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Sisterhood and Slavery: Transatlantic Antislavery and Women's Rights

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How (and Why) the Analogy of Marriage with Slavery Provided the Springboard for Women's Rights Demands in France

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In the Paris springtime of 1848, the new leaders of the revolutionary French Second Republic accorded all French men the vote, in a move too long known as “suffrage universal” – without the qualifier “masculin”. A small group of revolutionary French women protested their exclusion from the suffrage. To the male republicans’ claim that there were “no more proletarians in France,” the women responded that “if the revolution had been made for all,” women were assuredly “half of everyone,” and that “there could not be two liberties, two equalities, two fraternities,” that “the people” is “composed of two sexes.”¹ They almost immediately instigated demands for work, for better education, and – for our purposes, most importantly – for marriage law reform and the right to divorce.

What is particularly striking when examined from the perspective of “sisterhood and slavery” is the juxtaposition of these 1848 feminist demands on behalf of women (and particularly the demand for divorce) with the definitive emancipation of black slaves in France’s colonies. **[IMAGERY HERE]** Indeed, almost immediately upon assuming power, the new leadership of the republic had decreed (4 March) the definitive abolition of colonial slavery and their action was subsequently confirmed on April 27th. Although it had long been a proud maxim of French culture that “There are no slaves in France,”² the women of *La Voix des femmes* insisted from the outset that there were indeed slaves in France, remarking in various articles and editorials that a French woman was “bent under the weight of the most extreme oppression,” “deprived of all her rights,” “nearly a slave.”³ In late March, the feminist Jeanne Deroin upped the ante, challenging the male revolutionaries by insisting that “the mothers of your sons cannot be slaves.”⁴

It is by now well-known, at least in the scholarly community, that in France demands for women’s rights and abolition of black slavery in the French colonies developed in tandem many decades before 1848. Bonnie S. Anderson has categorically claimed that “Feminists began to apply the concept of emancipation to women’s situation during the French Revolution.”⁵ And, indeed, the feminist tracts of 1789 ring out with slavery analogies and appeals for emancipation. Claims for emancipating women and slaves were often coupled by sympathizers, including Condorcet and Olympe de Gouges, both of whom were active in the *Société des Amis des Noirs*.⁶ I will return to this period shortly, but first I want to go even further back in time. For my research has established that the roots of this symbolic connection between women’s status and slavery in French language, culture, and politics can be tracked still further back.

In this paper, I extend the timeframe back some two hundred years from 1848 to the 1650s, providing evidence of the slavery-marriage analogy in published literary and political

works by women and men (who deploy it in support of what can only be termed, retrospectively, a feminist politics). I will raise questions about exactly how we might interpret the feminist use of the slavery analogy as well as about how scholars and theorists have heretofore approached the separate subjects of women's rights and slavery. I will begin with the latter point, however, since some of the evidence I am producing here should be of use in clarifying some theoretical and interpretative concerns as well as straightening out the historical record. In so doing, I am hoping also to jumpstart a more fruitful dialogue between Anglophone and Francophone scholars of slavery and women's rights than has heretofore existed.

Among those French scholars who base their analyses of "what is thinkable" on the classics of political theory, Montesquieu is usually credited with bringing these issues of women's rights and antislavery together in his important works, *Les Lettres persanes* (1721) and *L'Esprit des lois* (1748), both of which have been cited as starting points for serious (male) thinking about the evils of slavery as well as of women's issues.⁷ And indeed, one cannot doubt Montesquieu's importance, though his opposition to slavery is in fact far more progressive than his position on the woman question.⁸ In the English-language literature, the remarkable Mary Astell is usually credited for first deploying the slavery analogy to denounce the situation of married women around 1700.⁹ Her line, "If all Men are born Free, how is it that all Women are born Slaves?" is widely quoted by scholars of the period.¹⁰

My thinking on this subject has been stimulated by a number of recent works by feminist scholars. The political theorist **Carole Pateman** has long insisted that behind the "social contract" there lay a "sexual contract," but her analysis has been based primarily in the work of well-known male theorists who contributed to the development of "liberal" political theory, with the implication that the sexual contract had been some sort of well-kept secret.¹¹ Meanwhile, on the French side, the American-based historian **Sarah Hanley** has looked at the historical aspects, identifying what she calls the "family-state compact" and "marital regime governance" that increased the power of husbands (as against that of fathers) during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV. She has likewise examined the varied forms of protest by women who took their cases from court into the streets in the later 17th century, and has shown how these highly-publicized actions may have informed the feminist protests of the later 18th century. Indeed, Hanley has claimed (1997, p. 45) that "For French women positing arguments against loss of liberty, life, and property, abduction, arrest, and captivity, tyrannical governance practiced in a harem or a household was as unnatural, improper, and illegal as was the slavery of other peoples, which they also decried." In fact, she summarily insists: "women suffered marital servitude by law in a French state that legally disallowed slavery."¹² The American literary scholar **Joan de Jean** has provided us with a stunning re-reading of the novels of the 17th century French women novelists that emphasizes their contributions to feminist social criticism. In fact, she calls the French novel "a feminist creation."¹³ Based in a recent reinterpretation of the contributions of François Poulain de la Barre, the Dutch historian **Siep Stuurman** has argued a strong case that calls for women's rights may have even provided the "unseen" springboard for the European Enlightenment.¹⁴ But neither Pateman, nor Hanley nor De Jean, nor Stuurman (nor anyone else whose work I have encountered to date, including **Carolyn Lougee**) have explored in any depth the repeated (and persistent) use in France by these women writers (and their associates) of the slavery analogy -- and the accompanying invocations of liberty on their own behalf -- even prior to the autocratic reign of the Sun King (Louis XIV had been crowned in 1644 at age six but only took power in his own right in 1661 when he reached age eighteen).

Thus, at least 150 years before the French Revolution, a century before J.-J. Rousseau proclaimed in *The Social Contract* (1762) that “Man was born free, but everywhere he is in chains,” nearly 100 years before Montesquieu’s *Esprit des lois* (1748), and fifty years before Mary Astell, and, indeed, even before black slavery had become an issue for French moralists, French writers – women and some men -- were already voicing condemnations of institutionalized marriage as slavery and as a violation of women’s individual freedom. These critics didn’t think either form of subordination was “natural.” Increasingly, they began to advocate dramatic emancipatory changes in the secular laws and practices governing marriage. They based their claims squarely on the analogy of women’s situation in marriage to slavery, accompanying these claims by calls, variously, for women’s “liberty” and, often in the same breath, “equality of the sexes” in various combinations and permutations, and juxtaposing “freedom” with “slavery”. Initially, they challenged the practice of arranged (loveless) marriages, seeking to advance women’s choice of a mate based on “inclination,” and to mitigate the harsh practices that (in a situation where no divorce was possible, and legal separations were extremely difficult to obtain) husbands could – and did -- deploy to control and punish unruly or recalcitrant wives. Masters were, after all, masters, and bondage was bondage. They also complained bitterly of women’s inadequate education, devised so as to insure their submission. Ultimately, they demanded divorce – and they demanded it from the civil authorities – from the state, not the church.

Who were these seventeenth-century French critics who introduced the slavery analogy in the 1640s and 50s and why was the slavery analogy so important to them? And to what specific slavery were they comparing women’s subordination in marriage? Can we determine their points of reference? Their knowledge base? The Bible? Aristotle? Rome or Athens? Half-knowledge about women in “oriental” harems? about Christian slaves in North Africa? Was it some understanding of slavery as developed elsewhere (especially in Spanish America) prior to the founding of the French West India Company (1664) and the elaboration of the *Code Noir* (1685).¹⁵ What, indeed, did “slavery” mean to these early critics of women’s status as wives? What did they mean by liberty? And what was the influence of this analogy, this rhetoric of slavery and emancipation with reference to wives, for subsequent considerations of emancipation more generally? [I do not expect to answer all these questions in this paper, but rather to lay some groundwork for further exploration of a neglected link between debates about women’s subordination and that of slaves. I further intend to pose questions about chronology and causality that may be of considerable interest to students of the Enlightenment, the revolutionary period, and the movement to abolish human slavery – and to challenge the master/slave, command/obedience pairing.] I am not prepared to argue that the women novelists invented this language of slavery/freedom, although they certainly appropriated it for their critique of marriage with gusto.¹⁶ What I find interesting is that in these early works, human bondage seems to have had no particular color or what we would now call racial components, though it clearly had a sex attached.

The denunciation of women’s position in marriage was a much-remarked and repeated theme, if not a central argument, in the rambling fictional works pioneered by early French women novelists -- the women novelists later branded (and slandered) as the *Précieuses*. In particular, we can point to the works of the Paris-based writer Madeleine de Scudéry – first, her *Femmes illustres, ou les Harangues héroïques* (1642), then in *Artamène, or The Grand Cyrus* (1649-53) and peaking in *Clélie* (1654-1660).¹⁷ The latter two novels became 17th century best-sellers, so many readers in the extensive Francophone world were exposed to the denunciation of marriage as “slavery” and to the language of “chains” and “liberty” (well before the founding of the French West India Company and the beginnings of serious French involvement in the African slave trade). In these novels, especially, Scudéry

attempted to develop a viable image of an independent, unmarried woman, even while shying away from publishing under her own name or playing the “savante”. She recognized marriage – as then institutionalized -- as a trap that would provide a woman only with a master, rather than a lover or partner; she herself remained single.

Such themes were further developed and popularized by the abbé Michel de Pure in his two-volume novel *La Précieuse* (1656-58), where one character delivered a blistering denunciation of marriage, and a group of women and their friends subsequently discussed what could be done to remedy it. “Is there a tyranny in the world more cruel, more severe, more insupportable than that of these chains which endure to the tomb?” asks de Pure’s character Eulalie (in vol. 1), while in the section called “Remedies to the evils of marriage” (vol. 2), one female speaker, denouncing the slavery of women, proclaims that “I wish to work . . . toward the liberty of my sex; and to make a society dedicated to delivering the miserable, and which sacrifices its life, its cares, and its labors to the redress of this injury, and the destruction of this servitude.”¹⁸

The particular issues that initially provoked the deployment of the slavery analogy by the writers of this period were those of opposing the legal marriage contract and supporting women’s right to choose their partners according to their own “inclination.” – this in protest against the arbitrary decisions of aristocratic and/or wealthy fathers, the male heads of lineage families, to arrange otherwise unsuitable marriages for their daughters in the family interest. During the 1660s and early 1670s, these protests concerning slavery in marriage were taken up by the popular and well-connected dramatist Molière in his famous plays concerning the *précieuses*, husbands and wives, and the femmes savantes.¹⁹ Ridicule and mockery have long provided means for defusing “objectionable” opponents, and certainly Molière’s satires scored points with contemporary audiences (indeed, they still do!). But precisely by making fun of the critiques of marriage, he (and those he satirized) educated others into understanding that there was a problem, and subsequent writers built on the criticism. And note that all this was going on just prior to the time that François Poullain de La Barre published his pathbreaking (though seemingly ignored at the time) treatise, *De l’égalité des deux sexes* (1673), introducing Cartesian method for the first time to address the “woman question”.²⁰ Thus, in France the debate about women’s subjection in marriage increasingly entered discussion of current problems, instead of being discussed in the guise of the faraway or Orientalized past. Indeed, mid-seventeenth century feminists had roundly and repeatedly denounced what Carole Pateman refers to as “the sexual contract” by one word: “slavery.”

Joan de Jean was not wrong to refer to the novel in France as “a feminist creation;”²¹ these novelists were very aware of what they were doing. It was precisely because male privilege was being exposed as “unnatural” – as a sociopolitical construction, in fact (and this had begun already centuries earlier) – that feminists and feminist claims were considered increasingly dangerous and disruptive. But the French novel offers further important evidence that has been overlooked: De Jean signals a shift in women’s fiction from the 1680s on, to exploring the stories of women after their marriages, as contrasted with earlier narratives that led up to the “happily ever after.” In particular, she points to the publication in 1697 of the *Mémoires de Madame la comtesse de M***** by a certain Henriette de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat, which in the context of what I have said above might qualify as the first “slave revolt” in French literature – as De Jean puts it, these memoirs “define female notoriety as the woman’s decision to challenge the state and its official religion in the person of the individual to whom it has delegated authority over her,” i.e. the master disguised as husband.²²

What did the 17th century women writing actually know about slavery as an institution? It is actually quite difficult to say. Madeleine de Scudéry's two giant novels were set, respectively, among the ancients – namely, the Medes and Persians, and the Romans. Both settings were those of slave-based cultures, though this feature did not seem to have been emphasized as such. But due to her residency in Marseille in the 1640s, during the years (1644-46) her brother commanded the Citadel there, Madeleine de Scudéry had every opportunity to witness the French state's prisoner/galley-slaves as well as to observe the redemption processions organized by Catholic religious orders for European Christians formerly enslaved by Barbary Coast pirates on the Mediterranean.²³ It may be significant that Scudéry's usage of the slavery analogy in her two long novels completely changes following her stay in Marseille. There are, to be sure, Orientalist overtones in her choice of novelistic settings, though in them the harem does not feature as an extreme site for criticism in the way it would be deliberately deployed by Montesquieu in the *Persian Letters* (1721). In any case I have (so far) found no reference in these early texts to black slavery, nor any reference to the French State's use of Iroquois galley slaves, plying the waters between France and its Canadian territories, or to the South Asian slaves kept by French colonists. Nor have I so far come across any literary reference to slaveholding by French Jesuit fathers in the West Indies (e.g., Père Labat). There is more to be done; the novels are very long-winded.

Still, the slavery analogy was being utilized by other seventeenth-century writers; in particular, explorers and commentators on the West Indies freely deployed it to describe the relations between the sexes among the indigenous peoples (*les sauvages*) of those areas: witness the Dominican father Jean-Baptiste du Tertre, in his influential report, *Histoire Générale des Antilles habitées par les François* (1667): “the wives of the savages are rather the slaves than the partners of their husbands, and they are never idle. . . and it is considered shameful for a man to set his hand to women's work.”²⁴ And in the early eighteenth-century, one case of an exotic girl acquired by purchase from the Turks by the French ambassador to Constantinople and brought to France for education (the case of Mlle Aïssé) became well-known to the Parisian public; her life was drawn on by the abbé Prevost for his *Histoire d'une grecque moderne* (1740).²⁵

By the mid-18th century, the secular marriage contract in France had been squarely identified as abusive of control over property and person (and, if anything, the powers of husbands over wives had increased). Was slavery not also primarily about control over property – unwilling property, in the form of persons? The marriage contract, though, was also about control over personhood. French husbands could – and did, with impunity -- circumscribe wives' mobility and lock them up; deprive them of property, particularly dowry property; confiscate children after separating them from their mothers; administer physical punishment with impunity; destroy wives' reputations.²⁶ Generic to slavery was the lifelong tyranny of a master, the requirement of submission (including sexual submission) and obedience, enforced by the threat of physical violence; so where was the difference, when marriage postulated the same? This is not to say that, on an individual basis, marriages could never be happy; I am speaking here of the institutionalized, legal form itself. By the time Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois* was published in Geneva in 1748, then, the slavery analogy was already in full flower. But Montesquieu's denunciation of slavery in the Spirit of the Laws did not encompass women. Other writings from his pen, however, reveal his underlying belief that, unrestrained, women (because of their powers of attraction and seduction) would absolutely lord it over men.²⁷

One of the most telling critiques of Montesquieu's position (never published in its time, unfortunately) came from no less a commentator than the very wealthy and well-connected feminist Madame Dupin, who was attempting to redress women's grievances by writing a history of women. Significantly, her hired secretary and research assistant on this project was none other than Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In response to Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*, and in the specific context of an argument that encompassed the issue of black slavery in the West Indies, Madame Dupin insisted (ca. 1750) that laws must be based in natural law and that their goal was human happiness through justice; she was thinking specifically of marriage as slavery for wives, precisely because of its indissolubility. Here I quote from a manuscript written partially in her hand and partially in the hand of Rousseau: "It is astonishing that in a country where Slavery is regarded with horror, one has become accustomed to impeding the freedom of married women in every imaginable way, and to finding them in a condition that does not even offer the hope of emancipation [*affranchissement*]."²⁸

A leading *Encyclopédistes*, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert clearly agreed with Madame Dupin. In his 1759 published response to Rousseau, d'Alembert too deployed the slavery analogy, critiquing "The slavery and the kind of degradation in which we have placed women; the fetters we place about their minds and souls If most nations have acted like ours with respect to women, it is because everywhere the men have been the strongest, and everywhere the strongest have been the oppressors of the weakest."²⁹

This cautionary advice from d'Alembert did not dissuade Rousseau from deploying the slavery analogy entirely in the interests of MEN in *The Social Contract* (1762), and, virtually in parallel, spelling out the subordinate place of women in *Julie* and *Emile*. When Rousseau insisted, at the outset of the Social Contract, that "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains," he was deliberately talking about men as such, and his use of the term Man (*L'Homme*) did not encompass women.³⁰ (One wonders what Madame Dupin thought of this intellectual treason on the part of her former employee!). This did not prevent French feminists from continuing to insist in print and loudly on the pertinence of the slavery analogy to the legal subordination of wives.³¹

Examples of such uses of the slavery analogy continue to multiply, and the link to black slavery expanded, though it does not seem that black slavery ever became the exclusive model of slavery cited. More investigation of eighteenth-century texts would be no doubt be useful in confirming the general pattern. But I must move on.

In the summer of 1789, the first year of the French Revolution, the issue of slavery surfaced full-blown in debates over the admission to the National Assembly of delegates from the colonies. Following the Declaration of the Rights of Man in late August, however, the use of the slavery analogy with reference to women's plight proliferated, though with differing contextual expressions. One remarkable document whose authorship is unknown deliberately contrasted the fate of French women, unliberated by the Declaration, and Black slaves, listed among a number of other categories of the oppressed (the poor villager, the unfortunate vassal, the timid soldier, the modest priest): "the black African will no longer find himself compared to a stupid animal which, goaded by the prod of a fierce driver, irrigates our furrows with his sweat and blood." The implication here was (as would also be the case again in 1848) that all MEN, of whatever description, were to date the primary beneficiaries of the revolution.

Ah! our masters! will we then be the only ones for whom the iron age will forever exist. . . ? Will we be the only ones who will not participate in this astonishing regeneration that will renew the face of France and revive its youthfulness like that of the eagle?

You have broken the scepter of despotism, you have pronounced the beautiful axiom. . . **the French are a free people**. Yet still you allow thirteen million slaves shamefully to wear the irons of thirteen million despots! You have devined the true equality of rights -- and you still unjustly withhold them from the sweetest and most interesting half among you! . . . ³²

The frame of reference here is clearly to contemporary concerns of inequality and injustice within the kingdom of France.

Among a number of other texts (and there are many more that remain to be investigated) the slavery analogy (and the chains imagery) is also present in the *Vues législatives* of Marie-Madeleine Jodin in 1790, albeit with an older orientalist frame of reference. Addressing the revolutionary legislators, Jodin states:

You are born our friends, not our rivals, and we emulate you. To reduce us to slavery is to abuse the force which was given to you to defend us; it is to deprive Society of what gives it charm and life. It is to imitate Orientals who, combining brutal passion with a sense of their own weakness, put women in chains, to prevent women doing the same to them.³³

Olympe de Gouges, author of the celebrated “Declaration of the Rights of Women” and, as I have mentioned, a member of the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, deployed the slavery analogy in 1791, here to describe the similarity between the slave trade and the old regime’s traffic in wives:

. . . the buying and selling of women was a kind of industry taken for granted in the first rank of society, which, henceforth, will have no credit. If it did, the revolution would be lost, and under the new order we would remain ever corrupt. Still, can reason hide the fact that all other routes to fortune are closed to woman, whom man buys like a slave on the African coast? The difference is great, as we know. The slave commands the master; but if the master sets her free, without compensation, at an age when the slave has lost all her charms, what becomes of this unfortunate creature?³⁴

It would be impossible in this brief presentation to quote from all those who deployed the slavery analogy in the interest of asserting women’s rights (Etta Palm, etc.) There remains much work still to be done on this issue. Permit me, though, to invoke the words of one more male-feminist, the deputy Pierre Guyomar, who – as he insisted that the term *homme* included both men and women -- made a remarkable intervention on behalf of women and blacks simultaneously in 1793 in the very heart of the revolutionary Convention. In Guyomar’s text, the issue of black slavery seems to alternate position with the issue of the slavery of women, firmly pointing out that the revolutionaries still had a chance to avoid foreclosing on women’s emancipation at home, even as slavery in the colonies would soon be ended:

Either the nation is composed of men and women, or it is only composed of men. In the first case, men form a body, against the spirit of the article; in the

second case, women are the helots of the Republic. You must choose: in good faith, is the difference between the sexes a title for slavery better founded than the color of blacks? . . . Either I am seriously mistaken, or a white or black skin will no longer characterize exclusion from sovereignty in the human species than a male or feminine sex I submit that half the individuals of a society do not have the right to deprive the other half from the imprescriptible right of expressing their wish [*voeu*]. Let us free ourselves henceforth from the prejudice of sex, just as we have freed ourselves from prejudice about the color of blacks. . . .³⁵

As I hope is clear from this rather quick survey, a line of challenge to women's subordination in marriage that had been developing from at least the mid-seventeenth century on, with reference to the institution of slavery, was manifest by the time of the French Revolution and became inextricably paired with the institution of black slavery in the West Indies and Americas. Revolutionary legislators did [partially] address this issue of women's subordination in 1791, when they passed legislation that would fully emancipate unmarried women who had reached the age of 21, and when they initiated not only civil marriage but also – and in particular – on 20 September 1792, civil divorce by mutual consent, which provided a relatively painless escape from the “slavery” of unhappy marriage.³⁶ The Divorce Law of 1792 was incredibly liberal; it has been called “a victory against both the sacerdotal view of marriage endorsed by the Church and absolute male authority in the household.”³⁷ Slavery in the French colonies ended only with the 1794 Law. For once, women's demands had been resolved first. And very favorably so. Tens of thousands of unhappy wives immediately began to take advantage of the new laws, as the research of Roderick Phillips and others has demonstrated.

It all seemed too good to be true. And, of course, it didn't last long. In fact, the backlash had already begun. Suzanne Desan has documented a campaign in the Council of 500 to get rid of divorce on grounds of incompatibility alone.³⁸ Counterrevolutionaries of all stripes, including lawyers, jurists, and, of course, physicians, converged on both women and blacks in attempts to short-circuit such revolutionary developments by “proving” their inferiority and the “natural” necessity of their subjection. In 1802 Napoleon Bonaparte, now Emperor, reestablished colonial slavery and in 1803 severely amended the Divorce Law, though without abolishing it completely. And with the promulgation of the Civil Code in 1804, he personally insisted on the prerogatives of the husband and the obedience of the wife. The overturn of the divorce law in 1816 effectively re-established the “slavery” of wives; this situation would endure until 1884 and well beyond, despite repeated denunciations and protests. Should we then be surprised that the outpourings of feminist rhetoric, particularly in the 1830s and 1840s, from George Sand's early novels to the works of the Saint-Simonian women and Flora Tristan -- are replete with invocations of women's slavery in marriage?³⁹ The rhetoric of “femme libre” and “femme affranchie” was widespread, and the reaction to it continued to be fierce.

To invoke slavery in the Anglophone context is nearly always to invoke the slavery of blacks, the heinous Atlantic trade, and the specific form of plantation-based chattel slavery, both in the West Indies and on the North American continent. This was not, let me remind you, the association that French feminists initially made: indeed, in the beginning, the specific victims and specific forms of slavery outside France might take seemed almost incidental to their use of the slavery analogy. The link to black slavery in the West Indies plantation culture came only later, but when it did materialize in the mid-eighteenth century, it served to solidify the feminists' political claims, which escalated even more in the early

stages of the Revolution (The works by French women on the slavery question invoked by Doris Kadish, et al., testify to this connection).⁴⁰ That marriage in France could epitomize slavery; that husbands had the political and cultural authority to put their feet on the necks of wives, to “chain” them, was abundantly clear and seemed not to require extensive explanation. **[IMAGERY HERE]** With the Revolution, feminist women and men saw French women as fully deserving of liberty, whereas even the *Amis des Noirs* – some of whom, like Condorcet, also supported women’s emancipation -- feared complete emancipation for black slaves in the colonies.⁴¹

But with time, memory slips, and with the revocation of the divorce law, the dramatic reconfiguration of marital authority in the Civil Code, and the re-establishment of colonial slavery, combined with the swellings of abolitionist activity by British Quakers and their allies, served to blot out memories of these remarkable developments. Even though French feminists might have called on this long, even venerable tradition of radical protest against the “slavery” of wives, that I have traced here, their historical memories were less well furnished than ours today. In early nineteenth-century France, there was no organized mass movement either for the abolition of slavery or for the emancipation of women, (and think how difficult it was, in the repressive context of the counter-revolution even to organize political meetings, much less ‘Movements’). Nevertheless, there developed a quantity of contemporary literary protest to draw on as they began to launch organized efforts not only for these legal reforms but also to improve women’s education and employment opportunities, and to demand political rights. Indeed, some feminists even petitioned the legislative authorities during the mid-1830s. If having the right arguments in place could have resolved the question, French women would have been “liberated” long before their Anglophone counterparts. By 1848, the campaigns for reform of the Civil Code (particularly Article 213, which postulated wifely obedience in exchange for husbandly protection) and divorce could be seen as French women’s equivalents at home of the campaign to abolish colonial slavery, which was again picking up steam in the 1840s, thanks to the efforts of the *Societe de la Morale chreétienne*.

But something significant had changed. And that was the fact that the players in 1848 had come, for the most part, out of the Saint-Simonian “social” movement, which (even while obsessing on the emancipation of Woman) had abruptly renounced its inclusion of women in positions of organizational responsibility – just as their British and American counterparts had been denied positions of responsibility in the antislavery movement and had to found their own associations. Male politicians, even the best-intentioned, were deliberately objecting to women’s participation, a move that took on international implications with the exclusion of the American women delegates at the World Anti-Slavery Conference in London. The women protesters of 1848 France were organizing on their own, establishing their own newspapers and clubs – months before the women’s rights convention convened in Seneca Falls, New York.

The conjunction with the antislavery movement in France was underscored by the initial protests of the women activists in March but also by the presence in 1848 Paris of the abolitionist and feminist English Quaker Anne Knight, who participated in the efforts of the *Voix des Femmes* team to formulate their protests. Anne Knight was (like many progressive English reformers at the time, including Anna Doyle Wheeler and John Stuart Mill) a Francophile, and she had spent a good deal of time outside England; progressive causes obviously attracted her, not least the Saint-Simonian agitation of the 1830s. Her feminist consciousness had been “raised” at the World Anti-Slavery Convention. Knight recounted a conversation with an English lady friend in 1848, who was quoted as saying: “Now the

Negroes are liberated, there is nothing more to do in Paris, is there?" To which Knight rejoined: "The Blacks are free, but there is still a slavery of the Whites. The French took liberty for all the men, and abandoned the rights of all their sisters." It is easy to imagine Knight hopping the next boat across the Channel to help her sisters.⁴² The *Voix des femmes* first reports the presence of this new ally in the issue of 31 March; followed by an article on Knight in mid-April, and reprinting her critique of the revolutionary men: "The men are in the chariot of progress [*char de progrès*]; the women walk behind, fettered and dragged along like slaves." "I have worked for twenty years against the oppression that is slavery – this question and that of women's rights are one. I support them both."⁴³ By mid-June, Knight was protesting against the closing of the women's clubs, against the French Protestant pastor Coquerel who had earlier been envisioned as a firm ally.⁴⁴

By the early nineteenth century, the slavery analogy had become common to the rhetoric and claims of English as well as French feminists. The title of Thompson and Wheeler's 1825 *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race Against the Pretensions of the Other Half – Men – to Retain Them in Political and Thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery* speaks to this point. The venerable slavery/freedom juxtaposition applied to women was extremely applicable and transferable. But in 1825 it was not new.

My point in this paper, however, is this: Feminist use of the slavery analogy to underscore the need for emancipating women was launched, not in the American or French Revolutions, not in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, but in the widely-read women's novels of seventeenth-century France. These feminist novelists had been using the slavery analogy to sustain their own claims for marriage law reform and divorce far longer than has been evident to scholars of the modern period, and I think also, a good deal longer than in the British case, though this remains to be proved. Credit should be provisionally given where credit seems due.

Were the great names of political theory, then, merely responding to concerns their readers were already familiar with? Would it be too much to claim that in France demands for the radical reform of marriage and individual liberty by feminists preceded, and may have even served as a template for the antislavery sentiment that developed only a good deal later? To be able to claim, against the notion that "There are no slaves in France," that there certainly were slaves – of the feminine gender – on home soil, was arresting, to say the least. Note that these were purely secular, not religiously-grounded arguments.

In the early Revolution (1791-92), we see the mixing of the claims and a series of actual legislative triumphs for single and married women alike. That colonial slavery and marital obedience were both reinstated in the early 1800s does not deprive the earlier developments of their immense historical significance. An important precedent had been set. Yet it is often overlooked due to scholars' prior fascination with the Jacobins' exclusion of women from political citizenship.⁴⁵ From my perspective, this is the wrong starting point. Even as, in the early nineteenth century, some French women began to write eloquently about Black slavery, others continued to insist – as they had during the revolution and well before -- that women's emancipation was the key to all other emancipations. Granted, there was no organized "movement" here in the conventional sense, and memories of 17th century novels may not have been uppermost in the minds of the agitators. But there was an atmosphere, a train of thought, of "the thinkable" that must have had a profound influence, if only in stirring up a resistance that tried, oh so very hard, to find new, impenetrable lines of argumentative defense.

In conclusion, I would claim that this French current of feminist thought which deployed the slavery analogy on behalf of women's rights had a far greater significance for the unwinding of the "family-state compact" in Enlightenment thought and Revolutionary practice – and, with the Revolution, for the Anglophone world, from William Thompson and Anna Doyle Wheeler, to Anna Knight, John Stuart Mill, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton – than it has to date been given credit for.⁴⁶ By exposing the legal subjugation of wives, and insisting that it be remedied, these French feminists (women and men) heightened consciousness that all forms of slavery – wherever situated, and whomever oppressed -- might be not only politically correct but morally wrong. Already by the time of the French Revolution, it was clear to many that to attempt restricting the understanding of "Man (l'Homme)" to men, and propertied European males (mostly, though not all white) at that, to reassert male dominance in the face of a well-established critique, was wrong. Opponents quickly shifted from "public utility" arguments to arguments from "Nature." The result was a fortress of elaborate arguments supporting sexism and racism, which have since become all too familiar.

The power of the slavery analogy, for feminists, was its insistence that women, and particularly women who married, were individuals in their own right, that they possessed "human rights" and free will and could not be legally disposed of like chattel or forced, even for family reasons, to do things against their will. The slavery analogy applied to marriage struck at the heart of institutionalized male domination in the family, and it continued to haunt the Western consciousness and to inspire subsequent generations of feminist action, both by women and by men well into the twentieth century, when in most countries the legal institution of marriage was totally (however reluctantly) restructured. It continues to characterize campaigns against sexual slavery into the twenty-first century.

I leave it to future scholars on both sides of the Atlantic and the language chasm to prove these claims either foolhardy or plain wrong. Meanwhile, we might contemplate yet another instance of what happens when we historians add women and stir, across cultures and linguistic barriers.

¹ Karen Offen, "Women and the Question of 'Universal' Suffrage in 1848: A Transatlantic Comparison of Suffragist Rhetoric," *NWSA Journal*, 11:1 (Spring 1999), 150-177, with translated documents.

² See Sue Peabody's very informative study, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) for a survey of the case law that resulted during the 18th century, when slave owners from the French West Indies tried to bring their slaves back to the mainland, or slaves who had arrived on French soil sued for their freedom. On p. 145, no. 14, Peabody points to the distinction between "né libre" (born free) and "affranchi" (emancipated).

³ Texts from *La Voix des femmes*, as translated in Offen (1999), above.

⁴ Jeanne Deroin, "Aux citoyens Français," *La Voix des femmes*, no. 7 (27 March 1848); doc. 2 in Offen (1999).

⁵ Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings! The First International Women's Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 115.

⁶ See the texts by Condorcet (1790) & Olympe de Gouges (1791), transl. in Susan Groag Bell & Karen M. Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), I, docts. 24 and 26 (hereafter *WFF*). See also the paper by Gregory S. Brown, "Abolitionism and Self-Fashioning: Olympe de Gouges and her *Esclavage des Noirs*, 1783-1792" (1999) in *Proceedings, Western Society for French History*, ed. Barry Rothaus, vol. 27 (2001), 210-219.

⁷ On Montesquieu, see Diana J. Schaub, *Erotic Liberalism: Women and Revolution in Montesquieu's Persian Letters* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), esp. chap. 7, on the inconclusive debate among men in Letter 38 (1721) as to "whether the natural law subjects women to men." Edward Derbyshire Seeber credits the beginning of anti-slavery opinion to Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* (1748); see his *Anti-Slavery Opinion in France during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Greenwood Press). Seeber's otherwise useful discussion seems impervious to the "woman question". Nor do his slaves have a gender; they all seem to be implicitly male. Hanley (AHR, 1997; see below) insists that Montesquieu, all-too familiar with women's juridical protests and *factums* during his years as a judge, "was determined to perpetuate marital-regime governance" and in fact, attempted to discredit French wives' complaints about their marital servitude (pp. 42-43) by pointing to the more extreme Persian harem example. Joan B. Landes, in her *Women and the Public Sphere*, is particularly critical of Montesquieu.

⁸ An older article brings this point out beautifully. See Robert F. O'Reilly, "Montesquieu: Anti-feminist," in *Studies on Voltairre and the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Theodore Bestermann, vol. 102 (1973), pp. 143-156. Montesquieu stated in several places that slavery was against natural law, since men were born free and independent. In his texts, "les hommes" clearly meant "men," not "man."

⁹ See Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992), etc. My argument in this paper initially follows rather similar lines -- but diverges in not criticizing these authors for misrepresenting African-Caribbean slaves. Indeed, most of the early French authors I discuss here were not expressly referring to African-Caribbean, i.e. black, slaves as such; this had obviously changed by the late 1700s. But even then the references are rather vague. Few, if any of these writers had any direct exposure to slavery of blacks in the colonies.

It is probably worth mentioning here that even before Astell or Aphra Behn, the slavery analogy had already been invoked, along with condemnation of men's usurping tyranny and assertions of women's equality to men in nature, in various works of the 1650s and 1660s by Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle. On the Duchess, see the work of Hilda L. Smith, esp. *Reason's Disciples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); should we be surprised to discover that the duchess was reading the very French women authors who were also denouncing the slavery of women?

¹⁰ Cited in Moira Ferguson, p. 25. The quotation is from Astell's *Some Reflections Upon Marriage* (1700).

¹¹ Notably, in Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988). Pateman argues that, with the development of modern contract theory, the shift was from the power of fathers to that of brothers. In the materials I am looking at, however, the expressed concern is about contesting the power of husbands.

¹² In a 1994 article, "The Monarchic State in Early Modern France: Marital Regime Government and Male Right," in *Politics, Ideology, and the Law in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Adrianna E. Bakos (Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press, 1994), Sarah Hanley briefly refers to the "analogic equivalencies" between marriage and slavery (pp. 121-122), but her point is that the tyranny/slavery juxtapositions could be used to undermine kingly authority, in his capacity of husband of his kingdom; she does not focus as such on what I would call feminist arguments. In a subsequent article, published in the *American Historical Review* in 1997 ["Social Sites of Political Practice in France: Lawsuits, Civil Rights, and the Separation of Powers in Domestic and State Government, 1500-1800," 102:1 (Feb. 1997), 27-52], Hanley's implicit (sub-textual) argument is that women's attacks on male authority in marriage in the trial and pamphlet literature may have effectively served to undermine the French monarchy itself, undergirded as it was by arguments for male marital authority and the exclusion of women from succession to the throne; here the feminists' criticism of wives' subjection effectively become the vehicle for stating liberal principles, and in particular, arguing for a separation of powers. My argument here attempts to flesh out and build on Hanley's earlier observations, but by going in a different, though complementary, direction.

Hanley's objective in the AHR article and in her forthcoming book is to demonstrate the centrality of gender politics to state-formation practices and political criticism in France prior to 1789, to move back the date at which "public opinion" begins to make a difference, and to locate its sites of practice in legal matters; my point in this article is somewhat different.

¹³ Joan de Jean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), and "Notorious Women: Marriage and the Novel in Crisis in France, 1690-1715," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 4:2 (1991), 67-85.

¹⁴ See especially Siep Stuurman refs. "L'Égalité des sexes qui ne se conteste plus en France: Feminism in the Seventeenth Century, in *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History*, ed. Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 67-84, and Stuurman, *From Cartesian Feminism to Rational Christianity: Françoise Poulain de la Barre and the Origins of the Enlightenment* (book manuscript, in press). In his Introduction, Stuurman insists that "To have turned gender into a publicly contested notion was perhaps seventeenth-century French feminism's most enduring accomplishment, and, I would argue, its major legacy to the Enlightenment." (Intro., ms. p. 25). Note that this begins well before the attacks on the absolute authority of Louis XIV.

¹⁵ Certainly the cruel treatment of slaves in the new world by the Spaniards were known to the French public, primarily through translations into French of Spanish works.

¹⁶ In fact, there were 16th century precedents. Agrippa de Nettesheim uses this language, as do other texts cited by Hanley, Pierre Matthieu's *Vasthi* (1589) and **Nicole Estienne's *plaint du mal mariée* (find reference.....) Reference to Ian McLean and Constance Jordan books.**

Such critical allegations extended right up to 1789, as for example in Esprit Michel Laugier, *Tyrannie que les hommes ont exercée dans presque tous les temps et les pays contre les femmes* (London & Paris: chez l'auteur, 1788).

¹⁷ Madeleine de Scudéry, *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* (1649-53) (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1972); *Clélie, Histoire romaine* (1654-60) (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973). It should be pointed out, however, that in the "Sappho harangue" in her 1642 *Les Femmes illustres*, Scudéry is already using the language of slavery and chains, both in respect to the need for the education of slaves, but also with regard to the hold women exercise over men. Following *Clélie*, her next novel was *Almahide, ou l'Esclave Reine*, which began to appear in 1660. The issue of slavery and the problem of independence for women was clearly of deep interest to Scudéry and, one presumes, to her readers.

¹⁸ Abbé Michel de Pure, *La Prétieuse, ou le mystère des ruelles* (1656-58), ed. E. Magne, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1938), I: 281, and II: 268-69. As translated by Carolyn C. Lougee, in *Le Paradis des femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 22 and 17 respectively.

¹⁹ The famous playwright Jean-Baptiste Poquelin de Molière has a fine time with the slavery/marriage analogy in several of his comedies. In Act III of *The School for Wives* [*L'Ecole des femmes*] (1662; published 1663), the father figure Arnolphe gives his daughter Agnes a list of "Marriage maxims, or The Duties of a Married Woman," to read. Included in the duties is to avoid meetings of women where marriage is criticized. In Act I of *Les Femmes savantes* (1672), Molière ridicules the aversion to marriage through his character, the intellectual Armande, who is critical of her sister's intention to marry, but even he cannot resist the slavery analogy: "Why marry, and be the slave of him you wed? Be married to philosophy instead. . ." But Molière quickly redirects the criticism, focusing instead on his purported marriage critic's aversion to "bestial natures" and "lusts," i.e. insinuating that Armande is, at base, anti-sex, not anti-structure. He then puts the language of marital slavery into the mouth of Henriette's suitor, Clitandre, and Chrysale (the hen-pecked father of Armande and Henriette) makes his celebrated speech against women's learning philosophy and science at the expense of their household duties. The maid Martine becomes an apologist for male rule! The long-term impact of these plays and the way in which they promulgated the slavery analogy, as well as the better-known and deadly serious but wickedly amusing anti-feminist criticism they contained, among French play-goers and readers over several centuries should not be underestimated. But these plays have been subject to far more study than the novels of the period.

²⁰ François Poullain de La Barre, *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (1673); the first English translation was published in 1677, based on Poullain's 2nd ed. (1676), and has been republished as *The Woman as Good as the Man, Or, the Quality of Both Sexes*, ed. Gerald M. MacLean (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

²¹ De Jean, *Tender Geographies*, p. 5.

²² Joan de Jean, "Notorious Women: Marriage and the Novel in Crisis in France (1690-1715)," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 4:2 (1991), 67-85; quote, p. 74.

²³ See Gillian Weiss, "Processions of Redemption from Barbary to France," unpublished paper presented to the French Culture Workshop, Stanford University, 25 Jan. 2001. It is particularly interesting that in the years 1644-46 there were several processions of redeemed Christian slaves originating in, or passing through Marseille, which Georges and Madeleine de Scudéry may very well have witnessed.

²⁴ Du Tertre (Paris: Th. Jolly, 1667), vol. 2, pp. 382-83 (Siep Stuurman's transl.).

²⁵ On Mlle Aïssé, see the article by Valerie Lastinger and translated letters in *Writings by Pre-Revolutionary French Women*, ed. Anne R. Larsen & Colette H. Winn (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 543-557.

²⁶ See Sarah Maza, *Private Lives, Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

²⁷ See, for example, Montesquieu's long unpublished fragment from "Mes Pensées": "Il faut remarquer qu'excepté dans des cas que de certaines circonstances ont fait naître, les femmes n'ont jamais guère prétendu à l'égalité: car elles ont déjà tant d'autre avantages naturels, que l'égalité de puissance est toujours pour elles un empire." *Oeuvres complètes*, I:1076 (item 581).

²⁸ Cited from the manuscripts by Anicet Senechal, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, secrétaire de Madame Dupin, d'après de documents inédits, avec un inventaire des papiers Dupin dispersés en 1957 et 1958," *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. 36 (1963-65), p. 243. My emphasis added in quote. As of the mid-1960s, when Senechal's inventory was published, the original pages of Art. 27 had been acquired by the University of Texas, Austin, but I have not had the opportunity to verify this. Other related manuscripts from this immense collection are held at Yale.

²⁹ "Lettre de M. d'Alembert à M. J. J. Rousseau sur l'article, «Genève», tiré du VIIe volume de l'*Encyclopédie...* (1759); in Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Oeuvres philosophiques, historiques, et littéraires*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1805), 349-56. Transl. KO.

³⁰ Quoted from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, translated by Lester K. Born (New York: Pocket Books, 1967), p. 7. See commentary on this point in my 1980s exchanges with a textbook publisher, who defended the position that Rousseau's use of "man" included women (Karen Offen, "Women's History and Textbooks – A Moral Tale," *Newsletter of the Conference Group on Women's History (CCWHP/CGWH)*, 14: 2 (June 1983).

³¹ See, among other examples, Esprit Michel Laugier, *Tyrannie que les hommes ont exercée dans presque tous les temps et les pays contre les femmes* (London & Paris: chez l'auteur, 1788).

³² *Requête des dames à l'Assemblée Nationale* (1789), reprinted in *Les Femmes dans la Révolution française, 1789-1794*, présentés par Albert Soboul, vol. 1 (Paris, 1982). Transl. by Karen Offen. © 1999. This translation has been published in CD-Rom, accompanying *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, ed. Jack R. Censer and Lynn Hunt (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001).

³³ Marie-Madeleine Jodin, *Vues législatives d'une femme*, as transl. in its entirety by Felicia Gordon in appendix to Felicia Gordon and P. N. Furbank, *Marie-Madeleine Jodin, 1741-1790: Actress, philosophe, and feminist* (forthcoming, Ashgate Publishers, 2001).

³⁴ Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen" (1791), *WFF*, I, doc. 26, pp. 107-8. Transl. by Nupur Chaudhuri, with Bell & Offen.

³⁵ Pierre Guyomar, *Le Partisan de l'égalité politique entre les individus, ou problème très important de l'égalité en droits et de l'inégalité en fait* (Paris, 1793), published in annex to Session of 29 April, Convention Nationale, in *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, 63 (Paris, 1903), 591-99. Transl. KO.

³⁶ As Roderick Phillips and others have shown, women filed for divorce in numbers that, to critics, seemed alarmingly large. See James F. Traer, *Marriage and the Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), and Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: A History of*

Divorce in Western Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and his earlier work on divorce in France. The historian Elisabeth G(uibert) Sledziewski insists on the importance of the legal reforms of 1791-92 for emancipating French women, and thus changing forever the family structure that had bolstered the old society of orders. Her article in English, "The French Revolution as the Turning Point," in *A History of Women*, ed. Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) briefly summarizes arguments elaborated more extensively in French; see "Naissance de la femme civile," *La Pensée*, no. 239 (March-April 1984), 34-48, and "La Femme, objet de la Révolution," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, no. 267 (Jan.-March 1987), 1-16. Barrie Rose also insists on this point in "Feminism, Women and the French Revolution," *Historical Reflections/Refléctions Historiques*, 21:1(1995), 187-205.

³⁷ Shanti Marie Singham, "Betwixt Cattle and Men: Jews, Blacks, and Women and the Declaration of the Rights of Man," in *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*, ed. Dale Van Kley (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 114-153; quote, 149.

³⁸ For the adverse reaction to civil divorce (and its possibilities for women), see Suzanne Desan, "Marriage, Religion and Moral Order: The Catholic Critique of Divorce during the Directory," in *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, ed. Renée Waldinger, Philip Dawsom, and Isser Woloch (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 201-210.

³⁹ See the documents translated in Bell & Offen, *Women, the Family, and Freedom* (1983); in Claire Goldberg Moses & Leslie Wahl Rabine, *Feminism, Socialism, and French Romanticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), and in Felicia Gordon & Máire Cross, *Early French Feminisms 1830-1940: A Passion for Liberty* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996).

⁴⁰ See Doris Y. Kadish & Françoise Massardier-Kenney, eds. *Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Women's Writing, 1783-1823* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994).

⁴¹ See the appraisal of the French abolitionists' concerns in the late 1780s and early 1790s by William B. Cohen, in his book, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 150-154.

⁴² Undated 1848 letter from Anne Knight to an unnamed recipient, quoted in "Anne Knight, A Woman's Pioneer," in *The Englishwoman's Review*, 15:1 (15 Jan. 1884), p. 11.

⁴³ *Voix des femmes*, no. 11 (31 March 1848) and no. 24 (15 April 1848).

⁴⁴ The French protestant pastor A. Coquerel was the nephew of Helena Maria Williams, whose husband David Williams had served in the revolutionary assemblies in the 1790s. Both were firm partisans of women's emancipation. Coquerel had been raised by the Williamses, and his interventions on the woman question (including his report on closing the women's clubs in June 1848) carried a great deal of symbolic baggage.

⁴⁵ I have argued against this approach in *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶ Even the French-based scholar Françoise Basch does not see this; see her article on the American case, "Rights of Women and the Wrongs of Marriage," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 22 (Autumn 1986), 18-40.