

Introduction

For the first edition of *A History of Their Own* in 1988 we stated goals remarkably similar to those of forward-looking women in mid-nineteenth-century Europe and the United States. "It would be really fine if someone would undertake to write a historical work on the position of women in society—how it has been developed from the earliest times up to today," wrote the German feminist Louise Otto in 1844,

The lack of such a work is always strongly felt, but even more now—to put lessons from the past on a firm historical foundation, to seek prospects for the future, even more to have women begin to feel that they . . . are not just wives and mothers of the people, but half of this people themselves. What has passed for the history of women until now is only biographies of famous women, saints, princesses, heroines, etc.¹

In the 1980s, we also wanted to legitimize the writing of women's history, to include lives and accomplishments long forgotten; to compensate for the absence of half of humanity from the historical record.

In many ways this project has been successful. During the last decade, scholarship on women has grown dramatically for every region and in every historical era. Because of this growth, the very existence of the history of women no longer needs to be justified as it did in Louise Otto's time. Few would now dare suggest, as they did twenty years ago when we first began the research for *A History of Their Own*, that women "had no history," or that they had achieved little worthy of inclusion in the historical record. Today, the study of women's past has become an accepted field within the discipline, and its practitioners have risen to the top ranks of the profession. Women's history courses are an accepted part of high school, college, and university curricula.²

Academic series of books in women's history, rich monographs, specialized encyclopedias, dictionaries, and bibliographic guides, new journals in women's history, internet groups, and web sites have proliferated. Growing networks of scholars, both in this country and throughout Europe, attest to the vitality of the subject. Topics that had to be pieced together in the 1980s are now recognized subfields in their own right: the history of the family, of sexuality, of violence against women, of laws and customs governing their lives. Subsequent research has confirmed analyses we assembled in order to write a work of synthesis: from the patterns of women's religious participation to the gendered dynamics of the witchcraft persecutions, from the shift in male roles when commerce made "providers" out of warriors to the connection between feminist demands and women's participation in political revolutions. Almost all of the principal figures singled out in our narrative history now have their own biographies and often scholarly editions of their writings. Talks that we cited in our notes, ones given at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, have become full-length monographs; long-range, general studies have finally been published—for example, an essential survey history of Catholic nuns, and analyses of women's lives in nineteenth-century Russia.³

In other ways, success has eluded feminist historians. Most works in women's history are found not in the history sections of libraries and book stores, but instead are catalogued under the impossibly vast category of Women's Studies. Scholarship in the field is read primarily by other women's historians or by feminists. Too many traditional historians make only the most cursory changes to their old narratives. European women now have their own histories, but this knowledge of their past has not significantly altered general accounts of European history. The question with which Louise Otto closed her thoughts on women's history in 1844 still applies today: "Shouldn't the female sex be given more attention in a general history of civilization than they were before?"

Women's historians of all regions of the world, not just Europe, have critiqued the male-centered nature, the subjectivity, the inadequacies of these supposedly gender-neutral prevailing accounts of the past. But however clearly the political nature of historical narratives and the choices and exclusions made in them are demonstrated, the full integration of women's history into all kinds of historical writing remains, in the words of the U.S. historian Anne Firor Scott, an "unfinished business."⁴ The burden of proof still lies with advocates for the inclusion of women and the dynamics of gender, not with those who oppose it. Most traditional historians continue to insist that their version of the past, which suppresses women's history and ignores gender, presents an "objective," "apolitical" account of all that is significant.⁵

Nowhere is this resistance more obvious than in European history textbooks. Although much lip service is paid in explanatory introductions to the need for a new, more inclusive history, the canons of the male-focused narrative still govern periodization, the organization of sections and chapters, the choice of heroes and the occasional heroine. At best, women are subsumed under "social history," implying that their contributions to politics, the economy, or intellectual and spiritual life have been negligible. Too often, women then appear only as victims, the subjects of laws and customs that constrained and denigrated them. Some textbooks tell far more about men's views of appropriate female behavior than women's actual lives.⁶ At worst, too many European textbook authors have simply added a few paragraphs about women to the ends of pre-existing chapters, pigeonholing the entire female sex as a "minority," an afterthought, an inconsequential and marginalized group whose lives exist outside the main story of Western Civilization.

None of the leading European history texts offers an innovative framework that views women as active participants with men in all areas of human endeavor. None analyzes men as a group or explicitly identifies what men as men have done. None examines the creation of historical definitions of masculinity, none explores how male-centered customs and practices became institutionalized and codified, none demonstrates how concepts of sexual difference have operated as social forces. Instead, the male has been universalized, so that accounts of men's achievements are assumed to be a complete history of the European past. What women accomplished despite constraints, what they made of their lives around and about the traditional men's narratives, has been omitted. There is no history of Europe that adequately describes the past experiences of women and men.⁷

As a result, women still need a history of their own that provides a continuous, female-centered narrative of Europe's past. A number of fine histories of European women now exist, but they either cover only a few centuries or particular groups and nationalities. Anthologies of articles present case studies across time but offer only brief transitional essays to link their disparate parts. Oxford University Press decided to publish a new edition of *A History of Their Own* because it provides a true synthesis, an unbroken, readable account of the European past from prehistory to the present that consistently puts women at the center of the narrative. Freed by its unique organization from the forced exclusions of traditional periodization, this two-volume work tells the familiar stories of the aristocrats and queens, but from a female perspective. In addition, by focusing on women previously ignored, like peasants and domestic servants, *A History of Their Own* provides a truly feminist account of European women's and men's collective history.

Choices that we made in the writing of these two volumes have become models for the field. Many historians have repeatedly called for reorganization of the standard divisions that shape our views of the past, chronological designations like "Middle Ages," "Renaissance," and "Industrial Revolution," but few have actually done this.⁸ Instead, the traditional units continue to shape histories of women, however exclusionary or distorting they may be. Freeing European women's history from what the literary critic Jane Marcus calls "the yoke of male periodization" was the most liberating aspect of our collaboration.⁹ By forcing ourselves to go against our training, we could re-examine standard historical events and thus reconceptualize the past from women's perspectives. In our reconceptualization, however, we did not abandon chronology. Each chapter is internally chronological, but the same event may appear more than once, as it affects different groups of women. Industrialization, for instance, had an entirely different impact on elite women, peasant women, and women of the modern cities, so it appears in each of the three chapters that focus on these categories. The Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the World Wars are all dealt with in this way. As traditional historical periods and events receded in significance, others grew in importance. Factors often ignored in histories of men, whether contraception or clothing, diseases or the design of houses, proved crucial in women's lives.

Equally liberating was our decision to change standard historical words and phrases. All historians are trained to examine documents critically, to distinguish between actual reality and what is being said about that reality by a specific group of people. In English, supposedly gender-neutral terms like "peasant" or "revolutionary" appear inclusive but the descriptions that follow never mention women. Other nomenclature based on the unspoken assumption that male experience is everyone's experience also distorts the reality of women's lives. "Working class," for instance, implies both that women in other categories did not labor and that women's lives in this social stratum mirrored those of men. We used descriptive phrases like "women of the people" and "women who earned income outside the home" to convey the reality of poor urban women's lives more accurately. In addition, we reversed traditional modes of expression, writing of "women and men," "queens and kings," "mothers and fathers" in order to make women the focus of our narrative and to counter the weight of a male-oriented past and male-dominant forms of expression.

Rejecting the male-centered biases of our discipline, we turned to other fields for methodological and analytical tools to break what the feminist historian and theorist Joan Wallach Scott calls the "epistemological frame of orthodox history."¹⁰ Anthropology proved the most fruitful. The beginning

of each section of this work uses the anthropological technique of "thick description." Women within a particular category in specific geographic localities are described in "cross-cultural montages" generated from all kinds of sources—from folklore, archaeology, and art history to sociology and economics.¹¹ This technique also allows us to highlight a single woman's life or production—her weaving, her basketwork, her painting, her diary. We then used this "text" to provide insight into the overall social structures and cultural contexts in which she lived. Thus, well-known heroines illumine the lives of unnamed women in similar circumstances. Joan of Arc sheds light on other peasant women's place in society, while Anne Frank's brief life illustrates the tragedies of the Nazi genocide.

In addition to giving us descriptive and narrative techniques, anthropology provided new categories of organization. The concepts of "place" and "function" allowed us to abandon the inadequate and inappropriate periodization of men's histories. Placing women in specific geographic and institutional contexts, identifying them according to their broad functions within European society, revealed the unity of certain groups over time and across the continent. Peasant women, usually rendered invisible in historical narratives, emerged as a separate group whose similarities outweighed geographic, ethnic, or temporal differences. Women within the Christian churches constituted another category unified across time and secular boundaries by place and function. In the modern era, these concepts allowed us to distinguish between different types of experience in the same place and era. In the nineteenth century, the lives of poor urban women differed so markedly from those of peasants that they constituted separate categories, even though the same woman may have lived first in the countryside and then in the city.

These categories also enabled us to assess the long trajectories and patterns of European women's experience over time. We had hoped to find a "Golden Age" for women, a time when European women were not subordinated to and valued less than men. While the possibility of a matriarchal culture in prehistory cannot be ruled out completely, we discovered no era in the historical past in which women dominated.¹² This unequal relationship between women and men, present in the earliest written documents of European culture—the Hebrew Bible, Homer's epics, Roman law—intensified as time went on. The nineteenth century marked the nadir of European women's powers and opportunities. In earlier eras, alternative authorities and customs, as well as regional, governmental, and religious variations, created a range of circumstances that enabled some European women to achieve relative independence and relative dominance. Gradually, however, the growing centralization, rationalization, and uniformity

imposed in government, law, the economy, and religion worked to erode these options and further limited women's lives.

The centuries from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment broadened possibilities for most men, giving them greater access to education and more choices of occupation. The opposite happened for women. New national law codes denied them control of their property and earnings, gave primary authority within the family to the husband alone, outlawed any efforts by women to control their fertility, and barred them from higher education and the newly defined professions. During these centuries, increasingly polarized images of the physical and psychological differences, both real and imagined, between women and men, between the "feminine" and the "masculine," justified these growing disparities. Female incapacity and male authority came to seem self-evident and natural.

The popular nineteenth-century ideal of the "angel in the house," a woman happily limited to the care of her household and children, offered a more restricted life to women than even the didactic treatises of previous centuries. The reality was always different from the imagined ideal. The majority of Europe's women continued to earn income; some "angels of the house" created paths out of the parlor and into the world. Even so, the concept of domesticity, with its constraining assumptions and definitions, remained for women of all classes and in all circumstances. The creation of "women's movements" in the nineteenth century occurred in part as a response to this narrowed view of women's capacities and activities.

In the twentieth century, women have changed laws and modified institutions. They, like European men, have benefited from prosperity, universal medical care, and technological progress. Most European women today enjoy full rights of citizenship, have access to education and employment, live longer, and face fewer risks from sexual activity and childbearing than women in earlier ages. While neither complete equality nor a realistic assessment of the value of women's contributions to European life has yet been realized, women's circumstances and opportunities have improved. In large part, change has come because of the effectiveness of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s and 1980s. As the anthropologist Kathleen Gough observes, "It is not necessary to believe myths of a feminist Golden Age in order to plan for parity in the future."¹³

In writing about each category of women, certain questions guided our research. First, how had ordinary women lived? What tasks filled their days? What motivated their actions and determined their attitudes? Second, how to explain the startling contrasts between women's and men's lives in the same eras? Why had laws, economic systems, religion, and politics excluded European women from the most valued activities in life? How had cultural

attitudes evolved that defined women, and qualities identified as "feminine," as innately inferior and placed all things female in a subordinate relationship to men and all things male? Why had men created or acquiesced in this inherently unequal system of social relationships? Perhaps more importantly, why had most women accepted or been forced to accept these limitations, which devalued their activities, denigrated their nature, and subordinated them to men?

Third, we looked at the exceptions—those women who achieved prominence and were included in traditional histories: St. Bridget of Sweden, Queen Isabella of Castile, Mme. de Pompadour, Florence Nightingale, Marie Curie. Why had these women gained recognition? Were they exceptions because of their character or historical circumstance? Finally, we studied those women, like Christine de Pizan, who first publicly questioned women's disadvantaged and denigrated status. Why did some women question all women's subordination? How had they come to identify with all women and to work for expanded opportunities for their sex? How and why did feminism begin and where might it lead, as it calls into question the basic values of European culture and society?

The answers to these questions led us to the central thesis of these volumes: that gender has been the most important factor in shaping the lives of European women. However, not all women's experiences are alike. Our narrative recognizes the gulf between a woman in medieval France and a woman in modern England, between a fifteenth-century female merchant and a twelfth-century day laborer, between a German Social Democrat and a Soviet Bolshevik. Our method of organizing women into separate categories graphically indicates the significance we accord these differences. However, underlying these differences are similarities decreed by gender. Throughout the centuries we found an awesome similarity in the effects of gender on European women's lives, in the continued power of the denigrating qualities classified as "feminine." Unlike men, who have been primarily identified by class, ethnic origin, or historical era, European women have traditionally been seen first as female, a separate category of being. As the French socialist Louise Michel wrote in 1885, it has been "painful" for us "to admit that we are a separate caste, made one across the ages," but as we compared our findings from studies of different eras, classes, and ethnic circumstances, no other conclusion was possible.¹⁴

Part I of *A History of Their Own*, "Traditions Inherited," speculates about women's and men's lives in prehistory and the origins of European culture's largely negative views of women and their subordinate status. It then examines the Greek, Roman, Hebrew, Celtic, Germanic, and Christian traditions about women and their relationships to men, traditions already in place

when Europe emerges as a more recognizable entity in the ninth century. Part II, "Women of the Fields: Sustaining the Generations," surveys the lives of European peasant women into the 1980s. Because they make up the vast majority of Europe's women until well into the eighteenth century, we placed their narrative first, thus highlighting their numbers and affirming their significance. Our account gives priority to the constants in their experiences over local differences in geography, custom, patterns of landholding and trade. Part III, "Women of the Churches: The Power of the Faithful," shows how Christianity provided a unique environment for European women. From the early centuries of the religion's growth, through the Reformations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, women could gain authority and relative autonomy not possible in other circumstances.

Part IV, "Women of the Castles and Manors," argues that the lives of Europe's noblewomen from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries are connected because of their elite status and their function as "custodians of land and lineage." While these women sometimes acquired power and acted in place of men, they remained vulnerable because of their gender. Part V, "Women of the Walled Towns: Providers and Partners," distinguishes urban women of the twelfth to seventeenth centuries from their rural counterparts. From the poorest day laborer to the wealthiest merchant's wife, townswomen participated in the significant economic developments of their era: the formation of guilds and the evolution of commercial capitalism. Neither, however, freed them from the constraints of circumstance and attitude that traditionally limited women's lives. These five sections comprise Volume I.

While our first volume focuses on the centuries before 1600 and our second on those after, this division is not rigid. Traditional chronologies are not the organizing principle of this work; the categories of place and function demarcating women's lives are. Thus although Part VI, "Women of the Courts: Rulers, Patrons, and Attendants," appears as the first section of Volume II, it describes court life from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. We argue that the growth of dynastic monarchy created special circumstances in which some women had opportunities to become educated, to write, to exercise political influence, and, in a few instances, to rule. Part VII, "Women of the Salons and Parlors: Ladies, Housewives, and Professionals," examines the lives of economically privileged women from the late seventeenth century to the present. Ideals of domesticity and the realities of better standards of living distinguished these women's lives from those in other classes. Some women turned these conditions to advantage, using their moral and material authority to play active roles outside of their homes.

Part VIII, "Women of the Cities: Mothers, Workers, and Revolutionaries," deals with the lives of everyday urban women in the same centuries, focusing on their participation in economic, social, and political movements. Here we pioneered the thesis that urbanization was more important than industrialization in shaping these women's lives. The chapters grouped under the heading "Women of the Cities" parallel our earlier category, "Women of the Fields." Together, urban and country women comprise the two most numerous groups of women, and so are near the beginning and end of the two volumes.

Part IX, "Traditions Rejected: A History of Feminism in Europe," mirrors the first section of Volume I, "Traditions Inherited" when Europe coalesced. Beginning with the writings of the courtier Christine de Pizan in the fifteenth century, this final section views European feminism as a series of repudiations of the negative traditions that limited women's lives.¹⁵ In this process, a women-centered view of the world, which is still being elucidated and realized today, evolved into feminism. This new edition of *A History of Their Own* concludes with an epilogue on developments in both Western and Eastern Europe since the collapse of communism in the late 1980s. The conservative shift in politics, the shrinkage of the welfare state, the rise of unregulated market economies, the continuance of primary responsibility for child-raising and housework still differentiate women's lives from those of men in the same nation, ethnic group, social stratum, or even family.

Aside from our central thesis about the significance of gender in European women's history, no other aspect of our book has been so controversial as our emphasis on the continuities in European women's lives throughout the centuries.¹⁶ These two convictions are linked. There are variations in European women's lives across time, place, function, and circumstance. They were active participants in political, social, economic, and religious change. But these variations and this participation did not alter women's status relative to men. Despite dramatic transformations of European culture and society from the ninth to the early twentieth century, the meanings given to sexual difference and to "feminine" and "masculine" identities worked to maintain the disadvantaged status of women.¹⁷ The medieval historian Judith Bennett describes a "patriarchal equilibrium" creating an overall pattern of European women's history that resembles a dance, in which the steps and rhythms, partners and groups may change, but the men always lead.¹⁸

Distinguishing variation from genuine transformation, we argue that a number of important aspects shaping women's lives have remained unchanged over time. Until the last decades of the twentieth century, all women

were defined by their relationships to men. Many women—far many more than men—remain in the historical record only as men's women: the daughters of Priam, Lot's wife, and the mother of the Maccabees are but a few of the earliest examples. A woman is first identified as her father's daughter, her husband's wife or widow, her son's mother. No matter what the era in European history, what their class or social rank, what their nationality or ethnic group, most women have lived their lives as members of a male-dominated family. Even those who lived more autonomous lives as part of women's spiritual communities were defined by their rejection of earthly marriage. Nuns, as members of religious orders, were described as the "brides of Christ."

These definitions, as historians of sexuality and of the family have demonstrated, constrained women and men. The "family" protected by law and custom, the union of a woman with a lawful husband for the purpose of procreation, presumed the heterosexuality of both partners and dictated their primary functions and roles. In the male-headed family, child rearing and maintenance of the household have always been gendered, seen throughout Europe's history as women's preordained, biologically appropriate tasks.

Defining women's primary duties as care of the family and the home has not precluded other work. In all historical eras, the vast majority of European women have labored at other chores and assumed other responsibilities.¹⁹ They have worked in the fields. They have earned wages. They have generated additional income for their families. Weeding, reaping, sewing, knitting, cleaning others' homes, raising others' children, working in factories or offices, women's labor has made the continuance of their families possible. This "double burden" of caring for a family and home and earning additional income has characterized the lives of most European women and differentiated them from men. It is women, not men, who have these multiple responsibilities and must find work compatible with these duties or arrange for substitutes to care for their children and their household while they earn income.

In addition, "women's work," whether in the home or outside of it, has traditionally been valued less and considered less important than men's work. Raising children and maintaining the home have been taken for granted and have never been valued as much as labor that men perform, whatever it may be. Paid labor available to women has usually been less prestigious than men's, has traditionally required less formal training, and has been more vulnerable to fluctuations in the economy. As a result, when they have been paid for their work, women have consistently received between one-half and two-thirds of what men earn. Sometimes connected by scholars to

different economic systems, this factor has always been present in European history. In reckonings of female and male worth in the Old Testament, in the manor rolls of noble households, in account books of sixteenth-century merchants, in payrolls of nineteenth- and twentieth-century factories, women received less than men. The amount that they are paid may vary: labor shortages or economic regulations may raise women's wages, but, so far, they have rarely equaled those of men. As historians of European women's labor have demonstrated, there was no "Golden Age" of women's household production. Commercial capitalism brought different activities and relationships within the marketplace to women, but not the transformation of the underlying gendered patterns of social interaction and the institutions that protected them. All of these factors shaping women's work limited European women's lives by curtailing their opportunities and resources.²⁰

Some women maneuvered around these limits or found ways of setting one institutional constraint against another—the aristocratic woman who sought the Church's support in her choice of a husband against the dictates of her family; the royal women who ruled as queens in their own right; the merchant's wives who managed a husband's fortune after his death; the successful court musicians, poets, and artists. Even they, however, were subject to the most damning aspects of gender: European culture's largely negative views of women. Considered innately flawed, less valuable, and thus inferior to men, all women were supposed to be subordinate to men. This subordination seemed part of the natural order. A woman who did rule over men, who held a dominant role, whether from a throne or within a family, was seen as "unwomanly," a danger to the universe's natural hierarchy, which made man come first.

These cultural views, expressed in the earliest writings of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, changed remarkably little over time. The biblical injunction to Eve that "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16) is repeated in every era and every European nation. The view that "the best woman is she who is silent"—first written down in ancient Greece—reappears often in European men's writings about women. The assumption that only men are truly human—that "a hen is not a bird and a woman is not a person," as the Russian proverb explains—echoes throughout European history. No woman could escape the impact of these views completely. Of all the factors that have limited women's lives, these negative cultural traditions, these negative constructions of what it means to be female, have proved the most powerful and the most resistant to change.

But they have never been all-powerful. Throughout the centuries is also scattered the evidence of European women's agency, of the multiplicity

of ways in which they gave value, beauty, and power to their lives. Many took pleasure and pride in their reproductive and nurturing role, in their daily tasks, however mundane. Sadly, much of women's creation has been anonymous and evanescent. Yet it is evidence none the less: the basket of willow branches created to gather food, the weaving in hand-dyed wools which clothed Europeans in the early centuries, the lace tablecloth for a daughter's trousseau, the household objects and children's toys designed to make life easier and more pleasant.

Although most of Europe's women accepted the institution of the male-dominated family for its guarantee of subsistence, an approved partner for life, and a sense of being protected from forces beyond their control, they have not just been victims. Resistance can take many forms. Even when unable to see beyond their culture's attitudes, they mastered the strategies of those in subordinate positions, manipulating, pleasing, enduring, surviving.²¹ Some claimed spiritual or moral authority as women, drawing on those religious or ethical traditions that empowered women rather than subordinated them. There is magnificence in the fragments of Sappho's poetry, in Hildegard of Bingen's visions, in Marie de Gournay's defense of women, in Paula Modersohn-Becker's self-portraits, in Mo Mowlam's negotiations in Ireland.

Our belief in women's abilities to create such excellence, to expand the boundaries of human creativity and endeavor, to transcend conditions that seek to limit and control them underlies every section of these volumes. We have never held that women are determined by "their essence" to remain in certain roles or to fulfill certain functions—a charge that our emphasis on continuity has sometimes prompted.²² Instead we have affirmed women's diversity and applauded their accomplishments. Increasingly, women's varied contributions have affected the lives of all. In 1998, Mary Robinson, as the United Nation's High Commissioner for Human Rights, brought her feminist sensibility to international affairs. While she was president of Ireland from 1990 to 1997, Robinson once explained: "A society that is without the voice and vision of a woman is not less feminine. It is less human."²³

Throughout our collaboration on *A History of Their Own*, we have taken heart from Virginia Woolf's vision in *A Room of One's Own* of a future in which a woman with the talent of Shakespeare could flourish. "My belief is that if we live another century or so, if we have the habit of freedom and courage to write exactly as we think," she predicted in 1929, a way for this genius can be prepared.²⁴ With these volumes we make our contribution to this collective enterprise. We look forward to the creation of a world in which women and men will acquire "the habit of freedom and courage," as well as the means and opportunity to succeed as they choose.

Notes

1. Louise Otto cited in Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, *Die Anfänge der deutschen Frauenbewegung: Louise Otto-Peters* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1983), p. 82.
2. For a survey of the changes in the academy and the profession for women's history and women historians, see for example, Judith P. Zinsser, Part III of *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).
3. Jo Ann McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Barbara Alpern Engel, *Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work, and Family in Russia, 1861–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
4. Anne Firor Scott, "Unfinished Business," *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Summer 1996), pp. 111–20.
5. For discussions of this problem, see the special issue of *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, Ann-Louise Shapiro, ed., vol. 31, no. 4 (December 1992) published in an expanded version as *Feminists Revision History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994).
6. For discussion of this in specialized works as well, see Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of Women's History," *Historical Journal*, vol. 36 (1993), pp. 413–14.
7. See for example, current editions of Lynn Hunt, Theodore R. Martin, Barbara H. Rosenwein, R. Po-chia Hsia, and Bonnie G. Smith, *The Challenge of the West: Peoples and Cultures from the Stone Age to the Global Age* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co.); Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage* (New York: Macmillan); Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, and Patricia O'Brien, *Civilization in the West* (New York: West Publishing Co.); Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization* (New York: West Publishing Co.).
8. Joan Kelly and Gerda Lerner were the first to articulate the need for new periodization in their now famous essays: "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in *Women, History & Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984 [1977]); "The Challenge of Women's History," in *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
9. Jane Marcus, "The Asylums of Antaeus: Women, War, and Madness—Is There a Feminist Fetishism?" in H. Aram Veenser, ed., *The New Historicism* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 140.
10. Joan Scott has discussed this dilemma in many of her essays. See for example, "The Evidence of Experience," in James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson, and Harry Harootian, eds., *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 367–69, 372–73, 376, 378. See also, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists*

- and the Rights of Man (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 124.
11. Judith Lowder-Newton uses this phrase. See her essay "History as Usual? Feminism and the 'New Historicism,'" in Veaser, pp. 153–54.
 12. Anthropologists have documented parity between women and men, and societies in which women exercised significant direct power, but not equality as it has traditionally been defined in Western cultures. For essays exploring this question, see for example, Rayna R. Reiter's collection, *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975) and Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough, eds., *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).
 13. Kathleen Gough, "The Origin of the Family," in Reiter, p. 54.
 14. Louise Michel, *The Red Virgin: Memoirs of Louise Michel*, Bullitt Lowry, and Elizabeth Ellington Gunter, eds. and trans. (University: University of Alabama Press, 1981), p. 139.
 15. Joan Kelly enunciated this idea in "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelle des Femmes*, 1400–1789," in *Essays*, pp. 65–109. This is also a central thesis of Gerda Lerner's *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to 1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
 16. On the difficulties of accounting for continuities and changes at the same time, see Sandra E. Greene, "A Perspective 'from African Women's History: Comment on 'Confronting Continuity,'" *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), pp. 95–104.
 17. For a clear formulation of questions about the meanings assigned to sexual difference, and the gendering of identities to women's disadvantage, see Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future," in Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).
 18. Judith M. Bennett, "Theoretical Issues: Confronting Continuity," *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), p. 86.
 19. Even though Europe's prescriptive literature might endorse the idea of a "separate sphere" as an isolated, protected women's world, the concept had no reality in fact. A number of historians have written on this misconception. See for example, Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, vol. 75, no. 1 (June 1988), pp. 9–39; Dorothy O. Helly and Susan Reverby's introduction in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).
 20. See Vickery, pp. 401–4; see also Bennett, "Theoretical Issues," p. 86. Note that Bennett, in her discussion of medieval English brewsters, does not see these constraints as specifically designed to affect women. Rather "[t]hese factors

- affected some women differently from others, but they affected all women to some extent. These factors shaped the lives of men as well as women, but they constrained most women more than most men. And these factors grew from fundamental institutions of English life at the time, institutions that were much more than mechanisms for the subordination of women," pp. 87, 86.
21. Anthropologists have made systematic studies of this phenomenon in contemporary cultures. See for example, James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance; Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
 22. For a discussion of the need to avoid the extremes of "essentialism" or "relativism," see Linda J. Nicholson, *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 9.
 23. Cited in Alida Brill, ed., *A Rising Public Voice: Women in Politics Worldwide* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1995), p. 155.
 24. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1957 [1929]), pp. 117–18.