

Though Anderson begins her book with an extensive theoretical justification, what she has to say is not about theory but about method. She takes issue, for example, with the fact that historians have a penchant for staying within the confines of a single nation or single colony. Since penitentiary systems connect the empire's most remote corners, it is only through patiently skimming through globally dispersed archives that the lives of convicts can be reconstructed. But other sources are needed as well. Individuals cannot be positioned without proper knowledge of their genealogy and, yes, their outward appearance. A key figure in Anderson's book, for example, is Amelia Bennett, a victim of a convicted rebel leader. Her name suggests sturdy Britishness. The book, however, carries a beautiful picture of this mid-nineteenth century young lady, which reveals her mixed European-Indian descent. Moreover, her genealogy conveys Indo-French roots. The picture and genealogical facts make us smile when we read that during the Great Mutiny, when Amelia was captured by rebels, she was able to pass as an Indian woman "tanned through the exposure" to the sun. Amelia's complexion was not something to be mentioned in texts, as that would have offended a woman of her class.

This brings me to the next point, namely that Anderson's book invites cross-imperial comparisons on the topics of race, class, gender, and education. In her highly original chapter on Amelia's abduction during the mutiny, entitled "Liaquat Ali and Amelia Bennett", Anderson explains that before 1857 the understanding of nationalism and race had not yet acquired the firmness it would acquire by around 1900. Through her meticulously researched examples she shows how this process took place. The rebel leader Liaquat Ali, once a sepoy soldier in the British colonial army, became enlisted in the anti-colonialist historiography of the early twentieth century, whereas by that time the Indo-French Bennett had acquired the status of an icon of pure British moral superiority. Without pictures, without genealogy and family history, we would not have learned how conceptions of race, class, and national belonging have been reworked over time.

Conversely, postcolonial approaches claiming that the "colonial mind" is locked up in texts run the risk of simply reiterating their own theoretical assumptions without being aware of it. In that respect the fact that Anderson has not revisited some of the positions of postcolonialism, and perhaps of the New Imperial History as well, in order to confront them with her findings, based as they are upon sophisticated social history, might represent a lost opportunity. Even without such an explicit confrontation, however, Anderson has written an important book that courageously crosses the Rubicon between theoretical approaches to colonial history and social history. *Alea iacta est*, I hope.

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MUÑOZ ABELEDO, LUISA. Género, trabajo y niveles de vida en la industria conservera de Galicia, 1870–1970. Icaria editorial [etc.], Barcelona 2010. xii, 340 pp. Ill. € 20.00. doi:10.1017/S0020859013000369

Analyses of the world of labour from a gender perspective have become a sphere that we can already consider as classical in social history. Since it became established in the

academic world in the 1980s, in the turbulent methodological scene being experienced at the time by the history discipline, new themes have been introduced which required novel approaches.¹

The work by Laura Muñoz is at the heart of this current. Her explicit mission is to study the labour market in the Galician fish-canning industry and the living standards of those employed in it from a gender perspective in the century which extends from 1870 to 1970. She advances progressively from presenting the general characteristics of this productive sector toward matters related to the organization of labour, then indicating the traits which characterize the employment of female labour in each of its production phases. Salary levels and their effect on household economies, the causes and effects of labour segmentation and segregation, the specific impact of crowding out on the employment of women, and the characteristics of the labour market in accordance with the aspects indicated, are some of the issues that are developed over the eight chapters into which the book is divided.

The first part takes us back to the end of the eighteenth century when family businesses devoted to the salted fish industry began to be set up in Galicia. This was an activity which required a scarce investment in fixed capital but which, by contrast, was very labour intensive. These origins gave the sector a series of traits which it maintained until well into the twentieth century: seasonality of employment, flexibility of labour, labour segregation, different working conditions depending on gender, and intensive employment of women with wages which were half those that their male colleagues received.

Toward the 1880s, the salting activity began to transform into the canning industry, although both activities were combined and coexisted until well into the first third of the twentieth century, without the above-mentioned traits being altered. Laura Muñoz offers us a detailed survey of this process, and of how these factors affected female labour activity. The determinants of household economies, which would help us to understand and explain some of the situations discussed by the author, stand outside the framework analysed, although some of these aspects are indicated in the third part of the work. These include the combination of agricultural and manufacturing activities, and the prominence that each of them acquired at different moments in accordance with the seasonality of activities, which was very marked in both cases. Also touched on are the strategies developed by employers when it came to establishing and exercising mechanisms to control non-commercial activities and thus be able to influence both the “subsistence” of families, and the reaction of employees to labour conditions.

We know this well for the same chronological framework in Asturias thanks to the book by José María Sierra, *El obrero soñado*.² In that case, the business strategy endeavoured to eliminate any means for the workers to obtain subsistence autonomously beyond the commodification of labour, with the aim of making the support of household economies depend exclusively on the wage ratio, thus being able to condition the capacity for endurance to a greater extent at times of conflict. Beyond the differences that we can pinpoint between the Asturian and Galician contexts, it would have been interesting to insert the characteristics highlighted by Laura Muñoz in this framework of relations which influence its configuration beyond the strictly labour context.

It is interesting to observe the process of mechanization that the author offers us in this first part. As with many other sectors, the introduction of mechanized sectors represented

1. Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005).

2. José Sierra Alvarez, *El obrero soñado* (Madrid, 1990).

the feminization – and infantilization – of some of these activities. Machines eliminated the capacity for “artisanal” control of the processes, removing the need to know specific skills to carry out the activity. This led to the disappearance of the learning processes which controlled access to the trade and, therefore, the capacity for endurance which the workers possessed. Mechanization of the canning process, in addition to reducing costs and introducing a gender-based division in the activity, feminizing activities traditionally performed by men, eliminated the control of the labour process which was in the hands of skilled workers and established greater control of the labour markets by the employers. The workers only maintained a certain capacity to control the production processes, labour market, and working conditions with those activities which continued to require specific trade skills (for example, welding).

The application of Taylorist methods during the 1920s and 1930s affected this situation. Likewise, the fact that the highest levels of stable contracts could be found among the male workforce, compared with female instability, was determined by the employers’ need to guarantee a skilled and difficult to replace workforce. Here we could add the consideration of whether labour segregation by gender was the factor that established the restriction on promotion and improvements for women or whether, conversely, the latter determined the former. Even in this sphere, however, it is difficult to consider this outside the aforementioned family strategies.³

In this same respect, we could mention the introduction of piecework formulae which, beyond the direct dependence on the evolution of salaries, was also related to different social and family contexts for their application and acceptance by workers. The analysis of the proletarianization processes, of the complex means by which they were imposed and the variety of situations existing is thus essential to understand labour phenomena in contemporary societies.⁴

The last section of this first part focuses on associative activity in the canning industry. Here, the author follows a more classical line in relation to trade-union organization and its evolution, protests about working conditions, working hours, social insurance, healthcare benefits, the workers’ press. She refers to some female aspects: for example, the conflicts generated concerning maternity insurance, but none of the factors is linked to all the determinants analysed previously, and a gender-analysis perspective, which is missing, would allow a continuation of the reflections traced in the previous chapters. The low levels of union membership among women employed in the sector are thus indicated, and the differences between canners and welders in intensity of associative activity are established. The reasons for its genesis are not, however, analysed and they are not linked to the broader contexts in which it is observed that, until the beginning of the twentieth century, the skilled sectors were the main participants in workers’ associations.

The world of unskilled labour, beyond the precariousness which characterizes it, has scarce mechanisms for collective cohesion. It is therefore important to untangle the world of labour from its strict margins, insert it in a broader social sphere, and give it a greater degree of complexity. As the author points out, beyond economic factors, cultural and ideological factors also affect the existence of different labour conditions between men

3. Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures: Industry, Innovation, and Work in Britain* (London [etc.], 1994).

4. Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden, 2008).

and women in the canning industry, but she does not explain how these factors are constructed specifically in the sphere analysed or the process of social construction of these cultural and ideological perceptions.

The second part, focusing on the period of the Franco dictatorship (1936–1977), offers a much less profuse analysis. We are provided with an overview of the economy in the period, from the post-war autarchy – characterized by the decapitalization of companies and the lack of raw materials – to the developmentalism of the 1960s. She refers to state interventionism in the canning industry in relation to the organization of productive activity, of new labour relations of a corporate nature applied by virtue of the new political framework which established full control over labour relations and over the labour markets by the employers with the aim of increasing productivity. This was accompanied by scarce conflict due to the presence of the vertical trade union. The author concludes that this panorama reproduced, or even increased, the sexual segregation of female employment in the Galician canning industry.

The third and final part of the book focuses on the specific case of the town of Bueu, starting from the documentation of some of the companies established there and from the oral accounts of some of the workers. The quantitative data provided allows the author to observe the degree of employment, gender differences, employment structure differences, repercussion of the rate of activity on population structures, child employment, living standards of working families, and evolution of salary indices. This is accompanied by an interesting statistical system which tries to establish the differences in three specific contexts: the first third of the twentieth century; (to a lesser extent) the years of autarchy; and the impact of the developmentalism of the 1960s.

In short, this book provides interesting information about the history of labour, specifically focused on the Galician canning industry, although its reflections could be extrapolated to other sectors and activities. The imbalance that we find between the different parts which make up the book is caused by the different type of sources used in each case. However, we could demand greater analytical homogeneity between them, with an in-depth examination of the gender perspective, beyond pointing out the segregated nature of female labour on a descriptive level.

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CHIN, ANGELINA. *Bound to Emancipate. Working Women and Urban Citizenship in Early Twentieth-century China and Hong Kong*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham [etc.] 2012. xiii, 279 pp. Ill. £51.95.
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Angelina Chin's *Bound to Emancipate* explains how social and political changes during the early decades of the twentieth century affected understandings of lower-class laboring women in Chinese society. It provides a compelling story of the ways that political elites, reformers, and intellectuals (be they colonial or Chinese nationalists) framed the debate