Women and Political Activism in France, 1848–1852

First Feminists

Laura S. Schor

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In loving memory of Esther R. Gross

Chronology of Women and Political Activism in Paris: 1848–1852

February 23–25, 1848: Women participate in revolutionary actions, building barricades and invading the Tuileries Palace.

February 25, 1848: Laundresses present demands to the Provisional Government to reduce their work hours.

February 26, 1848: Marianne de Lamartine and Emilie Mallet lead a march of children through the city requesting support from the Provisional Government for crèches and salles d'asile.

March 1, 1848: The announcement of the formation of the Vésuvienne legion, posted on the walls of Paris, attracts the attention of large groups of women.

March 2, 1848: Women workers present a petition demanding work to the Provisional Government.

March 15, 1848: Delegation of women garment workers march to the Luxembourg Commission to demand an end to clothing manufacture in prisons and convents.

March 16, 1848: Antonine Andrée de Saint-Gilles and women artists, workers, writers, and teachers petition the Provisional Government for the right to vote.

Petition from Eugénie Niboyet and others to Minister François Arago for the right to vote.

March 20, 1848: *La Voix des femmes*, the first daily feminist newspaper, publishes its first issue.

March 22, 1848: Allix Bourgeois leads a delegation of the Société des droits de la femme to the Hotel de Ville to present a petition to the Provisional Government demanding equal rights for women.

March 25, 1848: *La Voix des femmes* publishes the Definitive Constitution of the Association fraternelle des femmes.

March 26, 1848: The Association fraternelle des femmes changes the name of their organization to the Société de la *Voix des femmes.*

Meeting of Société des droits de la femme founded by Allix Bourgeois.

March 27, 1848: Two columns of young working-class women march from the Place Vendôme carrying a banner embroidered with the word Vésuviennes to the Hotel de Ville where they request use of the debtors' prison, recently emptied, as a home and garment-making workshop.

March 29, 1848: Mayor of Paris, Marrast, announced the opening of National Workshops for Women.

March 30, 1848: Meeting of Société de la *Voix des femmes.*

Meeting of Société des droits de la femme.

Meeting of Société des sages-femmes unis founded by Suzanne Voilquin.

March 31, 1848: Marianne de Lamartine organizes wives of government ministers, women known for their charitable work, and the wives of artists and writers to form the Association en faveur des pauvres.

March 1848: (exact date unknown): Club fraternelle des lingères founded by Désirée Gay.

Vésuvienne club founded.

April 2, 1848: Public meeting of Société de la *Voix des femmes* on rue Taranne.

April 4, 1848: Election is held in each arrondissement for delegates to help plan National Workshops for Women. Working women elect 60 delegates including Désirée Gay.

April 6, 1848: Public meeting of Société de la *Voix des femmes.*

April 10, 1848: The editors of the *Voix des femmes* submit Petition of Women to Provisional Government, calling for suffrage for unmarried women and widows.

April 14, 1848: The Société de la *Voix des femmes* prints Goals, Means of Action, and Membership rules.

April 15, 1848: Forty women of the first arrondissement march to the Luxembourg Palace to present Louis Blanc with demands for a minimum wage of 1 franc per shirt or 1 franc per day.

Mid-April through mid-July 1848: 25,000 women are employed in National Workshops sewing shirts for the Garde Mobile.

April 18, 1848: Eugénie Niboyet begins teaching a class on the history of women, free to all women.

Désirée Gay criticizes the administration of the National Workshops for Women and is removed from her position as delegate of the second arrondissement by Minister of Interior, Marie.

April 20 and 23, 1848: Jeanne-Marie (aka Jenny P. d'Héricourt) addresses the Club d'Emancipation du peuple asking their support for expanding educational and professional opportunities for women.

April 23, 1848: Pauline Roland publishes "Women Must Work" in *Voix des femmes.*

April 25, 1848: Société de l'émancipation des femmes is established by Jeanne Deroin, Adèle Esquiros, and Dr. Malatier.

April 27, 1848: Niboyet announces support of the Société de la *Voix des femmes* for the Association des femmes à gages.

April 29, 1848: Suzanne Voilquin submits a petition to the Constituent Assembly on behalf of 500 women members of the Société des sage-femmes unis. She asks that they be given the status of state employees.

La Voix des femmes suspends publication.

April 1848 (exact date unknown): Vésuvienne Constitution published.

May 11–June 6, 1848: The Société de la *Voix des femmes* adopts the name Club des femmes and holds eight open meetings at Salle de Spectacles-Concerts, Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle.

May 21, 1848: Women workers in the National Workshops march in the Fête de la Concorde, carrying a banner, despite being forbidden to do so by the administration of the Workshops.

May 28, 1848: *Voix des femmes* resumes publication.

Association fraternelles des femmes à gages is advertised in the *Voix des femmes* on May 28 and 29, June 4 and 6.

May 29, 1848: Marrast orders closing of National Workshops for Women.

June 12, 1848: The Club des femmes resumes calling itself the Société de la *Voix des femmes.*

June 15–18, 1848: Last issue of the *Voix des femmes* is published.

June 18–24, 1848: First issue of *Politque des femmes* is published.

June 23–26, 1848: Women participate in the June Revolt.

June 27, 1848: Two hundred and ninety-two women are taken prisoner following the June Revolt.

July 3, 1848: National Workshops for Women are closed.

July 6, 1848: Elisa Lemonnier establishes Société de l'Union des femmes travailleuses, employing 200 women.

July 15, 1848: Eugénie Foa establishes L'Oeuvre de bon secours employing 500 women.

July 28, 1848: Women's participation in clubs is outlawed.

Société d'émancipation des femmes is closed.

August 1848: Second and last issue of *Politique des femmes* is published.

First issue of *L'Opinion des femmes* is published.

Société d'éducation mutuelle des femmes (previously Société d'émancipation des femmes) offers classes by Adèle Esquiros, Eugénie Niboyet, and Jeanne Deroin.

September 17, 1848: Eugénie Niboyet establishes the Association Fraternelle des femmes ouvrières lyonnaises pour l'exploitation de toutes industries.

October 1848 (exact dates unknown): Association des ouvrières lingères is founded with support from the Société *d'émancipation des femmes.*

L'Oeuvre des Dames fraternelles is founded by Elisa Lemonnier.

L'Oeuvre de bon secours is founded by Eugénie Foa.

Fraternal Association of Shirt and Dressmakers founded by Désirée Gay.

October 18, 1848: Dobreska, Debruge et Compagnie, a cooperative association of seamstresses, is established. They receive a state loan of 10,000 francs on November 18, 1848, and later receive an additional 5000 franc loan.

November 25, 1848: The Women's Banquet is held featuring toasts by Jeanne Deroin, Désirée Gay, and Marie-Noémi Constant.

December 9, 1848: Joiners' banquet is held featuring toast by Désirée Gay.

December 25, 1848: Banquet with toasts by Jeanne Deroin, Adèle Esquiros, and Pauline Roland.

January 1849: Association fraternelle des democrates socialistes des deux sexes pour l'affranchissement politique et social des femmes is founded by Jeanne Deroin, Annette Lamy, Hortense Wild, Jean Macé, Joseph Delbrouck, and Eugène Stourm.

January 28, 1849: *L'Opinion des femmes* begins monthly publication.

February 25, 1849: Pauline Roland offers toast at banquet.

March 1, 1849: Jeanne Deroin offers toast at banquet.

April-May 1849: Jeanne Deroin campaigns for National Assembly.

August 3, 1849: Désirée Gay is awarded 12,000 franc state loan for her producer cooperative Association fraternelle des lingères. She turns down the loan.

August 23, 1849: Forty-three delegates attend meeting of the Union des associations de travailleurs founded by Jeanne Deroin.

September 24, 1849: First meeting of the Association fraternelle des instituteurs, institutrices et professeurs democrates socialistes founded by Pauline Roland, Jeanne Deroin, and Gustave Lefrançais. Eleven of the 22 chapters send representatives.

March 19–21, 1849: Meeting of Union des Associations de travailleurs is closed by police.

April 11, 1849: Meeting of Union des Associations de travailleurs which has 400 members.

May 29, 1850: Meeting of Union des associations de travailleurs is invaded by police. Thirty participants, including Jeanne Deroin, Pauline Roland, and Louise Nicaud are arrested.

November 13–15, 1850: Trial of Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland; they are both sentenced to six months in prison.

June 2–July 2, 1851: Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland serve sentences in Saint-Lazare.

June 15, 1851: Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland write a letter from prison to American women meeting in Worcester, Massachusetts.

December 3, 1851: Elisa Lemonnier fails to enlist Archbishop Sibour to prevent civil war in response to coup d'état by Louis-Napoleon.

January 1852: Pauline Roland is arrested for resisting the coup. Sentenced to exile for life in Algeria.

1852: Jeanne Deroin publishes *Almanach des femmes* in Paris.

August 1852: Jeanne Deroin goes into exile in London.

October 1852: Pauline Roland's sentence is remitted. She dies in December 1852 in Lyon.

Acknowledgments

I have been reading and thinking about the First Feminists for more than 50 years. My interest in these women activists began while investigating sources for my dissertation about the women silk workers of Lyon in 1971. In the periodical room of the old Bibliotheque National on rue Richelieu I came across treasures. In those days it was possible to consult original issues of nineteenth-century newspapers in the periodical room. I soon discovered *La Voix des femmes*, *La Politique des femmes*, and *L'Opinion des femmes.* Later I found all three volumes of *L'Almanach des femmes.* I also found *Le Charivari* and several other satiric newspapers that commented in texts and images on the women activists. During successive research trips I made photocopies of all the newspapers that I found, identifying them as valuable resources that I would want to consult in the coming years as I pursued research projects about women workers and girls' education. Without this collection of newspapers, it would have been impossible to write this book.

In the Bibliotheque Marguerite Durand and the Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal I discovered a few precious letters that were written by some of the women activists. In the Bibliotheque Historique de la Ville de Paris I found two encyclopedias of women which included brief biographies of some of the women. In the Archives Nationales I found information about women arrested in 1848. These repositories of information about women's lives in the nineteenth century were likewise essential in creating the narrative of this book. I continued to photocopy and to take notes on all this material for many years. I filed some of it in a voluminous folder titled "Dreams Women Dared to Dream." The title of the file expressed my

appreciation for the courage demonstrated by women who lived under the restrictive laws of the Civil Code while imagining and fighting for a better world for women.

The information I gathered appeared in papers I gave at professional meetings, in articles I published, and in my early books. Two courses that I developed at SUNY Fredonia in the mid-1970s, Women and Work, and Mothers and Daughters, reflected my research interests. Keen interest expressed by my students was a stimulus to further research.

I was appointed the Director of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Cincinnati in 1979. Soon my administrative work also reflected my research interests. I organized monthly meetings with a small group of community women, leaders of the local Women's City Club, Planned Parenthood, and the NAACP, calling the group Friends of Women's Studies. We spent many months discussing the importance of new research in literature, history, sociology, psychology, economics, and political science designed to expand the categories of knowledge to reflect women's contributions and experience. While working with women activists in Cincinnati, I often thought of the women of 1848. Both groups of women observed inequities and mobilized for change. Both had an eye on the future, recognizing that some of their goals would be realized by their daughters. I reserved part of every meeting to tell the Friends about their French foremothers. Ultimately, each selected one of the Parisian women as her role model. During the ten years I spent in Cincinnati, I learned a lot from the Friends of Women's Studies. Their live voices added volume to the hushed voices of French women activists I struggled to hear clearly through the medium of the newspapers and letters I had in my files.

My work in French women's history brought me into contact with many women historians who wrote about various aspects of the developing field. I met some of them at meetings of the Berkshire Conference, French Historical Studies, the Western Society for French History, and the American Historical Society. I met others at meetings of the International Conference on Women's History, the International Society for the Study of European Ideas, the University of Amsterdam's Conference on the French Revolution, and the Irish Conference on the History of Women in Belfast. I also met colleagues in Paris while doing research in libraries and archives. This circle of women historians which began as a small group has continued to expand, now including the daughters of some of the original members of the group. Reading the work of this pathbreaking group of scholars during the past few decades was often inspiring. My

correspondence with many of them is a testament to the collegiality and thoughtfulness of the cohort. I am particularly indebted to two members of the original circle, Karen Offen and Linda L. Clark, and to Judith DeGroat, a representative of the younger members; all three read the manuscript for this book and offered valuable suggestions for its improvement.

The research for this book, begun so many years ago, was completed during a sabbatical year that coincided with the COVID pandemic. Its completion was greatly facilitated by the efforts of a young colleague, Frederic Baitinger, who lives in Paris. Baitinger went to libraries and archives that were not accessible to me for months. He took photos of documents and e-mailed them to me. He also provided rough translations of dozens of documents to facilitate my work. All the translations in this book that are not identified in footnotes were done by Baitinger and me. I was also ably assisted by Jessica DeCoux in formatting the manuscript for submission.

My deepest gratitude goes to colleagues and students at Hunter College, where I have worked for the past three decades. This formerly woman's college remains a leader in gender and women's studies research and scholarship. It is a privilege to be part of a college whose first students (in the 1870s) campaigned for educational parity with City College, a men's college, and who remain committed to women's rights and social justice around the globe today. I would also like to thank the President's Fund for Scholarship at Hunter College for providing support to defray the costs of translation and indexing.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: First Feminists

This book profiles ten women activists whom I identify as the First Feminists. They were, in birth order: Eugénie Niboyet, Eugénie Foa, Suzanne Voilquin, Joséphine Bachellery, Pauline Roland, Jeanne Deroin, Elisa Lemonnier, Désirée Gay, Adèle Esquiros, and Marie-Noémi Constant. These women launched the French women's movement in Paris; thousands joined their endeavors, yet their efforts to expand the definition of the Republic to include civil and political rights for women have received little attention from historians of the period.

An early exception to this general neglect was Marguerite Thibert, whose *Le Féminisme dans le socialisme français de 1830 à 1848* was published nearly 100 years ago. Thibert's important contribution to both feminist and socialist history is her conclusion that women activists in 1848 understood the need for unity among all women to achieve feminist and socialist goals. The leaders she describes were women, both bourgeois and working class, who were influenced by progressive ideas and who struggled to be included in the formation of the new social order. Thibert argues that a schism between men and women of the working class developed in 1848, when "universal" suffrage replaced the property-based suffrage of the July Monarchy, while all women continued to be denied suffrage. She attributes the ensuing autonomy of feminism to this schism.[1]

[1] Marguerite Thibert, Le Féminisme dans le socialisme français de 1830 à 1848, Paris: Marcel Giard, 1926, 313–314, 335.12.

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More recently, feminist historians, notably Michèle Riot-Sarcey, Laure Adler, Claire G. Moses, Karen Offen, and Judith DeGroat, have added both information and analysis to our knowledge about the women of 1848. My book builds on their work.

The First Feminists, acting in response to the February Revolution, delivered petitions demanding women's rights to the Provisional Government, founded women's newspapers to create opportunities for women to engage in public discourse about these rights, and created clubs to involve and educate large groups of women through discussion of their rights. They were the first women to successfully unite across class lines in support of a broad range of rights for all women. They continued their efforts following the June revolt, supporting associations of women workers and educational reform for girls and women. Focusing research on the words and actions of these women activists and on the contributions of the women they inspired leads to a new understanding of the development of the women's movement in France and opens opportunities for further research into the influence of these women on the struggle for women's rights in England, the US, and Germany.

The women I have profiled did not use the word "feminist" to describe their thoughts and actions, speaking instead of women's rights and women's emancipation. The term "feminism" was first used more than two decades after the mid-century revolutions in the title of a French medical thesis in 1871, "Du féminisme et de l'enfantilisme chez les tuberculeux" (On feminism and infantilism among tubercular patients). In medical terminology, "feminism" was characterized as the "arrest of development" in a male patient.[2] The word "feminist" was first used by Alexandre Dumas fils in his *L'Homme-femme* (1872). Here too the use was pejorative.

Hubertine Auclert (1848–1914), the French champion of women's suffrage, was the first to use the term positively. In a letter of 1882 to the Prefect of the Seine protesting restrictions imposed on speeches made during civil marriage ceremonies, Auclert claimed the right of "feminists" to criticize the marriage laws during the obligatory civil ceremony. She later used the term to define herself and contributors to her newspaper, *La Citoyenne*. In response to contentious debate among contemporary feminist historians, Karen Offen offers a clear definition of feminism: "Feminism

[2] Geneviève Fraisse, Reason's Muse: Sexual Difference and the Birth of Democracy, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, 195. The thesis was written by Ferndinand-Valerie Faneau de la Cour, a physician and Fourierist, disciple of Professor Jean Lorain, physician and medical historian, who was the inventor of the new word.

is the name given to a comprehensive critical response to the deliberate and systematic subordination of women as a group by men as a group within a given cultural setting."[3] Though the terms "feminism" and "feminist" were not widely used in France until the end of the nineteenth century, it will become clear in the chapters that follow that these words were based on ideas that had been incubating since 1848. The protagonists of these ideas deserve to be called First Feminists.

Many challenges face historians who seek to study the lives and work of women in mid-nineteenth-century France. Few women activists of the period left their papers for future generations to consult; some left scattered letters and files in private collections, a limited number of which have been located. Only two wrote memoirs. Fortunately, many of the First Feminists were journalists. Articles they contributed to journals written by and for women, which Evelyne Sullerot calls, "la presse de nous,"[4] provide significant information about their ideas. These journals both reflected and formed public opinion and are an important source of the ideas held by radical women in the period under study.[5] Others were novelists whose works revealed thoughts and feelings about the position of women in the family and in society.

There is another obstacle facing the historian who uses work written by women in nineteenth-century France as sources. Women in this period signed their work with a variety of names: birth names, married names, first names, initials, and pseudonyms. Jeanne Deroin explained jettisoning her married name when she was engaged in political work: "The equation of the family with the father's name was an appropriation of power disguised as the exercise of a right. Its effect was to obliterate the social worth of motherhood and the identity of woman as an independent actor."[6] Eugénie Niboyet, in contrast, separated from her husband for decades, nevertheless continued to use her married name. Pauline Roland, who

[3] Karen Offen, "On the French Origin of the Words Feminism and Feminist," Feminist Issues, v. 8, n.2 (Fall 1988), 47. For discussion of the debate, see Claire Goldberg Moses, "Debating the Present, Writing the Past: "Feminism" in French History and Historiography," Radical History Review, v.52 (1992), 79–94.

[4] Evelyne Sullerot, Histoire de la presse féminine en France: des origines à 1848, Paris: A. Colin, 1966, 211.

[5] Ibid., intro by Jacques Godechot, 5.

[6] Jeanne Deroin in *La Voix des femmes*, #1, March 20, 1848.

never married, used the name Marie-Pauline on some of her articles.[7] Many authors used only their initials causing additional confusion. Marie-Noémi Constant applied for legal permission to use the name Claude Vignon, a character in Balzac's *Beatrix*. Most frustrating, for the historian, are the many unsigned articles.

Creating the story of the First Feminists requires an understanding of the context of the times in which they lived. Though they differed in socio-economic class, age, education, and marital status, the First Feminists were united by the limitations imposed by the Civil Code and by the widespread conviction that a woman's place should be restricted to her home. The Civil Code stipulated that in return for protection a wife owed her husband obedience. In the absence of his consent, she could not be employed, nor have a separate residence, nor attend a university. If she was allowed to work, her wages or royalties belonged to her husband. Women had no legal authority over their children and no right to witness certificates of marriage, birth, or death. A wife's adultery could bring imprisonment for a period of three months to two years; a husband's adultery went unpunished unless he defiled the marriage bed, even then the punishment was a fine. Divorce was not permitted. The Civil Code identified minors, ex-convicts, and women as unfit persons.[8] Opposition to the Civil Code regarding marriage and family law was a unifying element for the women profiled in this study.

The First Feminists also rejected the culture of the July Monarchy, which taught girls to accept the limitations imposed on them by gender. These conditions were described in popular books for girls, such as A. E. de Saintes' *L'Ange de la Maison*.[9] This book featured fourteen-year-old Laure, "the angel," who cared for her ailing widowed mother and for her two younger sisters while earning enough money as an embroiderer to support her impoverished family. Laure cared for her mother with compassion, fluffing her pillows, bringing her breakfast in bed, and keeping her company while completing her work as an embroiderer. She taught

[7] On names of Saint-Simoniennes, see Claire Goldberg Moses, Moses, Claire Goldberg, "Saint-Simonian Men/Saint-Simonian Women: The Transformation of Feminist Thought in 1830s France," Journal of Modern History, v.54, n.2 (1982), 253.

[8] André Tunc, "The Grand Outlines of the Code Napoleon," Tulane Law Review, v.29 (1954), 431–452. See Patrick K. Bidelman, Pariahs Stand Up! The Founding of the Liberal Feminist Movement in France, 1858–1889, Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982, 5.

[9] A.E. de Saintes, L'Ange de la Maison, Paris: D. Eymery, 1842. This book was reprinted in 1851, 1881, and 1883.

her sisters how to read and write, ensured that they ate nutritious food, and wore clean clothing. She instructed them to keep their home in order and inspected their comportment before attending church every Sunday. Laure never lamented the unusual burden she carried. Repeatedly, she sought guidance and support in prayer. The novel also described the arrival of a mysterious, rich, old man, M. Maurice, who noticed Laure in church.[10]

Laure's excessive family and work burdens ultimately led to her illness and to the family's falling into debt. Following weeks of continuing weakness and fear of economic ruin, Maurice disclosed that he was a long-lost relative who had been searching for his family. Impressed by Laure's dedication to her family and by her modesty, Maurice altered his will on behalf of the family. The message of the book was that Laure's angelic behavior brought deliverance to her family. The women in this story, including Laure, followed the submissive roles assigned to them by culture and law. The only female to express agency in the book was the "naughty" youngest daughter, Cécile, who stole candy when she was hungry. When discovered, she confessed and repented. The girl's agency was presented as a negative trait which was cured when she met with Laure's pious forgiveness.

Several of the First Feminists knew poverty and hunger as children. Suzanne Voilquin and Jeanne Deroin read stories like "L'Ange de la Maison" as children and later wrote with regret about their poor education.[11] They surely agreed with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who explained at the Seneca Falls convention in the summer of 1848 that men called women "angel" to make them believe that they weren't fit to struggle with the tempests of public life and needed the care and protection of men. She denounced this description with vigor:

> Care and protection—such as the wolf gives the lamb—such as the eagle the hare he carries to his eyrie!! Most cunningly he entraps her, and then takes from her all those rights which are dearer to him than life itself—rights

[10] Ibid. See Laura Strumingher [Schor], "L'Ange de la Maison: Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth Century France, International Journal of Women's Studies, v.2, n.1 (January/February 1979)," 51–61.

[11] Suzanne Voilquin, Souvenirs d'une fille du peuple ou Saint-Simonienne en Egypte, Paris: E. Sauzet, 1866, 70. Jeanne Deroin, "Profession de foi," cited by Michèle Riot-Sarcey, De la liberté des femmes: Lettres de Dames au Globe (1831–1832), Paris: Côte-femmes, 1994, 128.

> which have been baptized in blood—and the maintenance of which is even now rocking to their foundations the kingdoms of the Old World.[12]

The years of the July Monarchy were a time of rapid economic and industrial growth accompanied by increasing awareness of urban poverty, crime, and prostitution. The First Feminists, all independent thinkers, rebelled against the dominant culture of their time and were attracted to ideas for peaceful social change introduced by Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) and Charles Fourier (1772–1837) and by their respective followers in the 1830s. They were also influenced by the ideas and the activism of Flora Tristan (1803–1844).

The Saint-Simonian response to the growing disparity of wealth in industrialized society was a call to recognize the importance of workers—including scientists, artists, engineers, and industrialists, in building wealth. In this view all members of society should be encouraged to fulfill their individual potential. Of specific interest to the First Feminists was the Saint-Simonian idea that women were doubly unequal in French society as they were excluded from public life and subordinated by men at home. In the 1830s, Prosper Enfantin (1796–1864), the charismatic leader of Saint-Simonian ideology, argued that love, defined as the capacity for human sympathy, was the basis of peaceful society and that women were more capable of love than men. Hence, he believed, women must be emancipated to assist in bringing about peace in the industrializing world.[13] Enfantin thought that men and women were essentially different and that progress required the guidance of women's special virtues. He later espoused serial monogamy and the postponement of joint male and female leadership, leading to a schism in the movement.

Unlike Enfantin, Fourier contended that men and women were born equal and were similar in nature. He posited that the poor education given to women was responsible for their limited development. In contrast to the Saint-Simonians, Fourier thought industrialism and capitalism were wasteful and inefficient systems. He also saw the traditional patriarchal family as an inefficient structure. Fourier believed that people should live in a community in which individuals would work at jobs they enjoyed,

[12] Quoted by Bonnie S. Anderson, "The Lid Comes Off: International Radical Feminism and the Revolutions of 1848," NWSA Journal, v.10, n.2 (Summer 1998), 7.

[13] Claire Goldberg Moses, French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century, Albany: SUNY Press, 1984, 44–48.

couples would stay together for as long as they were happy, and children would be reared by those in the agrarian communities who wished to care for them. Both men believed that a new social order was necessary to achieve equality for women. Enfantin expected industrial development to advance human progress; Fourier thought that self-sufficient agricultural communities would be the path to progress.

Fourier summarized his belief in the statement: Social progress and changes from one era to the next are brought about in proportion to the progress of women toward freedom.[14] In the final utopian stage, which he called Harmony, men and women would be free, equal, and productive. A unique educational system would treat boys and girls alike. Fourier called for boys and girls to dress alike to avoid differences in their socialization. In Harmony women would not be excluded from any social or economic function. There would be women doctors and professors. In this new society, marriages would be based on love, not on financial interest. These ideas were embraced by many of the First Feminists.

In 1832, Désirée Véret (later Gay) and Reine Guindorf, joined by Jeanne Deroin, Pauline Roland, and Suzanne Voilquin, all poor women and followers of Saint-Simon, gathered to create a newspaper they called *La Femme libre*.[15] They remained loyal to Enfantin, seeing themselves as taking leadership in ushering in the "phase of women" he had predicted.[16] They were, however, also influenced by Fourier whose slogan they placed on their masthead: "Liberty for women, liberty for the people through a new organization of the household and industry."[17] These women called for women's solidarity to achieve equality with men:

> We call on all women, whatever their rank, their religion, their opinion, provided that they feel the oppression of women and the people and that they wish to join with us, to associate themselves to our work and share our efforts.

[14] Susan Groag Bell and Karen Offen, eds, Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents, v. 1, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983, 145–146.

[15] *La Femme libre*, renamed *Femme nouvelle*, and later, *Tribune des femmes*, appeared 32 times from August 10, 1832, to February 1834. It published articles written exclusively by women.

[16] S. Joan Moon, "The Saint-Simonian Association for Working-Class Women," Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History, v.5, (1977), 275–276.

[17] Guindorf left to teach; Deroin attributed the slogan to Fourier in *La Tribune des femmes*, 8 October 1832.

This unsigned call for women to unite was followed by another by Jeanne Deroin, titled "Woman in the Future":

> The time is arrived when woman shall find her place, her acknowledged, her useful place upon it [Earth]…This…we can affect, by forming ourselves into *one solid union*. Let us no longer belong to two camps, that of the women of the people and that of privileged women; let our common interests bind us together.[18]

This important article was translated into English by Anna Wheeler, an Irish feminist, and published on June 15, 1833, in Robert Owen's socialist journal, *The Crisis*.[19] Eugénie Niboyet and Elisa Lemonnier, both former Saint-Simonians of privileged backgrounds, did not respond to Deroin's call for solidarity.

Louise Maignaud, writing in *Le Conseiller des femmes*, a women's newspaper established in Lyon by Eugénie Niboyet in 1833, supported the theme of unity among women:

> Woman will not be truly strong until she is, in good faith, the friend of her sex…Women lack an esprit de corps; that is the cause of her dependency and servile position. The lack of harmony among women is always fatal to their progress.[20]

Niboyet agreed with Maignaud about the need for unity. However, her definition of unity was different from the one advocated by Deroin. She believed that educated bourgeois women had an obligation to help poor women learn skills so that they could improve their lives. She didn't yet articulate the limitations on freedom faced by all women.

In 1836, Hortense Allart, the author of *La Femme et la démocratie de nos temps*, and a regular contributor to *La Gazette des femmes* in Paris, met every Thursday night with a group of writers who contributed to this journal. The group, which included Niboyet, approved a project to form an Association for the Improvement of the Status of Women. Allart

[18] "Appel aux femmes," *La Femme libre* (*Tribune des femmes* 1, n.1). Translated in Claire Goldberg Moses and Leslie Wahl Rabine, Feminism, Socialism, and French Romanticism, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, 283.

[19] Bonnie S. Anderson, Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830–1860, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 67–68.

[20] Louise Maignaud, "L'Avenir des femmes," *Le Conseiller des femmes*, 2 November 1833.

explained: "Improvement will happen gradually. We will make nothing precise at first. We will study this serious question, but we demand the support of those who interest themselves in the moral [question]."[21] Allart's gradualist approach was rejected by other writers for the *Gazette* who adopted an activist stance, printing petitions to the government, demanding a broad range of rights for women. Several petitions addressed the need to amend the Civil Code as it related to marriage and divorce. Others focused on the need to open higher education and careers to women. In February 1837, La *Gazette* argued that "it be recognized and declared by the King and the Chambers that IN VIRTUE OF THE 1830 CHARTER, WOMEN HAVE THE SAME CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AS MEN."[22] This newspaper closed in 1838 following the arrest of the editors on morals charges.[23]

In addition to the works of Saint-Simon and Fourier and to the newspapers cited above, the First Feminists were aware of the works of Flora Tristan and of the vicissitudes of her brief life. Niboyet and Tristan attended meetings of authors who wrote for *La Gazette des femmes.* Pauline Roland, Joséphine Bachellery, and Antoine Desroches, Jeanne Deroin's husband, contributed funding to publish Tristan's *Union ouvrière.* Marie-Noémi Constant's husband, Alphonse, subsequently edited and published Tristan's posthumous work, *l'Emancipation de la femme ou le testament de la paria* (1846). Elisa Lemonnier and her husband, Charles, cared for Tristan during her final illness.

Tristan's life was the subject of her first book, *Les Pérégrinations d'une paria*, published in 1838. The book described a happy childhood, cut short by the sudden death of her Spanish-Peruvian father, and the family's rapid descent into poverty. At the age of 15, having received little education, Flora was apprenticed to a Parisian lithographer, André Chazal. They married when she was 18. By the time she was 22, Flora had given birth to two sons and was again pregnant; her husband had turned to drink and gambling as his business failed. Flora obtained her husband's permission

[21] *La Gazette des femmes*, v. 1, n.5 (November 1836), 153–54.

[22] Ibid., v. 2, n.32 (February 1837), 33–39. See Karen Offen, European Feminisms: 1700–1950: A Political History, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, 103.

[23] Marie-Louise Puech, "Une supercherie littéraire: Le Veritable rédacteur de la Gazette des femmes: 1836–1838," La Révolution de 1848 et les révolutions du XIXe siècle, v.32, n.153 (June–July–August 1935), 315.

to bring her ailing son to the countryside to recuperate in the care of her mother. She never returned to André Chazal.[24]

Leaving her children with her mother, she jettisoned the name Mme. Chazal, presenting herself as Flora Tristan, an unmarried woman in search of work. Chazal pursued her. Legally entitled to her wages, he informed her employers and landlords that she was a runaway wife. To escape Chazal, she found work as a chambermaid for an English family, living with them for five years, most of the time in London. In 1833, she contacted her father's younger brother Pio, in Peru, and claimed her inheritance. Asserting that she was his brother's natural child but not a legitimate heir, Pio Tristan offered her 2500 francs per year, about five times what she earned as a maid. Flora demanded an inheritance of 100,000 francs on which she could earn 4000 francs per year. She traveled to Peru to make the request in person.[25]

Unsuccessful in her quest, she returned to Paris, where she wrote her life story, including her experiences in Peru. The book enraged Pio Tristan, who arranged for it to be publicly burned in Lima. It also infuriated André Chazal who learned that Flora had failed to give him the money she had received from Pio Tristan. Chazal shot and attempted to kill his wife in front of many witnesses. A stormy trial ensued in which Chazal accused Tristan of adultery and Tristan reminded the court that Chazal had recently been tried for kidnapping and committing incest with Aline, the couple's 11-year-old daughter. The Parisian press featured the story with its lurid details, including a letter from Aline to her mother begging to be rescued from her molesting father. Tristan was granted a legal separation. Her *Pérégrinations* became a bestseller.

Women who were engaged with Saint-Simonian and Fourierist ideas were moved by Tristan's first book; many of them identified with her struggles as a wife and mother. They were also moved by her later books, *Promenades dans Londres* (1840) and, especially, *Union ouvrière* (1843). In the former, Tristan's unequivocal position on prostitution caught their attention:

> Prostitution is the most hideous of the afflictions produced by the unequal division of the world's goods; this infamy blights the human race and testifies

[24] Edith Thomas, Les Femmes en 1848, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948, 18–31.

[25] Laura S. Strumingher, The Odyssey of Flora Tristan, New York: Peter Lang, 1988, 35–36.

> against the social order much more than crime; this revolting degradation is brought about by the disastrous effects of prejudices, poverty, and slavery.[26]

Unlike the social investigators of the era, Parent-Duchâtelet and Frégier,[27] who assumed prostitution would always exist, partly because of the uncontrolled promiscuity of women, Tristan placed the blame squarely on poverty and demanded higher wages for women workers to change their circumstances. The publication of Tristan's *Union ouvrière* refocused the debate for women engaged in social change. Rather than calling on women of different classes to unite, a goal that continued to remain elusive, Tristan called on all men and women workers to unite:

> To all workers, men and women: Hear me! For the past 25 years the most intelligent and conscientious of men have devoted their lives to the defense of your sacred cause…These writers have explained that owing to such conditions of neglect and suffering it was inevitable that most workers, embittered by misfortune and brutalized by ignorance and excessive labor, were becoming a threat to society.

Since these eloquent voices of reformers did not move the government to address the suffering of workers forced to choose between suicide and theft, Tristan called on the workers to act:

> …There is nothing more to say, nothing more to write, for your unlucky situation is well known to everyone. There is only one more possibility: to act in the name of the rights inscribed in the charter…The action for you to take is not armed revolt, uprisings in the public square, burnings, and pillage. No, because destruction instead of bettering your situation will make things worse…As for action on your part there is only one that is legal, legitimate, and avowable to God and mankind: it is the Universal Union of Men and Women Workers.[28]

[26] Doris and Paul Beik, trans, Flora Tristan: Utopian Feminist, Her Travel Diaries and Personal Crusade, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993, 68.

[27] See Alexandre Jean-Baptiste Parent-Duchâtelet, De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris, Paris: J.B.Baillière, 1836; Honoré Frégier, Des Classes dangereuses de la société dans les grands villes et les moyens de les rendre meilleures, Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1840.

[28] Beik and Beik, 104–105. See also Marguerite Thibert, "Féminisme et socialism d'apres Flora Tristan," Revue d'histoire économique et sociale, v.9, n.1 (1921) 135.

Echoes of Tristan's call for working-class solidarity and action can be heard in subsequent calls by the First Feminists. Her book concluded that there were two essential demands that must be made of the government: the right to work and the organization of labor. Both issues would become central to the February Revolution in 1848. Tristan demanded that working men fight for women's rights as the improvement of conditions for women was necessary for the improvement of the working class. Unable to foresee the enactment of universal manhood suffrage in 1848, Tristan called on workers to hire a representative to defend their interests in the Chamber of Deputies. She also called for the establishment of Workers' Palaces, buildings where children would be instructed, where injured workers would recover, and where ailing and elderly workers would receive care.[29]

The First Feminists, like Tristan, sought support from working men for their movement. They were frequently disappointed by the men's response. Fearing women's competition for jobs, working-class men often joined middle-class reformers in seeking to restrict women to the role of wife and mother within the home. The workers' demand for the right to work that accompanied the February Revolution ignored women's labor.[30] Though they continued to seek support from men, finding little, the First Feminists increasingly focused on the need for all women to unite.

In the years leading to the February Revolution, women thinkers and activists were also influenced by two socialist writers—Etienne Cabet and Louis Blanc. Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie* published in 1840 described an ideal community that combined agrarian and industrial work. Blanc's *L'Organisation du travail* published serially in his *Revue du progrès* in 1839 called for worker-controlled cooperative workshops and state control of railways and banks. They also knew of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's book, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* This book, published in 1840, called for producer and consumer cooperatives that depended on a barter system.[31] These reformers were critical of capitalism and by extension of the July Monarchy that supported capitalist policies. All three assumed leadership roles in 1848. Though they were aware of the radical ideas expressed by

[29] Beik and Beik, 109, 119, 123.

[30] Judith DeGroat, "Working-Class Women and Republicanism in the French Revolution of 1848," History of European Ideas, v.38, n.3 (2012), 402.

[31] William Fortescue, France and 1848: The End of the Monarchy, London: Routledge, 2005, 77–79.

Cabet, Blanc, and Proudhon, the outbreak of revolution in February 1848 surprised the women under study. When the Provisional Government established in the wake of the revolution proclaimed universal suffrage and support for the right to work, the women activists seized the moment to present petitions to demand that they also be granted suffrage and jobs.

They circulated their petitions to the editors of major newspapers and followed up with personal visits to editorial offices hoping that the petitions would be published and would garner public support. Lamenting the silence that greeted their efforts to publicize their demands, they launched a newspaper of their own and called it *La Voix des femmes* (The Voice of Women). It became the first daily women's newspaper ever published, printing 46 issues. It was followed by the ephemeral, *La Politique des femmes* (Women's Politics), and the monthly, *L'Opinion des femmes* (Women's Opinion).[32] These newspapers published petitions, letters, and commentaries to inform all women of the struggle for women's rights. They published minutes of meetings of women's clubs to spread the content of their discussion to those who were unable to attend. On March 25,1848, editors at *La Voix des femmes*, all women, declared with enthusiasm and confidence:

> The times were ours! Our newspaper was meant to succeed. The success it has known since its appearance has surpassed our hopes. From now on, our newspaper will no longer be the product of a single person but the work of all women. As of tomorrow, two committees will be formed: one, to publish the paper; the other, to discuss the plan for public, state education for women.[33]

These women pledged to be equally concerned with the needs of young and old, rich and poor women. They asked for the support of all women. Finally, they asked rhetorically, "In working for the improvement of women are we not also concerning ourselves with the happiness of humanity?" In so doing they supported and expanded Tristan's view, which emphasized that improving working women's conditions was a prerequisite to the improvement of conditions for the working class.

[32] *La Voix des femmes* published from March 20 through April 29, and from May 28 through June 18, 1848. *La Politique des femmes* appeared twice, June 11 and August 5, 1848. *L'Opinion des femmes* appeared on August 21, 1848, and six times in 1849: January 28, March 10, April 10, May, June, and August 10.

[33] *La Voix des femmes*, #5, March 25, 1848.