
**Gisela Bock & Anne Cova (eds), *Writing Women's
History in Southern Europe 19th-20th Centuries***

Oeiras, Celta Editora, 2003.

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REFERENCES

Gisela Bock & Anne Cova (eds), *Writing Women's History in Southern Europe 19th-20th Centuries*, Oeiras, Celta Editora, 2003, vii + 183 p., ISBN : 972-774-149-5 (Paperback).

- 1 At a time when women's history was celebrating over 40 years of existence, several eminent historians from different European countries and a new generation of young scholars mainly from Portugal gathered in Serra da Arrábida in September 1999 for a Conference which aimed at reporting on the stage of southern European women's history writing. The Conference proceedings were published three years later by Celta Editora, together with nine brief overviews of recent research conducted in Portugal in the area of woman's historiography. The book, entitled *Writing Women's History in Southern Europe 19th-20th Centuries*, provides an interesting survey of what is being done in terms of research in Portugal as well as other southern European countries.
- 2 According to the project coordinators, from the eighteenth to the late nineteenth century, historical research focused on women's social circumstances, whereas from the late 1980s onwards, historians began to look into civic, political, social and national citizenship as well as trans-national or European cross border influences. The Arrábida Conference (which was the first of its kind to take place in Portugal) seeks to address this new trend in women's history research by raising interesting new topics of debate, such as whether in fact there is such a thing as a "southern" European history of women and gender relations. Moreover, looking back on what has been done so far in terms of

research in this new historical discipline will also highlight the differences between the focus of research in Northern and Southern Europe, both past and present.

- 3 Feminist movements in southern Europe and Latin America aimed at improving women's social conditions, while British and North American centred their efforts on obtaining women's suffrage. The analysis of the evolution of women's history research in southern European countries such as Italy (Michela De Giorgio, "*Raconter l'histoire des femmes*": 67-80), France (Françoise Thébaud, "*Écrire l'histoire des femmes en France: parcours historiographiques, débats méthodologiques et rapports avec les institutions*": 97-116 and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, "*France: Vers une histoire des femmes du temps présent*": 117-140), Greece (Efi Avdela, "*L'histoire des femmes au sein de l'historiographie grecque*": 81-96), Spain (Mary Nash, "*Women's History in Contemporary Spain: Issues in the 1990s*": 9-26) and Portugal (Irene Vaquinhas, "*L'historiographie sur les femmes au Portugal: le XIX^e siècle*": 27-48 and Anne Cova, "*L'histoire des femmes au Portugal: le XX^e siècle*": 49-66) emphasize its different stages of development and, more importantly, its concerns. Despite being labelled as Mediterranean and sharing many geographical, political and even social characteristics, these southern European countries have many external as well as internal differences. The research done on women's and gender history also reflects this diversity. When Portugal emerged from its dictatorship and women began to fight for their rights, researchers seemed to turn instead to the nineteenth century and it was only in the last decade of the twentieth century that there was a significant increase in the quantity of academic research embracing a wider range of historical periods. In post-dictatorial Greece, women's historical studies remain scarce and marginal. In France, Italy and Spain, women's historiography has already reached its maturity and appears ready to take on new challenges.
- 4 Although the roots of the historiography of women and gender relations are intertwined with the emergence of women's movements and feminist concerns, this "new" discipline has now reached an autonomous status and is ready to enter the next stage of development, which is to perceive women's history not only as part of a nation's history but as a supranational aspect of historical research which is no longer one-sided but includes both men and women. The articles published in this book not only provide an insight into what has already been done in terms of women's and gender history studies but also offer interesting suggestions for future research. Useful tools such as extensive bibliographies also accompany some of the articles.
- 5 Lengthy abstracts of research done in Portugal in the field of women's history are presented under the heading: "*Recherches Récentes au Portugal*" and include nine entries: Teresa Pinto, "*L'enseignement industriel féminin au XIX^e siècle*", p. 141-144; Maria Isabel Viegas Liberato, "*Discours, pratiques et politiques de la prostitution au Portugal (1841-1926)*": 145-148; Virgínia do Rosário Baptista, "*Women in the Portuguese Labour Market (1890-1940)*": 149-154; João Esteves, "*L'Associativisme Féminin au Portugal, 1906-1918*": 155-160; Irene Flunser Pimentel, "*Une organisation féminine de l'État nouveau portugais: l'œuvre des mères pour l'éducation nationale (1936-1974)*": 161-164; Manuela Barbas, "*Femmes et État nouveau: la jeunesse portugaise féminine, 1937-1945*": 165-168; Maria Antónia Fiadeiro, "*Maria Lamas (1893-1983), journalisme: le féminisme intellectuel portugais*": 169-176; Manuela Tavares, "*Féminismes in Portugal: 1970s-1980s*": 177-180; Amélia Campos, "*Les femmes députées et le pouvoir politique: le Portugal de 1974 aux années quatre-vingt-dix*": 181-183. These summaries of some of the research conducted in the area of women's historiography that has been done in Portugal mainly as part of MA courses offered by the Universidade Nova de Lisboa

and the Universidade Aberta between the years of 1996 and 2000 deal with a wide variety of subjects on Portuguese women's history, ranging from the nineteen- and twentieth-century discourse, practice and politics of prostitution to women's movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Amidst these, there are also three articles on early twentieth-century women's history, two of which (João Esteves's and Maria Antónia Fiadeiro's) appear not to have been published before.

- 6 The articles in this compilation, the majority of which are written in French and the rest in English, will appeal to a Portuguese as well as an international academic audience interested in accessing a broad synopsis of women's and gender history in southern European countries. Overall, this book represents a good starting-point for anyone aiming to do research in this area from a national as well as a trans-national perspective.
- 7 Perhaps more important than the edition of the conference proceedings and additional current research, is the Arrábida gathering of different southern European historians, where significant women's issues were aired and debated and out of which, one would hope, further research in this new trend of women's studies will arise.

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