

# Raising Clio's Consciousness: The Writing of Women's History in the U.S.

by Karla Biutrago

Woman *is* and *makes* history.  
--Mary Ritter Beard <1>

The key to understanding women's history is in accepting -- painful though it may be -- that it is the history of the majority of the human race.  
--Gerda Lerner <2>

Historians in the United States have been engaged for nearly twenty years in the effort to situate women in their rightful place in history. Needless to say, the field of women's history has come a long way. In 1976, Gerda Lerner wrote that "the striking fact about the historiography of women is the general neglect of the subject by historians." <3> Historical scholarship was far from "objective" or "universal," because it was based on male experience, and placed men at the center and as a measure of all things human. History as traditionally recorded and interpreted by historians has, in fact, been the history of activities of men--one might properly call it "Men's History." In summary, traditional history had simply left out at least half of humankind; in the official record, women were invisible. In the past two decades, the situation has changed considerably. In an enormous and rapidly growing body of scholarship, women have been rendered visible. The effort to reconstruct a female past has been called "Women's History." Women's history in the United States, as a respected area of study and as a recognized field in academia, has its own substantial history. The focus of this paper is to trace the development of this field beginning with its intellectual founder, Mary Ritter Beard, and to explore some of the trends, approaches, innovations, and internal interpretive debates of within the field.

## **Mary Ritter Beard: Founder of Women's History in the United States**

Mary Ritter Beard devoted her energies to reconstructing women's pasts in an effort to end their invisibility; yet she is herself a demonstration of it. In "mainstream" history she remains largely neglected or relegated to the status of Charles Beard's wife and collaborator. Both of these descriptions are true but hardly adequate. Beard was a political activist identified with the most radical wing of the American suffrage movement; she was a committed feminist, despite her criticisms of the militants; and, most relevant to our discussion, she was a highly productive scholar. Her intellectual work--she wrote six books alone and collaborated with her husband on seven others -- is sufficiently important to provide a respected place for her among historians and, specifically, among historians of women.

Beard was of the generation that came of age at the turn of the century, when, as one historian wrote, "the critical intelligensia in the United States" was formed. <4> The Progressive Era, as it came to be known, stimulated outcries against abuses by big

monopolies, concern for the survival of democratic government, and efforts to institute municipal reform. From that period came the literature of exposure by such writers as Upton Sinclair. At this time, the settlement house movement was established by reformers such as Jane Addams. In the universities, formalist approaches were shattered: in economics by Thorstein Veblen, in philosophy by John Dewey, and in history by James H. Robinson, Carl L. Becker, and Charles Beard. The writers of this New History challenged the primacy of military and political explanations by examining economic and social factors. Mary Beard belongs with this breed of critics and writers. Her work deals with the fundamental matter of history- writing. She used her energies to assert and demonstrate the centrality of women in history and the need to incorporate that conception of women in history, into the mainstream of historical writing. <5>

Mary Beard's basic thesis and what became the focus of her life's work is the assertion that women have always been a very real, although neglected, force in society. Without denying that women had legitimate grievances, Beard maintained that feminist protest from the eighteenth century to the twentieth had devalued women's history by expounding women's subordination. The myth that women were or are only a subject and oppressed sex is not only wrong, she argued, but it is counterproductive because as women accept that designation of themselves and their pasts, their collective strength is undermined. The very notion of oppression imprisons women's minds and oppresses them. She believed women could only be freed from that ideological bondage by discovering their own powerful, creative history and using that knowledge to create new social relations. Beard saw her job, her intellectual work, as political, designed to reach all women and persuade them of the power of their pasts and, moreover, of their futures.

Women are made to seem invisible, she said, not simply because history has been written by evil men or because women have, in fact, been invisible but because these men, as well as most of the professional women and radical feminists of her day, focused their concern on those areas of the community in which men predominate. Beard placed herself in opposition to the militant feminists of her time who called for absolute equality. Such simple-minded slogans, she insisted, deny the power and force of the total community of women, deny the existence and value of a distinct female culture. Beard's work consisted therefore in bringing light to women's neglected past: through her historical studies, such as *On Understanding Women* (1931) and *Woman as Force in History* (1946); through her collections of documents, *America Through Women's Eyes* (1933) and *Laughing Their Way: Women's Humor in America* (1934); in her unique study guide, "A Changing Political Economy as It Affects Women"; and in her 1942 critique of the omissions and distortions about women in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. In the 1930's Beard attempted to establish a World Center for Women's Archives to preserve the records of women's lives. Although she led a group of women in incorporating and setting up an office for the archives in New York, the project failed for lack of funds and support. <7>

*Woman as Force In History: A Study in Traditions and Realities*, published first in 1946 and then again in 1962, 1971, and 1973, is Mary Beard's most famous book. It represents the culmination of her years of study and stands as the mature statement of her thesis.

Many of the ideas and themes developed earlier are pulled together and deepened in this major work. In general, It appears that when Beard is referring to the force of woman in history, she has in mind simply the active presence and participation of women engaged in all the same kinds of activities as men:

From modern times running back into and through the medieval ages of Western feudalism and Christian contests with barbarism, the force of woman was a powerful factor in all the infamies, tyrannies, liberties, activities, and aspirations that constituted the history of this stage of humanity's self-expression. <8>

Her analysis of the ideas of Willam Blackstone and their impact on American feminism occupies a significant portion of the book (Half of the twelve chapters of the book). The false and tyrannical ideas that women have always been a subjected sex was aided in part by the interpretations of the American feminist movement in the middle of the nineteenth century. The authority cited to support this proposition was Blackstone, author of *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, published in 1765. In his chapter entitled "Of Husband and Wife," which is frequently referred to by feminists, Blackstone asserts that woman was civilly dead at marriage and that "her being or legal existence is consolidated into that of the husband." <9>

Mary Beard challenged the interpretation of that phrase used by feminists one hundred years later. She argued that Blackstone's language was meant to be taken metaphorically, not literally, that he was attempting to introduce some literary flavor into a dry subject. In any case, she insisted, he was referring only to married women. Most importantly, that when he used the phrase "in law," he meant precisely and only in "Common Law." According to Beard, those readers trained in law, for whom he was writing, understood all of these qualifications. The Common Law was, Beard said, "only one branch of English law." Other laws in England which could and did modify the Common Law included Acts of Parliament and old customs. Most important, she claimed, there was Equity, which was administered by a special court and which provided, "in the name of Justice, remedies for wrongs for which the Common Law afforded no remedies." Many powers denied to women under the Common Law were, said Beard, granted to women under Equity. In addition, there were many prtivate agreements of men and women which rarely even were brought to court, but which regulated daily affairs. <10>

According to Beard, American feminists, misunderstanding the technical aspects of Blackstone's legal writings, adopted the theory of total legal subjugation as the foundation for the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolution in 1848, and in so doing "they adopted a fiction about human behavior." In times past, Beard went on, theologians and moralists insisted that woman was evil and ought to be subjugated to man, but it was the feminist manifesto, using Blackstone's dictum as evidence, that argued that woman had, in fact, been subject to man. <11>

Beard then offers evidence to demonstrate the validity of her thesis. In the Middle Ages, for example, she said, class lines determined how one behaved and what rights one had, but sex distinctions, even when they were encoded in law, were so often defied in

practice that it is not possible to use any single formula to describe woman's role. Women in the ruling class, she said, exercised wide powers. It was not until power passed to parliaments, which were elected by men and composed of men, that women were officially excluded from the exercise of power.

Beard further claims that in pre-capitalist societies women had most of the privileges and burdens assigned them by their class, and that when women suffered it was largely because of their class position, not their sex. It was the development of capitalism, she insisted, that discrimination on account of sex, regardless of class, became pervasive. It was in this time that women were driven out of the professions, out of politics, out of power. The feminist movement, which was born during a period of diminished rights, assumed that such restrictions had always existed. Then, Beard believes, they concocted a description of the past that was profoundly untrue. Her repudiation of the traditional feminist view of history was important. To test the validity of her interpretation requires the kind of empirical work, research, and analysis that has only begun to be undertaken in the last twenty years in the scholarship of women's history. <12>

The significance of Beard's body of work cannot be overstated. Much feminist writing in these past two decades echoes her legacy if not her name: the central place of changed consciousness and the woman-center of her vision. Many of today's historians of women have acknowledged their indebtedness to Beard. For many, Beard's *Woman as Force in History* was the first text they had located which directly attempted to include women in history; this book "served as a beacon for feminist scholars rediscovering women's history two decades later." <13> Indeed Gerda Lerner, a present-day leading scholar of women's history, saw herself, early in her academic career, as Beard's direct successor. When asked why she wanted to become a professional historian, Lerner answered, "I want," she said plainly. "to complete the work begun by Mary Beard." <14>

Still, many feminists have deemphasized or ignored Mary Beard's argument for her thesis was not easy to use in an ideological struggle. Her thesis posed the question: if women have been as powerful as Beard claimed then why the complaints, the grievances of the women's movements? Her position seems to have this antifeminist tone, although such an inference was not what she intended. Her overstatement did, however, minimize the reality of subjugation, although she knew well the circumstances under which women have lived. Beard did not believe the world was ever a just place for women; this belief is demonstrated in her years of feminist activism. <15>

More important, though, her overstatement is part of her ideological effort. Women through time, as a mass, constitute a force that is limited only by the ignorance of those who do not recognize its power, she believed. If women only knew how much they had contributed to the world's wealth, arts, beauty, science, and technology, Beard felt, that knowledge would provide them with a tool of much greater value than the simple cry of equality. Whatever retards the growth of self-consciousness, self-confidence, and self-knowledge she rejected categorically. As a result, Beard minimized the negative. <16>

Ultimately, Beard provided the intellectual foundation for women's history. Without much support from the women's movement, without a large body of ideas upon which to build, without models of any kind to follow she audaciously placed women at the center of history and society and then insisted that the world look again from her perspective. In other words, she began the discussion on the importance and validity of women's history.

### **The Diffusion of Women's History in the 1960's and 1970's: Institutions**

The practice of women's history was nurtured in university settings in the United States much earlier and with greater success than anywhere else. The reasons for this have yet to be fully explored. Certainly, the civil rights movement of the 1960's spurred demands for women's equality in the 1970's. As feminist students turned their attention to the university curriculum, seeing it as a "bastion of male power," they demanded courses that would let them address their political concerns. Courses on women in the past--what was referred to as "herstory"--would provide exemplary role models for students, documentation for their claim that women had long been oppressed, and evidence about women's political movements that might offer ideas for their contemporary strategies. The student demand was willingly met by a small number of historians--most of them women--who improvised syllabuses and courses, often teaching these in addition to their regular course load. Many of these historians were themselves active in the women's caucuses of the professional historical association, seeking to increase the numbers and improve the status of women historians. <17>

In the United States courses in women's history developed in the larger context of the "women's studies" movement, an attempt to rectify the absence of attention to women in the curriculum as a whole. At some universities (the earliest being at state universities), interdisciplinary programs quickly came into being. At others, no formal structure linked individual courses. Many of those who taught them met to discuss methods, approaches, and sources. The women's studies programs provided faculty, who were otherwise isolated in their departments, with networks of intellectual exchange and political support. The National Women's Studies Association provided a forum for intense debate about the future of scholarship and its implications for women's politics. Several journals were founded to publish new scholarship and promote debate, among them *Signs*, *Feminist Studies*, and *the Women's Studies Quarterly*. <18>

As centers for both political advocacy and academic inquiry, women's studies programs faced a difficult problem of scholarly legitimacy. They had to prove their academic integrity to those in academia who disapproved of any interdisciplinary programs and those who found the explicit connection between politics and scholarship a violation of the academy's commitment to impartiality and objectivity. Indeed, the choice of "women's studies" was a retreat from the more overtly political title "feminist studies." In addition, there was debate among women scholars themselves about the advisability of locating studies of women in separate enclaves; the danger of "ghettoisation" was perceived as possible. After all, it could result in the marginalization of women in the university and the curriculum.

In fact, a type of dialectical relationship developed. The separate existence of women's studies courses permitted intense focus on women and furthered important innovative and interdisciplinary research. Furthermore, the programs developed a certain visibility and, in some institutions, the ability to establish ties to traditional departments. As professors published and students wrote theses of high quality, the legitimacy of the women's studies enterprise gained ground. <19>

Funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from private foundations, especially in the 1970's from the Ford Foundation, additionally enhanced the standing of women's studies in the academy. This funding also permitted the creation of some thirty-five university-based research institutes, not coordinated by the National Council for Research on Women. Indeed, one measure of growing academic legitimacy seems to have been the very recent willingness of the private universities, especially the prestigious institutions such as Yale, Princeton, and Harvard, to accept women's studies programs. Another indication is the increasing evidence in traditional university courses of material on women and the incorporation in doctoral and faculty research of questions about women and gender. <20>

Women's history scholars found additional encouragement in the decision of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians to sponsor conferences annually or bi-annually. <21> These conferences became the meeting ground for individuals working on similar topics. With national and international participation, the Berkshire Conference exemplifies the diversity of approaches to women's history. It is one of the institutional bases on which the field's visibility and influence has been built. Taken together, the institutional influences have been vital for women's history in the United States. <22>

### **Development of the Field of Women's History**

The practice of women's history, like culture itself, has been subject to lag and uneven development. Presently, practitioners in the United States are to be found at all levels and there is no consensus on the goal toward which development is heading. Different historians, or different groups of historians, move to another stage at different points; no one can declare with any certainty that women's history reached any certain stage at any certain time. Still, there are certain tendencies or trends that have characterized the field. Growing out of the feminist movement of the sixties and seventies, women's history tended at first toward the recording of women's oppression. Unfortunately, this brand of history, although understandable, made women seem passive victims rather than active agents in history. The reevaluation of "women worthies" seemed a more positive approach. Although certainly necessary, it was soon recognized as limited and failing to represent the experience of women in general. A more rewarding kind of "compensatory history" outlined the contributions of women to great historical movements, such as the abolition of slavery, and progressive social reform. Soon, not only the traditional categories (such as the Progressive movement), but also the very periodization of traditional history (including terms such as the Renaissance) were seen as male-determined and not applicable to women. <23>

## **Sources: Re-evaluation of Traditional Sources and the Influence of Social History**

Source material for historians of women has not been difficult to find. Once the search for these materials began, traditional archival and published sources turned out to be rich in materials about women. Certainly, it required the rereading of these existing sources so as to take account of gender (and class and age and race) bias. Historians interested in, for example, major wars and revolutions have simply returned to the usual sources and uncovered valuable descriptions and information that were collected but never used explicitly to write about women. Collections of family papers and letters have revealed information about the texture of women's lives and family relationships. Government documents, ranging from census and civil records to reports on urban poverty, have produced vast quantities of information about the economic and political experiences of women. Indeed, the question of invisibility is most apparent in relation to source materials. It is clearly not the absence of information about women, but the sense that such information was not relevant to the concerns of "history" that led to the invisibility of women in the formal accounts of the past. <24>

The discovery of sources for women's history was stimulated by the parallel development in the 1970's of the field of social history. Influenced variously by (1) the development of "quantitative methods of analysis (and particularly by refinements of historical demography)," (2) by the French *Annales* school's interest in the details of ordinary life, and (3) by the English humanist Marxist scholars (such E.P. Thompson), social history insisted on the importance of the experience of various groups of people as a focus for historical investigation. <25> Social history insisted that history was not only a narrative of diplomacy and war. Instead, history covered a broader terrain which included all aspects of society and social organization. In the course of this turn to the details of all kinds of human experience, and to consideration of family and community, as well as of economy and politics, information about women inevitably entered as part of the scope of social history.

In addition to the sources opened up by social history, those searching for information on women encountered libraries built by earlier generations of feminists to house the "proof" of women's capabilities and accomplishments. These libraries, often in the form of personal collections, contained published writing by and about women from every historical period and country, journals devoted to women's causes, private papers written by feminist political activists, letters, and diaries. Dating most often from the moments of major feminist activity in the past (the 1840's and 50's and then the 1890's through the 1920's in the United States), these collections are arsenals of intellectual weaponry, assembled to push forward the struggle for women's rights. Those who compiled them understood the value of historical documentation for the political fight they waged. Interestingly, the materials in these archives remained largely uncataloged and unusable for many years. Only in the context of the reemergence of a feminist movement in the middle of the twentieth century did their contents come to light. <26>

## **Methodology and Theories in the Writing of Women's History**

There has been no definable methodology associated with the writing of American women's history. Some historians have employed straightforward political narrative to tell the story of women's suffrage movements; others have taken a more analytical stance in attempting to locate that story in a broader social context or to use it to shed light on unexplored aspects of Politics. Similarly, biographies have detailed the lives of famous and not-so-famous women in much the same way historians have always written biography. Those interested in economic activities have collected data on jobs and wages and union membership. Those interested in family have, like any historical demographer, used and interpreted numbers from civil records and censuses and have, for example, measured changes in the size of the household over time.

Much of this work, however, has remained within the interpretive framework of its approach. Specifically, these historians of women have, for example, stressed the causality of immediate political issues, individuals influences on a life, or the impact of age of marriage on family size. As Joan Wallach Scott states:

As long as women's history has addressed itself to making women visible in existing historiographical frameworks, it has contributed new information, but not a distinctive methodology. <27>

More fundamental theoretical and methodological problems have begun to be addressed as historians ask why and how women became visible to history until very recently when, in fact, they were social and political actors in the past. The search for the answers to these questions has resulted in an important discussion about the usefulness of gender as a category of analysis. In "The Social Relations of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," Joan Kelly-Gadol poses the following questions:

How can we understand the operations of ideas about sexual difference (the different meanings attributed to masculine and feminine in societies of the past) in society and culture? How is the sexual division of labor (the different roles attributed to women and men) reproduced? What is the relationship between ideas of sexual rence, social organization, and political ideologies. <28>

These questions require the elaboration of new methodologies and new analytic perspectives for historians. Some historians have turned to various theories as a way of developing the new perspectives. The most influential of these theoretical formulations seem to have been provided by (1) Marxists (2) the writings of Jacques Lacan and (c) the writings of Michele Foucault.

Marxists scholars have addressed themselves especially to the sexual division of labor and its relationship to capitalist development. Arguing that the ideology of separate spheres (male production, public activity in the workplace and the polity and female reproduction, domestic activity in the private sphere. namely the home) fulfills capitalism's need to always lower labor costs and to have uncompensated reproductive labor, they find the gender system an important component of the capitalist system. Their analyses have also been extended by scholars interested in "development" in the so-called

Third World; the imperatives of capital accumulation there, it is argued, have often introduced new forms of sexual division of Labor and seriously altered family structures and social relationships. Women's invisibility, in this account, follows from the ideology of separate spheres which defined women as exclusively "private creatures" and denied their ability to participate in public, political life. <29> The power of the ideology was such that even when women did work or act politically, their activities were defined as "extraordinary" or "abnormal" and thereby outside the realm of serious or "real" politics. The devaluation of women's activities (as a source of cheap labor in the market and of free labor at home) also devalued a vision of them as historical subjects, as active agents of change. <30>

The work of Lacan has been used by some feminist historians because of its emphasis on the importance of language, of symbolic representations, in the construction of sexual identity and subjectivity. Since symbolic representations are collectively developed and used, they offer "access to the unconscious processes by which individuals identify with social groups and construct social relationships." <31> In the analysis of how gender figures in political language, for example, historians have found ways to account for the greater participation of women in Owenite socialist movements. Drawing on the implications for feminists of Lacanian theory (as developed by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose), these historians have begun to analyze material from the past as a way to understand how the terms of sexual difference are articulated, adapted, transformed, and reproduced. <32> From this perspective it might be argued that women's historical invisibility follows from her symbolic association with lack and loss, with the threat posed by femininity to unified male subjectivity, with the status of female as Simone deBeavoir's "other" in relation to the central, powerful, recognized male in/of history.

For those who have used the writings of Foucault, language is also an important focus. For Foucault relationships of power are constructed through "discourse." This term means not only particular discussions but the entire organizational and ideological technology associated with the implementation of ideas." <33> In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault suggests that relationships of power were constituted through the discourse of sexuality as it emerged in the nineteenth century. Expert knowledge, protected in the scientific disciplines, of medical and psychological functions defined normal and abnormal behavior. These makers of meaning, the medical experts, elaborated the meanings of sexuality and constructed human sexual identities. For historians of women, this has led to explorations of the relationship of (male) doctors and female patients. Some historians have attempted to understand how certain female behavior has resisted or appropriated medical definitions. Others have even attempted to understand how other relationships of power (say, of class) were formulated in terms of gender. <34>

Indeed, with the Foucauldian approach, the question of women's invisibility in history becomes a question of power. The historical discourse that denies women visibility also perpetuates their subordination and their image as passive recipients of others' acts. History, in this interpretation, is part of the politics of the gender system. By extension, then, writing the history of women assumes status as political strategy.

At this point in the writing of women's history, no single theory or method prevails. Indeed, the field is characterized by a healthy eclecticism which has, over time, yielded important and innovative insights. The trend, if there has been one, has been away from simple documentation of women's activities to a preoccupation with gender as a category of analysis. Borrowing from social, linguistic, and psychoanalytical theory, historians of women have begun to articulate the need for a method that is definably feminist, historical in its uses and conceptions and applicable not only to Western experience but to the rest of the world as well. Only comparative work will test the possibility of such a unified methodology; in terms of the immediate future, it is more likely that diversity and variety in method and theory will continue to characterize this field of study. <35>

### **Prominent Topics and Themes In Women's History**

Women's history has treated almost every area of female experience in the past. Yet certain topics have emerged more prominently than others. These, perhaps, speak to the preoccupations of the contemporary women's movement. The topics are Work, Family, Politics and the State, and Ideology, including religious teachings. Cutting across these topics are a set of themes that touch on the issues of class and ethnicity, sexuality, and symbolic representation. In addition, historians continue to struggle with the issue of assessing a woman's status. As Gisela Bock asks: "By what measures can improvement or deterioration be judged?" <36> Perhaps the most difficult question of all is whether one can speak historically of a single category of "woman."

Much of the history of women's work turns on the attempt to assess the impact of industrial capitalism on western societies (beginning in the eighteenth century). Although there is divided opinion about whether women's situation improved with the coming of factories, machinery, and later white collar jobs, there is, generally speaking, agreement among historians about certain patterns. First, as early as anyone can ascertain, jobs were divided along sexual lines. Men did one kind of work, women another, even if sex-typing varied from place to place. Second, the wages paid women tended to be lower than those paid to men and their work required less training. Employers seem to have anticipated turnover in female labor forces; that was part of the reason women could be hired so cheaply. Third, the issues faced by middle and working class women during the nineteenth (and twentieth) centuries were very different. They can be expressed as "a contrast between exclusion and exploitation." <37> Considerations about unpaid labor at home are also included in inquiries into women's work.

Studies in the family cover a broad range, extending from "family economy" of working people to the household organization of the middle class. Topics such as reproduction, fertility, contraception, child rearing, and sexuality are included. Indeed, in some works the family is treated as synonymous with the 'private sphere,' the area of activity and relationships that is somehow outside market and political activity. This work is representative of only one approach to the study of women and the family. Another approach refuses the "private" designation, arguing instead that the family is a social and public institution, integrally connected to economic and political life. From this second perspective, the treatment of the family as somehow apart from other kinds of social

relationships simply perpetuates the "ideology of domesticity" that came into being in its western form with the rise of industrial capitalism. Furthermore, it promotes the invisibility of women as workers, for it tends to study them only in their domestic context. Lastly, it ignores the existence and experience of single women who, at any moment in history, have formed a significant portion of the female population. <38>

Under the heading of "Politics and the State" at least three different issues have been studied by historians of women. They are as follows: (a) the participation of women in general political movements (revolutions, wars, political movements, and political parties); (b) the formation of specifically women's political groups, devoted to advancing some perceived common goal for all women or of a particular group of women; and (c) the relationship between the political and legal status of women and the form and organization of the state.

The analysis of "ideology" has undergone important development among historians of women. Beginning with the fairly simple notion that ideas reflected reality, historians sought to document women's oppression by citing prescriptive literature about them. Although this literature has changed over time, it seems typically to assign women lower status than men. The terms of female inferiority have differed but these notions seem regularly to recur in western thought. What, historians asked, could they mean?

One particular analysis which has been offered suggests that ideas about sexual difference influence the definition and perception of "experience." Conversely, these ideas are affected by "experience." More general cultural notions of male and female are adapted to particular circumstances. There is, say, variation by class, ethnic, and religious affiliation yet there are recognizable themes that seem to characterize western thought. These are, for the most part, expressed in binary terms. Men and women are constructed through a series of oppositions. For instance, woman is to man as wet is to dry, weak is to strong, passion is to reason, superstition is to science, evil is to good, nature is to culture, passive is to active, and powerlessness is to powerful. These themes have appeared in different formulations in different periods and among different groups in societies.

How and why ideas change; how ideologies are imposed; how such ideas set the limits of behavior and define the meaning of experience--these are the questions that confront historians of women. Certainly, other scholars from a variety of disciplines are working on these same questions. What historians of women add to the discussion is a preoccupation with gender--how the terms of sexual difference are defined over time; how they differ for women and men; how they are changed or imposed; finally, how they are reproduced. <39>

### **Conclusion**

The field of women's history, whether fully accepted by individual intellectuals and/or by the academy, has made a tremendous impact on traditional history. Certainly, the study of women has led to the rethinking of institutions, of modes of production, of ideological, religious, political, and social systems. Writing the history of women has broadened the

entire field of historical research. Including women in historiography has led to a change in our basic understanding of history. For example, do historians need to adopt different chronologies if they write women into the historical record? In other words, how relevant are the traditional historical time schemes for women? In 1973, Sheila Ryan Johansson, in a speech given at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association stated, "Clio, the muse history, is now a liberated woman." <40> She alludes to a still widely disputed issue: To what extent is the history of women the same as feminist history? To what extent does writing about women's past imply an ideological unity or common set of references among those who undertake it? All of the above questions have not been answered definitively nor are they likely to be in the near future. In any case, the fact that they are being asked illustrates that, indeed, Clio's consciousness has been raised by the study of women in history.

### Notes

1 Rosalind Miles, *The Women's History of the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989) preface.

2 Miles, 1.

3 Gerda Lerner, "New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History," *Liberating Women's History*, ed. Bernice Carroll (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1976), 349. 1

4 R Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 184.

5 Hofstadter, 186-88.

6 Ann J. Lane, "Mary Ritter Beard: Woman as Force," *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Key Women Thinkers*, ed. Dale Spender (New York Pantheon Books, 1983), 335-36.

7 Nancy Cott, "Beard, Mary Ritter," *Notable American Women: The Modern Period*, eds. Carol Hard Green and Barbara Sicherman (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 72.

8 Mary Beard, *Woman as Force in History: A Study in Traditions and Realities* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 282.

9 Lane, 343.

10 Lane, 344.

11 Lane, 345.

12 Berenice A. Carroll, "Mary Beard's *Woman As Force in History*: A Critique." *Liberating Women's History*, ed. Berenice Carroll (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 26.

13 Cott, 73.

14 Gerda Lerner. "Autobiographical Notes, by Way of an Introduction," *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) xix.

15 Carroll, 30-31.

16 Lane, 346-47.

17 Sarah Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knoff, 1978), 35-40.

18 Phyllis Stock-Morton, "Finding Our Own Ways: Different Paths to Women's History in the United States," *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, eds. Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson, and Jane Rendall (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 61.

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