

## WOMEN IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

### I. Renaissance:

- Wealthy women
  - *Querelles des Femmes* (“The Problem of Women”) – new debate emerged over women’s nature and their proper role in society (starting with Pisan in the 14<sup>th</sup> century); the debate continued for six hundred years.
  - Increased access to education
  - Lost some status compared to Middle Ages; were to be “ornaments” to their husbands
  - Important Renaissance noblewomen at court in education and culture
    - Christine de Pisan
    - Isabella d’Este: Mantua
    - Artemesia Gentilleschi, famous for her “Judith” pictures
  
- Women in general
  - Status did not change much compared to Middle Ages
  - Marriage
    - European Family Pattern:
      - Nuclear family (poor people tended to be unable to support extended families)
      - Wealthier people (and some landowning peasants) tended to have extended families
    - Based on economic considerations; not love
      - Dowries were extremely important in wealthy families.
      - Women tended to play a more significant role in the economy in Northern Europe.
    - Average age for women: < 20 (for men it was mid-late 20s)
      - Class issues: rich tend to marry earlier than middle classes, and poor tend to marry earlier too, or not to marry at all.
      - In Italy, the age gap between husbands and wives was much larger than in Northern Europe
    - Increased infanticide and abandonment (among the poor)
      - Increase of foundling hospitals (2/3 of abandoned babies were girls)
    - Low rate of illegitimate births
    - Dramatic population growth until 1650
  - Divorce available in certain areas (still very limited) compared to Middle Ages where divorce was non-existent
  - Women were to make themselves pleasing to the man (Castiglione)-- only upper classes
  - Sexual double-standard: women were to remain chaste until marriage; men were permitted to “sow their wild oats.”
  - More prostitution than in Middle Ages
  - Rape not considered a serious crime

- Important Female Rulers
  - Caterina Sforza
  - Isabella I
  - Mary Tudor
  - Elizabeth I
  - Catherine de Mèdicis
- Persecution of alleged witches
  - Beginning of witchcraft as official RCC dogma in 1484
  - Large number were older women
  - Reasons for targeting women:
- Joan Kelly: *Did Women have a Renaissance?*

## II. Reformation:

- Protestant women: occupation was in the home taking care of the family
  - Protestant churches had greater official control over marriage
    - Suppressed common law marriages
    - Catholic governments followed suit
  - Marriage became more companionate, Luther and Katerina von Bora were good models of the husband/helpmate model.
  - Increased women's literacy became a value because they needed to read the Bible and also teach children.
  - Lost some opportunities in church service that Catholic women enjoyed
  - Luther: sex was an act to be enjoyed by a husband and wife
- Catholic women:
  - Women continued to enjoy opportunities in the Church in religious orders
  - Teresa de Avila
  - Angela Merici, Ursuline Order

## III. 18<sup>th</sup> Century (and Industrial Revolution)

- Agricultural Revolution:
  - Enclosure significantly altered peasant life
    - Women had fewer opportunities to make profits off of work on common lands
    - Women increasingly worked away from home in the towns or cities
      - Most work was domestic
      - Many became prostitutes
      - Social consequences of working away from home: more autonomy, can save money for own dowries, slightly more choice in marriage partners, but still pretty much endogamous within class and trade. Also less communal protection from economic and sexual exploitation
  - Growth of cottage industry
    - Women increasingly were home working in the cottage industry
    - Young women became increasingly difficult for peasant families to feed due to loss of common lands
      - Young women were sent away to work

- Industrial Revolution
  - Large numbers of women work in factories in late 18th-century England
  - Family wage economy: Families often work together (especially women & children)
    - Declines somewhat after Factory Act of 1833 puts limits on child labor
- Marriage
  - Based more on romance as the Enlightenment moves into the Modern Era
    - Average age for marriage: late 20s or later
    - Many women don't marry ("spinsters"). A large population of unmarried middle class women is a new phenomenon.
  - Protestant women still expected to manage the home
  - Catholic women still had self-development options in religious orders
  - Views on child care: "spare the rod, spoil the child"
  - Families get smaller and children live longer and people invest more love and economic resources in their children as time goes on.
- Explosion in illegitimate births
  - Increased infanticide
  - Foundling hospitals created
- Decrease in witch hunts. Why? Most people say it relates to the new scientific ideas about evidence and the decline of political power of the RCC.
- Decline in women's opportunities as midwives, increased professionalization of medicine.
- Important Female Rulers:
  - Catherine the Great
  - Maria Teresa

#### Women in the Enlightenment:

- Science: Emilie du Chatelet, translated Newton's *Principia* (Voltaire's mistress)
  - See the 1997 DBQ on Women and Science
- Salons
  - Madame de Geoffren
  - Louise de Warens
  - Germaine de Staël
  - Jeanne Rolan
- Arts
  - Elizabeth Vigee-Lebrun
- Views on female education
  - Rousseau: *Emile*, 1762
  - Catharine Macaulay, *Letters on Education*, 1787
  - Hannah More, "Bluestockings"
- Generally the Enlightenment ideology didn't like or respect women all that much, and when women tried to apply its ideas of freedom and equality to their own sex even the most radical leaders of the French Revolution repressed them.

## Women in the French Revolution:

- Bread riots
- March on Versailles
- Olympe de Gouges: *The Rights of Woman* (1791)
- Mary Wollstonecraft: *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)
- Participation with the Sans Culottes (Society of Revolutionary Republican Women)
- Closing of women's political clubs by the National Convention
  - French Revolutionary leaders identified women with the debauchery and the effete style of the *Ancien Regime*. They thought it was not “manly” and sought to keep women out of public life.
- Charlotte Corday
- Salons during the revolution (e.g. Roland, Girondins)
- Victims of Reign of Terror: De Gouges, Roland
- Napoleonic France:
  - Civil Code reasserted Old Regime's patriarchal system
    - Women viewed as legal incompetents
  - Women gained few rights (except inheritance rights); leads to increased use of birth control and smaller families.
  - State paternalism
  - Criticism of Napoleon's regime by Madame de Staël
- Compare role of women in the French Revolution with role of women in the Russian Revolution
  - Ideals
  - What rights and privileges did they ultimately receive?

Emerging ideology about women following the French Revolution grappled with the problem of women's nature and what it meant for women's rights. “Individualist” feminists argued that women had the same “natural” rights as men and were, therefore, entitled to the same legal, economic, social and educational opportunities. Their ideas derived from Enlightenment ideology and were later embraced by thinkers such as John Stuart Mill. “Relational” feminists argued that women's nature was fundamentally different from men's and, significantly, just as important. They argued that women needed education to fulfill their special role as mothers and homemakers, to preserve and impart the native culture of their homelands and to provide healthy children for the nation, the so-called “mother-educator.” These thinkers were sympathetic to the new movements of Romanticism and nationalism.

#### IV. 19<sup>th</sup> Century:

- Industrial Revolution (see above)
- Marriage and Family
  - Ideal of romantic love becomes important
  - Fewer children per family; more love towards children
  - Middle class more inclined to consider economic reasons
    - Many men married late
    - Women closely monitored
    - Sexual double standard
  - Rate of illegitimacy declined after 1850 in working classes
  - Prostitution sought by middle and upper-middle class men
  - Freud: early childhood is vital
  - Lower class children less dependent on parents financially than middle class children
- Status of Women
  - After 1850, increasingly separate spheres: men worked in factories; women stayed at home
  - Protective legislation drove women out of certain kinds of employment. As the century progressed more jobs were “gendered” and in jobs defined as “women’s work” wages went down, for instance in teaching and office work.
  - Ideology of domesticity
    - Reinforced in home schooling or church schools
    - Victorian ideal
  - By late-19<sup>th</sup> century, women worked outside the home only in poor families
  - Middle class women began working to organize and expand their rights
  - Marxists view of women?
  - Socialist views of women
    - Saint-Simonian socialism. Emphasizes complementarity of the sexes, motherhood as the common denominator of female experience, but also “free love.” Suzanne Voilquin, Jeanne Deroin, Desiree Gay, Flora Tristan. Like the majority of these women, Deroin was a feminist first and a socialist second. She petitioned, unsuccessfully to run for the Legislative Assembly as a candidate of the Democratic Socialist Party.
    - German Socialist Louise Otto also emphasized women’s special nature and importance to the state, even though she saw marriage as a ‘degraded’ institution impairing the development of women’s character.
    - Marxist women argued that women were doubly oppressed, both by the capitalist society and also by men. Their program was to work for socialism first, because they thought that socialism (and later communism) would lead to equality between the sexes.
    - German Social Democratic Party. It had a special auxiliary for women. August Bebel, Clara Zetkin,
    - French feminist socialists: Hubertine Auclert, Louise Saumoneau, Elisabeth Renaud
- Romanticism: George Sand (Amandine-Aurore Dupin)

- Realism: George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)
- Women played a major role in social reforms in the mid- late-nineteenth century
  - Catholic orders organized schools and hospitals
  - Temperance
  - Increase of female teachers in late-19<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. preschool education)
  - Trend toward gendering certain occupations that had the effect of kicking men out and also making the wages lower.
  - Pacifism
    - Bertha von Süttner's *Lay Down Your Arms*, 1889)
    - Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Role of Jane Addams.
- Active participation in socialist movement
  - Owenites
  - Emma Martin
  - Flora Tristan
- Modernism in Western Europe: The "New Woman"
  - Drop in the birth rate became alarming
  - Ellen Key, Nelly Roussel, Marguerite Durand who published French women's daily newspaper, *La Fronde*
  - Reformers sought to reform marriage to increase its attractiveness to women
  - Women gained legal right to wages and property ownership
  - Right to work without husband's permission
    - Many educated women worked in white-collar jobs
  - Legalization of divorce in some countries (e.g. France)
  - Gov't subsidies to needy mothers (e.g. Britain in 1913)

## V. Female Suffrage

- Finland the first to grant female suffrage, 1906
- Other countries by 1920: Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Britain, Germany, Austria
  - Largely the result of women's participation during WWI
- England:
  - John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869)
  - Predominantly middle-class movement
  - Because England did not get Universal Manhood Suffrage until after World War I, many feminists and socialists were frustrated in their efforts to work for female rights. Leadership of suffrage reform movements felt that arguing for woman suffrage would hurt the cause of UMS.
  - Rise of professional suffrage associations
  - Millicent Garrett Fawcett
  - Emmeline Pankhurst (Women's Social and Political Union) and her even more radical daughters Christabelle and Sylvia.
    - Militant tactics: violence, bombings, destruction of property, picketing Parliament
  - Women's participation in WWI
  - Representation of the People Act 1918, age 30 and over

- Representation of the People Act 1928, age 21 and over
- Female suffrage after WWI in Western and Central Europe

## VI. 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

- Russia
  - Equality after the Russian Revolution (in theory)
    - Voting rights
    - Equal access to education
    - Job opportunities
    - No sexual double standard; increased abortion
  - Compare role of women in Russian Revolution to role of women in the French Revolution
  - Compare status of women in the Soviet Union with the status of women in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany
- Women make huge contributions to the war effort during WWI and WWII
- Traditional and oppressed role in Fascist Italy and Germany
  - Women encourage to have many children for the benefit of the state
  - Women denied access to high-paying job opportunities
- Post-WWI, several countries (not just fascist countries) passed repressive legislation against women in reproductive freedom and employment opportunities. This was due to the unemployment that followed the war combined with the huge death rate and over-supply of women and under-supply of babies.
- Post-WWII
  - Baby boom after World War II
  - Women having earlier and fewer children (2 per family)
  - Middle class children less economically dependent on parents
  - Women remained in the work force in larger numbers
- Women's Rights Movement and Feminism
  - Simone de Beauvoir, *the Second Sex*, 1949
  - Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963
  - 1965, end to ban on birth control in France
  - Protest marches in favor of abortion rights and decriminalization of homosexuality
  - Some feminists rejected "feminine" conventions such as bras, cosmetics and high heels.
  - Demands for equal pay for equal work
  - Italy in 1970s, women gained divorce, access to birth control information and abortion rights