

I am forbidden, by Edoardo, from writing a long and self-deprecating introduction to this paper. So instead, I will just say:

I wrote this paper because I felt my knowledge of German economic thought (particularly the treatment of pedagogy) could help shed light on the history of women's economic thought in Britain (which was often pedagogical). However, as many of you will know, the topic, people, and concepts in this paper are far outside my comfort zone. It would be very useful if you could point out any misunderstandings I may have regarding British political economy, education in nineteenth century Britain, women's economic thought—and any literature I should be engaging in that I am not.

I also have the sense the paper is rather repetitive at points, likely a result of the many rewrites I have done, but I have lost the ability to see clearly what needs to be done, so any pointers with writing and structure would be most welcome. How can I make my argument more clear?

Sorry Edoardo, I could not resist.

Thank you for reading and I look forward to your comments!

POPULAR PRIESTESSES: THE CHANGING RECEPTION OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC TEXTBOOKS IN BRITAIN, 1816-1897

BY
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Jane Marcet's 'Conversations on Political Economy' (1816) was the first in a pattern of female-authored, educational texts on political economy published across the nineteenth century in Britain. The women that wrote these textbooks have been celebrated primarily as, and simultaneously limited to the role of, 'popularisers'. This paper suggests that much can be learnt from the history of German economic thought. Pedagogical texts played a central role in Nationalökonomie, acting to consolidate the science for the good of educating the next generation. The women examined here played a similarly constructive role in British political economy: consolidating the scope and boundaries of the young discipline. Comparing the reception of the pedagogical economic writings of four British women from across the nineteenth century demonstrates this complex role and the process by which this act of consolidation was encouraged and later condemned. The rejection of consolidators by the end of the nineteenth century gave rise to the dismissive 'populariser' rhetoric that we still reckon with today. Such an investigation provides insights far beyond the history of these four women, unveiling complex negotiations regarding the nature and finality of economic discourse in Britain.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1835, Karl Heinrich Rau, the foremost German-language economist of the day, established the first specialised scientific economic periodical in the world. His *Archiv der politischen Ökonomie und Polizeiwissenschaft* provided an outlet for economic writers at a time when English-language economics was still confined to generalist magazines like the *Edinburgh Review*. One of Rau's earliest pieces of writing for his new journal was a review of two economic textbooks written by British women. The first was Jane Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*, published some decades earlier in 1816, and the second was Harriet Martineau's recently published *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832). His review began:

From the fatherland of Steuart, A. Smith, D. Hume, Malthus and Ricardo comes the new phenomenon of female feathers being ruffled in the direction of the abstract truths of political economy... the two women writers who entered the field, with correct intuition, chose the task in which the natural endowment of their sex, active imagination and delicate feeling, came to their aid; they did not research, but tried to dress the research of others in graceful garb.¹

The form of the texts was certainly more ‘graceful’ than the usual economist’s offering. Marcet’s *Conversations* was intended to be an elementary work in which dialogue between a Mrs B. and her student Caroline communicate to the reader a wide range of economic principles. In the preface, Marcet stated that she had, ‘attempted to bring within the reach of young persons a science which no English writer has yet presented in an easy and familiar form’.² She then tempered this claim with a series of humble caveats. ‘As to the principles and materials of this work,’ she explained, ‘it is so obvious that they have been obtained from the writings of the great masters who have treated this subject,’ and goes on to list these great men: Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, Jean-Baptiste Say and Jean Charles de Sismondi.³ Her own offering, by contrast, she bounded as a mere reproduction, and a flawed one at that. She proclaimed to have omitted entirely ‘the most abstruse questions and controversies in Political Economy’ and made sure to stress the limitations of her knowledge, repeating several times that her dialogic educational text could only aspire to be consumed by ‘young persons of either sex.’⁴

¹ Karl Heinrich Rau, ‘Harriet Martineau – Illustrations of Political Economy’, *Archiv der Politischen Oekonomie und Polizeiwissenschaft*, I, 2 (1835), 265-?: ‘Das Vaterland eines Steuart, A. Smith, D. Hume, Malthus und Ricardo hat die neue Erscheinung dargeboten, daß sich weibliche Federn in Bewegung setzen, um die abstrakten Wahrheiten der politischen ökonomie abzuhandeln... Die beiden Schriftstellerinnen, welche dies Gebiet betraten, wählten sich von einne richtigen Gefühl diejenige Aufgabe, bei der ihnen die natürliche Ausstattung ihres Geschlechtes, rege Phantasie und zarte Empfindung, zu Statten kam; sie forschten nicht, sondern suchten die Forschungen Anderer in anmuthiges Gewand einzufleiden.’

² Jane Marcet (Published anonymously under ‘By the Author of “Conversations on Chemistry”’), *Conversations on Political Economy; in which the Elements of that Science are Familiarly Explained* (London, 1816), p. v.

³ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. vi-vii.

However modest Marcet's intentions, her short book initiated a pattern of educational texts on political economy penned by British women across the nineteenth century. In Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography* she attributed the inspiration for her *Illustrations of Political Economy* directly to Marcet. She explained that when a copy of Marcet's *Conversations* was gifted to her sister by a neighbour in late 1827 she 'took up the book, chiefly to see what Political Economy precisely was... It struck me at once that the principles of the whole science might be advantageously conveyed... not by being smothered up in a story, but by being exhibited in their natural workings in selected passages of social life.'⁵ Martineau's *Illustrations* taught the economic principles of David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus through colourful novellas set across the British Empire, from an industrial community in South Wales to a settler colony in Australia. In 1874, Millicent Garrett Fawcett published *Tales in Political Economy* and in the preface admitted, 'I cannot let them go to press without a word of apology to Miss Martineau for my plagiarism of the idea, which she made so popular thirty years ago, of hiding the powder, Political Economy, in the raspberry jam of a story.'⁶

Rau was in step with the English-speaking economist community in celebrating the pedagogical and popularising achievements of Marcet and Martineau while simultaneously insisting on their limited scope as mere colourful reproductions of scientific thought. A review of Martineau's *Illustrations* and of Marcet's later text *John Hopkin's Notion of Political Economy* in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1833 welcomed the women into the science of political economy to perform the important task of guiding the young and protecting the poor. The reviewer concluded:

Popular priestesses have arisen. And they have fortunately undertaken to preach the practical truths and blessings of the science, rather than its mysteries and

⁵ Harriet Martineau, Maria Weston Chapman (ed.), *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography* (Boston, 1877), p. 105.

⁶ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Tales in Political Economy* (London, 1874), p. v.

creeds. Mrs Marcet has resumed her valuable labours in the unpretending little volume which heads our article. It is delightfully written, and is admirably adapted, by plain straightforward sense, for its virtuous purpose—the improvement of the labour classes.⁷

Rau's stance on Marcet and Martineau was not, therefore, unusual. In fact, it remains the standard take on their achievements. As interest in women's economic thought rises, the treatment of these pedagogical works has thankfully gained depth. Histories of these women and their works has moved from celebrating their 'popularising' role to considering them as more nuanced 'knowledge brokers', at the centre of a web of intellectual exchange.⁸ The curiosity in Rau's review is his position as a leading theoretician in an economic discourse that valued and centred pedagogy far more than the English-language economic tradition. German economic thought, as it emerged in the eighteenth century and flourished in nineteenth, retained a reverence for its primary purpose: the education of state administrators. This reverence permeated the entire science, shaping its discursive style, textual forms, language, methods, and intent.

This paper sets out an opportunity for the history of British women's economic thought. The history of German economic thought has had little choice but to seriously interrogate textbooks, lectures, debates concerning economic syllabuses and exams, the establishment of business schools and university departments, and the definitions, examples, and exhaustive encyclopaedias that accompany such a pedagogical culture. Of course, it was primarily a university pedagogical culture, which has always been respected more than the education of the masses. In the history of British economic thought, pedagogical texts, many of them written by women, have fallen into extra-discursive categories. This paper borrows from the historical

⁷ Review of *Illustrations of Political Economy*. By Harriet Martineau. (The first Thirteen Numbers.) 12mo. London: 1832; and *John Hopkins's Notions of Political Economy*. By the Author of Conversations on Political Economy. 8vo. London: 1833. *Edinburgh Review*, 57, 115 (April 1833): 1-39, p. 2.

⁸ Evelyn L. Forget, 'Jane Marcet as Knowledge Broker', *History of Economics Review*, 65, 1 (2016) 15-26.

German understanding of economic pedagogy to better understand the constructive and vital role educational texts have played in British economic thought.

II. BRITISH ECONOMIC PEDAGOGY IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

A cursory inspection of the dominant economic texts in nineteenth century Germany confirms their pedagogical nature. Dedicated chairs in economics had been established since 1727, although the subject would be taught in juridical and legal faculties until the early twentieth century, and the discourse coalesced around the oral form of the lecture. The earliest German-language economic texts were therefore written versions of these lecture courses, intended to save the student and the professor from tiresome repetition. This tradition had significant impact on the form of German economic writing, encouraging definitions, exhaustiveness, and greater emphasis on illustrations and examples.

Rau's own textbook, the *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie*, shared in this tradition. First published in 1826, the *Lehrbuch* was the dominant German-language economic text for nearly four decades.⁹ Hugely popular with both students and the general public, it also influenced the structuring and form of German economic texts for decades to come. Rau divided economic thought into three parts: *Volkswirtschaftslehre* (economic theory), *Volkswirtschaftspflege* (economic development), and *Finanzwissenschaft* (finance), a partition used in future texts and to organise economics syllabuses in German universities until the end of the twentieth century. The tendency for successful academic economists to publish an exhaustive economic textbook lasted into the twentieth century. Gustav Schmoller published his *Grundriss der Allgemeinen Volkswirtschaftslehre* between 1900 and 1904, produced from the material he had been lecturing on at the University of Berlin for nearly two decades.

⁹ Karl Heinrich Rau, *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie* (Heidelberg, 1826-1865).

Before encyclopaedias of economic knowledge, such as the Palgrave *Dictionary of Political Economy*, were published in English, *Handwörterbücher* [handbooks] were an important channel between the academic realm of economic knowledge and the educated German public. The most famous of these was Gustav Schönberg's *Handbuch der Politischen Ökonomie*, first published in 1866. The prolific publication and republication of these handbooks was testament to the public demand for pedagogical economic texts in an economic tradition that was dominated by its university educators.

In Keith Tribe's history of German economic discourse, he insisted that 'in the case of Germany it is evident that it is the institution of the university and its primary activity – teaching – which provide the relevant framework for the assessment of economic discourse.'¹⁰ The reasons for this pedagogical focus reach back into the earliest days of German economic thinking. The cameralist tradition which flourished in Prussian universities during the eighteenth century dedicated itself to a primary purpose: the education of Prussian state administrators. While eighteenth-century *Staatswissenschaft* gave way to a vigorous diversity of economic thought in the nineteenth century, the act of educating the next generation was never side-lined.

Such a pedagogical focus was not present in the British economic thought gaining traction at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The major treatises of English-language political economy—the famous texts of Smith, Ricardo, Malthus—are hard to mistake for a textbook. They make no claims to completeness or exhaustiveness and lack the comprehensive length and multiple encyclopaedic volumes of German economic texts. They function as critical interjections into the dialogue, summarising previous debate only to criticise and differentiate their own thought. A survey of introductions to the famous treatises of British

¹⁰ Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750-1840* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 7.

political economy demonstrates this point. Ricardo began his *Principles of Political Economy* (1817): ‘much as the science has been improved by the writings of Turgot, Stuart, Smith, Say, Sismondi, and others, they afford very little satisfactory information respecting the natural course of rent, profit, and wages.’¹¹ He then justifies his text as an attempt to ‘supply this deficiency’.¹² William Stanley Jevons’s *The Theory of Political Economy* (1871) began:

The contents of the following pages can hardly meet with ready acceptance among those who regard the Science of Political Economy as having already acquired a nearly perfect form. I believe it is generally supposed that Adam Smith laid the foundations of this science; that Malthus, Anderson, and Senior added important doctrines; that Ricardo systematised the whole; and, finally, that Mr. J. S. Mill filled in the details and completely expounded this branch of knowledge.¹³

He then set out his new treatment of economics as a calculus of pleasure and pain, positioning it as a new doctrine against the supposedly finished science of economics. British economists thus inserted themselves into a continuous conversation between treatises. This lasted until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the journal article began to replace the treatise as the economists’ medium of choice. This difference between British and German economics can be attributed, in part, to how its key theoreticians made their living. Almost every famous German economist of the nineteenth-century was a university professor whose primary activity was teaching. The leading lights of British economics were Members of Parliament, colonial administrators, businessmen, and clerics. Only by the very end of the nineteenth-century did British economic discourse centre itself upon the university.

¹¹ David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy, and Taxation* (Cambridge, 2015), p. iv.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. v.

¹³ William Stanley Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy* (London and New York, 1871), p. v.

The most comprehensive comparison of the pedagogical nature of various national economic discourses can be found in Augello and Guidi's *The Economic Reader*, a collection of essays on the history of the economic textbook in Europe, Japan, and the United States. The chapter on British economic textbooks acknowledges that while, 'up until mid-[nineteenth-]century teaching in political economy was extremely episodic in London, Cambridge and Oxford – the only English university institutions of the time – [this] should not be taken to imply that political economy lacked a pedagogic function – for at this time not only was self-education more significant than formal education, but the education of women was almost entirely a domestic affair.'¹⁴ The chapter briefly examines a number of semi-pedagogical texts, such as Malthus's *Definitions in Political Economy* (1827), before landing at the feet of the first truly popular educational texts in British political economy: Marcet's *Conversations* and Martineau's *Illustrations*.¹⁵

Even as economics education came under the purview of the universities in the late-nineteenth century, women played a central role. The lengthy and inaccessible treatises proved too bulky for undergraduates, so Henry Fawcett published his *Manual of Political Economy* in 1863 and his wife, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, soon after published her *Political Economy for Beginners* in 1870. Mrs Fawcett's text, aimed at beginners and school children, sold over 106'500 copies.¹⁶ The formalisation of economics education in British universities was intimately tied with the women's education movement. Mary Paley met her future husband Alfred Marshall as one of the first women to sit the Moral Sciences Tripos examination in Cambridge in 1874. Alfred was her lecturer in political economy. Although she was not permitted to receive a degree for her efforts, she soon became embedded in the new

¹⁴ Keith Tribe, 'Economic manuals and textbooks in Great Britain and the British Empire 1797-1938' in Massimo M. Augello and Marco E. L. Guidi, *The Economic Reader: Textbooks, manuals and the dissemination of the economic sciences during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (New York, 2012), pp. 43-75, p. 47.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

infrastructure created to facilitate the education of women at Cambridge and lectured in political economy at the newly formed Newnham College. Mary Paley Marshall's published her own educational text *Economics of Industry*, written with her husband, in 1879.

The reasons why women in Britain chose to write about political economy in pedagogical forms are clear—why they were able to do so successfully is a little more complicated. The obvious institutional and social barriers to women's full participation in intellectual life, including in the emerging science of political economy, limited the forms available to them when expressing economic ideas. As Joanna Rostek has explained, 'Women who took up the pen could not choose freely from the available range of genres, the 'higher' ones in particular. Since literature and pedagogy counted among the areas where women could acquire "some public presence", the bulk of writing by English women around 1800 occurred in genres that, from today's perspectives, would not qualify as academic or theoretical: conduct books, novels, poems, plays, moral tales, religious tracts, pamphlets, travelogues, diaries, or letters.'¹⁷ Themes of educational exclusion are common across the wide range of economic thought produced historically by women. Their own exclusion from educational environments unsurprisingly prompted them to provide extra-institutional educational resources.

Each of the women discussed here also had their own reasons for writing educational economic textbooks. Marcet, set to inherit an equal share of her father's fortune under the traditions of her Genevan heritage, and married to a wealthy physician, was free to write simply with the aim of contributing to the virtue of education, while Martineau took up writing to provide for her family at the loss of their fortune. Fawcett's and Marshall's motivations emerged from their pursuit of furthering higher education for women. For Fawcett, it was while assisting her husband in drafting his *Manual of Political Economy* and lamenting the poor state

¹⁷ Joanna Rostek, 'English Women's Economic Thought in the 1790s: Domestic economy, married women's economic dependence, and access to professions' in Kirsten Madden and Robert W. Dimand, *Routledge Handbook of the History of Women's Economic Thought* (New York, 2019), p. 35.

of economics education in schools. Marshall's motivation was directly related to her own experience as one of the first five female students to study at Cambridge.

These motivations for women to write pedagogically about economics also prevailed, although to a less degree, elsewhere in Europe. In 1895 in Germany three women were granted special permission by the Prussian state to attend Gustav Schmoller's economics seminar at the University of Berlin, although they were not permitted to receive degrees. One of those women, Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, was a leading figure in Germany's *Frauenbewegung* [women's movement] and was extremely interested in the education of women and the working poor. She established an educational institution for girls in 1875 and published a number of texts related to the education of women, including an economic textbook for secondary schools in 1914.¹⁸ Another of Schmoller's early students, Helene Simon, was one of the first students to attend LSE and translated a number of Beatrice and Sidney Webb's works into German, publishing her own book on education and motherhood in 1901.¹⁹ Yet women's authorship of economic textbooks was not nearly as prolific nor as early in Germany as it was in Britain. British women were taking a leading role in economics education in the earliest days of the science. Their success was anomalous.

Given the crowded market for pedagogical economic textbooks in Germany, it seems Britain, with its well-defined canon of economic treatises but an underdeveloped educational infrastructure for economics, was one of the few economic discourses that allowed women to fill this space. Of course, it is important to note that early female economists in Britain were writing pedagogical texts for a different audience than Rau and his contemporaries. Although Fawcett and Marshall were beginning to think about university instruction, all four of these women wrote with schoolchildren, women, and the working poor in mind. Rau, Roscher,

¹⁸ Elisabeth Gnauck-Kühne, *Das soziale Gemeinschaftsleben im Deutschen Reich: Leitfaden der Wirtschafts- und Bürgerkunde für höhere Schulen, Kurse, und zum Selbstunterricht*. (Mönchengladbach, 1914).

¹⁹ Adele Gerhard and Helene Simon, *Mutterschaft und geistige Arbeit* (Berlin, 1901).

Schmoller, and Schönberg were writing primarily for male undergraduates, although their texts also had a public audience. Nevertheless, studying the history of German economic thought demonstrates the powerful role pedagogical texts had in consolidating the methods, language, and framework of economic thought in the public conscience.

Historians of German economic thought have long since confronted the complex relationship between economic science, statecraft, and education [or *Bildung*, self-cultivation]. David Lindenfield's history of *Staatswissenschaft* [sciences of the state] began by insisting that, 'the sciences of state originated as a curriculum to train administrators in the skills and knowledge they would need to do their jobs well.'²⁰ He then explained that the pursuit of good governance had not only driven the prioritisation of practical knowledge, but 'insofar as book learning was also considered valid, the impetus existed for a systematic treatment of such knowledge'.²¹ In other words, in pursuit of bureaucratic education German economic thought early on sought a consolidated framework for economic thinking, a consensus echoed in the repetitive and reiterative textbooks of the nineteenth-century. This is not to say that German economic thought was inflexible, static, or closed to foreign influence. But dynamic research was combined with a prevalent commitment to 'order and fixed classification', agreed upon categories, syllabuses, and examinations, all in aid of effective state administration.²²

Alongside those that welcomed the consolidating function of the reiterative, repetitive German economic texts of the nineteenth century, there were moments when such acts of codification were feared and rejected. Keith Tribe's account of the writing of Max Weber's famous text *Economy and Society* suggests this was Weber's motivation for writing his handbook, the *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, in which *Economy and Society* was his entry.²³

²⁰ David F. Lindenfield, *The Practical Imagination: The German Sciences of State in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1997), p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²³ Keith Tribe, 'Introduction to Max Weber's *Economy and Society*' in Max Weber and Keith Tribe (ed. & trans.), *Economy and Society: A New Translation* (London, 2019), pp. 1-73.

Its publication, beginning in 1914 and concluding in 1930, coincided with the creation of the first distinct German university qualification in economics, the *Diplom-Volkswirt* in 1923.²⁴ The *Grundriss* was the most up-to-date textbook available to students on this new track. In Tribe's account, the *Grundriss* was Weber's attempt to capitalise upon this tradition of textbooks establishing agreed boundaries for economic science by publishing his own handbook that could divert economic thought towards a more complex, sociological understanding of human action. It is this act of consolidating and shaping an agreed framework, through the form of the textbook, for the legitimacy of the discipline, that I will focus on as I examine the works of Marcet, Martineau, Fawcett, and Marshall.

III. JANE MARCET AND HARRIET MARTINEAU

Jane Marcet was born Jane Haldimand in London on 1st January 1769. Her Swiss heritage, through her father, saw her not only educated alongside her brothers but also set to inherit an equal share of the family fortune. She married a Genevan physician, Alexandre Marcet, in 1799 and they quickly established a wide social circle of influential intellectuals. Marcet's book on political economy was not her first educational text. Her *Conversations on Chemistry* had been published anonymously in 1805 to much acclaim. It went through eighteen British printings, four French editions, one in German (which sold very poorly), and even saw more than-twenty pirated American editions.²⁵ As with her interest in chemistry, her turn to political economy was encouraged by the social circles that she kept. The Marcets were good friends of the Malthuses, the Ricardos, and the Mills.²⁶

Her *Conversations on Political Economy* was published in 1816. The date is important because it appeared before Ricardo's celebrated *Principles of Political Economy*, so may be

²⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁵ Evelyn L. Forget, 'Introduction' in Jane Marcet, Evelyn L. Forget (ed.), *Conversations on the Nature of Political Economy* (New York, 2009), p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

considered the first text to systematically lay out certain elements of his theory, including his theory of rent.²⁷ Ricardo read her book and offered suggestions for revisions. It was also read and praised by Jean-Baptiste Say who wrote in a letter to Marcet, ‘You have worked much more efficiently than I to popularize and to spread extremely useful ideas... It is not possible to stay closer to the truth with more charm; to clothe such indisputable principles with a more elegant style. I am an old soldier who asks only to die in your light.’²⁸ Thomas Malthus wrote to her: ‘I own I had felt some anxiety about the success of your undertaking, both on account of its difficulty, and its utility; and I am very happy to be able to say that I think you have overcome the first and consequently insured completely the second.’²⁹ Heaped with praise by the famous economists of the day, the reception of *Conversations* seems a far cry from the modesty, perhaps genuine, perhaps convention, with which Marcet presented it in her Preface:

If, however, it should be found useful, and if, upon the whole, the doctrines it contains should appear sound and sufficiently well explained, the author flatters herself that this attempt will not be too severely judged.³⁰

Modern historians of economic thought have walked the line between praise and modesty in discussing Marcet’s work. The modern history of women’s economic thought was given a push when Dorothy Lampen Thomson published *Adam Smith’s Daughters* in 1973, the first to focus on women’s contributions to economic thought.³¹ Thomson could not find a publisher for the book and paid to have it self-published, and the only review it received noted that it may be of interest to ‘college girls and career counselors’.³² It depicted the achievements in economic

²⁷ J. R. Shackleton, ‘Jane Marcet and Harriet Martineau: pioneers of economics education’, *History of Education*, 19, 4, 283-297, p. 287.

²⁸ Bette Polkinghorn, ‘Jane Marcet and Harriet Martineau: Motive, Market Experience and Reception of their Works Popularizing Classical Political Economy’ in M. A. Dimand, R. W. Dimand and E. L. Forget, *Women of Value* (Cheltenham, 1995) p. 167.

²⁹ Bette Polkinghorn, *Jane Marcet: An Uncommon Woman* (California, 1993), p. 54.

³⁰ Jane Marcet, *Conversations on Political Economy* (London, 1816), p. iii-iv.

³¹ Revised edition: Bette Polkinghorn and Dorothy Lapen Thomson, *Adam Smith’s Daughters: Eight Prominent Women Economists from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cheltenham, 1998).

³² *Choice*. ‘Review of *Adam Smith’s Daughters*’ 10, 10 (1973), p. 1602.

science of: Jane Marcet, Harriet Martineau, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Rosa Luxemburg, Beatrice Potter Webb, and Joan Robinson, with the intent of reminding readers ‘that women have a history in economics, although they have often been overlooked.’³³ Interest has, thankfully, increased since then. A significant contribution to this field was made in 1995 when Mary Ann Dimand et al. published *Women of Value*, a collection of essays on the history of women in economics, which they described as ‘a preliminary attempt to explore the extent to which women’s contributions to economics have been overlooked and undervalued.’³⁴ The editors of *Women of Value* have since taken the valuable step of compiling *A Biographical Dictionary of Women Economists*, with more than one hundred articles on the lives and works of international women economists.³⁵

With this growing interest in women’s economic thought, treatments of Marcet’s pedagogical writings have grown in sophistication. In the 1990s, historians endeavoured to highlight the importance of economics education and thus the seriousness of her contribution. J. R. Shackleton (1990) implored us to consider that popularisers and disseminators of economic thought held an important role despite their lack of innovation, while Bette Polkinghorn’s biography of Jane Marcet (1993) expanded on the importance of popularisers and concluded that popularising had been overlooked because it was often done by women.³⁶ Willie Henderson (1994) treated her educational strategy with greater sophistication, examining the roots of its dialogic form and describing Marcet, along with Martineau, as key figures in promoting a *laissez-faire* agenda to the public conscience.³⁷ A similar treatment was

³³ Bette Polkinghorn and Dorothy Lapen Thomson, *Adam Smith’s Daughters: Eight Prominent Women Economists from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cheltenham, 1998), p. vii.

³⁴ Robert W Dimand, ‘The neglect of women’s contributions to economics’, in Mary Ann Dimand, Robert W Dimand, and Evelyn L Forget (eds), *Women of Value: Feminist Essays on the History of Women in Economics* (Aldershot, 1995), 1-24. P. 1.

³⁵ Robert W Dimand, Mary Ann Dimand, Evelyn L. Forget, *A Biographical Dictionary of Women Economists* (Cheltenham, 2004).

³⁶ J. R. Shackleton, ‘Jane Marcet and Harriet Martineau: pioneers of economics education’, *History of Education*, 19, 4, 283-297; Bette Polkinghorn, *Jane Marcet: An Uncommon Woman* (California, 1993).

³⁷ Willie Henderson, ‘Jane Marcet’s *Conversations on Political Economy*: a new interpretation’, *History of Education*, 23, 4 (1994), 423-437; Willie Henderson, *Economics as Literature* (London, 1995).

afforded to Marcet by Hilda Hollis (2002), who underlined that ‘Marcet’s use of rhetoric is critical to appreciating the role her work played in the development of the self-understanding of the monied classes’.³⁸ Saba Bahar (2001) has depicted Marcet as a pioneer who moved the boundaries of public knowledge, pushing at the carefully constructed separation of professional and public science.³⁹

Most recently, Evelyn Forget (2016) has extended the narrative of education, popularisation, and dissemination by employing the term ‘knowledge broker’. Forget questions whether popularisation should be considered ‘a one-way transfer of information from the professional who discovered it to the amateur who needs merely to understand an issue in broad outline.’⁴⁰ A knowledge broker is instead someone who ‘helps to create the multimodal network of communications between and among professional scientists and the broader culture.’⁴¹ In other words, Forget places Marcet back into the scientific dialogue by considering how she connected and communicated between professional scholars in a vast intellectual web. Although Forget concedes that, in this way, Marcet helped define the field of economics, she concludes that it would be ‘an error to read Marcet looking for original insights or neglected intellectual contributions to the science of political economy.’⁴²

Jane Marcet and Harriet Martineau are, unsurprisingly, often written about together. As two women writing educational economic texts at the beginning of the nineteenth-century (one published in 1816, the other in 1832) they are ripe for comparison. The two women also came to know each other, despite being born more than three decades apart and to quite different families and backgrounds. Harriet Martineau included Marcet in her *Biographical Sketches*,

³⁸ Hilda Hollis, ‘The Rhetoric of Jane Marcet’s Popularizing Political Economy’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 24, 4 (2002), 379-396.

³⁹ Saba Bahar, ‘Jane Marcet and the Limits to Public Science’, *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 34, 1 (2001), 29-49.

⁴⁰ Evelyn L. Forget, ‘Jane Marcet as Knowledge Broker’, *History of Economics Review*, 65, 1 (2016) 15-26.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

describing her as follows: ‘she was always her own honest self, humble at heart and generous in spirit, even when appearing most conventional in her views, and prejudiced in her impressions.’⁴³ Martineau acknowledged Marcet as the direct inspiration for her own *Illustrations of Political Economy* and they were treated together even in their own time, with reviews of their works often approaching the ‘two women’ in the field.

Recent historiographical treatment of Martineau is therefore unsurprisingly guided by the treatment of Marcet. Martineau has shared in the transformation from parroting communicator to a more complex role. Yet the nature of her stories and the breadth of her writing (on topics far beyond political economy) has convinced historians that she was a more political figure than Marcet, not simply a populariser or ‘knowledge broker’ but a virulent advocate of *laissez-faire* economics and of the British empire.⁴⁴ Willie Henderson (1995) has pushed back against this assertion, claiming that ‘If Martineau’s longer-term impact was to fix notions of *laissez-faire*... then that responsibility is not hers alone but is shared with both the wider society and others in the field.’⁴⁵ Rescuing Martineau from the charge of being a vulgarising, dogmatic lobbyist for *laissez-faire* classical political economy has occasionally justified putting her back in the box of mere educator.

The nineteenth-century German economists used the form of the textbook and the handbook to anchor the science, to establish the agreed upon bounds of political economy at a given point in time. They were a record of the key points of agreement at that moment, although they also indicated the areas of disagreement. They not only performed this function for the public, but also for other economists. They established what was to be passed on to the next generation of economists and in doing so demonstrated some level of agreement over what should be included in an economist’s toolkit. These textbooks did not tend to be replaced very

⁴³ Harriet Martineau, *Biographical Sketches* (New York, 1869), pp. 74-75.

⁴⁴ See: Janet Seiz, ‘British women on the British Empire; in Kirsten Madden and Robert W. Dimand, *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women’s Economic Thought* (London, 2019), 53-72.

⁴⁵ Willie Henderson, *Economics as Literature* (London, 1995), p. 85.

often. Decades passed before the science had advanced enough to demand a new lead textbook. In the history of German economic thought, the authors of these textbooks did not need to be categorised as communicators or knowledge brokers because they were the key theoreticians themselves. The role they played in consolidating the science was fully internal to the act of pursuing the science. Historians of Marcet's and Martineau's work are still attempting to walk the line between affirming their contribution beyond 'mere' reiterative pedagogy, while not overstating the originality of their thought. Learning from the history of German economic thought helps to dissolve this boundary by accepting that 'scientific' economic thought is not synonymous with originality.

Marcet and Martineau were not writing for undergraduates and did not hold teaching positions in universities. But British economic thought was not yet a university discourse. At the time of Marcet and Martineau the primary antagonists in British economic debates were: David Ricardo, a retired financier and then Member of Parliament; James Mill, an ex-clergymen and London-based writer; and Thomas Malthus, who had been a fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge and then taught at the East India Company college in Hertfordshire. John Ramsay McCulloch had been appointed the first British professor of political economy, at University College London in 1828.

The first 'line in the sand' to guide economics education was, of course, Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Malthus's lectures for the East India Company were based on categories that can all be found in Smith's book.⁴⁶ In 1827, Malthus published *Definitions in Political Economy* in which he lamented that the terms, categories, and even methodology of political economy had yet to be agreed upon.⁴⁷ Although Malthus never used it for teaching, it was clearly born

⁴⁶ Keith Tribe, 'Economic manuals and textbooks in Great Britain and the British Empire 1797-1938' in Massimo M. Augello and Marco E. L. Guidi, *The Economic Reader: Textbooks, manuals and the dissemination of the economic sciences during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (New York, 2012), pp. 43-75, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Thomas Malthus, *Definitions in Political Economy* (London, 1827), p. 2.

out of the hours he had spent lecturing his students in preparation for them to enter the Indian Civil Service. It was a clear statement of frustration regarding the lack of agreement and consolidation in political economy and the obstacle this presented to the future of the science.

It began:

The differences of opinion among political economists have of late been a frequent subject of complaint; and it must be allowed, that one of the principle causes of them may be traced to the different meanings in which the same terms have been used by different writers.⁴⁸

Malthus therefore set out rules for bringing clarity to political economy. Any consolidated definitions should correspond to ordinary usage in daily occurrence and the usage of the great leaders in the science.⁴⁹ He acknowledged that change was, occasionally, necessary, but should only be taken where there were not great objections and greater utility would be the clear consequence.⁵⁰ Any new definitions had to be consistent with remaining older definitions.⁵¹ Where state administrators were required, political economy demanded ever-clearer guidelines for their instruction, just as in Germany. When the East India Company college closed in 1858 it marked the beginning of economic discourse moving into formal university departments. Britain simply did not have the educational infrastructure in political economy that Germany had in the early nineteenth century, further highlighted by the fact that students hoping to learn political economy in the nineteenth-century often travelled to Germany to do so.

As Malthus had noted with dismay, the terms of the science in Britain were not particularly clear. Economic pedagogy forces clarity. It forces theoreticians to consider what is vital for the economist's toolkit. Without this infrastructure, there was little clarity. Aside from *Wealth of Nations*, now heavily outdated, and Malthus's *Definitions*, there was Ricardo's

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. vii.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6.

Principles of Political Economy published in 1817, and Malthus's *Principles of Political Economy* published in 1820. John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* would not be published until 1848 and Henry Fawcett's attempt at a pedagogical instruction manual would follow in 1863. The remainder of British economic discourse was mostly to be found in pamphlets and journalistic articles in the *Edinburgh* or *Westminster Review*. So when Marcet entered the field in 1816, nothing programmatic was available beyond Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

The conversations Marcet constructed between Caroline and Mrs B provided the perfect medium for consolidation. Caroline was able to ask what political economy precisely was, Mrs B was able to answer. Consider this back-and-forth:

CAROLINE. I have been thinking a great deal of political economy since yesterday, my dear Mrs. B., but I fear not to much purpose: at least I am not farther than to the discovery of a great confusion of ideas which prevails in my mind on the subject. This science seems to comprehend everything, and yet I own, that I am still at a loss to understand what it is. Cannot you give me a short explanation of it, that I may have some clear ideas to begin with?

MRS. B. I once heard a lady ask a philosopher to tell her in a few words what is meant by political economy. Madam, replied he, you understand perfectly what is meant by household economy, you need only extend your idea of the economy of a family to that of a whole people—of a nation, and you will have some comprehension of the nature of political economy.⁵²

Political economy, she continued, was the science that considers the formation, the distribution, and the consumption of wealth, the causes of its increase, and its influence on the happiness of

⁵² Jane Marcet, *Conversations on Political Economy* (London, 1816), pp. 17-18.

peoples.⁵³ Her definition bears much similarity to Smith's description of his inquiry, although she was in a much better position than Smith to say what 'political economy' broadly understood might mean. And her definition is much firmer than Malthus's, who devoted an entire book to explaining the difficulty one has in choosing any one definition.

Marcet's list of 'conversations' was her list of topics on which political economy had a rightful claim to express knowledge at that moment in time. The table of contents again bore much similarity to *Wealth of Nations*, beginning with a discussion of the relationship between the cities and the countryside and continuing along the lines of the division of labour, capital, money, commerce, and foreign trade. She also incorporated new elements. Ricardo's theory that rent was a payment for the differential quality of agricultural land appeared in her *Conversations*, no doubt borrowed from discussions with Ricardo himself and Marcet's reading of his *Essay on the Influence of a Low Price of Corn on the Profits of Stock* in 1815. She also employed the temporarily popular idea of the 'wage fund', the idea that there was a certain amount of money available for workers and that wages could only increase with a rise in capital or a fall in the number of workers. She was certainly up to date with the literature of political economy in 1816.

By the time Martineau came to write *Illustrations* Ricardo and Malthus had published their great treatises. Along with Marcet's *Conversations*, there was a little more available on which to base an educational text. In the Preface to the first volume of her *Illustrations*, Martineau shared Marcet's desire to narrow upon a definition for political economy:

Can anything more nearly concern all the members of any society than the way in which the necessaries and comforts of life may be best procured and enjoyed by all? Is there anything in any other study that can be compared with it in interest and importance? And yet Political Economy has been less studied than

⁵³ Ibid., p. 18.

perhaps any other science whatever, and not all by those whom it most concerns—the mass of the people. This must be because its nature and its relation to other studies are not understood.⁵⁴

She then repeated Marcet's definition almost exactly, 'Political Economy treats of the Production, Distribution and Consumption of Wealth; by which term is meant whatever material objects contribute to the support and enjoyment of life. Domestic economy is an interesting subject to those who view it as a whole...'⁵⁵ Neither Ricardo nor Malthus in their treatises gave such a firm definition of political economy, concerned as they were with highlighting the disciplines great deficiencies. Malthus, in particular, underlined the many errors and disagreements that still characterised political economy, but was also firm in his conclusion that greater agreement was needed for the good of the science: 'in order to give them their proper weight and justify their being acted upon, it is extremely desirable, indeed almost necessary, that a considerable majority of those who, from their attention to the subject, are considered by the public as likely to be the most competent judges, should agree in the truth of them.'⁵⁶

The only other text to attempt to provide a systematic and static overview of the field was James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy*, published in 1821. In this text Mill, like Marcet and Martineau, seemed more concerned with consolidating the science than challenging it. He broke political economy down into four enquiries: the laws that regulate the production of commodities; the laws according to which commodities are distributed; the laws according to which commodities are exchanged; and the laws which regulate consumption.⁵⁷ Mill's text provided one of Martineau's major sources. She described her method for writing her tales in her *Autobiography*. She first surveyed the available economic literature, including Mill's

⁵⁴ Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (9 vols, London, 1834), *No. I. Life in the Wilds. A Tale*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ?.

⁵⁶ Thomas Malthus, *Principles of Political Economy* (London, 1820), p. 3.

⁵⁷ 1, *Elements of Political Economy* (London, 1821), p. 4.

Elements, to choose a theme for the tale and then wrote down a list of principles which the tale was to convey. For example, her first tale *Life in the Wilds* was to convey that ‘production being the great end in the employment of labour and capital, that application of both which secures the largest production is the best’; that ‘the increase of agricultural capital provides a fund for the employment of manufacturing and commercial, as well as agricultural, labour’; and that ‘the interference of the law is injurious’.⁵⁸ She then chose a setting for her story and developed a plot that might convey her chosen principles, and would research her setting and time period thoroughly. For *Life in the Wilds* she chose ‘a small British settlement in the north of the European territories of South Africa’. At the beginning of the tale the settlement is attacked by a fictional South African tribe and the village gather to replan their society, providing an opportunity for Martineau to spell out the most foundational principles of political economy such as the division of labour and modes of production. Other tales were written on the principles of: population, property, use value and exchange value, free trade, public expenditure, and taxation.

Marcet’s *Conversations* did not receive any reviews in the various literary magazines, but Martineau’s *Illustrations* was met with numerous celebratory reviews. Economic discourse was still decades away from moving firmly into the medium of the journal, but literary magazines such as the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Westminster Review*, and the *Quarterly Review* were important proving grounds for a new economic text. It is in these reviews that the narrative of these women as popularisers and educators first emerged, but also where we find evidence of their contribution to consolidating the discipline.

The review of Martineau’s *Illustrations* which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1833 depicted her tales as taking the mystical form of the fable and transforming it into a scientific tool that could produce general laws from the experiment that is human existence.

⁵⁸ Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (9 vols, London, 1834), No. I. *Life in the Wilds. A Tale*.

‘By the help of a well-contrived fiction,’ the reviewer, William Empson, claimed, ‘she puts society, as it were, into a sieve, and takes out of the commingled mass of human affairs, one by one, the particular amount and description of persons and circumstances which an actual experiment would require.’⁵⁹ Empson was adamant that despite relying on fictional tales, Martineau was pursuing the experimental scientific method that political economy demanded. He also insisted that Martineau’s tales left a deep impression as to the vital importance of economic truths. The lack of popularity of political economy thus far, Empson conclude, was due to ignorance of its aims and possibilities, an ignorance that was only worsened by methodological disagreements.⁶⁰ *Illustrations* stepped forth as the solution, a moment in which, ‘revealers of hidden mysteries meet with disciples who prove more successful missionaries than themselves.’⁶¹ Yet clearly Empson considered her far more than a missionary preaching a God-given gospel. He praised her for doing more to stimulate the minds of political economists than the economists could ever do for themselves, attributing the great increase in activity at the Political Economy Club to her initiative.⁶² His greatest fear for her was that, given her great influence in setting the economic discourse, her scrupulous care and fastidious research might wane with devastating consequences for the discipline. He concluded that: ‘Mrs Marcet has less of imagination and of poetry about her. But we feel, while with her, that we are in the hands of a more judicious reasoner, and a surer guide.’⁶³

The *Quarterly Review*, of different political leaning to both Martineau and the *Edinburgh Review*, took a far more critical stance. The reviewer briefly praised Martineau’s intentions, writing ability, and breadth of knowledge before concluding:

⁵⁹ William Empson, ‘Review: 1. *John Hopkins’s Notions of Political Economy*. By the Author of Conversations on Political Economy. 8vo. London : 1833. 2. *Illustrations of Political Economy*. By Harriet Martineau. (The first Thirteen Numbers.) 12mo. London : 1832.’, *The Edinburgh Review*, 57, 115 (Apr 1833), 3-39, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

But it is equally impossible not to laugh at the absurd trash which is seriously propounded by some of her characters... and what is worst of all, it is quite impossible not to be shocked, nay disgusted, with many of the unfeminine and mischievous doctrines on the principles of social welfare, of which these tales are made the vehicle.⁶⁴

The attack in the *Quarterly Review* was clearly political. It took issue primarily with her liberal political conclusions. Yet even this reviewer betrayed that he believed her tales to be a scientific act. While ridiculing her conclusions in a tale on the origin of rent, the reviewer proclaimed: ‘thus it is,—when the axioms and definitions of these political economists are tested by an application to facts, they are found not to fit above one in a hundred.’⁶⁵ The reviewer treated each tale as if it was an experiment in itself, rather than a fictional narrative designed to communicate a preselected principle. He disagreed that they proved the truth of political economy, instead seeing them as examples of the absurdity of modern economics when properly tested. At first glance, these reviews, both friendly and hostile, seem to construct the women as ‘popular priestesses’ proselytising a science communicated to them by male gods. Yet the anxiety in both these pieces arises from these women’s power in setting the boundaries and terms of the economic agenda in both the public and expert mind.

As Evelyn Forget has affirmed, Marcet and Martineau were not writing to transmit information in one direction from experts to the public. The experts themselves were reading these texts. Jean-Baptiste Say translated passages of Marcet’s *Conversations* for inclusion in his *Cours complet d’économie politique pratique* [Complete Course in Practical Political Economy] (1828), a text written for the education of the working poor in France. Say was far more interested in economic pedagogy than his British counterparts. He had already published

⁶⁴ ‘Review: *Illustrations of Political Economy*. Nos. 1-12. By Harriet Martineau. London. 1832-1833.’, *The Quarterly Review*, XLIX (April & July 1833), 136-151.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

his *Catéchisme d'économie politique* in 1815 as a student textbook. The less-pedagogically-inclined British economists were more patronising, although they celebrated the educational achievements of Marcet's book. Ricardo wrote to Malthus in 1817: 'If she begins to listen to our controversy, the printing of her book will be long delayed,—she had better avoid it and keep her course on neutral ground. I believe we should sadly puzzle Miss Caroline and I doubt whether Mrs. B. herself could clear up the difficulty.'⁶⁶ Martineau received similar criticism. John Stuart Mill wrote to Thomas Carlyle in 1833: 'Your criticism of Miss Martineau is, I think, just; she reduces the *laissez-faire* system to absurdity as far as the principle goes'.⁶⁷

Even if the British economists were unsure if Marcet and Martineau could keep up with the theoretical rigour of the subject, they still recognised them for their consolidating role, sometimes praising and sometimes condemning this function. On the publication of Martineau's final tale Mill wrote a review in *The Monthly Repository*.⁶⁸ He recognised her work as bearing 'some semblance of an elementary treatise' although bade the reader not to compare her work with the more elaborate treatises available.⁶⁹ He noted that any educational text can be criticised for attempting to 'construct a permanent fabric out of transitory materials'.⁷⁰ While he believed the conclusions of political economy must necessarily change between times and settings, he claimed that political economy's method of investigation had now been proved universally applicable. But despite this advance into universal truth, Mill issued a warning against being beguiled by the misleading permanency of a text such as Miss Martineau's. 'It is, when not duly guarded against, an almost irresistible tendency of the human mind to become the slave of its own hypotheses; and when it has once habituated itself to

⁶⁶ David Ricardo, Pierro Sraffa (ed.), *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo* (11 vols, Cambridge, 1951), vii, p. 140: 'David Ricardo to Thomas Malthus, 9 March 1817'.

⁶⁷ John Stuart Mill to Thomas Carlyle, 11-12 April 1833, in *Collected Works of J. S. Mill*, p. 152.

⁶⁸ John Stuart Mill, 'On Miss Martineau's Summary of Political Economy', *The Monthly Repository*, 8, 85 (1834), 318-22.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

reason, feel, and conceive, under certain arbitrary conditions, at length to mistake these conditions for laws of nature,' he warned.⁷¹ He then told a cautionary tale of the lawyer who, in the habit of asking himself how a certain case corresponds with the law, soon becomes the enemy of reform, concluding: 'we think there is some danger of a similar result in the case of the English political economist.'⁷² He acknowledged that Martineau's work was not the only culprit, although he considered it 'as an exposition of the leading principles of what now constitutes the science' just as guilty as the work of the great economists in 'fixing bounds' and 'setting limits' to what might be known and achieved.⁷³

The 'fixing' tendency of Marcet's and Martineau's contributions can also be uncovered in the thoughts of the younger generation of economists, those on which they had a more formative impact. Michael Faraday claimed that Marcet's *Conversations on Chemistry* had ignited his passion for the subject as a young boy. There is no evidence of quite such an important figure finding their young passion ignited by her *Conversations on Political Economy*, except for, of course, Harriet Martineau. But there is evidence for such a figure finding inspiration in Martineau's *Illustrations*. Austin Robinson declared that Harriet Martineau was 'the first political economist whom I ever read'.⁷⁴ On rereading *Illustrations* later in life, he concluded: 'We who suffer from a surfeit of simplified economics, may perhaps under-rate the demand of an age that lacked a host of popularisers, and believed more faithfully that the ultimate truths were to be found in the principles discovered by Mr. Ricardo.'⁷⁵

At an address to the first meeting of the Cambridge Economic Club in 1896, Alfred Marshall had declared: 'Economic science as I first knew it, just thirty years ago, was more

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 319-320.

⁷² Ibid., p. 320.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 321.

⁷⁴ Austin Robinson, 'Review: *Harriet Martineau*. By John Cranstoun Nevill. (London, 1943), 116-120, p. 116.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

confident than now.’⁷⁶ He attributed this to a great enthusiasm for general principles that was now being recognised as naïve and unscientific. The ‘growing perfection of scientific machinery in economics’ demanded not more certainty, but greater acknowledgement of uncertainty.⁷⁷ When he then proclaimed that ‘Never again will a Mrs. Trimmer, a Mrs. Marcet, or a Miss Martineau earn a goodly reputation by throwing them into the form of a catechism or of simple tales’ he was not only condemning popularisation and simplification, but the whole act of scientific consolidation.⁷⁸ Schumpeter, in his *History of Economic Analysis*, concluded that a great deal of the ‘sneering’ Marcet’s work had achieved was because it was so sure of the conclusions of political economy, something quite out of step with twentieth-century economic thought but quite in step with the confidence of the nineteenth-century economists. ‘Not for a moment,’ he wrote, ‘did Mrs. Marcet doubt not only that the definitive truth about economics and economic policy had been discovered at last but also that this truth was so delightfully simple as to be capable of being taught to every school girl.’⁷⁹

The narrative we inherit from generations of economists about these women is multifaceted. They were fixers and consolidators of their science, yet this was both praised as a necessary step in the creation of a discipline and later condemned as an ossifying tendency that needed to be purged from the science. Malthus, in *Definitions in Political Economy* (1827), had suggested that economics needed to go through such a process to win the trust of the public and the politicians. Seventy years later, Marshall condemned this practice as having put the development of political economy in grave danger. Marcet and Martineau, as key contributors to this process, stood to be blamed. The remainder of the article examines the pedagogical contributions of Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Mary Paley Marshall, writing towards the end

⁷⁶ Alfred Marshall, ‘The Old Generation of Economics and the New’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 11, 2 (1897), 115-135, p. 116.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁷⁹ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (London, 1981), p. 452.

of the nineteenth century. The reception their work received completes the story. The pedagogical process contributed to by Marcet and Martineau helped to form an economic science which then turned its back on such acts of consolidation and condemned Marcet and Martineau, and Fawcett and Marshall, as simplifying popularisers.

IV. MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT AND MARY PALEY MARSHALL

Millicent Garrett Fawcett's contributions as an economic thinker are usually overshadowed by her position as the leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. In 2018 she became the first woman to be honoured by a statue in Parliament Square in London as a celebration of her efforts campaigning on behalf of women. She was born in 1847 to a liberal household and early in life made the acquaintance of some of the country's finest thinkers. She met her future husband, Henry Fawcett, in 1865 through John Stuart Mill and was only nineteen when she married him in April 1867. Henry was thirty-three at the time of their marriage, already held the chair in political economy at the University of Cambridge, and had already published his *Manual of Political Economy* (1863). The text served as a pedagogical abridgement of Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) which was felt to be too lengthy and dense for undergraduates. In the preface, Henry commented on the great certainty Mill had brought to the science: 'Mr. Mill's treatise is so complete and so exhaustive, that many are afraid to encounter the labour and thought which are requisite to master it'.⁸⁰ His book was intended to be a more palatable iteration.

Given Mill's warnings in his review of Martineau's *Illustrations* of the dangers of fixing the boundaries of political economy, he was careful in the preface of his *Principles* to be clear that he was not limiting the future of the science, but was simply recording the latest improvements. Mill was insistent that, 'It is no part of the design of this treatise to aim at the

⁸⁰ Henry Fawcett, *Manual of Political Economy* (Cambridge, 1863), p. vii.

metaphysical nicety of definition'.⁸¹ He limited himself to defining his subject as, 'the set of doctrines designated, since the time of Adam Smith, by the appellation of the Mercantile System.'⁸² Readers of Mill's *Principles*, including Henry Fawcett, had no such qualms with declaring the science complete and to be found exhaustively in its pages. Phyllis Deane described Henry's book as: 'Mill's *Principles* summarised in deliberately unambiguous terms, with most of the subtle qualifications and elaborations of the argument left out'.⁸³

After their marriage, Millicent Garrett Fawcett quickly became Henry's helper in his work. Henry had been blinded in a shooting accident a decade earlier and was grateful for his wife's help in drafting as well as discussing new ideas. In this way, Fawcett quickly learned the core principles of political economy. While helping Henry draft a third edition of his *Manual*, Fawcett seized upon the idea of writing an educational text of her own. In fact, she wrote two. In 1870 she published *Political Economy for Beginners*, with the aim of helping 'to make Political Economy a more popular study in boys' and girls' schools'.⁸⁴ Then in 1874 she published *Tales in Political Economy*, which she acknowledged as directly inspired by Martineau's *Illustrations*.⁸⁵

Fawcett's pedagogical efforts have been little discussed in modern historical literature. Her writings on women have received far more attention. Admittedly, her thoughts on women often intersected with her thoughts on political economy. The *Routledge Handbook of the History of Women's Economic Thought* (2019) discusses Fawcett in an article on debates over equal pay. On her pedagogical contributions the article states that: 'Fawcett was a public figure who fits in the tradition of female knowledge brokers in economic thought', indicating Evelyn

⁸¹ John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (London, 1848), p. ?.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. ?.

⁸³ Phyllis Deane, 'Henry Fawcett: the plain man's political economist', in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), *The Blind Victorian: Henry Fawcett and British Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 93-110, p. 96.

⁸⁴ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Political Economy for Beginners* (London, 1870), p. i.

⁸⁵ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Tales in Political Economy* (London, 1874).

Forget's categorisation of Jane Marcet as 'knowledge broker'.⁸⁶ The *Biographical Dictionary of Women Economists* (2004) indicates that her writings on women were the more interesting of her oeuvre, dismissing the pedagogical texts as 'solely aimed at 'popularizing' political economy'.⁸⁷ An early treatment of her *Tales in Political Economy* can be found in a 1982 article by Bette Polkinghorn that compared Marcet's and Fawcett's 'fanciful fables'.⁸⁸ Polkinghorn treated Fawcett, along with Marcet, as an important and sophisticated 'populariser'. She noted that Fawcett's tales carried an air of optimism that was absent from Marcet's and Martineau's tales, concluding that Fawcett's tales were a celebration of the triumph of political economy over pauperism.⁸⁹ Polkinghorn also commented that, by the time of Fawcett, the market for pedagogical economic texts was more crowded as the infrastructure of economics education expanded. The spaces for women's contributions was narrowing, indicated in Fawcett's choice to write more overtly for children.

More recently, Willie Henderson wrote the first historical assessment of Fawcett's *Political Economy for Beginners*, noting the only systematic evaluation of the text he could find was in the *New Palgrave* which judged the work to be 'unremarkable'.⁹⁰ Henderson's treatment pushed the boundaries of the 'populariser' category. 'There has been a tendency,' he explained, 'to label these works "popularisations" but this underestimates, for the most part, the educational ideas that guided the production of the works, and even the economic thinking that the women writers became involved in.'⁹¹ He concluded that any educational text is

⁸⁶ Cléo Chassonnery-Zaïgouche, 'Is Equal Pay Worth It? Beatrice Potter Webb's, Millicent Garrett Fawcett's and Eleanor Rathbone's changing arguments' in Kirsten Madden and Robert W. Dimand, *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women's Economic Thought* (London and New York, 2019), 129-149, p. 131.

⁸⁷ Michèle A. Pujol and Janet A. Seiz, 'Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847-1929)', in Robert W. Dimand, Mary Ann Dimand, and Evelyn L. Forget, *A Biographical Dictionary of Women Economists* (Cheltenham, 2004), 156-161, p. 157.

⁸⁸ Bette Polkinghorn, 'Political Economy Disguised as Fanciful Fables', *Eastern Economic Journal*, 8, 2 (1982), 145-156.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹⁰ Willie Henderson, 'Millicent Garrett Fawcett's *Political Economy for Beginners*: An evaluation', *Pedagogica Historica*, 40, 4 (2004), 435-453, p. 435.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

necessarily derivative, and that Fawcett's text took its place in a now established tradition of 'codifying' textbooks. A brief discussion of *Political Economy for Beginners* by Keith Tribe concluded that:

Despite the evident popularity of the work, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Alfred Marshall, lecturing to women students studying for the Cambridge Higher Local examinations in the same year as its first publication, would not have viewed it as an introduction to political economy suited to his women students, and that at least part of the motivation for writing what became *Economics of Industry* lay in a desire to displace the confusions brought about by Mill's *Principles* condensed into dogmatic truth at two removes, via Henry Fawcett's own reduction and Millicent's synopsis of that condensation.⁹²

The process of consolidation that had been encouraged by Malthus, assisted by Marcet and Martineau, and feared by Mill, had now reached an advanced stage in the transformation of Mill's *Principles* into the textbooks of Henry and Millicent Garrett Fawcett. This codification, although central to the formation of economics as a distinct academic discourse, faced a significant backlash now it had advanced. A similar occurrence can be found in the history of German economic thought. At the introduction of the first dedicated degree in economic science, the *Diplom-Volkswirt*, accompanied by the creation of economics departments, syllabuses, examination topics, and lecture series, a debate raged over the appropriate boundaries within which to teach economic science. Max Weber's attempt at publishing his own handbook was a response to his concern over the codification of the boundaries of economic knowledge in the wrong direction. As the establishment of dedicated economics

⁹² Keith Tribe, 'Economic manuals and textbooks in Great Britain and the British Empire 1797-1938' in Massimo M. Augello and Marco E. L. Guidi, *The Economic Reader: Textbooks, manuals and the dissemination of the economic sciences during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* (London and New York, 2012), 43-75, p. 52.

degrees in Britain loomed, a similar anxiety developed, particularly in the mind of Alfred Marshall.

Alfred Marshall's anxiety on this issue took some time to develop. Early in his marriage he was supportive of his wife, Mary Paley Marshall's, educational achievements and encouraged the education of women in Cambridge. In fact, his part in the women's education movement was how they met. Mary Paley's father had allowed her to study for the Cambridge Higher Local Examinations for Women over Eighteen, an outreach examination set up in 1864 to test standards for women entering the teaching profession.⁹³ The petition to open the examinations to girls had been signed by Professor Henry Fawcett. As a result of her excellent performance in the exam she was awarded a scholarship and asked to come to Cambridge to take part in the 'Lectures for Women' scheme which had begun in 1870. In 1874 two of these pioneering women, Mary Paley and her friend Mary Kennedy, were the first to sit the Moral Sciences Tripos, of which political economy formed a part. Alfred Marshall stood on the committee of the Lectures for Women scheme and acted as their lecturer on political economy, and it was Alfred who persuaded the two Mary's to sit the Tripos exam. Mary Paley passed with a First Class and a distinction in Logic and Political Economy.

She was invited to return to Newnham in October 1875 as a resident lecturer to take over Alfred's teaching for the Association for Promoting the Higher Education of Women in Cambridge. Mary became engaged to her former lecturer in 1876 and married him in August 1877. It seems they began work on *The Economics of Industry* together immediately upon their engagement. Keynes recounted the circumstances under which she embarked on the text.⁹⁴ She had promised Professor Stuart that she would write a textbook for the extension lectures and asked Alfred for his help. She later commented that although the book was published in her

⁹³ For an excellent history of women's education at Cambridge see: Rita McWilliams Tullberg, *Women at Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

name, it should really be ‘his book’ as the second half was almost entirely his thought and predicted elements of his later *Principles of Economics*. However, Marshall soon turned against the elementary book, stating that ‘every dogma that is short and simple is false’.⁹⁵ Keynes had quite a different conclusion:

It was, in fact, an extremely good book; nothing more serviceable for its purpose was produced for many years, if ever. I know that my father always felt that there was something ungenerous in Marshall’s distaste for this book, which was originally hers, but was allowed to go out of print without a murmur of complaint from her when there was still a strong demand for it.⁹⁶

The dominant presence of Alfred clouds the historical literature on Mary Paley Marshall. Her own autobiography devotes much discussion to her husband and she had a tendency to diminish her own achievements.⁹⁷ Keynes, however, noted that ‘Mary Marshall deserves a record of piety and remembrance, not only as the wife of Alfred Marshall, without whose understanding and devotion his work would not have fulfilled its fruitfulness, but for her place in the history of Newnham... as the first women lecturer on Economics in Cambridge’.⁹⁸ She is discussed in the *Routledge Handbook of the History of Women’s Economic Thought* in an article on ‘women economists and economists’ wives’ alongside Harriet Taylor Mill and Beatrice Potter Webb.⁹⁹ Yet as Keynes was sure to state, ‘This was not a partnership of the Webb kind, as it might have become if the temperaments on both sides had been entirely different... Marshall came increasingly to the conclusion that there was nothing useful to be made of women’s intellects.’¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 333.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 333.

⁹⁷ Mary Paley Marshall, G. M. Trevelyan (ed.), *What I Remember* (Cambridge, 1947).

⁹⁸ John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Biography* (New York, 1951), p. 324.

⁹⁹ Virginie Gouverneur, ‘Harriet Taylor Mill, Mary Paley Marshall and Beatrice Potter Webb: women economists and economists’ wives’ in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women’s Economic Thought* (London and New York, 2019), 73-89.

¹⁰⁰ John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Biography* (New York, 1951), p. 335.

The shadow of Alfred has prevented Mary being pulled entirely into the ‘popularising’ rhetoric. This can be somewhat attributed to the fact that ‘her personal contribution is nevertheless difficult to delimit’, not helped by her own insistent modesty.¹⁰¹ Not only is it hard to tell who wrote which sections of *The Economics of Industry*, but Alfred’s dislike of the book has dominated discussion. Keynes attributed this dislike to the book’s cursory treatment of the theory of value which was picked up by a number of negative reviews in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* in 1887 and 1888.¹⁰² Austin Robinson concluded of the little book that Alfred ‘very wrongly, felt little but shame’.¹⁰³ Rita McWilliams Tullberg reignited discussions of the book in 1972 when she found a letter Alfred had written to an unnamed Japanese student who had clearly professed interest in translating *The Economic of Industry*.¹⁰⁴ Alfred insisted that the student would not have thought to translate the book, which he admitted to having suppressed, if he understood the circumstances surrounding its suppression.¹⁰⁵ Alfred explained:

Those who suggested that an education work on economics should be written by a young student (who had obtained only a very elementary knowledge of it and did) [heavily crossed through] were not economists and did not know that the task of combining simplicity with thoroughness is more difficult in this than in almost any other subject. Several scores of books have been written in the hope of doing this; but they have perished quickly.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Virginie Gouverneur, ‘Harriet Taylor Mill, Mary Paley Marshall and Beatrice Potter Webb: women economists and economists’ wives’ in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women’s Economic Thought* (London and New York, 2019), 73-89, p. 78.

¹⁰² John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Biography* (New York, 1951), p. 177.

¹⁰³ Austin Robinson, ‘Review: What I Remember, by Mary Paley Marshall’, *The Economic Journal*, 58, 229 (1948), 122-124, p. 123.

¹⁰⁴ Rita McWilliams Tullberg, ‘Economics of Industry’, *History of Economic Thought Newsletter*, 9, Autumn 1972, 14-17.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

We can make a good guess as to who this ‘young student’ with only elementary knowledge might be. McWilliams Tullberg also shed light on the heavy-handed ways in which the book was suppressed. She noted that, at the time of writing in 1972, it was not available in the University Library or the Marshall Library in Cambridge. The only remaining editions in Cambridge existed in the Newnham and Girton college libraries (two of the women-only colleges).¹⁰⁷ A reprinting of *The Economics of Industry* in the 1990s prompted further discussion, which continued to be led by dutiful scholarship from McWilliams Tullberg.¹⁰⁸ Her 1992 article ‘Alfred Marshall and the Male Priesthood of Economics’ explained that although Alfred’s thoughts on women’s education stemmed from reasons quite outside economics, his understanding of the aim of economics as ‘the scientific gathering and understanding of facts, and second, the creation of a strong body of theory’ swayed him against simplifying pedagogy which in turn fed into his growing criticism of the women’s education movement.

In an 1897 statement about a moment of transformation in political economy, titled ‘The Old Generation of Economists and the New’, Alfred devoted considerable space to denigrating women’s efforts in economics education. He proclaimed that, ‘Never again will... a Mrs. Marcet or a Miss Martineau earn a goodly reputation by throwing [economic principles] into the form of a catechism or of simple tales, by aid of which any intelligent governess might make clear to the children nestling around her where lies economic truth’.¹⁰⁹ Such tales, Alfred believed, would be churned up and cast aside by the ‘growing perfection of scientific machinery in economics’.¹¹⁰ His own wife, and the textbook he had penned with her, could not escape his turn against simplified, educational ‘dogma’. Mary herself remembered that, ‘He

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Alfred Marshall, Mary Paley Marshall, Denis O’Brien, *The Economics of Industry* (Bristol, 1994).

¹⁰⁹ Alfred Marshall, ‘The Old Generation of Economists and the New’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (1897), 11, 2, 115-135, p. 117.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

never liked the little book for it offended against his belief that ‘every dogma that is short and simple is false’.¹¹¹

Alfred’s change of heart regarding the textbook, and his transformed attitude to women’s education, occurred simultaneously with a transformation in how he saw political economy. As the science renewed itself at the end of the nineteenth century—establishing devoted economic journals, university departments and undergraduate courses, and new scientific methods—the educational efforts of women economists were denigrated as dangerous simplifications. As economic discourse relocated to the university and the educational infrastructure grew women were pushed out of this pedagogical space and the narrative of these women as dismissible popularisers grew in intensity, a narrative that clings to this day.

Both Fawcett’s and Marshall’s pedagogical texts did, in fact, reflect the increasing uncertainty and complexity of the science they were attempting to explain. By 1911, Fawcett’s *Political Economy for Beginners* was in its tenth edition, each one changing to reflect the rapidly developing body of economic knowledge.¹¹² Yet Fawcett, with characteristic confidence in Millian orthodoxy, opened her introduction: ‘Political Economy is the science which investigates the nature of wealth, and the laws which govern its Production, Exchange and Distribution.’¹¹³ *The Economics of Industry* was not so sure of its own foundations. The introduction demonstrated that the Marshalls were already reflecting on the transitional moment that faced their science, imploring the reader to drop the term ‘Political Economy’ and ‘to speak simply of Economic Science, or more shortly, Economics.’¹¹⁴ The introduction then tussled its way around the notion of economics as a ‘science’. Economics is a science, it concluded, and science can find uniformity in nature and define this as a law, eventually

¹¹¹ Mary Paley Marshall, *What I Remember* (Cambridge, 1947).

¹¹² Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Political Economy for Beginners* (10th ed., London, 1911).

¹¹³ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Political Economy for Beginners* (London, 1870), p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Alfred Marshall and Mary Paley Marshall, *The Economics of Industry* (London, 1879), p. 2.

progressing to a place where it can ‘predict future events with increasing confidence and accuracy.’¹¹⁵ But, the Marshalls were sure to insist, ‘this is all that a science can do; it cannot claim to be a guide in life, or to lay down rules for the practical conduct of affairs. That is the task of what in old times used to be called an Art.’¹¹⁶ Economics, they concluded, ‘investigates the causes which determine the work of a man’s daily life, the manner in which he spends his income, and the influence which his work exerts on his character.’¹¹⁷ This definition, derived from the more individualistic, subjective treatment of value and utility proposed by William Stanley Jevons, was quite different from the one used by Fawcett that had prevailed for over a century.

The Economics of Industry (1879) was published fifty-two years after Malthus’s *Definitions in Political Economy* (1827). Both reveal an economic discourse in transition, grappling with various possible definitions of their aims and agreed methods. And both betray an anxiety over the impact of definitional confusion on the future of the science. Malthus referred to such definitional disagreement as an ‘obstacle’ to political economy, while the Marshalls spoke of ‘slower progress’ due to the slow adoption of ‘methods of classification’ and ‘systematic study’.¹¹⁸ The major source of this disagreement in each is also comparable, half a century apart. Malthus picked apart several areas of considerable contention, including the looseness with which he felt French economists applied the term ‘wealth’ and the inconsistency with which Adam Smith used the word ‘real’. Yet his most animated discussion concerned the use of the word ‘value’. Malthus claimed that there was no sufficient agreement over what constituted the value of a commodity and that when it was used in distinction from nominal price it could mean any number of things, including purchasing power, an expression of something inherent within the product, or something relating to its production. He concluded

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

that, ‘Every person who has either written or talked on the subject of political economy, has been constantly in the habit of using the term without specifically expressing the object of comparison intended’ and most discussions using the term ‘value’ talked ‘the greatest nonsense’.¹¹⁹ *The Economics of Industry* was also eager to cut through the noise surrounding the term ‘value’, and devoted books two and three to determining the components of ‘normal value’ and ‘market value’.

What differed between Malthus’s text and the Marshalls’ textbook was the solutions they offered to these definitional problems. For Malthus, the remedy was clear: the old nomenclature must be preserved but its borders must be defined and solidified. The Marshalls, by contrast, warned against simplifications, generalisations, and ‘narrowness’ in all its forms. Progression as a science rested upon careful disaggregation of economic facts, constant awareness of the linkages between types of knowledge, and an appreciation of complexity so that general laws, useful as they were, could be slowly approached. *The Economics of Industry* was therefore a book with a deep contradiction at its heart. It followed in the pedagogical tradition of Marcet, Martineau, and Fawcett, proclaimed that its main outlines ‘have been tested during many years in lectures at Cambridge’ and that its aim was to guide students of the Cambridge University Extension lectures.¹²⁰ It therefore, by design, aimed to consolidate the body of economic knowledge for educational consumption. Yet, from its introduction, this was very much against the outlook of the authors. Fawcett’s text bore no such contradiction and remedied the rapidly changing nature of economic science in the way that textbooks traditionally have, by publishing frequently revised editions.

The Economics of Industry was reprinted as a revised edition in 1881 and a third edition was apparently in the works around 1885 but was never published.¹²¹ The preface to the second

¹¹⁹ Thomas Malthus, *Definitions in Political Economy* (London, 1827), p. ?.

¹²⁰ Alfred Marshall and Mary Paley Marshall, *The Economics of Industry* (London, 1879), Preface.

¹²¹ Rita McWilliams Tullberg, ‘Alfred Marshall’s Attitude Toward the *Economics of Industry*’, *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 14, 2 (1992), 257-270.

edition further clarifies the authors' rejections of consolidation, stating that political economy 'as it was left by English Economists of the last generation made too great pretensions to finality'.¹²² The Marshalls further attempted to dismiss elements of the earlier edition, stating that, 'it was proposed to give the volume a more elementary character than was ultimately found advisable'.¹²³ They admitted that the earlier edition had shied away from complex definitional discussion and although they tried to remedy this slightly in the second edition, concluded that 'no really satisfactory meaning can be given to these terms'.¹²⁴

Anxiety over the consolidation of the boundaries of economic science was not just a personal quirk of Alfred Marshall's. We have already discussed John Stuart Mill's concerns in the 1850s. Mill's own recantation of certain Ricardian laws left English political economy in the 1870s in an identity crisis, undecided whether its greatest threat was disagreement or ossification.¹²⁵ The reception of both Fawcett's and the Marshalls' pedagogical texts demonstrated this contradiction, the turn against knowledge codification alongside a gratitude for further solidification of the science. Fawcett's *Political Economy for Beginners*, like Marcet's and Martineau's texts, was clearly read and respected by audiences far beyond the schoolchildren she proclaimed to write for. This is evidenced by a discussion held at the Political Economy Club on January 16th 1871 when Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke proposed that Mrs Fawcett be elected to join the club, stating that her 'little book' gave her 'a far better claim to membership of the Club than is possessed by many of its present members.'¹²⁶ She never was elected, although John Stuart Mill signalled his approval and the potential approval of other members. Yet it also received heavy criticism, including a review in the *Economic*

¹²² Alfred Marshall and Mary Paley Marshall, *The Economics of Industry* (London, 1881), p. v.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

¹²⁵ For a discussion of this seemingly paradoxical problem see: A. W. Coats, 'The Historist Reaction in English Political Economy 1870-90', *Economica*, 21, 82 (1954), 143-153.

¹²⁶ For a discussion of this event see: James P. Henderson, 'Mill's Missed Opportunity: Women and Women's Issues in the Political Economy Club of London', *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 6, 1 (1984), 40-45.

Review, which had been established in 1891 to deal with the ‘moral and social bearings of economic problems’.¹²⁷ The review, written by Sidney Ball in 1905, of the ninth edition of *Political Economy for Beginners*, lamented that ‘something more than new illustrations would be required to bring its theories or its “facts” really “up-to-date.”’¹²⁸

The Economics of Industry, bolstered by Alfred Marshall’s name on the cover, was discussed in several articles in the first two volumes of the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, the very first English-language journal of economics. James Laurence Laughlin, head of political economy at the University of Chicago, initiated the back and forth with a review of the treatment of value in *Economics of Industry*.¹²⁹ He noted that the Marshalls used a new phrase, ‘expenses of production’, rather than the usual ‘costs of production’, to regulate the value of a commodity. The ‘normal value’ of a product was then equal to these expenses of production if there was no external force distorting the market, expenses of production being what price the raw materials, labour, and sacrificed interest on capital that could instead have been made in the open market. Laughlin determined that ‘to define value in terms of value’ was a great error.¹³⁰ Value, which is expressed through prices, was seemingly dependent on prices. What, Laughlin enquired, sets the initial prices? Laughlin wrote about these as deficiencies of Alfred Marshall alone and made no mention of Mary. In the same volume, Francis Walker issued a further critique of Marshall’s position on the earnings of management.¹³¹

¹²⁷ ‘Economic Review’, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 5, 2 (1891), 239.

¹²⁸ Sidney Ball, ‘Political Economy for Beginners’, *Economic Review*, 15, 2 (1905), 242.

¹²⁹ J. Laurence Laughlin, ‘Marshall’s Theory of Value and Distribution’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1, 2 (1887), 227-232.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹³¹ Francis A. Walker, ‘The Source of Business Profits’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1, 3 (1887), 265-288, p. 275.

Marshall took it upon himself to reply to both in the same volume, despite his claim that he had a rule ‘not to engage in controversy’.¹³² Laughlin’s issue with his ‘expenses of production’ he dismissed as a misunderstanding, and he clarified his position on Walker’s complaint about his treatment of the earnings of management. In both rebuttals, he lamented that ‘the *Economics of Industry* suffered from not having space to treat properly some of the difficult problems which were raised in it.’¹³³ The *Quarterly* controversy seemed to accelerate Alfred’s view that simplicity and pedagogy were impossible and dangerous aims in economic science.

Reviews of *Economics of Industry* played out in the very earliest pages of dedicated English-language economics journals. The journal was soon to largely replace the treatise as the agreed medium for professional, scientific economic thought. It was a form that encouraged the division of scientific labour and a focus on detailed treatment of individual principles for an academic audience, not the transformation of economic truths into digestible doctrines. In 1903 Alfred established the Economics Tripos in Cambridge and based the syllabus almost entirely on his *Principles of Economics* (1890). He attempted to abridge *Principles* for educational consumption in a new volume, *Elements of Economics of Industry* (1892) which shared the name of the earlier educational text but bore the content of *Principles*. A review of the new educational text in *The Economic Journal* lamented the loss of the old *Economics of Industry* writing:

It is also unable to treat with such fulness some of the topics, such as co-operation and trade unions, which were handled in the old *Economics of Industry* and it is perhaps the case that, in general arrangement, that book, while

¹³² Alfred Marshall, J. Laurence Laughlin, ‘Note by Professor Marshall and Reply by Laughlin’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1, 3 (1887), 359-362, p. 359; Alfred Marshall, ‘The Theory of Business Profits’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1, 4 (1887), 477-481.

¹³³ Alfred Marshall, ‘The Theory of Business Profits’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1, 4 (1887), 477-481, p. 477.

it did not bring into so great prominence the originality of Professor Marshall's treatment of economics, followed more closely the traditional lines of former manuals, and therefore presented itself in a more familiar guise to the student who had already gained some acquaintance with economic literature.¹³⁴

The transformation of economics education into a university practice and a professional academic discourse, changed the framework through which simplifying, confident economic textbooks could be viewed. Textbooks were still required, in fact with the expansion of university education they were in more demand than ever before. But the situation had evolved to resemble more nearly the situation in Germany in the eighteenth century, as it became professionally acceptable for the theoreticians themselves to produce the necessary educational material. The space for women narrowed. This also involved a reframing of the educational texts of the past. Alfred Marshall's accusations, that Marcet and Martineau threw economic truths 'into the form of a catechism or of simple tales', was part of this rewriting. As the whole concept, once very popular, that economics could be agreed upon as a firm set of doctrines that could be communicated to the public was turned upon in aid of developing the science, educational economic texts, many of them penned by women, were rejected. The works of Marcet, Martineau, Fawcett, and Marshall, among others, suffered from both simple prejudice against women and a more complex animosity that tied them to a supposed sickness within economics that needed to be purged.

The recent historiography of these women has had great success in defending the importance of pedagogy and popularisation in the history of economic thought. Yet we must not forget that these women were praised and encouraged to fill a void by a discipline that at times yearned for disciplinary agreement and consolidation. Their condemnation as dogmatic

¹³⁴ L. L. Price, 'Review: *Elements of Economics of Industry* by Alfred Marshall', *The Economic Journal*, 2, 6 (1982), 316-320, p. 318.

popularisers was constructed as this consolidation progressed to the point at which it became undesirable.

V. CONCLUSION

Jane Marcet and Harriet Martineau have often been written about together. Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Mary Paley Marshall also frequently feature together in the history of economic thought as ‘economist’s wives’. Writing about all four women prevents the possibility of writing about each with the fine detail they deserve, and it also omits a great many other women who could be included. It does, however, offer us a broader nineteenth-century perspective, to search for the lengthier transformations in the history of economic thought in which the reception of their work was embedded.

This paper argued that a glance at the history of German economic thought compels us not to abandon the idea of these women as popularisers or knowledge brokers, but to acknowledge that educational texts played a key role in consolidating the boundaries of economic science in the nineteenth century. These women and their work were at the heart of fundamental changes in British political economy. A study of the reception of their work helps us to understand those changes. They cannot be siphoned off into extra-discursive categories, separate from the discipline at large. They were first encouraged in their role of fixing the form and boundaries of the discourse, but consolidation was always accompanied by anxieties over inflexibility and the stunting of future growth. Economic pedagogy and women’s economic writing were thus jointly condemned as British economics developed. Both the ability for women to successfully write popular economics texts, and the form of condemnation they received, were a feature of British political economy’s specific path to professionalisation and institutionalisation.

Despite the German tendency to publish exhaustive, reiterative economic textbooks, Rau still felt that these women ‘did not research but tried to dress the research of others in graceful garb’. Greater reverence for the role of economic pedagogy is clearly not enough to stifle misogyny in the history of economic thought, but it may be a useful starting point. We can acknowledge the constitutive role these women played while remaining realistic about the limitations they faced from achieving full participation in economic discourse.