

that were led and protected by the men, women, and children who kept up an often indefatigable flow of correspondences. Through this intense examination of the McIlwraith family, Kröller has attested powerfully to the dependence of empires on the profuse writing and networking energies of British families, and the intimacies that structured these regimes.

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JOANNA MARTIN. *Georgina Weldon: The Fearless Life of a Victorian Celebrity*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2021. Pp. 488. \$39.95 (cloth).
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In *Georgina Weldon: The Fearless Life of a Victorian Celebrity*, Joanna Martin offers a vivid and balanced encounter with her extraordinary subject: performer, teacher, entrepreneur, and terror of the legal profession, Georgina Weldon (1837–1914). Martin, a descendent of Weldon's brother, took possession of her subject's archive, including twenty-four journals and unpublished memoirs, and she privileges these primary sources in her narrative. As such, Martin is able to provide a fuller and more nuanced account than have earlier biographers, which largely based their work on Weldon's published writings and secondary material.

Georgina Weldon, née Thomas, was born into a comfortable family with society connections, although her parents displayed some unconventional attitudes that may have helped shape their daughter's outlook. Despite her talent and desire for a singing career, Weldon was expected to conform to the typical Victorian pathway of marriage and motherhood. Pursued by a number of suitors, she chose Harry Weldon, a charming but feckless army officer. Following a stillbirth early in the marriage, Weldon was unable to sustain a further pregnancy, and the journal entries offer fascinating insights into a nineteenth-century woman's perspectives on fertility and the trials of managing a household on a limited income.

As her marriage proved increasingly unsatisfying, Weldon directed her energies toward the arts, performing at recitals and concerts. She planned to open a music school, taking on orphans for instruction and holding concerts to raise money for the enterprise. Weldon developed an intense relationship with French composer Charles Gounod, in which she acted variously as his agent, muse, caregiver, and—in the eyes of the press, at least—mistress. Weldon's involvement with the legal system, with which she had already had some experience, intensified as she supported the composer's claims against his English publishers. When her own relationship with Gounod broke down, Weldon brought disputes against him over copyright. This pattern was repeated in other relationships, notably with concert organizer Jules Rivière; Weldon's one-time business partner Anacharsis Ménier; and her companion Angèle Ménier. Time and again Weldon formed attachments, developing grand artistic and business schemes with an individual and offering emotional and financial support before falling out with them and seeking redress through the courts.

Weldon's fiercest legal battles concerned her husband's attempts to have her committed to an insane asylum in 1878. Martin describes the steps involved in this process and Weldon's measures to counter it in precise and often chilling detail. What becomes clear is Weldon's vulnerability to such an accusation, not only for her supposedly unconventional lifestyle but also for the use of her voice in public to air personal grievances. Weldon reimagined herself as an instrument of reform, thereby initiating the period of her greatest celebrity—as author, as advocate, as litigant. Seeking compensation through the courts against the doctors who would have her committed, Weldon also published accounts of her experience and delivered

a performative address, “How I Escaped from the Mad Doctors,” actions that in turn saw her sued for libel. It was charges of libel that led to Weldon’s first stint in prison, which provides some revealing insights as prison becomes a site of temporary peace and comfort.

Martin shows Weldon’s capacity to generate support for her activities and her alignment with fringe and radical communities and movements such as spiritualism and ballooning. As she mounted campaigns and lent her support to various causes, Weldon actively cultivated publicity. She launched her own newspaper, *Social Salvation*; continued to appear in court, often representing herself; and developed performance avenues that played on her public persona. Focus on the support Weldon received effectively counters the representation of her in the contemporary press, which was mostly negative. Weldon achieved an astounding victory when granted a retrial of her case against Forbes Winslow, one of the doctors seeking her committal, and won her suit, giving ammunition to broader calls for reform of the Lunacy Laws.

Martin frames her work as a refutation of earlier biographies, specifically Brian Thompson’s *A Monkey among Crocodiles: The Disastrous Life of Mrs Georgina Weldon* (2000), which figures its subject as both fool and failure. Martin briefly notes Weldon’s appearance in some scholarly works. However, Weldon has received more scholarly attention than is suggested here. Her life has informed research on subjects including women’s engagement with the legal system; activism, and performative display; and spiritualism, seeing her reclaimed as an influential figure in Victorian public life. However, as Mary Madden shows in her useful survey of responses to Weldon (“Stories about a Story Teller: Reading the Radical in Scenes from the ‘Disastrous’ Life of Georgina Weldon,” *Women’s History Review* 15, no. 2 [2006]: 213–28), earlier treatments have been hampered by the lack of access to primary sources. Madden cheekily suggests that “until [Weldon] chooses a suitable spiritualist through whom to speak or sing, she remains unable to directly protest against unseemly appropriations of her life” (224). Martin acts as something akin to that medium here, in bringing us closer to Weldon’s authentic voice than any earlier work has done.

At times, the detail in the text threatens to become overwhelming, but Martin maintains the reader’s engagement and leavens the narrative with humor. She provides a sympathetic but clear-sighted portrait, skillfully avoiding the judgment and ridicule Weldon attracted during her lifetime and that of other biographers. She lets Weldon speak for herself through the journals, even when the views being espoused (such as the desire to rid herself of various orphan charges) present her in an unflattering light. While exposing Weldon’s fearless engagement with arenas including the law, the press, the medical establishment, and the entertainment industry, Martin avoids psychoanalyzing her subject or judging her self-destructive behavior. And yet the internal and external forces that drove Weldon, to assert herself on the public stage, often at significant personal and professional cost, warrant further attention. Martin’s text would function as an excellent resource for such a study and any number of thematic analyses.

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CHRIS PEARSON. *Dogopolis: How Dogs and Humans Made Modern New York, London, and Paris*. Animal Lives: Human and Non-human Worlds Together. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021. Pp. 248. \$24.00 (paper).
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Chris Pearson’s new history of evolving human-canine relations has New York City, London, and Paris all going to the dogs. These metropolises served as testing grounds where