

# Reviews

---

## Adelyne revisited: militant feminism and feminist antimilitarism during World War I

by *K.E. Garay*

Catherine Marshall, C.K. Ogden, and Mary Sargant Florence. *Militarism versus Feminism: Writings on Women and War*. Edited by Margaret Kamester and Jo Vellacott. London: Virago Press, 1987. Pp. x, 178. C\$10.95 (paper).

“DEAR RUSS, THIS is a fair exchange for Og.” With this warmly irreverent salutation to Russell begins a note of 13 October 1921 from C.K. Ogden, one on whom the accolade polymath is aptly bestowed. Ogden (1889–1957) devoted the greater part of his life to a crusade for linguistic reform, from his early seminal work, *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923, coauthored with I.A. Richards) to his language simplification project, Basic English. He was also an eccentric, an omnivorous collector of clocks, shoes, masks, musical boxes and, above all, books (and hence of houses in which to store them). He was, at various times, a bookseller, a dealer in scrap paper, an editor and a publisher as well as, at all times, an indefatigable writer.

The connection with Russell, which was to be a close and enduring one, was first established when, as a Cambridge undergraduate and cofounder of the Heretics, a society at once less exclusive and less pretentious than the Apostles, Ogden managed to lure the philosopher to address the group. Through the turbulent years of the First World War Ogden, by means of his boldly dissenting weekly, *The Cambridge Magazine*, consistently upheld the right of free expression for all who opposed the conflict, and he risked the censor’s wrath in order to publish Russell’s articles and letters and to protest the treatment accorded him by his college and by his country. In 1925 Russell and his wife, Dora, named Ogden as their executor and as joint guardian<sup>1</sup> of their children, in the event of their deaths. Ogden also served as a sort of business and literary agent for Russell, booking halls in London for his lectures when Cambridge refused to accommodate him and assuming the burdensome financial arrange-

<sup>1</sup> Along with Dora’s sister Biddy. See Russell’s letter of 22 January 1925 (RA REC. ACQ. 429[1]).

ments, as well as proposing and editing books by both Russell and Dora during the 1920s.<sup>2</sup>

This recently published collection of writings on the theme of the antithetical relationship of militarism to feminism is dominated by Ogden. It was from his articles, appearing first under his punning *nom de plume* of Adelyne More, in the *Cambridge Magazine* as well as under his own name in *Common Cause* and *Jus Suffragii*, that *Militarism versus Feminism* was drawn. The work was first published anonymously as a slim, soft-covered volume by Allen and Unwin in April 1915. The extent to which two of the pieces from which the book was compiled were the product of joint authorship remains a vexing question which the editors are unable to resolve.<sup>3</sup> The manuscript of *Militarism versus Feminism*<sup>4</sup> is in no other hand but Ogden's, and the style is so distinctively his throughout that one is left to speculate that the contribution of Mary Sargent Florence, an accomplished artist<sup>5</sup> and active suffragist, may have been limited to providing Ogden with some of the geographical and literary allusions with which the work abounds.<sup>6</sup>

As those who know her work will expect,<sup>7</sup> Jo Vellacott, with the capable collaboration of Margaret Kamester, has done a scholarly job of editing. Ogden the obscure emerges, albeit incompletely, from the gloom, although one might wish that our pacifist/feminist editors had not chosen to introduce him thus:

We would love to be able to produce the evidence that Adelyne More was yet another forgotten feminist and the sole author of the book. However, this was merely one of the several pseudonyms used by C.K. Ogden, the editor of the *Cambridge Magazine*.<sup>8</sup>

Nor are Vellacott and Kamester content to leave the advocacy of the antimilitarist/feminist cause to their authors. Instead, our editors, while earnestly pro-

viding full bibliographic citations for all the early feminist works appearing in their texts, tell us which (almost all, it would seem) “deserves to be better known”. And loud editorial chortles can be heard 'midst the footnotes when, to supplement Ogden's information that the bellicose Sir John Arundel callously caused the death by drowning of some captive nuns in 1379, we are informed that Arundel was subsequently shipwrecked, although “as good pacifists we refrain from making the obvious comment”.<sup>9</sup>

Such editorial proselytizing, because of its wryly humorous tone and because there is much early pacifist/feminist material unearthed here which is well deserving of a trumpet blast or two, must be forgiven. The lack of balance evident in this volume is less easily absolved. Ogden's *Militarism versus Feminism* comprises 87 of the 119 textual pages included here; wisely the editors have selected a hitherto unpublished portion of a planned expansion of *Militarism versus Feminism* to supplement the published work.<sup>10</sup> Less judiciously, they preface these segments with two rather indifferent essays by the feminist activist Catherine Marshall, and, on the dubious strength of these seventeen pages, Marshall's life is given generous attention in the surefooted survey of early twentieth-century feminist consciousness which is the book's introduction. Could it be, perhaps, that Dr. Vellacott's planned biography of Marshall (and we await it impatiently) obtruded itself here?

More appropriate, if further “filler” were needed, would have been one or two of Ogden's other *Cambridge Magazine* pieces from the 1915–16 period. Adelyne More's most powerful denunciation of militarism was published in the magazine on 29 January 1916. *The One Thing Needful*, which was reprinted as a halfpenny pamphlet by the National Labour Press, ironically proposed the extension of conscription to men between the ages of 45 and 70, “if not as actual combatants, at least in such harmless occupations as mine sweeping”, and concluded its impassioned appeal with the invocation:

O ye old and middle-aged, for well nigh two years the young have borne patiently with your howlings, your taunts, your patronage, your generous “giving” of sons, of lives that were not yours to give. If this law cannot be passed, it is but a small thing that we ask of you—those of you who have enjoyed the good things of the earth and taken so little thought for the morrow—a moment's silence now, while the last young men are dragged away.

This passage seems to suggest, and the archival evidence would appear to confirm, that Ogden himself, as distinct from his passionately feminist and antimilitarist alter ego, espoused both causes, not because of any particular intellectual commitment either to upholding the rights of women or to the pres-

<sup>2</sup> To Ogden, through his friend W.S. Stallybrass who was its director, can be attributed Russell's connection with the publishing house Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner. Ogden was responsible, either as editor of the two major series, the Today and Tomorrow series and the International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method, or as intermediary with the publishers, for *The A.B.C. of Atoms* (1923), *Icarus or the Future of Science* (1924), *What I Believe* (1925), *The A.B.C. of Relativity* (1925) and *The Analysis of Matter* (1927), as well as for Dora's *Hypatia or Woman and Knowledge* (1925—all of the foregoing titles being published by Kegan Paul) and *The Right to Be Happy* (Routledge, 1927). Dora's memoir of Ogden appears in *C.K. Ogden: a Collective Memoir*, ed. P. Sargent Florence and J.R.L. Anderson (London: Elek Pemberton, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> See p. 28 and fn. 48, 51 and 52, p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> Contained in the C.K. Ogden Papers which are housed in the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library.

<sup>5</sup> Sargent Florence and Ogden were later to cooperate on a series of articles for the *Cambridge Magazine* in which the analogy between colour and musical harmony was explored (see the issues of February and May 1918).

<sup>6</sup> This hypothesis does not, however, account for the unidentified piece submitted by Sargent Florence to *Common Cause* alluded to by Maude Royden in a letter to Ogden of 23 December 1914. See fn. 91, p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> See especially Jo Vellacott, *Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War* (Brighton, England: Harvester Press, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> *Militarism versus Feminism*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Fn. 67, p. 173.

<sup>10</sup> This longer work, to be entitled *Militarism, Feminism and the Birthrate*, exists, almost complete, among Ogden's papers. It was never published, and much of the material for it was incorporated into *Fecundity versus Civilization*, which appeared, under Ogden's Adelyne More pseudonym, in 1916 (London: Allen and Unwin).

ervation of peace, but rather because of his unswerving dedication to the wider cause of humanity. As far as the war was concerned, Ogden's failure to follow Russell into the No-Conscription Fellowship or even to join the Union of Democratic Control indicates that his views regarding the conflict, while vehemently dissenting and consistently articulated, were not easily categorized or channelled. The cause of feminism Ogden served tangentially, through his articles in *Common Cause*, *Jus Suffragii* and the *Cambridge Magazine* as well as in such extended examinations as this present volume, but, significantly, the only group he formally joined and actively worked for was the People's Suffrage Federation, an organization which cast its nets in favour of all the disenfranchised, regardless of their sex.<sup>11</sup>

But to return to the collection at hand. Much of Ogden's writing in *Militarism versus Feminism* is in the patchwork quilt (or should it be called kaleidoscopic?) style with which readers of his later *Foundations of Aesthetics* (1921) and *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) will be familiar. Examples, citations and illustrations abound in a polemic which is occasionally indigestible but never entirely without interest. Anthropology, geography, history and sociology are all pressed into service and ransacked to support the book's central purpose, which is "to show how the subjection of women, both now and in the past ages, is essentially due to militarism, to the prevalence of war, and to the institutions and customs which are the legacies of war."<sup>12</sup>

Ogden's chosen subtitle calls the work *An Enquiry and a Policy Demonstrating That Militarism Involves the Subjection of Women*. The question which demands to be answered is whether such a demonstration is convincingly made. For this reviewer, despite the current vogue for understating the catalytic role of the First World War in the area of female emancipation, Ogden does not prove his case.

While it would be foolish to attempt to deny the strength and persistence of the forces of reaction after the war, it is clear that the precedent for women's new role in society was established during the years of this conflict, and, with an almost medieval inevitability, that precedent was to influence for the better the lives of women thereafter.

In this instance (and I should be hard put to it to find another) H.G. Wells was right and Ogden/Adelyne, Marshall and the other antimilitarist feminists were wrong; rather than working against the feminist cause the Great War, as Wells was to astutely observe in 1916, was "bringing us rapidly to a state of affairs in which women will be much more definitely independent of their sexual status, much less hampered in their self-development, and much more

nearly equal to men than has ever been known before in the whole history of mankind."<sup>13</sup>

*Department of History and  
The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections  
McMaster University*

<sup>11</sup> Russell, in a letter of 18 October 1911 (#225) to Lady Ottoline Morrell, refers with gratitude to Ogden's work for the P.S.F. By 1912 Ogden was Hon. Organizing Secretary of the P.S.F., Cambridge Branch, while Russell had become its Hon. Secretary.

<sup>12</sup> *Militarism versus Feminism*, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> *What Is Coming? a Forecast of Things after the War* (London: Cassell, 1916).