

# ***Rooms of Our Own: The Spatial Turn in Histories of Women's Education***

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**Abstract:** Virginia Woolf's «A Room of One's Own» (Woolf, 1929) provides a resonant spatial metaphor for envisaging the negotiation of factors that mediate/facilitate women's «horizons of possibility» which accrue around the ideas encapsulated in another spatial metaphor «women's place». Space is an expansive concept and offers possibilities for investigation both materially and metaphorically, and at different scales from the intimate to global. This article takes three historical case studies; on the Mothers' Union, a girls' junior technical school and women's presence at the Anglican Church congress to reflect on the embedded nature of space and place in research into women's activism in philanthropy, education and the work place. This article draws on the spatial turn in scholarship underpinned by Henri Lefebvre's landmark *Production of Space* and the work of feminist geographers Linda McDowell, who focuses on the gendered nature of space and identity, and Doreen Massey who conceives spaces as arenas of conflict (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999). To conceptualise the validation of women occupying space whether in 'rooms of their own' or as agents in a wider public sphere we draw on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of capital and pedagogic authority.

**Keywords:** women; space and gender; turns; education; networks; Anglican religion.

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## **1. Introduction**

In 1929 Virginia Woolf observed the prioritisation of gendered patriarchal knowledge evident in education and culture, and reflected on the contingent obstacles and exclusions facing women seeking autonomy and authority in intellectual endeavours. Her extended essay «*A Room of One's Own*» (Woolf, 1929, pp. 11-31) evokes the material necessities women need in order to attend to self-realisation. It also, against a context of socially constructed and often religiously endorsed,

gendered notions of «female», and «male» intellectual capacity, emotional attributes and contingent roles, provides a resonant spatial metaphor for envisaging the negotiation of factors that mediate/facilitate women's «horizons of possibility» which accrue around the ideas encapsulated in another spatial metaphor «women's place» which carries connotations of opportunity, status and constraint. As Bourdieu insists in his discussion of reflexivity, which calls for «conscious self-referencing» in an attempt to reduce biases, researchers, like the subjects they choose to investigate, are located in time and place/space which frames experiences and contingent assumptions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 38). As researchers and writers we have grown up in a cultural context in which Woolf was a dominant voice and reference point for feminist consciousness. We acknowledge that our perspectives are mediated by our location and our disciplinary perspective as practitioners of history. We also recognise that aspirations for women's intellectual autonomy and agency have been articulated by authors and activists from other latitudes and perspectives and that these have been scrutinised by scholars representing varying disciplines and methodologies. This is exemplified by the critique of constructs of «race» and the assignation of prioritised status to space as discussed by Rita Segato in her critique of coloniality (Segato, 2022). Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins whose examination of family space through the lens of intersectionality resonates with Bourdieu's understanding that capital is mediated by constructs of gender and «race» (Collins, 1998). From a historical perspective, Marie Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* and Billie Melman's *Women's Orients* engage with constructions of space and contingent hierarchies of knowledge through an imperial gaze (Melman, 1995; Pratt, 2008).

Here we take a retrospective look at three of our historical projects and through these case studies reflect on the embedded nature of space and place in our research. Space is an expansive concept and offers possibilities for investigation both materially and metaphorically, and at different scales from the intimate to global. Spatial themes are also evident in the assemblage and curation of histories in archives (Steedman, 2002; Tamboukou, 2014) and the recall of histories in acts of memory such as the creation of monuments or women's history walks (Bartlett, 2019; Ingold, 2006). In this paper our priority is to analyse the strategies deployed towards 'making space' and improving spatial position in the field towards the realisation of objectives. To do this we draw on feminist geographies and Bourdieu's conceptualisation of «field manoeuvres» that involve transactions of capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, pp. 11-31). Each study illustrates different dimensions of the spatial which this retrospective reflection suggests is a recurring theme in our work that engages with women's negotiation of agency in education, philanthropy, work and religion. We begin by reviewing the literature and theory that underpins our analysis of the spatial in each case.

## 2. Literature

There is a rich literature surrounding the themes of (historical) women's activism, constraint and agency much of which reflects spatial themes. This article draws on the spatial turn in scholarship underpinned by Henri Lefebvre's landmark

*Production of Space* and the work of feminist geographers Linda McDowell, who focuses on the gendered nature of space and identity, and Doreen Massey who conceives spaces as arenas of conflict (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999). Investigation of the nineteenth century trope of women's «separate spheres» which located women in a domestic milieu and men in the public world, has revealed it to be more complex than a simple spatial binary (Kerber, 1988; Sue Morgan, 2009; Vickery, 1998). Similarly inquiry focussed on women's access to the public world reveals that there are, as noted by Simon Morgan degrees of public exposure, and varieties of public space such as the parochial realm identified by Lyn H. Lofland (Lofland, 1998; Simon Morgan, 2007). Jane Rendall also identifies a variety of public spaces where access is mediated by gendered codes of nuanced behaviour that reflect socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity (Rendall, 1991). As Sue Morgan has noted, the lens of gender is a tool in an analysis of experience that looks beyond categorisations of oppression to consider the negotiation, replication and transference of power within the fluidities of public and private space (Sue Morgan, 2002). The unequal relationships of power signified as class must also be acknowledged as a mediator of access to space both literally and metaphorically (Cannadine, 1998).

The negotiation of agency, understood as the capacity to act towards the realisation of aims within and across private and public space (Aiston, 2010; Sue Anderson-Faithful, 2017), involves the mobilisation of resources and deployment of strategies for the negotiation of position whether breaking into 'masculine' spaces such as the pulpit or the polling station or circumventing gendered spatial barriers to access education. Linda Eisenman's «Framework for Interpreting US Women's Educational History» identifies four categories through which women's access to education both formal and informal and other spheres of activity may be analysed (Eisenmann, 2001). The category of money relates to enabling material resources, religion relates to motivation and legitimisation of initiatives, and the categories of networking and institution building both have a spatial dimension. Like Linda Kerber, she notes that women may work both within and beyond existing institutional spaces.

The analysis of networks which have a spatial dimension as affirmative and communicative structures in relation to the realisation of women's individual aims and collective activism has been explored by Margaret Keck and Kathryn A. Sikkink who identify networks as a means of advocacy across geographical boundaries (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). While the establishment of a presence in a space by women may represent increased opportunity, without the associated achievement of authority, that is, recognition of the status of the space and the visibility and voice of its members, the possibilities for agency and the realisation of their aspirations remain restricted. To conceptualise the validation of women occupying space whether in «rooms of their own» or as agents in a wider public sphere we draw on Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu, in an analysis that accords with feminist geographer Doreen Massey's notion of public space as an arena of conflict (Massey, 1994) conceptualises spaces in which cultural and political activity such as religion or education play out as fields (a spatial metaphor) in which competition for ascendancy takes place amongst «players» (Bourdieu, 1991).

The achievement of success in the field, which establishes rules, values and knowledge preferences, is enabled by the possession of capital, that is attributes that are recognised as desirable and can be transacted towards power. According to Bourdieu's analysis players of distinction whether as individuals or represented collectively as institutions, achieve, through the accumulation of recognised capital, pedagogic authority; the right to speak in and for the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu conceives capital in three broad categories economic, cultural and social which relates to the networks of personal relations, acquaintance and recognition an individual is connected to. He notes that capital may be symbolic as it may relate to intangible arbitrarily designated qualities such as piety, and that embodied attributes such as gender or «race» may serve to mediate capital. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In the following case studies we connect the thread of capital to Eisenmann's categories to illuminate the field manoeuvres deployed in the negotiation of place/space towards the realisation of women's aspirations. As historians engaging with the past, our disciplinary approach is the assemblage and interpretation of evidence. Each study has a temporal dimension as well as a spatial one for in each case there is a narrative of expansion which was achieved through transactions of capital.

### **3. Case study 1 Day Technical School for Girls, Chatham, Kent, UK.**

The Day Technical School for Girls, Chatham, Kent, England, evolved from a demand for clerical workers by the Army Pay Corps in 1916. Initially, what became known as the Junior Commercial School for Girls was under the headship of Mr Keen, principal of Chatham Technical Institute and it shared the institute's premises with the boys' technical school. By 1919 subjects taught included arithmetic and book-keeping, science, literature, economics, history, geography, shorthand and typing. After the Medway Education Board added needlework and millinery to the curriculum in the early 1920s, the school became the Commercial and Trades School. The recommendation for the appointment of a headmistress to lead the school in 1926 resulted in recognition of the school by the Board of Education as a Junior Technical School and it becoming the Day Technical School for Girls (Holloway, 2024). Junior Technical Schools of the interwar period in England, introduced from 1913, provided vocational education for working class pupils and were intended to fulfil local industries' needs (*Report on the Consultative Committee on The Education of the Adolescent*, 1926). They admitted thirteen year olds who had been successful in passing the entrance examination. These schools were, according to Ross McKibbin's analysis, «popular» with working class parents as they provided an education which gave pupils access to career opportunities beyond those provided by elementary schools (McKibbin, 1998).

The appointment of Gertrude Vary Moffat proved to be a turning point in the history of the school. Under Moffat's leadership the school achieved institutional status and widened the horizons of women and girls both in the work place and culturally. Moffat's achievement accords with Eisenmann's analytical categories, namely networking and the establishment of a space for women within the wider educational field. Bourdieu's thinking tools are also relevant to analysing Moffat's

accumulation and assertion of capital towards securing pedagogic authority for her educational approach and the school. Moffat's initiatives towards securing recognition also resonates with Hobsbawm's analysis of how «invented tradition» seeks to «inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past» (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 1). She began by accumulating material resources invested with symbolic meaning and establishing rituals that marked the achievement of pupils and were endorsed by the involvement of figures of social or professional distinction such as Lady Alexander-Sinclair, who presented Sports Day trophies. Moffat also secured the endorsement of the established (State) Anglican Church and sustained an ongoing relationship with high status clergyman Canon Hickin.

Moffat introduced these elements of tradition including a school chest, an honour lamp and book and the school song «Pioneers, Oh Pioneers!» at the first speech day in November 1927. Further endorsement of the institutional dignity of the school is indicated by the location of the event in the prestigious Chatham Town Hall. Well-wisher Mr Bird donated to the chest two small blocks of oak from the «roof of Westminster Hall which date not later than the XVI century» and a small piece of «Royal Purple cloth from the catafalque used at the lying in state of King Edward VII at Westminster Hall 1910». In the accompanying letter, Mr Bird stated that he hoped «this element of antiquity ... may serve as starting on a long line of happy tradition» (Fort Pitt School Private Archive). This happy tradition continued in 1930 when Moffat founded the school's first association for ex-pupils, the Fort Pitt Old Girls Association. A photograph in the school archive records the occasion and demonstrates the prominent position given at the centre of the top table to Canon Hickin.

One of Moffat's aims was to secure equality of status for technical schools with grammar schools which hitherto had been regarded as more prestigious because of their academic focus. This aligned with the view of Lord Eustace Percy President of the Board of Education who was a known supporter of technical education and wanted technical schools to have «equal status to grammar schools» (Sanderson, 1994, p. 130). Moffat secured the support of the Duchess of Atholl, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, as the key speaker for the school's 1929 speech day. It could be presumed that the visit was a success as a month later Lord Percy argued in Parliament that technical education had been described as «a badge of social servitude» and that this view needed to be corrected (Hansard, 23 April 1929, 732). Moffat's efforts towards securing the status of the school also focused on achieving a physical space to equal that already accorded to the boys. The last page of the speech day booklet called for a «permanent dignified home in keeping with the importance of the work [the school] is doing» (Fort Pitt School Private Archive).

Her efforts were successful. By September of the same year, Moffat and her pupils moved into Fort Pitt, a historic building dating from 1780. It commanded an imposing site with its elevated position looking down upon the River Medway and surrounding area. As a former military site and monumental architectural presence, the school buildings were invested with masculine power (McDowell, 1999) and exemplify Delamont's definition of a school with a «potent image» (Delamont, 1993, p. 79). The physical distinction of the school and opportunities available to the girls

were enhanced by the provision of a school playing field (Williamson, 2011) organised by Margaret Bondfield, Minister of Labour in 1929, one of Moffat's distinguished contacts in the educational and political field.

Moffat's curriculum was designed to extend employment opportunities for girls by covering technical and clerical subjects that would open up careers in nursing, secretarial work or the civil service. Girls of the Day Technical exceeded the government's expectation that they should be employed solely by local business. The needlework department alone served many firms in London and girls went on to work at the court dressmakers. In addition, girls were employed in public facing roles, including as shop demonstrators (Holloway, 2024). To enhance employability in these positions the girls received input to enhance their linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Elocution lessons encouraged them to speak without the perceived impediment of local accent and idiom (Holloway, 2024). Moffat led by example, modelling how to speak in public during assemblies, speech days and when discussing her musical interests.

Increasing girls' economic capital was not the extent of Moffat's ambition, she also introduced initiatives that would enhance both pupils' cultural capital and that of the school.

The girls had lessons in Greek dancing which was publicly performed on the ramparts of the old fort. The pupils were introduced to opera and classical musicians came and played regularly. A school choir performed for visitors and also entered competitions. A literal broadening of horizons was achieved through school trips to Boulogne in connection with a girls' boarding school, the *College de Jeunes Filles* and its head mistress Mlle C. Aubrun. The inclusion of French on the curriculum provided further evidence of Moffat's commitment to going beyond the restricted curriculum designed for working class girls (Holloway, 2024).

The school's claim to status and authority was not just built on a culturally distinctive curriculum, an impressive location and support from political and religious figures of distinction. The teaching staff employed by Moffat (and Moffat herself) were themselves recognised in the educational field. Prior to her headship university graduate Moffat had taught at the prestigious Latymer School an historic London grammar school. The French teacher at the Day Technical, Amy Thomas had worked to introduce a progressive approach to teaching French; the «Direct Method». Thomas published an article on the method in *The New Era: the Journal of the World Education Fellowship* in 1933 (Thomas, 1933). The addition of English teacher Agnes Latham to the staff in 1935, led to cultural growth through drama productions. Latham had graduated from Somerville College, Oxford in 1926 with a first class degree in English Language and Literature and had edited and published *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh [sic]* in 1929 (Latham, 1929). Not only did the school attract educators of distinction it provided a pathway to professional advancement. Thomas went on to become headmistress of Maidstone Technical School for Girls and Latham was offered a post at Bedford College.

Moffat's strategies to promote her school and to expand the educational horizons of girls exemplify Bourdieu's understanding of field manoeuvres and transactions of capital. She drew on figures of social, professional and political distinction to endorse the school and to secure recognition of the school in the educational field. Her

appropriation of cultural capital to endorse the school is illustrated in the school song which borrowed freely from Walt Whitman's poem of the same name. «Pioneers O Pioneers!» also epitomises Moffat's forward thinking ambitions and ability to evoke and accrue symbolic capital in the interests of validating her institution:

All the past we leave behind,  
We take up the task eternal,  
And the burden and the lesson,  
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing.  
So we go the unknown ways,  
Pioneers, O Pioneers! (Fort Pitt School Private Archive)

#### **4. Case study 2 The Anglican Mothers' Union**

The Anglican Mothers' Union, which today is a global organisation of more than 4 million members, began in 1876 as a meeting for working class women hosted by its founder Mary Sumner (1829-1921). In 1885 following the Church Congress, an annual gathering of clergy and lay people featuring talks, preaching and social events the Mothers' Union was adopted by the Bishop of Winchester Edward Harold Browne as an official Church organisation in the diocese. (M. Porter, Woodward, & Erskine, 1921, p. 24) After this the organisation spread rapidly across the UK and overseas to colonies and contact zones. The Mothers' Union followed the 1875 Girls' Friendly Society, a welfare organisation for young working women, as the second religious organisation to be run by women sanctioned by the Anglican Church of England (Anderson-Faithful, 2022; Heath-Stubbs, 1926; Money, 1902). By 1921 the year of Mary Sumner's death the Mothers' Union had a worldwide membership of 391,409 (*The Times*, August 12th, 1921).

Sumner's activism took place at a time when the rapid expansion of industrial towns brought issues such as health, poverty and the excessive consumption of alcohol to public attention. It was a period that saw in the UK a proliferation of philanthropic activity and the emergence of women's organisations (Gordon & Doughan, 2001; Prochaska, 2002). Mary Sumner saw good mothering as the way to alleviate the social ills of poverty and crime which she attributed to lack of religious morality. The Mothers' Union was intended to educate mothers in the values of the Church of England. Sumner believed that mothering was a role that required training in pedagogic expertise and favoured the methods of Pestalozzi and Froebel (Johnson, 1891). She secured recognition for a collective and authoritative voice for women in the Anglican Church, albeit framed by gendered notions of assumed women's interests accruing to domesticity and childrearing. However, Sumner asserted the connection of family life to politics and legislation, and positioned the Mothers' Union as a patriotic organisation by articulating the contribution of «mothers of England» to citizenship and the imperial project (M. Sumner, 1888, p. 69; 1895, p. 10).

Sumner's Mothers' Union, which achieved institutional status both within and beyond the patriarchal Anglican Church, fits several of the categories suggested by Eisenmann's analysis of women's educational activism. It was inspired by religion,

driven by a reforming and educational agenda and also involved network associations. The process of expansion of the Mothers' Union can be conceptualised by drawing on the thinking tools of Bourdieu with a focus here on the attributes of capital as transacted as field manoeuvres, the field in focus being the Anglican Church which as the state endorsed (established) church with the monarch as its titular head and bishops as members of the upper legislative chamber (the House of Lords) was associated with sites of power.

Mary Sumner was the daughter of Thomas Heywood (1797-1861) an affluent former banker and antiquarian who had equipped his daughter with educational capital from exposure to literature history and travel (M. Sumner, n.d.). Whilst on holiday in Rome Mary met George Sumner the son of Charles Sumner Bishop of Winchester and nephew of the Archbishop Canterbury John Bird Sumner. George and Mary married on 26 July 1848 and subsequently lived in Farnham Castle the official residence of the Bishop where George served his father as chaplain (M. Sumner, 1910, pp. 8-14). So Mary was positioned in a kinship network close to figures of the highest distinction in the Church. In 1851 George was appointed as Rector of Old Alresford a parish not far from the cathedral city of Winchester. Mary, in accord with conventions of the time supported her husband's role as parish priest by performing social duties and by participating in local Church endorsed activity notably as a Branch Leader and later Diocesan President of the Girls' Friendly Society, and Vice President of the Church of England Juvenile Temperance Society, all indices of her possession of symbolic religious capital (*Hampshire Chronicle*, 1886; M. Sumner, 1910, pp. 15, 16).

The satisfactory performance of wifely duties and philanthropic activism in the local area were not Sumner's only source of religious capital. In 1881 she, her husband George and a small group comprising relatives and friends journeyed to Egypt and the Holy Land (M. E. Sumner, 1881). Sumner's account of first-hand experience of sites significant in the Bible published in book form as *Our Holiday In the East* positioned her as an expert and validated her claims to religious pedagogic authority (M. E. Sumner, 1881).

Whilst her mothers' meeting was not unusual for a middle/upper middle class woman in a clerical milieu the celebratory history of the Mothers' Union written in 1921 notes the innovative use of membership cards for members. It also marks the significant of Sumner's speaking from the platform to an audience of women at the Portsmouth Church Congress. At the time it was a rare occurrence for a lady to expose herself in this way to a large city audience and the account emphasises Sumner's valour in encroaching into masculine territory but alleviates any suggestion of female impropriety by noting the authorisation she had from her friend Ernest Wilberforce the Bishop of Newcastle (M. Porter et al., 1921, pp. 20,22,23). Wilberforce was not the only bishop to recognise, endorse and enhance Sumner's symbolic religious capital. It was this event that was the catalyst for the institutional endorsement of the Mothers' Union and spatial expansion of the society from the local parish to the diocese, the larger structural unit of church organisation, sanctioned by Edward Harold Browne Bishop of Winchester and father in law to Sumner's daughter (M. Porter et al., 1921, p. 24).



Whilst Sumner's social capital was advantageous to the genesis of the Mothers' Union, its expansion owed much to her energetic canvassing but also chimed with a topical focus on motherhood and the appetite of Anglican women for work towards social cohesion (Gill, 1994; Heenev, 1988). A prolific letter writer, she was highly active in mobilising her network contacts in the interests of expanding and promoting the Mothers' Union. She wrote to bishops of her acquaintance to lobby them to adopt the organisation in their dioceses (M. Porter et al., 1921, p. 27). The presence of the Mothers' Union when it was adopted by parishes was physically manifested by a banner in the church building. Sumner also exploited social conventions that aligned socialising with religious activity and regarded the performance of philanthropy as laudable. She used her network of existing contacts from the Girls' Friendly Society to set up and run Mothers' Union branches. Endorsement and financial support was secured from socially elite women who took roles as diocesan presidents and later national Vice Presidents.

Sumner also deployed media to increase the reach of her message, *The Mothers' Union Journal* was instigated in 1888 to communicate her personal message to members. The following year it had a circulation of 46,000. *Mothers in Council* a magazine aimed at middle and upper class readers followed in 1890, and Sumner enhanced the appeal of the magazine by securing Charlotte Yonge, a journalist and bestselling novelist esteemed for her handling of religious themes, as its editor. Sumner's advice on marriage, childrearing and education was disseminated in books notably *To Mothers of the Higher Classes*, and *Home Life* (M. Sumner, 1888, 1895). The latter volume, aimed at a working class audience included a spatial element. Wives were exhorted to keep husbands from going out to drink in the public house by making home an attractive environment, and they were advised to ensure the chastity of girls before marriage by keeping them from «the streets and lanes at night, unprotected» (M. Sumner, 1895, p. 6 Members' card Rule 4).

The message of the Mothers' Union was also disseminated through meetings initially these were at diocesan level. As the organisation expanded the Mothers' Union instigated a London conference of delegates that considered topical issues such as divorce and secular education and aligned the interests of mothers with national and political issues. By 1896 a constitution had been formalised and the organisation had a London headquarters in Church House Westminster. In 1900 a service at London's St Pauls Cathedral signified the status of the Mothers' Union as an officially recognised national Anglican organisation. «Mass meetings» held in prestigious recognised venues such as the Royal Albert Hall a space invested with the highest cultural capital, where Sumner addressed an audience of 8,000 in 1908 further indicated the stature of the Mothers' Union as a nationally recognised institution (M. Porter et al., 1921, p. 46).

The Anglican Church was an imperial enterprise (A. N. Porter, 2003). The patriotic stance of the Mothers' Union which secured the patronage of the maternal embodiment of empire Queen Victoria, validated the conscious assertion of an imperial identity for the society (Moyse, 2009, pp. 80-86). Mothers' Union expansion overseas in dominions, colonies and contact zones followed the presence of women with kinship connections to the armed forces and colonial administration. Emigration to dominions also drew in white expatriate members. Branches were started in New

Zealand and Canada in 1888 Australia 1893, Cairo and Malta 1897 and South America 1898 (M. Porter et al., 1921, pp. 36, 107,108). In 1902, the year of British ascendancy in the South African Boer War and the coronation of Edward VII, the Mothers' Union signalled its imperial identity with an amendment to its second object. The words «the Empire» were substituted for «England» so that it read: «To awaken in mothers a sense of their great responsibility as mothers in the training of their boys and girls (the future fathers and mothers of Empire)». In 1904, Sumner claimed at the Mothers' Union Central Council that the organisation was a presence in nearly every British colony (Lancaster, 1958, p. 115).

The influence of the periphery in the construction of identities in the imperial metropole is interpreted by Catherine Hall and Sonia Rose as a relational transaction bound up with religion (Hall & Rose, 2006, pp. 2,5,6) and Alison Twells sees the exercise of philanthropy «at home» not only drawing on the metaphor of foreign mission but also informing middle-class identity and culture (Twells, 2009, p. 5). Tanya Fitzgerald shows how women in the colonial context networking through the exchange of letters, used these accounts to give authority to their experiences (Fitzgerald, 2005). Sumner's manoeuvres to promote the Mothers' Union both «at home» and abroad reflect these points. She used correspondence to make personal links with what were known as overseas members just as she had done when promoting the Mothers' Union in the UK. Mothers' Union membership was not confined to expatriates. Missionary enterprise encouraged indigenous membership notably in Madagascar where Gertrude King sister of the Anglican bishop encouraged correspondence between her branch and Sumner (Prevost, 2010). This was reproduced in Mothers' Union publications which celebrated the simple piety of converts (Anderson-Faithful, 2018, pp. 136,137). Members overseas were invited through correspondence to identify with «home» and see themselves as pioneers equipped for a «civilizing mission» with the prioritised religious capital of Anglicanism and superior cultural (and implicitly «racial») capital accruing to the British imperial metropole. The idea of missionary enterprise communicated via Mothers' Union magazines and through the presence of distinguished speakers with overseas connections at meetings was also drawn on to inspire members «at home». The financial support of overseas missionaries was encouraged and the evocation of an imperial periphery envisaged as exotic and dangerous and requiring valorous endeavour gave glamour to the efforts of mothers «at home» seeking to uphold the ideals of the Mothers' Union whilst coping with the trials of daily life. Sumner wrote: «We must get the members of our Mothers» Union to act as missionaries amongst their relations and friends, helping to bring the Christian life into the darkened homes where as yet our dear Lord is not loved and honoured (M. Porter et al., 1921, p. 41).

Sumner's field manoeuvres were facilitated by her social status and position next to figures of distinction in the religious field. This located her in networks «at home» and overseas.

Her pedagogic authority which allowed her to speak on behalf of the established (state) Anglican Church, an institution with imperial aspirations, also rested on her successful performance of esteemed gendered capital as a good wife, mother, philanthropist and churchwoman. The spatial expansion of the Mothers' Union

illustrates Bourdieu's understanding of the transaction of capital assets for improved field position.

## **5. Case study 3 The Anglican Church Congresses, 1861-1938**

The Anglican Church Congresses were instigated in 1861 by Archbishop of Canterbury, John Bird Sumner. His aim was to foster relations between clergy and lay people, educate the populace in Church views and in so doing promote Anglican unity at a time when rival denominations were increasing in popularity (Scotland, 1995). The week long congresses, which were held annually around England, Wales and Ireland were a demonstration that the established Church was embedded in political and social life. Parades, sermons by elite clergy, and civic receptions hosted by the Mayor and Mayoress made a conspicuous show of the presence of the Church in the host town. The formal programme of papers and discussion was enhanced by exhibitions and fringe meetings. Agenda topics indicated the concern of «church people» with industrial relations, poverty, education, and the position of women. At the second meeting of congress in Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre women spectators were allowed to watch the proceedings from a secluded gallery. This opened the way for women's participation in congress as members of the audience and hostesses. From 1862 onwards, the congresses attracted substantial numbers of men and women. Despite the disapproval articulated in 1872 in a letter to the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* of 15<sup>th</sup> October by a resentful cleric who complained about «ladies crowding the platform», women had become a regular and visible presence at congress.

The congress years coincide with a dynamic period for women in the negotiation of citizenship and the enlargement of horizons of possibility in education, work and leisure. It was a period in which relations between the sexes, marriage, and the role and status of women were topical both within the Church and in wider society. Religion was a mediating factor here, and also permeated the proliferation of philanthropic activity. A field in which women found opportunities for self-realisation, pursued aspirations towards the alleviation of social problems and in some cases found a pathway to employment. By 1938, the final year of its assembly, congress had provided a space in which elite women in emerging professions; education, medicine, law, politics (and to a lesser extent the Church) could demonstrate their pedagogic expertise in a public forum. It was both a catalyst and a showcase for women's organisations such as the Mothers' Union and the National Union of Women Workers. It also provided a respectable venue for public assembly for both middle and working class women (Anderson-Faithful & Holloway, 2023).

Themes at congress resonate with several of the categories suggested by Eisenmann's analysis. It was inspired by religion, driven by a reforming and educational agenda and also involved network associations. Women's negotiation of a presence at congress, and how the congress space was used towards the enlargement of women's horizons in diverse fields, can also be conceptualised by drawing on the thinking tools of Bourdieu with a focus on the attributes of capital as transacted as field manoeuvres, the field in focus being the Anglican Church.

It was not until 1875 that a woman's view, but not physical voice, was heard. Novelist Charlotte Yonge had her paper on «Women's Work in the Church» read from the platform by the Rev. C. W. Bond. At the 1881 congress at Newcastle, the first meeting dedicated to an audience of women was introduced and even more innovatively, the first women speakers were heard. The following year at Derby, morality campaigner Jane Ellice Hopkins became the first woman to address a male audience. Women's meetings flourished in years between 1882 and 1913, when special sections of the programme targeted a female audience, and provided an opportunity for middle and upper class women speakers to talk on a variety of subjects. Working class women were well represented in the audience at congress. Reporting on the 1884 Carlisle congress, *The Church Times* of Friday 10th October noted that:

The Congress Hall was crowded on Saturday night with an audience of women. Addresses were delivered specially adapted to women in regard to their social relations and domestic duties. It was the first meeting of the kind in connection with a Church Congress and was probably one of the largest meetings of women ever held... There must have been 2,500 women present, a fair proportion of whom were from the working class.

Congress began with the pomp and pageantry of a ceremonial procession through the streets of the host town. The pride of place in each parade was given to the specially commissioned congress banner. The banner was photographed but accompanying text was also used to describe colour and texture. The banner showcased the contribution of women both collectively and individually to congress which was noted by the women's magazine *The Queen* on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October 1897 «as the visible symbol of the diocese to which it belongs». Robed clergy and civic dignitaries marched past large numbers of spectators who lined the route. The parades and accompanying crowds were well documented in newspaper accounts, photographs and later newsreels, confirming public interest in the spectacle. In later parades women were present but outtakes from a Pathé News reel of the 1926 congress parade reveal that women in the procession were omitted from the final version released to cinema audiences.

Louise Creighton, regular platform speaker, first president of the 1895 National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) and bishop's wife, enjoyed the congresses because they enabled her to «get in touch with church people generally, and to understand more about church affairs» (Creighton, 1994, p. 112). However, congress had a lighter side, entertainments and fringe events added to its appeal, and provided opportunities for socialising. The Rev. Charles Dunkley, editor of the official congress report, noted the «completeness of hospitality and bountiful provision made for the physical wellbeing and social happiness of the visitors» to the 1890 congress at Hull (Dunkley, 1890, p. vi). It was customary for congresses to include receptions hosted by the mayor and mayoress of the host town supported by civic dignitaries. These were however, largely for invited guests from amongst ticket holding congress members, and the practice of a social «conversazione» to conclude the proceedings was established by 1879. Despite the lack of enthusiasm demonstrated by the

*Church Times* correspondent of 12<sup>th</sup> October 1883, who considered that «no one with anything else to do need waste much time on the conversazione», it proved popular with other congress goers. Initially the social dimension dominated women's participation. Laura Ridding, wife of the presiding bishop, was responsible for the tea and cheesecake supplied at the Nottingham «conversazione» and noted with relief in her diary of 30 September 1897: «it is all going very well» (Ridding).

The presence of women in social events perceived by Simon Morgan as a civilising influence was a conduit to their fuller participation (Simon Morgan, 2007). Women associated with clerics and church organisations were positioned not only to provide hospitality but to take on roles as meeting chairs, committee members and platform speakers. The significance of being a platform speaker was not confined to the impact made on the audience physically present at the time. Speakers' words were recorded verbatim in the official congress records which were published in book form and disseminated across the globe.

Reform of the public world through temperance and morality was a recurring theme at congress. The public drinking house was considered a dangerous place where the lack of inhibition caused by alcohol might lead both men and women into violence, crime and moral degradation. Dr Mary Scharlieb, gynaecologist and eugenicist speaking at the Exeter congress in 1894, focussed on the moral evil of drink, and saw the remedy in abstinence. Scharlieb was aware of the attraction of alcohol for the hard pressed working class woman. Her speech contained a caution against self-righteousness on the part of the middle class would be reformer. She admitted the attractions of public drinking houses and went on to question (albeit implicitly) conventional assumptions, by suggesting that drink was a symptom and not necessarily the cause of poverty. In order to alleviate the evils of drink, other issues such as employment, wages, housing and education needed addressing. She concluded her remarks on the attractions of the public house with a challenge: «What do we offer in exchange for this seductive glamour? Good advice, bad coffee, and a promise of a happier future. We must make a better offer than this» (Dunkley, 1894, p. 248).

Congress was an arena in which rival groups sought to assert the authority of their views. The Girls' Friendly Society, like Sumner's Mothers' Union prioritised chastity. Mary Townsend founder of the GFS sought «To prevent, 'tales of shame and misery, of wasted lives spent in the service of sin or vanity instead of in the service of Christ. Central Rule Three (1875) stated: 'No girl who has not borne a virtuous character to be admitted; such a character being lost, the Member to forfeit her Card» (Money, 1902, pp. 5,18,19). This was not uncontested. At the Hull Congress of 1890 Mrs Papillon took the platform to advocate a Women's Help Society. Her suggestion was for: «a larger society which she thought might take in the GFS» which would cater for childless wives, unmarried women and, most provocatively, those who «were lost but were now found» (Dunkley, 1890, p. 247). Opponents of Papillon's views (who included Sumner) articulated their moral objections. Feelings ran high. Miss Marianne Mason, HMs inspector of boarded out pauper children, was so offended by Papillon's suggestion, that she abandoned her prepared speech to vigorously uphold the Girls' Friendly Society public «witness for purity» an indicator of symbolic capital which she saw as a pillar of the GFS's claims to authority as well

a means towards the reform of society. Having shown her prepared paper to the panel Mason then proceeded to read «from a paper that I have already published» (Dunkley, 1890, p. 271). The fact that she revealed that this was a paper that she had bought with her suggests that having seen Papillon's name on the list of speakers, she was already aware of her views and, braced for an argument.

In addition to showcasing women from the voluntary sector, congress engaged with and represented women's movement into the professions and paid work. Elite teachers were amongst the first to become regular contributors. Notable speakers included Lilian Faithfull, head of Cheltenham Ladies' College, and Elizabeth Wordsworth, principal of Lady Margaret Hall, the first Oxford College for Women, who articulated her advocacy for women in the university. Congress faced the problems associated with «respectable» middle class women's entry into the workplace that accrued around the potential loss of status resulting from the necessity to earn a living. The Hon. Augusta Maclagan, a stalwart activist on behalf of the Mothers' Union and the Girls' Friendly Society, recognised widening opportunities for women's paid work. She also advocated learning typing, and commented that: «Journalism of late has made great strides as a profession for women» (Dunkley, 1899, p. 137). She was aware that increasing numbers of middle class women were seeking paid employment, and asserted that middle class women could undertake occupations such as school teaching without «loss of caste which she, although the daughter of a peer, considered an outdated notion».

Should it be suggested that I am advising encroachment on ground hitherto occupied by what are called «the working classes». I answer that in these days of eager competition there can be no restriction. Intelligent working men and women can reach (and have reached) the top of the tree in every profession, and brave women, however gently nurtured, have a right to claim their independence and earn their livelihood in any way which is open to them (Dunkley, 1899, p. 137).

Congress speakers with professional expertise relating to workers' rights and conditions took the audience into the factory and sweatshop. Gertrude Tuckwell, author, trades unionist and campaigner for workers' protection sought to speak on behalf of workers. In her debut speech, Tuckwell spoke as a representative of the Industrial Law Committee, on the need to enforce safety legislation in the workplace. She congratulated her audience for their compassion for workers in sickness and death, but then stirred their consciences on the issue of working conditions. She evoked a picture of distress:

I will try to call up for you the voices which are always sounding in the ears of myself and those who work with me among the workers in our factories and laundries. First, the voices of those maimed and mutilated by machinery... Six accidents were brought to us from a laundry the other day. All of them mutilated and maimed so that their earning capacity was ever diminished (Dunkley, 1902, p. 152).

Tuckwell gave further anecdotes of workers «suffering from insanitary conditions», «ankle deep in water» and «hidden in rooms working seventeen hours a day including holidays and even Christmas day». Worse, they were «earning a wage below the level at which they can subsist and from it are taken deductions for water, for gas, for machinery, for the doctor, for the hospitals» (Dunkley, 1902, p. 152). For Tuckwell, a dedicated Christian Socialist, poor exploited workers were condemned to ill health, bad housing and exclusion from respectability. It was her view that workers' material deprivation needed to be addressed before moral and spiritual progress could be achieved.

Congress also engaged with women's aspirations to participate fully in public life through the ballot box and parliamentary debate. Congress women held different and evolving views on suffrage prior to the universal franchise achieved in 1928. Whilst these views were not directly addressed from the platform, fringe events, meetings and exhibitions provided spaces that demonstrated the breadth of women's political engagement in organisations such as the conservative Primrose League, and provided a forum for advertising arguments both in favour of and in opposition to universal suffrage. Louise Creighton's friendships encompassed women with both pro and anti- women's suffrage views. Laura Ridding and dear friend Kathleen Lyttelton, author of *Women and their work* were keen suffragists whereas fellow National Union of Women Workers activist (Kelly, 2004), and well known novelist Mary (Mrs Humphrey) Ward, was at the forefront of anti-suffrage campaigning (Loader, 2019). Initially Creighton took an anti-suffrage stance but later in 1908 Creighton had a change of heart in the public forum of the National Union of Women Workers' conference and recorded her reasoning in her memoir:

What was most decisive in leading me to change my opinion ... was the fact that women whether in the Primrose League or the Women's Liberal Association, increasingly took part in politics in a very decidedly party manner. I felt that if they were going to mix in party strife they had better have full responsibility (Creighton, 1994, p. 89).

Another women's aspiration, the quest for spiritual equality also played out in the peripheral spaces of congress. Whilst missionaries, deaconesses and women in religious organisations such as the Mothers' Union and Girls' Friendly Society spoke from the congress platform, more radical demands for women's greater religious authority namely preaching and ordination were confined to fringe spaces. In the period following the 1914-1918 war, congress speakers Edith Picton-Turbervill and notable evangelist Maude Royden promoted their advocacy for women in the pulpit through separate meetings organised to coincide with congress by groups such as the League of the Church Militant (Anderson-Faithful & Holloway, 2023, pp. 65-71). Despite women's access to so many areas of public life represented in the religiously sanctified space of congress full pedagogic authority as religious professionals was denied to women in the Anglican Church in England until 1994 when the first women were ordained and it was not until 2015 that Libby Lane was the first woman to be consecrated bishop in England. The Church Congress exemplifies several elements of Bourdieu's analysis. Women drew on capital accrued from social distinction and

positioning next to figures of distinction in the religious field to secure initial access to congress organisation agenda making. Access to organising agendas enabled the showcasing of women of distinction with pedagogic authority accrued from having expert knowledge valued in diverse field such As education, medicine and law. Public exposure in the «respectable» forum of congress a space endorsed by an institution with th highest symbolic capital and an alignment with state power and served to endorse women’s participation in civic life.

## 6. Concluding section

Our case studies exemplify Eisenmann’s categories as each one involves attributes of institution building, the assemblage and manipulation of resources and the mobilisation of network contacts and religious endorsement is also evident in all three cases. Bourdieu’s thinking tools are applicable as a frame of analysis for conceptualising the strategic manoeuvres relating to the transaction of capital that women in various spheres of activity represented in the case studies deployed towards the achievement of pedagogic authority. The case studies also illustrate the spatial themes identified by Lofland, Rendall and Simon Morgan relating to women’s access to space notably relating to degrees of public exposure and gender as a mediator of spatial access.

Moffat’s networking with figures of distinction in the fields of politics, education and the church enabled her to build a distinctive institution for women and girls within the existing educational field that enlarged the gendered curriculum aimed at girls by including technical subjects. The accumulation and transaction of economic and cultural capital through Moffat’s educational approach and networking served to widen the horizons of the girls both metaphorically and literally by opening opportunities in employment and leisure which extended beyond the local area.

Sumner’s manoeuvres achieved a trajectory of literal and metaphorical spatial expansion. She transacted her economic, cultural and religious and social capital which positioned her close to sites of power, towards achieving personal pedagogic authority, locally, nationally and transnationally. By securing recognition for the Mothers’ Union at the highest level in both Church and State she made a dedicated space for women to speak both within the Church, and collectively as active citizens at a time when women were yet to achieve equality of civil rights.

The Anglican Church congress exemplifies various ways in which women gained access to public space in work, education and civic activism. As a location endorsed by a religious institution that embodied temporal power and high social status congress legitimised women’s public appearance. Access grew incrementally from specifically gendered space towards the congress main assembly and was mediated by assumptions relating to class and appropriate topics deemed of interest for women. Congress also demonstrates attributes of Massey’s theatre of conflict as different views were articulated and rival groups competed for ascendancy. Despite rivalries a key theme that emerges from congress is the significance of women’s networks and collaborations towards the realisation of their aspirations. Our collaboration as researchers and writers has been as a result of just such a collaborative network the Centre for the History of Women Education a space for



thinking, talking, sharing and friendship that has helped us towards having «a room of our own».

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