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Women in History. Early Modern Europe

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SURVEY ARTICLES
WOMEN IN HISTORY
I
EARLY MODERN EUROPE

THE HISTORY OF WOMEN HAS REACHED A WAY STAGE IN ITS DEVELOPment. With a track record stretching back fifteen years or more, its achievements can be viewed in perspective. We can assess how far we have gone in finding out about and understanding women and their roles in the past and, in addition, the extent to which the pursuit of a specifically female experience has contributed to our discipline as a whole. The recent publication of *Women in Western European History: A Select Chronological, Geographical and Topical Bibliography from Antiquity to the French Revolution*, compiled and edited by Linda Frey, Marsha Frey and Joanne Schneider (Brighton, 1982) to set alongside Natalie Zemon Davis and Jill K. Conway, *Society and the Sexes: A Bibliography of Women's History in Early Modern Europe, Colonial America and the United States* (New York, 1981) and Gerda Lerner, *Bibliography of the History of American Women* (New York, 1978) allows us to measure both the extent and the quality of the endeavour. The work of Frey and Schneider should be on the shelves of every library not only as a vade-mecum for anyone interested in women of the past, but because this impeccably researched, gargantuan exercise, listing 6,894 works, almost half of them relevant to the period 1500-1800, permits an instant appreciation of the prolificity and variety of the work which has been undertaken and the important issues which have been raised. It also makes clear that the study of women in the past, given impetus by the women's movement, is part of a venerable tradition stretching back into the nineteenth century and much of the work of earlier scholars remains immensely valuable, not merely for its content but for approaches adopted and assumptions made.

Over the past two decades women have, with varying degrees of thoroughness, been pursued by reference to their reproductive capacities, their sexuality, their attitudes to childbirth and child care, their family roles, their position in the community, in the work-force and the family economy. Their differing degrees of religiosity and often preponderant role in religious protest movements, their specific interest in certain forms of philanthropy, their educational experience sometimes measured by reference to the lag in female literacy rates

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over time — these have been other productive lines of enquiry. Women and popular medicine, women and nursing, women and witchcraft, women as mystics or before the Inquisition, women and crime, their role in riot, in civil war or dissident sects, in political intrigue and dynastic alliance, as Renaissance patrons, as radicals in the French Revolution — these might serve as a further sample of issues relevant not merely to the history of women.

A number of factors demand initial recognition. The first is the very obvious one that there is no single history to be told of the history of women in any period but rather many stories. Experience differed by class and occupation, by country and cultural background, by region and even by immediate locality. Another is difference in historiographical approach: while some have merely been concerned with the process of retrieving women in the past, others have sought to interpret and explain according to a feminist model. At risk of oversimplification, a feminist approach to the past seeks to use history to explain the more recent status of women and to discern in the past the degree of, and trends in, female exploitation. The bulk of feminist writing has tended to focus on the nineteenth century and to concentrate on the position of women in a system of capitalism. Nevertheless there are very specific feminist approaches to the history of witchcraft, medicine, midwifery and the treatment of religious mystics, some of which have raised critical issues which will presently be discussed. One problem for the early modernist is that feminist writing on the nineteenth century has tended to force upon historians of the early modern period one unenviable task, that of locating a *bon vieux temps* when women enjoyed a harmonious, if hard-working, domestic role and social responsibility before they were downgraded into social parasites or factory fodder under the corrupting hand of capitalism. So far the location of this *bon vieux temps* has proved remarkably elusive. Social and economic historians of women in the early modern period — and they are not numerous — in the absence of sound scholarly monographs have tended to concentrate upon uncovering hard facts. For some this has meant attempting to isolate women in society to look at their specific roles and attitudes; others have followed Natalie Zemon Davis in her plea for a recognition that equal weight should be given to the experience of both genders. At the same time she has urged that an awareness of the differences in every sphere of female existence must be accentuated if such a balance is to be achieved.

The difference in approaches to the history of women have been the subject of much debate, particularly in the United States where the women's movement has been most active and where the universities have been keenly sensitive to student demand. Here we have had the most and the greatest variety of work specifically devoted towards

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women and this has been reinforced by a whole series of new journals of which *Feminist Studies* and *Signs* have perhaps proved the liveliest. These journals have not only produced the fruits of specialist research but, equally important at this stage, they have questioned the nature of the important issues, the value of potential source material, and the method of proceeding. Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges", *Feminist Studies*, iii nos. 1-2 (1975), N. Z. Davis, "Women's History in Transition: The European Case", *Feminist Studies*, iii nos. 3-4 (1976) or Joan Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relations of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History", *Signs*, i (1975-6) might serve as examples of this kind of writing.

When so much remains to be done which can only be enriched by a variety of approaches, over-long debate on the paramountcy of any one interpretation or method would appear irrelevant to the main business of discovery. The liveliness of the feminist debates, however, and the sheer bulk of historical writing on women in the States has made many on either side of the Atlantic critical of the relative paucity of specific studies by European scholars. Such criticism often emanates from ignorance of works which, while on broader themes, more than fulfil Natalie Zemon Davis's criteria of balance. For example, the Annales school was recently taken to task for its failure to concern itself with the differing historical experience of women: Christine Fauve, "Absent from History", *Signs*, vii (1981-2) and S. M. Stuard, "The Annales School and Feminist History", *Signs*, vii (1981-2). Yet in France women have inched their way into the great theses via demography, marriage contracts, religious sociology, testament analyses and the preoccupation with differing literacy levels.

Leading French journals, such as *Annales de démographie historique* (1981) and the *Revue du nord*, lxiii no. 250 (1981) have dedicated entire issues to women in the past which have broken new ground and some of the articles will presently be discussed. In *Pénélope* a journal specifically devoted to women's history has emerged, albeit one mainly concerned with the nineteenth century. Furthermore, journals with a literary as well as a historical bias such as *Le XVII^e siècle* and *Le XVIII^e siècle* have shown themselves singularly receptive to biographies and pietistical work intended to mould female religious thought.

In Britain *History Workshop* has recently incorporated feminist studies into its title and has committed itself to publishing an article on women in each issue. This is a welcome development but it should not be interpreted as dragging Britain into the field of women's studies. There has been a massive national emphasis on demography and the history of the family with special emphasis on women's roles.

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Moreover in Britain we can acknowledge a body of older literature, almost all of which has been recently reprinted, which usually bears witness to the willingness of the British university establishment in times past to allow the occasional woman of talent to infiltrate its ranks. Once entrenched, some of them produced work which has yet to be replaced. Furthermore, there is a heartening trend in textbooks and specialist studies wherein women are given more detailed treatment. The new Hutchinson Social History of England series is a milestone in textbook writing in this respect, with Keith Wrightson's volume *English Society, 1580-1680* (London, 1982) demanding special mention for its attempt to recognize the experience of both genders.

The purpose of this short essay is to pick out some recent work which I have found particularly revelatory, which has broken new ground or has suggested other lines of enquiry, even if such work has not been specifically dedicated to women alone. Most of this work has appeared since Frey's bibliography went to press or is not included or, being subsumed in a broader study, has escaped attention. I should also like to suggest where I consider some of the most conspicuous gaps in our knowledge lie and where comparative material is urgently required.

The publication of E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (London, 1982) represents a major landmark for any one concerned with women in the past. Many of the conclusions of the work (such as the late age at marriage of couples in pre-industrial society, the small size of families and so forth) were already widely known, but the careful elaboration of the hypothesis linking population movement with age at marriage, which in turn is closely linked with real wage performance, is one which will constitute a major preoccupation for women's history. The odds on spinsterhood and on tardy marriage increased with the hardness of the times. The French evidence, now neatly summarized in J. Dupâquier, *La population française aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1979), though it does not demonstrate chronologically synonymous movements with the British performance, underscores essentially the same point so that we can proffer as a generalization that in times of low wages there were more single women seeking work.

Dupâquier also conveniently summarizes (p. 25) work showing how much easier it was for a widower in any age group to remarry than it was for a widow to do so. The essays in R. B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London, 1981) also proffer evidence to show that whereas widowhood in England in the sixteenth century seems to have been fairly promptly followed by remarriage — often to a widower — certainly

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by the end of the eighteenth century widowhood for those without means was a more permanent condition.

The demographers, perhaps led by the nature of their evidence, have elected one woman, the unmarried mother or the one made pregnant outside matrimony, for special attention. P. Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard M. Smith (eds.), *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (London, 1980) and P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge, 1980) draw together a great deal of work covering Europe and the Americas. Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America, 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, v (1974-5) is a very helpful guide to work in America.

In comparison, the neglect of the spinster (identified by the Cambridge Population Group as someone who dies over the age of fifty without ever having been married) has been almost total in spite of the fact that such spinsters constituted a significant element in the population (14 per cent, for example, of the cohort born in France in the period 1784-9). An important and pioneering work standing alone in its efforts to rescue the single English woman of the past from obscurity is Richard Wall, "Women Alone in English Society", *Annales de démographie historique* (1981). L. Henry and J. Houdaille, "Célibat définitif", *Population*, xxx (1978) gives some statistical reality to the French situation. The *Journal of Family History* plans an issue specially dedicated to the spinster in 1984.

Historians of women would like to see more class-specific demographic work and more which takes account of, or is on the look out for, sex differentials in age-specific mortality rates. Apart from T. H. Hollingsworth, *The Demography of the British Peerage* (Supplement to *Population Studies*, xviii no. 2, London, 1964), admirably exploited by Patricia Courtney Otto, " 'Daughters of the British Aristocracy': Their Marriages in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries with Particular Reference to the Scottish Peerage" (Stanford Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1974) and an extremely important article, B. Derouets, "Une démographie différentielle: les populations rurales d'ancien régime", *Annales. E.S.C.*, xxxv (1980), there is very little consideration of substantial class differences particularly in marriage rates and the numbers of children born to a couple. Otto shows for example that whereas towards the middle decades of the eighteenth century perhaps as little as 7 per cent of all women born remained permanently celibate, as many as 30 per cent of the daughters of the Scottish gentry did so as families struggled to preserve the family patrimony undiminished and sons married the daughters of wealthy commoners. Both the British peerage and the more substantial peasant families of the Beauce married earlier and produced larger families than the national norm.

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Sex differential demography has been of vital concern to historians of women since R. Kennedy, *The Irish: Emigration, Marriage and Fertility* (Berkeley, 1973) revealed that in nineteenth-century Ireland peasant society fed its sons to the detriment of its daughters — argued by reference to greater female mortality in age groups where there should be relative parity between the sexes so that the under-feeding of girls seems the obvious explanation. Again Richard Wall, "Inferring Differential Neglect of Females from Mortality Data", *Annales de démographie historique* (1981) has tried to locate such a differential in English society in the nineteenth century but without success. Kennedy's findings may however prove to be of broader application to pre-industrial society than the English example would suggest and a very possible and profitable line of development.

The demographic work has been very closely linked with the most conspicuous historical growth history of recent years, the history of the family. M. Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family* (London, 1980) and the welcome translation of Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder, *The European Family: Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford, 1982), with its wide-ranging emphasis on the central as well as the western European experience, provide us with the introduction and bibliographical data we need to reconstruct the role of women within the family. Both works do less than justice to J.-L. Flandrin, *Familles: parenté, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne société* (Paris, 1976), which still stands out as the most sensitive exposé of the relationship between the sexes, of women's views of themselves and of the attitudes of Counter-Reformation churchmen to women's duties and sexual conduct. This book was very inadequately translated and published by the Cambridge University Press in 1979 under the title, *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality*. O. Harris, "Households as Natural Units", in K. Young, J. Walkovitz and R. McCullough (eds.), *Marriage and the Market* (London, 1981), proffers a differing perspective, and R. Rapp, E. Ross and R. Bridenthal, "Examining Family History", *Feminist Studies*, v (1979) makes the reader aware of the strengths and limitations of looking at women's history through the family. N. Bulst, J. Goy and J. Hoock, *Familie zwischen Tradition und Moderne* (Gottingen, 1981) examines the transition as they identify it between family patterns before and after industrialization. A pioneering study for the questions it raises and the sympathetic treatment given to the widow is M. Chaytor, "Household and Kinship: Ryton in the Late 16th and 17th Centuries", *History Workshop*, no. 10 (1980).

Did women in the past love their children? There seems no chance of a diminution of interest in this perennial theme. The latest contribution, Elizabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View*

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of the Maternal Instinct (London, 1981), which secured a great deal of attention from the media, has generally incensed the world of professional historians of women by its insensitivity to many of the practicalities of life for working-class women. To argue maternal indifference three facts are usually mustered: first, the heavy numbers of abandoned children; secondly, the propensity among certain social sectors to put their children out to wet-nurse; thirdly, heavy infant mortality which bred an expectation of loss and hence a reluctance to make an emotional investment in a child. For a consideration of the harsh practicalities facing a woman who bore a bastard child and who could not find work to support herself and her offspring and who chose abandonment as a means of giving the child some chance in life, O. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1974); for some appreciation of the large number of women in France who used wet-nurses so that they could work to support their families, and the intricacies of the wet-nursing business, G. Sussman, *Selling Mothers' Milk: The Wet-Nursing Business in France, 1715-1914* (Urbana, Ill., 1982). Anne Martin-Fugier, "La fin des nourrices", *Le mouvement social*, no. 105 (1978), though concerned with the nineteenth century, contains many observations pertinent to the eighteenth in that it drives home the point that the wet-nursing business reposed on the uneven development of the city and some parts of the country: the women of the *ateliers* and the urban catering trades could leave their children with rural women who had no other means of earning a living. Both could thus contribute to a family economy. The practice disappeared with the small urban workshop and greater rural economic development. A very sensible measured discussion of the theme of affection for broader sectors of English society is found in Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680*.

We are thus carried into the realms of women and work and are confronted with a curious paradox. We all *know* that women in pre-industrial society worked. In adolescence and early adulthood, domestic service helped a girl to accumulate the few pounds she needed to constitute a dowry which would help in the business of leasing or stocking a farm or be engaged in some form of commercial or industrial activity either within her own family or someone else's which would endow her with a skill and perhaps a small sum of money as well. We know that women worked in hoeing and weeding, in the dairy and the *basse cour* and in domestic industry as well. Sense tells us that in the proto-industrial phase their role was crucial. They were the more numerous sector of the cheap labour force. Yet we have very little detailed modern research bearing on the nature and importance of their labour. Earlier works are frequently being reprinted. Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1919; repr. London, 1982), and Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women*

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Workers and the Industrial Revolution (London, 1930; repr. London, 1969), though excellent in their way, need updating.

The English domestic service sector is still largely described by reference to Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1956; repr. London, 1980). The same is true when one turns to women's work in colonial America. The recent useful and evocative collection in Linda K. Kerber and Jane de Hart Mathews (eds.), *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* (Oxford, 1982), though largely composed of recent specialized studies, is forced to turn for an appreciation of women's work roles to an extract from Julia Cherry Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1938).

There are some new chinks of light however. Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), while an extremely important and evocative study, is a little disappointing in the amount of space allocated to women. A splendid professional study, beautifully illustrated and elegantly composed, is Caroline Davidson's *A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650-1950* (London, 1982). The strength of this work lies in revealing the sheer physical drudgery involved in carting water, collecting and drying turds for fuel, and servicing at the most basic of levels a family's culinary needs.

We urgently need to examine further some of the interesting questions and hypotheses raised by H. Medick, "The Proto-Industrial Family Economy", in P. Kreidte, H. Medick and J. Schlumbohm (eds.), *Industrialization before Industrialization* (Past and Present Publications, Cambridge, 1981). A model study for an early industrial work-force which gives due emphasis to the work of women is Maurice Garden, *Lyon et les lyonnais au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1970). In my view this work has contributed more to the understanding of working lives of women than any other single work. Its strength lies in considering migratory patterns, the nature of work in the manufacture of silk for immigrant girls, the amount of money they could accumulate if they steered clear of sickness and slump, who they would marry (a master's son anxious to purchase a mastership), the working partnership thus created, the egregiously high family size of the silk worker's family due in part to sending children out to nurse, differential male/female mortality rates based on occupation and so on. More recently, Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Crafts in Sixteenth-Century Lyons", *Feminist Studies*, viii (1982) and the reprint of J. Godart, *L'ouvrier en soie* (Geneva, 1976), which describes in detail the processes in which women were involved, have converted the Lyonnaise silk and craft worker into the woman of the past we know the best.

Second in such a league table must be the Genevan. Apart from

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the demographic study by A. Perrenoud, *La population de Genève du XVI^e siècle au début du XIX^e siècle* (Geneva, 1979), which has some particularly detailed sections on women, Liliane Mottu-Weber, "Les femmes dans la vie économique de Genève", *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Genève*, xvi (1979), Liliane Mottu-Weber, "Apprentissages et économie genevoise au début du XVIII^e siècle", *Revue suisse d'histoire*, xx (1970) and E. W. Monter, "Women in Calvinist Geneva, 1550-1800", *Signs*, vi (1980-1) have left us with a very clear notion of the world of working women in this city. Most did very menial work and female apprenticeship contracts represent at any one time a very feeble proportion of the total. One female Genevan entrepreneur emerges which shows that with the right connections and business acumen women could make a small fortune. There is also some interesting evidence on the position of the widow able to continue production in her husband's name provided male labour was used where the guild deemed appropriate.

A little-known but useful study is J. D. Pauw, "Immigration féminine, professions féminines et structures urbaines à Nantes au XVIII^e siècle", *Université de Nantes, Centre de recherches sur l'histoire de la France atlantique, Enquêtes et documents*, ii (1972). Though a short study, A. Groppi, "Le travail des femmes à Paris à l'époque de la Révolution française", *Bulletin d'histoire économique et sociale de la Révolution française* (1979), demonstrates that the theme could be converted into a very rich study.

Perhaps a foretaste of more extensive studies to come and ones which proffer some valuable comparative date are Judith C. Brown and Jordan Goodman, "Women and Industry in Florence", *Journal of Economic History*, xl (1980) and Merry Weisner Wood, "Paltry Peddlars or Essential Merchants? Women in the Distributive Trades in Early Modern Nuremberg", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xii no. 2 (1981). This latter study will be used as comparative data for a model study by Lyndal Roper of differing types of work involvement in her "Religion and Social Institutions: Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Augsburg", forthcoming in *Past and Present*.

Less directly, there is a wealth of information on women in Oxford to be found in Mary Prior, *Fisher Row: Fishermen, Bargemen and Canal Boatmen in Oxford, 1600-1900* (Oxford, 1982).

The domestic service sector, in spite of recent pleas by Philippe Ariès, remains neglected when one considers that around 12 per cent of the total population of any European city fell into this category. Cissie Fairchilds, "Masters and Servants in Eighteenth Century Toulouse", *Journal of Social History*, xii (1978-9) considers a very specific aspect of the problem. A truly pioneering, highly original essay on a very unexpected topic is B. C. Hacker, "Women and Military

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Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance", *Signs*, vi (1980-1).

An unexpected study by two young Dutch historians, Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *Daat was Laatst een meisje loos Nederlandse vrouwen als matrzen en soldaten: een historisch onderzroek* (Baar, 1982) studies women who enlisted in male guise largely to secure a free passage to Batavia where women were at a premium and marriage prospects good.

What is there about middle-class women in the early modern period that no one wishes to reveal? Where are the clergymen's wives and daughters or those of lawyers or doctors?

The lack of professional outlets for the middle-class spinster, the one who in Mary Wollstonecraft's phrase could only look to being a companion, a governess or a mantua maker, is often attributed both by contemporary women and recent writers to the conspicuous lag in female education. On the eve of the revolution in France literacy rates of 65 per cent for men and 35 per cent for women are argued with some striking contrasts either side of a line drawn from St. Malo to Geneva. F. Furet and J. Ozouf, *Lire et écrire: l'alphabétisation des français de Calvin à Jules Ferry* (Paris, 1977) have traced the main stages of this development and have raised some interesting questions which they have not resolved, such as why northern and eastern France was much prompter to educate its female children than the west and south and what made people decide to educate their daughters at all given the limited job opportunities for women? R. Chartier, M. M. Compère and D. Julia, *L'éducation en France du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1976) has a very succinct and pertinent chapter 6 on the form and content of female education and an excellent bibliography. Girls' schooling remained until this century for the most part a religious concern, a fact often used to explain differing religiosity rates between men and women in the nineteenth century. At the top level, there were some very exclusive boarding establishments for the wealthy. D. Roche, "Education et société dans la France au XVIII^e siècle: l'exemple de la maison royale de Saint-Cyr", *Cahiers d'histoire*, xxiii (1978) is concerned with one such school. J. Perrel, "Les écoles de filles dans la France d'ancien régime', in Donald N. Baker and Patrick J. Harrigan (eds.), *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679-1979* (Waterloo, Ont., 1980) has far wider import, though M. Laget, "Petites écoles en Languedoc au XVIII^e siècle", *Annales. E.S.C.*, xxvi (1971) remains in my view unsurpassed. A very useful local study is J. Perrel, "Les filles à l'école avant la Révolution", *Revue d'Auvergne*, xciv (1980).

In England the difference between male and female literacy rates is less remarkable and far more English women would appear to have

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attained basic literacy levels by the end of the eighteenth century than their French counterparts. D. Cressy, "Levels of Illiteracy in England, 1530-1730", *Historical Journal*, xx (1977) has much pertinent comment but the best point of departure for any one wishing to know anything at all about women's education in the eighteenth century must be the bibliographical essay by B. B. Schnorrenberg and J. E. Hunter, "The Education of the Eighteenth-Century Englishwoman", in B. Kanner (ed.), *The Women of England from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present* (Hamden, Conn., 1979). Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1982) has also made a pertinent and very succinct contribution to the history of women's education. In fact, the history of women's education has constituted one of the most obvious focal points of women's studies in all countries; for example, U. Herrmann, "Erziehung und Schulunterricht für Mädchen im 18. Jahrhundert", *Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung*, iii (1976). A recent overview with a good bibliography is P. Stock, *Better than Rubies: A History of Women's Education* (New York, 1978).

Increasing female literacy is closely allied with many other issues, women as readers, women as writers, women in relationship to the great intellectual movements of the day, since such issues are superabundantly treated in Frey's bibliography. It is perhaps invidious to pick out for special mention Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in 17th-Century England* (London, 1981); N. Z. Davis, "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820", in Patricia Labalme (ed.), *Beyond their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past* (New York, 1980); M. Marzolf, *Up from the Footnotes: A History of Women Journalists* (New York, 1977); Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women's Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria* (London, 1972); Mary R. Mahl and Helen Koon (eds.), *The Female Spectator: English Women Writers before 1800* (Bloomington, Ind., 1977). The salon hostesses and the attitudes of Enlightenment thinkers to women, their social role and the content of their education can be pursued through C. Lougee, *Le paradis des femmes: Women, Salons and Social Stratification in 17th-Century France* (Princeton, 1976), which produces an interesting interpretation; Paul Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée des lumières* (Paris, 1977); and E. Jacobs (ed.), *Women and Society in Eighteenth-Century France* (London, 1979), an interesting collection on specific thinkers and topics. These are but a few of the more general works among a substantial body of literature dedicated to Mesdames de Genlis, du Deffand, de Stael and others, and towards locating the attitudes towards women of the more noteworthy disciples of the Enlightenment. An eminently readable work

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with an appendix which actually gives mini-biographies of many lesser women writers and feminists (a minor treasure in itself since stark unadorned fact conveys very eloquently the struggles many of these faced in their efforts to earn a living) is K. M. Rogers, *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Brighton, 1982).

Notions of women's roles and of the essence of womanhood as something distinct from or inferior to manhood and of what is sauce for the gander not being so for the goose, the "double standard" exposed by Keith Thomas more than twenty years ago in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, xx (1959), are themes which have received much recent attention. Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Women* (Cambridge, 1980) proffers an intricate exposé of how medical, theological, ethical and political ideas combined to form complex, if evolving, views interpreting female status. On the theme of menstruation and views, among others, on how it affected female standing and intellect, there is P. Crawford, "Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England", *Past and Present*, no. 91 (May 1981). And Albie Sachs and Jean Hoff Wilson, *Sexism and the Law: A Study of Male Beliefs and Judicial Bias* (Oxford, 1979) has many ideas of interest to historians.

Clearly religious beliefs were often crucial in determining attitudes both from above and at the popular level towards women. Moreover, the relationship between women and religion, in Reformation and Counter-Reformation and in all movements attacking or defending traditional beliefs and practices, in the promotion or rejection of cults right into the present century, is emerging as one of the most striking themes of women's history. When the religious sociologist, Gabriel Le Bras, urged a study of religious practice over time, he did so as one cognizant that the Roman Catholic church in France was by the late nineteenth century a woman's church and that part of the task must be to trace and explain how and why this came about. F. le Brun (ed.), *Histoire des catholiques en France* (Toulouse, 1980) is a superb synthesis tracing so many issues critical to the understanding of women and religion that it is impossible to do justice to them in a few sentences. For example, it deals with the low opinion of Counter-Reformation churchmen of women in general (the equation of Eve and evil) but the gradual if reluctant appreciation that women were far more docile to the dictates of the church and that the example of the pious woman could be one means of keeping the unruly aberrant male within the church. These sections draw not only on confessional and pietistical literature, but the evidence of the bishops' visitation registers. Another theme is the increasing role of women in parish worship and of the difference between male and female attitudes to the secularizing effects of the Enlightenment. Here we have summarized the formidable body of evidence accumulated by M. Vovelle,

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Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1973). Also J. Quéniart, *Les hommes, l'église et dieu dans la France du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1978) embodies a great deal of very varied material on the differing attitudes of men and women towards religious practice.

The French Revolution is recognized to be the watershed in male/female commitment to the Roman Catholic church and one of the factors which ensured female hostility, particularly in the villages to the Terror, was the policy of dechristianization. O. Hufton, "The Reconstruction of a Church, 1796-1801", in G. Lewis and C. Lucas (eds.), *Beyond the Terror* (Cambridge, 1983) gives the bibliographical details behind the process of female hostility to change and the predominantly female effort to reconstruct a church after Thermidor. R. Dupuy, "Les femmes et le Contre-Révolution dans l'ouest", *Bulletin d'histoire économique et sociale de la Révolution française* (1980) looks at the kind of women who sheltered priests and organized clandestine masses.

The influence of Le Bras has had considerable influence throughout Catholic Europe and there has been a trickle of work conscious of the need to make sexual distinctions in religious practice. G. Orlandi, *Le campagne modenesi fra rivoluzione e restaurazione, 1790-1815* (Modena, 1967), G. de Rosa, *Vesovi, populo e magia nel sud: ricerche di storia socio-religiosa dal XVII al XIX secolo* (Naples, 1971) and P. Stella, "Devozione e religiosità populare in Italia (sec. XVI-XX): interpretazione recenti", *Rivista liturgica*, lxiii (1976) gives some pointers as to how far this process has gone.

The French woman's religious experience has perhaps been studied with greater continuity than anyone else's except perhaps the American. For a detailed bibliography on this theme, one's initial recourse must be Janet Wilson James (ed.), "Women and Religion", a special issue of the *American Quarterly*, xxx no. 5 (1978). One evocative study in this collection is by Mary Maples Dunn, "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period". American historians of women have made very imaginative use of sermons and didactic literature; for example, L. T. Ulrich, "Virtuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735", *American Quarterly*, xxviii (1976) and M. W. Masson, "The Typology of the Female as a Model for the Regenerate: Puritan Preaching, 1690-1730", *Signs*, ii (1976-7).

The Englishwoman's religious experience has been very patchily treated. Exception must be made for K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (New York, 1979) and Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villages in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974). These two works, and particularly the second which is a *chef*

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d'oeuvre, bear witness to a new and acute sensitivity to women's experience in historical writing. Particular non-conformist women continue to attract their biographers. James K. Hopkins, *A Woman to Deliver her People: Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in an Era of Revolution* (Austin, Tex., 1982) is perhaps the most recent. The history of how the Anglican church lost its working-class women while the Catholic church in Europe held on to them remains a largely unexplored theme.

S. C. Karant-Nunn, "Continuity and Change: Some Effects of the Reformation on the Women of Zwickau", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xii no. 2 (1982) is an interesting local study which could probably be given broader application. An up-to-date bibliography on women and the Reformation is found in Joyce Irwin, "Society and the Sexes", in S. E. Ozment (ed.), *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* (St. Louis, Miss., 1982).

The issue of witchcraft, clearly allied to both Reformation and Counter-Reformation, in which certain types of women in certain societies at certain times were victimized to further religious or political ends has also been a growth sector among historians of women and popular practices. C. Marchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (London, 1980) includes in chapter 5 a thought-provoking discussion of witchcraft in the context of attitudes to women. C. Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London, 1981) is an extremely judicious appraisal of many of the theories of witchcraft. Both these works move away from the earlier feminist portrayals of witches as the free-thinking "advanced" women of their time victimized because they challenged a male-dominated society. Such a theory did not stand up to a detailed examination of those tried for witchcraft who were often old, alone and merely very conventional "wise women" of the villages. G. Henningsen, *The Witches' Advocate* (Reno, Nev., 1980) is unusual because it deals with the Spanish witch and Spanish attitudes on which so little was known. R. A. Horsley, "Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, ix (1978-9) is a valuable addition to the earlier work of Keith Thomas, E. W. Monter and H. C. Erik Midelfort. Concerning the female victims of the Inquisition, H. P. Salomon, "The Portuguese Inquisition and its Victims in Light of Recent Polemics", *Journal of the American-Portuguese Cultural Society* (1971) shows there is work still to be done in this area.

Tangentially related to the theme of women and religion and women and witchcraft is that of women as healers, midwives and the like, and at the more formal level of women as nursing sisters, as the backbone of local philanthropic societies and as organizers of village charity. A great deal of debate has focused upon the contribution of

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women to the community in these ways and of efforts by male doctors or midwives to question their competence and to oust them from roles in which they were often efficient and more readily and cheaply available than the men who sought to displace them. On these themes, see Jane B. Donegan, *Women and Men Midwives: Medicine, Morality and Mysogyny in Early America* (Westport, Conn., 1978), Jean Donnison, "Medical Women and Lady Midwives", *Women's Studies*, iii (1976), Jean Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of Interprofessional Revalues and Women's Rights* (London, 1977) and J. Gelis, "Sages-femmes et accoucheurs: l'obstétrique populaire aux XVII^{e} et XVIII^{e} siècles", *Annales. E.S.C.*, xxxii (1977). Lawrence Stone suggested in a recent review of E. Shorter, *A History of Women's Bodies* (New York, 1982), which appeared in the *New York Times* of 2 January 1983, that the one contribution of that work may have been somewhat to redress the image of the virtuous, helpful village midwife ousted by the grasping male professional by stressing her incompetence when confronted with an abnormal presentation of a foetus or other irregularity. However, judging from an examination of the French data relative to a pre-antisepsis society when a surgeon's hands could kill in spite of any knowledge he might have of anatomy, the respective merits of midwife and medical man must remain an open question. Virago Press has now established itself as devoted to women's creative achievements, and their publication of Mary Chamberlain, *Old Wives Tales: Their History, Remedies and Spells* (London, 1981) draws on the legacy of folk medicine and makes interesting reading. We need more good work on women and philanthropy. F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980), which argues for philanthropy as the means whereby women enlarged their horizons, could with profit be pushed back into the eighteenth century.

We also need a history of the nursing and medical services in France which steers an even course between the hagiographical and the dismissive and looks at the real services proffered by the female religious orders to the community.

The history of crime demonstrates that crime has always been a male problem except for the very specific instances of witchcraft and prostitution — and who in these instances is the criminal is open to debate. Less violent, less prone to theft, women are usually represented in the annals of crime on something of a 1:5 basis. Both of Nicole Castan's recent works, especially *Les criminels de Languedoc, 1750-1790* (Toulouse, 1980) but also the general data and comments in *Justice et répression en Languedoc à l'époque des lumières* (Paris, 1980), are immensely valuable and give due consideration to women and specific areas of female crime. We have little comparative British work except J. M. Beattie, "The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-

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Century England", *Journal of Social History*, viii (1974-5), which draws on Surrey data. J. Sharpe's article on "Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England", *Historical Journal*, xxiv (1981) also contains pertinent material on women as the victims of crime. N. E. H. Hull, *Infanticide in England and New England, 1558-1803* (New York, 1979) concentrates upon a specific area of female crime, but one which is very difficult to detect. A surprising lacuna is a good study of prostitution in pre-industrial society to complement Judith Walkowitz's brilliant later study. A useful article is Mary Perry, " 'Lost Women' in Early Modern Seville", *Feminist Studies*, iv no. 1 (1978).

To jump from prostitution to politics is perhaps unjustifiable. The withholding of political power from women until the twentieth century has created an impression of female passivity or apathy in earlier periods which is to a degree deceptive. Abundant biographies exist on queens and mistresses, the "Women on Top" of Natalie Zemon Davis's article in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), and Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (London, 1981) provides an excellent instance of biography integrated with politics. Many were victims of dynastic ambition. P. S. Fichtner, "Dynastic Marriage in Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft", *American Historical Review*, lxxxi (1976) deals with the state that depended most heavily on thus immolating its women. Recently a tendency has developed to probe deeper and to recognize that few people had political power and that those who did were subject to manifold pressures by those who sought to further their own political and social ends. Among the manipulators, women figure conspicuously. A. Muhlsten, *La femme soleil: les femmes et le pouvoir. Une relecture de Saint Simon* (Paris, 1976) analyses the female influences and pressure groups at work in the court of Louis XIV, and in much the same vein there is Karl von den Steinen, "The Discovery of Women in Eighteenth-Century English Political Life", in Kanner (ed.), *The Women of England*. At the popular level the role of women in the French Revolution continues to command attention with A. Soboul, "Sur l'activité militante des femmes dans les sections parisiennes en l'an II", *Bulletin d'histoire économique et sociale de la Révolution française* (1979) constituting the most recent contribution.

The list of works continues to grow month by month. The latest reprint by the Bibliothèque Bleu is *Le miroir des femmes* (Montalba, 1982), where Arlette Farge brings to us texts from these popular chap-books relating to women. E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Love, Death and Money in the Pays d'Oc* (London, 1982), in which is translated a novel by the Abbé Fabre, *Jean l'ont pris*, a goldmine for those interested in attitudes towards women in meridional society in the mid-eighteenth

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century, will be extensively used by historians of women. The French have progressed far more than anyone else in bringing ethnography to the service of the history of women and in some branches are now setting the pace. We note that the Irish woman has recently made her entry with "Images of the Irish Woman", *The Crane Bag*, iv (1980). A pioneering group in Spain have produced *Mujer y sociedad en España, 1700-1975* (Ministerio de Cultura Estudios Sobre la Mujer, Madrid, 1982), of which the opening essay by Maria Angeles Duran, "Notas para el estudio de la estructura social de España en el siglo XVIII", though not specifically devoted to women, will form some of the statistical basis for an in-depth study of women's occupational roles. The Dutch periodical *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* and the Italian *Memorie* are other recent manifestations of a growing European commitment to the history of women and promise new horizons. There remains much to be done.

University of Reading *Olwen Hufton*

II
THE MODERN PERIOD*

> What one wants, I thought — and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply it? — is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety?[1]

DURING THE LAST DECADE, VIRGINIA WOOLF'S CALL FOR A HISTORY of women — written more than fifty years ago — has been answered. Inspired directly or indirectly by the political agenda of the women's movement, historians have documented not only the lives of the average woman in various historical periods, but they have charted as well changes in the economic, educational and political positions of women of various classes in city and country and in nation states. Bookshelves are now being filled with biographies of forgotten prominent women, chronicles of feminist movements, and the collected

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[1] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London, 1929), p. 68.

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