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AT THE DAWN OF EMANCIPATION

The French Revolution raised the old question of women's position in a dramatic way, calling forth high hopes, but in practice it gave women next to nothing. However, the activities of Olympia de Gouges in France and Mary Wollstonecraft in Great Britain gave rise to a waive of international discussions; this was a successive stage of what had since the Middle Ages been known as *Querelle des femmes*. In Germany Emilie von Berlepsch accused publicists of misogyny as early as 1791 and asserted that woman should not only be a housewife and bear children; she should be able to act independently, think for herself and not be a machine dependent on her husband's will. In a way, this was a reply to the misogynous treatise *Über die Weiber* (1787) by Ernest Georg Brandes in which he stated that women were unable to guide their lives themselves. Though some progress in social mentality was achieved during the Age of Enlightenment, the old dispute over whether woman could be regarded as a human being was revived. In 1789 the Weimar "Journal des Luxus und der Moden" published a satirical article in which the author ironised women's complaints that they could not be elected to parliament. In December 1793 the "Journal" argued with the British publicist Mary Wollstonecraft and asserted that women were bound to stay at home and should not mix in politics. Being an influential periodical, the "Journal" shaped the opinions of its numerous male and female readers. But voices defending women's rights could also be heard. In 1797 a female author using the pseudonym of Aspasia complained that the most ardent defenders of freedom and equality were frequently despots; she alluded to Kant, who was convinced that neither women nor children were free human beings, and could become citizens.

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In 1798 some German ladies organised a protest in Leipzig against the denial of all political rights to women. An anonymous author of the pamphlet *Über politische Würde der Weiber* (1799) commented upon the treatise of the well known writer Theodor von Hippel, developing his thoughts in the classic form of a dialogue between man and woman. The woman argued that the human rights had so far denoted only man's rights. The man replied that since woman was not a human being, the human rights did not concern her. But at the beginning of the 19th century the Bavarian liberal, Wilhelm Joseph Behr, came out in defence of civic rights for women. The discussion on women's education was also revived. In her booklet *Über die Bestimmung des Weibes zur höheren Geistesbildung* (1802) Amalia Holst informed her male and female readers about von Hippel's opinions, asserting that the entry of women into politics would be too great a social revolution; her advice was that more attention should be paid to making education more accessible to women. But in this respect, too, opinions differed; in 1789 Joachim Heinrich Campe brought out a booklet *Väterliche Rath für meine Tochter* in which he warned women against erudition.

A heated discussion was also carried on in the Netherlands after 1795. An energetic activity was developed by Etta Palm d'Aelders who tried to set up women's clubs in Holland on the model of Parisian clubs. The clubs were used by many women and even men as a forum for demanding political rights and a wider access to education for women. Women participated in the country's political life, especially in the anti-French movement which developed in response to Napoleon's occupation of Holland.

At the end of the 18th century women in Italy developed also an energetic activity. Italian women formulated a written protest against the *nullita absoluta* of women and against *egoismo mascolino*; it was signed by 2,550 persons. Anonymous pamphlets criticising the difficult situation of women were put into circulation. One of the authors who demanded political rights for women stated that male despotism was as condemnable as monarchic despotism. Another argued that although men and women were of a different sex, they had the same human nature. Demands for giving women a wider access to education were widespread, and opinions were also expressed that the right to vote should be extended to women (actions in Milan).

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But it was not these discussions and polemics that determined the situation of women in the 19th century. Of great importance for the whole of Europe was that its laws were based on the principles of *Code Napoléon* (1804)[1], which was introduced not only in France but also in Italy, Germany (with the exception of Prussia), Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands and the Duchy of Warsaw, that is, in the whole of Europe under Napoleon's domination. The code liquidated the feudal estate privileges, separated the Church from the state and guaranteed private property. Jean Etienne Marie Portalis, who helped to draw up the code, held the view that private virtues were a guarantee of public virtues and that the family, a small home, was linked with the great home, the country. Good fathers, good husbands, good sons were good citizens in his opinion. The code accorded full public and private rights (including the right to property) only to men. It recognised the husband's rule as the basis for the existence of the family. It was the husband's duty to ensure protection to his wife while the wife should be obedient to her husband; the pledge of obedience was included in the marriage oath. This solution was expected to end the old discussion about the relationship between the two sexes. According to Portalis, Nature made man and woman different so that they might constitute a unit. It was not only Nature but also society that required the inequality of the sexes. Like John Locke in the past, Portalis asserted that the husband's authority was required by social necessity, for where two persons of a different sex form a union, that is a kind of community, the decisive voice belongs to the person of the privileged sex, that is to man[2].

According to *Code Napoléon*, the wife should live where her husband resides, she should have the same citizenship as her husband. Joint possession was recognised as a norm in marriage and was put under male control. Even if the marriage articles provided for a different solution, the wife had no right to exercise independent control over her property. She was not allowed to appear in court and start legal actions without the consent of her husband. Judicial inquiry into fatherhood and claims of alimony were forbidden. In 1810 the Civil code was supplemented by the

[1] Women's legal situation has been examined by U. Gerhard, *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, München 1997.
[2] Cf. J.-M.-E. Portalis, *Écrits et discours juridiques et politiques*, Marseille 1888.

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Penal code which provided for stern punishment for women guilty of adultery and a lenient punishment for men who committed the same offence.

However, in order to promote the economy, the code drew on some traditional solutions and partially exempted women engaged in economic activity from their husbands' control. But for this one exception, the husband was to be the master in marriage and in the family and, among other things, he was to have full control over the children. The only achievement of the Revolution was that sons and daughters were granted the same inheritance rights. Marriage was to be a civil, secular contract, but Portalis emphasised its sacral character. This is why divorce was eliminated in France in 1816. The husband was to represent his wife in all matters outside the home; the spouses were "one political person". In fact, this meant that the woman was incapacitated, legally annihilated. By turning to the most discriminative solutions of the past centuries, France showed how deeply conservative she was.

Prussia and Austria were more liberal. The *Allgemeine Preussische Landrecht* of 1794, in force until 1900, and the slightly later *Austrian Allgemeine Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch* of 1804 stipulated that the two sexes had the same rights, but both codes ingeniously justified actual inequality, pointing out that the husband was the head of the family for this was required by woman's nature (her weakness, unreasonableness, sensuality), by the necessity to ensure that one opinion prevailed in case of conflicting views, by the "voluntary" character of the marriage contract in which the woman ceded her rights to her husband, and by man's rationality. Both codes discriminated unwedded mothers and illegitimate children but contrary to the *Napoleonic Code*, they gave women some (limited) rights to institute legal proceedings. Separation of property was a norm in the Austrian code but women could seldom have full control over the part they owned. In Austria only Protestants and Jews could divorce; in Prussia the attitude to divorce was liberal but in practice divorce was difficult to obtain because of high costs. Unmarried and widowed women had to have a male protector (*cura sexus*) in most regions.

Thus, in the whole of 19th century Europe civil law accorded freedom, equality and property rights only to the male sex. The

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Napoleonic Code was the model for the civil codes of Italy (1865), Portugal (1867) and Spain (1889) and exerted an influence on the civil code of Switzerland.

The economic changes which took place in the 19th century — industrialisation, rapid urbanisation, migrations of people seeking work — also exerted a great influence on the situation and life of women[3]. Women and children supplied factories, mines and iron and steel works with the cheapest workforce. In 1800 women and children accounted for 75 per cent of all persons employed in the textile industry in Britain. In English, Belgian and French mines many women worked in extremely difficult conditions (described in Emil Zola's *Germinal*, 1885) in the 19th and early 20th centuries. As a rule, women received a much lower pay for the same work than men; this was explained by the fact that a woman worked to maintain only herself while a man had to maintain a family. This was by no means true, and sex discrimination was a camouflage for exploitation. Paid work became a necessity for the majority of proletarian women, they had to help maintain their family and they often had to bring up their children alone. Women from the lower middle class and also from the financially afflicted petty bourgeoisie and impoverished gentry also had to take up paid jobs. Several trades, those of a governess[4], dressmaker and milliner, in addition to the traditional trade of servants, became typical women's occupations in the 19th century. The poorest women who had no qualifications at all, traditionally chose "the world's oldest profession", prostitution, which acquired enormous proportions in the whole of Europe in the 19th century[5].

Extremely hard living and working conditions made it difficult for poor women to fulfil mothers' duties. Although Ignacy Sammelweis's discovery in 1847 that dirt was the cause of puerperal fever reduced the death rate in childbirth, motherhood was extremely difficult for women workers. The English publicist

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[3] Cf. J. Lown, *Women and Industrialisation. Gender at Work in Nineteenth Century England*, Cambridge 1990; J. Rendall, *Women in an Industrializing Society: England 1750–1880*, Oxford 1990; A. Willms, *Grundzüge der Entwicklung der Frauenarbeit von 1880 bis 1980*, in: *Strukturwandel der Frauenarbeit 1880–1980*, ed. Walter Müller et alii, Frankfurt/M 1983.

[4] Cf. Hardach-Pinke, *Die Gouvernante. Geschichte eines Frauenberufs*, Frankfurt/M 1993.

[5] J. R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, Cambridge, Mass. 1980.

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Anne Jameson analysed this question in her booklet *Women's Mission and Women's Position* (1843). She wrote that in Manchester women textile workers worked 12–16 hours a day up to the confinement and after no more than a two weeks' rest would come back to work. Being unable to nurse the child (work, lack of milk), they would leave it with a neighbour or a paid wet-nurse or take it to a welfare home. This was the reason for the death of many infants. The death rate of infants was extremely high. This tragic situation did not change despite the establishment of more and more homes for foundlings in which millions of children dragged out a wretched existence, dying prematurely. More and more poor women resorted to abortions, which were usually carried out in very primitive conditions, resulting in death or lasting injury.

Ironically these were the years when Romanticism set women on a pedestal. Romantic poets in the whole of Europe propagated the worship of woman, idealising her as a virgin, a lover and mother, as the priestess of the home, an angel of beauty and a goddess. Romantic love was in a way a continuation of the medieval courtly love extolled by troubadours; like courtly love, it was a fantasy detached from reality. Romanticism also witnessed the revival of sentimentalism, fashionable at the end of the 18th century, which regarded woman as a weak being needing male protection and man's strong shoulder, and copied the old stereotyped sex structure in which man was the oak and woman the ivy winding itself round it.

The 19th century is often called the Victorian era from the name of the British queen who reigned from 1837 to 1901[6]. This was the time when bourgeois society, extremely unfavourable to woman, flourished in all European countries. The border between the female, private domestic sphere and the male public sphere was very clearly marked in bourgeois societies. Work and the world was the domain of men, the home and the family constituted the domain of women. In this arrangement woman was the wife, housewife, mother, the guardian of customs and religion, and she was not allowed to go beyond these roles with impunity. Hypocrisy and dissimulation were the characteristic features of Victorian society. Double moral standards were in use, different for men and women. Hence the increase in prostitution

[6] D. Thompson, *Queen Victoria. Gender and Power*, London 1990.

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and the development of brothels, frequented by respected husbands and fathers.

Officially, women's paid work was condemned, even though it was a mass phenomenon in the lower social strata. In bourgeois and aristocratic families the ideal was a family maintained solely by the husband. Woman was to live a life of leisure (housework and the care of children were in the hands of servants), she was a decorative element adorning the house and flattering the husband's vanity. Idleness and the impossibility of filling their days with some useful occupation often resulted in nervous breakdowns and depression. Charitable activity was the only permissible work. Hence the increase of all kinds of women's organisations and circles sewing clothes for orphans, visiting poor families, organising raffles for the benefit of the poor[7]. Much time was devoted to society life, an occupation not devoid of practical considerations, for it made it possible for women to back the career of their husbands or sons and arrange good matches for their children. An important role in society life was played by balls, which were often organised for some charitable cause and always served matrimonial purposes. Theatre plays, concerts, operas, and less frequently reading, were the kinds of permissible entertainment popular with women. Some ladies practised certain kinds of sport, such as horse riding, skating, crocket and tennis.

The discussion on the situation of women continued unabated. In about 1800 science practically discarded Aristotle's view that woman was an incomplete, inept man. The bourgeois model was based on the conviction that woman was not worse than man, but different. Naturally, this had to have socio-political consequences, hence the many publications devoted to this subject. In 1825 two English authors, William Thompson and Anne Wheeler published a booklet entitled *Appeal of one Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men*, in which they stated that women's rebellion against their eternal prison, the home and the family, was the only remedy that could improve the situation of the oppressed sex. But in an article on the relationship between the sexes, published in the well-known *Staats-Lexicon* (1838), Carl Welcker, a Ger-

[7] F. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England*, Oxford 1980.

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man liberal, explained this "difficult and complex situation" by the laws of nature, tradition, common sense, history and social necessity, arguing, like many of his predecessors, that Nature endowed man with wisdom and woman with weakness, and since society needed somebody who could take decisions, it was better to entrust this task to the wiser person, that is to man. Like John Locke and Portalis before him, Welcker argued that men were not only wiser but also more energetic, more capable for active work; this justified their privileged status in society.

Completely different views were propagated by the English philosopher John Stuart Mill who in *The Subjection of Women* (1869) defended women's rights and in 1867 demanded suffrage for women in the House of Commons. His views shocked even some women. The English writer Margaret Oliphant blamed Mill for treating women as victims. She pointed out that English law, which regarded husband and wife as one person, reflected reality. In her view it was wrong to claim equality by saying that the two sexes were identical, for this was not true (she admitted though that Aristotle was wrong in claiming that woman was an inept man). Oliphant emphasised the perfect co-operation between men and women in everyday life and the help they lent each other. All she demanded in practice was that women should be granted a wider access to education. The French philosopher Auguste Comte also argued with Mill. He based his views on relations between the sexes on biology. Comte's opinions were violently combated by the French writer Marie Deraismes who in her treatise *Eve dans l'humanité* published in 1868 criticised the theory that women were inferior to men.

Evolutionary biology, created by Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, lent substance to the view that the relationship between the sexes was not based on complementariness but on supremacy and subordination. According to Darwin, natural selection proved that women were inferior to men, and this was reflected in the fact that men had greater achievements to their credit in science and creative work. Darwin ignored the fact that for centuries women had had no free access to education and to activity in scientific and artistic life. The result was that in 1870 the editor of Marquis de Condorcet's famous text on women's rights, written during the French Revolution, equipped it with an introduction in which he explained men's traditional domination

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by "natural selection". In this way he softened the views of the philosopher who believed so strongly in progress and human rights that he committed suicide during the years of terror.

The stereotype of woman, a stereotype born of male fantasy, obsession, fear and longing, continued to be in force in the second half of the 19th century. Woman was still regarded as an irrational creature endowed with mysterious powers. In addition to being presented as a predatory she–cat, sphinx and femme fatale, she was viewed as a naive savage girl evoking perverse passions, as an hysterical nymphomaniac. It was Sigmund Freud, the Austrian father of 19th century psychoanalysis, who helped to spread and perpetuate these stereotypes[8]. He asserted that women suffered from the complex of the lack of penis, thus referring to Aristotle's theory of "incomplete man". His patients were neurotic women from higher social strata, who in fact were victims of the social order in which fate had placed them[9].

In the years when Freud was busy analysing the symptoms of hysteria in his rich female patients, connecting them with the sphere of sexual life, movements aimed at the social liberation of economically and legally handicapped groups began to develop in Europe. The attitude of these movements to the question of women's position was of essential importance[10]. The majority of the Chartists, active in England in 1836–1848, favoured the traditional family arrangement with the man as the breadwinner and the woman as the housewife taking care of the home. Only one section of the Chartists, headed by Reginald John Richardson, supported the demand for women's civil and political rights. But in France, the group of supporters of the Utopian French socialism inspired by the ideas of Saint–Simon and Fourier included radical feminists who awaited the coming of a female Messiah and proclaimed women's solidarity regardless of class, nationality and party affiliation (Jeanne–Desirée Véret, Susanne Voilquin); they published a periodical "La femme

[8] Cf. Z. Freud, *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, Wien 1917; E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigismund Freud*, vols. 1–3, New York 1953. For criticism of Freud see L. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'est pas un*, Paris 1977.

[9] Cf. R. Schaps, *Hysterie und Weiblichkeit. Wissenschaftsmythen über die Frau*, Berlin 1982.

[10] G. Bock, *Frauen in der europäischen Geschichte. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, München 2000, esp. pp. 126 ff.

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libre". Elisabeth Celnart, a supporter of Saint-Simon, complained as early as 1832 that woman's position was very low even at home in the family, despite the fact that it was woman who on account of motherhood was fulfilling a special moral and civilisatory mission, a fact which undermined the widely propagated division into women's sphere, a sphere of nature, and the sphere of culture, allegedly connected with men. Similar opinions about women's civilisatory mission were expressed by Louise-Aimé Martin (*De l'education des mères de famille ou la civilisation du genre humain par les femmes*, 1834) and Sarah Lewis (*Woman's Mission*, 1839). These views met with a broad response; they were praised by the press ("Journal de femmes") and also by such popular women writers as the English novelist George Eliot (pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans) and the Scottish writer Mary Reid (who joined the discussion in her booklet *A Plea for Woman*, 1843)[11].

The Springtide of Nations activated women and raised their hopes; many women supporters of Saint-Simon's Utopian socialism took part in the 1848 events in Paris, Italy and Germany[12]. Fanny Lewald, a German advocate of women's rights, wrote enthusiastic reports about the revolution in Paris. Louise Otto, a German democrat and free thinker, called for women's participation in political life; similar demands were put forward by women activists in Vienna. Energetic actions were undertaken in France where the hopes unfulfilled by the Revolution kept reviving. "La voix des femmes", a periodical published by Eugene Niboyet, boldly supported emancipation slogans. In 1849 Victor Considerant, member of parliament, put forward a motion providing for suffrage for women (only unmarried ones!). But the famous writer Georges Sand refused to run for the National Assembly when her candidature was put forward. She was convinced that the struggle for social and moral liberation (for the right to divorce and free love) was more important than the struggle for women's civic rights. She felt no solidarity with women, believing that if they were granted voting rights they

[11] B. Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem. Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1983.

[12] Cf. C. Lipp (ed.), *Schimpfende Weiber und patriotischen Jungfrauen. Frauen im Vormärz und in der Revolution 1848/49*, Moos 1986; M. Riot-Sarcey, *La démocratie à l'épreuve des femmes. Trois figures critiques du pouvoir, 1830–1848*, Paris 1994.

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would vote as their husbands told them to[13]. Aversion to women's liberation claims was still strong in France, as was proved by the anti-emancipation statements made by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a socialist, and Jules Michelet, a historian. Under the influence of Darwin's theory, both justified the different treatment of the two sexes by differences in the animal world, thus sanctioning it by Nature. They kept repeating the eternal arguments that woman was an "incomplete" man, that she lacked one organ (Freud), was weak, was born to obey, just as man was born to rule. The publicist Juliette Adam-Lamber countered their assertions, stating that physical force did not legitimate authority, that women contributed other values to society than men did, which meant that the male and female components of social life should co-operate. In her opinion equality did not denote identity but equivalence. Similar discussions were held in England. The philosopher and critic John Ruskin protested against the exploitation of workers in factories but was a traditionalist with regard to the question of women's position. He believed that woman's nature was completely different from that of man. In his view men were endowed with intellect, which made them creative and inventive; the task of women was to maintain order and harmony. His treatise *The Queen's Garden* (1865) had run into several editions by the end of the 19th century. It presented the classic Victorian division of roles (the outside world for men, the home for women) as a social model, though Ruskin opted for some departure from this model, for instance, he thought that women should be allowed to conduct a wide charitable activity, overstepping the bounds of social life of the upper class.

Women's professional charitable activity and care of the sick became subjects of animated discussion in the second half of the 19th century. The marginalisation of women which occurred in the 16th-18th centuries greatly restricted their access to these fields but they now began to return to this kind of work. The Crimean War of 1853-1856 and the role played in it by Florence Nightingale opened hospitals to professional nurses. Despite the opposition of Victorian society, more and more women looked after the poor

[13] For George Sand's views see M.-R. Renard, *Féminisme et religion dans l'oeuvre de George Sand*, "Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse", vol. 84, N° 2, Avril-Juin 2004, pp. 103-178.

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in slums, after orphans and prostitutes, lending them material and moral aid. Women activists fought for prison reform. In 1836 a Quaker woman Elizabeth Fry organised the British Ladies' Society, which looked after female prisoners. Members of the Workhouse Visiting Society, set up in 1856, regularly visited the workhouses. The Society's secretary, Louise Twinning, demanded suffrage for women. In Spain, Concepcion Arenal, a liberal radical woman lawyer, endeavoured to change the organisation of prisons and introduce far-reaching social reforms, including the liberation of women. In France Josephine Mallet and Madame d'Abbadie d'Arrast were engaged in prison reform in the middle of the 19th century. In Germany many women's unions were set up during the struggles for liberation and the 1848 revolution to look after the wounded and the poor (in the Prussian part of Poland the first such union was established in 1831). Women also organised trade schools, kindergartens (*Friedrich Fröbels Pedagogik*), and ran soup-kitchens. In 1902, Bertha Pappenheim, an energetic organiser of social actions, established an organisation whose aim was to provide help to women (*Verein Weibliche Fürsorge*). In the Netherlands Betsy Park set up the first women's trade union, the Union of Needlewomen (1872). Many women's organisations and societies were established in Norway, Finland and the United States.

By their charitable activities and protective attitude women showed that they were ready to organise themselves. They could develop their work with ease for this kind of activity was in keeping with the traditional image of woman and her maternal mission. Charitable activities often had a religious context, being conducted by women's congregations inspired by the 17th century Sisters of Charity (France, the Catholic states of Germany). In Protestant countries this kind of activity was developed, especially from the 1850s and 1860s on, by Quaker and Unitarian women, many of whom were in favour of women's emancipation. They were soon joined by members of the Salvation Army (set up by Catherine Booth), which introduced full equality of the sexes in its ranks. An interesting movement called the Bible Women was born in England at that time (on the initiative of Ellen Ranyard). These were women who with the Bible in their hand visited the poor to teach and help them. Similar charitable and

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religious functions were performed by the conservative Union of Protestant Women set up in Germany in 1899.

Women's societies and organisations, which mushroomed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advocated peaceful social reforms, thus constituting an alternative to the class struggle and revolutionary slogans propagated by socialists and working class activists. The women's question was complicated in those years by the development of national liberation movements, for many countries deprived of statehood (Ireland, Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, etc.) started demanding independence. It was necessary to set priorities in the struggle for freedom. Both the class struggle and the aspirations for national liberation overshadowed the question of equality of the sexes.

Most women abandoned emancipation activity and took up the struggle for the liberation of the proletariat or independence. Not many women in Poland fought for women's rights (except for the so-called Enthusiasts rallied round the female writer and teacher Narcyza Żmichowska). Some other women writers (e.g. Maria Konopnicka and Eliza Orzeszkowa) took also an interest in women's problems, concentrating attention on the education of women and their access to work. This was but a weak echo of the events which were taking place in the West of Europe, especially in Britain and outside of Europe, in the United States.

The working class movement was growing in strength in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, overshadowing the problems of women, despite the fact that the plight of proletarian women was much harder than that of men. Many working class activists regarded the demands put forward by advocates of women's rights as manifestations of bourgeois ideology. Women socialists, such as Klara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg, took the side of those working class activists who believed that involvement in the struggle for women's rights dragged revolutionaries away from their true task, the liberation of the working class. In his writings and speeches Karl Marx (who in private life tyrannised his family, especially his daughters) never proposed equality, unlike August Bebel, author of *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879). In this situation women began to set up organisations which were not connected with the working class movement and were not of a religious or charitable character but expressed their emancipation aspirations: *Allgemeine Deutsche Frauenverein*

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(1865) and *Letteverein* (1866) in Germany, *Association pour le droit des femmes* (1870) in France, *Vrije Vrouwenvereiniging* (1889) in Holland, *Unione feminile* (in the 1870s) in Italy; similar societies were also established in Spain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. In 1892–1918 many scattered women's organisations coalesced into national communities, following the example of the United States where a *National Council of Women* was established in 1888. The next stage in the consolidation of women's movement was unification on an international scale: in 1889 *Union générale des femmes* was set up in Paris, and in 1893 *International Council of Women* was established in Chicago. About a dozen years later (1904) a union whose aim was to fight for women's suffrage, *Internationaler Frauenwahlrechtverband*, was set up in Berlin; in 1913 it affiliated 26 national organisations, and in 1929 as many as 51 (in addition to European organisations also those from South Africa, China, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Palestine and Syria)[14].

The women's movement was faced with important tasks. It wanted to widen women's educational possibilities mainly by access to universities, to secure greater opportunities of fairly paid work for women, to reform the family law (husband–wife relationship, right to property and to children), to secure women's political rights, especially the right to vote and to be elected, to say nothing of a change of morals (double moral standards, different for men and women, legal regulation of prostitution).

Changes were gradually effected in woman's position in marriage and the family. In Britain the successive reforms made in 1839, 1873, 1886 and 1925 gradually gave both parents equal control over the children. Civil divorce was introduced in 1857 and in 1882 women were granted the right to dispose of their property and income. Women's financial emancipation was also

[14] For the development of women's movement see in particular: B. Pietrow-Ennker and S. Paletschek (ed.), *The European Women's Movements in the 19th Century: A Comparative Perspective*, Stanford 200; J. Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780–1860*, Houndmills 1985; L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*, Princeton, N.J. 1997. The little known situation in Portugal has been analysed by J. Esteves, *As origens do sufragismo português: A primeira organisação sufragista portuguesa:a Associação de Propaganda Feminista 1911–1918*, Lissabon 1998; the situation in Spain has been discussed by C. Fagoaga, *La voz y el voto de las mujeres. El sufragismo en España 1877–1931*, Barcelona 1985.

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effected in Finland (in 1872 married women were given the right to dispose of their property and income) and in Norway (from 1888 women could dispose of their income). The progress of emancipation was slightly slower in France where the authority of the father and husband survived for a long time. It was only in 1884 that divorce was introduced in France; in 1907 married women were given the right to dispose of their property and income. The regulation that married women were not allowed to work professionally without the consent of their husband was not abolished until 1957. The movement for changes in family laws also developed in many other countries, e.g. Spain, Holland, Denmark and Sweden, at the turn of the 19th century[15].

In the middle of the 19th century women entered the universities. As early as the 1840s Switzerland opened its universities to women, an opportunity which was seized by women from other European countries, including many Russian and Polish women. In Britain the first academic school for women, the Medical School of Women, was opened in 1874, London University began to admit women in 1879, but Cambridge and Oxford did not do this until after World War I. In France women were for a long time denied access to knowledge (for a considerable part of the 19th century they were not admitted to the National Library in Paris). The first French woman to obtain *license en lettres* at the Sorbonne was Julie Daubié (1871). In the 1870s women were gradually admitted to medical faculties, but when two girls appeared at the faculty of law in Paris in 1895 they met with protests. It was only in 1924 that women in France were allowed to study at all faculties. In Germany the universities of Berlin and Göttingen admitted the first female students in 1895/96, other German universities opened their doors to women in 1900–1913. Polish women were given the right to study at the universities of Lwów and Cracow in 1897; previously, if they wanted to study they went abroad, mainly to Switzerland. *Verein für Kampf um Frauenrecht zum Universitätsstudium* was set up in Austria in 1888 but all it received at first was consent to the recognition of foreign diplomas. In 1878, under the pressure of progressive intelligentsia, the tsarist government opened a kind of academic school for

[15] Cf. G. Bock, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 170 ff., and A. T. Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany 1800–1914*, New Brunswick, N.J. 1991, and A. Cova, *Maternité et droits des femmes en France, XIXe–XXe siècles*, Paris 1997.

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women (Bestuzhev courses) in St. Petersburg and later also in some provincial capitals. All this shows that the process of admitting women to universities encountered serious resistance and was not completed until the 20th century[16].

A great campaign had to be waged to secure suffrage for women. The problem had been mounting since the end of the 18th century when Olympia de Gouges blamed the French Revolution for restricting the slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity, as well as the concept of citizenship, to men. Under the influence of democratisation which spread in the 19th century, European societies began to question the situation in which half of humankind, that is women, was deprived of rights. The movement for the abolition of slavery, which was growing in strength in the United States and the colonies, brought to mind the slave–like situation of women. As early as 1820 a proposal was put forward in the Portuguese parliament to grant voting rights to mothers of six children, as a premium for their motherhood. The idea to give suffrage to women who had the required financial qualifications was discussed in Britain in 1832. An additional incentive came from the United States where, in addition to the struggle for the abolition of slavery, a campaign was in progress to give freedom also to women. A turning point was the congress of women activists organised by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Seneca Falls in 1848. The congress recalled the irritating event of 1840 when two American delegates who arrived in England to attend the International Congress against Slavery were not admitted to the conference room on account of their sex. The indignation which the event caused speeded up the development of women's movement in America. The congress in Seneca Falls coincided with the European Springtide of Nations, when demands for granting women voting rights on a par with men were raised in many countries (France, Germany, Austria). This demand was particularly strong in France where it was supported by many female writers, artists, teachers and activists rallied round the periodical "La Voix des femmes", including Jeanne Deroin and Eugenie Niboyet. In 1867 Hubertine Audert set up a committee for women's suffrage and started

[16] Cf. L. Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989; C. Huerkamp, *Bildungsbürgerinnen: Frauen im Studium und in akademischen Berufen 1900–1944*, Göttingen 1996.

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publishing the periodical "La Citoyenne"; she acted with great energy until the First World War. In Germany similar demands were put forward by, among others, Louise Otto, Helen Lange and Anita Augspurg; in 1876 Hedwig Dohm stated in her booklet *Der Frauen Natur und Recht* that the right to vote for women was only a question of time. In Italy Anna Maria Mazzoni and Salvatore Morelli demanded also voting rights for women. Similar demands were raised in Switzerland (Meta von Salis and Charles Secrétan), Norway (Gina Grog) and by activists of women's movement in Sweden, Portugal and Spain[17].

The hardest storm broke out in Britain where the suffragettes developed a large-scale movement. The struggle waged in the 19th century for extending men's suffrage (by a reduction of financial and educational qualifications) stimulated women's struggle[18]. In 1867 the House of Commons, which was then discussing a reform of the electoral law, received a petition of the Women's Suffrage Committee, signed by 1,500 women. The next discussion on electoral law, held in 1884, prompted the suffragettes, whose number was steadily growing, to intensify their campaign. In 1897 many regional organisations merged to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. Combated with fervour by the authorities, ridiculed by the press and condemned by public opinion, the suffragettes organised demonstrations to popularise their ideas. The Churches, parliament and many men and women came out strongly against women's suffrage, regarding the suffragettes as a threat to public order and traditional values. In 1889, 100 influential persons, men and women, signed an Appeal Against Female Suffrage. The prime minister William E. Gladstone asserted that women's involvement in politics would impair their delicacy, purity and subtlety, features which

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[17] B. Bader-Zaar, *Das Frauenwahlrecht: Vergleichende Aspekte seiner Geschichte in Grossbritanien, den Vereinigten Staaten, Österreich, Deutschland und Belgien, 1860-1920*, Wien 2000; S. Hardmeier, *Die frühe Frauenstimmrechtsbewegung in der Schweiz, 1890–1930*, Zürich 1997; Y. Voegli, *Zwischen Hausrat und Rathaus: Auseinandersetzungen um die politische Gleichberechtigung der Frauen in der Schweiz, 1945–1971*, Zürich 1997.

[18] S. S. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain 1900–1918*, Cambridge 1986; idem, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement*, London 1996; the French movement has been analysed by S. C. Hause and A. R. Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic*, Princeton, N.J. 1984, and the Irish movement by C. Murphy, *The Women's Suffrage Movement and Irish Society in the Early 20th Century*, New York 1989.

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lay at the root of women's nature. The suffragettes were regarded as ridiculous spinsters and dangerous fanatics and it was asserted that their demands, if met, would masculinise women and unsettle social norms[19].

The suffragette movement reached its climax at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1903 the suffragettes' leader, Emmeline Pankhurst, and her daughters Silvia and Christabel set up Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Its members engaged in various radical ventures, they interrupted political meetings, followed parliamentarians in the streets, invaded the House of Commons, and in despair even resorted to acts of vandalism, breaking window panes or cutting telephone wires. Arrests and reprisals followed, but they brought no results. In 1905 chaos ensued during a meeting of the Liberals in Manchester, when Christabel Pankhurst and a young woman worker, Annie Kenney, asked if the Liberal Party intended to grant suffrage to women; the two women were arrested and imprisoned. The event drew public attention to the question of women's position and the way it was being solved. In 1908 the suffragettes organised a great demonstration in London, in Downing Street; they chained themselves to the railings of prime minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's house, which made it difficult for the police to arrest them. One of the women even invaded the prime minister's house. The demonstration ended with arrests but it lasted long enough to attract the attention of many people.

The culmination of the struggle was reached on what became known as "black Friday", 18 November 1910, when British police tried for six hours brutally to disperse the suffragettes' demonstration outside parliament by pouring water on the women and beating them. The demonstrators were dragged by hair along the ground, ridden down by horses, many were seriously hurt and two died of injuries. 150 women were arrested. The imprisoned females went on hunger strike (they were then fed forcibly), they were beaten and humiliated. The repressive measures did not break the determination of women fighting for freedom. New demonstrations were organised on and off. On 4 June 1913, Emily Davison, a 32-year-old suffragette, frequently imprisoned, threw herself under a horse at the Epsom Downs race,

[19] Cf. B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres. The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, London 1978.

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unfurling the violet–green–white flag of the WSPU. She died of head wounds in hospital and her funeral in London was attended by thousands of suffragettes. Some women, driven to despair, resorted to acts of vandalism: in March 1914 a suffragette Mary Richardson cut up Velasquez's painting of Venus in the National Gallery in London. This was a protest against the treatment of woman as an object of man's desire and yet another desperate attempt to draw public attention to the fact that females were deprived of all rights.

Though objections may be raised to the methods used by the suffragettes, we cannot but admit that these acts of extreme despair turned out to be effective in the conditions of those days. Within the life of one generation the British suffrage movement developed into an international struggle. In this respect, however, Europe was outdistanced by other continents. New Zealand gave its women voting rights in 1893 (they became, however, eligible for election only in 1919). Four American states (Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Wyoming) had given women voting rights by 1896. By the end of the 19th century women had been granted suffrage in most of Australia (in the entire Commonwealth of Australia in 1907) and in the Isle of Man. At the beginning of the 20th century voting rights were granted to the women of Finland (1906) and Norway (1907).

The First World War marked a turning point in women's history for it was then that they were granted full political equality with men. During the hostilities women were given voting rights in Denmark and Iceland (1915), Holland and Russia (1917). In 1918, after the end of hostilities, women were given voting rights in Ireland, Canada, Luxembourg, Great Britain and Poland, and in 1919 suffrage was extended to the women of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Germany. In 1920 women in all states in USA and in Hungary received voting rights, in Sweden this happened in 1921. During the interwar period suffrage was granted to women in Spain and Portugal (1931), Turkey (1934), and outside Europe to women in Brazil (1932), India and Burma (1935). World War II provided further incentives in this respect. In 1945 suffrage was finally extended to the women of France and Italy, and outside Europe to women in Japan and Vietnam. In 1946 respective legislation was adopted by Albania, Romania and Yugoslavia and outside Europe, by the Philippines, Panama and Salvador; in

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1947 by Bulgaria, Argentina, China, Liberia and Venezuela; in 1948 by Belgium, Israel and Korea; in 1949 by Chile, Indonesia and Syria; in 1953 by Greece and Mexico. In the 1950s and 1960s suffrage was granted to the women of most African countries, Haiti and the United Arab Republic. In Switzerland women's suffrage was introduced after strenuous endeavours only in 1971[20]. The canton of Appenzell–Innerhoden ignored the law for many years and did not grant its women voting rights until 1990, after a series of court proceedings.

Jordan decided to extend suffrage to women in 1974 and Lichtenstein, though an European state, waited until 1984. In some Arab countries the situation is still difficult. In March 1999 the liberal emir of Quatar called the country's first elections to local councils, in which women also took part. In the same year the emir of Kuwait tried to change the country's constitution and give women voting rights and access to posts on equal terms with men but this was violently opposed by parliament, which rejected the emir's liberal ideas. They were approved in 2005. In 2002 women were allowed to take part in the elections in Bahrain, a small emirate in the Persian Gulf. But Saudi Arabia still denies women voting rights.

As we see the 19th century was not long enough to secure political equality to women; the process lasted throughout the whole 20th century, extending even to the beginning of the 21st. The struggle was waged not only in Europe but also on other continents. Paradoxically, it was the two world wars that helped women in Europe for they induced them to leave their homes and replace men in offices and factories, which led to enormous changes in social customs and mentality. Moreover, in the countries which laid claim to independence, women played an important role in the struggle, it was therefore difficult to deprive them of rights in the new state (e.g. Poland). The restructuring of Europe after the two world conflicts also favoured the introduction of political equality for the two sexes.

The fact that the struggle for women's political rights lasted such a long time and encountered such fierce resistance shows the force of the stereotypes and prejudices which were born in Biblical times and the Antiquity, and were next cultivated in the Middle Ages and in the 16th–18th centuries. The boundary set

[20] Cf. Y. Voegli, *op. cit.*, fn. 17.

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centuries ago between the public and the private sphere, the home in which women were imprisoned, was difficult to cross. The fact that women were obtained voting rights so late in France, Italy and Switzerland, which otherwise were leading countries in liberal democratic Europe, shows that despite appearances of "enlightenment", archaic, irrational clichéd thoughts and customs were deeply rooted in social mentality. But even the granting of suffrage did not mean that women obtained full political equality. For years men have an overwhelming majority in successive elections. Let us take Great Britain as an example. 8,500,000 women took part in the 1918 elections (only women over 30, with high financial and educational qualifications were entitled to vote, proletarian women were excluded); 17 women against several hundreds of men ran for parliament but only one, Constance Markiewicz, the "red countess", obtained a sufficient number of votes. She was a leading figure in the Irish Easter Rising, so this was a triumph of Sinn Fein. But Markiewicz rejected the mandate for some reasons. The first woman to take a seat in the House of Commons was Nancy Astor, elected in Plymouth in 1919. Women's participation in parliaments and governments is still not proportional to their number in spite of their political rights.

As we see, the late 19th and early 20th centuries brought enormous changes in the situation of women. This had an impact on their participation in culture, not only as patrons and consumers but also as creative workers. Admission to universities gave women the possibility of conducting professional research. At first not many women took up scientific work, but some soon won acclaim. The Russian mathematician Sonia Kovalevska was appointed professor at Stockholm University in 1884. Maria Curie-Skłodowska, the first woman Nobel prize holder (1903), was appointed professor at the Sorbonne in 1906, and in 1911 she received the Nobel prize again. Many women conducted historical research. At first they concentrated on biographies of famous women, especially queens. In 1832 Ann Jameson published the book *Celebrated Female Sovereigns*, and in 1840–1860 the sisters Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland wrote the history of Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart. In 1889 Henriette Guizot de Wilt, the daughter of a well known historian and politician, brought out *Les femmes dans l'histoire*, a book on women's role in history. Women also discussed broader subjects;

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for instance, in 1873 Hortense Allart published a history of the Republic of Florence, and Marie Flavigny Countess d'Agoult (pseudonym Daniel Stern), a prolific writer, analysed the history of the 1848 revolution.

In the 19th century women took literature by storm. Hundreds of women put pen to paper in all countries, breaking their age-long silence. In May 1831 the German literary critic, Wolfgang Menzel, criticised this rush of women writers in "Literatur-Blatt" in a characteristic way: "Our writing ladies could reach for the needle instead of the quill... Nowadays young girls do not want to get married, they want to write, they do not want to fulfill women's duties, they want to write"[21]. Of the 265 authors researched by the Austrian historians Kurt Habitzel and Günther Mühlberger and classified as historical writers (a total of 965 novels) 45, that is 17%, were women[22], a very large number if we compare it with figures from previous centuries. It was especially the novel on psychological and social problems that became the domain of women in the 19th century. This was committed literature which discussed the situation of women, analysed marriage, raised such questions as self-sacrifice, the right to love, also to sensual love, the right to self-fulfilment. In Germany these questions were tackled in the novels of Therese Huber, Fanny Lewald and Joanna Schopenhauer; emancipation aspirations were expressed especially by the Countess Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Luisa Mühlbach (Clara Mundt); the latter wrote a biography of the British 17th century dramatist and novelist Aphra Behn, the first woman in England to earn her living as a writer. Women's problems were often intertwined with general social questions. This current was represented by Luise Otto's novel *Schloss und Fabrik* (1846) and Bettina von Arnim's *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (1843) with a moving description of the life of poor women. In Norway Camilla Collet's book *Amtmandens Döttre* (1855) won great popularity; it described the degradation of a woman who married a man she did not love. In Sweden the situation of women was criticised in the middle of the 19th century in the novels of Frederika Bre-

[21] Quoted after M. Kurkowska, *Literary Works as a Source of Studying Social History. German Popular Novel during the Biedermeier Epoch (First Half of the 19th Century)*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", vol. 89, 2004, p. 109.
[22] *Ibidem.*

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mer, in Poland by Eliza Orzeszkowa. In Holland very popular were novels which combined women's problems with general social questions (criticism of the bourgeois family model, stories of domestic servants, of abused and abandoned women); these questions were discussed, among others, by Margo Scharten–Antink, Top Naeff, Ina Boudier–Bakker, and Carry von Bruggen. These questions also attracted the attention of such Dutch male writers as Jacob Jan Cremer, Frans Coenem and Herman Robbers. In Poland the situation of women and women's emancipation was discussed by Bolesław Prus.

Several women writers won popularity and international fame. In Great Britain Mary Ann Evans (d. 1880) who wrote under the pseudonym George Eliot acquired renown as author of excellent realistic novels. No less famous were the three Brontë sisters: Ann (d. 1849), Charlotte (d. 1855) and Emily Jane (d. 1848), born on the English–Scottish border[23]. The best known were Charlotte, author of *Jane Eyre* (1847), precursor of feminism in literature, and Emily Jane who in her *Wuthering Heights* (1847) described in a fascinating way the history of a stormy love of two radically different persons. Both exerted a great influence on the work of many writers and their novels are still frequently reprinted.

It was George Sand (Aurore Dupin, Baroness Dudevant, d. 1876), author of nearly 100 novels, including such well known ones as *Indiana* and *Lélia*, who won fame not only in France but all over Europe. She eulogised true, free love, opposing it to marriage. She shocked society by her lifestyle, she wore masculine clothes, made no secret of her love affairs with Alfred de Musset and Frederic Chopin, and asserted openly that woman was intellectually equal to man and like him, could live without restrictions and defy conventions.

The Dutch writer Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom Toussaint (d. 1886) won popularity with her historical novels but she was not so famous as the writers mentioned above. She too was an advocate of women's rights as is shown in her novel *Major Trans* (1874) in which she discussed questions concerning women's liberation.

[23] L. and E. Hanson, *The Four Brontës*, Oxford 1949.

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In fine arts women had a more difficult start than in literature, though their interest in this field, especially in painting, increased in the 19th century. The Belgian painter Philippe Van Bree alluded to this fact in his painting (1831); it presented an atelier in which several women practise the art of drawing. Their model is a woman stylised as the legendary Omphale (with lion skin and a club) who was said to have held Hercules captive. At the foot of Omphale is sitting a woman reader who reads to the women painters the periodical "La Femme Libre" (such a paper did appear at that time) with an article headlined *Les St. Simoniens* (the St. Simoniens: advocates of women's rights, inspired by Saint-Simon's ideas, famous in the Europe of those days). One could hardly think of a clearer allusion to women's emancipation and their increasing interest in the study of painting. Indeed, in the 19th century more and more women started to study painting and drawing in Paris, Munich, Dresden and Vienna, where so-called free academies (e.g. Academie Julian, Academie Colarossi), private institutions accepting female students were set up. In the second half of the 19th century private art schools and courses existed also in Poland, in Cracow and Warsaw. At the beginning of the 20th century women gained admittance to renowned official academies. In 1900 the famous Academy of Fine Arts in Paris opened its doors to women, even though many protests were raised against this decision. In Poland women were allowed to study at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts as soon as it was opened in 1904. The Cracow Academy of Fine Arts was opened to women in 1920. It can be said that women gained admittance to art schools at the same time as they gained admittance to universities.

As the opportunities of study widened, more and more women painters acquired a high professional rank. In the second half of the 19th century, two female portraitists, the Polish woman Olga Boznańska and the French woman Bertha Morisot won international acclaim. Very well known was also the American postimpressionist Mary Cassat (d. 1926), who had worked in Paris from 1879. Her pastel drawings are devoted mainly to motherhood.

Women had been active in music, singing and acting for a long time. Many of them reached a high professional level and were well known also outside their country. Mickiewicz's

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mother-in-law Maria Szymanowska (d. 1831) was an excellent pianist and composer. The pianist Clara Wieck shone in the salons of Vienna. The singer Jenny Lindt (d. 1887) called the Nightingale of the North sang not only in Stockholm but on the stages of the whole of Europe and America. The Polish soprano Janina Korolewicz-Waydowa was admired in Europe and the United States. The famous English actress Sarah Siddons and the French actress Sarah Bernhardt are remembered in the history of the theatre as unparalleled performers of tragic roles. The Polish actress Helena Modrzejewska (known abroad as Modjeska) captured the hearts of audiences in Poland, Great Britain and the United States. These are but a few examples. In the 19th century hundreds of women were employed in theatre, opera and ballet companies and many of them were at the top of their profession.

An analysis of women's participation in scientific, literary and artistic work during the period of their struggle for civic and political rights shows that this was the period when quantity began to change into quality: it was not only that women made their appearance in creative work but they achieved important results and often reached the top of their profession. They not only showed what a woman is capable of; their work has enriched science, literature and art with great, lasting values, it has contributed to their development by creating patterns and providing inspiration for other creators. This led to the equalisation of the rights of the two sexes not only in politics and the law but also in culture.

(Translated by Janina Dorosz)

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