Scholarship on Women, Gender, and the Reformation: Developments in Recent Years

LAURA JURGENS
University of Calgary

In the late 1990s, the three main figures in gender approaches to the Reformation were Heide Wunder, Merry Wiesner-Hanks, and Lyndal Roper. This essay discusses how the gender study of the Reformation has progressed in recent years, while highlighting the contributions made by these key scholars.

Women's History Surfaces

Traditional historical studies, written and presented by conventional historians, capture the male experience and present this experience as universal.[1] It is for this reason that traditional historical studies have been called "Men's History."[2] Within these studies women are not typically mentioned unless they were related to an important male figure or "very occasionally and exceptionally, women who performed roles generally reserved for men."[3] In other words, women are not usually considered worth discussing in historical works that follow traditional historical methods. Conventional historians exclude women because they are solely considered in relation to marriage, family life, and the "house" and thus appear to have no history of their own.[4] Heide Wunder explains that "their economic, social, and cultural accomplishments were seen as 'close to nature,' or of minor importance, or the result merely of passive execution."[5] Conventional historians and traditional historical methods neglect social contexts and are oriented toward political or constitutional

history where, Wunder argues, "women were not part of the picture" and were, in fact, not represented.[6]

Traditional historical studies received much criticism growing "out of the [second wave] women's movement at its early, spontaneous and energetic phase, bringing together political commitment" and advocating that women should be represented in historical scholarship.[7] This assertion was first met with scepticism from conventional historians who thought that this was a quickly passing trend.[8] This scepticism, however, did not extinguish interest in women's history, but perhaps even accelerated it; as Merry Wiesner-Hanks notes, "many women who were active in radical or reformist political movements were angered by claims that their own history was trivial."[9] The effort to reconstruct the female past in the face of such enormous neglect from conventional historians and traditional historical works has been called "Women's History."[10]

Since the beginning of women's history, an important research area has been the study of women during the early modern period in Europe.[11] Conventional historians writing about this historical period might mention queens, martyrs, and reformers' wives, but most still focus on men.[12] These studies often consider women as passive partners or do not critically investigate them at all. This is not to say that women have been left out of history because of the "evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians," but because history has traditionally been considered and represented in male-centred terms.[13]

Early modern scholars acknowledged this neglect and began to approach the Reformation and women in two distinct ways. The first trend examines individual women and their lives.[14] Reformation scholars apply the social-historical method and research women or "women worthies" as topics that they argue are worth including in historical studies of the early modern period.[15] The works by Kirsi Stjerna and Roland Bainton provide good examples of this research trend because their works include biographical information on individual women in order to highlight women's leadership roles and their contributions to the Reformation.[16]

The second trend explores women's lives during the early modern period and seeks to explain how women were affected by the Reformation.[17] Research on the Reformation and women originally took a divisive approach, similar to Joan Kelly, to the question: Did women experience a Reformation?[18] Heide Wunder perhaps provides the most striking scholarship on this topic when she answers this question with a "no" rather than with a "yes."[19] In contrast to other scholarship, Wunder

does not base her answer on the notion that women's lives did not change, but rather rejects that the Reformation was the main cause of that change.[20] Wunder points to transformations in family life and ideas about marriage since they were considered the most significant effects of the Reformation on women. She argues that these transformations were a result of dramatic social and economic transitions and were not due to religious changes.[21] While attempting to contribute answers to this question, scholars like Wunder produced more questions than satisfactory answers.

Scholars no longer focus on whether women experienced a Reformation, but instead have started questioning how such transformations, religious or social, affected women and women's lives. In other words, was the Reformation beneficial or harmful to women?[22] In attempting to answer this question, scholars particularly turn their attention to female religious and life in the convent.[23] Lyndal Roper contributes to analyzing the effects experienced by women religious by pointing out that life in the convent theoretically provided women with an alternative to marriage.[24] This alternative meant that marriage was not the only role socially valued for women. However, the Reformation forced many convents to close their doors, which propelled many women from the religious life to family life.[25] This limited acceptable social roles for women by replacing spiritual virginity with marriage as the Christian ideal, which proved to have both beneficial and negative effects for women.[26]

In recent years, however, questioning the positive or negative effects of the Reformation on women is not as popular as it was previously. Instead, scholars are now considering more diversity: Which women? Where? When? Married or single?[27] Scholars like Roper and others adjusted how they approached this question and are now less interested in making general conclusions about the effects of the Reformation on women as a whole.[28] Rather, scholars such as Merry Wiesner-Hanks contribute by including discussions on women who were single, married, mothers, or widows in order to explore the enormous range of the female experience.[29] Wiesner-Hanks argues that despite this diversity there are two factors that remain constant. First, a woman's response to the Reformation was determined more by her gender than any other aspect of her life. Both Catholic and Protestant reformers agreed that the proper avenue for a woman's response to their ideas was either personal or domestic because "public responses, either those presented publicly or those which concerned dogma or the church as a public institution,

shocked and outraged authorities, even if they agreed with the ideas being expressed."[30] For women the proper avenues included prayer, teaching children the catechism, or entering and leaving the convent.[31] Second, Wiesner-Hanks argues that most women experienced the Reformation as individuals since they were not considered their own social class and that these experiences need to be examined further.[32] Noting the significance of diversity, Wiesner-Hanks and others critically investigate women's political, social and cultural, and economic roles and identities from a variety of angles in order to "light up areas of historical darkness" and focus more specifically on a *woman-centred* inquiry.[33]

Wiesner-Hanks argues that by focusing on *woman-centred* studies scholars started investigating women's lives in the past and fitting them into categories with which they were already comfortable, but then realized that "this approach, sarcastically labeled 'add women and stir,' was unsatisfying."[34] Due to this, scholars like Heide Wunder started to disrupt familiar and conventional categories while also rethinking the ways in which history was traditionally structured and organized.[35] For example, conventional historical studies focus on political or constitutional history, which describes the state and its institutions where women were usually not represented.[36] Women are excluded from traditional historical studies because scholars considered women to be embedded in marriage, the family, and the household. Conventional historians argue that these are not topics for general historical works because the relations between the sexes are a private matter.[37] Wunder notes that the "search for women in the society of the early modern period has yielded findings that fit only in part with conventional ideas . . . they challenge us to rethink our notion of the political during those centuries."[38] By rethinking traditional structures, Wunder argues that women were by no means excluded from political authority by pointing to female rulers, but, more importantly, also wives. She asserts that scholars "failed to realize just how normal the regency of noblewoman was, and that the running of a peasant household, an artisan's workshop, or merchant business was possible only on the basis of the shared responsibility of wife and husband."[39] Wunder disrupts conventional categories by arguing that marriage and the household combined in a unique social order where the "husband and wife, in their roles as housefather and housemother, were part of the 'political' public" and where the wife had authority and represented the household.[40] Wunder contributes to rethinking and complicating traditional structures by arguing that although scholars still acknowledge local community politics *as*

politics, they continue mistakenly to limit what occurs in the home and within a marriage as simply a "battle of the sexes."[41]

Rethinking and disrupting conventional categories not only helped to "light up areas of historical darkness," but also provided scholars with unique avenues to search for new sources that revealed women's historical experiences.[42] In addition, it provided scholars with different avenues to interpret traditional sources in new and creative ways.[43] For example, Lyndal Roper interprets traditional sources, such as historical case studies, in imaginative ways by examining the psychological aspects of popular culture using feminist theory and psychological analysis.[44] With this work, she examines witchcraft and witches.[45] Roper argues that a prominent theme in witch trials was motherhood and that these trials did not represent "male attempts to destroy a female science of birth nor were they concerned with wrestling control of reproduction from women."[46] On the contrary, she notes that it was mothers who typically accused other women. Roper argues that witch trials and accusations should be considered on their own terms through the themes in which they developed: "I think we may best interpret them as psychic documents which recount particular predicaments. Witchcraft cases seem to epitomize the bizarre and irrational, exemplifying the distance that separates us from the past."[47] While using psychological analysis, Roper contributes by collecting traditional sources and analyzing them in creative ways to help illuminate women's historical experiences that might have otherwise been neglected.[48]

These creative approaches and new interpretations have made available even more avenues for scholars critically to examine and, more importantly, re-examine how historical developments might have affected women and women's lives. For example, some scholars examine the effects of the expansion of capitalism on women's work and identity.[49] However, more recent scholars, such as Wiesner-Hanks, critically re-examine women's labour, economic activities, and experiences. She re-examines these topics in order to show how they differed according to a woman's social class, economic status, and geographical location.[50] As Wiesner-Hanks re-examines this topic, she contributes by providing new insights into women's other economic activities and whether capitalism expanded or limited women's work opportunities.[51] Wiesner-Hanks argues that there have been both positive and negative effects on women's work. This expansion provided women with employment that helped them to contribute income, but it also lessened the value of their domestic duties.[52]

These new insights add to scholarly discussions of the ways in which women's economic activities were usually restricted, poorly paid or unpaid, and perceived as marginal.

By rethinking such structures, creatively approaching traditional sources, and critically re-examining the ways in which history affected women, scholars such as Wunder, Roper, and Wiesner-Hanks contribute to this field by challenging traditional history with the assertion that women actually have a history that is worth further exploration and analysis.[53]

Evolution of Gender History

As this paper has shown, women's history affirmed that women are important topics that need to be included in historical studies, especially within the field of Reformation studies. Remarkable scholarship has emerged from including women as topics, such as those works by Wiesner, Wunder, and Roper. During the 1990s, however, many scholars became increasingly unsatisfied with the consideration given to both women *and* men.[54] Gerda Lerner argues that "there are women in history, and there are men in history, and one would hope that no historical account of a given period could be written that would not deal with the actions and ideas of both men and women."[55] Natalie Davis takes a similar approach, stating that by "treating women in isolation from men, it ordinarily said little about the significance of sex roles in social life and historical change."[56] It is for this reason that social historians began to discuss the ways in which sex differentiation affected both women and men and started to use the word "gender" to describe these systems and structures.[57] This terminology became widely noted, and scholars in many fields increasingly switched from "sex" to "gender" as the acceptable terminology for any scholarship addressing feminine and masculine characteristics.[58] In other words, the overall progression of this field has been to move towards "a gradual displacement of women's history by gender history."[59]

There have been two conflicting reactions to this gradual displacement. The first response to this shift is from feminist historians who lament this evolution.[60] Not only do some feminist historians reject this shift altogether, but some also consider "gender history" to be a passing trend within the field.[61] Some feminists argue that this shift ultimately means that the field will include the very topic that has been considered

the "proper" focus of conventional history, that is, men.[62] This may explain the reasons why recent studies with "gender" in the title still mainly focus on women and women's history.[63] Clare Lees and Andrea Pearson provide counter arguments to this by stating that "the focus on men . . . is . . . not a return to traditional subjects that implies a neglect of feminist issues," but an acknowledged contribution to them, which can be created as a dialectic.[64] Lees and Pearson argue that focusing on men and masculinity could actually help to contextual scholarship on women and femininity. However, there has not been much agreement on this shift within the field, which has caused much tension between women's history and gender history.

The second reaction to the shift from women's history to gender history is to celebrate the change. Many scholars, such as Roper, argue that this evolution could actually benefit historians, including both feminist and non-feminist.[65] For these scholars, "gender" is a category "through which it looked as if women's history might have the potential not only to enter history as a respectable historical field, but to reshape the historical narrative themselves."[66] Roper argues that reshaping the historical narrative will help to capture the male experience.[67] Bennett and others argue that by solely addressing the problem of "women," scholars have "been blinded to the way masculinity" also changed throughout history, especially during the early modern period.[68] In other words, viewing the male experience as universal not only hid women's history, but also prevented historians from analyzing the male experience.[69] Wiesner-Hanks argues that the very words we use to describe people, such as "artist" and "women artist," kept scholars from "thinking about how the experiences of Michelangelo or Picasso or Isaac Newton were shaped by the fact that they were male, while it forced us to think about how being female affected Georgia O'Keefe or Marie Curie."[70] This shift or evolution has provided historians with a new perspective. This perspective characterizes "gender" as an appropriate category of analysis when examining all historical developments and not simply those topics that involved women or the family, but also men and masculinity.[71] This has proven to be beneficial to more recent studies since it has moved the field overall "towards broader studies of how gender was understood."[72]

Recent studies, such as those by Roper, Wunder, and Wiesner-Hanks, contribute to this shift by critically exploring concepts of gender and concentrating on both femininity and masculinity.[73] More specifically, there are three ways in which Roper, Wunder, and Wiesner-Hanks

contribute to this evolution and to modern scholarship on this topic.

First, these scholars enrich current discussions of the ways in which both women and men *defined themselves* during the early modern period.[74] For example, Heide Wunder explores how men and women were defined during the Reformation. She notes that men and women were defined based on conceptions found in dominant Christian anthropology, including biblical creation stories.[75] In her work, Wunder explores these prevailing models for male and female through autobiographical accounts and observations from fathers, mothers, and siblings.[76] Along with exploring women, she goes further by examining how men defined themselves, how they defined their own gender membership, and how men developed their male identity throughout their lives.[77] Wunder spans the transformation of the male identity, beginning with a discussion of children. For example, she notes that when boys received their first pair of trousers it was an important moment in their lives because they were "putting aside girls' clothing," which marked a clear distinction between men and women.[78] Wunder argues that the final transformation of the male identity occurred when the man became married because he accepted the ultimate male role and social status.[79] Wunder highlights information on masculinity and the male identity during the early modern period. She provides insight into how men identified themselves as men and she presents a topic that has been little considered in previous scholarship.[80]

In addition to discussing the ways in which both men and women defined themselves, these scholars also contribute by exploring how men and women were *defined by others*.[81] For example, Lyndal Roper explores this very topic as she analyzes the female figure as a representation of evil womanhood and the masculine counterpart – Catholic and Protestant clerics. During the early modern period, the Catholic priest was accused of possessing excessive manhood through fighting, drinking, and lusting. The Catholic priest was seen as a "sexual competitor, stealing wives and naïve daughters who, however, are so deeply mired in the sin of Eve as to be eager to yield to his seductive arts."[82] Protestants considered the Catholic priest "as a particular kind of man because the doctrinal battle engaged two different kinds of manliness . . . as it set the pious married woman against the lusting nun."[83] Roper argues that the Catholic priest came to represent fears about manhood and anxieties that were felt by Protestant clerics who had to figure out their own sexual status. Protestant clerics had left an all-male monastic living environment and began entering a married state in which "manhood had to be proven in compan-

ionship with the opposite sex." Prior to the Reformation, the clergy experienced a distinctive sexual status because, in principle, "they were virgins, men who had not acquired manhood by mastering a woman through sexual intercourse, men who were in a sense castrated."[84] Roper argues that as the Protestant clergy became "men," or heads of households, they came to hate the Catholic priest figure as he began to symbolize "aspects they wished to obliterate from their own masculine identity."[85] Roper contributes to the discussions of how men were defined by others by identifying how Catholic and Protestant clerics defined other men in relation to their own manhood.

Finally, these scholars contribute to current discussions of how men and women were *defined by social institutions* by exploring how gender identities were closely tied to social and economic activities.[86] For example, scholars have previously examined notions of guild honour, but have not analyzed what it might say about masculinity or femininity.[87] Wiesner-Hanks refines this discussion by focusing on gender. She argues that these scholars have failed to notice the "most important component of [guild honour], this was an honour among *men*, an honour which linked men together with other men and excluded women."[88] These guilds essentially became excellent examples of "male bonding." Wiesner-Hanks argues that this concept rarely appears in historical studies, but that it can help illuminate some of the actions of craft guilds "which were difficult to explain in terms of more standard social, economic, and political factors."[89] These actions included strange guild restrictions, such as forcing a widow to leave her shop and essentially become bankrupt, even though these actions would be against the interests of their own guild members.[90] Wiesner-Hanks explores the concept of "male bonding" to analyze craft guilds and examines how male bonding affected women's access to economic power since skilled work was defined as "men's work."[91] Wiesner-Hanks contributes to current discussions by exploring male bonding and guild systems in order to highlight how men defined themselves, defined themselves against each other and against women, and how their masculinity related to social structures, status, and economic activities.

Conclusion

The first half of this paper discussed how Wunder, Wiesner-Hanks, and Roper challenge traditional history by asserting that women actually

have a history that is worth including in historical studies, especially works on the early modern period. By rethinking structures, approaching sources in creative ways, and re-examining how history affected women, these three scholars have contributed to the field by including women as important topics within their works and critically analyzing what it meant to be a woman during the Reformation period.

In addition, when this field shifted to include gender history, these three scholars seamlessly evolved with it. They explore feminine and masculine conceptions of gender identity through how men and women define themselves, how others have defined them, and how social institutions have shaped their senses of self. These contributions have helped the gender study of the Reformation, as a field, progress from a nearly invisible field to one that has, in a short time, become a very dynamic one.

However, much work still needs to be done in this field because it is clear that there are significant gaps in our knowledge and understanding about both women and men during the early modern period in Europe.[92] Future research may also benefit if scholars ease the tensions between adherents of women's history and gender history. Indeed, this tension is slowly starting to diminish. Many scholars are now describing the field as "women's and gender history," thereby illuminating the connection between them rather than highlighting their differences, which should prove to be useful for future research projects.

Despite the remarkable quantity and quality of previous scholarship, especially the contributions made by Wunder, Wiesner-Hanks, and Roper, this field has not yet experienced a paradigm shift that would lead to a thorough reassessment of the importance of both men and women to the early modern period.

Endnotes

1. See Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The New History and the Old* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); for other examples of conventional historical works see David Childs, *Britain Since 1945: A Political History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979); and G. R. Elton, *England Under the Tudors* (London: Methuen, 1955).

2. Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 133; Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History: Global Perspectives* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1-2; and Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, *A History of Women in the West*

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), x-xi.

3. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 133.
4. Heide Wunder, *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon: Women in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 202.
5. Wunder, *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon*, 202-3.
6. Wunder, *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon*, 202.
7. Marilyn Boxer, *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10.
8. Colin Brooks, "Writing Women In: The Development of Feminist Approaches to Women's History," in *Historical Controversies and Historians*, ed. William Lamont (London: UCL Press, 1998), 185; Boxer, *When Women Ask the Questions*, 8-9; and Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 133-34.
9. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2.
10. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 133.
11. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 10-11.
12. See Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); and Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
13. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 140.
14. Ruth Gouldbourne, *The Flesh and the Feminine: Gender and Theology in the Writings of Caspar Schwenckfeld* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2006), 35.
15. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency, and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 1-5.
16. Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009); Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971).
17. Gouldbourne, *The Flesh and the Feminine*, 35-40.
18. See Joan Kelly-Gadol, *Did Women Have a Renaissance?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).
19. Wunder, *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon*, 58-87.

20. See Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 154-55.

21. Wunder, *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon*, 58-87.

22. See Susan Karant-Nunn, "Continuity and Change: Some Effects of the Reformation on the Women of Zwickau," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13, no. 2 (1982): 17-24; for England see also Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, 154-55.

23. See Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Convents Confront the Reformation: Catholic and Protestant Nuns in Germany* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996); see also Barbara Harris, "A New Look at the Reformation: Aristocratic Women and Nunneries, 1450-1540," *Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 2 (1993): 89-113.

24. Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 206; see also S.M. Wyntjes, "Women in the Reformation Era," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

25. For the effects of closing convents and changing church practices see Katherine French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion After the Black Death* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); for women and religion see Margaret King,and Albert Rabil, *Teaching Other Voices: Women and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); for Catholic nuns see Amy Leonard, *Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

26. Roper, *Holy Household*, 233-37.

27. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Protestant Movements," in *Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Couchman, Katherine McIver, and Allyson Poska (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 130.

28. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Women and the Reformations: Reflections on Recent Research," *History Compass*, 2 (2004): 1-10.

29. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Nuns, Wives, Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds*, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 8.

30. Wiesner-Hanks, *Nuns, Wives, Mothers*, 25.

31. Wiesner-Hanks, *Nuns, Wives, Mothers*, 25-27.

32. Wiesner-Hanks, *Nuns, Wives, Mothers*, 25-26.

33. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 140.

34. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, 1.

35. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 2.

36. Allan Megill, Steven Shepard, and Phillip Honenberger, *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error: A Contemporary Guide to Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-3.

37. Wunder, *He is the Sun*, *She is the Moon,* 203.

38. Wunder, *He is the Sun*, *She is the Moon*, 203.

39. Wunder, *He is the Sun*, *She is the Moon*, 202-3.

40. Wunder, *He is the Sun*, *She is the Moon*, 203-4.

41. Wunder, *He is the Sun*, *She is the Moon*, 204.

42. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 140.

43. Abrams and Harvey, *Gender Relations*, 40; Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 1-2.

44. See also Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); and J.R. Brink, Allison Coudert, and Maryanne C. Horowitz, *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville: Sixteenth-Century Journal Publishers, 1989).

45. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 201-2.

46. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 201-2.

47. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 201.

48. For more traditional views on witchcraft and explanations see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (Old Westbury: Feminist Press, 1973).

49. See Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1992); Susan Cahn, *Industry of Devotion: The Transformation of Women's Work in England, 1500-1660* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Martha Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

50. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 129.

51. See also Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Spinsters and Seamstresses: Women in Cloth and Clothing Production," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret Ferguson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); 191-205.

52. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 129-30.

53. This challenge has proven to be beneficial to the study of the Reformation and women that has progressed remarkably in recent years. See Helena Cole, Jane Caplan, and Hanna Schissler, *The History of Women in Germany from Medieval Times to the Present: Bibliography of English-Language Publications* (Washington: German Historical Institute, 2009).

54. Brooks, *Writing Women*, 185.

55. Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past*, 133.

56. Natalie Davis, "Women's History in Transition: the European Case," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 4 (1976): 83-103.

57. At this point, historians differentiated between "sex," by which they meant physical, morphological, and anatomical differences, and "gender," by which they meant a culturally constructed, historically changing, and often unstable system of characteristics. There has been some scrutiny surrounding even the basic theories that deal with gender. For example, the work of Judith Butler has led to a re-examination of "gender" as a term itself. Butler notes that there are instabilities within the term "gender" and "sex" and asserts that "rather than being fixed or 'essential' entities, in fact these terms are both constitutive of and constituted by the effects of hegemonic discourse." See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-16; see also Herbert McAvoy and Teresa Walters, *Consuming Narratives: Gender and Monstrous Appetite in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 2; and Brooks, *Writing Women*, 185.

58. Marianna Muravyeva and Raisa Toivo, *Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1-2.

59. Abrams and Harvey, *Gender Relations*, 1-5; see also Teresa Meade and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *A Companion to Gender History* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

60. See Kathleen Canning, "Gender History/Women's History: is Feminist Scholarship Losing its Critical Edge?" *Journal of Women's History* 5 (1993): 102-14; and Gisela Bock, "Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on

Women's History," in *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, ed. Karen Offen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1-23.

61. See Denise Riley, "Am I that Name? Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History," *History Workshop* 29 (1990): 159-62.

62. See Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, 1-5.

63. See Sylvia Brown, *Women, Gender, and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

64. Clare Lees, *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), xv; and Andrea Pearson, *Women and Portraits in Early Modern Europe: Gender, Agency, Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

65. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 13-14.

66. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 13.

67. For information on masculinity in Europe (mainly England and France) see Susan Broomhall and Gent Van, *Governing Masculinities in the Early Modern Period: Regulating Selves and Others* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

68. Judith Bennett, "Feminism and History," *Gender and History*, 1 (1989): 251-72.

69. It is for this reason that scholars like Bennett have recently asserted that the historian's task is now to think about gender analysis and not simply women's history for historical studies: "We need . . . to develop historical narratives in short – and long-term transformation of gender relations; we need to think about the extent of the impact of shifts in the meanings of masculinity and femininity on the ongoing system of gender relations." See Bennett, *Feminism and History*, 251-72.

70. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, 2.

71. See Joan Scott, "Gender: a Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 619; see also Joan Scott, "Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis?" *Diogenes* 57, no. 1 (2010): 7-14.

72. Penny Richards and Jessica Munns, *Gender, Power and Privilege in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Pearson & Longman, 2003), 2-3.

73. McAvoy and Walters, *Consuming Narratives*, 1-3.

74. Richards and Munns, *Gender, Power and Privilege,* 2-3.

75. For detailed explanations on how biblical creation stories influenced theological and social understandings of male and female relationships during the early modern period, see Margaret Sommerville*, Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London: E. Arnold, 1995).

76. See also Steven Ozment, *Three Behaim Boys: Growing Up in Early Modern Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

77. Heide Wunder, "What Made a Man a Man? Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Findings," in *Gender in Early Modern German History*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 24.

78. Wunder, *What Made a Man a Man*, 24-25.

79. Wunder, *What Made a Man a Man*, 34.

80. Wunder, *What Made a Man a Man*, 25.

81. Richards and Munns, *Gender, Power and Privilege*, 2-3.

82. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 43.

83. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 43.

84. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 43.

85. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 43.

86. Richards and Munns, *Gender, Power and Privilege,* 2-3.

87. See Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate 1648-1871* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971).

88. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender, Church, and State in Early Modern Germany: Essays* (London: Longman, 1998), 163-64.

89. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender, Church and State*, 164.

90. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender, Church and State*, 174-75.

91. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender, Church and State*, 173.

92. Lynn Botelho notes that scholars are not yet familiar with women's life stages or ageing, especially how they affect different kinds of women, while others, like Allyson Poska, emphasize the need to use class as a perspective to discern women's experiences. See Poska, Couchman, and McIver, *Ashgate Research Companion*, 7-8.