Companion to

Women's Historical Writing

Edited by

Mary Spongberg,
Ann Curthoys and
Barbara Caine

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Contents

America and in 1938 a *History of Women in Medicine. Medical Women of America* detailed the contributions to medicine of individual women; the establishment of medical schools for women, women's employment in the medical profession and the admission of women to medical societies. *History of Women from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* is a similarly broadly based narrative of women's participation in medicine, drawing on literary references, mythology and archaeology, as well as sources in Spanish, French and German. Hurd-Mead planned two more volumes of *History of Women*. Volume two, covering the Eastern hemisphere, from Australia to Ireland, exists in manuscript. Volume three, on the Western hemisphere, was in progress when she died. Hurd-Mead's historiographical approach was openly feminist as she sought to reveal and rehabilitate women as subjects in the history of medicine. This saw her work being criticised by the medical establishment. Her extensive medical history collection was given to the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, where she also established a fund to provide an annual lecture on the history of women in medicine.

Sarah Howard

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Major work

A History of Women in Medicine from Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century (Winchester: Longwood Press, 1979).

Hutchinson, Lucy 1620–1681

English poet, translator, historian. Born in Tower of London, daughter of Sir Allen Apsley, Lieutenant of the Tower, and Lucy St John, his third wife, of Tregoze in Wiltshire. She was a precocious child who received an extensive education under the influence of her mother. She recorded in an autobiographical fragment that she could read by the age of four and became a competent linguist, able to work in both Latin and French. She developed an interest in Calvinist theology, a highly unconventional area of scholarship for women. In 1638 she married John Hutchinson who became an officer in the parliamentarian army and the governor of Nottingham. During the civil wars and interregnum they lived at Owthorpe, the Hutchinson family estate in Nottinghamshire. John Hutchinson was one of the Regicides, though he was not incarcerated until accused of plotting an uprising in 1663. He died in prison in 1664 and Lucy Hutchinson was left with debts which she paid off through the sale of family estates. Lucy Hutchinson had nine children, at least two of whom died in infancy.

John Hutchinson's death prompted Lucy Hutchinson to write her main historical work, 'The Life of John Hutchinson', though it was not published until 1806 in an edition by Julius Hutchinson re-titled *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*. This went through several editions in the nineteenth century and was re-edited with the inclusion of some correspondence of C H Firth in 1906. Hutchinson's account of her husband reveals their shared 'puritan' sympathies. The political narrative and Republican sentiment is interwoven with a providential interpretation of events. For example, 'the hand of God was mightily seen prospering and preserving the parliament till Cromwell's ambition unhappily interrupted them' [1906 edn, 273]. Hutchinson's text is also littered with evidence of her taste for poetry: Captain Charles White is described as 'the devil's exquisite solicitor'. It is very detailed factually drawing on her own notebooks and Thomas May's 'history'. *Memoirs* features John Hutchinson as Plutarchan hero; his greatness and magnanimity are demonstrated constantly through unflattering portraits of others. Lucy Hutchinson's own role during the civil war is seen in snatches, for example when she describes herself nursing the sick of both sides in Nottingham Castle. However, she diminished her authorial presence by describing her husband as 'a very faithful mirror, reflecting truly, though but dimly, his own glories upon him'. She allowed some oblique personal praise, recording her husband's judgement of her work as 'beyond the customary reach of a she-wit'. *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* is primarily a scholarly narrative of the English civil wars, commonwealth and restoration and, as such, it ranks with the work of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon.

Hutchinson was a remarkable scholar, a rigorous Calvinist and arguably the finest woman historian of the English Renaissance. Her translation of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* was published in a modern edition in 1996. It has also been suggested that she was the author of an anonymous poem 'Order and Disorder' (1679), a meditative exploration of the Fall. She was an admirer of Cromwell's chaplain, John Owen, and wrote two theological treatises – *On the Principles of the Christian Religion* and *On Theology* – published in 1817. However, her historical biography of her husband is usually regarded as her greatest achievement.

Amanda L Capern

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I

Industrialisation

Recently there has been a great deal of writing about women's experience of industrialisation as part of a range of industrial developments. Gender is now critical to all assessments of the experience of and the impact of industrialisation. It was not always the case; the history of industrialisation tended to focus on factory systems and male workers. Once the Industrial Revolution was thought to have been a discrete historical phase that began in Britain in the last part of the eighteenth century and resulted in improved agricultural efficiency, accelerated population growth and improved transport and distribution infrastructure. The surplus labour thus freed was able to urbanise and work in larger and increasingly mechanised workplaces. Histories of industrialisation elsewhere frequently took this British experience as the touchstone to measure other industrialisations. Most accounts now emphasise slow continuous change with more gradual productivity gains and a range of work practices. Change was uneven. Indeed for many the notion of industrialisation having ended is premature as well as thoroughly British and ethnocentric.

Despite historians in general concentrating upon male factory workers, there are examples of women writing about industrialisation from the early nineteenth century. Britain has the earliest tradition of industrialisation and most developed accompanying writing. While there was no sudden revolution, clearly Britain was the 'first industrial nation' and industrialisation may best be understood discursively (Zlotnick 1998: 1). British women writers'

interest in industrialisation partly flows from Britain's comparative advantage, and also from the feminist project itself. Feminism starts from the view that women are systematically disadvantaged in modern society. It suggests that men and women should have equal opportunities. The idea of industrialisation has been associated with the most profound economic changes. A highly unequal sexual division of labour is seen as a central characteristic of both industrialisation and modernity. Commentators have been drawn then to industrialisation as a defining social as well as economic force, although their research questions have changed over time. A relatively small circle of middle-class novelists in the mid-nineteenth century debated the moral effects of industrialisation in fiction. Political women had fewer common interests and could not agree over what the state should do about industrialisation. It did not help that they were not clear as to the extent of women's involvement in industrialisation. Turn-of-the-century reformers did better research but they were deeply divided over the effects of the state's industrial measures especially over protective labour legislation. Professional women historians exhibit variations in argument and approach over the twentieth century although they all, to some extent, maintain the Industrial Revolution changed gender relations. A survey of British women's writings about industrialisation since the early nineteenth century does not settle the issue of whether women's position improved as a result of the Industrial Revolution but it reveals the extent to which women's work and change has been put in the spotlight and mainstream history.

Fiction and industrialisation

Charlotte Bronte was at the centre of a small and far-flung circle of friends writing about industrialisation. In June 1850 Mary Taylor having emigrated to New Zealand wrote to her Roe Head schoolfriend, Charlotte Brontë back in England, about Brontë's book *Shirley* (1849). The novel was about the introduction of cropping machines and Luddite riots earlier in the century which Brontë had heard about at Roe Head and then subsequently researched in the columns of the *Leeds Mercury* newspaper of 1812–1814 (Gaskell 1857/1966: 378). Taylor complained that Brontë took as her subject the first duty of women to be in paid employment but only for some women, those who eschewed marriage and men. Taylor accused Brontë of being 'a coward and a traitor' for all women ought to earn money: 'A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not and a woman who does not happen to be rich and who *still* earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault – almost a crime – a dereliction of duty which leads rapidly and almost certainly to all manner of degradations' (Smith 2002: 392). In 1865 and 1870 she returned to England having earned sufficient in colonial retailing to retire comfortably. Taylor wrote a series of articles in the new feminist journal, *The Victorian Magazine*, that were later republished as *The First Duty of Women* in 1870 on the theme of women's obligation to earn money. This theme, the morality of women's paid employment in a new order, was the backdrop too for her 1893-novel *Miss Miles* (Stevens 1972; Bellamy 1997).

Harriet Martineau, a second literary female friend, had a different criticism of Brontë's work. In her obituary of Brontë in 1855 she noted an undue concern with poor conditions of the middle-class women workers. Martineau wrote a novel too, but at the time she began her friendship with Brontë she had revealed her sense of history in her *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832), 34 novelettes which covered 'the growing division of labour and the effects of machinery; the relation between wages, prices, and profits; the importance of individual initiative and labor and the negative effects of state support' (Hoecker-Drysdale 1992).

Not all of Brontë's literary friends were so critical. In 1850 Brontë met Elizabeth Gaskell whose *Mary Barton* was published a year before *Shirley*. It was another novel about industrialisation but in this case working people struggling in Manchester including an unsuccessful effort to present the Charter to Parliament. Gaskell had been writing on working-class characters in Manchester since she wrote 'Sketches Among the Poor' with her husband, a Minister, in the *Blackwell's Magazine* in 1837 (Staff 2002). Gaskell concentrated on the gap between rich and poor and the temptation for the working class to respond to social injustice violently. Brontë confided to Gaskell that there were parts of *Mary Barton* which she 'never dare read a second time' (Smith 2002: 476). After her death Gaskell wrote a commemorative biography of Brontë. She explained that Charlotte thought 'she had described reality' albeit fictively (Chapple and Pollard 1966: 308). They were both engaged in female novelistic and in so doing offered historical understanding of these events. Others have noted the documentary nature of these women's fiction: Brontë read newspapers and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's *Blue Book*, although this can be taken too far (Koacevic and Kanner 1970; Shelston 1989).

This circle of women writing about industrialisation indicates how widely ideas about industrialisation were circulating in society. These women were widely read and had transatlantic reputations too. Gaskell was quite adamant that 'I am, (above every other consideration) desirous that it should be read . . . my own belief that the tale would bear directly upon present circumstances' (Chapple and Pollard 1966: 345). The famous authors were the tip of a literary phenomena. Many middle-class Victorian women displayed their understanding of the historical process in their diaries, letters to friends and editors, magazine articles, poetry, book and reviews of other people's writings (Kovacevic 1975). As early as 1894 Amy Bulley and Margaret Whitely's *Women's Work* was drawing attention to 'the multitude of scribblers of lesser fame . . . An immense amount of second class fiction is written by women, who seem to have a special gift for producing tales that are readable and brightly written without ever rising above the level of mediocrity' (1894: 4). These sources reveal above all a spirited debate as well as intense conversations about how to construct historical and literary accounts of industrialisation.

An examination of women poets serves a similar purpose. Ellen Johnston wrote her *Autobiography, Poems and Songs of Ellen Johnston, The Factory Girl* in 1867. This text was significant because she was preeminent among just a few female muses. Her popularity was not unrelated to the fact that her poetry seems at odds with her description of her life as a factory worker with an illegitimate daughter, for instance, 'Kennedy's Dear Mill' is a paradise: 'The workers are as free As the sunshine of the hill' (Jump 1999). Lesser-known Janet Hamilton, mother of ten, a tambourer (embroiderer), shoemaker's wife, had her narrator in 'Lay of the Tambour Frame' denounce working-class men who opposed better pay for needlewomen: 'Selfish, unfeeling men! Have ye not had your will? High pay, short hours; yet your cry, like the leech Is, Give us, give us still. She who tambours – tambours for fifteen hours a day – Would have shoes on her feet, and

dress for church, Had she a third of your pay.' 'Marie', for example (her last name is not known), was a dye-worker from Chorley who published several poems in William and Mary Howitt's *The People's Journal and Howitt's Journal* beginning in 1847, and in assorted journals for a few years thereafter including *Eliza Cook's Journal* (Alves 1996). Eliza Cook, the eleventh child of a tinsmith and brazier, published *Melaia, and Other Poems* (1838) and managed to find the financial and other resources to edit *Eliza Cook's Journal* as a penny-biweekly from 1849 to 1854. In her poems, she commented on the factory conditions, the dignity of labour and working.

Over and above their differing regard for industrialisation and their common theme of moral choices, Brontë, Gaskell and the others have been criticised for their romantic content and the modest change they portray. In the end the woman are married off. Indeed some have argued that later feminists and cultural historians ignored their work because of its non-radical feminism (Shelston 1996: 414–34). More recently Rohan A Maitzen (1998) has catalogued the numerous historical texts written by women and taking women as their subjects, arguing that there was a challenging of conventional beliefs about historical authority and relevance that had long relegated women to the margins. We can rehabilitate the writers further. Together they shared a desire to challenge stereotypes of women in paid employment. Factory women were assumed to possess few moral scruples in the early nineteenth century. The promiscuity of the mill girl was such a common stereotype that one writer in the *Morning Chronicle* flatly declared that there was scarcely a thing as a 'chaste factory girl' (Rule 1986: 1999). And it is here that literary women's engagement with the effects of industrialisation are so potent. Bessie Rayner Parkes in her essay 'The Market for Educated Female Labour' (1859) argued that industrial employment did not unsex women (2002: 141–50). *Mary Barton* challenged the promiscuous characterisation and it was read in large numbers. The contrast is clear with novels written in the twentieth century about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century industrialisation. Tracie Paterson and Judith McCoy Miller's trilogy, *Daughters of the Loom* (2003), *A Fragile Design* (2003) and *These Tangled Threads* (2003) are historical fictions without contemporary engagement.

Until recently analysis of the nineteenth-century fiction has been largely left to literary commentators. Their central question was whether there were contrasting literary treatments of the effects of the industrial revolution by male and female writers. Susan Zlotnick argues in *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution* (1998) that novelists Gaskell, Brontë, Trollope and Tonna were more sympathetic to industrialism than their male counterparts. Valerie Kossew Pichanick made the same observation two decades earlier in relation to Harriet Martineau (1980: 54). Both Pichanick and Zlotnick characterise male writers as viewing industrialisation gloomily and 'critically', writing nostalgically about the past. British women writers were not so pessimistic and some even foresaw the prospect of real improvement for women in modernity. In the absence of much material by industrial workers themselves, on the basis of the middle-class novelists, should we accept that writing about industrialisation above all reveals a gendered experience? A different characterisation would be made if we included the political and professional women who were not optimistic about or favourable to the possibilities offered by industrialisation.

Political women's writings

Political commentators noticed contemporary social and economic changes but were initially slow to suggest that they impacted in any particular way upon women. Their gaze lingered upon the cities and the developing working-class political organisation. Flora Tristan's 'Tour de France' during 1842 took in 19 French industrial centres but she was still struck by the misery of urban English industrial workers. Tristan assured her readers that '[u]nless you have visited the manufacturing towns and seen the workers of Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Sheffield, Staffordshire, etc you cannot appreciate the physical suffering and moral degradation of this class of the population'. Bread was a luxury for English industrial workers who did not sing, talk and laugh like French factory workers. The British worker died young, killed by work, followed quickly by his wife and children who were 'harnessed to the same machines' or else died more quickly because they had 'no work'. Tristan was not against a machine age but rather its social organisation. There had to be a social revolution in order to realise the potential advantages the machinery age offered: 'brute force banished, less time expended on physical labour, more leisure for Man to cultivate his intelligence' (1842/1982: 67).

For a while it seemed that even the 'gloomy' English would revolt at the new economic order. A brief moment of Owenite class and gender radicalism in the protest movements during the 1830s was followed by the working-class Chartist movement. Women did not take positions of active engagement or leadership in the Chartist movement. This did not mean, of course, that they were politically unaware or that they did not write of their experiences. It is certainly true that few women activists penned political pamphlets. The early nineteenth-century Chartist movement's commitment to the rights of woman is questionable but Dorothy Thompson (1971) was not short of material when she began researching women and Chartism in the 1960s. Moreover she was able to draw upon contemporary feminists such as Harriet Taylor Mill who wrote critically about the Chartists.

To some extent the later period is more difficult to trace, for none of the leading women trade unionists or left-wing workers wrote about their industrial experiences. Jill Liddington devotes some space in her biography of Selina Cooper, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel* (1984), to make clear her rarity. Few women organisers like Cooper who helped her fellow women cotton mill workers into cotton trade unionism in 1893 and 1894 had the rich sources, oral histories, continuous occupancy by the family of a home from 1901 to 1983 and family members loyal to the same causes. Even here, Liddington did not manage to find one letter that Cooper wrote (1984: 450–55). Cooper's contemporary, Ada Neid Chew (1982), 'helped to expose tailoresses' appalling wages and conditions in a series of anonymous letters to the local paper, signing herself just "Crewe Factory Girl"'. These women belonged to the second wave of industrialisation and any earlier generation of women writing on industrialisation is difficult to locate.

Thoroughgoing explanations have been offered for this silence of industrial, working-class and left-wing women. They are twofold: prosaic and poststructuralist. Women were less likely than men to write about their experiences, particularly in the form of memoirs or autobiography. As Jonathon Rose has shown for Britain, working-class '[w]omen account for only about 5 per cent of the memoirists born before 1870 rising to about 15 per cent

for the 1870–89 cohort and about 30 per cent for the 1890–1929 cohort' (2001: 2). This is indicative of the relative paucity of texts that embody female working-class voices. In keeping with such an estimate, Mrs William (Elizabeth) Sharp included just eight poems by working-class women out of 120 in her 1887 anthology *Women's Voices* (Tyler-Bennett 1995). David Vincent suggested that working-class women lacked 'the self-confidence required to undertake the unusual act of writing an autobiography' or, one might add, most publications. Working-class women were relatively literate but they were excluded from working-class organisations, subordinate in families and lacking the authority to be storytellers (1981: 8–9). The nineteenth-century working-class women who committed their thoughts about their experiences to paper were indeed singular. Some like Hannah Cullwick and Ann Yearsley wrote about domestic and rural labour rather than industrialisation but their distinctive relationships to mentors Hannah More and Arthur Munby have also been well-documented. The paucity of working-class women's writings means that it is difficult to trace 'authentic' accounts of the historical experience of industrialisation for women.

Harriet Martineau outshone other contemporary women political authors. However, Martineau's objective was shared by the other women writing about industrialisation: to show that women were critical to the process. Martineau wrote *The History of England During the Thirty Years' Peace 1816–1846* (1849–1850) but it is in her writing in the ephemeral press that she concentrates upon women. In her classic article on 'Female Society' (1858) in the *Edinburgh Review*, she showed that two-thirds of women were likely at some stage to be in paid employment. She began 'contributory women's history' over a century before second-wave feminists insisted that the Industrial Revolution was powered by working-class women's labour. She paints a grim picture of working women's circumstances, but was hopeful that industrialisation would ultimately emancipate women.

Reforming women's writings

In Britain, state intervention began with the Factory Acts from 1802. Although there were few women as part of the first official commissions of inquiry and local reports on industrialisation that focused on the factory, the state figured prominently in women's writing about industrialisation over the course of the nineteenth century. Middle-class women such as Emily Faithful and Barbara Boudichon came to write through reform and philanthropic work. The extent to which there ought to be protective labour legislation became a new axis of debate in women's writings by the end of the nineteenth century. Concern developed in Britain from the 1870s about the consequences of working conditions and the failure of the minimal state interventions to date, both in the form of factory legislation and in its enforcement. It was generally agreed that trade unionism alone would not solve women's employment situation. A more visible debate emerged between a variety of different interest groups about state intervention for women workers against the backdrop of economic depression, male unemployment and national competitiveness. Symbolically the East End of London, with its slums, crime and 'sweated' industries, was metaphorically represented as 'outcast' or 'darkest' England (Harrison 1999: 20–46). A number of strikes and demonstrations in the late 1880s intruded physically into West End terrain contributing to middle-class concerns about the threats to social stability that unemployment, sweated labour and poverty posed. This combination fuelled the fears of physical and social degeneration. As Beatrice Webb was to note in *My Apprenticeship*, it was here that the Industrial Revolution had 'thrust hundreds of thousands of families into the physical horrors and moral debasement of chronic destitution and chronic tenements in the midst of mean streets' (1926: 287).

Drawing on their experience of social observation, groups of feminist reformers, philanthropists and social scientists worked together to produce a range of studies of the working life of women such as Clara Collet's special study of women's work (appended to Charles Booth's famous survey of London, *Life and Labour of the People of London* 1889). Beatrice Webb recorded her experiences as a needleworker in her essay 'Pages from a Work-Girl's Diary' which she published in the contemporary journal *Nineteenth Century* (1888). Webb's experiences with Booth's work undoubtedly contributed to her views about the necessity for state intervention. In the United States the connection between Hull House and the University of Chicago allowed women social scientists to gain practice at the Settlement and theory at the School of Civics and Philanthropy and to produce sources of women writing about industrialisation.

At first, reformers' reports were uniformly useful to those lobbying for state intervention. Groups such as the Fabian Society's Women's Executive Committee or the National Federation of Settlements focused on the working conditions of women and children such as work hours and the physical impact of factory labour. Interest culminated in the 1891–1892 Royal Commission of Labour that took an unprecedented step of not only setting up a separate investigation of women's work, but appointing women to undertake it. Some of those eventually appointed to the British Women's Factory Inspectorate had worked for the Royal Commission or in sanitary inspection. Others associated with the Fabian Women's Committee Executive and the Women's Industrial Council argued for reforms. Indeed there was a raft of institutions publishing women's demands for reforms including the Anti-Sweating League, Women's Cooperative Guild, Women's Labour League and the Women's Industrial Council from 1889.

The women's factory inspectors were responsible for many of the new historical sources on industrialisation from the 1890s, generating unique records of women in industry. Inspectors visited up to 7000 factories and 3000 workshops as well as homes and hospitals annually. In addition, they prosecuted cases in the courts, and undertook special inquiries into particular kinds of work. By 1910 the inspectors were receiving 2025 written complaints representing the 'genuine' experience of women's factory work. Such state intervention led to the institution of gender-specific protective legislation that limited the number of hours and the types of work that women could undertake.

Calls for state intervention came to be increasingly challenged by other women worried that gilded cages of protection would prevent women's equality in the long term (Harrison and Nolan 2004). Josephine Butler and Helen Blackburn and others believed that there should be no 'special' legislation for women in industrial society. In the early years of the twentieth century the demand for protective labour legislation tested women's movements. The International Council of Women deliberately 'ducked from resolutions on

controversial questions' such as protective labour legislation 'in an attempt to build a truly broad coalition of women's societies' (Wikkander 1995: 46).

Women historians on industrialisation

When Ivy Pinchbeck wrote her classic account *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution* (1930), she was regarded as a 'remarkable pioneer', conspicuous and 'alone' in her choice of writing about women and work. Commentators suggested that while the second feminist wave promoted women's history, Pinchbeck's work permitted those histories to be written. Pinchbeck's work was considered path-breaking not only because she drew upon a wide range of sources but because she was part of a wider phenomena of women academics writing about industrialisation.

As Maxine Berg has shown, a critical number of women economic historians emerging from the London School of Economics (LSE) turned their gaze on industrialisation (1992: 308–12). The LSE proved to be the crucial institution. Formed by Fabian Socialists, Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1895, the LSE set out to change social research and it is not surprising that a number of women academics found it congenial. Lilian Knowles joined LSE in 1897 and her students included Ivy Pinchbeck and Dorothy Marshall. This nursery influenced their research topics. They focused on women's economic role in the past and changes in women's status generated by the slow development of industrial capitalism. They concentrated upon the pre-industrial economy and the phase of proto-industrialisation. But more importantly their history focused almost entirely on women's labour in this period (Berg 1987: 64–9). The connection between the Fabian Movement and the LSE meant that it became an important centre for the study of women's work and their role in the economy. On the fringe non-academics but Fabian Women's Group members wrote more popular works such as Maud Pember Reeves and Mabel Atkinson's *The Economic Foundation of the Women's Movement* (1914). By the 1920s and 1930s women associated with the LSE shaped some of the most critical debate in economic and social history in the period.

The LSE work attracted a response. Knowles was a committed Tory who maintained that the Industrial Revolution brought positive changes to production and insisted that the factory system was a marked improvement on home-based industry. Her student Alice Clark disagreed, arguing in her *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919) that women's labour had declined in status over time. Clark's account suggested that women in the seventeenth century had been more economically active than those in later centuries and she argued that their standard of living was higher. Barbara Leigh Hutchins' *Women in Modern Industry* (1915) drew on historical examples 'to argue that marriage had been an "industrial partnership" before the rise of the factory system and recognised the importance of reproduction to this partnership'. Helen Laura Sumner [Woodbury] drew similar conclusions about the history of women's economic production in America. Barbara Hammond and her husband, J L Hammond wrote about the 'apocalyptic decline' for both men and women in *The Town Labourer* (1917) and *The Skilled Labourer* (1919). Thereafter 'decline' has sometimes been in ascendancy in the women's writing about industrialisation and 'improvement' the dominant view at other times. Dorothy M George's *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1925) argued for positive changes. Bridget Hill's *Britain's Married Women Workers* (1965) argued that the decline in employment opportunities for women in an agrarian economy was overtaken by industrial capitalism and that industrialisation was largely to women's paid employment disadvantage.

Since the 1980s there has been an emphasis on examining the way gender has affected economic relations during the industrial revolution in works such as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes* (1987) and Catherine Hall's *White, Male and Middle Class* (1992). Sonya Rose has examined the construction of masculine and feminine identities within the working class in *Limited Livelihoods* (1992). Judy Lown supplied a case study of gender at work in the Courtauld silk mills in mid-Victorian Essex in *With Free and Graceful Step* (1986). Anna Clark's the *Struggle for the Breeches* (1995) goes the farthest in positing a direct relationship between the decline of Chartism and the rise of a domesticated working class. Deborah Valenze's *First Industrial Woman* (1995) demonstrates changes in how women were regarded; they became 'other', weak and in need of protection. This developed out of discussion about the masculinity of the organised labour movement in works such as Sheila Lewenhak's *Women and Trade Unions* (1977) and Barbara Taylor's *Eve and the New Jerusalem* (1983). While a number of lost women leaders have been found most work has been on how skilled working-class men and their unions excluded or at least marginalised women and about the uneasy relationship with organised labour and working-class political institutions. Jane Humpheries in her essay 'Protective Legislation, the Capitalist State and Working Class Men' (1981) has stressed the sexual threat women in workplaces presented. In *Hidden Hands* (2002) Patricia E Johnson has noted that working-class women were seen as both dangerous sexual beings and victims in need of protection. One can explain and compensate for women's exclusion but the fact remains women's unionism was weaker than male unionism. Indeed, Katrina Honeyman's *Women Gender and Industrialisation* (2000) argues that gendered identities in the long run impeded industrialisation and working-class prospects.

Joan Scott and Sonya Rose have also revealed the extent to which gendered identities were institutionalised as the language of class was rendered masculine (Scott 1992; Rose 1993). Industrialisation gave rise to a working-class movement that involved activism and necessitated the creation of language that facilitated the mobilisation of a mass movement. Men came to dominate that language of commentary and take centre political stage in the histories of industrialisation. Catherine Hall in her 'tale of Samuel and Jemima' makes this point (1990: 78–102). Given this semantic and political hegemony, doubt is cast upon the degree to which 'genuine voices of women' remain in the scripts we have. Recent texts such as Pamela Sharpe's edited collection *Women's Work the English Experience* (1998) have focused on the definition of women as dependent particularly in the rise of the male breadwinner wage model. Jane Humpheries stresses the communitarianism of this while others have pointed to a divided working class (1977: 214–58; Seccombe 1993).

Other works such as Sally Alexander's *Becoming a Woman* (1994), Angela V John's *Unequal Opportunities* (1985) and Jane Lewis' *Women in England* (1984) have considered the sexual division of labour more closely. Deborah Valenze and others have emphasised the extent to which economic change for women has been overdrawn: the 'factory girl's liberation from the family

economy was probably overestimated by contemporary observers' and her 'much vaunted independence may have been more widely discussed than experienced' (1995: 103–4). Karen Sayer's *Women of the Fields* (1993) has considered the continuing importance of agricultural work and the growth in domestic labour at the same time as industrialisation.

The insertion of women into the narrative of the Industrial Revolution in works such as Berg and Hudson (1992) has led to a revisionist perspective that reimagines the history of industrialisation. This has involved a rethinking of class. It has become commonplace in studies on industrialisation to combine class analysis with gender (Clark 1995; Koditschek 1997). Effectively there has been a collective project to gender British class analysis in regard to industrialisation. Undoubtedly there are fewer voices of women than there are of men experiencing and witnessing industrialisation. However, despite the imbalance of sources, the history has not been hobbled in the long run. Historians of industrialisation have successfully learnt to read across the grain.

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References

Alves 1996; Bellamy 1977; Berg 1987, 1992, 1996; Berg & Hudson 1992; Bulley & Whitely 1894; Chapple & Pollard 1966; Clark 1995; Gaskell 1857/1966; Hall 1990; Harrison 1999; Harrison & Nolan 2004; Hoecker-Drysdale 1992; Humpheries 1977; Jump 1999; Kovacevic 1975; Koacevic & Kanner 1970; Koditschek 1997; Parkes 1865; Rose 1993; Rule 1986; Scott 1992; Seccombe 1993; Shelston 1989; Shelston 1996; Smith 2002; Staff 2002; Stevens 1972; Valenze 1995; Vincent 1981; Webb 1926; Wikkander 1995; Zlotnick 1998.

Related essays

Great Britain; Historical Fiction; Feminism; Modernity; Memoirs.

Ireland

Women have been central to the development of patriotic and nationalist history in Ireland, and indeed to the development of Irish nationalism itself. Since the emergence of nationalism in Ireland and the emergence of a strongly nationalist tradition in historical writing are key themes in Irish history, it is therefore unsurprising that women should have engaged with those themes. But perhaps because of the development of a specifically cultural form of nationalism in Ireland, alongside political nationalism, the marginalisation of women in Irish and British political life did not have quite the same affect in Ireland as it did in other emerging nations.

Cultural nationalism

Women were active in shaping nationalist discourse at its core. Irish memoirs, biography and historical fiction during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been seen as part of a British tradition in women's historical writing and many have identified writers like Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owensen, Lady Morgan as major influences on the development of the English gothic novel, and on Sir Walter Scott's historical novels. As was usual for the Irish elite, these women moved between England and Ireland in a fluid way and many nineteenth-century Irish women writers chose London as a base because of the publishing opportunities and wider audience that were available there. Irish women were writing in a context of sharply contested and changing political circumstances that were quite different from those in England at the same time. When writing about Ireland these women frequently engaged in a wider cultural and political debate and were much more explicit about this than was usual for English women writers of the period despite the fictional form that they used. It is helpful to look at a particular example, Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, in order to understand the connection between women's historical writing and their political engagement. Maria Edgeworth wrote within the tradition of Irish patriotism in which her father was a key figure and which had produced a bloodless coup in Ireland in 1782 and a relatively independent Irish parliament. However, this Irish patriotic tradition had to be re-thought and re-invented in the first decades of the nineteenth century after the 1798 Rebellion came close to toppling the Irish government. The rebellion resulted in Ireland's constitutional absorption into the United Kingdom in 1801, in opposition to everything that Irish Patriots had fought for in the 1780s. English readers may have seen Maria Edgeworth's historical novels as merely small-canvas tales set in provincial Ireland. But readers with even the barest grasp of Ireland's political and social turbulence could not have missed the fact that Edgeworth's Irish novels dealt with highly politicised issues. Together with her letters and her unpublished Memoir, the Irish novels *Castle Rackrent*, *Ennui* (1809), *The Absentee* (1812) and *Ormond* (1817) offered a historically framed critique of the Protestant Ascendancy to which the Edgeworths belonged and an assessment of their relationships with other social groups in Ireland. Her historical fiction was emblematic of Irish society in general rather than accurate in all its historical details. The novel's apparent focus on the period before the establishment of the Irish Parliament, when Ireland was under direct British rule allowed her to draw a parallel with her contemporary period and to explore issues that were re-emerging in the context of the re-absorption of Ireland into Britain through an Act of Union. Historical fiction thus provided her a space in which she could re-think the basis of Irish patriotism in the period of post-Rebellion reconstruction and to wrestle with the issue of how Ireland and its Protestant elite could survive the process of absorption into Britain by an Act of Union which she and her father opposed.

The book was rushed through the publication process so that it could be released in the limbo period between the Act's passage through the two Parliaments in 1800 and its enactment the following year. There were fears that Ireland would descend again into Revolution, especially when King George III refused to agree to the Act of Catholic Emancipation, which had been promised as an accompaniment to the Act of Union and indeed Robert Emmet did lead a second failed Rising just two years later. Historical fiction allowed Edgeworth to explore these political issues in a way that insulated her from the full force of criticism that a political pamphlet would have attracted. By presenting an 'amusing' historical novel she could avoid the accusation that she was encouraging further rebellion. The historical fiction form gave her access to a much wider audience in England than would have been the case for an Irish political pamphlet, and helped her avoid the possibility of alienating that audience. Finally, although the Edgeworths continued to view the Union with considerable unease, by the time *Castle Rackrent* was published they saw it as inevitable. As a result, Maria used her novel as a device with which she could combat English prejudices against the Irish and encourage