
Although it considers questions of education only in passing, Mary Poovey's intricate History of the Modern Fact will provide historians of education with a good grounding in recent conceptual and methodological developments in the human sciences. The book examines an "epistemological unit": the modern fact. Her study of epistemological units is intended to reveal the foundations of knowledge production practices. Poovey locates her book in the overlapping fields of the prehistory of the social sciences, intellectual history, and historical epistemology. She wishes to avoid a linear account of the modern fact, for she claims that such accounts retrospectively recodify their objects of investigation and thereby dismiss much of the context in which developments take place.

Poovey's reading of the texts that sustain her intellectual history is guided by a double concern. First, she wishes to break with the tactics of unmasking and denunciation that characterize much would-be critical history writing. Such tactics consist in demonstrating, in the wisdom of hindsight, that past authors employed what we know to be oppressive or exploitative concepts. Poovey argues, on the contrary, that authors and texts can't be sexist or racist, for instance, before the construction of the categories of sexism and racism.

By way of taking up the implications of this stance, Poovey seeks to locate authors and texts in intellectual and cultural "configurations," where what can be thought and known, what demands enunciation and what is assumed, and what forms and styles of enunciation are available, all have characteristic limits. Configurations, or "ensembles" are fields rich in possibility. Against linear readings of intellectual history, Poovey...
insists that there are always paths not taken in one ensemble that may reappear in another. Furthermore, Poovey seeks to maintain a notion of continuity that stretches across intellectual discontinuity by suggesting that subsequent readings of texts turn what were initially statements into questions. The modern fact is characterized by an internal tension: on the one hand, facts are isolated, observable particulars that are significant in their own right. On the other hand, facts are evidence. They acquire significance in relation to some overarching theoretical schema. Modernist social and political thought has been characterized by a variety of attempts to resolve this tension, either by elevating one of its dimensions over the other, or by seeking strategies of knowledge production that circumvent it. Poovey provides us with a genealogy of such attempts.

In broad outline, Poovey's narrative emphasizes England and locates the emergence of the modern fact in Baconian empiricism and in the double-entry bookkeeping of the 16th century. She traces the intellectual and political practices and devices of the 17th and 18th centuries that made it possible to bridge the gap between fact and theory without collapsing it. For instance, the authority of the absolutist state, the disinterested civility of gentlemen observers, and beliefs in divine providence and in universal human subjectivity were invoked at different moments to provide the framework of an overarching system that enabled the isolated particular to signify in its own right. Poovey then shows that the modern fact encountered its limits in Hume's scepticism, which brought the problem of induction to the fore. Having rigorously rejected *a priori* assumptions about systematic knowledge, Hume concluded that the only grounds one can have for assuming that future observations of particulars will continue to resemble past observations is some species of belief.

Belief is at the heart of systematic knowledge, and thus the internal tension that is constitutive of the modern fact was faced with implosion. Although Hume himself turned to other modes of writing, such as the essay, as a support for claims to knowledge, Poovey argues that Smith, McCulloch and Malthus adopted different tactics. Smith invented a set of conceptual abstractions, such as the "market system," to provide an orderly framework for the making of observations. In his thought, in other words, the tension between theory and observation was resolved by moving towards the theoretical pole. McCulloch (Dickens's Mr. M'Choakumchild in *Hard Times*) argued for a professional solution to the problem of induction: "statistics" would be the province of the collection of neutral facts; political economy, conducted by experts, would be the province of general significance. And, importantly for the readers of this journal, educated training people to act in keeping with the dictates of theory. In served to widen the gap between practice and theory, they were not regularities were numerical, they were held to be transparent.

Finally, according to Poovey, Mill that English social thought served to claim that because the empirical world was a seamless network of numbers, it would deal with large-scale tendencies. It would deal with the isolated particular to the resolution, Poovey suggests, some variant of a postmodern empirical entity at all.

The development of the practices of numerical representation was a growing interest of the isolated particulars has been inserted into more general sciences of wealth and practices whereby numerical and authoritative work in this regard. First, Poovey characterizes the distinction makes it possible to measure some representations are thought. Poovey carries her fictions," such as "goodwill balance, but any observer of a state that claims about the are not limited to common styles of argumentation. Even arguments are made in common
Poovey seeks to maintain a notion of intellectual discontinuity by suggesting what were initially statements characterized by an internal tension: on what were significant facts are evidence. They acquire overarching theoretical schema. Modern- been characterized by a variety of settings of knowledge production that with a genealogy of such attempts. Emphasizes England and locates in Baconian empiricism and in the 16th century. She traces the and devices of the 17th and 18th century the gap between fact and theory, the authority of the absolutist state, observers, and beliefs in divine subjectivity were invoked at different levels of an overarching system that designated its limits in Hume's scepticism, action to the fore. Having rigorously cast systematic knowledge, Hume can have for assuming that future knowledge, and thus the internal modern fact was faced with implosion. Other modes of writing, such as the ledger, Poovey argues that Smith, different tactics. Smith invented a set the "market system," to provide an of observations. In his thought, in theory and observation was resolved in pole. McCulloch (Dickens's Mr. suggested for a professional solution to what would be the province of the economy, conducted by experts, science. And, importantly for the
closely connected to stylistic conventions that submerge the work necessary to make diverse and variable objects seem to be equivalent.

Space precludes a discussion of the many other dimensions of this work that readers are likely to find interesting. Poovey’s earlier book, Making a Social Body, suffered from its origins as a collection of essays and Modern Fact shares the same difficulty, although to a lesser extent. There are a number of repetitive sections that testify to their origins as essays and the last chapter, one of the first to be written, does not satisfy as a conclusion. The most serious limitation of the work in my view, however, is methodological. Cultural ensembles or configurations of knowledge contain a variety of genres and styles, works well known and works ignored, paths followed and paths not taken. It is reasonable to argue, as Poovey does, that the ensemble as a whole is relevant. Yet it is impossible practically to reconstruct everything written and debated in philosophy and literature, and so Poovey tends to gesture towards paths not taken, towards what is “not the modern fact.” Such gestures certainly defeat linearity, but Poovey does not explain the logic of their selection. I am tempted to see an irony here: the texts Poovey discusses are isolated particulars that serve as evidence, but part of the system guiding her selection of them is not enunciated.

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What is the “ideal” family, and what dimensions of social life were affected by the effects of that normalization? How did these become invested and lodged in Canadian consciousness? If, in the notion of “the ideal family,” contributed to particular relations between social knowledge and power in Canada, for example, local practices of schooling, examination, justice, healthcare, care, custody, homemaking, and what can be said about how particular discursive constructs actually objectify human behaviour? In what ways do disciplinary effects of the human sciences provide a necessary condition for understanding the social dynamics of Canadian society?

Normalizing the Ideal is the concluding volume of Toronto Press Studies in Gender and Culture. Mona Gleason makes useful points about how through which human beings become embedded within social reality. Perhaps the most substantial contribution of this postwar decades primarily through which families and schools were socialized to the suasion of “ideals” that were the rule in Canada, in a sense, were heterosexuality, in sensibility. Gleason’s notion of “technologies of normalization” is how particular discursive networks can be conflated the normal with the ideal, and thereby, the very ways in which Canadians’ receptiveness to