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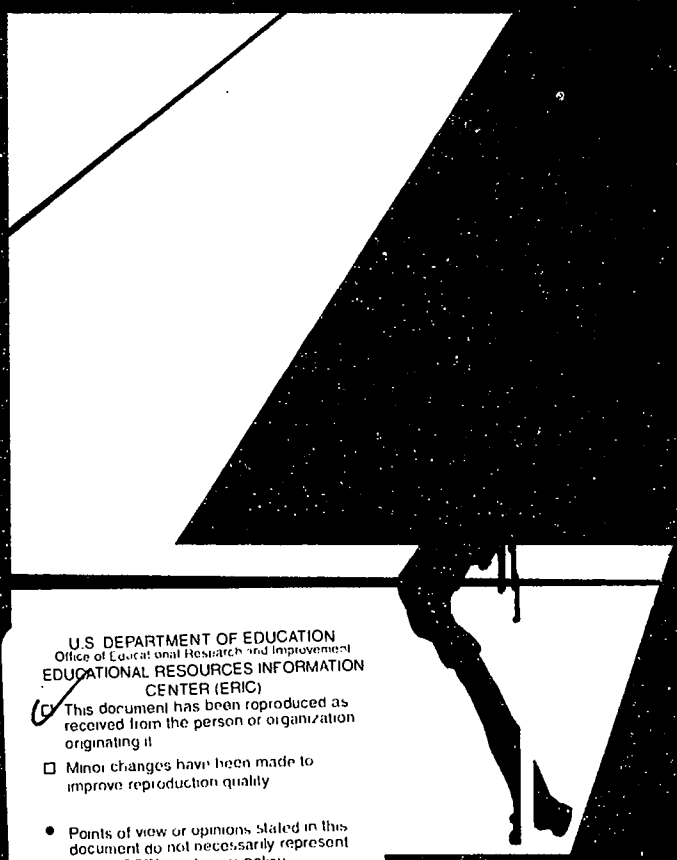
ABSTRACT

This collection of 21 essays reviews the context of developments in adult education in the last 15 years. "Adult Education for Change in the Nineties and Beyond" (Marjorie Mayo) is a critical review of the context for these changes and of the theoretical debates that attempt to analyze and explain them. "Challenging the Postmodern Condition" (Paula Allman, John Wallis) offers a specific challenge to postmodernism in relation to adult learning. "Are We Not More Than Half the Nation?" (Julia Swindells) argues that focus on the relationship between independent working men's movements and adult education has tended either to exclude or distort recognition of the importance of women's education. "Cultural Struggle or Identity Politics" (Tom Steele) argues that the seed of a cultural struggle in Britain after World War II found fertile ground among adult educators. "Radical Adult Education" (Hilda Kean) explores the tradition of working-class reading to examine the way in which socialists and feminists saw education as a mechanism for the development of the self. "Piecing together the Fragments" (Martin Yarnit) focuses on the education of adults as a vital part of the whole national apparatus of education and training. "Competence, Curriculum, and Democracy" (David Alexander, Ian Martin) reflects the authors' experience of the current process of professionalism within the field of adult and community education in Scotland. "Really Useful Knowledge" (Katherine Hughes) describes the history of the Ruskin Learning Project. "All Equal Now?" (Rebecca O'Rourke) reflects on some concerns about the changing context for radical adult education. "Feminism and Women's Education" (Jane Thompson) looks at the contribution of feminism to recognition of "really useful knowledge." "Making Experience Count" (Wilma Fraser) focuses on programs that emphasize reflection on experience. "The Dying of the Light?" (John McIlroy) offers a radical look at trade union education. "Learning in Working Life" (Keith Forrester) outlines difficulties in provision of educational programs by trade unions.

"Popular Education and the State" (Keith Jackson) explores the contribution adult education might make "in the community." "Beyond Subversion" (Mae Shaw, Jim Crowther) argues that broad dissatisfaction with the current orthodoxy provides an opportunity for a radical agenda to be reasserted. "Training the Community" (John Grayson) focuses on the field of tenant training. "Seizing the Quality Initiative" (Cilla Ross) identifies ways in which radical adult education practice can be redefined and remade. "Amman Valley Enterprise" (Sonia Reynolds) describes adult education and community revival in the Welsh valleys. "Formal Systems" (Chris Duke) focuses on those who adhere to a radical vision while working within the formal organization. "Adult Learning in the Context of Global, Neo-Liberal Economic Policies" (John Payne) looks at experiences in the London Borough of Wandsworth and in Nicaragua. "Popular Education in Northern Ireland" (Tom Lovett) describes the Ulster People's College. (Each article contains references.) (YLB)



Edited by
Marjorie Mayo
and Jane Thompson

ADULT LEARNING, CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

We would like to dedicate this book to all our students past and present; to the spirit of collective resistance and to the possibility of transformation. We would also like to acknowledge and thank Marion Junor for keeping collective track of all our contributions.

Adult Learning, Critical Intelligence and Social Change

Edited by

Marjorie Mayo & Jane Thompson

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Three

Are We Not More Than Half the Nation? Women and 'the Radical Tradition' of Adult Education, 1867–1919

Julia Swindells

Throughout the history of adult education in England over the past 150 years, there has been a tension between the drive towards emancipation and the pressure towards elitism. For the most part, this has been debated in terms of the relationship between independent working men's movements and adult education generated by middle-class men, initially from Oxbridge. This account will redress the balance by arguing that focus on that relationship has tended either to exclude or to distort a recognition of the importance of women's education, both in itself and as a driving force in the radical tradition of adult education.

I date the historical account from 1867, when the Reform Act gave increased democratic powers and rights to working-class men. The struggle entailed in the attempt to extend working-men's rights in the political and industrial fields has been well documented (Jepson, 1973; Williams, 1980). This battle for rights was also being fought, as is frequently the case in relation to a political struggle, in terms of, contested and competing demands vis-à-vis education. The threat of anarchy represented for some by the Hyde Park riots, precipitated in 1867 by the campaign for extended franchise, was experienced primarily as a fear of challenge to the existing culture, particularly to the role of the gentleman, privileged by class and educational background (Williams, 1980). Amongst the range of responses from education, there are a number of significant indicators in that same year, including the establishing in Leeds of the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, and the appointment of James Stuart, one of the central promulgators of the University Extension Movement, to a fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Before moving to the significance of those events for adult education, though, it is important to register models more recognisable in terms of the radical tradition of adult education, which predate 1867. The Adult School Movement began at the end of the eighteenth century and was for women as well as men. The beginning of the nineteenth century then saw the founding of Mechanics' Institutes, whose aim was to offer workpeo-

ple 'an easily accessible training in the scientific principles of their professions' (Harrop, 1987: 97). In relation to both the Adult School Movement and Mechanics' Institutes, there are existing histories, some of which have focused on the issue of gender. In brief, we can see that the ideas of association, collectivism and equality were in tension with an implicit, sometimes explicit, exclusion of women, denoted in a celebration of manhood. The manifesto of the Adult School Movement demonstrates this in its rhetoric, 'associating men together for the free study of the deeper problem of life', on the basis of 'the ideal of manhood set before them in the Gospels' (Harrop, 1987: 96). Admission of women to the Mechanics' Institutes was a 'reluctant' one, and was often based on an assumption that female and male requirements were quite distinct, education in scientific principles and professional training being the preserve of men, unless this was related to women's family roles (Purvis, 1989: 102–6).

The Working Men's Colleges developed in part as a response to criticisms of the Mechanics' Institutes, which were generally felt to have failed working men in certain key areas, not least in giving little chance to discuss politics or determine curriculum design and content. The Colleges were committed to an education that was meant to be characterised by the pursuit of true, disinterested scholarship, free of constraints imposed by the world of commerce. However, the whole question of 'fellowship' discussed by the founder members, who were largely academics and clergy, left the position of women at best ambivalent. As one of the founders put it, 'it did not seem possible to create such a fellowship with the working women' (Purvis, 1989: 168, quoting F.D. Maurice). The response of one male student indicates that anxiety about extending the definition of fellowship to embrace women was not peculiar to academics and clergy with historic privileges born of their experience of college life. It is significant that he invokes the phraseology of 'really useful knowledge', associated with the radical tradition, to voice what he sees as the threat; women's presence is only acceptable to him if their teaching can take place without disturbing the 'real usefulness' of his own college education (Purvis, 1989: 168).

Where women did gain access to the colleges, it was often in terms of a curriculum which was differentiated not only from that of the men, but also within gender. Middle-class women followed daytime classes in 'ladylike' accomplishments, whilst working-class women followed evening classes in the 'three Rs' and plain sewing. Ironically enough, too, the Working Women's College, which was set up in part because of women's suffrage campaigners' recognition that women were being ill-served, if served at all by the college model, was under pressure to include men as well as women. This seems to be something of a general pattern which develops when women attempt to claim for themselves 'the same sort of educational advantages ... that the men enjoyed' (Purvis, 1989: 171). Of these colleges, the London version lasted longest. The 1908 Report, *Oxford and Working-Class Education*, records that by that date, the London Working Men's College is 'the only institution (apart from Ruskin College and the new College at Fircroft, Bournville) which offers workpeo-

ple both a University education and comradeship in learning' (Harrop, 1987: 101).

The Women's Co-operative Guild

It is not until the Co-operative Societies are founded in the later part of the nineteenth century, that we have much sense that women and men are working together to generate their own movement, independently of industrialists on the one hand, or academics and clergy on the other. It is in the Co-operative Movement that we first get a commitment to political education as self-education, carrying with it the naming of women as well as men in relation to citizens' rights. The movement describes itself as including 'the training of men and women to take part in industrial and social reforms and civic life generally. It deals with the rights and duties of men and women in their capacities as co-operators, workers, and citizens' (Harrop, 1987: 99).

Even so, women clearly felt that they needed to create their own groups and movement, which they did so in the form of the Women's Guilds. The Women's Co-operative Guild was formed in 1883 by Alice Acland, who had criticised the Co-operative men's movement for being gender-divisive in encouraging men to agitate for political and social reforms, whilst advocating that women focus primarily on being consumers of Co-operative goods. 'What are men always urged to do when there is a meeting held at any place to encourage or start co-operative institutions? – come! help! vote! criticize! act! What are women urged to do? – come and *buy*! ... Are we not as important as the men? Are we not more than half the nation?' (Liddington and Norris, 1978: 40).

The Guild was committed to a highly politicised model of education, in which 'the true education of women' was an integral part of the movement as a whole (Webb, 1927: 52). Margaret Llewelyn Davies, who was Secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild from 1889 to 1921, was explicit about the ideological role that education should fulfil.

> *The training given by the Guild starts from the point of view that Guildswomen have common interests as members of a Movement, and that the education needed is in the ideas and facts which will make their movement most effective; while the success in arousing enthusiasm and energy is due to combining appropriate action with education (Webb, 1927: 11).*

Guildswomen soon ensured that meetings broke with the traditional subjects related to domestic economy, to include not only co-operative and labour matters, but also discussions which formed the basis of a wide range of public campaigns. In the 1890s alone, they were at the forefront of agitation for women's suffrage, free education, old-age pensions, sickness benefit, and other rights, not to mention socialism. As one commentator put it, 'cutting-out parties and sewing classes' were replaced with 'the understanding that many of the reforms desired must be secured through *public action*' (Webb, 1927: 123 [original emphasis]).

Working with women in the trades unions, Guildswomen also undertook extensive research and documentation for use in political argument and legislative debate – used, for instance, in discussion of the Factory Acts and 'the minimum wage'. Even to the most sceptical of contemporaries, this must have been evidence of 'a triumph for the progressive power of democratic organisation and a vindication of women's capacity for politics' (Webb, 1927: 120). Margaret Llewelyn Davies solicited, collected and published a number of first-hand accounts of working women's lives, many of which pay tribute to the educative aspect of the Guild (Llewelyn Davies, 1931). Again, the debate about what is an appropriate education for a woman involved in and committed to the Guild is registered in explicitly ideological and political terms. Mrs Layton's account points up the contrast between the type of education she has experienced at Mothers' Meetings, and that which she participates in when she joins the Guild.

> *I had attended Mothers' Meetings, where ladies came and lectured on the domestic affairs in the workers' homes that it was impossible for them to understand. I have boiled over many times at some of the things I have been obliged to listen to, without the chance of asking a question. In the Guild we always had the chance of discussing a subject. The Guild was more to my mind than the Mothers' Meeting, so I gave up the Mothers' Meeting and attended the Guild (Webb, 1927: 40).*

She also comments that, coming to the Guild, she was not used 'to working-women managing their meetings'. Another Guildswoman writes:

> *I used for a short time to attend a Mothers' Meeting, and did so more from a point of duty than anything, but after joining the Guild I did not feel to have patience to listen to the simple childish tales that were read at the former, and did not like to feel we had no voice in its control. There is such a different feeling in speaking of trials and troubles to Guilders (where they are real) than to speak to the ladies of the Mothers' Meeting. You know that they have a fellow-feeling being all on an equality, but there is the feeling in speaking to the ladies that after consulting this one, that one and somebody else, a little charity might be given ... This sort of thing to honest working people hurts their feelings of independence, but when co-operators help them it is done in a different way (Webb, 1927: 40).*

The desire for self-determination, 'control', 'voice' and discussion where the issues are 'real', is in clear opposition to the threat to independence imposed by the reductive and condescending model of education offered by the middleclass. For many Guildswomen, the only liberating model of education they have experienced has been through the Guild. Mrs Wrigley comments, 'I can't say that I have read many books as I have had no time. What I have read has been Guild and Co-operative literature and newspapers, for I have learnt a great deal

through newspapers' (Webb, 1927: 66). In Mrs Scott's account, the relationship between education and politics is equally explicit, though of a more visionary and romantic character. She has read widely in George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, George Egerton, H.G. Wells and pacifist literature, as well as 'the old favourites', Dickens, Tennyson and many others. She comments: 'When we think of the great and noble women who have made the path, like the story in Olive Schreiner's *Dreams*, by giving their lives and thoughts to making it easy for those who follow, we cannot feel too much or speak too highly of those who founded our Movement ... which has meant so much to the working-woman, brought new visions and opened the doors and windows' (Webb, 1927: 99–101).

History has not only tended to overlook Guildswomen's search for 'really useful knowledge' and their extensive contributions to political radicalism in the late nineteenth century, it has also, where it has looked, tended to camouflage working-class women's educational aspirations by disparaging as bourgeois a passion for learning, particularly where this is expressed in literary terms such as those which characterise Mrs Scott's account. There has also been a tendency to overplay the antagonisms between 'ladies' and working women. As we see from the Guildswomen's accounts, there was clearly opposition to those ladies of the Mothers' Meetings who could offer only childish tales and charity, but equally there was much solidarity and mutual support between those women of all classes who were campaigning for the suffrage. As the Guild's informal curriculum 'broadened out from domestic and co-operative matters to ... political economy and rational dress', so it began to provide 'one of the most important sources of support' for the Women's Suffrage Movement, which was itself, I shall argue, importantly generative in relation to the University Extension Movement (Liddington and Norris, 1978: 40 and 136).

Even without that connection with university extension, the issue of education was often in the foreground of Guild and Suffrage public campaigns. For instance, when the 1902 Education Bill proposed to abolish school boards and replace them with education committees from which women would be excluded, there was massive protest from Guildswomen. The commitment to education as part of the political struggle was also protracted beyond the effective life of the Women's Co-operative Guild and into the twentieth century. In 1918, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies converted itself into the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, which by 1929 had become the Townswomen's Guilds. After the 1919 Sex (Disqualification) Removal Act, which was intended to remove remaining barriers to women entering the professions, and after the extension of the suffrage to women under the age of 30 in the 1920s, the movement's commitment to education became even more explicit.[1]

Once the rights and activities of working-class women have been recognised, it is appropriate to put the history of the Co-operative Women's Guilds into the context of the radical tradition of adult education. However, that recognition has been a long time arriving, and some histories persist in rendering working-class women's participation in the radical

tradition invisible, or marginal, or hopelessly compromised by their relations to middle-class women. The Co-operative Women's Guilds, however, were primarily about working-class women's struggle for their own educational, social and political agenda and self-determination.

The University Extension Movement – The Traditional Story

What is more problematic is the argument which I want to make next, which is that women's relationship to other forms of adult education in the period was also radical or potentially so. However conventionally mainstream the University Extension Movement was in its male form, for instance, the relationship of women to it historically is often more politically ambiguous. This raises further questions, to which I shall return, about what we mean when we talk about the 'independent' tradition of adult education, and also indeed, what we mean by 'radical' in relation to adult education movements.

The traditional story of the rise of the University Extension Movement is a story of men. It begins in 1850, when a Royal Commission was set up to investigate the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which had become 'increasingly isolated from the needs of the time and, to a considerable extent, corrupt and oligarchical' (Jepson, 1973:13). In that year, the MP for North Lancashire proposed an inquiry 'to assist in the adaptation of those important institutions [Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and Trinity College, Dublin] to the requirements of modern times' (Hansard, 1850). One of the figures he quoted related to King's College – it had an income of £20,000 a year, but only 13 students. Incensed by the whole issue having been brought before Parliament (and by an MP from the North), the Member for Oxford University went on to accuse his not-so-honourable friend of quoting from scurrilous pamphlets which had suggested that 'the interests of religious and useful learning have not advanced to an extent commensurate with the great resources and high position of those bodies'. The Oxford MP's indignant speech upholds the rights of Oxbridge to remain independent of accountability to Parliament (particularly to the likes of the MP for North Lancashire), and perhaps even to the Crown.

Nevertheless, the leader of the House, Lord John Russell, apparently to the surprise of most members, decided that there could be no objection in principle to setting up a Royal Commission to make an inquiry. Of interest here is that one of the reasons he gives is that the subject is very important to the people of Great Britain.[2] He goes on to suggest, in what reads as a tone of beguiling calm, that Oxbridge should play its part in a national education system, and should encourage and foster greater accessibility to educational resources. Indeed, he appears momentarily to uphold that commitment to 'useful learning' which we are led to believe had originated in the scurrilous pamphlet.

In that same year, William Sewell pressed for the extension of university education and a broadening of the Oxbridge curriculum, and also

began to see the deliberations of government in a somewhat satirical light, for, as that 1850 debate stretches over the months, the focus on educational discussion gives way to one about the unassailability of Oxbridge independence. Many of the MPs are, of course, Oxbridge men themselves, and many of their speeches abound with images of 'veneration', of these 'eminent' institutions, for which they harbour 'respectful' and even 'reverential' feelings. The exception is an MP who is an Oxford man, but professes cynicism. Throughout the eighteenth century, he argues, both universities remained in 'a torpid and languid state', and 'the whole system was a perversion of the intentions of the original founders ... to enable poor clerks to educate themselves'. But even Lord Russell had suggested that any inquiry should be conducted in 'a friendly spirit'. After all, these are 'venerable' establishments, well known for their 'literary distinction'.

There is more to be said about the nature of Oxbridge corruption at this time, and about how far Oxbridge being 'isolated from the needs of the time' is a phenomenon which has persisted beyond the nineteenth century as a problem for adult education. And, of course, the 1850 debate had not raised the issues as they related to women at all. It was not until 1922 that Oxbridge was to be discussed in Parliament in ways that would include any analysis of the needs of women students and staff.[3] Even as recently as 1982, we can read that 'Oxford and Cambridge play a determining role in the formation of elites in Britain ... they perpetuate an unjust and divisive class system ... with a disproportionate influence on the rest of higher education' (Labour Party, 1982: 49).

The University Extension Movement – The Less Traditional Story

The debates about working-class men's involvement in adult education have often rehearsed openly the tension between dependence on existing educational resources and institutions on the one hand, and self-generated, politicised conceptions of education on the other. Even the 1908 Oxford Report, quite radical in its perception that the absence of the working-class from the universities meant not only that working-class people were being 'wronged', but also that the universities had 'sterilized' themselves, played out its fears around such stereotypes as the one that working-class people who entered Oxford might be 'carried off their feet by the social life ... and forget their own people'. The debate about whether the working class should be 'given' access to dominant culture rather than the political means to generate and develop a distinct curriculum persists into our own time, highlighting the political reality that elite groups remain in a position of patronage.[4]

In relation to working-class women, these tensions are exacerbated by a history which has placed women in a position of social, economic and educational dependence on men, which has rendered political struggle for women problematic in any clearly 'independent' form. What we have seen in relation to the Adult School Movement, the Mechanics' In-

stitutes, the Working Men's Colleges, and even the Guilds, are some of the difficulties for women in attempting to educate themselves either alongside or independently of men. And what we frequently see in the history of the Women's Suffrage Movement, even again in the history of the Guilds, is the seemingly necessary intervention of middle-class women in order to secure any kind of 'independent' activity for working-class women, precisely because of working-class women's greater economic and ideological dependence on men (so notions of independence must always be qualified by the question of independence from whom).

As well as 'independence', the question of 'radicalism' has been a fraught one vis-à-vis women. The Women's Suffrage Movement, in itself, has often been dismissed as a middle-class movement, in relation to which the term 'radical' is inappropriate. And mention of the history of the University Extension Movement sets up flashing lights, signalling that this is the liberal tradition, outside the jurisdiction of questions of radicalism. The usual story of university extension *does* focus on liberal men, showing the movement emerging from within Oxbridge, after those debates in 1850, to meet the challenge of the criticisms that had been made of the two universities. As a sole explanation, however, this does not account for that delay of 17 years, between 1850 and 1867, after which the movement got under way.

My argument is that the pressure on Oxbridge came from political developments and independent groups outside of Oxbridge, at least as much from the consciences of the educationally over-privileged at Oxford and Cambridge or from government intervention. By 1871, four years after James Stuart was appointed to his fellowship at Trinity College, the Cambridge University Extension programme was being seen as a potential educational provider to what would have previously seemed the most unlikely groups of people to be corresponding with Oxbridge colleges. In that year, at least four known bodies approached Cambridge about the possibilities of help with their educational provision – the Crewe Mechanics' Institute, the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society, the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women and the Mayor of Leeds. Indeed, it is possible to argue that at least some of these groups, far from wanting to eschew their own independence in determining education, were deliberately seeking to redistribute and increase educational resources only available until that time to a small elite. The women included in these independent groups were often also involved in the Women's Suffrage Movement, making demands for educational resources as part of their commitment to the political struggle on behalf of women, and we therefore also need to raise the question of whether their activity represents a form of radicalism which often passes unrecognised.

The case for a less traditional, more radical story of university extension is perhaps made easier by the fact that, historically, women's relationship to the University Extension Movement is vastly and therefore patently different from that of men's. The men were the providers. The women were not. We could say, somewhat perversely, that women were independent in this late Victorian history in one clear sense – that they

were independent of access to the key institutional providers of post-school education for most of the Victorian period – Oxbridge, London and Dublin. Women were not alone in thinking that an approach to these institutions, particularly once the signal of these liberal men involved in university extension had been given, did not come from a position of hopeless political compromise, uselessly sullied by what Oxbridge represented in terms of dominant culture and elitist education. In other words, the Rochdale Pioneers too believed that their position of exclusion gave them every right to believe that it was high time to attempt to grasp some 'privileged' resources. (There are many instances, though, of liberal Oxbridge men believing and continuing to believe that the dominance of women in their extension classes was a distraction from the real purpose.)

Even women's struggles vis-à-vis Oxbridge itself tell an illuminating story, as 'the women's degree campaigns at Oxford and Cambridge can be seen as microcosms of the national struggle for female enfranchisement' (McWilliams-Tullberg, 1977: 118). It is not within the scope of this account to review those battles, but it is important to register that 'the story of the admission of women to degrees at Cambridge is a telling illustration of masculine ambivalence toward women's struggle for emancipation' (McWilliams-Tullberg, 1977: 117). In other words, whilst some Cambridge men were attempting to open up aspects of university education to women, a persuasive body of others was actively resisting women's attempts to define education on their own terms.

Prominent figures such as Emily Davies and Josephine Butler clearly felt under pressure to drop certain political commitments in relation to the liberation of women, in the act of prioritising the struggle for educational reforms. Emily Davies, who played such a forceful part in the history of women's entry to Cambridge, felt she had to resign from the Women's Suffrage Committee when she took up that cause. The association of Cambridge with the Women's Suffrage Movement is often given as part of the reason why it took so long for the university to facilitate access to degrees for women. There is ambivalent commentary on this, ranging from the rather depressing but familiar idea that women were somehow to blame for being too outspoken, to the more convincing explanation that it was men's resistance, not to education for women *per se*, but to women's organisation of the campaign, which was the problem. Certainly, in Oxford, male dons objected explicitly to women's attempt to control their own education, voicing the lingering prejudices about the possible ill-effects of study on women's minds and bodies (Brittain, 1960: 69). In Cambridge, 'anti-feminist sentiments' persisted (Brittain, 1960: 70). When women agitated for degrees, they were scorned and outvoted. When men did so on their behalf, the battle was won.

We see these tensions reflected in debates between women within Oxbridge. The running argument between Emily Davies and Anne Clough about whether women should follow the same curriculum as men or a different one, is well documented (McWilliams-Tullberg, 1977; Bryant, 1979). And we could here move the argument back outwards again, to suggest that that controversy had bearing on adult education as

a whole in the period, revealing 'the dilemmas involved when trying to equalize educational opportunities for women and men without changing the power structure of "male" colleges', and indeed of male education as a whole (Purvis, 1989: 174). It is not until the 1920s and 1930s that the attack on those structures is articulated, but it is forceful when it comes (most notably in Woolf, 1938). However, that is another story.

The important story here is one that goes beyond women's battles, symbolic or literal, to gain access to Oxbridge or even higher education as a whole. Groups like the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association were campaigning, primarily, on behalf of women in the under-privileged 'regions', particularly the big Northern cities, whose access to educational resources were minimal. Crucially, too, their campaigns were often linked to debates, not only about their own education, but to the national education system as a whole, where the expansion of public education was increasingly to demand women as teachers, particularly those of young children, and where the inadequacies of girls' experience of secondary schooling had come to light (Miller, 1992).

Against this background, we could re-write some of the story of the University Extension Movement to show additional characters to those of William Sewell, James Stuart, Edward Carpenter, and other enlightened male reformers in Oxbridge. The Leeds Ladies' Educational Association, created in the same year as James Stuart's Trinity appointment, appears to have been instrumental both in establishing the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, and in campaigning for educational resources for the women of Leeds. It figured its own, lesser-known protagonists, including Lucy Wilson, Miss Heaton and Theodosia Marshall.

Star-Gazing versus Suffrage

Perhaps more importantly, though, we can examine the illuminating discrepancies between the intentions of these bodies in approaching Cambridge University and the actuality of the type of provision that the University's incipient extension programme could offer. In his autobiography, Edward Carpenter, one of the early extension lecturers transmitted to the provinces by James Stuart, is persuasively genial about his meeting with the Leeds Ladies, and his lecture programme in Leeds (Carrpenter, 1916). What the Leeds Ladies had wanted from Cambridge was resources to support a teacher training programme, a course in pedagogic theory and method, a means of developing women's teaching skills in themselves and as part of the way of addressing the inadequacies of the teaching of girls. They had stipulated this requirement in their letter to James Stuart. What the latter has to offer, though, is Edward Carpenter, along with his particular subject specialism, astronomy. Edward Carpenter knows nothing whatever, he readily admits, of teacher training. Having secured a contact, having managed to tap into what one Oxbridge man described as the golden stream of Cambridge resources, the Leeds Ladies keep Carpenter on for astronomy, the final irony being that, however fine the Rosse telescope, and however committed Edward Car-

penter is to a somewhat progressive pedagogic method, wishing to support theory with practice, seeking to encourage his students to use telescopes as well as be informed of their findings, it is difficult to see the stars through the smoke of industrial Leeds.

Edward Carpenter has urbane and charming things to say, too, about the Leeds Ladies themselves. He sees himself as a gentleman mediator between women of competing passions, drawing him into 'deadly plots'. There is perhaps another perspective that could be adopted here to tell a different story, including a whole story about Lucy Wilson herself, who is described in the following terms: 'Like many "advanced" women she was very *doctrinaire*; and having swallowed a principle (like a poker) would remain absolutely unbending and unyielding, and, in the second place, she hated men. On one occasion she got up a "Women's Rights" Meeting in Leeds' (Carpenter, 1916: 82). Edward Carpenter is not slow to recognise the predicament of many Victorian women: 'Certainly the disparity of the sexes and the absolute non-recognition of sexual needs – non-recognition either in life or in thought – weighed terribly hard upon the women of that period' (Carpenter, 1916: 95). But his attitudes to the Leeds Ladies reflects some of the tensions in male attitudes at the time; that telling witticism about the poker and the slightly jocular, disparaging use of 'got up' to describe Lucy Wilson's organisation of a meeting about women's rights.

The important argument, though, is about what this glimpse at the supposed character of Lucy Wilson can show about women's involvement in the struggle for adult education, for women's self-determination through education, and for access to educational resources on their own terms. The history of the Guilds, the Extension Movement and of late nineteenth-century Oxbridge, is a story of highly-charged connections with the Women's Suffrage Campaign. It is, to that extent at the very least, about a coherent strategy on behalf of women's self-determination in relation to education for political and social change, a strategy under considerable and sometimes coercive pressure to fragment.

As 1867 has carried real and symbolic force in this account, so we can see some significant events in 1919. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act removed existing legal barriers to women entering the professions, a sub-group of Lloyd George's Reconstruction Committee recommended that universities should generate extension programmes as 'a normal and necessary part of their functions', and, symbolically enough, though perhaps somewhat surprising in its belated aspect, Ruskin College agreed to accept women students (Kelly, 1970: 267–81). As I mention earlier, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, with the vote for at least some women newly won, was metamorphosing from a political campaign to one for 'citizenship education'. In many ways, though, 1919 was only the beginning of the struggle. The issues raised, implicitly and explicitly, by Guildswomen and by women's intervention in the University Extension Movement, were too dramatic in their social and political configurations to be solved by legislation alone, and without a continuation of the struggle for independent movement, which women abandoned at their peril.

A handful of Oxbridge dons may have seen the issue as being about channelling the golden stream of Oxbridge resources to what they no doubt saw as particularly worthy representatives of the deserving masses, but the stark fact remains that they could not supply what the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association required from them. Women's attempts to gain the tools by which to further their own education for social and political change were met by Oxbridge men with either resistance, incomprehension or plain lack of skill. Whether we see groups like the Leeds Ladies attempting to seize or appropriate resources, or simply asking, perhaps misguidedly, for help, we remain confronted with that inadequate response; that, however inappropriately, Oxbridge dons could at best supply their own expertise – the authority of the specialist subject discipline, whatever it might presume to be. They were approached for teacher training, badly needed by women striving to educate themselves, their sisters, their daughters, to enter the public sphere on better terms, in the struggle for political rights and liberation. That the best the men had to offer to that struggle was a particularly opaque form of star-gazing, is a story which continues.

Notes

1. For another occasion, though, there is a whole twentieth-century history to be written about the extent to which the Townswomen's Guilds lost, or at least the accounts of it have lost, a sense of how to maintain a politicised commitment to education. Readers can see the tension in Mary Stott, *Organization Woman. The story of the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds*, Heinemann, 1978.
2. The connection John Russell makes between Oxbridge and a national education system is one which, as we see later in this account, is also made by women campaigners for the suffrage and educational change.
3. Royal Commission on the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Hansard, volume 153, 1922, recommended that there was a need to discuss the position of women students and teachers.
4. The construction of this polarity, with dominant culture on the one hand and self-determination on the other, has dogged the discussion of working-class children and schooling. Here, the issue of class has often been confused with the issue of compulsory state schooling, as if to argue that if working-class children have rights of access to dominant culture, then we (? professional educators? whoever?) have the right to force it upon them. Surely, we have to dispense with the polarity, if working-class people are to generate education on their own terms?

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