

## Creative Couples in the Sciences



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that elemental struggle, with considerable loss of life and civil liberties.

If any criticism is warranted, it is that the book still retains too many of the characteristics of the thesis on which it is based. The comparison moves mechanically through the categories—industry structure, conflict, civil rights, politics—looking first at West Virginia and then at South Wales. The effect is to interrupt the narrative with frequent restatements of the issues and repetitive summaries. This small caveat aside, Fagge's book is thoroughly researched and carefully argued.

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ABBOTT GLEASON. *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1995. Pp. 307. \$25.00.

A variant of the tyranny classified by the ancients, totalitarianism scarred much of the twentieth century. Although associated primarily with the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, Benito Mussolini's Italy and Mao Zedong's China have also been so characterized. The extinction of the boundaries between the state and civil society, the destruction of privacy and of personal autonomy through omnipresent terror, the deliberate infliction of mass suffering and mass murder by a single dictator imposing his will through a single party: these features appalled students of totalitarianism. How this peculiarly modern form of autocracy has been analyzed and criticized is the subject of Abbott Gleason's valuable survey. His is the first major account in English of what totalitarianism has meant to scholars, publicists, and political figures writing in Western and Eastern European countries as well as in the United States.

The book begins in the 1920s with Italian Fascists eager to assert the novelty and extent of their own power, and ends with Russian, Czech, Polish, and Hungarian intellectuals who have realized in recent decades that the West's indispensable rhetorical weapon during the Cold War illumined their own political experience. By giving their neologism a positive spin, Mussolini's ideologues were virtually unique; by acknowledging that so pejorative a term as "totalitarianism" was accurate, some members of the Eastern Bloc helped to accelerate its disintegration. In between Gleason shows how World War II and the Cold War made this concept salient to social science and to propaganda. He respects the ineluctable demands of chronology. But the author also treats controversies as distinctly national debates, so that the reader can easily follow the disputes over the meaning of the term. Of course, depth is sacrificed; even the most influential texts are summarized rather than freshly examined. The virtues of this volume are therefore balance and range, not detailed diagnosis. It would ask too much of so brisk yet ambitious a work that Gleason cite every relevant article or monograph. But he merits

high praise for using published sources in five foreign languages (mostly German, Italian, and Russian).

One inference to be drawn from Gleason's study is how rarely the concept of totalitarianism was developed into an effective instrument of analysis. Too often, this category was reduced to virtually one example: sometimes the Third Reich, more often the Soviet Union. Thus the comparative possibilities were mostly undeveloped. An exception was Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1956), coauthored by specialists in different fields. But of the three sections of Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), the first two were devoted to anti-Semitism and imperialism. This adumbrated Nazism but not Bolshevism, however inspired her effort to establish parallels. Another major work published at the same time, J. L. Talmon's *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1951), discerned in the utopian absolutism of some *philosophes* the sinister genesis of the homogeneity that the Communist elite would impose. How this side of the Enlightenment foreshadowed Fascism was not obvious. Though Gleason has specialized in Russian and Soviet history, his study is by no means imbalanced in that direction.

Totalitarianism was most influential in shaping academic interests in the early 1950s, when Raymond Aron's books were also published. Since then, no significant permutations or modifications could be discerned, which poses a problem for an "inner history." The moral case for democrats to resist totalitarianism did not evaporate, but the concept calcified. Gleason fails to dramatize the fate of so static a political category, and therefore his book does not maintain the momentum of its opening chapters.

Nor does it help that his own passions stay banked and that he keeps his opinions to himself. Too few of the chapters come to any emphatic resolution, and the book's conclusion is feeble. Gleason's diligence and energy in approaching the abyss of modern politics are commendable, but reticence deprives his book of punch. One partial remedy might have been to show, for example, how images of totalitarianism infiltrated vernacular discourse, where—at least when spoken with an American accent—little precise affiliation with the systematic cruelties of the Third Reich and Stalinist Russia remained. Spelling America with a k, some New Leftists typified an urge to evoke the horror of modern despotism. They were not alone in wanting to shock, to warn, to trump, to mobilize. But then, using charged terminology to stir the populace was familiar to the ancients as well.

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HELENA M. PYCIOR, NANCY G. SLACK, and PNINA G. ABIR-AM, editors. *Creative Couples in the Sciences*. (Lives of Women in Science.) New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press. 1996. Pp. xi, 369. \$50.00.

Scientific biographies used routinely to leave out as irrelevant the private life of their subject, a tendency that is unfortunately now being revived in those biographical works based heavily on laboratory notebooks. By contrast, this collection of seventeen essays, edited by Helena M. Pycior, Nancy G. Slack, and Pnina Abir-Am, is primarily about the successful and unsuccessful careers and personal lives of twenty-four heterosexual, married couples in the sciences, social sciences, and medicine from the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, and Sweden. Although biographers have treated couples in politics and the arts before, this genre takes the history of science into fresh territory. Yet readers need to be forewarned that these are not all "collaborative couples," for as the introduction by Pycior points out, few of these pairs worked together for all or even part of their marriage; even the most famous of them, Marie and Pierre Curie and Irène and Frederic Joliot-Curie, worked intensively together for only five years (p. 11). Thus most of the scientific couples depicted here spent most of their lives together but did their research separately.

The editors are to be congratulated for having found so many authors and for having brought such a venture to completion. They have arranged the essays in five sections by type and circumstances of the marriage: several but not all of the Nobelists come first, then the marriages of an established—or at least older—scientist to his student, then the more companionate unions among equals like fellow students, and finally two sets of unsuccessful marriages that ended in divorce, mental illness, suicide, and public disgrace. This arrangement means that the reader skips around among countries and fields as well as chronologically. The last is the most serious, since in the century between 1829, when the first marriage took place (British ornithologist John Gould to illustrator Eliza) and 1934 (when Margaret Mead married her third husband, Gregory Bateson), higher education and scientific societies opened almost all their doors to women in these countries. Although this greatly increased the opportunities for men and women scientists to meet, forms of exclusion also increased and allocated employment, resources, and status differently to men and women. This sex-linked differential meant that the stories of later couples are full of contingencies: lucky breaks, independent means, accommodating third parties, and other favorable local circumstances that helped these pairs become "exceptions."

Calling on a great many fresh resources, such as family papers, these well-researched essays take us into an amazing variety of marriages and household arrangements. The authors of several of these essays should be encouraged to expand them into whole volumes and to hold on to the movie rights in their book contract. Joy Harvey's chapter on the pioneering pediatricians Mary and Abraham Jacobi, who lost a son to diphtheria, the very disease on which they were experts, is particularly ironic and dramatic. Abir-Am's is the most analytical and conceptually bold essay,

because it covers three highly unusual (even for this volume) sets of sexually liberated social activists and reformers of the 1920s and 1930s, some of whom might not fit the usual definition of scientists: Dora and Bertrand Russell, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, and Mead and Bateson. Because at least one child of each of these unions later wrote an autobiography, there is an additional level of richness in the family dynamics open to scrutiny here.

These essays not only reevaluate the contributions of the married Nobelists, of whom there are several here, but also take more seriously the mundane activities of the far more numerous non-Nobelists of science who were heretofore just names, such as the zoological Blanchards of the University of Michigan, brought endearingly to life by Sylvia McGrath. We also read more here than one usually does in the history of science about underemployed and downwardly mobile male scientists who needed help with their work and supporting their families. But a few of the tales of unsuccessful outcomes (as in Linda Tucker and Christiane Groeben's poignant essay on mentally disturbed Emily Nunn Whitman, who late in life wrote to her brother that "my life is a thing of the past" [p. 205]), remind one of the far larger population of women not here because they were lost to science when more conventional marriages ended their careers or contributions. But as Slack points out in her essay on several botanical couples, many marriages did not last a lifetime; for some, divorce or bereavement reopened the opportunity for increased scientific participation—with or without a new, more suitable spouse.

We learn from these essays that up close and personal traditional gender stereotypes of dominant male geniuses and docile female assistants do not hold up. The variety of skills and roles involved were far too complex for that, thus causing a historian of science to rethink just what acknowledged and unacknowledged roles and skills contribute to creativity. All too often traditional patriarchal roles arose at the end of the project as a result of outside pressures, as when publishers wanted to maximize sales by featuring the better known of the couple (usually the male, but not so in the case of Mead) on the title page, or award committees selected those already well known, thus obliterating the spouse's public recognition. Yet as Barbara Becker points out in her essay on astronomers Margaret and William Huggins, sometimes both spouses wanted it that way.

Although most of the essays are generous in assessing contributions and sympathetic to the lack of public credit, John Stachel's essay on Albert Einstein and Mileva Marić sounds a discordant note and seeks to dismiss or at least minimize her contributions as detrimental to Albert's uniqueness. Stachel does not even mention Einstein's sharing his Nobel prize money with her in 1922, to which Pycior's first sentence has already called attention (p. 3). By contrast another essay by Susan Hoecker-Drysdale on sociologists Helen and Everett Hughes tells us we should not

accept spouses' evaluations at face value, since there is a pattern of husbands' seeking and accepting wifely assistance but then minimizing its extent and undercutting its value (p. 338 n. 53).

The general reader does not need to read these essays in the order presented but should feel free to dip into the book anywhere and save for last Pycior's wide-ranging analytical introduction, which surveys the sociological literature and brings many of these topics chronologically into the 1990s. The volume is already in paperback and with its many pictures and low price it should be useful in classes on the history of science, gender and science, the professions, or marriage and the family.

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MAXINE BERG. *A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889–1940*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1996. Pp. xv, 292. Cloth \$69.95, paper \$24.95.

I grew up in a household in which the works of Eileen Power and of M. M. Postan were considered among the great twentieth-century contributions to medieval history. *Medieval People* (1924) was a family favorite, and years later, when I discovered feminism and women's history, I turned with delight to *Medieval Women*, the posthumous anthology of Power's writings on women that her husband and fellow-medievalist, Postan, compiled long after her death. It was, therefore, with great eagerness that I picked up Maxine Berg's life of Power, a volume long overdue in the worlds of women's history, historiography, and biography.

Berg's principal interest, not surprisingly for an economic historian, is Power's contribution to a liberal economic history closely associated with the London School of Economics (LSE), where Power worked for the greater part of her professional life. Thus, Berg's structure alternates between more traditionally biographical chapters, which detail both the quotidian and the exceptional events of Power's life, and chapters focused principally on her intellectual contributions and the development of her quite particular and innovative style and method as a historian. If there is a tendency to compartmentalize and perhaps separate the personal and the professional, this is nonetheless a strategy that makes the book a readable one.

This is a very traditional biography, even given its division into two types of chapter. It is unabashedly empirical, heavily reliant on Power's marvelous letters and diaries, but Berg rarely turns an analytic lens on any of her sources. She reads Power very literally, and her focus is principally on Power as a professional woman. A more complex reading might seek to understand how Power, as one of only a handful of women to achieve seniority within the old-boy ranks of the profession in the 1920s and 1930s, navigated the prejudices so vividly conjured, for example, in Power's 1920 encounter with London University's vice-chancel-

lor. Applying for the Kahn Traveling Fellowship (which she won), Power had to endure an interview's worth of insults about women's incapacity for "real" history.

Despite such stumbling-blocks, Power rose to the top of the profession, and in so doing she became something of an establishment figure, notwithstanding the maverick qualities that Berg skillfully depicts. Her friendship circles, her commitment to liberalism (albeit of a pacifist bent), and her attitudes to the countries she visited as a Kahn Fellow suggest a woman inside the networks of academe and not knocking at its doors for entry. Berg chooses not to consider the interesting paradoxes that Power's life presents, concentrating instead, and most successfully, on presenting an attractive portrait of a lively, intellectually engaged, and warmly human woman, living life to the full and in London's best intellectual and even political circles. That, unlike her junior male colleagues, Power was seldom asked to serve on government commissions and the like is noted but hardly pursued by Berg; perhaps in the 1990s, it seems too obvious an omission to need discussion.

The depiction of Power as deeply likable is central to Berg's aim. As a result, some sensitive topics go untouched that might have thrown an interesting light on how Power remained on top as a woman. There are brief allusions to her mutual enmity with LSE administrator Jessie Mair, but although we are privy to the poisonous pen of Mair, we hear nothing about how Power dealt with Mair or what she thought of her. If there is nothing in the record, then the silence itself might be illuminating, or at least worth consideration, but Berg avoids that path. And while Berg acknowledges Power's orientalist reading of India as Europe's Middle Ages all over again, she also insists that Power did not share the anti-Semitism displayed by so many of her close friends. Her marriage to Postan, a Russian Jew, and her close friendships with British Jews such as Harold Laski and Matthew Nathan are Berg's evidence for this. Yet Power is complicit with J. H. Clapham's ill-mannered xenophobia, speaking disparagingly in a letter to him about editorial difficulties with the "wops" (p. 215). Power may well have been racist but not specifically anti-Semitic; the paradox needs discussion.

There is much here to praise: Berg's lively evocation of the glory days of the LSE, her detailed accounts of Power's work and life, her sensitive accounts of Power's important female friendships. This is not, however, the last word in scholarship on Eileen Power, although it is a good beginning. At one point, Berg describes Power's work as collapsing the boundaries between history and fiction in its imaginative evocations of the medieval world and as moving away from the reigning positivism of the day. What, I wonder, would Power herself have thought of this unexaminedly empirical account of her own life?

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