

The Suffragette: International, National & Regional Empowerment

Professor Máire Cross:

Socks and Airplanes: Natural Rights in the Campaign for Gender Equality in France During the Early Twentieth Century?

In this paper, Professor Máire Cross proposes to examine a sample selection of the political tracts of campaigners (Nelly Roussel, Hélène Brion, Marthe Bigot, as well as Marie Louise Puech and Jules-Louis Puech) to explore how the argument of 'natural' rights, was considered, in the early twentieth century and used to challenge the 'great' heritage of the Enlightenment and the 1789 revolution. In so doing she aims to raise the profile and tactics of lesser-known militants in the campaign for gender equality, contextualise their articulation of egalitarian demands, and illustrate what arguments they used if not referring to any natural rights discourse, to fight for inclusion in the democratic process.

Professor Máire Cross is an emerita professor at Newcastle University. Her publications include *The Letter in Flora Tristan's Politics* (Palgrave, 2004), the first full translation of Tristan's journal, *Flora Tristan's Diary: The Tour of France, 1843–1844* (Peter Lang, 2002), edited books, *Gender and Fraternal Orders 1300–2000* (Palgrave, 2010) (with Caroline Bland) *Gender and Politics in the Age of Letter-Writing, 1750–2000* (Ashgate, 2004), (with David Williams) *The French Experience from Republic to Monarchy* (Palgrave 2000). She served as President of the *Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France* (2005–2013) and as President of *the Society for the Study of French History* (2014–2017). She serves on the editorial board of *French History* In addition to working on nineteenth century epistolary practice, using the correspondence sent to Flora Tristan by socialist activists in mid 1840s France she is investigating the work of a pioneer of socialist history, Jules-Louis-Puech, political biographer of Flora Tristan.

Laura Nicholson:

Introverted Activism as Loud Rebellion: An Exploration of Radical Quietness Through the Lens of Lavena 'the Obscure' Saltonstall (and the West Yorkshire Suffrage Movement)

Iconographic images and accounts of historic leaders are regularly used to articulate the intricacies of their specific, socio-political times. With regards to women's suffrage in the UK, the exploits of prominent WSPU leaders like the Pankhursts are retold alongside the tragic martyrdom of Emily Wilding Davison, as the foundation upon which the suffrage movement is painted. While these historical figures lend crucial weight to women's history, it is important to highlight the extent to which arguably individualist interpretations of history can overshadow the invaluable activism of unsung underdogs.

Through an exploratory insight into the elusive life of Lavena Saltonstall—a suffragette from Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire—Laura Nicholson underlines the need for widespread acknowledgment of ‘quieter’ activism and revolutionaries who, while eschewing the leadership spotlight, play as crucial a role in bringing about socio-political change. Apprehensive to speak in front of crowds, Saltonstall utilised the craft of writing to fiercely condemn opponents of women’s suffrage, but barely made it into the history books.

In response to the lack of narrative afforded to revolutionaries like Saltonstall and absence of appreciation for slower, more ‘quieter’ methods of activism, Laura will explore the resurgence of craftwork activism—or ‘craftivism’—as a form of “gentle, slow protest” that can encompass the ‘quiet’ rebellion of introverts. She criticises the systematic fetishisation of individualism, as well as the neoliberal fracturing of socio-economic structures throughout Northern England—where labour/craft played a historical role in community and political change – for history’s omission of activists like Lavena Saltonstall.

Laura Nicholson is a recent graduate from the University of Edinburgh, Languages Literatures and Cultures department, with an MSc in Film Exhibition and Curation. In 2014, she graduated from King's College London with a First class BA Hons in Film Studies. She is a frequent contributor and editor of online feminist moving image journal, *DISPATCH*, and has previously worked with the renowned Women and Hollywood. She is currently working as co-editor on a book proposal that focuses on the figure of the female detective in international crime TV.

Dr Christopher Wiley:

Ethel Smyth, Music, and the Suffragette Movement: Reconsidering *The Boatswain’s Mate* as Feminist Opera

The recent release of the first complete recording of Ethel Smyth’s *The Boatswain’s Mate* (1913–14) (Retrospect Opera, 2016), its staging by Toronto-based Opera 5 as part of the double-bill *Suffragette* (2017), and the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act invite reconsideration of the relationship between this opera, the broadly contemporaneous leading suffragette activity of its composer-librettist, and feminism. Previous scholarship by Wood (1995) and Wiley (2004) that has explored similar ground has not gone so far as to call into question the popularly-held supposition that the work constitutes a ‘feminist opera’, made primarily on the basis of the overture’s liberally quoting two of Smyth’s own suffrage songs (‘1910’ and ‘The March of the Women’) instead of the conventional assortment of themes from the score itself, coupled to the suggestion that the opera’s female protagonist was modelled on Emmeline Pankhurst, with whom Smyth had maintained a close (some believe lesbian) relationship.

Christopher Wiley’s paper subjects this headline claim to renewed critical scrutiny, investigating factors including the extent of the indebtedness of Smyth’s libretto to the short story by W.W. Jacobs (from *Captains All*, 1905) in which it originated; Smyth’s creative process, about which she wrote at length in her auto/biographical books *A Final Burning of Boats Etc.* (1928) and *Beecham*

and *Pharaoh* (1935); and her practice of drawing upon pre-existing music at several significant junctures in the score, including the heroine's central aria 'What if I were young again' which is based on the traditional British ballad 'Lord Randall', a dialogue between a mother and the son who has been poisoned by his beloved.

Dr Christopher Wiley is Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Surrey. The author of essays appearing in *The Musical Quarterly*, *Music and Letters*, *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, and *Comparative Criticism*, he is an acknowledged expert on Ethel Smyth, the subject of two journal articles, CD liner notes, and many conference papers and public talks. His research interests include musical biography, music and gender studies, popular music studies, music for television, and learning and teaching in higher education. He is also one of the team behind Retrospect Opera, the company currently recording and releasing several of Smyth's operas.
