

The Bluestocking Legacy

Transcript of a salon held at Hatchlands Park on Tuesday 12 June 2018.

Chaired by Nino Strachey, Head of Research and Specialist Advice for the National Trust. Introduced by Rachel Devine, House Steward.

Speakers:

Dr Elizabeth Eger, Bluestocking Society expert, historian and author.

Donna Coonan, Editorial Director of Modern Classics at feminist publishing house Virago.

Professor Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, astrophysicist and campaigner for women in STEM.

Cairo Clarke, an independent art curator.

Rachel: Well good evening and welcome to Hatchlands Park. My name is Rachel. **I'm the House Steward here and tonight we're going to be recreating a salon in the home of one of the founding members of the Bluestocking Society, Frances, or Fanny to her friends, Boscawen.** The salon tonight is part of a series of events at Hatchlands that will be running from June to October highlighting the story of **Fanny and the Bluestockings as part of the National Trust's 'Challenging Histories' programme.** This national programming is designed to share and celebrate and unpick some of the more complex or marginalized histories relevant to National Trust places. **Our theme for 2018 is 'Women and Power'** which is responding to the centenary of women (or some women) getting the **vote and it seeks to give power and voice to women's hidden history** and acknowledging the importance of giving equal representation to women in heritage programming.

Now when we began to research Fanny's story for our exhibition, we found it was one which was largely untold. Her extensive letters and journals have been documented in two biographies, but both were written and curated in the 1940s with a very male gaze **on her domestic life and her naval husband's career.** **In fact, their titles are 'The Admiral's Wife' and 'The Admiral's Widow'.** So, I quickly realized at the beginning of the project that the extent and the incredible achievements of the Bluestockings is largely underplayed and overlooked. So, no surprise then that in a survey of the visitors to Hatchlands only 8% of people have a good understanding of what they have achieved. And of the 20% that had **heard of the term 'bluestocking' it was associated with the image of a dusty, bookish spinster,** which is certainly not what the original Bluestockings were. So, **the Bluestockings are a solid example of hidden women's history and it's my personal goal to raise their profiles to where it should rightly be as our recognized foremothers as women and to whom we owe much.**

And so, to celebrate these women for the first time in 250 years, we have invited modern bluestockings to hold a salon once again in this historic environment. **We took our inspiration from Richard Samuel's 1778 painting which is somewhere around, where he had painted the nine living muses of Great Britain which depicts the Bluestockings as easily recognized successes from across the different disciplines of Arts and Science.** And on that basis, **I'd like to introduce you to our panel tonight.**

So, we have Dr Elizabeth Eger, **a reader in the department of English at King's College, London.** Her specialist field of research is in **18th century women's writing, poetry, visual culture and conceptual history of luxury.** She co-curated **the National Portrait Gallery's Brilliant Women exhibition,** which featured Fanny and many of her bluestocking friends and co-authored the accompanying book with Dr Lucy Peltz. **And she also wrote 'Bluestockings; Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism' for which I am extremely grateful and is currently co-investigator with Caroline Franklin on the project Elizabeth Montagu's letters.**

Donna Coonan is the editorial director for Modern Classics at Virago. Virago was founded in 1973 as the first mass-market publisher for 52% of the population, women. **Virago's** mission statement states that they are, dedicated to the celebration of women writers and to the rediscovery and reprinting of their works, which reflects the views of the original Bluestockings whose books are still included in the modern classics catalogue. Forty years old this year the Modern Classics series is a much loved iconic – holds an iconic status- and has been instrumental in reinstating **female writers' influence** and cementing powerful legacies.

Next to Donna we have Professor Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, an astrophysicist, who discovered the first radio pulsars in 1967, which has been credited as the greatest astronomical discovery of the 20th century. She has served as president of the Royal Astronomical Society and was the first female president of the Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of Edinburgh. She has won many awards and was awarded the Institute of Physics **president's medal in 2017.** She is also a prominent campaigner for the equality of women in science and was founder member of Athena SWAN charter, established in 2005 to advance the careers of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

And then I bring you to Cairo Clarke **who is an independent art curator.** Cairo's work explores and challenges the way institutions and galleries traditionally approach curating contemporary artworks in their spaces. Currently she is assistant curator **for Art on the Underground's commission** with artist Nina Wakeford, and newly appointed curator of DK-UK in Peckham. Her previous work includes the Reinvention of Love at the Century Club. She was a panellist on Tate Modern's Curating Radical Futures and Women in Art symposiums. **And in 2017 she curated 'Touch Sensitive',** an immersive exhibition exploring notions of the female body through a series of events and performances with

guest projects and the Arts Night associate programme in collaboration with the Whitechapel gallery.

And finally, I bring you to our salonniere this evening Nino Strachey. Whose research focuses on the expression of personality through place and material culture interpreting the biography of buildings and collections. Nino has worked for English Heritage and has curated the homes of Darwin, Churchill and George Bernard Shaw. She is currently head of research and specialist advice for the National Trust. And Nino's **book 'Rooms of their own' for the National Trust's** Pride and Prejudice programme, which was screened last year has just been published and explores the homes of three writers linked to the Bloomsbury group. – Eddy Sackville-West, Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, whose **essay 'A Room of One's Own'** is a powerful feminist critique justifying the need for women to possess intellectual freedom and financial independence – the same ideals that the Bluestockings had been fighting for over 100 years previously.

And with that, I hand it over to you, Nino. Thank you very much.

Nino: **I'm delighted that Rachel has invited me to be here this evening. Such an impressive group of female experts representing all the aspects. We've got art and literature and history and science; all these focuses today, and I'm delighted to be part of this conversation.**

So, what am I doing here today? Well I think I'm here for three reasons. Firstly, I used to be curator for Hatchlands many years ago and I've got a lot of affection for this place and the history of this place and in particular for Fanny Boscawen and it's wonderful to be back at Hatchlands and to be able to celebrate her and her legacy here today. I hope that those of you who haven't already seen the exhibition will take the chance to have a look at that when you have the opportunity. So firstly, there is the connection to Hatchlands.

And secondly as head of research at the National Trust **I've had a lovely opportunity to be involved with our national public programmes. So, for examples last year it was Prejudice and Pride celebrating the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in the UK and there we worked with the University of Leicester to research the history of our sites. And this year, which is Women and Power, we are working with the University of Oxford researchers to celebrate the 100th year anniversary of the partial giving of the vote to some women a hundred years ago and obviously the Bluestockings were role models for many of the supporters of the suffrage movement. So again, it's lovely to be able to talk about that theme tonight.**

And then finally there are many themes linking the Bluestockings with the research that I have done for my recent book and focusing on three writers of the Bloomsbury group. So we have here Eddy Sackville-West, Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf and interesting thinking about how their feelings about

gender and sexuality affected the interiors they created in three National Trust houses, Knole, **Monk's House and Sissinghurst and interesting the trio there** – in that Vita Sackville-West played the masculine, Eddy Sackville-West played the feminine and Virginia Woolf acted as an amused referee between the two cousins. **So really we're thinking** about the legacy of Virginia Woolf in particular and connections through to the Bluestockings and obviously Virginia was a champion of female agency and creativity in both literature and the arts and we think of her most strongly in relation to **'A Room of One's Own'** and **'Beginnings'** but she was also a personal patron, like Fanny Boscawen, in that she was a woman who was commissioning art and architecture but interestingly she was actually using money that she had earned herself as a writer and publisher to commission female artists, notably her sister Vanessa Bell. So, you have that real link of a woman able to pay for works of art and to celebrate that both in print – she wrote **catalogues for her sister's exhibition** and to promote them and able to share those works of arts with others and a broader audience.

Also thinking of Virginia's **role**, like Fanny Boscawen, as a salonniere, because she was able to bring together groups of men and women to discuss literature and the arts, both at her house in London **and in Monk's House in Sussex**. And I think what is interesting in terms of both the Bloomsbury Group and the Bluestockings in that they were creating cross-gender gatherings of mixed groups of men and women to discuss **matters of importance on an equal basis**. **So that's an** interesting legacy.

Perhaps the Bloomsbury Group took things a little bit further in that they believed that everybody had the right to live and love as they chose. So therefore, they were exploring further into issues of gender and sexuality. And here Virginia Woolf again leads the way as her character Orlando changes sex and gender over time which is a theme that takes us right up to the present day and to think about what these either mixed sex or same sex groups means to a growing generation of young people who are identifying as non-binary and gender-fluid and where that leads us in discussions tonight.

So, **I'm now going to be inviting each of our** panellists to share their perspectives on the Bluestockings and their legacy and their relevance to today. **And first up I'm going to be inviting historian, Elizabeth Eger, to give us some** background to the Bluestockings and to tell us a bit more about them in more detail and in particular how Fanny Boscawen fitted into that circle.

Elizabeth: Well thank you Nino. **I thought I'd start with a quotation from 'A Room of One's Own'** as a nice link between the Bloomsbury Group and the Bluestockings, because towards the end of her essay she talks about the 18th century **and the fact that it's the first great period when** women earned living **from their writing**. **That's something that** not many people from the general public are aware of. Often Austin is thought of as one of the first woman to make a living. And Virginia Woolf writes – this is in 1929 – **'towards the end of the 18th** century a change came about which if I were rewriting history I should describe

as more fully and of greater importance than the Crusades or the Wars or the Roses’.

So why have the Bluestockings been forgotten? One of things that is most interesting to me is that after all my researches into that period one of the most salutary conclusions is that feminism is not a story of simple progress – of teleological progress – towards a greater good – that there have been peaks and troughs along the way. There have been various moments in history when women ascended and have taken a particular opportunity to organize themselves and demand greater rights. The great achievement of the Bluestockings was that they **created a space for women’s intellect**. They saw an opportunity in the British enlightenment. London was a flourishing metropolitan capital where new spaces for meeting and sociability were becoming more democratic for both genders, so Addison in the Spectator famously talked about taking philosophy out of the closet and into the coffee house and the museum into the more democratic urban spaces in public culture. And the Bluestocking women – three key hostesses are Elizabeth Montagu, Frances Boscawen and Elizabeth Vesey – all used their homes to invite people to share their intellectual discoveries and they were very definite about how they did this – they **didn’t serve alcohol, they banished card playing** – and they created an atmosphere which was not austere or frumpy by any means – it was very brilliant and sparkling and I thought to give a sense of this sociability I would read a very short passage from one of the few contemporary descriptions we have of this conversation - a wonderful poem by Hannah More called Bas Bleu or Conversation

*Our intellectual orb must shine
Not slumber idly in the mine.
Let education’s moral mint
The noblest images imprint;
Let taste her curious touchstone hold,
To try if standard be the gold;
But ‘tis thy commerce, Conversation,
Must give it use by circulation;
The noblest commerce of mankind,
Whose precious merchandise is MIND!*

So here you have a rich strong sense of the excitement of the commercial society where the new social mobility is encouraging people to be more confident and to assert themselves. I think this idea that education is something valuable that circulates is very important and the means by which the Bluestocking network worked is by letters and there were, and they were a republic of letters.

Boscawen was famous as a letter writer. Unlike letters today which you might **think of as very intimate or things you wouldn’t really show to other people, they** were shared by groups of friends. Friendship was very important to the beginnings of the Bluestockings.

So, friendship and correspondence were the starting point for groups of women who shared their ideas and discussed their reading together. And as Montagu who became famous as a letter-writer and well-known in her own circle as a letter-writer her letters were shared more and more widely. It is an age when **letters were published. Pope's letters, for example, were published** in the Lady Mary Wortley and other wonderful women of the period. And so, people wrote with a more public audience in mind. That explains, perhaps, the nature of these spaces in the home. They were neither public nor private, but they brought the two together. I think that is what is so empowering about these bluestocking hostesses.

I'm currently writing a biography of Elizabeth Montagu and **I've** read 7,000 of her letters in the library, not in England unfortunately but in California. There are several to and from Fanny Boscawen as one of her dear friends. Towards the end of her life she came to live in Richmond and them, particularly in their old age, they had a very important friendship where they read to each other when **Montagu's eyesight was** failing, and Boscawen read her favourite poetry and novels to her. But while there is an emphasis on friendship and correspondence, femininity, values that we consider to be feminine, the Bluestockings really asserted themselves as a major cultural institution of their time, which makes them so interesting.

Women couldn't go to university then of course and they couldn't be president of the Royal Society. Two painters were co-founders of the Royal Academy of Art, Angelica Kaufman and Mary Moser, **but it wasn't until** I think the 1930s that Laura Knight was the next female academician. So that says something of the radical nature of the fact that these Bluestockings did manage to make a difference to the public intellectual culture of the day. So, Montagu published an essay on **Shakespeare for example. At the time when Shakespeare's reputation was really** forged as a public figure, she met David Garrick, or she invited David Garrick to **her salon. It's very important to stress that it was mixed gender** – Johnson, Burke, Garrick were all regular visitors of hers. And she virtually realized that she could use her power to introduce people to these men. So, Hannah More came down from Bristol to meet David Garrick at **Montagu's** house and he helped her stage her first play in London – Percy, a tragedy. So, they were networkers who used the contemporary medium of the day.

When I curated the exhibition about the Bluestockings at the NPL we won sponsorship from a businesswoman called Charmaine Eggberry who was then the president of Blackberry, which I think now **hasn't survived. She was very excited** by the Bluestockings. She said that if they were alive today, they would all have blackberries. **I think it's interesting to** think how communication in email and tweet that we use today to help each other as women to puff and tweet each **other's reputations.** You could see that as a kin match of the Bluestocking network.

I think **that's probably all I should say.**

Nino: Thank you very much. That was lovely. You paint such a good picture of the kind of activities that Fanny and her circle of friends were doing in sharing their letters publicly and privately, and also groups of both men and women. You said something quite interesting about it at the beginning, which is about Bluestockings **not being very well known today. Do you think that's the case?**

Elizabeth: Well, I think it is. Very few people know for example that the first Bluestocking was a man, which I meant to say. Benjamin Stillingfleet came to **Montagu's parties wearing** his blue stockings whereas if he was polite, he would **have changed into white silk. It's** a bit like going **to a gentlemen's club** in jeans or something. But it was a sign of their informality and their contemporaneity that they celebrated that relaxed attitude towards scholarship. Gradually this name **adhered to the group. But what's so** fascinating in feminist terms is that it is only when it became associated with only women by the 1770s that it starts to become derogatory. So, the history of the definition of 'bluestocking' is quite telling.

Nino: **I'm interested in that and I want** to come to the other panellists as well in terms of what your perceptions were of the Bluestockings before you came tonight. How much did you know about them and was the impression negative or positive?

Donna: I did not know a great deal about them the Bluestockings I must admit **but it's almost like the term feminist. When I was growing up a feminist was** often used as a derogatory term and now it has been reclaimed as a positive call for equality. So, **if I were called a Bluestocking, I'd be very happy about that, whereas maybe I wouldn't have been when I was growing up.**

Nino: Jocelyn?

Jocelyn: I was aware of the term Bluestocking. Not with a great amount of knowledge behind it, to be honest. I knew it was female and I knew it was **intellectual. I wasn't** aware of the derogatory element in it, maybe because I probably came across it first in Cambridge University.

Cairo: **Yeah, I didn't know anything about the Bluestocking's struggle before I** was invited here. Interesting to hear about their relevance and the lives that they were living, and to connect that to how it transpires now in contemporary circles of women.

Nino: **I'm going to ask a quick question** to the audience before I come back to Donna in a second. **I'd like to have a show of hands.** Who came here this evening feeling they knew all about the Bluestockings? And who felt they knew absolutely nothing at all? So, **here's a lovely chance to** hopefully raise all our consciousness and awareness tonight.

OK so we've heard a bit about the historical context. I'm now going to move on to Donna who will share a bit about the literary legacy of the Bluestockings and in particular thinking about how 200 years ago the Bluestockings worked together to support women publishing to ensure through subscription movements that women could get to print.

Elizabeth: Yes, there is something I just want to add very quickly that of course **the in an age where women couldn't own property or were men's property** in marriage, literary copyright was one thing they could own. Catherine McCaulay, one of the figures in **the** of Great Britain, wrote a pamphlet on copyright law in the 1770s so they could earn a living from their writing. The fact that they could earn a living from their writing was very significant and it often determined the nature of the literature they were writing because they were doing it to a man.

Nino: **Well, that's a really important point** and if you think what Virago does today which is to provide women's writing. **Is this something** we still need right now to support women's literature?

Donna: Absolutely. I run the Virago Modern Classics list and this year is our 40th anniversary. Forty years ago Carmen Callil set up the Virago Modern Classics list and the reason was because Michael Holroyd had recommended - so you got men and women working together talking about literature - Michael Holroyd recommended '**Frost in May**' for her by Antonia White and she loved this book so much and realized that **she couldn't get hold of it and it wasn't in publication** of anybody. And then there were more books that she was recommended by writers who were famous in their day and female writers who were famous in the 20s and the 30s and 40s who had gone completely out of print.

So, **she set up the Virago modern classics list and I don't think it's an** understatement to say that it changed literary history in this country. So it was set up to demonstrate the female tradition in literature, to challenge the sometimes narrow definition of what a classic is, that had led to the neglect of some wonderful books, and also to spread the word that women have always been part of literature. The fact that they were not published any more does not mean that they **didn't** exist. The list grew a really enthusiastic following, which continues today.

Now if women's stories aren't published and valued and in all of their variety then their voices are silenced, their voices are lost and only part of the human experience in both the historical and imaginative context is represented. And the Virago modern classics list **redrew the map to show that women's stories were** out there even if they were not in publication. And it basically exposed what had been hidden from view and it provided a counterbalance to the existing male-dominated perspective. Like '**Frost in May**' many of the books on the list **hadn't** been available for decades. **And that wasn't because of** a lack of literary merit. Otherwise, I would argue, why was Hemingway in print but not Willa Cather? So, a platform that values the female experience to be equal to the male is vital to

this. Telling stories is **part of what it is to be human and if you're losing** that part of your legacy, of your human story then **you're** losing half of history. And readers, **if these books aren't** available miss out on female literary heritage, which is 50% of the human population **it's** important.

So, 41 years ago, for example, if you wanted to find out about the experience of people who lived through the First World War you could read Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, they were in print. But where would you go to find out about **women's experience?** There was a wealth of material from male point of view. That was only half the story though. So, in 1978 Virago published or republished **Vera Britten's 'Testament of Youth'**. In 1933 that had been a massive, monumental best seller and although now it is seen as one of the most important books in the annals of First World War literature **it hadn't been in print for** decades. Now as Britten recognized herself, any picture of the war years is incomplete which omits those aspects that **mainly concern women. That's** something that she wrote **herself and that's why she wrote 'Testament of Youth'**. But when 40 years ago that book had basically been wiped from the public's consciousness. And looking at the fiction that Virago published in that time, I find it **quite astounding what wasn't** available.

So, I've always taken the availability of writers like Edith Wharton, like Willa Cather completely for granted. Like Charlotte Perkins Gilman who wrote the **'The Yellow Wallpaper'** which is a huge feminist classic. All of these books were in copyright then and yet it was up to this fledgling publisher to publish them in the early 1980s. Other writers that it published were Elizabeth Taylor who is one of my favourites. Rebecca West, Rosamund Lennon, Stevie Smith, Radclyffe Hall. Rosamund Lennon and Antonia White were still alive at the time and pretty much thought that they had been forgotten and they were just thrilled and delighted at their, as Rosamund Lennon put it, **'her reincarnation'**.

Today there aren't as many female authors to rediscover perhaps. There still are, **and it's quite surprising** but what I think really needs to be readdressed is the reputation of some women writers. For example, one of our bestselling writers on our list is Daphne du Maurier. For years and years and years she had been published as – **she'd been dismissed as** a historical **writer of women's romances** with covers with water colours of women peering out to sea and something that really needed to be done was for her reputation to be restored and for her to be studied and reappraised. This is the writer that gave us **'The Birds'** and **'Don't Look Now'**. She is not a romance writer. And now we publish all of her books since 2003 and **she's studied again, she's taken her** rightful place as one of the most influential writers of the 20th century.

In 2018 our ethos hasn't changed. We're still growing, we're still rediscovering and publishing books to delight and to inspire. And as well as reissuing our rich backlist we also add to the list. So, in the last 10 years **I've added 117 new titles to** the list including books by Patricia Highsmith and Mary McCarthy and Muriel

Spark: So, **there's still a lot to be done**. So, you could say that at age 40 life is just beginning.

Nino: **I'm realizing how lucky I have been to have been around when Virago** existed so we could always access these writers who you are talking about tonight.

Obviously, **you've been talking about bringing** titles back into print. In terms of **women's writing now do you** still think that **separate women's prizes for** literature are important still to keep it going forwards?

Donna: Absolutely. **I don't think women's writing takes up the space that it** should. Women read more fiction than men do. There are probably as many books published by women as there are men, **but they don't take up** the same amount of review coverage, **they don't win** the same prizes. When people talk about that 'great American writer' they'll talk about John Updike or Philip Roth **they won't talk about** Marilyn Robinson or Donna Tartt. I think there is still a great divide between 'great writers' and women writers. Recently there was a survey done in America on two million books and books by women were priced at 45% less than men's books, **so it's not only** intellectually that they are downgraded, **it's** also in monetary value.

Nino: **It's intriguing the difference between** great and gender in authors. Virginia Woolf felt exactly the same about artists and she said she very carefully positioned her sister **as saying she wasn't just a great female** artist; she was a great **artist regardless of gender so that's something to bear in mind**. **I'd now like** to move on to Jocelyn to think about the effect of Bluestockings on scientific legacy. The Bluestockings really encouraged female education across **all areas, that's the arts and sciences and botany in particular**. Can you give us your perspective? **You've** obviously encouraged education for women in sciences through STEM.

Jocelyn: Thank you. This is going to focus more on females in physical sciences, astronomy in particular, because **that's, so to speak, my heritage**. **I'd like to** mention three female scientists and then draw some lessons and some contrasts **with what we've** already heard, **starting with a woman who's a little bit later than we've been** talking about but with strong local interests, local links. Ada Lovelace lived in Ockham, lived in East Horsley. Ockham, I know, celebrates the fact. **I haven't driven through** East Horsley, **so I don't know if they do**. Ada Lovelace was the only legitimate child of Lord Byron. He walked out on the family when she was about three and so she was brought up by her mother. Her mother encouraged her mathematical, scientific interests because she thought it might **'prevent' her daughter having the** quote **'insanity' that her father had**. It might have been a slightly prejudiced view, but she was encouraged. She married Count Lovelace, so she was a Countess, so obviously a woman of some position which doubtless helped. But in particular she worked with Babbage on very early computers. Babbage had devised this calculating machine which was great. It

was Ada Lovelace who saw that there was a lot more in it than Babbage had seen and in fact created the first algorithm, which has led to computing as we know it these days. She was a bit later 1815-1872.

The two women astronomers I want to talk about both had overseas links which maybe confuses the picture slightly. Caroline Herschel, 1750-1848, started life in Germany, **in Hanover. One of a large family, her mother couldn't read and write.** Caroline got enough education so that she could read and write and served as her **mother's amanuensis when mother** needed to send a letter or something. Her father was a military musician and one of the sons became a musician and moved to Bath in England – William. Caroline had had chicken pox or smallpox as a child **and had a pock marked face and her father told her that since she wasn't** pretty, she should never expect to marry and that her role in life would be as housekeeper for one of her brothers. And at the time we pick up the story she was indeed housekeeper for one of her brothers in Germany. Older brother William had moved to England at this point and wanted Caroline to come and be his housekeeper. The brother for whom she was working agreed, provided William paid for a servant to take Caroline's **place in his household.** Caroline moved to Bath, had to learn English, did so quite well. Had a nice soprano voice but would only perform if William was conducting. And not long after she arrived in Bath William became interested in astronomy and started making his own mirrors for telescopes. This involved having large areas of glass occupying a small living room or a small dining room or a small bedroom. And he was going to grind it into proper shape. And Caroline went along with this although there were complaints about lace cravats getting splattered with pitch and things like that. William, I think **didn't** fully understand optics but by grinding lots of mirrors made some that were good and used them for his home-made telescopes. And with one of these homemade telescopes he discovered the planet Uranus while still in Bath.

You may know that if you go outside at night into a dark place it takes your eyes 10 or 15 minutes to adapt fully to the dark. And as soon as you see a bright light you lose that night vision and it takes another 10 or 15 minutes to adapt. This is a **huge problem for an astronomer. You're looking down a telescope, you want to make notes on what you see, you use your light to make notes, you've lost your dark sight.** you wait 10 or 15 minutes to get your night sight. William and Caroline had a wonderful system. He was at the telescope and she was some way away but within shouting distance, calling distance, at a small table with a lamp, with a notebook and a pen and ink and a clock. What they were doing was they were cataloguing the heavens and William would watch stars moving across and when it came to the centre of his telescope he would shout Now and Caroline would note the time and write it down and carry on till the next star came **and he'd** shout Now. And between them they catalogued thousands of stars. Caroline also learnt a lot about astronomy and did her own thing when William was away. She found eight comets, which was quite good going. **She hadn't** had much education. She taught herself algebra and calculus by asking William questions over breakfast – **after a night's observing.** And during the day she got a little bit

of sleep, she did the accounts, she ran the house. She was a tiny, tiny woman but she was made of very stern stuff. But whenever anybody praised her, she always reflected it to William. She said, 'You know William is such a good teacher that even I can be of some **assistance to him**'. Very much not pushing herself forward. She got recognition very late in life. She was in her 90s before she started getting prizes.

The other woman I want to talk about was Mary Somerville who was born in Fife in Scotland, had a reasonable Scottish education as a child. Married another Scotsman but they got cheated out of their money at one point and they spent quite a lot of their life abroad, typically in Italy, partly in France, I think because the living was cheaper. And Mary started writing science books and she was fantastic at synthesizing information – '**this man has discovered this; this man has discovered that**' but nobody has put the two together. So, in one sense she was not an original researcher, an original scientist, but she did this fantastic synthesis job and her books were praised right, left and centre. I think she was probably **brighter than her husband**. She didn't take part in salons or soirees in the sense that we are meaning here but she had quite a social life in Italy and France and met quite a lot of scientists and built contacts with them. Both Caroline Herschel and Mary Somerville were the first women to be admitted to the Royal Astronomical Society, first female members, that was 1835, but they were honorary members. The first regular members weren't till 1916.

So, reflecting on those three women who are sort of the right period. They are not part of the kind of society you have been describing. They are working with men, through men. **They're sort of the equals of men, but they're sort of not and** I think they are taking care not to be seen to be dominant because it would certainly be improper for a woman to dominate in those areas. So, **they've done** it without a body of women to support them. **They've done it** largely in a male society **and I don't know of any caucus of** females supporting female scientists.

Nino: What an interesting contrast between **what we've been discussing, where** the Bluestockings were very successful at promoting **women's** literature. **Obviously not so much women's scientists**, not even in the 19th century was that happening. How do you feel that **compares to today?** **Do women's networks** exist to support women in science? Can you share a bit about that?

Jocelyn: **There's** beginning to be. In particular one thing - people who work in academia may disagree with this – one thing that I think has been quite important. Twenty to thirty years ago there was a small group of senior women scientists, of which I was one, meeting to see what could be done about the position women in science. There were very, very few, they were having a rough time, they **weren't getting credit for what they had done, it was very much a** male-dominated field **and you've heard all this before and the women's contribution wasn't** being recognized even though it was often splendid. And this small group of senior women met after work – of course. We started to think what we could do. And one of us who was quite a good psychologist said, 'You

know, University vice chancellors are competitive guys' – and they were all guys at that stage – 'If we offer a prize for a women-friendly **university, they'll compete**'. At that time the only prize we could afford was a glass rose bowl. But they competed. And for several years we awarded glass rose bowls to the university that we felt was the most women friendly. Then we got some more money and it gradually became the Athena Swan scheme, which maybe is the curse of your life. **It's now happening in a lot of universities. There's a whole award scheme.** You apply to be accredited at bronze, silver or gold level. The process of preparing the paperwork probably still falls disproportionately on female academics but research funding bodies have begun to say 'you need to hold Athena Swan bronze if you **re going to apply to us.** And that makes a change I regret to say. So, **it's going places now** and that was started by women and is almost too rapidly being mainstreamed.

Nino: And finally, **I'm going to come on to** talk to curator Cairo Clark about the **Bluestockings'** artistic legacy. Is there a supportive network required for women artists today? I was horrified in preparing for today when I heard that apparently in 2017 only 17% of major exhibitions in the UK focused on female artists. So, can you share your perspective?

Cairo: Yeah, my perspective largely comes from my experience and the network of artists, curators, just individuals who **I've engaged with** throughout the field that **I'm now working with** and am engaged with. **And I think it's interesting to think about the Bluestockings but I think they come from a very particular type of society and I think it's important to think that not** only that this female group was forged but also thinking about class and about race and ethnicity and I think within the arts there is still such a small percentage of women artists being shown and also being labelled as '**these are women artists**', **this box ticked** and that kind of feel. Also wondering about how many of these women are women of colour, how many of these women identified as queer, and these kind of things and so I **think it's very empowering within the art world** that there is this quite large lack of diversity in this way and I know many groups and collectives and networks being forged depending on that.

So, for example there is a group **called** which is a group of writers and artists and four women of colour have created a magazine writing and supporting women in a network that are made up of black, Asian and minority ethnic groups which is really exciting and of course then to a point they've built up so much momentum that they are working on projects with the V & A and with the Tate. There's also been alternative routes for artists and graduates **when maybe they're not as represented in the wider world of the art school because I think it's not just** about whether women are represented but where these women are from and whether they identify as women and what kinds of economic backgrounds they come from and what kind of support is there. Because too I think nine times out of ten to navigate the field of the art world – **it's a privilege in a way** – usually you have to have someone to help you to get into that world **and it's not necessarily the right way to become financially stable or a place that's easy to navigate. It's**

already, first of all, much easier for men to do so and has its history of that male artist being more successful than women. But then when we think about women from different parts of the world or different working class backgrounds or different ethnic backgrounds how they are represented and supported.

And so, I think for me **that's something** when thinking about the Bluestockings. I think that existed in one context and then I think it is important to think about the different groups now that are mobilizing to really make the arts more accessible. One of the spaces I work in in Peckham is really challenging and the structures of the art space and **it's not working in this** kind of white institutional structure.

DKUK is a hair salon and so the premise is you get your hair cut in front of art instead of mirrors and **the founder of the salon, he's an artist, and found it very** difficult to sustain his practice and so went into hairdressing and tried to figure out a way he could afford **both and we're working on a** programme where recent graduates can also train as hairdressers and expand their skills that way in order to support their practice. And at the same time most of the people that sit in front to the art works and come to our private views are from a non-art audience who **don't visit galleries** or exhibitions. 80% of which **don't go to exhibitions**. So, **it's really nice to create spaces where people get engaged with** artwork thinking outside of gender and outside of racial bias **and also academia**. **You know there's** always this pressure sometimes when you walk into a space of art that you should know how you should feel to impact with the works.

These kinds of collectives that are existing now, a lot with the help of social media too, being able to connect with people who are like you across platforms, across spaces, across countries. **It's** making for new models to think about art and how we engage with art and who can and on what scale. **I think that's really** exciting.

Nino: **That's a fascinating** insight into that 21st **century perspective and I'd like to** invite some of the other panellists to reflect on in particular in terms of bluestocking history to begin with. Cairo, **what you're describing is** conversations around art happening informally in different sorts of spaces, in hairdressing salons or whatever and obviously in bluestocking circles they were encouraging similar sort of informal conversations but maybe, would it be fair to say, in quite a narrow social grouping in houses like this and on a similar scale in London. What you think in terms of the inclusivity of their group?

Elizabeth: Yes, well I think the women who led the Bluestockings were very privileged but nonetheless I feel of Elizabeth Montagu, she created a space. I suppose what distinguishes her from her aristocratic peers. She was born into the gentry and she married upwards, but her husband **wasn't making any use of** his wealth. He had coalmines in Newcastle, and she was a very shrewd businesswoman. So, she used her initiative to up the productivity of the coalmines and she was very self-consciously ploughing that money into her

projects in London. And she was a great patron, not just of writers but of crafts and so Matthew Boulton of Birmingham for example she invited him in to design some mirrors and cutlery for her new house. She saw her role as a patron in a philanthropic sense. **It's a 19th century model of patrician charity I suppose but nonetheless for a woman to do it so concertedly.**

And also, I think that in researching the Bluestockings **you realize that you're just tracing the tip of an iceberg, if that's** the right expression, in the sense that some of their attempts at patronage backfired. So, when Elizabeth Montagu and Hannah More discovered Ann Yearsley, the milkmaid poet in Bristol. She was considered a native genius of the rural class. But they were worried about her being able to manage her money because they thought her husband was an alcoholic and would spend it all on drink. She was having none of this and publicly outed her patrons as not fair and to control her own money. And there was a very uncomfortable divorce between patrons and poet. And when we were researching her for the exhibition, we had a wonderful image of her in an engraving that was from a painting by a woman painter called Sarah Shields. And **we weren't able to discover** who the painter was. **And it's just an example of how many unknown woman artists were connected with these circles.**

Nino: So, we could be waiting to **reveal far more varied stories that haven't yet been told today about female ...**

Elizabeth: Yes, I think so. I think also **what's interesting about these** privileged women who fought for equal rights is that they identified with other portions of society who were downtrodden. So the anti-slavery movement for example was very important to Bluestockings and they had a very close relationship and I think not many of the Bluestockings were radical basically but some of the radical women at the end of the century like Mary Wollstonecraft and Catherine McCauley I think were far more critical of what they saw as a just society and they would not have existed had it not been for the Bluestockings.

Nino: In terms of contemporary publishing and science, in terms of inclusivity and so on, what do you think there in relation to what Cairo has been describing?

Donna: I think in publishing we are slowly making changes to **the structure that's** – publishing has always been, and a lot of the arts have always been very wealthy middle class, middle to upper class, white men. **They've been** the gatekeepers therefore **that's what** contributed towards white men being the great writers because they are the gatekeepers. And whatever position of power you are in, **when you're hiring staff for example, there is** an unconscious bias so that you end up taking on people like yourself. So, **it's extremely important to have** editors and to have the gatekeepers and the people who are senior in publishing and in all the arts to represent society both in terms of class, in terms of what ethnic background they are. So far, I think **it's** been very closed. It has been really, really **closed. And that's why we don't see** very many exhibitions of people of colour or

of women. I **don't know** – I'm **optimistic that** there is going to be change but these things always take way too long.

Nino: How about you, is that fair to say in science as well?

Jocelyn: I can probably only speak for science and particularly academic science but there is a big change happening – **it hasn't fully happened yet – but we've become very aware of things like unconscious bias and there's now quite strict monitoring of appointments and salary levels and this kind of thing.** So, the stuff **that's being done now.** I think, is a good deal better than it used to be but of course there are a lot of more senior people in office, in post, appointed before there was that awareness and that importance attributed to things like unconscious bias. But for instance the University of Oxford where I work has an Equality and Diversity committee and disability has been, so to speak, dealt with in the sense that there are now ramps and lifts **and aren't** access problems; gender issue is being dealt with and very closely monitored. Racial diversity is the next thing coming up with the panel. And I think, ultimately, or not ultimately, but after that **we'll probably** be addressing LGBTQ+. So, there is awareness of all these dimensions, and I think what is happening now is a hell of a lot better than what was happening when I was young. But of course, we have to wait for these old folks to die off.

Nino: Cairo, you were describing some really great supportive networks. In terms of prizes, things that really get public attention, where do you think we are now in terms of the arts and being broadly supportive of women?

Cairo: Yeah, **I think it's** brilliant the way women artist - **I think it's** important and should definitely **just become a normalized part of any artists' prize.** **But I think it's such a strange kind of – on the one hand it's great to have it because if there's** not this awareness and this talk constantly happening then how do things change. But also this you know – people intersect in so many different ways – **and so it's important** that practices, gender, race, all these things intersect throughout prizes **and maybe that's where you've got** - I mean the recent Turner prize was Lubaina Himid and that was really amazing and such a great celebration of her and her work.

So it feels like in general again, this conversation is constantly bubbling from different generations and perspectives and outlets, this conversation is being had so as long as this momentum builds, and people in positions of power and change are actually conscious of that and opening the doors to new ideas and new structures for the prizes.

Nino: **I'm delighted you mentioned** Lubaina Himid because she is working with a group of artists at Knole at the moment as part of **our programme 'A Woman's Place'** **talking about** female agency in **the history of Knole.** **It's been a joy to work** with her there.

I'm going to open the conversation out a bit more broadly now and think about more general questions. We've heard tonight about the history of the Bluestockings, who were asking for equality for women over 200 years ago, and then we've got the first women getting the vote 100 years ago and so you'd think we'd have made absolutely fantastic progress but it's pretty obvious that we're still struggling now with women's marches, gender pay gap etc. Why do you think that is?

Cairo: Its' still old men making the decisions on all these things, perhaps?

Nino: So, you think this is a generational thing?

Cairo: Not necessarily generational I think people across generations think in different ways, but until maybe there are more women in higher positions then things like the genuine pay gap won't be as vast, because the people making the decisions are reflective of the people that they're making the decisions for. When things like that are more spread, maybe there will be more equality in that sense.

Elizabeth: When you take the longer view, it's been a very long time coming. It's only fairly recently that women have as much power as they do. We say women in power but it's only very recently that they have occupied these positions. I think that is quite interesting. And I've always been interested by people who feel excluded by something but nevertheless want to belong for whatever reason. I think woman have often had to campaign to be included in education for example. It's still the case that subjects like maths and physics are very under populated by women students and having worked in an English department in university and above the floor of the maths department I was constantly shocked by the disparity in terms of gender how many students, how few female students of maths there were and how many women students of literature there were. The subjects acquire these affiliations as well.

Nino: It is an interesting gender ratio between subjects.

Jocelyn: Yes, I have access to data on women in astrophysics around the world and it's quite clear that the culture in a country plays a large factor in how many women go into things like science and engineering. So, if you look at the number of professional female astronomers around the world. In Argentina 38% of astronomers are female, in the UK it's 16 or 17%, in Japan it's 9%. Huge range. And I don't believe Argentinian women's brains are that different from our brains. I think a lot of it is the culture. What is it OK for women to do? And maybe other factors like 'how prestigious is this subject?' If it's not terribly prestigious there'll be quite a lot of women because the men have gone wherever the prestige is. And they're all gradually changing with time. They're all going up a few percent every few years. But the pattern has remained remarkably stable. South Europe, Spain, France, Italy, South America – have large numbers – well the largest, it's not large overall – but have the largest numbers of female astronomers. The English-speaking countries are grouped at just below the world average and

northern European countries like Germany and the Netherlands are lower still and India and Japan are right down there.

Cairo: I was just going to say that I did a panel on women in the arts and there was a lady from the Commons there saying as well it was a cultural kind of thing. I think in Brazil the most successful artists and the artists that make the most money in the art market are all women by a huge proportion in comparison to European female artists.

Nino: **That's really interesting the** variations across the world. So how important do you think female role models are in these fields?

Jocelyn: You have to be a bit careful. The first women in the field have to be incredibly tough. They have to behave like wee men rather than women. **It's** said of both Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher that they were the best men in their cabinets. So, the very first are probably not ideal role models. But when you begin to get some more you can ...

Donna: And not necessarily the ones that give the leg up to other women **either...**

Jocelyn: Absolutely true as well, yes.

Nino: And have we gone too far the other way? I was reading something interesting about Donna. You tweeted about your sons commenting on the series of books for rebel girls and that therefore we are trying to

Donna: Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls? These books are incredible. **I'm so** happy and I really wish they had existed when I was little and the tweet that I put out was about my son reading that book at my **niece's house and** then when we **got home saying** 'I really want that book, can you buy it for me but can you keep it in the front room because I will be embarrassed when my friends come round **because it's stories for girls**'. And that little preposition – **I thinks it's enormously** important for boys to have female role models as well as male role models. And, **you know, I'm a feminist** – I teach my boys about the women who have been written out of history and that woman have always been doing things and have always been important in their fields but have been side-lined. **And I think it's** important for me to teach them about this because at school and everywhere else they will learn about the men – it just happens. So, I thought it was a shame that these **books weren't maybe 'Stories of Rebel Women'**. That tiny little preposition basically means that he **won't** want that book which I think is a tremendous **shame because I don't** want my children to only have men as their role models in life.

Jocelyn: I think everybody should have that book – keep it in their front rooms.

Donna: **A lot of the women you're talking about, like Caroline Herschel, I only learnt about them through these books.**

Elizabeth: **I think it's a very important point**, like you were saying Jocelyn, the way that women relied on making it with men who supported them as well. Many Bluestockings had fathers or brothers who were very much behind them. Elizabeth Carter, for example, who was the translator of Epictetus and a great classical scholar who never married, and she earned her living from her translation of Epictetus **which wasn't replaced until the beginning of the 20th century** and was a great success. She spoke several languages and her father educated her and allowed her to be independent in that way. So, I think involving men in feminism is very important.

I think often attitudes in universities often the groups that are set up to help women's identity tend to focus on subjects they assume to be female like childcare. But men are never involved in these groups, so I think the more men that become involved the more the family becomes – or rather the education of children or the bringing up of children becomes something that concerns all genders equally. **I think that's really** – because it is the relationship between the civic and intimate spheres of life that is at the heart of this problem really because people assume that women are more concerned with the domestic and the intimate and the emotional. **We're all** concerned with that in the same way we all need to be concerned in the public sphere of life, **so I think that's very important** to try and bring these genders together **if we're going** to make progress in 2018.

Nino: **I'm going to have one more question before I then open to the room.** But I am just thinking that in terms of this discussing what brings everyone together might that then affect the attitude that has been expressed to some of the **women's groups** that we were talking about today? For example, I think early on we talked about different perceptions of the Bluestockings as a group, good or bad, the suffragette movement became caricatured and more recently some of the contemporary **women's** movements also become subject to insult. Are we moving beyond that now or do you think a separate feminist group will always be subject to that kind of hostility or caricature?

Jocelyn: In academic science one of the really big successes has been when funding bodies required departments to demonstrate that they were women friendly. And this came about - **it's a rather nice story** – the chief medical officer for health in England and Wales is a woman, Dame Sally Davies, and she met with the heads of medical schools probably about five years ago to talk about the kinds of things they had to talk about, she was a funder they were recipients of funding. And at the end of the conversation she looked round the room and she said, **'you're all men, where are the women?'** **And one of the men said 'Och, it doesn't matter'.** **As she put it, she had a rush of blood to the head and she said 'if you want to apply for my funding you have got to demonstrate that your department is women friendly by holding one of the Athena Swan awards'.** And

once funders start putting pressure on like that people start paying attention. I **regret to say but choke off the money and they'll notice.**

Nino: **OK, well thank you very much panel. We've had a wonderful overview of** all the different sectors in which Bluestockings are historically and currently have become involved. **I'd like to open** questions to the room. Anyone got anything they would like to ask panel members or points that they would like to raise for conversation?

Audience: **It wasn't really a question. I was thinking about propriety and** manners and how the thing that stops a woman being educated or to show her intelligence is impropriety. **It's quite interesting** when you talk about the milkmaid poet. I was thinking about class when you talked about class, maybe that's a class thing. The upper classes, or the female upper classes. When you talked about the milkmaid poet, she was happy to go public with this kind of vulgar thing about money. I wonder **if there's something interesting about the** working classes being driven by opportunity and finance, and the upper classes **are driven by propriety, and whether there's this double pronged attack to keep women down. You can't win either way.** This was an interesting circular thing I was thinking about.

Elizabeth: No well **that's a very good point and it's particularly true** of sexuality, because the Bluestockings were very virtuous and that was the only way I think they could keep their reputations in publishing because the reputation of **women's writing** at the end of the 17th century being very much loose morals, prostitutes and associated with display. Being public as a woman was just wrong. So, it in order to be public they had to be proper and that was the price they paid. Because when more daring women like Mary Wollstonecraft and Catherine McCaulay stuck by their ideals, they were put in dictionaries under prostitutes, so it swung right back again.

But I **there's also something more subtle about** attitudes towards behaviour. There is a wonderful quotation from Elizabeth Montagu, which I wanted to read about wit. An area we **haven't talked about** is female **comedians and that's a very** recent field where women have become properly recognized. And I think people are very scared of wit and intelligence but also humour. And Montagu has been reading Pilkington who wrote scandalous memoirs of her relationship with Jonathan Swift and Montagu is writing to Boscawen about this and she says **'It is often said that** wit is a dangerous quality. It is meant that it is an offensive weapon that may attack friends as well as enemies. And it is a perilous thing in society. But wit in women is apt to have other bad consequences. Like a sword without a scabbard it wounds the **wearer and provokes assailants. I'm sorry to say the generality of women have excelled in wit and failed in chastity'**.

Nino: **We're not allowed to be witty?** And incidentally in terms of this this propriety thing, you also raised about not drinking in their groups. So, it was soft

drinks only. I think one of them had a rather unusual name. What was it that they liked to drink?

Elizabeth: Orgeat. It was an almond syrup, almond and barley, I think.

Nino: Yes orgeat.

Elizabeth: Maybe it had some secret properties.

Audience: I think **that's absolutely the** thing, the feeling that things can change. **I think it's that idea that you can speak out it's still considered not particularly a** trait in women that is encouraged. And Me Too **and timeout and this stuff, that's** a whole movement that has come from that not feeling like you can speak in public space or be confident to do so. **It's taken a very long time** even to teach your daughters to not use the word bossy, to teach them to argue, to teach them not to apologise and even that even **hard, 'don't apologise, say no'**. **It just takes a** very long time culturally. That idea of propriety and behaviour has been a very **big weapon in managing women's** intellect and acting in the public sphere.

Donna: If you keep women silent you take away their power and therefore being **told that you've got to** be demure and got **to be**

Have you read **Mary Beard's book 'Women in Power'** which is all about oratory **and how it's** basically bad for women to have the qualities that make them an orator, which I found absolutely fascinating?

Nino: Do you think that the social networks available today where you can communicate very easily, has that made it easier for women to have a voice?

Audience: **That's happening in every sphere. You get 600 tweets and they're** going to rape you.

Donna: **Because if you're going to have a voice you've got to not be** anonymous, really. Yet the people that attack you are anonymous.

Nino: Any other questions?

Audience 2: It was just a question about whether there were any historical famous women in history who impersonated **men. I'm aware of authors who** published as men. I just wondered if you were aware of really awesome women who happened to pretend to be men just to get their voice heard?

Jocelyn: **J.K. Rowling wouldn't use her Christian names** just her initials.

Elizabeth: Georges Sand. I was thinking of **Chopin's pianos. It's fascinating that** the most famous ones were in the 19th century George Eliot, Currer Bell, Charlotte

Bronte, whereas in the 18th century it's not so much the case. There are a few exceptions but mostly if they did use their name they would use their own name and sometimes they **were published by 'a lady' but it was very common to publish** anonymously to start with and then if it was a success you claimed your authorship. So, Elizabeth Montagu when she published her essay on Shakespeare it was anonymous but when it was discovered in her circle and when it was a great success, she put her name to it and in the later editions. So, it does seem interesting to go back to how history is not just a long tale of progress. Sometimes women felt more able to speak out than others.

Because I think there was a huge backlash against the success of women authors at the beginning of the 19th century. Some of the most famous men of the Romantic period – Wordsworth and Coleridge and Byron – were very scathing about the Bluestockings. Hazlett **said he didn't care a fig** that any woman he knew what an author meant.

Nino: So, the ebb and flow of male-female... Interestingly I think Donna you were reflecting on some sales figures connected to whether men would buy men or women buy women.

Donna: I think what I said earlier on about the survey that was published last month about books by women being 45% cheaper. **There's quite a lot of** anecdotal evidence that although women will read books by both sexes, many men (**I'm not** disparaging anyone in the room) many men will consider themselves well-read even if their huge **reading list doesn't include any women whatsoever**. When you look at lists of authors or books in newspapers of the best books ever **written the percentage of women's books is usually woeful. I guess it's the same** with women artists too.

Audience 3: **I don't know how old she is** when she got her success. Was there any feed of young women in their teens and twenties? Or was it all much more mature women?

Nino: In the Bloomsbury Groups? Sorry, the Bluestockings! So, the age range. Were they fostering a younger generation coming on?

Elizabeth: Yes, they did. Fanny Burney, the novelist, was nurtured by the Bluestockings. But she had rather an ambivalent relationship to them, talking of which she wrote a play called *The Witlings*, where she satirized Elizabeth Montagu as Lady Snatter. She was **very modest in society. There's a great** painting of her in the National Portrait Gallery **where she's wearing a big hat that was called a Lunardi hat after the Italian balloon artist and she's looking down and she's blushing and she looks incredibly shy but** secretly she was writing scathing satire of society women. So, I think women should feel free to behave badly in public, but you can find a history of them doing so in secret and scrutiny in their more private writings. **But it's** actually her father who told her not to

publish it for strategic reasons because she might be disowned by the Bluestockings.

Audience 4: I was just thinking, that thinking about Caroline Herschel saying that her brother was a very good teacher and so watching girls come in at the bottom, the teaching that they get at school, how a good teacher who will promote a scholarly girl as opposed to a scholarly boy. And at the moment most **schools are boys and girls together. Is there something to be said for all girls' schools or all boys' schools** so they are not having to compete against each other in a sexual but just in an academic way? And therefore, it pits the girls against the girls and the boys against the boys and the cream will come to the top with each but not necessarily when **it's all** mixed up.

Jocelyn: The Institute of Physics has done some interesting research on girls doing physics at GCSE, A level and things like that. And they found that in **girls' schools** a higher proportion of girls take physics than in mixed schools, which is probably something to do with the kind of socialization that is going on, interestingly. Teachers are important. But actually I think we gender children at a very, very early age, probably even pre-**primary school and it's probably established** enhanced in primary school and so by the time they get to secondary **the game's almost lost – as long as there's this perception that girls don't do blah blah blah.**

Cairo: **A friend of mine she's the head of an all-girls' school in Stratford.** I guess **the area's** quite deprived and 85% of the girls are on free school meals **and she's** really working very hard to promote not only with her staff and also with the parents the importance of girls taking up careers or interests in writing, in broader subjects, in **arts as well. And it's very difficult I think she's been** telling me to come in and help organize the group and to show these girls from all different backgrounds working from all different fields because even with the separation of schools a lot of the people who come in and talk about careers are still men who have these successful positions. **I think it's important that the idea** of fawning girls is pushed away and is not thought of in such a binary way and is thinking more openly about the individual and how they work collectively to support each other.

Nino: **That's a lovely note to end on.** I certainly think of my own 16-year **old's** experience more and more children in their class are totally confident with non-binary gender, choosing they/them pronouns, looking for non-gendered sports, non-gendered facilities, everything. So, there is a direction of travel towards that – equality regardless of gender.

So, **I'd like to say thank you very much to our distinguished** panel this evening. Thank you to everybody else for participating in our conversation. And a lovely chance to celebrate Fanny Boscawen and the legacy of the Bluestockings at Hatchlands. Thank you very much.