CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ON FEMALE LABOUR

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ABSTRACT

In the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution was believed to have produced a radical change for women. The industrializing process seemed to provide a mechanism for reducing the difference between women's and men's work. By the twentieth century, feminist writers began to recognize that the effect had been much less dramatic than had been supposed, and some claimed that rather than being a vehicle for liberation, modern capitalism further subjected women by excluding them from the production process. This paper begins by identifying a model of the impact of industrialization on women which has been developed in the twentieth century. It then shows how various scholars have approached the subject and discusses their perspectives in terms of the developing models. Those issues which are still contentious and those which have been resolved are indicated.

I

The analysis of the impact of industrialization on female labour is still at a fairly elementary stage. Although women's past is no longer as invisible as it was in fairly recent periods of scholarly investigation, there are, even now, few broad interpretative works about the effect of industrialization on women's labour. Like the debate about whether industrialization improved or worsened social conditions, a clear conclusion about the impact it had on women's work is hampered by insufficient empirical work. Even relatively straightforward historical problems, such as whether female labour force participation increased or decreased, cannot be agreed upon. But in spite of the disagreement on certain fundamental issues, a general model of development based on the English experience has been developed in the twentieth century and is assumed to apply cross-culturally. Various aspects of this model are questioned and modified over time, but its principal outlines are generally accepted as being universally valid.

The general model of social development through the capitalist industrialization process explains three major changes. First, industrialization separates the home and the workplace. In the preindustrial period, the household is a productive unit with the family working together in the production process. As industry is moved out of the household, the home is no longer a place of production, and the family's function as a productive

unit disappears. Second, this process brings about the increased differentiation in the division of labour by sex. As the physical location of production separates female and male labour, occupational and industrial segregation by sex becomes more pronounced. The male, through productive activities outside the home, becomes increasingly responsible for securing the family income and, over time, is increasingly able to do so. His occupation with domestic affairs becomes negligible. Productive activities for the married female become less significant and her dependency on the male increases. Her labour becomes characterized by maintenance activities for the family; reproduction, child-care activities, and housework become her primary work roles. At the same time, unmarried women's work becomes associated with market activity, although it is occupationally and industrially segregated from the work of males and is, for the most part, temporary. The third major change associated with industrialization is that a much sharper division is created between the public and the private worlds of work. In preindustrial time, the household is, to a great extent, the economy, and distinctions between work and life are insignificant, as are the distinctions between the public and private functions of specific individuals within the household. As productive work and males leave the household, they become identified with the public sphere, and as women are confined to the household, their work and world become increasingly privatized and isolated.

II

Early writers on the subject of women and industrialization held views which do not conform to the general model developed in the twentieth century. The tendency in the nineteenth century was to see the change for women as a dramatic one which fostered greater occupational diversity and labour force participation. During the process of industrialization and the transformation from cottage production to factory production, the obvious change in female employment was the extent to which women were leaving the home to work. It appeared that industrialization was creating unprecedented wage labour for women. Because the extent of factory work was the notable feature of the transition for labour, writers tended to focus on the workers in these factories. There is substantial evidence to show that in the early stages of factory work, workers were primarily women and children; this fact was particularly important in cotton manufacturing, the critical industry in the industrialization process.(1)

The extent of women's work outside the home quite naturally led contemporary observers to assume that a revolution was taking place in work for women. Engels saw this as a step towards the emancipation of women because it would permit them to spend less time on domestic work and more on production on a large, social scale: "And only now has that become possible through modern large-scale industry, which does not merely permit of the employment of female labor over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends towards ending private domestic labor by changing it more and more into a public industry."(2) Increased factory work for women appeared to be the general trend for the future, but it was seen as a trend which was destroying the nature of the family and traditional relationships between women and men: "In many cases the family is not wholly dissolved by the employment of the wife, but turned upside down. The wife supports the family, the husband sits at home, tends the children, sweeps the room and

cooks."(3) Like other Victorian writers (4), Engels sees this as an "insane state of things," which "unsexes the man and takes from the woman all womanliness."(5) Women's work outside the home affected her domestic functions, since unmarried women did not acquire domestic skills and married women had no time to perform them. It also had moral consequences which were "not calculated for the favourable development of the female character"(6); it adversely affected women's health; and it increased child mortality. In short, the industrialization process was seen by contemporaries as drastically changing women's work by removing their productive work from the home to the factory and by drastically reducing their ability to perform traditional household duties. At the time, it was almost universally assumed that this was bad for the entire family, although it was recognized that there were some advantages for single women in gaining independence from their parents and from the tyranny of having to marry for economic reasons.

By the twentieth century, the significance of the extent to which women were being excluded from the production process as a result of industrialization was being recognized.(7) Alice Clark, in *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century,* produced one of the most important analyses of the impact of industrialization on women's work.(8) She develops much of her argument by comparing the change in the seventeenth century with the development which occurred with the factory system. She establishes that during the seventeenth century, the work of husband and wife were mutually dependent. With industrialization, a major change took place which undermined this idea: economic change led to the acceptance of the notion that it is the man who should provide for his wife and children, who are not expected to provide for their own support.(9) Since Clark sees a positive correlation between women's productive work, the value of women's labour, and women's power and independence, the inability of most women to support themselves and the widespread acceptance of the idea that it was inappropriate for them to do so, resulted in a restriction of their world and a decline in their status.

In the preindustrial economy, women's work, both within and without the household, was more diverse than after industrialization.(10) Also, male work was more connected with domestic affairs. While Clark is careful to admit that the wife's work was distinct from the husband's, in a system where labour which produced for family use and labour which produced for exchange were equally productive, there was no distinction to the family between the value of the two types of production. So even though the wife's labour was relatively less connected with market exchange than the husband's, the family did not value her labour any the less. Under the factory system, however, the labour related to production at home for use by the family became less productive than labour in the factory.(11) But the value of women's labour on the market also decreased as industry left the household. The acceptance of the notion of the substitution of an individual wage for a wage which would support a family enabled men to combine on labour markets to exclude women.(12) The result was that even when women did work for a wage, their labour was of less value than that of men. This altered the significance of female labour to the family: "When employed in domestic industry the whole value of what she produced was retained by her family; but when she worked for wages her family only received such a proportion of it as she was able to secure to them by her weak bargaining power in the labour market."(13)

Clark is also careful to distinguish between the change in the productive capacity of women according to their class and marital status. In the capitalist class, as a result of a rapid increase in wealth with the removal of the family business from the home, the role of women changed dramatically from one of direct involvement in the family or their own business to a life of leisure.(14) In agriculture, the wives of the wealthy yeomen withdrew from farm work and supervisory activities as large-scale capitalist farming gained strength. The wives of wage labourers were deprived of the income they had formerly received from gardens and pastures and became increasingly dependent on their husband's wage. In other crafts and trades as well, women began to withdraw as these businesses were developed along more capitalistic lines.(15)

The textile trades are an exception to this movement of withdrawal from employment. Spinning, which has always been dominated by women, expanded during this period and developed into the chief source of income for married women as they were simultaneously being excluded from other occupations. Capitalist industry also dramatically changed the nature of the work of married and unmarried women and brought about the "reversal of the parts which married and unmarried women play [ed] in productive enterprise."(16) Where, in the preindustrial economy, domestic work had been performed by unmarried girls supervised by a married woman directly engaged in the family industry, now, with industrialization the position was inverted. The married woman remained at home, dependent upon the income of her husband and primarily responsible for domestic activities. The unmarried woman, on the other hand, now worked outside the home and gained a new economic independence.

In addition to her discussion of the change in the nature of the family as an economic unit and women's limited role in production, Clark analyzes the decline in the political status of all women. The effect of industrialization on women's political status is one of the most contentious issues for writers of women's history, but it is common to see a positive correlation between the economic process and women's emancipation.(17) However, Clark sees the concept of the family as a labour and a political unit replaced by the concept of the individual as critical to excluding women from political consideration. In preindustrial society, because the family, and not the individual, was the basic unit, women were automatically included in the notion of the English Commonwealth. However, in the modern state the concept of the individual involved males only, at least in the the early stages: "Thus it came to pass that every womanly function was considered as the private interest of husbands and fathers, bearing no relation to the life of the State, and therefore demanding from the community as a whole no special care or provision."(18)

Most of the features of the paradigm now accepted for the impact of industrialization on women were formulated by Alice Clark. Like nineteenth-century commentators, she saw the process as having a profound effect on female labour. However, unlike those observers, she focussed on the period of transformation from a preindustrial to a proto-industrial economy. Over this long period the restrictive nature of the process becomes evident. In contrast, Marx and Engels, by focussing on the effect of changing technology in the factory system, exaggerated the impact of the process on expanding women's work roles.

Ivy Pinchbeck, in *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850,* also focusses on the change in female labour during the period of transition from a proto-industrial to an industrial economy. Like other writers of the time, Pinchbeck stresses that there was a dramatic impact on women's labour during this period, but takes issue with the widely accepted notion that the Industrial Revolution produced the female worker.(19) The significance of industrialization was not the increased productive capacity of female labour (Pinchbeck sees that women's total contribution to production did not change), but in the fact that wage-earning occupations became more numerous. This was a critical step forward because it improved employment conditions for women who were not part of a family, productive unit and who had to rely on their own wage labour for support. The period immediately preceding the Industrial Revolution was a time when unemployment for women, particularly as domestic servants, was at its worst. While married women of this period had a share in the activities of their husbands, albeit in subsidiary employment, their position was not as oppressive as the single woman's, which was much more insecure.

The transition period, when industry was taken from the home, was a particularly difficult period for married women, but Pinchbeck sees that, ultimately, the benefits were considerable. As industry left the home, married women in particular were deprived of an earning capacity in the home, and the total family income declined. She regards as exaggerated the nineteenth-century view that married women became employed in large numbers in the factories.(20) This view tended to reinforce the notion that during the period of industrialization there was a widespread deterioration in the domestic life of the working classes because female labour was less involved with domestic activities. Pinchbeck also takes issue with this, pointing out that cottage life, even in the eighteenth century, provided few facilities for women, so that opportunities for "acquiring any measure of skill in domestic management were exceedingly limited."(21)

On the whole, she recognizes the impact of industrialization on changing the economic basis of marriage from a partnership to economic dependence for the wife.(22) Unlike Alice Clark, she sees the acceptance of the notion that the family should be supported out of the male's wage as an important advance because it "prepared the way for the more modern conception that in the rearing of children and in home-making, the married woman makes an adequate contribution."(23) The benefits she sees from industrialization by the mid-nineteenth century outweigh the decline in married women's economic condition. These benefits are: improved domestic conditions, as women were able to devote more time to children and housework; better employment conditions for working women through improved conditions in the factories and higher wages; an improved standard of living; and more varied experience and interests gained by working together in a community.(24) Clearly, what Pinchbeck is approving of with regard to women's work outside the home is the increased possibility for some women (i.e., single women) to achieve social and economic independence. But this was not occurring through more diversity of female occupations; she recognizes that occupations become increasingly limited in range as the influence of capital becomes more significant. With capitalist production and its concomitant division of labour, "women were relegated to certain occupations, the number of which tended to be reduced as capitalist organizations developed."(25)

She says factory work was the only expanding field of employment for women, while all other opportunities for wage work had actually declined.(26)

Recent writers on the impact of industrialization on women's work have presented analyses which fall into two main categories: there are those who stress the dramatic nature of the change brought about with the confrontation of an established social system and industrial capitalism; and those who stress continuity in the social system in which the family maintains its primary function and the nature of female labour remains relatively unchanged. The analyses stressing continuity base the argument on findings which indicate that the structure and size of the family has remained remarkably constant over time and, contrary to common opinion, that the family has not evolved from an extended to a nuclear structure as a result of the industrialization process.(27) They feel that understanding the function of the family is critical to assessing the impact of change on female labour. This perspective also tends to be much more critical of the notion that the preindustrial economy was a golden age in which women's productive activity had equal status with that of men. They cite evidence which shows that the exploitation and oppression of women was not a new feature of capitalist industry, but existed in a well-developed form in preindustrial societies as well.(28)

Louise Tilly and Joan Scott challenge the notion that industrialization separated the family maintains its primary function and the nature of female labour remains relatively unchanged. The analyses stressing continuity base their argument on findings which indicate that the structure and size of the family has remained remarkably constant over time that the family remains a basic economic unit and, as an institution, is still involved in production in that it retains its influence over the productive activities of its members. They do, however, substantially modify the model in their assessment on the impact of industrialization on the division of labour by sex. They make a distinction between the nature of female labour and the pattern of female employment. Essentially, they see the nature of female labour as being relatively unaffected by industrialization: "The aggregate view indicates that industrialization did not change the type of work women did, nor did it greatly increase the amount of time that women in the aggregate devoted to productive work for market exchange."(30) They are not, however, arguing that there was no change, but that this change can be seen in the pattern of employment (i.e., where it took place and under what conditions) rather than in its nature, and that, most importantly, the change was incorporated into and justified according to the ideology of the traditional family, so that the function of female labour with the family was not radically altered.(31) The function of female labour in the production process in preindustrial times is seen as being subsidiary to that of males: in the urban family the wife was the husband's assistant, and in the rural family she ran the household while he worked in the fields.(32) In the peasant economy "men and women not only performed different tasks, but they occupied different space."(33) Industrialization, then, did not change the division of labour by sex, rather, it intensified it.

While Tilly and Scott do see a significant change in the increased numbers of women who worked for a wage, they interpret this as a continuation of the well-established practice of relying on female wage labour to supplement the family income, which was a common occurrence at various times in the preindustrial economy. This type of employment,

generated for women through urban and industrial development, was primarily in the traditional sectors of the economy. The initial expansion of work was a result of the expansion of the market for consumer goods, which increased the production of piecework within the household.(34) Married women's work tended to be found in the least industrialized sectors, where they were able to control the rhythm of work to harmonize with the demands of domestic activities.(35) Industrial jobs requiring specialization and a full-time commitment from a married woman were the last resort for income for desperate families.(36) Gradually, married women began to spend more and more time on household responsibilities, as children remained in the home longer and domestic chores expanded. Although Tilly and Scott feel the evidence is not overwhelming, they tend to see married women's labour force participation decreasing as industrialization advances (at least until World War I).(37) Throughout the nineteenth century women's total labour force participation varied little.(38) Those who were in the labour force were predominantly young and single; factory work, except for the textile industry, did not employ large numbers of women. The general pattern throughout Europe was for domestic service to outstrip manufacturing for increased employment for women.(39)

Over the long run, Tilly and Scott see that women's productive activity declined with industrialization, after reaching a relatively high level in the preindustrial household economy. But eventually, with the development of the tertiary sector in advanced industrial countries, female productive activity reached an even higher level.(40) With the acceptance of this notion of a U-shaped pattern of female productive activity, Tilly and Scott's analysis decidedly conforms to the model developed earlier. Their modification is in seeing the change as a gradual one which incorporated new economic conditions in traditional family values. The effect on women's labour was not a dramatic one, since old patterns of labour persisted for many years alongside the new, yet the productive activity of women was ultimately affected.

Unlike Pinchbeck, Tilly and Scott see little or no relationship between women's political rights and women's work. Their point is that women were a substantial part of the labour force long before they achieved any civil or political rights. They explain the misconception linking political emancipation to labour force participation as the tendency to look only at the experience of middle-class women. These women formed an insignificant part of the labour force during the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, and their re-entry into productive labour did coincide with political advancement. In contrast, most women working during this period were from the peasant or working classes.(41) While the authors deny the impact of the ideology of individualism within industrial capitalism as the impetus for female emancipation, they do not offer an alternate explanation for the process. Their main concern is to warn of the dangers of imposing a view of change pertaining to the middle class on the experience of all women in the past.(42)

While Scott and Tilly see the persistence of the traditional values of the family throughout the industrialization process as a factor in minimizing change in the nature of women's work, Hans Medick uses the same premise about the family's traditional nature to show that in the proto-industrial stage there are important changes in the division of labour by sex.(43) He shows how the significance of labour in the genesis of capitalism cannot be laid to a new labour discipline introduced by the Protestant Ethic, but rather is the result

of the tenacious resistance to change of pre-capitalistic labour. This resistance is evidenced by the retention of the family type of economy characteristic of agrarian production when the agricultural base is removed.(44) Retaining the family type of economy outside of a land-based economy necessitated a change in the family structure. It was not property relationships, but the work capacity of both partners which became the primary economic consideration in marriage. The productive unit itself became increasingly specialized in its work, while there was a decrease in the specialization of the individual in production. This had a significant impact on the traditional division of labour by sex: "The necessity to work together under adverse conditions entailed a higher degree of functional integration and thereby also of structural cohesion than was necessary in the peasant family."(45) While women were the vanguard of peasant household industries, men began to return to the household and to take up occupations formerly performed by women. The distinction between female and male labour became less rigid than in peasant households, and in certain branches of production and in certain market conditions, the traditional division of labour between the sexes was erased.(46)

Medick sees the traditional form of the family economy, which is retained in the proto-industrial stage, as an important agent in the improvement in women's position through productive activities. As women's work became more important to the family, significant social changes occurred: egalitarian consumption patterns in the household began; property constraints and patriarchal controls were loosened in the selection of marriage partners; and the sexual activities and behaviour patterns of women and men became increasingly similar.(47) The change from a peasant to a proto-industrial economy brought about the increased assimilation of female and male work and a more flexible allocation of role responsibilities for all family members. While Medick's analysis focusses on the impact of the earliest forms of industrial production of female labour, it is less concerned with the increase in the productive nature of women's work than it is with explaining a change in the division of labour by sex. This is in decided contrast to Clark's analysis, which sees the whole period of industrialization, including the period of a rise in household industry, as one in which the sexual division of labour increased and women's occupational diversity narrowed. However, the critical stage for both is the proto-industrial one.

More recently, Sheila Rowbotham reinforced Clark's approach. Her analysis shows that women have been on the defensive since the seventeenth century and were disadvantaged even in early capitalism. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the division of labour became more complex and competition among men intensified, women were gradually forced out of the more profitable trades and their work became associated with low pay.(48) During the period of industrialization proper, however, the impact became even more significant. Middle-class women were cut off from production and became increasingly dependent on men, while working-class women were forced into factories to become wage-earners.(49) However, the process of becoming a wage earner was not an improvement in the position of the working-class woman because, with the separation of work from the home, women were forced to carry on both roles in different places and life became more difficult as various tasks were less easy to combine.(50)

Whether female employment increased during the proto-industrial stage and fostered a corresponding diversity in the division of labour by sex is not the focus of the analysis which developed the U-shaped pattern of women's economic participation. This interpretation usually deals with the period from the beginning of the eighteenth century and assumes high female participation in the agriculturally dominated economy. In the most explicit description of the U-shaped pattern of activity, Eric Richards describes the preindustrial period as one in which "the utilization of women in the economy was close to a notional maximum."(5 1) However, during the nineteenth century there was a substantial reduction in the economic roles of women, and only in the middle decades of the twentieth century did the trend of women's involvement in the economy begin to approach the level it reached in the eighteenth century. The nineteenth century created some new opportunities for women, but these did not balance out the decrease in employment in the traditional fields. He sees the rise of the factory girl as being an atypical development in the industrializing economy, and even in textiles he maintains that as a proportion of the labour force, women lost ground.(52) It is difficult for him, then, to give the Industrial Revolution credit for the emancipation of women. He feels that Marx may have been correct in identifying female employment outside the family context as the liberating factor which was created by capitalist industry, but, since the overwhelming majority of women did not experience this until the twentieth century, emancipation can only be seen as a "monumentally lagged effect of industrialization."(53)

Ann Oakley, also accepting a U-shaped pattern, sees three main periods characterizing change in the economic participation of women associated with industrialization-04) Her analysis of women's role in preindustrial society follows that established by Alice Clark, but she sees a sharp change occurring with the Industrial Revolution. From 1750 to the 1840s, the family as a productive unit was increasingly broken up as the workplace was separated from the home. During this period women followed their traditional work outside the home.(55) In the second stage, from the 1840s to 1914, there was a decline in employment for married women outside the home. Oakley sees the restriction of married women to the household and the "rising popularity of a belief in woman's natural domesticity," as the most significant effect of industrialization on women.(56) With this came the emergence of the modern role of housewife as the dominant mature feminine role. During this period, while occupations for males were expanding, those for women were being drastically restricted.(57) She links this restriction to a variety of factors: the exclusion of women from participating in their husbands' professions as work left the household; the institution of protective legislation which further restricted their labour market activity; and the development of an ideology that favoured the male as the worker and the female as the housewife. The third period Oakley distinguishes is from 1914 to the 1950s, when there was growing employment for women outside the home, but the primary role of women was still seen as that of being a housewife.

While there is little consensus about when women began to be restricted in their productive activities, throughout the twentieth century there has been an emphasis on the restrictive nature of the Industrial Revolution on women's work during the nineteenth century. Most writers also point to the particular effect this had on married women, so that by the mid-nineteenth century even working-class married women had retreated into the home. (58) However, Sally Alexander, in her study of women's work in London from 1820 to

1850, introduces some interesting evidence which, if found to apply more generally to other towns and cities, could disprove the notion of a U-shaped pattern of female employment associated with industrial ization.(59) Alexander shows that in London, married women continued to work and earn an income. Because industrial transformation in London was characterized by slop and sweated trades rather than factory work, women's work expanded in areas which had been typically female work in the past: they worked at needlework, as chars, maids and home workers.(60) The sexual division of labour which existed in the household economy was transferred to the newer forms of production, so that, ultimately, the effect of modernization was "neither so uniform nor so revolutionary in terms of the sexual division of labour as many contemporaries, including Marx and Engels, had anticipated."(61) Alexander feels that the extent of employment for married women has been understated because the nature of their work made it more difficult to count. There was no single employment for women in London as there was in the textile towns, and women were more formally excluded from skilled work. The work tended to be intermittent, casual, and usually involved a variety of occupations which escaped the rigid job classifications of the census. Furthermore, because many women worked for a wage within their own home, the census would not count this type of work.(62) Even though Alexander feels women continued to work, she does see that industrialization made the sexual division of labour more rigid, so that women's work became unskilled and low-paid, and their occupations overcrowded and limited in range. She has shown that in London, at least for the period between 1820 and 1850, while industrialization tended to offer a narrower range of occupations to women, it is unlikely that the amount of work which women did for pay decreased.

As Alexander has demonstrated, because certain forms of traditional female labour were not directly related to the industrializing process by being industrial occupations, there has been a tendency to overlook the impact of the Industrial Revolution on increasing these forms of labour. The most notable exclusion, until fairly recently, has been the extent to which domestic service expanded during the nineteenth century. Ivy Pinchbeck, for example, does not include these workers in her discussion because she feels it was one occupation which remained relatively unchanged until late in the nineteenth century.(63) Similarly, Wanda Neff, in her analysis of working women, includes only those occupations which had been under public scrutiny and which had experienced definite reform. She deliberately excludes an analysis of "such hopeless slaves as the handloom weavers and the immortally toiling agricultural labourers and domestic servants."(64) While handloom weaving and agricultural labour declined during the nineteenth century, domestic labour did not. Yet the implications of this were not clear even by the second decade of the twentieth century: B.L. Hutchens, in *Women in Modern Industry,* assumes that the rise of factory labour for women meant that single women became less dependent on domestic service for employment.(65)

Recently, there has been much more attention paid to the increase of domestic service as a typical pattern, cross-culturally, for female employment during the early period of the industrialization process.(66) The striking feature is that this area of work was the fastest growing industry for women in Britain, and was the largest employer of women throughout the nineteenth century. It was second only to agricultural labour as the most important

occupation for both sexes.(67) Not only were jobs increasing in this area, but the whole industry was becoming feminized and more characterized as temporary employment.(68)

In the way that certain traditional occupations for women were invisible to those examining the process of industrialization, so was the work women performed within the home without pay. The usual assumption is that middle- and upper-class women who became housebound essentially led a life of leisure, while working-class women, in addition to providing household services for their own families, were forced into the labour market to work either in the homes of richer women or in factories. For example, John Burnett, in *Useful Toil,* explains why domestic service expanded so dramatically during the nineteenth century by saying, "Domestic help was necessary to the Victorian middle and upper classes, partly because wives and daughters had become virtually functionless and partly because the accumulated paraphernalia of gentility had become so demanding of attention."(69) In *Silent Sisterhood,* Patricia Branca takes issue with this notion that middle-class housewives retreated into the home and became leisured ladies.(70) Because* of the middle-class woman's role in the modernizing process - transforming the family from a unit of production to a unit of consumption - and because of her role in providing a new model of child care, she was not idle. Even though domestic help was common in these households, most hired only one worker, and with the increased demands on household labour, having only one servant meant that the housewife continued to provide considerable labour within the household.(71)

The emphasis in recent studies of women and industrialization is on those areas of female activity which were not included in earlier analyses because they were not seen as being directly connected with the industrialization process. While the total picture is still far from clear, the implication is that industrialization did not exclude women from work to quite the extent which earlier analyses had indicated. In the nineteenth century, by focussing on the rise of the factory and women's disproportionate participation in the textile industry, the process was seen as rapidly expanding women's employment opportunities as well as permitting greater independence from men. However, by the twentieth century it became clearer that this was a phenomenon peculiar to the textile industry; jobs for women in other forms of manufacturing did not increase. Industrialization, then, was seen as a process which excluded the female from those types of production which had been a typical part of her working role when the family worked together as a productive unit. The dichotomy in the woman's labour role increased as wage work and household work were separated. The effect was to intensify the division of labour between the sexes so that, over time, the typical male pattern was identified with wage work which supported the family, while the ideal female pattern of work became associated with tasks involving family reproduction and maintenance. The fact that more women worked outside the home and more worked for a wage than before industrialization, did not conceal the fact that those who remained in the home (i.e., most of the married women) were denied an opportunity to participate in productive work and to contribute to the family's income, while those who worked in the labour force were confined to a limited range of occupations, usually in the non-industrial sectors.

The separation of the female and the male in the production process and the intensification of the division of labour by sex are two aspects of the **model of development which**

appear to meet with general approval. The more contentious issues are whether the woman's world of the nineteenth century became increasingly privatized and restricted and whether women's actual labour force participation decreased. When viewed in the very long run, industrialization is seen as having a positive effect on women's political emancipation. However, some analysts see the tremendous lag between cause and effect as reason to question the impact of the Industrial Revolution on this process. The effect on female labour force participation is still inconclusive, mainly because the empirical evidence, particularly with regard to the earlier period, is not complete. While there is a tendency to see women's participation as decreasing during the nineteenth century, there remains some ambiguity about whether the U-shaped pattern is strictly discussing wage labour or whether it is including women's involvement in the family economy as evidence of high participation in the proto-industrial period. There is also a question about the extent to which married women retreated to the home, particularly because there is some indication that the common practice of not viewing any work other than permanent full-time labour as work, excluded the type of labour women performed.

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NOTES

(1) Neil J. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of the British Cotton Industry* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 202; Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1969). Pinchbeck shows that women represented 56% of the workers in cotton mills, 69% of workers in woolen mills, and 70% of workers in silk and flax mills in 1844 (p. 197). However, she says the proportion of males involved in textiles under the factory system was much greater than under the domestic system, where there are estimates as high as eight women and children to every man employed (p. 124).

(2) Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 148.

(3) Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England (Moscow:* Progress Publishers, 1973), p. 182.

(4) J.F.C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians 1832-51* (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 74-77; Smelser, pp. 281ff; Pinchbeck, p. 197, note.

(5) Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class, p.* 184.

(6) Ibid., p. 186.

(7) Olive Schreiner, in *Woman and Labour* (Toronto: Henry Frowde, 1911), was one of the first to recognize this impact of industrialization on female labour. She wrote that modern civilization has "tended to rob women not merely in part, but almost wholly, of the more valuable of her ancient domain of productive and social labour" (p. 50).

(8) For a discussion of Alice Clark's impact on women's history, see Natalie Davis, "Women's History in Transition: The European Case," *Feminist Studies* (Spring/Summer, 1976), 85-90; Roberta Hamilton, *The Liberation of Women. A Study of Patriarchy and Capitalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), pp. 16-22.

(9) Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968), pp. 12-13.

(10) Alice Clark used Eileen Power's material for information on women in medieval times. When she wrote this book the material was unpublished but has subsequently appeared under the title, "The

Position of Women" in *The Legacy of the Middle Ages,* eds. C.G. Crump and E.F. Jacob (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926). Clark cites the following occupations as being part of domestic industry common to women: "Brewing, dairy-work, the care of poultry and pigs, the production of vegetables and fruit, spinning flax and wool, nursing and doctoring" (p. 5).

(11) Clark, pp. 290-92.

(12) Ibid., p. 296. See Smelser for an example of the union argument against female labour, p. 232.

(13) Clark, p. 304.

(14) Sylvia Thrupp shows that females, both as wives and daughters, were active in trade before industrialization. *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300-1500)* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 170.

(15) Clark, pp. 9-10.

(16) Ibid., p. 11. This theme has been taken up by recent writers. See Ann Oakley, *Women's Work. The Housewife, Past and Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p. 26; Patricia Branca, *Women in Europe Since 1750* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 31-32.

(17) Pinchbeck, p. 314, and in preface to reprinted edition; Viola Klein, *Britain's Married Women Workers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965). She states that the loss of productive work and a corresponding sense of loss of usefulness "was one of the mainsprings of the movement known as the Emancipation of Women" (p. 9).

(18) Clark, pp. 307-08.

(19) Pinchbeck, p. 1. See also B.L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry* (East Ardsley: EP Publishing, 1978), pp. 1, 70; Margaret Hewitt, *Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry* (London: Rockliff, 1958), pp. 1-3; Dorothy Thompson, "Women and Nineteenth-Century Radical Politics: A Lost Dimension," in *The Rights and Wrongs of Women,* eds. Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 112.

(20) Pinchbeck, pp. *197-99.*

(21) Ibid., p. 310. See also Wanda F. Neff, *Victorian Working Women* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966), p. 251.

(22) Pinchbeck, p. 312.

(23) Ibid., p. 313. Wanda Neff also sees the disadvantages as being temporary and says that industrialization made a woman "freer than she was as a household drudge with the added burdens of spinning, hand-sewing, and the care of cows and pigs feeding on the village common" (p. 248); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), has one of the most optimistic views of the industrialization process. He shows that there is a definite link between capitalism and mother love (p. 632). In a traditional society, the mother's first commitment is to the family economy, but with ¡ndustrial capitalism "Economic growth liberated mothers from this desperate need to employ their time elsewhere" (p. 264).

(24) Pinchbeck, p. 306.

(25) Ibid., p. 121.

(26) Because Pinchbeck's analysis excludes the effect of industrialization on domestic service, she overlooks this as an expanding occupation for women during this period.

(27) Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), p. 93; Peter Laslctt and Richard Wall, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 137-39; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 416ff; Lawrence Stone, "The Rise of the Nuclear Family in Early Modern England: The Patriarchal Stage," in *The Family in History,* ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Philadelphia: Univ of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).

(28) For a discussion of the repressive nature of the female labour role in preindustrial society, see Wallace Notestein, "The English Woman, 1580 to 1650," in *Studies in Social History,* ed. John Harold Plumb (New York: Books for Libraries, 1969); Barbara J. Harris, "Recent Work on the History of the Family: A Review Article," *Feminist Studies* (Spring/Summer, 1976), 166; Laslett, p. 3; Shorter, pp. xvii, xviii, and Ch. 2; Branca, p. 23.

(29) Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott,

(29) Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978), p. 232. Stone, in *The Family, Sex and Marriage,* also challenges this view and maintains that "the family continued to act as a unit of producton far into the nineteenth century in major areas of the economy, in domestic industry, agriculture and even in early industrial workshops" (p. 417).

(30) Ibid., p. 77.

(31) J.W. Scott and L.A. Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe," in *The Family in History,* ed. C.E. Rosenberg, pp. 152-53.

(32) Tilly & Scott, *Women, Work and Family, pp.* 44-5 1.

(33) Scott & Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe," p. 155.

(34) Ibid., pp. 148-49.

(35) Tilly & Scott, *Women, Work and Family, p.* 124.

(36) Ibid., p. 129.

(37) Scott & Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe," p. 150.

(38) Tilly & Scott, *Women, Work and Family, p. 77.*

(39) Scott & Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe," p. 169. Although the authors do postulate a general pattern of development across Europe, they point out that in Italy, domestic service was outstripped by textiles as the major employer of women, p. 148, note.

(40) Tilly & Scott, *Women, Work and Family, p.* 229.

(41) Scott & Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe," pp. 146-48.

(42) Ibid., pp. 146, 178.

(43) Hans Medick, "The Proto-Industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of Household and Family During the Transition from Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism," *Social History* (Oct., 1976).

(44) Ibid., pp. 298-300. Medick explains this by saying that even though production and consumption became increasingly dependent on the market, the family's work did not conform to the notion of accumulating a monetary surplus or a net profit (i.e., labour does not become "rational" in the market sense). Rather, it treats its returns as constant so that if the family income begins to fall, the work expenditure increases, while if the family income rises, the work effort will be adjusted downwards.

(45) Ibid., p. 310.

(46) Medick says, "even in the textile trades the division of labour within the household showed no conformity; it varied according to the branch of production, its developmental stage and its market condition; it frequently deviated from the 'classical' pattern in which the man was weaving, the wife spinning, and the children were occupied with subsidiary activities" (p. 311, note). For a description of the classical pattern of labour distribution in the family economy, see Frances Coller, *The Family Economy of the Working Classes in the Cotton Industry 1784-183.3* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1964), p. 2; Smelser, Chapters 6, 7, 8.

(47) Medick, pp. 311-13. In contrast, Shorter attributes the changes in sexual behaviour to the increased division of labour by sex during the industrialization process.

(48) Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from history: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1977), p. 2. Roberta Hamilton also says it is not industrialization, but the transitional period from feudalism to capitalism which is the point of departure for the study of women in capitalist society, p. 92.

(49) Rowbotham, p. 55.

(50) Ibid., p. 57.

(51) Eric Richards, "Women in the British Economy Since About 1700: An Interpretation," *History* (1974), 338. He sees the high participation rates of this period as consistent with observations of pre-industrial societies in Third World countries today, p. 337.

(52) Ibid., p. 345. He does admit that there is some evidence for believing that until 1820 there may have been an increase in jobs for women, but by the mid-nineteenth century the range for jobs for women declined sharply, pp. 346-47.

(53) Ibid., p.356.

(54) Oakley, Ch. 3.

(55) Ibid., pp. 34-43.

(56) Ibid., p. 34

(57) Oakley says that in 1851, one quarter of the married women in Britain were employed. By 1911 the proportion had dropped to one-tenth, p. 44.

(58) Thompson, p. 115.

(59) Sally Alexander, "Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London: A Study of the Years 1820-50," in *The Rights and Wrongs of Women,* ed. Mitchell & Oakley.

(60) Ibid., p. 110. Viola Klein shows that even according to the 1851 census, there was a fairly high proportion of married women working. Twenty-five percent of the married women and two-thirds of the widows were listed as having an extraneous occupation. She also points out that social legislation, which was designed to protect women and children, became an issue precisely because of the huge numbers of them employed, pp. 12-13.

(61) Ibid., p. 97.

(62) Ibid., pp. 64-66. Branca also points out that up to one-third of the women of the working classes in cities took in lodgers, p. 32.

(63) Pinchbeck, p. 4.

(64) Neff, p. 17.

(65) Hutchins, p. 73.

(66) Theresa M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 14. The author says the pattern is similar in Europe, the U.S. and Latin American countries.

(67) John Burnett, *Useful Toil* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), pp. 135-38. McBride cites the 1851 census, stating that one in every five women from the ages of 15 to 30 was listed as a domestic, p. 120. In London, the proportions were even more dramatic: in 1861, one-third of the women between 15 and 24, and more than one-sixth of the women between 10 and 94 was a servant, p. 14. Branca cites figures for 1841 which show that 8,787 women worked in factories, while 712,493 worked as domestics, p. 69. However, she cites agriculture, not domestic service, as the major employment for women up to 1850, p. 25.

(68) McBride, pp. 9, 110. The examinations of the more inivisible type of female occupations tend to place emphasis on the function of the occupation itself during the industrialization process. McBride says that the function of domestic labour was two-fold: It served as a means of modernizing rural female labour by making them accustomed to an urban work pattern, and it "initiated the middle-class woman into the role of employer/manager and initiated her into certain professional skills" (p. 117). Sec Lisc Voge, "The Contested Domain: A Note on the Family in the Transition to Capitalism," *Marxist Perspectives* (1978), for a criticism of the functionalist approach.

(69) Burnett, p. 144; Oakley, p. 49.

(70) Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood. Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Home* (London: Croom Helm, 1975). Like McBride, her interest is primarily in the function of this particular class of women in the process of modernization.

(71) Ibid., pp. 53-57.

THE EVOLUTION AND EMANCIPATION OF SARAH WOODRUFF: THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN AS A FEMINIST NOVEL

DEBORAH BYRD

ABSTRACT

Many critics of The French Lieutenant's Woman *have regarded Fowles's title character as an insane or totally enigmatic figure who does not change or mature during the course of the novel. In actuality, however, Fowles repeatedly undercuts the notion that Sarah is mad and stresses that her emancipation from the restrictive life tyles and negative self-images that Victorian society imposed on women are as central to the novel as is Charles's maturation. By analyzing Sarah from existentialist and feminist perspectives, one can see that she progresses from an unhappy, victimized woman to one who is angry, confused, and rebellious before she achieves autonomy, self-respect, and independence.*

I

In the fourteen years since its initial publication, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has become a best seller, has been made into a fine film, and has won critical acclaim as an historical novel, as a formally experimental novel, and as a novel embodying existential themes. Yet *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has been ignored by feminist literary critics, despite the fact that the novel is an almost ideal feminist fictional work. (1) Set in mid-Victorian England, Fowles's novel contains an imaginary, but on the whole historically accurate and psychologically authentic account of the victimization of a number of poor and middle-class women, among them domestic servants, prostitutes, governesses, an elderly widow, and the spoiled daughter of overly protective bourgeois parents.(2) Fowles, however, does more than document the oppression of Victorian women - he creates a positive role model in the character of Sarah Woodruff, a woman of imagination, intelligence, daring, and moral integrity. Fowles traces the way in which this young rural governess, unaware of any organized movements advocating the emancipation of women, gradually develops a feminist consciousness. He shows her engaging - with some success - in acts of political protest, and he sympathetically portrays her difficult but ultimately successful struggle to liberate herself from the circumstances which restrict her growth as an autonomous human being. Just as importantly, Fowles stresses the contemporary relevance of his novel by drawing parallels between his fictional heroine and women of the present. In so doing, he implies that just as Charles Smithson emerges from his relationship with the mysterious Sarah Woodruff "a better and more