stances, but 'agreeing' with them is rather missing the point.

Ironically the moral absolutism of these women, which led them to abandon feminism and espouse radical and direct political action, was fuelled by their response to the constraints and constrictions of the family. In their view the only course open to the committed radical was a renunciation of all the benefits of privileged social status and all search for personal gain. Thus it was precisely because the Russian radical women had experienced subordination in the family that they were unwilling to fight for female emancipation. Since they would benefit from this struggle, it became an indulgence.

A price was paid for this emphasis on self-sacrifice, the price of constant undervaluation of individual rights. The antithesis between the individual and the collective became a firm tenet of Russian radical thought, influencing not only the political actions of populists and terrorists but also the social democrats later in the century. The Bolsheviks made the same distinction between the public and the private and gave the same priority to the public sphere. In the post-revolutionary period the factory was seen as the source of proletarian consciousness, and of the new socialist relations, economic, social and political. Women were exhorted to come out of their families, to leave their pots and pans behind and take their place in the collective. Public commitment was seen in the same all-embracing terms. On the one hand the 'masses' on the other the 'best people', the communist party members who would guide society to a socialist paradise.

Mothers and Daughters leaves important questions unanswered, but it is a splendid beginning. The research that has gone into the making of this book shows an awe-inspiring dedication of its own. The scolarship though does not weigh heavy on the text. The book is written in a delightfully easy style. Barbara Engel set out to tell the story of the women of the Russian intelligentsia and she has told it very well. The portraits of the Russian women are marvellously drawn, especially those of the radicals of the 1870s who have her strongest sympathy. But she writes of the earlier generation also with skill and affection. I shall always remember Natalie Herzen, a woman of the 1840s, less politically earnest and committed than those who came later, who wrote, after witnessing the revolutionary events of 1848 in Europe, 'All Republics, revolutions and everything of that sort seem to me in the final analysis to be like knitting stockings, and they make the same impression on me.'

Elizabeth Waters

Give us Bread but Give us Roses Sarah Eisenstein
Routledge and Kegan Paul 1983
207pp £5.95 ISBN 0-7100-9479-5

By now it is a feminist truism that, for women, waged work and family life are interdependent, but the precise connections between 'public' and 'private' spheres, and the ways in which women of different social classes and in different historical periods experience paid work and family life are still far from clear. In *Give us Bread but Give us Roses* Sarah Eisenstein analyses the formation of consciousness among wage-earning women in the United States between 1890 and the First World War. This is an ambitious project which sadly Sarah was unable to complete because she died in 1978. *Give us Bread but Give us Roses* is thus a series of essays rather than a finished piece of work.

In one of the essays Sarah Eisenstein explores late Victorian ideas towards women and work, analysing the advice books written for women and girls entering the labour market. In another she charts working women's attitudes towards marriage and work. In a

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further essay (printed as an Appendix) she shows how a set of ideas critical of the dominant conception of womanhood began to take root among some working-class women. It is impossible here to do justice to the complexity and subtlety of the book's arguments. Sarah Eisenstein charts the subtle changes in Victorian conceptions of 'ladyhood' and 'womanhood', showing how wage-earning women were excluded from the prevailing conceptions of respectable womanhood. She demonstrates that working-class women were committed to marriage, but that, unlike middle-class women, they did not have 'an abstract commitment to marriage as an institution'; instead they regarded it 'as an alternative to and escape from work' (p139). She shows how their entry into the social world of paid employment and their organization in trade unions and suffrage organizations were factors leading to an active self-awareness among some working-class women – how from protesting about their conditions of work some women went on to challenge the ideas of 'the lady' and 'woman's place' and the dominant images of home and family which presented barriers to their collective action. And finally she suggests that the version of feminism developed by working-class women differed from the vision advanced by the mainstream of the early twentieth century feminist movement because 'wage-earning women stressed the contradiction between social ideas about women and the actual reality of their own lives' (p149). Anna Rudnitsky, a young immigrant worker, graphically illustrates this theme in the following passage reprinted in Sarah Eisenstein's book.

> But life means so much, it holds so much, and I have not time for any of it; I just work... Romance needs time. We can think about it, yes, but to live it needs time. Music I love to hear and it makes me happy... to study, to go to school, I have no time and I have no money. Then the world is so beautiful... why if I work all day and do good work, why is there never a chance to see these wonders? (p32)

Give us Bread but Give us Roses makes a major contribution to feminist theory in a number of difficult but important areas. Some of these are outlined in Hal Benenson's succinct introductory essay. Sarah Eisenstein's analysis of consciousness, for instance, is sophisticated and avoids some common pitfalls. She sees the women's consciousness neither as a reflection of the dominant Victorian ideology nor as autonomous from it, but as a 'negotiated response' both to new conditions of work and working-class life and to dominant and critical feminist and working-class ideologies. Her conceptualization of consciousness proposes neither a unitary class consciousness nor a unitary gender consciousness, but includes, instead, an analysis of class and gender. The analysis of the relationships between the workplace and the older class and family cultures is also important. As Hal Benenson says

> It attempts to specify the domains of conflict and accommodation between these social forces, without falsely idealizing the consequences for women of either modern economic individualism in the form of early twentieth-century employment conditions or precapitalist communal (and patriarchal) traditions. (p7)

Give us Bread but Give us Roses was written without the benefit of the many feminist writings about family and work, consciousness and subjectivity, which have been published in the past decade. The sophistication of its analysis is testimony to Sarah Eisenstein's insight, scholarship and political imagination.

Veronica Beechey