

Prepared for the
Twentieth-Century?

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*The Life of Emily Bonnycastle
Mayne (Aimée) 1872-1958*

By

Michael Armstrong Crouch

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PREFACE

This is a study of a woman's life that identifies how an upper-middle-class upbringing, that included attempted tertiary education, induced her into a marriage and life-style that was the antithesis of her early aspirations. Her life in the early twentieth-century was to engender a sense of grievance that embittered relations with her family. While she was to take advantage of her travels to undertake a lecturing career, her sense of personal fulfilment was only to be met during the 1940s 'Blitz' of London. Her rich life-story is the essence of this study.

David Lambert and Alan Lester among others have written that Biography remains a powerful way of narrating the past. Philip Zeigler considers that the all-important job of biographers is above all to understand their subjects and to convey that understanding to their readers. An essential element of this study is therefore not only of 'the Life' but also of 'the Times'.

The 1890s in Britain was a decade of diverse middle-class anxieties about the emerging status and roles of young women. Perhaps it is inevitable that residual reactionary pressures, impacting here on women of the upper-middle-class, inhibited the trumpeted social and educational advances. In this context one woman's experiences challenge some generalizations made by those historians who have extolled the period as one during which women were enabled to take advantage of opportunities provided by tertiary education.

Aimée Mayne's life-story—her background and her understanding of life, her education, and her aspirations—provides an example of an upper-middle-class English female, born into a period that might have been life-changing for young women of her upbringing, especially one with her social and financial advantages. Aimée had been encouraged to pursue a university education, but her father's death had a major impact on her life choices.

Although not unique in the lingering context of late-Victorian family expectations, it was the then widowed mother's action in withdrawing her daughter from Bedford College which crushed her daughter's ambitions. Forced to live as her mother's companion, she accepted a marriage proposal to escape from home. Married life in India and elsewhere abroad, though interesting, was at times frustrating and often an unhappy

experience. It did not meet the aspirations she cherished as a young woman.

This biography documents a casualty of a changing world, with its lingering restrictions on how many women could run their lives. The diverse influences that shaped this woman's experiences and identity were expected to provide agency to her— but she was unable to take advantage of what was on offer. Consequently, her life in the twentieth-century was a story of personal disappointments, overshadowed by an unhappy marriage. Far from her upper-middle-class background and education preparing her for the twentieth-century, Aimée Mayne's early expectations of her future as an independent woman were to be unfulfilled.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mature-aged students coping with twenty-first century academia and technology require much assistance. Over the six-year gestation of this work, the assistance I have received has been varied and always vital. At the outset, it was my Supervisor, Professor Jenny Gregory (then Director of the UWA Press) who actually persuaded me that a History doctorate was a feasible path to follow. Her on-going, friendly and firm support has been invaluable and I owe her much. Close behind Professor Gregory has been another Jenny, my wife, who gently had to urge me to face the initial challenges of the History Honours year. Thereafter, she has read much of what I have written, with an eye to grammatical and syntax errors. My foremost thanks are therefore to both of them. During the first part of this journey Jenny Golding, a Library Officer in the Reid Library, University of Western Australia, helped me to source references. On her retirement it was Graeme Rymill who rendered the same service. To them, to their colleagues and the IT staff, I am grateful. In the Scholars Centre I benefited greatly from the practical assistance provided by Librarians Susannah Melo de Howard and Azra Tulic.

Overseas, I was able to draw on the resources of the Bonnycastle Family's genealogist, John Bonnycastle Gould, as I attempted to unravel, at times, complicated family trees. John is based in Chicago and we have never met, but via the Internet he was always 'on-hand' to answer queries. Thank you, John. Also overseas, it was the staff at the British Library who were efficient and courteous in pointing me in the right direction to unearth nineteenth-century India records. The Royal Holloway College library staff provided a similar function with regard to late Victorian female education. Later, the excellent Archivists, the St Helier Librarians and the Superintendent Registrar on the Island of Jersey were similarly helpful.

In India, the countless anonymous Indian officials I met in cathedrals, churches, living in what were Aimée's residences, the staff of the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Authority, essential English-speaking locals and the Zamindar of Hatta with his extended family—they all made my research come to life. I am very appreciative of their practical support and of their hospitality.

In Paris, Frédéric Bine, my recently-discovered relative, contributed valuable material on his great-grandfather, Archie Barnett, and on the poisonous relationship between the French side of the family and Aimée Mayne. My sister Sabrina provided family photographs from early last century. To them all, and to cousins Hilary Peters and Anne Mayne who supplied firsthand comment, I repeat a heartfelt, "Thank you!"

The Hon. John P. Bryson, QC, as an interested 'bystander' while I toiled over the final drafts, kindly read through the document and identified typographical errors. Thank you, John. I am also very grateful to Dr. Leo Ryan of Brisbane who presented forensic psychological comment on Aimée and on her unfortunate husband Arthur.

Finally, I thank Dr. David Barrie of the University of Western Australia's History Discipline for reading through my final draft and for providing useful feedback.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Aimée and Her Family

(From Family photographic archive)



Mr. Barnett c. 1890



Mrs. Barnett, c.1890



Brother Archie Barnett 1901



The schoolgirl, c. 1885



The undergraduate, 1894



The fiancée, 1897



The sportswoman, 1901



The cyclist, 1910



The 'Burra Mem', 1910



The lecturer, 1920



The Family in Jersey, 1927.
(L->R Arthur, Helen, Edward, Margaret, Archie, Isa, Aimée)

JANUARY	1st Month	1897	28 Days	FEBRUARY
24 Sun: In camp. 7 with ride - rain & thunder at night.				
25 Mon Tramped the hills doing settle ment-work in morning saw several cases of famine.				1 Mon Came to an imp. agree- ment - to strike a happy mean. Camp - Kalluga
26 Tu Moved as to felt camp 2 days & hills - poured rain at night - end of day marriage near by.				2 Tu Saw Poor House - interviewed Hospital Asst. Quartermaster to Bar
27 Wed Stayed in same camp. rain - in morning shooting. A interview towards say writing A. article.				3 Wed March to Wanasini in to Baalaghal - on an Lhu - Read Article -
28 Th Moved camp to Benia. riding in afternoon - up 18 hills				4 Th Probe leaves as alone.
29 Fri Spent day at Benia - work in evening. A very busy.				5 Fri
30 Sat Camp again moved along ridge of hills lost a head				6 Sat Bumwip called.

Sample of 1897 diary pages and of Aimée's memoir *Annette*,
both referring to the famine

them instructions to turn back and return in the direction they had come. They ~~walked more like dumb~~ driven cattle than in a ~~calm~~ and did not take any interest in what was said to them.

"Here is our first sign of real famine, Annette, when starving people begin to wander from their native village, where they have spent all their lives, and go out in search of relief, one may be sure they are in a pretty bad way. I am telling them the Government is opening Famine Kitchens and Relief works at once in their part of the District so it is no good wandering away."

When they reached the camp there was a row of some forty men, women and children squatting on the ground, some of the women, ~~had~~ clad in the ragged remains of the usual colored cloth worn by village women, had infants in their arms, the men, ^{were} in scanty loin cloths. All were very thin and ~~some of~~ the older people emaciated, some of the naked children had enormously distended stomachs though their limbs were like sticks. A few held out their hands whining pitifully others merely stared in front of them indifferently.

"What wretched looking people" cried Annette, her heart wrung with pity, "are they really starving? Let me get them some of our plenty. We have a box full of stores and several loaves of bread, put away in Baloo's box of things for the table."

"My dear, these people are certainly slowly starving, they are getting only just enough, from the charity of their neighbours, to keep body and soul together, but they won't touch our food. They could lose their caste, which is more precious to them ^{than} any food. You might get the children to take a few sweets, that is all."

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of a woman of the British upper-middle-class, whose story is full of colour—of living in India; of family relationships; of travel; of the Blitz. She kept diaries, she wrote an intimate memoir. This study explores her emotional conflicts, with a revealing analysis that includes revelations about a woman brought up in the late-Victorian period, encompassing her sex-life and the turmoils of an unhappy marriage.¹ Her story places an obligation on the biographer to produce an informed, interesting and readable scrutiny of a full existence.

Biography sits comfortably with more traditional forms of history, argued historian Jeremy Popkin, who has written extensively on the subject. There is a relationship between biography on the one hand and history and autobiography on the other that provides substance to the individual life history in its own right.² In a review of Barbara Caine's *Biography and History* Popkin noted that in a postmodernist world 'suspicious of grand narratives of collective experience', Caine's recognition of the relationship is valid. Biography adds to history through providing substance to specific 'locations and circumstances'. Historians, Caine has observed, have traditionally considered biography as an inferior means for exposing the past, while postmodernists have questioned its basic premise—the notion that there is any coherence in the notion of an individual life. Caine contended that modern biographers, particularly those interested in women's lives, have demonstrated biography's historical and vital relevance.³

Gender ideology was a key factor that ruled young women's lives at the end of the nineteenth-century and recent research into the restrictions it

¹ '[We are] never likely to know much about the sexual lives of Victorian couples because they alluded to it so little themselves', Eric Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens, the Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, London 1976, cited in John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1999, p.59.

² Jeremy D. Popkin, 'Biography and History (review)', *Biography*, 2011, vol.34, no.2, p.329-331. Jan. 2012.

³ Barbara Caine, *Biography and History*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. pp.5, 7.

imposed has been extensive.⁴ A major question I discuss is how and whether the vaunted educational and social advances for English women in the late nineteenth-century benefited the subject of this biography during her life in the twentieth-century. Born into an upper-middle-class family in 1874, Aimée Mayne had all the late-Victorian privileges of a comfortable London home and schooling. Her tertiary education was to be cut short by family circumstances that led to an unfortunate marriage, years in India, and to on-going dissatisfaction with her life in the twentieth-century.

I argue that Aimée Mayne's education and aspirations created false expectations for her. As a very young woman, she apparently aspired towards a serious career, eschewing marriage and children. The anticipated prospects aroused initially by commencement and abandonment of tertiary education, and later by embracing her 'mehsahib' life in India, instilled a sense of frustrated discontent that embittered her in later life, to the detriment of relations with her husband, her family and the wider community. After a period of lecturing, her initial ideals to make her own way were really only to be realised through her work during the London 'Blitz' in the 1940s.

Aimée Mayne's story is uncovered and reviewed against the social, cultural and political background to her early idealism. I place her as a symbol of emergent British upper-middle-class womanhood, in the first half of the twentieth-century, often isolated from her peers because of her earlier frustrated expectations—she was, I argue, a victim of the gender beliefs at the time that still saw young women of her class destined for marriage. My investigation contributes to the body of work on the lives of upper-middle-class women, providing one more example to illuminate their experiences as products of the late Victorian nineteenth-century.

Her life has five clearly definable periods: her childhood through to her leaving university, 1872-1896; followed by her life in India 1897-1916; family life in Canada, the USA, UK and Jersey, 1916-1931; travels, mainly with her husband Arthur, through Europe, the USA and southern Africa during the 1930s; and living on her own in London during World War II until 1944.

My investigation of Aimée's development into a mature woman necessitated a deep engagement with a very wide range of the secondary sources relevant to this period and this woman's life. They are discussed in this introduction. Of particular significance are the multitude of writings

⁴ Jane Hamlett & Sarah Wiggins, 'Victorian Women in Britain and the United States: new perspectives', *Women's History Review*, vol.18, no.5, 2009, pp.705-717.

on late Victorian Britain, on the social and political climate, the attitudes and behaviours of the various components of the middle- class and the societal expectations placed on males and females. In addition, I have studied the effects of religion and other belief systems, such as Theosophy; I consider the advances in education for women in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Finally, I have mined the extensive literature on the British Raj to discuss how India affected the British women who lived there, together with the contribution such women made to their communities and to the country, under the Raj. It must be remembered that, in this context, British India was a predominantly masculine society (and British women were at best tolerated).⁵

Middle-Class Society in late-Victorian Britain

Late Victorian Britain was a period of significant political and social change. The British Liberal government had created under William Gladstone a 'civilisation' based on 'Free Trade, classical scholarship, strict religious observance, public probity and reformist zeal', as George Dangerfield put it.⁶ There was an emerging realisation of the state of the working-class. More than one Londoner in three lived in 'families huddled six to a room; more than one in eight died in the workhouse'.⁷

However, in the second half of the nineteenth-century there were attempts under way to remediate these squalid conditions and to raise the status of working-class children. Concurrent with later measures that were part of the series of legislative actions, known collectively as the 'Factory Acts' dating from 1802, the Education Act introduced compulsory and free elementary education in 1876, followed by the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act 1889, (the 'Children's Charter') and the Education Act 1891 that attempted to further ensure free education to all children. John Tosh noted that it was these two later pieces of legislation that marked a change in how society was becoming aware of obligations towards the working class.⁸

No study of this period can be undertaken without consideration of the British class structure, although it is beyond the scope of this study to

⁵ Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.138.

⁶ George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, London, Paladin, 1972, p.9.

⁷ Norma and Jeanne MacKenzie, *The First Fabians*, London, Quartet, 1979, pp.37-38.

⁸ Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.159.

attempt here a delineation of what constituted the ‘middle-class’. As Linda Young comments, the formation of the middle-class ‘is easier to document than to define’. She draws on E.P. Thompson’s view of class, not as a ‘category’ ‘but something...recognizable in relations between people’,⁹ a very practical approach. David Cannadine, among others, discussed this in some detail.¹⁰ Suffice to say, as Bernard Porter wrote, in the late nineteenth-century the classes lived in different worlds, unable sometimes even to communicate with each other, except at the level of giving and taking orders. This greatly affected peoples’ views and values on virtually every matter.¹¹ As Gwen Raverat concluded, ‘for nearly seventy years, the English middle-classes were locked up in a great fortress of unreality and pretence.’¹² Carol Hall has argued further the middle-class was held together by ideas and ideals about masculinity and femininity, together with an opposition to the gentry and the aristocracy.¹³ How best then to identify the ‘middle-class’?

Carol Dyhouse considered that ‘class’ is best identified through individuals’ personal experiences of family life.¹⁴ They were far more influenced by their class situation—in particular their class functions—than by any more general ‘national’ discourse.¹⁵ A prime example of this is Aimée herself: her birth into an upper-middle-class family was a major factor in determining her future, albeit contrary to her own expectations of life, as will be discussed. It was no mere accident that her upbringing was in London. The Metropolis was the centre to which the wealthy middle-class gravitated.

From where in Britain did the upper-middle-class first emerge? W. D. Rubinstein found that the wealthy middle-class was divided into ‘metropolitan-banking-commercial’ and ‘provincial-industrial’. The centre of wealth-making in late nineteenth-century Britain was London, rather than the industrial towns of the north of England. Most top London

⁹ Linda Young, *Middle class culture in the nineteenth century: America, Australia, and Britain*, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.39.

¹⁰ David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999.

¹¹ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists—Empire, Society and Culture in Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.311.

¹² Gwen Raverat, *Period Piece*, London, Faber and Faber, 1953, p.104.

¹³ Carol Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, p.70.

¹⁴ Carol Dyhouse, *No distinction of sex? Women in British universities 1870-1939*, London, UCL Press, 1995, p.186. Hall, also made the point that the composition of the (upper) middle-class was ‘less documented and theorized than it is on the working-class’, *White, Male and Middle Class*, p.94.

¹⁵ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p.311.

fortunes were left by those in commerce and finance, while wealth in the north was earned in manufacturing, despite the plethora of merchants in provincial trade centres such as Liverpool, Glasgow and Leeds and the Scottish industrial centres. By the middle of the nineteenth-century the middle-class was developing into a unified culture.¹⁶ The growth of its wealthy upper levels was to lead to its inclusion in the governing strata. Cannadine noted that ‘the status elite and the wealth elite were essentially the same people.’¹⁷

The composition and functions of the ruling elites changed. The late nineteenth-century was one of challenge for the traditional ruling (upper-) class, which had based its power and authority on land. Nancy Ellenberger described the plutocratic middle-class families that suddenly appeared in the highest circles of Society, with an accompanying decay in the probity and refinement of aristocratic life. Sons of the upper-middle-classes, educated at public schools and Oxbridge, usurped places in the civil service and the professions. Careers in politics came to require talents and concentration beyond the abilities of Ellenberger’s ‘dilettante gentleman statesmen’.¹⁸

Adding to the pressures on the upper class during this period, serious doubts were being raised about the health of the British ‘race’ (no longer so dominant throughout its Empire). From 1870 the British birth rate began to decline.¹⁹ Scientists and medical men warned that ‘the right types’ were not breeding in sufficient numbers; feminists were blamed for attacking the heart of family relations—marriage and motherhood—thus deterring middle-class young women from performing their proper function.²⁰ As Lesley Hall concluded, there was a strong inclination towards smaller families, for reasons that are not wholly clear, though they would have included economic and social factors. It was also the period when contraceptive devices were coming into use.²¹ Hall noted that their

¹⁶ W.D. Rubinstein, ‘The Victorian Middle Classes: Wealth, Occupation, and Geography’, *Economic History Review* vol.30, no.4, 1977, p.606.

¹⁷ Cannadine cited in E.A. Wasson, ‘The Penetration of New Wealth into the English Governing Class from the Middle Ages to the First World War’, *Economic History Review*, New Series, vol. 51, no 1, February 1998, p.28.

¹⁸ Nancy Waters Ellenberger, *The Souls: High Society and Politics in Late Victorian Britain*, *Victorian Studies*, vol.25, no.2, winter, 1982.

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=749357061&Fmt=7&clientId=20923&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. June 2007.

¹⁹ Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870-1914*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.128.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880*, London, Macmillan, 2000, p.29.

use was primarily by the professional and administrative classes.²²

The way gender featured in the process of class formation was crucial to the social relations of citizenship, since it positioned women primarily within the home. In practice, however, it was to be shown as impossible to sustain the artificial demarcation between private lives and public commitments. Accordingly, there emerged an alternative set of equal rights espoused by a small but vocal minority of Victorian women expressing a distinct philosophy reflecting a strong sense of female identity.²³

For women not to work reflected the success of their men—whether father or husband. The education of girls was to prepare them for courtship and marriage.²⁴ Yet the role of the wife and mother was a significant one in the household and Patricia Branca disputed assumptions that Victorian codes of middle-class domesticity required women to be merely ornamental and confined to the parlour. Branca identified female education as one of the obvious ways in which the middle-class aped the manners of the upper-class. The Victorian middle-class recognised that knowledge was power, as Simon Morgan commented.²⁵ Branca noted that ‘Middle-class parents desiring to improve their social standing would send their daughters off to boarding school’.²⁶

By the 1880s women were perceived as capable beings, rather than as passive victims; the vast majority of middle-class housewives coped with quarrelsome servants while struggling with ‘creative accounting’. Branca argued that almost all the studies of Victorian women focus on discontent and on the history of women as being the history of the inarticulate. By contrast, she placed the middle-class woman as a positive element of British social history, as mistress of the house—with domestics and as a mother devoting herself intensively to the care and attention of her

²² Ibid. p.66.

²³ This was not without its detractors: ‘No impartial witness,’ observed *The Daily Telegraph*, ‘could doubt implications for the claims of women to a wider public and political life: we shall be rather at a loss for good arguments to level at them when they try to enter the House of Commons. Of course they may break down...if a motion...is rejected...may break into tears...’ Jane Martin, *Women and the Politics of School in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1999, p.38.

²⁴ Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, p.63.

²⁵ Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's place*, London, New York, Tauris Academic Studies, 2007, p.36.

²⁶ Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood - Middle-class Women in the Victorian Home*, London, Croom Helm 1975, p.23.

children.²⁷ On the other hand, Carol Dyhouse noted that many women seemed to have shared the experience of having 'sofa-ridden mothers'. She concluded that this must have impressed on their daughters that they were expected to represent their mothers, as well as nurse them.²⁸ Clearly there was a range of experiences, with some middle-class women supremely able to run a household, while others, for whatever reason, sagged under the responsibility.

It should be noted at this point that this was during the period of the first Great Depression, lasting from the early 1870s to the mid-1890s, resulting in 'a new state of mind of uneasiness and gloom' about the prospects of the British economy.²⁹ It was notable for some significant changes in Britain's economic position.³⁰ While not discounting its devastating effects on the unemployed and under-employed, the Great Depression had a major impact on the middle-class. Incomes were reduced to the point where some grown-up daughters could not be supported at home, even during their father's lifetime.³¹ These socio-economic factors affected a wide range of women, with many middle-class families unable to provide for their daughters' livelihoods. This became a recurrent preoccupation of Victorian commentators. As Leonore Davidoff commented, girls and women were particularly vulnerable to sudden economic shifts, due to financial pressures on the family, because they were economically dependant, as well as socially, on home affiliations.³²

Although there was a surplus of young, single women in Britain, from the middle of the century,³³ in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century the status of middle-class women was improving. Tertiary and vocational education was on the rise, there were enhanced job prospects, with the demand for women in employment, chiefly in education, in nursing, or as

²⁷ Ibid. p.151.

²⁸ Carol Dyhouse, *Girls growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England*, London, Boston and Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, p.20.

²⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: The Birth of the Industrial Revolution*, New York, New Press, rev. ed., 1999, p.105.

³⁰ A.E. Musson, 'The Great Depression in Britain 1873-1896: A Reappraisal', *Journal of Economic History*, vol.19, no.2, 1959, pp.199-228.

³¹ Janet Howarth and Mark Curthoys 'The Political Economy of Women's Higher Education in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain', *Historical Research*, vol.60, 1987, p.214.

³² Lenore Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, London, Croom Helm Ltd., 1973, p.94.

³³ James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen - Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration 1830-1914*, London, Croom Helm, 1979, pp.23-28.

health inspectors or in secretarial and clerical work.³⁴ Moreover, there was, as Tosh described, the emergence of the ‘New Woman’ of the British upper-middle-class in the last two decades of the nineteenth-century—women who smoked, bicycled and lived away from family. This was ‘the revolt of the daughters’, with their insistence on no chaperone and a general refusal to live life by the patriarchal rules.³⁵ This also represented ‘challenges to patriarchal convention’ as Tosh discussed later.³⁶

The cultural context

It is now apposite to discuss briefly some of the major cultural influences on upper- middle-class young women, as they grew up in the last three decades of the nineteenth- century. The first of these implied pressures was often religion, principally either of the Nonconformist or of the Anglican variety. It was believed throughout the Victorian era that domestic seclusion gave a proper basis for a truly religious life: women naturally occupied the domestic sphere; they were seen as more ‘naturally’ religious than men.³⁷ The religious census of 1851 made it clear that attendance at church or chapel was a practice much more associated with the middle-class than the working-class. It is true that, as Sarah Williams and others have argued, many working-class women were still religious, but equally many were effectively excluded from attending organized churches, due to the scarcity of churches in rapidly expanding urban centres, high pew rents and expectations of respectable clothing.

In her analysis of the powerful nineteenth-century ‘thematic triumvirate’ of religion, gender and family life, Williams argued that, as yet, historians have failed to move beyond ‘a hegemonic preoccupation with evangelicalism and its emphasis on a highly feminised, domesticated piety’. By adhering to the static tableau of middle-class family religion first articulated by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall over twenty years ago, she argued, historians have replicated the same Victorian homilies on female moral superiority that demand our critical scrutiny, creating a picture that elides the social and spiritual diversity of popular family

³⁴ Howarth and Curthoys, ‘The Political Economy of Women’s Higher Education’, p.216 et seq.

³⁵ Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, pp.150-153.

³⁶ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Harlow, U.K. Pearson Education Limited, 2005, p.205.

³⁷ H. Allen, *A Beloved Mother. Life of Hannah S Allen by Her Daughter*, cited in Leonore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, London, Hutchinson, 1987, p.90.

religion. Working-class religiosity, for example, often operated on the peripheries of Christian culture. Women and men combined church-based practices with folk myths and shared rituals that were often attributed a hallowed status. The syncretism of popular religious culture meant that family bibles often lay alongside lucky charms and protective amulets. To rethink modern domestic spirituality, Williams suggested alternative methodological approaches such as oral history and an exploration of material culture. Only in this way, she believes, will we fully appreciate the local, denominational and class-specific forms that religion took.³⁸

Nevertheless, as Hugh McLeod commented, 'The whole tone was so clearly set by [the] social superiors'.³⁹ Religious belief had become 'a character and function of class' rather than as a basis for a wider social unity; adherence to evangelical Protestant forms was part of 'respectability, if not gentility, offering individuals an identity and a community in a society that was changing rapidly'.⁴⁰ Another contemporary source recorded that this respectability bestowed on middle-class women a particular identity, distinctive from the 'aristocratic ideals of the lady'.⁴¹

An alternative belief-system was one result of this period of soul-searching: Theosophy. Joy Dixon has researched Theosophy as an important belief of the time—based on an eclectic blend of science, spiritualism, and both 'Eastern' and Christian mysticism—that appealed primarily to men and women of the professional-middle-class. Their privileged access to the resources of the public sphere enabled them to exercise an influence far greater than the relatively small membership of the Theosophical Society would suggest. In the late nineteenth-century, the 'scientific spirituality' (my words) of the Theosophical Society mainly attracted professional men. In the early twentieth century Theosophy was increasingly dominated by women, and the 'feminization' of the movement produced a complex reconfiguration of class and gender

³⁸ Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries, 'Introduction', and Sarah Williams, 'Is there a Bible in the house? Gender, religion and family culture' in Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries (eds), *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*, Hoboken, Taylor and Francis, 2010, pp.4, 12-14.

³⁹ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth Century Britain*, London and Basingstroke, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1984, p.58.

⁴⁰ Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, p.76.

⁴¹ 'Any individual male or female could be redeemed through Christ, and when facing death or bankruptcy, religious belief provided explanation and meaning', C.P. Melville and J. Fox, *Unpublished Diary of a Visit to Bingley Hall*, Birmingham, 1819 Brl 669392, cited in *Ibid.*, p.77.

relations, embedded in forms of spirituality such as mysticism and occultism.⁴²

The social scientific thinkers throughout the culture also developed an interest in Science. The emergence of the disciplines of sociology and anthropology had been prominent in the 1850s and 1860s. Thomas Heyck drew attention to the main themes of Victorian philosophical and intellectual life in Britain as also being pervaded by new analytical disciplines. They had begun to crystallize in the early nineteenth century, including chemistry, mineralogy, geology, and comparative anatomy. The state expanded its role in knowledge production, manifested by the opening of museums and state institutions such as the School of Mines and medical schools.⁴³

The period also spawned pseudo-sciences. Peter Bowler wrote that this was also the Age of the Sages that gave rise to new scientific enquiry, the more spurious of which, including Phrenology, were to be debunked.⁴⁴ Prominent among the enduring intellectuals was Charles Darwin,⁴⁵ who had produced a new and crude mechanism by which evolution of species might be explained, although the general formulation of some of the key notions commonly seen as 'Darwinian' should more properly be assigned to the philosopher Herbert Spencer, now referred to as a Social-Darwinist. The latter was a 'self-made' thinker who had alighted upon a jumbled fund

⁴² Joy Dixon, *Gender, Politics, and Culture in the New Age: Theosophy in England, 1880-1935*, Ph.D., Rutgers The State University of New Jersey - New Brunswick, 1993 cited in Ibid, p.112. See also Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001 and 'Modernity, Heterodoxy and the transformation of religion cultures' in Morgan and de Vries, *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain*.

⁴³ Thomas William Heyck, 'The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, vol.49, no.1, 2006, pp.165-167.

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=2&did=1259575361&SrchMode=5&Fmt=3&retrieveGroup=0&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1180402840&clientId=209 23>, May 2007.

⁴⁴ For a comprehensive discussion on phrenology, see L. Livianos-Aldana, *et al.*, 'F.J. Gall and the Phrenological Movement,' *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol.164, no.3, May 2007, p.414.

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=1227861191&SrchMode=5&Fmt=4&retrieveGroup=0&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1180402840&clientId=209 23>, May 2007.

⁴⁵ Darwin believed that 'the chief distinction between the sexes was biologically based. Men were capable of deep thought, reasoning or imagination, whereas women the powers of intuition... characteristics of the lower races, and therefore of a past or lower state of civilisation'. Katharina Rowold, *The Educated Woman: Minds, Bodies, and Women's Higher Education in Britain, Germany and Spain, 1865-1914*, Hoboken, Taylor and Francis, 2009, p.25. [EBL access record]

of scattered facts and speculations, seen as a search for ‘mutual echoes’ between zoology and economics.⁴⁶

As Susan Kingsley Kent wrote, ‘in cultural and intellectual terms the promulgation of Darwinist and social-Darwinist theories of evolution and ‘racial’ determination undercut the assumptions about human nature...’⁴⁷ However, it was Spencer’s work that provided an ‘overarching intellectual frame work for liberal social scientists in the 1800s’.⁴⁸

The medical advances and beliefs of the late Victorian period were significant. Francesco Cordasco recorded the development of new goals in medical education; the clinic and laboratory in the mid nineteenth-century; the spread of laboratory teaching and the continued struggle for the evolving laboratory curriculum to the end of the nineteenth-century. Moreover, the development of a university standard in medical education accompanied by the changing student populations in medicine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a preparation for new challenges in medical education to the mid twentieth-century.⁴⁹

In view of the resistance to women’s education in many quarters, it is all the more remarkable that the late nineteenth-century in England and early twentieth-century was a period of advances in the field of tertiary education for women. As Jane Martin noted, in London and elsewhere, members of the first women’s movement in England were pressing for education, economic and social rights for women. Although there was a lingering belief that ‘the mental powers necessary for university education were commonly considered to be less developed in women than in men’,⁵⁰ higher education was slowly opened up to them, professions such as medicine admitted their first female entrants and the suffrage organisations used the traditions of female philanthropy to gain access to government, administration and the law. Incidentally, the Victorians made little attempt to hide the class nature of education, which also had a distinct gender dynamic; a pattern was soon established that rendered the expansion of

⁴⁶ Peter J. Bowler, *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.473-475.

⁴⁷ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain 1640-1990*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, p.229

⁴⁸ Simon Szreter, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain 1860-1940*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.113.

⁴⁹ Francesco Cordasco, ‘Becoming a Physician: Medical Education in Great Britain, France, Germany, and the United States.’ *USA Today*, 125 (2620), 1997, p.96. <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=10590282&Fmt=7&clientId=20923&RQT=309&VName=PQD>, October 2007.

⁵⁰ Rowold, *The Educated Woman*, p.8.

girls' education in institutions specifically catering for women.⁵¹

The late nineteenth-century saw the first of the female doctors who were part of the surge in medical graduates which took advantage of the growth of medical education through the Victorian age. Patricia Hollis concluded that the concept that women undertaking tertiary education would damage their reproductive capacities, and indeed damage their offspring, was dismissed by prominent educational pioneers of the time.⁵² This shibboleth was also discussed by Deirdre Raftery.⁵³

However, there was still opposition to this new world for women.⁵⁴ Reactionary Victorian views on women, marriage and education had to be complementary with women's place in the home. In Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography*, published in 1877 she had argued that a wide-ranging education, including history and natural philosophy, was not incompatible with women's domestic duties. 'The best housekeeper is an educated woman.'⁵⁵

The later part of this discussion has focussed on how education was equipping women for life in the twentieth-century, but can I extrapolate this scenario to the lives of British women in India? Was an educated woman equipped for life in India where Aimée found herself after her marriage?

⁵¹ Martin, *Women and the Politics of School*, pp.2,4.

⁵² 'Girton suffers largely, I believe, from the determined opposition of medical men, and as for me, I scarcely expect anything else if a medical opinion be asked in the case of any girl. The smallest ailment always proceeds from over-brainwork!!! [sic] never from neglected conditions of health, from too many parties, etc., etc.' Frances Buss to Emily Davies, 13 April 1874 from Barbara Stephen, *Emily Davies and Girton College*, 1927, cited in Patricia Hollis (comp), *Women in Public: Documents of the Victorian Women's Movement, 1850-1900*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1979, p.28.

⁵³ 'I have seen girls, the daughters of well-grown parents, who simply stopped growing too soon. They are more-or-less dwarfism specimens of their kind, this being caused, I believe, by the vital nervous force being appropriated by the mental part of the brain in learning', cited in Deirdre Raftery, 'The Opening of Higher Education for Women in the Nineteenth-Century: Unexpected Revolution' or Inevitable Change?' *Higher Education Quarterly*, vol.56, no.4, 2002, pp.340-346.

⁵⁴ Maria G. Grey, *On the Special Requirements for Improving the Education of Girls*, London, William Ridgway, 1872, p.119. See also her 'The Women's Educational Movement', *The Woman Question in Europe*, London, Sampson Low & Co., 1884, pp.131-132.

⁵⁵ Alison Twells, *British Women's History - A Documentary History from the Enlightenment to World War I*, London New York, I.B. Tauris, 2007, p.17.