

LONG REVIEWS

Matthew Worley

Class against Class: The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars London: I. B. Tauris, 2002, x + 352pp., h/b, ISBN 1-86064-747-2

Worley's contribution is concerned with the debate over the early development of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) during the late 1920s and early 1930s in a phase known as communism's 'Third Period' following the Third International in 1919. It centres on the CPGB's pursuance of the so-called 'New Line' introduced during 1927-28, an ambitious militant strategy to seize the leadership of the British working class from both the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and characterised as an agenda of 'class against class'. Worley's revisionist analysis seeks to establish a more nuanced account of the experience of the CPGB during this period than has hitherto been achieved.

Worley presents a sound assessment of the dilemmas faced by the party in tackling the reverberations felt by the experience of the 1924 Labour government and the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike, in positioning itself within the British labour movement and in articulating a response to the hostility and marginalisation it faced from both the TUC and Labour Party. By placing developments within a domestic and international context Worley demonstrates an informed understanding of the uncertain development of the 'New Line'. His exposition of the 'misunderstandings' that arose over its interpretation between the Communist International and the CPGB in the context of the 'British case' is shown to be pivotal in defining this relationship.

Worley lucidly develops this theme further in arguing that the debate within the CPGB reflected a wider debate within international communism and led to a 'leftward' lurch which confirmed the split with the Labour Party.

Worley's analysis of party fortunes reveals the difficulties it faced in having to grapple with the application of the 'New Line' throughout the economic and political crises of the late 1920s and early 1930s with a leadership frequently at loggerheads with the Communist International, while at the same time assuming the mantle of 'vanguard' of the British working class and attempting to voice the routine concerns of workers. Worley amply demonstrates the limits of the 'New Line' through an analysis of the links between the CPGB and trade union organisations. He indicates that through these travails the CPGB was deft enough to learn through experience and following an introspection and re-organisation was able to stabilise what had become a parlous state for the party. From this Worley offers an erudite and innovative interpretation of the shift of emphasis from attempts to win support from industrial workers to organising the unemployed, particularly in his assessment of the tensions which arose between the CPGB and the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM).

Worley offers a useful appraisal of how CPGB fortunes improved during the early 1930s through the increased influence it

was able to exert on the back of economic and political crises and government responses to them, and as a result of the 'realignment' of 1930 which brought about a more 'pragmatic approach' to CPGB intervention in the industrial sphere. On the other hand, as Worley observes, the fact that much of this improvement was achieved through the ability of the NUWM to galvanise support amongst unemployed workers once again brought into sharp focus the realisation that the CPGB had failed to make significant inroads into the industrial working class.

Through a two-chapter panorama dealing with 'The Party at Work' Worley provides a solid examination of the response by communists to the challenges and opportunities created by the economic and political events of the period. This constitutes a fascinating account of the interpretation of the 'New Line' by the party rank and file and of activism in the workplace. Worley confirms that although the CPGB was influential in certain locations and industries, the hegemony enjoyed by the Labour Party and its associates combined with organisational difficulties to prevent communism extending its influence. Moreover, the difficulties involved in propagating theoretical ideas to pragmatic workers engaged in industrial disputes ensured that it failed to capitalise on industrial unrest and the despair felt by workers. This allows Worley to produce one of the most revealing aspects of his analysis through a brief, but absorbing, examination of the regions and industries in which the CPGB was active.

Similarly, Worley's treatment of Communist Party culture is another strong aspect of his study. He shows, in an effective way, how the party's detachment from the rest of the labour movement was

paralleled by the emergence of a distinctive party culture which itself accentuated the distance from other labour organisations. He successfully argues that this process rested on the more unique elements of adherence to communism, which itself produced a 'hardening' of division from other labour 'institutions'. Worley's account of 'Party Life and Education' through its cultural and social activities is intriguing, particularly in the way the party attempted to adapt its message to meet local conditions through a variety of cultural and social activities, and how these were perceived in industrial regions in Britain.

Worley's analysis is underpinned by extensive historical research from a variety of primary and secondary sources including much new material from Communist Party sources deposited at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre of the People's History Museum, Manchester, together with the Working Class Museum Library, Salford.

The main shortcoming of the work lies in the content and organisation of its subject matter. On the one hand, Worley produces an examination of the CPGB in terms of doctrinal and policy matters, while on the other he produces an assessment of the sociology of the party and the party at work. The question must be posed as to whether it would not have been more fruitful to have concentrated on the latter. Worley offers some tantalising insights into the work of the party in specific industries and regions, but more on this under-researched area would have been welcome. Furthermore, the chronological schema of much of the study tends to accentuate the degree of fragmentation. A wholly thematic investigation might have been more beneficial.

The problem of coherence becomes evident in the disjuncture in handling important questions the work proposes, such as understanding why the CPGB's ideological message proved so difficult and in explaining the shift of emphasis from industrial workers to the unemployed.

Another limitation of the work concerns Worley's less than emphatic substantiation that the inability of the CPGB to extend its influence can be accounted for, as much by the increasing consolidation and domination of the Labour Party and allied trade unions as the failure of doctrine and policy. Finally,

there is the problematic assumption that structural industrial change in Britain was directly influential in determining the vagaries of Communist Party development. However, to his credit, throughout his work, Worley never assumes that the growth of the CPGB should have been inevitable. In this respect careful analysis of historical sources ensures that his revisionist credentials remain firmly intact in producing a worthy addition to our understanding of the evolution of far left politics in Britain between the wars.

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Stephen James Carver

The Life and Works of the Lancashire Novelist William Harrison Ainsworth, 1805–1882.

Studies in British Literature, volume 75 Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003
468pp. ISBN 0-7734-6633-9

Anyone who studies Ainsworth is aware of the long shadow cast by S. M. Ellis, whose two-volume 1911 work *William Harrison Ainsworth and his Friends*, though something of a hagiography, is unsurpassed as the standard account of the novelist's life. Stephen Carver wisely decides not to attempt a new biography, but to re-assess the major novels and to set his comments in 'a loosely biographical frame' (p. 45). This 'Works and Life' approach has been adopted before, notably by George J. Worth, whose 1972 volume in the Twayne English Authors series is treated rather dismissively by Carver. The greater part of this new book is taken up with case studies of selected novels, beginning with the early works, which have never previously been studied in such depth, moving on to the most successful novels, with the longest chapters devoted to *Rookwood* and *Jack Sheppard*. These chapters contain the most painstakingly researched arguments

and thought-provoking conclusions. The purely historical novels (although Carver might argue with that definition) including *Windsor Castle*, *The Tower of London* and *Old St. Paul's* are considered in a single chapter, followed by the novels with a Lancashire connection. In the final section, excruciatingly titled 'Man of La Manchester', the civic banquet given to the aged novelist by his own city is described, but, like most of the biographical parts of the book, adds little to the current body of knowledge.

More worrying, however, is the emphasis placed on the critical reaction to some of Ainsworth's work, especially *Jack Sheppard*, which sparked off the 'Newgate controversy' of the early 1840s, when there was a considerable groundswell of moral outrage at Ainsworth's eponymous anti-hero. Carver states that: 'The story behind the accepted version of Ainsworth's critical assassination is also

central to my argument ... becoming a convenient way for his voice to be silenced by the Victorian critical establishment' (p. 45). This is a bold thesis, and one that, in the face of the facts, is impossible to sustain. Carver selects his examples with great care and judiciously avoids those that do not fit in with his theory. For example, following the publication of *Jack Sheppard*, the positive reviews are confined to a footnote, quoting *Fraser's* and *Punch*, then leaving the reader to 'see Ellis I, 375, for favourable notices.'

To suggest that Ainsworth's whole career was blighted from that point onward is overstating the case. A string of successful and uncontroversial novels, including *Windsor Castle*, *The Tower of London*, *Old St. Paul's* and *The Lancashire Witches* followed on through the 1840s. The objections to *Jack Sheppard* by such as Forster, Thackeray and (by default) Dickens, are well-known, but Carver places undue emphasis on the lunatic fringe, particularly R. H. Horne in *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844) which contained a few short pages of vituperation on Ainsworth's work.

In the case of *Old St. Paul's*, no less than six glowing notices are reproduced, and Carver grudgingly admits 'the Newgate taint had been banished by Ainsworth's new direction (at least in the short term)', but then insists on resurrecting R. H. Horne once more, like a gothic horror, to pour scorn upon the successful novel. Carver attempts to justify this as follows: 'While such accolades have vanished into obscurity, R. H. Horne's predictable rejection of this novel endures' (p. 277), following this up with the conclusion that 'once again the literary elite fails to understand a popular narrative' (p. 278). This is not a convincing argument. It is not

sufficient merely to refer once again to Horne's obscure text, in the face of contrary evidence from the archives of national journals. Furthermore, can Horne, primarily a naval adventurer and gold prospector in Australia, really be described as part of the 'literary elite'? Surely the critical success of *Old St. Paul's* in 1841, shows that Ainsworth had successfully weathered the storm of *Jack Sheppard*. Carver places too much emphasis on Horne's pocket-sized rant.

Chapter five, titled 'The Lancashire Novelist', begins with a fascinating feminist reading of *The Lancashire Witches*, which is a virtuoso piece of literary criticism and deserves to be widely read. *Mervyn Clitheroe* does not fare so well, however. The description of 'Cottonborough' from the novel is reprinted in its entirety, but Carver declines to draw any serious conclusions from the long extract, stating blandly that 'I would offer "Cottonborough" as one of the few genuinely objective accounts of Manchester to be found in the period' (p. 356). Dr Carver, who lectures in popular culture, as well as Victorian literature, has a fluent and confident writing style. From time to time, though, the language lurches alarmingly from earnestly academic to matey demotic. For example, on page 124, after retelling an anecdote from Ellis about Ainsworth (during his short publishing phase), paying Scott, in person, a fraction of his normal fee for a ballad, Carver remarks that Ainsworth 'certainly had more front than Brighton' – Cor blimey! More seriously, the assertion that James Crossley 'seemed to write through Ainsworth' (p. 49) reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between the two men. Crossley's literary ambitions, apart from

the editorial work he fulfilled for Chetham's Society for 40 years, lay in the direction of biography. Together with other Chetham Society stalwarts, Crossley was happy to provide the historical skeletons for Ainsworth to flesh out, but to say he 'wrote through' Ainsworth is inaccurate and misleading.

While leaving aside minor factual details that might be open to dispute, it is necessary to challenge the assumption that Ainsworth's second marriage, as reported by Ellis, did not in fact take place. Carver cannot find evidence of the marriage to Sarah Wells, described by Ellis as 'a private marriage', some years before the birth of their daughter in 1867. Ellis was probably referring to a civil ceremony rather than a church wedding, and given his vagueness about the date, this would indeed make the marriage somewhat difficult to trace. Carver leaps to the conclusion that the couple were unmarried, and cohabiting, with an illegitimate child, which would have been an extremely unconventional, even scandalous, situation at that time. We know the relationship was an enduring one (more so than Ainsworth's first experience of matrimony), because the 1881 census shows them living with their daughter, then fifteen, in Reigate. Furthermore, Ellis notes that 'the widow, Mrs Ainsworth' was present at the author's funeral. So, if Carver is correct, why should Ainsworth opt for this difficult ménage? Why would he and his

family have lied to the census taker to give the impression of respectability, when it would have been much simpler to legalise the union? Carver assumes that the least likely, but most sensational possibility is the correct one, while offering only the absence of evidence to support his theory.

The strength of this book lies in the detailed criticism of the major novels, especially *Rookwood*, *Jack Sheppard* and *The Lancashire Witches*, together with the first in-depth readings of the early works, all of which make a real contribution to the slim, but belatedly growing, corpus of Ainsworth scholarship. Ultimately, the grand theory of critical conspiracy seems to peter out, and Carver reverts to the more conventional argument that Ainsworth 'seems suddenly out of time and place, the last of a line, a fantasist in an age of fact' (p. 338). The book ends with a plea for a renewal of interest in the novelist's work, which should necessarily begin with a clutch of new editions of the better-known titles. The next step would naturally be screen adaptations, and Carver closes the final chapter in a typically off-beat way by suggesting that Alan Rickman should play the arch villain Jonathan Wild in *Jack Sheppard*. An apt piece of casting, but we must hope that Ainsworth's name will still be remembered when readers and cinema-goers are asking 'Alan who?'

Steve Collins

John Chapple and Alan Shelston (eds)

The Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003 (originally published 2000) 332pp. ISBN 0-7190-6771-5

The last twenty years have witnessed a major re-evaluation of Elizabeth Gaskell, one that has seen her status elevated from

that of a minor female novelist to one of the most significant writers of the mid-nineteenth century. Her reputation is

built upon an impressively diverse body of works, encompassing two of the most important representations of urban life and industrial unrest (*Mary Barton* [1848] and *North and South* [1855]), her deceptively understated studies of provincial life (*Cranford* [1853] and *Wives and Daughters* [1866]) and a host of haunting tales of the supernatural. Yet one should not underestimate the critical and popular interest generated by her extensive correspondence, first brought to the reader's attention by Chapple and Pollard's monumental collection *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, published in 1966. Those not yet familiar with this body of texts may be surprised by the range and extent of her involvement with some of the leading literary, artistic and cultural figures of the day: Rossetti, Ruskin, Nightingale and Harriet Martineau all figure within the circle of friends and acquaintances with whom she corresponded. *The Letters* was followed in 2000 by Chapple and Shelston's *Further Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell* and now by an updated paperback edition. The editors' achievement in gathering together 270 new letters (only 40 of which were previously published) is impressive, and the result a worthy companion to the original *Letters*. The paperback edition will bring a valuable and illuminating body of correspondence to a broader range of Gaskell scholars and interested readers.

In addition to making a number of corrections and amendments, this volume includes six letters discovered after the 2000 edition went to press. Perhaps the most interesting of these additional sources is a letter to Gaskell's friend Eliza Paterson, written in 1854 when, in an attempt to escape the demands and interruptions attendant upon her busy life in

Manchester, Gaskell had sequestered herself in the home of Florence Nightingale to devote herself to the writing of *North and South*. Not only does this letter detail her feelings about the writing process – 'I have been so tired with writing; the mere act of mechanical writing, has left me as weak and as stupid as – I don't know anything so stupid' (p. 292) – it also contains a report of Nightingale's preparations and departure for the Crimea. Having begun the letter with an apology for having 'literally nothing to say' (p. 292) – the disingenuous voice will be familiar to those who have read her novels – Gaskell also found occasion to refer to the *Westminster Review*, comment upon the various war correspondents for *The Times* and copy an epigram written on William Whewell's *Of the Plurality of Worlds*. The breadth of allusion and topical engagement evident in this letter is entirely typical of this fascinating compilation of Gaskell's correspondence.

Chapple and Shelston's editorial style and practices are both convenient and unobtrusive. Footnotes are reserved for the most significant people and events while a Biographical Register provides more detail about a range of individuals who figure prominently throughout the correspondence. That said, those who do not possess the original *Letters* may, occasionally, find the cross-references to this volume slightly frustrating. The Introduction sets the scene for what follows: directing the reader's attention to significant letters and correspondents and providing a general introduction to, amongst other things, Gaskell's philanthropic activities, her relationship with her publishers and, more generally, her own feelings and anxieties about her status

as a writer and the reception of her works. In a particularly telling letter of 1850, Gaskell demonstrates a surprisingly modern understanding of fractured identity, acknowledging that she is characterised by 'a great number' of 'mes' as 'warring members': middle-class wife and mother, Unitarian, social being and woman writer (p.108). Gaskell was, precisely, a multi-faceted subject constructed by a variety of contemporary discourses. Reading the Introduction, one occasionally feels that this complexity might have been more fully illuminated by recent theoretical debates and conceptual frameworks. At the same time, one can also appreciate that the audience for these letters extends beyond that of academic scholars.

Those primarily interested in Gaskell as a writer will find a wealth of material in the numerous letters that offer her interpretations of the writing process and the contemporary response to her novels. Of particular interest, as Chapple and Shelston point out, are the letters to her various publishers and editors documenting Gaskell's growing sense of herself as a professional author. Reading in her more intimate correspondence with personal friends the catalogue of exhausting engagements and both familial and social duties, one is left wondering how Gaskell managed to produce as much as she did. Such letters bring home, in concrete detail, the difficulties and material obstacles experienced by women writers of the period. Also of interest are the many letters that detail her tireless efforts on behalf of those suffering

economic and social deprivation. Here, as in her novels, the emphasis is almost exclusively upon the individual. Indeed, certain letters leave one with the sense, certainly not unique to Gaskell, that the mass suffering of an entire class overwhelmed and almost paralysed her. Yet seeing Manchester through Gaskell's eyes, one is presented not only with its horrors but also with its great achievements. Descriptions of economic distress jostle with references to Hallé's orchestra or the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition.

Arguably, what makes Gaskell's industrial novels so significant is the fact that she takes the reader into the homes of the working classes in order to demonstrate the impact of industrialism on domestic life. Clearly, this interest in domestic affairs characterised her own life, and many letters display a positive craving for, and delight in, the ordinary, day-to-day activities and routines that dominated the lives of so many middle-class women. Yet many of these same letters also represent an explicit engagement with the most pressing social and political issues of the period: the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, British-American relations and, closer to home, the Cotton Famine of 1861–64. As such, they shed new light on how the great public events of the day were experienced and interpreted by an informed and concerned individual. Thus this collection must be seen as an important source document for anyone interested in the values and views of the Victorian age.

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Mark Cropper

The Leaves We Write On: James Cropper: A History in Paper-Making London: Ellergreen Press, 2004. 300pp, illustrated. ISBN 0954919106

Mark Cropper's *The Leaves We Write On* is a history of his family's paper-making firm at Burneside, near Kendal in the Lake District. It covers local history, family history as well as the business and technical development of James Cropper & Co. from 1845 to 2004. The opening chapter sets the local industrial scene on the River Kent with corn and fulling mills originating from at least 1290, passing through woollen and cotton mills to paper and a paper machine in 1833. The introduction of papermaking here was helped by the Kendal bankers, the Wakefields. Papermaking at other places in the vicinity is also touched on.

The second chapter outlines the Cropper family background from 1600 to 1845. Their links to the Quakers was perhaps one factor in the first James Cropper changing from farming to becoming a merchant in Liverpool during the 1790s in partnership with Thomas Benson. This partnership helped to establish the Black Ball Line to America which flourished through being the first to inaugurate regular twice-monthly sailings in 1818. Cropper Benson survived various vicissitudes and, although wound up in 1836–8, provided the fortune on which James Cropper, papermaker, could establish himself. The Quaker tradition continued to manifest itself in the Croppers' attitude to their worker's welfare at Burneside down the years.

Born in 1823 to parents who practised their Quaker beliefs, James Cropper, papermaker, went to Edinburgh University in 1840, unsure of his future career. It was

through his becoming engaged to Fanny Alison Wakefield of Kendal in 1842 that James decided to buy the papermills at Cowan Head and Burneside for £13,000 in 1845. And, at appropriate places throughout the rest of the book, we have the history of this remarkable family which has guided the fortunes of this papermill up to and including the present chairman, another James Cropper. These accounts of the various marriages, children, etc. have been drawn from a wide range of family papers which must be unique for any papermill.

The first papermaking James later admitted that he had paid too much for the business and also that he had little idea of the complexities of making a sheet of paper. For the first few years, the mills lost money and the venture might well have floundered but for the support of the family fortunes of the Croppers, the Wakefields and then the printers George McCorquodale and William Blacklock who, for many years, provided important outlets for the paper. James was lucky in various ways, such as the excellent situation of Burneside Mill on the Kent for waterpower, the expansion of the railways in the 1840s which opened up much wider markets (the Kendal to Windermere line opened in 1847), the abolition of the duty on paper in 1861 which increased demand and Croppers' venture into coloured papers around the same time which has remained a feature of this company ever since. In the 1860s, Croppers mitigated the general shortage of fibres for papermaking by turning to jute which was suitable for coloured papers. While later

woodpulp became their predominant source, they were willing to experiment with other furnishes.

Another feature of Croppers throughout their history has been a willingness to invest in new machinery, starting with a new papermaking machine in 1855. Details of such investments are given but just after the First World War, when prosperity turned to slump, a fifth machine on order was fortuitously cancelled. Their introduction of the twin-wire machine was another technical innovation which literally paid dividends. In the 1950s when Croppers became a public company floated on the London Stock Exchange, over £800,000 was spent on modernisation. Even in the years of difficult trading in the 1980s, there was further investment which had reached £46 million by 1991. So, although development grants and tax allowances were the key to survival at a time when so many other papermaking mills closed down, it was a thoroughly modernised mill which faced recent challenges.

But the machinery alone would not have brought success to Croppers had the product not been right. Coloured papers and the ability to change these quickly are but one example. Croppers have long made black paper which few other mills were willing to do – a product much in demand for black-out in the Second World War. Another example was Croppers' patent linen-lined paper for registered envelopes made from 1878 to 1960. Such innovations have continued to the present with the company diversifying in more

recent years into, for example, their technical fibre products, the converting department and their mill shop, now expanded into fourteen stores across the country.

The story was not always one of plain sailing and the book covers the problems as well as the successes. Accidents and disasters are given their place. In 1893 the mill chimney was blown down, killing three girls. In 1903 there was a serious fire. Pollution of the River Kent nearly led to closure of the mills through litigation, taken to the High Court, with the local angling club. This was finally solved only by sending the effluent to Kendal Sewage Treatment Works by special pipe-line at high cost. Around 1900, Charles Cropper's love of foxhunting was probably detrimental to the firm's profits. Yet, the production figures and profits and losses recorded from 1853 to 2004 show a remarkable story of success. The first profit was recorded in 1854 and there was no annual loss apart from 1921 and 1976.

It was originally intended that a history should be published in 1995 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the company, but the intervening years have enabled additional research to produce an outstanding history of this extraordinary company. Sources are properly referenced for those who wish to delve deeper. I judge it to be the best account we have of one of the smaller British papermaking enterprises. Mark Cropper must be congratulated on his achievement.

Richard Hills

Jutta Schwarzkopf

Unpicking Gender: The Social Construction of Gender in the Lancashire Cotton Weaving Industry, 1880–1914 Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. xi + 228 pp. ISBN 0–75460–980–4

Jutta Schwarzkopf's study of gender in the Lancashire cotton industry contributes to both gender and labour history by going beyond traditional understandings of gender as the social organisation of sexual difference and a major source of inequality. In Schwarzkopf's account, gender is a process within which a multiplicity of femininities or masculinities can be constructed in a variety of social contexts. Of particular interest to scholars concerned with gender inequality is the highlighting of experience and agency which, the writer argues, have become increasingly questionable as concepts of historical analysis. By way of contrast to studies of textuality and literary analysis, Schwarzkopf's in-depth research draws on a wealth of primary sources, such as royal commission and parliamentary investigations, *The Cotton Factory Times* (the cotton workers' newspaper), as well as personal testimony, and which lead her to the conclusion that 'it is people rather than discourses that make history' (p. 2).

Much of the existing literature on the history of the Lancashire cotton industry has shown that in the cotton weaving process men and women worked together using the same machines for the same rate of pay. Schwarzkopf regards such work as central to the identity of female weavers, and accords to the labour process a principal role in accounting for their self-perception as men's equals in the workplace. Although weavers were held in low esteem by contemporaries and by historians who regard weaving as semi-skilled (involving a loss of respectability if performed by a man), Schwarzkopf

describes the high level of skill required to compensate for inadequacies owing to the variable quality of the cotton and the peculiarities of the looms. Arguing that skill is no objective measure of the requirements of the labour process, she suggests that by assuming an identity as a skilled worker, the female weaver appropriated as feminine what was usually thought of as masculine, thereby deviating from dominant understandings of working-class femininity.

In the absence of the division of labour as a possibility in which gender differences could be identified, Schwarzkopf uses several case studies to show how male workers and unionists tried to reaffirm masculinity by distinguishing themselves in other ways. For example, in the campaign against 'driving' in weaving sheds, female weavers were portrayed as vulnerable and as victims (constructed as different to the more resilient male weaver), requiring the aid and protection of male co-workers. In her re-appraisal of instances of suicide resulting from the driving system, Schwarzkopf argues convincingly that women's self-identity revolved largely around their work, and that failure in respect of income and status in the community could exert a profound effect upon their psychological well-being. Tracing the events around the introduction of the Northrop loom into Ashton Bros at Hyde, the study also investigates how different notions of gender might come into conflict: employers colluding with male operatives to introduce new technologies bound with skill and masculinity; union amalgamations

supporting the male bread-winner wage; and female weavers defending their right to paid employment amid accusations of breaching conceptions of femininity.

Some scholars might question Schwarzkopf's view that female weavers saw themselves as waged workers first, rather than primarily as wives and mothers.¹ In addition, the emphasis on pride and satisfaction, as well as enjoyment associated with work in the weaving shed, in this study might downplay the negative aspects of tiring work in insanitary conditions. However, whether or not female weavers saw their paid work as more important than domestic management, it does appear from this and other research that the necessity of the wife's economic contribution resulted in a more pronounced sharing of household duties between partners and more equitable family relationships than were evident among other working-class couples. Indeed, Schwarzkopf and others have shown that such mutuality extended to joint decision-making over the issue of controlling fertility. Demonstrating the interconnection of work and family, the study highlights cultural values that were endorsed and shared, as friends, neighbours and relatives worked in close proximity creating particular understandings of femininity and masculinity in the process of the construction of gender in cotton weaving communities.

A central argument of this study is that near-equality in the labour process alerted female weavers to inequality elsewhere, and motivated their involvement in unionism and the suffrage campaign. Although it has been suggested that women lacked commitment to union activity, Schwarzkopf comments on the strength of numbers, enthusiasm and awareness of gender inequality among female weavers which led to attempts to improve their condition and alleviate specific grievances. Such opportunities were largely denied to other less skilled and less well-paid female cotton workers.

In her depiction of women weavers as agents shaping their own lives by defending their right to paid employment, encouraging more equitable relationships in the home and struggling for the vote to improve their lives, Schwarzkopf encourages scholars to rethink and reshape ideas of gender as a social construction, and to relate such concepts to the real lived experiences of women in a particular historical and cultural time. Stressing that, the 'renegotiation of gender occurred at the workplace, where it was anchored in the specific organisation of the labour process in cotton weaving, whence it radiated to other sites on which gender is constructed' (p.170), Schwarzkopf demonstrates that female weavers understood relations of power as social constructions that were

1. On this see B. L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry* (London, 1915); and M. Gomersall, 'Education of Factory Women', *History of Education*, 1991, 24(2), pp. 159-64. See also the writings of A. Nield Chew, 'All in A Day's Work', *The Englishwoman*, 15, 1912, pp. 35-45; and the autobiographies of weavers such as A. Foley, *A Bolton Childhood* (Manchester, 1973); and D. Smith, *My Revelation: An Autobiography. How a Working Woman Finds God* (London, 1933), as well as oral testimonies recorded by E. Roberts in *Woman's Place: An Oral Investigation of Working Class Women, 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984); and J. Liddington in 'Working Class Women in the North West', *Oral History*, 1977, 5(2), pp. 31-46.

changeable. This study makes clear that it is not the uniqueness of conditions in the Lancashire weaving industry that made this a choice for study but rather the labour process itself, which was crucial in the formation of gender and which created the conditions that allows the

construction of gender to be observed beyond the confines of any particular industry. This study therefore, provides a very useful model for wider research on gender inequality.

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Terry Wyke with Harry Cocks

Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester: Public Sculpture of Britain, Volume 8 Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-85323-567-8

This handsome volume, winner of the 2005 Portico Library prize for North West literature, is the eighth volume in the Public Sculpture of Britain series, the National Recording Project of the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association. The first seven volumes were all written by art historians. For Greater Manchester, however, the commission was given to Terry Wyke, a social and economic historian at Manchester Metropolitan University, assisted by cultural historian Harry Cocks. This was an excellent choice since Wyke has an encyclopedic knowledge of the historical records of north west England, both archival and structural. The result is a volume of great interest to historians, professional and lay.

In planning the volume, the authors faced a number of problems, the first being geographical. Greater Manchester, as they acknowledge, is a 'boundary of convenience'. Many of the ten boroughs contained within it were a creation of the Local Government Act of 1974. Whilst historically important towns like Stockport, Wigan and Bolton fell within their remit, Blackburn and Preston, an integral part of 'textile Lancashire', were outside it. Another problem, needing early resolution, was that of the definition of 'public sculpture'. The authors made the

sensible interpretation of 'sculpture which is accessible to the general public or visible from the public highway'. They are careful to remind readers of the possible security implications of trying to view at close hand a piece visible from the highway, but contained within an institution such as a school or hospital. Given these limits the range of material included is very wide, featuring portrait statues, portrait busts, architectural sculpture obelisks, fountains, towers, war memorials and 'modern sculpture' which of its nature escapes any of the preceding categories.

The city of Manchester has pride of place with more than 150 entries occupying almost a third of the book. Albert Square and the Town Hall, with its Sculpture Hall, are covered in detail, beginning with Prince Albert, beneath his Worthington-designed canopy, and ending with Cawthra's little noticed 'Philosopher' on the Town Hall extension, christened 'Mr Therm' by citizens paying their gas bills in that building.

Salford, Manchester's twin city, comes next, although with a mere 27 entries despite being a pioneer in the provision of public parks, the space for much public sculpture. It now has only two portrait statues, Albert and Victoria. Sir Robert Peel has been removed from his

eponymous park, Cobden is missing and Joseph Brotherton transferred to Manchester (fee undisclosed).

After these two cities, the other eight metropolitan boroughs follow in alphabetical order, most meriting between 20 and 30 entries, although Stockport, despite its 'wedding cake' Town Hall and Ledward's impressive war memorial manages only ten. This relative paucity of public sculpture in part reflects the fact that these boroughs were amalgams of smaller, independent towns like Altrincham or Sale in Trafford, and Hyde or Ashton in Tameside. In these smaller, workaday communities, public art was regarded as something of a frivolous expense, even if this came from the pocket of a wealthy donor or a public subscription rather than from the rates. Where a monument was erected, it often took the form of an obelisk, portrait bust or, where the topography was suitable, a tower on a nearby hilltop, rather than a more expensive portrait statue.

In all the places dealt with, however, the book reveals a similar chronological pattern in attitudes to public sculpture. The early nineteenth century produced little, even a net loss as ancient market crosses were removed in face of increased urban traffic. The sudden death of Sir Robert Peel in 1850, along with the development of public spaces such as parks and squares, gave rise to a burst of monument building not only to Peel but to other (male) worthies, local and national. By the 1890s, public support weakened only to be aroused by the great burst of war memorial building after 1919. This completed, there followed decades of indifference, if not outright hostility, to public sculpture especially to statues of the 'coat and trousers' variety. Few World War Two

monuments were built, the names of its dead being added to those on World War One memorials. Only recently has there been a revival with the regeneration of town centres, the expansion of school and university building and the development of out of town shopping malls and sports stadia. Trafford's 23 entries include three in the Trafford Centre, three at Manchester United's ground and three in the regenerated Quays area of Trafford Park. East Manchester regeneration and the 2002 Commonwealth Games gave the city James Butler's 'Reg Harris' at the Velodrome and Colin Spofforth's 'The Runner'. These have recently been joined by Thomas Heatherwick's 'B of the Bang', 'the tallest public sculpture in Britain'.

From 1850 to the present, controversy has surrounded much public sculpture and here Wyke comes into his own, with fascinating essays on the origins and movements of Barnard's 'Abraham Lincoln' ('the tramp with the colic'), now in Lincoln Square off Deansgate, or on the fierce debates over the siting of Matthew Noble's 'Oliver Cromwell' in front of Manchester Cathedral, 'an odious effigy of a traitor and a regicide' in the view of the Conservative press.

Though Cromwell is now removed to the less sensitive area of Wythenshawe Park receiving the attention mainly of non sectarian pigeons, social and political controversy continues to arise over public statues. Computer companies refused to subscribe to the statue of Alan Turing in Sackville Park because of his homosexuality. Stephen Broadbent's 'Pull the Plug' in front of Hyde Town Hall was opposed by some because it appeared to condone an act of civil disobedience, the Plug Plot of 1842. Most opposition though is on the

grounds of expense especially where the purse being opened is a public one. One senses a whiff of disapproval as Trafford folk ride the Metro tram past Kan Yashuda's tactile 'Touchstone' outside the Bridgewater Hall ('No wonder their council tax is so high!').

Only the very churlish can complain at the cost of this splendidly informative volume. After a short introduction and a helpful map of the borough being described, each entry contains details of the architect/sculptor, its date, inscription(s), condition (too often 'poor') and

owner. This is followed by detailed description of the piece and then the historical background to it, fully foot-noted. Most pieces are illustrated by a black and white photograph. A useful glossary of architectural terms, biographical notes on many of the sculptors, and a very full bibliography conclude the work. It outweighs a Pevsner and is not pocket size, but it makes a major contribution to the cultural history of the Manchester region.

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