1967 Ford Mustang nicknamed Eleanor, a car with whom he has a history, and a car that has the sort of antagonistic, temperamental, moody personality that Young and his contemporaries would immediately categorize as female. *Gone in 60 Seconds*, DVD, directed by Dominic Sena (2000; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> In *The Complete Motorist*, Young describes the car at rest as “a captive lion or a savage shown at a fair” to impress upon his readers how out-of-place or absurd a stopped car can look (310). It is made to be in motion is his argument, but his language is telling. Cars are powerful, but ultimately they are slaves to be dominated and controlled.

Some china-blue chiffon—to go with my eyes—  
And wrapped up my head with a length of it.

“Get in,” said my lover, “as quick as you can!”

He wore a black smear on his face,  
And held out the hand of a rough artisan  
To pilot me into my place.

Like the engine, my frock somehow seemed to miss-fire,  
For Reginald’s manner was querulous,  
But after some fuss with the near hind-wheel tyre  
We were off at a pace that was perilous.

“There’s Brown just behind, on his second-hand brute,  
he thinks it can move, silly ass!”

Said Reggie with venom, “Ha! Ha! let him hoot,  
I’ll give him some trouble to pass.”

My service thenceforth was by Reggie confined  
(He showed small compunction in suing it)  
To turning to see how far Brown was behind,  
But not to let Brown see me doing it.

Brown passed us. We dined off his dust for a league—  
It really was very poor fun—

Till, our car showing symptoms of heat and fatigue,  
Reggie had to admit he was done.  
To my soft consolation he scant heed did pay,  
But with taps was continually juggling,  
And his words, "Will you keep your dress further away?"  
Put a stop to incipient snuggling.

"He'd never have passed me alone," Reggie sighed,  
"The car's extra heavy with you."  
"Why ask me to come?" I remarked. He replied,  
"I thought she'd go better with two."  
When I touched other topics, forbearingly meek,  
From his goggles the lightnings came scattering,  
"What chance do you give me of placing this squeak,"  
He hissed, "When you keep up that chattering?"

At that, I insisted on being set down  
And returning to London by train,  
And I vowed fifty times on my way back to town  
That I never would see him again.  
Next week he appeared and implored me to wed,  
With a fondly adoring humility.  
"The car stands between us," I rigidly said.

“I’ve sold it!” he cried with agility.

His temples were sunken, enfeebled his frame,  
There was white in the curls on his crest;  
When he spoke of our ride in a whisper of shame  
I flew to my home on his breast.  
By running sedately I’m certain that Love  
To such passion would never have carried us,  
Which settles the truth of the legend above—  
It was really the motor-car married us.<sup>41</sup>

It should be noted that the “frock” is likened to the car’s “engine” in that it “seemed to miss-fire.” But here and elsewhere in Pope’s motoring texts, the women describe the soft, flowing fabrics of their outfits, their veils especially. This could be deliberately in contrast to the cold metal of the cars themselves, highlighting that however men may try to conflate them with language, women and cars are not one and the same. Ever aware of fashion, it is possible that Pope noticed that a singular and rabid focus on motoring clothing was largely encouraged by motoring publications in order to target the growing female demographic. Peter Merriman observes that early century motoring discourse “reflected prevailing attitudes about the social roles of men and women, and aligned technological mastery with masculinity, and a love of fashion and shopping with femininity—it was accepted that women could and would take a keen

---

<sup>41</sup> Jessie Pope, “Love in a Car,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 28-30. Previously published in *Punch*, September 26, 1906, 229.

interest in questions of dress, comfort and styling.”<sup>42</sup> He also rightly notes the artificiality of this created notion of the motoring woman:

Motoring women were constructed as a particular kind of motoring consumer, who were concerned about their appearance and complexion as well as questions of comfort, but many women did challenge the demarcation of particular concerns and interests to men and women, developing interests in automotive engineering and motor racing, or expressing little interest in the new fashions in motor-clothing. (126)

Women like Levitt, however, participating in the contemporary discourse, discuss clothing, although Levitt keeps her discussion practical and gets it out of the way in the second chapter of her book. It should be noted that Levitt’s book grew from articles she wrote for the *Daily Graphic*, so necessarily she participates in the discourse of her moment.

Reginald’s acknowledgment of his behavior is key—“he spoke of our ride in a whisper of shame.” It is as close to an apology as the speaker can expect, and it is this “whisper of shame” that brings her back, not the declaration that the car has been sold, though she is surely softened by that news, too. The final four lines more problematic in their punchline delivery. She defends, as a victim of abuse often does, Reggie’s bad behavior during their ride together, but she does not seem to regret the trip, for she reads

---

<sup>42</sup> Peter Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012), 118.

it as “Love” bringing them to “such passion.”<sup>43</sup> The motor-car married them, but not the trip they took together, rather his recognition that the motor changed his behavior and that he treated the speaker poorly during their trip together.

Reginald’s recognition of the change the car wrought in his behavior is important, for it indicates a recognition of the abuse his car enabled or escalated. But set alongside the other men in Pope’s bibliography, it becomes clear that for men like Reginald, the car isn’t the problem. It is the culture that naturalizes and finds ready excuses for such hurtful behavior. “Love in a Car,” despite its speaker exhibiting some behavior indicative of a battered woman, reads as a revision of, or at least an alternate ending for, the relationships described in “Men I Might Have Married,” “My Rival,” and “Mote in His Eye.” Reginald is a man who removed the mote from his eye, yes, but this does not give us a happy ending. The beam, if we follow the reasoning of the parable in the biblical book of Matthew, could be in the eye of any of these female speakers, for they do seem to overlook how quickly their men’s behavior edges toward abuse.<sup>44</sup>

Young, early in *The Happy Motorist*, reminds his readers that in a motor car, “there is a soul, and the mechanism that serves us as wings need not and should not be robbed of its poetry” (12). While this seems like a beautiful sentiment and seems to

---

<sup>43</sup> Here, it seems that the speaker sees Reggie’s return and his declaration as a reward. Herbert, Silver, and Ellard find that “it is quite likely that rewards will be associated with relationships that are simultaneously abusive. Although a man who abuses his partner may be assumed to be ‘crazy’ or consistently ill-tempered, this is often not true. Anecdotal reports suggest that many are ‘nice guys’ who can be charming and loveable and who often function well in all roles save that of an intimate relationship. [...] Even following an abusive episode, many men apparently show genuine regret for what they have done, and women report that they can be extremely loving and kind at the same time” (313). Tracey Bennet Herbert, Roxane Cohen Silver, and John H. Ellard, “Coping With An Abusive Relationship: I. How and Why Do Women Stay?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53, no. 2 (1991): 311-325.

<sup>44</sup> “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? / Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? / Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” Matthew 7:3-5. King James Bible Online. <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>.

advise treating the car with respect, on the next page, Young finds that “among motorists at present there are more slaves than masters of the motor-car” because drivers are “too much preoccupied with and imposed upon by its strange personality” (13). Early century motor cars, to be sure, were temperamental and difficult to learn. Beginning drivers then were the kinds of beginning drivers we cannot even imagine in the twenty-first century. Not only is the skill set a new one, it is one they have never before observed. Motoring manuals liken it to piloting a yacht, but even then, open water is very different from a city street crowded not only with pedestrians, but with cyclists and equestrians as well. As cyclists became motorists, cars must have seemed very strange indeed. But as motor enthusiasts described their experiences with their cars, they turned to easy stereotypes and an existing language of hierarchy and mastery. The car exists to be mastered, and men are masters. It was not a stretch for these writers to find a female face behind the car’s “strange personality.” So when Young admonishes his readers that “To be a monarch of miles is very well, but to be a slave of motor-cars is very ill—a waste of life and damaging to reason,” the sentiment goes beyond the car in the garage to speak to the management of the wife in the sitting room (11).

This sort of management mindset denies the agency of the party under management, and Pope leverages this to explore the situation of women by forcing the reader to realize the alignment of cars with women and then by giving the car itself a voice, one that confronts the reader with how closely analogous it is to a human woman’s voice. “The Cry of the Car” especially problematizes the gendering of driving and maintaining a car by giving the car itself a voice. This strategy has precedent elsewhere in Pope’s writing. When she writes from the points of view of children or animals, she is

frequently using that voice as a way to foreground women's situations in a nonconfrontational way.<sup>45</sup>

*Master and friend!*

You have the power to control my fate,

Pause—and attend.

One moment by the wayside let us wait,

And to the end

Hear my petition ere it be too late,

While, eloquent of wrongs, my vitals palpitate.

Are you aware

Your clumsy driving fills my soul with pain?

The wear and tear

Of tyre, transmission gear, exhaust and chain

I grin and bear—

But when small cars keep passing in disdain,

My haughty throttle throbs and sobs—but throbs in vain.<sup>46</sup>

This speaker is especially powerful when read alongside “The Mote in His Eye” and “My Rival,” for it gives voice to both the car and the silenced woman. “Master and

---

<sup>45</sup> For some examples of animal speakers, see: “Bilkington Squire,” *Punch*, August 16, 1905, 116. “The Dog and Fly Papers,” *The Pall Mall Magazine*, February 1911, 323-324. “Gambol,” *Punch*, March 20, 1912, 207. “The Midges’ Song,” *Punch*, June 23, 1909, 448. For some examples of children as speakers, see: “Hints for the Very Young,” *Punch*, March 16, 1904, 190. “Mail-Cart Dialogue I,” *Punch*, November 16, 1904, 352. “Mail-Cart Dialogue II,” February 8, 1905, 91. “Mail-Cart Dialogue III,” *Punch*, December 6, 1905, 413. “My Comforter,” *Punch*, May 29, 1907, 383.

<sup>46</sup> This is language used, without irony, to describe car sounds in the early century. Plunkett notes “the soft sob which dies away when [the car] has reached the summit” of a hill (qtd. in Young, *The Complete Motorist*, 272).



friend!” is similar to Young’s language of slavery, but here it is in the context of a complex marriage relationship: the male is the head of the household, the legal entity, the master of his domain, but he should also be a friend to his wife and behave in a kind manner. At least that is what the woman hopes for because “[he has] the power to control [her] fate.”<sup>47</sup> The speaker asks him to stop and listen, which is what the men in nearly all the motoring poems do not want to do under any circumstances. They do not want to listen to the woman beside them, but they will silence her to hear the car, even if they remain unwilling to listen to the car. But at the same time, the car speaker here is presenting a “petition” because she depends on the man to respect it and do as she asks and recommends. She cannot present it as something for her benefit alone; in order to convince the man here, she must present her “wrongs” in a way that will make it to the man’s benefit to address them.<sup>48</sup>

As in “My Rival,” the speaker here bears up under abuse with no real expectation of relief. She can “grin and bear” no longer, but this poem, like the others, does not read as an ultimatum, for it cannot be one. Nowhere does this speaker seem optimistic that her “petition” will be heard or her requests granted; they depend upon the male driver to recognize and alter his own behavior, after all. As we have seen elsewhere in Pope’s writing, men are often unaware of the effects of their privilege upon those who are exploited to support and maintain it.<sup>49</sup>

How badly planned

Your jerky application of the clutch!

---

<sup>47</sup> See chapter 2 for a discussion of marriage expectations.

<sup>48</sup> This is a strategy used in *Votes for Women*.

<sup>49</sup> My discussion of the “Men I Might Have Married” series in my first chapter bears this out as Pope’s speakers rule out each potential husband because of his careless and abusive domination of spaces of all kinds.

No master hand  
Would use me thus, although you pose as such.  
Please understand  
You must improve your steering very much  
If you and I intend to keep it all in touch.

*Give me a chance!*

And like a star we'll flash to yonder pole.  
The broad expanse  
Of England like a picture will unroll;  
A gleaming lance,  
We'll pierce the leagues and consummate our goal  
When once you understand a motor has a soul.<sup>50</sup>

Pope carefully maintains a nonthreatening tone in this poem, but this does not diminish her critique. She takes the commonplace of the “soul” of a motorcar and overlays it with the commonplace of the car as a woman.<sup>51</sup> In making the car a woman, she does not overtly challenge “a woman’s place.” Because a car cannot be not a car, rather, she argues for kind treatment of the car, and by extension, the woman the car represents. Remember, she tells the reader, that this thing that you have charge of “has a soul” and to treat is as such. The final stanza, with its sexual language of a “gleaming lance” to “pierce the leagues and consummate our goal,” describes the car and driver as a team, rather than an antagonistic pairing. Pronouns become plural, uniting the car and the

---

<sup>50</sup> Jessie Pope, “The Cry of the Car,” *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909), 14-15.

<sup>51</sup> Young, *The Happy Motorist*, 12.

driver. Becoming a partnership, the car argues, will lead them toward a mastery of the road and toward driving the car for the purposes for which it is intended.<sup>52</sup> The argument, then, is for a companionate rather than a patriarchal relationship.<sup>53</sup>

Again, the speaker reminds the driver that improving his driving skill and listening to the car will be mutually beneficial. This penultimate stanza is the moment where in “Love in a Car,” the speaker walked away from Reginald, but this speaker cannot leave on her own. Importantly, this poem—highlighting the dangerous situation of a woman in an abusive relationship, as Pope does repeatedly in “Men I Might Have Married”—underscores that abuse is frequently seen as the woman’s problem to solve.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Hammerton reminds us that it is up to the woman to prove her abuse in multiple ways.<sup>55</sup> It is her responsibility to change her husband’s behavior. Aligning the situation of the woman with the situation of the car—a literal object with no say in who its “driver” may be and limited ways to express pain in a way meaningful to that driver—lets Pope lay bare the situation of women in heterosexual relationships. The man in this poem is a bad driver, an inexperienced driver. On the one hand, driving is new, so it is natural that

---

<sup>52</sup> In *The Happy Motorist*, Young writes that the motor car “might, among other things, teach the English to know England as well as the Americans know it. Ancient, green England, threatened and disappearing beneath the tide of what is called progress, topping the flood still, and raising its old voice in these quiet country places” (229-230). According to him, “the man who has a motor-car and knows how to use it may really enjoy; he may taste new experiences, and rediscover old and forgotten pleasures; he may do that most enchanting of all things—discover and explore a country” (41). “The ideal of motoring,” he argues, “combines two things: to secure the greatest possible amount of pleasure and luxury for oneself, and to inflict the least possible amount of discomfort on other people” (41).

<sup>53</sup> A. James Hammerton, “Victorian Marriage and the Law of Matrimonial Cruelty,” *Victorian Studies* vol. 22, no. 2 (1990): 269-292.

<sup>54</sup> Herbert, Silver, and Ellard summarize that “one commonly hears of abused women who either remain with their partner following an abusive episode, or return to their partner after having successfully left the relationship. Observers who see an abused woman remain with, or return to, the man who abuses her may be likely to blame her for her victimization because she ‘keeps going back for more’” (311).

<sup>55</sup> Hammerton writes that under the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, divorce was permitted, “but enshrined the double standard of morality in law by allowing relief to a husband for his wife’s adultery alone, while requiring a wife to prove adultery plus a compounding offense such as cruelty, desertion, incest, or bigamy” (271). He continues that “no significant changes were made to the legislation until the double standard was abolished in 1923, and grounds other than adultery were permitted for a divorce decree in 1937 (271).

he be bad at it, but he is not listening to the car, which every driving manual says, will tell you what is wrong with it if you only learn to listen.<sup>56</sup>

Most important for this poem is that the hurt caused by the driver does not show on the outside of the car. The damage is not external, but internal. For this car and speaker, the “clumsy driving” does not just hurt the body, it goes much deeper, to the soul. Tires can be replaced or patched, but the gears and chains are hidden under the hood, or bonnet. Hammerton summarizes that it is harder to prove emotional abuse in the courts than it is to show bruises from physical abuse.<sup>57</sup> These texts work within the context defined by early century motoring manuals and attitudes about driving. Because technology is a male domain, the things manipulated within it are described in female terms and the relationship with those objects is one of mastery and ownership.<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately, the speaker knows that, as a car, she cannot communicate in a language

---

<sup>56</sup> Dorothy Levitt even recommends letting no one else drive your car but you because only you know your car’s noises best. Merriman notes that “the motor’s rhythm, pitch and volume could be important not only for timing and gear-changing, but also for reasons of road safety, sociality and car maintenance” (77). Levitt admonishes her readers to “train your ear to distinguish the slightest sound foreign to the consistent running of the engine. A single misfire means that there is some little thing needing attention” (52). In *The Complete Motorist*, Young gets very specific indeed, saying “in certain cars, particularly Panhards, the musical note caused by the gear wheels is itself a very fair guide to the changing of speed” (218). Sigmund Krausz asserts, “the noise of the engine is a point which should be studied, in order to be able to distinguish by sound whether there are any defects or whether, in cases, of hill-climbing, the engine has arrived at the limit of its power, in which case a change to lower speed is necessary to prevent the stopping of the car” (124-125). Sigmund Krausz, *ABC of Motoring: A Manual of Practical Information for Layman, Auto Novice and Motorist* (Chicago: Laird and Lee, 1906).

<sup>57</sup> Hammerton quotes Sir William Scott: “What merely wounds the mental feelings is in few cases to be admitted where they are not accompanied with bodily injury, either actual or menaced” (273).

<sup>58</sup> Wajcman notes the use of “gender symbolism to conceptualize nature” in “eighteenth and nineteenth century biomedical science in France and Britain” (6). “Anatomically, males were depicted as representing active agents and females as passive objects of male agency. [...] This strikingly gendered imagery of nature and scientific inquiry is not just an historical relic, as these same dichotomies and metaphors can be found in contemporary writing on science” (6).

her driver will readily understand; her “throttle . . . throbs in vain.” Her plea may be heard, but the odds are against its being understood.<sup>59</sup>

### “Self-Sufficient and Alone”: The Female Driver

It is clear that Pope understands the problematic nature of motoring’s feminizing the car and that she deftly folds her critique into her persistent and ongoing concern for women. Pope’s motorists are not always men, though the most unskilled ones are. When Pope’s women take the wheel, the motor car becomes a vehicle of agency and optimism rather than silence and abuse. “Car Coming” aligns the woman with the car without it coming down to an antagonistic, abusive relationship. In “Car Coming,” Pope takes the commonplace of gendering the car as feminine and moves the focus from the driver’s manipulation of the car to the car’s movement itself in a way that highlights its potential for enabling female agency.

The careful driver pulls his horses round,

And in the press of traffic loses ground;

He hears a little, palpitating sound—

*Car Coming!*

As if allured by some enchanted thread

He sees her rush where hansoms fear to tread,

And gaining twenty yards shoot on ahead.

*Car coming!*

Now far behind the din of traffic fades,

---

<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that the car of “Motor Car for Hire,” suffering under Geoffrey’s inept hand, could be read as a speaker here, or at least as anticipating this speaker. Pope’s first car escapes abuse, only to be captured and sold.

She swings discreetly through suburban shades,  
Disturbing butcher-boys and nursery-maids—

*Car coming!*

Shops scatter out, red villas come and go,  
The pavement narrows and the gardens grow,  
Through dingy hedges fields begin to show—

*Car coming!*

The open country lies serene and fair,  
A quiver strikes the solitary air,  
The cattle, idly browsing, pause and stare—

*Car coming!*

The trudging rustic hears the throbbing gust,  
And watches with a taciturn distrust  
The growing speck—the trailing cloud of dust—

*Car coming!*

The landscape disappears into the night,  
A sudden brilliance hurries into sight,  
Two radiant orbs of bold, unshrinking light.

*Car coming!*

Piercing the somber, unexplored unknown,  
A moving flash upon the blackness thrown,

Persistent, self-sufficient and alone.

*Car coming!*<sup>60</sup>

This poem is all about the movement of the car through space. The rhythm of the poem mimics that of a motor tour through the countryside. The first stanza begins through the eyes of the “careful driver” who hears the motorist’s initial approach; by the second stanza, the point of view is inside the car, and the reader experiences the thinning out of the city street, the “red villas” that “come and go” as the car passes them. The car whizzes past the world in this poem; it is a “quiver strik[ing] the solitary air”; the “trudging rustic” seems stationary as he experiences both the “growing speck” of the car’s approach and the “trailing cloud of dust” as the car passes and continues moving. This sense of time compressed and of movement is something early century motorists write of often. For Young, the car “flattens out the world, enlarges the horizon, loosens a little the bonds of Time, sets back a little the barriers of Space. And man, who created and endowed it, who sits and rides upon it as upon a whirlwind, moving a lever here, turning a wheel there, receives in his person the revenues of the vast kingdom he has conquered.”<sup>61</sup> Pope’s car here certainly moves through the landscape as a “whirlwind.” From the vantage point of the car, a journey becomes a “deliberate and conscious progress” in which “we feel the road rising under us.”<sup>62</sup>

It is important in this poem that the driver is a competent one; the landscape changes while the environment in the car remains the same. Absent here are the bangings and roarings, the “short leaps and bounds” of the drivers in “The Mote in His Eye,” “My

---

<sup>60</sup> Jessie Pope, “Car Coming,” *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907), 55-56.

<sup>61</sup> Young, *The Complete Motorist*, 311. In both *The Happy Motorist* and *The Complete Motorist*, the pleasures of travel largely circle around the idea of possessing the land and the country.

<sup>62</sup> Young, *The Complete Motorist*, 312.

Rival,” “The Cry of the Car,” and “Men I Might Have Married.”<sup>63</sup> The driver of “Car Coming” has become a “motorist,” as Peter Merriman describes it: “one must ‘be’ or perhaps ‘become’ a motorist; moving, sensing *with*” the motor, the motor an extension of the human.<sup>64</sup> This driver has become one with the motor, explaining why the focus of this poem is on the car and not the driver. This driver disappears into the car and is described under the same feminine pronoun that would be assigned to the car, with or without a driver. Pope does not offer this fact up for questioning. Pope presents us with a car moving competently and confidently through space. The repetition of the title throughout—“*Car coming!*”—seems to work too hard to remind the reader that it is a car that is coming, not a woman driving a car. We are meant to read the car as a woman.

It is in carrying this reading into the final stanza that the poem becomes a crucial one in Pope’s motoring bibliography. Here, “the landscape disappears” as darkness descends: it does not turn to shades of gray, it does not become shadowed. It is gone in the darkness. The car, its headlamps lit, soars as if in space, “a moving flash upon the blackness thrown.”<sup>65</sup> The driving off into the night “self-sufficient and alone” is expected for a male driver; for a male driver, this is showing “nerve,” because night driving is especially dangerous. But for a female driver, being “self-sufficient and alone” is a completely different animal altogether. If she is self-sufficient, obviously, she can repair

---

<sup>63</sup> Pope, “Motor Car for Hire,” 417.

<sup>64</sup> Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture*, 155.

<sup>65</sup> “Nerve” is frequently listed among qualities necessary in a motor car driver. If driving a car in the pitch darkness in 1906 isn’t nerve, I don’t know what is. Headlamps were after-market accessories at this moment, and they were dim and unreliable at best. And then, as now, there were no streetlights along country roads. The “powerful acetylene lamps” of the early century “were perceived as necessary evils, illuminating the road ahead, but also creating shadows, illusions and dazzling other road users” (Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture*, 87). In *The Complete Motorist*, Young advises foregoing “blinding search-lights” in favor of “two good paraffin lamps” if your car “travels at less than 30 miles an hour” (257). Levitt quotes a price range for purchasing lamps: “The front lamps will cost about £6 per pair, and the rear lamp £1 to £1 5s.” (18).



her car if it breaks down, if anything unexpected happens she knows what she'll have to do.<sup>66</sup> Pope's choice to leave the driver ambiguously gendered yet to maintain the femininity of the car is a powerful one. It boldly depicts a feminine object moving competently and unapologetically through space. She is not questioned, she is not stopped; rather, she is the future. She has escaped the abusive driver and confronts the world "persistent, self-sufficient and alone."<sup>67</sup>

The interrupting nature of the italicized refrain, "*Car Coming!*" highlights the auditory and visual disturbance implicit in a motor car. To sit atop an Edwardian motor car, a highly visible spectacle of noise, machinery, and dust was to become part of the spectacle itself. To participate in any kind of motoring behavior, whether as a driver or a passenger, was to subject oneself to observation and critique due to the attention-drawing

---

<sup>66</sup> Merriman quotes one motoring commentator who surmises that he does "not believe there are ten women in the kingdom who are to trusted in an emergency" (qtd. in 100). From Young, it is expected that the man knows what to do in order to direct someone to do it for him, but in a pinch, he can probably do it himself.

<sup>67</sup> Perhaps because she moves toward the "somber, unexplored unknown," it is to be implied that there is no place yet for such a woman in the motoring world. Even Dorothy Levitt has to make compromises to preserve the performance of her femininity. The woman/car of "Car Coming" makes no such compromises.

nature of the vehicle itself, its sheer novelty.<sup>68</sup> In “Motor Car for Hire,” Kit describes the experience with accuracy:

Geoffrey got in beside me and began to wind a little handle at his side. A small groaning sound came from under the seat, followed by a deep internal note which began low down and increased in volume and ferocity as it went up the scale. The children were startled—naturally—I’m quite sure *I* was, they fell back and stumbled over each other, and one began to cry. The milliners shrank towards Buzzard’s clerk, and I, expecting instant annihilation, sat trying to look as if I were used to it. Then, when we seemed to have arrived at the bursting-point, Geoffrey pulled a lever and we sprang forward with a bound.<sup>69</sup>

The car is a slow eruption of noise and vibration. It is enough to cause the children to shrink back, the female milliners to cower behind the male clerk, and one child to cry. As the car gets underway, Kit observes the effect of the noise on those they pass and on

---

<sup>68</sup> Pope’s “Venus’s Looking Glass,” published in *Punch*, June 15, 1904, highlights the visibility of women in cars: “The sympathetic action of the Woodbridge District Council in erecting a mirror at some cross roads for the benefit of motorists has met with general approval. There is some uncertainty, however, as to whether the glass is intended to reflect around-the-corner traffic for information of the driver, or whether it is placed there for the benefit of the lady in the *tonneau*. In any case it has been noticed that cars bearing what are presumably members of the fair sex refuse to pass the glass and that the cross roads have further become a favorite resort for lady bicyclists and short-skirted pedestrians. The crowd, however, has so far been quite orderly and good-tempered, falling into the *queue* and patiently waiting according to the police instructions until each gets her proper turn. In order, however, to prevent undue congestion, it has been proposed that a mirror should be placed at every other milestone, so as to distribute the traffic” (430). This brief paragraph references a real happening, recorded in *The Motor*, May 31, 1904: “The District Council of Woodbridge, Suffolk, have erected large mirrors at a corner where cross roads meet at such an angle as to constitute a danger to traffic” (460). Making a joke about women’s perceived vanity is the easy response for *Punch*. Most important for Pope in her response to the Woodbridge mirrors is the assumption that women are riding in cars as passengers and decoration only. They are observers and the observed. Pope’s use of the phrase “there is some uncertainty” is the moment where Pope holds the assumption up for observation. The real notice about the mirrors is that they’re to be placed at crossroads where the angle is bad for turning or for seeing what is coming. So moving them to “every other milestone” begins to misunderstand the actual safety concern and takes it to the realm of the absurd. It then proposes to reconstruct the safety feature around the assumed vanity of women, which would allow a conservative reader, Mr. *Punch*, to nod at what is perceived as the nugget of truth within the joke.

<sup>69</sup> Pope, “Motor Car for Hire,” 414.

herself as well. They drive on, honking their horn to “[give] a double note to everybody we did see,” calling for the people they pass to give them attention (417). The attention paid to the car itself is one thing, Kit makes clear, but the transference of that attention to herself is quite another. The noise is exciting for Kit, but it inspires within her conflicting feelings. She enjoys it, yet she knows she must hide her enjoyment. “[T]hough half ashamed of the disturbance,” Kit relates, “I felt such a silly desire to giggle that I found it extremely difficult to preserve a *blasé* demeanour” (414). Seated atop the source of the noise, all eyes are on them, and Kit, especially, must act as if the whole thing is nothing at all. Just in her presence on the seat next to Geoffrey, Kit cannot avoid participating in the spectacle of the motor car. For the driver to disappear completely into the car of “Car Coming,” then is important indeed. To observe a female object moving through space without the onus of judgment upon her is rare, but Pope demonstrates its possibility, if even only as a fantasy.

Merriman reminds us that in the early twentieth century, “some male motoring commentators raised concerns about the suitability of open-topped motor cars for women passengers (let alone women drivers), [... and] that [women’s] embodied practices and experiences started to generate comment amongst male and female participants and observers.”<sup>70</sup> A woman’s experience of an early century motor car, as Kit’s story demonstrates, is very different from a man’s experience of that same car. Once Kit is installed in the car, she becomes part of the object and the spectacle, and she becomes subject to the gaze of everyone the car passes. Geoffrey wants all eyes upon him, while Kit’s fierce maintenance of her “*blasé* demeanour” shows her awareness that, as a woman in a car, she will be critiqued in the manner of other women passengers and drivers in a

---

<sup>70</sup> Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture*, 92.

way that is concerned “as much about the physical appearance, bodily comportment, and dress of women drivers as about their *comportment with* their vehicles, and their performance on the road” (92). It is telling that Kit partially relaxes only once she and Geoffrey have driven out of the center of the town where they will encounter fewer onlookers. It is only at this moment that Kit begins to enjoy herself:

My word! but it was glorious now; we buzzed along at a grand pace, no one was about, and Geoffrey suddenly relieved his feelings by a whoop and a shout. I wanted to, but knew Geoffrey would think it unladylike (he’s very particular), so I had to content myself with singing ‘Oh, listen to the Band,’ at the top of my lungs.<sup>71</sup>

It is important to note here that Kit wants to give “a whoop and shout” as Geoffrey does, but she silences herself by anticipating Geoffrey’s reaction and his wishes. It is also important that Kit gives us this thought process. She must maintain her calm façade, so she does not react to the frightening noise of the car. She wants to have a visible and auditory reaction to what she is experiencing, but she, for the sake of the onlookers who may see her and Geoffrey who may rebuke her, cannot. Kit knows what she wants to do and what she must do, and she decides which impulse to follow.

Kit’s entire experience of riding in the motor car with Geoffrey is defined by how she is seen and perceived by others.<sup>72</sup> How others evaluate her occupation of the space of the motor car and how the motor car, under her control, occupies space. Even before

---

<sup>71</sup> She is singing “Soldiers in the Park” from the 1898 musical *A Runaway Girl*, lyrics by Aubrey Hopwood and Harry Greensbank. The lyrics describe the loud drums of a soldiers’ band marching or playing in the park.

<sup>72</sup> Kit is already hyper-aware of her sex at this moment, for the previous day, Geoffrey and the owner of the car, Mr. Morgan, took the car out for a spin, leaving Kit behind because, as she says, “The motor car held two. I was a girl, so I was left behind” (413).

starting the car, Geoffrey assesses Kit's occupation of space on the seat, warning her, "keep your dress away from that little handle under the seat."<sup>73</sup> His order is not to preserve her dress, but rather his order assumes that Kit will be in the way, that her presence in the car will impede his handling of it. Pope seems aware of the contradictions that would be inherent in a female driver. Socialized from birth to take up as little space as possible, to be quiet and demure, for a woman to be in control of a loud, space-devouring machine—to control such a monster—goes against her training.

An additional price paid by women who motor is the constant surveillance and critique of those whose space they disrupt. Pope explores the ways that cars offer this double-edged freedom of movement. On the one hand, as in "Car Coming," the car presents the possibility of being "self-sufficient" and alone," but alternatively, that kind of solitude attracts more attention for a woman than for a man. Maintaining the femininity in how we read the car allows us to see something else at work when Pope's speakers and observers critique how a car occupies space. While the speaker of "Motor Martyrdom," for instance, has a valid complaint in noise and dust pollution, he or she can be read to find fault with the potential for increased female mobility, because increased agency and freedom for women upsets the status quo and disturbs the social peace.<sup>74</sup>

The most important part of "Queen of the Road," for instance, is that the driver of the offending car is a woman. The use of a female driver allows the female speaker to identify with the motorist's movement, but also find fault with it because the speaker is

---

<sup>73</sup> Pope, "Motor Car for Hire," 414. Every one of Pope's male motorists has a moment like this one with his female passenger.

<sup>74</sup> See appendix 6 for the text of "Motor Martyrdom."

moving through space with her husband by her side, which from her point of view, is more correct and proper.<sup>75</sup>

Let the 'igh-born madam go scorchin' by  
In 'er motor-car, velvet-lined,  
A "shover" in front with a 'aughty eye  
And phew! what a stew be'ind.  
I wouldn't be 'er, it's an absolute cert,  
An' so I'd like to 'a' told 'er,  
For I'm Queen of the road, when I bike with Bert  
With 'is hand upon me shoulder.<sup>76</sup>

Each demonstration of the speaker's bravery or nerve returns to the presence of "'is 'and upon me shoulder'" throughout the poem. Indeed, the speaker puts conditions on her being "Queen of the road," for her presence on the road is dependent upon the presence of her Bert and his ever-present "hand." It is important to note the contrast between the female motorist, speeding through town alone, and the female cyclist, whose occupation of space is dependent upon the presence of her husband. The kind of freedom the car

---

<sup>75</sup> The speaker, more conservative and less affluent than the driver, certainly understands the world differently than the other woman would. Joan Perkin discusses the wide gulf between the married lives of upper middle class to upper class woman and the married lives of working class women. The lives of the former present much more freedom than the latter. This poem also hints at what Carlton Reid observes of the growth of the car and the decline of the bicycle. While the speaker asserts that "it's an absolute cert" that she would never be the female driver of the car, she is, in fact, on a trajectory to do just that. Reid notes consistently that as the upper classes moved on from bicycles to motorcars, bicycles dropped in price, allowing those who could not afford them previously to own them. Bicycles also began to gain a connotation of being for the lower classes as cars became more and more pervasive. Carlton Reid, *Roads Were Not Built For Cars* (Newcastle: Front Page Creations, 2014).

<sup>76</sup> Jessie Pope, "The Queen of the Road," *Punch*, June 11, 1913, 466. See appendix 7 for the full text of "Queen of the Road."

represents is accessible only to those with the disposable means to own one and the disposable time to learn one.<sup>77</sup>

Like the female motorist blazing through the first stanza of “Queen of the Road,” Mollie, the eponymous “A Chauffeuse,” is part of the spectacle of the speeding car. Mollie leverages the uncertainty surrounding the new technology and claims the freedom of a motor-car for herself.<sup>78</sup> In the second stanza, Mollie “blows her motor-horn / [...] as if she meant it; / And thunders with such a note of scorn,” taking up additional auditory space with sounds she can control. She announces her presence. Finally, Mollie is cited for speeding, and it is here that we see her use more prescribed female behavior, described by Pope as “gentle woman’s wiles.” Mollie’s use of her “woman’s wiles” are meant to draw attention to her physical attractiveness, or at least her performance of prescribed female behavior, which as we will see, is important to maintain for the potentially subversive woman to be taken seriously.

When Mollie drives a motor-car  
You guess that something’s coming;  
The nimbus follows, from afar,  
You hear the engine drumming.  
You’re quite uncertain where you are  
When Mollie passes in her car.

---

<sup>77</sup> Pope is not unaware of the classism inherent in motoring, as “Queen of the Road” and “Motor Car for Hire” make clear. Note that Pope has set the speaker of “Queen of the Road” on the path to increased mobility by placing her on a bicycle. Reid notes that motoring led to increased access to bicycles for those of lower income because prices for new and used bicycles dropped once car manufacturing gained momentum.

<sup>78</sup> It should be noted that the car is distinctly described as “her car,” not her husband’s, her brother’s, or her father’s car.

When Mollie blows her motor-horn  
She blows as if she meant it;  
And thunders with such a note of scorn  
All quadrupeds resent it.  
They dance as though they're full of corn  
When Mollie blows her motor-horn.

When racing over measured miles  
A policeman catches Mollie,  
The enemy she reconciles  
At first with melancholy;  
Then, such are gentle woman's wiles,  
She takes her goggles off—and smiles.

For Mollie's got a charming face,  
The county magnates know it:  
With sympathy they try the case  
Although they never show it—  
Until the policeman, in disgrace,  
Admits he overjudged the pace.

Pope could easily have written this poem to describe any man driving his motor car, but she chose Mollie and uses her to naturalize the exceptional behavior of a female motorist. This, of course, is over-shadowed by the memorable culmination of the poem:



Mollie being forgiven for speeding. As a woman, she is comical, whereas if she were a man, the poem would lose its humor to focus instead on the injustice and inconvenience of the speeding citation. When Mollie is stopped for speeding, the reader is meant to understand that she uses her “gentle woman’s wiles” to get out of a citation. It is important that she “takes her goggles off,” removing some of her motorist’s armor, to confront the policeman.<sup>79</sup> The presence of the goggles indicates that she is not only a serious driver, but one aware of the gendered connotation of certain after-market accessories. A windshield was considered an effeminate accessory. Merriman notes that “motorists tolerance of the elements frequently became associated with a particular construction of motoring masculinity.”<sup>80</sup> A man will enjoy driving in the open air, but “women, it was argued, often desired and required protection from the complexion-ruining effects of the British weather and male motorists need not work about the addition of ‘effeminate’ accessories if they were for the benefit of their lady passengers” (86).

Motoring as a man would is Mollie’s best way to demonstrate her seriousness. Like Pope’s “A Bachelor Girl,” Mollie makes a conscious effort to do things in the “masculine” way. The episode of Mollie’s speeding citation and how it is forgiven serves to highlight her gender over her driving. In focusing on the court appearance, her smile and “woman’s wiles,” the reader may easily forget how competently Mollie handles a car

---

<sup>79</sup> This can also be a class moment, For the policeman, here “disgrace[d],” may not be of the same leisured class as Mollie herself. It is not until the court proceedings that the policeman “admits he overjudged the pace.” Speedometers are a novelty after-market accessory at this time, and Young even recommends not getting one because your wristwatch can work just as well and also because no one wants to admit their real speed, everyone overestimates their speed.

<sup>80</sup> Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture*, 85

built for speed.<sup>81</sup> We must also remember that this poem merely observes Mollie; it does not detailed her embodied experience of driving alone and being stopped for speeding. We cannot know whether Mollie's smile indicates her using "woman's wiles" or false politeness. What we do know is that Mollie drives her own car, she drives it well, and she drives it alone.

Women leveraged the instability of the motor car as one, among many, way to "[move] more and more visibly away from Victorian conventions of gender."<sup>82</sup> Clarsen describes the progression from "privileged women relish[ing] their newly won freedom to walk alone through commercial streetscapes, to shop in department stores, to ride on public transport, and to pedal bicycles" to their "daughters welcome[ing] with equal enthusiasm the opportunity to drive automobiles and fly airplanes."<sup>83</sup> As women claim their right to public space and human status, it is logical that they should also lay claim to visibility in that space. The way Pope's women negotiate that visibility is important. Among other things, it shows again Pope's intense awareness of the situation of women in her historical moment.

With women like Kit and Mollie in her motorpool, Pope is able to show readers the delicate conversation that happens in the mind of the female motorist. Does she show her pleasure? Does she expose the abysmal driving of the male motorist? Does she correct him? Does she react to the car? Each woman weighs her options carefully before deciding. As we saw with Kit and the speaker of "My Rival," the woman is both

---

<sup>81</sup> Young flatly states that fast cars are not meant for women: "needless to say, machines of more than forty horse-power should be used with the utmost care and driven only by the most careful and experienced men" (*The Happy Motorist* 126).

<sup>82</sup> Lisa Carstens, "Unbecoming Women: Sex Reversal in the Scientific Discourse on Female Deviance in Britain, 1880-1920," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 20, no. 1 (2011): 62-94. 66.

<sup>83</sup> Clarsen, *Eat My Dust*, 5.

welcome on the seat next to the male motorist and damned in that position as well. If her weight is convenient to the running of the car, the male motorist is pleased to have her, but if her skirt gets in the way of the driver's search for a lever, it is the woman's fault for being there, dressed as a woman would be dressed. The male motorist cannot see the double bind. When the female motorist drives the car, she is, as Merriman's research shows, judged along a different set of criteria from how a male motorist would be judged. And those who would critique the female motorist for these things, blame the female motorist for provoking those critiques. The provocation, their reasoning says, is her presence, her occupation of space in the motoring arena. Pope recognizes the absurdity here, but also the opportunity. In exposing the problematic nature of motoring's feminized vocabulary, Pope is able to demonstrate that humans become what they are socialized to become, and the fault does not lie with the product of the system, but with the system itself. But in order to change the system, one must first realize that the system exists. Pope's female motorists can see the gears of the system turning; they can see their faces reflected in the shining metal surfaces of the motorcar; they can hear their voices in the hum of an engine. Their male counterparts, however, are not cognizant to the reality of the machinery that manipulates them.

## Coda

Jessie Pope was not only a prolific writer but also a devastatingly smart one. Indeed, my study of her early career easily demonstrates that Pope is not the mindless, meaningless peddler of sing-song jingoism for which she has been taken. It takes a keen eye and careful use of language to write humor, and to write it well. Moreover, Pope had surgical skill. Her women are fluid and evasive; depending on the expectations of the reader, they can appear traditional or transgressive. Her concern with “a woman’s place” would not be out of place in twenty-first century media.

The primary focus of my study has been reading Pope’s women in the context of Pope’s historical moment and discovering the ways in which Pope was in conversation with her world. When one comes to Pope expecting her to be frivolous or just plain wrong, her range is a revelation. Pope’s writing, often dismissed because of its rigorous use of the strongly metered, heavily alliterative, and clearly rhymed characteristics of light verse, lends itself to methods of seeing and reading developed by feminist and cultural studies theorists in the latter half of the twentieth century. Pope consistently interrogates issues of performance and subjectivity from a female perspective, recognizing that both men and women are socialized to particular sets of behaviors that are located along a spectrum of cultural value. She recognizes to whom the power to speak is given and from whom power and agency are taken. She perceives the violence inherent in the system and deploys her women to expose it.

To move forward with further study of Jessie Pope, we must continue to take her seriously as a writer, and we must, as I begin here, read her as she appeared originally in *Punch*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Windsor Magazine*, and elsewhere and then read her as she

collected herself. It is in this latter mode, especially, that we see Pope's orchestration and see most clearly her feminist agenda. Her collections ebb and flow, allowing one woman to confront misogyny openly while another frets over her new dress. But both women, as I have shown, can present similar critiques. They can lay bare the ways in which women are bound and use silence, space, or evasion to resist those boundaries or escape them completely.

In her analysis of women's humor, Regina Barreca frequently notes the social languages in which women must be fluent. Her discussion frequently aligns with Annette Kolodny's reading of how a text may be coded for a particular audience, a code which an outsider audience may overlook completely.<sup>1</sup> Barreca writes,

For example, you can use irony undetected by its subject but apparent to the correct audience. Girls are taught to do this very early on, blinking darkly fringed round eyes at the most boring man in the room and telling him that he is fascinating, which he believes without the shadow of a doubt (having been told this by his relatives since birth), while her girlfriend stands behind the guy laughing silently but thoroughly at how completely, because of his arrogance, he is taken in by the false flattery. Often such women are characterized by men as both sweet and devoid of a sense of humor. Men read the woman's funny, ironic, and sometimes even sarcastic text as straight ("Oh, you're so strong. Can you really crush that

---

<sup>1</sup> Annette Kolodny, "A Map for Rereading: Or, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts," *New Literary History* 11, no. 3 (1980): 451-467.

beer can?") and are delighted to meet a woman who can finally  
"appreciate them."<sup>2</sup>

In her near-constant work with gender and failures of communication between men and women, Pope's women fit this description perfectly. Pope's women are often in the position that they not only recognize the cultural forces that contain them, but also that they realize that the men in their lives are just as bound by those technologies of gender as women are. These women push back against their boundaries and, at times, escape them. Even then, Pope shows us what the escape can cost.

A woman who has freed herself from the threat of marriage, for instance, becomes "damaged goods" in the eyes of the world. She becomes like Miss Proctor in "Our Natural Enemies," a woman who is harmless because she is ridiculous and tragic because she is a woman alone, a woman grown old without having fulfilled her purpose as a woman: becoming a wife and then a mother. Women's lives were changing in the early years of the twentieth century, but for Pope's women, they were not changing quickly enough. Pope, like Mary Frances Buss, could see that the tides were shifting, could cast her hopes toward the future, but still recognized the ways she must perform her gender. Yet, Pope's texts offer a rich legacy that has remained buried under the debris of her connection to Wilfred Owen.

Because of the humorist label and because of her novel status as a female humorist, Pope had a fraught position as a writer of feminist critique. Still, she realized the power of her position as an outsider and used it to her advantage. Barreca notes that "the voice of authority assumes control and offers definition; the voice of the minority

---

<sup>2</sup> Regina Barreca, *They Used to Call Me Snow White ... But I Drifted: Women's Strategic Use of Humor*, (New York: Viking, 1991), 17.

suggests subversion and redefinition. Joking is a reaction that allows the joker to feel in control, however briefly” (58). This is one way that Pope gives power to her women. Many of the situations in Pope’s early career texts are about a struggle for control, often wrapped up in a woman’s desire for autonomy over her own body. However, as I have demonstrated, that desire and struggle are coded messages. Indeed, Mr. Punch never felt himself threatened by Pope’s writing. Quite the contrary, in *Punch*’s reviews of Pope’s first two collections, the magazine is pleased to support Pope’s solo publications and finds her women amusing, not threatening. But in many of her poems addressed to men in particular, Pope’s aim seems to be raising awareness. Women, the speaker of “A Fair Warning” intones, “Won’t be your playthings any more, / When women get the vote.” “No more your little better half need sit at home and fret,” warns the speaker of “The Doom of the Club,” “For the bell will soon be tolling for your club.” Emblematic of so many of Pope’s women, speakers like these look to the future with certainty and give advance notice to men that the times are changing. The men who cling to the past are the ones who become caricatured when placed in the context of Pope’s bibliography. They are men like the speakers of “The Extinct Crocodile” and “The Clue” who long for the days when fewer women fought back against their containment within the patriarchy.

In her day, Pope was always named as a female humorist. Today, her name is prefaced by labels that are inaccurate at best, slanderous at worst, and consistently tied to a single historical moment. It is time to realize that Jessie Pope is more than the sum of poems written from 1914-1918. She was a publishing writer from 1895 until the 1930s, and the vast majority of her texts remain uncollected, still waiting to be read again. My study treats a large sampling of her poetry and but a few prose texts, including stories and

letters. Pope was prolific across a number of genres, including observational articles, skits, short story collections, and a novel. She recovered and edited Robert Noonan's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. She published so many children's books and contributed to so many gift collections of texts for children that it is difficult to compile an exhaustive list.

Until very recently, Pope has been confined to only a few poems she wrote in 1914 and 1915. These poems represent a drop in the vast ocean that is Pope's publishing career. This project reads Pope on her own terms and finds her a voice worthy to read alongside her more famous, more traditionally "literary" peers. It is time that we read Pope as a writer rather than Wilfred Owen's opposite number and let her stand on her own.



## Bibliography

- Acker, Joan. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender and Society* 4, no. 2 (1990): 139-158.
- Altick, Richard D. *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841-1851*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997.
- Anderson, Kitty. "Frances Mary Buss, The Founder as Headmistress, 1850-94." In Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School, 25-54*.
- Anderson, Nancy Fix. *The Sporting Life: Victorian Sports and Games*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010.
- Archives of Grant Richards, 1897-1948*. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., 1979.
- Backscheider, Paula. "The Paradigms of Popular Culture." In *The Eighteenth Century Novel, Essays in Honor of John Richetti*, 19-59. Edited by Albert J. Rivero and George Justice. New York: AMS Press, 2009.
- Barreca, Regina. *They Used to Call Me Snow White ... But I Drifted: Women's Strategic Use of Humor*. New York: Viking, 1991.
- Barwell, Claire. "Bryant, Sophie (1850-1922)." In *Historical Dictionary of British Women*, 145-46. Edited by Cathy Hartley. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Bebbington, W.G. "Jessie Pope and Wilfred Owen." *Ariel* 3, no. 4 (1972): 82-93.
- Beetham, Margaret and Kay Boardman, ed. *Victorian Women's Magazines: An Anthology*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- "The Bizarro Jerry." *Seinfeld*. Season 8, Episode 3. Directed by Andy Ackerman. Aired October 3, 1996.
- Blunden, Edmund, ed. *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.
- Breger, Claudia. "Feminine Masculinities: Scientific and Literary Representations of 'Female Inversion' at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 1/2 (2005): 76-106.
- Brightman, Carol. *Writing Dangerously: Mary McCarthy and Her World*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1992.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

- . "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-531.
- Byles, Joan Montgomery. *War, Women, and Poetry, 1914-1945: British and German Writers and Activists*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995.
- C.J.M., "Léon Charles Albert Calmette 1863-1933." *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* 1, no. 3 (1934): 315-325. doi: 10.1098/rsbm.1934.0015.
- Campbell, James. "Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism." *New Literary History* 30, no.1 (1999): 203-215.
- Carnell, Jennifer. "Victorian Sanitary Towels and Menstrual Products." *Victorian Advertising*. Accessed April 3, 2014.  
<http://www.sensationpress.com/victoriansanitarytowels.htm>
- Carstens, Lisa. "Unbecoming Women: Sex Reversal in the Scientific Discourse on Female Deviance in Britain, 1880-1920." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (2011): 62-94.
- Chambers, Mrs. [Dorothea] Lambert. *Lawn Tennis for Ladies*. New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1910.
- Clarsen, Georgine. *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.
- Collins, Tracy J.R. "Athletic Fashion, *Punch*, and the Creation of the New Woman." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 43, no. 3 (2010): 309-335.
- Cowper, William. "Boadicea: An Ode," 431-2. *The Poems of William Cowper*. Vol. 1: 1748-1782. Edited by John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.
- Cross, Edith ed., "Reminiscences of the School in Its Early Years." In Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 55-70.
- Crosset, Todd W. *Outsiders in the Clubhouse: The World of Women's Professional Golf*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Cuthbertson, Guy. *Wilfred Owen*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- "Division of Labour." *The Windsor Magazine*. 1909. 696.
- Dooley, Eleanor. "Mrs. Bryant." In Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 71-91.

- Dorré, Gina Marlene. "Horses and Corsets: *Black Beauty*, Dress Reform, and the Fashioning of the Victorian Woman." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2002): 157-178.
- Dowson, Jane. *Women, Modernism and British Poetry, 1910-1939*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Drummond, I.M. Epilogue. In Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School, 202-205*.
- Easterday, Lois, Diana Papademas, Laura Schorr, and Catherine Valentine. "The Making of a Female Researcher: Role Problems in Field Work." *Urban Life*, later, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 6, no. 3 (1977): 333-348.
- Eisikovits, Zvi, Zeev Winstok, and Richard Gelles. "Structure and Dynamics of Escalation from the Victim's Perspective." *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services* 82, no. 2 (2002): 143-152.
- Eliot, Rosemary. *Women and Smoking since 1890*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Fisher, Will. "Handkerchiefs and Early Modern Ideologies of Gender." *Shakespeare Studies* 28 (2000): 199-207.
- Fiske, John. "Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life." In *Cultural Studies*, 154-73. Edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Flanders, Judith. *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed*. London: HarperCollins, 2003.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- France, Marie de. "Prologue." Translated by Robert Henning and Joan Ferrante. In *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, 201-3. Vol. 1A. Edited by Christopher Baswell and Anne Howland Schotter. New York: Longman, 2010.
- Fraser, Antonia. *Boadicea's Chariot: The Warrior Queens*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988.
- Furtak, Rick Anthony. "Poetics of Sentimentality." *Philosophy and Literature* 26, no. 1 (2002): 207-21.
- Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

- George, Jane. ““Ladies First’?: Establishing a Place for Women Golfers in British Golf Clubs, 1867-1914.” *Sport in History* 30, no. 2 (2010): 288-308.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. “Soldier’s Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War.” In *Sexchanges*, 258-323. Vol. 2 of *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Gillis, John R. *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Goldsmith, Oliver. “The Hermit, or Edwin and Angelina.” Accessed February 11, 2014. [http://literaryballadarchive.com/PDF/Goldsmith\\_3\\_Edwin\\_and\\_Angelina.pdf](http://literaryballadarchive.com/PDF/Goldsmith_3_Edwin_and_Angelina.pdf)
- Gone in 60 Seconds*. DVD. Directed by Dominic Sena. 2000. Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2000.
- Graham, John. *Lavater’s Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas*. Berne: Peter Lang, 1979.
- Gramsci, Antonio. “Hegemony, Intellectuals and the State.” 75-80. In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Edited by John Storey. Harlow: Pearson, 2009.
- Gurney, Joan Neff. “Not One of the Guys: The Female Researcher in a Male-Dominated Setting.” *Qualitative Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1985): 42-62.
- Hall, Stuart. “Culture, Community, Nature.” In *Representing the Nation: A Reader*, 33-44. Edited by David Boswell and Jessica Evans. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Hammerton, A. James. “Victorian Marriage and the Law of Matrimonial Cruelty.” *Victorian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1990): 269-292.
- Harmsworth, Alfred C. “The Motor-Car Question.” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*. January 1902. 1-8.
- Hayes, Alice M. *The Horsewoman: A Practical Guide to Side-Saddle Riding*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edited by M. Horace Hayes, F.R.C.V.S. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903.
- Heilman, Madeline, Aaron Wallen, Daniella Fuchs, and Melinda Tamkins. “Penalties for Success: Reactions to Women Who Succeed at Male Gender-Typed Tasks.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 3 (2004): 416-427.
- Herberle, Mark A. *A Trauma Artist: Tim O’Brien and the Fiction of Vietnam*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001.

- Herbert, Tracey Bennet, Roxane Cohen Silver, and John H. Ellard. "Coping With An Abusive Relationship: I. How and Why Do Women Stay?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53, no. 2 (1991): 311-325.
- Hezlet, May. *Ladies' Golf*. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1907.
- Hibberd, Dominic. *Owen the Poet*. London: Macmillan, 1986.
- . *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002.
- Higonnet, Margaret R. Introduction to *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, 1-17. Edited by Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- ., ed. *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I*. New York: Plume, 1999.
- Hipp, Daniel. "'By Degrees Regain[ing] Cool Peaceful Air in Wonder': Wilfred Owen's War Poetry as Psychological Therapy." *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 35 no.1 (2002): 25-49.
- Holland, Evangeline. "The Mustache." *Edwardian Promenade*. March 9, 2008. Accessed March 15, 2014. <http://www.edwardianpromenade.com/men/the-mustache/>
- Hopwood, Audrey and Harry Greensbank. "Soldiers in the Park." In *A Runaway Girl*. 1898. <https://archive.org/>
- Howard, Vicki. "A 'Real Man's Ring': Gender and the Invention of Tradition." *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (2003): 837-856.
- Howlette, Caroline J. "Writing on the Body? Representation and Resistance in British Suffragette Accounts of Forcible Feeding." *Genders* 23 (1996): 3-41.
- Hughes, C.E., H.W. Lucy, and Owen Seaman. Review of *Airy Nothings*, by Jessie Pope. Our Booking Office. *Punch*, December 8, 1909. 414.
- . Review of *Paper Pellets*, by Jessie Pope. Our Booking Office. *Punch*, December 12, 1906. 432.
- Hughes, John. "Owen's 'Dulce Et Decorum Est.'" *Explicator* 64, no. 3 (2006): 160-62.
- Hume, Leslie Parker. *The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies: 1897-1914*. New York: Garland, 1982.
- "The Hygiene of the Handkerchief." *Public Opinion* 36 (1904): 597.

- Jabet, George. [Eden Warwick, pseud.] *Nasology: or, Hints Toward a Classification of Noses*. London: Richard Bentley, 1848.
- Jameson, Frederic. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." *Social Text* no. 1 (1979): 130-148.
- Kay, Joyce. "It Wasn't Just Emily Davidson! Sport, Suffrage and Society in Edwardian Britain." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 10 (2008): 1338-1354.
- Kazantzis, Judith. Preface to *Scars Upon My Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War*, xv-xxxii. Edited by Catherine W. Reilly. London: Virago, 1981.
- Keeble, N.H. *Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987.
- Kendall, Tim. "Combat Gnosticism and the Woman Poets of the First World War." *War Poetry* (blog). April 10, 2009. <http://war-poets.blogspot.com/>.
- . *Modern English Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Kerr, Douglas. *Wilfred Owen's Voices: Language and Community*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- Kolodny, Annette. "A Map for Rereading: Or, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts." *New Literary History* 11, no. 3 (1980): 451-467.
- Krausz, Sigmund. *ABC of Motoring: A Manual of Practical Information for Layman, Auto Novice and Motorist*. Chicago: Laird and Lee, 1906.
- Kutzer, M. Daphne. *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books*. New York: Garland, 2000.
- Lane, Arthur. *An Adequate Response: The War Poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972.
- "Language of Flowers." *Victorian Bazaar*. Last updated 2000. Accessed May 8, 2014. <http://www.victorianbazaar.com/meanings.html>
- Laurence, Patricia. "Women's Silence as a Ritual of Truth: A Study of Literary Expressions in Austen, Bronte, and Woolf." In *Listening to Silences*, 156-67. Edited by Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Lauretis, Teresa de. "The Technology of Gender." In *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, 1-30. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Lavater, John Caspar. *Essays on Physiognomy*. Translated by Thomas Holcroft. London: William Tegg and Co, 1878.
- Lee, James F. "The Lady Footballers and the British Press, 1895." *Critical Survey* 24, no. 1 (2012): 88-101.
- Leendertz, Lia. "Kate Middleton's Homegrown Bouquet of Lily of the Valley Follows Royal Code." *The Guardian*. April 29, 2011. Accessed July 8, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/>.
- Lejeune, Anthony. "Clubmen and Ladies Who Lunch." *National Review*. July 20, 1992. 56.
- . *The Gentlemen's Clubs of London*. London: Bracken Books, 1979.
- Levitt, Dorothy. *The Woman and the Car: A Chatty Little Handbook for All Women Who Motor or Who Want to Motor*. Introduction by C. Byng-Hall. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909.
- Lewis, Cecil Day, ed. *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*. By Wilfred Owen. London: Chatto and Windus, 1963.
- Macdonald, Kate. "Women and their Bodies in the Popular Reading of 1910." *Literature and History* 22, no. 1 (2013): 61-79.
- Macdonald, Sharon. "Boadicea: Warrior, Mother, and Myth." In *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives*, 40-77. Edited by Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden, and Shirley Ardener. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
- Mansfield, Katherine. "Her First Ball." In *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, 115-20. New York: Penguin, 1997.
- Marsh, Jean. "A Manner of Speaking." Introduction to *The Illuminated Language of Flowers*, by Kate Greenaway, 9-18. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.
- Martin, Andrew. "I Stick A Handkerchief in My Jacket Pocket and Think I Look Aspirational." *New Statesman*. October 4, 2004. 63.
- Mathews, R.G. "A Boadicea of Politics." *The Bystander*. April 1, 1908,

- Mayhall, Laura E. Nym. "Creating the 'Suffragette Spirit': British Feminism and the Historical Imagination." *Women's History Review* 4, no. 3 (1995): 319-344.
- . *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Merriman, Peter. *Mobility, Space and Culture*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Mikalachki, Jodi. *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990.
- Milne-Smith, Amy. "A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen's Clubs of London, 1880-1914." *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 4 (2006): 796-818.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18.
- Munkwitz, Erica. "Vixens of Vinery: Women, Sport, and Fox-Hunting in Britain, 1860-1914." *Critical Survey* 24, no. 1 (2012): 74-87.
- Nabi, Jason. "Tennyson with the Net Down: His 'Freer' Verse." *Victorian Poetry* 51, no. 2 (2013): 177-200.
- Neale, C.M. *The Senior Wranglers of the University of Cambridge, from 1748 to 1907*. Bury St. Edmonds: F.T. Groom and Son, 1907; archive.org, 2010.  
<https://archive.org/>
- Nelson, Carolyn Christensen. "The Uses of Religious in the Women's Militant Suffrage Campaign in England." *Midwest Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2010): 227-42.
- Nelson, James G. *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.
- Nixon, Cheryl L. "'Stop a Moment at this Preface': The Gendered Paratexts of Fielding, Barker, and Haywood." *Journal of Narrative Theory* 32, no. 2 (2002): 123-153.
- O'Connell, Sean. *The Car and British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring 1896-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.
- "Our Heritage." *Cambridge Assessment*. Accessed June 11, 2015.  
<http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/>
- "Paper Pellets. By Jessie Pope. (Elkin Mathews)." *The Athenaeum*. March 1907. 319.



- Park, Jihang. "Women of their Time: The Growing Recognition of the Second Sex in Victorian and Edwardian England." *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 1 (2001): 49-67.
- Parratt, Cartriona M. "Athletic 'Womanhood': Exploring Sources for Female Sport in Victorian and Edwardian England." *Journal of Sport History* 16, no. 2 (1989): 140-157.
- Patrick, John J. "Political Socialization and Political Education in Schools." 190-222. In *Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research*. Edited by Stanley Allen Renshon. New York: The Free Press, 1977.
- Pearl, Sharrona. *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Perkin, Joan. *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Pethick Lawrence, Emmeline. "Tactics of the Suffragettes." *Votes for Women*. March 1908. 81.
- Philadelphoff-Puren, Nina. "The Right Language for Rape." *Hecate* 29, no. 1 (2003): 47-58.
- Phillips, Mary. "A Typical Suffragist." *Votes for Women*. December 1907. 35.
- The Pocket Lavater, or, The Science of Physiognomy, to Which is Added, an Inquiry into the Analogy Existing Between the Brute and the Human Physiognomy, from the Italian of Porta*. New York: Van Winkle and Wiley, 1817.
- Pope, Jessie. *Airy Nothings*. London: Elkin Mathews, 1909.
- . "The Boy in the Street." *Punch*. January 26, 1910. 59.
- . "The Cat Out of the Bag." *The Pall Mall Magazine*. June 1909. 698-704.
- . "The Clue." *Punch*. February 26, 1913. 159.
- . "The Extinct Crocodile." *Punch*. October 27, 1909. 293.
- . "A Fair Warning." *The Windsor Magazine*. 1909. 696.
- . *Jessie Pope's War Poems*. London: Grant Richards, 1915.
- . "Joan and the Whale." *The Pall Mall Magazine*. October 1909. 579-585.

- . *Love—On Leave*. London: C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., 1919.
- . “Mere Vacuum.” *Punch*. May 18, 1904. 347.
- . *More War Poems*. London: Grant Richards, 1915.
- . “The Mote in His Eye.” *Punch*. June 10, 1903. 411.
- . “Motor Car for Hire.” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*. April 1900. 412-423.
- . “My Rival.” *Punch*. February 25, 1903. 143.
- . *Paper Pellets*. London: Elkin Mathews, 1906.
- . “A Proposal (1908).” *The Windsor Magazine*. November 1908. 781.
- . “Purple, Green and White.” *Punch*. March 23, 1910. 214.
- . “The Queen of the Road.” *Punch*. June 11, 1913. 466.
- . “Sandwich Women.” *The Pall Mall Magazine*. October 1910. 632.
- . *The Shy Age*. London: Grant Richards, 1914.
- . *Simple Rhymes for Stirring Times*. London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1916.
- . *Six Plantation Songs with Choruses and Accompaniments for Pianoforte or Banjo*. London: J. Bath, 1900.
- . *Ten Thousand a Year. Humorous song or duet for lady and gentleman with accompaniment for pianoforte or banjo*. London: J. Bath, 1897.
- . *The Tracy Tubbses*. London: Mills and Boone, 1914.
- . “Venus’s Looking Glass.” *Punch*. June 15, 1904. 430.
- Potter, Jane. *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women’s Literary Responses to the Great War, 1914-1918*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2005.
- . “Pope, Jessie (1868–1941).” In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, Oct 2008; May 2014. Accessed August 10, 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/98109>.

- Radner, Joan N. and Susan S. Lanser. "Strategies of Coding in Women's Culture." In *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Culture*, 1-29. Edited by Joan N. Radner. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Ramsey, E. Michele. "Driven from the Public Sphere: The Conflation of Women's Liberation and Driving in Advertising from 1910 to 1920." *Women's Studies in Communication* 29, no. 1 (2006): 88-111.
- Raymond, Joad. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Reid, Carlton. *Roads Were Not Built For Cars*. Newcastle: Front Page Creations, 2014.
- Reynolds, K.M. "The School and Its Place in Girls' Education." In Scrimgeour, *The North London Collegiate School*, 107-138.
- Ridley, Annie E. *Frances Mary Buss and Her Work for Education*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896; Google Books, 2008. <https://books.google.com/>
- Roof, Larry and Annette Hatley Roof. "Flower Meanings, Flower Sentiments." *The Language of Flowers*. Accessed May 8, 2014. <http://www.languageofflowers.com/flowermeaning.htm>
- Rosen, Andrew. *Rise Up, Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union, 1903-1914*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.
- Russ, Joanna. *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.
- Sanford, Nevitt. "The Development of Social Responsibility." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 37, no. 1 (1967): 22-29.
- Sappho. Fragment 118. In *The Sappho Companion*. By Margaret Reynolds. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Sassoon, Siegfried, ed., *Poems*. By Wilfred Owen. London: Chatto and Windus, 1920.
- Scrimgeour, R.M., ed. *The North London Collegiate School, 1850-1950*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Seaman, Owen. "Women I Have Never Married, I." *Punch*. August 3, 1904. 74.
- . "Women I Have Never Married, II." *Punch*. August 10, 1904. 92.
- . "Women I Have Never Married, III." *Punch*. August 17, 1904. 110.

- . "Women I Have Never Married, IV." *Punch*. August 24, 1904. 128.
- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In *The Norton Shakespeare*, 805-863. Edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. New York: Norton, 1997.
- . *Much Ado About Nothing*. In *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1381-1444. Edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. New York: Norton, 1997.
- . *Othello*. In *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2091-2174. Edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katharine Eisaman Maus. New York: Norton, 1997.
- Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. New York: Viking, 1990.
- Silver, Catherine. "Gendered Identities in Old Age: Toward (De)Gendering?" *Journal of Aging Studies* 17, no. 4 (2003): 379-397.
- Simmers, George. "Jessie Pope's Love—On Leave." *Great War Fiction* (blog). July 9, 2009. <http://greatwarfiction.wordpress.com/>.
- . "Poor Old Jessie Pope." *Great War Fiction* (blog). July 7, 2009. <http://greatwarfiction.wordpress.com/>.
- Solnit, Rebecca. "The Problem with Men Explaining Things." *Mother Jones*. August 20, 2012. Accessed March 4, 2014. <http://www.motherjones.com/>.
- Staffe, Blanche Baroness. *The Lady's Dressing Room*. Translated by Lady Colin Campbell. London: Cassell and Co., 1893. In *The Dictionary of Victorian London*. Edited by Lee Jackson. Accessed July 24, 2015. <http://www.victorianlondon.org/index-2012.htm>.
- Stallworthy, Jon. *Wilfred Owen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Stephen, Leslie. "Calverley, [formerly Blayds], Charles Stewart, (1831-1884)." Revised by Katherine Mullin. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: University Press, 2004. Accessed February 27, 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4409>.
- Stevenson, Pauline. *Edwardian Fashion*. London: Ian Allan Ltd., 1980.
- Stout, Janis P. *Coming Out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005.

- Sturdy, Steve. "Philip, Sir Robert William (1857–1939)." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004; Jan 2011. Accessed April 3, 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35505>.
- Summers, Annette. "Sairey Gamp: Generating Fact from Fiction." *Nursing Inquiry* 4, no. 1 (1997): 4-18.
- Swift, Jonathan. "Strephon and Chloe." 1734. *Eighteenth-Century Resources*. Edited by Jack Lynch. Last updated January 7, 2006. Accessed February 19, 2014. <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/texts/Strephon.html>
- Tennyson, Alfred Lord. "Boadicea." 613-6. In *The Poems of Tennyson*. Vol. 2. Edited by Christopher Ricks. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Thomas, Pauline. "Edwardian Embellished Blouses." *Fashion-Era.com*. Last modified 2001. Accessed June 18, 2013. <http://www.fashion-era.com/>.
- Tickner, Lisa. *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-14*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1987.
- Tinkler, Penny. "Rebellion, Modernity, and Romance: Smoking as a Gendered Practice in Popular Young Women's Magazines, Britain 1918-1939." *Women's Studies International Forum* 24, no. 1 (2001): 111-122.
- . "Refinement and Respectable Consumption: the Acceptable Face of Women's Smoking in Britain, 1918-1970." *Gender & History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 342-360.
- Torney-Purta, Judith. "Adolescents' Political Socialization in Changing Contexts: An International Study in the Spirit of Nevitt Sanford." *Political Psychology* 25, no. 3 (2004): 465-478.
- "Treatments for Tuberculosis – The Edinburg Scheme." *Lothian Health Services Archive*. Accessed April 3, 2014. <http://www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk/>.
- Vandrei, Martha. "A Victorian Invention? Thomas Thornycroft's 'Boadicea Group' and the Idea of Historical Culture in Britain." *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 2 (2014): 485-508.
- Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance. "Red Flags for Abusive Relationships." *Red Flag Campaign*. Accessed July 23, 2015. <http://www.theredflagcampaign.org/>.
- Votes for Women*. Google News Archive. <https://news.google.com/>.
- Wajcman, Judy. *Feminism Confronts Technology*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991.

- Walton, Susan. "From Squalid Impropriety to Manly Respectability: The Revival of Beards, Moustaches and Martial Values in the 1850s in England." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 30, no. 3 (2008): 229-245.
- "Ward Lock and Co.'s Wonder Book." *The Bookman*. December 1912. 186.
- "Washable Hankies." Mumsnet Talk. *Mumsnet*. Accessed April 16, 2014. <http://www.mumsnet.com/>.
- Waugh, Arthur. Introduction to *Later Poems from Punch*, xi-xxvi. London: George C. Harrap and Co., 1909.
- Welland, D.S.R. *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1960.
- Williams, Elizabeth A. "Gags, Funnels and Tubes: Forced Feeding of the Insane and of Suffragettes." *Endeavour* 32, no. 4 (2008): 134-140.
- Williams, Michael. "Wilfred Owen: A Poet Re-Institutionalized." *Critical Survey* 2, no. 2 (1990): 194-202.
- Wilson, A.J. "How to Drive a Motor-Car." *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*. 1902. 254-260.
- Wilson, Elizabeth and Lou Taylor. *Through the Looking Glass: A History of Dress from 1860 to the Present Day*. London: BBC Books, 1989.
- Wintle, Sarah. "Horses, Bikes, and Automobiles: The New Woman on the Move." In *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin de Siècle Feminisms*, 66-78. Edited by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Wojtczak, Helen. "Wife Beating." *British Women's Emancipation Since the Renaissance*. Last updated 2009. Accessed July 7, 2015. <http://www.historyofwomen.org/wifebeating.html>.
- Wosk, Julie. *Women and the Machine: Representations from the Spinning Wheel to the Electronic Age*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- "WWI A2 exam – poetry, prose and quotes." *The Student Room*. Last updated 2006. Accessed May 20, 2015. <http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/>.
- Young, A.P. Filson. *The Complete Motorist: Being an Account of the Evolution and Construction of the Modern Motor-Car; With Notes on the Selection, Use, and Maintenance of the Same; and on the Pleasures of Travel upon the Public Roads*. London: Methuen & Co., 1904.

---. *The Happy Motorist: An Introduction to the Use and Enjoyment of the Motor Car*. London: Grant Richards, 1906.

Zimmerman, Everett. "Swift's Scatological Poetry, A Praise of Folly." *Modern Language Quarterly* 48, no. 2. (1987): 124-144.

Zimmerman, Sarah M. "Smith, Charlotte (1749-1806)." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004; Oct 2007. Accessed August 17, 2013. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25790>.

Zweiniger-Bargilowska, Ina. "The Making of a Modern Female Body: Beauty, Health and Fitness in Interwar Britain." *Women's History Review* 20, no. 2 (2011): 299-317.

## Appendix 1

“Dulce et Decorum Est”

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!-An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,-  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.

Owen, Wilfred. “Dulce et Decorum Est.” *Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*. Edited by Jon Stallworthy. New York: Norton, 1985.



## Appendix 2

### “The Call”

Who’s for the trench—  
Are you, my laddie?  
Who’ll follow French—  
Will you, my laddie?  
Who’s fretting to begin,  
Who’s going out to win?  
And who wants to save his skin—  
Do you, my laddie?

Who’s for the khaki suit—  
Are you, my laddie?  
Who longs to charge and shoot—  
Do you, my laddie?  
Who’s keen on getting fit,  
Who means to show his grit,  
And who’d rather wait a bit—  
Would you, my laddie?

Who’ll earn the Empire’s thanks—  
Will you, my laddie?  
Who’ll swell the victor’s ranks—  
Will you, my laddie?  
When that procession comes,  
Banners and rolling drums—  
Who’ll stand and bite his thumbs—  
Will you, my laddie?

Jessie Pope, “The Call,” *Jessie Pope’s War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915).  
Previously published as “The Call” in *Daily Mail*, November 26, 1914.

### Appendix 3

#### “Play the Game”

Twenty-two stalwarts in stripes and shorts  
Kicking a ball along,  
Set in a square of leather-lunged sports  
Twenty-two thousand strong,  
Some of them shabby, some of them spruce,  
Savagely clamorous all,  
Hurling endearments, advice or abuse,  
At the muscular boys on the ball.

Stark and stiff ‘neath a stranger’s sky  
A few hundred miles away,  
War-torn, khaki-clad figures lie,  
Their faces rigid and grey—  
Stagger and drop where the bullets swarm,  
Where the shrapnel is bursting loud,  
Die, to keep England safe and warm—  
For a vigorous football crowd!

Football’s a sport, and a rare sport too,  
Don’t make it a source of shame.  
To-day there are worthier things to do.  
Englishmen, play the game!  
A truce to the League, a truce to the Cup,  
Get to work with a *gun*.  
When our country’s at war we must all back up—  
It’s the only thing to be done!

Jessie Pope, “Play the Game,” *Jessie Pope’s War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915)  
11. Previously published as “Play the Game” in *Daily Mail*, November, 11, 1914.

Appendix 4

“Socks”

Shining pins that dart and click  
In the fireside’s sheltered peace  
Check the thoughts that cluster thick—  
*20 plain and then decrease.*

He was brave—well, so was I—  
Keen and merry, but his lip  
Quivered when he said good-bye—  
*Purl the seam-stitch, purl and slip.*

Never used to living rough,  
Lots of things he’d got to learn;  
Wonder if he’s warm enough—  
*Knit 2, catch 2, knit 1, turn.*

Hark! The paper-boys again!  
Wish that shout could be suppressed;  
Keeps one always on the strain—  
*Knit off 9, and slip the rest.*

Wonder if he’s fighting now,  
What he’s done and where he’s been;  
He’ll come out on top, somehow—  
*Slip 1, knit 2, purl 14.*

Jessie Pope, “Socks,” *Jessie Pope’s War Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1915) 21.  
Previously published as “Socks” in *Punch’s Almanack*, January 1915.

Appendix 5

Contents	
	PAGE
SECOND THOUGHTS . . . . .	7
THE LAST WASP . . . . .	8
COMPETITIVE COUGHING . . . . .	10
IT WAS A PLUMBER AND HIS LAD . . . . .	12
A CRY OF THE CAR . . . . .	14
A LEAGUE ENTHUSIAST . . . . .	16
WHEN CISSIE SWIMS . . . . .	18
A WEAK POINT . . . . .	19
A "DIVOTEE" . . . . .	21
MY COMFORTER . . . . .	23
A CRY FROM CLEMENT'S INN . . . . .	25
THE ARTFUL DODGER . . . . .	26
LOVE IN A CAR . . . . .	28
CHEERRIES ARE IN . . . . .	31
THE BEACH . . . . .	32
OUR SKATING SEASON . . . . .	34
A BACHELOR GIRL . . . . .	36
OFF HIS GAME . . . . .	38
FAREWELL TO THE FAIR . . . . .	40
THE DOOM OF THE CLUB . . . . .	42
A VALENTINE . . . . .	44
WITH THE BEAGLES IN HERTS . . . . .	46

ON THE BRINK . . . . .	PAGE	48
A CRÊPE-DE-CHINE ROSE . . . . .		50
AN UGLY MUG . . . . .		52
INVINCIBLE HANKY-PANKY . . . . .		53
A FOG . . . . .		55
THE RUBBER BOTTLE . . . . .		58
A CHAUFFREUSE . . . . .		60
THE LANCERS . . . . .		62
A FROST . . . . .		64
ANY WOMAN TO ANY SUFFRAGETTE . . . . .		66
ANY SUFFRAGETTE TO ANY WOMAN . . . . .		67
WELL-BRED WHINES . . . . .		68
THE AMENDE FEMININE . . . . .		69
OUR NATURAL ENEMIES. I. . . . .		70
"    "    II. . . . .		72
"    "    III. . . . .		74
"    "    IV. . . . .		75
"    "    V. . . . .		77

Second Thoughts

HARRY, when you proposed to me last night  
 In that unpolished way of yours, although  
 It was not unexpected, I took fright  
 And answered No.

The wedding-ring has terrors for me, Harry;  
 Its apparition set me in a whirl;  
 But, all the same, I don't want you to marry  
 Some other girl.

The very thought torments me; though prepared—  
 Nay, satisfied—to face the world alone,  
 My future will be black if yours is shared  
 By Grace or Joan.

Don't look upon the thing as settled, will you?  
 Why should we, either of us, suffer pain?  
 And I, for one, can't eat or sleep until you  
 Ask me again.

Jessie Pope, Table of Contents, *Airy Nothings* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909): 5-6.

Appendix 6

“Motor Martyrdom”

I never have clung to a motor car,  
Or crouched on a motor bike.  
Worry and scurry, clank and jar  
I cordially dislike.  
I do not care for grimy hair,  
For engines that explode,  
But of one and all I've the put and call,  
For I live on the Ripley Road.

I drank the country breeze at first,  
Unsoiled by fetid fumes,  
But now I am cursed with a constant thirst  
That parches and consumes.  
I am choked and hit with smoke and grit  
When I venture from my abode,  
My pets are maimed and my eyes inflamed,  
For I live on the Ripley Road.

I pass my days in a yellow fog,  
My nights in a dreadful dream.  
Haunted by handlebar, clutch and cog,  
And eyes that goggle and gleam.  
I am not robust, but I dine on dust,  
Gratuitously bestowed,  
And for twopence I'll sell my house in the dell  
By the side of the Ripley Road.

Jessie Pope, “Motor Martyrdom,” *Paper Pellets* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1907) 10-11.  
Originally published as “A Ripley Road Martyr,” in *Punch*, July 13, 1904, 34.

Appendix 7

The Queen of the Road

Let the 'igh-born madam go scorchin' by  
In 'er motor-car, velvet-lined,  
A "shover" in front with a 'aughty eye  
And phew! what a stew be'ind.  
I wouldn't be 'er, it's an absolute cert,  
An' so I'd like to 'a' told 'er,  
For I'm Queen of the road, when I bike with Bert  
With 'is hand upon me shoulder.

When 'is shop is shut an' 'is work is done  
Of a Thursday afternoon,  
I knock off, meself, for a bit of a run;  
I know 'e 'll be round for me soon.  
Then we jump on the bikes we love—  
In traffic no girl is bolder—  
And the 'ills don't seem a bit of a shove  
With 'is 'and upon me shoulder.

We pedal an' pedal by woods and grass  
Where the country is real, no fake;  
There ain't many coupes we can't pass,  
An' for tea we 'ave cresses an' cake;  
We watch the tip of the sinkin' sun  
An' then, when the air comes colder  
'E starts back for the 'omeward run  
with 'is 'and upon me shoulder.

The night grows black an' we light our lamps—  
Two sparks in a twinklin' chain—  
I'm neither afraid of ghosts nor tramps,  
Not me; I'm as right as rain.  
Though me jersey's old the same as me skirt  
An' me can's a good bit older,  
I'm Queen of the road, when I bike with Bert  
With 'is 'and upon me shoulder.

Jessie Pope, "The Queen of the Road," *Punch*, June 11, 1913, 466.