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University Coeducation in the Victorian Era: Inclusion in the United States and the United Kingdom, by Christine D. Myers; pp. 283. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, £60.00, \$95.00.

This is a very interesting addition to gender and educational scholarship on the Victorian period. Christine D. Myers is to be congratulated on a rare comparative study on higher education in the United Kingdom and the United States. She has achieved what must have been a mammoth task by focusing strictly on one topic: the integration of women into male universities and the response of society to this integration. Thus universities or colleges which were established as coeducational or specifically for women only are omitted. Nevertheless, Myers examines how far coeducation was gained in twenty-four different institutions which fit her criteria, covering England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Ohio Valley, and midwestern and southern United States. She has made extensive use of archival and unpublished sources in her research and weaves these together admirably, addressing her various themes in a very readable manner. This is supported by a small but well-chosen number of illustrations.

There are three major themes: the evolution of perceptions of women and their relationship to higher education; the expectations of the future roles of female graduates; and the effects on the admission of women caused by shifts in the practical control of universities and changing values in society. These themes are treated separately and together. Myers shows that across the Atlantic arguments raged about woman's societal role and the presumed threat to her morality and femininity and to traditional roles and ways of life if women were educated equally with men. Such fears are shown to have persisted even while the growing need for good quality teachers and the perceived need for the moral and social improvement of society prompted women's increasing admittance to universities. Medical disputes over women's university participation which are now well known form an interesting part of the discussion here, although only men's, not women's, counterarguments feature. Constant reference to the separate spheres argument ignores Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes* (1987) and the subsequent revision of some of their arguments, but, nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of the issues is usually displayed, backed by apposite evidence from the many institutions studied.

In looking for similarities across institutions and national boundaries, Myers also reveals differences. Time and again the importance of individuals is evident, but Myers reiterates that, on the one hand, not all women students wanted to revolutionize gender roles and, on the other, administrators (usually leading male academics) and the structure of institutions were significant both in supporting the admittance of women and guiding them into traditional female roles. Myers shows curriculum shifts to be important, but sees the help of progressive faculty members, backed by public

support, as more crucial. That support, in turn, was stimulated both by associations established to advance women's opportunities in higher education and by national and state legislation such as the 1862 Morrill Act in the United States. Of course that legislation was contested and variously interpreted. Religious and cultural fears, as in Ireland and the southern United States, also inhibited the taking up of women's higher education. Finance was often a crucial factor, although women became increasingly welcome as a source of extra funding.

Myers refreshingly explores both the academic and the extracurricular lives of the students, realizing—as did Carol Dyhouse in *No Distinction of Sex?: Women in British Universities, 1870–1939* (1995)—that restrictions in the latter belied equality of provision or the free interaction of the sexes. Her discussion of the wide-ranging responses to the curriculum, the timing of lectures, seating of students, location of facilities or halls for women, and access to resources and awards, form a fascinating read and prove Myers's command of her multifarious sources. Those sources provide illustrative nuggets. That Latin was deemed an easier option than science for women in Wisconsin, for instance, while the reverse was held in West Virginia, illustrates both the Victorian determination to hold to gendered differences and the significance of this comparative study. Lack of physical space and money could be as crucial to change as the evolution of professional teaching and preoccupations with health. Endless questions over discipline, safety, and moral wellbeing permeated all aspects of university life. An evolving pattern emerged in which greater opportunities for women developed within an environment that restricted women at university and guided them subtly into traditional roles afterwards. What was similar everywhere was that campuses were profoundly altered “from traditional, intellectual bastions of society to . . . place[s] for the cultural development of the nation's youth” (143). Some activities were mixed, but men usually had more and better facilities in sports, and student government proved hard to integrate—a foretaste of life beyond the university. Nevertheless, women learnt about political organisation and activism and contributed to university publications (although men dominated them).

Through this comparative analysis Myers shows that local needs and demands were most important everywhere. She proves there were remarkable similarities in attitudes and experiences in the United States and United Kingdom, with the wish to alter women's role not being the driving force. Gender assumptions remained but warnings of catastrophe were proved wrong, and universities gained by the successes of high profile women students. Progress was uneven in coeducation but models of the best (such as Aberystwyth and Indiana), helped others. Despite limitations, gender roles were inadvertently reshaped. University education remained elitist but women were the first excluded group to invade the old monopoly of learning and so their admission was significant. Understanding the arguments of this well-researched book should be a must for all those interested in the evolving place of gender and of education in the Victorian period.

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