GLADYS ARNOLD: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in History

University of Regina

by

Joanna Leach

Regina, Saskatchewan

December, 2008

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-55018-2
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-55018-2

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Joanna Marie Leach, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in History, has presented a thesis titled, ***Gladys Arnold: The Formative Years,*** in an oral examination held on October 20, 2008. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner:	Dr. Mary Hampton, Department of Psychology, Luther College
Supervisor:	Dr. James M. Pitsula, Department of History
Committee Member:	Dr. J.W. Brennan, Department of History
Committee Member:	Dr. Dawn R. Flood, Department of History, Campion College
Chair of Defense:	Dr. Kathleen Wall, Department of English

ABSTRACT

Gladys Marguerite Arnold (1905-2002) earned a place in Canadian history for her work as a foreign correspondent during the months preceding the outbreak of World War II. Arnold is well-remembered for her role as the only Canadian correspondent in Paris in 1939, and for her work with the Free French movement in Canada during the war. She was formally recognized for her commitment to the French people in 1971, when she was made a member of the Legion of Honor by the government of France.

This thesis examines Gladys Arnold's formative years in order to understand and appreciate her documented achievements. Women of her time were restricted by a society unwilling to recognize their movement into the public sphere or their ascent within the patriarchal social order. Arnold, however, could envision no life for herself within the domestic sphere, and refused to be constrained by gender discrimination or social norms. She was resolute in her goal to achieve success as a journalist, confident that her own abilities and work ethic would enable her to move beyond traditional expectations for women.

Utilizing heretofore untapped sources, consideration is given to Arnold's life as a young child on the prairies, and the development of her character as she matured, for the purpose of determining the foundations for Arnold's strength of character and her unwillingness to conform. Her commitment to individualism, egalitarianism, and libertarianism was unmistakable in her writing and served as a touchstone for her opinions and life choices, thus explaining her eventual success. For two years she wrote a column for the women's page of the Regina *Leader-Post* titled, "It's a Secret, But...," and combined with private letters retrieved from the Gladys Arnold Papers, these sources offer a wealth of information on Arnold's life, beliefs and moral fibre, as well as providing a glimpse at political, economic, cultural and social issues of her time.

Gladys Arnold matured with a clear sense of purpose, willing to challenge mainstream opinion in order to make a difference beyond the boundaries of marriage and motherhood. Her well-known achievements may now be seen as the product of her fortitude, unwilling as she was to sacrifice her own principles and standards despite pressures to conform. Arnold demonstrated strength and courage as she worked toward that which appeared to be, at the time, unattainable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was assisted by Scholarships provided by the Government of Saskatchewan through the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Department of History of the University of Regina. I wish to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. James M. Pitsula, for his enduring encouragement, critical comments, and support for the completion of this project.

I wish to thank Professor Janice McKinnon, not only for her letter of recommendation which was critical for the commencement of this project, but also for her enthusiasm and inspirational teaching during my undergraduate years.

I wish to acknowledge Marilyn Bickford's assistance in guiding me through the administrative processes from the beginning, and for her superior formatting talents, patiently tolerating my lack thereof.

I am grateful to the University of Regina Archives' staff for their unending willingness to retrieve boxes and files of information contained within the Gladys Arnold Papers.

Of course, without the generosity of Gladys Arnold herself, in gifting her personal papers to the University of Regina, I would not have had the most gratifying experience of sharing in the life of this extraordinarily independent and egalitarian woman.

And finally, I would like to thank my family for their sincere interest in my work, offering encouragement by their willingness to adapt. In particular I must recognize Brent Leach, who understood the importance of this project from the beginning; Sonja Woods, whose opinion I trusted to be unbiased and insightful; and Keith Barton, for facilitating my endless hours in the archives and library.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Across the domed sky this eve
Wild autumn's golden banner flung
And etched in black intricacies
The trees stand out against the sun.
And I like some mad gypsy girl
Would dance abandoned on the down.
A mad thought that,
For one who must
Sedately walk about the town.

(Gladys Arnold, "Wild Wishes," 1922)[1]

Gladys Arnold was seventeen years old when she wrote "Wild Wishes." Her childhood had been difficult and she matured into adulthood without a clear sense of her place in the world. While she came to believe wholly in her abilities and intelligence, Arnold struggled to identify her role in society. She had grown up feeling as though she did not belong, her aspirations and interests different from other girls her own age. As an adult, Arnold worked to reconcile her own ambitions with societal expectations, trying to ease her sense of displacement. Despite her inner struggles, she was inspired and excited by all that the world had to offer, and it was her intense curiosity that guided her toward her goals. Gladys Arnold eventually followed her "wild wishes" for a life where she could dance freely, secure in the knowledge that she had created for herself a life of meaning.

Gladys Marguerite Arnold (1905-2002) first attracted the attention of historians with the publication of her book, *One Woman's War* (1987). In her memoir she related her experiences as a young journalist in Paris prior to World War II, and her subsequent work with the Free French Information Service (FFIS) during the war years. Her narrative is the means by which historians have defined Gladys Arnold. She is now referred to as a "war correspondent," in the works of history published since the release of *One Woman's War*. Marjory Lang, author of *Women Who Made the News*, covered

[1]University of Regina Archives, Gladys Arnold Papers, 98-54, (hereafter: Gladys Arnold Papers), Box 14, File 203.

Arnold's adventures in Europe. She aptly described the journalist as the, "Paris correspondent for the Canadian Press in the late 1930's," who "happened to be in the right place at the right time."[2] Kay Rex, author and historian, described Arnold, and her fellow reporters at the *Leader-Post* in the early 1930's, as being "curious about the international scene,"[3] as an explanation for Arnold's motivation behind her European trip. Similarly, the *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* concentrated primarily on her contributions as a foreign correspondent and the work she did for the FFIS.[4]

However, Arnold's career began before she became a foreign correspondent for the Canadian Press. Through a study of her formative years,[5] this project offers a different perspective on Gladys Arnold, her life, and her accomplishments. As she briefly mentioned during *Eyewitness to War* (2002), the Saskatchewan-produced film documenting her European experiences, she started her journalism career in 1930 with the Regina *Leader-Post*, where she worked as a "reporter, columnist and editorial writer."[6] She was hired as secretary to the editor, though it was not long before she was promoted to reporter. Three years later, Arnold was writing her own daily column for the women's page entitled "It's a Secret, But...." Her column ran from January 1934 to August 1935, at which time she also acted as the women's page editor.

In the history of journalism, very few female reporters aspired to write for the women's pages, thought to be trivial and of only minimal importance to the newspaper's

---

[2]Marjory Lang, *Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada 1880-1945* (Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press, 1999), 276.

[3]Kay Rex, *No Daughter of Mine: The Women and History of the Canadian Women's Press Club 1904-1971*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 37.

[4]"Arnold, Gladys," *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, 2005.

[5]The term "formative years" is meant to define the years during which Arnold's character was shaped, and her opinions developed, in response to circumstances of her life prior to her departure for Europe at the age of thirty. This definition is loosely based on the legal definition of "formative years,": "That age which follows puberty and precedes the age of majority." see http://legal-dicitonary.thefreedictionary.com/FORMATIVE), and the medical definition of "formative years,": "The period of physical and psychological development from the onset of puberty to complete growth and maturity." See http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Formativeyears).

[6]*Eyewitness to War*, video production, prod. Lori Kuffner and Barb Campbell, 2002.

content.[7] Yet it was extremely difficult to break through gender barriers for advancement to areas reserved for male reporters. Although the early years of the twentieth century saw the progression of the feminist cause, as women made social, political and economic gains toward gender equality, the newspaper industry was one of the last to accept women into its ranks and then it was only with reluctance.[8]

As Canada underwent a transformation from a largely rural population to an increasingly industrial, urban society, some women became anxious about the resulting negative consequences. Although women from different classes, regions, and ethnic backgrounds were concerned with different issues, most agreed that female suffrage was the means to bring about change.[9] Some women, often referred to as "maternal" or "social" feminists, argued that the extension of women's values and mothering nature into the public sphere, specifically the political arena, would allow women to safeguard and nurture the moral well-being of society.[10] Others believed that men and women were basically the same and as such should have equal rights.[11]

By 1922, in all of Canada except Quebec, the early feminists had won their battle.[12] In their movement for women's right to vote, as well as other social reforms on their agenda, the work of women activists served to weaken the gendered division of labour upon which society was based. As women's political rights were secured, and their participation in both higher education and the labour force increased,[13] the social

---

[7]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 149-150.

[8]Lang, *Women Who Wrote the News*, 147.

[9] Some of the issues concerning female reformers included alcohol abuse, prostitution, gambling, health and housekeeping standards, and property rights. For further discussion see: Alison Prentice, et al eds. *Canadian Women-A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996), 189-242.

[10] Ibid. 237.

[11] Ibid. 238

[12] Female suffrage in Quebec was not granted until 1940. See note #42 for provincial dates of female suffrage. Ibid. 234.

[13] Between 1920 and 1930, the number of full-time female university students doubled, from 3,716 to 7,428.Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled - Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 24. Female participation in the labour force, for women aged 20-24, increased from 39.8% to 46.9%, and from 19.5% to 27.9% for women aged 25-34. Ibid., 43.

landscape changed. Traditional gender boundaries between the public and private spheres blurred as women entered historically male dominated areas.

Arnold, and other women coming of age in the interwar years, benefited from advances made by maternal and "equal rights" feminists. There were increased opportunities available to women beyond the domestic realm, and some degree of independence prior to marriage had become socially acceptable.[14] However, various forms of discrimination against women remained an integral part of the socio-economic condition, and the field of journalism was particularly adverse to recognizing women's right to equal opportunity. Women were accepted as journalists only when the women's pages became a necessary addition to the newspaper to attract commercial sponsors, and advancement beyond the women's pages was a rare occurrence, often dependent on determination and/or luck.[15]

Gladys Arnold was one of those women who began her career restricted to the women's page department, but overcame gender limitations to experience journalism as a war correspondent. The purpose of this thesis is to study the early decades of Gladys Arnold's life, and her work at the *Leader-Post*, in an attempt to understand her success as a journalist beyond not only the women's page, but also the boundaries of her own country. This area of her life has been left unexplored and yet aspects of her formative years lend insight to the direction her life took in later years. The thesis asks the question: what circumstances, or personal characteristics, or a combination of both, allowed a girl from small-town Saskatchewan to make her way to the upper echelons of print journalism, considering herself on par among male foreign correspondents in London at the outbreak of World War II? At the same time it follows Arnold's course as she came to an understanding about her own character, where she belonged, and what her

---

[14]Ibid.

[15]Barbara Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom: The Journalism of Kathleen Blake Coleman* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989), 55.

country and citizenship meant to her.

The answers to these questions are found in two previously unexamined sources: Arnold's own recollections, found in letters to her mother and other acquaintances; and the column she wrote for the women's page of the *Leader-Post*, "It's a Secret, But...." The letters offer a wealth of information on Arnold's early childhood and it becomes clear that the death of her father, when she was only nine years old, and the subsequent breakdown of her family unit, had a profound effect on the woman Arnold would become. Not only did she come to depend on herself and her abilities at an early age, but the loneliness and lack of love she felt without her family led to her interest in journalism. She became absorbed with books and writing as a means of filling the emptiness in her life and as a young woman she was quite sure that, in some manner, her passion for the written word would lead to the achievement of her goals.[16] Arnold was determined not only to travel and see the world, but also to make a meaningful contribution through her writing. It was clear that she would not be content to follow the majority of women of her time into a life of domesticity.

Her columns, the second primary source used extensively throughout this thesis, provide a look into the character of Gladys Arnold as she matured during her mid to late twenties. Most importantly, the columns qualify her opinions on a variety of subjects, through her seemingly honest and straightforward style of journalism. Central to Arnold's worldview was her belief in the importance of justice and equality in all matters, from women's issues to world politics. She expected her readers to emulate her libertarianism, while giving serious thought to topics she determined to be of relevance, not only to women but to the world at large.

Arnold's personal life experience is also considered within the broader social context, particularly in terms of gender issues. Through "It's a Secret, But...," she

---

[16]Gladys Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," 17 October 1937, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

offered her interpretation of the gender-based limitations facing women while, at the same time, revealing her personal sense of displacement as she struggled to reconcile her own ambitions with social norms and expectations. Arnold's "equal rights" feminism, her belief in the inherent equality of all men and women, with merit, not gender, necessarily serving as the basis for advancement in all areas, is discussed in relation to the prevailing feminist thought of her time.[17] Maternal feminism, based on preconceived assumptions regarding women's characteristics, reinforced motherhood as the ultimate female goal. Arnold insisted on freedom of choice for all individuals, and would not accept less in her own life.[18] She was adamantly opposed to the discrimination women faced in both the public and private spheres, and felt alienated from women who were accepting of the status quo.[19]

Arnold grew up feeling that she did not belong. She was uncomfortable with the families she boarded with, she distanced herself from her peers because of different interests and circumstances, and, as an adult, she felt different from other women in terms of personal values, beliefs, and lifestyle. Both socially and professionally, where the male-dominated news industry was traditionally opposed to female journalists, Arnold seemed to exist on the margins. Unable to reconcile herself to gender-defined roles, or women's lower status in the patriarchal social order, she felt isolated by her convictions and ambitions.

Furthermore, Arnold came to question the meaning of her citizenship to Canada. She was unsure that she truly understood the nation's complexities in terms of French/English issues, as two distinct cultures tried to exist as one country. Without that comprehension she could not feel wholly Canadian. In particular, Arnold felt ignorant regarding the French culture in her country. She believed it to be unique in terms of

---

[17]Prentice, et al, *Canadian Women*, 313-318.
[18]Gladys Arnold, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 March 1934, 7.
[19]Gladys Arnold, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 3 March 1934, 7.

language, traditions and customs, and as such could not understand how Quebec could be a part of Canada. Without a real understanding of what it was to be Canadian, Arnold could not feel as though she belonged.[20]

This thesis suggests that, from the time she was a young girl, Arnold felt different, socially and professionally, excluded on the basis of interests, values and gender. She attempted to reconcile her inner need to belong, to feel a part of a "family,"[21] with her absolute unwillingness to compromise on her values. It was her inherent strength of character, combined with a great curiosity about the world around her, that allowed Gladys Arnold to find success on her own terms. She refused to be restricted by patriarchal social norms, and assumed that she would advance on the basis of her strong work ethic and personal attributes. Through her life experiences, Arnold eventually came to understand and appreciate her Canadian citizenship, and created for herself a life that honoured her convictions while fulfilling her inner need to live with purpose. It mattered not that she was male or female, only that through the use of her talents, and her experiences overseas, she was able to serve her country as interpreter between English and French Canadians.

In order to appreciate the life of Gladys Arnold, and therefore the significance of this thesis, it is important to briefly consider Arnold's achievements after she left the *Leader-Post* in August 1935. As a young woman from the prairies, with an unsettled childhood as her foundation, and no professional training in journalism, Arnold's success at advancing beyond the women's pages was in itself an accomplishment. The courage and determination she demonstrated as war descended upon Europe, though presented factually and without glorification in *One Woman's War*, are traits for which she deserves to be respected and remembered.

---

[20]Gladys Arnold, *One Woman's War: A Canadian Reporter with the Free French* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1987), 155.

[21]Gladys Arnold, "The First Five Years," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 205.

Arnold left the *Leader-Post* in August 1935 and journeyed to Europe the following month, planning to support herself on the small income promised her from the newspaper in return for articles on her travels. The Canadian Press hired her in 1936 to served as their Paris correspondent and by 1939, when she returned to Canada for a short visit with her family, Arnold was the only accredited Canadian reporter in France.[22] Determined to fulfill her journalism ambitions, she went back to Paris in October 1939, shortly before the Germans invaded France. In her memoir, Arnold gave a comprehensive description of her forced evacuation from Paris, along with millions of refugees, as they moved together toward safety at the coastline. She described her passage to England from Bordeaux aboard a small ship and the desperation she felt at leaving France, knowing many of her friends had stayed behind.[23]

Arnold was outraged as she gradually absorbed the horrific reality of what had happened. Although she had anticipated war in Europe, Hitler's swift and successful campaign through Poland and France came as a shock. The capitulation of the French government on 25 June 1940 was cause for further disbelief, as Arnold and many others had maintained faith in the strength of the French army.[24] Furthermore, she felt guilt and remorse at leaving behind those people who refused to evacuate. She knew she had no choice,[25] but to abandon her friends was devastating for her. After her safe arrival in London, Arnold continued to work for the Canadian Press until she was sent back to Canada in June 1940.[26]

Gladys Arnold was devoted to the people of France. She had spent the first four years of her European visit in Paris, learning the language and culture. She made a home

---

[22]Gladys Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 3.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., 62.

[25]At one point Gladys lost her identification papers and therefore risked imprisonment as a belligerent. Ibid., 35.

[26]The Canadian Press sent Arnold to Canada with a group of English children who were being relocated for the duration of the war. She was to report on their story but she knew she would never get back to Europe, given the restrictions of wartime travel. Ibid., 84.

among the Parisians and came to respect and adore them. Her shared experience of the Nazi invasion and her admiration for the French people's courage and strength as they were driven from their homes, strengthened the bond. She explained her decision to join the Free French movement in Canada as being a natural consequence of her commitment to France:

> "Some people have asked ... why I have joined the Free French movement in Canada ... My answer was that I know that were England ever occupied there would be somewhere a free legion of Britishers fighting on. I know that were my own country ... ever invaded every Canadian worth his salt who could escape would be somewhere in the world in a Free Canadian legion struggling to liberate Canada."[27]

The remainder of the book details the rise of the Free French army under General Charles de Gaulle and her own involvement with the cause. De Gaulle, though relatively unknown in 1940, piqued Arnold's interest when, following the fall of Paris, he declared, "France has lost the battle! But France has not lost the war!"[28] Arnold, as the only French-speaking journalist in the London Press Office, took advantage of her status to arrange an interview shortly after she arrived in London.[29] The impression he made on her changed the course of her life. She was impressed not only by de Gaulle's confidence, but also by his vision for the future of France. Because she believed that he and the Free French represented France's best chance to recover the freedom of its people, she committed herself to his service. After she was unexpectedly ordered to leave London in 1940, Arnold joined the Free French Information Service (FFIS) in Canada. She worked tirelessly for the duration of the war, raising awareness and support for de Gaulle and the Free French.

Arnold was so involved with the FFIS that she felt as though she had isolated herself from Ottawa, from Canada and from everything going on around her. In her memoir she included an experience that brought her life into focus. Her gratitude for

---

[27]Helen Murphy, "Women in the War," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 676.
[28]Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 78.
[29]Ibid., 79.

peace in Canada and the safety of its cities, compared to the destruction of war-torn Europe, was momentarily overwhelming and revealed to Arnold that she had, in fact, reconciled her feelings regarding her citizenship. She had finally found her "home," her place in the world. As she explained in *One Woman's War*,

> At dusk I walked up Parliament Hill, admiring the beauty of the sixteen-sided library and gazed down the Ottawa River ... In the purple twilight I was so thrilled I could hardly contain it. I was *home*. Ottawa was my home as much as any other part of Canada. All of Canada belonged to me and never would I feel an outsider in any part of it.[30]

And because she accepted "all" of Canada as her home, Arnold made a further commitment to her francophone compatriots. She felt that her experience with the French people, having lived and worked in a French environment for ten years, was a gift that she could share with all Canadians. She felt qualified and, indeed, responsible, to act as mediator for Canada's two cultures once the war was over. She wanted Canadians to come to an understanding about their country as she had:

> The whole question of bilingualism and mutual understanding of the rich endowment Canadians had in possessing two cultures suddenly became very important to me. If the size of our country with its different needs, ideas, and attitudes in the various regions tended to misunderstanding, we still had some common experiences to glue us together. Cultural activities, the arts and languages know no boundaries; they express the soul of a people ...
>
> I knew that France had given me a great gift ... I thought I understood the heritage of my French-speaking fellow Canadians and why they clung to it so fiercely. I would always be grateful to France, to the example of my French colleagues whose terrible pain and grief over the loss of their country had caused me to reflect and discover exactly who I was ....[31]

From this sense of purpose came Gladys Arnold's decision to work with the information service at the French Embassy in Ottawa, until her retirement in 1971. However, she never forgot her war experience, offering her perception of world conflict at the conclusion of her memoir, "Instinctively that V-E Day I was aware that, even though the end had come to another war in Europe, the ideas lived on and we could be challenged

---

[30]Ibid., 155.

[31]Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 156.

again."[32]

The Canadian media received *One Woman's War* favourably. William French of the *Globe and Mail* described it as "a compelling memoir,"[33] and the *Montreal Gazette* wrote, "*One Woman's War* will undoubtedly earn a place as one of the most valuable personal documents of the Second World War."[34] The Canadian Press captured most effectively Arnold's purpose for writing the book: "Not only an absorbing account of her wartime experiences, but an exploration of what it means to be Canadian."[35]

Following the publication of Arnold's book, documentary makers Lori Kuffner and Barb Campbell put her story on film in *Eyewitness to War: The Gladys Arnold Story* (2002). The award-winning film captured Arnold's spirit as she recalled her personal memories of the years building up to World War II. She had travelled through Germany and Italy two years prior and witnessed the beginnings of the Nazi war factories and the power of Hitler and Mussolini over the people. Kuffner and Campbell revealed Arnold's anguish as she recalled the circumstances under which millions of refugees escaped France, and her faith at the time in de Gaulle's ability to raise an army to fight for France.

As a result of her own book and the film that followed, Gladys Arnold has become known for her European experience. It was clearly that part of her life of which she was most proud and, justifiably, wanted to share. For a woman, coming of age in the 1930s, her achievements were remarkable. To be the only accredited Canadian journalist in Paris at the outbreak of World War II, and bilingual as well, has made Arnold deserving of the recognition she has received. Her dedication to the French people and the contributions she made to the French Resistance, as well as her continued work with the French Embassy following the end of the war, brought her further acknowledgment.

---

[32]Ibid., 221.

[33]William French, "*One Woman's War*," review for *Globe and Mail*, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[34]Review by *Montreal Gazette*, in Arnold, *One Woman's War*, cover.

[35]Review by Canadian Press, in Arnold, *One Woman's War*, inside cover.

In 1971 Arnold was awarded the Legion of Honour by the French government, the country's most prestigious tribute.[36]

Detailing the personal and social circumstances of Gladys Arnold's formative years allows for insight into the life of one woman, the lives of women collectively who came of age during the early twentieth century, and the conflicts between the two. Chapter One discusses the conditions of Arnold's childhood, growing up on the Canadian prairies amid family tragedy and personal challenges. Her early years were not easy and her personal letters and papers reveal quite explicitly the loneliness and confusion felt by the young girl. At the age of nine, burdened with a grief and emptiness unusual for a young girl, Arnold was forced to grow up quickly and came to rely on herself for her own survival and happiness. She discovered that books could help fill the void in her life where her family had once been, and she became fascinated with the knowledge she acquired regarding the world around her.

Through her reading and personal writing, as she advanced through her teen years, Arnold gained a greater understanding of herself as she replaced social interaction with individual writing pursuits. Her diaries and letters were the means for her to share her thoughts and feelings, and she gradually came to believe that she was different from other girls and women. She was apparently not interested in the games and play of her peers, preferring "authors to people,"[37] and revelling in the new ideas to which she was exposed through literature. As she grew up, Arnold continued to find motivation and satisfaction in the pursuit of her own goals, not to be swayed by the domestic aspirations of the majority of women her age. With social engagements serving as the focal point of their lives, it seemed difficult for her to imagine that she would ever find common ground with them.

---

[36]Alixe Carter, "France Honors Gladys Arnold," *Ottawa Journal*, 12 March 1971 in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[37]Gladys Arnold, "A BELATED TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER," Poetry Manuscript, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 14, File 203.

Gladys Arnold was determined to incorporate her love for writing and for travel into her life. Far from parochial in her ways, she lived and wrote with inquisitiveness, anticipating all that waited for her beyond the boundaries of Saskatchewan. As she reached maturity, Arnold refused to settle for any situation that did not allow her to work toward those goals. Chapter One concludes with a look at her work experiences following her high school graduation. A brief discussion of women's historical involvement in newspaper journalism is included as explanatory background to Arnold's experiences in print journalism.

Chapter Two continues to examine the development of Arnold's character, with a focus on her experiences as a young journalist, hired by the *Leader-Post* when she was twenty-five years old. It becomes evident that pivotal to the unfolding of her life during her formative years was Arnold's ongoing search for a place where she felt she fit in, unconditionally accepted for who she was.[38] It was at the *Leader-Post* that she began to feel a sense of belonging and purpose, as her employers, perhaps unknowingly, offered her the security of family. They mentored Arnold through her first journalism experience, and she thrived both professionally and personally under their guidance.

After two years of general reporting for the *Leader-Post*, Arnold published her first daily column for the women's page on 3 November 1933; on 6 January 1934 it became a regular feature until 25 August 1935 when it abruptly stopped without explanation. While her personal letters are primarily written after her experience at the newspaper, her column reveals facets of Arnold, and her life, while she was developing her skills as a journalist. It provides insight into the growth of Arnold's character, and presents her opinions and views on several issues, as she matured and readied herself for her European experience. Although Gladys did not consider her columns important in contrast to the vast amount of work she had accomplished by the time her book was

---

[38]Gladys Arnold recalled, "Because I had known very little family life after the death of my father ... for some subconscious reason I instinctively sought out a family and attached myself to it for warmth ..." "A Lamp in the Dark," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 205.

published, they allow for her life to be considered as an integral part of the society in which she lived, a society that was just beginning to accept women's ventures into the public sphere. Her challenges to not only women's discrimination, both socially and in the workforce, but to all injustices and inequities, speak volumes as to her strength of character.

Arnold's writing style, as revealed through "It's a Secret, But...," was unique. In order to understand the difference between her approach and that of others, consideration is given to the careers of two former women's page columnists, Jane Cunningham Croly and Kate Simpson Hayes. While the majority of columnists were apt to follow traditional guidelines for the women's pages, Arnold was more concerned with providing articles that would, in her estimation, broaden the perspectives of her readers. Arnold was determined to give her readers "something a little meatier" to digest,[39] and Chapter Two concludes with an explanation of her freedom to do so.

Chapters Three and Four offer an analysis of the columns themselves. An initial perusal of the 359 columns that Arnold wrote for the *Leader-Post* was conducted in order to gain an overview of Arnold's style, as well as to ascertain what, if any, prominent themes existed in her writing. Detailed notes were taken on each column during the first reading, with particular attention given to recurrent themes; the content and intensity of Arnold's opinions on various subjects; and her style of writing, noting characteristics such as sarcasm, humour, repetition, and tone.

In the second stage of content analysis, a data base was created using the information compiled from the initial reading. That part of one column which focused on the same topic was labelled a "segment," and was recorded under one of several broad categories, with the date and specifics of the segment documented.[40] Eight subjects

---

[39]George Bentley, "Arnold Retired But Not Retiring," *Leader-Post*, 24 October 1987, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[40]For example, one column may have contained two segments: one on the lack of women elected to Parliament, and one on a particular concert being held in Regina. The first would be recorded under

emerged most frequently from the 481 segments written, and were therefore used as the means to divide and discuss the columns: Women's Issues, Regina/ Saskatchewan, Arts and Culture, Politics, International News, Advice, Beauty/Fashion, Youth. The rest of the segments in the data base, not specific to any of the eight subject headings, were allocated to the heading "General." Finally, percentages were calculated in order to make the information more meaningful.[41]

Specifically, Chapter Three focuses on the articles in which Arnold was concerned with issues affecting women. Of the segments she wrote, 125, or 26%, concentrated on women, their activities, and factors affecting their lives. Given that "It's A Secret, But..." was written for the women's pages, this percentage may not seem large. Nonetheless, it is significant that the eighty Beauty/Fashion segments were not included in this category and that, therefore, Arnold allotted one quarter of her column's space to issues affecting women's lives, not their looks. Clearly her interests were far removed from cosmetics and skirt lengths, as she wrote with more concern for women's status in patriarchal society than with how their beauty could sustain that position.

With regards to gender issues, Arnold was primarily concerned with social and economic changes that could potentially raise the status of women. She was insistent that the only way for gender inequalities to be rectified was for women to make use of the opportunities opening up to them. It was a time of change for Canadian women, and as they moved into the public sphere,[42] and Arnold predicted they had further gains to make

---

Women's Issues, noting both the specifics of the article and Arnold's opinion if she offered one; the second segment would be recorded under Arts and Culture, noting the specifics and Arnold's opinions contained within.

[41]In instances where one segment was relevant to more than one category, it was placed according to the theme of primary importance. The breakdown of segments was as follows: Women's Issues 26%, Regina 13%, Arts 12%, Politics 4%, International 8%, Advice 4%, Fashion 6%, Youth 5%, General 22%. Percentages calculated by author.

[42]Between 1920 and 1930, the number of full-time female university students doubled, from 3,716 to 7,428.Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled - Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 24. Female participation in the labour force, for women aged 20-24, increased from 39.8% to 46.9%, and from 19.5% to 27.9% for women aged 25-34. Ibid., 43.

if they were willing to take action. Although her recommendations for women's involvement in shaping their future were vague, she was convinced that women's best course for advancement was through their right to vote, granted less than twenty years prior.[43] She believed that it was essential for women to use their political voice to generate legislation of benefit to women in all aspects of life.

Chapter Four considers some of the other topics to which Arnold made repeated reference. Fortunately, she was forthcoming with her thoughts and opinions on the world as she saw it, and her columns are an excellent untapped source of information on the issues affecting the society in which she lived. Although almost 25% of her articles had no specific focus, including stories, events happening about town, and general banter, she did spend about half of her commentaries discussing four common themes: politics, youth, arts and culture, and beauty and fashion. Apart from providing information on her opinions regarding everything from politics to women's fashion choices, the columns confirm Arnold's fundamental beliefs in egalitarianism at all levels, justice and integrity, the importance of a strong work ethic, and her commitment to pacifism. It was clear that no matter what subject was up for discussion she was able to refer to her core convictions for a baseline on which to structure her views. Consequently, despite her youth and inexperience, her columns convey strength and confidence.

This study of Arnold's early years offers a fresh interpretation on the life and character of a woman previously revered for her successes in the male-dominated public sphere. Gladys Arnold's courage and determination were evident as a child, as she chose her own path through tragedy and instability. Seeking refuge from circumstances that threatened to overwhelm her with loneliness, Arnold immersed herself in a world of literature and personal writing. She matured with a strong sense of herself, confident in

---

[43]Women were granted the federal franchise through the passage of the Women's Franchise Act in 1918. Women in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta achieved the provincial franchise in 1916; in B.C. and Ontario in 1917; and in the Maritime provinces the franchise was granted between 1918 and 1925. Quebec women were not given the vote until 1940. Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 234.

her beliefs and abilities, and eventually settled down to further her journalism skills at the *Leader-Post* before embarking on her life-long dream to travel.

Unafraid to confront social injustices, and anxious to alert women to the effects of patriarchy, Arnold provided social commentary through her daily column. She was absorbed with both current events and philosophical thought, awakening her readers not only to the political and economic turmoil facing the world in the 1930's, but also challenging women to take action for their own advancement. She recognized the conflict between her own values and those presumed to be held by women in general, but she was neither intimidated nor willing to conform. While Arnold's later achievements have been well-documented, this thesis brings recognition to her formative years, reflecting on her strength of character and fortitude as evidenced by her willingness to write as she lived: with courage.

CHAPTER ONE

Gladys Arnold's childhood was marked by upheaval, a result of circumstances that were both unexpected and overwhelming. The effects followed her into adulthood and left Arnold uncertain as to the direction her life would take, knowing what she wanted but unsure of how to acquire it. After her father's death when she was nine years old, Gladys had no home life and was shuffled from house to house, among family and friends, where she was physically watched over but emotionally stranded. Arnold recalled being "well looked after" but not "loved."[1] She would be forever affected by the death of her father and the subsequent breakdown of her family life. She grew up as an outsider, feeling alone and lonely, comforted primarily by her interest in books and writing. Gladys' enthusiasm for literature and journalism would be life-long. She was unwavering in her determination to incorporate writing into her career, while at the same time equally committed to travel. By following through on her own convictions and aspirations, Gladys was eventually able to resolve the issues from her youth.

Born in 1905, Gladys Maria Marguerite Arnold was the first child of Albert and Florida May Arnold.[2] Her parents were married in Ontario, but Albert's job required their relocation to western Canada. They left their families and moved to Saskatchewan where Gladys was born. In 1905, the year Saskatchewan was granted provincial status, the Arnold family was living in Macoun, Saskatchewan, though Albert's job took the young family to McTaggart, Saskatchewan just three months after Gladys' birth. From that time forward, the Arnold family moved constantly among the three Prairie Provinces, never allowed to settle in any one place.[3] Mr. Arnold worked as a troubleshooter for the

---

[1]Gladys Arnold, "A BELATED TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER," Poetry Manuscript, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 14, File 203.

[2]Florida May was of Irish descent. Her mother, Sara Jane Broley was born to William Broley and Marg Robinson. Broley came from Ireland to Ontario in 1830. Florida was 24 when she gave birth to Gladys. Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 2, File 14.

[3]According to Arnold, the family moved to the following towns during her preschool years: McTaggart, Rouleau, Lockwood, Landis, Bankhead, Golden, Bowden, Red Deer, Cornation, and she suggests there were others. The family stayed from one month to several in any one place. "My Trips to Europe and Elsewhere," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 208.

Canadian Pacific Railway, problem-solving for new stations and "training young station agents in the art of telegraphy and bookkeeping."[4] He was one of many young men who came west to service the expanding railway.[5]

The growth of the prairies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the railway expansions and the greatly increased immigration rate gradually enabled the urbanization of Saskatchewan. The end of the global depression and the concurrent increased demand for wheat in Europe helped fuel the western economy.[6] In 1901, 19% of Saskatchewan's population lived in urban centers; by 1921, nearly 30% of the population was urbanized.[7] The railway station, grain elevator, bank, blacksmith and general store became the staples for the small towns where Gladys and her brother, Max, spent their early childhood years.[8] By the time she was ready to start school, the Arnold family had moved to Calgary, Alberta, but Gladys would attend twelve different schools before she graduated from Grade Twelve at the Weyburn Collegiate and Normal School in 1923.[9]

The constant travel by the family meant that the Arnolds were unable to settle into a life of routine and stability. In 1905, approximately 80% of the prairie population was rural.[10] Farming families were tied to the land and worked together to create an independent existence that could be passed on to new generations. Although farming on the prairies was not without its own uncertainties, it did offer a certain sense of

---

[4]Arnold, "MY TRIPS TO EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 208.

[5]The immigration policy of Laurier's Liberals, between 1900 and 1913, ultimately succeeded in settling western Canada primarily with immigrants from Britain, the United States, Eastern Canada and Central and Eastern Europe. As part of the western expansion program, rail lines proliferated across Canada into the southern part of Saskatchewan to facilitate the transfer of immigrants and goods from Eastern Canada. Albert Arnold was one of many who contributed to the success of the program. Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, John English, *Canada 1900-1945* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1987), 59 – 60.

[6]John Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.

[7]"Urban" is defined as any incorporated place, or a densely settled, built-up place containing more than 1000 persons. Bothwell, et al, *Canada 1900-45*, 65.

[8]Thompson, 87.

[9]Arnold, "MY TRIPS TO EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 208.

[10]Bothwell, et al, *Canada 1900-1945*, 65.

continuity. The farming community itself was like a family, rarely changing and always there to offer support and aid when needed.

For the Arnold family, there could be no comparable sense of familiarity. The towns were new, the people varied,[11] and the communities minimally populated. The distances between farms and towns often prevented new families from being incorporated into the more established farming community.[12] Gladys, from the time of her birth until adulthood, was always the newcomer, which perhaps explains why she felt she had to "walk sedately about the town,"[13] not wanting to draw further attention to herself. New to so many schools, she met unfamiliar people and faced unknown situations on a constant basis.

Mrs. Arnold stayed at home to raise the children and care for the household, offering Gladys and her brother some stability during their years of travel.[14] Although the information available on Florida Arnold is limited, her decisions following the death of her husband, Albert Arnold, in 1914, suggest that she had depended on him financially. With no social assistance available, Mrs. Arnold had no choice but to make herself employable or become dependent on extended family. She was determined to become financially self-sufficient and chose to leave Gladys in the care of friends and family, while she took the younger Max east with her as she began her training as a

---

[11]Canadian-born immigrants, primarily from Ontario, who dominated the prairie social hierarchy, populated the prairies. British immigrants, sharing with Ontarians a loyalty to the mother country, followed closely behind and were as anxious as English speaking Canadians to assimilate immigrants from other countries into their common culture. Swedes, Norwegians, protestant Germans and Ukrainians all made their way to the prairies creating a diverse cultural makeup. Thompson, 76.

[12]Town location depended on the direction of the rail lines, "determined both by locomotives' need for coal and water and by the distance a farm family could cover in a day with a team and wagon." Thompson, 87

[13]Arnold, Poetry Manuscript, Box 14, File 203.

[14]At the turn of the century both men and women believed in women's natural, biologically-determined predisposition to nurturing and motherhood. Thus women were expected to become wives and mothers, in that order, and to be satisfied with their domestic role in society. Furthermore, it was because of their purity and 'religious piety' that they were to be the "keepers of the moral fiber of the nation." Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 2-5.

nurse.[15] Consequently, after the age of nine, Gladys Arnold was, in a sense, on her own.

The death of her father, and her mother's decision to leave Gladys in Saskatchewan, was devastating for Arnold and left her feeling not only alone but unloved by her caregivers. Contained within her personal papers was a poem she wrote as an adult. It was entitled "A BELATED TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER," and one section revealed her sense of loss:

> My father died when I was nine years old and that was the end of home life for me. Uncles and aunts, "friends of the family" [became] my pseudo-parents, and while they were never really unkind to me – they were indifferent.
>
> I was fed and clothed and sent to school ... My body was well looked after but nobody ever bothered to inquire [about] the real me – the little girl inside who missed her parents and the reality of "home."[16]

Gladys Arnold was forced to learn how unpredictable and harsh life could be at far too early an age. As she said, "nobody ever bothered to inquire [about] the real me – the little girl inside who missed her parents and the reality of 'home'".[17] Following an early childhood full of disruption and displacement, the sudden absence of both her parents and her brother left Arnold to work out the unexpected circumstances of her new life.

Feeling as though she had been emotionally abandoned, Arnold came to rely heavily on letters from her mother and brother to lessen her loneliness. While the letters helped replace the support and guidance her family had once offered, she gradually looked beyond her mother's words in an attempt to broaden her understanding of the world. She spent a great deal of her time reading and writing, trying to make sense out of, in her words, "life itself."[18] As an adult, she would attribute her fascination with

---

[15]Gladys Arnold, "A BELATED TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 14, File 203.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

letters and books to that time in her life when words were all she had. In the same poem written for her mother, she described her early attraction to the written word, and how it helped to relieve the pain of her youth:

> The "love" I could cling to came in the letters from my mother and brother, and for that reason the printed word has a very special significance for me - I love words. They move me more than people do. They satisfy that great longing, fill that great void that opened up when my father died and my mother went away...
>
> From the words I learned about so many important things. All the emptiness gradually filled and what I knew about other people about situations, about life itself, came in the form of words. Books and their authors were more real to me than people – even though I could not speak aloud to them. I held long conversations with the writers and very often I found the answers to my questions on the printed pages of their books.[19]

Although Arnold may have been able to satisfy her intellectual curiosity and ease her emotional longing through reading, the unsettled nature of her youth left her searching for a sense of family and stability that could not be replaced by words. Eventually, it was this search for a sense of who she was and where she belonged, combined with her natural curiosity about some of life's fundamental questions, that proved to be a strong influence on Arnold's life choices. Traditional and restrictive gender boundaries, the result of a patriarchal social order where women were denied access to positions of power strictly on the basis of their gender,[20] weakened as her resolve for a life with purpose, where her contributions would be made within the public sphere, deepened.

However, as a child, Arnold struggled to cope with the changes in her life. She spent her years between the ages of nine and seventeen moving among friends and

---

[19]Ibid.

[20] Pierson, Ruth Roach. "The Politics of the Domestic Sphere," in *Canadian Women's Issues* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995), 1-34.

relatives as she continued her education.[21] In her papers she left a list of the numerous secondary schools she attended:

> Before I left grade six I had been in a number of schools, Victoria, Connaught (twice) te[*sic*] the Model School in Elbow Park, Earl Grey, Crescent Heights, also in Edmonton, Strathcona Public School. In high school I took Grade 10 and Nine at Central Collegiate Calgary, Grade 11 in Edmonton and Grade 12 in Weyburn.[22]

They were years of uncertainty and travel, very similar to those prior to Albert Arnold's death with the glaring exception that she no longer had her mother with her to provide stability and influence her development.

Though Florida's decision to leave Arnold behind was difficult for her daughter, it was most likely a decision made in the best interests of the girl. Following World War I, the opportunity for girls to be educated at the high school and post secondary levels became increasingly common. However, a girl's chance of graduating often depended on whether or not she was needed at home to watch younger siblings or help with the housekeeping.[23] By not burdening her daughter with the care of Max, Mrs. Arnold ensured that her daughter would advance through the high school system. Arnold herself reflected on the importance her mother put on her education. "So many times she said to me, 'All you need is an education, ethical standards, and family pride.' She never mentioned money."[24] Arnold's freedom was a gift, though not without consequences.

Florida Arnold ensured that her daughter had the advantage of a high school diploma, but the cost of that education to Arnold's personal growth and emotional development cannot be known. She was forever the newcomer to the schools and towns

---

[21]Fostering out became more and more popular, although never universal, as a solution to the dilemmas of institutional care. In many instances, youngsters were readily handed out to whomever would take them. Young girls, ... might very well find themselves expected to perform a multitude of chores in exchange for room and board." Strong-Boag, 17.

[22]Gladys Arnold, "MY TRIPS TO EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 208.

[23]Strong-Boag, 17.

[24]Arnold, "Tribute to Mother," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 14, File 203.

where she was moved, and this alone may have contributed to a sense of isolation. As historian Veronica Strong-Boag pointed out, many young immigrant girls of the early twentieth century felt "uncomfortably singled out" as they entered school because they were different, either in ability or because of their culture and accent.[25] Although Arnold did not come from a different country, as far as her classmates were concerned, she was new to them.

Arnold confessed to preferring words to people, and the words she spoke as she reflected on her youth spoke volumes of her unwillingness or inability to make social connections: "I love words. They move me more than people do ... Books and their authors were more real to me than people."[26] The disruption of her childhood seemed to have created for Arnold a need to remove herself from the community, her loneliness manageable only within the private world she created, protected from the harshness of reality. She had difficulty bonding with other people, unable to trust even her caregivers, suspicious of what motivated their decision to offer her care.[27]

Arnold's reluctance to relate with people in general may have simply been a personal preference, choosing the quiet of words to the stimuli of human contact, particularly when she was forced into so many new situations. Or, it is possible that Arnold withdrew from her peers as a defense mechanism against the hurt of being "singled out" as different. Whatever the reason, she was clearly more comfortable in her own company, and would remain so into adulthood.

Arnold grew up independent and intellectually curious, anxious to travel and to see the world she had read so much about. She had watched her mother take over the role of breadwinner in her family and had, herself, become emotionally, if not economically, self-sufficient at a fairly young age. Arnold did not anticipate finding

---

[25]Strong-Boag, 18.
[26]Arnold, "Tribute to Mother," Poetry Manuscript, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 14, File 203.
[27]Ibid.

emotional fulfillment from marriage. In fact, she recalled being quite reluctant to give herself over to what she saw as the restrictions of marriage. She had always been independent,[28] and could not, "bring [herself] to make a selfless commitment to one person for life."[29] Nor could she imagine, "living in one place forever when [her] consuming desire [was] for travel."[30] Furthermore, she revealed no interest in raising a family, and in later life was relieved not to have brought children into the world.[31]

The prevailing social trend of post war Canada, that of reinforcing the traditional family unit with its gendered division of labour and women's influence in the home, conflicted with much of what Arnold believed in and aspired to. High school girls of Arnold's age were being taught, through the schools, print literature, and social attitudes, to aspire to goals that were opposite to her own. Although "home economics" and "domestic science" classes had initially been introduced prior to the turn of the century as a means of educating future wives and mothers on the use of new technologies designed to liberate them from the drudgery of housework,[32] the focus changed after the war. Schools, as an effective means of socialization, were used to ensure a return to long-established values of home and family in response to the social upheaval left by the war.[33]

Girls and women were led to believe that no paying job should be considered as important as their role as primary caregivers in the home.[34] The "job" of homemaker was raised to professional status and revered as essential to the well-being of society. Girls were reminded that their specific qualities as women made them domestic authorities.[35]

---

[28]Arnold, "Clippings about Gladys Arnold," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28,File 694.
[29]Ibid.
[30]Ibid.
[31]Arnold, "Personal Diary, 1950-51, 1979, 1985," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 2.
[32]Strong-Boag, 19.
[33]Strong-Boag, 19.
[34]Ibid.
[35]Jane Errington, "Pioneers and Suffragists," in *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*, eds. Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code, Lindsay Dorney (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 74.

According to historian Veronica Strong-Boag, "[Female] students were groomed to accept the privatization of the household and the strict division of labour between the female homemaker and the male breadwinner."[36]

It is almost impossible to believe that Arnold internalized the idealization of the wife and mother, or the idea that it was her social responsibility, because of her innate qualities as a woman, to perform those roles. Her view of domesticity, and the gendered division of labour it implied, had been challenged by the death of her father and her mother's absence. She knew it was possible for women to be breadwinners, and she was encouraged by her mother to value both independence and education. While many girls played with dolls, preparing for motherhood, Gladys Arnold withdrew to her books, holding conversations with absent authors who felt more real to her than the people she encountered in her daily life.

At a young age Arnold seemed to understand that there were a wide range of opportunities available to women. Her mother, determined that Gladys receive an education, ensured that her daughter would have options as she matured. Although there is no indication that Florida explicitly advised Gladys either to marry or not to marry, Arnold's childhood circumstances taught her that there were no guarantees in marriage or in life, and she carried with her a fierce determination to remain self-reliant.

There was hope, however, for Arnold and other girls who were not particularly anxious to enter into marriage after their high school graduation. The Victorian ideology, convenient in terms of maintaining patriarchy,[37] was being challenged by economic realities and women's increased access to both education and employment.[38] By the

---

[36]Strong-Boag, 19.

[37]"Victorian Canadians of all persuasions were assaulted by an ideology that saw women as the embodiment of purity, and as both physically and financially dependent. Home was a woman's "proper sphere." Alison Prentice, et al, eds. *Canadian Women-A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996)156. For context concerning patriarchal norms of the day see Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson, eds., *The Proper Sphere: Woman's Place in Canadian Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

[38]In their attempt to spare women exposure to the challenges of the "man's world", the reformers

early 1920's, a 'new woman' had emerged, described by historian Jane Errington as, "a woman who was increasingly educated, apparently independent (many claimed they were far too independent), and unquestionably in the public workplace."[39] As Arnold matured, this new world for women was perfect for her – it would prove to be her one opportunity to escape what society seemed to have planned for her.

While Florida Arnold's circumstances were clearly not those of the majority, more and more families were finding it impossible to make ends meet with one income. However much commentators tried to prop up the traditional family, women were increasingly required to work outside of the home, and, in certain areas of the labour force, their presence was not only tolerated but also seemed necessary. The expanding economy gave rise to a clerical sector, among others, for which women were deemed particularly well-suited.[40]

Nonetheless, while the growing economy had a place for female workers, social opinion lagged behind. For many women, the messages from public discourse in post-war Canada were contradictory in nature. As often happens after times of crisis, there was a call for security and a return to traditional ways. Women were constantly reminded that their place was in the home. The federal government ran an intensive poster campaign to enforce the idea that returning soldiers needed their jobs. Slogans such as, "Do you feel justified in holding a job which could be filled by a man who has not only himself to support, but a wife and family as well?" could be found in magazines and on

---

themselves broke the barrier into the public sphere in order to share their concerns with those who had the power to make changes. The movement established a new precedent for women as upper class single women used the crack in traditional barriers to seek out educational opportunities that had once been confined to men. Strong-Boag, 20-27.

[39]Errington, 65. By 1921 more than 17% of all Canadian women over the age of 15 were counted as members of the paid labour force and they constituted 15% of all paid workers. Strong-Boag, 43.

[40]Women were still believed to be nurturers by nature, presumed to be gentle, caring and pure. In general, women were considered to be particularly suited to jobs that required dexterity, repetition of task, and patience. Because of these assumptions women were increasingly steered into the clerical fields. Errington, 76.

posters.[41]

Every attempt was made to persuade women that their duty was to return to the domestic sphere, or at the very least, to seek out employment in areas deemed suitable for women, where they could not threaten the status of male workers.[42] Yet, many women were hesitant to give up their economic advantage, and some, like Arnold, enthusiastically responded, not to the government's suggestions, but rather to the increased opportunities for employment that promised independence. Gradually, by the 1920's and 1930's, the pattern of women's lives was changing, and it became increasingly common for women to spend some part of their lives in the public sphere. The granting of women's suffrage in 1918 furthered their participation in areas once reserved for men, and helped to adjust attitudes toward changing roles for women. [43]

Obviously, those women coming from families in greater economic need were going to find paid work as soon as they were able, but by the time Arnold finished high school, it was not unusual for women from middle-class families to seek employment before marriage. Women in the post-war years were better educated and had more opportunities available to them than women in the past. They were no longer confined to domestic work, but now had access to jobs of a higher status and with fewer physical demands. Clerical work, nursing, and teaching were all deemed suitable for women,[44] because they demanded skills to which women were thought to be naturally predisposed, but primarily because women in these jobs posed no direct competition to male employment.

Arnold fit the description of the 1920's "new woman" – she was educated, white, single and seeking independence upon her graduation from high school in 1924.[45] For

---

[41]Prentice, et al, eds. *Canadian Women – A History*, 249.
[42]Ibid.
[43]Refer to note 34. Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 234.
[44]Ibid., 134-140.
[45]Errington, 65.

some, university would have been an option but she did not seem to have considered furthering her education at the university level, perhaps due to her family's limited budget. Instead, she chose to pursue a teaching career and received her teaching certificate in 1925.[46]

Arnold was immediately hired in December 1925 and sent to Amulet, Saskatchewan, where she spent two years, from January 1926 to December 1927 teaching in the junior room of the schoolhouse.[47] The secretary-treasurer of Amulet school considered her to be a "thoroughly competent teacher, capable of handling all classes of scholars."[48] Although she was certainly competent, she was distressed by the difficult working conditions she faced, conditions not unusual for jobs predominantly performed by women.[49]

As a result, Arnold found her job in Amulet to be a challenge. As she wrote to her grandmother in June 1928, "I have been teaching school for three years but my health will not stand for it. You have no idea what a country teacher must endure."[50] She was prone to arthritic pain and often complained of ill health.[51] Furthermore, Amulet was four miles from the nearest town, and there were few books in the school or in the preacher's home where she stayed. According to Arnold's recollection, the reading material available was limited to the Bible and religious material, the *Grain Grower's Guide*, and four biographies all of which she found dull.[52] The isolation and boredom of small-town prairie living, combined with her health issues, caused her to reconsider her choice of career.

---

[46]John Anderson, Secretary Treasurer of Amulet, Saskatchewan, Reference Letter written for Gladys Arnold, 3 July 1928, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 105.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Prentice, et al, 143.

[50]Gladys taught for two years, 1926 and 1927. She may be including her one year of training. Arnold, "Dear Grandma," June 1928, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 23.

[51]"The pains in my hips have disappeared and the arthritis seems to be gone." Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," 18 January 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25. "I have not felt so well for a long time ...", "Dear Mother and Arnold," 10 February 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[52]Arnold, "Reviews," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, file 682.

Arnold left Amulet with a good letter of reference and, late in 1927, moved to Winnipeg.[53] Although many women were ready for marriage following a few years in the workforce, Arnold had not yet given up on her career pursuits. She had saved her money from teaching and was able to pay for a business course as well as accommodation in a rooming house.[54] Before she was able to graduate, however, she ran short of money and made an appeal to her paternal grandmother for a loan. From the tone of her letter, a copy of which she included in her personal papers, the two women were not close. Arnold was emboldened to ask for money knowing how much the grandmother had loved her son, Arnold's father and it would not be the last time that she would turn to others for financial help.[55]

Arnold trained at the Success Business College from December 1927 until her graduation in August 1928 at the age of twenty-three.[56] At some point during her schooling, the president of the business college offered her a job teaching shorthand for $100/month upon graduation.[57] Arnold, however, seemed to be motivated by more than just money and security and turned down the job for an opportunity to try something new. Her plan was to travel south with a friend, Wanda Richardson, on the hunch that there were jobs available at the Stockman Company in Dallas, Texas. She did not have the money for the trip south but managed to secure a loan from the manager of the Weyburn Security Company (Limited).[58]

---

[53]John Anderson, Secretary Treasurer of Amulet, Saskatchewan, Reference Letter written for Gladys Arnold, 3 July 1928, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 105.

[54]Most single employed women continued to live at home or under the watchful eye of relatives or other surrogate parents. They were expected to contribute their wages to the family income. In this respect, Arnold was already more independent than most. Strong-Boag, 42.

[55]There do not seem to be any other letters or correspondence with the grandmother, and she the tone of the letter suggests Arnold was not close with the grandmother. Arnold, "Dear Grandma," Letter to Grandmother, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 23.

[56]Letter from Manager, Weyburn Security Company, 5 July,1928, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 106.

[57]Arnold, "Dear Grandma," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 23.

[58]Arnold seemed to have no qualms appealing for money to whomever in order to make her plans a reality. Perhaps her family knew the Manager of the Weyburn Security Company as she managed to secure the loan in order to make her dream of going to Texas happen. Letter written by the Manager of Weyburn Security Company, 5 July 1928, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 106.

Gladys Arnold was adventurous and ambitious. Already in debt to her grandmother, prepared to take on more debt for the possibility of a job, and passing up a guaranteed income from the business school, she was willing to take risks and do something out of the ordinary. As it happened, the job in Texas fell through and Arnold resigned herself to teaching at the Winnipeg College.[59] She had been with the college for approximately one year when she received word from a friend in Regina that there was an opening at the *Leader-Post*.[60] Given that she had dreamed of writing professionally since her childhood, it is little wonder that, in her words, she "jumped" at the opportunity to work at the newspaper.[61] Although her commitment to books and writing was perhaps more intense because of her childhood circumstances, Arnold was not alone in her ambitions to succeed as a journalist.

In June 1938, *Canadian Home Journal* published the results of a survey of 167 women graduates from McGill, Queen's, and the University of Toronto regarding their job preferences. The purpose of the study was to determine whether women's enrolment in female-dominated faculties would produce overcrowding in certain sectors of the workforce.[62] The results revealed that those women surveyed were satisfied with the traditional roles assigned to them, the majority preferring secretarial work and teaching. Although the results of the survey raise several questions, for the purposes of this thesis it is relevant that even though it was not the most common job for women at the time, journalism was chosen as their third preference.[63]

Marjory Lang, author of *Women Who Made The News – Female Journalists in*

---

[59]Manager of Weyburn Security Company, "Dear Miss Arnold," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 106.

[60]Arnold had transferred to Regina when the Business College opened an office there. The job possibility that she heard about was for secretary to the editor. George Bentley, "Arnold Retired But Not Retiring," *Leader-Post*, 24 October 1987, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[61]Ibid.

[62]A. Harriet Parsons, "Careers or Marriage?" *Canadian Home Journal* (June 1938): 63 in Strong-Boag, 25.

[63]Ibid.

Canada 1880-1945, explained women's interest in journalism as follows: "It was not surprising that young women with poetic yearnings and a passion for scribbling should want to enter journalism – it would seem to be an exciting opportunity to practice her craft and to be taken seriously as a writer ...."[64] As well, success on the women's page brought female columnists a certain authority. As they advanced causes of their choice through their columns, and educated the public on issues they determined to be important,[65] they achieved access to power normally beyond their reach. Not only did they enjoy authority through their words, but female columnists often transformed themselves into illustrious characters behind their pen names, taking on almost celebrity status. Editors willingly marketed the personalities of their female columnists to sell papers.[66]

Perhaps most importantly, newspaper journalism was seen by many women as the chance to experience life in a way they would not otherwise be able. Travel, new opportunities, exciting people, and escaping the ordinariness of everyday life, were all thought to be part of the journalism experience. Reporting allowed for gender boundaries to be legitimately crossed: "[it] was a route for the ambitious woman who wanted to get on the inside track – to participate in the world of politics, business, international relations, and war."[67] The lure of journalism was clear for women who sought the chance to experience life beyond the private sphere.

Yet, as Lang says, "the gloss wore off," and few women followed through on their goal before conforming to the customary path of domesticity.[68] The reality was that

---

[64]Marjorie Lang, "Separate Entrances: The First Generation of Canadian Women Journalists," in Lorraine McMullen, ed. *Re(dis)covering our Foremothers 19th c. Canadian Women Writers* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990), 86.

[65]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 11.

[66]Ibid., 33-35.

[67]Ibid., 248-249.

[68]As Canadian novelist/journalist Sara Jeannette Duncan (1861-1922) wrote: "Here in Canada nothing, comparatively speaking, has been accomplished by women in journalism, partly because the Canadian newspaper world is so small as to be easily occupied by some half dozen influential journals, partly because it is a very conservative world indeed, and we know what conservatism means in relation to

the odds of success, given that each newspaper usually hired only one woman,[69] were minimal. Not only did it require perseverance, determination, and a bit of luck, journalism also brought women into direct competition with men for employment, a new and unpopular concept. Women in the labour force generally dominated certain fields, competing against, and working with, only their own gender. Furthermore, it would seem that many women believed that a journalism career and raising a family were mutually exclusive, and they were not so determined to write as to sacrifice mothering for a career.[70] Therefore it is not surprising that many women gave up on their dreams of journalism and all that it seemed to offer. Although glamorous in the eyes of many, it also appeared to be unreachable.

Gladys Arnold was one of the few who disregarded the limitations of the newsroom, historically patriarchal and resistant to change, to pursue her dreams. For Arnold, who believed strongly in the equality of the genders, the idea of competing with men, and sharing their work environment, did not begin to dampen her enthusiasm for all that a journalism career offered. She longed to travel, and to become involved in all areas of life covered in print journalism, particularly those areas beyond the women's page. Furthermore, she was willing, if not relieved, to bypass the domestic role for the opportunity to pursue her writing career.[71] In fact, it became increasingly evident, as Arnold matured, that her commitment to, and passion for, writing would be the guiding force in her life.

By the early 1900's, many women felt that their domestic role could not be

---

the scope of women's work." Ibid., 83.

[69]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 13.

[70]In 1941, 75.6% of female journalists were single. Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 15.

[71]Arnold had a stop in Churchill, Manitoba as she waited for the ship that would take her to Europe. There she met a man and he fell in love with her, offering a proposal of marriage. In a play describing the events of her time there she wrote, "He's loveable but I've things I have to do before marriage because I'd never get a chance later." Considering the proposal Arnold wrote, "Under it all I knew I was going to take ship and that nothing could prevent it. I was moving toward my destiny just as surely as the moon maintained its course across the night sky, even if I wanted [to] I couldn't resist it." Arnold, "A Lamp in the Dark," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15 file 206.

combined with a job, particularly in print journalism, however such had not always been the case. Initially, newspaper production was integrated with the family home and women happily participated.[72] During the eighteenth century they were able to assist their husbands or fathers, or even take over responsibility of the print shop, in the absence of the male head of the household.[73] For example, when her father died in 1762, Mary Katherine Goddard (1738-1816) began working as a printer, joining her brother in the family printing shop in Providence, R.I.[74] In 1768, she left Providence, moved to Philadelphia, and worked as shop manager for the *Pennsylvania Chronicle,* established by her brother as one of the largest publications in the colonies. In 1774, she followed her brother to Baltimore to manage a new plant that produced the *Maryland Journal*, Baltimore's first newspaper.[75] Though the earliest publications remained under her brother's name, Mary Katherine Goddard earned public recognition for her work when, in 1775, the *Maryland Journal* was advertised as "Published by M.K. Goddard."[76]

The era of women's participation in the publishing industry ended around the time of Goddard's death. The need for mass-produced daily newspapers evolved when the largely rural North American population began to move into the cities, as indicated by the expansion of Goddard's publications. The home-based newspaper shop was no longer practical or efficient and was replaced by larger production facilities able to meet the growing demand. The cottage industry was transformed into "grimy, noisy downtown offices and printing plants."[77]

Although Katherine Goddard remained involved with the family business as it

---

[72]"Emerging evidence supports the idea of the women printers savoring, if only briefly, their participation in the 'man's world'." Zena Beth McGlashan, *The Evolving Status of Newspaperwomen*, (Ph. D. Dissertation: University of Iowa, 1978), 31.

[73]Ibid. 31-34.

[74]Maryland State Archives, (2001). "Mary Katherine Goddard (1738-1816)," [online]. Available: http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/womenshall/html/goddard.html [2007 June].

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Maurine H. Beasley and Sheila J. Gibbons, *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism* (Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1993), 8.

grew, in general women's involvement was discouraged as the press was removed from the home. The nineteenth-century woman was held responsible for the well-being of the home and community, a consequence of her presumed superior morality and natural abilities for nurturing. She was not expected to pursue a career beyond mother and homemaker. Furthermore, with respect to news production specifically, it was thought to be a loud and dirty, aggressive and fast-paced occupation, most certainly disagreeable for women presumed to be pure and pious.[78]

Women were distinctly absent from the modern newsroom, yet some remained committed to literary work and wrote from their homes, sending their articles by post or messenger to avoid contact with the male-dominated offices. These "literary ladies"[79] found a forum for their work, not only in newspapers but also in magazines published specifically for women by women.[80] The independence of female journalists gave rise to sex-segregated printed material, inadvertently lending support to the already popular belief in sex-specific interests and ideas.[81]

The first examples of newspaper pages created particularly for the interests of women, occurred in Canadian, American and British papers around the last decades of the nineteenth century. By 1880 the "women's pages" were being included in daily newspapers. However, within ten years they were published only for the weekend editions, only to return to the daily papers by 1900.[82] Never considered a top priority by male editors, the women's pages were also met with resistance from those women labouring to expand women's opportunities in the public sphere. These women, educated and serious in their attempts to fight gender discrimination, charged that the women's pages were "trivial," inherently insulting to women in their presumption that women

---

[78]Ibid., 9.
[79]Ibid., 8.
[80]Ibid.
[81]Ibid., 9.
[82]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 144.

could not fully understand the entire newspaper and therefore had to be catered to with their own special section.[83]

Nevertheless, commerce was the guiding force that ended the debate over the political correctness of women's pages and brought women back into the world of news production. Initially, newspapers were supported financially through political alliances. As the papers matured and became more established, by the late nineteenth century, the publishers wanted their independence from political affiliations. Party coffers were soon replaced with advertising dollars to support news production.[84] Businesses were anxious to advertise in newspapers, providing they could guarantee a readership large enough to warrant the investment.

Women, in their new role as domestic principals, were the targeted market. They were the new consumers of the growing selection of home and personal products and were therefore the most sought after means of increasing circulation. The newspaper that once catered to the interests of men – political, economic and international news – was expanded to include interests of women – presumed to be primarily fashion, food, and domestic fare.[85] The contemporary newspaper did not challenge the idea of gender-specific pages, thereby confirming the separation of public/private spheres for men and women. By the turn of the century, women found a special section devoted to their unique interests on the "women's pages" of nearly every daily newspaper.[86]

Jane Cunningham Croly (1829-1901) has been recognized as the innovator of the "women's page".[87] Determined to create a female readership for the *New York Sunday Times*, she put forward a proposal that changed the nature of the modern newspaper.

---

[83]Ibid., 142.

[84]Ibid., 32.

[85]Beasley and Gibbons, 17. These additions fit with other changes in print journalism: "The popular press of the late nineteenth century was more local than national and more personal than political." Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 33.

[86]Ibid., 142.

[87]Barbara Belford, *Brilliant Bylines – A Biographical Anthology of Notable Newspaperwomen in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 38.

During the 1850's, she developed a women's column, "Parlor and Side-Walk Gossip," that was published in the *Sunday Times* and the *New York Noah's Weekly Messenger.*[88] Following the success of her column, written under the pseudonym "Jennie June," Croly became editor of the New York *World's* women's page in 1862. Her column was the first to be syndicated, going to various papers in the Eastern and Southern United States.[89]

Croly's main interest was fashion and she covered not only what the "ladies" in society were wearing, but also offered advice on the merchandise available at various department stores.[90] With improved printing techniques, Croly was able to critique in detail the latest fashions and provide pictures for her readers – a form of printing previously reserved for women's magazines.[91] She was centred on, and confident in, her views on fashion, but she also wrote beyond the women's focus: "Prolific beyond any standard, she wrote editorials, book reviews, criticism, and covered major news events..."[92]

Although Croly passively encouraged the idea of sex-specific sections of the paper through her column, she was not oblivious to women's challenges in a patriarchal society. In 1868, she was denied a ticket to a dinner being held for Charles Dickens by the New York Press Club because she was a woman. She was so infuriated that she organized a meeting in her parlour of similarly indignant women. This led to the founding of SOROSIS, a club for women.[93] She eventually became a leader of the American women's club movement and formed the New York Women's Press Club in

---

[88]Ibid. 40.

[89]Ibid.

[90]McGlashan, 57. Croly edited *Demorest's Quarterly Mirror of Fashion* and was part owner of *Godey's Lady's Book.* "Jane Cunningham Croly, Journalism and Publishing, Biographies," [online]. Available: *http://reference:alrefer.com/encyclopedia/C/Croly-Ja.html* [June 2007].

[91]McGlashan, 58.

[92]Belford, 40.

[93]For Croly, SOROSIS was "a club to pursue municipal housekeeping." Jone Johnson Lewis, "Founding of *Sorosis*," [online]. Available: http://womenhistory.about.com/od/womansclubmovement/p/sorosis.htm [June 2007].

1889.[94] Having experienced sexual discrimination herself, she tried, through her journalism and through her club work, to inspire and support all women.[95]

While she was a firm believer in equal rights for women, Croly did not actively involve herself in the suffrage movement; nor did she use her column to promote women's rights.[96] She was prepared to keep her personal values and beliefs separate from the words she put into print, not bothered by the fact that they were often contradictory. She was well aware of two facts: that her female readership was crucial to her employment, and that the same readership did not necessarily agree with her feminist views. She was very careful to ensure that in no way would her words upset the status quo. For example, to quell any doubt as to where her loyalties lay, she wrote, "A good wife, good mother and helper in the maintenance of social order was more important to the race than the practice of any profession."[97]

Notwithstanding her marriage to the editor of the New York *World*, David Goodman Croly, in 1857, Croly's work remained central to her life until her death in 1901.[98] She aggressively pursued both advancement in the workplace and syndication of her columns. In addition, she authored *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America* (1898).[99] At the same time, and in contrast to how she lived, she wrote about the primacy of women's domestic commitments and the importance of women's role as "helper in the maintenance of social order" in her columns. The inconsistencies in Croly's life are not easily reconciled. She was torn in opposite directions between her simultaneous support for, and resistance to, the gendered status quo.

Croly was an ambitious journalist at a time when female journalists were

---

[94]Croly was denied membership to the all-male New York Press Club. Ibid.

[95]Belford, 43.

[96]"Jane Cunningham Croly," Women of the Hall, [online]. Available: http://www.greatwomen.org/women.php?action=viewone&id=45 [June 2007].

[97]Belford, 38.

[98]McGlashan, 60.

[99]"Jane Cunningham Croly, Journalism and Publishing, Biographies," [online]. Available: *http://reference:alrefer.com/encyclopedia/C/Croly-Ja.html* [June 2007].

unwelcome in the newsroom. Her success may be attributed to her skill at sensing the changing influences in society, as she seemed particularly adept at predicting trends.[100] However, her ability to read the social climate of the time inevitably led to the suppression of her feminist spirit, revealing only as much as her readers and editors were willing to accept. Croly believed in the strength of women's united front, but she worked only indirectly for women's rights as the driving force behind the club movement. Through her column she reminded women that they must first master the domestic realm in order to maintain the social order. Only then would women be free to pursue avenues of liberation.[101]

The irony lay in Croly's own challenge to the social order as she pressed forward, bringing into question women's traditional role and the male supremacy of the newsroom. She was careful to keep her own position on women's roles separate from the words she wrote behind the columns of "Jennie June." The intricacies of the relationship between the journalist and her newspaper personality remain open to speculation. Few women journalists left evidence of their private lives.[102] However, Croly would not be the last female journalist to incorporate into her life a conflicting set of core values.

Writing as conservatively as Jane Cunningham Croly was Kate Simpson Hayes (1856-1945), who began sending feature articles in to the Winnipeg *Free Press* women's page in 1888. By 1900, she was writing her own column for the newspaper, entitled "Women's World," under the pseudonym Mary Markwell. Also that year she became the women's page editor.[103] Her column, as with most women's page columns, focused on items of presumed interest to women including marriage, motherhood, employment and

---

[100]Belford, 40.

[101]Ibid., 41.

[102]"Women journalists were skilled and self-conscious crafters of public personas, unusually adept at shielding their private selves behind their newspaper selves ...Women who reflected publicly on their careers employed a self-consciously light tone, perhaps with the intention of deflecting serious scrutiny." Lang, *Women Who made the News*, 13.

[103]Constance Anne Maguire, "Convention and Contradiction in the Life and Ideas of Kate Simpson Hayes, 1856-1945," (Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Regina, 1996), 48.

women's clubs.[104] Like Croly, Hayes was ambitious. She had two children to support and often worked two jobs simultaneously to do so, yet writing was always pre-eminent in her life. She published not only newspaper articles but also several novels as well as poems and short stories.

Hayes was constantly moving from one place to another, creating for her and her children a life of upheaval. However, whether in the North-West Territories or London, England, she consistently sent articles and letters back to the *Free Press*, always under her penname. "Mary Markwell" was known by her readers for being strongly committed to the ideology of women's purity and for firmly believing that a woman's place was in the home. In 1910, she wrote, "heaven's original scheme: the man to fight the battles of life for his food, the woman to guard the gateway of the home."[105] Hayes was a devoted Catholic and believed strongly in the institution of marriage. Her columns were teeming with advice and discussion on matrimony as well as on motherhood.

However, as with Jane Cunningham Croly, Hayes's life was full of contradictions. Her writing was very traditional in content but her everyday life broke many of the traditional rules. After four years of marriage to Charles Bowman Simpson, Kate Simpson took their two children and moved to Regina, leaving her husband permanently behind. Although she never divorced, unwilling to challenge the rules of the Catholic Church, the pair were legally separated in 1889.[106]

Kate Simpson Hayes so believed in the sanctity of marriage that she disapproved of a woman who remarried even after her husband died. Hayes technically honoured her own marriage, never divorcing, even though she left her husband and became involved with another man, bearing two children out of wedlock.[107] In her column she wrote as

---

[104]Ibid., 63.
[105]Ibid., 107.
[106]Maguire, 30-32.
[107]Ibid. 52

though devoted to the idea of separate spheres for men and women and had, herself, only ventured out as a journalist in order to support her family.

As C. A. Maguire points out, Hayes' marriage must have been miserable for her to abandon that in which she so strongly believed.[108] Therefore, the contradictions in Hayes's life seemed to be more a product of circumstance than of her own ambition. Given the choice, it seemed likely that Hayes would have chosen a more conservative life but was not prepared to withstand a life of misery, born of a troubled marriage, in order to do so. Her life choices therefore, seem not only ironic but also contain an element of pathos.

Both Croly and Hayes felt compelled to revise their columns in order to suit the demands of their readers. Gladys Arnold, writing thirty years later, would approach her journalism with the force of changing social attitudes behind her, allowing her more freedom to write true to her own beliefs. As will be discussed in the following chapter, Arnold's challenges were more personal than societal, though her writing would reflect an element of frustration with the limitations faced by some women. Croly was concerned with the future of women's place in the social structure, and Hayes accepted the ideology of patriarchy but lived in conflict with it. Arnold circumvented the feminist debate, concerning herself more with personal goals and the larger issues facing the world.

From Gladys Arnold's childhood came her love for books and the attempts at writing that followed in her poetry, stories, and journals. As she matured, she found solace in her passion for words, initially able to shield herself from circumstances that she found uncomfortable. She came to understand that the society in which she lived was based on assumptions that she did not agree with, just as Croly and Hayes had before her. The years that followed allowed Arnold time to practice her craft, expose herself to new

---

[108]Ibid.

experiences, and gain confidence in her views – views that would inevitably challenge what was expected of a woman coming of age in the 1930's.

CHAPTER TWO

Gladys Arnold was twenty-four years old when she arrived in Regina, Saskatchewan via the Canadian Pacific Railway, the same railway her father had worked for fifteen years earlier. Following her high school graduation, she had found employment first as a grade school teacher, and then as a stenographer instructor. Although she had established her independence, no longer required to live where she felt tolerated rather than loved, neither career choice had brought Gladys satisfaction. She often felt she was different from other girls and women,[1] and her assumption was fairly accurate -- she had different career aspirations, different life objectives and a different outlook on life than others did. Although she did not specify exactly what she hoped to find in Regina when she boarded the train in 1930, she obviously felt it was a step toward achieving that unknown destiny.

Arnold was still trying to resolve who she was and how she could meld societal expectations with her personal ambitions. She was raised without the security of a stable family environment and, consequently, she admittedly grew up craving a sense of belonging to familial situations.[2] Whether it was with the family she stayed with during the summer, or her coworkers at the newspaper, Gladys wanted to fit in. She also carried with her into adulthood a heightened enthusiasm for two pursuits: to write and to travel. The direction Gladys' life took once she left Winnipeg was largely determined by her need to find a place where she felt she belonged, a place where she would be nurtured, professionally and emotionally. In doing so she was able to solidify her opinions and gain the confidence she needed to pursue her goals, no longer feeling as though she should "walk sedately," but rather secure in her life choices.

From Gladys Arnold's childhood grew a fascination with words and writing. As a

---

[1]"Nan Robins," pseudonym for Gladys Arnold, "I Would Rather Have Beauty Than Brains," *Chatelaine*, February 1931, in Sylvia Fraser, *Chatelaine: A Woman's Place: Seventy Years in the Lives of Canadian Women* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1977) 225-227. Also found in Gladys Arnold Papers, rough draft entitled "Beauty versus Brains," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 108.

[2]Arnold, "The First Five Years," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 205.

child, she took comfort in books and often recorded her thoughts on paper; as an adult, she could envision no life without her craft. Writing from her room in Paris, during her first year abroad in 1935, she expressed her thoughts to her mother,

> Sometimes I get so discouraged I think "to h ... with it all," what is the use of trying in the face of all this competition and the natural handicaps I had of not being prepared for it [journalism] in the same degree as those who in the most cases succeed over here. But on the other hand, the thought of giving up makes me absolutely disgusted with life. If I can't do this, I'd rather be dead – and do nothing.[3]

Arnold's commitment to journalism was evident as she overcame gender barriers and social restraints to pursue her interest in words and the world they described. Marriage and children, though expected of her, would never be Arnold's goal. She was far too dedicated to satisfying her own curiosity to be content with a life confined to domesticity.

In her search for a new, more promising career, Arnold joined the *Leader-Post* as secretary to the editor, Victor Sifton, in 1930. She was single, unburdened by family obligations and free to pursue her career aspirations. While the majority of women her age were ready to move on to a more domestic stage of their lives,[4] Arnold seemed uninterested in either marriage or motherhood. She gradually became absorbed in the workings of the newsroom and in her pursuit of a journalism career.[5] She dreamt of travel, of writing about world events, and of finding answers to the political questions she had at the time. Marriage, she believed, would have been a barrier to her ambitions.[6]

At the *Leader-Post* a new world opened up for her – a world where ideas were freely exchanged and her mind was continually stimulated by concepts that were new to

---

[3]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," 17 October 1937, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[4]"... during the past year there has been a regular epidemic of babies among my friends." "Robin," "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 21 November 34, 7. "With June weddings just around the corner and so many prairie lassies willing – nay, anxious – in spite of dust, dithers and depression, to take the fatal step...," "Robin," "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 22 May 1935, 9.

[5]Arnold was enthusiastic about "seeing for [herself]" the rise of Hitler, and vowed to her fellow reporters that she would start saving immediately for a trip overseas. And, on her first night reporter experience she wrote that she, "found it one of the most interesting experiences of my journalistic life." Arnold, "Lamp in the Dark," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 206.

[6]See note 7.

her. She was naïve and impressionable and she was captivated by the dialogue in the newsroom.[7] It was there that Arnold began to feel at home and, in the beginning, the *Leader-Post* seemed to be what she had been searching for since her childhood – a safe environment where she would be accepted no matter how strong her ambitions to succeed in the public sphere, and where she was able to feel purposeful. She carved out a place for herself in the *Leader-Post* "family" and was nurtured by the staff around her.

When Arnold was hired at the newspaper, Victor Sifton was soon to become publisher, and Bob MacRae would step in to fill his place as editor. Both of these men had a huge impact on her life and her development as a journalist. Although she began her term with the Regina newspaper as a secretary, it was not long before she was submitting articles and editorials for publication.[8] Her quick promotion to reporter was a result not only of her persistence, but also the nature of her relationship with the editor and publisher.

Sifton and MacRae were more than just Arnold's employers; they became her friends and advisors. Sifton's role in her life was that of father figure. He filled the gap in her life left by her own father's death. MacRae was more of mentor to Arnold.[9] By definition a mentor should be "older, wiser, and more experienced" than the mentored and MacRae was all of that and more.[10] The professional association between the two

---

[7]"Possibly one of the most important lessons [I've] learned in life is to seek out the ideas of others." "Books Galloping around in her mind," *Ottawa Journal*, 13 December 1971, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28 file 694.

[8]"...soon also writing 2 daily columns (1 for the editorial page, other for women's section) and supervising the make up of each day's women's pages...," Marjorie Gillies, "Writing From the Front Lines," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 May 1987, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[9]According to Joan Jeruchim and Pat Shapiro, who wrote *Women, Mentors, and Success* (New York: Ballentime Books, 1992), the mentoring relationship has certain qualities that distinguish it from other work relationships: 1. the mentor has more power within the organization and can use that power to empower the protégé; 2. the protégé idealizes and admires her mentor; and 3. there is an intensity in the emotional involvement of those involved. MacRae was more powerful at the *Leader-Post* and could use that power to Arnold's advantage; he was easily admired and idealized by Gladys because of her vulnerability to him as a father figure; and there was an "intensity (to) the emotional involvement" between Arnold and MacRae. Joan Jeruchim and Pat Shapiro, *Women, Mentors, and Success* (New York: Ballentime Books, 1992), 30-34.

[10]Ibid. 23.

was mutually beneficial, also a qualification of the mentoring relationship.[11] Without doubt, MacRae, as well as Sifton, were willing to push the boundaries on Arnold's behalf,[12] and she, in turn, contributed a great deal to the paper.

It is hard to explain the connection between Arnold and her employers, their history offering few clues as to their interest in the young reporter. Victor Sifton (1897-1961) was one of five sons of Clifford Sifton (1861-1929). With the purchase of the Manitoba *Free Press* in 1899, Clifford began the creation of a newspaper dynasty that lasted until 1995. Victor had been an infantry officer during World War I and won the Military Cross.[13] After the war, he and his brother, Clifford Jr. (1893-1976),[14] began managing two Saskatchewan newspapers, the Saskatoon *Star- Phoenix* and the Regina *Morning Leader,* purchased by their father in 1928. Victor lived in Regina and worked as editor, then publisher, of the *Leader-Post* until 1935, when he moved to Winnipeg to become manager of the *Free Press*, eventually taking over as publisher in 1944.[15]

When Arnold began working for Sifton in 1930, she was twenty-four years old, new to Regina, and inexperienced in the news industry. It was not long before Sifton moved on to become publisher and she began reporting, but the two established a rapport that extended beyond employer/employee over the next five years. From the letters Arnold sent to her mother, as well as those exchanged between Arnold and Sifton, it is possible to gain a sense of the relationship that developed between reporter and publisher while she was at the *Leader-Post.*[16] The letters clearly indicate a friendship and a past based on mutual respect, as well as giving a sense of the supportive role that Sifton

---

[11]Ibid. 23.

[12]MacRae and Sifton met together and agreed to pay Arnold $10 a week to send back articles from Europe after she left the *Leader-Post* in 1935. It was a special favor and she was determined that no one find out about it. Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[13]Neil Forsyth, "The Siftons," The Archivist, Library and Archives Canada, [online]. Available: *http://www.collectionscanada.ca/publications* [June 2007]. The *Calgary Sun*

[14]Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, 859.

[15]Forsyth, "The Siftons," [online].

[16]All of the letters exchanged between Arnold and Sifton were written after Arnold had left the *Leader-Post* in 1935.

played in Arnold's life. He felt protective of her, and Arnold looked to Sifton for personal guidance, professional advice, and even financial support.

That she was not just another employee of Sifton's, but indeed a friend, was made evident as Sifton made a point of staying in touch with Arnold after she had left the newspaper in 1935. They exchanged letters and made the effort to see each other when possible. During one of his trips to Europe, Sifton made arrangements to visit with her in London, England in 1936. They met with mutual acquaintances and enjoyed an evening of conversation.[17] Sifton reported back in jest to Bob MacRae that he thought Arnold was "a little too 'red' for the peace of mind of the nations,"[18] suggesting that Sifton felt sufficiently comfortable in his relationship with Arnold to feel at ease joking about her political views with MacRae.

As an advisor, Victor Sifton offered his advice to Arnold many times throughout her life as she faced career choices. With war appearing imminent in June 1939, Sifton, along with Arnold's mother and MacRae, was worried about Arnold remaining in Europe. He wrote to her, strongly urging her to return to Ottawa and accept an offer she had received from the Canadian Press.[19] Her mother had also sent a telegram urging her to return,[20] but Arnold refused her mother's plea. Although it gave her pain to cause her mother angst, she felt strongly that she had a duty, as a "single person," to do what she could as a journalist should war erupt.[21] However, on Sifton's advice she did return to

---

[17]Bob MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 23 January 1937, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 110.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Victor Sifton, "Dear Miss Arnold," 29 June 1940, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 113.

[20]Arnold, referring to the cable from her mother, wrote, "If you could only know the state of despair into which your cable and my inability to answer you as my heart wants me to for your sake, has plunged me...At this moment I do not speak of sentiment because I dare not. I think only of my duty as a journalist. After all I chose this as my career and I must follow whatever its demands and if I go home now before I am sure it is necessary – before I am evacuated, I shall lose my standing not only as a journalist – but for my own honor." Arnold, "My Own Darling Mother," 26 September 1938, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[21]Arnold did not want to risk her job with the Canadian Press by leaving Europe when her mother asked her to. As she said, she had worked too hard to get it and she especially did not want to leave without a job in place in Canada. And, in the case of war, it was a chance to get ahead as a journalist; "Everybody cannot stay at home [if war] and it is better that the single people take the load because they

Ottawa in 1940 and accepted a position with the Canadian Press.[22] The tone of the letter implied her confidence in his opinion.

Five years later, in 1945, Sifton again advised Arnold on her career path. She had resigned from the Canadian Press in 1941 to help set up, and work full time for, the Free French Information Service (FFIS) office in Ottawa.[23] After the war, Sifton felt she would be better off financially to accept an offer with the French Embassy in Ottawa. It had become affiliated with the FFIS and Sifton felt it was a better option for Arnold than to go back to work for the Canadian Press.[24] She accepted his advice, and it was a move that would affect the rest of her life. Her post-war career was spent working for the French Embassy office and in doing so she was able to fulfill what she believed to be her responsibility to her country. In 1971 she wrote, "I have never lost sight of the fact I must interpret English Canada to the French Embassy."[25]

Victor Sifton was also there for Arnold when she was in need financially. According to an undated letter written by Sifton to "Miss Arnold," Sifton had given Arnold a series of loans in the amount of 20 pounds with an interest rate of 3% from 1 June 1937 to 1 September 1937.[26] Writing from Ottawa on 29 August 1951, Arnold commented to Sifton:

> My dear Victor,
>
> I have always intended to give you an account of what I got for the $2,000.00 you loaned me, without questions, and which I finally paid back to

---

have no husbands or wives or children depending upon them." Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[22]Arnold wrote to Victor Sifton, "I have followed your advice and accepted the Ottawa position." She wrote that she could not return to the *Leader-Post* because of Bob MacRae's death and her reluctance to work without him. She did imply she would like to work at the Winnipeg *Free Press* but no offer was forthcoming. Arnold, "Dear Mr. Sifton," 1940, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 122. However, there is some dispute as to whether she chose to leave England or, as she described in *One Woman's War*, she was forced to go. There she wrote, "I don't want to go..." but she that she had no choice. Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 84.

[23]Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 115.

[24]Sifton, "Dear Miss Arnold," 2 January 1945, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 113.

[25]"France Honors Gladys Arnold," *Ottawa Journal*, 12 March 1971, 28, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[26]Arnold, "My dear Victor," 29 August 1951, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 113.

> you even though I have a letter somewhere in which you stated that you never expected to see it again – having already had loans of this kind turn sour. That made me awfully mad once ...[27]

Clearly the relationship relaxed over the years as "Mr. Sifton" became "My dear Victor" in Arnold's letters. Although to him she remained "Miss Arnold," the two shared more than a working relationship. Arnold was willing to share her thoughts with Victor and he was obviously prepared to take on some of the responsibilities of a father -- to listen, to advise and to help when possible. She confided to him, after she had accepted her position at the Canadian Press in 1940, her reluctance to do so:

> I may say frankly but privately to you that I'd rather have worked for the F.P. [Winnipeg Free Press] my reasons being purely sentimental because of the old association and the fact that I have never ceased to remember those days as the formative ones, and to be grateful for the influences to which I submitted.[28]

She was referring to her time with Sifton and MacRae at the *Leader-Post* and the fact that they were instrumental in the development of her journalism career. Arnold made it clear that she would have preferred to work in Winnipeg upon her return to Canada and it is not clear why this was not an option. She explained that she could not have returned to the *Leader-Post* without MacRae there, his death having occurred in October 1939. However, Arnold did make it clear to Sifton that she would welcome an offer to work at the Winnipeg *Free Press.* For whatever reason, an offer did not materialize and she settled in Ottawa.

Although it is impossible to know if Gladys Arnold would have succeeded as a journalist without the support of Sifton and MacRae, she certainly recognized the invaluable help they provided during her first years at the *Leader-Post.*[29] Arnold worked under their watchful eyes and began the process of developing her craft as a writer and journalist. She was given the opportunity to serve as a reporter, night reporter, columnist

---

[27]Ibid.

[28]Arnold, "Dear Mr. Sifton," 1940, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 122.

[29]"I may say frankly but privately to you...I have never ceased to remember those days [at *Leader-Post*] as the formative ones, and to be grateful for the influences to which I submitted." Arnold, "Dear Mr. Sifton," 1940, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 122.

and women's page editor.[30] She was aggressive in her approach to journalism, unafraid to try new things and fascinated by all the information she was exposed to in the newsroom. Sifton encouraged her to expand her writing in the direction she was interested in but nervous to explore. The month that Sifton moved to Winnipeg in 1935, Arnold wrote to her mother sharing some of the advice he had given her:

> I think someday I would like to write stories that could be produced or write plays if I could ... Mr. Sifton says that even if I don't write anything that can be or will be published I will learn a great deal that will be valuable to make me a first class journalist and that there will always be a place for me in the organization ... Mr. Sifton says they can always use a human interest writer who understands social problems ... so I'm going to make myself an expert on the subject and do some practical work too.[31]

Clearly Victor Sifton had a significant influence on the course of Arnold's life. He gave her confidence as well as career advice. Sifton looked out for Arnold as a father would a daughter, providing financial and emotional support, both of which gave her the sense of security essential for her personal growth.[32] When Arnold decided to plan a trip to Europe in 1934, it was Victor Sifton who showed concern for her welfare. While he was pleased that she had chosen to broaden her horizons,[33] he was also worried that she would not have enough money to manage once she got there. Accordingly, he guaranteed her an income if she would send back articles to the papers.[34] Arnold was thrilled, but also recognized that his actions were preferential on her behalf and she implored her mother not to tell anyone that he had made such a promise.[35]

It was a real loss to Arnold when Victor Sifton moved to Winnipeg. She wrote to

---

[30]Arnold, "A Lamp in the Dark," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 206. Arnold, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[31]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[32] Arnold recognized her vulnerability to any form of security: "Because I had known very little family life after the death of my father in my nineth [sic] year for some subconscious reason I instinctively sought out a family and attached myself to it for warmth wherever I happened to be." Arnold, "The First Five Years," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 205.

[33]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d. Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid.

her mother,

> Of course it means that I won't be doing anymore work for him and I am sorry about that for several reasons. One reason is because he is such a grand man to work for, a second is because when I worked for him he knew my work and I could always get a criticism from him as to how to improve and consequently have got along quite well in journalism – better than I would have – or could have.[36]

Arnold recognized that Sifton had helped her grow as a person and a journalist, and he would continue to be an influence in her life well after she had left the newspaper.

As important as Victor Sifton was in her life, it was Arnold's editor, Bob MacRae, who, arguably, became an even closer friend, both personally and professionally. MacRae mentored Arnold at the *Leader-Post*, and this was not uncommon in the newspaper industry. Female journalists tended to rely on male mentors due to the absence of women in senior positions who might have performed the role. For example, Jane Cunningham Croly's husband and editor, David Goodman Croly, supported her in her efforts to have her work published. They moved together to the New York *Daily Graphic* in 1872, where her articles were syndicated.[37] Kathleen Blake Coleman, well known for her column "Kit's Kingdom," published in the Toronto *Daily Mail* from 1889-1914, was very vulnerable to male influences in the newsroom. She depended on her male colleagues for their opinions, support and advice. For Coleman, it was her lack of faith in the loyalty of women, particularly female journalists whom she claimed were both critical and deceitful, that turned her toward the newsroom's male influence.[38]

Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), a successful author and journalist, is remembered in part because she was able to succeed in the male-dominated industry without a male mentor.[39] In 1845, she published *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, recognized at the

---

[36]Ibid.
[37]McGlashan, *The Evolving Status of Newspaperwomen*, 57.
[38] Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom*, 64.
[39]McGlashan, *The Evolving Status of Newspaperwomen*, 44.

time as being a "manifesto for the women's rights movement".[40] Horace Greeley, publisher of the New York *Tribune*, then hired her as a journalist. Greeley recognized her talent and considered her book to be the "ablest, bravest, broadest, assertion yet made of what are termed Woman's Rights."[41] However, while Fuller had forged her own path as a writer, without a mentor, Greeley did support her in other ways. In 1846 he made her foreign correspondent for the *Tribune*, promising to pay her eight dollars for every story she sent home. Just as Sifton had for Arnold, Greeley gave Fuller the freedom to travel to Europe and fulfill her lifelong dream, and in return the editors secured foreign correspondents for their newspapers.[42]

Arnold's mentor, David Bruce MacRae ("Bob"), similarly supported her dreams. MacRae began working for the Winnipeg *Free Press* in 1910 and by 1929 he was second in command of the newspaper. The following year, he moved to Regina to replace Victor Sifton as editor of the *Leader-Post,* and Arnold worked with him from 1930 to 1935.[43] He was a man remembered for his "striking capacity for friendship,"[44] as well as the "wit and brilliance" of his writing.[45] Bob MacRae was well-respected by his staff, being extremely well-informed on a number of subjects and more than willing to share his knowledge with his employees. He offered both thoughtful and unbiased opinions.[46]

It is not surprising that Gladys Arnold developed a long-lasting friendship with MacRae. He was generous, helpful, and like Arnold, he was intelligent and witty.[47]

---

[40]Joan Goodwin, "Margaret Fuller," [online]. Available: *http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles /margaretfuller.html* [June 2007].

[41]Ibid.

[42]McGlashan, 42.

[43]"West Remembers – Salute to Bonnie Fighter," *Leader-Post*, 21 October 1939, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 695.

[44]"D. B. MacRae," *Leader-Post,* 21 October 1939, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 695.

[45]Bill Dunstan, "Writer of Wit and Brilliance," *Leader-Post*, 31 March 1948, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 695.

[46]Ibid.

[47]"D. B. MacRae," *Leader-Post*, 21 October 1939. As to Arnold's personality: "Miss Arnold is golden-haired and feminine and has a most delightful personality." "Women in the War," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 695; In a reply to some of Arnold's articles submitted for publication from the *Calgary Herald*, "Don't be modest angel. They can only return your sparkling and witty effusions." In Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 108.

Arnold was inexperienced in the newsroom and she needed someone to direct her, particularly in her writing. As she developed her skills, MacRae challenged Arnold to be the best journalist she could be, and she did her best to meet his expectations.

Arnold also saw MacRae socially, often as a guest at the MacRae household.[48] He became a very important part of her life while she worked at the *Leader-Post* and, as she wrote to her mother in 1935, his absence left her feeling downcast. That year MacRae was travelling abroad from January until May, and Arnold wrote to her mother that, as a result, she anticipated a "a long spring here alone."[49] That she should feel "alone" with MacRae away from the office draws attention to the focal role he played in her life.

Arnold was dependent on MacRae, but both seemed to derive some satisfaction from their professional relationship. In a classic mentoring relationship, both parties benefit and it would seem that as Arnold matured emotionally and intellectually, she became a lively colleague for MacRae.[50] He seemed to enjoy her own nurturing and supportive nature,[51] as well as her wit, humour and charm.[52] They were especially well-suited in their mutual enjoyment of intellectual debates. At the newspaper, MacRae and Arnold often challenged the opinions of one another, engaging in a type of verbal jousting. Arnold wrote, "I was so vocal about my opinions of the First World War that Mr. MacRae said to me one day, 'Why don't you get out the old files of the *Leader-Post* and glance through the war years. You were a child during war.'"[53]

Their exchange of opinions continued through the letters they sent one another once Arnold had left for Europe.[54] In response to MacRae's letter of 4 April 1936,

---

[48]Arnold, "Dear Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[49]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[50]Jeruchim and Shapiro, *Women, Mentors, and Success*,30-34.

[51]A friend of hers described Gladys as a "giver giver." "Letter to Gladys from Myriam," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10 File 117. Also see note 48.

[52]See note 48.

[53]Arnold, "A Lamp in the Dark," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 206.

[54]Letters exchanged between Arnold and MacRae may be found in the Gladys Arnold Papers, Box

Arnold replied from Paris,

> You cannot imagine how glad I was to have you set down on paper some of the things you did in your letter. Some things I agree with – others - I will discuss in this letter. It was like old times – when you used to battle me back into a corner until I wanted to cry with rage – feeling that I might be able to beat you if only I just had time to study a bit more on the subject. What an urge I got, when reading it to be sitting on the big table and attempting to refute some of the things you said.[55]

She clearly enjoyed her discussions with MacRae and learned the skills to debate and defend her position. In response to the letter of 4 April 1936, Arnold chided MacRae for his political opinions and questioned what his editorial policy was now that he was no longer "subjected to [her] socialistic influence."[56] She wrote that she feared, "without my socialist input you may be slipping back to the wolves ...."[57] More seriously, she went on at great length considering his opinions regarding the political situation in Europe and seemed to agree with most of his views.

Although they both agreed that in the event of war most Canadians would back the British,[58] it was Arnold who doubted that the French Canadians would be equally as supportive. She suggested that, "they [the French Canadians] prize the peaceful state of Canada after hundreds of years in France, always in the midst of trouble, more than we do."[59] She also believed that "the Frenchman from his temperament is not a soldier ... he can show reckless bravery and brilliant courage in an emergency - but he can't bear to think about war – and he hasn't the same type of grim endurance as the British."[60]

Whether they were able to find common ground or not, it remained MacRae's responsibility, as both friend and editor, to tactfully criticize Arnold's writing on occasion. At one point he suggested to her that perhaps her personal views were

---

10.

[55]Arnold, "Dear Mr. MacRae," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 110.
[56]Arnold, "Dear Mr. MacRae," Paris, 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 110.
[57]Ibid.
[58]Ibid.
[59]Ibid.
[60]Ibid.

infiltrating her writing: "Might it not be possible that you are seeing Europe with a slant despite your sincerity to see it otherwise?"[61] Although he did not specify how Arnold's writing may not have been objective, Arnold often referred to her own socialist leanings.[62]

Furthermore, while her interests lay in political and economic foreign affairs, MacRae had to remind Arnold on several occasions that from her he needed short articles covering the lighter side of the news.[63] He reminded her that Cora Hind, the well-known agricultural journalist from the prairies, was sending home "travel log" articles from her European tour and although he found them "flat," he knew that the readers found them entertaining.[64]

MacRae was counting on Arnold to feed the readers with similar tales from Europe that entertained, not educated, the public. After sending home an article about the French election, in June 1936, he informed her, "Only a fraction of our readers get het [sic] up about economics and foreign policy ... they are more concerned with love, food, the movies, clothes and family affairs."[65] As her friend, MacRae enjoyed Arnold's intelligence and political curiosity, but as her editor MacRae was insistent that she give him what he needed to sell papers.

As evidenced through the letters between Arnold and both Sifton and MacRae, they had a significant impact on the development of Arnold's career. They offered her a sense of family - support, security, friendship, and unconditional acceptance – all of which were important to her development as a person and as a journalist. At the newspaper, Arnold was recognized for her talents and intelligence, given much freedom

---

[61]MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 25 June 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 110.

[62]For more information on Arnold's political views refer to Chapter Four.

[63]MacRae instructed Arnold in one letter, "... but only a fair amount of politics because we get that from all quarters and I fear that our readers want light and life, the low hounds." MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 23 January 1937, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 110.

[64]MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 4 March 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 110.

[65]MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 25 June 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 110.

to learn as she experimented with many types of reporting.

Although some degree of Arnold's work is unrecoverable due to the anonymity of the editorial page, what remains as evidence of her personal and professional growth at the newspaper is her daily column, "It's A Secret, But...," which first appeared on 3 November 1933. By February 1934 it had become the daily column that many Saskatchewan women turned to for their glimpse into events and issues central to their own lives. She provided a forum for women, many isolated from one another, to feel connected.[66] Items on the women's pages were expected to provide a light-hearted read. They were buried in the middle of the paper, kept away from the heavier news of politics, world events and economics, for fear of somehow lessening the importance and prestige of the newspaper's "real" content – news that was reported as it happened and serious editorials on the major questions of the day.[67]

The women's pages necessarily focused on the routine events of women's daily lives, and columnists were expected to offer advice on every aspect of the female domain. They also covered women's activities as they participated in the community's social, political and cultural realms, and most columnists worked within those tacit limits of the women's page contents.[68] Arnold was well aware of the expectations for the women's page and, in "It's a Secret, But..." she discussed the latest fashion trends, she shared household tips and beauty secrets, and occasionally regaled her readers with a smidgen of city gossip.[69]

However, Arnold was also more than willing to push the boundaries whenever possible.[70] Her interest in world events was leading her in a direction that left the

---

[66] Lang, *Women Who Made the News,* 140.

[67] Ibid., 146.

[68] Ibid., 161.

[69] For example, Arnold writes, "We've just seen another sign of spring. No, it wasn't a pussy willow nor a robin either. A diamond – but it's your job to guess who's fourth finger it was on." Arnold, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 17 January 1934, 7.

[70] In an interview, Arnold expressed her views regarding the women's pages: "I hated those women's pages where there was nothing but social items. I thought we should have something a little meatier." George Bentley, "Arnold Retired But Not Retiring," *Leader-Post*, 24 October 1987, in Gladys Arnold

traditional subjects of a woman's column wanting, and she quickly became frustrated with her column. During an interview in January 1945 Arnold reflected back on what her ambitions had been for "It's A Secret, But...": "[I] wanted to report on why Russia [had] no unemployment when the West was suffering from depression ... and how was Nazism affecting German society."[71] It was not long before she modified her column into a feature that deliberately exposed the readers to issues well beyond what they had come to expect.

Just as Bob MacRae was more willing to give Arnold some experience with different types of reporting, he was also fairly liberal when it came to the contents of the specifically female section of the newspaper. Perhaps as a result of women's autonomy in much of prairie life, female columnists for prairie papers were often given greater independence concerning the makeup of the women's pages than columnists elsewhere.[72] Therefore, Gladys Arnold was a perfect fit for the *Leader-Post* and its readers. She was opinionated and assertive in her writing, and her readers seemed to respond in a positive way to the challenges she put forth. Writing as "Robin," Arnold began to challenge, rather than endorse, the popular attitudes of her day.

Other female columnists were not so fortunate. Kathleen "Kit" Blake Coleman, a journalist whose career spanned from 1889 to 1915, was a single mother who could not jeopardize her income. Coleman was hired by the Toronto *Daily Mail* to attract a female readership to the paper and was expected to write articles on domestic, fashion and household issues for the Saturday edition.[73] She became very well-known for her column

---

Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[71]Susan Becker, "Former Reginan honored," *Leader-Post*, 13 March 1971, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28 File 694.

[72]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 153. Also, for example, WWI war correspondent, Rheta Childe Dorr, took her first job as Women's Page editor for the *New York Tribune*. Dissatisfied with women's position at the paper she complained to the managing editor who told her: "There is no position open to you better than the one you now hold. You know yourself that a woman could never be a city editor much less a managing editor." McGlashan, *The Evolving Status of Newspaperwomen*, 68-71.

[73]Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom*, 9.

"Woman's Kingdom"[74] and wrote for the *Daily Mail* for twenty-five years.[75] Yet, Coleman had always had great aspirations to be a novelist and she spent her career anxious to escape the confines of the women's pages. She found the monotony of writing "Women's Kingdom" to be depressing.[76]

Kit Coleman was initially uncertain as to what her readers wanted from her, though she had been specifically instructed not to "write over the heads of the people." [77] She had a wide variety of subjects that she thought may be of interest to her readers and raised topics such as marriage, women's rights and temperance, through her "Our Letter Club" discussion venue.[78] Much like Gladys Arnold, Coleman was anxious to expose her readers to more serious issues, as well as providing the traditional articles expected from her editors. She encouraged discussions on politics, economics, religion, and social issues. However, her readers made it clear, as did her editors, that all topics were acceptable for debate providing "Kit" did not challenge women's accepted role;[79] she could not be accused of being a "new woman," that is, a woman espousing women's rights and challenging women's traditional role, and still maintain a contented audience.[80]

Therefore, "Women's Kingdom" was written with her readers in mind and "Kit," the columnist, became what they wanted her to be. Kathleen Blake Coleman gave up her more "forthright characteristics" and endeared herself to her readers with a maternal persona.[81] She wrote of her concern for the more unfortunate and she discussed her

---

[74]Ibid., 2.

[75]Coleman gained notoriety for insisting on covering the Spanish American war in 1898. Ibid. 4.

[76]Freeman concluded that, "Kit's earliest work revealed an underlying anxiety over what she should write about for Canadian women and how to please them." Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom*, 49. Some historians have suggested that Coleman's depression was caused by her lack of literary accomplishments: "She harbored an acute sense of inadequacy because she was a newspaperwoman, not a female literary star." Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom*, 11.

[77]Ibid., 37.

[78]Ibid.,18.

[79]The *Mail* did not support women's rights. Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom*, 9. Freeman notes that Coleman followed the dictates of her editor in her choice of suitable women's page material. Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom*, 54.

[80]Ibid., 40-41.

[81]Ibid.

private life, unusual for columnists of her day, as an attempt to appear motherly.[82] Some have suggested that the conflict in Coleman's life -- the restrictions placed on her journalism and her inability to follow her literary aspirations -- was responsible for her serious depressions and unhappiness.[83]

Unlike Jane Cunningham Croly and Katherine Simpson Hayes, who were more content to follow the guidelines of the women's page,[84] Coleman and Arnold both wanted to write articles with more substance for their readers. Kathleen Blake Coleman was required to modify her writing for her column as she succumbed to the demands of her readers and editors. Gladys Arnold was freer than Coleman to take risks with her writing. She had no dependents and she had the support of both MacRae and Sifton. She was also able to adopt a different tactic due to the more liberal nature of the *Leader-Post* and Saskatchewan readers. Just as Kathleen Coleman invented "Kit" to appear maternal and committed to traditional social roles, Arnold created "Robin" to be a rigorous and harsh social critic. She used the character of "Robin" to vent her own frustrations with the world as she saw it and to influence her readers to consider issues that she felt warranted their time.

Arnold's readers granted her a great deal of freedom in "It's a Secret, But...." At times she scolded them, often calling them names and pointing out their inadequacies, in order to stress the importance of her argument. Arnold got away with her rebukes because she cleverly endeared "Robin" to the readers of "It's a Secret, But...." "Robin" was critical and outspoken, but she was also a dedicated advocate of honesty and fairness. "Robin" had a wonderful wit and sense of humour, and was not afraid to poke a bit of fun at herself to soften her otherwise glaring accusations. A reading of Arnold's personal papers, including letters and interviews, gives rise to the conclusion that "Robin" was

---

[82]Ibid., 72.
[83]Ibid., 11.
[84]For further information on Croly and Simpson see Chapter Three.

essentially Gladys Arnold reinvented as herself.

Gladys Arnold fought against conformity. She attempted to live her life according to her own standards and beliefs, gradually moving toward immunity from the expectations of anyone but herself as her self-assurance increased. Arnold, like "Robin," was demanding and forthright, but she also placed the greatest value on fairness and equality. After three years of experimenting with reporting, and benefiting from all that the *Leader-Post* environment offered her, she confidently spoke her mind through her column, particularly if doing so brought her the results she wanted. Although she could be intimidating and intently serious when it came to political and egalitarian issues, Arnold, through "Robin," often shared her sense of humour with her audience. Therefore, willing as she was to expose her opinions on the issues she considered important, "It's a Secret, But..." was a true reflection of Arnold's own personality; the persona of "Robin" merely allowed her to be more abrasive and aggressive than would otherwise be acceptable for a female columnist.

Regardless of the fact that "Robin" was, for the most part, everything that a woman should not have been for her time, she did have male fans that admired different aspects of her column. Writing in with his thoughts on "the rights of men," one male reader felt confident in being given a fair hearing from "Robin" because he had "sufficient faith in your fair-mindedness and in your sense of justice ...."[85] For women's page columnists, winning over male readers was the ultimate gratification, and Arnold made sure that her readers took note of the letter-writer's sex.[86] The male audience, carrying with it a presumed authority, validated women's writing as legitimate and worthy of consideration.[87]

---

[85]Anonymous, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 12 September 1934, 7.

[86]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 147. "A man has had the temerity to venture into our domain. We present to you his remarks.," "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 12 September 1934, 7.

[87]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 145.

Both Arnold and Coleman chose to write behind names that were deliberately ambiguous in terms of gender. The bias against women working, particularly in an all-male newspaper office, necessitated the use of such tactics. In order to express more controversial opinions on traditionally conservative women's pages and to be received favourably by their readers, women journalists often concealed their gender behind intentionally vague pseudonyms.[88] The gender ambiguity gave readers the freedom to attribute particularly contentious or bold columns to a male author, thereby making the commentaries acceptable reading. There is no question that Coleman was successful in raising doubts as to her identity:

> When I read your answers to correspondence I think you are an old lady, single, then again that you are married and have a large family, you have a motherly way with you sometimes. Again that you are a young girl – and, Kit, I sometimes tremble lest you be a man. Now which are you anyway?[89]

Arnold, on the other hand, did not try to keep her gender a mystery, despite the fact that her name was androgynous. She identified herself as a woman on more than one occasion, even if she did not always seem proud of the fact. Writing nearly thirty years after Coleman, Arnold wrote for an audience more willing to accept women's participation in the newsroom. Her boldness, particularly when softened with her humour and integrity, was apparently more tolerable to the increasingly liberal-minded audience of "It's a Secret, But ...."

Although it is impossible to know how many, if any, of her columns were rejected for being too radical or unorthodox, Arnold dedicated her column to enlightening women on issues beyond fashion and food. Approximately 40% of the articles she wrote were completely serious in nature, while even more included some kind of message or issue for her readers to think about. In 1987 Gladys Arnold reflected back on the writing she

---

[88]Freeman, *Kit's Kingdom*, 6.

[89]Dennis Smith, "Women of the Press," [online]. Available: http://7thfloormedia.com/resources/canadiana/library/women_press.html [April 2007].

had done for "It's a Secret, But ...": "It was filled with stuff I got out of other papers and rewrote about international affairs and women because I hated those women's pages where there was nothing but social items. I thought we should have something a little meatier."[90]

At the *Leader-Post* Arnold took advantage of the security afforded her to constantly challenge herself to improve, to question and justify her perspectives, and to educate herself. Her five years at the newspaper were formative for Arnold; her experiences and interactions helped to develop her character and opinions. Professionally, she mastered her journalism skills; personally, she came to a better understanding of herself. In both cases her editor and publisher, Sifton and MacRae, supported her and, whereas she was once unsure of where she belonged, they helped her to find her place. She came to understand that she wanted to be among those who reported world news, news that reached far beyond the women's pages. Through her column, "It's a Secret, But ...," she was given the opportunity to explore what interested her. She covered many subjects, from arts and cultural events in Regina,[91] to international news concerning the rise of Hitler and Mussolini.[92] It became increasingly obvious that it was not the required, traditional topics on the women's page that interested her. Rather, she was most fascinated with the world's political and economic issues. It also became evident that Arnold seemed to consider herself immune from gender barriers, thus giving her the confidence to move beyond the women's pages.

---

[90]Bentley, "Arnold Retired But Not Retiring," in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[91]For examples see, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 2 April 1934, 8.; "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 6 March 1934, 7.

[92]For example see, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 24 August 1934, 7.

CHAPTER THREE

The column, "It's A Secret, But...," provides a glimpse into the character of Gladys Arnold before she left Saskatchewan to become a foreign correspondent. In her book, *One Woman's War*, Arnold chose to share what she considered to be the most relevant experiences of her life as a journalist. By contrast, the column provides a look at what Gladys Arnold did not choose to share. For the first time her columns are examined from a historical perspective, analysed for what they reveal regarding Arnold and the society about which she wrote. That she was innocent to the future exploration of "It's a Secret, But...," and her opinions within, increases the historical value of the column. From her daily articles it is possible to determine what she was thinking about, what she believed, in whose company she was most comfortable, what her passions were, and what accomplishments she dreamed of. "It's a Secret But..." is the only evidence left, apart from a few letters,[1] from which to gather a representation of Gladys Arnold, as she was when she began her journalism career.

Although she covered many subjects in her column, this chapter focuses on Arnold's opinions regarding women and their activities. She wrote about several aspects of the female condition, both past and present, as well as disclosing some of her own feminist views.[2] The substance of these columns is critical to an understanding of Arnold and how she felt about women's role in society. These columns help to explain why she felt unsettled as she matured, unable as she was to meet society's expectations for women of her age. They also reveal why she considered herself to be so different from other women, and how she handled her feelings of alienation. The discussion helps to place Arnold's character within the social conditions of her time and illustrates the conflicts with which she dealt. Briefly addressed is her relationship with her mother, as another means of considering how Arnold flourished and floundered within her society.

---

[1]University of Regina Archives, Gladys Arnold Papers, 98-54, Boxes 1-34.

[2] Although "feminist" has held numerous definitions and implications throughout history, for the purposes of this thesis "feminist" refers to that individual concerned with issues that work toward the achievement of women's equality to men in all aspects of society – politically, economically, as well as socially.

By the time Arnold assumed responsibility for the *Leader-Post's* women's pages, it was clear that her gender would affect the course of her life. Whether she was willing to admit it or not, anxious as she was to please MacRae and Sifton, the reality was that she would never be promoted to editor, nor would she be given the opportunity to provide the paper's political or economic analysis. For all but the very few, the women's pages were the final destination for female journalists and there can be little doubt that as the initial thrill of reporting wore off for Arnold, it was replaced with concern for the effects of gender discrimination on her own life. It would seem that the more Arnold came to terms with the reality of her own situation, the more her persona of "Robin" aggressively encouraged her female readers to address their inferior social position and limited opportunities for advancement. For two years Arnold struggled to break down traditional ways of thinking, calling on women to confront the socio-economic and political issues that were affecting their gender's status.[3]

Arnold used the column to instruct women on their right to equality with men in both the public and private spheres. She was persistent in her attempts to provoke her readers into action because she believed that socio-economic changes were creating opportunities for women to rise above their second-rate status and economic disadvantages. She maintained that women's access to economic independence would be the catalyst for a challenge to men's claims to superiority.[4] Her critical evaluation of the patriarchal social structure, and the apathy of some women within it, is clearly revealed in "It's a Secret, But...."

Arnold used humour and mockery, criticism and manipulation, in her attempts to stir indignation, and therefore a response, from women. Her forcefulness became an acceptable, if not endearing, characteristic of "Robin", and helped Arnold in her efforts to compel women to see their situation for what it was and what it could be. Her consistent

---

[3]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 18 April 1934, 7.
[4]Ibid., 20 July 1934, 7.; Ibid., 19 February 1935, 7.

argument was that men were unlikely to seek change because they had the social, economic and political power.[5] She argued that it was women's responsibility to become independent thinkers and make an aggressive claim for equality as the opportunity arose.

However, Arnold had an underlying fear and resentment that some would not take on the challenge, and from this grew her contempt for women in general. She believed that certain women were, for the most part, satisfied with their status in the patriarchy and were therefore unwilling to use the vote and other means to bring about change. On these women she wrote, "She is guilty on at least two counts, her ignorance and indifference. She is ignorant of her own powers – and she is too indifferent to find out about them."[6] Therefore, Arnold felt compelled to write with passion and aggression in order to get her arguments heard by her readers.

That Arnold had such little faith in women's desire to improve their social position stemmed from what she saw as their refusal to break through the constraints of domesticity in favour of independence.[7] Women of her day and age were expected to concern themselves with getting married and creating a satisfactory domestic situation for themselves and their families. Their lives were in effect directed toward that end. Be it a focus on their appearance or involvement in the local social scene, practicing mothering skills through child-minding or working at an interim job, women were "relentlessly directed ... to wedding vows, childbearing, and child rearing."[8] The cycle of financial dependence and inferior social rank was thus sustained, and Arnold wanted no part of it.

Arnold was aware of the choices before her and was unwilling to sacrifice her

---

[5]According to "Robin," "... men looked out over the vast population of women [working during wartime] and promptly became frightened. Knowing women could do the job just as well as they could, they united against this wholly unexpected threat to their occupations." "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 24 April, 1934, 7.

[6]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 18 April 1934, 7.

[7]Sometimes Arnold specified that only a certain group of women were guilty of her accusations, and other times Arnold made generalizations about women as a whole. "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 6 July 1935, 6.

[8]Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 12-13.

own goals for the sake of society's expectations. As she wrote to her mother from Regina during her time of employment at the *Leader-Post*, she was more concerned with her career and her writing than with anything else,

> I have joined the little theatre and am studying drama, the art of the stage and theatre ... I think someday I would like to write stories that could be produced ... I have some pretty definite ideas on what I want to study and write. Am beginning a course in sociology at Regina College. I'm going to make myself an expert on the subject and do some practical work too. You will see, therefore I have a big winter lined up with work, little theatre, skating and sociology – lots of sleep on the night I am not studying and skating will be my fun. No bridge – no parties if I can help – I like work better.[9]

At twenty-five she had such different ambitions than those of the majority of women her age. She did not regard her job as a stepping-stone toward marriage; she looked upon marriage as a threat to her career and her personal aspirations.[10]

Certainly, from a historical perspective, there were other women who shared Arnold's ambition for a career and her interest in world affairs. However there were few within the male-dominated newspaper business. Arnold's belief was that the majority of women were too dedicated to their social itineraries and marriage pursuits to share her commitment to social change. She seemed to believe that women were virtually incapable of understanding her ambitions for a life beyond home and family because they had been repeatedly socialized to accept the importance of their domestic responsibilities.[11]

---

[9]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d. Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[10]Arnold never did seem to see marriage as a priority, though not for lack of opportunity, and later in life she was relieved that she had not brought children into a world that she considered dangerous. Arnold, "Diary Entry," 9 January 1985, "Diary 1979,1950-51,1985," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 2. On discussing the man who proposed to her in Churchill before she left for Europe, Arnold wrote, "He's lovable but I've things I have to do before marriage because I'd never get a chance later." "The Lamp in the Dark," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 206.

[11]As she wrote in her article for *Chatelaine*, "I Would Rather Have Beauty Than Brains": "Haven't I had it drummed into me that a husband is the prize packet in the lottery of life and that a family and a home is every normal girl's real job." *Chatelaine*, February 1931, in Sylvia Fraser, *Chatelaine: A Woman's Place: Seventy Years in the Lives of Canadian Women* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1977) 225-227. Also found in Gladys Arnold Papers, rough draft entitled "Beauty versus Brains," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 108.

Arnold did not seem to include herself as having been similarly taught about the supremacy of domesticity. Her mother, as Arnold's greatest influence, was perhaps the reason. Curiously, in an article Arnold had published by *Chatelaine* (February 1931), entitled "I Would Rather Have Beauty Than Brains," she suggested that, in fact, her mother was counting on her to marry. She wrote that with every passing day her mother believed Arnold was closer to bringing disgrace to her family.[12] However, given all the letters shared between mother and daughter, all of which indicated a great love and honesty between them, Arnold's reference in her article to her mother's pressure seems fabricated. Florida Mae Arnold was thought to be proud of the choices her daughter had made in her life,[13] and she certainly wrote without condemnation for Gladys' choices and accomplishments. Arnold remembered her mother telling her, "all you need is an education, ethical standards and family pride."[14]

Florida Mae and her daughter, though physically apart from one another for years, remained extremely close and her mother was an intimate, if not her most trusted, confidante. For example, when Arnold first started her monthly cycle she was afraid she had contracted some strange disease. Frightened and alone, she immediately wrote to her mother. Her mother was "appalled," perhaps that Arnold was so innocent or that she had no one more immediate to turn to for information and advice. Florida Mae wrote a long letter immediately, "explaining the meaning of the phenomenon and how I should handle it – so calmed my fears ...."[15] There are several examples of the love and respect they had for each other in Arnold's personal papers, and it is clear that the distance between them did not lead her to depend on others for motherly advice; nor did it prevent Florida

---

[12]Ibid.

[13]In 1945, when Arnold returned to Paris, a friend wrote to Florida Mae, "No doubt you miss Gladys these days...Her work must be very interesting since she has so much responsibility. She certainly has done well and I'm sure you are very proud of her." "Dear Flossie," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 22.

[14]Arnold, "A BELATED TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 14, File 203.

[15]Ibid.

Mae from instilling her values in her daughter.

Given the nature of their relationship, it is clear from where at least some of Arnold's values came. Florida Mae taught her that outward physical appearance mattered less than the inner person. From the same letter written to her daughter, Mrs. Arnold wrote,

> In my nursing experience I have seen men who were horribly mutilated in war; who were burned and their faces completely changed or contorted by skin grafts. I have seen children, born with deformities and women disfigured in accidents. Yet when came to know the persons living in these damaged houses, I saw them shining through, -- through their eyes, their smiles, and the special auras they emanated. This caused their physical bodies to melt away, to disappear and I no longer saw the reddened tissues, the scars and distortions ... [Gladys went on to comment] In many letters over the years she [mother] made remarks here and there, but always the point was the same. The inner person must be the one who others will learn to know – and however beautiful the "house" may be, it will lose its charm, its beauty and become ugly in the sight of others if the inner person is selfish, arrogant, cruel or uncaring.[16]

It is not surprising that Arnold grew up believing in the inherent equality of all people; people from all races, nationalities, religions, economic classes and genders were equal in her view and all deserved fair treatment as well as equal rights and opportunities: "I have no patience with stupid prejudices, wrangling about accents and voices and customs of food and clothing and living...Why not accept the differences as interesting – giving variety to life." [17] Her commitment to egalitarianism was evident from her teaching days, as she recalled having children of fifteen different nationalities in her classroom, "It made me realize that people are all alike fundamentally – the same hopes and joys and sorrows – but that each country has something definitely worthwhile to give to the others and we are fools if we do not discover it and make use of the good things each has to give."[18]

Arnold's opinions on gender equality were equally clear: "Women – especially

---

[16]Ibid.

[17]"Dearest Mother and Arnold," 18 January 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[18]Ibid.

business women – are still paying the penalty of being born girls instead of boys....Take for instance, the salary discrimination that exists between men and women. In almost any line of business you care to mention where men and women are working side by side at the same jobs, women are paid less than men."[19] And she wrote, "Women as well as men are individual members of the human race. They have brains and they propose to use them if they choose to."[20]

Through her column, Arnold made it clear that in her mind, men and women were individuals first, gendered beings second, and she firmly believed in the injustice of any and all gender discrimination: "We have forgotten that men and women alike are human beings, equipped with emotions, hands, eyes, brains."[21] She explained that women were not given equal opportunity to excel in a role beyond that of wife and mother, and she was frustrated with the prejudice holding women back, her own ambitions obviously thwarted by discrimination.[22] Arnold used "It's A Secret But..." to point out her belief in women's inferior social position -- in the workplace, in politics, and in the home – and how it came to be that women occupied a consistently low position in the hierarchy of power.

Gladys Arnold's explanation for women's historically low ranking in the patriarchy was based, perhaps ironically, on her perception of men's good sense. In two of her columns from July 1934, she suggested that men had wisely foreseen the advantages of standing together in the face of challenges to their power.[23] In order to

---

[19]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 3 March 1934, 7.

[20] This was Arnold's response to remarks made by the Mayor of Montreal, Camillien Houde. In a discussion on the five year plan for Canada's social and economic reconstruction during the Depression, the Mayor wrote up a six point plan, the fourth of which read: "General legislation for gradual re-establishment of the woman in the home and the man in the factory and office." It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 22 July 1934, 7.

[21]"It's a Secret, But...,"*Leader-Post*, 19 January 1934, 7.

[22]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 3 March 1934, 7.

[23]In her discussion on a union in England where both men and women belonged, she informed her readers that the women had asked that they "be granted dowries when they marry." That is, the women wanted a rebate on the money they had contributed to the union assuming that once married, they would not get unemployment or strike benefits. The women went to the all-male union officials, and were voted

malign women's attempts at bettering their condition, men had worked together to instill in women's minds certain ideas that propagated men's own superiority. By negatively characterizing women's behavior and creating hostile, divisive categories among women, she made the generalization that "men" had prevented women from advancing.[24]

Arnold explained to her readers that men had convinced women to believe in the myth that "nice women" were everything that men were not. For example, she wrote that men referred to a woman who demanded economic equality as an "old war-horse," and to a woman who refused to accept the opinions of her male companion as being "prejudiced, stubborn, faddy." Arnold believed that men considered women who wanted to work outside the home as being "selfish, mercenary, grasping and greedy."[25] Tinged with mock respect, Arnold justified men's approach as tolerable because their goal was admirable -- to maintain their economic and political power.

As though trying to instigate a response from her female readership, Arnold claimed to admire men for their "astute use of psychology,"[26] while simultaneously accusing women of being responsible for their own historical demise. Women were "simpletons," she wrote on 6 July 1934, for accepting the double standard propagated by men.[27] As she pointed out, the same characteristics disparaged in women were qualities to be emulated in men. She implored her readers to understand the injustice of a situation where women were criticized for doing what men were praised for. As "Robin," she admonished women for their gullibility in accepting the prescribed, inferior role without question: "But our main criticism is that women are such *dunderheads* that they swallow the stuff holus-bolus and are their own worst enemies. What a man says a woman

---

down. Arnold asked, "Do you blame the men? Not at all, while we're living under the snatch and grab system. They're looking out for themselves....When the women get together and present a united front – then we will have economic equality." "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 20 July 1934, 7.

Also see, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 6 July 1934, 6.

[24]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 6 July 1934, 6.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

emphasizes a hundred-fold."[28]

Having established that women should be dissatisfied with their current status, Arnold made it clear that they must seek change. Political action was, for her, the most effective, if not the only, means for women to improve their socio-economic position and achieve equality with men. As a young columnist Arnold did not give consideration to the possibility that it was attitudes toward gender issues that were the real problem, and that political action would be ineffective without restructuring social attitudes. Years later, for example, she would understand that war was merely a symptom and that attitudes were the fundamental, and persistent, problem in her evaluation of World War II.

Therefore, Arnold was relentless in her plea to women to make their membership in the community count for something. From changing labour legislation to establishing pay equity laws, she believed that women's united vote held the power:

> If the women in every electoral district would manage to co-operate long enough – without regard to party – to decide what they expect their representatives to do – to put the question up to the candidates and refuse support unless the candidates promise to fight for such legislation – we might get such stains on our national honor [sic] as "sweated" labor [sic] – wiped out. It's up to you.[29]

She held farmwomen up as the example as to what could be accomplished when women stood together,[30] and she praised those women who recognized the power they had to make change.[31] She did not judge women for choosing one political platform over the other; she merely applauded political action.[32]

Arnold pressed women to vote on any and all issues as the first step toward bringing about gender equality. She explained that they had to make their opinions

---

[28]Ibid. Author's italics.

[29]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 March 1934, 7.

[30]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 20 July 1934, 7.

[31]For example, "Not all of them intend to vote the same way...the main thing, however, is that they realized that it is their duty to express an opinion on the subject so that the vote will be representative when it comes." "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 8 July 1935, 6.

[32]Ibid.

count, and the franchise was the tool they had at their immediate disposal.[33] Beyond that, she considered female representation in Parliament as the next step in women's progression to positions of power. Whether as members of the established political parties or through strictly female organizations, women had to make their voices heard.[34] They had to believe that they were equally capable and deserving of positions alongside men in government institutions.

Arnold was convinced that women's electoral success would produce a well-rounded government, where women's values and expectations, which she presumed to be different but just as important as those of men, would be given equal consideration.[35] Women had their own insight to offer, gained through a history of experiences unique to their gender, and she believed that the woman's perspective must become an integral part of the decision-making process for the government to be effective and egalitarian. [36] Finally, in Arnold's opinion, the government should rule in accordance with the principles of gender equality and fairness:

> Personally the sort of government we want is a government that will recognize that women should be the economic equals of men, that they should be paid at the same rate for the same work as men and that married women should have the right to work either as housewives in their homes, or retain their jobs as they please.[37]

The simplicity of Arnold's solution to patriarchal control was reflective of both her youth, and her tendency to see the world in terms of black and white, right and wrong. For her there was no gray area; there was no dilemma for which a concrete solution could not be found. In her column she established the problem as gender

---

[33]Ibid.

[34]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 19 June 1934, 6.

[35]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 22 October 1934, 7.

[36]Arnold wrote, "We contend ... that women really have something to contribute to governments. This is one of the reasons that we believe that a government made up of men and women might be better balanced, saner and more efficient. For if 50% of the members of the house were women – we are sure that many things would assume a greater importance than they do now- while other things would perhaps lose a little of their urgency.." "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 22 December 1934, 7.

[37]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 19 June 1934, 6.

discrimination, a problem that posed a very real threat to her personal ambitions. She gave the reasons for its existence and she offered a solution. According to Arnold, political action was the answer; women would achieve equality and freedom of choice through the power of suffrage. She did not share with her readers the complexities involved in trying to improve women's inferior status within a patriarchal social order, but merely offered what she believed to be a simple and effective solution.

As for how women were to actually achieve political success, Arnold believed that women should feel free to say whatever they thought was necessary in order to secure votes and win elections. Her suggestion was that, in public, women would campaign solely on the basis of their platform, promising to fight for principles that would appeal to both men and women voters, antagonizing neither. However, when dealing with women on an individual basis, Arnold felt that women were free to use any argument to secure a vote:

> Like politicians (all being fair in love and politics) she may suggest whatever she pleases. If she is to call upon a housewife she can say "give me your vote and I will sponsor sanitation and housing schemes, I will work for the nationalization of munitions" ... If she calls upon a business woman she may say "vote for me and I will bring in and support measures that will call for equal pay for the same work, whether done by men or women ...."[38]

Arnold was a realist. She did not hold women up as paragons of virtue but rather assumed that if they were to succeed, they would have to play by the same rules as their competitors, manipulative or otherwise. She was certain that political action was the key to improving women's socio-economic position and that they were justified in their methods to achieve that goal.

Arnold encouraged women to vote according to their personal convictions, not as the men in their households instructed. Similarly, she wanted women to choose their own paths in adulthood. For the most part, she was open-minded regarding women who

---

[38]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 22 October 1934, 7.

wanted different things out life; those who preferred a career were as honourable in Arnold's view as those who committed their lives to home and family. Her support was based on the provision that each woman made her own decision as to what was right for her. While it was not surprising that, as a career woman herself, she supported women in the labour force, it was a greater indication of her sense of fairness and equality that she defended the homemaker in the face of criticism from working women.

Gladys Arnold had no bias when it came to the life choices women made, on the condition that those decisions were considered and thoughtful.[39] Her tolerance ended with women who dared criticize others for the choices they had made. At a conference for women clerks and secretaries, the speaker, Miss A. Rimer, defended the rights of women to work outside the home. Rimer supported her argument with the declaration that domesticity blunted the intelligence and creativity of the most capable of women. Arnold, while in sympathy with the basic argument, felt that the speaker overstated the case:

> We think Miss Rimer is doing her sex an injustice to say that after six months of domestic work the modern woman is never the same again. Most of the married women we know can handle their work in the home with one hand and apply the other to clubs, sidelines of all kinds and still have time to get out a bit.[40]

Arnold went on to say that work outside the home could be as repetitive and routine as domestic work. In fact, any work could dull the character if "you are a square peg in a round hole."[41]

Just as Arnold was quick to recognize the prejudice of Rimer's remarks against women who chose to work in the home, she often used "It's A Secret, But..." to reflect on the discrimination faced by single working women. At a time when women were expected to aspire to marriage and motherhood, she wanted her readers to understand

---

[39]Arnold wrote, "... women, as individuals, should have the right to select what they shall do in the world without regard to sex." "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 5 April, 1934, 6.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid.

why she and others were not inclined to conform. For the "ambitious working woman," herself tacitly included,

> ... the words 'home and family' have a certain terror for [the single working woman]. They suggest to her a cottage up to its eaves in mortgages with a deadly round of badgering the butcher, sitting up with measley or mumpsy children, or getting worn and drawn and uninteresting.[42]

Although Arnold was able to support most women in their choices, sometimes her personal feelings filtered through, the previous quotation implying some disdain for domesticity. She did not criticize those who chose raising a family over earning an income; she did, however, make it perfectly clear why some rejected the former option in favour of paid employment.

Arnold seemed to recognize that it was a period of uncertainty for women. The recent movement of women into the labour force had opened up several new issues for women to think about, and she encouraged them to do so in-depth, from many different angles. It was possible, though perhaps uncharacteristic, that Arnold questioned her own choices at times:

> Let us suppose for a moment that we follow the advice of those who insist that all women should give up their jobs, and that men be allowed to take them over – with, however, the responsibility of providing for all the women who gave them up. With the advances of modern science, in providing labour-saving equipment in the homes, things look pretty rosy for women.[43]

Perhaps Gladys Arnold *was* uncertain as to her choices. There is little question that she felt disquieted and displaced among most women her age. She was still a young woman and those around her were advancing to the next stage of their lives, leaving interim jobs for marriage and children. As a career woman Arnold had chosen to belong to the less popular group, the group of women charting new ground and, in the newsroom, those women were few. If she were at all insecure regarding her own life choices, and

---

[42]Apart from these comments, Arnold only discussed her personal choice to remain single in her private papers. "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 11 June 1934, 7.

[43]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 15 December 1934, 7.

questioning whether to conform would, indeed, lessen her sense of alienation, it would explain her particular sensitivity to criticisms aimed at working women from those who chose to work at home.

A case in point was her response to an article written by Rita Halle and published in an "eastern magazine."[44] The article told the story of a woman who worked inside the home. She was continually chastising her friend, who had chosen to pursue a career, for never being home. The mother at home believed with certainty that "a woman's place was in the home."[45] However, as her friend sharply reminded her, she was never home herself. The author wrote, "she is always out – either doing something important like finding the right shade of stocking to go with her new spring suit or attending an educational club of some description or simply relaxing over a bridge table or a matinee."[46] Arnold followed up the author's point with:

> All of which are grand things to do – but they are not 'staying at home' and in our opinion, not as domestic really as checking diet lists in a hospital or shirts in a laundry – or as maternal as wiping noses in a day nursery. Nor do they keep one at home as much as being tied to a typewriter by an editor's contract, nor any more worthy than serving the public from behind a counter.... The mother whose children have attained school age or the wife who has no children is rarely in a position to look down her nose at the working women on the plea that woman's place is in the home...[47]

In this instance it is clear that Arnold could be depended upon to defend the inherent worth and "womanliness" of those of her sex who chose to pursue a career outside the domestic sphere.

Arnold felt it was essential for women's individual choices to be respected by other women and men. She further believed that it was important for these choices to be validated by government and community. For example she wanted the recognition that

---

[44]There was no name for the magazine provided. "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 29 March 1934, 7.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

some women made the choice to be single, that they remained unmarried due to lack of interest not opportunity. In this respect, she was fighting against tradition and customary behaviour. The "single working woman" was a relatively new concept in 1934.[48] It had become acceptable for a young woman to work for a stint after graduation providing marriage was the eventual objective; it was a disgrace to end up an "old maid."[49]

Arnold was pleased, therefore, when a court judge publicly recognized the monetary contribution working single women could and did make to the family struggling during times of economic depression.[50] Although she included few details on the case, she quoted the judge as saying, "'during the entire period of financial distress the unmarried woman earning her own living has stood out like a star. I do not know what many a family would have done if it had not been for the refuge from their problems – the old maid in the family.'[51] Arnold took the judge's words as a positive sign for the progress of women and wrote, "It is possible that at last a little recognition and gratitude are to be given to the most downtrodden and unfortunate of their sex under the patriarchal rule of the last century."[52] It was a reason, if a reason was indeed necessary, for society to accept and support the choice she and others made.

Arnold went on to point out to her readers that in a household where the single woman was not allowed to work outside the home because it reflected badly on the family, she was made to feel like a burden. A woman in that position was forced to perform the duties of cook, housekeeper and nursemaid, all the while being treated more as a liability than an asset. She wrote that, given the choice, the "old maid" would surely have opted for employment outside of the family home. She wondered whether the

---

[48]From 1921 to 1931, for ages 20 to 24, the percentage of working women in Canada jumped from 39.8% to 47.4%; and for ages 25 to 34 the percentage fell from 7.6% to 4.9%. Strong-Boag explained, "A newer phenomenon, although it originated in the 19th century, was the entry of middle-class girls into the paid labour market. Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 43.

[49]"It's a Secret, But," *Leader-Post*, 26 July 1934, 7.

[50]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 14 April 1934, 6.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid.

misery of daughters confined to their parents' home was the catalyst for women overcoming their fear of the business world.[53]

A month later Arnold published a letter in "It's a Secret, But..." from one of her readers, who presented another view of the matter. The letter illustrated all the reasons for young women to have marriage as their ultimate goal. It warned that unmarried women were destined to a life of servitude for deplorable wages, as well as being forced to live in constant fear of being replaced by someone younger. The author had no doubt that the single woman's family would take her wages, since they would assume she had no life of her own and therefore no need of them. The letter concluded: "Life at 40 is a tragedy. My advice to girls is to marry – never mind who. If you can't get the one you want, take the one you can get. [signed] 'The Family Goat – a Spinster.'"[54] Arnold, attempting to stir up debate, commented, "This, at least, is one side of the question – is there another?"[55] There were no responses. Perhaps the topic was just too depressing, or, alternatively, it spurred a rush to the altar.

In another column, Arnold presented a more hopeful picture. She called her readers' attention to Vera Britain's *Testament of Youth*, in which the single working woman of mature years is portrayed in a positive light: "A woman who seeks a position at 30 is past the age when she is considering it as a stopgap between school and marriage. Her judgment is mature, she has poise, experience and is not likely to be carried away by impulsive enthusiasms."[56] Arnold was proficient at providing her audience every side of every issue and allowing for freedom of choice.

Gladys Arnold believed men and women were equally capable and should be treated as such. This meant that she did not support giving preference to women *because*

---

[53]Ibid.
[54]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 26 May 1934, 7.
[55]Ibid.
[56]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 1 October, 1934, 7.

they were women. She expected everyone to make their way in the world on the basis of merit, and merit alone. That this was not necessarily the way the world worked did not make it any less expected by Arnold, and she was almost disbelieving when she was not treated accordingly.[57] She pointed out to her readers that when women were given advantages because of their gender, that this was in fact not progress and they should be wary.[58] Such discrimination merely confirmed women's position on the margins. It proved that women could not pull their own weight and had to be catered to. Women, she thought, were often to blame for their own misfortune because they fell into the trap of believing themselves incapable of functioning on an equal footing with men. Nor did she think that women's accomplishments deserved special praise, as though they were unusual and not to be expected:

> Women themselves have erected many of the barriers which act as a hindrance to economic development. We have taken a pride -- a prudish, unhealthy pride – in the fact that certain projects are woman-managed. By calling attention to that fact, we announce that it is unusual for women to be capable.[59]

Arnold was an "equal rights" feminist.[60] She believed that women were already equal with men -- they had just not realized it yet. For her, the impediments to full and practical equality were primarily in women's minds. She did not want equality to come as a gift from the patriarchy because that would, in her mind, have made it a sham. Arnold did not want to be patronized; she wanted to be recognized for achievements honestly earned. While she believed there were structural obstacles to women's equality, some of them erected by women themselves in their acceptance of recognition based on domesticity, the solution was not special favours or preferential treatment, but rather

---

[57]Arnold was "outraged" when she nearly lost her passage to Europe because the captain did not approve of a woman travelling without a companion. She proved herself to be equal to every man on the ship when she "white washed" the engine room, trying to appease the crew, also angry that a single woman was on their ship. Arnold, "The First Five Years," 1935, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 205.

[58]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 18 January 1935, 9.

[59]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 18 January 1934, 7.

[60] Prentice et al, *Canadian Women*, 238.

equal opportunity. Arnold believed the playing field was not then level, but it could be made so if women made use of their potential political power to make it happen.[61]

Arnold rejected the maternal feminist contention that women were inherently morally superior to men and she pointed out the downfall of the argument's fundamental assumption -- historically women had been denied access to the labour force because of the belief that, "women are an inspiration, something to be set on a pedestal to be protected, admired and cared for by men."[62] However, when the economy had needed women to step forward as in times of war, and they had performed men's jobs, they had proven themselves capable, neither too fragile nor too pure. That women were not allowed to maintain their newly earned positions at war's end was not due to their failure, but rather to men's decisions to reclaim their jobs.

Arnold had provided an example of the shortcomings of chivalry for her readers. Men, while claiming to cherish women because they were "much finer than men," used this as an excuse to keep women out of the workforce, except when their labour was absolutely required: "So they promptly trot out all the nostrums, they set women against one another, they try to fill her with fear for her appearance, her health, her femininity and dangle a host of other bogies before her eyes."[63] Arnold insisted that women had been "hoodwinked" and that they then needed to learn to think of themselves as equal to men, to play on the same field as men, and to use the political and legal systems to establish their equality. Women needed to fight for equal pay, equal opportunity and equal freedom to make life choices.

---

[61]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 9 March 1934, 7.

[62]Maternal feminism was an argument used by women who sought to reform society, to bring an end to the problems and needs of their growing communities. They believed that in order to bring about change, women needed, and deserved, a political voice in the public sphere. They justified their demands on the basis of their gender-specific characteristics as mothers and nurturers. They argued that women's uniquely feminine traits and values allowed them to act as guardians of the home, and they were similarly competent to bring "order and well-being" to society, particularly through their use of the vote. Prentice et al, 189. Arnold, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 24 April, 1934, 7.

[63]Ibid.

Clearly, if women were going to think of themselves as equal to men, and refuse to buy into either the maternal feminism jargon or the male rhetoric denouncing their presence in the "man's world," then women had to learn to think independently. Arnold did not want a woman to attend political meetings because her husband or father had told her to.[64] She did not want women to vote as directed by the men in their families and she did not want a woman to proceed in life as instructed.[65] Gladys Arnold consistently encouraged women to think for themselves, to make their own decisions, and to reconsider customs and traditional thought patterns that were detrimental to women's progress.

A prime example of behaviour that made Arnold cringe occurred on Parliament Hill. On 11 February 1935 she criticized the cabinet members' wives who were invited to lunch with the Ontario Lieutenant Governor's wife but turned down the invitation. They did so because the Premier at the time did not approve of the position of "lieutenant governor." Arnold found fault with the wives on several counts. She could not agree with their decision because she considered politics and social commitments independent of each other and one should have no bearing on the other.[66] She then reproached the women for their failure to think independently:

> Second, that these women, all of them prominent, well-educated and presumably well-informed, have behaved like sheep and obediently followed in the footsteps of their lords and masters, thus deliberately admitting that they cannot think and decide for themselves.
>
> Thirdly, and most importantly, they have denied women as being independent and individual intelligible thinkers.[67]

In response to her finding fault with the cabinet members' wives, she received a letter that accused her of not understanding the relationship between a husband and wife:

> Remember, Robin, it's a man's world and you can't get away from it, however

---

[64]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 20 April 1934, 7.
[65]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 11 February 1935, 6.
[66]Ibid.
[67]Ibid.

> much emancipated the women are. A husband can make it pretty unpleasant for a wife if she does something of which he doesn't approve and it's those little unpleasantnesses [*sic*] that are worse than a good "beating up."[68]

Arnold did not back down from her position. She suggested in a follow-up paragraph to the letter that women's increased economic freedom should provide them with the freedom to leave bad marriages or what she considered to be "tyrannies."[69]

It is not difficult to imagine the indignation a woman in a troubled marriage would feel toward the young and single "Robin" for daring to suggest that married women were free to leave a marriage if the husband was dominating and controlling. According to "Robin," if the wife was not able to freely express her own opinions, then she should and could leave. Arnold's youth and naiveté clearly prevented her from understanding the barriers that a woman could face then, (and now,) in escaping a potentially harmful domestic situation.

Arnold had the further temerity to write, in reference to the "unpleasantnesses" that could occur when a wife disregarded her husband, that she had trouble believing men were capable of such behaviour.[70] This was but one instance of Arnold's habit of coming to the defense of men in general. Even her commentary on men's stratagems to hold onto power was tinged with admiration. She seemed genuinely impressed at men's skill and intelligence, even when they were exercised to the detriment of women. In this respect, she was curiously lenient on the former and harsh on her own sex. She respected men for their ability to maintain power for so long,[71] while needling women for all the mistakes they had made. She rarely praised women as a whole for their accomplishments.

For example, she wrote:

> Women are meek with great patience and quiet courage. They have quietly carried on through the centuries capably and efficiently – without making any noise about it while every man who thought he had an idea in his head

---

[68]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 18 February 1935, 7.
[69]Ibid.
[70]Ibid.
[71]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 6 July 1934, 7.

proceeded to write it out in the form of a novel...."[72]

While Arnold seemed to be admiring women for their efficiency and competence, the term "meek" carried with it certain negative connotations. Although she acknowledged the way women carried on throughout the centuries without much fanfare, she perhaps did not think it was a trait worth perpetuating. She later wrote that the schoolgirl who quietly went about her life, unassuming and obediently, was not to be praised for she would surely have "no mind of her own" and would turn into a "yes woman."[73] Conversely, she admired children who were defiant and not afraid to speak their minds, for they would "surely make a difference in the world."[74]

Perhaps Arnold was resentful of the fact that she had not had the freedom to be defiant or speak her mind because growing up she had always been a guest in someone else's home. Therefore, she wanted little girls to feel free to be themselves when they had the opportunity. Above all she valued independent thinking and girls who were resistant to compliancy were surely gifted with individualism; these were the girls who would make sure their ideas were not forgotten. Arnold could not support women who did not feel confident enough to voice their opinions and take the action they believed to be right. Thus she could not sympathize with the woman who remained in a bad marriage.

Women had always been followers and, according to Arnold, they needed to "grow up" into their new role,[75] presumably that of modern, independent women. In the past, while men were hunters and adventurers, she wrote that women had nothing to do but "sit around and ... gossip."[76] It is unusual that she was so obviously reluctant to accord women the recognition they deserved for their contributions. She seemed to carry

---

[72]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 29 September 1934, 7.
[73]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 January 1935, 6.
[74]Ibid.
[75]Ibid.
[76]Ibid.

with her a preconceived image of women throughout time that denied they had any part in the progress of humanity. Conversely, according to Arnold, men had consciously been gaining and holding onto their power, and leading the world forward.

Apparently Arnold shared the opinion of those who believed that the public sphere was the only place of power and influence, where *real* work was done. Women's influence on the family, and the work done domestically or for the community, had little value in her mind. If it did, she would not have criticized women in the past for "sitting around" doing nothing, nor would she have been so overly impressed with men's accomplishments in comparison. To accord those society women, whom she felt alienated from, recognition for their contributions perhaps risked the importance of her own progress toward a successful career. She could not accept that in their role as mothers, as club members, as volunteers, and as wives, those women were themselves powerful in their own right.

That Arnold denied the value of domestic work is significant in terms of her relationship with women. Her refusal to respect and esteem women's contributions in the private sphere gave rise to her inability or unwillingness to identify with her gender. Arnold admired the accomplishments of men and strove for acceptance in the public sphere because she bought into the perception that work without pay was without value.[77]

Furthering that argument, Arnold did not value women's potential either. She believed that should they ever make advancements into the realm of paid employment and social position, they would be ill-prepared to fill positions of leadership because they had historically been denied access to situations where they could learn to lead. Men had known when to speak and when not to, for example, whereas women were far more

[77]The value of labour is an idea from Karl Marx's *Das Capital*, suggesting that a product's value is determined by the number of labour hours put into it. He gave no value to reproductive labour, including domestic labour. See Karl Marx, *Das Capital*, published in 1867.

likely to "talk themselves into trouble."[78] Arnold referred to female foreign correspondents as she wrote, "Every week or so the papers are full of accounts about another woman who has been locked up for "talking too much."[79] In comparison, "Men, we have to admit, appear to be much smarter than women in this respect."[80]

Given that she seemed convinced of women's overall satisfaction with their lesser role in the social structure, it is not surprising that Arnold was wary of women's ability to handle power should they ever achieve it.[81] If they did not talk themselves into trouble, Arnold anticipated female leadership to be comparable to a tyranny. While she dismissed the idea that men were capable of acting as tyrants in a marriage, she was less convinced that women who had domestic servants were not "petty tyrants over those who [held] minor positions."[82] She wondered, in fact, if "women would not be even greater tyrants than men ... if it would be safe to put ourselves at the mercy of women ... and if women could stand power without abusing it."[83] Arnold believed that some women, unlike men, dealt "in those subtle and refined cruelties that stunt the soul and drive fellow creatures to despair...."[84]

It was quite a powerful condemnation by Arnold of those women in charge of domestic servants. It was precisely those women, the women who "stayed at home" but had servants to manage the household, whom Arnold almost seemed to resent or, at least, habitually present in a negative light. They were the one group of women that she could not defend in terms of their life choices. If Arnold were jealous of their situation, of a life made easier by servants and prosperity, it would explain her hostility. However, she gave no indication of ever aspiring to such a lifestyle. She was more determined to travel than

---

[78]Arnold believed that gossip, in showing a lively interest in human affairs, was a truly feminine characteristic. "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 January 1934,

[79]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 5 January 1934, 7.

[80]Ibid.

[81]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 2 November 1934, 8.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Ibid.

to marry and more determined to write than to amass a fortune. In fact, there appeared to be no particular reason for the passion with which she wrote about their cruelty.

Regardless of the circumstances, Gladys Arnold was still guilty of acting exactly as she had counselled her readers to resist. Her consistent argument was that if women were ever to advance toward economic and social equality with men, then they would have to work together and support each other for the common cause. Yet, when confronted with a group of women who irritated her, whom she accused of tyrannical behavior and of passing judgment on herself and other working women, Arnold seemed unable to follow her own advice. In her struggle to promote solidarity among women, she was herself a divisive force.

Arnold's youthful perception of women's roles, combined with her own ambitions to be valued in a society where women were consistently undervalued, prevented her from identifying with her own gender. She accepted the devaluation of women's work inside the home and within the community, and consequently made every effort to work in the public sphere. She passed judgment on those who she believed be to be unwittingly working against her own advancement, or who were apathetic.

Not only did Arnold refuse to accord women any credit for their accomplishments, but she was also persistent and vocal with her criticisms of women in general. From "dunderheads" to "an army of 'yes' women" she really had very little positive to say about her readers. Curiously, they supported her column for nearly two years, perhaps coming to enjoy her candid observations on issues and social conditions. Her honesty and her ability to find humour in nearly every column, lightened the otherwise contentious columns she printed daily.

The study of Arnold's feminist position as revealed through her columns gives rise to several conclusions. Clearly she believed that women's inability to advance socio-economically or politically was the result of male domination over the power centres

within the social structure. Her solution was simple and one-dimensional. First, Arnold urged women to internalize their inherent equality to men, and accept that they were likewise deserving of the power and subsequent benefits of leadership. Secondly, she encouraged women to assume responsibility for their own advancement, specifically through their collective political voice.

Despite her theories to improve the lot of women, Arnold had little faith in their willingness to take action, and consequently she had no inclination to associate herself with those whose work she did not value, and whose commitment to change she doubted. Although she was able to recognize the responsibilities faced by nearly all women, and understood their individual challenges whether in paid employment or working at home, single or married, Arnold felt no obligation to work for the betterment of women nor to comply with society's expectations for her gender. She wrote with objectivity, though periodically revealed her admiration for the achievements of the opposite sex.

It was clear that Arnold would never identify with, or admire the accomplishments of the majority of women. From her columns written on women, the conflict between her personal convictions and those of the society in which she lived become identifiable. She wanted to be judged by merit, to be advanced according to her talents, and her articles revealed her frustration that such would not be the case. She knew the strength of the gendered division of labour and would eventually choose to leave the *Leader-Post* in search of a place where she would be valued for her own abilities. Arnold had far too much confidence in her own skills and intelligence to accept a career limited to the women's page.

Gladys Arnold's columns exposed her determination to distance herself from the female majority. She believed she was different and she was resolved not to follow her peers into marriage and domesticity. She was driven to create a life in which she had a purpose, and where she would be accepted for who she was, and not for what society

expected her to be. She used her column as an outlet for her opinions and feelings, and in doing so provided an explanation for her determination to get beyond the women's pages -- for Gladys Arnold, gender was irrelevant and should have no bearing on individual pursuits. She was clearly not prepared to spend her life writing for people who did not share her interest in the issues affecting the world at large.

CHAPTER FOUR

Through her columns on women's issues, Gladys Arnold dealt with the limitations faced by women of her generation, and alluded to her personal hopes for experiences that went beyond those limitations. She had many diverse interests and her columns were indicative of her varied concerns. Beyond gender issues, she repeatedly discussed politics, pacifism, education and the power of the next generation, as well as arts and culture in "It's a Secret, But...." A consideration of these discussions exposes more information about the nature of Gladys Arnold's character, and highlights her reaction to several social issues of her time. It becomes clear that while she occasionally shared the majority view, more often than not Arnold wrote according to her own agenda and cared not at all that it conflicted with mainstream opinion.

Although Arnold had an enthusiasm for many subjects not typically found on the women's page, she was required to follow some of the traditional guidelines for the female readership. She sometimes included little paragraphs of "necessary" text following a lengthy diatribe on a more serious subject, as if it was an afterthought. For example, in a column dated 20 April 1934, Arnold argued in favour of independent political thought for women and then followed with a piece on "the ideal dream girl of 1935," including the required body measurements, hair colour, and appropriate use of cosmetics.[1] It was an excellent example of Arnold's attempt to meld the necessary with, in her opinion, the important.

However, Arnold did not write as though these "women's interest" features were menial or trivial, as might have been expected given her impatience with the female mindset. When she wrote, she wrote professionally, without prejudice. However, such material was irrelevant to the main course of her intellectual development and formation of an adult view of the world. She gave the impression through her papers that she was

[1]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 20 April 1934, 7. Another example of Arnold mixing serious with light topics was given on 5 April 1934. She followed a discussion on women's right to free choice with a paragraph on how to rate one's laugh. "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 5 April 1934, 6.

like a sponge, absorbing not only the workings of the newspaper but also the wealth of information that passed through it every day. In particular, she was fascinated with the economic and political issues of the time. She researched the world situation, past and present, including governments and economic policies of European countries, and when she could, shared some of her views with the readers of "It's a Secret, But ...."[2]

It was these issues that captivated the attention of the young reporter, more so, perhaps, than the column she was responsible for on the women's pages. The column was her job, but the heavier issues were where Arnold would focus her life's work. It follows that she devoted approximately 10% of her columns to beauty issues and 12% to political and international issues; the former were of little interest to her, the latter were presumed to be of little interest to her readers.[3] However, all of her columns offered information important to the study of Arnold and how she reacted to the society in which she lived.

It is clear that Arnold was worried, as were many others, for the future of her country. It was a time of great economic upheaval and while there were many social critics, herself included, few answers emerged. In June 1934, she addressed the failure of the Canadian government in its handling of the economic crisis, and the inadequacy of the country's educational system in supplying students with an education useful in managing the economic and political crisis.[4] In Arnold's opinion, "It's more important to our youth to know what is worth while to make the future of Canada prosperous than to know who won the "War of the Roses" or what year William the Conqueror came to England."[5]

---

[2]For a few examples see: "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 20 June 1934, 7; 22 February 1934, 7; 5 June 1934, 6.

[3]See Introduction, Page 10 for an explanation of the categories that the column was sorted into for the purposes of this thesis. At least 6% of her articles were fashion or beauty related, and 12% focused on international and/or political issues.

[4]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 20 June 1934, 7.

[5]Ibid.

In the same article, Arnold wrote positively on the opinions of W. E. Gentzler, Secretary of Appointments at Columbia College, who held up the economic programs of the United States as a model for the successful management of the Depression and who encouraged Canada's youth to take an interest in the new methods.[6] Arnold wrote, "Whether it is suitable for Canada or not isn't the question. It's a new experiment and therefore should be studied for the aspects that might be suitable in our country."[7]

Arnold made it clear through "It's A Secret, But..." that not only was *she* greatly concerned with the state of world affairs, she expected her readers to share her concern. Although she had little faith in her female readership to care as deeply as she did about economic or political policy, her optimism for the future lay with the younger generation. Unlike some of her readers, who wrote to the column criticizing the "modern generation" for being irresponsible and lazy,[8] she considered her generation to be full of potential. They had come of age in the 1920s and, therefore, had never known anything but prosperity and relatively easy times. But, Arnold pointed out that during the economic depression, they were being tested and "toughened,"[9] and would respond with courage to the challenges they faced.

Gladys Arnold understood the power of youth and put her faith in both her contemporaries and the upcoming generation to lead her country, and the world, out of the many difficulties that had developed during the 1930's. She believed that in order to govern with some effectiveness, the younger generation required an education that included both economic and political studies in order to gain a thorough understanding of the depth of the problems facing the world.[10] She encouraged those students who, like

---

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Arnold's definition of the modern generation was: "Those young men and women between 20 and 30 years of age, who are just beginning to make their voices heard and their presence felt in public affairs." *Leader-Post*, 21 December 1934, 6.

[9]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 21 December 1934, 6.

[10]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 20 June 1934, 7. Arnold expected not just future leaders, but also the general public, to benefit from a broader education: "a good many of us might find the business of

herself, recognized that their future employment depended on political and economic change and who, therefore, committed themselves to relevant programs of study. "It bodes well for the future when our young people are considering making a science of government," she wrote, "they are showing wisdom when they study and question monetary questions, trade questions and social services."[11]

Unlike her opinion regarding the apathy of women toward effecting change, Arnold believed that her "generation", in general, would rise to the challenge. They would understand that, in current conditions, a job was a prize awarded to the most deserving, and that young people had to take charge of their destiny if society was to move forward. Just as she expected women to take charge of their future, as she would her own, so too did she look to her generation to be proactive. Here Arnold revealed two of her core character traits – individualism and belief in the work ethic. This led her to discount those who, in her opinion, had not "learned the value of work."[12]

Therein lay the reasons for Arnold's inclination to find fault with women who, in her opinion, had acquired no work ethic. Women who had servants to perform their domestic duties while occupying themselves with pursuits of lesser value, in Arnold's estimation, knew neither the meaning of hard work nor did they exhibit any sense of individualism.[13] While she was a proponent of individual choice, she had no respect for women who were satisfied with an unproductive role in society. She may have also recognized the unfairness of some women being free of economic concerns, while others were required to work outside the home simply because they were less prosperous. Furthermore, Arnold was worried for the future of her society and had no tolerance for those who were blissfully unaware of the circumstances faced by the modern world.

---

getting a living much simpler if we knew more about it. Not only that, we might not have the world in the economic mud-puddle it now finds itself – if a little more attention had been devoted to [the study of money]." "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 24 June 1935, 7.

[11]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 20 June 1934, 7.

[12]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 21 December 1934, 6.

[13]For further information on this subject refer to Chapter Three.

Gladys Arnold was deeply concerned about what was happening in the here-and-now. She often wrote her columns with a sense of urgency, understanding that the world was in deep political and economic trouble. She knew there was cause for alarm, and she wanted her readers to be informed and aware of the international dimensions of the crisis. In August 1934 Arnold quoted Professor Gerhard, a follower of Hitler, who gave a lecture at the Regina YMCA.

> The new Germany is to be built upon home life. We believe that a well-ordered and well-disciplined home will mean a well-ordered and well-disciplined nation. We have taken women out of factories and given their places to men for we think womanhood was meant for something better than to be – shall we say – factory slaves. We believe that the welfare of the nation depends in a great measure on the women, they are in charge of the health, morals, education and conduct of the children ....[14]

Always an advocate of equality and fairness, Arnold initially responded not to the words spoken by the professor as would be expected, but to the audience's reaction. Apparently the Regina listeners were less than respectful of the speaker, calling out "You're a liar," among other interjections, during his talk. In her column she reprimanded such behavior as an "exhibition of ignorance."[15] Her belief was that any visiting speaker deserved the respect and attention of the audience, whether they agreed with his opinions or not.

It was in the following day's column where Arnold made it clear that in fact she did not support his views on women. However, she did admit to agreeing wholeheartedly with Gerhard's theories on dealing with the unemployed. According to the professor, his country was committed to finding work for everyone, "We do not believe that any able-bodied person should be a parasite on the rest of the people, either because there is no work for that person to do or because he won't work."[16] To which Arnold responded, "Agreed!"[17] She then went on to explain the benefits of Hitler's policies, policies that

---

[14]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 24 August 1934, 7.
[15]Ibid.
[16]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 25 August 1934, 7.
[17]Ibid.

Gerhard termed "practical socialism."[18]

The idea put forth by Gerhard was that relief payments for the unemployed should only be distributed in exchange for some type of contribution to society. For example, those with specific talents would be employed on government projects or enlisted as teachers in their particular areas of knowledge. Correspondingly, those people who were fortunate enough to be earning an income had a social responsibility to give back to the community, through contributions of food or money to aid the unemployed. Arnold considered Germany's method of relief payment to be fair, as well as conducive to promoting strong work ethics, and was therefore reasonable.[19]

That she had, at this point in her life, supported one of Hitler's policies would likely seem unreal to Arnold later in her life. At the time, however, she criticized the government of Saskatchewan for not implementing similar projects. She based her judgment on the assumption that any person, given the option, would rather earn his or her keep than accept handouts. She saw the value in Germany's relief program and she held her own government responsible for not providing its people with similar means of proving their worth.[20] Arnold, like many commentators of her time, was searching for answers to the deteriorating economic condition, and hard work seemed like a reasonable answer. That she was a perceptive reader of the country's mood was evident when two years later she witnessed the "On to Ottawa" Trek and inadvertently revealed her socialist leanings.

In June 1935 Arnold was in Regina when hundreds of men descended upon the city via rail on their way to protest in Ottawa against Bennett's unemployment policies. The plight of the men who had participated in the "On to Ottawa" Trek deeply moved the young Arnold as she witnessed their despair and hopelessness. In a personal letter to her

---

[18]Ibid.
[19]Ibid.
[20]Ibid.

mother and her stepfather her words revealed her frustration, "Never in my life have I seen anything that so stirred my emotions."[21] She was appalled that a nation as rich in natural resources as Canada could allow men to sit in camps for four years, producing with their time nothing but agitation. She was "heart sick" for the trekkers and held the government solely responsible for their condition.[22]

In her column of 15 June 1935 she criticized the government, specifically the Minister of Justice in Ottawa, for attempting to discredit the march by blaming it entirely on the "red threat."[23] She pointed out, as she had done in her personal letter, that the placement of the young men in work camps for several years was demoralizing, as were years of travelling the country with no shelter or food, searching for work:

> Their high hopes, enthusiasm, initiative and energy have found no way to employ themselves. They are vegetating, becoming cynical, disillusioned and embittered. Does this mean they are 'reds.' Does it mean that some strange sort of influence has been exerted over them. These boys are ordinary Canadians ... The thing is not that they are under the influence of 'reds,' but that we have permitted such conditions to exist that they find no one else offering them vigorous leadership.[24]

Although the Trek was an isolated incident, her opinions are worth noting in as much as they exposed Arnold's more radical political beliefs. Though not written for the benefit of her readership, she offered an explanation to her mother regarding her personal theories on capitalism:

> It is a dreadful thing that in a young country like this, with an abundance of natural resources and land and raw materials, with man power and so much work to be done – that we cannot find jobs for all these young men. That is the reason I am against the private ownership of the means of production. I am not against the ownership of a man's house, or his car, or his boat or ... but I am against anyone but the state as a whole owning the capital that produces these things [the] factories and mines, the lumber or timber limits and the oil wells – these things should be held by the state for the good of all people – it does not matter how much of the materials they produce are held individually provided

---

[21]Arnold, "Dear Mother and Arnold," 1935, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[22]Ibid.
[23]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 15 June 1935, 7.
[24]Ibid.

they can only be consumed, and not used to produce with.[25]

Arnold's commitment to fairness and justice, evidenced previously in "It's a Secret, But...," fuelled her argument for socialism and illustrated the consistency in her arguments and viewpoints. She interpreted the capitalist world as unfair, based on the idea that a small percentage of men controlled the means of production on the earth that *all* of mankind had inherited equally. However, Arnold did not assume that socialism was the final solution. She believed that political structures progressed and that it was merely the next step. She repeated her belief in the power of youth as she wrote, "[socialism] is what we see – generations to come will see something infinitely better when that is achieved."[26]

Clearly Arnold had given a great deal of thought to her political theory but it was just that, a theory. She was equally concerned with the reality of the world situation and the threat of war weighed heavily on her mind. During her time at the *Leader-Post,* Arnold was a committed pacifist and made no secret of the fact with her readers. She wrote article after article in "It's a Secret, But..." discussing the many sides of war. She also highlighted the works of authors, who wrote in favour of peace,[27] and she covered peace conferences and youth rallies.[28] She wrote:

> A pacifism that merely sits in idleness waiting to demonstrate itself by a refusal to fight once war is started, appeals to nobody. But a pacifism ... to work actively to 'cut the roots of war and militarism,' to substitute reasons for force, to revise text books on a different standard of values ... to police the world – that is worth while.[29]

While Arnold had written her fair share of disparaging remarks against women, when it came to pacifism she expected women, as a united group, to act as the advocates

---

[25]Arnold, "Dear Mother and Arnold," 1935, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[26]Arnold, "Dear Mr. MacRae," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 110.

[27]Arnold referred to Vera Brittain's novel, *Testament of Youth*, for an example of the damage created by war. "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 19 November 1934, 7. See also "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 7 May 1935, 6.

[28]Arnold, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 15 April 1935, 7; Ibid., 22 June 1934, 7; Ibid., 7 August 1934, 7; 8 December 1934, 6; Ibid., 13 May 1935, 7.

[29]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 8 December 1934, 6.

for peace, using the franchise as their power to effect results.[30] She completely agreed with the statement made at a conference concerning international events: "Women have a large vote in this country – if they insist upon their candidates pledging themselves to anti-war principles before they are elected something might be done."[31] Employed or at home, married or single, beautiful, homely, intelligent or otherwise, women, Arnold believed, ought to join forces with women from all walks of life for the pacifist cause. On this issue she was sure she would find common ground with her readers.

Arnold was particularly encouraged by the attitude of the younger generation and their apparent stand against war. She appreciated the definitions of pacifism presented by both teams of an international debating match on the subject, who saw pacifism as an "active fight" rather than a "passive wait."[32] She devoted an entire column to the words of a young man who had written "Robin" with his thoughts on war. She admitted that in sharing his words she hoped for the affirmation of others, thereby giving reassurance that young men in the future would not be easily tricked into war again. He wrote: "In war, soldiers are much alike whatever uniform they may wear. They are doped with lies and made to believe that every enemy is a devil ... War does not settle who was right or wrong. It just settles who was strongest."[33]

Arnold also included in her columns other opinions on war and the need for its prevention. She shared the words of a soldier who maintained that war was inevitable based on historical evidence,[34] but in defense of pacifism she effectively cited a veteran who described war as "an evil, vile, smelly thing" and peace as "the course of wisdom."[35] She was inspired by the responses to an essay competition, held by the New History Society of New York, which posed the question, "How can the youth of the universities

---

[30]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 12 March 1934, 7.
[31]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 16 January 1934, 7.
[32]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 8 December 1934, 6.
[33]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 22 June 1934, 7.
[34]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 11 September 1934, 7.
[35]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post,* 13 May 1935, 7.

and schools contribute to the realization of a United States of the World?"[36] She quoted some of the responses in her column, noting that there was overwhelming support for peace on both sides of the ocean:

> "Keep alive the will to peace and the will to sacrifice for peace." Austria
> "Let us irrevocably refuse all military service." Bulgaria
> "Turn to the youth who want peace and a better life – the old do not understand." Czechoslovakia
> "Our goal is peace and the realization of the United States of the World. We wish to enlist in the service of this ideal and in its name become The Heroes of Peace." Germany[37]

Arnold ended the column with a plea to Saskatchewan's youth to send in their views. She concluded, "We have an idea that the war propaganda that spreads through the world comes not from the tongues and pens of youth but of age."[38]

Though there were some aspects of the war issue that Arnold was personally reluctant to raise in her column, she did manage to make her views known. For example, she published an article written by a Regina man to "It's a Secret, But...," that mirrored her own sentiments. The letter discussed ownership of the means of production and suggested that "armament manufacturers, big interests and politicians," profited from war and therefore had an economic interest in their stand against pacifism.[39] Although she left her own opinion out of the discussion, she explained to her readers that *some* people felt economics fuelled wars.[40]

At twenty-five Gladys Arnold was absolutely committed to the pacifist cause. "The war," [i.e. the First World War] she wrote, "was an odious and criminal way to try to settle problems in the 20th century of civilized nations; propaganda and greed had started it and nobody had won ... conclusion, I was a pacifist."[41] She believed her opinion was "objective and informed," based on her own research and knowledge. In

---

[36]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 7 August 1934, 7.
[37]Ibid.
[38]Ibid.
[39]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 2 August 1934, 7.
[40]Ibid.
[41]Arnold, "A Lamp in the Dark," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 206.

1936 she wrote to MacRae,

> Of course you know my sentiments – I am a pacifist and I don't care who knows it – even to the point of being overwhelmed by another nation...I believe it is better to sacrifice territory than lives because the next generation grows up in a territory and usually loves the place he calls home whatever its name.[42]

In 1939 her youthful passion would yield to a new position, born of age and experience.[43]

Arnold had expressed relief in the younger generation's considered support for pacifism, and she believed they would benefit from an improved educational system, taking note that changes were already underway as she wrote her column. Emulating the values of her mother, Arnold was an enthusiastic proponent of education and endorsed its benefits through her column. She celebrated the newly established "Education Week" in her column of 29 January 1935, explaining its purpose as, "bring[ing] parents and teachers closer together for the ultimate benefit of Canadian children."[44]

Arnold stressed the importance of parents showing an interest in curriculum issues and sharing in the development of a progressive educational system. Having experienced firsthand the difficulties faced by a rural teacher, she encouraged parents to become fully involved in the education of their children, thereby reducing the teacher's burden. She foresaw the benefits to society of a youth skilled in understanding the fundamentals of citizenship, and encouraged parents to view school as a place of "training children for the new world,"[45] rather than as a childcare facility.

Arnold went so far as to evaluate the new textbooks brought into the public schools in 1934. She critiqued one positively for bringing to young readers more than an appreciation for literature. According to Arnold, the stories in *Highroads to Reading* encouraged the overall development of a "healthy, happy, self-reliant child," through the inclusion of a wide variety of material relating to city and farm life. She was most

---

[42]Arnold, "Dear Mr. MacRae," 16 April 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[43]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," 17 September 1938, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[44]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 29 January 1935, 7.
[45]Ibid.

appreciative of a section on "Everyday Living," which instructed children on the dangers of matches, the meaning of traffic signs, health issues and even a section on "individual happiness."[46] Again, she encouraged parents to examine the contents in order to understand what their children were learning in school.[47]

Arnold believed that a relationship of respect and cooperation was developing between students and teachers as the public education system matured. In her opinion the "ultra modern" generation[48] was benefiting from the experience of working together with the teachers, though she did not specify exactly what the two groups were working on. She thought the closer relationship was producing a younger generation possessed with "plenty of initiative, natural poise and leadership, with a great enthusiasm for work of all kinds."[49] Combined with the students' work ethic, the new education system was developing students who were "by far the most promising" in her opinion.[50]

Arnold was also pleased that the education system had encouraged music as an area of study. She was an avid follower of the arts and considered music in the schools to be of fundamental importance. As an example, she informed her readers on the tour of a local school band. Regina's Central Collegiate orchestra was attending a Winnipeg music festival and she commented on how impressed she was with the students' "scrubbed-up" look in their new clothes.[51] Arnold also valued their youthful excitement, enviably free from adult concerns.[52] From her point of view, "the chance to get together

---

[46]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 4 September 1934, 7.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Arnold called the generation just coming up the "ultra modern generation", whereas she considered herself part of the "modern" generation. Arnold, "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 21 December 1934, 6.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid. As an explanation for the growing relationship between students and teachers Arnold quoted the opinion of a graduate from a Regina secondary school, "The teachers have something to do with it ... In just the last few years they seem to have discovered that school has to prepare you for something more than the ability to verify your change at the corner store."

[51]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 2 April 1934, 8.

[52]Ibid.

in a massed orchestra, to play in competition and in harmony is an education in itself."[53]

It was not just the local arts community that captured Arnold's attention. She supplied for her readers bits and pieces of theatre news, and reviews of books, plays, music and performers from around the world. While her columns in this area were loaded with information on what was going on creatively during Arnold's time, what is most relevant for the purposes of this paper is her continuity of thought.

Present in Arnold's study of the arts was her commitment to individualism and her concern with gender issues. She truly believed in the importance of personal choice and the individual's right to live and think according to his/her own convictions. Consequently, she disagreed with the way visual arts and music had been streamlined, taught in schools as a series of "monotonous musical exercises" and lectures on "a mysterious hidden meaning" in a line of poetry. She believed that even art appreciation should be an individual experience, so that children learned how to take their own sense of enjoyment and value from artistic activities.[54] She explained that not everyone should be expected to excel in poetry or music, but all people could learn to appreciate the beauty of the arts in their own way.[55]

Arnold also brought gender issues into her discussion of the arts. For example, finding fault with the male conviction regarding the overall superiority of their gender, she praised one man alone for recognizing women's greater ability in the film industry. Arnold held up film critic, Dan Thomas, as a model for acknowledging women's talents, in this case for film editing and their greater skill at bringing the picture together.[56] She also included the opinion of director Sidney Franklin, who agreed with Thomas on women's superiority in this area but attributed it to their, "critical and sentimental point

---

[53]Ibid.
[54]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 16 January 1935, 7.
[55]Ibid.
[56]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 14 January 1934, 7.

of view ... they know best what moves the heart and pictures that do are usually hits."[57] Arnold was pleased that women were recognized for work well done and, although she was convinced men and women were inherently equal, she allowed for their gendered differences. She would have agreed with the director in his assessment of women's sentimentality, but in her view, this did not make them lesser than men, just different.[58]

Arnold directed almost 15% of her columns to topics in the arts. The newest books, play reviews, and local talent were as important to her as were the heavier issues she included in "It's A Secret, But...." Politics, economics, and the possibility of war were all serious concerns of Arnold's. They were issues to which she had given considerable thought, and on which she wrote knowledgably. It can only be imagined how Arnold felt about the other approximately 10% of her columns that covered what was "required" for the women's page.

Although Arnold was an independent thinker, and at times unconventional, being more than willing to challenge standard responses to issues, she was not an active feminist.[59] As previously discussed, she was more comfortable disassociating herself from women than she was fighting for the feminist cause. Her relationship with women was complicated and her reactions to gender issues were unpredictable. As a case in point, Arnold was grateful for the opportunity to work for the Canadian Press in Europe, unruffled by her mandate to "stick to the human interest stories" because, "the boys in the London Bureau will look after political and military stuff."[60] At the same time, she was infuriated when denied access to the Maginot Line because it was "no place for a

---

[57]Ibid.

[58]For example, Arnold saw no problem with her conclusion that gossiping was a "truly feminine" characteristic. "It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 January 1934.

[59] There was no evidence in the research conducted that Arnold was involved with any groups or activities involved in promoting women's equality. She did not seem to write her columns on behalf of the women's movement, but rather she wrote more as an observer or social commentator. Arnold would now be considered a liberal feminist, believing that change could be brought about through legal and political reform within the existing social structure.

[60]Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 16.

woman."[61] Arnold was conflicted between wanting to work as a journalist and the gender bias involved. She knew what was expected of her - female journalists were *supposed* to cover the human interest stories - but she was in a continual struggle against what was expected, in favour of following her own agenda.

The same may be seen in her column. Arnold knew she was expected to cover beauty and fashion issues, and she followed the requirements without bias. She did, however, minimize the number of columns focused on the mandatory. Although Arnold had a sharp tongue, evident when discussing women's issues among others, she was not at all condescending in her coverage of beauty issues. She did not agree with the standard, but she understood it; if women were to be judged according to their physical appearance, then she might as well help them along. In her column she wrote, "Every normal girl wants to make the most of her appearance – it is as natural as her desire for a good dinner."[62]

Gladys Arnold worked to keep her readers informed on upcoming fashion trends, and she offered specific methods for her readers to improve their looks. She wrote on topics such as popular seasonal colours in fashion, new techniques under development in the beauty industry, and general beauty and make-up tips. She informed her Regina readers that, to achieve "permanent roses in the cheeks," women in London were having them tattooed on.[63] Arnold wanted to expose women to new ideas and encouraged her readers not to be afraid to try new things in all areas of their lives. Whether it was bright patterns to wear,[64] or opinions to voice,[65] or romantic affections to show,[66] she implored women not to be afraid of stepping out.

In terms of her own beauty, Arnold did not seem to think very highly of what she

---

[61]Ibid., 22.
[62]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 February 1935, 7.
[63]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 25 May 1934, 8.
[64]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 8 February 1934, 7.
[65]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 January 1935, 6.
[66]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 6 February 1934, 7.

saw in the mirror: "If I look the world straight in the face as is natural for me to do, I look like a rather plain, intellectual girl without any sex-appeal."[67] She considered herself "one of the unfortunate intelligent ones," *unfortunate* because in her words, "Correct spelling will bring me in twenty-five dollars a week, perhaps, but a cute nose will give me a meal ticket to punch for the rest of my life."[68] Although she was neither homely nor unpleasant to look at, Arnold lacked confidence in her physical attractiveness. She felt that she could not compete with other women in this department, perhaps offering an explanation for her unwillingness to share in what she saw as women's preoccupation with their looks.

It is impossible to know for sure how Arnold felt about covering beauty and fashion issues. If she did resent having to write paragraphs on the benefits of rice pudding for the skin,[69] or how to wear the latest style of hat,[70] then she was skilful at hiding it. There were no columns where she even hinted at disdain for the beauty advice she shared with her readership. In fact, as with her articles on the arts, there were some fashion issues that she was able to turn into a debate for individualism. A discussion that began over whether it was appropriate for women to wear only silk stockings on their legs in the wintertime, turned into a full-blown dispute between herself and her readers. Mothers and fathers wrote in demanding that Arnold support their plea for young women, their daughters in particular, to wear more than "sheer silk knickers" in the cold weather.[71] With all practicality, she replied, "there is no reason why clothing could not be especially designed for colder climates. There is no reason why smart things,

---

[67]"Nan Robins," pseudonym for Gladys Arnold, "I Would Rather Have Beauty Than Brains," *Chatelaine*, February 1931, in Sylvia Fraser, *Chatelaine: A Woman's Place: Seventy Years in the Lives of Canadian Women* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1977) 225-227. Also found in Gladys Arnold Papers, rough draft entitled "Beauty versus Brains," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 108.

[68]Ibid.

[69]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 6 April 1935, 6.

[70]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 23 January 1934, 6.

[71]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 9 February 1935, 7.

distinctive and exceedingly pleasing to the eye, could not be made."[72] She sympathized with the girls' wish to be seen as fashionable, and reinforced their right to make decisions for themselves, though she did mildly concede that perhaps this was not one instance of their "feminine intelligence."[73]

Arnold believed that she understood the system by which her society worked. Ultimately, in the case of women, beauty was the ticket to success. Personally, she was willing to play by the rules to a degree; she would make the best of what she had, but she would never count on her own beauty to get her places. For one thing, Arnold did not believe it would get her very far; and secondly, she was committed to a system of rewards based on merit. However, she was also practical and if she had considered herself beautiful, it does not seem beyond the realm of possibilities that she would have used that, too, to advance her own cause. Gladys Arnold wanted to travel and she wanted to write, and she was absolutely determined to accomplish her goals, one way or the other.

Of the 481 segments that Arnold wrote for the *Leader-Post*, nearly all of them revealed a clue to understanding her or the society in which she lived. Although she was concerned for the economic future of her country, she was certain that hope lay with the younger generation. She was completely in favour of modernizing the educational system, sure as she was that the changes would lead to a stronger group of economic and political leaders. Arnold was disheartened by the leadership of the early decades of the twentieth century, and believed that the mistakes of the federal government, with regards to the unemployed, were made evident by the "On to Ottawa" Trek.

Arnold was not afraid to voice her opinions, whether it was to criticize the government or to praise what she saw as social advancements. She wrote honestly, with conviction and consistency. Through her column, Arnold gradually evolved as a

---

[72]Ibid.

[73]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 1 February 1935, 7.

thoughtful and provocative writer, a tribute, in part, to the liberal guidelines of Bob MacRae. The more serious tone of "It's a Secret, But..." was reflective of her private interest in more stimulating topics. She did follow traditional guidelines for a women's column, but barely. She knew what was expected of her, admitting that "serious affairs" were "hardly suitable for [this] column,"[74] but that did not stop her from covering everything from women's rights to European politics.

Gladys Arnold's column was unique to the traditional world of women's pages, just as the woman herself was unique for her time. While Arnold was the primary contributor to the women's page of the *Leader-Post* for two years, her focus lay elsewhere. She was fascinated with the political perspective and believed herself capable of moving beyond the women's page. However, Arnold discovered that no matter how competent she was, her gender remained an obstacle in the newspaper field. She was eventually forced to reconcile her own objectives with what was expected of her, in order to find success as a journalist.

[74]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 16 February 1934, 7.

CONCLUSION

On 12 August 1935 "It's A Secret, But..." contained three segments. Arnold, writing as "Robin," informed her readers that Noel Coward, one of her favourite playwrights, was working on a new play; she described the latest fashion in masculine hair dress, the quiff; and she discussed whether there existed laws to protect "a poor innocent male from the gold-digging activities of the female sex."[1] Curiously, "Robin" did not mention that it would be her last column. Arnold left for Europe on 23 August 1935, sailing out of Churchill, Manitoba.[2]

Arnold explained the motivation behind her trip as "political curiosity"; she wanted to examine the "isms," to see for herself the pros and cons of socialism, communism, fascism, and democracy.[3] This study of her formative years, however, suggests that there were extenuating circumstances, far less dramatic but certainly as important, behind Arnold's decision to leave the *Leader-Post.* Although there is no denying her interest in the world's political and economic situation, there was evidence that she felt both frustrated with her role at the newspaper, and less than fulfilled with her personal life. Arnold was confident in her ability to succeed as a journalist beyond the women's page, and was anxious to experience the world she had written so much about. It would seem that she hoped to find much more in Europe than simply answers to her political questions.

Arnold's mother once claimed that the whole family had a case of "itchy feet,"[4] and it was clear that her daughter would eventually spend time traveling. Arnold often wrote in her column about the experience of seeing new places, and she listed the cities

---

[1]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 12 August 1935, 7.

[2]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[3] Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 3.

[4]Although Arnold was born in the West, the family took trips back to Ontario and Bar Harbour, Maine to see relatives, as well as vacations in Vancouver and San Diego. On her own Gladys had travelled to Ontario at the age of 16 to visit relatives, she had been to Vancouver, to Quebec and to the United States. Arnold, "My Trips to Europe and Elsewhere," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 208.

she would most like to visit when she toured the world. She was encouraged by the determination of people from the prairies to travel despite the Depression, and suggested that everyone should prepare for excursions overseas, beyond the boundaries of Canada:

> Dozens of girls on small salaries have sighed to go abroad. Why not have excursion rates on some of the smaller boats so that they can have that dream come true. Westerners aren't burdened with false pride. Personally we're prepared to try it in a canoe if the rates are right.[5]

In 1934, inspired by the articles sent from Europe to the *Leader-Post* by Cora Hind, a well-known agricultural journalist from the prairies, Arnold had decided to start saving her money, reasoning that, "If she could do it, why couldn't I?"[6] Her plan was to have the office accountant save half of her salary every month from October 1934 until June 1935. At that point she would have in her "travel fund" approximately $675, enough, she calculated, to allow her to stay for ten months in London, providing she could find cheap passage to Europe.[7] Arnold wrote so confidently about her travel intentions that it appeared to be more a matter of "when" she would leave, than "if." She gave no indication at all that venturing on her own to Europe required anything more than the funds and the vessel to get there. She was neither nervous nor wary, but apparently resolute to satisfy her political curiosity.

While in Europe, Arnold wrote a story about her last days in Canada, describing the extent of her commitment to see Europe.[8] She explained that her resolve was tested when she met a man during her stay in Churchill, while waiting for the ship to arrive that would take her to England. The two established a meaningful relationship in a short period of time, and he was so enamoured of Arnold that he proposed marriage and asked her to stay with him in Manitoba.[9] According to her story Arnold, although captivated by the young man, did not give serious consideration to giving up her chance to travel for

---

[5]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 28 July 1934, 7.
[6]Arnold, "A Lamp in the Dark," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 206.
[7]Ibid.
[8]Ibid.
[9]Ibid.

marriage. On making her choice she wrote, "Under it all I knew I was going to take my ship and that nothing could prevent it. I was moving toward my destiny just as surely as the moon maintained its course across the night sky, even if I wanted [to] I couldn't resist it."[10] Arnold described herself as being completely unyielding and confident in her purpose, unwavering on her decision; she had a plan and she was going to follow through on it:

> I told my friends earnestly that I was going to Europe to see what it was all about?[*sic*] Were the Russians right in their system? Not dictatorship, of course. But why couldn't the democracies have economic programs so there would be no unemployed ... in Russia?[11]

However, the absolute insistence on her single-minded sense of purpose, both in her book and her papers, was so excessive as to suggest that there may have been more to Gladys Arnold's decision to leave Canada than the political curiosity she was apparently so intent on satisfying. In hindsight, even Arnold herself realized how pretentious and self-important her words sounded. "I have to see for myself [the political systems in Europe], I said, *never realizing how pompous and presumptive I must have sounded.*"[12]

In fact, Arnold remembered being less sure of herself in some of her own recollections. Contrary to the self-portrayal in her story, she recalled feeling nervous before she left for Europe: "[I] was leaving [my] country and sailing into the unknown ... [I] was nearly twenty-nine years old but my layer of sophistication was only Saskatchewan deep – pretty thin. [I] suddenly felt exposed and vulnerable."[13] She was strong and determined, but she was also human, a fact that at times she seemed unwilling to admit.

As far as her fascination with foreign affairs, Arnold was undoubtedly anxious to

---

[10]Ibid.
[11]Ibid.
[12]Ibid. Author's Italics.
[13]Ibid.

see the various political systems at work. Her papers are filled with letters and references to political theory as she worked to explain unemployment rates in Canada, while Russia seemed to be prospering. She discussed several topics including the meaning and benefits of socialism, Canada's reaction to another war and its commitment to Britain, the difference between French and English Canadians and their responses to events in Europe, the success of communism and fascism, and the rise of Hitler. As well, she wrote periodically about both national and international politics.[14]

Notwithstanding her interest in the political and economic conditions in Europe, and her longing to travel, these are but two pieces of the larger puzzle explaining her decision to board the grain ship for London.[15] Arnold had been writing professionally for less than five years, she had no experience as a political journalist, and she had only debated the greater political questions with colleagues and friends. Given this, it seems questionable that her sole reason for leaving stemmed from her intense need to see socialism in action.

The timing of Arnold's decision also adds doubt to her own explanation for resigning. The columnist left her job at the *Leader-Post* in the middle of the worst economic depression the country had experienced. MacRae laughed at the audacity of her decision: "For anyone with a job in hand in the 30's to consider leaving it for the unknown jungle of economics and unemployment would be regarded as sheer lunacy."[16] Although money had rarely been a determining factor in any of Arnold's decisions, the times were different in 1935. People were desperate for employment, and yet she made the decision to leave the newspaper, where she had a paid, stable job. Arnold was curious, and she did have wanderlust, but there are pieces missing to the story and they can be found in her columns and papers.

---

[14]See Note #2, Chapter Four.
[15]Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 3.
[16]Arnold, "A Lamp in the Dark," 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 206.

At the outset, the events from her childhood had a significant influence on Gladys Arnold's formative years. Following the death of her father she developed an unusually intense connection with books and writing, both solitary activities that enabled the young girl to withdraw from natural social circles. She gradually came to prefer her own company to that of others her own age, sensing already that she was in some way different from other girls. It is possible that she would have been less introverted had circumstances been different but, as it was, Arnold felt an emptiness within, caused by the sudden absence of her family, and turned to books as a means of coping. From her early dependence on words, rather than people, grew her interest in journalism and the creation of her own stories, poems, plays and journal entries.

Arnold's unwillingness to search out companionship when she was left to handle her new circumstances on her own, may be attributed to a number of different factors. It is possible that she preferred to be alone because she felt uncomfortable around other girls her age. She was interested in books, literature, and knowledge. Her mother encouraged those diversions and stressed the importance of education for all people. It is not difficult to imagine the reaction of her peers to Arnold – not only the "new girl" in town, but also imbued with a sense of purpose at such a young age, immersed as she was in her own interests. Of course it is difficult to know which came first, her preference for books, or her feelings of exclusion that led to her introversion.

A childhood spent travelling from school to school, from home to home for care, was, at the least unsettling, if not traumatic. It is reasonable to assume that her means of dealing with the changes in her life was to remove herself from situations that created further stress. Perhaps it was easier for Arnold to have conversations with authors who were not there, than to try to fit in as an adolescent. She may have been just as reserved had her father lived and her life continued on as normal, but the fact remained that as an adult she was extremely focused on her own agenda.

There is no doubt that as a result of the circumstances of her youth, she learned to depend on the one constant in her life – herself. Because Arnold had little trust in her caregivers, she learned how to guard herself emotionally, and gradually grew confident in her capabilities. She seemed to have few confidantes beyond her mother and consequently she was forced to trust her own strength to get through difficult times. Arnold necessarily became independent earlier than most children; without her family around to watch over her, she had no choice but to protect herself. Both her confidence and competence were evident as she grew into adulthood.

Arnold exhibited a curious mixture of self-assurance, having complete trust in her own abilities and intelligence, and insecurity, as she struggled emotionally to fill the void left by the disruption of her family life. She was not afraid of stepping out on her own, but as she did, she searched for an environment where she felt protected and secure.[17] Arnold was lucky when she found herself welcomed into the *Leader-Post,* a situation where she was recognized for her talents but was also taught to deal with her weaknesses. MacRae and Sifton seemed to have understood that within the young reporter there was a child who needed guidance.

While it is impossible to know exactly what the relationship was between Arnold, her editor, and her publisher, it is clear that both men were concerned with her well-being and more than willing to help with her journalism aspirations. Her time at the *Leader-Post* was a learning experience, where Arnold embraced the support of her mentors, and established familial relationships that allowed her to heal some of the pain from her childhood. Both Sifton and MacRae gave Arnold the comfort of knowing that they were there for her, in good times and bad. Practically, they trained her in her craft, allowing her some freedom to experiment with different types of reporting and giving her latitude as far as her column was concerned.

---

[17]Arnold, "The First five Years," 1935, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 205.

Her years at the newspaper gave Arnold the opportunity to grow, both personally and professionally, preparing her for her next challenge. She had a political inquisitiveness, fuelled by the news environment in which she worked, but Arnold was also ready to move forward in 1935. She had been nurtured at the *Leader-Post* and was more prepared as an individual and a journalist to venture beyond the boundaries of Saskatchewan. In fact, it may be that she had grown past what the newspaper was able to offer in terms of her career, giving her further motivation to leave for Europe.

Arnold was limited as a journalist at the *Leader-Post* and she must have known it. Initially she was ecstatic with the opportunities afforded her at the newspaper, but the monotony of writing her daily column, despite the editorial freedom she was accorded, may have become more of a chore than a challenge for someone as intellectually alive as Arnold. Given the tone of the article "Robin" wrote on 10 August 1934, it would seem that Arnold was beginning to feel restless. The column discussed the daily situations that long distance pilots were able to escape due to their constant presence in the air. She included examples such as the ability to avoid both friends to whom invitations were owed, and relatives who came to visit and then talked only of the wonderful vacations they had experienced. The nature of the article left the impression that it was Arnold who would have liked an escape. She went on to include experiences that pilots avoided in an office situation, away from among other things, the newspaper:

> You wouldn't have to work every day and be polite to people that come in to use up your time. Think of not having to listen to long accounts of operations, diets, drouth (*sic*) and depression ... And then think of getting away from newspapers ... You would have a chance to stop speculating on the chances of a war in Europe and be able to keep out of arguments.[18]

It seemed that the tediousness of office work was beginning to drain the once enthusiastic reporter.

Arnold's reaction to her job, if she was indeed frustrated with her mandate, was

---

[18]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 10 August 1934, 7.

not surprising. Historically, few women columnists were remembered for being satisfied with their job assignments. They were consistently underpaid and undervalued, treated as lower status workers. And although the women's pages gave them the opportunity to practice their craft, most aspired to greater literary ambitions that they were never able to achieve. Marjory Lang wrote that most female journalists survived on the women's pages by believing in an ideal: "It was the hope that the women's page would grow as they did in wisdom, sophistication and public esteem that sustained the most ambitious women's editors through the tedium of social trivia."[19]

Gladys Arnold had believed in the ideal. She had wanted to create something "a little meatier"[20] for her readers, to give them more than what was typically offered in a women's column. Even after her time in Europe, she was reported as still believing in the potential of the women's page to educate its readers on what she considered to be important political and economic issues.[21] However, despite her efforts, it would take time for the women's page to undergo any noticeable improvements, and for women's status at the newspaper to improve. In the meantime, Arnold remained frustrated with the indifference of her gender toward affecting change and shared little in common with the majority of women her age.

After nearly five years of working for the *Leader-Post*, Arnold could not have ignored the limitations she faced at the paper. If anything, she almost certainly felt more stifled than some of the other female journalists, given that she had no dependents or responsibilities holding her back from pursuing greater literary challenges. The frustration must have been extreme at times for the columnist; she had to spend her time perusing other journalists' work for acceptable material when she was impassioned about

---

[19]Lang, *Women Who Made the News*, 149.

[20]George Bentley, "Arnold Retired But Not Retiring," *Leader-Post*, 24 October 1987, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[21]"Gladys Arnold, just back from her adventures as Canadian Press foreign correspondent during the Nazi invasion of Paris, made a plea for the critical importance of an authentically national newspaper in Canada. The woman' page on such a paper would carry 'national news of news value.'" Ibid., 160.

all that was not acceptable.[22] Arnold was such an advocate for advancement based on merit, equality between the sexes, and fairness, that her restriction to the women's page must have seemed highly unjust.

On 25 July 1934, a full year before she actually left the *Leader-Post*, Arnold's dissatisfaction with the tediousness of her job was evident. Apparently she had made a small error in the spelling of a name in her coverage of a wedding, and the person involved had sent a complaint to the newspaper. She went on to recite an example of a wedding announcement from an American newspaper, sharing with her readers the ruthlessness with which that journalist had disparaged the wedding couple's relatives. Arnold pointedly commented,

> In Canada this type of journalism is practically unknown. The harassed editress [*sic*] who makes a mistake in an initial, but gets a reasonably accurate and courteously written account of a wedding, hasn't sinned so terribly do you think, when other papers get away with the above?[23]

At one point, Arnold described being the editor of a social column as being one of the two most thankless jobs for women – the other was being an old maid.[24] Clearly she was not content with her prospects at the newspaper.

There were other changes in Arnold's situation at the time she made her decision to leave the paper. It was only a few months prior to her own departure that Victor Sifton, the man who had been like a father to her during her time at the newspaper, left Regina permanently to take up residence in Winnipeg.[25] Arnold admitted to how much she was going to miss him, and in particular the advice he offered her regarding her work. She may have anticipated that without the attention and professional guidance of Sifton, her career would be stymied. She certainly anticipated the personal loss she was going to feel with him gone, and perhaps doubted whether her work would remain as fulfilling as

---

[22]Bentley, *Leader-Post*, 24 October 1987, in Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.
[23]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 25 July 1934, 7.
[24]Ibid.
[25]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

it had been under his direction.

The nature of Arnold's relationship with Bob MacRae is also a factor deserving of consideration in her decision to leave Regina. She clearly enjoyed the camaraderie she shared with MacRae, but it almost seemed she was overly dependent on her employer for companionship. Arnold admitted to latching on to any family situation as a way of filling the emptiness left by her childhood,[26] and had apparently done so with the MacRae family. The fact that she confessed to feeling "alone" when MacRae was gone from Regina, gives an indication as to her over-reliance on his company. If she was so needy for his company that she felt stranded without him, then perhaps her life beyond the paper was lacking in similarly fulfilling relationships.[27]

Given Arnold's overall opinion of women, it is not surprising that she depended on MacRae. She did not feel particularly close to women, and was generally frustrated with their apathy and narrow focus. As far as she was concerned, the attitude of her gender could only serve to hold career-minded women, such as herself, back from making advancements in the public sphere. She seemed almost proud of the fact that she did not spend her time socializing, as she presumed other women did incessantly, but rather was completely focused on her work.[28]

As Arnold explained in both her columns and letters to her mother, she had no time for the trivial pursuits of women her own age. She was determined to devote all of her time to her career and to developing her own interests. Making friends apparently was not high on her list of priorities. She wrote in her column about the "epidemic of

---

[26]Arnold, "The First Five Years," 1935,Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 15, File 205.

[27]Arnold was so emotionally attached to MacRae that she found his death devastating, "This winter [1939-1940], the terrible changes of the past year and the war have made so many changes in my life that I may say I am not the same person ... the death of MacRae which knocked me out and was one of my reasons for so long hesitating about returning to Canada." Arnold, "Dear Mr. Sifton," 1940, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 122.

[28]Writing to her mother Arnold said, "... therefore I have a big winter lined up with work, little theatre, skating and sociology- lots of sleep on the nights I am not studying and skating will be my fun. No bridge – no parties if I can help – I like work better." Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

motherhood" among the women she knew, and it may have been difficult to find things in common with young wives and mothers, even if she had so desired. [29]

Given this was the case, it explains her dismay at MacRae's absence, particularly if Sifton was away as well.[30] It must have been a rather lonely existence, and may have awakened Arnold to the limitations of the life she had made for herself in Regina. She had maintained a close relationship with her mother, but it was primarily through letters. Furthermore, her mother remarried in 1932, leaving her less accessible. Her brother was on his own, busy with his life, and eventually married sometime after 1935.[31] Therefore both members of her immediate family had new families of their own; they were moving on, and although they always welcomed Arnold and supported her in her career, neither offered daily companionship.[32]

It is therefore possible that Arnold felt she needed to get away in order to expand not only her professional options, but also her social life.[33] When she finally settled in Paris and found herself in the company of women who were as intellectually engaged as herself, she was ecstatically happy.[34] She regaled her mother with tales of their discussions and adventures, the tone of her letters in such contrast to those written from Regina as to suggest that she had been quite lonely.[35]

By 1935 Arnold had acquired a strong sense of what she believed in fundamentally. At the core was her commitment to egalitarianism at all levels. Gender

---

[29]"It's a Secret, But...," *Leader-Post*, 21 November 1934, 7.

[30]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Max lived with his wife, Marjorie, in the United States. Flo and Arnold lived in Victoria, British Columbia.

[33]In one of her letters to her Mother Arnold described the events of her day as follows: "I went to a tea this afternoon ... The night before I went to a I.O.D.E tea, to a show with Helen Beattie and afterwards to tea at Noreens [sic]." But in her column, Arnold spoke condescendingly of "teas". It is possible she needed more in her life. Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4 file 25.

[34]Arnold attributed her happiness and good health in Paris, in part, to her friends, "I am among congenial people." Arnold, "Dear Mother and Arnold," 10 February 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25. She described her extremely busy and interesting social life in Paris. Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[35]Ibid.

inequality, as well as prejudice against any and all minorities, was unacceptable. She lived according to an extremely hard work ethic and expected others to do the same. And Gladys Arnold believed firmly in the rights of the individual. Freedoms of thought and of choice were essential to the process of fulfilling human potential. These ideals were being challenged in Regina. She wanted to write with a focus on the political developments in the world; instead she was required to report on the lighter side of the news, though she obviously pushed the limits at every turn. She was held back because of her gender, not ability, and it went against the grain of her basic value system.

Arnold wanted the opportunity to live as an individual first, a woman second. For a relatively young reporter from the prairies she had high expectations, but given the history of her formative years they were not unrealistic, certainly not in her own mind:

> When I arrived in London that summer of 1935 I was filled with an ardent desire to write, in my head, and a desperately sore heart in my bosom. I had a great confidence in myself – and precious little understanding of my great handicaps.[36]

Although Arnold's experiences in Europe are beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worthwhile to note that she found Paris to be everything she had hoped for. Writing home soon after her arrival, she explained to her mother her feelings about her new home:

> I thrill every time I step out on my balconey [*sic*] for I feel as though this is my city – my very own. I am sure, Mother, that what French blood we have has been concentrated in my blood. Always I have liked French literature ... and everything about French life appeals to me. I like the impulsive, warm-hearted-natural attitude they have. They have many faults but these more than compensate for them.[37]
>
> I can't believe how fast time goes – it seems as though I had never been in Regina and do not care if I ever see it again ... I am tremendously happy here – more so than I have been for years.[38]

Arnold had found a place where she felt free to pursue her goals without restrictions, gender or otherwise.

---

[36]Arnold, "Correspondence En Route to Europe," 1935, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 113.
[37]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," 18 January 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[38]Arnold, "Dear Mother and Arnold," 10 February 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

Arnold immersed herself in the arts and culture of France, finally able to experience music and drama that she had only written about. She travelled freely, either alone or with friends, to several countries in Western Europe. She studied the French language and continued with her journalism, sending articles back to the *Leader-Post*, other prairie papers, and the Canadian Press for publication. It was the income she received from her writing that funded her stay in Europe. However, it was also her continued association with MacRae and others in the newspaper industry that restricted her freedom to find satisfaction in her work.

Arnold was desperate to share with the Canadian people what was happening in Europe. Between 1936 and the fall of 1938 she made two trips to Germany, two trips to Italy, and a visit to Austria and Czechoslovakia.[39] The developments she witnessed were daunting, her observations shaking the foundations of her belief system. Arnold saw the signs of war: the armament build up of Nazi Germany,[40] the reports on the beginnings of the poisonous gas factories in Germany;[41] the signs on village walls as she passed through by train, "JEWS NOT WANTED HERE."[42] Obviously deeply moved, she concluded:

> As you know, before I left Canada I was a complete and outright pacifist – I'm not anymore – I am convinced that it is better to die fighting than to allow the world to become subject to the fascist terror. Fascism believes only in conversion by the sword, the threat and the terror.[43]

Gladys Arnold had arrived in Europe a naïve, idealistic young woman; five years later she was ready to sacrifice her life for the sake of democracy and, as a journalist, she felt the need to publicize the developments in Europe. As war grew more likely in 1938 the reporter wrote to the Canadian Press, offering to send home more serious articles of a

---

[39]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," 17 September 1938, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[40]Arnold, "Dearest Mother," 28 August, 1938, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[41]Ibid.
[42]Ibid.
[43]Arnold, "Dear Mr. MacRae," 16 April 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

political nature rather than her travel stories.[44] The opportunity was finally in front of her to write on more serious topics, and she would not forfeit her chance. She was so committed to her career that she disregarded her mother's pleas for her daughter to return home to safety. Arnold was practical and ambitious and she knew that to return home at such a crucial point in European history would jeopardize her journalism career: "I don't want to lose my Canadian Press work which was so hard to get and which ... is giving me a chance to get my name in papers all over Canada."[45]

And so, Arnold wrote to her mother regarding her decision to stay in Europe: "My decision is the right one and the only one in accordance not particularly with my desires but with my conscience."[46] She seemed to downplay her ambition for the sake of her mother, and explained her other reason for staying. She felt duty bound as a single person to offer her services in whatever capacity she was needed should war erupt; to return home would have been, to Arnold, an act of cowardice.[47]

While her success as a foreign correspondent was in large part due to her connections with the *Leader-Post*, that same connection would be responsible for the end of her journalism career. Arnold continued to write political articles for her Canadian contacts but MacRae was not receptive. He was adamant, as were her connections at the Canadian Press and the Winnipeg *Free Press,* that she send only human-interest stories.[48] In Regina, Arnold had been allowed to push the boundaries of the women's page, but the gender boundaries in print journalism remained firmly entrenched. Women did not write political editorials.

In fact, MacRae, as both friend and editor, was required at times to tactfully

---

[44]Arnold, "My own Darling Mother," 26 September 1938, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[45]Arnold, "Dearest Mother and Arnold," n.d., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[46]Arnold, "My own Darling Mother," 26 September 1938, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.
[47]Ibid.
[48]On her Canadian Press assignments, she wrote, "My work with the Canadian Press probably kept me sane. As usual, I was given stories that were neither political nor truly military ...." *One Woman's War,* 73-74.

criticize Arnold's writing and her reluctance to abide by the guidelines. On several occasions he repeated his request for stories short in length and lighter in material, reminding her that other journalists covered the political scene.[49] He was counting on Arnold to produce travel stories that entertained, not educated, the public. After sending home an article about the French election in June 1936, he informed her that, "Only a fraction of our readers get [het?] up about economics and foreign policy ... they are more concerned with love, food, the movies, clothes and family affairs."[50] As her friend, MacRae enjoyed Arnold's intelligence and political questions, but as her editor he was insistent that Arnold give him what he needed to sell papers.

Although Arnold claimed that her gender had negatively affected her career only once,[51] when she was denied access to the front lines, while in Europe her instructions were clearly gender-based. She had left Regina to study the political and economic situations of the western European countries. She wanted to know why it was that Russia had no unemployment when the West was suffering from economic depression and how the Nazi regime was affecting German society.[52] Arnold spent hours discussing politics and political systems with her friends trying to understand structures that were foreign to Canada.[53] She had not ventured to Europe to discover the latest in Italian cuisine or French fashion.

However, as MacRae pointed out to her, he was getting the political stories from "all quarters," and did not need more of it from her.[54] It is more than likely that by "all

---

[49]MacRae reminded Arnold about the preferred contents of her articles, "... but only a fair amount of politics because we get that from all quarters and I fear that our readers want light and life, the low hounds." Bob MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 23 January 1937, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10. File 110.

[50]Bob MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 25 June 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10, File 110.

[51]Karen Boyd, "Canadian journalist recalls German occupation," *Arizona Republic*, 2 December 1976. Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[52]Marjorie Gillies, "Writing From Behind Front Lines," *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 May 1987. Gladys Arnold Papers, Box28, File 694.

[53]For example, Arnold noted, "Sunday night we all went to Di's and discussed politics and political systems until midnight." "Dearest Mother and Arnold," 17 October 1936, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 4, File 25.

[54]Bob MacRae, "Dear Miss Arnold," 23 January 1937, Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 10. File 110.

quarters" he meant the male foreign correspondents, American among others. Arnold had been told to "stick to the human interest stories," because "the boys in the London Bureau will look after political and military stuff."[55] And it was not just Arnold who faced discrimination. At the *Christian Science Monitor* a male journalist replaced Suzanne Wunder, a friend and fellow reporter of Arnold's, so that she would not be responsible for covering the military news.[56]

Gender was an issue when it came to reporting on the political and military developments in Europe, whether Arnold acknowledged it or not. There were no accredited Canadian male journalists in Paris when she was there.[57] It is evident, therefore, that MacRae chose foreign reports over Arnold's, even though she was a journalist he knew and respected. And it was Arnold who was sent home in 1940 to accompany a group of children being sent to safety in Canada, not "one of the boys." Her disappointment was obvious, "I did not want to go. Imagine being anywhere except London! How could I leave?"[58]

Arnold was desperate to stay. She talked to everyone she knew trying to get the decision reversed, but to no avail. She had finally made it to the big leagues of print journalism. She had realized her dream and now, merely because she was a woman, she was being forced to give it all up. While a fellow reporter suggested that perhaps she would be able to return, Arnold knew the chances were slim. Getting to Europe from Canada was nearly impossible since the war had begun; for a woman it would take a miracle.

Determined to find some means of remaining involved with wartime events, Arnold followed through on a interview she had had with a young general from France,

---

[55]Arnold, *One Woman's War*, 16.
[56]Ibid., 40.
[57]Arnold was the only accredited Canadian reporter in France at the time. Ibid., 3.
[58]Ibid., 84.

Charles de Gaulle, shortly after she arrived in London.[59] He was relatively unknown at the time, yet Arnold was intrigued by the young man who promised to rally together an army to reclaim France. She visited de Gaulle one more time before she left and asked what she could do from Canada to help him. He told her that his secretary, Elisabeth de Miribel, was already there, spreading the word of the Free French movement, and that she could use the help of a journalist. Arnold joined forces with de Miribel almost immediately upon her return, and worked so diligently for the remainder of the war as to warrant the most distinguished award from the French government.

At the Free French Information Service (FFIS) Arnold was appreciated for all that she had to offer, without regard to gender. Her knowledge of the French, their language and culture, was crucial to her ability to help the movement. Her work ethic was one of her greatest assets as she and others worked tirelessly for de Gaulle's success. Although plagued with a fear of public speaking, she toured the country giving speech after speech informing Canadians about the Free French.[60] She firmly believed that de Gaulle was fighting for a right and just cause and demanded of her audiences that each member make an individual decision to offer their support.

From 1941 to 1945 Arnold used all of her talents to help bring about success for the Free French. She was working in a familial environment, similar to that which she had experienced at the *Leader-Post*, with the exception that at the FFIS gender was irrelevant. She had worked at the newspaper for five years, becoming increasingly interested in subjects found on pages beyond her reach, restricted as she was to the "lighter side of the news." MacRae and Sifton had tried to support her independence but when a critical turning point was reached, and the issue of war was at hand, they had relegated Arnold to an inferior role.

---

[59]She had been advised by her bureau chief to "keep an eye on that movement and see if anything comes of it." Ibid., 74, 79.

[60]See *One Woman's War* for more information on Arnold's work with the FFIS.

During her time at the FFIS, she found the career satisfaction and personal fulfillment she had been searching for. Reflecting back on her work there, and with the French Embassy following the war, Arnold wrote: "In all the years I've worked for the French people, I've never once been told how to do a certain job. To me that's their greatest gift. To let an individual 'do his own thing'...."[61] Perhaps that is what Arnold meant as a young girl, when she dreamed of "dancing abandoned on the down,"[62] – the chance to be herself, to be appreciated for her talents, and to be trusted to act according to her own principles and standards. Arnold finally found her place among her French-speaking compatriots.

Gladys Arnold was proud of her wartime accomplishments and rightfully believed that Canadians would be interested in her experiences. In Europe she demonstrated both commitment and courage – commitment to her journalism career, persevering regardless of the challenges she faced, and courage, as she willingly overlooked her own safety in order to serve in whatever capacity she was needed. However Arnold demonstrated a more profound type of valour as she repeatedly stood against the majority. Unwilling to be influenced by society's expectations and norms, she lived true to her own standards. Arnold believed her happiness lay beyond domestic boundaries, and despite social pressure she built a life for herself as a single woman. She believed herself capable of writing beyond the women's page, and followed through on her career ambitions despite gender barriers. She believed in the Free French cause and took a stand against mainstream opinion, being one of the first in Canada to speak out in favour of General de Gaulle's campaign. It was Arnold's fortitude that lay behind her success.

This study of her formative years has provided the basis for understanding Arnold's development as a person and a professional. The separation from her family at

---

[61]Eunice Gardiner, "Books Galloping Around in her Mind," *Ottawa Journal*, 13 December 1971, n.p., Gladys Arnold Papers, Box 28, File 694.

[62]Arnold, Poetry Manuscript,

a young age served as the catalyst for her immersion in books and writing. She sought refuge from the pain of her father's death, and her mother's absence, in textual rather than verbal communication, and as an adult transferred her childhood diversion into a career. Arnold's level of commitment to her writing was evidenced by her unwillingness to settle for less as she moved through her early twenties searching for a career that would satisfy her journalist's instincts.

It is impossible to imagine the depths of Arnold's grief as she found herself alone at the age of nine. Although she struggled to fill her emotional needs well into her adult years, Gladys Arnold eventually came to trust in the strength of her own character. She experienced life according to her own agenda, unwilling to compromise her interests and goals for the benefits of conformity. Her moral fibre served as the touchstone from which she based many of her opinions in later years, influenced in part by the egalitarianism of her mother.

The previously unstudied columns serve as a blueprint for Arnold's character. Above all else, the ideas she shared in "It's a Secret, But..." reflected her sense of justice and equality. Arnold had no tolerance for patriarchal rules or gender-based norms. She considered herself to be as equally capable as any man, and expected women and men to be judged and rewarded on the basis of merit not gender. Consequently Arnold's work ethic was above reproach and, combined with her determination to serve some purpose with her life, contributed to her accomplishments. Beyond women's issues, Arnold's libertarianism extended to all aspects of life as she defended the integrity of the younger generation, particularly their commitment to pacifism, the worthiness of the unemployed, and the necessity of a broad-based educational system, especially in times of political and economic turmoil.

This thesis provides the background for the well-known achievements of Gladys Arnold. It gives depth to her life, and she emerges from these pages as a woman unique

in her approach and beliefs. Although she wrote for the women's pages, Arnold's character did not reflect the principles upon which those pages were based. She was neither an advocate for sex-based interests nor did she live according to gender-prescribed roles. Arnold was her own person, unwilling to have her life influenced by patriarchal rules and unafraid to challenge that which she considered unjust. Arnold's early life experiences bring to Canadian history a refreshing glimpse of one woman's personal war against conformity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Cassidy, Enid. Audio Tape. SAB. R11195.

Long, Myrtle Long. Audio Tape. SAB. R11191.

Davis, Mary Clark. "I Was A Pinafore Pioneer." Published in *Saskatchewan History*. 11 Spring 1956. SAB. MICRO R-258. 63-69.

Dryden, Annabel. *Yesterdays*. SAB. R-E854. Accession No. R80-698.

Gladys Arnold Papers. University of Regina Archives. 98-54. Boxes 1-34.

L'Esperance, Jeanne. *The Widening Sphere: Women in Canada 1870-1940.*

Canada: National Library of Canada, 1982. SAB. R-E1440.

SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS

Arnold, Gladys. *One Woman's War: A Canadian Reporter with the Free French*. Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1987.

Backhouse, Constance. "White Female Help and Chinese-Canadian Employers: Race, Class, Gender, and Law in the Case of Yee Chun, 1924." In *Canadian Women – A Reader*. Wendy Mitchinson, Paula Bourne, Alison Prentice, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light and Naomi Black Eds. Canada: Harcourt and Co. 1996. 280-298.

Beasley, Maurine H. and Sheila J. Gibbons. *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*. Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1993.

Belford, Barbara. *Brilliant Bylines – A Biographical Anthology of Notable Newspaperwomen in America.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Bothwell, Robert, Ian Drummond and John English. *Canada 1900-1945.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Code Lorraine. "Feminist Theory." In *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada.* Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code, Lindsay Dorney, Eds. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988. 18-51.

Cook, Ramsay and Wendy Mitchinson, eds. *The Proper Sphere.* Canada: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Errington, Jane. "Pioneers and Suffragists." In *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada.* Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code, Lindsay Dorney, Eds. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988. 51-80.

Fraser, Sylvia, ed. Intro. Rona Maynard. *Chatelaine: A Woman's Place: Seventy Years in the Lives of Canadian Women.* Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1977.

Freeman, Barbara M. *Kit's Kingdom: The Journalism of Kathleen Blake Coleman.* Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989.

Haig, Kennethe Macmahon. *Brave Harvest: The Life Story of E. Cora Hind.* Toronto: Allen Publishers, 1945.

Hobbs, Margaret. "Equality and Difference: Feminism and the Defense of Women Workers During the Great Depression." In *Canadian Women – A Reader.* Wendy Mitchinson, Paula Bourne, Alison Prentice, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light and Naomi Black Eds. Canada: Harcourt and Co. 1996. 212- 229.

Jeruchim, Joan and Pat Shapiro. *Women, Mentors, and Success.* New York: Ballentime Books, 1992.

Lang, Marjory. "Separate Entrances: The First Generation of Canadian Women Journalists." In Lorraine McMullen, ed. *Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers: 19th c. Canadian Women Writers.* Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990. 77-90.

Lang, Marjory. *Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada 1880-1945.* Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press, 1999.

Lemons, J. Stanley. *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Marzolf, Marion. *Up From the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists.* New York: Hastings House, 1977.

Mills, Kay. *A Place in the News: From the Women's Pages to the Front Page.* New York: Dodd Mead and Co., 1988.

Pederson, Diana. "Providing A Woman's Conscience: The Y.W.C.A., Female Evangelicalism and The Girl in the City 1870-1930. In *Canadian Woman – A Reader.* 194-210.

Pierson, Ruth Roach. Canadian Women's Issues. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1995.

Prentice, Alison, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson, Naomi Black. Eds. *Canadian Women – A History.* Toronto: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996.

Rex, Kay. *No Daughter of Mine: The Women and History of the Canadian Women's Press Club.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

Sorel, Nancy Caldwell. *The Women Who Wrote the War.* New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999.

Strong-Boag, Veronica. *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939.* Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988.

Thompson, John Herd. *Forging the Prairie.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

ARTICLES

Brown, Charles B. "A Woman's Odyssey: The War Correspondence of Anna Benjamin." In *Journalism Quarterly.* Autumn 1969. 522-530.

Freeman, Barbara. "'Every Stroke Upward:' Women Journalists in Canada, 1880-1906." In *Canadian Woman Studies.* Vol.7 No. 3 (Fall 1986)43-46.

MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, AND VIDEOS

Robins, Nan. Pseudonym of Gladys Arnold. "I Would Rather Have Beauty Than Brains." *Chatelaine.* February 1931. In Sylvia Fraser. Ed. *Chatelaine: A Woman's Place: SeventyYears in the Lives of Canadian Women.* Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1977.

Parsons, A. Harriet. "Careers or Marriage?" *Canadian Home Journal* (June 1938):63. In Strong-Boag, Veronica. *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939.* Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988.

Arnold Gladys, "It's a Secret, But..." *Regina Leader-Post.* November 1933; January to December, 1934; January to August, 1935.

Vajcner, Mark. "Arnold, Gladys (1905-2002)." *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan.* 2005.

Eyewitness to War. Video Documentary. Produced by Lori Kuffner and Barb Campbell. Written by Barb Campbell and Daryl D. Davis. 2002.

UNPUBLISHED THESES

Constance Anne Maguire, "Convention and Contradiction in the Life and Ideas of Kate Simpson Hayes, 1856-1945," Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Regina, 1996.

McGlashan, Zena Beth. "The Evolving Status of Newspaperwomen." Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Iowa. 1978.

INTERNET ARTICLES

Anonymous. http://legal-dicitonary.thefreedictionary.com/FORMATIVE [November 2008].

Anonymous. http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Formativeyears [November 2008].

Maryland State Archives, (2001). "Mary Katherine Goddard (1738-1816)," [online]. Available: http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/womenshall/html/goddard.html.

Johnson Lewis, Jone. "Founding of *Sorosis*," [online]. Available: http://womenhistory.about.com/od/womansclubmovement/p/sorosis.htm.

"Jane Cunningham Croly," Women of the Hall, [online]. Available: http://www.greatwomen.org/women.php?action=viewone&id=45.

"Jane Cunningham Croly, Journalism and Publishing, Biographies," [online]. Available: http://reference:alrefer.com/encyclopedia/C/Croly-Ja.html.

Goodwin, Joan. "Margaret Fuller." [online]. Available: http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/margaretfuller.html [June 2007].

Prychitko, David L. "Marxism." [online]. Available: http://www.econlib.org/Library/Enc/Marxism.html.

Smith, Dennis. "Women of the Press." [online]. Available: http://7thfloormedia.com/resources/canadiana/library/women_press.html[April 2007].