EMBODYING WOMEN AS AGENTS OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE WITHIN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS ON REVOLUTION

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FRONTISPIECE

…When bodies assemble on the street, in the square, or in other forms of public space (including virtual ones), they are exercising a plural and performative right to appear, one that asserts and instates the body in the midst of the political field and with its expressive and signifying function, delivers a bodily demand for a more liveable set of economic, social and political conditions no longer afflicted by induced forms of precarity.

- Judith Butler

I have seen 'the people' not as personifications of heroism or passive victimhood. Rather, they are flesh-and-blood human beings with some agency, shaped by the distinctive circumstances and values of their times, sometimes accommodating, sometimes resisting, sometimes suffering, sometimes escaping, sometimes changing things and trying something new.

- Natalie Zemon Davis

What does being a thinking subject, an intellectual, mean for women-of-colour from working-class origins? It means being concerned about the ways knowledges are invented. It means continually challenging institutionalized discourses. It means being suspicious of the dominant culture's interpretation of 'our' experience, of the way they 'read' us.

- *Gloria Anzaldúa*

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives… Militancy no longer means guns at high noon if it ever did. It means actively working for change sometimes in the absence of any surety that change is coming. It means doing the unromantic and tedious work necessary to forge meaningful coalitions, and it means recognizing which coalitions are possible and which are not...Any future vision which can encompass all of us, by definition, must be complex and expanding, not easy to achieve.

- *Audre Lorde*

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about women in revolutionary struggle. More specifically, it is about women who, locally, nationally, and internationally, are set on building a new and better world. My overall objective is to enrich our understanding of how and why their contributions as historical 'agents of revolutionary change' are critical to the history of ideas on revolution.

The existing literature provided fruitful material for this aim, but I found little on such women, other than as dramatic icons or in non-essential roles, so peripheral to the ideas, arguments and theories on revolution. Further research indicated that, as Louise Raw has argued, many such women are not just absent, neglected, or forgotten, within revolutionary history, they are 'hidden' both from and by it (Raw, 2011).

This insight informs the preliminary ideas on the adoption of the concept of 'embodiment' as the basis for a for a theoretical framework of analysis and the development of a broad definition of revolution applicable to women. This incorporates consideration of the sources, processes and possible consequences of women's invisibility for the theory and practice of revolution. It, however, moves beyond it to embody women's revolutionary actions with the aim of re-envisioning them as active subjects within revolutionary history. I have drawn on Raya Dunayevskaya's (1991) description of such women as both revolutionary "Reason and force" (author's capitals). This signals that, as well as being a force for change, they have the capacity for developing ideas and theories that are grounded in, but go beyond, their revolutionary experiences.

To draw the strands together, a case study of a strike in 1888 led by women in the match-making industry is included. Its primary function is to illustrate, within a real-life context of women's collective revolutionary action, how the identified research problem of theoretical 'blindness' serves to render women invisible as historical agents of revolutionary change. It is also to reflexively link theory and practice and the role of revolutionary women in deepening our understanding of both.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis took longer to write than expected because of the illness and death of my husband John. I am grateful for the support and kindness of my family and friends to continue writing despite my loss of a wonderful partner and critical friend.

I am very grateful to Jane Thompson and Sue Mathieson, who gave academic support to my application, and thought the ideas within it were interesting, and still do. I am indebted to my Supervisors, Professor Ingrid Sharp and Dr Corinne Painter, for their patience, understanding, and intellectual support not just in getting the thesis completed but in helping me to maintain my enthusiasm and enjoyment in the topic of revolutionary women and its complexities. I am also grateful to Karen Priestley, the Departmental Administrator for being there with effective kindness at critical points and encouraging me to continue despite the difficulties.

Finally, my very sad but overwhelming gratitude is to my husband John and to my special friend Sheila who both believed that this attempt to write women into the history of ideas on revolution mattered, but did not live to see its completion.

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ACRONYMS

General:

BL:	Black Lives Matter revolutionary political movement
B&M:	Bryant and May
LGBTQIA+:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning
WLM:	Women's Liberation Revolutionary Movement

The Strike:

ASL:	Anti-Sweating League
MWS:	Match Women's Strike
MWG:	Match Women and Girls
MWU:	Match Women's Union
MMU:	Match Makers Union
NFWW:	National Federation of Women Workers
PP:	Parliamentary Papers
RCL:	Royal Commission on Labour
TUC:	Trades Union Congress
WCG:	Women's Cooperative Guild
WIC:	Women's Industrial Council
WTUL:	Women's Trade Union League
WTUPL:	Women's Protective and Provident League

Notes on usage of title of the Strike

'Bryant and May' The Company

The registered trade name 'Bryant and May' still exists but now just as a brand name for matches produced by a Swedish Company outside the UK.

The 1888 strike and the strikers within the Bryant and May Factories,

Unless quoting or summarizing other works, the strike is referred to throughout as '*The Match Women's Strike'* rather than the familiar 'Match Girls Strike'. This is to reflect the wide age range of the strikers which is falsely typified as just young girls between 12-15 years. Although many were very young, those involved in critical events, meetings and, decisions were usually adult. The strikers are referred to throughout as 'women and girls' so that issues such as that of child labour can be raised separately where appropriate. It is also to recognize that, though not the initiators, men and boys were also part of the strike. They are referred to by their gender and age as appropriate. (See Appendix 3 for photos and images that confirm the accuracy of these points.)

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Introduction, purpose, focus, and research questions

Introduction

This thesis is about women in revolutionary struggles: in the past and now; sometimes with men, at other times separate, or in opposition to them. In this respect, like numerous other studies, it is concerned to recognize and value women's revolutionary activism in different times and places against economic, social and political injustice. It, however, aims to go further. Its goal is to understand more fully the lived reality of their activism in political, social, and economic struggles, within their community, nation, or across the world.

This is also not new. Biographers, writers, and scholars have dug deeply into the individual lives of such women to find out why and how they become revolutionaries, their achievements and the obstacles they face within the historical context-specific situation of political and social struggle. Taken together with individual revolutionary women's own memoirs and autobiographies, this has made the essence of the revolutionary consciousness, political activism, and lived experience of many women appealing and enthralling reading.[1]

Purpose and focus

The overall objective of this thesis is to contribute to the ideas and theory building within the prior research and writing on revolution and the place given to women within it. The focus is specifically on women set on creating conditions and horizons of possibility for a new social, economic, or political order through revolutionary change. A study such as this that brings such women to the forefront of revolutionary theory and praxis is historically interesting. It is also appropriate and timely.

As David Graeber pointed out, "rather than disappearing as a political horizon, revolutionary projects are being renewed and reconstituted along new lines (or, more accurately perhaps, through the maturation of some previously subordinate revolutionary strands) [his parenthesis]" (Graeber 2007, 318). The possibility of revolutionary movements developing, either within countries and globally, or specifically against environmental destruction, patriarchal, colonialists, and racist systems, is, therefore, once more on current campaigning and academic agendas and in grave international political debates on war and conflict and the legitimacy of violence within them.

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[1] See for example: Peter Hudis (Ed) (2013, 2019) 'Rosa Luxemburg' Vols 1/2; Sarah Irving (2012), 'Leila Khaled'; Cathy Porter (1980, updated 2014) 'Alexandra Kollontai'; Paula J. Giddings (2008) 'Ida B. Wells Sword Among Lions'; Yvonne Kapp (1972, 1976,) 'Eleanor Marx' Vols 1,2; Anne Haverty (1988) 'Constance Markievicz'; Dale Fetherling (1974) 'Mother Jones'.

Women, many of them young, have not just joined or supported the current movements for revolutionary change, they are at the centre of many of them as visionaries, organizers, and strategists. For example, the environmental activist Greta Thunberg has led campaigns challenging world leaders to take immediate action on the human causes of climate change. Alicia Garza, similarly, is the founder and a central strategist of the American BlackLivesMatter (BLM) Movement. This is now a bye-word and rallying cry for struggles challenging the power of white powerful political elites and transforming public institutions that justify and perpetuate racist polices and actions.

Their imaginative ideas, knowledge, and lived experiences are important in the current debates. They are also inspirational for women political activists now and in the future. A fascinating question is what motives them as women, whether prominent or not, to cross the threshold from their private lives and take up arms, their pen, camera, music, or paintbrush for a public world of revolution. Attributing full historical political agency to them in the exercise of their revolutionary actions, makes a theoretical case for them to be situated as active revolutionary subjects within the history of ideas of revolution.

The identification of two serious research problems

(i) The initial idea, purpose, and focus:

The research proposal for the thesis was to identify the goals and lived reality of the activism of two prominent 19C revolutionary women, Alexandra Kollontai and Eleanor Marx, through a case study of each of them. It was also to characterise ways in which the lessons of their revolutionary knowledge, and the reality of their activism are enduring and can be inspiring for women activists in contemporary and future revolutionary action.

Prior reading, however, highlighted theoretical problems that made it impossible to continue to focus on these two women in isolation while also attempting to fulfil the overall aim of the thesis. As conceived, whatever its merits, it could not provide the analytical power needed to explain why, how, and where, these two women fitted within revolutionary theory and praxis as the history makers they undoubtedly were. The purpose and focus of the thesis was transformed by this concern. As a first step, research was undertaken on the biographical and other information available on the activism of a larger number of such women from different classes, ethnicities, and nations, in different times and places. While selective, it was sufficient to indicate that women have participated in historically different ways within revolutionary struggles, often demonstrating great courage, imagination, and endurance within them. The idea of adding further case studies, however, complicated rather than resolved the problem of the research proposal and a new starting point was sought.

(ii) The silence of the Literature:

The attempt to give a shape and focal point to the thesis in this way, led to a persistent observation that while such women are often included, their revolutionary roles and contributions as thinkers, writers, and activists, unlike that of their male counterparts, they are not considered critical to the theory and practice of revolution, nor their practice a defining variable within it. Their notable absence made it difficult to answer questions on the traditions, priorities, and forms of their activities. It was also puzzling and required explanation.

A search across the existing theoretical literature and scholarship in which revolution is the ‘object’ of study, however, found that few justifications were given for their absence as such women contained in either library catalogues on what is written on revolution, or as entries under ‘women’ in indexes of individual works. This turned the intellectually interesting question of why women are absent in the works of some individual authors, possibly because of category blindness, lack of theoretical interest, a view that modifiers to the term revolutionary added nothing to the concept, or blatant misogyny, into a serious research problem that had the potential to undermine the aims and objectives of the thesis. It, therefore, needed to be addressed before they could be realized.

It was also clear that it was not just a problem for this thesis. The possible cumulative effect of such women being systematically absent without justification is that the existing history of ideas on revolution is incomplete and inaccurate. It means, first, they are absent as active subjects of research; second it silences them as contributors to the theory and practice of revolution beyond their personal autobiographies. In both respects they vanish from the historical records.

A change of purpose and focus

This transformed the general purpose and focus of the thesis to the systematic absence of such women in terms of, what Mouffe and Laclau (quoted in Butler 2015, 4), called, their 'constitutive exclusion' from what is written and how this works. If they are edited out of this history, then the question of what remains within the history of revolution of their intellectual and front-line contributions as history makers within authoritative accounts within it, has an ethical element to it that also needs to be explained. As the purpose and focus changed, the thesis become more complex, and the sources explored were expanded to accommodate this change.

Part One: the specific focus is on, first, the possible role of narrow and restrictive definitions of revolution within theoretical studies of revolution; second, the contribution of 'sex-blindness' to it. A case study of a successful strike led by women in 1888 is included as part of this research structure to illustrate, animate, and inform, the conceptual problems within a real-life context.

Part Two: the concept of 'embodiment' is introduced and elaborated on as a theoretical tool. This is seen to offer a constructive way of moving beyond a critique of the existing literature and scholarship without remaining within, what M. M. Mullaney called, the "realm of compensatory history" (Mullaney 1983, 2) in which women are uncritically added to the existing scholarship and 'revolution' as the 'object' of study remains essentially unchanged.

Risks to this approach

There are recognized risks to this approach as examples provided of the different historical forms of women's revolutionary activism included are admittedly arbitrary. It is also, to some extent, controversial; particularly on grounds of the lack of scientific rigour and the inability of the approach, which includes the use of a case study, to lead to generalisations, or test the validity of concepts used within it. The approach, however, is intended to be exploratory and a work of interpretation with the aim of learning more and gaining a deeper understanding of such women's revolutionary activities.

In other words, no claim is made that women, as historical agents of revolutionary change, have alone created the conditions, ideas, and organization for the transformations studied. This, it is hoped avoids, what Khalis and Mili in their research on the 'Arab Spring called, "faulty assumptions of causality". It, however, follows their insistence that, in what is written, such women, their activism, courage, and determination is "correlated and associated" with the socio-political transformation" and ongoing political, social, economic and legal struggles studied (Khamis & Mili 2018, viii).

Rationale for the revised thesis

The decision to revise the thesis is informed by the belief that tracing the exclusion of a critical consideration of women as historical agents of revolutionary change in this way prepares the way for more in-depth research on the topic in line with the original research proposal. It offers, that is, a new starting point for 'rethinking' the revolutionary roles and contributions of women. It also permits more general questions to be raised that cannot be readily separated from the definitions given of 'revolution' such as the distinction between collective memory, autobiography, oral history, and historical accounts based on independent observation, and the theoretical value to be given to them. This, it is hoped will lead to a different reading of revolutionary history.

Research design and questions

The thesis is analytic throughout. It is based on desk research of qualitative data across different academic fields and traditions of thought drawn from secondary sources to support the ideas and arguments within it. While it offers a critique of the existing literature and scholarship, much that is written across different genres was provides thoughtful insights on women's revolutionary activities. Thus, the aim is to build on previous research rather than make a fundamental break with it

The following research questions, informed by the overall objectives and the identified research problem, have been developed to guide the revised thesis The first three relate to the general theoretical considerations in this and the following chapter. The fourth is specific to the case study in Chapter 3.

RQ1: *How are women absent within the definitions of revolution and their application in existing theoretical literature and scholarship and how far is this because of systematic 'sex-blindness' to them as historical agents of revolutionary change within it and what are the possible consequences of this overall for the history of ideas on revolution?*

RQ2: *What can attention to the 'embodied' agency of women, and the embodied injustices they experience in their everyday lives and activism, tell us about women's historical agency in revolutionary change?*

RQ3: Is *a broader definition of 'revolution' required that brings women within it or is applicable to them, and how, if at all, can it be reconfigured and expanded to bring the wide variety of historical forms of women's actions within it?*

RQ4: *What are the sources, processes, and consequences of theoretical blindness to the embodied historical agency of the women and girl matchmakers in their Strike of 1888 and how have the representations of the strike operated to undermine its historical significance and render the women and girls within it invisible?*

Positionality Statement

Before presenting this thesis, in the spir it of self-reflexivity, I acknowledge my research standpoint as an educated white English woman from a working-class family with an academic and activist background as a socialist feminist in community politics and activism. My interest in revolutionary women began as an activist in the international women's liberation and anti-war movements in the late 1960s. It was a time of great excitement, and for many women such as me brought the promise of possibilities of change in our lives.

At the same time, it was a time of frustration and isolation for women who, also like me, felt excluded from the campaigns, rallies, and conferences because of the expectations and demands of child, family, and parent care, and the limiting situations of education attainment, class, and economic dependence on a man. Even so, it was obvious to me that while these movements were largely white and upper-middle class, women prominent within them often found their voices neutralised by cultural and legal patriarchal mechanisms that supported sexual inequality, misogyny, and sexism.

Since that time, my political activism has been informed by academic work within the fields of political philosophy and women's studies. [B]el hooks argument that while attributes regarded as 'masculine' are privileged within it, 'patriarchy has no gender but is a complex and interconnected system of oppression and people's allegiance to it is not static' (hooks 1984). This has challenged the narrow conception of patriarchy, used at the time and with it the limited idea of the 'Personal is Political' that ignored differences between women and which I had accepted.

I have since learned from women students and activists how they both intersect and cross lines of class, ethnicity, and sexuality against a backdrop of patriarchy, imperialism, and colonialism, often painfully and relentlessly for them in the day-to-day reality of their marginalized lives. They are, therefore, critical factors in their motivation to engage in political action set on bringing about revolutionary change in the hope of a better future.

This has given me the general tools for my own life-long learning and belief in the possibility of fundamental change through women's revolutionary actions. It has also helped me to identify and draw out the significance of the research problem for this thesis of theoretical ‘blindness’ to the historical agency of different women in revolutionary change in much that is written on revolution.

Finally, these theoretical tools have contributed to the critical link I make between revolutionary theory, scholarship, and practice on the conviction that, while theorizing and activism are not the same, they must continually address and renew each other. This thesis, it is hoped, will contribute to mutual recognition of the novel possibilities of women’s actions as agents of revolutionary change in which factors, across the axes of difference, are seen to be a powerful source of strength, inspiration, and genuine unity, rather than a problem to be overcome.

Summary and Introduction to next Chapter

This Introduction has provided an overview and context for the aim of the thesis to situate women as agents of revolutionary change within the history of ideas on revolution. It has identified a research problem of such women’s invisibility and set out how this will be addressed. It has indicated also how my positionality as both an activist and intellectual has influenced the general thrust of this thesis.

Chapter One that follows is based on a Literature Review of the existing theoretical literature and scholarship. The findings and conclusions from the Review are summarized at the end of the chapter.

Key words: *colonialism, historical agent, imperialism, patriarchy, revolutionary change, sex-blindness, sexist-bias, positionality.*

PART 1: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

CHAPTER ONE: A Literature Review

Conceptions of women and their absence within the changing models and approaches to the study of revolution

Introduction

This Chapter is based on the findings from a Review of the body of theoretical literature and scholarship on ‘Revolution’. The aim of the review was to identify the critical gaps to gain a deeper understanding of why, how, and with what consequences, women as historical agents of revolutionary change are systematically absent or marginalized within it. A brief outline of is first given of the historical development of the concept of Revolution and the changes given to its meaning over time. This is followed by a summary of the key findings on the theoretical issues applicable to the invisibility of such women and the conclusions drawn from them.

Outline of Historical Models and Approaches

Revolution is recognized to be “among the most complex social and political phenomena, possible (Edwards 1970, 2) and observations on them, and why they occur, are known to stretch back over 4000 years (Goldstone 1994, 1). Over that time, the concept has slowly acquired new meanings, and the term has been and still is also used interchangeably in popular usage to describe many forms of protest, revolt, and rebellion. The changes are also reflected in the different explanatory frameworks analysing the origins, causes, processes, and outcomes, of revolutions across the social and political sciences, history, anthropology, and philosophy (Inwegen, 2011).

‘Revolution’ as an analytic category

Distinct models of ‘revolution’ as an analytic category have been developed since at least the 4th century B.C. (Finlay 1987, 47-57) when philosophers such as Aristotle theorized on the concept as part of a cyclical regular ‘recurrence’ for the ‘restoration’ and ‘renewal’ of political formations against decay and corruption of an existing order (Aristotle Politics, Bk 1-6.) This model was still obvious in the 14th Century when the term first appeared in English and was retained up to the 17th Century (Arendt 1979, 43).

In contrast, writers of the 18th and 19th Centuries, including those writing specifically on the American and French Revolutions, gave the term a sharply different meaning to characterize ‘a rupture’ from the past that remains in place today. This shifted the idea of revolution, according to Arendt, to the ‘new political beginnings’ that could be achieved through human endeavour, based on reflection and choice. A new ‘Age’, that is, brought into being, as the result of what revolutionaries consciously set out to achieve, and what they do (Arendt 1979, 45).

In the nineteenth century, which Eric Hobsbawm described as the ‘Age of Revolution’ (1996), and into the early 20th century, theorists, most famously Karl Marx (Draper 2005, 1986, 1978), writing from these different fields of interest, focus generally on the role of ‘modernization’ and the failure of an existing economic, social or political order to respond to its demands as a trigger for revolution (Beecher 2021; Smith 2016; Leggett 1973). The changes from the 19th Century until now to the approaches and ideas, arguments, and explanations within them justifying the models used and examples given are also obvious in the scholarship, often referred to as ‘generational’ in its coherence and focus on revolution as the ‘object of study has developed that provides different theories on causal factors and processes that will bring revolutionary change and sustain it (see Goldstone et al survey 2022; Goldstone 2001).

The focus from the mid-20th Century was on revolution as armed struggle and tended to concentrate on the four models, conventionally treated as ‘classic’ cases: the English ‘Glorious Revolution’ in the 17th Century, the ‘American’ and ‘French Revolutions’ in the 18th Century, the ‘Russian revolution’ of the 19th Century and the Chinese Revolution of the 20th Century. These generally fitted without controversy into definitions of revolution with violence as their defining feature (Brinton 1965). From the last part of the 20th Century till now, however, the focus has increasingly widened to include different forms of political and social struggles such as those against authoritarian regimes, or for women’s rights and liberation, labour and civil rights that are not defined by violence (Defonzo 2011; Inwegan 2011; Woddis 1972). Recent work within or explicitly linked to this group of scholars has advanced the study of revolution through new ways of conceptualizing it that advance the study of revolution to encompass revolutionary struggles of the 2lst Century that are “different in both substance and form” from those of the 20th Century and earlier (Beck et al 2022, 2)

- Core ideas across the different theories relevant to this thesis:

While the definitions of the nature and scope of the term and its practical application are contested and the boundaries given to the term differ, ‘revolution’ is commonly differentiated from other forms of ‘resistance’ and ‘protest’ that also apply nonconstitutional means of achieving change. At its most basic, this accords with the core of definitions given in the Stanford Encyclopaedia, namely,

> ‘*A revolution, that is shares the negative aim of other forms of resistance to the status quo but has an additional positive aim to institute a new political, social, or economic order in the place of the existing one’*.
> (Buchanan & Motchoulsk 2023, 2017).

There is also some commonality within the different models of revolutionary struggle that is critical to the case study within this thesis. According to Rod Aya, they can be collected into “three main lines of thought” namely,

- ‘*Outsider-agitator*’ in which subversives provoke otherwise disinterested masses to violence’.
- ‘*Volcanic’* in which tensions lead to ‘civil strife…that boils up in human groups, like lava under the earth’s crust, or steam in a geyser’.
- ‘*Political’,* in which the sound and fury of public violence signify shifting power balances and struggles between contenders for control of the State… and is undertaken for discernible practical reasons” (Aya 1979, 39-99).

Key findings: Contested definitions and concepts

The main general point from this Review is that the definition of the concept of ‘revolution’ remains essentially contested within both theoretical studies and scholarship and the debates within and between them. Further, while the meaning central to the modern concept of revolution as ‘a rupture’ with the past, is different from earlier times as recurrence, restoration, and renewal, the earlier definitions have not been jettisoned altogether. For example, the different ‘generations’ of scholarship, is not just critical of previous research within it but has often put a new or different lens on earlier models and definitions (Lawson 2019; Young & Leszynski 2020 Tilly 1993).

Further, on the question of violence as a defining feature of revolution, many of the struggles currently accepted as revolutionary, do not rely on it as critical and some are explicitly opposed to it. Significantly for this thesis, as Christopher Finlay has shown, there is no clear definitiion of its role in the different approaches to revolution (Finlay 2018, 373-397; 2006, 373-397). As became clear through the Review, it is in part because the term is generally left unanalysed in what is written with a reliance, if unpacked at all, on the oppositional arguments of philosophers, writers, and activists writing outside them.

Conclusion: The absence of women

The major findings of the Review, while based on selective reading, generally confirm that of Jack Goldstone et al following their comprehensive survey of the theoretical study of revolution, namely,

> "*Despite huge numbers of works devoted to the problem of revolution, there is no universally accepted definition of the concept. There is, accordingly, no shared criteria for considering, assessing, or judging the political activities on which to draw" (Goldstone et al 2022, §2).*

This is critical to aim of this thesis as each theoretical study provides its own clusters of imagery and introduces a new vocabulary into the theoretical language of models, definitions, and concepts used. The lack of a general theory of revolution, together with the lack of shared criteria for what counts as 'revolutionary', means it is impossible to identify and characterise within a single theoretical framework the reasons for women's absence as 'constitutive' categories and the marginalization of their activism as a 'non-defining' variable in what is written.

The lack of a single theoretical framework is further complicated by the finding that there have been theoretical challenges to the silence on such women and the marginalization of their practices. This has mainly come from feminist and gender-focused theorists across different academic disciplines on revolution, war and peace (e.g., Painter, Sharp & Stibbe 20'22, Sharp 2020; Sharp & Stibbe 2018; Rowbotham 2014; Mullaney 1983; Moghadam 1979). Their scholarship, however, is not fully incorporated into the ideas and arguments within the existing theoretical literature and scholarship on revolution as an 'object' study.

In the absence of a general framework, and the scholarship of feminist and gender-focused theorists, an attempt is made below to show how women are absent as historical agents of revolutionary change in different theoretical studies. The list based on the Literature Review is intended to be illustrative, rather than definitive or definitively critical of all that has been written by the authors highlighted. Further research may lead to different findings and conclusions.

- In General studies of revolution:

Women are often included as participants and key activists in studies and scholarly debates from the 19th century on revolution and revolutionaries still being developed today summarized by Goldstone et al (2022). Their activism, however, is generally treated as marginal to the ideas, arguments and debates on the concept, and nature, and consequences of revolution. Ingrid Sharp eloquently underlines this point in her statement that "[w]omen's experiences in the First World War and Weimar Republic have been extensively discussed, but often in ways that threaten to erase women's political agency" (Sharp 2020, 2). This finding was unexpectedly complicated by the discovery that this scholarship is missing in that of the 'generations' of theoretical researchers on revolution who were expected to provide a 'reference group'[2] for the thesis.

Jack Goldstone, who has written extensively and thoughtfully on the study of revolution studies from within this group of scholars, is a surprising example. In his '*Very Short Introduction to Revolution'* (2014) Goldstone recognizes that women have "marched demonstrated and fought alongside men for social justices" (39) but then provides a contradictory argument that both celebrates but marginalizes and distorts their activities. He acknowledges that the existing scholarship is "not satisfactory in its treatment of women or gender issues and that women have been "consistently let down by revolutionary promises for equality" and have only "made progress where they have undertaken their own mass campaigns for the right to vote and women's rights" (39). He then, however, engages in a limiting discussion on women's roles and contributions.

Strikingly, he fails to mention the historic and world-wide revolution led by the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) that began in the 19th century and is still under way. Further, he acknowledges women have taken on roles as leaders in "national revolutionary struggles" but contrary to the ample evidence available from a wide range of sources, he says this is only as "heirs of politically prominent fathers or husbands who have been unable to shift the dominant patriarchal character of their societies" (39) - a charge he doesn't level at their male counterparts.

- In Classic Models of Revolution:

The same problem is obvious in the accounts reviewed of political events commonly regarded as classical models of revolution. William Boyle, in his 'Short Introduction to the French Revolution' (2019) for example, states the "Revolution is unimaginable without recognizing the participation of women" (110) but then sidelines them. He chides - but without naming them - earlier generations of historians who, in his view, "tended to confine their treatment to "spectacular episodes where women predominated…as the dramatic female victims of revolutionary politics…or the activities of so-called revolutionary Amazons" (110).

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[2] 'Reference Group' is used to refer to the circle of scholars, writers, and activists whose ideas and theories are significant to definitions of revolution (Urry 1973).

This reference to ‘Amazons’, the classical female warriors of ancient Greece, famed and mythologized for their prowess on the battlefield and for their male-free society, in this respect is contentious. Largely based on ancient mythology, it separates them as ‘exceptional women’ from the history of women’s militant revolutionary activities. It also does not lead him to challenge the way the actual lives, courage, determination and endurance of women in armed revolutions, often in the face of misogynous discrimination and oppression, that is reduced by the “earlier generations of historians”. He also uncritically and controversially repeats the reductive and distorting idea of militant women as female ‘Amazons’.

For example, he credits the French feminist activist and playwright, Olympe de Gouges as the author of the radical *‘Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizenesses*’ (1791) in the revolutionary period modelled on the ‘*Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens’* (1789). It was written explicitly as critical response to the former’s failure to include women with rights as citizens (110). The latter, Boyle rates as not just as the Founding manifesto of the Revolution but as “something entirely new in the history of the world” (12). He, however, has nothing to say on the revolutionary significance of the de Gouges ‘Declaration’ for our understanding of the Revolution. Further, he describes her as a ‘revolutionary Amazon’ even though she was deeply opposed to violent revolution. She paid, with her life for her feminist activism and yet famously and courageously made the political point on her execution:

> *“A woman has the right to mount the scaffold. She must possess equally, the right to mount the speaker’s platform” (Jones 1989, p311).*

He also fails to mention other militant women revolutionaries active within armed conflict in the Revolution whose inclusion would possibly have changed the direction of his arguments. For example, Claire Lacombe, who as a founding member of the militant working-class ‘*Society of Revolutionary Republican Women’*, crucially pushed for revolutionary feminist ideas in its alliance with the ‘*Sans Culottes’,* the popular driving force for direct militant action. Rather, with the one example, he not only incorrectly profiles and sidelines Olympe de Gouges, but all such women from the mainstream theorizing on revolution. He does so with the limiting point that whatever perspective is taken on women as revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries, “an age of resurgent feminist activism now views the French Revolution as a compelling episode in the history of women and gender relations” (111).

Similarly, the (albeit selective) Review of accounts of the Russian Revolution reviewed, largely corroborate the arguments of Svetlana Alexievich and Judy Cox that women’s militant activism has been written out of all aspects of it (Alexievich 2017; Cox 2017). It also confirms Cox’s further claim that women have been “relegated to unskilled and less organized sections…or in relation to powerful male revolutionary leaders, for their appeal as antagonists, wives and lovers" (2).

The study by Richard Stites on women's liberation in the Russian revolutionary period (1978), is an example of the way women's historical agency within it has been, "airbrushed" from its revolutionary history (Cox, 2). He acknowledges the role of women in taking to the streets of the capital, then Petrograd, demonstrating against bread shortages (289). He, however, then positively quotes the theorist, Pitirim Sorokin's diary entry at the time to emphasise his point that their action was that of "hungry women and children demanding bread and herrings" rather than political activists and so "does not require complicated theories about their historical role (Stites, 289).

He argues that women appeared "as historical agents in the crucial segments of the revolution only twice… International Women's Day (IWD) and the so-called 'women's Battalion' armed defence of the Winter Palace…The historical distance between these two events is immense…There is, therefore, no sense in trying to magnify the role played [by them]" (Stites 1978, 289-90). It is arguable whether the distance between these events, the first on February 23rd, 1917, the second on October 25th that year, is "immense" in revolutionary terms. Given the wide-ranging evidence available to him, his failure to give political significance to the women's united revolutionary actions as a spark for the revolution that was to bring down Tzarism, is a fatal error that limits the accuracy of the history he provides.

He failed, for example, to consider the evidence of feminist radical political activists, war correspondents, and journalists present and reporting on events within the Revolutionary period. They included the American reporters Bessie Beatty and Louise Bryant who said that she "went forth to gather pebbles and found pearls" and the British feminist political activist, Emeline Pankhurst (Lowes 2017; Bryant 2021; Rappaport 2016, 25). They gave prominence to the political significance of women's revolutionary actions in both these events and reported explicitly on the military and political significance of the 'Women's Death Battalion' summarily dismissed by Stites as "so called". They also met with and recorded with great respect the courage, determination, and huge price paid by its leader Mariya Bochkareva (Rappaport 2016 Ch3).

He also misses, as other research has shown, that the strikers and women demonstrating on IWD included academics, journalists, artists, teachers, doctors, nuns and factory workers with international connections, calling for an end to war and militarism as well as bread shortages and women's rights (Clements 2012, 159; Glickman 1984; Mandel 1975; Halle 1935). Unlike Lenin and Trotsky, he also fails to acknowledge the evidence available to him that many of the women had a history of militant strike action against oppression and subjugation in the workplace. Some also had direct experience or knowledge of the 1905 ‘Bloody Sunday’ massacre and the strikes following it (Halle 1935, 46-75; 91-93).

Orlando Figes’ in his comprehensive account of this Russian Revolutionary period between from 1891-192 sympathetically includes women’s political agency in the revolution as significant (2014). For example, he names and discusses prominent women such as Inessa Armand, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg, Fannie Kaplan, Nadezhda Krupskaya, Vera Figner, Lydia Osipovna Dan, Elena Stasova, Inna Samidovich, and Maria Bochkareva. His discussion of them, however, generally conforms to Cox’s criticisms in that he writes of them mainly in relation to powerful male revolutionary leaders rather than as militant activists in their own right.

- In studies of revolutionaries

Little was found on the critical role of women’s tactics, organisation and strategies in transformational change in different times and places in the writing on them (e.g., Hobsbawm 2001). In Springer and Truzzi’s book (1973), one of the few focused on participant perspectives, only two of the thirty-two essays on “the universal problems of the revolutionary and the strategies for seizing power through revolutions” only two are by women.

This applies to women often portrayed as ‘extraordinary. As Corinne Painter, for example, pointed out: “While Rosa Luxemburg has been the subject of scholarly interest, she is very much an isolated female figure in the historiography” (Painter 2021, 94). Helen Rappaport makes a similar point about Bertha von Stutter who was “undoubtedly the most influential women of her generation” within the International Peace Movement. As she says: “Her dying words echo down from 1914…Ultimately, however, her message did not prevail” and she has been forgotten (Rappaport 2022).

- In models of a supposed revolutionary ‘type’

Women are also missing in the explanatory theories reviewed. These, as M. M. Mullaney pointed out, are typically based on the biographies and life experiences of a small number of ‘illustrious’ male leaders. It is particularly problematic, as Mullaney says, where they are underpinned by a Freudian psychoanalytic base that highlights the determining role of childhood socialization based on a rebellion of an adolescent conflictual relation with a father resulting in “a quest for power” (3) or, among followers, a total obedience to an authority figure and an ideology. This, as she said, is commonly recognized to be “loaded with biases and prejudices in what constitutes ‘normal’ male, and by implication, female behaviour” (1984, 1).

Conclusions from the findings

The lack of a generally accepted definition of revolution with shared criteria on its use and applicability, means that women are included in separate theoretical studies based on contested definitions in which they are either absent or if included it is generally discursively. Their presence, that is, is treated as ephemeral, and their activism, unlike that of male revolutionaries, is not subjected to analytic treatment as a defining variable within the ideas, arguments and explanations provided.

The difficulty is that consequently, women are missing or marginalized in different ways. At times, what is written on them is ambiguous, indeterminate and contradictory. At other times, it tends to fit with the findings of El Said, Mari, and Pratt, in their research on the 'Arab Spring'; namely, "a general tendency" to conceptualize their activism only as "an instrument for particular goal", i.e., giving recognition to it only in terms of the means of "achieving a particular end" (12) shaped and defined by others. Their lasting appeal in some cases, is seen to as part of a weak theoretical narrative of 'exceptional women', even legendry 'Amazonian' warriors.

Consequently, there is nothing to suggest their actions, thinking and writing and connections with other women are of sufficient theoretical interest to be elaborated theoretically in detail. For example, their historical agency in the shaping, orientating, or challenging the course and direction of a revolution or its study is lost. So too is the knowledge of any controversial stance they take on the legitimacy, form and ideological base of revolutionary action, particularly where they put women and their political rights at its centre.

Overall Conclusion

The wide-ranging evidence available from sources outside the scholarship on revolutions that such women have played pivotal roles in revolutionary struggles over the centuries counters the paucity of their inclusion within the existing theoretical literature and scholarship. The overall conclusion from this is that the research problem identified in the introduction to the thesis of their systematic invisibility must be understood as two-fold and the force of the distinction is different in both cases.

(i) Women are systematically absent as a constitutive category, and their activism missing as a defining category in what is written.

(ii) Second, their 'disappearance' as such is made 'invisible' within the traditions of writing within existing theoretical literature and scholarship on revolution and revolutionaries.

The key point is, they require different theoretical tasks to address them. The first is open to correction within what is written. The second requires an alternative history to that provided.

Summary and introduction to Chapter Two

This chapter summarized the prior research, ideas, and theories within studies on revolution and how definitions and models of revolution within them have changed across time. The Literature Review revealed an absence of a general theory of revolution with agreed criteria on the critical variables central to them according to which the absence of women as a constitutive category could be critically considered.

The following chapter explores the possible contribution of systematic 'sex-blindness', leading to the possibility of systematic 'sex-bias' in theoretical studies and how it works to marginalize women in revolutionary theory and practice.

Key words: capitalism, constitutive, culture, freedom, modernization, new beginnings, purposive agency, processes, renewal, restoration, rupture, structure, variable, violence.

CHAPTER TWO: Systematic 'Sex-blindness'

Introduction

In this Chapter, a theoretical case is made here to show, first, that 'sex-blindness',[3] and the possibility of systematic 'sex-bias'[4] arising from it, renders invisible or marginalizes *all* such women; second, that that if differences between women are not included within 'sex' as a defining category, *some* women may be similarly excluded or marginalised using the term.

The second point builds on critiques of what is written that cross different academic fields of interest, especially within the academic disciplines of Feminist, Women, Labour, Black, and Colonil Studies. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa, a theorist, poet, and activist, for example, emphasised the importance of such concepts as defining categories within theory with respect to Women of Colour: namely,

> *"Theory produces effects that change people, and the way they perceive the world…Thus we need theories that will explain how and why we relate to certain people in specific ways…We need to rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis that cross borders and blur boundaries…We need theories that point out ways to manoeuvre between our particular experiences, and the necessity of forming our own categories and theoretical models for the patterns we uncover…And we need to find practical applications for those theories…We need to give up the idea that there is a correct way to write theory"* (Anzaldua 1990, xxv).

Lilia D. Monzó in her book on Women of Colour and Indigenous Women as revolutionary subjects makes a similar point in her challenge to the American political left.

> "*What has always been missing is the wisdom and vision of racialized working-class women whose multiple axes of oppression connect across a wide spectrum of the population but who also support the theoretical sophistication necessary to find creative ways to struggle to change the course of a world in crisis"* (Monzo 2018, 4-5).

The differences between women are also expressed in complex ways among women political activists that cross national and ideological borders. For example, on the question of the primary site of revolutionary struggle for women and how to put their ideas into practice to be effective (Jayawardena 1986, 2, 3). The allegiance to different positions brings different dilemmas and tensions for women that are complex and significant to an understanding of the lived reality of such women's activism.

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[3] Systematic 'Sex-Blindness' as used here incorporates theories, studies, and scholarship that are silent, oblivious to, or careless of all or some women and the revolutionary significance of their political actions.

[4] Systematic 'sex-bias' refers to an under- or miss-reporting of demographic social, economic, or political characteristic that privileges one group over another based on their sexual characterisation. It may reflect untheorized or unjustified conceptions associated with one of the sexes, or prejudiced attitudes to sexual and gender diversity. They also may be explicit, implicit, or contradictory within a conceptual or methodological approach, and assume the findings are generalizable from one to others.

As Hanan Ashrawi, spokesperson for the Palestinians in the Palestinian Occupied Territories (POT) in the political negotiations with Israel, highlighted in her autobiography, the huge personal costs for the women involved that as she said are difficult for our 'Western sisters to understand' who have not experienced them. In her words:

> "*Sometimes in their anguish and anger the women would turn against themselves and each other. When the rejection and anger was directed at me, I felt it as being understandable at some level…but my pain and sense of betrayal were also very real to me…it was like a blow to my stomach (Ashrawi 1995, 228).*

Shirin Ebade, an influential oppositional figure in the 1979 Iranian Revolution, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her role, recognizes this difficulty in her autobiography but makes the practical point echoed by many other women such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1990):

> *"As I have experienced so often myself, being crushed simply gives you greater exercise in collecting the shards of yourself, putting them back together and figuring out what to do next (Ebadi 2016, 67).*

'Sex-blindness': Sources, processes, consequences

Drawing on such arguments, together with the conclusions of the Literature Review, the sources, processes and possible consequences of 'sex-blindness' as a general theoretical problem are investigated by an attempt to answer the question of on a two-fold basis focused on the mechanisms by and through which it may arise: first, how it renders such women invisible; second, how it contributes to a diminished or distorted version of the complexity of their activism. The following list while not exhaustive, is included to provide a starting point for understanding much of the criticism of the problem of systematic 'sex-blindness' and 'sex-bias by feminist and gender-focused researchers of what is written and its relevance within the history of ideas on revolution.

• 'Sex' as a defining category

First, 'sex' as a defining category is controversial and so cannot be taken as given within an investigation such as this one into of 'sex-blindness'. It is used here as a defining category in line with Maria Mies argument is that it is 'as much a cultural and historical category as that of ‘gender’ (Mies 1986, 23). This usefully removes the constraints of the traditional binary of a masculine-feminine/male-female sexual division, elaborated in greater detail in Chapter Four. It acknowledges the idea that the binary biological concept of ‘sex’ is not fixed, and that this is often referred to as ‘gender fluidity’, encompassing terms such as ‘GenderQueer’ (see Cooper 2017, Ch3) The terms ‘woman’, and ‘girl’ (‘man’, ‘boy’), and their plurals, therefore, refer to a female defined as such within her society, or who self-identifies as such, and so experiences common advantages, oppression, and exploitation as human beings.

Factors across the ‘axes of difference’ that it is argued here must be incorporated within ‘sex’, thus defined, as central for a full understanding of how blindness to it renders women invisible or marginalizes them. The central concepts used here are also controversial, widely debated and contested, and so cannot be simply used or taken as given. The meanings given to them, and explanations of how they might overlap to privilege or disadvantage women in relation to others, needs, therefore, also to be clarified.

For ease of reading, the concepts of ‘class’, ‘sexuality’ and ‘ethnicity’ that are considered central to this discussion and how they can work independently within the problem of ‘sex-blindness or may ‘intersect’ as critical factors are elaborated on in Appendix 1 rather than the main text. Other factors referred to are noted as appropriate to the discussion.

- Through Language:

Language, as is widely recognised to play a fundamental role in theoretical ‘blindness’ to revolutionary women insofar as if they appear at all, they are without nominal, tangible or visible form, i.e., their physical presence is unlocated in language. It works broadly by obscuring, them through supposedly ‘sex-neutral’ universalizing language or the use of the unmarked ‘he’ that disguises absence of women or the fact that what is said or written is not applicable to women but based on males (Sharp 2018; Brennan 1989; Mullaney 1983; Kelly 1978).

Significantly for this investigation, it may also happen using an unmarked ‘woman’ or ‘she’ as a universalizing concept. For example, the mobilizing motto ‘the sisterhood is global’, can serve to mask differences between individual women and groups of women and so contribute to a silence on the different reasons, priorities, and lived realities of their activism and the risks they take.

In addition to the issue of absence, women may also be cancelled out by language that reduces or objectifies their complex lives and actions to a ‘one dimensional’ depiction of them in which their agency and subjectivity is reduced to 'fit' the objectives of those describing them. This leaves women revolutionaries vulnerable to arguments, justifications, and explanations in which 'male', 'whiteness', 'heterosexuality', or 'the West', for example, are seen, or implied, to be normative. In the process, their 'subjectivity' as thinking, feeling human beings, and the possibility of 'intersubjectivity 'with others leading to collective action with others to change the world for a better future is obscured

Scripts and myths, as will be elaborated on in the case study in Ch3, can play an important role within this in freezing women within an unchanging narrative or verbal, written, or visual image that obscures, reduces, or distorts the lived reality of their activism within such explanations. Class, sexuality and ethnicity are key factors within this. For example, 'working-class' women and 'subaltern' women, particularly Black Women, and Women of Colour, are doubly, and often cruelly marginalized as the stereotypes of them are generally framed through patriarchal, class-bound, and racist representations of their sexuality, based on male and colonial fascination with sexual 'exoticism', 'orientalism' and ideas of 'otherness' (Khamis & Mill 2018; Said 2003; Yegenoglu 1998).

This puts them at risk to a hagiography that serves to fix them in the imagination of the public and readers on revolution, whether as demons or heroines, as symbolic and iconic visual representations of struggle. The American revolutionary, Angela Davis, found herself in this position when, at the same time as being hunted and imprisoned under brutal conditions, her 'Afro' hair and 'black leather jacket' became universally commodified as symbolic of radical Black power (James 2008, 273).

Davis, among other women such as Assata Shakur, Mother Jones, Constance Markievicz, also found, that from being called a 'terrorist', it is a small step to the reality of a woman's life as a revolutionary being distorted in pejorative descriptions of her as 'dangerous' and that often this depended vicious stereotypes that chillingly scapegoat her as a 'fury', 'virago', or 'hag'. These can be blatant or subtle, either way, with minimal effort, they acquire the status of truth across a community, country or even the world (Gorn 2002; Shakur 2001; Haverty 1988; Davis, 1971).

The stereotypes function not only to malign a woman's name and reputation but may have a material and even dangerous impact on her, her family, and friends. Patrisse Khan Cullors who, together with Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, founded the revolutionary '*BlackLivesMatter*'(BLM) Movement in America, makes the point starkly in her autobiography, that she, with the other women, was called 'a terrorist'. Defined as such, as she says, she lived under the terror of knowing that 'I, or any member of my family could be killed with impunity" (8). This, she further says, was part of the criminalizing of Black people and their communities by the Nixon government at the time who acknowledged what was said to be a lie (9).

The language of stereotyping and stigma, at its most harmful, is also part of the weaponry of sexual violence used in the repression of women revolutionaries and torture of them. Both the sex and ethnicity of a revolutionary are both often crucial to the form of torture of them (de Beauvoir & Halimi 1962). Moreover, reference is often made to biblical and patriarchal notions of virtue, chastity, honour, and vice, to support arguments for its use (El-Rifae 2022; Tankiewala 2014)

- Through intellectual and academic Hegemony:[5]

Language use, such as the employment of the passive rather than the active voice in which women are the subject of a sentence, is also relevant to the question of hegemony in the production and dissemination of knowledge and how it is countered. The role of intellectual and academic hegemony in the perceived invisibility and marginalisation of women as historical agents of revolutionary change, however, goes further. It also, that is, confronts the question of where intellectual and academic claims of 'objectivity' based on the idea of an 'independent observer' within the hegemonic narratives of revolution within the study of revolution break down and enter the world of politics making it difficult to maintain the prerogatives of an academic theorising position.

Feminist and gender-focused academics, across different disciplines, outside the study of revolution, have offered a critique of the hegemonic academic language in which maleness is the norm and women are either invisible or represented as 'the other".[6] Dale Spender took such arguments a step further to argue that patriarchy in society, its systems and institutions, is perpetuated "through the authority given to male meanings". Much of women's subordination to men, that is, is structured through patriarchal language, and, she argues, the intellectual legacy of women's ideas is lost through it (Spender 1985, 33-36).

The explanatory models of the characteristics, motivations and behaviour of revolutionaries touched on in Chapter One, provide an example of this and how it works to leave the definition of a woman revolutionary vague and undefined.

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[5] 'Hegemonic' is used here in a general sense to mean that which produces political and cultural supremacy over others and prevents the full development of other political and cultural forms. Gramsci's view of hegemony as the way a ruling class gains and maintains cultural, moral, and ideological power over allied and subaltern groups' is significant to G. C. Spivak's definition of 'subaltern women' used here and her arguments on its significance for them.

[6] The range of research is extensively reviewed with a comprehensive bibliogaphy by Jennifer Saul, et al (2017), Stanford Encyclopaedia.

Conceived only as non-essential, she disappears other than as a shadow of male revolutionary activities. As Ingrid Sharp argued with respect to the German revolution of 1918: “Excluding women’s political agency from the history of the revolution implies that they were beneficiaries of a struggle in which they had never engaged…due to the generosity of men” (Sharp 2020,18).

‘Political Agency’, and its denial to some women through intellectual and academic hegemony, is a key theme of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s work. In her seminal essay ‘*Can the Subaltern Speak’*, for example, she specifically challenges Western intellectual hegemony, or what she called ‘epistemological violence’ to the agency and realities of those brought into the “silent, silenced centre” through it. In this way, she argued, the views, experiences, and attempts, individually and collectively, of ‘subaltern’ women at self-representation are structurally written out of theoretical narratives and are displaced, or effaced, in the production and dissemination of knowledge (Spivak 1988, 79 in Grossberg & Nelson 1988).

This depends, according to Spivak, on the construction of “the worldling of what is now called ‘the Third World’ in the West’s hegemonic position” (Spivak 2003, 306). For Chandra Mohanty, it is the “production of ‘Third World Woman’ as a singular monolithic subject within feminist and academic texts…and ‘the west’ as the primary referent in theory and praxis” (Mohanty 2003, 51). A point also made by Kumari Jayawardena in her statement that many Western Feminists are unaware of the historic and heroic acts of resistance by women in revolutionary struggles in non-Western countries (1986, 10).

On this argument, which Spivak (2003) applies to both Western and non-Western contexts, intellectual hegemony has led to two negative consequences for women who come within her definition of ‘subaltern’ women’. First, it is a denial of their historical agency as revolutionary subjects; second, it denies them theoretical and discursive ‘public spaces’ in which they can express their multiple ethnic, sexual, and political identities however they choose to recognize them. This includes their assessments and experience of injustice through discrimination, oppression and suppression in terms of their class, race, sexuality, religious, and national identity.

Spivak’s point is strengthened if linked to Hannah Arendt’s seminal ideas on the significance of ‘a public realm’ (Canovan 1985) which she emphasised across her whole body of work and saw the freedom to participate within it as a key aim of revolution (1979,118). On her arguments, the denial of such a space for subaltern women, means they have no possibility of coming together freely with others to reveal themselves as thinking human beings to be publicly heard, and so give permanence to their otherwise hidden or fleeting concerns. This includes laying themselves open to the influence and judgments of their peers as an objective frame of reference against which to test their ideas against the reality of their own and other women's lived experiences.

The importance of the denial of a public space for such women was also strongly emphasized by Audre Lorde in an open letter she wrote to Mary Daly, the American radical feminist philosopher who had invited her to speak at a feminist conference:

> "*It is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory in this time and in this place can take place without examining the many differences, and without significant input from poor women, black and third-world women and lesbians"* (Lorde 2017, 38-44).

Spivak and Lorde's points were eloquently reinforced by bel hooks, namely:

> *"No need to hear your voice, when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk"* (Hooks 1990, 343).

This problem is obviously exacerbated where the language used in theoretical discourse is not that of the women from different geo-political places studied. Inevitably, some critical aspects and nuances of international revolutionary struggles and debates on them are lost. This has particular importance and meaning where the language used, such as English, is that of an imperialist and colonialising power. As Gloria Anzaldúa, movingly said in her analysis of the problem: "*And though I now write my poems in Spanish as well as English, I feel the rip-off of my native tongue*" (Anzaldua, et al., 2021, p.163).

- Through being unnamed:

All the above sources, processes, and consequences of systematic 'sex-blindness' and 'sex bias' that fail to incorporate factors of 'difference' as an analytic category are relevant to women who are unnamed, other than in general terms in what is written on revolution. These are in the main ordinary women, among whom there are working-class, proletarian, and subaltern Women (see App1).

While it is difficult to determine from the evidence available, with a great degree of accuracy, the scale and chronology of the revolutionary actions by those unnamed and undocumented, a focus on 'blindness to them is instructive. It challenges any simple representation of them merely as a powerless 'grey mass' on the margins, essentially uninformed, and with little political awareness of their oppressive social conditions or how to change them (Clement 2012; Moghadam 1997; Wood 1997). It also challenges research methodologies that, as Louise Raw showed in relation to the '*Match Women's Strike*' (see Ch3i), miss or ignore crucial data on them that is later found to have been accessible (Raw 2011, 17).

Most obviously, as E.P. Thompson said of other working-class groups, the use of collective nouns, usually pejorative, such as 'riot', 'mass', mob', 'rabble', they become part of, what he called, "a spasmodic view of popular history". In this "imaginary constructs, conceal their humanity, their embodied historical agency as revolutionaries, and the roles they take on" (Thompson 1993, 185). Elizabeth Wood, writing on Russian women known as '*the Baba'* at the time of the Russian Revolution, considered to be illiterate, superstitious, and generally 'backward', strongly emphasises the significance of conceptualizations that have structured, limited, and assigned meaning to such women. What she says of the history of Russian women, is relevant to other revolutionary histories in which women are unnamed, namely:

> "*It has usually been written as if it were about real women. Yet it is really about myths, different myths at different times, but nonetheless provocative, tenacious, contradictory myths" (Wood 1997,13).*

Conclusions from the findings

The sources, processes, and consequences of 'sex-blindness' and systematic 'sex-bias' listed here suggest how women's revolutionary contributions can be invisible, cancelled out minimized or distorted through it. It indicated that though they apply to all women, they are experienced differently according to the situated historical and geo-political context of women's activism and such factors as their class, sexuality, and ethnicity. Many women who are unnamed and undocumented, moreover, disappear altogether in largely pejorative collective nouns that dehumanize them. For example, the images of women central to the insurrection from within the Paris Commune in 1871 are as 'unruly' (Gullickson 1996) and 'incendiaries' (Thomas (1967); the revolutionary nature of their activism is dismissed.

Summary and introduction to next chapter

In this chapter, a summary of the possible sources, processes and consequences of 'sex-blindness' was provided. The following chapter is based on a case study of a successful women's strike in 1888. Its primary function is to illustrate and animate the conceptual problems examined in this chapter and the previous one based on a Literature Review.

Key words: *constitutive category, object of study, ordinary, proletarian provocative, research questions, subaltern, sex-blindness, theoretical tools, working-class*

CHAPTER THREE:

Illustrating the problem in a real-life context: A Case Study of a Strike

Introduction

This chapter consists of a case study focused on a successful strike in July 1888 led mostly by women and girls employed by the Bryant & May [B&M] Matchmaking Company in Bow, London. It is focused specifically on the contribution of 'scripts and associated narratives to the history of the strike and how they work in practice, separately or in combination, to restrict the historical significance given to it and the invisibility of the women within it.

This Strike is not seen as the only example of women's political action set on revolutionary change salient to these research problems, or as an exemplar representing all strikes by women. These have happened in many industries in different times and places ranging from textile factories, sewing trades, bookbinders, cigarette and cigar-makers (Drake 1984; Glickman 1984; Pinchbeck 198l, original 1930). A common thread, however, can be drawn between this strike and other landmark strike action initiated by women. Some have also had lasting popular appeal within the arts. For example, the 1968 '*Dagenham Ford Sewing Machinist Strike'* which led to the 1970 'Equal Pay Act' in Britain was dramatized to great popular acclaim in a film (2010) and musical (2014).

Further, while the industrial situation of women, and the ethnic and social diversity of workforces in Britain and elsewhere today, is different to that of 1888, many current industrial disputes led by women are based on similar problems of low pay, long hours, unsafe conditions, and sexual violence in the workplace. Connections can also be made between the 1888 strike with contemporary international labour struggles against women's precarity and exploitation, 'indentured' labour', and trafficking for work and sex; all are modern forms of 'sweating' and 'slavery' raised as problematic through this strike.

The theoretical case for singling this Strike out over others is that it provides a clearly bounded and historically situated instance of successful militant strike action led by women that has been extensively written about across different genres. While no attempt is made to provide a complete or comparative history of the strike, it is hoped that this limited study will suggest future research into other such strike action and revolutionary campaigns by women outside the class system of the time who come within G. C. Spivak's definition of 'Subaltern Women' undermined or marginalized in social and political structures in their society.

Building on prior research

The case-study is analytic throughout and draws on primary and secondary sources from different academic fields of interest, biographies, newspapers, and reports rather than empirical research. As generally acknowledged across the sources specific to the Strike, direct accessibility to the views of the strikers is limited other than through the quotes of others (Raw 2011, 8). In piecing together the evidence, therefore, the study uses as much as possible the concrete facts of the strike and the context for it available. An introductory descriptive overview (artifact) of the development of B&M into an international hugely profitable match-making company and an outline of the key milestones of the Strike are provided in Appendix 2.

The study draws heavily on the detailed, empirically researched account of the strike by the labour historian, Louise Raw (2011). The core of her argument relevant here is that myths and fictional images have shaped and defined the history of the strike and the women and girls within it. This she argues is reflected in its familiar title, '*The Matchgirls Strike*' which, as a beginning to her revision of its history, insists on changing to the '*The Match Women's strike'* to reflect the reality of the diversity their ages (see Appx 3). In doing so, she makes a compelling case that the title, which reduces the strikers to 'non-adults', draws on the dramatic image of a martyred child in the popular nursery fable '*The Little Match Girl*' by Hans Christian Anderson (1845).

In this story, alone in the mean dark streets, ill-clad, with bare feet, the child sells matches. Afraid to go home to a violent father, she succumbs to the cold and hunger and dies comforted only by an image of her dead kind grandmother. The fable and its image of the child, Raw argues, fitted well with the British Victorian establishment's view of the deserving and undeserving poor; in this case a poor child, "honest, virtuous, and accepting of her lot with no talk of workers' rights" (28). It has remained significant, Raw claims, in the way "fact and fiction" are confused in what is written in the "orthodox history" of the Strike.[7]

This, she argues, defines and gives historical value to it only as an isolated, spontaneous, albeit dramatic protest, local to one non-essential industry. Its lasting dramatic appeal within this history, she says, is precisely in its portrayal of the Strike as a protest by a small group of very young 'factory girls'. Children, that is passively acting under the external leadership of the 'adult' prominent, educated, upper- and middle-class political activists and intellectuals, particularly Annie Besant, the radical women's rights campaigner and journalist (7). Such history, she says, "owes as much to this sentimentalized view of the poor as it does to reality" (28).

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[7] The term 'orthodox' as used by Raw (2011), is adopted from this point rather than wider terms such as traditional or conventional. While there is overlap, its use captures the central idea of an account taken to be authoritative, right, or true.

Its enduring historical power, she argues, also lies in the way this portrayal of the strike converged with, and was codified within, the writing of influential theorists focused on poverty, population, and labour at the time (59). Henry Mayhew, for example, writing in 1851 on poor London workers, particularly children in 1851, employed similar imagery in his picture of 'the Little Watercress Girl' who had 'suffered the bitterest struggles of life', to emphasise cruelty of their conditions (Raw, 45, 164, 207). As Raw says, quoting Deborah Valenze, it was also reflected in the pessimism of the influential economist, Thomas Malthus (1789), who viewed the poverty in communities, such as those in which the strikers lived, as "an evil so deeply seated that no human ingenuity could reach it". It was also obvious, as Valenze noted, in his latent hostility to woman worker whom he saw as a failure as a worker, homemaker and in their primary function as a mother" (Valenze 1995, 128).

Raw's conclusion is that consequently the actual women and girl strikers are 'hidden' within such versions of the strike and the reforming context of the time. By this, she says, she means that, prior to her research, those who downed tools and walked out on strike remained as nameless as the little girl in in the fairy story…archetypes rather than flesh-and blood women" (28). Their only reality captured in a much used black and white photograph in which they are "frozen forever in one moment of time" (3). She, however, goes on to make the further important point that the way they have been hidden, which Sheila Rowbotham famously argued is the fate of the lives and experiences of most working-class women, (Rowbotham1974) is not straightforward or clear cut.

This conclusion provides an important insight for this thesis. As Raw says, unlike the many other strikes led by women, the problem, is not that this Strike has been completely erased from history, it is, rather, that it has been written about so often as a dramatic and appealing story that it has become a "victim of its own success" and almost a cliché of the genre"; i.e., a truism about which there is nothing else to say (Raw 2011, 1, 28). From this, she concluded that the Strike and women and girls within it have been doubly marginalised in that they have "not only been 'hidden *from* history; they have also been 'hidden *by'* history [Raw's italics]" (2011, 2, 29).

Two research imperatives follow from this conclusion according to Raw. It is necessary to uncover and attempt to overturn, what she describes as, "fundamental flaws" in the orthodox versions of the strike and its main players by "generations of Labour historians…careless with the facts of the strike" (17). Where errors can be shown to be fatal to an account, however, she saw the theoretical task to be of a different order: namely, to rewrite the existing history rather than attempt to correct it from within (17).

Scripts, Narratives, Myths and Imagery

The approach here takes on board the force of Raw's conclusion. Its aim is to both examine the limitations of the existing history of the strike and to make a small contribution to an alternative history of it. It does so through an investigation into the role of scripts and associated narratives as a source of the 'serious flaws' of the restrictive definition of the Strike and 'sex-blindness' in the existing history of it that renders the strikers invisible within it.

A broad distinction is made between 'scripts' and 'myths' that, admittedly, may be subtle and open to debate. It is. however, considered broad enough to indicate the different theoretical task required to elucidate the power of each and respond to false information found within them. A myth has no basis in fact, so cannot be changed only debunked - as Raw insisted the myth of the 'match girls' should be. A script, however, can be revised, interpreted, subverted, or refuted when exposed to empirical evidence. While no attempt is made to construct a causal link between the 'scripts' explored here and the 'myth' of the strike on which Raw concentrated, a connection is made between them with respect to the bleak and fatalistic depictions of the strikers lives in the East End of London.

The findings of the study of the Strike are presented here in two parts. The first makes a theoretical case that scripts and associated narratives within the hegemony of 'orthodox' versions (see Ch2) have obscured reduced or distorted its place within the wave of revolutionary strike action regarded as central to the emergence of a new form of militant trade unionism in late 19th Century Britain, familiarly known as ''New Unionism'' (Coates & Topham 1972). This is followed by an examination of the role of scripts and narratives in the reductive construction of the 'subjectivities' of the strikers as empty or impoverished through their life of abject poverty within the East End of London and makes a link from this to the accepted version that it was dependent for its success on external leadership.

The aim is to show that once the distraction of the scripts, narratives, as well as the myths, and images is removed, an alternative history of the Strike is possible. One, that is, that situates it within Labour History and reveals the leadership role of the women and girls within it.

The underpinning argument: Overarching, Multiple and Colliding ‘scripts’

The focus on ‘scripts is underpinned by the general argument of Baker and Edelstein (2015) that “scripting revolutions” provides a way for critically considering performances made possible within revolutionary situations. It recognises, that the ‘scripts’ being put forward here are not ‘revolutionary scripts’ of the type or level of revolution discussed by the authors within Baker & Edelstein’s edited book who interrogate their argument through individual cases (Baker & Edelstein 2015, 3-21).

They, however, make it clear that that their argument, which they say in its approach is also exploratory, is not exhausted by the type of struggles on which they focus, and they invite debate (2). The hope is that its use here with respect to the significance of this strike within revolutionary strike action associated with ‘New Unionism’ that is recognized to have contributed to and changed the course of Labour History, will be considered appropriate to be brought within that debate.

The part of their argument used here aims to show that within orthodox versions of the strike, whether explicit or implied, ‘scripts’ have “constituted an analytical frame with an unchanging projected narrative” of the emergence ‘New Unionism’. In this, the historical significance of the ‘*Match Women’s Strike*’, unlike that of the ‘Great Dock Strike’, is deemed essentially contestable. This narrative, moreover, has remained constant, “widely shared and replayed indefinitely” for one hundred and thirty years within Labour History (3).

Silvana Toska’s argument in her contribution to their book, that revolutionaries within “the Arab uprisings” that began in Tunisia in 2010, were dependent on “multiple scripts” rather than one has also proved a useful addition here (Toska in Baker & Edelstein 2015, 325-343). So too has Moritz Föllmer’s suggestion, following Toska, that where “it is difficult for one ‘script’ to prevail…revolutions may be “marked by a collision of ‘multiple scripts” (Föllmer 2018, 191).

These are both relevant to this discussion because of the linkages made between the complex intersections of the workplace, neighbourhoods, and communities, and political and economic structures within which those involved in the wave of strikes associated with ‘New Unionism’, including the strikers under discussion, worked and lived. The obvious candidates of such multiple scripts relevant here are those of ‘sex’, ‘class’, and ‘ethnicity’ against the backdrop of patriarchy, imperialism, and colonialism. Following Toska and Föllmer, they are seen as likely to “collide” with each other and possibly, the overarching ‘script’ albeit they have been constructed for different purposes beyond the emergence of 'New Unionism' and have been invented and reinvented in situations over time distant from it.

The proposal is that, in the language of Baker & Edelstein, the overarching 'script' in the telling, and interpreting of the compelling story of 'New Unionism' haw led to a misrepresentation of the historical significance of the *'Match Women's Strike'* and denied the historical agency of the women and girls within it. In challenging this, the Baker & Edelstein conception of a revolutionary agent as someone "enacting" "subject' positions'' and "possible moves" in a revolutionary situation is adopted to clarify what is being denied of the women and girls (2015, p.3). At its most basic, this assumes they had the historical agency and revolutionary subjectivity to initiate and enact revolutionary change through the Strike.

A further argument here is that the over-arching 'script' has provided a narrative in which engendered charismatic leadership is lauded, and no alternative model is considered. Within it, the leaders in the strike by gas-workers and dockers are named and straightforwardly accorded full 'revolutionary subjectivity' as the frame for their militant actions. Will Thorne, a leader with others in both strikes, for example, is recognised to have been illiterate, from a background of abject poverty and violence and was taught to read and write by Eleanor Marx. He is, however, seen to have "symbolized the new spirit" of 'New Unionism' (Kapp1989, 11). Importantly, while Eleanor Marx, like Annie Besant in the '*Match Women's Strike*', is credited as having given total and wholehearted support to the strikes, no suggestion is made that she was the real leader of them.

With respect to the '*Match Makers strike'*, on the other hand, even though Louise Raw, challenged this narrative by finding and naming the leadership from within the strike, the revolutionary subjectivities of the women and girls have not been brought out from the shadows of the 'charismatic' leadership of Annie Besant within their own dispute or Will Thorne, John Burns, Ben Tillet, and Tom Mann of the other strikes. This, as will be discussed later in general terms, ignores or cannot permit the possibility that the women and girls may have operated with a consensual leadership model rather than one based on hierarchy and a charismatic personality.

- Scripting revolutionary strike action leading to 'New Unionism'

The idea of 'New Unionism' as a critical moment of change within the history of trade unionism is widely debated and contested (Matthews 1991; Gray 1981 quoted in Raw, 18). The term is used here, however, in agreement with Mary Davis, that it is "is properly applied to the period between 1888-1891…not only because many new unions were formed during this short period but a new approach to trade unionism permeated both the older and newer organizations" (Davis 1993, 94-95). As John Tully pointed out in his history of the Silvertown Strike, 'New Unionism' may now seem inevitable, but it wasn't always so. As an expression of constructive revolt by unskilled and semi-skilled workers to the abject poverty they endured during what Jack London described as "the greatest, wealthiest and most powerful empire the world has ever seen", at the time it caught most people by surprise (Tully 2018, 37). Barbara Drake confirmed this point with respect to women. As she says, "Combination was not unknown amongst the 'female poor' even as early as the 18th Century". It was however "casual and the aristocratic and craft unions…were not open to women… In the 19th Century, new unions "sprang up like mushrooms…and the excitement "found its echo among women and paved the way for the advent of the 'Women's Trade Union League (Drake 1984, 4-9, original 1920).

The further argument of Mary Davis, that this was due to the political challenge to the outlook of old unionism by class-conscious socialists within the newly formed unions, or in support or inspiring them, while beyond the scope of this thesis, reflects that of several writers. Sydney and Beatrice Webb, who initiated the scholarly interest in 'New Unionism' for example, credited socialists with bringing in from that "vast hordes of unskilled workmen into the metropolis into some form of trade union organization" (Webb S. & B. 1950, 376, 402). The question of their role within the '*Match Women's Strike'* is also significant as the named activists, journalists, and intellectuals supporting the strike were known socialists. Some involved, such as the writer and novelist, Olive Schreiner who wrote on 'Women and Labour', saw themselves as 'vanguards' in the Strike which this thesis is challenging and Louise Raw showed to be false (Livesey 2009, 3).

Theories of 'New Unionism' since the Webbs and how far it was an historic turning point in the history of British Labour (Matthews 1991, 24; Gray, 1981). The reading for this topic, however, confirmed A. E. Duffy's contention that historians, and commentators, including the Webbs, have tended to associate its start in practice to be in 1889 (Duffy 1961, 306), the year of the strikes by the gas-workers and dockers. Further, as Duffy also suggested, it is treated as dependent on the success of both strikes in 1889, specifically, the 'Great Dock Strike' (306).

For example, John Charlton who, like the Webbs, saw socialist activism as vital to getting the 'New Unionism' movement underway, said "The Great Dock Strike" …was a symbol of a massive upsurge of Britain's unskilled workers' drive for liberation from oppression by organization" (Charlton 1999, 10). Yvonne Kapp wrote that "On 31 March 1889, modern trade unionism was born in Britain…Trade Unionism broke free from the conservatism of the old crafts and aspired to be a mass movement (Kapp 1989, 11).

For Eric Hobsbawm, “1889 marked a qualitative transformation of the British Labour Movement and its industrial relations…[when] a new era of class conflict was opening” under a new militant leadership (Hobsbawm 1985, 15, 17). G. D. Cole saw the New Unions to be committed to class solidarity and in “fighting policy, directed, by implication at any rate, against capitalism itself” (Cole 1948,103), quoted in Matthews 1991, 28). The Webbs, writing in 1894, reported: “[i]n 1889 London Dock-Labourers [marched] to their brilliant victory over their employers which changed the whole face of the Trade Union World” (Webb, S & B. 1950, 401)

Within these views, a broad overarching ‘script’ is obvious, namely:

> *‘New Unionism’ arose in 1889 and had its beginnings in the strikes by the gas-workers and dockers, specifically that of the ‘Great Dock Strike.’*

There is also a projected narrative, namely:

> ‘*The strikes of 1889 led directly to the formation of unions for unskilled workers in all industries. The militant leadership from within the unorganized trades also successfully fought for social and political change that would give workers a say in the government of the country and industry.’*

The ‘*Match Women’s Strike*’ measured against this ‘overarching script’ and narrative

In contrast, there is a wide variation in the significance given by labour and social historians to the ‘*Match Women’s Strike*’ in relation ‘New Unionism’. It is most pronounced, but not completely so, between those present at the time and engaged with the strikes who recognize its historical significance, and detached observers and commentators at the time and later who have tended to see it as successful but as an early accidental prelude to the other strikes considered to be benchmarks in the chain of events leading to ‘New Unionism’.

The leaders of the gas-workers and dockers, and other political activists at the time generously acknowledged its victory and its significance for their struggles. Ben Tillett wrote of it as “the beginning of the social convulsion which produced the ‘New’ Unionism’, the new Docker’s union and the great Dockers Strike of 1889 (Tillet 1931, quoted in Stafford 1961, 14).

John Burns, for example, exhorted strikers to remember the “Match Girls” victory and stand “shoulder to shoulder” with them (Raw 2011, 16). Fredrich Engels, said it was “the light jostle needed for the entire avalanche to move and kickstart wider strikes” (Match Girls Memorial site). The Webbs saw their victory as having “turned a new leaf in Trade Union annals…It was a new experience for the weak to succeed…The lesson was not lost on other classes of workers” (Webbs, 1950, 402).

Some later writers have also seen the 'Match Women's Strike' as "starting and accelerating the mass movement" of workers (Charlton 1999, 10), who were "previously regarded as unorganizable, by a group of women workers who were traditionally seen as having no industrial muscle" (Boston 1980, 48). It was, according to Eleanor Marx's biographer "the small spark that ignited the blaze of revolt and the wildfire spread of trade unionism among the unskilled in which [she] was to play so an outstanding part" (Kapp 1976, 270).

In contrast, some historians with an interest in industry and labour of the time, such as John Kelly, have made no mention of it (Kelly, 1988) and others, have given little historical significance to it. For example, Alastair Reid, while giving serious critical attention to the strikes and leadership of the gas-workers and dockers, briefly acknowledged its "apparent breakthrough" but stressed that "when faced with a determined employer opposition their organization simply collapsed" (Reid 2004, 220-26, 235).

Barbara Harrison, who wrote specifically on women's health, marked its significance to the development of occupational health policy regulating 'dangerous trades' (Harrison 1996, 66-71). She, however, said its success "owed more to the publicity it received from its socialist/feminist supporter Annie Besant than to its actual uniqueness; especially as there were other examples of strike action…occurring spontaneously in other industries at the time" (Harrison 1995, 20-21).

E. H. Hunt recognized that "a single dramatic victory could play a catalytic role in the emergence of the New Unionism". He, however, claimed that the matchgirls strike "probably came too early to have this effect", and somewhat strangely said that "the matchgirls themselves were probably too unlike the workers who had the best prospect of becoming successful 'new unionists" (Hunt 1988, 304). He doesn't make clear whether this was because of their sex or other factors but it is hard to think of another factor to which he was referring.

Paul Thompson refuted any suggestion that the strike was part of 'New Unionism' on the grounds that it was "relatively isolated and given exaggerated publicity. "The real start of the 'New Unionism' in London, he claimed, was not until the gas-workers' agitation of 1889" (Thompson 1967, 45, quoted in Raw, 2011, 10). Henry Pelling dismissed the 'Match Women's Strike' as "a small but significant harbinger [of 'New Unionism'] among a few dozen women…who with the help of Mrs Besant and other Socialists were successful in their strike, and they formed a little union of their own" (Pelling 1963, 97).

While the views of such writers limiting the strike's historical significance are diverse, it is possible to discern a broad 'script' within them, namely:

> *‘The Match Women’s Strike’ was an isolated, spontaneous protest by a small group of working-class women and girls. It was limited to localized disputes within the factory and the narrow problems of the industry and had no part in wider and long term industrial and class-struggles for economic, political, and social change in society’.*

Moreover, regardless of the view of the strike, this study confirmed Louise Raw’s claim that, with notable exceptions such as Mary Davis (1993), Sarah Boston (1980), and Ann Stafford (1961), the following narrative associated with the ‘scripts’ has almost universal acceptance across all positions on the strike (2011, 11), namely that,

> ‘*The strike was totally dependent for its impetus, organization, and success on the leadership from external prominent socialist activists, journalists, and intellectuals, particularly Annie Besant, and the publicity she brought to it; and through them, a trade union was established but this was small, located only within the industry, and did not survive’.*

Conclusion from the Findings of this Study

The above are, admittedly, selective examples of positions taken on the strikes. No claim is, however, made that those referred to are representative of all the positions on it, nor that generalizations can be developed from the ‘scripts and narratives suggested here to all possible ones within revolutionary strike action. It does, however, provide a productive way, albeit indicatively, of looking at how the ‘scripts’ and competing narratives can operate to provide restrictive definitions of revolutionary strike action in a way that renders strikes such as this one historically insignificant and the historical agency of the women and girls within it invisible.

While the revolutionary role of the strikes by the gas-workers and dockers, and the leaders of them in the formation of ‘New Unionism’ is open to question, the rest of this section is focused on the ‘*Match Women’s Strike*’. Again, drawing on the argument of Baker & Edelstein (2015, 3), it attempts to show, using their terms, that within the ‘overarching scripts’, the unchanging projected narratives of the strike, the manner in which it is said to have unfolded, and the characterization of the women and girls acting within it, it is defined, considered, and judged, as peripheral to revolutionary strike action central to the formation of ‘New Unionism’ .

Challenging the ‘Scripts’ and narratives

It is possible to argue that the significance of the strike beyond its settlement was limited as claimed by Arnold (2004). In what follows, however, the ‘scripts’ and narratives are challenged where they are not backed by empirical evidence and so are at least questionable in the assumptions underpinning them. For example,

- The Strike was not in an essential industry.
- It was an isolated impulsive protest.
- The trade union resulting from it was weak, localised, and short lived.

- It was not an 'essential' industry but a 'dangerous' trade

While, undoubtedly, the match-making industry was not an 'essential' industry or trade, the strike's importance lay, as Mary Davis held, "in the fact that it took place in one of the notorious 'sweated trades' of the 19th century (Davis 1993, 94). Matchmaking in Bryant & May was defined as a 'dangerous trade' and the company was involved in public scandals with respect to it and its use of sweated labour (see Appendix 2). The '*Anti-Sweating League*' and other campaigns, including within parliament, termed this an industrial evil of 'slavery and servitude' of mainly women and children. According to Clementina Black, a leading campaigner involved in the strike, it was a "a running sore, that 'not only poisoned an industry, but affected the whole fabric of society' and its wellbeing (Black 1907, x)

The role of the strike in raising public awareness of the appalling working conditions and health hazards within the factory was also significant beyond the factory and the industry. As Barbara Harrison, acknowledged the health problems within the factory and industry, particularly the risk of 'phosphorus necrosis', "exhibited general features related to the politics of occupational health in the period, and the ways in which it was specific" to an industry (Harrison 1995, 21). The Strike, as she said, put It also put the spotlight on "a definite crisis of public confidence at the time in the ability of the state…to make any major impact on industrial ill-health" and… a suspicion that the government and its officials wished to avoid any measures that would "cause overt conflict with the interests of industrial capital (Harrison 1995, 38).

- It was an isolated protest by a small group of women:

This view does not sit easily with the facts (see Appx 2). While the strike was triggered in response to the sacking of a young female worker(s): "It just went like tinder", it was not just a thoughtless and impulsive reaction to a mate's sacking. The cause of it went much deeper in the longstanding grievances within the factory against poor wages and harsh terms and conditions including the effect of poisonous white phosphorus fumes (Satre 1982, 11). The demands they made on the employer (App 2) before they would return to work also confronted, the company's indifference to its workforce that was in stark contrast to other Quaker run businesses of the time such as Courtaulds (Satre 1992, 17; Adams et al 1983).

Women were elected to go with Besant to Parliament to make their case. During that visit, they met with key politicians, and, got questions raised publicly on the illegal use of ‘fines’ by the Company to discipline the workers that breached the ‘Trucking Act’ regulating the payment of wages and fines. Their demand for a female factory inspector to be introduced into the factories also fed into increasing concerns at the time nationally and internationally of the gendered abuse and violence of male overseers in factories (Raw 2011, 141; Glickman 1984, 142-3; Black 1907). It was, in other words, an act of mass solidarity by unskilled women against oppressive industrial practices that had historic consequences at the time and are relevant for women trade unionists today.

The Strike also came within a tradition of militant political and industrial rebellion action that went back to the Chartist Rebellion between the years of 1830-48 that had revolutionary dimensions to it (Thompson 1984). It was, that is part of a history of protest and striking both inside and outside the Company of which the strikers would have direct experience or at least knowledge. There were, for example, at least three previous strikes in 1881, 1885, and 1886. These were, according to Raw, all reported in the media and noted by Beatrice Webb in her role as a social investigator for Charles Booth. According to Tom Mann, a leader of the strikes of 1889, they were also linked to low wages and phossy jaw (Raw 2011, 151).

Also, in 1871, matchmaking workers, led by women and children marched in their thousands, to protest the imposition of a tax on matches (Beaver 1985, 48) that the Company formally said they would pass on to the workers in the form of wage deductions (Raw 2011, 145). They managed to present a petition to Parliament in the face of such police brutality, apparently based on fears of the influence of the Paris Commune, that questions were asked in Parliament, and the tax was abandoned (Beaver 1985, 51).

It is also instructive, in terms of overturning the invisibility of the women and girls in this Strike that they had the strategic and organizational skills to convene a mass meeting at the Victoria Factory and gather huge numbers of workers and supporters to the the traditional Whitechapel site of protests. They also made banners and marched sing their own version of the American Civil War song ‘John Brown’s Body’, ’*We’ll hang Old Bryant on the Sour Apple Tree’* (Raw, 145). This confirms they were in touch with international revolutionary action of the time as was also obvious in their close connections with the feminist campaigner for the urban poor and the rights of women, Jane Addams.

More generally, it is significant that the population in the East End, where the strikers lived had exploded between the years of 1831 and 1881 from 4,785 to 101,117 people and continued to grow in the years up to 1888 (Beer 1986, 15; Arnold 2004, 17).

According to Gillian Rose, the B&M workers, lived around eight close poor neighbourhood clusters within the area, two of which were mainly Irish, and a network of trusted reciprocal support for survival crossed them all (Rose 1996, 102). There was a large working-class Chinese and Bangladesh communities that had settled in the East End (Fishman 1988).

The East End was, as W. J. Fishman makes clear, also a place of vibrant community and street life with a very diverse population with a large concentration of Irish, Jewish working-class people. "To portray it as one sombre mass of unmitigated woe", as William Fishman, said "would be a travesty" (Fishman 1988, 2, 303). Jobs were, however, hard to come by for everyone due to the 'failure of important businesses that had left 'an enormous pool of poor, unskilled workers living there' (Arnold 2004, p.2,) and their need for homes was far in excess of the existing housing stock and many lived under the threat of the workhouse, forced emigration to the colonies, and the pauper's grave (Fishman 1988, Ch1; Beer 1986, 14; Beaver 1985, 4).

The newcomers to the East End, many of whom had had left Ireland in response to the conditions associated with the 'Great Famine' or fled the 'pogroms' of Eastern Europe were especially vulnerable to poor housing, unemployment, and the worst terms and conditions of employment and low pay, dependent on casual work in 'sweated' trades. Many of the Irish were committed to or engaged in the demand for Home Rule in a Republican Ireland and had the support of prominent political activists such as Eleanor Marx. This is likely to have included the strikers in some way as according to the Company, the workers in the Victoria factory "hailed from Ireland by birth or lineage" (Rose 1996, 102). At the time of the strike, as Louise Raw shows conclusively, many working in B&M factories also lived with, or near, the striking Dockers and Gas workers (2011, 2) which challenges the idea that they had no connection with them or influenced or were influenced by them.

Thus, unemployment, 'sweating', and international politics were major issues linked nationally by association to immigration with, as Fishman noted, "a torrent of anti-alien rhetoric in the press and pulpit (Fishman 1988, 71). The women and girls engaged in '*The Match Women's Strike'* were, that is, embedded in communities in the East End, at the centre of the polarized political debates in Britain on poverty, unemployment, immigration, nationalism, and imperialism (Fishman 1979, 1). It is difficult to believe, therefore, that they either didn't take part directly in any of these wider struggles or know of them.

On this evidence, it is reasonable, to conclude that, contrary to the assertion that this was an isolated local protest by a small group of girls unconnected to other revolutionary strike action, the women and girls would have been involved, or know of, the strikes and protests within and beyond the company. Consequently, they would have had the knowledge, political consciousness, and objective understanding of their conditions to start, organize, and lead this strike to a successful outcome. It is widely and reliably documented that they drew on the support of influential activists and trade union experts. The empirical evidence from Louise Raw's research of leadership from within the Strike, however, is against the 'script' that they were totally dependent on them for its organization and successful outcome. This is not to dismiss the significance of that support, it is to suggest, a different weight needs to be given to it in the Strike's history.

- A Weak, local, short-lived trade union

The limited historical significance given to the trade union formed by the strikers is more complicated to assess as this research revealed very little on it. It must, however, be put in the context of it being one of their successful demands to the Employer for them to return to work (Appx 2). It was a huge achievement given the hostile environment to workers' rights generally within its factories. It was also the first nationally recognized union of unorganized female workers, and its success was achieved without financial and comradely support from the major trade unions. It became "the largest Union composed entirely of women and girls in England" sustained by a membership fees and small donations. (Booth,1889, 435-8, quoted in Kapp 1976, 269; Drake 1984, 26-7).

The union that was formed successfully "struggled against employer victimization of its committee members, that according to Sarah Boston was "one of the most difficult situations facing women trade unions at the time (Boston 1980, 51) but successfully overcame the threats and intimidation and to increase its membership and to open it to men. It is also evidence of its strength and involvement in industrial struggles beyond the workplace, that, unlike the Unions of the dockers and Gas workers, it elected a committee member Sarah Chapman as a delegate to the newly formed '*Trades Union Congress'* (TUC).

It is also telling that Mary Macarthur, who formed and became the first president of the '*National Federation of Women Workers'* (NFWW), from trades considered most difficult to organize, used the '*Match Women's Union'* as a model (Hunt 2019, 59-60). While this research revealed nothing on why it was dissolved in 1903 two suggestions for this, therefore, seem doubtful. The first was that the early loss of Annie Besant as leader was partly responsible (Soldon 1978, 31-33, quoted in Satre 1982, 27); the second, that it just 'collapsed under pressure from a determined employer'.

On the first point, Annie Besant, though giving support to the strikers was never keen on it or to the women and girls forming a union, even though she supported them to do so. As she made clear in her article in 'The Link', provocatively entitled '*White*

Slavery in London', she favoured the less radical solution, first suggested at the Fabian meeting at which she was present, of boycotting Bryant & May goods. "Trade Unionism", she said in her Link article might teach [the women] comradeship and stir up social feeling and improve their business faculty in many ways but raise their wages – no! (Besant 1888, '*the Link'*).

On the second point, there was an upsurge of strike action following the Strike with workers contacting this Union to "ask for advice on establishing their own organization (Raw 2011, 158). Moreover, the strike had a great deal of local support, not just from prominent socialist activists but also from labour leaders and experts within the emerging Labour Movement. For example, Lewis Lyon, the leader in the strike by 10000 Jewish tailors in 1889 against the sweated system, while in close contact with the leaders of the gas worker and dock strikes, was arrested for his direct support of the striking women and girls. It, therefore, seems more likely that the needs of the members of the 'Match Makers Union' were thought to be better served by the larger '*National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers'* led by Will Thorne and others known to the matchmakers regardless of the attitude of the employer.

Soldon's other suggestion that there was a lack of a united women's trade union association at the time warrants further consideration. While, the '*Women's Trade Union League*' was in place and effectively took up the issue of phosphorus poisoning in the industry, with the Home office and in its 'Women's Trade Review' throughout 1889 (Satre 1982, 27), the 'National Federation of Women Workers (WFWW) affiliated to the '*General Federation of Trade Unions'* formed by Mary Macarthur, for women in the "hidden trades and considered to be the most difficult to organize was not set up until 1906 (Hunt 2029, 59). As a "fighting militant Union, committed to developing women leadership from among the workers, it might have given appropriate visibility to the women match-workers in their strike, united them under its radical banner, and so taken the history of their strike and trade union in a different direction.

In conclusion, the evidence of the way the overarching 'script' and associated narratives explored above has put the strike at the periphery of labour history suggests a need to 'rethink' the existing history, and the assumptions underpinning it. To finalize this challenge, a link is made in what follows with the role of the 'myth' of the poor little matchgirls elaborated by Raw and a 'script' of the 'slums' of the East End of London.

Colliding 'scripts': The Poor Little Matchgirls from the East and of London

On the issue of the lack of historical agency attributed to the women and girls strikers, Louise Raw, debunked the myth of the 'poor little match girls' (Raw 2011, 1, 28) The power of the myth, however, as she said, doesn't just lie in the title of them as 'girls' but comes from the portrayal of them as part of an unknown number of the 'labouring poor' from the East End of London.

The argument here is that this has all the hallmarks of a 'script' with associated narratives that 'collide' with 'multiple scripts and narratives. These taken together serve to misrepresent, reduce, and distort the lives of the women and girls in the strike so that the possibility of their historical agency in revolutionary change through the strike is put into question.

The East End, as a geographical space construed as separate from the rest of London and in opposition to the wealthy West End was new at the time and shifted as London grew and people migrated there (Kaufman 2016, 4). This 'script' broadly reflects the views of many from the wealthy West End, whom Ellen Ross called "slum travellers" to the East. They went, as Ross notes, as observers, commentators, and reformers, into "the undiscovered 'dark space' inhabited by the London poor" (Ross 2007, 1). They included social investigators, novelists, poets, and artists and adventurers seeking raucous entertainment, drinking, and partying among the exotic 'alien Irish and Jews (Kaufman, 2016 accessed 17.11.23).

The idea of an 'undiscovered dark space of the London poor' was obvious in the statements of famous investigators. For the social investigator and reformer, Beatrice Webb, the East End was "a bottomless pit of decaying life" and those forced to be homeless, were "low looking, bestial, content with their own condition" (Webb 1938, 225, quoted in Fishman 1988, 11). T.H. Huxley likened it to a place of 'savages' unfavourably comparing those living there to the innocence of the Polynesian savage (Fishman 1988, 2) and similarly, William Booth compared them to 'the African pigmy' (Beer 1986, 1).

Novelists, artists, and poets provided definitive images of the East End that confirmed the images. For example, the popular poem, '*The City of the Dreadful Night'* by James Thompson, created a snapshot in the reader's mind of a nightmare vision of it as a dark place of loneliness, alienation, spiritual despair, and sexual danger, all to be avoided. Dicken's novel 'Oliver Twist' provided the threatening character in 'Fagin, a resident of Whitechapel who preys upon orphan children. The spate of horrific serial murders of women in Whitechapel in the months after the strike, attributed to 'Jack the Ripper' were sensationally reported in the press and helped to invoke Whitechapel as a dark and dangerous place.

While the images of the 'poor little match girl' unwaveringly portrayed her as waif-like, pretty, and, albeit in tattered clothes, but with clean bare feet, her eyes trustingly, turned to heaven, arms stretched up in innocent supplication, accepting her fate. The gritty images of the East End similarly convey a stereotype, but of mean dark streets and depravity. This is artistically expressed in Gustave Doré's 1872 illustration in which a policeman shines the harsh light of 'The Bulls Eye', lamp on a huddled group of homeless people including children'. They are all pitiful, and with bare feet but no suggestion of innocence (The Victorian Web accessed 22.3.24).

The Script of The East End: 'a dangerous outcast place'.

This 'script' obvious in such views is that:

> '*The East End is an undiscovered outcast place inhabited by the labouring poor and unemployed residuum without hope of working out their own means of escape'.*

Such constructions, as Fishman noted (1988, 2), 'conjured up 'a nursery of destitute poverty and thriftless, demoralised pauperism in a community cast adrift from the salutary presence and leadership of men (sic) of wealth and culture, and…a political threat to the riches and civilisation of London and the Empire (Jones 1971, 15-16, quoted in Fishman 1988, 2).

According to the popular poem 'the Angel in the House", by Coventry Patmore, virtuous women did not work for financial gain or move outside the domestic sphere alone. By implication 'factory girls' were unrespectable, undisciplined, and potentially dangerous to the social order. In contrast, the East End was viewed as, a place in which women and girls in the sweated industries, or unemployed, either through dire necessity, or 'almost naturally', take to the streets (Fishman 1988, 122).

From the point of view of the upper-and middle-class social investigators and social reformers travelling from the wealthy West End, the East End was thus a "degenerate social milieu that spawned an alienated, antisocial personality", providing the setting for their easy "move of into prostitution" (Walkowitz 1980, 38). This took no account of the double moral standards exposed starkly by the 'experimental' findings of W.T. Stead that, "wealthy prominent men travelled from the West End and elsewhere to prey on, or have procured for them, very young girls for sexual purposes" (Stead, quoted in Kaufman 2016, 11).

Strikingly, given his sympathetic political position on the appalling conditions of working-class families and workers, Fredrich Engels viewed with concern "the lack of chastity of factory girls". He saw the reversal of the "natural circumstances in which unemployed men were married to women with jobs, as the "shameful and degrading erosion of normal sexual attributes" (quoted in Valence 1995, n96).

Such patriarchal and class-bound definitions of the East End are presented as ‘truth claims’ but slip from the facts of poverty to fit normative standards of the upper- and middle-class men and women that are based on and reinforce the patriarchal and class linked sensibilities and norms of purity, disorder, and fear of pollution of the poor. As Dorothy Thompson commented, the “typification of woman as a frail, delicate, and decorative creature, and its simultaneous tolerance of, and indeed dependence on, the exploitation of vast numbers of women in every kind of arduous and degrading work… was “one of the many hypocrisies” of the time…Society would not have survived long had women, among the ‘labouring poor’ been prevented from working (Thompson 1986, 112-138).

They also contrast starkly, questionably, and at times shockingly, with the autobiographical accounts of those writing about their lives in East London around the time of the Strike (Kaufman, 2016) and those of the writers within the Cooperative Women’s Guild (Virago, 2007). Also, while, in Glasgow, rather than London and before the Strike, Ellen Johnston’s autobiography and her poetry based on of her difficult life as a victim of domestic violence and as ‘factory girl’ also significantly challenge such assumptions (Simmons 2007, 301-315, 366-386).

They are also contrary to the social histories available on London working class women, men, and families at the time and later (Simmons 2007; Davin 1997; Fishman, 1988; Booth, 1889,). Interestingly too, the ‘script’ jarred with this researcher’s own anecdotal family history of that time in Bow, East London. This is full of stories of poverty and hardship in which the women, men, and children worked ‘as casuals’ in the factories under the threat of the ‘workhouse’ in which one member was born. Their stories of the time, however, were of loving family and vibrant community that had diversity, mutual aid, and music at its heart.

This contradiction was also confirmed by Louise Raw (2011), who found that the actual women and girl strikers, and the complexity of their lives, interests, and needs did not ‘fit’ the generalised one-dimensional portrayals of their lives in the East End (2011, 15). The five women she located through her research in the B&M archives, defined by B&M Directors as ‘troublemakers’ and leaders within the strike, some of whom were elected to the Strike Committee (Appx 3), did not fit the stereotype of the very young passive, sexually promiscuous ‘girl’ (23).

Her finding that some were married respectable members of the community is consistent with Gillian Rose’s point that the Victoria Factory in which the Strike began contained B&M’s highest paid female workers and about a fifth were married. Rose suggests, as such, they were likely to have been instrumental in its impetus as “less willing to put up with the sexual division of power in which “brutal” supervisory men were the highest paid (Rose 1996, 101)

Findings and Conclusion

The findings from this study highlight the significance of class, sexuality, ethnicity and nationalism to the ‘sex-blindness’ to the historical agency of the women and girls within the Strike. They also confirm Raw’s point that the versions that ignore the lived reality of the actual women and girls as workers and within their communities, inevitably reduce their role within the Strike to, what Anna Davin called, “a cliché of female activism” (quoted by Raw 2011, 15), and, as Mary Davis said, as “victims rather than fighters” (Davis 1993, 94 Note). This indirectly make the point that what Raw calls the ‘orthodox’ versions of the strike, also fail to include the significance of the indifference of the employer to the wellbeing of the workforce.

An additional insight provided by this case study is that such versions also disregard the role of the striking women and girls within the strike as both, what Raya Dunayevskaya called, revolutionary ‘Reason’ and force’. Their capacity, that is “as exploited workers (Dunayevskaya 1991, xiii) to initiate, organize and devise strategies for its success. This brings them within Spivak’s definition of ‘subaltern women’ as socially, politically, and geographically marginalised or oppressed and subjugated in terms of their sex, class, and ethnicity. It also exposes how, as well as dehumanizing and stigmatizing the strikers’ communities, their subjectivity is tied necessarily to the poverty-stricken ‘environment’ of a dangerous and outcast place that determines their ‘natures’ as frivolous, thriftless and sexually promiscuous, i.e., they could not be otherwise.

Taken together, the findings confirm Louise Raw’s argument that the significance of the strike and the capabilities of the strikers within it, have been ‘hidden’ *from* and *by* history’. From the script and associated narrative of their subjectivities as tied necessarily to the abject poverty of the East End, that is, it is a simple step to insist in on the total dependence of the strikers on the outside leadership of upper-class women (and some men) as catalysts for the political consciousness of their exploitation as workers, oppression as women, and for the planning, organization, and success of the Strike. The argument here, again in line with Raw (7), is that this is a serious ‘error’ in the construction of the strikers gendered, class, sexual, and ethnic identities that should be corrected if what is written is to be accepted as a full and accurate account of it

It also meets her stronger point, that such ‘script’ and associated narratives has led to a history in which the strike is falsely represented within it. The suggestion here is that the presentation of the strike based on this history conforms to what Rob Aya defined as an “*Outsider-agitator’* model of revolutionary struggle (Aya 1979, quoted in the Literature Review). In this case, one led by ‘socialist’ subversives with a ‘socialist’ revolutionary political agenda and ideology provoking to otherwise disinterested ‘girls’ to violent strike action. This is not just a serious error to be corrected, it is fatal to the existing history. The overall conclusion from the findings of this study is that this requires a new theoretical framework and space in which it is possible to ‘rethink’ the Strike so that its historical significance, and the actual women and girls, as a constitutive category and their strike action as a defining variable can be made visible and critically considered, judged debated within it.

Summary and Introduction to Part Two: Ch.4

In this Chapter, the case study of the Strike has illustrated how the conceptual problem of the invisibility women and marginalization of their revolutionary practice elaborated on earlier (Ch1 & 2) can happen through scripts, myths and images and how factors of sex, class, sexuality, and ethnicity are central to them.

In the following Chapter the concept of ‘embodiment’ is introduced as a starting point for the development of a theoretical space in which to ‘envisage’ the contribution of women as historical agents of revolutionary change. This focuses on them as thinkers and activists for whom the factors of ‘difference’ and the controversies surrounding them are significant but do not necessarily define them.

Key words: Chartists, Class-bound, dehumanize, Jewish, mutual aid, ‘New Unionism’, pauperism, phossy-jaw, poem slavery, slum travellers, victims.

CHAPTER FOUR

Embodying women as ‘historical agents of revolutionary change’

Introduction

In Part One, women’s invisibility as historical agents of revolutionary change was identified as a serious research problem for this thesis. This led to the complicated question of how to ‘envision’ such women without them appearing sui generis, i.e., from nowhere, and so unconnected to this theoretical problem. A theoretical case is made in this Chapter for the adoption of the concept of ‘embodiment’ as a constructive way forward to give tangible and visible form, i.e., bodily presence, to such women as thinking, feeling, acting human beings and to the conditions shaping their lives and experiences.

Prior research on ‘embodiment’

This is a complex undertaking as the topic covers different theoretical interests across different academic disciplines. On the historical development of the term and its uses within the analysis of the phenomenology of human existence and the lived body, the studies of the concept by Drew Leder (2024) and James R. Mensch (2009) provided useful background information. It draws in detail on the study of women’s embodiment in political resistance by Maša Mrovlje and Jennet Kirkpatrick (2023), and the on and the essays of Claire Andrieu (2000), and Paula Schwartz (1987) that are focused on the French Resistance on which Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick build. Together, they provide important additional insights to the problem of invisibility.[8] Other authors, used in less detail, are credited within each part of the discussion as appropriate.

Women’s embodiment considered within a framework of Marginality

The intention is not just to capture the essential elements of women’s embodiment, although it is hoped it will do so. It is also to bring actual women from the periphery to the mainstream of theoretical debates on revolution. No claim is made that this use of the concept is definitive. It is, however, seen, to provide a distinctive approach to the research problem within a framework of ‘Marginality’ understood as both ‘on the edge’, or ‘of little effect or importance’. This usefully provides a way of conceptualizing the women, individually and collectively, who have been treated in what is written as, what bel hooks calls, “part of the whole but outside the main body” (2015, xxvi) and their marginalized ‘voice’ that, the writer and poet Suheir Hammad says, is “part of the story but left off the main page” (Hammad 2004 in Burrell xi-xiv).

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[8] These authors focus on political ‘Resistance’ and women ‘Resisters’. Where the distinction between them and ‘Revolution’ and ‘Revolutionaries’, as defined in Ch2, is critical or substantially changes or misrepresents the point, it is noted; otherwise the terms are treated as interchangeable.

Within this approach, the breadth of the term ‘outsider’ is recognized to be problematic given the widely different backgrounds of the women and the different identities generated by the lived realities of their material conditions and the significance of such factors as class, sexuality, gender, and ethnicity to those identities. The resulting distinctions between women are recognized to complicate their revolutionary politics and the possibility of solidarity with other women (and men) in collective action. For example, of the women prominent on the front-line of struggle, some attempt to bridge the gap between the Centre and the Margin, others do not locate themselves in either and for many, it is a place of collective despair. As hooks, emphasises from her own experience, however, while ‘the Margin’ is not always safe, for many women it is a space of refusal to be what others want you to be (hooks 1989).

There is also a distinction between women choosing to be in ‘the Margin’. This may be defensive or defiant as eloquently expressed Suheir Hammad in her poem that begins: *“don’t wanna be your exotic / some delicate fragile colorful bird / imprisoned caged / in a land foreign to the stretch of her wings…*” (Hammad 2010, 41). It may also be part of a vision for a new imaginary of human society of women such as that such as that explored by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her novel ‘*Herland*’ (1915). Either way, as hooks found, for many women it is “not a marginality one wishes to lose, to give up, or surrender but rather a site one stays in, clings to even” supported by comrades and trusting friendships within a “community of resistance” (hooks 1989, 19), that is not just found in words but in the habits of being and the way one lives” (20).

It is also, for women such as hooks, “a space for radical openness” in which a radical standpoint, perspective and position can be developed and “the process of revision” begin (1989, 15). In their autobiographies, writing, art, and speeches, using in a first-person narrative, as Margo V. Perkins found in her study of the autobiographies of three prominent American revolutionary women, they “intentionally link the personal with the political, to assertively give shape and meaning to being a woman and a revolutionary in the social and political climate of their time” (Perkins 2000, xii).

Some do so as an ‘act of resistance’ using their own embodied stories of how their political journey evolved as an act of resistance to challenge the general writing on revolution and question the patriarchal imaginary of ‘a revolutionary’ within it (Garza 2020; Farmer 2017, Ch2). As Ziva Galili showed in her analysis of the Russian Revolution, for example, the situation of women was deeply contradictory. She focuses on Alexandra Kollontai, whom she notes, was at times central to the leadership, at others marginalized and dismissed both intellectually and physically sent to the periphery (Galili, in Diamond 1998, 63-78). Kollontai was criticised for living as an independent woman in accordance with her political beliefs and for her insistence on putting the liberation of women, their care, and that of children at the centre of the Revolution. She, however, spoke publicly, and wrote copiously through novels and other writing on love, sexuality and socialist ethics on what this entails and why it mattered to her personally as a woman and in revolutionary terms (Kollontai 2020).

Among those writing and making speeches, a number have gone beyond their autobiographies to develop an authoritative role as a 'Public Intellectual' with the deliberate intention of being part of the complex theoretical debates on revolution. For example, an essential part of intellectual endeavours and activism of Audre Lorde, the Black American feminist and anti-racist political activist was the use of 'embodied discourse' through which she gave voice to an oppositional and counter-hegemonic record of the revolutionary history in which she was engaged and aimed to construct an alternative to it.

She wrote extensively on the novel possibilities for action by women and solidarity between them that is essential to the lineage of generativity of their actions beyond the moment of struggle and for a better future. This requires, she maintained, overturning the institutionalized rejection of the differences between women that "have led to them being "misnamed and misused in the service of separation and confusion" (Lorde 1984, 108). Solidarity, she argues comes from women recognising the very real differences between them but as a dynamic force that "is enriching rather than threatening to the defined self when there are shared goals" with other women (Lorde 2017, 12). It is also, she says, through the attempt to bridge some of them as "self-actualized individuals, female and male, that any real advances can be made". It is not, she cautions, "difference that immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken" (43).

The attempt here is to use the concept of 'embodiment' to uncover how that "silence" is produced and reproduced in what is written and how it forecloses any analysis of the lived reality of women's revolutionary activism. The aim in other words is to show how this conceals, what hooks called, their "radical perspectives that make it possible for them to see and to create, and to imagine alternatives, and new worlds" through it (hooks1989, 20).

Confronting the 'othering' of women

As shown in Part One, the invisibility of women's historical agency in revolutionary change plays differently according to the historically and geographically situated context of political struggle in which they are engaged and that is being written about. It also indicated that, regardless of the differences, this commonly happens in two ways in theoretical representations of them as follows. Women are, that is, '*objectified*' in ways that reduce their embodied lives to fixed attributes, or caricatures associated with their sex, class, sexuality, and ethnicity that can be accepted or rejected, and from which motives and behaviours can then be assigned to them. They are also '*typified*' in accordance with already constructed (though not necessarily stated) norms and standards for women of the time that they do not, cannot, or refuse to meet.

The case study of the '*Match Women's Strike*' (Ch 3), usefully illustrates how this process can happen in complex ways in which factors of 'difference' such as gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity are central to it. The women and girl strikers are not only objectified as the nameless quintessential 'Other' but typified as child victims in a dramatic morality tale of dastardly villains and a fairy godmother (Annie Besant) rather than as embodied striking revolutionary subjects within Labour History. Moreover, contrary to the evidence that Louise Raw gathered in her detailed account of the strike (2011), the women and girl strikers are typically dehumanized as part of the 'Labouring Poor' of the East End of London. As such, they are defined by a biological and socializing essentialism grounded in their conditions of abject poverty and corruption from which they could neither escape or act contrary to, nor change.

This is based largely on abstractions that slip from the facts of social issues of the time, such as poverty and child labour, that are left unconsidered in the depiction of the strikers as 'passive victims' of their biological natures or stereotyped as 'factory girls' - either way, in need of protection, control, and reform. As Raw showed, this has frozen them namelessly in the history of the Strike as totally dependent upon an external upper-class, educated, and 'charismatic' leadership of men and women for the Strike's impetus, organization and success. As such, they have also remained historically in the political shadows of later strikes, led by 'charismatic' working-class men, that are seen to have revolutionized the class, industrial, and political landscape and relations at the time.

Women defined as 'the Second Sex'

This leads directly to the question of how such women are defined as the 'Other' in relation to the 'embodied' male subject privileged as the 'norm' in leadership positions. The duality of male and female revolutionaries builds on the idea of sex differentiation in which there is a sexual division of labour such that roles and tasks are assigned differently between men and women. This is not a relation between equals, however, as, if mentioned at all, women are typically encompassed within descriptions of male revolutionaries that puts them in a negative relation to men as secondary, inferior, subordinate, or deviant from the male norm. Thus, in their actions they are only deemed noteworthy if they act *like,* or *as,* men or stay within non-essential subordinate roles characterised as specifically female linked to service, compassion, and self-sacrifice.

While a small number of prominent women as theorists and activists are often recognised as extra-ordinary and their activism as critical to the theory and practice of revolution, it is as a stand-alone case, usually in relation to powerful male leaders, as 'exceptional' women, or as legendry revolutionary warriors/female 'Amazons' (Boyle 2019). Their inclusion in what is written, therefore, that frequently does not acknowledge the significance of class and ethnicity, does not break the general silence on the historical agency of such women.

As the case study of the '*Match Women's Strike'*, shows, for example, the upper-class, educated campaigner, Annie Besant, is historically credited as the leader of the Strike rather than the women and girls within it whom, Louise Raw, conclusively proved to form its actual leadership (Raw 2011). Besant, however, is typically depicted as a 'notorious', 'colourful' woman, 'inconsistent' in her political views, relationships, and interests (2). Her political legacy from the strike and other political campaigns for women rights as citizen that built on her determination to live as an autonomous independent woman against the accepted traditions of the time and at a huge a huge personal cost is 'hidden within this description and so *from* and *by* the history of the Strike.

In all these ways women conform to, what Simone de Beauvoir eloquently called, "the Second Sex" (de Beauvoir 2009; from the original, 1949). The theoretical importance of the distinction created through this binary analytic based on attributes of the strikers rather than that of their actual embodied activism is that it denies women, individually and collectively, as independent subjects of their own revolutionary history and truncates their life-decisions, revolutionary choices, and actions other than in a secondary negative elation to a male revolutionary or leadership figure.

Restrictive definitions and the '*honorary man*' trope

Maša Mrovlje and Jennet Kirkpatrick (2023), writing from a feminist perspective, take as their starting point a failure of existing histories of political resistance to recognize the centrality of women's embodiment within them (1). Their arguments and conclusions for this mirror many of those elaborated on in Part One of this thesis. Their general argument, building on Andrieu (2000) Schwartz (1987) is that the failures are, in many respects, the outcome of a definition of resistance as 'armed combat' that privileges male 'resisters', as the gendered and embodied "normative actors" (2-8).

They also provide the additional insight into the common use within the theorising on political resistance of, what they call, the '*honorary man'* trope. (2) They show that the assumptions within it, function to perpetuate the exclusion of women within this narrow and restrictive definition and to problematize the female body in the representation of them 'resisters' (2). Thus, they argue that, although its form is "varied and complex in its use, a woman is represented as lacking the necessary male qualities for resistance and is only "a true resister" if she 'fights like a man' (2). On their argument, "women cease to be women" (4). Thus, it is only in the subordinate roles assigned to them that revolutionary women are women.

While, they argue, the 'honorary male' framework, may at first appear inclusive, privileging men as the "normative actors" will not lead to a correct understanding of "the political world", [of revolution]. Invoking the arguments of Audre Laude and Simone de Beauvoir, they conclude that not only is the definition too narrow but to ignore the female body, its possibilities, gendered vulnerabilities, and how it is situated, is to make a fundamental error in imagining women's historic embodied acts of political resistance (8).

As de Beauvoir points out, this sexist trope has long philosophical roots. She cites, "Aristotle: 'We should regard women's nature as suffering from natural defectiveness'… and St Thomas Aquinas, who later decreed that woman was an 'incomplete man', 'an incidental being'" (de Beauvoir 2009, 5). To get away from such historical "oppressive understandings and the negative "racial, classed and sexual embodiment of women within resistance movements" (2), Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick, in line with Andrieu (2000,1) and Schwartz (1987,152), and the conclusions in Part One of this thesis, argue for broadening the theoretical definition of political resistance and the constitutive analytic categories and defining variables within it. They, however, go further to specify that this must include not just armed struggle but also covert acts of defiance, and the essential support activities and care work of women essential to the functioning a political Cause (2).

As they say, this demand constitutes a profound change to the existing theoretical literature and scholarship on political resistance. While, as the Literature Review showed, the theoretical study of revolution has expanded to include struggles not defined by armed combat. It also indicated, however, this has not overturned previous models that remain in place as 'classical models' of revolution, and that the inclusion of women within theoretical studies relies often on a version of the 'honorary male' trope that sidelines them discursively, as critical actors.

As a first step towards a broad inclusive definition such as they suggest, an attempt is made in what follows to show how the narrow and restrictive definition of revolution and resistance together with the '*honorary male'* trope that establishes acceptance of the invisibility of women within it, fail on their own accounts. It does so, first, by drawing on the ample evidence available that since antiquity and across the world, women in great numbers have historically played vital roles in armed conflict and been prepared to sacrifice their lives and freedom for a revolutionary cause; second, by consideration of the theoretical origins of the 'honorary man' trope.

Women's history of engagement in revolutionary armed combat

The picture that emerges is inevitably complicated with some women changing their position over time. Some are famous for their military leadership; others who remain unnamed, have also made history through their great courage and bravery in action. of age". As the records of the terrible toll of injury, brutal incarceration and death in revolutionary armed combat and those not depended on it, women, from across these divides, often show great strength and determination in action and in brutal interrogations and torture. They can also show tough-minded and courageous resolve in moments of danger. The depictions of them as such, however, are typically contradictory and even dismissive as such.

Constance Markeivicz who, as Joe McGowan records in his biography of her, "armed with an automatic pistol and Mauser rifle, "made a formidable soldier" and faced with the British police at her home late at night, made it clear she was "quite prepared to shoot and be shot at" (McGowan 2003, 29). According to Eilen MacDonald in her book on 'terrorism', an experienced officer the German Domestic Security Agency whom she interviewed said: "For anyone who loves his life, it is a good idea to shoot the women first". Whereas men will wait a moment before firing a gun, a woman will not hesitate" (MacDonald 1992).

The contradictions are dramatically expressed in in the different representations of Boadicea who in AD 60/61 led a successful uprising against the occupying forces of the Roman Empire. She is depicted as a legendry female warrior or 'Amazon' but typically in ways that stress her femininity. She is also criticized for lacking the male qualities required for battle leadership. For example, the 17th Century influential poet and historian, John Milton, dismissed her with blatant misogyny as a "shameless harridan who ought to have kept her sorry tale of assault, rape and humiliation to herself rather than seeking revenge and unleashing war on the Romans because of it". Thus whether celebratory or critical, as a military leader, she is reduced to her feminine body and her campaign to female weakness for personal revenge in her female weakness for personal revenge (Vandrei 2018, 15).

The Tragic dimensions and dilemmas women face

The above confirms Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick's argument, that the '*honorary male'* trope fails to reveal the "tragic dilemmas and vulnerabilities" women face as women within it (5) or, as in the case of Boadicea, do so in a contradictory way. This ranges from the ordinary and everyday events of their lives but includes those faced by women in leaving their family responsibilities, particularly their children. The response is again contradictory. For example, they quote Srila Roy (2007, 197) on the celebration of women within the Naxalbari Movement of Bengal, who "made what she calls "the heroic sacrificial femininity" in leaving their children or losing them to a revolutionary cause" (3) In contrast Alexandra Kollontai and Constance Markievicz, were both criticized for doing so with the latter's biographer seeing it as "fair" to raise the contradiction between "her love for all mankind and the Irish people with her ruinous personal relations…particularly with her only child whom she virtually abandoned…(O' Faolain 1987, 7).

Embodied injustice and gendered violence

Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick's argument for foregrounding 'embodiment' in theories of Resistance and for exposing and debunking the 'honorary-male trope', significantly complicates and disrupts the existing theoretical debates on violence as a defining feature of revolution. It is at its most challenging if there is an insistence to include the embodied injustices directed as part of the armoury of dominance against women's bodies in revolutionary struggles as an analytical category within the debates. Conversely, no attention to the significance of the use of violence by women in armed combat (or outside it) as they argue, or that by women controversially defined as 'Terrorists' and 'Freedom Fighters' other than, as Jessica Auchter says, in relation to men (Auchter 2012).

In its most brutal form this involves extreme sexual violence including rape as a weapon of torture war that are now recognized as war crimes.[9] As Christina Lamb said in her book "*Our Bodies, their Battlefield: What War does to Women*', "You won't find the names of women raped in the history books…Around the world a woman's body is still very much a battleground" (Lamb, 2020, p.5, p.11). An additional complication to the consideration of gendered violence is that a woman is not always targeted because of her sex alone but also because of her nationality or ethnicity.

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[9] Yasmin El-Rifae, in her book '*Radius*' on her experiences in the Egyptian Revolution of 2012 movingly and shockingly highlights the sexual violence against women protesters, and their continued trauma following the sexualized attacks on them as women (Rifae, 2022).

Asef Bayat, in his discussion of the same Revolution, highlights the inverted use by the military of the cultural importance of a woman's virtue to justify their obscene punishment of women protestors through gang rape with objects such as knives and bottles. The general violence and its sexual nature exposed by a video on social media, as he says, shows "a group of soldiers grabbing a woman protester, kicking her stomach and dragging her unconscious body, deliberately exposing her underwear to humiliate her (Bayat 2021, p.152-154).

The military narrative of justification, according to Bayat, was that the women were not virtuous "like your daughter or mine". In its denial of the moral virtue of the women, the implication was they were stripped, not only physically but of rights to protection by male family members. According to Bayat, its purpose, however, was not just to instill terror in women, it was also to humiliate the men associated with them personally and as comrades (Bayat 2021, p153).

As Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick observe (4), quoting Simone de Beauvoir and Giséle Halimi, the arrest, imprisonment of Djamila Boupacha in the Algerian War of Independence from France, was justified by the French on the grounds of her 'terrorism'. She was, however, repeatedly tortured through extreme sexual violence and rape as an 'Algerian' woman (de Beauvoir & Halimi 1962). This is also central to an understanding of the genocidal intent to destroy a nation or ethnic group. Sexual violence, that is, is generally perpetrated against women, as reproducers but there are many examples where both sexes, young and old, are subjected to it, not because of their gender alone, but because of their nationality or ethnicity.[10]

While this is a complex topic beyond the scope of this discussion, it is an indication of how the use of the concept of 'embodiment' alters our understanding of what counts as revolutionary and challenges the idea of revolution as a neat and tidy form of male resistance. It also permits attention to be drawn to the way it can lead to different priorities on the primary site of struggle and who is considered the antagonist. Where, for example, women are involved in both a national struggle and one internal to the sexism and misogyny in their society, they may see themselves in two 'battles (Eltahawy 2015). They may also see the struggle as against patriarchy and the domination of women by men as primary and the requirement of joining men in the broader struggle, therefore, as inimitable to them. This often turns on whether a distinction is between domestic sexual violence against women within the home and workplace and its use as a tool of war and conflict.

Double Blindness: revolutionary acts, civil disobedience, and leadership

The narrow definition of revolution and resistance as armed combat and, what Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick term, 'the honorary man' trope' also break down through the double blindness to the “huge number of women who play a crucial role in in the day to day running of a local, national or international revolutionary struggle (Schwartz, 142). First, they are relegated theoretically as women to supportive minor roles not seen as essential to the organization and outcome of revolutionary struggle. Second, in their actual supportive roles “of quiet assistance” they are unnamed and their activities untheorized as revolutionary acts of Resistance in any formal sense. Black Women and Women of Colour are trebly jeopardised by the blindness to their roles in Black Black freedom and civil rights movements, and those more broadly for human rights and social justice that enable them to function (Gore et al 2009).

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[10] As in the Myanmar Military Coup of 2021 and the War against the Tutsi people of Rwanda in1994, for example, a woman was harmed and murdered as a Rohingyan or Tutsi, rather than because of her sex. alone. For example, the murderous lynching campaigns in America in the 19C against Afro-Americans, which Ida B. Wells courageously led an international campaign against, extreme sexual violence, including rape and murder, was used, as a weapon of white political repression of Black people, on grounds of their sexuality and ethnicity, both of which were seen to threaten white supremacy, male honour and the virtue of white women.

Their notions of justice and shared humanity that motivate their actions and shape them are also missing. While this may have its origins in family relationships with those connected to a Cause, it is just as likely to be through local church, clubs and community groups. The American writer, feminist political activist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman described this as “one of the most important sociological phenomena of the [19C] - indeed all centuries … through which a “sense of human unity [grows] daily among women.” (quoted in Smith 1970, 265-66).

The blindness is to the revolutionary roles and contributions of such women in both supporting and driving revolutionary change forward both before and during revolutions and in critical roles afterwards. Often facing grave provocations, they work steadily fundraising, printing and distributing leaflets and newsletters and organizing meetings. While in recent years, social media has changed the nature of much of the supporting work, women using it still play an essential part in reaching out to engage others in a cause, supporting those on the front-line, and keeping the world informed of what is happening.

In these roles, they can also become central to a particular struggle showing great endurance and strength of purpose, especially when their families are starving or at risk (McDermid1998). For example, the women’s march on Versailles over the scarcity of bread was one the earliest and most significant events of the French revolution in 1789 and the women’s protest in Moscow (Petrograd at the time) against both the war and the shortage of bread was a spark for the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Many also play a critical part in post-revolutionary situations. Bosnian women, in 2002 following the Balkan War of the 1990s, for example, formed ‘*The Mothers of Srebrenica*’ to advocate justice for the 6,000 survivors of torture and displacement, and to expose the horrors of the crime of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Conference Proceedings Sarajevo 11-12 June 2015).

Schwartz adds to this complex picture by citing the role of housewives, whom Andrieu terms, “the shadows of the shadow army of Resistance” (17). Such women, as both Andrieu and Schwartz admit, may not be easy to identify, and not all are engaged in the Cause they support; some may even be reluctant to embrace it. This, as Schwartz comments” this did not prevent them from resisting in the home by offering childcare, or serving as “letterboxes, safehouse keepers, or transmitters of intelligence” (151). Andrieu, in turn, argues that in considering such actions as caring for those on the front-line and their families as a resistance activity with the risk of imprisonment and death, one is forced to “close the link between the political] fugitive and the hostess ‘doing her duty’ within this traditional female role (22).

- Women’s Civil Disobedience:

All three authors pick up on the way such dilemmas are missing in existing accounts of the Resistance. As Claire Andrieu says, “by leaving aside the Resistance’s tragic dimension, one misses the specificity of civil resistance by women to a barbarous tyranny” (14). This usefully opens for discussion the creative ways women have used their bodies in civil action and disobedience in, “culturally gendered tactics” as the organizing principle of protest breaking gendered taboos and fears around women” [11] (Chenoweth and Marks 2022, 109) described by Marwan Kraidy as ‘creative insurgency’ (Kraidy 2017).

- Leaderless Revolutions; women’s revolutionary Leadership:

A recent focus among researchers, relevant to this discussion, is on what they term ‘leaderless’ revolutions’ in which ordinary people take power and change the existing political order; without following or being dependent on an external leadership (Bayat 2017). This definition builds on Raoul Vaneigem’s seminal argument that it is impossible to talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life (Vaneigem 1967, 11). This aligns with the arguments above with respect to unnamed and undocumented women. It can also be linked usefully to Rosa Luxemburg's concept of 'spontaneity' and her belief in the creativity and readiness for revolutionary action by ordinary people (Luxemburg 1971).

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[11] The Suffrage prisoner hunger strikes, their forced feeding, and the horrors of the ‘Cat and Mouse’ Act, remains one of the most poignant and disturbing aspects of women’s struggle for the political vote. Yet women involved found creative ways to ensure the legacy of women who suffered from it. For example, Janie Terrero, who was force-fed, while in prison memorialized the brutality of her experience and that of others in a tapestry.

‘Unnamed’ women, alongside those well known, have also shown great creativity in other forms of non-violent direct action. Women in the ‘Htamein (Sarong) Revolution’ against the military coup in Myanmar in 2021, spooked the military by hanging sarongs and underwear in the streets to spook the military who had to walk under them.

In the late 1970s, Chilean and Argentinian women, similarly caught in up in waves of disappearances under military dictatorship gained international fame as radical instigators of resistance for their actions as subversives effectively exerting their power to undermine the authority of the authoritarian regimes (Principe, 2017).

In the ‘Women’s War in Nigeria in 1929, tens of thousands of women danced and sang and threatened to appear naked as they marched and blocked meetings in protest against both an enforced and exploitative British colonial policy, and the patriarchal legal structures that kept them in a submissive position to men, Much earlier, in 1871, working class women from the Paris Commune, accused by the government of burning down much of Paris, famously stood between the government troops and their canons, sitting astride the canons of the soldiers causing the soldiers to put down their arms.

Luxemburg, for example, believed, that the historic collective action in a wide range of revolutionary struggles showed the capacity of ordinary people to understand and creatively change the objective conditions of their lives. Therefore, in her view, the description of such actions without an imposed leader as necessarily inarticulate, thoughtless, or unstable, and so outside history, was wrong, and critically so, in its denial of the novel possibilities for action by people to bring change independently of a centralized leadership, bureaucracy, or vanguard, who may ignore the historical significance of their actions (Luxemburg 2019).

Taking up the two ideas of 'leaderless revolution' and 'spontaneity, is not a denial of the need for organization and strategy. It is a challenge, however, to the 'honorary male' trope in which a centralized leadership affirms traditional ideas of masculinized authority and organization, typically linked to the quality of 'charisma' of a single leader engendered as male. This ignores the ways that women uphold consensual influence and inclusive relationships of influence with other women rather than within a hierarchy with (charismatic) leaders at the top. For example, as the Case study of the '*Match Women's Strike'* indicated, prior to Louise Raw's account, no alternative was considered to the accepted 'charismatic' leadership of Annie Besant and that of the leaders of later strikes. Consideration of the possibility of the Strikers operating on a leadership model based on shared mutuality and interdependence with each other from their experiences of oppression as women, workers and within the East End of London (as described by Smith & Valence 1988) is entirely missing.

Ella J. Baker, put this point in strongly provocative terms. Significantly for this thesis she was one of the most important leaders of the early 20th Century Black civil rights and freedom struggles in America, though largely invisible and mostly unknown as an historical agent of revolutionary change. She rejected the charismatic leadership of Martin Luther King within the civil rights movement in America as a model of leadership. Her theory was "strong people don't need strong leaders" (Moye 2013, p2). A leadership, she argued, "should be first and foremost teachers and facilitators… with good listening skills" (3). She promoted instead, the grass roots leadership that was "group-centred" as key to the success and longevity of the Civil Rights Movement. In her view, "the movement made Martin rather than Martin making the movement. As she said," this was not to discredit or minimize his significance. It was as it should be" (Baker in an interview in 1968 quoted in Stanford MLK Jr Inst. Undated, 22.5.22).

The ‘*Combahee River Collective*(CRC)’ of Black Women activists echo her formulation with respect to women. They famously rejected leadership hierarchies within it that lead to “pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind…To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough” (Combahee 1974, §2, 4). Andrieu makes a similar point about women in the French Resistance. She says women at the time often “were uninterested in social recognition, and practiced deliberate social self-effacement…and continue “not to ask for a decoration on the grounds of their activity in their Resistance…only men as for titles (17)

In conclusion, the fundamental premises of the ‘honorary male’ trope collapse when women, whether famous, unnamed, or theoretically undocumented, are brought within them. That leaves open how to bring women within a Broad definition, such as that defined by Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick to include not just armed struggle but also covert acts of defiance, and the essential support activities and care work “that no resistance movement can do without” (2). Overturning both leads directly to the question of the theoretical underpinnings and origins of the ‘honorary male’ trope in which women are defined only as the ‘Other’ in relation to male revolutionaries’ rather than as revolutionary actors individually and collectively, for and of themselves, in their thinking, choices, and actions.

Women as the ‘Other’ in relation to the ‘honorary male’ trope

Attention is drawn here to the question of how far the trope is underpinned by theories and categories not specifically developed for the situation of revolutionary women. In what follows, consideration is given here specifically to how far such theories and categories tie women to a supposed ‘natural’ female disposition that justifies or explains the use of the trope. On this understanding, the subordinate non-essential roles taken or given to women are viewed as an extension of biologically determined instincts indistinguishable from the traditional and socially acceptable role of women in their domestic lives as wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters or in ‘feminized’ jobs.

Accordingly, women are represented as either staying within the acceptable ‘norms’ of accepted ‘feminine’ traits, or as deviating from them and so, in Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick terms, “cease to be women”. This happens in complex ways as Andrieu notes, for example, in the Resistance the “the line between genders was not drawn between men and women but between men and ‘male women’ on one side and ‘pure women’ on the other…through this asymmetrical conception of genders, however, while women could become men - the inverse was not true” i.e., a man as a resister, even in failure, did not become a woman (24).

Jessica Auchter, in her focus on ‘gendering terror’ (2012) rejects such foundationalist theories in which biology and socialization are central. In doing so, she usefully raises the problem of how the assumptive language in much that is written on this topic “functions to trigger an automatic acceptance that violence is gendered masculine. Women, on this view, as she says, “given the choice without the pressures of male domination” through loyalty, coercion or seduction, would “strive for peace” and, according to Francis Fukuyama, who argued in Western-centric terms of socialization of women, that as human history as a struggle between ideologies was largely at an end, women in existing non-liberal democracies, “as they gain power…should become less aggressive, adventurous, competitive and violent” (1997, 27 quoted by Auchter).

- Traits, instincts and rationality:

The critical point is that, however, it plays out, this biological determinism denies that women’s motivations, behaviour and choices are the result of an understanding of social, political, and economic injustice based on rational reflection. This includes a woman’s willingness to act even where it is not necessarily in their personal interests to do so, or they do not agree with the politics of a revolutionary cause. The consequence for a woman who goes against the accepted or approved ‘norms’ traditionally associated with or expected of women, it can also lead to her being stigmatized as ‘unwomanly’, i.e., ‘unfeminine’ or ‘unsexed’.

The reduction of a woman’s actions to a universal structure of natural ‘traits’ determined biologically or through childhood socialization is of importance here because it remains powerful in the descriptions of revolutionaries, their characteristics, motivations and behaviours. Asef Bayat, writing on ‘The Arab Spring’, for example, in an otherwise thoughtful discussion of how revolution seeps into communities and the predicaments of subaltern life, highlights what he called women’s ‘inherent’ capacity to “feminize and civilize – i.e., to turn the otherwise narrow, masculine and potentially violent protests into a broad-based societal upheaval” (Bayat 2021, 149). He also, interestingly argues this is a recent phenomenon, unlike in the classic cases. This, while beyond the scope of this discussion, is questionable; as noted earlier, women across all revolutions have had critical roles and taken great risks as women.

While the application of theories of biologically determined ‘traits’ to men, in this regard, is not the subject here, the problematic nature of the alignment of ‘inherent’ ‘masculinity’ with violent protest that of women’s ‘capacity’ to feminize and civilize protests is relevant to the hegemonic relation constructed between revolutionary women and men in much that is written.

Ute Frevert's study of the way emotions and their related practices have been historically 'gendered' in contradictory ways and how knowledge of them has shaped norms and practices in different times and places, usefully links to the above. (2011). She points out that the "stereotypical expectations about male and female emotional behaviour that have prevailed" historically, "are still in wide use" (98). As she says: "They not only structure how that behaviour is perceived and judged; they also bear an impact on how men and women feel and express their feelings.

As she says, as "a general rule" the perception is that women are "sensitive…all gentleness and benevolence…highly impressionable and affected by all kinds of sentiments and 'natural feelings. Men, on the other hand, are granted "a creative mind that privileges reason and a capacity to dissect, reflect and abstract…although they may display a certain 'harshness or vigour' (105). On this division, it is easy for women revolutionaries to be represented as out of place in the harsh world of revolution other than in supportive, empathetic, or 'civilizing' roles.

- 'Masculinity' and 'femininity' as analytical categories:

The idea of 'masculinity' as a monolithic unproblematic unit of analysis that, within generally accepted norms of biological sexual difference, puts men in a hegemonic relation with women has been increasingly challenged since the 1980s as shot through with internal contradictions and false presumptions (Jewkes et al 2015). This generally credits men with full rationality that, unlike women, enables them to act beyond 'instinct'. Yet, as Moritz Föllmer, notes, for example, in his article on male subjectivities in the [failed] German Revolution of 1918-19, the men were criticised, not for a failure of 'reason' but as "gutless" and "lacking masculine vigour, *lendelahm* – literally 'lame in the loins' (Föllmer 2018, 162). The construction of 'masculinity' as a theoretical construct on which the 'honorary male' trope depends, it would seem, is also unreliable.

There is, a 'double void' with respect to women within the 'honorary male' trope. They are defined as the 'Other' in relation to their male counterparts. This is constructed within an essentialist discourse centred on the concepts of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' that are contestable. Both together, serve to deny women critical consideration as independent, thoughtful, acting revolutionaries. Overall, therefore, this exploration of the theories underpinning the 'honorary male' trope while requiring further research, supports the strong call by Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick to reject theories that rely on it in some form or another.

Overall Conclusion: Attributing 'historical agency' to women

The rejection of the ‘honorary male’ trope allows for the development of a new broad definition of Resistance in which all the categories Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick’s argue for are brought within it. It also permits the development of a definition of revolution that, based on the concept of ‘embodiment’, as elaborated here, is sufficiently capacious to allow critical consideration to be given women’s historical agency within revolutionary change which is the overall objective of this thesis.

In other words, it shifts the focus from women described discursively as the ‘Other’ in relation to their revolutionary male counterparts, to an analytic consideration of them as independent embodied revolutionary subjects. In doing so, it makes it possible to locate their historical agency, not within their female biology or childhood socialization, but within their revolutionary praxis to which factors of difference such as sex, class, sexuality, and ethnicity are central. Used in this limited sense, it allows their revolutionary actions to be considered and assessed as historically significant, rational and ethical judgments based on a political consciousness of injustice and suffering and a vision, based on reflection of what needs to be done, that they can put into action.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Introduction

The overall objective of this thesis is to situate women as historical agents of revolutionary change within the history of ideas on revolution. The preliminary reading, summarised in the Literature Review (Ch1) indicated, however, that while women are often included in theoretical studies, it is generally discursive and descriptive. They are, that is, missing as a constitutive category in the debates on the nature, scope and applicability of the concept of 'revolution'. Their ideas, priorities for action, and the lived reality of their action as women, are also marginalized as non-defining variables in revolutionary theory and practice, i.e., not essential to them.

The purpose and focus of the thesis were accordingly revised to identify and characterise the sources, processes, and possible consequences of the problem in two key respects obvious from the reading on the topic. The first centred on the contribution of narrow and restricted definitions of revolution to the silence on women (Ch1). The second concentrated on 'sex-blindness' to women within existing theoretical studies of revolution and the significance of differences between women based on such factors as class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity (Ch2).

The case study of the '*Match Women's Strike'* of 1888 provided a useful illustration of the two conceptual problems. The use of 'scripts' proved to be an effective tool for exploring how the problems arise in a real-life context. The adoption of Baker and Edelstein's general argument (2015) that revolutions are scripted and rescripted with associated narratives that have enduring influence in later revolutions proved very effective in the attempt to give historical significance to the Strike in contrast to versions that put it outside Labour History of revolutionary strike action. The idea of 'multiple scripts' (Toska 2015) originating elsewhere that may 'collide' (Föllmer 2018), also usefully shed light on the significance of portrayals of the women and girl strikers as the 'Labouring Poor' to their invisibility within the history of the Strike.

The concept of 'embodiment' within a framework of 'Marginality' gave tangible and visible form to women's experiences, motivations, and choices absent in the existing theoretical literature and scholarship on revolution. It also made it possible draw a clear distinction between the lived reality of their daily lives and activism and the silence on them within the academic and intellectual hegemony that has locked them historically within this framework as a homogeneous 'Other' in relation to their embodied revolutionary male counterparts.

The concept also provided a constructive way to recognize and value the different ways women participate in revolutionary activity along a spectrum of revolutionary actions. This showed that, contrary to theorising and scholarship that puts them in a secondary and typically negative relation to male revolutionaries or dependent on others for leadership, they have led revolutionary campaigns and crusades for a paradigm shift from an old order to a new and better one. The studies of Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick (2023), Claire Andrieu (2000), and Paula Schwartz (1987) provided important additional insights to the problem. Their focus on embodiment in political resistance, registered from different perspectives the novel possibilities and innovative tools of women's revolutionary action, while highlighting the dilemmas and gendered vulnerabilities of their political engagement. The specific focus of Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick on the sexist and gendered logic of the 'honorary man' trope provided an effective theoretical tool for overturning representations of women that are prejudicial to an understanding of their contributions and the centrality of the female body within acts of resistance and revolution.

Importantly for the discussion here, their conclusions reflected in many ways that of Louise Raw in her account of the '*Match Women's Strike*': namely, that the historical agency of women as agents of revolutionary change has been 'hidden both from and by the history of them. Like Raw, they strongly called for a new broad definition that is inclusive of all forms of women's revolutionary actions and acts of resistance and would bring a new perspective on them. This, they argued, would require the development of new theoretical tools that are sufficiently robust to include differences between women based on such factors as to class, gender sexuality, ethnicity, and the way they intersect to complicate and compound the identified 'sex-blindness' to women.

Some further lines of research: Towards a new and broad definition of revolution

- A feminist lens:

There are many potential directions for future research in the context of the demand for a new and broad definition of revolution and political resistance. One productive way forward would be to draw on interdisciplinary feminist scholarship, ideas, and writing, including that from an international perspective. No attempt is made within the thesis to develop a feminist theory of revolution as that, while needed, was beyond its scope. Also no attempt to impute a feminist consciousness to the women referred to within it. It would be wrong to do so as not all would accept the label 'feminist' and others would simply be unaware of it as a description of their activities. Much of the discussion, however, suggested a feminist lens on the silence on women's historical agency in revolutionary change would be fruitful.

Valentine M. Moghadam made this point some years agon in her argument that, not only have women actively participated in revolutions but gender is “an integral dimension of the revolutionary process and should be accorded conceptual value by sociologists of revolution” (p162). Acknowledging the richness of the scholarship on revolution at the time, she said it was deficient in not incorporating gender into the analysis as a constitutive category (Moghadam 1997, in Foran 1997, 137). She then contrasts this ‘discrepancy’ to feminist scholarship that has produced “prolific research into the role and position of women” in revolutionary struggle (p137). Cathy Porter, the socialist feminist historian of women in the Russian Revolution, wrote more critically that “…male historians have consistently deleted women from the record. The historical bias will ultimately be redressed; it must now be exposed and an alternative version offered” (Porter 1976, 2).

- An Abolition Feminist Framework

‘Abolition Feminist’ theory would provide a useful foundation for a theoretical framework and space for further consideration of the problem of the sexist ‘honorary male’ trope elaborated on by Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick writing from a feminist perspective. It would also offer a way of assessing the significance of patriarchy more generally in line with Louise Raw’s concern in the case of the ‘*Match Women’s Strike* that “something beyond carelessness is at work, a deeper ideology moving below the surface that has concealed and distorted the truth even when it is in plain sight “ (Raw 2011, 29). Most obviously this is because it argues for the possibility of collective struggle in attempting to build a ‘truly intersectional, international, abolitionist feminism’ that is also anti-colonialist and anti-imperialistic in its aims and argues that class, race, gender, and sexuality (among others) are key determinants in women’s (and men’s) political activism, and their oppression (Davis et al 2022).

It also offers a basis for an alternative perspective to revolutionary history based on broad definition of revolution demanded by Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick, Andrieu, and Schwartz that meets, what Kathleen Canning calls, “the rubric of revolution”. The use of Abolition Feminist theory as a base for this would, in Canning’s terms, lead to “a more capacious understanding” of revolutions… that sees them as more than just as a sequence of strictly political events…while firmly, resisting adjudications of the revolutions success or failure, or the fulfilment or miscarriage of women’s emancipation… or the ascription of rights to men and women on the basis of sexually differentiated capacities (Canning 2015).

Within this framework, further case studies would offer a comparative perspective through which to critically evaluate the findings and conclusions of the single case study of the Strike and to further test the validity of the adoption of ‘embodiment’ as a theoretical tool in different contexts. This would give a new direction to revolutionary history within a theoretical space in which women’s historical agency in revolutionary change is visible and their views and demands heard, read, and considered as critical to the arguments, findings and conclusions of the scholarship contributing to the history of ideas on revolution.

APPENDIX ONE

Vocabulary of concepts

‘Class’

As used here recognizes the demographic stratification between women. A woman, not specifiable as upper or middle-class, is referred to descriptively, rather than analytically, as an ‘ordinary woman’ (often historically ‘a commoner’) without economic and other privileges of birth or those conferred by marriage, or a sexual or financial relationship.

Where an analytical point requires a distinction to be drawn between ordinary women, the terms, ‘working-class’ Proletarian women’. Others come within Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s definition of ‘Subaltern’ women (1988). The distinctions recognizes that women within these categories engaged in revolutionary struggles do not necessarily experience the same lived realities of oppression, subjugation, and exploitation.

‘Working class women’ is used broadly of those belonging to a social class engaged in unskilled labour with nothing to sell but their labour power and skills. The term ‘proletariat woman’ is used in the narrower Marxian political sense to mean women of this class who oppressed by capitalism have common economic and political interests that transcend national boundaries impelling them to unite in struggles to create a world free from class distinctions.

Women referred to here as ‘subaltern’ come within Gayatri Spivak’s definition of those whose agency, the ability to make their own decisions and choices, and to speak for themselves, is undermined or marginalized in social and political structures in their society, even in its broadest sense. It builds on her focus on ‘indigenous people dispossessed in colonial societies’ to include women who among the poorest and most marginalised revolutionary actors discussed here who are outside a class system, however, broadly defined, and so excluded from the possibility of social mobility within it. For example, it includes the women strikers within the Case Study (Ch 3), typically referred to at the time without distinction as the ‘labouring poor’ so outside the class system recognized at the time and now.

‘Sexuality’

Is used here as a multifaceted concept, uniquely experienced and expressed that encompasses a broad range of psychological, physiological behaviours (see Hekelman et al, 24.5.23, J. of Sexual Medicine).

‘Ethnicity’

As used here acknowledges the criticism of acronyms such as ‘BAME’ for ‘Black African and Minority Ethnic’ populations for not being widely understood, and for excluding some of the most marginalized and disadvantaged communities, such as Roma and Travellers, of different heritages. It is also censured for defining people solely by reference to the white majority, for suggesting that some people are racially separate from other ethnic minority populations, and for including under a single label heterogenous groups with little in common with each other.

To accommodate such controversies, 'ethnicity', 'race' and 'nationality' are treated as independent categories. To be as diverse and inclusive as possible, however, and where it is known, a person's ethnic identity, and its relation to their nationality, such as 'African American', is used; otherwise, the generic term 'ethnicity' is employed.

The term 'Women of Colour' is used, following D. Monzó (2019), to refer, inclusively, to all women "who ae racialized as other than White, ethnic and religious minorities, and women from non-western societies". 'Indigenous Women' are referred to separately, in agreement with Monzó, that although they "are Women of Colour, they have been forgotten in statistics of major groups" (Monzó Note, p.3, p.20; Cook-Lynn 1996).

The first letter of generic terms is capitalized, where appropriate, or because it is how it appears in a text: e.g., 'Black', 'White', or 'Women of Colour'. Terms such as 'race', 'Negro', and 'Coloured' people', 'race women'/men' used in much of the writing in the late 19C and early 20C but little used today, are marked in quotes.

'Intersectionality'

As an analytical category it was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw to challenge the falsely universalising concept 'woman' within narratives of oppression that excluded some women, particularly working-class Black Women (Crenshaw, 1989).

This makes a productive contribution to this thesis but is problematic in its original form. It 'embodies' the women referred to within it, that is, only as, what Anna Carastathis has called, "hyper oppressed subjects" within an intersection of axes of oppression" (Carastathis, 2008, p.9). This makes it difficult to raise the integrative effects of gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity as significant factors of difference, and their relation to power on them as historical agents of revolutionary change other than as passive subjects and victims.

The term is used here in line with the arguments of Khamis & Mill in their book on the 'Arab Spring', namely, that from the 'intersection' of the different factors central to their activism, "new gendered identities, new forms of activism, and new modes of resistance, are continuously born and regularly manifested" (Khamis & Mill 2018, 7).

APPENDIX 2

The economic development of B&M 1843-1979 and the Strike within it

B&M began in 1843 as a small London partnership between two Quakers in a business as general merchants. By 1860 it had expanded to become the leader of the match industry in Britain as a manufacturing rather than merchandizing organisation with its own coat of arms, motto 'Fiat Lux, and trademark, 'Noah's Ark'[12] (Beaver 1985, 42-43).

In 1884, it became an independent public limited company in which the family retained the majority of shares with shareholders paid dividends on the profits with a capital of £300,000 (approx. £46 million today). By 1888, it was 'the biggest and most successful match manufacturer in Britain and one of the largest employers in the East End of London with extensive markets abroad (Beaver 1985, 57-60). As such it was able to control wages to a low level.

- A 'dangerous trade'

In the years just prior to the Strike, the Directors had powerful links to and influence on the government of the day and senior clergymen, some members of which were on its Board of Trustees (Satre 1982, 17; Raw 2011, 96). They however, failed to respond positively to the working and social conditions of the workforce unlike other Quaker family businesses such as Courtaulds (Adams et al1983) that provided housing, health, and leisure facilities for their workers, until forced to do so following the Strike. Then, it was mainly to reform the women and girls (Beaver 1985, 86) and, according to Satre (1982) "it was clearly a profit-motive rather than any humanitarian concerns that underlay their actions" (31).

The Company was thus involved in public scandal and subject to Government legislation mainly through the investigations of such official bodies as the 1863 '*Commission on the Employment of Children'* and the '*Factory Acts'*, especially that of 1864 under which women and children were forbidden from taking meals where 'dangerous processes' were carried out. Because of the specific risk of phosphorous poisoning of workers, the Home Office classified the 'lucifer' match production at B&M a 'Dangerous Trade' to which special rules were to apply (Harrison 1996, 51, 65).

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[12] 'Fiat Lux': Let there be light: is a biblical reference taken from Genesis in which God's commands the bringing forth of light, and initiates creation of the world. Its trademark 'Noah's Ark was seen as a symbol of safety and security.

- ‘Matchmakers Leprosy’

‘Phosphorous necrosis’ resulting from exposure to the fumes of deadly white/yellow phosphorous (‘the devil’s element’) used in in the head of its popular ‘Lucifer (light bringer!) ‘Strike anywhere’ matches had been identified as an industrial disease in 1838 (Satre 1982, 8) and from which 60-65% of the workers in the B&M factories were exposed to the fumes or engaged in handling the phosphorous (Beer 1985). This disease, familiarly known as ‘phossy jaw’[13] ravaged the face, with a horrible smelling black gangrenous discharge, that led to infected jaw bones to be surgically removed; it also often led to organ failure, and painful death (Harrison 1995).

It was greatly feared by the workers and often referred to as ‘Matchmaker’s Leprosy’ in part because victims left disfigured by the disease were often ostracized from their workplaces. Even though B&M directors knew of the fatal health risks to workers, it continued to use it rather than the safe non-poisonous ‘red phosphorous’ available. For this, they blamed the demands of consumer choice, the fear of the loss of profits at home and abroad and even rejected it as an occupational disease putting it down to the sufferer’s ‘self-induced’ poor health (Beaver 1985).

The use of the poisonous phosphorous continued after the strike and throughout the 1890s ‘*The Star’*, ‘*Justice*’ and ‘*Clarion*’ newspapers, also successfully exposed, not only the continued cases of ‘phossy jaw’ that B&M continued to deny but also the cover up of the extent of the condition within the factories through alleged false medical reporting, and the forced removal of the sufferer from the factory (Satre 1982).

This led to a government prosecution of the Company in 1898 and in 1901, it announced it had stopped using white phosphorous. The government, however, did not pass the necessary legislation prohibiting its use until 1910, seventy years after it was medically identified as potentially fatal risk to the health of workers producing matches at B&M (Satre 1982). Satre put this down to the government’s reluctance to embarrass such a major industrialist and cause economic disruption of the industry.

- ‘Sweated Labour’:

The workers inside and outside the factory thus came within the definition of what the *Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System* called*:* "the evils known by name ‘sweating’: a rate of wages inadequate to the necessities of the workers or disproportionate to the work done; excessive hours of labour; the insanitary state of the houses in which the work is carried out."

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[13] See Satre 1982 [note 5] list of discussions and reports of phosphorous necrosis, or ‘Phossy Jaw’, in which he particularly recommends John Bristow’s Report of 1863 on the use of phosphorous in matchmaking industries.

The '*Anti-Sweating League*' and other campaigns including within parliament, termed it an industrial evil of 'slavery and servitude' in which the slavedriver, wields the whip of hunger: a 'running sore', that 'not only poisoned an industry', but 'affected the whole fabric of society' and its wellbeing (Black, 2018; originally 1907). The trade unionist, Mary Macarthur, a member of the Committee, argued that a further category was needed for homeworking as 'super-sweated'.

- Starvation wages: High Dividends

At the time of the strike, the factory arrangements "were strictly hierarchical…output was measured, each worker paid by 'piece', and the male foremen had charge of the factory floor and could hire, discipline and fire staff at will" (Arnold 2006, 3). The workers, mainly women, and girls (some as young as 12-14y), inside the factory were employed on a casualised, irregular basis, relying at times on work in jam factories in which conditions were also harsh and hop-picking in Kent. They worked between 11–14 hours a day in insanitary conditions, earning, between 4s and 9s/pw.

This compared to the pay of between 10s and 15s elsewhere (Arnold, 8) and that of a skilled male worker in many industries, with possible pay of around 40s a week (Drake 1984).This low wage level was, however, rarely achieved, in part because payment was deducted for necessary work materials, but also due to fines of up to a shilling (£4.10 today) As a consequence of both, the take-home pay of the women and girls could be as low as 8d (Arnold 2004, 4).

The 'fines', meted out by a male overseer, often with verbal abuse or physical blows were used arbitrarily to discipline, and punish workers for such things as being late, talking, laughing, an untidy desk, and dirty bare feet (Stafford 1961). According to the report in the journal, '*the Link'* of 6 June 1888, for example*, "*one girl was fined a shilling for letting the web twist round a machine in the endeavour to save her fingers from being cut and was sharply told to care for the machine, 'never mind your fingers" (Besant 1888, quoted in Boston 1980, 48-9).

Following the strike much to the embarrassment of some of the senior politicians and clergymen on its Board who worried about their reputation, the radical press exposed the scandal of the high Dividend payments of around 20% of the huge profits made by the Company to its Board of Trustees, and the salary of the managing director, 125% greater than the workers producing the matches (Satre 1982).

Outworking:

Domestic 'outworkers', outside the protection of the Factory Acts, were also employed by B&M to make the matchboxes. "Matchbox making was about the last resource of the destitute and the first occupation of little girls…A dexterous child could earn 1d an hour and a hard working woman up to 2d…putting in 12h/day, it was possible to make a living – provided enough work could be obtained; better than the workhouse – "but only just" (Beaver 1985, 40).

Although used less than in the firm's early days because of increased mechanisation of box making within the factory, as late as 1906, the MP, Will Crooks, giving evidence at the Poplar Union Enquiry noted that B&M found it convenient to have women take their work home. "God help the home; but they take it to the place which shelters them at 21/4d a gross and are only paid of what they do" (quoted in Beer 1986, 3).

The implications of such an existence on the lives of the children, according to a report in 1882, were stark and the mortality rate appalling. They worked at matchbox making for many hours a day; subjected to "a constant round of sunless drudgery, they never played as children, they never seemed to think as children, they were prematurely old, and the victims of awful cruelty" (Reeves 1894 quoted in Beer 1986, 16)

At the time of the strike, over 5000 workers were employed at the B&M matchmaking Company in London in 4 separate and distinct factories (Arnold, 2004) across the Victoria factory, in which the strike began, according to Rose (1996), contained B&M's highest paid female workers, about a fifth of whom were married women, against about a tenth in the others. There was no significant difference between the average pay of married and single women. "Rather, it was supervisory men, who were the most prominent well-paid group" (101).

The Strike: 'this female revolt against the iron rule of wages'[14]

On 2 July[15], fourteen hundred workers, mostly women and girls, from within the Victoria factory in Bow, East London, walked out, closed the factory, and went on strike against the perceived unfair sacking of young female worker(s).**[16]** In one striker's words, "We all came out; it just went like tinder" (Raw 2011, 127). While this appeared impulsive, it went much deeper than support for a workmate. It was part of a history of longstanding grievances that had led to strike action against the Company, in 1881,

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[14] 'The Star' (9.7.1888, p2, quoted in Raw 137)

[15] As Raw notes, there are conflicting reports of the actual start date of the strike, whether one or three young female workers were dismissed, and the reasons for the dismissal. As they do not affect the key concerns of this case study, no position is taken on the different accounts, and it goes with Raw's timeline beginning on 2nd (Raw 2011, 130-133).

[16] The number of dismissals is given is between one and three across different accounts and the reasons given for the sacking differ (Raw 2011, 131). Of interest here is the general agreement that whatever the pretext, it was linked to the refusal of the workers to sign a statement saying the claims in 'the Link' of conditions of 'White Slavery' were false. (Raw, 130).

1885, and 1886, against poor wages, harsh terms and conditions of work, including the health hazard of 'phossy jaw' (Satre 1982; Fishman 1988, 285).

The Directors offered to immediately reinstate the sacked woman, but it came too late, "the spirit of revolt against cruel oppression had been aroused" (8 July 1888 East London Observer, quoted in Raw 2011, 133). Strike-breaking threats were then made "to starve out the wretched women whose avarice threatened to run a great national industry" (Drake, 1984, 26) either by moving to Norway or to drafting in workers from the Glasgow factory (Raw 2011).

The press was divided on the strike. 'Justice', 'The Star' and the Pall Mall Gazette, for example supported the strike Justice giving day to day coverage of it in its first week. *The Times* newspaper's editorial of 14 July, however, inveighed against the strikers, saying "it is not possible that this state of things can go on indefinitely…they must either return to their old work of find new work of another kind, thereby reducing by their competition the miserably poor wages of unskilled female labour in the East End of London" (quoted in Beaver 1985, 67).

The strikers, however, remained resolute and widened their demands and refused to return to work until all their demands[17] were met. They all showed solidarity in the face of the threats. In doing so, they moved beyond personal interests, even when among B&M highest female earners (Arnold 2004, p.5).

- A Wide Network of Support

They effectively organised themselves into a disciplined force for action with the ability to garner support from prominent political activists and intellectuals and with their active help attained widespread public attention and sympathy. This involved active support from international and national activists and intellectuals campaigning, mainly as socialists, for revolutionary change such Jane Addams the Chicago based social reformer, Annie Besant journalist and activist, Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army, Henry Hyde Champion of the '*Labour Elector',* political activists such as Emmeline

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[17] List of the strikers' demands agreed to:
- Abolition of all fines, deductions for paint, brushes, stamps &C.
- Restitution of 'pennies' if the women and girls do their own racking work, or payment by piece work.
-The packers to have their threepence.
- All grievances to be taken straight to the managing director without intervention of the foreman.
- An eating room for the workers separate from the factory floor.
- The formation of a union 'so that future disputes, if any, may be officially laid before the firm'.
('*East London Observer*' 21.7.88 quoted in Raw, 141)

Pankhurst, Olive Schreiner, George Bernard Shaw, and William Stead, Editor of the '*Pall Mall Gazette'*.

This network of support began with a speech on the evils of Sweated Female Labour at a Fabian Society meeting in London on 15 June by Clementina Black, the feminist and pioneering trade unionist against female sweated labour. Henry Hyde Champion also raised the inequity of the Trustees at Bryant & May being paid 20% dividends on the company's huge profits while workers were on starvation wages. He put a resolution that was unanimously passed, to boycott all their goods.

The journalist and activist, Annie Besant, a member of the audience, was horrified when she learned of the pay and conditions of the women working at the Bryant & May factory. The following day, she went with Herbert Burrows to the factory gate and from talking to some of the women learned from them of their pay and working conditions and the risk of 'phossy jaw, all of which confirmed Black's speech. On 23 June 1888, Besant wrote a damning article on the terrible working conditions at Bryant & May in her newspaper, '*The Link',* provocatively entitled '*White Slavery in London'* laden with meaning and intentionally resonating with the abolitionist movement against slavery in England and the time. On 26th June, she and Burrows distributed the article to the women and girls as they came out of the factory (Fishman, 1988).

The company reacted furiously, threatened Besant with court action that came to nothing, and attempted to force their workers to sign a statement that they were happy with their working conditions which they refused to do. Besant, Henry Hyde Champion, and William Stead responded by calling for a boycott of B&M matches in their papers.

The Directors in an interview with '*The Star',* a paper that supported the strike, dismissed the connection of the sacking of the workers with Besant as "twaddle". The '*Times'*, in an article on 7th July, however, commented, "[t]he pity is that the matchgirls have not been suffered to take their own course but have been egged on to strike by irresponsible advisers. No effort has been spared by those pests of the modern industrialized world to bring this quarrel to a head" (quoted in Raw 2011, 55).

This was overshadowed by the Interventions from widely respected local dignitaries, including the MP George Lansbury and Reverend Barnett of Toynbee Hall alerted by the 'Link' article. Moreover, local support for the strike, grew with collections and offers of a meeting place, and provision of large quantities of bread, cheese, and beer to the girls" (East London Advertiser 14 July 1888).

The day after the strike began, around two hundred of the women and girls marched from Mile End, along the Embankment to Besant's small office near Fleet Street. Three women, Mary Naulls, Mary Cummings, and Sarah Chapman, were deputized to meet with her. She advised to continue the boycott rather than taking strike action but despite her misgivings, agreed to support their plan for a strike committee.

- Strike Action

From day one of the Strike, they also ran a vibrant, noisy picket at the factory gates “with a large number of police stationed in the neighbourhood” (Raw, 2011, p.132). One of the police is quoted as saying wryly that “no girl will dare to commence work while the mass of others remains out. They will have it taken out of them if they do” (Raw 2011, 137).

On 8 July: they ran a public meeting on Mile End Waste, a local place used for political rallies of huge crowds, and mobilised political activists to speak with a call to the strikers to form a trade union (Fishman, 1988). The second meeting, according to ‘*The Star*’ was attended “by thousands of people” as the strike “has created enormous sensation in the neighbourhood” (The Star, ibid).

They also formed a Strike Committee, comprising Mary Naulls, Mary Cummings, Sarah Chapman, Alice Francis, Kate Sclater, Mary Driscoll, Jane Wakeling, Eliza Martin. They set up a strike fund, and a strike register that George Bernard Shaw helped them to administer. The Strike Committee was given the chance to make their case. They met with the B&M Directors supported by the London Trades Council.

On the 14 July, at a meeting registering the strike fund and distribution of official funds, it was agreed a delegation, including the strike committee, should go with Annie Besant to Parliament. They met with Glasgow MPs to plead their case against the drafting in of workers from the factory there. They also met with the radical MP, Charles Bradlaugh, who then took a motion to Parliament accusing B&M of being in Breach of the 1831 ‘Truck Act’ that ensured workers got their entire wages in coin and regulated the use of fines against workers.

On 17 July: a deputation from within the strike it went to the London Trades Council (LTC) who responded positively by giving financial support, helped them to draw up a list of grievances and donated £20 to the strike fund. The LTC, which, “had previously shunned unskilled workers, successfully brokered a long difficult meeting between the deputation of the Strike Committee and the Company Directors” (Boston 1980, 50).

By 18th July, the employer conceded to the strikers’ demands according to Raw ‘grudgingly’ (2011, 142) announced that it was willing to re-employ the dismissed women and would also bring an end to the illegal ‘fines’ system. The women accepted the terms and returned in triumph to work on the 21 July. In just under three weeks, the strike was won!

On 27thJuly: the inaugural meeting of the '*Union of Women Match Makers'* 'to protect the rights and privileges of the trade' took place in Stepney Meeting Hall took place (covered by the ELA and 'Justice' quoted in Fishmen 1988n, .287). Rules and subscriptions were agreed and a Committee was elected from within the Strike: Eliza Martin, Louisa Beck, Julia Gambleton, Jane Wakeling, Jane Staines, Eliza Price, Mary Naulls, Kate Sclater, Ellen Johnson, Sarah Chapman, Polly (Mary) Driscoll, Alice Francis with officer support from Annie Besant, Herbert Burrows, and Clementina Black ('Match Girls Memorial' site). On 15 November the rules were altered to admit male members.

Sarah Chapman was subsequently made President and elected as the Union's first representative to the Trades Union Congress (TUC). By September it had 600 members. At the first one of 1888, in London, she was one of 77 delegates. The second one she attended in 1890; she was one of only 10 women among the 500 delegates and is recorded as having seconded the motion demanding the enforcement of the 'Truck Act' ('Match Girls Memorial' site).

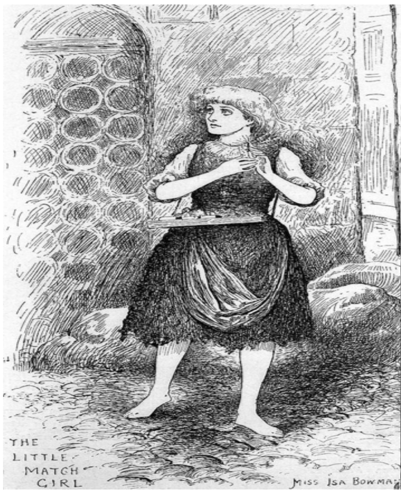
Even in the face of the successful strike, the widespread public condemnation, later official verification of the allegations of a deliberate 'cover-up', evidence of direct intimidation of workers with 'phossy-jaw', and prosecution for its continued use, the Company never admitted wrong-doing. On the contrary, they strenuously denied the reported scale of the problem and suffering of workers, claiming it to be an exaggeration made for political purposes by outside socialist agitators and the popular press: "perverters of the truth printing a tissue of lies" (quoted in Boston, 50).

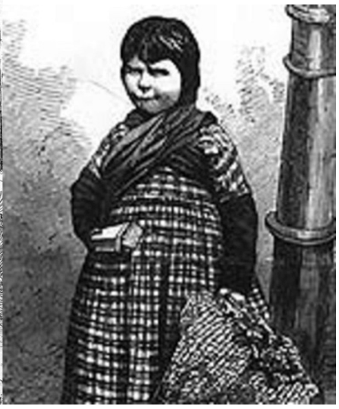
The public furore over the scandals, however, brought public sympathy behind the strikers and indignation and the anger at the despotism and continued determination of B&M to give its Board huge dividends, while making the human life of all its workforce cheap to make its matches profitable. While the settlement of the strike cost the Company little, despite all its privilege and power, the Company's public image of itself as a progressive industrialist committed to the care of its workforce based on the Quaker religious principle that 'all people are equal' was tarnished by the strike, and the popular label, 'the phossy-jaw firm', stuck until the factory closures in the 1970s.

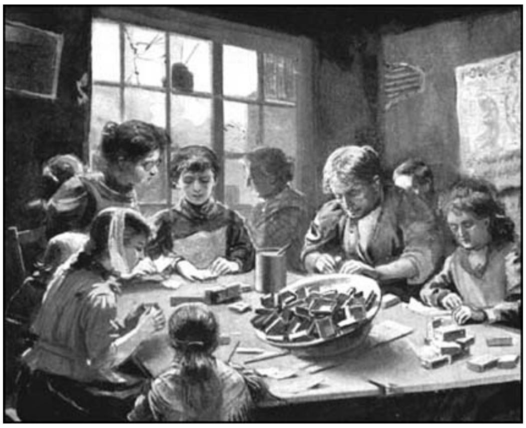
APPENDIX THREE

Contradictory images of the Match Women & girl strikers

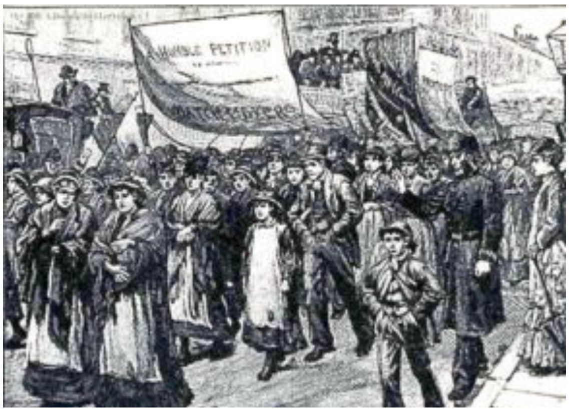
(All images Courtesy of TUC Library Collections at London Metropolitan University).


THE LITTLE MATCH GIRL
MISS ISA BOWMA

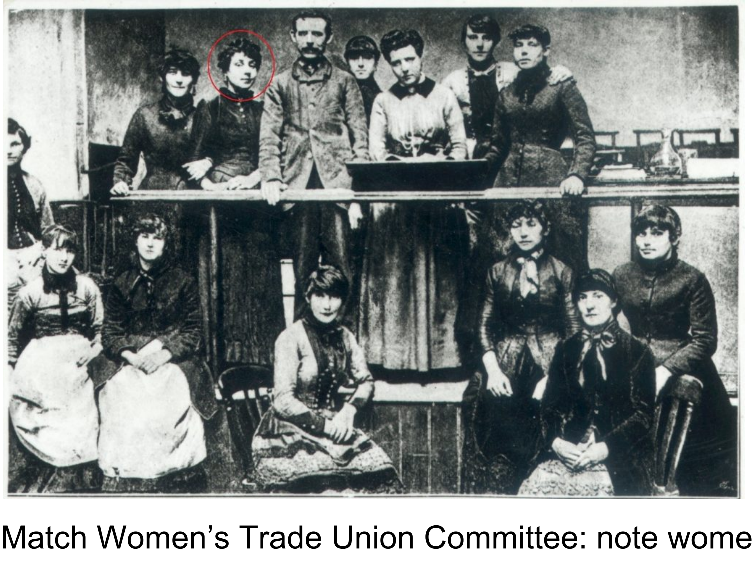




Outworkers making the match boxes


HUMBLE PETITION

March to Parliament 1871



Match Women's Trade Union Committee: note women's ages.

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