

RÉGINE PERNOUD

Those Terrible
Middle Ages
Debunking the Myths

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Pour en finir avec le Moyen Âge
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CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| | Foreword | 7 |
| 1 | "Middle Ages" | 9 |
| 2 | Clumsy and Awkward | 21 |
| 3 | Crude and Ignorant | 45 |
| 4 | Torpor and Barbarity | 65 |
| 5 | Of Frogs and Men | 85 |
| 6 | Women without Souls | 97 |
| 7 | The Accusing Finger | 115 |
| 8 | History, Ideas, and Fantasy | 139 |
| 9 | Simple Remarks on the Teaching of History | 163 |
| | Index | 175 |

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d. Constricted or narrowed calyces

ANSWER: D

23. The differences between pre-renal and intra-renal injury include all of the following except which one?

- a. Intrarenal injury involves damage to the nephrons resulting in acute tubular necrosis, while pre-renal injury is characterized by impaired renal blood flow.
- b. Both pre-renal injury and intrarenal injury result from dehydration.
- c. Patients with pre-renal or intrarenal injury may develop oliguria.
- d. Pre-renal injury may be caused by hypovolemia and hemorrhage while intrarenal injury is not.

ANSWER: B

13. A 27 year old woman presents to the clinic complaining of an anaphylactic reaction to a bee sting. During an anaphylactic reaction, patients experience bronchospasms, difficulty breathing, reduced blood pressure, itching, and dizziness. These symptoms are produced primarily by mast cell-derived histamine. Histamine causes bronchospasms by activation of which Histamine receptors?

a. H1

b. H2

c. H3

d. H4

ANSWER: A

14. John went on a hiking trip with his brother and accidentally fell into a bush with poison ivy. He inherited a mutated gene that suppresses B lymphocyte activity. Will this genetic defect alter his hypersensitivity to poison IV?

a. Yes, it will enhance the reaction

b. No, it will suppress the reaction

c. Yes, it will enhance the antigen-antibody reactions

d. No, it will not affect the reaction.

ANSWER: D

15. A 55 yr old severely malnourished man presents to the clinic complaining of peripheral edema. Which of the following statements may explain the cause of peripheral edema in this patient? Net filtration of fluid into the tissue caused by

Reduced plasma oncotic pressure with increased capillary hydrostatic pressure.

Increased plasma oncotic pressure with reduced capillary hydrostatic pressure.

Increased plasma oncotic pressure with increased capillary hydrostatic pressure.

Reduced tissue oncotic pressure with reduced capillary hydrostatic pressure.

ANSWER: A

16. Which renal function test is the best indicator for determining the progression of chronic kidney disease rather than an acute renal disease?

a. BUN

b. Urine-specific gravity

c. Serum creatinine levels

d. Urine sediment test

ANSWER: C

17. A patient presents to the urgent clinic with signs and symptoms of dehydration. What value would you expect for the patient's Blood Urea Nitrogen test?

a. 3 mg/dL

b. 10 mg/dL

4. A severely ill patient with a history of Infective Endocarditis develops acute renal failure and rushed to the emergency department by a family friend. Lab results: hematuria, albumin 30mg, urine output 400ml/day and azotemia. The physician confirms a diagnosis of Acute glomerulonephritis (AGN). Which one of the following clinical symptoms is also consistent with AGN?
- BUN=15mg/dL
 - Serum creatinine=1.2mg/dL
 - Orthostatic Hypotension
 - Diastolic Hypertension
5. When comparing the clinical manifestations of hyponatremia and hypokalemia, which statement best describes compensatory changes in circulating aldosterone levels in response to the electrolyte imbalance?
- Hyponatremia and Hypokalemia leads to increased aldosterone levels
 - Hypokalemia and Hypertatremia leads to reduced aldosterone levels
 - Hyponatremia and Hypertatremia leads to reduced aldosterone levels
 - Hypokalemia with no change in aldosterone levels
6. A 60 yr old man suffering with septic shock was recently diagnosed with an acute intra-renal injury and acute tubular necrosis. Which of the following is NOT an expected lab result?
- BUN > 20 mg/dL
 - FENa > 2
 - Albumin = 30mg
 - Urine Osmolality (mosmol/L) > 500
7. A patient with a history of Stage 3 chronic renal disease was recently injured during a camping trip in Colorado. His physician is concerned that his wound is not healing and suspects it may be due to his CKD. Do you agree?
- No, there is no evidence that CKD will have an affect on the healing process.
 - Yes, CKD is associated with an upregulation of glucoogenesis which delays healing.
 - No, patients with CKD have not shown any changes in wound healing
 - Yes, CKD is associated with uremic syndrome which has been shown to delay wound healing.

the negotiators, primarily English but also French, Spanish, and Portuguese, coming to buy slaves on the coasts of Africa in order to resell them to the planters of the Antilles, Guyana, and so forth. We should also mention here the wholesale genocides that would be produced, particularly in the nineteenth century, beginning with the methodical annihilation of the Indians of North America. And if at the end of our own twentieth century the apartheid of South Africa seemed an inadmissible anachronism, it would certainly not be without interest to recall that in some countries like Australia and New Zealand, the question of apartheid is no longer even posed; all the natives have been massacred.⁶

To return to France and the classical period, it will suffice to recall Colbert and the Sun King at Versailles, ruling in all good conscience on questions concerning the condition of slaves in the Antilles and creating or encouraging the commercial companies through which their traffic was carried out. The result was the wealth of cities like Bordeaux, Nantes, La Rochelle. To be just, one must add that only France worked out a kind of code tending toward the protection of black slaves—a very Platonic disposition, moreover, when one knows that whites were charged with overseeing its application. This state of things, as we know, lasted in reality up until that first true start of liberation: the 1848 Revolution—that of 1793 having only very temporarily abolished slavery in written texts without any practical effect. We know that, in English-speaking regions, slavery was to persist up to the War of Secession, and later still in Brazil.

⁶At the request of the ambassadors of Australia and New Zealand, we will give here the population statistics: Australia, 12.5 million inhabitants, of which 150,000 are aborigines; New Zealand, according to the 1961 census, had 2.5 million, of which 168,000 were aborigines. We will leave to the reader the task of evaluating the statistics.

WOMEN WITHOUT SOULS

In 1975, that "year of the woman", the rate of references to the Middle Ages became staggering; the image of the Middle Ages, of the dark, obscure times from which we emerged, like Truth from the well, was thrust upon all minds and furnished a fundamental theme for treatises, colloquia, symposia, and seminars of all kinds. When I mentioned one day in public the name of Eleanor of Aquitaine, I immediately received enthusiastic approval: "What an admirable person!" one of the people present exclaimed. "In a time when women thought only of having children . . ." I pointed out to her that Eleanor seemed to have thought about it also, since she had ten of them and since, given her personality, that could not have happened through mere inadvertence. The enthusiasm cooled a bit.

The status of women in France in the Middle Ages is today [1977] a nearly new subject; few serious studies have been devoted to it, no more, one might say, than could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The Jean Bodin Society, whose works are so remarkable, published between 1959 and 1962 two large volumes (346 and 770 pages respectively) on *La Femme*. All civilizations are examined successively. Women in the Society of Siam, or according to the various cuneiform laws, or in the Malikiite-Maghreb law, are mas-

terfully studied in it, but, for our medieval West, we find only ten pages dealing with canon law, ten others dealing with the period running from the thirteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, a study devoted to classical times up to the civil code, another to the French monarchy, and more detailed works on Italy, Belgium, and England in the Middle Ages. That is absolutely all. The feudal period is passed over in complete silence.

It is equally useless to look there for a study on women in the Celtic societies, where nevertheless we are certain they held a role quite in contrast to the one in which they were restricted in societies of the classical Greco-Roman type. In what concerns the Celts, for the historians of our time, men and women were on a strictly equal footing, since neither one nor the other is ever mentioned. The Celts are, once and for all, refused any right of existence.

And yet, one image commands attention that I have had occasion to mention elsewhere.¹ Is it not surprising, in fact, to think that in feudal times the queen was crowned just like the king, generally in Reims, sometimes in other cathedrales of the royal domain (at Sens for Margaret of Provence), but always by the hands of the archbishop of Reims? In other words, as much importance was attributed to the crowning of the queen as to that of the king. Now, the last queen who was crowned was Marie de Médicis; this was done belatedly, in 1610, on the very eve of the death of her spouse, Henry IV. The ceremony took place in Paris according to a custom that had arisen in the preceding centuries (getting to Reims at that time represented a military action because of the Anglo-French wars). And besides, from these medieval times (the term taken here in contrast to feudal times), the crowning of

¹ *Histoire de la bourgeoisie en France* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1962), 2:30-31.

the queen had assumed less importance than that of the king; in a period when war reigned in France as an endemic state (that of the famous Hundred Years' War), military needs began to prevail over any other preoccupation, and the king was first of all a war chief. Still, it was only in the seventeenth century that the queen literally disappeared from the scene in favor of the "favorite". It is enough to recall the destiny of Marie-Thérèse or that of Marie Leszczyńska to be convinced of that. And when the last queen wanted to re-assume a particle of power, she was given the occasion to repent of it, since she was named Marie Antoinette (it is only fair to add that the last favorite, Du Barry, joined the last queen on the scaffold).

This rapid skimming through the status of queens gives an accurate enough idea of what happened for women in general; the place they held in society, the influence they exercised, followed an exactly parallel line. While women like Eleanor of Aquitaine and Blanche of Castile really dominated their century, while they unquestionably exercised power when the king was absent, sick, or dead, while they had their chancellery, their dower, their field of personal activity (which could be claimed as a fruitful example by the most feminist movements of our time), the woman in classical times was relegated to the background; she exercised power only in a hidden way and found herself excluded from any political or administrative function. She was even considered, especially in Latin countries, as being incapable of ruling, of succeeding to a fiefdom or domain, and, finally, according to our Code, of exercising any right whatsoever over her personal property.

It is as always in the history of law that we must seek the facts and their meaning, in other words, the reason for this decline, which became, in the nineteenth century, the total

disappearance of the role of woman, especially in France. Her influence diminished in direct proportion to the rise of Roman law in juridical studies, then in institutions, and finally in customs. It was a progressive obliteration, whose principal stages, in France at least, one can follow very easily.

Curiously enough, the first provision that excluded women from the succession to the throne was made by Philip the Fair. The fact is that this king was under the influence of the southern French jurists, who had literally invaded the court of France at the beginning of the fourteenth century and who, as typical representatives of the urban bourgeoisie, particularly of cities of the south, who were much into trading, rediscovered Roman law with a veritable intellectual avidity. This law, which had been conceived for the military, functionaries, and merchants, conferred on the property owner the *ius utendi et abutendi*, the right of use and abuse, in complete contradiction to the customary law of that time but eminently favorable to those who held personal wealth. To the latter, this legislation seemed, and rightly so, infinitely superior to the existing customs for insuring and protecting goods, trade, and commerce. Roman law, whose influence is seen reborn in Italy, particularly in Bologna, was the great temptation of the medieval period; it was studied with enthusiasm not only by the urban bourgeoisie but also by all those who saw in it an instrument of centralization and authority. It showed in large part the effects of its imperialist and, let us say the word, colonialist origins. It was the law par excellence of those who wanted to affirm a central state authority. So it was claimed, adopted, extended by the powers seeking centralization at that time: by the emperor, first of all, then by the papacy. In the middle of the thirteenth century, Emperor Frederick II, whose tendencies were those of a monarch, made it the common law of the German coun-

tries. The university he founded in Naples—the only one the subjects of the emperor would henceforth be authorized to attend—dispensed the study of Roman law, so well, in fact, that it was this Roman law that ruled the institutions and customs of the Germanic countries at a time when the West did not yet allow it.² It would only be in the course of the seventeenth century that the study of Roman law, precisely because it was imperial law, would be allowed at the University of Paris. The fact is that, much earlier, it was taught at Toulouse and that, favored by the infatuation felt in the sixteenth century for antiquity, it had begun to penetrate the customs and to modify profoundly the habits and mentalities in France itself.

Now Roman law is no more favorable to the woman than it is to the child. It is a monarchical law, which allows only one single end. It is the law of the *pater familias*, father, proprietor, and, in his own home, high priest, the head of the family with sacred, in any case unlimited, power in what concerns his children: he has the right of life and death over them—it is the same for his wife, despite some limitations belatedly introduced during the Byzantine Empire.

It was by relying on Roman law that jurists like Dumoulin, through their treatises and their teaching, contributed both to extending the power of the centralized state and also—what interests us here—to restricting the freedom of women and their capacity for action, particularly in marriage. The influence of this law would be so strong that in the sixteenth century the age of majority, which for the most part was twelve years for girls and fourteen for boys, was returned to

² Paradoxically, the Germanic countries were thus formed by Roman law, while in France, with all due respect to those who remain attached to the myth of the "Latin race", the customs were formed by usages believed to be "Germanic" but which should have been called, rather, "Celtic".

the very age fixed in Rome, that is, twenty-five years (in Rome majority scarcely mattered, since the power of the father over his children remained effective all during his life). This was a clear regression from what had been customary, which permitted a child to acquire true autonomy when very young, without, for all that, withdrawing him from the solidarity of the family. Within this latter structure, the father had a managerial, not proprietary, authority: he did not have the power to disinherit his oldest son. This was the custom that also regulated the transmission of property in noble or common families, in a sense that shows very well, moreover, the power the woman maintained over what belonged to her as her own: in the case of a deceased couple without any direct heir, the property originating from the father went to the paternal family, but that originating from the mother returned to the maternal family, according to the well-known adage of common law: *paterna paternis; materna maternis*.

In the seventeenth century, already, we note a profound evolution of this point of view: children, considered as minors until twenty-five years old, remained under paternal power, and the character of ownership as the monopoly of the father became only more pronounced. The Napoleonic Code put the final touch to this system and gave an imperative sense to tendencies that had begun to assert themselves from the end of the medieval period. Let us recall that it was only in the twelfth century that women were obliged to take the name of their spouse; and also that it was only with the Council of Trent, thus in the second half of the sixteenth century, that the consent of parents became necessary for the marriage of children; just as the sanction of the Church became indispensable. To the old adage of former times:

Drink, eat, sleep together
Get married, I think

is added:

but the Church must get involved in it.

Here I must remark on the number of unions duly arranged by families during feudal times: girls and boys engaged from the cradle, promised to each other, examples in fact abound. This is without fail used as the argument when demonstrating that women were not free during the period; to which it is easy to retort that, from this point of view, boys and girls found themselves on rigorously equal footing, for the future groom was disposed of in absolutely the same way as the future bride. Yet, it is incontestable that there occurred at that time what still happens today in two-thirds of the world: the great majority of unions were arranged by families. And in noble, even royal families, these dispositions constituted in a way part of the duties of birth, for a marriage between two heirs of fiefdoms or kingdoms was considered the best way to seal a peace treaty, to assure reciprocal friendliness, and also to provide a fruitful legacy for the future.

One power fought against these imposed unions, and that was the Church; she increased the number of the causes of nullity in canon law, never ceased to claim freedom for those who were pledged to each other, and often proved rather indulgent in tolerating in fact the rupture of imposed bonds—much more at that time, we should note, than later. It is, moreover, an established fact, taken from simple evidence, that everywhere progress in free choice of a spouse accompanied progress in the spread of Christianity. Even today, it is in Christian lands that this freedom, so justly demanded, is

recognized by law, while in Muslim lands or in the countries of the Far East this freedom, which seems essential to us, does not exist or has only very recently been granted.³

That leads us to discuss the expression "a Church hostile to women". We will not pause here to take up the whole of a question that would necessitate a volume by itself; neither will we go on to discuss the obvious nonsense that has been uttered in this regard. "It was only in the fifteenth century that the Church admitted that women had a soul." This statement was candidly affirmed one day on the radio by some writer of fiction who was no doubt motivated by good intentions but whose information showed proof of several lacunae! So, for centuries, soul-less beings were baptized, confessed, and admitted to the Eucharist! How strange that the first martyrs honored as saints were women and not men: Saint Agnes, Saint Cecilia, Saint Agatha, and so many others. How truly sad that Saint Blandine and Saint Genevieve were deprived of immortal souls. How surprising that one of the most ancient catacomb paintings (in the burial ground of Priscilla) represented precisely the *Virgin with Child*, well designated by the star and the prophet Isaiah. And finally, whom shall we believe, those who, justly, reproach the medieval Church for the cult of the Virgin Mary or those who judge the Virgin to have been considered at that time to be a creature without a soul?

Without letting such nonsense delay us, we will merely recall here that some women (who were not in any particular way singled out by their family or their birth, since they

³ "Muslim legislation forbids the woman what she demands today and what she calls her rights and what constitutes nothing but aggression against the rights that have been conferred on men alone." So Sheik Hasanam Makhluf expressed himself in 1952, in the publication entitled *Al Misri* (see *La Documentation française*, no. 2418 [May 31, 1952], 4).

came, as we would say today, from all social strata, as witnessed by the shepherdess of Nanteuil) enjoyed in the Church, and by their function in the Church, an extraordinary power during the Middle Ages. Certain abbesses were feudal lords whose power was respected equally with that of other lords; some wore the cross just like a bishop; they often administered vast territories with villages, parishes. . . . One example among thousands of others: in the middle of the twelfth century, the cartularies permit us to follow the formation of the monastery of the Paraclete whose superior was Héloïse; one need only skim through them to note that the life of an abbess of that period included a whole administrative aspect: donations were accumulated that allowed, here, the collection of a tithe on a vineyard, there, the right to rent on hay or corn, here to have a barn, and there a right of pasture in the forest. . . . Her activity was also that of an owner, indeed, of a lord. This is to say that, by their religious functions, certain women exercised, even in secular life, a power that many men would envy today.

On the other hand, one notes that the religious of that time—about whom, we should say in passing, serious research is completely lacking—were for the most part extremely well-educated women who could have rivaled the most learned monks of the time in their knowledge. Héloïse herself knew and taught Greek and Hebrew to her nuns. It was from an abbey of women, that of Gandersheim, that a manuscript came in the tenth century containing six comedies in rhymed prose in imitation of Terence; they have been attributed to the famous abbess Hroswitha, whose influence, moreover, on the literary development of the Germanic lands is well known. These comedies, probably enacted by the religious, are, from the point of view of dramatic history, considered to be proof of a scholarly tradition that

contributed to the development of theatre in the Middle Ages. Let us add in passing that many of the monasteries of men and women dispensed local instruction to children of the region.

It is surprising, also, to note that the best-known encyclopedia of the twelfth century came from a woman religious, the abbess Herrat of Landsberg. It was the famous *Floris d'elicianum, Garden of Delights*, in which scholars draw the most reliable information about the state of technical knowledge of that time. Just as much could be said for the works of the famous Hildegard of Bingen. Finally, another woman religious, Gertrude of Helfta, in the thirteenth century, tells us how happy she was to pass from the state of "grammatian" to that of "theologian", which is to say that, after having gone through the stage of preparatory studies, she reached the higher stage, like that studied at the University. Which proves that in the thirteenth century, convents of women were still what they had always been since the time of Saint Jerome, who established the first of them, the community of Bethlehem: centers of prayer, but also of religious knowledge, exegesis, learning; Sacred Scripture was studied there, considered as the basis of all knowledge, and also all the elements of religious and secular learning. The religious were educated girls; moreover, entering a convent was a normal path for those who wanted to develop their knowledge beyond the usual level. What seemed extraordinary in Héloïse in her youth was the fact that, not being a religious and not manifesting any desire to enter a convent, she nevertheless pursued very dry studies instead of contenting herself with the more frivolous, more carefree life of a girl wanting to "remain in the world". The letter that Peter the Venerable sent to her explicitly says so.

But there are more surprising things yet. If one wants to get an exact idea of the place held by women in the Church

in feudal times, one must wonder what would be said in our twentieth century of convents of men placed under the authority of a woman. Would a project of this kind have the least chance of succeeding in our time? This was, however, achieved with great success and without providing the least scandal in the Church by Robert d'Arbrissel at Fontevault, in the early part of the twelfth century. Having resolved to situate the extraordinary crowd of men and woman who were following in his footsteps—for he was one of the great converters of all time—Robert d'Arbrissel decided to found two convents, one for men and the other for women;⁴ between them rose the church, which was the only place where the monks and nuns could meet. Now this double monastery was placed under the authority, not of an abbot, but of an abbess. The latter, through the will of the founder, was to be a widow, having had the experience of marriage. Let us add, to complete the picture, that the first abbess, Petromilla of Chemillé, who presided over the fortunes of this order of Fontevault, was twenty-two years old. Such audacity would not have the least chance of being envisaged again in our own time.

If one examines the facts, the conclusion is inescapable: during the whole feudal period, the place of women in the Church was certainly different from that of men (and is this not precisely a proof of the wisdom of making allowances for what equal but different creatures men and women are?), but it was an eminent place, which, moreover, symbolized perfectly the cult, which was likewise eminent, rendered to the Virgin among all the saints. And it is scarcely surprising that the period ends with a woman's face: that of Joan of Arc,

⁴ There were numerous other double orders during the period, notably in Anglo-Saxon regions and in Spain.

who, let us say in passing, could never have obtained in later centuries the audience or aroused the confidence that she obtained in the end.

It is surprising, too, to observe the growing intransigence that occurred with respect to women at the very end of the thirteenth century. It was through a very significant measure that Pope Boniface VIII, in 1298, decided on the total and strict cloister of nuns (Carthusians and Cistercians) that they have known ever since. In consequence, women religious would no longer be allowed to mix with the world. Consecrated laywomen, such as the *béguines*, who, in the thirteenth century, led a life like everyone else's but were consecrated by vows, would no longer be tolerated. In the seventeenth century, in particular, the Visitation sisters, meant by their founders to mix in everyday life, were obliged to adapt themselves to the same cloister as the Carmelites; so that Saint Vincent de Paul, in order to permit the Daughters of Charity to render service to the poor, to go care for the sick and to help families in need, was very careful not to treat them as religious and make them take the veil; if he had, their fate would have been that of the Visitandines. It was by then inconceivable for a woman, having decided to consecrate her life to God, not to be cloistered; although in the new orders created for men, such as the Jesuits, the latter remained in the world.

It suffices to say that the status of women in the Church is exactly the same as their status in civil society and that gradually, after the Middle Ages, everything that conferred on them any autonomy, any independence, any instruction, was taken away from them. Now, at the very time when the University—which admitted only men—was trying to concentrate knowledge and teaching, convents gradually ceased to be those centers of study that they had been previously;

let us add that they also ceased, and rather rapidly, being centers of prayer.

Women thus found themselves excluded from ecclesial life just as from intellectual life. The movement was precipitated when, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the king of France had control over the nomination of abbesses and abbots. The best example remains the order of Fontevrault, which became a sanctuary for old mistresses of the king. A sanctuary where, moreover, a less and less edifying life was led, for such strict cloister was not long in suffering violence, acknowledged or not. If some orders, like those of Carmel or the Poor Clares, kept their purity thanks to reforms, most of the monasteries of women, at the end of the Ancien Régime, were accessible houses where the younger daughters of large families received a large number of visits and where cards were played, as well as other "forbidden games", very far into the night.

We have yet to speak of women who were neither great ladies nor abbesses nor even nuns: peasants and townswomen, mothers of families and women practicing a trade. It goes without saying that, to be treated correctly, such questions would demand several volumes and would also require preliminary works that have not been written. It would be indispensable to explore not only collections of customs and town statutes but also the enormous mass of notarial acts, in the south especially, cartularies, legal documents, or even the inquiries ordered by Saint Louis;⁵ we find there, taken from

⁵ An unprecedented and, moreover, short-lived initiative, which consisted in the king's having made a survey of his own administration by directly addressing those administered: the king sent out on-site investigators uniquely charged to gather together the responses of common folk who had made complaints to royal agents and to reverse thus, on site, the abuse committed; in other words, this was the efficacious way to remedy the failures of state control.

everyday life, thousands of small details, gleaned by chance and without any preconceived order, which show us men and women through the small facts of existence: here the complaint of a woman hairdresser, there of a woman salt merchant (trading in salt), of a woman miller, of the widow of a farmer, of a chatelaine, of a woman Crusader, and so on.

It is through documents of this kind that one can, piece by piece, reconstruct, as in a mosaic, the real story. There is no point in saying that this story is in appearance something very different from that provided by the *chansons de geste*, the chivalric novels, and the literary sources that have so often been taken as historical sources!

The picture that comes into focus from the whole of these documents presents for us more than one surprising trait, since one sees, for example, women voting like men in urban assemblies or those of rural parishes. I am often amused, in various conferences or reports, to cite the case of Gaillarde de Frécheou, who, at the time of an agreement proposed by the abbey of Saint-Savin to the inhabitants of Cauterets in the Pyrenees, was the only one to vote No, while all the rest of the population voted Yes. The vote of women was not expressly mentioned everywhere, but that may be because the necessity for doing so was not obvious. When texts allow us to differentiate the origin of the votes, we see that, in regions as different as the Béarn parishes, certain villages of Champagne, and certain eastern cities like Pont-à-Mousson, or even in Touraine at the time of the Estate-General of 1308, women are explicitly named among the voters, without anything being said to imply it was a usage particular to the locality. In city statutes, there is a general indication that the votes were received in an assembly of the inhabitants without any further details; sometimes mention is made of age by indicating, as at Aurillac, that the right to vote was exer-

cised at the age of twenty years or, at Embrun, beginning at fourteen years. Let us add that, since generally the votes were cast by home, that is, by household, rather than by individual, it was the one who represented the "home", thus the father, who was called to represent his family; if it was the father of the family who was naturally the head of it, it remained well understood that his authority was that of a manager and an administrator, not an owner.

In notarial acts, it is very common to see a married woman act by herself, in opening, for example, a shop or a trade, and she did so without being obliged to produce her husband's authorization. Finally, the tax rolls (we would say the preceptor's registers), when they have been preserved for us, as in the case of Paris at the end of the thirteenth century, show a host of women plying trades: schoolmistress, doctor, apothecary, plasterer, dyer, copyist, miniaturist, binder, and so on.

It was only at the end of the sixteenth century, through a parliamentary decree dated 1593, that women would be explicitly excluded from all state functions. The growing influence of Roman law was not long, then, in restricting women to what has been, in all times, her privileged domain: the care of the home and education of children—at least up to the moment when that, too, would be taken away by law, for, let us note, with the Napoleonic Code, she would not even be mistress of her own property any more and would play only a subordinate role in her own household. For, from the time of Montaigne up to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it was men who composed educational treatises, even though the first treatise on education published in France that has come down to us was produced by a woman, Dhuoda, who wrote it (in Latin verse) sometime around 841-843 for the use of her son.⁶

⁶ P. Riché, *Dhuoda: Manuscrit pour mon fils* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1975).

Several years ago, some of the discussions that took place on the subject of parental authority in France were rather disconcerting for a historian of the Middle Ages; in fact, the idea that a law was necessary to give women the right to oversee the education of her children would have seemed paradoxical in feudal times. At that time, the married community, both father and mother, exercised jointly the task of educating and protecting children as well as, eventually, administering their property. It is true that the family was conceived then in a much broader sense; education posed infinitely fewer problems, because it was carried out within the heart of a vital fabric, of a familial community that was more extensive and more diversified than in our time, since it was not restricted to the initial mother-father-child cell but included also grandparents, other relatives, and domestics, in the etymological sense of the word. Which did not prevent the child from having, eventually, a distinct legal status; thus, if he inherited his own property (bequeathed by an uncle, for example), this was administered by the family community, which, subsequently, would have to render him an account of it.

There is no shortage of detailed examples furnished by the history of law and customs attesting to the erosion of the place held by women between the time of feudal customs and the triumph of a "Roman" legislation with which our legal code is still permeated. At that time, moreover, when moralists wanted to see "the woman of the hearth", it would have been more appropriate to reverse the proposition and insist that the hearth belonged to the woman.

A reaction to this is coming only in our own time. We should add, moreover, that it is very disappointing: everything is happening as if women, overcome with satisfaction at the idea of having penetrated the masculine world, have

remained incapable of the additional imagination required to bring to this world her own mark, which is precisely what is lacking in our society. It is enough for her to imitate men, to be judged capable of practicing the same trades, of adopting the behavior and even the customary clothing of her partner, without even asking herself what might be questionable and should be questioned about this. Without asking herself if she might not be motivated by an unconscious, perhaps excessive, admiration of a masculine world she believes it is necessary and sufficient to copy with as much exactitude as possible, even at the loss of her own identity, by denying in advance what is original in her.

Such observations lead us rather far from the feudal world; they can in any case lead us to wish that this feudal world might be a bit better known by those who believe in good faith that women have "finally left the Middle Ages"; in point of fact, women have much to do to recover the place that was theirs in the time of Queen Eleanor and Queen Blanche . . .