

Children's Periodicals

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Definition: The emergence of the children's periodicals market in the nineteenth century meant that women had new venues in which to contribute fiction, poetry, illustrations, and non-fiction articles as well as to work as editors. When the market for children's periodicals expanded substantially after 1850 and became more commercially viable, women were increasingly able to contribute to these publications. Women were active contributors – through poetry, short stories, serialized fiction, and illustrations – to children's magazines throughout the Victorian period, occasionally also holding editorial roles.

Keywords: periodicals; children's magazines; serialized fiction; illustrations; editors

Introduction

Women had a lengthy history of writing for children, but the emergence of a significant market for **children's periodicals** in the nineteenth century meant that women had new venues in which to contribute fiction, poetry, illustrations, and non-fiction articles as well as to work as **editors**. The substantial expansion of this market for **after 1850 meant that they** were increasingly able to contribute to these publications, especially because they were assumed to be natural caregivers and morally superior, which meant that their association with children was considered innate. The number of **boys' magazines** rose quickly from mid-century, with girls' magazines emerging as a significant market from the 1880s. Women were active

contributors to children's magazines – through poetry, [short stories](#), serialized fiction, and illustrations – throughout the Victorian period, occasionally also holding editorial roles.

Historians of the nineteenth century have commented on the variety of publishing venues in which women's writing appeared. Not only did they offer an opening for beginners, they also “provided an increasingly important outlet for fiction which even popular authors needed to exploit” (Onslow 2000, p. 203). Women published in children's periodicals for a variety of reasons, and the types of female contributors also varied widely. As Alexis Easley, Clare Gill and Beth Rodgers suggest, the [periodical press](#) “as a publishing venue functioned symbolically and materially in different ways for Victorian women writers, whether they were considered ‘great’ in their time or not” (2019, p. 395). Children's periodicals offered opportunities for women writers to build and maintain readerships, with some authors turning to children's magazines as a new market for their writing while others leveraged their popularity in the children's press to publish fiction in [novel](#) form. This “active participation” with the press was central to the literary labour of Victorian authors, and especially women, who saw the periodical press as a “strategic vehicle through which to access the male networks of book publishing” (Easley et al. 2019, p. 395). Women writers for children adeptly navigated between the demands of the book publishers and the children's periodical press to establish and maintain successful literary careers.

The gradual repeal of taxes on advertising, newspapers and paper in the mid-Victorian period paved the way for the increase in children's periodicals that had begun earlier in the century (Drotner 1988). With the introduction of the [Education Act of 1870](#), children's literacy began to increase as children up to the age of twelve were required to attend school, and “publishers were quick to realize that this represented a vast, hitherto untapped potential market” (Dixon 1996, p. 135). As publishers sought content for new children's periodicals, they turned to

women writers. Barbara Onslow observes that “By far and away the most important sectors to which women had access were religious magazines and those for women and children” (2000, p. 130). Given the importance of providing children with suitable content, the focus on [religion](#) and morality in the children’s periodical press is unsurprising.

Girls’ Magazines

Girls’ magazines in particular were a valuable network for women writers, and they employed different strategies to establish and support their careers as writers. In some cases, a woman might publish the majority of her work in a single magazine, which became the primary vehicle through which most of her fiction was published in serial form. [Anne Mozley](#) edited the [High Anglican Magazine for the Young](#) in 1842, for which she solicited contributions from domestic novelist [Charlotte Yonge](#). She also encouraged Yonge to edit a new publication, the [Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the Church of England](#) (1851-1899), which Yonge took up in 1851 and continued until 1891. Yonge’s output mostly appeared in the *Monthly Packet*. In addition to fiction such as [The Daisy Chain](#); or, *Aspirations: A Family Chronicle*, which was published in book form in 1856, she also contributed a range of other content to the magazine including [literary criticism](#), advice on reading, historical sketches and religious topics (Liggins 2009, p. 694).

Similarly, Margaret Gatty was known for her five series of *Parables from Nature* (1855-1871), in which she used natural history to explore moral and religious lessons, and her domestic stories including *Aunt Judy’s Tales* (1859) and *Aunt Judy’s Letters* (1862) based on her family where her daughter Juliana – who became [Juliana Ewing](#) upon her marriage – features as the main story-teller (Drain). Gatty’s reputation as a religious writer for children induced publisher George Bell to invite her to edit *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* (1866-1888). Most of daughter Juliana’s fiction appeared first in *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*, including *Six to Sixteen*:

A Story for Girls and *Jan of the Windmill*, before it appeared in book form. Although some of Ewing's early fiction appeared in the *Monthly Packet* and in *London Society* (Onslow 2000, p. 224), she primarily contributed to *Aunt Judy's Magazine*. Ewing and Yonge made and maintained their reputations through a combination of serialized fiction in children's periodicals and subsequent book publication.

In other cases, women contributed to multiple magazines over the course of their careers. For example, one interested reader wrote to the *Monthly Packet* to inquire about the author of the 1875 novel *Woored and Married*, written by Rosa Nouchette Carey. The inquiry signals the active interest that magazine readers had in obtaining information about books they enjoyed, and the extent to which Yonge, as the magazine's editor, sought to provide suitable fiction for her readers. She responded that "We are happy to say that a story by [Carey] will begin...in July" (Yonge, p. 98). This story was "Heriot's Choice," which appeared in the *Monthly Packet* from July 1877 to October 1879 before being published by Bentley in a three-volume edition. Throughout the 1880s, Carey wrote a number of serialised stories for another girls' periodical, the *Girl's Own Paper* (1880-1944), published by the Religious Tract Society (RTS). After their appearance in the *Girl's Own Paper*, the RTS published them as part of the "Girl's Own Bookshelf" series. Carey also published shorter fiction in the *Argosy* under the editorship of Ellen Wood and then, under Wood's son Charles, she serialised *The Mistress of Brae Farm* in 1896 (Hartnell 1999), which Bentley published in the same year. Annie Swan, editor of *Woman at Home* (1893-1920), published the first chapters of Carey's *Other People's Lives* before it appeared in book form from Hodder and Stoughton in 1897 (Hartnell 1999). Carey is an excellent example of the many women who wrote for a variety of different periodicals, with their contributions to children's periodicals often appearing serially before being published in book form.

Women's contributions to boys' periodicals are also evident, but to a lesser extent. Most of the serialized fiction in the *Boy's Own Paper* (1879-1967), for instance, came from well-known male writers such as W.H.G Kingston, G.A. Henty, and R.M. Ballantyne (Banham 2009, p.70). One notable exception is *Mrs. Eiloart*, who published two lengthy serials in the *Boy's Own Paper*, including "Jack and John: Their Friends and Their Fortunes", which began in the first issue in 1879, and "The Ill-Used Boy; Or, Lawrence Hartley's Grievances" in 1881-1882. She also published "The Boy with an Idea" in another children's magazine, *The Round Robin: A Gathering of Fact, Fiction, Incident and Adventure* as well as authoring a number of novels between 1868 and 1880. Under the pseudonym of Asterisk, she also wrote for *Once a Week* and the feminist *English Woman's Journal*, becoming its editor in 1864 (www.curranindex.org).

Amateur Contributions

Some readers were able to launch their writing careers through amateur contributions to children's magazines. Known as "Mother Goose," Yonge actively encouraged her "goslings" to contribute by establishing an amateur manuscript magazine she edited entitled the *Barnacle*. The pseudonyms of some of the *Barnacle* contributors later appear in the pages of the *Monthly Packet*. Onslow explains that "The development of juvenile papers stimulated ambitious girls to write poetry, fiction and essays" (2000, p. 26). One such example is Evelyn Sharp, who first appeared as an amateur contributor in *Atalanta* when she was commended for her Christmas story submitted in 1887 and highly commended for an essay on "Dress" in June 1888. After middling results in the magazine's February 1890 Scholarship Competition, later the same year she won second prize worth half a guinea. In 1891, she is listed as

“Proxime Accesserunt”, or runner-up, for the Scholarship Competition. Her first, presumably paid, short story appears in *Atalanta* in September 1892, following by two longer serials, “The Amenities of Domestic Life” in 1895-96 and “In School” in 1896. The latter was published as *The Making of a School Girl* (1897). In the twentieth century, Sharp went on to become a militant suffragette and later a prolific journalist (Johns 2009).

Earlier in the century, [Jean Ingelow](#) similarly started her literary career as an amateur contributor of “fanciful didactic children’s stories” to *Youth Magazine* in the 1850s under the pseudonym of ‘Orris’ (Hickok). These stories were republished as *Tales of Orris* in 1860, and Ingelow became quite well known for her poetry (Black pp. 300-1), with a group of American fans writing to [Queen Victoria](#) to urge her to appoint Ingelow as poet laureate after [Tennyson](#)’s death.

In contrast, other editors were considerably less keen to encourage girls’ contributions. Charles Peters, editor of the *Girl’s Own Paper*, generally rejected amateur contributions as “not suitable” (“Answers” 815), although he did include an “Occasional Page of Amateur Contributions” when he found them suitably interesting and well written. Peters’ unwillingness to include amateur contributions is likely owing to their poor quality, but also because he needed to keep space in his magazine for well-established writers who would attract new readers. The magazines depended on well-known writers providing serialized fiction because these serials typically took months to finish and could be used to promote the magazine.

The Publishing Industry

Women writers for children’s periodicals were engaged with the publishing industry in numerous and multifaceted ways. Yet their presence in boys’ periodicals and elsewhere may

be underestimated because of the common practice of using pseudonyms, particularly prior to about 1880. In the last decades of the century it became more common for a woman to publish under her own name, owing at least in part to the fact that writing was become a more acceptable form of employment for women. Mozley, in addition to her editorial work on *Magazine for the Young*, contributed to *Bentley's Quarterly* in the 1850s and to *Blackwood's* in the 1860s and 1870s under pseudonyms. Although she specialized in women's rights and fashion, her pseudonymity allowed her to occasionally 'adopt a male persona or to discuss topics considered outside women's ken' (Wilkes 2009, p. 430).

Female *illustrators* also achieved success in the market for children's periodicals especially as the visual became an important feature of children's magazines. From mid-century onwards, Onslow notes, 'illustrations of all kinds offered women artists new opportunities' (158). *Kate Greenaway* began exhibiting at the Royal Academy in 1877 (Onslow 226), and her illustrations consistently appeared in periodicals from the mid-1880s including *Graphic*, *Cassell's Illustrated London News*, the *Girl's Own Paper*, and *Little Wide-Awake* (the latter two children's periodicals). Her children's books – such as *Mother Goose; or, The Old Nursery Rhymes* – 'brought her recognition, a lasting reputation and financial success' (Law 2009, p. 258). Similarly, *Mary Ellen Edwards* was 'one of the small group of women artists who was salaried or employed as a regular contributor to magazines' (Onslow 2000, p. 224). Her illustrations appeared in a wide variety of publications aimed at adults and at children.

Summary

The flourishing of the market for children's periodicals in the second half of the nineteenth century offered opportunities for women as writers, editors, and illustrators that would continue well into the twentieth century. Only with the advent of the First World War did the children's periodicals market contract as paper became increasingly expensive and as money

and labour was diverted to wartime activities. From about 1850, however, women were increasingly able to turn to children's magazines as a venue for their fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and illustrations that could be mobilized in concert with the book publishing market to develop and maintain their readerships. Although often marginalized as writers for children, some women were able to establish successful careers as the burgeoning market for children's magazines meant that they had more potential venues for publication.

Cross-References: Anglo-Catholicism; *Daisy Chain, The*; Editors; Ewing, Juliana; Illustrators; Ingelow, Jean; Literary Criticism; Mozley, Anne; Novels; Poetry; Queen Victoria; Religion; Short Stories; Yonge, Charlotte

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