



The Sybil Campbell Collection at the University of Winchester

NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

ISSUE 18 | MAY 2010

The Library was founded at Crosby Hall in 1928 by the British Federation of University Women, now the British Federation of Women Graduates

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Sybil Campbell Lecture

Medieval Women and the Care of the Family: the Archaeology of Life, Death and Magic
Roberta Gilchrist FBA, FSA, University of Reading; Leverhulme Major Research Fellow 2007-10

This year's lecture considered how medieval archaeology can shed new light on the private lives of medieval women, using archaeology to reveal the deeply held beliefs and intimate practices that surrounded life and death in a medieval family. The source material comprised the archaeology of English settlements and cemeteries dating from the 12th to the 15th century, drawing comparisons between devotional practices in medieval domestic and mortuary spheres.

It was proposed that certain materials and objects were used for the care and protection of the family during life and death. Connections were drawn with charms used in the practice of traditional folk magic, and with occult materials more associated with medieval 'natural magic'. Certain animals, plants and minerals were considered by medieval people to possess special properties, some manifest and some resulting from the 'occult' power of nature. It was suggested that three main categories of 'magical' item occurred in medieval graves and domestic contexts: 1) healing charms and protective amulets; 2) objects believed to possess 'occult' natural power; and 3) 'antique' items. The first two types are attested categories of medieval magic; the third was suggested on the basis of the archaeological evidence of medieval burials.

Amulets are worn on the body or kept in the home to preserve against affliction; the principal medieval types comprise textual amulets, charms and consecrated objects. Archaeological examples of textual amulets include the possible remains of two birthing amulets written on parchment and interred in female graves. Charms include jewellery and other objects with magical inscriptions, such as the names of the Three Magi, used as a charm to ward off sudden death. Such charms are found in considerable numbers in the home, but were only rarely deposited in graves. Consecrated objects include pilgrims' badges and papal bullae, the latter detached from indulgences and circulated as amulets. The pilgrim souvenirs recovered from domestic contexts show a strong correlation with shrines venerated by women for their connection to childbirth, such as Aachen, which held a relic of 'the holy nightgown', which was said to have been worn by the Virgin at the conception and birth of Christ.

Occult materials comprised fossils, stones and gems that were perceived to have special healing or protective properties. In graves, white stones of quartz or granite were prized, while objects carved from jet, coral or amber were better represented in domestic

contexts. Jet was considered to be efficacious in childbirth, while coral was highly valued for offering protection to infants and young children from the evil eye. Antiquities deposited in graves may also have been considered to possess occult properties, especially Roman coins and beads. Medieval graves provide sealed archaeological contexts in which grave goods can be directly associated with individual bodies that can be aged and sexed. On this basis, it is possible to detect a correlation in the use of 'magic' objects and materials especially for the young, and perhaps also for the physically disabled. In contrast, 'old' items excavated from medieval

households were interpreted as family heirlooms that may have circulated for only two or three generations before being discarded. Examples included objects possibly connected with marriage, such as women's headdresses, and chests and coffers that were typically given as wedding gifts. By opening up the question of heirlooms, we begin to see connections between the lifecycles of people and things.

Charms, amulets and objects of special materials, such as jet and coral, provide insight to the material practices of life course rituals and thresholds – especially birth, marriage and death. Archaeological

evidence of the home and grave shows the extent to which religious devotion and 'magic' were combined in medieval popular belief, and connected with family memory. Magic rooted religion in everyday life, in folk memory and in protecting and healing the family. Perhaps most significantly, magic provided the opportunity for women to engage directly with the divine through their own agency, without the need for the intercession of priests.

For further details see R Gilchrist (2008), *Magic for the dead: the archaeology of magic in medieval burials*, *Medieval Archaeology* 52, 119-59.

Dr Barnita Bagchi



The Annual Sybil Campbell seminar at the University of Winchester was held on May 20th at 6.p.m at the King Alfred Campus MB1 (Main Building Ground Floor). Dr Barnita Bagchi from the University of Utrecht spoke on 'Social Capital and Creative Agency: South Asian Women in the Public Sphere, 1920-1950'

Dr Bagchi considered ways in which social capital, as manifested in associations, networks, and everyday sociability mutually inflected the creative agency of South Asian women in the public sphere during 1920-1920. While the term social capital, as adumbrated by Robert Putnam and Pierre Bourdieu, is well-known, 'creative agency' needs explanation. Dr Bagchi argued for a connotative, multifaceted analysis of women's agency in the public sphere, as manifested in a number of areas

such as writing, lobbying, political and social activism: her analysis paid great attention to women's creative work, most notably manifested in writing, but also in a broader, open-ended view of the often informal and quirky ways in which women acted in the first part of the twentieth century in the Indian subcontinent.

At the Sybil Campbell Library, Dr Bagchi's research has been enriched by looking at material related to the Indian Federation of University Women: here too she was struck by the way official association business, social and political activism, creative performances, and food and drink enmeshed to form a dense web of associational life. Dr Bagchi analysed further this richness, and brought in issues of the interlinking of personal autonomy and collective endeavour. Deliberately, she collocated apparently disparate figures, notably Cornelia Sorabji, Rokeya Hossain, and Lila Majumdar, whose principal identities were those of lawyer, educationist, and children's writer. As a scholar in literary studies, she argued that we gain more through connotative richness than what we lose by the attendant fuzziness, if we view women's agency and the enmeshing

of the associational, the creative, and the personal in this way.

Biography

Barnita Bagchi is an Indian feminist historian and sociologist of girls' and women's education, currently at the Faculty of Literary Studies at Utrecht University and formerly at the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata. She studied at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, St Hilda's College, Oxford and Trinity College, Cambridge. Barnita Bagchi has translated works from Bengali by the South Asian feminist Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Selina Hossain, Jvotirmoyee Devi and Santosh Kuma Ghose.

The Middlebrow Network

The Sybil Campbell Collection is represented on the Advisory Board of the ARHC funded Middlebrow Network convened by the University of Strathclyde and Sheffield Hallam University. The Middlebrow Network is a transatlantic and interdisciplinary network exploring what the term 'middlebrow' signifies past and present.

In *The Death of the Moth* (London: Hogarth Press, 1947, first published 1942), Virginia Woolf asked "But what, you may ask, is a middlebrow? And that, to tell the truth, is no easy question to answer. They are neither one thing nor the other. They are not highbrows, whose brows are high; nor lowbrows, whose brows are low" (p.115)

In *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Nicola Humble notes:

"The broad working definition I employ throughout this book is that the middlebrow novel is one that straddles the divide between the trashy romance or thriller on the one hand, and the philosophically or formally challenging novel on the other: offering narrative excitement without guilt, and intellectual stimulation without undue effort. It is an essentially parasitical form, dependent on the existence of

both a high and a low brow for its identity, reworking their structures and aping their insights, while at the same time fastidiously holding its skirts away from lowbrow contamination, and gleefully mocking highbrow intellectual pretensions" (p.11-12).

The Sybil Campbell Collection contains works by writers deemed middle-brow. These include best-seller novelists like Elizabeth von Arnim, Winifred Holtby and Stella Gibbons. These novelists have tended to receive very little critical attention from researchers, although widely read by their contemporaries.

Dr Stephanie Spencer represented the Sybil Campbell Collection at the Middlebrow Cultures conference at the University of Strathclyde in July, when she gave a presentation about the Collection.

To find out more about the term 'middlebrow' you can access the website (www.middlebrow-network.com) where you will find sources to enable further exploration of the term middlebrow. There is a searchable database of researchers in the field, an annotated critical bibliography, and information on access to image, sound and text archives and out-of print material. The special issue of *Working Papers on the Web*, "Investigating the Middlebrow" can be accessed free from the middlebrow website.

2010 BFWG Library Lecture

The Sybil Campbell Library Lecture, entitled *Pen and Parsimony: Carriages in the Novels of Jane Austen*, will be delivered by Sandy Lerner, who will share her enthusiasm for Jane Austen and will talk about the way in which the Chawton House Library came into being.

The Lecture will take place on Thursday

28 October 2010, in the Library of the University Women's Club, 2 Audley Square, London W1Y 6DB, 18.00 hours for 18.30 lecture.

Sandy Lerner is Chair and Trustee of Chawton House Library, and the Centre for the Study of Early English Women's Writing, Chawton, Hampshire.

Research Apprenticeship Scheme at Winchester

Following a pilot project in the Arts Faculty last year the Winchester Research Apprenticeship Scheme (WRAP) has been rolled out across the university. This scheme offers some work experience to students usually in their second or third year of study. Students are offered the opportunity to work alongside academics in their research, learning some of the wide variety of skills needed from the inception of a project to its completion and publication. The apprenticeship lasts for two weeks at the end of the second semester. There is heavy competition both amongst academics to have their projects accepted and amongst students, who apply through application letter and interview, to work on the project of their choice. The scheme is funded through the Learning and Teaching / Research Informed Teaching Fund at the University.

We are delighted that one of the schemes accepted for this year is a project on the archives of the Sybil Campbell Library Collection. We can now announce that Mandy Smith, a final year undergraduate on the BA (hons) Education Studies programme will be working with Professor Joyce Goodman and Dr Stephanie Spencer as they review the contents of the archives. The purpose of the project is to create an electronically searchable database of the material contained in the boxes. Mandy has successfully completed modules which focus on 'Women, Power and Education' and the relevance of historical knowledge for policy makers today. We will report more fully on this project in the next Newsletter.

Association of Independent Libraries Annual Meeting 2009

This year the AIL Annual meeting was embedded into the programme of the International conference of Mechanics Worldwide 24th –28th September, held at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. Leading members of the AIL committee had convened the international conference, attended by delegates from USA and Australia. Their attendance at the AIL events on Friday 25th and Saturday 26th gave wider publicity to the AIL's activities. Dr Margaret Roake attended these events as an independent member of the AIL with an interest in the Sybil Campbell Library. On the Friday evening about 30 delegates met at an informal reception sponsored by the AIL. Members expressed sympathy at our loss of Nancy Edwards, who had attended the conference with last year in Leeds.

On Saturday, Geoffrey Forster, Chairman introduced the President, Dr Robert Anderson who briefly mentioned the 500 Mechanics Institutes which still exist in Victoria, Australia. A petition in support of the Beechworth Athenaeum's collections in Melbourne, now under threat, was signed by all present.

Dr Michael Powell of Chetham's Library in Manchester gave a lively history of that library's changing development, its links with the choir school and the natural history collection which used to be arranged around the bookstacks.

Peter Hoare, representing the Historic Libraries Forum, spoke of the history of numerous collections in Nottinghamshire that now form the Bromley House Library in Nottingham.

The AGM of the AIL followed.

An illustrated new directory of member libraries has just been published. *Historic Libraries in Partnership*, edited by

Lynne Shepherd and Geoffrey Forster
Hugh Pierce of Ipswich agreed to become Treasurer and Carol Barstow of Nottingham the Secretary. The existing President, Chairman and committee were unanimously re-elected.

After an excellent buffet lunch in an adjoining room Dr Robert Anderson gave a fuller analysis of the various Mechanics Museums, often with book collections attached, which he had visited in USA and Australia, stressing the value of these varied local collections of historical artefacts for their communities and the wider world

Geoffrey Forster then spoke of Samuel Smiles' time in Leeds from 1838, as editor of the radical newspaper 'The Leeds Times', while the Chartist Feargus O'Connor in 'The Northern Star' led a more violent appeal for political reform.

After tea with Bath Buns, Roger Brien of the Devon and Exeter Institution outlined the history whereby they acquired the freehold of the delightful house in the cathedral close that houses the library and gave some useful hints, eg. On avoiding tenancies from his experience as Librarian.

The final paper, by John Killen from the Linen Hall Library in Belfast outlined its history and pointed to the documentation that the library holds on all sides in the most recent 'troubles' in Ireland. He described how pictures had been sold to raise funds to repair the roof and install a lift and how material had been assembled in important exhibitions to raise funds for the library. **EXPLOIT YOUR COLLECTIONS!** Was his final advice, which is good advice for all independent libraries.

Margaret Roake, Sybil Campbell Library Trustee

Guidelines for the Deposit of Books in the Sybil Campbell Collection, Including Bequests of Books

The Sybil Campbell Collection welcomes deposits, including bequests. The following guidelines are provided to advise those wishing to deposit or bequeath books to the Collection. Deposit of books not already in the Sybil Campbell Collection or the University of Winchester University Library published prior to 1958, are welcome in the following categories:

- Books written by women (not necessarily about women), including books by members of the British Federation of Women Graduates
- Books about women, including biographies of women
- Women's history
- Accounts and printed reports of women's organisations
- Women's education (informal and formal)
- Women, the arts and literature

Process of deposit for books in the Sybil Campbell Collection

- 1 Books for deposit should be listed by the donor, or her or his representative
- 2 All titles/authors should be checked by the donor, or her or his representative, against the online catalogues of the Sybil Campbell Collection and the University of Winchester Library (both of which are accessible to the general public at the web addresses below) to ensure that the list does not contain books already held by the Sybil Campbell Collection or the University Library
- 3 Once checked against the catalogues, the list of books for deposit or bequest should be submitted by the donor, or her or his representative, to the University Librarian, with a covering letter outlining the deposit or bequest
- 4 The decision on the books to be retained will be made by the University Librarian who will submit the letter and list of books for deposit to the Sybil Campbell Steering Committee for information
- 5 The decision on the deposit of the books will be conveyed to the donor, or her or his representative in writing after the meeting of the Sybil Campbell Steering Group.

Executors wishing to deposit collections outwith the process outlined above may do so on the understanding that the University Librarian will decide on the books to be retained.

Sybil Campbell Collection Catalogue:
<http://sybilcampbelllibrary.org.uk/catalogue/>
University of Winchester Library Catalogue:
<http://talisprism.winchester.ac.uk/TalisPrism/>