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## Gendering Sport and Health in Victorian Periodicals for Boys and Girls

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*Sport and Literature Association Annual Conference. University of Limoges, 19-22 June 2019*

Socialization into cultural norms regarding gender-appropriate physical activities in the late-Victorian period, occurred through a number of mechanisms including institutions such as the Religious Tract Society, which used the children's periodical as a vehicle for the propagation of their values to a target audience that was considered both vulnerable and volatile. The idea of adolescence as a separate stage that ran from puberty into one's early twenties became a subject of concern with the adolescent female defined as a 'woman-child...a sort of hybrid creature.' She was at once a 'little schoolgirl—a mere infant' and a woman in 'prudence and aptitude.'<sup>1</sup> Victorians also debated the 'doubtful state between boy and man,' viewing adolescents as an uncomfortable amalgam of young and old.<sup>2</sup> Interest in these teenage years, coupled with increasing literacy,<sup>3</sup> stimulated an increase in the market for periodicals directed at adolescents. Some, such as *Chatterbox*, were published for both boys and girls, although social prejudices regarding sport were always evident, while others, such as *Every Girls Annual*, were gender specific.

Victorian boys' magazines shaped ideas about gender, race, class and empire and they played a major role in reinforcing ideas of acceptable masculinity, portraying manliness as a moral attribute incorporating virtues of industry, self-reliance, sobriety, chastity and family affection.<sup>4</sup> Masculinity was defined against notions of the 'otherness' of gender, race and class. In serialised stories,<sup>5</sup> 'the 'real, true boy' was juxtaposed with the boy 'who prefers love stories...immature and weedy youths are not true boys at all; rather they are of the kind of youth that can be seen, with pale and pimply face, sucking cigarette or cane-top, loafing about and ogling the girls, instead of joining in the sports of their more manly fellows'.<sup>6</sup> Women represented a significant 'other' group and when they appeared in stories their roles were circumscribed with their rescue from kidnap or swift flowing river being used to help to define the hero as bold, honourable and considerate of those weaker than himself.<sup>7</sup> Periodicals for adolescent girls cemented this gender ideology through the presentation of a socially

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<sup>1</sup> Carey, Rosa Nouchette. 'Aunt Diana.' *Girl's Own Paper* 6, no. 274 (March 28, 1885): 401–3,402; 'Answers to Correspondents.' no. 282 (May 23, 1885): 543–44, 543; 'Gossip,' August 27, 1864, 256.

<sup>2</sup> 'Struggles of Adolescence,' 121.

<sup>3</sup> Van Vuuren, Melissa S. *Literary Research and the Victorian and Edwardian Ages, 1830–1910: Strategies and Sources*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2011.145.

<sup>4</sup> Boyd, Kelly (2003). *Manliness and the boys' story paper in Britain: a cultural history, 1855-1940*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; John Tosh. *Masculinity, 1560-1918: Men Defining Men and Gentlemen*. Part 3: 1800-1918, Sources from the Bodleian Library, Oxford [http://www.ampltd.co.uk/collections\\_az/masc-3/description.aspx](http://www.ampltd.co.uk/collections_az/masc-3/description.aspx) Accessed 26.3.2019

<sup>5</sup> Pauline Farley. *Young Masculinity and 'The Other': Representations of Ideal Manliness in Twentieth-Century English Boys' Annuals*. 1 Sep 2008 DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3149/thy.0202.154>, 154–174.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, H. (1911) 'Four famous authors for boys', *Empire Annual for Boys*: 281–94, 281.

<sup>7</sup> *Helen Kanitkar, 'Real true boys': moulding the cadets of imperialism Dislocating masculinity*. Comparative ethnographies Edited by Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne London and New York; Routledge, 1994, Chapter 11, 183-195, 183.

appropriate framework.<sup>8</sup> Girls' stories integrated 'moral messages,' and served as a 'medium for the reinforcement of social expectations',<sup>9</sup> about femininity and the appropriateness of female sport.<sup>10</sup>

The recognition that the relations of the sexes are socially rather than naturally constituted, embedded in and shaped by the social order has stimulated historical enquiry into the gendered body and the social practices of sport and exercise.<sup>11</sup> No longer construed as natural, fixed, ahistorical or given, the body is now viewed as a socio-cultural construct. As Foucault suggests, power relations manifest themselves most concretely at the level of the body and it is upon putative or fictionalized biological differences between male and female bodies that the edifice of gender inequality is built and legitimated.<sup>12</sup> From the 1790s, women became characterized by physiological properties such as passivity, sensitivity and softness, leading to 'a muscular feebleness', according to Cabanis, that inspired in women 'an instinctive disgust of strenuous exercise'.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, the female body became increasingly pathologized in medical discourse<sup>14</sup> as the medical profession served embedded patriarchal interests by defining women's bodies as wounded and diseased.<sup>15</sup> The consensus that the female mind and body formed a 'mechanistic, closed model of a finite store of nervous energy'<sup>16</sup> meant that good health for adolescent girls necessitated the subordination of all intellectual and physical pursuits to the overwhelming demands of the developing female reproductive system.<sup>17</sup> The result was a redefinition of middle-class women's health as a permanent state of illness,<sup>18</sup> an ideology of female bodily incapacity that left a legacy from which sporting women have had difficulty escaping.<sup>19</sup> It was acknowledged by 1900 that women of the better classes could swim, dance and ride, with relative ease. However, while doctors considered that men's bodies had been constructed to make running natural, swift and efficient, women's bodies were constructed for reproduction and nurturing and their attempts to run displayed 'a kind of precipitate waddle with neither grace, nor fitness, nor dignity'.<sup>20</sup> These attitudes to gender-appropriate exercise and sport were reflected in girls'

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, J. N. Burstyn (1980) *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* (London: Barnes & Noble Books); C. Dyhouse (1981) *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul); and J. Giles (1995) *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900–1950* (London: Macmillan).

<sup>9</sup> Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 158; Cadogan and Craig, *You're a Brick, Angela!*, 9, 74.

<sup>10</sup> Kathryn Walchester *Alpine Guides, Gender, and British Climbers, 1859–85: The Boundaries of Female Propriety in the British Periodical Press* *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Volume 51, Number 3, Fall 2018, pp. 521-538, 522.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia Vertinsky (1994): *The social construction of the gendered body: exercise and the exercise of power*, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 11:2, 147-171, 147-148.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1. An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p.152.

<sup>13</sup> Cabanis, *Oeuvres Philosophiques*, 1956, p.278.

<sup>14</sup> Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own*, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Cynthia Ellen Patton 'Not a limitless possession': Health Advice and Readers' Agency in 'The *Girl's Own Paper*', 1880-1890. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2012), pp. 111-133, 125.

<sup>16</sup> Vertinsky, Patricia A. 1994. *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press. 1st published Manchester University Press, 1989, 58. See also Cynthia Eagle Russett's *Sexual Science*.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Vertinsky, 'Women and Sport in the Nineteenth Century', in M. Costa and S.R. Guthrie (eds.), *Women and Sport* (Illinois: Human Kinetics Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Cynthia Ellen Patton 'Not a limitless possession': Health Advice and Readers' Agency in 'The *Girl's Own Paper*', 1880-1890. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2012), pp. 111-133, 113.

<sup>19</sup> Patricia Vertinsky (1994): *The social construction of the gendered body: exercise and the exercise of power*, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 11:2, 147-171, 149.

<sup>20</sup> Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p.14.

periodicals, which played a key role in the construction of the female body, and in mediating for readers diverse views on the benefits or dangers of female physical culture.<sup>21</sup>

There was universal agreement on the benefits of sport for the male population, especially boys, and the hero of public-school stories in boys' annuals was usually the captain or star player of the First Eleven or Fifteen.<sup>22</sup> There was no similar consensus about the role of sport in girls' lives, although there was concern about girls' inactivity. Dr Lucy Hall observed that 'Muscle and nerve and intellect do not develop and grow strong upon sensational literature and fancy work and this is why girls of this age often grow morbid, sentimental and self-conscious'. She recommended walking, running, horse-back riding, tricycle riding, lawn tennis, swimming, rowing, skating, bowling, handball and general gymnastics as the best exercises balanced physical development.<sup>23</sup> These positive perspectives were never uncontested. In 1899, physician and 'eugenic feminist', Arabella Kenealy related the story of Clara who, through exercise and a vigorous lifestyle, had toned muscles, was slimmer, stronger and more agile, but had lost many of her subtle qualities in the process, including her elusive beauty. This had been replaced by a booming voice, highly toned body, a briskness, mere muscular achievement and a 'bicycle face (the face of muscular tension)'. Clara had traded her femininity for a strident muscularity, thereby squandering 'the birthright of the babies' and 'debasing her womanhood'.<sup>24</sup>

There is a corpus of work on periodicals but there has been little scholarship focusing specifically on the sporting content of late-Victorian girls' magazines.<sup>25</sup> What is also missing from the historiography is research that considers boys and girls publications alongside each other as part of a gendered sporting discourse.<sup>26</sup> This project is intended to address these omissions, although I have been naïve in assuming that this would be a fairly easy process since, as one periodical specialist has noted, 'leafing through' months of editions to study their contents is tremendously time-consuming.<sup>27</sup> This presentation, then, represents only my initial thoughts by outlining the history of two closely aligned publications and then utilising a limited discourse analysis of their January and February 1881 issues to consider three components, contents, illustrations and answers to correspondents.

The BOP was published from January 1879 by the Religious Tract Society, an evangelical Protestant missionary organisation founded to encourage children to read and to instil Christian morals.<sup>28</sup> Costing

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<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Hargreaves (1994) *Sporting Females: critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports* (London: Routledge), p. 150.

<sup>22</sup> Wade, George A. (1915) 'Boy-heroes in the Great War', *Empire Annual for Boys*, 80–6; (1917) 'Great players fallen in the war', *Empire Annual for Boys*, 21–6.

<sup>23</sup> Lucy M. Hall, MD, in *Popular Science Monthly* cited in Moral and Physical Health Hints. *Good Housekeeping*; New York Vol. 1, Iss. 1, (May 2, 1885): 19.

<sup>24</sup> Kenealy, Arabella. April 1899. 'Woman as Athlete.' *The Nineteenth Century* 635–645. 635, 641, 643, 645.

<sup>25</sup> Alison Enever (2015): 'How the Modern Girl Attains Strength and Grace': the *Girl's Own Paper*, sport and the discipline of the female body, 1914–1956, *Women's History Review*, DOI: [10.1080/09612025.2015.1028208](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1028208); See Joyce Kay (2010) A Window of Opportunity? Preliminary Thoughts on Women's Sport in Post-War Britain, *Sport in History*, 30(2), pp. 196–217 (p. 203).

<sup>26</sup> Alison Louise Enever (2014) 'More than just a magazine': The Boy's Own Paper and *Girl's Own Paper*, 1914–1967, University of Southampton, Faculty of Humanities, School of History, PhD Thesis, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Janet G. Casey (2017): *Histories for the Many: The Victorian Family Magazine and Popular Representations of the Past: The Leisure Hour, 1852–1870*, Nineteenth-Century Contexts, DOI: [10.1080/08905495.2018.1395843](https://doi.org/10.1080/08905495.2018.1395843).

<sup>28</sup> Alison Louise Enever (2014) 'More than just a magazine': The Boy's Own Paper and *Girl's Own Paper*, 1914–1967, University of Southampton, Faculty of Humanities, School of History, PhD Thesis, 8–9.

one penny, the editors tried to create a magazine which parents and guardians would approve, schoolmasters and ministers would recommend, and boys would buy, read, and enjoy. Circulation in the late nineteenth century reached around 200,000 copies per week, making it 'among the most successful juvenile serials of the late-Victorian period'.<sup>29</sup> Christian and Anglo-Saxon notions of masculinity, morality, and racial superiority were delivered with a 'healthy moral tone' through articles on sport, history, warfare, and adventure. Prominent contributors included Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, and Robert Baden-Powell, who urged readers 'to live clean, manly and Christian lives'. Sport was always high on the agenda, with articles by leading cricketers and athletes, and Talbot Baines Reed serialised his best-selling stories, in which virtue always triumphed. The British Empire was promoted as the highest achievement of civilization, and the paper reflected fully the racist, class and gender attitudes taken for granted at the time. The paper initially attempted to appeal to all classes, finding its way 'into the slums as well as into the best homes',<sup>30</sup> but in the 1890s it began to concentrate on boys from wealthier backgrounds as photographs of rugby teams, heroes of the University Boat Race, and headmasters of the great schools increasingly dominated the paper.<sup>31</sup>

Another penny weekly, the GOP was also produced by the Religious Tract Society from January 1880, but it featured little overt religious instruction, focusing instead on entertaining texts that reinforced approved social values.<sup>32</sup> It rapidly gained a circulation of 250,000, the editor claiming to be receiving 'over 1,000 [letters] weekly' during its first year, and by 1884 it had attained 'a circulation equalled by no other English illustrated magazine'.<sup>33</sup> The GOP aimed to provide an educationally superior alternative for girls, helping 'to train them in moral and domestic virtues, preparing them for the responsibilities of womanhood and for a heavenly home',<sup>34</sup> and the paper was praised for promoting

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<sup>29</sup> Richard Noakes, 'The Boy's Own Paper and Late-Victorian Juvenile Magazines', in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: reading the magazine of nature*, ed. by G. N. Cantor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 151-71 (p. 153); Edward Salmon, *Juvenile Literature As It Is* (London: H. J. Drane, 1888), pp. 15-16.

<sup>30</sup> Lesley Delaney Little Women, *Good Wives: Victorian Constructions of Womanhood in the Girl's Own Annual 1927* *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol. 34, No. 1, March 2003, 33-34

<sup>31</sup> Cox, Jack (1982). *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!: the story of The Boy's Own Paper*. Guildford: Lutterworth Press; Sabbagh, Karl (2007). *Your Case is Hopeless: bracing advice from The Boy's Own Paper*. London: John Murray; John Crawford *The Boys' Own Paper* <http://www.julesverne.ca/jvboysown.html> Accessed 26.03.2019; Jim Mackenzie. *The Boy's Own Paper 2001* <http://www.collectingbooksandmagazines.com/bop.html> Accessed 26.3.2019

<sup>32</sup> Drotner, Kirsten. *English Children and Their Magazines, 1751-1945*. New Haven and Yale UP, 1988, 116; Avery, Gillian, *Childhood's Pattern: A study of the heroes and heroines of children's fiction, 1770-1950*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975, 206; Mitchell, *New Girl*, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret Beetham. *A Magazine of her own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996; Salmon, Edward. 'What Girls Read.' *Nineteenth Century*. 20 116 (1886): 520-523, 520-521; Kristine Moruzi. *Children's Periodicals in Andrew King, Alexis Easley, John Morton* *The Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals and Newspapers* Oxford: Routledge, 2016, 298; See also, Moruzi, Kristine and Michelle Smith. "Learning what Real Work...Means': Ambivalent Attitudes Towards Employment in the *Girl's Own Paper*.' *Victorian Periodicals Review*. 43:4. Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ Press, 2010. pp.429-445; 'Periodicals.' *Annual Report of The Religious Tract Society*. 83 (1882), p.302; Moruzi, Kristine. *Constructing Girlhood through the Periodical Press, 1850-1915*, 2012; Skelding, Hilary. 'Every Girl's Best Friend?: The *Girl's Own Paper* and Its Readers.' In *Feminist Readings of Victorian Popular Texts: Divergent Femininities*, edited by Emma Liggins and Daniel Duffy, 35-52. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.37; Smith, Michelle. *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture: Imperial Girls, 1880-1915*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; 'Answers to Correspondents.' *Girl's Own Paper* 2, no. 53 (January 1, 1881): 222-23, 223.

<sup>34</sup> The GOP Prospectus, 1880, cited in Forrester, 1980, p. 1; Peters, Charles. 'Your Valentine from the Editor.' *Girl's Own Paper* 2 59 (February 12, 1881): 320.

traditional Victorian feminine values.<sup>35</sup> Although it marketed itself as ‘crossing class boundaries’,<sup>36</sup> its content demonstrates that it was ‘imbued with the educational ideals of the professional middle classes’,<sup>37</sup> and it attracted readers ‘ranged from pre-teen girls to women in their fifties’.<sup>38</sup> While the BOP, with its stable readership of middle-class boys, consistently disseminated a discourse of juvenile masculinity based around ideals of honour and sporting endeavour, the GOP frequently adapted its discourses to reflect changes in age of its readership and in social perceptions of girlhood and feminine identity.<sup>39</sup>

Whilst sport and sporting language saturated BOP, for most of GOP’s history sport was marginalised.<sup>40</sup> It carried occasional articles on cycling and tennis,<sup>41</sup> but it also warned that passing ‘in recreation beyond a certain bound of natural womanly duties, is to pass into a sphere with which such duties are utterly incompatible’.<sup>42</sup> In 1885, the GOP warned even the ‘strongest and most healthy girl’ that ‘health and bounding life’ was not limitless and that at any moment a girl could be confined to a sick bed.<sup>43</sup> The GOP engaged with competing and changing discourses around female sport and the female body,<sup>44</sup> and in 1908 the paper introduced content catering for older married women, whose engagement with physical activity was expected to be different to that of younger, single girls.<sup>45</sup> While girls were to be encouraged to participate in physical culture and improve their bodies, there needed to be a delineation, marked by marriage, at which point women were encouraged towards activities that were deemed seemlier and in keeping with their domestic commitments.<sup>46</sup>

From the start, the GOP addressed issues of health and beauty, arguing that girls who were to be successful in marriage and romance had to be healthy and fit.<sup>47</sup> The medical adviser, Dr W. Gordon Stables (‘Medicus’), suggested fresh air, exercise, moderate diet, and a cold bath taken every

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<sup>35</sup> Salmon, Edward. ‘What Girls Read.’ *Nineteenth Century* 515-29.

<sup>36</sup> Rodgers, ‘Researching the Relationship Between Two Periodicals’, 93.

<sup>37</sup> Penny Tinkler (1995) *Constructing Girlhood: popular magazines for girls growing up in England 1920–1950* (London: Taylor & Francis), pp. 47–48.

<sup>38</sup> Terri Doughty (Ed.) (2004) *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper, 1880–1907* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press), p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Alison Enever (2014) ‘More than just a magazine’: the Boy’s Own Paper and *Girl’s Own Paper*, 1914–1967 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southampton), pp. 272–273.

<sup>40</sup> Alison Louise Enever (2014) ‘More than just a magazine’: The Boy’s Own Paper and *Girl’s Own Paper*, 1914–1967, University of Southampton, Faculty of Humanities, School of History, PhD Thesis, 240-242.

<sup>41</sup> Schofield, A. T. December 21, 1895. ‘The Cycling Craze.’ *Girl’s Own Paper* XVII (834): 185–186.185.

<sup>42</sup> Richardson, Sir Benjamin Ward. ‘On Recreation for Girls.’ *Girl’s Own Paper* XV, no. 753 (June 2, 1894): 545–547, 546.

<sup>43</sup> Medicus. ‘Common-Sense Advice for Working Girls.’ *Girl’s Own Paper* 6, no. 267 (February 7, 1885): 295-96, 295.

<sup>44</sup> Alison Enever (2015): ‘How the Modern Girl Attains Strength and Grace’: the *Girl’s Own Paper*, sport and the discipline of the female body, 1914–1956, *Women’s History Review*, DOI: [10.1080/09612025.2015.1028208](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1028208); See Joyce Kay (2010) A Window of Opportunity? Preliminary Thoughts on Women’s Sport in Post-War Britain, *Sport in History*, 30(2), pp. 196–217 (p. 203).

<sup>45</sup> Alison Enever (2015): ‘How the Modern Girl Attains Strength and Grace’: the *Girl’s Own Paper*, sport and the discipline of the female body, 1914–1956, *Women’s History Review*, DOI: [10.1080/09612025.2015.1028208](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1028208), 3-5.

<sup>46</sup> Enever, ‘More than just a magazine’, p. 174.

<sup>47</sup> Kristine Moruzi (2012) *Constructing Girlhood through the Periodical Press, 1850–1915* (Aldershot: Ashgate), pp. 88–90.

morning<sup>48</sup> and exhorted readers to prize good health over 'romantic' or 'ladylike' languor.<sup>49</sup> Describing how girls could improve their strength, he provided an A to Z of hints, including 'Do not stop to stare in shop windows, but walk as if you were meant doing something [sic]',<sup>50</sup> 'Keep a smiling face...fretting weakens the body' and 'Try to control your temper, never get angry.'<sup>51</sup> During the 1880s and 1890s, he recognized the scope for incremental improvement in physique and well-being in all young women: 'All kinds of exercise do good; walking for the weakly, cycling and rowing for the stronger, dumb-bells and Indian clubs before breakfast or in the afternoon for all.'<sup>52</sup> Initially, he encouraged weaker girls to use a tricycle, and lauded the cycle's overall health benefits,<sup>53</sup> but by 1901, he was warning readers not to 'have too much of that emancipation business'. 'Who wants a woman with biceps, anyhow?'<sup>54</sup> While his earlier publications had encouraged girls to play sport, now he denounced the pursuit of 'man-games and tomboy exercises' that would result in the loss of elegance. Golf led to an 'ungainly and hoydenish golf stride', while hockey was the most 'ungraceful of all man-games' and developed a figure with no 'more grace in it than of an oyster-wife'. In reversing his support for cycling, he described how biking rolls the spine, interferes with the proper function of the hip-bones and gives the bicycle face, with its 'blintering' eyes, look of deep concern, square jaws and flabby mock-turtle cheeks', concluding that 'biking is after all but a man-game'.<sup>55</sup>

### **Contents Lists**

The contents list of these periodicals for the first two months of 1881 show similarities in structure but significant differences in content, as can be seen in these examples, which juxtaposes action with passivity.

### **Illustrations**

Visual representations of male and female bodies communicate deeper messages about hierarchy and status. For example, eighteenth-century male wax models were usually upright and muscular while female models were frequently recumbent on cushions and decorated with 'flowing hair, pearl necklaces, removable parts and small foetuses'.<sup>56</sup>

A list of characteristics that sketches out a literal and physical map of the disproportionate relations of the sexes.

Man is the most firm-woman the most flexible.

Man is the straightest-woman the most bending.

Man stands steadfast-woman gently trips.

<sup>48</sup> Cynthia Ellen Patton 'Not a limitless possession': Health Advice and Readers' Agency in 'The *Girl's Own Paper*', 1880-1890. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2012), pp. 111-133, 111-112.

<sup>49</sup> Medicus, 'Poverty of Blood: Its Cause and Cure'. *Girl's Own Paper* 9 no. 429 (March 17, 1888): 388-390, 388.

<sup>50</sup> 'Medicus'. 'Can Girls Increase Their Strength?' *Girl's Own Paper* XV, no. 752 (May 26, 1894): 534.

<sup>51</sup> 'Medicus'. 'Health, Strength and Beauty.' *Girl's Own Paper* XI, no. 557 (August 30, 1890): 758-759.758; 'Medicus'. 'Health All the Year Round.' *Girl's Own Paper* VI, no. 259 (December 13, 1884): 166-167.166.

<sup>52</sup> 'Medicus'. 'A Plain Talk with Sensible Girls.' *Girl's Own Paper* XVII, no. 860 (June 20, 1896): 597.

<sup>53</sup> Stables, Gordon. *Health upon Wheels; or, Cycling a Means of Maintaining the Health*. London: Iliffe, 1887, 43.

<sup>54</sup> Stables, Gordon ('Medicus'). 'Health.' *Girl's Own Paper* XXII, no. 1128 (August 10, 1901): 716-717.

<sup>55</sup> Stables, Gordon ('Medicus'). 'Man-Games That Murder Beauty.' *Girl's Own Paper* XXVII, no. 1376 (May 12, 1906): 502-503.

<sup>56</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine Between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.45. See also, Marcia Pointon, 'Women, Physiology and the Male Artist', *Feminist Review*, 22 (Feb. 1986), 5-22.



Man surveys and observes-woman glances and feels.  
 Man is serious-woman is gay.  
 Man is the tallest and broadest-woman less and taper.  
 Man is rough and hard-woman smooth and soft.  
 Man is brown-woman is fair.  
 Man is wrinkly-woman less so.  
 The hair of man is more strong and short-of woman more long and pliant.  
 The eyebrows of man are compressed-of woman less frowning.  
 Man has most convex lines-woman most concave.  
 Man has most straight lines-woman most curved.  
 The countenance of man, taken in profile, is more seldom perpendicular than that of the woman.  
 Man is most angular-woman most round.<sup>57</sup>

Both the BOP and the GOP developed a visual vocabulary by using illustrations to reproduce gender norms.<sup>58</sup> Visual images reinforced slimness as a beauty ideal and virtually every drawing featured women with extremely slim waists. Nurses, maids, actresses, society women, mothers, daughters, and almost every other type of woman were similarly portrayed, and the only women normally appearing beyond this were matronly cooks or servants.<sup>59</sup> Passivity and action were also reproduced through illustrations.

### **Answers to Correspondents**

The persona created for the GOP invited readers to view the magazine as a somewhat one-sided, late Victorian version of a chat room.<sup>60</sup> The presence of *Medicus* on the staff encouraged readers to seek out and to trust the magazine's medical advice through letters to the editor,<sup>61</sup> the majority of which came from teenage girls concerned with subjects ranging from skin conditions to familial dramas.<sup>62</sup> Readers' letters themselves are not printed and it may seem tempting to dismiss the editorial answers as fabrications invented for didactic or commercial purposes, but the Religious Tract Society was too concerned with the integrity of society publications to allow deception in its periodicals. In addition, the constant repetition of the same answers to the same questions, as opposed to invented questions that would have been more varied and entertaining, suggests correspondence was genuine.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Lavater, Johann Caspar (1855), *Essays on Physiognomy*, 9th edn, London: William Tegg, 403 cited in Lucy Hartley (2001) *A Science of Beauty? Femininity, Fitness and the Nineteenth-century Physiognomic*, *Women: A Cultural Review*, 12:1, 19-34, 23.

<sup>58</sup> Book Review. Janet G. Casey (2017): *Histories for the Many: The Victorian Family Magazine and Popular Representations of the Past: The Leisure Hour, 1852–1870*, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, DOI: 10.1080/08905495.2018.1395843; *Histories for the Many: The Victorian Family Magazine and Popular Representations of the Past: The Leisure Hour, 1852–1870*, by Doris Lechner, Bielefeld, Germany, Transcript-Verlag, 2017, 340 pp., \$45.00 (paperback), ISBN: 978-3-8376-3711-3.

<sup>59</sup> Alisa Webb (2006) *Constructing the Gendered Body: Girls, Health, Beauty, Advice, and the Girls' Best Friend, 1898–99*, *Women's History Review*, 15:2, 253-275, 264-265.

<sup>60</sup> Cynthia Ellen Patton 'Not a limitless possession': Health Advice and Readers' Agency in 'The *Girl's Own Paper*', 1880-1890. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2012), pp. 111-133, 125.

<sup>61</sup> Cynthia Ellen Patton 'Not a limitless possession': Health Advice and Readers' Agency in 'The *Girl's Own Paper*', 1880-1890. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2012), pp. 111-133, 120.

<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth Fox *Victorian Girls' Periodicals and the Challenge of Adolescent Autonomy* *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Volume 51, Number 1, Spring 2018, pp. 48-69, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Cynthia Ellen Patton 'Not a limitless possession': Health Advice and Readers' Agency in 'The *Girl's Own Paper*', 1880-1890. *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2012), pp. 111-133, 115-118



## Conclusion

There is much to do here. Even during the 1930s, there were significant differences in the way the BOP and GOP papers approached sport, although the GOP was beginning to include factual articles on sport and fictional heroines who played sport.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, the GOP consistently linked the healthy well-exercised female body with aesthetics, stressing ways to 'become even more healthy and graceful than you are already', and suggesting that 'exercises endow you with strength and grace. They produce a good figure and posture'.<sup>65</sup> Female exercise was therefore projected as related to the improvement of physical attractiveness, whilst for boys sport was positioned as a preparation for manliness, a means of achieving the 'supple muscles, a true eye and a quick brain' necessary in the 'swiftmoving life of today'.<sup>66</sup> The BOP and similar periodicals are no longer read by British schoolboys and, superficially at least, styles of masculinity have changed. However, versions of the dominant masculinities these stories reveal are firmly rooted and reworked on the rugby field, in the club and round the boardroom table. Misogyny, chauvinism, class and racist prejudices continue to define a hegemonic masculinity of 'real true men' subscribed to by many of the British establishment.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Spratt (ed.), *Girl's Own Annual*, Volume 56, pp. 245-49.

<sup>65</sup> Spratt (ed.), *Girl's Own Paper*, July 1939, p. viii; Spratt (ed.), *Girl's Own Annual*, Volume 56, pp.344-45.

<sup>66</sup> Northcroft, *Boy's Own Annual*, Volume 57, pp. 458-60.

<sup>67</sup> Helen Kanitkar, 'Real true boys': moulding the cadets of imperialism Dislocating masculinity. *Comparative ethnographies* Edited by Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne London and New York; Routledge, 1994, Chapter 11, 183-195, 186, 187, 194.