

Malcolmson, Patricia E. *English Laundresses: A Social History, 1850-1930*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press. Pp. xv, 220. Illustrations. \$26.95 cloth (U.S.)

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Tausky and Distefano, architectural historian and English Professor, provide a substantive account of the theoretical framework that produced these masterpieces of cultural complicity, and coincidentally outline the ideas that formed our twentieth century outlook; the theory of the Gothic Revival, concern for the most up to date materials and methods, a preoccupation with scientific progressive (modern) thought. But at the same time, it is very clear that for the victorian there was always an easy way to distinguish between architecture and mere building. Architecture employed elements drawn from historic traditions of architecture; mere building did not. Therefore, even the most original, progressive and scientific of architects necessarily pursued his innovative ideals within a framework of historically derived forms. This did not make architecture unoriginal or immoral; quite the contrary. The works described are often quite fresh and individual, even when they are at the same time most familiar even to anyone who has never been anywhere near the city of London, Ontario.

Finally, the literary connection. This is obviously a vein that could be much more heavily worked. Architects engaged in professional practice, and clients concerned with their investment, do not tend to frolic around with literary allusions. Exactly how it was that late victorian architecture incorporated this kind of content is still a question worth pursuing. Tausky and Distefano draw some parallels between literature and architecture but do not really engage the question very deeply; it requires a separate work with this specific focus. But what is perhaps of greatest interest, is how meaningful cultural values are developed in ordinary practice, not just in outstanding works. The real argument may be that architecture must embody content that goes beyond the immediate circumstances of function and construction if it is to have real cultural significance. The victorian architecture presented in this book certainly did have this, and indeed still does. We need it badly.

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Malcolmson, Patricia E. *English Laundresses: A Social History, 1850-1930*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press. Pp. xv, 220. Illustrations. \$26.95 cloth (U.S.).

Patricia Malcolmson's book focuses on the work, health, life-style, family attitudes, and habits of English laundresses, the way their trade changed under the impact of technological, social, and market forces, and the relationship between unpaid domestic work and paid professional labour. In addition, *English Laundresses* is designed as a case study for the exploration of important themes in economic, labour, social, and women's history: for example, the connection

between home and workplace, the household economies of the poor, the growth of the service sector, the transformation of a hand industry into a mechanized industrial process, the formulation of public policy and introduction of government regulation, and women's employment issues and the reaction to them by feminists, trade unionists, and other reformers.

Following an introduction exploring the structure of the laundry trade and its importance in the Victorian economy, Malcolmson examines the women who dominated it, and the way their work fitted into the general circumstances of their lives. In the process, she provides a real sense of the disruption which boiling water, making soap, removing stains, washing, bleaching, starching, rinsing, drying, mangling, and ironing caused to working-class family life. Most laundry workers, she notes, were married or widowed women of limited means, who, despite low wages and back-breaking work in unpleasant conditions, considered laundering a desirable occupation because of its adaptability to domestic responsibilities and the ease with which it could be entered and pursued with few skills or expensive tools.

Malcolmson goes on to discuss the long, complicated process of regulating the trade, placing it within a broad spectrum of social amelioration which saw a tortuous struggle between the forces of reform and reaction, and ultimately the passage of an array of experimental social legislation. In considerable detail, she explains how the laundry industry was changed by legislation, how the legislation was administered, amended, and expanded, and how the issues of concern in the industry altered as time passed with shifts in general social policy, the impact of war, and changes in the central concerns of reformers, feminists, and laundresses themselves.

Laundry workers, Malcolmson argues, tried with varying degrees of success to influence the conditions under which they worked, as individuals, as members of unions, and as uneasy supporters of middle-class reformers. "By the 1920s," she concludes, "the self-help of laundry workers and the sisterly help of union organizers, other unionized women, and middle-class supporters had combined — aided by wartime experience, the impetus of the Trade Board, and the stimulus of press attention — to increase worker solidarity and confidence and to produce measurable benefits in many a workplace" (p. 122). But she notes at the same time, with particular reference to the actions of middle-class social feminists, that while they contributed substantially to bringing about factory inspection, industrial legislation, minimum wages, and laundry unions, their conviction that women's primary place was in the home as wives and mothers meant a lack of interest in effecting a significant reorientation of women's place in the industrial system. Malcolmson believes that in some ways the reformers actually impeded laundresses' pursuit of a better life.

The last of the book's five chapters discusses the evolution of the service sector under the impetus of urbanization, growing prosperity, improved transportation, and changing personal habits, and the gradual conversion of the laundry trade from a domestic to a modern factory-based industry. This is followed by an epilogue which reiterates main themes and provides an overview of developments in laundering since the 1930s, and by a useful bibliographical essay.

English Laundresses is fascinating, careful and competently constructed. It is also extensively researched in nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals, pioneering private and published investigations, inspector's reports, parliamentary papers, local histories, feminist literature, and histories of women's work and trade unionism. Malcolmson presents a convincing portrait of her heroines as tough, resourceful, assertive women, who often valued the independence their work gave them, and who were both victims and beneficiaries of a changing social and economic system. Because of the general soundness of her book, the author can be forgiven for telling readers about the hand-, workshop- and factory-laundering process in so much detail that their skin will fairly pucker from the 'dampness' rising from the pages.

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Tyler, John W. *Smugglers & Patriots: Boston Merchants and the Advent of the American Revolution*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986. Pp. xiv, 349. Appendix, bibliography, illustrations, index, tables. \$25.00 (U.S.).

Many of the people and some of the events so judiciously portrayed in John Tyler's engaging analysis of Boston merchants will be unfamiliar to readers well-versed in literature on the American Revolution. To most scholars of the period, names like Hancock, Adams, and Otis represent standard historical fare, as do events like the Stamp Act, Townshend Acts, and the Boston Tea Party. But how many historians readily recognized Benjamin Barons, Solomon Davis, John Mein, The Boston Society for Encouraging Trade and Commerce, or the Free Port Act of 1766? For those who do not, *Smugglers & Patriots* offers a fresh perspective on the way little known individuals and events contributed to the advent of the Revolution.

Unlike Arthur M. Schlesinger's monolithic treatment of traders in *Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (1918), Tyler argues that Boston's merchant community (N= 439) was divided into three identifiable groups. "General merchants," trading according to the dictates of British colonial policy, were most numerous. "Dry

goods merchants," dealing exclusively with British or East India goods, were more specialized and figured prominently in supporting the nonimportation agreements associated with the Townshend Acts. "Smugglers," seeking to avoid duties on molasses or import goods directly from Europe (primarily Holland), were small in number, but nonetheless politically influential. As Tyler's narrative unfolds, it is quite evident that a strong connection existed between the business interests of each group and political behaviour.

The controversy surrounding the suspension of customs collector Benjamin Barons in 1759 for his liberal seizure policies is a case in point. Eager to safeguard their illicit profits, leading smugglers Melatiah Bourn and Solomon Davis (whose ledgers and letterbooks Tyler uses skillfully to identify illegal traders) supported Barons in a counter-attack against his customs house rivals. As a matter of timing, the Barons affair tied into larger issues, like the writs of assistance case (1761), thus tending to intensify the emerging battle over British colonial policy. Ultimately, Barons lost his bid for reinstatement, but neither "smugglers nor their merchant colleagues forgot the lessons they learned in . . . their struggle against British efforts to restrict their trade within the confines of the Navigation Acts" (p. 63).

That struggle emanated from the Boston Society for Encouraging Trade and Commerce (BSETC), the primary "mouthpiece" of Boston's merchant community in the 1760s. Thus, it was BSETC members who spearheaded the attack on George Grenville's revenue measures, influenced deliberations in the town meeting, and rallied merchants against compromise proposals (like the Free Port Act) offered by the Rockingham Whigs. Clearly, Boston merchants had grown accustomed to the benefits afforded by unfettered trade during years of salutary neglect, and, until circumstances permitted one interest group to prosper at the expense of another, they maintained a united front against British legislation.

Unanimity fragmented with the passage of the Townshend Acts, however. Nonimportation provided dry goods merchants and smugglers with an opportunity to weed out under-stocked competitors and fly the banner of patriotism simultaneously. Disagreement over support for, and adherence to, non-importation divided the merchant community and fostered a newspaper war sparked largely by John Mein who, as printer of the *Boston Chronicle*, published the names of patriots who violated the agreements. The unwanted publicity adversely affected Boston's reputation and caused "lesser merchants" to question "the disinterested virtue of the patriot leadership" (p. 137).

Boston's merchant community never regained its unanimity. Aside from pinpointing divisions within the trade, Tyler argues convincingly that the Townshend Acts split Bostonians on a more profound level. More than the Tea Act or the Coercive Acts, it was nonimportation that "became the cru-