

‘Quite the opposite of a feminist:’

Phyllis McGinley, Betty Friedan and Discourses of Gender in mid-Century American Culture

The period between the end of World War Two and the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* represents something of a lost era in studies of anti-feminist thought. Although our understanding of the period and of key figures within it has been nuanced of late by the work of Joanne Meyerowitz, Elaine Tyler May, Daniel Horowitz, Stephanie Coontz, Joanne Boucher and others to be discussed in this essay, pressing questions about the role of anti-feminist thinkers – and specifically anti-feminist women – in shaping discourses of gender have yet to be addressed.¹ Kim Nielsen notes a widespread scholarly lacuna in this respect, arguing that across the field, ‘historians of women have been slow, sometimes reluctant, to acknowledge anti-feminist women as political and historical actors.’² In an earlier and British context, Julia Bush observes that ‘women who opposed their own enfranchisement were ridiculed by the supporters of votes for women and have since been neglected by historians [. . .] modern histories of suffragism all too often ignore its committed female critics, and fail to evaluate the widespread support for their views.’³ The relatively little scholarship that does exist tends, as in Nielsen’s study *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Anti-feminism, and the First Red Scare* (2001), to focus on earlier periods or to jump forward to the ERA and ‘Backlash’ years of

the 1980s.⁴ Cynthia D. Kinnard's *Anti-feminism in American Thought: An Annotated Bibliography* and Angela Howard and Sasha Ranaé Adams Tarrant's *Anti-feminism in America: A Collection of Readings from the Literature of the Opponents to U.S. Feminism, 1848 to the Present* provide useful primary material, but it is clear that a systematic and detailed study of anti-feminism in mid-century American life remains to be written.⁵

This may, in part, be a symptom of the wider critical neglect of the history of women in the years 1945 to 1960, a neglect which Joanne Meyerowitz seeks to address in her 1993 essay 'Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958' and in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Post-War America, 1945-1960*. This work, along with subsequent studies by Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, Judy Giles, Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows, Eva Moskowitz, Laura Shapiro, and Lynn Spigel, has succeeded of late in refocusing attention on this fascinating period.⁶ Meyerowitz's research in particular, along with Eugenia Kaledin's slightly earlier *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (1984), has deftly reorientated scholarly understanding of the allegedly conformist, stay-at-home ideologies of the post-war era.⁷ Nevertheless, even here, the pressures of anti-feminism, and the subsequent tensions between feminist and anti-feminist thinkers and activists, have remained largely unexamined.

The present essay seeks to fill this gap by assessing the relationship between an emergent second-wave feminist movement and parallel and persistent anti-feminist rhetoric in the years surrounding the publication of *The*

Feminine Mystique. In so doing, it situates both forces in relation to the wider social and cultural contexts of post-war, and specifically suburban, America. By considering each stance in relation to the other, this study will illuminate some of the nuances and contiguities of both and will identify some – perhaps unexpected – common ground. My argument eschews any simple polarisation of feminist and anti-feminist positions – a binary schema which, in the past, has led to an unfortunate hierarchisation of perspectives with one view, the feminist one, rising to dominance and the other, the anti-feminist, being erased from sight. And it seeks to resist a teleological reading of feminism, or the ‘narrative of oppression-then-liberation’ as Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd describe it, which might in its haste to affirm a still-precarious victor, overlook the presence of dissenting opinion.⁸

Phyllis McGinley

In pursuing this argument, I focus on the work of one particular anti-feminist writer, Phyllis McGinley. McGinley was born in 1905 in Oregon and lived most of her life in the New York suburbs. She contributed light verse and other poetry to the *New Yorker* and was popularly known as the ‘housewife poet.’ In 1961, she won the Pulitzer Prize for her collection, *Times Three: Selected Verse from Three Decades* – a book which, like many of her others, was a bestseller. She was also a prolific and acclaimed essayist, contributing articles on family life in the middle-class suburbs to mass-market periodicals such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *McCall’s* and the *Ladies Home Journal*.⁹ She found a ready readership in a Cold

War culture characterised by the anxious defence of hearth and home and was taken up as a spokesperson by those who were alarmed by the apparent radicalism of Friedan and other second-wave feminist thinkers.

In 1964, on the strength of earlier articles such as 'Cooking to me is Poetry' and 'The Sentimentalists' (the *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1960; July 1961), 'A Garland of Envy, or 21 Reasons Why I Wish I Were A Man' (*McCall's*, March 1961), and 'Do They Love You or Your Disguise' (*Glamour*, May 1961), McGinley was commissioned by her publishers to write a riposte to Friedan's recently published *The Feminine Mystique*. As a *Time* profile explains: 'Phyllis McGinley did not ask to get into this argument. But since she has been praising domesticity all along [. . .] her publisher prodded her into assembling her thoughts as a rebuttal.'¹⁰ The resulting book, *Sixpence in her Shoe* – a study-cum-defence of 'woman's most honourable profession,' in the words of the subtitle – argues for a proper evaluation of women's domestic duties, and for recognition of the importance of this role to individual women, their families and communities.¹¹ The book spent over six months on the *New York Times* bestseller list and sold 100,000 copies in hardback in the first six months alone; it was subsequently contracted to appear in several international editions including Spanish and Japanese.¹² As Marion K. Sanders records in a 1965 article in *Harper's* magazine, *The Feminine Mystique* had sold 65,000 copies in hardback in its first two years in print and 700,000 in paperback while *Sixpence in her Shoe* was, within six months, 'in its eighth hardcover printing, heading toward the 100,000 mark with a paperback edition still to come.'¹³ The Dell paperback

edition which followed later that year was flagged on the cover as 'The book that talks back to *The Feminine Mystique*'. The success of *Sixpence* was heralded in *Time's* cover story wherein McGinley was explicitly pitted against Friedan:

The strength of Phyllis McGinley's appeal can best be measured by the fact that today, almost by inadvertence, she finds herself the sturdiest exponent of the glory of housewifery, standing almost alone against a rising chorus of voices summoning women away from the hearth. The loudest of the new emancipators is Betty Friedan, another suburban housewife and mother.¹⁴

Contemporary reviews similarly foregrounded the schism; a 1964 article in the *Charlotte Observer* opens 'Betty Friedan, Ha!' while the *New York Times* review the following year is headlined 'The McGinley Mystique' and describes the poet as the 'housewife's partisan.'¹⁵

McGinley is a valuable exemplar in this study of anti-feminism for a number of reasons. First, in *Sixpence in her Shoe*, which consolidated her reputation as Friedan's antithesis, we find a formidable counter-narrative to the *Feminine Mystique* story. As several commentators have noted, Friedan's study quickly came to dominate popular and critical understanding of the period. According to Horowitz, the book has had 'a commanding impact on historical scholarship, cultural memory, and American feminism.'¹⁶ McGinley's alternative vision of women's lives and potential has, its popularity and influence in its own moment notwithstanding, disappeared from the public record. By restoring the anti-feminist view to light, we are better able to assess the strength and

heterogeneity of contemporary discourses of gender. By comparing McGinley's stance with that of other anti-feminist writers of the period (for example, Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham, authors of *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* [1947]), we might discriminate between divergent positions, thereby avoiding the dangers of homogenising anti-feminism.¹⁷ Without this important strand, we have an incomplete and thus inadequate grasp of contemporary women's history.

Secondly, criticism of *The Feminine Mystique* focuses often – and justifiably – on Friedan's omission of variations in class, ethnicity and race. The allegation is that she took as a norm a white, middle-class, heterosexual, suburban experience which was, in fact, atypical. A consequence of this is that critical attention has centred of late on the experiences of women beyond Friedan's purview thereby overlooking the hidden diversities and dissensions within her original constituency. In other words, Friedan is said to have 'homogenized American women' or to have 'glossed over major variations between women as a rhetorical device to take home [her] message,' but in responding to that homogenization or 'gloss[ing] over,' critics have sought out alternative experiences rather than examining the hidden heterogeneities *within* the sample group.¹⁸ In *Not June Cleaver*, for example, the reader is introduced to a range of women's voices in order to counter the narrow vision of Friedan's book:

Chinese Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, white women, unwed mothers, abortionists, lesbians, butches, femmes,

and Beat bohemians. The ways they portray themselves demonstrate that women in the post-war era saw themselves as more than women or wives or mothers.¹⁹

Valid though this is, it implicitly perpetuates the disavowal of the experience of those who did define themselves as ‘wives or mothers’. Johnson and Lloyd have recently traced the processes by which the figure of the ‘housewife’ has been presented and rejected as feminism’s ‘shameful “other”’.²⁰ By examining McGinley’s work, I bring that ‘other’ back into view. Her writing, I suggest, gives voice to the much-maligned happy housewife and offers a spirited alternative to Friedan’s reading of white, middle-class domesticity as ‘always oppressive for all women.’²¹ Scrutiny of her fan mail, as I will argue below, provides additional insight into the terms, and force, of the debates and into the meanings of motherhood, domesticity and work to her readers. More broadly, the ways in which McGinley was positioned by her editors and publishers, and received by critics and readers, alert us to the wider economic and cultural pressures which shaped feminist, and anti-feminist, rhetoric at this time.

Thirdly, and relatedly, McGinley’s articulation of a particular perspective – or, more properly, a range of perspectives – on woman’s place in post-war America provides fascinating and provocative evidence of the fluidity of the field. Howard and Tarrant argue that ‘diversity of opinion and perspective has existed and persisted among those who oppose the assertion of women’s rights’ to which I would add that this diversity also exists *within* any given position – a point illustrated by the shifts, contradictions and tensions that I identify in McGinley’s

intriguingly ambivalent work.²² Her polemical essays do not always yield a singular or fixed meaning, while her poetry allows us to see the deep texture subtending the issues, and invites multiple and fruitful readings. Meyerowitz critiques Friedan's portrayal of mass culture as 'monolithic' and 'repressive' and argues instead that it is 'rife with contradictions, ambivalence, and competing voices.' It is the argument of this essay that McGinley's popular poetry and essays similarly yield 'subversive, as well as repressive potential.'²³

Finally, the disjunction between McGinley's biography (as a professional woman who combined a writing career with her accomplishments as wife and mother) and the apparently subordinate feminine role she advocated for others marks a primary and suggestive contradiction. The swift decline in her reputation as a poet and commentator in the light of *Sixpence in her Shoe* is a measure both of the growing strength of feminist thought from the early 1960s onwards and of the cost of that success to those with dissenting views. McGinley's effacement from the record suggests an unwillingness on the part of feminist historiography fully to account for the place of anti-feminist thinking in the emergence of the second-wave movement. If we overlook the role of anti-feminist women we run the risk, as Nielsen has argued, of 'limit[ing] our ability to respond effectively to contemporary anti-feminism' and, more generally, in Meyerowitz's terms, of 'flatten[ing] the history of women.'²⁴ In order to avoid this risk, it is necessary to engage with hitherto overlooked positions, to read against the grain, and to critically scrutinise post-war feminism's own creation narratives.

Contexts: Anti-feminism

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan dismisses McGinley's work and that of her peers Shirley Jackson and Jean Kerr as the product of 'a new breed' of 'happy housewife heroines.'²⁵ Friedan's contention is that the humor in their fiction, poetry and plays denies the reality of women's daily lives and is thus both misguided and misleading. Marsha Bryant has recently and convincingly argued for the validity of these writers' ambivalent representations of domesticity while Laura Shapiro has pointed out that in this 'literature of domestic chaos,' women writers 'spoke knowledgably' to their readers about 'the psychic mess at the heart of the home.'²⁶ Nancy Walker provides a re-reading of McGinley, Kerr and Jackson's work as compelling 'double texts' and indicates that 'below the surface of the humour are significant signs of restlessness and unease.'²⁷

In the case of McGinley, in particular, Friedan overlooks both the detail of her writing and the broader contexts in which it was produced and read with the result that an important voice in contemporary debates about women's roles is denied a fair hearing. Specifically, Friedan does not register the ironies, contradictions and inversions in McGinley's work, reducing it to a monotonal and superficial rendering of unenlightened consciousness rather than, as I will argue, a complex, provocative, sometimes critical and sometimes performative, evocation of suburban women's domesticity. This is not to suggest that inside McGinley, there is a feminist trying to get out. As Walker cautions 'it would be far too strong to call the domestic humor of the 1950s a rallying cry for the feminist movement of the 1960s.'²⁸ Nevertheless, it is to focus attention on the unstable

nature of the discourse, and to recognise its propensity to exceed the boundaries that continue to dominate our thinking.

To an extent, one can understand Friedan's – and thereafter the wider scholarly – dismissal of McGinley's position. As early as May 1950, McGinley had positioned herself in private and in public as an anti-feminist, referring in a journal entry to 'my newest hobby – anti-feminism' and recording a discussion at a dinner party where she had argued against women's pursuit of creative careers: 'perhaps the artistic world, let alone the domestic world, would be better off if they stayed at home and raised their families more diligently'.²⁹ The point anticipates one she espoused in a 1953 *Saturday Review* debate ('A *Saturday Review* panel takes aim at *The Second Sex*') convened to mark the recent publication in the United States of Simone de Beauvoir's book: 'it does not matter who writes the novels or paints the pictures or discovers the new planet. If it is woman's function to hold the world together while these things are accomplished, let her take pride in that.'³⁰ The existence of this panel, incidentally, counters Friedan's argument that in the post-war public consciousness, 'the 'woman problem' in America no longer existed.'³¹ Fellow participants in the debate included anthropologist Margaret Mead and writer Philip Wylie (more of whom, below). De Beauvoir herself is profiled as 'a petite woman of forty-five, with a penchant for coronet braids [who] is generally regarded as France's Existentialist No. 2.'³²

Over the following years, McGinley's position seemed, if anything, to become more entrenched. In an essay on 'Woman's Honor' collected in *The*

Province of the Heart, she argues that although ‘women have been enfranchised now for nearly forty years [. . .] the world is no better for it’ and that we should ‘teach our daughters not self-realization at any cost but the true glory of being a woman – sacrifice, containment, pride, and pleasure in our natural accomplishments.’³³ In a 1961 article for *Glamour* magazine, she labels herself ‘quite the opposite of a feminist’ and in a ‘Note to English Readers’ drafted for the British edition of her homage to the housewife, worries about the spread across the Atlantic of dangerous feminist tendencies:

I have not been in England for six years. How strident across the sea is the voice of the New Feminist I do not know. Here in America it is very loud and its accent is strictly local. We women, admittedly the most pampered, fortunate, emancipated in the world, are being urged to cast off invisible chains and alter the face of society. *Sixpence* is a protest against that protest, an attempt not to set women back but to set them right.³⁴

Tempting though it is to dismiss these assertions, it is important to give some thought to the person and historical contexts in which they were formulated and expressed. In so doing, it becomes possible to recuperate and begin to understand the nuances of her anti-feminist rhetoric.

McGinley’s writing seeks to defend post-war women and to validate their daily lives as housewives and mothers in the context of a culture which seemed set on disparaging them. When she concludes her essay ‘The Honour of Being a Woman’ with the rousing message about the ‘true glory of being a woman,’ cited

above, or ends the opening chapter of *Sixpence* with the admonition 'it is time we learned to love ourselves,' she is attempting to bolster her women readers' embattled sense of self-worth. Even when she argues that 'Women fulfil themselves best when they give themselves away' or that women are 'the self-immolators, the sacrificers, the givers, not the eaters-up, of life,' her message should be read not simply as anti-feminist, but as a conscious and well-targeted repudiation of contemporary representations of women as dangerous, all-devouring moms set on leaching the hearts, bodies and minds of the American male.³⁵

Specifically, McGinley writes back to infamous commentator Philip Wylie, whose 1942 book *Generation of Vipers* roundly condemned a generation of women for emasculating their sons, disempowering their men, and bringing a once-great American nation to its knees. In an astonishing and sustained attack, Wylie constructs – in order utterly to traduce – the figure of the American 'mom,' the 'destroying mother,' the 'Queen of Hell. The five-and-ten-cent store Lilith [. . .] the black widow who is poisonous and eats her mate.'³⁶ A decade later, Wylie is still playing the same tune. In a November 1956 article for the recently launched *Playboy* magazine, entitled 'The Abdicating Male and How the Gray Flannel Mind Exploits him through his Women,' he alleges that women dominate the economy and enter the job market only in order to snare a man:

The bulk of American women who do venture into the world-of-affairs do so to promulgate an *affaire* that will lead to their early retirements as wives. Their mates soon die. The insurance is made

out to the gals and the real estate is in their names. They own America by mere parasitism.³⁷

One of McGinley's essays in *Sixpence in Her Shoe*, 'How Not to Kill Your Husband,' seems at first to be a witty, self-deprecating appraisal of marital relationships which ends by urging women to let their husbands 'educate' them: 'The whole duty of a wife is to bolster her husband's self-esteem; not his vanity but his pride.'³⁸ But the light-hearted surface masks a more urgent message. From its opening page, her essay presents a skilful and determined rejection of Wylie's various charges including the *Playboy* accusation of 'parasitism' and the allegation in *Generation of Vipers* of murderous intent. As the latter urges its (male) readers:

Your neuralgia comes from the fact that you married a finale hopper, or flapper, who, through the years, has turned into a fountain of carbolic acid. What with wincing, shuddering, dodging, fending, grimacing, arguing, hollering, and generally turning your viscera into vinegar, your blood into lemon juice, your dung into slime, your hair into nothing, and your skin into the sort of dank leather that covers an old baboon's behind, you have got neuralgia. Your neuralgia persists and increases because there is a law against strangling this bitch.³⁹

McGinley tacitly acknowledges these charges, and explicitly rejects them. Her tone is controlled and ironic. But her underlying critique of Wylie's position, and that of his prominent contemporaries, is forceful, focussed and wholly effective.

Wylie's views were astonishingly influential. A little over a decade after the *Generation of Vipers*' first publication, he noted sales thus far of 180,000 copies with continuing annual sales, even into the 1950s, of some 5000 copies.⁴⁰ He describes himself with some pride in the *Saturday Review* panel on *The Second Sex* as 'a male, and [. . .] an American long known as the lead critic of females.'⁴¹ Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English note that his assertion of the dangers of 'momism' was, without any evidence, widely taken as credible.⁴² In this context, unpalatable though some of McGinley's assertions may be to feminist readers, her defence of women (albeit couched in traditional and apparently retrogressive terms) should be read as a self-conscious, strategic and necessarily hyperbolic riposte to Wylie's and similar positions.

For Philip Wylie was not alone in his misogyny. More damaging even than his views, were those espoused by Lundberg and Farnham whose 1947 study, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* opens as follows:

The central thesis of this book is that contemporary women in very large numbers are psychologically disordered and that their disorder is having terrible personal and social effects involving men in all departments of their lives as well as women.

It proceeds to depict women as:

One of modern civilization's major unsolved problems [. . .] at least on a par with such other sturdy social puzzles as crime, vice, poverty, epidemic disease, juvenile delinquency, group intolerance,

racial hatred, divorce, neurosis and even periodic unemployment, inadequate housing, care in old age and the like.⁴³

McGinley's enthusiastic endorsement of women's everyday lives and interests in the articles cited above, and in poems such as 'One Crowded Hour of Glorious Strife' (a warmhearted description of the frenzy of despatching the children to school in the mornings), or 'The 5: 32' about the routine of collecting the commuting husband at the station, or 'Mind Over Mater' [sic], about the cycle of motherhood, should be read as a strategic counter-balance to the deep cynicism of Lundberg and Farnham's views.⁴⁴ Whereas for Lundberg and Farnham, women are 'a problem to themselves, to their children and families, to each other, to society as a whole,' for McGinley they are a solution. Whereas for them, 'being a woman today is in many ways more of an ordeal than ever,' for McGinley, it is an honour and a delight.⁴⁵

McGinley's defence and celebration of women's traditional roles as home-makers, guardians of moral virtue, and mentors to the next generation is expedient in these contexts. Her views are often essentialist as, for example, in the essay 'How Not to Kill Your Husband' where she argues that it is women's role to bolster 'male pride' because men are unable to experience the fulfilment of bearing children, or in 'The Third Hand' where she argues for mothers' innate inability to devote as much to their careers as men.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, they represent deeply held and widely shared convictions, and they played a part in defending women's lives, and salvaging their pride, in a post-war culture which

was deeply and divisively exercised by incipient changes to the gendered, familial, racial and ethnic balance of power.⁴⁷

Contexts: Suburban motherhood

As Ehrenreich and English, Julia Grant, Glenna Matthews, Kathleen McHugh and Sarah A. Leavitt have shown, motherhood was a particular object of scrutiny in this period with successive waves of childcare ‘experts’ (sociologists, psychologists, doctors, educators) offering forceful and often contradictory advice.⁴⁸ By the late 1950s, women of McGinley’s generation were unsure which way to turn. In an essay in *Sixpence*, ‘The Casual Touch,’ McGinley – to her credit – insists on the mother’s capabilities, and points to the damaging effect of expert advice: ‘parents in this generation have had their confidence undermined by too many changes of doctrine, too much advice from contradictory sources.’ She assures women of their right, and their ability, to raise their children in their own way, and urges them to fend off the criticism of others. At the heart of the ‘casual motherhood’ which she proposes, is the mother’s own sense of identity: ‘Love with a casual touch never says, “My children are my life.” That mother makes a life of her own which is full enough and rewarding enough to sustain her. And she permits her young to let *their* lives be individual accomplishments.’⁴⁹

For McGinley, home – and the work women do within and around it – is the locus of selfhood, community, and agency. She speaks up for a generation of stay-at-home mothers who felt their positions to be under attack from a male culture determined to belittle them, and from a nascent feminist movement which

seemed equally engaged in disparaging their choices and pushing them into the public world of work. In *Sixpence*, housewifery is an honour, but also a profession (a draft title for the book was *Profession: Housewife* and it appeared in Macmillan's 'Career Book' series) – a skill to be explicitly valued even if the rewards it provides are not fiscal.

More important, though, than McGinley's defence of motherhood is her advocacy of the suburban way of life. This vital context – one which McGinley and Friedan share – has hitherto been overlooked in assessments of both women's work. McGinley's move to the Victorian suburb of Larchmont, Westchester County, predates the post-war exodus of the *Feminine Mystique* era – an exodus which, by the 1960s, had been identified as a serious problem.⁵⁰ During this period, the suburbs were roundly indicted as the site of conformity, dysfunction and despair – a narrative that Friedan helps to sustain, and that McGinley seeks to refute. Central to these attacks on suburbia was the implicit and long-standing association between the city, rationality, masculinity and the public world of work and the suburbs, irrationality, femininity and a privatised domestic sphere.⁵¹ Friedan's thesis must be understood as part of this widespread vilification of the contemporary suburbs. The 'problem,' the 'schizophrenic split,' and the generalised malaise that she characterises as the lot of the suburban housewife merely replicate the larger rhetoric of suburban (and thereby implicitly feminine) malignancy apparent in the commentary of the period.⁵² In novels such as Richard Yates's *Revolutionary Road* and in numerous

contemporary reports, suburbia is indicted as pathogenic and murderous with women regarded as particularly prey to its effects.⁵³

John Keats's *The Crack in the Picture Window*, for example, is clear about the received association between the suburbs and female psychopathology: 'Today's housing developments,' he insists, 'actually drive mad myriads of housewives shut up in them.'⁵⁴ In similar vein, Gordon et al's *The Split-Level Trap* (marketed as a 'Kinsey Report on Suburbia'), opens with a cast of suburban 'case histories' including several supposedly typical unhappy housewives akin to those later studied by Friedan: 'In one of the split-level houses, a young mother is crying. She is crouching in a dark closet. Voices in the walls are telling her she is worthless.'⁵⁵ In suburbia (or 'Disturbia,' as the authors rename it), women are disproportionately represented in admissions to psychiatric hospitals; their symptoms are seen as evidence of the 'tremendous emotional pressures that are peculiar to the suburbs.'⁵⁶ *The Feminine Mystique* assimilates this rhetoric. For Friedan, the suburbs are a 'trap' (a position that she continues to hold in her 1982 book, *The Second Stage*: 'that suburban house literally embodied [. . .] the feminine mystique, and trapped women in it') and suburban housewives are shorn of agency and meaning.⁵⁷

McGinley identified herself as one of the few defenders of the much maligned suburbs:

I write about my little world – the suburban world [. . .] mine was the first articulate voice to be lifted in defense of that world which has

been the whipping boy for satirists for the last three or four decades.⁵⁸

It is in the light of the hostility outlined above that her vivid – perhaps even overenthusiastic – poetic portrayals of the life of the middle-class suburban housewife are best understood. In McGinley's suburbs, women look forward to their husbands' return on 'The 5: 32' train from the city, or their arrival in the country to join their families on summer weekends ('Letter from a Country Inn'). They take part in school events ('P.T.A. Tea Party'), prepare their daughters for parties and dancing classes, entertain friends, and take occasional trips into the metropolis ('A Day in the City').⁵⁹ The busyness of McGinley's suburban daily world refutes the insinuations of critics such as David Riesman and Lewis Mumford that suburban housewives are passive, isolated and infantilized with little better to do than watch television.⁶⁰ It confirms the evidence of one of the few other contemporary defenders of the suburbs, Herbert Gans, that the 'much maligned' suburbs should be seen as a site of health, wellbeing and community, not of disease, despair and isolation.⁶¹

In defending the suburbs, McGinley is also implicitly defending women, and vice versa. Her writing depicts suburbia – and femininity – as a valuable rather than a pitiable space. In this respect she is poles apart from Friedan. For Friedan the solution to female suburban malaise is an independent economic life outside the suburbs; for McGinley, the solution is a revalidation of feminine life within it. Moskowitz cites the hostility of women readers to the 1963 publication in *McCall's* of Friedan's article 'Fraud of Femininity.' Angry women who wrote to the

editor rejected the article as 'confirmation of the tendency of women's magazines to put down the housewife and domesticity.'⁶² It is clear, then, that there was a significant constituency of self-avowedly happy, if increasingly beleaguered, homemakers who felt that their own intimate experiences were being effaced by Friedan's articulation of the unhappy suburban housewife's point of view. McGinley, willingly or otherwise, assumed the role of spokesperson for this group.

Spokesperson

Scrutiny of the fan mail that McGinley received over her lifetime reveals the complexity and interrelatedness of contemporary discourses of gender, family, home and nation, and the mutability of the boundaries of private and public.⁶³ Even before the appearance of Friedan's book, women were writing to McGinley endorsing her representations of the contentment of the suburban housewife. A letter of February 1961 from Mrs. F. is typical in that it identifies with, and finds validation in, McGinley's intimate experience:

I had just received an assignment from Houghton Mifflin for my first work on an English textbook [. . .] I thought of you often as I juggled assignment, child, and husband! You have expressed more eloquently than any writer I have ever known my deepest convictions and, I am sure, those of hundreds of women everywhere.⁶⁴

Mrs B., writing from New Jersey in October 1962, is more insistent still:

As an educated (Radcliffe) housewife, I particularly resent the patronizing attitude of the professional Frustrated Females, who claim that I am 'wasting my brains' when I maintain that I like what I am doing [. . .] Thank you for saying so well what I feel so strongly.

Another letter, written in August 1965 (so after the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* and *Sixpence*) reads:

I must tell you what a joy and solace your *Sixpence in her Shoe* has been, and is, to me [. . .] Thank you so much for validating my role, as wife and mother of three sons.

Not all McGinley's correspondents were quite so enthusiastic though. Some were hostile to her position and some, intriguingly ambivalent. A July 1962 letter from Mrs S. opens by talking about her twenty-five years as a housewife and mother of seven children, but then admits:

After twenty-five years, I am starting to think of myself. And find myself tired, lonely, a dull mind, a body with aches and pains from not having time to think of myself. Sure I know all about doing that which I have always wanted to do, now's the time. But that was squelched twenty years ago [. . .] society is not interested in what words of wisdom they [housewives] might have to say. So I know how to be a 'nurse, chef, diplomat, dispenser of first aid, teacher, healer of hurt affection'. So what? Who cares?

It is clear even from the more ambivalent letters that McGinley's readers sensed an intimate and empathetic connection with her, and shared a feeling of relief

that, at last, someone seemed to be speaking up for their lived experience. A 1963 letter from a Californian woman illustrates the effect of contemporary hostility to stay-at-home mothers:

Lately there have been so many articles blaming the troubles in the world on the woman who stays at home and tends to the career she has chosen – homemaking [. . .] It seems if you are happy at home you are some low grade moron with no brains.

Meyerowitz regrets that in the case of her study of post-war women's magazines, it is difficult to gauge readerly responses to their ideologies.⁶⁵ These private fan-letters to McGinley go some way to filling this gap, providing some of the nuances, contradictions, and detailed dailiness which vocal public debates, in painting broad-brush caricatures, risk missing.

The role of anti-feminist spokesperson is arguably (and ironically, given Friedan's point about women's economic empowerment) one that McGinley assumes in response to the demands of this particular market. Horowitz implies a similar motivation for Friedan: 'her claim that she came to political consciousness out of a disillusionment with her life as a suburban housewife was part of her reinvention of herself as she wrote and promoted *The Feminine Mystique*.'⁶⁶ Both women, then, performed their respective roles because it was expedient financially – and in terms of the public profile of their respective causes – so to do.⁶⁷ In McGinley's case, although she seems not to have felt trapped in her life as a suburban housewife, she clearly did begin to feel constrained by the role of anti-feminist. Writing to her daughter and son-in-law in November 1964, she

regrets her appearance on the Carson Show: 'What a disaster that was – with the needle stuck on the Women's Rights bit when what I meant to do was to tell a few amusing anecdotes about the book,' and in a 1960 profile in *Newsweek*, exclaims: 'I'm so sick of this "Phyllis McGinley, suburban housewife and mother of two" [. . .] That's all true, but it's accidental.'⁶⁸

McGinley's performance of the parts of suburban housewife and anti-feminist is not, then, without ambivalence.⁶⁹ It is here, arguably, that her example proves most valuable to a reappraisal of post-war discourses of gender. For in the contradictions, ironies and flexibilities of her stated position, we see something of the texture and fluidity of the debates and, more intriguingly, of the constructed nature of the available positions within it. In McGinley's case, the role of happy housewife, like that of anti-feminist, is produced performatively, and sustained by reiteration. Lacking fixity or substance, the role exposes its own fragility and insubstantiality. Poems which ostensibly celebrate the suburban feminine ideal reveal gaps in this façade – moments of silence or contradiction. These aporiae allow us to glimpse the resistant narrative lying beneath. The sequence of 'Sonnets from the Suburbs,' for example, offers an uneasy celebration of suburban life which bring to mind the more dystopian vision of, say, Richard Yates. Her 'Eros in the Kitchen,' acknowledges the chaos which lurks below the antiseptic surface of the suburban ideal, while her elegies for adolescent daughters as they prepare to leave the family home ('The Doll House' and 'A Certain Age') register the isolation and confusion of suburban mothers as their primary responsibilities drop away. 'Beauty Parlor' and 'Hostess' expose the

thinness of femininity.⁷⁰ So, too, the 1946 poem 'Occupation: Housewife' (the title is significant given Friedan's excoriation of the role in *The Feminine Mystique*) slowly peels away the mask of suburban – and feminine – success.⁷¹ It begins by cataloguing the myriad things about which the housewife might feel grateful: her good health, her youthfulness (she 'owns to forty-one'), the children educated away from home, the pastimes and the antique collection. Yet all this proves superficial. As the final sestet and the falling rhythms of the closing couplet reveal, there is nothing here but regret for what might have been:

She often says she might have been a painter,
Or maybe writer; but she married young.
She diets. And with contract she delays
The encroaching desolation of her days.

Again and again, then, McGinley's poems seem to celebrate comfortable middle-class women's suburban lives while simultaneously encoding quite different readings.

Conclusion

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan aimed to liberate the 'strange, dissatisfied voice' of the mid-century suburban housewife.⁷² In the only full-length study thus far of McGinley's work, Linda Wagner suggests that McGinley herself has acquired the status of 'a public institution, a public voice.'⁷³ Arguments about 'voice' presuppose agency and experience on the part of the subjects on whose behalf the 'voice' – or as here, competing voices – claim to speak. McGinley's

work merits attention, finally, not only because it suggests the presence of a counter-narrative, but because it moves us away from ultimately limiting notions of voice and representation, distancing us from what Johnson and Lloyd have described as a ‘fantasy of the feminist subject as fully unified and coherent.’⁷⁴ Her example pushes us to look beyond voice as a sign of agency, and towards an understanding of the ways in which subjectivities are constructed and performed, or denied. Indeed, in her poetry, there is a deceptive absence of ‘voice’ – a reticence and finally a silence. The first person ‘I’ is rarely seen. The perspective is oblique; her poems are watchful rather than self-revelatory. Her suburban housewife speakers observe and present themselves playing a role, but their subjectivity seems to be displaced. We might usefully read this as evidence of the condition of post-war suburban life; the disciplinary regime of the suburbs (which were designed, according to Lynn Spigel, as a ‘space for looking’) puts a premium on surveillance and thus stimulates forms of deception, and self-deception.⁷⁵ More fruitfully still, we might read the disappearance of the female ‘I’ in McGinley’s work as product and confirmation of the received place of women in mid-century American life. This poetic self-abnegation (the necessary self-immolation of which McGinley speaks so proudly in *Sixpence in my Shoe*) only reenacts the social roles that women were offered – and that McGinley endorsed, albeit ambivalently – at this time.

To study McGinley from a feminist perspective is, then, to identify some uncomfortable truths about internal resistance to social change during the late 1950s and early 1960s. As importantly, it is to illuminate the wider climate of

hostility evident in the work of Philip Wylie and his peers, and to situate feminist and anti-feminist debates in relation to broader post-war anxieties about everyday suburban life. It is to recognise the complexity of contemporary discourses, the weight of public feeling on both (and several) sides of the debate, and the pressures on women to articulate positions – or, more properly, to performatively produce identities – which may, in turn, have generated some ambivalence. More disturbingly, perhaps, it is to concede feminist historiography's role in marginalizing and silencing some women's opposition; this strategy was probably expedient for a young and persistently threatened movement. But as we approach the 50th anniversary of the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, it is perhaps time to register the presence of aberrant, troubling, dissenting voices – even those such as McGinley's which unsettle the usual narrative paradigm.

[8656 words incl.]

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¹ B. Friedan (1963/1982) *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Pelican); J. Meyerowitz (1993) 'Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,' *The Journal of American History*, 79 (4), pp. 1455-82; J. Meyerowitz (Ed.) (1994) *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press); D. Horowitz (2000) *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press); E. T. May (1999) *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic); S. Coontz (2010) *A Strange Stirring: 'The Feminine Mystique' and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic); J. Boucher, 'Betty Friedan and the Radical Past of Liberal Feminism,' *New Politics*, 9 (3), pp. 1-16.

² K. E. Nielsen (2001) *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Anti-feminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press), p. 10.

³ J. Bush (2007) *Women Against the Vote: Female Anti-Suffragism in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 1, 2.

⁴ On the earlier period, see J. Camhi (1994) *Women Against Women: American Anti-Suffragism 1880-1920* (New York: Carlson) and T. Jablonsky (1994) *The Home, Heaven and Mother Party: Female Suffragists in the United States, 1868-1920* (New York: Carlson). For the later period, see S. Faludi (1992) *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (London: Chatto & Windus).

⁵ C. D. Kinnard (1986) *Anti-feminism in American Thought: An Annotated Bibliography* (Boston: G.K. Hall); A. Howard and S.R.A.Tarrant (Eds) (1997) *Anti-feminism in America: A Collection of Readings from the Literature of the Opponents to US Feminism, 1848 to the Present* (3 Vols) (New York and London: Garland). See also Howard and Tarrant (2000) *Anti-feminism in America: A Reader* (New York and London: Garland).

⁶ R. Baxandall and E. Ewen (2000) *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books); J. Giles (2004) *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg); S. Gillis and J. Hollows (Eds) (2009) *Feminism, Domesticity and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge); E. Moskowitz (1996) "It's Good to Blow Your Top": Women's Magazines and a Discourse of Discontent, 1945-1965,' *Journal of Women's History*, 8 (3), pp. 66-98; L. Shapiro (2005) *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America* (London: Penguin); L. Spigel (2001) *Welcome to the Dream House: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham and London: Duke University Press).

⁷ E. Kaledin(1984) *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne).

⁸ L. Johnson and J. Lloyd (2004) *Sentenced to Everyday Life: Feminism and the Housewife* (Oxford: Berg), p. 12. See also Bush, *Women Against the Vote*, p. 12.

⁹ *The Feminine Mystique's* origins lie in an article by Friedan, 'I Say Women are People Too' in *Good Housekeeping* 151 (1960), pp. 59-61, 161.

¹⁰ "The Telltale Hearth" (1965) *Time*, 25 (85), 18 June, pp. 74-8. Also online at: <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,898901,00.html>. Accessed 11 October 2007.

¹¹ P. McGinley (1964) *Sixpence in her Shoe* (New York: Macmillan). See also (1960) "Cooking to me is Poetry," *Ladies Home Journal*, January, pp. 66-7; (1961) "A Garland of Envy, or 21 Reasons Why I Wish I Were A Man," *McCall's*, March, pp. 163-4, and (1961) "The Sentimentalists," *Ladies Home Journal*, July, pp. 102-3.

¹² 'Telltale,' p. 75; E. Jacobson [Curtis Brown Literary Agency] (1966) Letters to Phyllis McGinley, 22 February and 18 April, Syracuse. Box 5.

¹³ M. K. Sanders (1965) 'The New American Female: Demi-feminism Takes Over,' *Harper's Magazine*, July, pp. 37-43 (p. 39).

¹⁴ 'Telltale,' p. 75.

¹⁵ E. Garrison (1964) 'Betty Friedan, Ha!' *The Charlotte Observer*, 27 September, n.pag., Syracuse. Box 63; (1965) 'The McGinley Mystique,' *New York Times*, 14 June, p. 54, Syracuse. Box 23.

¹⁶ Horowitz, *Betty Friedan*, p. 224; see also Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*.

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- ¹⁷ F. Lundberg and M.F. Farnham (1947) *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers).
- ¹⁸ Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver*, p. 10; L. Martens (2009) 'Feminism and the Critique of Consumer Culture, 1950-1970' in Gillis and Hollows, *Feminism, Domesticity*, pp. 33-47 (p. 43).
- ¹⁹ Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver*, p. 10.
- ²⁰ Johnson and Lloyd, *Sentenced to Everyday Life*, p. 142.
- ²¹ Giles, *Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 155.
- ²² Howard and Tarrant, *Anti-Feminism in America*, p. viii.
- ²³ Meyerowitz, 'Beyond the Feminine Mystique,' p. 1457.
- ²⁴ Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood*, p. 9; Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver*, p. 2.
- ²⁵ Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, p. 50.
- ²⁶ M. Bryant (2007) 'Ariel's Kitchen: Plath, *Ladies Home Journal*, and the Domestic Surreal' in A. Helle (Ed.) (2007) *The Unraveling Archive: Essays on Sylvia Plath* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), pp. 211-35; Shapiro, *Something from the Oven*, p. 144-5.
- ²⁷ N. Walker (1985) 'Humour and Gender Roles: The "Funny" Feminism of the Post-World War II Suburbs,' *American Quarterly* 37(1), pp. 98-113 (p. 99).
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- ²⁹ P. McGinley (1950) Journal entries, January, May, Syracuse. Box 47.
- ³⁰ P. McGinley et al (1953) 'A *Saturday Review* Panel Takes Aim at *The Second Sex*,' *Saturday Review*, 21 February, pp. 26-31 (p. 30).

³¹ Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, p. 16. See also D. T. Miller and M. Novak (1977) *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday) and S. Coontz (2000) *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic) for contrary evidence about the significance of this issue in post-war America.

³² McGinley et al, 'Saturday Review Panel,' p. 26.

³³ P. McGinley (1959) *The Province of the Heart* (New York: Viking), p. 22.

³⁴ P. McGinley (1961) 'Do They Love You or Your Disguise?' *Glamour*, May, pp. 138-9, 199, 212-4 (p. 138); 'Sixpence in her Shoe: A Note to English Readers' [draft], Syracuse. Box 33.

³⁵ McGinley, *Sixpence*, pp. 14, 43, 47.

³⁶ P. Wylie (1942/1996) *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Dalkey Archive), pp. 215, 216.

³⁷ P. Wylie (1956) "The Abdicating Male and How the Gray Flannel Mind Exploits him through his Women," *Playboy*, 3 (1), November, pp. 23-4, 50 (p. 50). For more on *Playboy's* place in post-war culture see B. Colomina, A-M. Brennan and K. Jeannie, K. (Eds) (2004) *Cold War Hothouses: Inventing Postwar Culture from Cockpit to Playboy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press) and B. Ehrenreich (1983) *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press / Doubleday).

³⁸ McGinley, *Sixpence*, p. 35.

³⁹ Wylie, *Generation*, p. 175.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

⁴¹ McGinley et al 'Saturday Review Panel,' p. 28.

⁴² B. Ehrenreich and D. English (1978) *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press / Doubleday), p. 214.

⁴³ Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. v.

⁴⁴ P. McGinley (1960) *Times Three: Selected Verse from Three Decades with Seventy New Poems* (New York: Viking), pp. 184, 137; P. McGinley (1946) *Stones from a Glass House* (New York: Viking), p. 44.

⁴⁵ Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ McGinley, *Sixpence*, pp. 27-38; *Province*, pp. 173-81.

⁴⁷ See also Kaledin, *Mothers and More* and May, *Homeward Bound*.

⁴⁸ Ehrenreich and English, *For Her Own Good*; J. Grant (1998) *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press); Glenna Matthews (1987) *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press); K. A. McHugh (1999) *American Domesticity: From How-to Manual to Hollywood Melodrama* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), S. A. Leavitt (2002) *From Catharine Beecher to Martha Stewart: A Cultural History of Domestic Advice* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press). See also R. Hofstadter (1963) *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf) on the rise of the 'expert'.

⁴⁹ McGinley, *Sixpence*, pp. 243-53 (pp. 245, 246, 251, 244).

⁵⁰ In 1967, President Johnson established a task force to examine the 'economic, social and physical problems of suburbs and the people who live there.' See

C.M. Haar (Ed) (1972) *The End of Innocence: A Suburban Reader* (Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman and Co.), pp. 13-15.

⁵¹ For an account of the perceived relationship between women and suburban space, see S. Saegert (1981) 'Masculine Cities and Feminine Suburbs: Polarized Ideas, Contradictory Realities' in C.R. Stimpson et al (Eds) *Women and the American City* (Chicago and London: University Press of Chicago), pp. 93-108 (pp. 93-4); J.R. Stilgoe (1988) *Borderland: The Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), and D. Hayden (2003) *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth 1820-2000* (New York: Vintage).

⁵² Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, pp. 17, 9, 40.

⁵³ R. Yates (1961/2001) *Revolutionary Road* (London: Methuen); E. Fromm (1955/2002) *The Sane Society* (London: Routledge); W. Whyte (1956) *The Organization Man* (London: Pelican); J. Keats (1956) *The Crack in the Picture Window* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), R.E. Gordon, K.K. Gordon, and M. Gunther (Eds) (1960/1964), *The Split-Level Trap* (New York: Dell).

⁵⁴ Keats, *Crack*, p. xii.

⁵⁵ Gordon et al, *Split-Level*, p. 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 26ff, 7.

⁵⁷ B. Friedan (1982) *The Second Stage* (London: Michael Joseph), p. 288.

⁵⁸ P. McGinley (1952 [?]) *A Short Walk From the Station* [draft introductory remarks for a reading], n. pag., Syracuse. Box 47.

⁵⁹ McGinley, *Times Three*, pp. 137, 190, 133; McGinley (1937) *A Pocketful of Wry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company), p. 30.

⁶⁰ D. Riesman (1957) "The Suburban Dislocation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 314, pp. 123-46 (p. 135); L. Mumford (1966) *The City in History: Its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects* (London: Pelican), p. 512.

⁶¹ H. J. Gans (1967) *The Levittowners: Ways of Life in a New Suburban Community* (London: Allen Lane), p. v.

⁶² Moskowitz, 'It's Good to Blow Your Top,' 88. See also Giles, *Parlour and the Suburb*, pp. 144-53.

⁶³ See May, *Homeward Bound*, Matthews, *Just a Housewife*, and Baxandall and Ewen, *Picture Windows* for readings of fan mail to Friedan. Moskowitz calculates that approximately 80% of Friedan's correspondents were opposed to her argument ('It's Good to Blow your Top,' p. 97); I estimate that in McGinley's case, at least 80% of her correspondents endorsed her views.

⁶⁴ Letters have been anonymised in order to protect correspondents' privacy and are denoted by date within the text. All are drawn from Syracuse, Boxes 26 and 27.

⁶⁵ Meyerowitz, 'Beyond the Feminine Mystique,' p. 1463.

⁶⁶ Horowitz, *Betty Friedan*, p. 2. As Meyerowitz notes, 'the anti-feminists and the women's rights advocates [. . .] [b]oth tempered their arguments in seeming attempts to broaden appeal: anti-feminists sometimes disavowed reactionary

intention [. . .] and women's rights advocates sometimes disavowed feminist militance' ('Beyond the Feminine Mystique,' p. 1477).

⁶⁷ See M. Maynard (1989) 'Privilege and Patriarchy: Feminist Thought in the Nineteenth Century' in S. Mendus and J. Rendall (Eds) *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge), pp. 221-47 (p. 228) for a reading of expediency in an earlier British context.

⁶⁸ P. McGinley (1964) Letter to Patsy Hayden Blake, November. Syracuse. Box 1; (1960) 'The Lady in Larchmont' *Newsweek*, 26 September, pp. 120-1 (p. 120).

⁶⁹ One local newspaper is unusual in noting the latent similarities between the two positions: 'actually the two writers are not far apart . . . Miss McGinley's dual career represents the acme of Miss Friedan's ideal, though the latter would have more respect than the former for the countless women of average ability who seek fulfilment nowadays in jobs outside their homes.' K. A. Annin (1965) 'The Feminine Dilemma'. *The Berkshire Eagle*, 6 July, p. 19.

⁷⁰ McGinley, *Times Three*, pp. 133-7, 88, 53, 45, 136, 155.

⁷¹ Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, pp. 39, 180. The poem was first published in the *New Yorker* of 13th July 1946 and collected the same year in *Stones from a Glass House*. It is re-named 'Executive's Wife' in *A Short Walk from the Station* (1951) (New York: Viking) and reverts to its original title in *Times Three* (1960). The original title gestures towards a question in the census and to the rise of market research in this period. For more on this see Sarah E. Igo (2007) *The*

Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

⁷² Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, p. 23. See Giles, *Parlour and the Suburb*, p. 148 for a reading of Friedan's claim to a representative voice.

⁷³ L. Wagner (1971) *Phyllis McGinley* (New York: Twayne), p. 7.

⁷⁴ Johnson and Lloyd, *Sentenced*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ Spigel, *Welcome*, p. 2.