

Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution

Professor Susan Zlotnick

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#9502138 in Books The Johns Hopkins University Press 1998-09-23 Original language: English PDF # 1 1.10 x 5.75 x 8.771, #File Name: 0801858291336 pages | File size: 71.Mb

Professor Susan Zlotnick : Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution:

The industrial revolution in nineteenth-century England disrupted traditional ways of life. Condemning these transformations, the male writers who explored the brave new world of Victorian industrialism looked longingly to an idealized past. However, British women writers were not so pessimistic and some even foresaw the prospect of real improvement. As Susan Zlotnick argues in *Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution*, novelists Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Bront, Frances Trollope, and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna were more willing to embrace industrialism than their male counterparts. While these women's responses to early industrialism differed widely, they imagined the industrial revolution and the modernity it heralded in ways unique to their gender. Zlotnick extends her analysis of the literature of the industrial revolution to the poetry and prose produced by working-class men and women. She examines the works of Chartist poets, dialect writers, and two "factory girl" poets who wrote about their experiences in the mills.

"Women, Writing, and the Industrial Revolution provides us not only with a rigorous and persuasive reworking of some gender and class assumptions about nineteenth-century industrialism, but also with some vibrant and

illuminating critical readings." -- Julia Swindells, *Victorian Studies*"[Zlotnick] forces us to rethink the whole issue of industrial capitalism and especially its effect on women in the workforce (including female novelists themselves, who benefited greatly from the expanded market for literature capitalism made possible). This is a far-reaching and original book that should be required reading for all students and scholars of 19th-century literature." -- *Virginia Quarterly* "A compelling new reading of an important facet of British cultural history, based on contrasting literary treatments of the effects of the industrial revolution by male and female writers." -- *Victorian Periodicals* "Distinguished by clarity of prose and quality of research... Contributing a new reading of the social problem genre in relation to gender, this study adds a crucial perspective through its emphasis on noncanonical and working-class writing." -- Lynette Felber, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*"Susan Zlotnick's study is a highly readable contribution to what looks like being a revisionist (and distinctly feminist) phase in the academic project of 're-reading the industrial revolution'." -- Ella Westland, *Dickens Quarterly*About the AuthorSusan Zlotnick is an associate professor of English at Vassar College.