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NOTE:
Thank you again to everyone in history society who wrote an article for this edition of the history journal. It’s fascinating to read a range of articles focussing on women throughout history and across the globe, I hope that everyone enjoys reading this edition.

- FRANCESCA HORGAN
In honour of the recent International Women’s Day, celebrated globally on the 8th March each year, this edition focusses on the history of women. International women’s day has throughout history has aided as a focus in the movement towards improvement of women’s rights. The first international women’s day took place in 1911; however, action to progress the rights of women had been taking place around this time for a few years previously. In 1908 15,000 women had marched through New York to demand better pay and hours, and women’s voting rights. In 1909, the Socialist Party of America declared the first National Women’s Day in America on the 28th February. National Women’s Day continued to be celebrated on the last Sunday of February until 1913. In the following year, a conference was held in Copenhagen (the International Conference of Working Women) were held with representatives from many countries, discussing the idea of a day to celebrate women and continue to fight for their rights. After this conference, International Women’s day was celebrated for the first time.

International women’s day is still very relevant, as while great progress for the rights of women has been made, there is still much progress to be made. In the UK, the gender pay gap still remains as roughly 20% and systemised sexism remains. Internationally there are many countries where women’s voting rights, as well as general rights, are severely restricted.
Catherine II is one of the most famous rulers of Russia. She reigned from 1762 until her death in 1796, the longest reign of any female Russian leader. Historically, she is remembered for her eventful love life and military might but how ‘Great’ was Catherine really?

She was born Sophie von Anhalt-Zerbst in 1729 to a Prussian Prince. Her father’s family had little money but her mother’s bloodline opened numerous prospects for Catherine. As a teenager, she caught the eye of Russia’s Empress Elizabeth, who was in search of a bride for her nephew and heir, the future Peter III. She took on the name Catherine, or Ekaterina Alekseyevna when she was baptised into the Orthodox faith in order to marry Peter, and the couple were unhappily married in 1745. Catherine’s husband was regarded as inept by many and so after only six months on the throne she overthrew him with the help of Grigory Orlov, a military officer with whom she was having an affair. Only a week after abdicating Peter was killed, which cemented Catherine’s position on the throne. Then began what is considered to be the Golden Age of Russia.

On a smaller cultural scale, female artists flourished under the rule of Catherine the Great. Peter I (reign 1682-1725) had brought about

Petersburg who created many famous palaces and churches in the city. One of whom was the French sculptor Etienne Maurice Falconet, commissioned to create what is now known as the Bronze Horseman, a magnificent monument to Peter the Great on the banks of the Neva. The empress herself published the satirical magazine: Vsyakaya Vsyachina (“Odds and Ends”) which was made up of her own writings and even wrote plays. Catherine also regularly corresponded with the famous Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire. "It was he, or rather his writings, that shaped my mind and my beliefs," she wrote of him. The philosopher, in turn, spoke of Catherine with great respect and promoted the empress in Europe.

Catherine prioritised the arts and science, significantly contributing to the cultural history of Russia. She put together a collection of paintings, drawings and sculptures which formed the beginning of the Hermitage, now one of the largest museums in the world. She also invited a number of important European artists, architects and other cultural figures to St.
reforms that allowed women greater freedom to pursue education, but it wasn’t until Catherine rose to power in the mid-18th century that women found confidence to write and create art. These artists tended to be from aristocratic backgrounds but they followed the lead of Catherine II and other women who held power in Russia such as Princess Natalia Ivanovna Kurakina. Kurakina was one of the most well-known women of the movement and wrote at least 45 songs, some of which were so popular that Breitkopf and Härtel published a collection of eight of her French romances in 1795. Under Catherine, an educational residence was founded for girls, which grew into the Institute for Noble Girls. It was one of the earliest progressive educational organisations for young women and is known today as the Smolny Institute.

Catherine was also a successful military ruler; her troops conquered a great deal of new territory. During her reign, the borders of the Russian Empire extended by roughly 200,000 square miles. One of her major goals was to increase Russian influence in Europe. She seized Crimea from Turkey and, with the aid of leaders from Austria and Prussia, partitioned Poland out of existence, incorporating into Russia the territory that now makes up Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia. Catherine partly owed her military victories to her brilliant generals. Alexander Suvorov was one of the best generals in Russian history, and Grigory Potemkin, one of the empress’s favourites, reformed the army along European lines. Although Catherine didn’t go into battle personally, she had proven her military mettle, gaining a vast amount of new territory and influence for Russia.

However, although Catherine II accomplished many military achievements and remoulded Russia culturally, she failed to improve the lives of the poorest citizens. Initially, Catherine tried to alleviate the plight of her people when she created the Legislative Commission in 1767. This temporary legislative body was brought into being in order to develop a new comprehensive law that would reconcile the interests of all classes. Even the abolition of serfdom was discussed. In the end, the commission was disbanded due to fears that many nobles would revolt against the empress. Catherine’s rule was definitely a golden age for the nobility. They were exempt from military service and paying taxes, and they were granted the right to open their own factories and to trade. Noblemen made up the country’s military and political elite and were known for their lavish parties at the expense of the rest of the population. Peasants, on the other hand, had little benefits under Catherine’s reign. They were forbidden to complain about their landlords, and the landlords were given the right to force peasants to do hard labor. The little freedom they had was lost. Peasant revolts, of which the best known is Pugachev’s Rebellion, broke out across Russia in the 1770s. They were all suppressed.

There is no doubt that the reign of Catherine II was great; however, it was the nobles who profited whilst the peasants suffered. The military was mainly comprised of noblemen and so the conquering of new territory was to their benefit. Additionally, the edifices built during Catherine’s cultural reforms would’ve been enjoyed by the elite. Palaces were constructed for her favourites to live in and the female artists who emerged during her reign were mainly aristocrats. The position of the peasants declined as landowners were prioritised at their expense. Overall, Catherine deserves her title as she managed to singlehandedly raise Russia to the same advancement level as the rest of Europe even if she couldn’t improve every aspect of her country.
"You turn if you want to. This Lady's not for turning."

Such were the words of Britain’s first female Prime Minister during a Conservative conference on 10th October 1980. The politician that would be the only Prime Minister in the 20th century to have held her position for three ensuing terms, was then addressing the criticism given to her on Tory plans made to liberalise the economy. This particular phrase was in her adamant refusal to alter such economic plans, and would inevitably become a cornerstone of the similarly gritty determination that characterised Thatcherism and her time in office. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister recognised the necessity of such liberalisation after unemployment had risen to the stark figure of two million people that year and the country faced an economic recession. Her speech had been written by Sir Ronald Miller, a playwright, who had attempted to reinvent a pun based on a popular 1948 play entitled ‘The Lady’s Not for Burning’ by Christopher Fry. Miller failed to recognise that it would be not his pun which would grip the attention of media outlets, but rather the now iconic second sentence, in which Thatcher would assert her stubborn resolve against the face of external adversities to have Britain remain on the course planned.

History has bestowed upon Margaret Thatcher a myriad of witty epithets, narratives and characteristics, to create a persona which has permeated international politics for nearly forty years. It is this persona which has enraptured historians and politicians alike, and many still argue how much of what we know of Thatcher was rooted in truth or whether this steely figure had a softer interior hidden from the public eye. Similarly, we cannot fully assert whether History has been kind to Thatcher, because there seems to be an equal chorus of criticism as of praise from both sides of the fence. As with all great figures, we seem to know so much about Thatcher and yet she still remains a figure shrouded in the murky unknown. It is with keeping such ideas in mind, that we begin the tumultuous early history of the ‘Iron Lady’.

Originally born under the name of Margaret Hilda Roberts on October 13th 1925, Thatcher was the daughter of a grocer, in the small town of Grantham in Lincolnshire. However, the Thatcher powerhouse, akin to any of the great empires made to last, had not been calibrated overnight, and at its genesis, had nearly hindered any possibilities of re-election success held by the Tories.
Thatcher’s determination to succeed in her goals had become a fixture within her life from an early age, from her acceptance into the University of Oxford for Chemistry in 1943 to later practising as a barrister within taxation law in 1954. She did so whilst balancing work as a research chemist and doing additional studying to pass the bar exam. She married her husband, Denis Thatcher, in 1951: a successful industrialist who backed Thatcher on her political motives, and with whom a mere two years later, she would welcome twins. The future ‘Iron Lady’ had run for Parliament earlier, but had failed, despite campaigning which would cause a 50% increase of Conservative supporters within the area. Despite such shortcomings, Thatcher adamantly refused to allow her political aspirations to slip through her fingers, and nearly a decade later, won the safe Conservative seat of Finchley. Within the next fifteen years, Thatcher would pass through a plethora of roles which were parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, Chief Opposition spokesman on National Education and Secretary of State for Education and Science. The latter meant Thatcher became part of Conservative Edward Heath’s cabinet and implemented controversial policies as part of her newfound role, such as eliminating a Labour free milk program for young schoolchildren, which gave birth to the name of ‘Thatcher the Milk Snatcher’. During this period, she also continued Labour’s introduction of the comprehensive school system in the 60’s, which had been utilised to combat classist structures, via the introduction of schools running under comprehensive jurisdiction.

In 1974, Margaret Thatcher would be the only competitor to popular Conservative leader Edward Heath’s bid to regain power as Prime Minister, before gaining control of his own Party. Despite having suffered the loss of two successive elections, many members were skeptical in supporting a new candidate as their leader, for fear of losing only more power to the Labour Party. In doing so, Thatcher had carved out a space for herself within not only the innermost rooms of Parliament, but within society as an ambitious MP breaking not only sexist stereotypes of the period but providing an unparalleled dominance which would be spoken about with respect from both critics and admirers for years to come. It was just five years later that the ‘Iron Lady’ would take her seat as the new Prime Minister, faced with the task of leading a country, with whom many had participated in a string of strikes, which would be aptly named the ‘Winter of Discontent’.

During her time as Prime Minister, Thatcher would focus on issues such as separating the individual from the state, allowing trade to be hindered less by governmental interference and reducing spending for social services. Many recognise Margaret Thatcher for her political prowess later in life, yet few recognise the importance of looking back at her early history and analysing how it would later shape the drive and determination that shook Parliament, and ultimately, the fate of Britain forever.
Eva Perón was one of the most influential women in South American history. She was an Actor, feminist, role model, founder of the Eva Perón foundation, founder of the Perónista Feminist Party and was the First Lady (1945-1952.)

Eva Perón was born as Maria Eva Duarte was an illegitimate child who was born and raised in the small town of Los Todas on the Argentine Pampas. She grew up quite poor in a working-class which shaped her greatly. Eva’s family struggled financially, which worsened especially when her father, Juan Ibargüerén, died when she was just six. Due to her upbringing, she became a person who understood misfortune from a young age and set out to help other people who were in her situation.

A few years after her father’s death the family moved to Junin, Argentina. When she was 15 she moved to Buenos Aires to pursue a career in acting and she eventually gained popularity after sustaining several radio acting roles.

Shortly after this she attracted the attention of a rising star of the new government Colonel Juan Perón, and the two got married in 1945 (when Eva was 24.) Eva very active in Juan’s presidential campaign and won adulation of the masses as he was elected later that year in June 1946. Without ever holding any governmental post, Eva was very actively a part of government as she acted as the minister of health and labour. She awarded wage increases to the unions who then provided political support for Perón. After Eva cut ties with the Sociedad de Beneficencia (Aid society) she set up her own foundation called the Eva Perón foundation—a supposedly by voluntary union took cuts from the national lottery, business contributions and other funds. These funds were responsibly used for establishing thousands of schools, hospitals, orphanages, care homes and charitable organisations.

Eva was almost fully responsible for the women’s suffrage law and formed the Perónista Feminist Party, meaning she was known as a feminist during and towards the end of her life. She also introduced compulsory religious education into school curriculum. Even though she was running for Vice President in 1951 she grew gravely I’ll quite suddenly with cancer and the army forced her to withdraw her candidacy. She died shortly after in 1952.

She reminds me a lot of Alexander Hamilton. He came from a small Caribbean island and saved up along with the other residents for him so he could get a ticket on one of the ships and move to New York. His persistence was quite amazing as he had come from a large sickly family few of which he had left. He created the financial congressional plan and he also wrote 51 anonymous essays defending the Declaration of Independence to the members of the public. Alexander Hamilton was named a founding father of America who was supposedly “forgotten about”. However, Eva also came from a very poor background and worked her way up and eventually was able to achieve what she set out to do in the first place but she was not forgotten. Dare I say she was and still is a founding mother and a role model to all of Argentina till this day. She had and always will be known as a feminist and formidable influential prodigy till the end of time.

CHARLIE JOHNSTON
An Olympic champion and role model to many, Wilma Rudolph was a prolific civil rights and women’s rights pioneer. Rudolph was born in 1940 and was an African-American sprinter who became a record holding Olympic champion in 1960. With the introduction of television, her international regard grew and she helped elevate women’s track and field events: encouraging more female participation in sports. The world of sports is not often discussed in such detail as other methods of the fight for equal rights and so it is for this reason that Rudolph should be mentioned amongst other influential women.

It is true there have been many influential women in sport throughout the decades such as Babe Didrikson Zaharias but Rudolph is a special case. When she was five years old she contracted polio causing a form of paralysis in her left leg of which she never fully regained control. Throughout her ordeal she did not receive the required medical care on account of her racial background. This only makes it more surprising that by the age of 12 it was possible for her to walk and run without the use of a brace. She went on to compete in her school basketball and track teams, leading her to, at the age of sixteen, attend the 1956 US Olympic track and field track team trials and qualified to compete in the 200-meter individual event at the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne. Rudolph was the youngest member of the US Olympic team. In the unopposed for eight years. She was crowned “The Tornado” and was shown as America’s athletic ‘leading lady’ through the media.

Her successes in the Olympics affected both attitudes towards race and female participation in school as when she arrived back in her home town, Clarksville, people of all races and genders came to congratulate her. Rudolph states that this homecoming parade was her town’s first integrated event in the city’s history. Outside of sports she contributed to civil rights protests in Clarksville to desegregate city restaurants. This protest later turned out to be successful as all public facilities and restaurants became fully integrated.

In the face of adversity Rudolph succeeded in defying expectations and changing public opinion of women’s sport. She won three gold medals in the 1960 Olympics, making her the first American woman to do so. Even after her Olympic career she continued to make changes to the sporting world, such as in 1961 when she became the first woman to run at the Millrose games (an annual indoor athletics meet held each February in New York City). The legacy of Wilma Rudolph’s legacy is not one that is remembered among young people despite its importance in the breakdown of gender barriers in sport and should be celebrated for the achievements she made.
The story of a great city, plunged into a 10-year war over the abduction of the most beautiful woman in the world, is irresistibly dramatic and tragic. This allure has sent adventurers and archaeologists in quest of the lost city, which is now widely believed to have existed. The synopsis from the British Museum’s website characterises the Troy exhibition perfect. The exhibition itself followed the story of the Trojan War, beginning with background of the war and showing artefacts depicting key events from what’s depicted in the Iliad itself, to the fall of Troy and Odysseus’ wanderings. The artefacts themselves vary in depiction and purpose; from vases showing Achilles’ killing Queen Penthesilea or Odysseus with the Sirens, to what’s believed to be the Jewels of Helen and even local artefacts from excavations on the sight of Troy. What I found particularly interesting was how the same scene could be depicted in a variety of ways, a particular example being the array of scenes showing Aeneas’ escape from Troy, carrying his father Anchises on his back and holding his son Ascanius’ hand. Furthermore, modern interpretations of Ancient Artefacts, such as the Shield of Achilles show how perceptions of the Trojan War and events have changed throughout the centuries.
The exhibition is an amazing experience and interesting to Classicists and non-classicist alike, for those who don’t know the story of the Trojan war the exhibition takes you through events whilst for those who do its fascinating to see interpretations of famous scenes from epic. The exhibition is still open until March so I recommend you all go it’s worth it!
Most people, when thinking of the role of women during the First and Second World War, picture them working in factories producing ammunition, and helping on the ‘home-front’: running Britain while the men were engaged in battle abroad. This was not the case for Captain Flora Sandes, who became the only Western woman to have enlisted and fought as a member of the regular army in the First World War.

Flora Sandes was born in North Yorkshire in 1876 to a country rector from a Protestant Anglo-Irish family. Since childhood, she yearned for adventure and always dreamed of becoming a soldier. In her free time, she enjoyed reading poems and books, particularly Tennyson’s ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’, and riding on horseback in the countryside, showing no desire to follow the norms of society that were expected of a young woman of her background. When war broke out in August 1914, Flora saw an opportunity to follow her vocation. At the age of thirty-eight, only a few days after war against Germany had been declared, she travelled to Serbia as a volunteer with the St John Ambulance Service. There, she initially worked as a nurse, but, as her knowledge and understanding of the Serbian language grew, she was able to enlist in the Serbian Army, one of the few that allowed female soldiers.

In the autumn of 1916, Flora took part in a series of fierce battles alongside her male companions. On 16th November, however, she was wounded by a grenade as she was defending her position from a surprise enemy attack. Although her wounds were severe, Flora Sandes remained undaunted and, once recovered, continued fighting on the frontline. Flora continued to help the Serbians regain the country they had lost three years before. For her bravery in battle, she was awarded the Karadorde Star, Serbia’s highest civilian and military decoration. In the meantime, she had been promoted to the rank of Sergeant-Major. 1916 also saw the publication of her autobiography, An English Woman-Sergeant in the Serbian Army (London: Hodder & Stoughton), which Flora released in order to raise awareness of the Serbian plight and collect funds for the Serbian Army. Through her book, word of her story spread back in England.

She remained in the army even after the end of the war and became the first woman and only foreigner to have been commissioned as an officer and to command her own platoon. In late 1922, after being demobilised, she travelled between England and the recently formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later called Kingdom of Yugoslavia).
Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later called Kingdom of Yugoslavia). In 1927, she married a fellow officer, Yuri Yudenitch, a former White Russian general. Two years later, after a short period spent in France, the couple moved to Serbia and lived and remained there during the Second World War, despite the fact that Yugoslavia had been encircled by the Nazis. At the age of sixty-five, Flora Sandes decided to rejoin the fray and fight again, but her plans were cut short by her old war wound which prevented her from continuing. The Germans soon defeated the Yugoslav Army and occupied the country.

Flora Sandes and Yuri Yudenitch were soon arrested by the Gestapo and thrown into prison. Flora was released on parole after eleven days, on 4th July 1941. Two months later, after a long illness, Yuri died of a heart failure. Flora continued to report to a Gestapo officer weekly until the end of the summer of 1944, when it became clear that the Germans were losing the war. The Germans’ place was taken by the Yugoslav Partisans, a Communist-led resistance commanded by Marshal Tito. Flora Sandes saw them as just another group of oppressors: alone and impoverished, she decided to move to Rhodesia with her nephew Dick. Eventually, she was forced to return once more to England. After a brief illness, despite being still full of energy and desirous to travel and see the world, she passed away. She was eighty years old.

Although still celebrated in Serbia - where a road was named after her in 2009 and her portrait appeared on postage stamps in 2015 - her story is still virtually unknown in her own country. A movie about her life is in the works, to be soon released by Mad As Bird Films, so there is every hope that her legacy may be re-evaluated and that this inspirational figure may become a role model for young women all over the world. For people wanting to find out more about the extraordinary life of Captain Flora Sandes, Louise Miller’s book *A Fine Brother* (Richmond: Alma Books, 2012) is a great starting point and an extremely rewarding read.
Rosa Parks was born on the 4th of February 1913 to James and Leona McCauley, who named her Rosa Louise McCauley. When Rosa was two years old her parents divorced and Leona moved their family from Tuskegee, Alabama to Pine level, Alabama. There they lived with Leona’s parents, Rose and Sylvester Edwards, who were both former slaves.

With her grandparents both ex-slaves, Rosa was raised to be an advocate for racial equality. Growing up in an unaccepting society, Rosa had several experiences with racial discrimination from an early age. On one occasion her grandfather had to stand outside the house with a gun as Ku Klux Klan members patrolled the street.

Her first school was an Industrial School for Girls and she later went on to enrol in the now Alabama state university. This was an exclusively black school while she attended; however, when her grandmother became ill she had to drop out. At the age of nineteen she married Raymond Parks, a local barber. Together they joined many associations in order to prevent racial injustice.

**WHAT WAS ROSA PARKS’ BIG STEP TOWARDS CIVIL RIGHTS?**

Rosa parks kicked off the civil rights movement by refusing to give up her seat on the bus. In the 1950s buses were separated by race, white
people sat at the front and black people sat at the back. If the bus got busy then the black people would have no choice but to give up their seat as if it they did not they received a $10 fine. Rosa denied giving up her seat and was arrested with the charges of violation of the laws of segregation. Rosa, however, was not the first to refuse to give up her seat on the bus. There were two women before her, but the community leaders believed that they were not strong minded enough to gather an association of supporters. In fact, one of Rosa’s main inspirations was Claudette Colvin who was 15 when she was arrested for refusing a white person her seat on the bus: a display that moved Rosa, but unfortunately Claudette didn’t get the recognition she deserved. However, when Rosa Parks arrived in front of them she was seen as an ideal candidate with her strong-willed personality.

This helped develop the Montgomery bus boycott, which was a thirteen-month protest against the policy of racial segregation on public transport. This was basically a thirteen-month period where Rosa and all the people that she inspired didn’t get on the bus at all. The campaign lasted from December 5th 1955, the Monday after Rosa’s arrest, until the 20th of December 1956 when the Supreme Court came to the decision that segregated buses were unconstitutional.

Rosa Parks was the push that society needed to stop racial injustice and, without her, who knows where we would be. There could still be separate water fountains for white and coloured people, buses would still be separated as would schools. This is why Rosa Parks is one of the most important women in history.

XANTHE PICCHIONI
You must all know by now Henry the eighth had many wives. 6 to be exact. All of these wives were different and helped make history what it is today, but here I will be focusing on the last (and might I say the best) Catherine Parr.

Catherine Parr was born in 1512 but the exact date is unknown, but thought to be in August. She was born to Sir Thomas Parr and Maud Green. Her education was quite simple and the same of girls from well-off families (since girls at the time were seen more as objects than people) but enjoyed learning and was quite intellectual: knowing many languages fluently. It was believed that she thought she was worthier than to just do the stereotypical ‘woman’s job’ and thought she had a better life ahead of her.

Catherine Parr was married twice before her marriage to the King. Her first marriage was to Edward Borough when she was 15 and lasted 4 years before he sadly passed away in 1533. The next year Catherine Parr married John Neville who also sadly died in 1543. Neither of these marriages resulted in a child being born.

When John Neville passed away, Catherine was employed in the house of Mary. While she was in the house of Mary she met Thomas Seymour, who happened to be the brother of Jane Seymour, one of Henry’s former wives. She fell in love with him, however, while she was in the house of Tudor, she also met the King who proposed to her in the year of 1543.

Henry and Catherine got married on the 12th of July 1543 and she was a good and responsible wife to Henry. She supported his campaign to France in 1544 and helped reconcile lost ties between Henry and his daughter Elizabeth I and Mary. But, after Henry sadly passed away in 1547, she went back to her previous lover Thomas Seymour and had a child called Mary. Not much is known about Mary Seymour but it is highly suspected that she died at a young age, as many infants did at that time. Catherine Parr died on the 5th of September 1548 because of Childbirth in Sudeley Castle.

Catherine Parr is one of the most famous queens of England and Ireland and is loved and well respected by many. She may not have been a feminist in any sort of fashion but I believe she is a strong, influential woman who had many core qualities and strengths that should be admired and used in woman of all ages at any time of life.
FILM REVIEW OF 1917

With 1917, it seems that director Sam Mendes has joined the trend of event style immersive war pictures, akin to Nolan’s Dunkirk, but he is able to bring his own unique ambitions that make 1917 more than just an insignificant piece of a larger chain. The film stars the criminally underrated George MacKay and Dean-Charles Chapman, fresh-faced and an eager rising star following his swan dive from the sinking ship of Game of Thrones. They both give genuine and subdued performances that hint to great future potential in coming projects but their characters ultimately fall short as fully fleshed out beings due to a bare bones script that leaves much to be desired. It is evident that Mendes’ focus in this project was not to tell a thought provoking and thematically resonant story but rather to present a historical spectacle, a window into the past and into the shoes of a WW1 British soldier. The real star of the project is Roger Deakins, the British heavyweight champion of cinematography and frequent collaborator with Mendes, who offers some of his best work, comparable to Skyfall and Blade Runner 2049, in order to create a vibrant and boldly coloured landscape of warfare. The cinematography greatly supports the central conceit of the film, that Mendes and editor Lee Smith use long takes to give the film the appearance of a single long shot. This is clearly done to inspire the immersion of the viewer as Mendes retains a ‘boots on the ground’ shot perspective as he follows his protagonists through the trenches and into no man’s land and beyond. This style of filmmaking is hardly unique, Alejandro Iñárritu’s film Birdman had a similar presentation and took home Best Picture at the 2014 Academy Awards, but Mendes uses it to great effect as the long shots emphasise the tension in each scene, as though the viewer is stuck hanging onto each agonising moment until its drawn-out conclusion with no hope of respite. A slight clash with the realism of the film’s aesthetic is the stunt casting, as Mendes hires big names like Benedict Cumberbatch and Mark Strong for little reason other than buking up the importance of bit roles. It’s difficult to maintain the illusion that one is actually experiencing WW1 when the viewer thinks, ‘Oh hey, it’s Moriarty from Sherlock’, separating them from the realism that Mendes pursues. The film is very comparable to Dunkirk, which suffers from similar stunt casting but effectively pursues a recreation of the tension and feeling of war. While ultimately the imbalance of focus, spectacle over substance, makes the film the lesser of the giants of immersive historical pictures, like Amadeus and Russian Ark, a film which incidentally uses a similar single shot style, it is still an engaging and worthwhile film that leaves one breathless through technical mastery of cinematography, directing and editing.
THE FIRST WOMAN IN WESTMINSTER

ALICE NEWSHOLME

Shortly after 2pm on the 28th of November in 1919, a tram conductor in Plymouth made an announcement to his passengers. “She’s in” he shouted, having heard the decibels of an ecstatic crowd in the distance. Lady Nancy Astor had been elected to serve as the Member of Parliament for Plymouth Sutton in Devon, and she then became the first female MP in British history to take a seat in the House of Commons.

Astor took on the seat from her husband, Waldorf Astor, who had succeeded his father’s peerage following his death and therefore moved automatically to the House of Lords. Consequently, he had to relinquish his seat of Plymouth Sutton in the House of Commons, triggering a by-election. With Waldorf having to move ‘upstairs’ to the House of Lords, Lady Astor decided to contest the vacant Parliamentary seat as the previous year had seen the 1918 Parliament Qualification of Women Act passed, which allowed women to become MPs. Astor stood as a Unionist candidate (now the Conservative Party), despite the fact that many had reservations, including the Unionist Party Chairman Sir George Younger. Despite criticism, Astor was at her best during electioneering. Her natural wit and charm captivated her to voters of all classes, though she was hindered in the popular campaign for her known opposition to alcohol consumption and ignorance of current political issues. Her informal style baffled yet amused the British public. By rallying the supporters of the current government, moderating her prohibition views and using women’s meetings to gain the support of female voters, Astor won the election, beating her main rival Liberal Isaac Foot.

In Parliament, Nancy Astor needed to have all her wits about her to survive in the male dominated arena of politics. On 24\textsuperscript{th} February 1920 Astor stood alone in a sea of almost 500 male politicians and delivered her maiden speech. Bravely she referred to the fact that some women over the age of 30 could now vote in Britain, stating that ‘You must remember that women have got a vote now and we mean to use it, and use it wisely.’ She also spoke about the perils of drinking: emphasising the damage it caused to women and children, as well as the economic cost to the country, and appealing for stricter restrictions on the drinking hours that had come into effect during the First World War.

In Parliament, Nancy Astor needed to have all her wits about her to survive in the male dominated arena of politics. On 24\textsuperscript{th} February 1920 Astor stood alone in a sea of almost 500 male
politicians and delivered her maiden speech. Bravely she referred to the fact that some women over the age of 30 could now vote in Britain, stating that ‘You must remember that women have got a vote now and we mean to use it, and use it wisely.’ She also spoke about the perils of drinking: emphasising the damage it caused to women and children, as well as the economic cost to the country, and appealing for stricter restrictions on the drinking hours that had come into effect during the First World War.

During the initial years of her political career Nancy supported lowering the voting age of women to 21 (an Act that was later passed in 1928) and proposed raising the age of alcohol to 18 after it was set at 14 in 1901 (an Act that was passed in a 1923 Private Member’s Bill and which remains to this day.) Astor spent almost two years as the only woman in the House of Commons against a backdrop of sexism and, often, outright resentment. Active both inside and outside of government, she supported welfare reforms, equal voting rights and was also supportive of other female MPs, regardless of political party. During this period Nancy also advocated the development and expansion of nursery schools for children’s education and she worked to recruit women into the civil service, the police force, education reform and the House of Lords. She was also concerned about the treatment of juvenile victims of crime.

In the 1930s, Nancy and her husband spoke out against the rise of Nazism in Germany, and objected to engaging in a Second World War. The couple both backed Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement policy in reducing the threat of entering into a war with Germany; however, after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, Nancy began to lose popularity among her fellow MPs. She made a number of longwinded speeches, including one in which she accused the foreign office of being manipulated by Catholics, whom she loathed. Nevertheless, despite opposing the conflict, Nancy contributed to the war effort by running a hospital for Canadian soldiers.

After 26 years in the House of Commons and seven successful elections, Nancy retired in 1945. The end of her parliamentary career was shadowed by rumours of German sympathies and a subsequent loss in popularity, but her legacy was evident: in that same year, 24 women were elected and took their seats in parliament. It continues today, a century after she took her seat for the first time, with the unveiling of a bronze statue of Astor outside her former home. Nancy Astor had to withstand the jeers and bawdy jokes of male colleagues - and the lack of female toilets - when she arrived in the Commons in 1919, but had paved the way for women MPs.
Sappho was an ancient Greek poet (c.620-570 BC) from the island of Lesbos. Her work is focused on romantic love, desire and loss. Her poetry would have been sung to the accompaniment of a lyre, aided by her use of ‘Sapphic Meter’. Many deem Sappho as ‘the first lesbian’ (with the name lesbian originating from the island Lesbos) with her poetry focussing on her romantic desire towards women. Over time, Sappho’s sexuality has been widely debated by Classicists; however, most modern Classicists accept her homosexuality as the most natural interpretation of her work. Tragically, the majority of Sappho’s work has been lost over time, with only roughly 650 lines of her poetry still surviving, of which only one poem (Ode to Aphrodite) is completed.

Jane Austen (1775-1817) was a Regency novelist who published six novels, two posthumously, depicting the life of the upper middle-class within 19th century England. Her first three novels contain prevalent literary satire alongside her depiction of Victorian society, while in her later three novels the comedy shifts in focus to the comedy of the characters and society. Her work particularly satirises the genre of the sentimental novel which had risen in popularity at the time. Her novels often explore the ideas of the dependency of the dependence of women on marriage at the time to secure their social and economic position.

Agatha Christie (1890-1976) was known for her detective novels, of which she published 66. Christie was part of the ‘Golden Age of Detective Fiction’ and massively influenced this genre. She is listed as the best-selling novelist of all time, with popular characters such as Poirot and Miss Marple, and has sold roughly 2 billion copies worldwide. Her work estimated as the third most widely published, after Shakespeare’s works and the bible. Christie was also a playwright, with her play Mousetrap setting the world record for the longest continues run at one theatre.

C. Bronte & Shelley
Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855) and Mary Shelley (1797-1851) were two authors who made significant contributions to the prominent gothic genre. While Bronte started as a poet, she shifted to writing prose fiction during the 1830s and 40s. One of her most famous novels, Jane Eyre, incorporates elements of the gothic alongside the story of the conflict and struggles of a woman at the time. Mary Shelley also used the gothic, as well as influencing the genres of horror and even science fiction. Reception of Frankenstein was widely varied, with some critics fascinated by Shelley’s creation, while others found it horrifying and even criticised it due to the fact that it was written by a woman. The novel comments upon human nature and the opposing forces of ambition and morality.
ELIOT & BARRET BROWNING

George Eliot (1819-1880) and Elizabeth Barret Browning (1806-1861) were prominent Victorian authors/poets. George Eliot was the penname for Mary Ann Evans. While there were female authors published at the time using their original names, she wanted to move away from the way the public viewed and received women’s literature, as well as her identity as a critic and editor. The majority of her work is set in provincial areas of England and focusses on giving insight into the characters. Elizabeth Barret Browning was known for experimenting with the poetic forms that became characteristic of the Victorian era. She frequently utilised the ballad form and sonnets, influencing poets such as Christina Rossetti and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

DE BEAUVOIR & WOOLF

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) were two prominent feminist authors of the 20th century. Virginia Woolf is considered to be one of the most important modernist authors of the 20th century, and was one of the first to utilise the experimental technique of stream of consciousness, such as in her novel Mrs Dalloway. Aside from her role within fiction, Woolf was also an essayist and wrote on ideas such as pacifism and feminism. Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own, explores the opportunities available to women, compared to men, and what they require to gain greater intellectual independence. De Beauvoir’s The Second Sex was published in 1949 and has been regarded as a starting point of second wave feminism. Within the book she argues how men are viewed as the ‘default’ within culture and women were viewed as the lesser sex.

CARTER & ATWOOD

Angela Carter (1940-1992) and Margaret Atwood (1939-present) are two modern novelists. Angela Carter’s works, such as The Bloody Chamber, take on the influences of the gothic, fantasy and fairy tales and shape them within her narratives to convey many feminist, and subversive messages. Margaret Atwood was a very significant author within the dystopian genre. The Handmaid’s Tale, comments upon society and the position of women at the time. Atwood recently published a sequel to The Handmaid’s Tale: The Testaments, which received mixed reviews and further commented upon politics and society within a developed modern context.

MORRISON

Toni Morrison (1931-2019) was an American novelist. Her work focusses on the African American experience and incorporates a wide range of influences (such as post-modernism, modernism and magical realism) within her work. Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. Her work explores the idea of black identity within America and the social difficulties faced throughout history. Beloved pulls upon the real-world story of Margaret Garner and explores the life of women post-slavery and their experiences.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Other notable female authors throughout history are Christina Rossetti, a Victorian poet (though she opposed women’s suffrage); Sylvia Plath, another influential poet; Maya Angelou, an American poet, singer and Civil Rights activist; the American Poet Emily Dickinson; and Betty Freidan, an American feminist author.