

Clark points out that the ideas about woman's nature had changed little since the work of Fénelon in the seventeenth century. Both Catholic and secular authorities agreed with the notion that feminine minds and bodies were different from and weaker than those of men. Nature, they believed, compensated for these weaknesses by endowing women with the qualities of industry, neatness, and thrift so that they might be quietly occupied with their homes. Significantly, Clark reminds us, women's differences did not make them inferior human beings. Their domestic functions were "no less important to the public than those of men" because men's success and the education of children were dependent upon women's performance of their duties (p. 19).

Despite bitter controversies in many other areas, anticlerical and Catholic authorities were in remarkable agreement about woman's nature and the consequent need to specialize education for girls. Both groups supported the "separate sphere" approach to education which was reinforced by the nineteenth-century sentimental view of women's unique and morally superior qualities, as opposed to the liberal tradition of the eighteenth century which emphasized the equality and essential similarity of the sexes. The textbooks reflected these opinions in lessons which attached importance to woman's place inside the home, contrasted explicitly to man's exterior role. The lessons were indicative of the separation of home from work place that had become increasingly common during the nineteenth century, even if less widespread in France than in other more rapidly industrializing countries, and also confirmed the ideology of "separate spheres". But, as Clark insightfully points out, while school intended to reinforce women's commitment to domesticity, rather than free them from it, the acquisition of literacy and disciplined work habits and the knowledge that financial need might make employment necessary did carry the potential for diverting some women from the foyer (p. 59).

Despite the heavy emphasis on woman's place, Clark does point out that for girls and single women paid employment outside the home or work on the family farm were the norm. And, while educators counselled that thrift was the married woman's solution to a squeezed family economy, even they conceded the necessity of married women's wages in extreme cases. I would add that the proscriptions against women's paid work were more insistent in France precisely because a higher percentage of married women worked in France than in any other major Western nation. As Delphine Gay de Girardin pointed out in *Lettres Parisiennes*, "One only makes laws against women's ambition in countries where ambition is women's passion" (p. 240).

Clark also accurately points to the limited social mobility promised to boys and girls in the textbooks despite the persistent changes effected in their living conditions by the impact of urbanization and industrialization. But, I think Clark overstates the case for similarity when she concludes that the textbook image, that the main reward most women reaped from working was provision for basic individual and family needs, was simply one aspect of the lesson for both sexes that most children should expect adult lives comparable to those of their parents (p. 104). I believe the texts show that boys and girls were gradually socialized to identify with the gender-differentiated models which made boys look to personal achievement for satisfaction while girls were encouraged to find validation in serving the family. The resulting pattern: "Papa lit, Maman coud" was the ultimate outcome of the change in values.

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RACHEL G. FUCHS — *Abandoned Children. Foundlings and Child Welfare in Nineteenth-Century France*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984. Pp. xvii, 357.

As the lives of unknown French men, women and children in the last century have been rescued from neglect to become an acceptable and ever-demanding agenda of social history, it is hardly

surprising that our attention should be directed towards the presence in their midst of a significant proportion of the unwanted, who died after the briefest of encounters with life, or hovered against all the odds at the edges of society as its survivors. Barrows, Nye and others have recently recreated the perceptions of observers terrified by threats to social order posed by the presumed links between alcoholism, criminality, vagrancy, and the degeneration of the race. In the minds of those who were warning the respectable classes, there was doubtless a special place reserved for the undesirable progenitors of these social pariahs, destined by their very nature to continue the endless cycle.

Fuchs's book is, however, more akin to Sussman's reconstruction of the wet-nursing business than it is to interpretations of what was offered as a body of responsible social thought by a growing group of social observers gaining disciplinary recognition, whether or not they were closely or more loosely linked with formal state institutions or their officials who administered this part of a growing system of surveillance and control, as Donzelot and Castel have shown us in their works on the social reconstruction of the family and of the hundred-year reign of the asylum. As members of the personnel who made the machinery of the state-supervised system regulating the movement of infants to wet-nurses and thence to foster homes, they are present in Fuchs's study, but only in a shadowy, almost peripheral way, carrying out a hierarchy of commands aimed, as she tells us, to ensure efficiency and reduce cost, but without dissipating the suspicions of many that a vicious circle was thereby being carelessly or inadvertently preserved. She has produced a carefully wrought analysis of the fate of those unwanted children who were abandoned mainly by their mothers (fathers were not, as these unfortunate women knew, much help or much in evidence). Her book must hence be seen within the context of other forms of birth limitation, including abortion and infanticide, since, as we learn from Fuchs, the mortality rates of the abandoned infants within days of birth were from 3 to 3 ½ times higher than those of legitimate children — about 20 percent throughout the century. The total numbers of abandoned for all of France are not available, and the only fairly certain guide we have is of admissions to the hospice in Paris, set up early in the century. A year by year count from 1815 to 1900 yields a figure in excess of 340,000 (her figures, my calculations). Including the smaller, but not negligible, numbers of abandoned legitimate infants, ranging from rates below 10 percent of the total numbers of abandoned between 1815 and 1847 to rates in excess of 26 and often reaching 33 percent in the last decade of the century, Fuchs might have asked what lay behind the greater readiness or desperation of married mothers to give up their children. She demonstrates a correlation between economic fluctuations and abandonment down to the end of the Second Empire, but finds it to be a non-existent factor during the balance of the century. Had the married women been abandoned themselves, or was abandonment more openly practised as a back-up to failed abortions than in the past? The book raises these questions for historians who will be relating such statistics and her figures to general population trends in France.

Her sober assessment of the two groups of women who framed the lives of the survivors ironically illustrates the symmetry of a social structure that was significantly graded at its lowest levels to induce some young women in precarious and marginal urban work settings to endure the risk of conception, while other women, in even more unfavourable social and economic conditions, were constrained to become wet-nurses. What we see confirmed again is that the viability of the household, artisanal, and small factory economies depended on a large concentration of vulnerable women, and that the rural economies of certain regions relied even more urgently on women whose choices were even more limited, while the young girls and boys who did not succumb to a variety of diseases in their first year, most substantially related to the causes and consequences of general malnutrition, took their place, as was intended or rationalized by the supporters of the system, in the nether regions of the economy and of society.

Fuchs is to be admired for addressing so demanding a series of problems. But she may be altogether too generous in concluding that the doctors, inspectors and judges had dissolved their moralistic doubts about the origins of illegitimacy and assumed the more benevolent position that they had a special mission to look upon and treat the subjects of her study as society's victims. The

temptation to think of them as the manipulators of society was never absent from the discourse throughout the century.

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PETER GAY — *The Bourgeois Experience. Victoria to Freud. Vol. I. Education of the Senses*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1984, 534 p.

L'histoire des mentalités est, de tous les types d'histoire, le plus difficile à cerner; la bourgeoisie, d'autre part, forme un groupe social dont la spécificité s'avère tout aussi évasive. Peter Gay s'engage à relever ce double défi dans un ouvrage monumental qui comportera au moins cinq volumes analysant l'expérience bourgeoise. Malgré ce que laisse entendre le titre, il ne s'agit pas seulement, ici, de l'expérience vécue, mais aussi des pratiques discursives qui ont inspiré ou limité cette expérience. Dans une approche qu'il qualifie de symphonique, Gay traite successivement de l'amour, de l'agression et des conflits.

Dans une introduction générale qui demeurera un classique du genre, l'auteur tente d'identifier les caractéristiques de son sujet. Retenons que, en donnant de la bourgeoisie une définition qu'il dit lui-même évasive et élastique, il y inclut tous ceux qui jouissent d'une certaine mesure d'indépendance économique et d'honorabilité sociale, c'est-à-dire une minorité de 10 % à 15 % de la population urbaine des États-Unis, de Grande-Bretagne, de France et d'Allemagne. Ce groupe social présente donc d'énormes inégalités économiques et une vaste pluralité d'expériences, mais partage, selon l'auteur, une pensée commune sur l'amour et l'agression. La culture bourgeoise, en l'occurrence l'éducation des sens et donc en grande partie de la sexualité évolue, de 1820 à 1914, suivant deux grandes périodes, séparées par une large bande de changements culturels (p. 3) de 1850 à 1890. Dans l'ensemble cependant, Gay privilégie la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il s'attarde aussi davantage sur les exemples anglais et américains.

Même si l'auteur se défend de pratiquer la psychohistoire, c'est à Freud qu'il emprunte la grille d'analyse ainsi que la méthodologie et la problématique psychanalytique servant à arracher au passé ses significations abstruses (p. 8). Pour résoudre le problème du lien entre l'individuel et le collectif qui se pose aux historiens des mentalités, Gay utilise la psychanalyse qui fait le pont entre l'expérience individuelle et collective. Les vignettes présentes au début de chaque chapitre sont en effet empruntées à la méthode de cas exploitée par Freud. Se basant aussi sur Freud, Peter Gay redonne sa place au plaisir sexuel dans l'expérience bourgeoise. La thèse qui marque en filigrane tout ce premier volume est la réfutation de la réputation d'austérité sexuelle, de négation du plaisir des sens que se sont mérités les Victoriens et surtout les Victoriennes. Au delà des lieux communs sur le puritanisme du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Gay fait ressortir à partir d'écrits intimes l'attitude positive devant la sensualité que partageaient les couples hétérosexuels, plus particulièrement les femmes, que plusieurs ont souvent cru ignorantes et frustrées des jouissances sexuelles.

Alors que les dispensateurs de conseils et d'interdits nous ont légué une littérature prescriptive prodigieuse, les comportements intimes réels de la bourgeoisie se laissent moins facilement saisir. Au siècle dernier, la vie privée reçoit ses lettres de noblesse, le foyer devient le refuge d'un monde agité, et la vie domestique prend une importance et une qualité nouvelles. Privée par définition, cette vie nous échapperait totalement n'eût été l'habitude bien victorienne de tenir un journal intime et d'accorder une large place à la correspondance. Peter Gay a eu la chance et la patience de retracer nombre de ces témoignages personnels qui nous font pénétrer dans l'intimité même des alcôves.