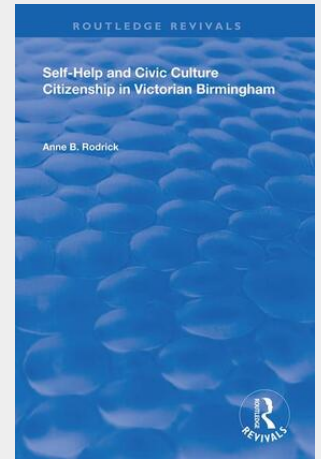


Rodrick

SELFHELP & CIVIC CULTURE

First published in 2004. The nineteenth century witnessed a flowering of the culture of self-improvement that was reflected in a plethora of institutes, societies and journals that sprang up across Britain with the goal of spreading knowledge and learning to a wide spectrum of society. The prophets of self-improvement believed that not only was self-improvement a laudable goal in its own right, but more importantly, it would contribute towards a general improvement in society. In an age in which direct participation in the political processes was restricted to a minority, education and self-improvement could act as an alternative force by creating a sophisticated and knowledgeable population. In other words, self-improvement was also seen as a way of creating active and responsible citizens. Focusing on the city of Birmingham, and drawing on both local and national sources, Self Help and Civic Culture explores the changing nature of self improvement and citizenship in Victorian Britain. By approaching the concept of citizenship from a new perspective, provincial identity and its relationship to wider ideas of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness', a distinct ideal of citizenship is elucidated that adds further nuance to current scholarship. By drawing together various issues of citizenship, self-improvement, class and political power, this work brings a new perspective to the on-going attempts to determine who could claim the full rights, duties, privileges and responsibilities of the larger social body, thus illuminating the relationship between culture and power in nineteenth century England.



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