
Research paper

Column Inches: Women Taking Space in Homemaking Magazines in Interwar Britain

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ABSTRACT

During the interwar period in Britain women's magazines provided a place to rethink design practice and how it could further social equality. Although long overlooked as source material in the history of the built environment, women's magazines can reveal intimate insights into the social and political responsibilities held by women in architecture and design. Recent scholarship has argued that magazines offer a more complex view of women's experiences of modernity that previously presumed, and by leaning into such middlebrow, mass cultural objects, this paper argues that we can uncover valuable insights into women's views and expectations of culture, politics, family, home, work, money, and citizenship. In the female-dominated sites of magazine production, space was made on the page for the presentation and discussion of modern design. Working within the confines of a patriarchal society, women writers and editors challenged the canon and published articles on designs for social equality, such as how the single working woman could live independently. Whilst women's writing on architecture rarely appeared in architectural journals of the interwar period, their views were transmitted to wide audiences in magazines targeted at female readerships.

Keywords: feminism, magazines, periodical studies, architectural histories, interwar Britain

During the interwar period in Britain, women's magazines provided space to rethink architecture and consider how it could further social equality. As the content of, but also as contributors to and consumers of, magazines, collaborative networks of women underwrote complex debates about modern ways of living, encouraging social and political engagement and responsibility. Using the British edition of *Good Housekeeping* magazine as historical case study, this article considers how, by using the concepts of space and architecture as a way of focusing the tools of periodical studies, publications promoted possibilities to women against the backdrop of changing employment and family norms and universal suffrage.

The field of periodical studies has recognized the immense potential of magazines as unexplored archives for women's cultural history.¹ The association of magazines with the middlebrow and mass culture, and the gendering of this culture as feminine, coincided with the large-scale democratisation of publishing during the early twentieth-century, creating a period of change and power in female readerships. This paper, through its consideration of the collaborative practice of architectural writing and reading as opposed to a focus on the

¹ See, for example, 'The Edinburgh History of Women's Periodical Culture in Britain' series

singular (male) architect-hero, promotes a leaning-in to the middlebrow to reveal details about women's experiences with modernity in relation to issues of domestic space.

Within the physical spaces of the page, analysis of formats and codes – linguistic and bibliographic, internal and external, editorial and commercial – and a recognition of the different methods of reading text and image, magazines provide researchers with dynamic cultural objects for the study of architecture. This analysis makes clear that through using print media as source, the focus of architectural history can be shifted to a more multifaceted feminist reading. It is due to the complexity and diversity that periodicals offer in terms of form, space, and network that a unique means through which voices of otherness in narratives of architectural history can be considered.

The magazine in question – *Good Housekeeping* – was launched in Britain by William Randolph Hearst's National Magazine Company in 1922.² Its opening editorial promised readers articles about 'what concerns them and interests them most', answering 'the burning questions of the day...by women who are fearless, frank, and outspoken' (Author unknown, 1922, p. 11). It provided extensive advice, expert opinions, recipes, and a consumer testing service through the Good Housekeeping Institute, as well as problem pages, letters from readers, fiction serials, and articles on current affairs. Through its pages, the sites in which it was produced, and the readership which consumed it, *Good Housekeeping* provided space within mass culture for women to think about their understanding and place in a fast-changing world.

Following the First World War, publishing provided women with new career options and the opportunity for institutionalised cultural capital, particularly in the fields of journalism and advertising. Through word and image, women could take up space in places where their presence was formerly not considered or allowed: in discussions surrounding modern politics, social issues, and culture. Its sites of production, as well as its readership, formed a community of women that investigated new innovations in the built environment, and its articles detailed how such advances could further social equality, rethinking domestic design from a feminist perspective. By looking beyond the built at architecture on the page, we can realise the ways in which women influenced and shaped modern design and highlight the importance of the intricate networks of collaborative practice which are key to feminist revisions of history.

METHODOLOGY

In order to create a more inclusive architectural history and to acknowledge previously overlooked contributions it is necessary to expand parameters. The methodology of this paper does this in two ways: firstly, by expanding the idea of who designs, and, secondly, by looking beyond the built at the other forms architecture takes.

In questioning more established theories of modernism, which place so much focus on the figure of the singular, genius (and often male) architect, as problematic and reductionist, parameters can be opened up to consider the role of other figures – in the case of this article, journalists, editors, and social commentators – and the ways in which they collaboratively shaped the built environment. Readings which favour artistic individualism can result in an overlooking of architecture as a collaborative profession and product of complex relationships. As Cheryl Buckley (1986) notes, in attaching meaning to a single name, the historical process is simplified, both understating production and consumption in favour of promoting the personality (p. 10).

Narratives of architecture are inherently shaped by the written word, and by looking at architecture in the context of periodicals studies, we can explore how women's writing shaped modernity in interwar Britain.³ Language plays an important role: the term 'genius', for example, has particular pertinence in architectural history, which has been written as 'a succession of geniuses' described as male (Battersby, 1991, p. 16). Similarly, the term 'hero' has been recognised as promoting a tendency to ignore collaboration and constrain women as passive others to active male designers (Worden & Seddon, 1995, p. 177). These labels of accomplishment are inadequate at measuring success and histories written within such parameters identify architects as the 'individual from whom the entire conception of the building came', to the detriment of the recognition of contributions of others, including women (Willis, 1998, p. 59). Lynne Walker (1989) describes the resulting refusal to acknowledge women in architecture as 'a case study in patriarchal control and economic hegemony': architecture physically shapes and defines society, and therefore works to maintain the status quo, so women's participation in architecture is both politically and economically charged (p. 102). By moving away from the individual figure of the architect and looking at, in this instance, networks of women working in the magazine industry, we can see how collaborative practice and social commentary shaped spaces of the interwar period. Patrick Collier

² *Good Housekeeping* began in the United States in 1885, before being acquired by the Hearst Corporation in 1911

³ On the relationship between architecture and writing, specifically in terms of gender see, for example: Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*; and, more recently, Darling, *The Avant-Garde in the Drawing Room*, and the WoWA project: <https://wowa.arch.ethz.ch/>

(2015) specifically celebrated the ability of periodical studies to do exactly this: to direct attention to a greater number of voices and to examine culture beyond the canon (p. 99). These sources help us question how we come to know what we know by providing intimate reflections on how women constructed their gender identities and experienced modernity.

Collier (2015) went on to note that entire runs of periodicals can present an 'unmanageable plenitude of texts', the reading of which is a very different experience from the reading of a book (p. 107). Collier (2015) suggested using the methods of 'close', 'distant', and 'surface' reading: focusing on the how the multiple internal forms interact to give meaning, how larger patterns form throughout texts, and how rhetorical patterns change over time, respectively (p. 108). When looking at *Good Housekeeping* in Britain from its launch in 1922 to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the periodical studies methodology of longitudinal reading is highly relevant, unveiling a complexity of trends, themes, and meanings. Over the interwar period the magazine revealed patterns and changes in British society. The 1922 Law of Property Act, which enabled husband and wife to inherit each other's property, was referenced in the article 'The New Law of Property' (Normanton, 1924). Further legislative developments, such as that passed in 1926 which allowed women to hold and dispose of property on the same terms as men, are reflected in monthly architectural features highlighting specific homes and in advice literature on the legal and economic side of homeownership.⁴

SPACE: THE ARCHITECTURE OF MAGAZINES

Periodical studies methodologies form the basis for discussing the spaces created inside of the magazine to discuss the environment built outside of the magazine. Magazine design can be considered a form of architecture in and of itself, and through analysis relationships can be formed between the idea of page-space and feminist ideas of space. Periodicals are 'hybrid, composite' sources which command multiple and fragmented spaces simultaneously (Hackney & Bigham, 2022, p. 103). In order to make sense of the different types of content contained within *Good Housekeeping* – fiction, fashion, architecture, design, opinion, advertisements – this section will take what Penny Tinkler (2016) has described as a 'holistic approach', and consider how design practices involving codes, form and layout, and the relationship between image and text work together to organise the whole and create meaning (p. 31).

When using periodicals as source materials, it is important to recognise the unique formats and codes they present, and to consider different methods of reading in order to understand them. Jerome McGann (1991) wrote of the difference between linguistic codes (semiotics and semantics of words) and bibliographic codes (such as typefaces, page formats, and bindings) when using texts as sources, highlighting how 'meaning is transmitted through bibliographical as well as linguistic codes' working together to generate overall intention (p. 57). With regards to periodical texts more specifically, Brooker and Thacker (2009) focused in on what McGann termed bibliographic codes, arguing that the 'physical material of the magazine itself is...a crucial factor in understanding the texts and images found within its pages' and that a 'materialist deconstruction will seek to disclose how different modernisms are marked by the accents of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and region' (pp. 6, 10). It is in these codes – in the architecture of the page as well as in architecture on the page – that designs for social equality in women's magazines can be communicated and understood.

As McGann noted, it is often the relationship between codes that creates meaning and significance. Brooker and Thacker used the example of advertising, which fits into both the internal and external categories: their placement in the page layout of the magazine contributes to the internal code, whilst their relationship with the wider world of commerce and the magazine's readership contributes to the external code of the publication (p. 6). *Good Housekeeping* used such internal and external codes to blur the boundaries between editorial and advertising content. For example, readers were confronted with 'advertorials' which used design to make sponsored content look like journalistic articles, or with advertisements repeatedly published across successive issues to reinforce messaging. This demonstrates the periodical's unique ability to confront readers with information presented in mixed formats, invoking 'creative strategies' for reading, and resulting in a 'much richer and more nuanced vision of the periodical as a specific and dynamic print cultural object' (Clay et al., 2018, p. 6).

In October 1924, for example, the *Good Housekeeping Institute* published an article on 'The Care Your Floors Demand' detailing through text and instructional photographs step-by-step guides to clean and maintain domestic flooring. The article noted that 'too much emphasis cannot be laid on the wisdom of equipping your home with an efficient vacuum cleaner' and went into depth about the hygienic aspects of cleaning, such as the 'dust- and germ-laden air' inhaled when cleaning carpets (Cottington-Taylor, 1924, p. 30). These sentiments, particularly in relation to health, were echoed further through the issue in a full-page advertisement for the Whirlwind Suction Sweeper on page 103. In order to avoid 'faces, lungs, clothes – grimed, choked and smothered with dust', *Good Housekeeping* readers were encouraged to buy the Whirlwind (p. 103). Despite its

⁴ See, for example: Bryant Hobbs, Buying an Estate House; An Actuary, House Purchase Problems

position in the second half of the issue, the advertisement, in its relationship to more prominently featured editorial content, bridged internal and external codes to create meaning and legitimacy.

This interlacing of repeated thematic messaging throughout *Good Housekeeping* – whether vacuum cleaners and their positive effects on health or wider concepts such as modern femininity – created what Collier (2012) termed a 'value marked grid': an ordering of page space allowing the reader to move through the periodical's messaging, creating a hierarchy of content through which readers could negotiate multiple, often conflicting, views (p. 492). These 'grids' were formed through systems of 'organising rubrics', whereby repetition created feelings of reliability and predictability for the reader (p. 493). In *Good Housekeeping*, this was maintained through repetitive structures and schemas: architectural features always had at least a double-page spread and always appeared after romantic fiction and political opinion pieces but before the fashion pages. Magazines used bibliographic and spatial codes to denote the value of the content, such as more important content, or that written by popular figures, in the opening pages and lesser known or less important features further towards the back pages. The editorial decision to give full-pages and large-scale illustrations to the architectural features denoted the importance of home-design in *Good Housekeeping*. Every month spotlighted a different home, with lengthy text written by an architect describing the layout and innovative features, accompanied by large photographs of the exterior and more detailed photographs of the interior. Floorplans consistently accompanied these articles, suggesting that readers were well-versed in reading spatial drawings as well as analysing images. These reliably reappearing features created order and coherence but were also a means through which the magazine created its own identity within the growing market for women's magazines as one which valued architecture and created an identity for its readership as one which was educated in spatial design and architectural jargon.

Where the 'value marked grid' becomes a more challenging concept is the relationship it has with advertising: that spaces of 'value' in the magazine could be purchased, such as the Whirlwind's full-page spread. In *Good Housekeeping*, where advertising took up a lot of page space, the magazine's editorial team built and maintained trust by assuring readers that 'advertised goods are good goods', selectively given page space having been screened and approved.

Within the 'value marked grid' of *Good Housekeeping's* ordering and page layout lies another level of meaning construction through the architecture of the page: the relationship between image and text. The semiotics created through the text/image connection is a key proponent of Tinkler's holistic approach to magazine study and demonstrated new ways of seeing and constructing meaning during the specific time period (2016, p. 31). For instance, the boom in women's magazines in Britain during the interwar period coincided with the popularisation of, and increasing accessibility to, the cinema. Fiona Hackney (2008) linked Charles Eckert's concept of 'emotional fantasy generating' in popular media, when films became 'living display windows' for products and constructed fantasies of womanhood drove commerce, as a metaphor applicable to magazines (Eckert, 1990, p. 120). Filmic techniques such as montage structures offered different models of modern womanhood and provided a space in which women could experiment with different identities and explore 'what being both modern and a woman might mean' (Hackney, 2008, p. 120). Readers of *Good Housekeeping* would have been viewing new films alongside reading magazines, and a link can be drawn between the montage-effects in both media. For example, the use of collage across a single page and the jumping through different content types across a single issue of the magazine were akin to cinematic cross-cutting. The reader, like the cinema viewer, commanded a large view of collated information which required active engagement to create coherent meaning and a safe space to experiment with facets of modern womanhood.

Hackney and Bigham developed the idea of viewing magazine space as 'window' and 'mirror', with the page presenting and reflecting the 'fissure' between reality and fantasy (p. 105). Much as film was fantasy-generating, magazines covered 'fantasies of modern living (magazine-as-window) alongside an acknowledgement of how people lived (magazine-as-mirror)' (p. 134). In *Good Housekeeping*, photography of aspirational homes provided a 'window' – a glimpse into the sort of life a modern woman could lead – but by also featuring homes that were within the economic reach of its readers, the magazine remained relevant and realistic. The interaction of photography and text on the architectural pages produced the 'space of agency and female subjectivity' described by Hackney and Bigham and 'intensified the experiential and transformational promise of modern homemaking' (pp. 108, 122). This required new methods of looking and constructing meaning and suggests an active reader who can assimilate and accommodate content according to their own desires and circumstances.

Collier (2012) described the 'metonymic and microcosmic' nature of periodicals and their role in repackaging and making sense of the world into something consumable and comprehensible for its readers (p. 492). In terms of *Good Housekeeping*, the busy and contradictory pages of the magazine reflected the messiness of interwar Britain – postwar recovery, changes in women's status, changes in family dynamics – but through its spatial organisation it avoided overwhelming its readers and instead reflected this complexity and multiplexity in a coherent and reliable way. Using the 'mirror' and 'window' techniques of magazine publishing, *Good Housekeeping* bridged the gap between the reader as she was and the reader as she wanted to be in the modern

world. Through page space, it provided space for women to inhabit and to see both the fantasy and reality of how architecture could shape modern life.

NETWORKS: SITES OF PRODUCTION / SITES OF CONSUMPTION

The diversity of content and form in magazines reflected the new status of women as modern citizens, but as well as being present on the pages of the magazine, modern women were also present in the sites of production. Women's magazines of the interwar period provided spaces to rethink traditional gender roles and promote equality in emerging professions, in fields such as advertising, public relations, and journalism. Hackney noted that the women's press became increasingly dominated by a female workforce as it was believed that women were best suited to understand their own audience, ushering in a 'new breed of female journalist' concerned with improving their readers' lives (Hackney, 2008, p. 117). Women with institutionalised cultural capital, in the form of professional journalism training, domestic science qualifications, or employment, had the power to inform opinion in new ways. *Good Housekeeping* magazine employed such women, promoting their voices in conversations about modern life, public discourse, and social equality, and giving a platform for their opinions on architecture and design: making space through words rather than through buildings.

This is exemplified in the figure of Alice Maud Head, who, following work at *Country Life*, *Woman at Home*, and *Nash's Magazine*, became Managing Director of *Good Housekeeping* and the National Magazines Corporation. Through her business strategy and networking skills, Head built up a strong roster of contributors to the magazine and developed profitable relationships with advertising agencies; a task which was fundamental for the survival of the magazine, whilst at the same time influenced the spending habits of thousands of households. As seen above in the links between the editorial on clean floors and the Whirlwind advertisement, advertisers sought to link their products with the construct of the 'modern housewife or domestic manager' as consumer, through the adoption of the language of feminism and by linking social liberation and equality with freedom from housework via labour-saving devices. Through these networks, Head and her collaborators shaped how the idea of the modern woman and her modern ways of living were constructed.

Head's colleague, Dorothy Daisy Cottington-Taylor, worked as the Director of the *Good Housekeeping* Institute, following an education at the National School of Cookery and King's College for Women, where she obtained a Certificate in Household and Social Science. Her regular column for the magazine – 'Household Engineering and Housecraft' – provided step-by-step photographs to guide readers in home maintenance tasks. Beyond the magazine and the Institute, her reach as an expert extended to an advisory role on the Committee of the Household Appliance Section of the London Chamber of Commerce. Women working in the magazine industry were therefore highly influential and had the economic power to impact change at high levels of government.

Good Housekeeping's architectural features were chosen by the Director of Housing, firstly Herbert Welch, one of the architects of the Hampstead Garden Suburb, who was succeeded by the architect Robert Springett; male experts prescribing a new kind of modern for a new kind of woman. It is interesting to note that Housing was the only field in the magazine to be directed by men, unlike, for example, the fashion pages. However, in February 1935 the magazine appointed Joyce Townsend as the new Director of Housing. Townsend was one of the second cohort of women who attended the Architectural Association in 1918. In practice, she worked on slum re-settlement projects, factory and hospital buildings, and almshouses for women. Whilst the content of the pages remained largely unchanged, a full-page spread in the magazine introducing Townsend celebrated her credentials and network, including election as an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects and as a founding member of their Women Architect's Committee, a group created to advocate for equality in the profession (Romanip-James, 1935, p. 66).

Through these professional networks facilitated by the working spaces of the magazine, women acquired social, cultural, and economic capital, but *Good Housekeeping* also promoted these possibilities to its readership, against the backdrop of changing employment and family norms. The interwar period saw dramatic changes in women's education and access to the written word, opening up a new generation of readers and consumers of print culture across all classes (McAleer, 1992, p. 12). Cynthia White (1970) identified 55 new women's magazines appearing between 1920–1939, the majority for lower-middle and middle-class readerships, with Hackney describing *Good Housekeeping* as 'one of the publications of choice' for the comfortably middle-class demographic (Hackney, 2008, p. 117). The value that *Good Housekeeping* placed on the design of the home reflected changes in the built environment, where home ownership 'above all else, became a marker of middle-class identity', with large numbers coming from the expanding readership of 'popular women's and consumer magazines' (Hackney & Bigham, 2022, p. 107).

The readers of *Good Housekeeping* were a network in and of themselves, interacting with the magazine and each other in various ways. As previously discussed, the magazine's tone addressed the expertise of readers, treating them as educated professionals capable of, for example, deciphering architectural floorplans and complex

household budgeting. More directly, letters from readers were published in every issue, albeit selected by the Editor. The 'Health Questionnaire', for example, in which a doctor responded to readers' letters regarding medical questions, became a regular feature throughout the 1930s. These penned interactions provide some insight into the geographical range of the *Good Housekeeping* readership: from London and the Home Counties to the northern reaches of Britain, and into countries under colonial control. A competition run in the magazine in June 1937 encouraged readers to cite instances in which they had 'careers chosen, businesses started and homes equipped as a result of articles read in the magazine', with prize-winners located in across Britain, as well as Guyana (at the time under colonial control as British Guiana) and Bulgaria (p. 202).

As well as interacting through the pages of the magazine, the *Good Housekeeping* readership had the unique ability to network in the magazine's physical space of its Institute. Located on Wellington Street off The Strand in Central London, the Good Housekeeping Institute provided a space in which women could meet, learn about new products, and trial new designs. It was open to visitors on weekday afternoons or by appointment and ran special events such as its cookery school. In an article published in September 1933, Cottington-Taylor, the Institute's Director, remarked that 'both readers and members of the general public continue to make the fullest possible use of the organisation' (Cottington-Taylor, 1933, p. 42). As with the magazine, the Institute adopted the language of scientific management and industrial rationalisation to create a 'culinary laboratory', tapping into the discourse of domestic science popularised in America by figures such as Christine Frederick and in Germany by designers including Lilly Reich and the Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky; promoting the image of the home as a domestic factory and the housewife's role as a profession (Garbutt, 1936, p. 52). Challenging the traditional idea of science as a male space, Cottington-Taylor's Institute 'laboratory' was run by women, for women. Cottington-Taylor herself could be viewed as the ideal *Good Housekeeping* reader: middle-class, married yet retaining independence, and a professional who was serious about her role as a manager of her home.

Beyond the pages of the magazine, the *Good Housekeeping* readership also formed a wider network of shoppers, reflecting the changing power of interwar women as consumers. Katie Lloyd Thomas (2020) posited that new roles for women as patrons and shoppers allowed them to participate in, and influence debates about, the built environment and the development of new design languages. Lloyd Thomas noted that the cultural identification of shopping with femininity may explain why architectural histories have in the past overlooked this development, preferring instead the image of the designer as separate from the consumer (p. 131). This consumer network of women can also be applied to Jessica Kelly's (2022) concept of 'the architectural public': a market of interwar consumers of architecture who were interested in, but not necessarily experts of, design and therefore sought specialist opinions as to what to buy (p. 14). Although Kelly's concept addressed the readership of *The Architectural Review*, this newly commercialised side of architecture presented questions which reached beyond the architectural press, such as to how to persuade the public what constituted the new 'good taste'. By framing shopping as an intrinsic part of women's interwar citizenship, *Good Housekeeping* mediated ideas of good taste in new architecture and design products for its network of modern readers.

DESIGNS FOR SOCIAL EQUALITY: WOMEN'S MAGAZINES AND MODERNITY

Through these networks of production and consumption, *Good Housekeeping* became a mouthpiece for modernity. In its opening year, it had circulation figures of 150,000 and described itself as having 'treble the sale of any other shilling woman's magazine' on the cover of the February 1923 issue. The magazine's success is demonstrable of the period's 'democratisation of publishing', which saw the large-scale production of magazines and gave new power to women as readers and consumers (Wood, 2016, p. 39). The women's magazine boom of the interwar period presented multifaceted texts featuring high and low cultural subjects, adding to contemporary anxieties surrounding the threat mass culture posed to authentic high culture, but also subversively situating modernism within feminised culture, contravening previously gendered cultural boundaries and representing an 'important site of resistance against gendered discourses' (Wood, 2016, p. 59).⁵ Catherine Clay (2018) noted how magazines of this period provided women with new opportunities to consume modernism in its various forms, arguing that 'modernism was more firmly embedded in the everyday concerns of middle-class, female readers of the interwar period than is generally recognised' (p. 11).

Earlier studies of women's experiences in interwar Britain concluded that magazines promoted 'only one desirable image...that of housewife and mother' (Beddoe, 1989, p. 8) and a 'return to dear housewifeliness' (White, 1970, p. 100) following the blurring of traditional gender roles during the First World War. Adrian Bingham (2004) argued that there was no revolution in gender relations during the interwar era but nevertheless conceded that the period 'cannot simply be regarded as an era of domesticity and retreat', but one that saw the

⁵ Interwar women's magazines' promoted middlebrow content, defined by Faye Hammill as a: 'productive, affirmative standpoint for writers who were not wholly aligned with either high modernism or popular culture' and one which sought to construct readers as culturally literate with a variety of interests, see Hammill, 2007, p. 6.

development of a 'self-consciously 'modern' femininity that drew upon real changes' (p. 233). Closer analysis of *Good Housekeeping* challenges these previous conceptions and reveals a more complex, multifaceted, and sometimes contradictory, interwar woman.

Referencing Raymond Williams's theory that 'the complexity of culture...is to be found...in the dynamic interrelations at every point in the process, of historically varied and variable elements' (1977, p. 121), Brooker and Thacker argued that the relationships between periodicals and the hegemonic mainstream are active and constantly in a process of transformation (p. 17). *Good Housekeeping* presented pluralities of modernity for its audience, featuring the 'variable elements' of which Williams spoke. Different and changing views were printed, capturing both progressive and conservative ideas and demonstrating how ideas of modern womanhood were in a constant state of flux. Articles by leading feminists, such as the politician Violet Bonham-Carter on 'The Political Future of Women' (1922, p. 11) and the barrister Helena Normanton on 'Wages for Wives' (1928, p. 35), sat alongside romantic fiction and the latest fashions, revealing its readers to be nuanced and capable of navigating different social, political, and cultural contexts. These articles often clashed with one another, encouraging readers to engage critically with differing views and contradictions of modern life. These differing perspectives on women's identities demonstrate, as Alice Wood (2018) described, the 'danger of homogenising accounts of the ideology and content' of interwar magazines (p. 223).

Magazines promoted a new kind of citizenship for women, 'transforming and multiplying the ways in which women's gender identities could be constructed' (Clay et al., 2018, p. 2). The highbrow and lowbrow, the intellectual and popular, the progressive and traditional, were not oppositional, and readerships were not forced into being one or the other, but rather multifaceted participants negotiating different iterations of female modernity and citizenship. This is illustrated in *Good Housekeeping's* architectural pages, which provided space for discussions on changing social equality in terms of ways of living.

The loss of men during the War created a 'surplus' (Nicholson, 2008) of women who, through new employment opportunities, could also be independent wage earners, and were a central feature to the experience of interwar womanhood, as well as a key reader demographic of magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*.⁶ This 'surplus' – or 'bachelor girls' as they came to be known in the press – lived independently or with each other, and opened up debates in new ways and new places for living, presenting a challenge to traditional models of women graduating from the homes of their fathers to the homes of their husbands upon marriage.

Good Housekeeping regularly ran features advising single women who chose to live together; detailing methods by which to effectively run the household of home-sharers. As advocated by Cottington-Taylor, the home should be run by a manager. The article 'Living Together' from July 1922 described the running of a bachelor girls' home as 'business-like' and a partnership: 'The most satisfactory method is for one [woman] to sign the lease, and make herself responsible for all out-goings...Strict weekly accounts must be kept and both women go over them, the junior partner paying her share' (Leigh, 1922, p. 35). It was not just practical advice that the magazine imparted, but also ways to design and decorate flats for women to share. The article 'Symphony in Two Colour Schemes' from November 1930, which coincided with the Bachelor Girls Exhibition held in London the same month, detailed 'a flat decorated and furnished for a pair of bachelor girls' (Byrd, 1930, p. 29). Acknowledging that 'the lot of the bachelor girl is often hard', the article's recommendations would ensure that 'the flat...should prove comfortable and perfectly simple to run and keep in order' (pp. 28, 154).

The high proportion of content concerned with married life and motherhood featured in *Good Housekeeping* magazine perhaps supports arguments that the bachelor girl lifestyle was only ever intended as a temporary state; that working life was primarily 'a preparation for marriage' (Holden, 2007, p. 13). In her study of girls' magazines of the period, Tinkler (1995) noted that 'there were no popular bachelor *women* or spinsters in these magazines' (p. 135). However, some bachelor girls of the 1920s did become bachelor women in the 1930s, due to, for example, the numbers of single women, the need to work, and the implementation of marriage bars in many professions.⁷ This shift can be seen in *Good Housekeeping*, where articles from the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s featured more permanent spaces for single women.

Alice Baines's article, 'The Scandal of English Flats', published in May 1929, illustrates this shift in discussions by looking at city flats as a housing type suited to the bachelor woman who wanted a space of her own with more stability and longevity. Baines noted that 'Bachelors, both men and women, want flats because they are sick to death of living in boarding-houses or hotels' (Baines, 1929, p. 36). She praised the use of steel, concrete and glass in apartment building projects in Europe, and questioned 'why cannot middle-class people of average income in this country have flats that are labour-saving and contain the amenities of life, like their compeers in

⁶ The articles discussed from *Good Housekeeping* cover a middle-class experience of the bachelor girl lifestyle. Many working-class women's magazines reflected on the economic hardships and social isolation of single life. See, for example, Nicholson's discussion of *Woman's Weekly* magazine (216–218)

⁷ Holden discusses this in relation to popular careers for middle-class women, such as teaching, nursing, and the civil service (38–42)

the cities of the United States and Canada?’ (Baines, 1929, p. 36). Seven years on, in the article ‘Small Homes in the Heart of London’, Elizabeth White (1936) made similar calls for convenience. In describing a newly completed block of flats in Clifford’s Inn in central London, she noted how they: ‘appeal firstly to the many busy professional men and women who live out of town and who can ill spare the long and tiring hours spent in travelling backwards and forwards’, and went on to highlight the modern amenities: central heating, constant hot water, housemaid and valet services, a restaurant on site (p. 30).

These themes of comfortable and convenient living for professional single women appeared beyond editorial content and into advertising; a technique of value and meaning-making discussed earlier. A description of the Clifford’s Inn flats was closely paralleled in an advertisement featured in *Good Housekeeping*’s January 1934 issue for Sloane Avenue Mansions. This building was an 11-storey apartment block in the Chelsea area of London, designed by George Kay Green and opened the previous year. The advertisement drew attention to the block’s modern technology, ease, and suitability for professionals: Small, Convenient, Inexpensive! You are invited to inspect the most modern, best appointed, labour-saving small flats in central London. Ideal homes for the businessman or woman; an ideal pied-a-terre for the country resident. Electric lights; telephone for each flat; garages for residents’ cars; central heating; constant hot water; private balconies...dainty kitchenette and tiled bathroom included’ (p. 127).

The plurality and nuances of the magazine’s changing readership and its ongoing inclusion of single women was reflected in its wider discussions on living arrangements. For example, to be a modern single woman did not mean that one had to live in the city. The article ‘Between Moor & Sea: A Bachelor Girl’s Home’ from April 1929 showcased a ‘real life’ home. As the domain of a single woman, like the Clifford’s Inn flat, the article detailed a minimal way of living: ‘being a bachelor girl’s home, the accommodation needed was not great; a living-room, kitchen, the usual domestic offices, two single bedrooms for herself and her maid, and a spare bedroom for an occasional guest being sufficient’ (Clifford Hollis, 1929, p. 55). However, the owner’s desire to live both in the countryside and by the sea dominated the discussion. The magazine reflected the realities of those who did not fulfil the caricature of the urban bachelor girl and looked beyond stereotypes to present a myriad of ways that the modern woman could live.

The outsourcing of domestic labour forms a common thread throughout these articles, whether through devices, on-site catering, or housemaid services (live-in and live-out). Despite prophesising in its first issue that labour-saving technologies would create ‘educated classes...independent of domestic help’, *Good Housekeeping* remained engaged throughout the interwar period with the ‘servant problem’ in its advice (Author unknown, 1922, p. 11). As Lucy Delap (2011) noted, labour-saving devices did not translate into a simple move away from employing domestic labour, despite *Good Housekeeping*’s predictions to the contrary (p. 118). Reflecting shifts in the class system of interwar Britain, the magazine acknowledged that whilst managing a fleet of domestic help was no longer viable for the majority of middle-class households, complete servantlessness was also rare. Although more domestic work was taken on by middle-class women as a result of these shifts, there remained a clear divide in terms of ‘respectable’ versus ‘rough’ tasks (p. 126). Cooking, for example, gradually became acceptable for middle-class women as it was aligned with the ‘daintiness’ seen as a key part of femininity, a term echoed in the ‘dainty kitchenette’ featured in the Sloane Avenue Mansions flats (p. 121). Designs for social equality, as communicated through architecture for single working people on the pages of *Good Housekeeping*, were therefore more concerned with equality in terms of gender; equality for working women across classes was more problematic.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, women’s magazines can offer unique reflections on women’s experiences of modernity, helping new histories to emerge that position women as key figures in the production, promotion, and consumption of modern architecture in Britain in the interwar era. Through an exploration of these sources we can identify a much more complex figure of the interwar woman in Britain than previously assumed. By looking ‘beyond the built’ at architecture in word and image, we can consider the ways in which women influenced and shaped modern design, and highlight the importance of the intricate networks of collaborative practice which are key to feminist revisions of history.

Women’s periodicals such as *Good Housekeeping* advocated for a multiplicity in modern femininity, reflecting the complex and diverse realities of being a woman during a time of social, political, and cultural change. This rethink of design from a female perspective was, however, indicative of the class structures of Britain at the time, and *Good Housekeeping* cannot be taken as representing all magazines or women of the period given its firmly middle-class identity and readership.

The modern woman’s nuances were reflected in the variations across the years of *Good Housekeeping*, but also within single issues, through readers’ negotiations of juxtapositions present in different types of content and form. Readers did not absorb content in a uniform or straightforward way but rather could employ different and

new ways of looking to construct meaning, informed by an increasingly visual culture and developments in the graphic design of magazines. It is due to this complex, contradictory, and ever-changing set of relationships that periodicals offer a unique means through which to consider multiple feminine modernities.

The writers and editors of *Good Housekeeping* magazine, working within the boundaries of a male-controlled society and for a magazine company presided over by men, initiated a rethinking of architecture and design, creating a space for discussion about modern design and the modern woman. Their positionality as women writing for women encouraged social participation in the magazine's readership to engage both on the page and off. By giving a voice to women in what had until that point been traditionally male spheres of wage-earning work, science, and architecture, *Good Housekeeping* magazine challenged ideas of the male expert and featured design which would appeal to the needs and wants of women.

Through analysis of the space and form, networks, and the sites of production and consumption of women's magazines, new perspectives on domestic modernity and women's roles within it can be evidenced. The relationship between editorial and commercial content within magazines, and the various possible identities that this created for women, show that she was a much more complex figure than just a suburban housewife, and had an active role in demanding modern changes in the home.

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