Introduction

ELINOR ACCAMPO and VENITA DATTA

When Rachel Ginnis Fuchs suddenly passed away on October 15, 2016, large and overlapping communities of family, friends, colleagues, students, and mentees found themselves in a state of grief and shock over the enormous hole her absence would create. The various communities became one in their desire and need to pay tribute to her life and work. We are very pleased to honor her memory with this special issue of *French Historical Studies*. We honor her unequaled dedication and service to the historical profession, especially to the Society for French Historical Studies and the Western Society for French History, as well as her large and innovative body of scholarship.

Over nearly thirty years Rachel served several terms as a member of the executive board of the Society for French Historical Studies; she was president of the society in 1999–2000, during which she organized a most successful and memorable annual meeting in Tempe, Arizona. She was also for many years a member of the editorial board of *French Historical Studies*, and with Kent Wright she edited the journal from 2011 to 2014. Throughout her career Rachel participated in the annual meetings of the Western Society for French History and was a member of its executive board from 1995 to 1998. In addition, she devoted much service to other academic societies for which she has been extensively honored. Most important, Rachel was a dedicated, supportive, beloved, and inspiring mentor to countless undergraduates, graduate students, and colleagues, as the authors of this introduction have good cause to know.[1] She was a

1. Fuchs devoted much service to the Pacific Coast branch of the American Historical Association, especially as a long-term member on its executive board and as its president in 2008–9. She was also a long-term member of the Western Association of Women Historians, and she served as copresident of the Coordinating Council of Women in History from 2012 to 2016. She has been widely acknowledged in several commemoration events and publications, including sessions in her honor at the 2017 annual meetings of the Society for French Historical Studies and the Pacific Coast branch of the American Historical Society. Colleagues in French history remembered her scholarship with a special issue of *H-France Salon* (no. 18) reviewing the body of her work, and former students honored her with a festschrift that was already in progress before her passing: Barton and Hopkins, *Practiced Citizenship*.

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careful, perspicacious, and generous reader, and she offered insightful suggestions, always striking the right balance between encouragement and constructive criticism. These talents help explain both Rachel's success as the editor of *French Historical Studies* and her popularity among colleagues, who solicited her constantly for letters of recommendation.

The boundless empathy and compassion Rachel felt for friends, colleagues, young scholars, and students informed her scholarship, as did her passion for social justice. Trained in the context of 1970s "new social history" like other scholars of this era, Rachel used quantitative methods to present factual detail about people of the past most historians had ignored. Unlike many other social historians, however, Rachel understood the explanatory limits of statistics and correlations and went far beyond quantifiable materials in her archival explorations. From the time she was a graduate student, her intellectual curiosity and her empathy for the powerless in nineteenth-century France informed the questions behind her archival choices and gave her an uncanny ability to discover compelling anecdotes that lent a human face to her quantitative findings. Impoverished women and children—those who held the least power in society and thus garnered little interest from most historians—held pride of place in her research. Rachel's subject matter posed a challenge few historians have been able to meet. As she eloquently noted in her second book:

> Sources are sparse and seldom written by the poor themselves. Poor women become visible only when they meet the policymakers through their interactions in the public arena. Much of the central drama of the poor . . . is played on a stage in which the women confront legislative and administrative rulings, public welfare, charitable institutions, public hospitals, and the criminal courts. The women are illuminated only when on stage with people who ran these institutions and kept the records. The men have the power of interpretation because in this drama they are the actors, playwrights, producers, and directors. The poor women, however, have major parts which they can develop to their fullest extent. Once they step off that stage the poor women exit through the side door, down the narrow streets and back alleys on which they live, and on which little historical light shines. The men, however, exit the theater through the front door, into the glare of the spotlights: they grant the interviews, meet the press, write the reviews, and shill their production.[2]

Rachel Fuch's goal in all her work was to redress the imbalance in the historical record caused by the paucity of direct evidence regarding the lives of people who had relatively little power but who, as she was convinced from the outset of her career, played an important role in the social and political dramas

2. Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris*, 5.

unfolding through the nineteenth century—particularly, as she would demonstrate, in the shape of institutions that eventually became the welfare state. While she focused on actors in the "back alleys of history," her interest in episodic but growing state interventions into the lives of poor women, children, and families led her to incorporate into her analyses men and women across social classes, including powerful policy makers such as judges, health professionals, and legislators. Her research demonstrated both that the "welfare state" originated with concerns about reproduction and that its foundations were laid far earlier than historians had previously observed.

From the outset of her career Fuchs sought to give voice to the "voiceless" in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French and European history. Her study of the powerless gave them not only voice but also an identity missing from most scholarly volumes. The titles of her monographs reflect common themes that inspired her passion: *Abandoned Children: Foundlings and Child Welfare in Nineteenth-Century France* (1984), *Poor and Pregnant in Paris: Strategies for Survival in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), and *Contested Paternity: Constructing Families in Modern France* (2008). These works, along with her other books, book chapters, and many articles, seek to understand women's and men's choices and actions as individuals and as members of family units in their relations to one another and to the state. Her works cover the range of French political regimes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the numerous social disruptions caused by urbanization and industrial capitalism.[3] She discovered in her research the plights of the women who were too poor to keep their children, the fates of those children, and the experiences of unmarried pregnant women who lived in Paris or came there to give birth. All her books resulted from deep digging into myriad archives and posing questions of them no historian previously had.

Two major themes emerge in the body of Fuchs's work: the state's increased interest in women and children, and women's ability to act as their own agents in response to government intervention in their lives. *Abandoned Children* not only documented the social stresses that caused women to give up children but also traced the changing attitudes that led the government to take measures to protect children against abandonment, abuse, and neglect. *Poor and Pregnant in Paris* similarly explored the plight of this vulnerable population. Fuchs compellingly depicted the experiences of these women while uncovering and explaining the cultural politics that led health professionals and legislators to assist, rather

3. Among her other works are *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (2005); with Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (2005); and, edited with Elinor Accampo and Mary Lynn Stewart, *Gender and the Politics of Social Reform in France, 1870–1914* (1995).

than punish, "errant" women. This book also demonstrated how women turned the concerns of bourgeois men to their own advantage. They were not passive recipients of charity but, rather, had "major parts which they played to the fullest extent" on the stage of this theater.[4] The multiple-prizewinning *Contested Paternity* examined court cases in which women sought to gain economic support from fathers of their children even when they were not married, or the opposite cases, in which men sought to claim biological paternity or "social fatherhood" in their quest for custody.[5] Women often succeeded in these cases, which is all the more astounding given that the Napoleonic Code automatically granted custody to fathers and prohibited paternity suits. *Contested Paternity* is thus pathbreaking in its discovery of how the disenfranchised, especially poor and uneducated women, were able to use the courts and appropriate the language of republicanism and human rights during the Third Republic when they remained disenfranchised. But it also engaged its readers in a detailed, eye-opening discussion of the crucial and sometimes fluid differences between paternity and fatherhood and demonstrated how the latter could be independent of the former—a previously unexplored phenomenon with wide implications for the family and its relationship with the state, particularly in an era when paternity was impossible to prove.

As a whole, Fuchs's scholarship brought to light women's determination to retain their sense of dignity through the ingenious manipulation of charity, welfare organization, and the courts. Most important, she demonstrated that the "weakest" members of society had agency after all and played a role in shaping institutions, especially as the language of human rights took root during the nineteenth century.

This issue of *French Historical Studies* honors Rachel Fuchs by including articles that reflect the questions and methodologies of her own research. The five articles touch on interrelated themes central to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France, including evolving forms of male power expressed through paternity, court systems, state surveillance, and professional expertise. Other common threads are the victimization of women and children caused by industrial capitalism and male abuse of power, and the development of mechanisms to protect the abused and to survey victims or potential victims, often by surveillance of women's sexual behavior. Efforts to aid the poor included

4. Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris*, 5.

5. *Contested Paternity* was awarded the Charles E. Smith Prize of the European History Section of the Southern Historical Association (2009), the Frances Richardson Keller-Sierra Prize for best monograph in the field of history published by a member of the Western Association of Women Historians (2009), and the J. Russell Major Prize of the American Historical Association for the best work in English on any aspect of French history (2009).

charities such as orphanages and workshops operated by religious groups, which ran afoul of the state as it attempted to survey, regulate, and provide assistance. The resulting clash also reflected the broader conflict between religious belief and the growing effect of anticlerical secularization, especially at the end of the nineteenth century.

Similar to Fuchs's works, these articles bring to life women's and children's voices or note where they are suppressed or ignored. They also assess the veracity of their words and the veracity, or lack thereof, that male contemporaries attributed to them. Like Fuchs's work, these articles address social and cultural issues that became prominent as French men and women dealt with changes in women's and children's labor and the family unit. By the late nineteenth century these transformations coincided with the waning role of the church in social life, especially in education and the administration of charity. As women and children were increasingly viewed as important national resources, they were also often seen as passive and potential victims in need of protection. Indeed, an overarching theme of these articles is state and church competition to protect women and children against economic vicissitudes, family breakdown, sexual predators, and economic exploitation. At the same time, those in perceived need of protection could challenge the authority of church and state institutions by undermining male power or male honor, the republican secular agenda, or mechanisms of market capitalism, thereby allowing them to assert their own agency, feminist or otherwise.

This special issue opens with Anne Verjus's "Une société sans pères peut-elle être féministe? *L'empire des Nairs* de James H. Lawrence," which offers an unexpected and rather uncanny imaginary context for Fuchs's work on paternity. Verjus analyzes the British author James H. Lawrence's 1793 novel, *The Empire of the Nairs*. Based on the social organization of an actual tribe, the novel imagines a society in which men and women live in commingling but separate worlds, where the two pillars of patriarchal family and society—paternity (filiation) and property—are denied to men. A central premise in this novel is that uncertain paternity was the most common factor in conjugal instability and failure. Taking to the extreme a form of "feminism" based on biological difference, Lawrence envisioned a society in which the role of the father is limited to insemination and his primary function is economic production. Women hold all property and collectively devote themselves to bearing and raising children, the roles biology determined for them. Both men and women are free to have sex with whomever they wish, and the sexual act is no longer a transactional exchange. Lineage is strictly maternal, and patrimony disappears—as does the dependence of women and children on men, since their potential abusers have no power over them in the private sphere. Verjus's astute analysis of this novel

and of its distribution in France during the first half of the nineteenth century helps us understand contemporaries' ability to reimagine the role of paternity in both the family and the larger patriarchal social order. This article also allows its readers to reimagine the role of paternity and its implications, particularly with regard to the need to protect women from sexual and economic exploitation—neither of which would exist in Lawrence's utopia. We cannot help but recall Fuchs's *Contested Paternity* and imagine that in such a society there would be no contestation over paternity and no court cases. Nor, however, would male genitors have any relationship with their children—the "social fatherhood" based on emotional care, so important to Fuchs's analysis, would be absent. Indeed, Lawrence's novel says little about the actual raising of children and their place in this imagined nonpatriarchal society, where women and men would be freer to pursue what was most "natural" to each gender, especially in the eighteenth-century context: reproduction and motherhood for women, creative production for men. At the same time, this article raises important questions about the limits of Lawrence's feminism, since his utopic vision obliged women to assume the duties of child rearing, thereby limiting them to the private sphere. Verjus's provocative and engaging analysis provides a useful backdrop for the subsequent articles.

If paternity was the subject of contestation in the nineteenth century, so too were conceptions of childhood. E. Claire Cage's article, "Child Sexual Abuse and Medical Expertise in Nineteenth-Century France," offers a fascinating analysis of the ways in which medical and legal expertise combined to protect children against abuse but also sometimes to question the veracity of children's claims and defend accused adults. Cage traces an increase in sexual crimes against children during the nineteenth century, after the 1832 criminalization of such acts with children under eleven years old. Medical expertise and forensic evidence, which were meant to detect signs of abuse, were increasingly important in courts of law. Rather than protecting children, such expertise often resulted in criminalizing the supposed victims. Doctors often dismissed signs of physical abuse as self-inflicted and sometimes discredited the testimonies of victims and their mothers as efforts to blackmail the accused. Most of the cases involved perpetrators and victims among the working classes, and doctors and judges characterized their criminal behavior as inherent to working-class immorality and crowded living conditions. But in some of the most troubling cases, the perpetrators were bourgeois men and their victims lower-class boys or girls. In these instances, doctors and courts tended to question the credibility of children's claims even when forensic evidence supported them. Reputation and honor came into play for men of means, and their words held greater weight than those of children, who were compared to "hysterical women." Sexual abuse of children is far less tolerated today, but blaming the victim and silencing the

voices of the abused remain familiar tactics. Moreover, such strategies illustrate how efforts to protect the weak could have the opposite result of vindicating the already empowered accused.

Protection of children, particularly girls and young women, is a major theme of Miranda Sachs's article, "When the Republic Came for the Nuns: Laicization, Labor Law, and Female Religious Orders." *Ouvroirs*, or workshops housed by congregations, were charitable institutions: women religious who took in girls whose parents could not afford to support them and gave their charges religious instruction and training in skills that would make them employable once they came of age. The *ouvroirs*' housing and instruction were meant to protect girls from sexual predators and from falling into prostitution, as well as to train them in useful skills. But such "charitable" efforts had two pitfalls. First, in some cases nuns exploited their charges and seriously compromised their health. Second, the labor of children, as well as their instruction, drew the attention of the anticlerical Third Republic, notably as it attempted to shut down congregations that did not demonstrate "public utility." Sachs's article offers a new and compelling dimension of the anticlerical campaign and nuns' efforts to survive it, as the work performed in this female space was eventually subjected to the surveillance of work inspectors whose purpose was to combat exploitation and poor work conditions. Another outcome of the inspectors' reports, however, points to inherent contradictions in the Third Republic's agenda. On the one hand, the inspectors wanted to ensure that girls learned trades that would make them productive once they left the congregation; on the other, the low cost of the items they produced competed unfairly in the broader market, inviting further state surveillance as a result of pressure from competing factory owners. Given that the government's intent was to suppress congregations, sometimes regardless of the conditions under which young women and girls worked, one might ask whether the true interests of the latter were sacrificed to the combined interests of market capitalism and anticlericalism. In Sachs's article, as in Cage's, we see the limits of state protection of young women and girls. Sachs also shows us nuns' efforts to defend the missions of their congregations and to preserve their religious houses from the intrusion of male representatives of the government. Her article is an interesting example of the clash between church and state in the early Third Republic with regard to a vulnerable population dependent on church institutions at a time when an increasingly secular, indeed, anticlerical, and centralizing government contested the very notion of charity.

As the Third Republic sought to suppress congregations and their influence in the face of the expansion of state welfare, lay Catholics sought to stave off the influence of the godless republic by pursuing charitable works. Charity

and religious devotion are major themes in Elizabeth Everton's contribution, "Expiatory Victims of Modern Crisis: Christian Feminism, the Bazar de la Charité Fire, and the Politics of Suffering." This article focuses on the writings of Christian feminist Marie Maugeret and her reactions to the devastating fire at the Catholic Charity Bazaar in 1897, the siege of the nationalist and anti-Semitic Ligue des Patriotes' headquarters in 1899, and the Dreyfus affair. But it was the fire, which killed mostly women—many of whom were Catholic aristocrats performing an act of charity for the poor—that had the most profound effect on Maugeret's version of Christian feminism. Just as nuns in charitable congregations sought to resist Third Republic efforts to close their houses, Maugeret also reacted to the clash between church and state, though in her case on the level of human values. The unheroic actions of men during the bazaar fire exemplified to her how modern values had eroded men's proper roles and their ability to protect women. Like the radical English novelist James Lawrence featured in Verjus's article, Maugeret attacked the male-dominated society that had tyrannized, abused, and murdered women instead of protecting them. Both blamed injustice on male domination and wrongdoing, envisioning a fundamental reordering of society along the lines of gender. But unlike Lawrence, whose vision excluded women from public life, Maugeret, a century later, believed the republican experiment had failed women and that only they could redeem the nation through their natural propensity for Christian self-sacrifice and moral service in public and political life. As Everton notes, Maugeret's uneasy coexistence with both secular feminists and male Catholics makes her an interesting, and surely not unique, example of a woman for whom the modern world and its contradictions resulted in spiritual and moral agony.

In one way or another, each of the articles here addresses women or children, especially girls, as actual or potential victims in need of protection by a male-dominated state. In "Coercion and Choice: The 'Traffic in Women' between France and Argentina in the Early Twentieth Century," Elisa Camiscioli takes this theme a significant step further by asking readers to step outside the "binary trap" of viewing exploitation or victimization as completely exclusive of agency or female independence. Instead of assuming that trafficked women were necessarily victims of white slavery, Camiscioli suggests that we consider them as migrants who were selling sex, thereby upending the neat (and gendered) divide of exploiters and exploited. In this regard, her article is quite provocative. She notes how fundamental the concept of victimization is to white slavery narratives and asks readers to appraise "white slave" experience on a spectrum of freedom and servitude. Using personal testimony in letters and police archives, she documents cases that are far more complex than the typical narrative of seduction or abduction leading inexorably to slavery. Testimonies of

supposed victims allow her to posit an alternative narrative in which women engaged in foreign adventures that landed them in the sex trade but, contrary to officials' narratives, also opened new opportunities, enabling them to escape the patriarchal authority of husbands and fathers. Camiscioli is very careful to avoid romanticizing the experience of women migrating to sell sex, but she also discovers from some of their own testimonies a sense of adventure. Indeed, the experiences of these young women contrast starkly with the fate of the girls in the congregation workshops featured in Sachs's contribution, whose futures work inspectors described as dead ends and whose voices they either ignored or silenced. This final article in the collection, in fact, returns us to Fuchs's inspiring words about women having choices and having agency in exercising their choices, even when their options were very limited:

> The very word "strategy" implies that these women had information providing them with the power to make rational decisions about their lives. It would be erroneous to assume that the poor . . . sat around a kitchen table with lists of available options, deciding on what strategy to adopt. Their lives were too precarious to allow such orderly decision making, and their list of alternatives would be short. It would be equally erroneous, however to assume that women were powerless and lacked ability to govern their own lives. Women made choices, albeit without adequate information, without many options, and without much planning.[6]

The articles in this special issue address a number of topics, including women's and children's real, potential, or projected vulnerability to sexual and labor exploitation, as well as the need to protect them from exploitation. What decisions did the government make that benefited women but also restricted their rights? What choices did women have, or to what extent were they coerced in their choices by men in their private or public lives? When were the interests of women and children sacrificed for the allegedly greater good of society? Those deemed "vulnerable" to male exploitation might also appear to threaten the male-dominated order of society. Directly or indirectly, these articles touch on gender relations and the power of men and male institutions to shape the lives of women and children and to sustain and reinforce male power in all its forms, as the forces of change, particularly feminism and the changing roles of women, threatened to subvert the patriarchal order.

Fuchs's work and the research in these articles address issues that unfolded against the background of increasing concerns about low French birthrates and "depopulation," especially during the Third Republic. This demographic phenomenon of rapidly declining birthrates combined with high infant mortality

6. Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris*, 1.

brought increased attention to the productive and reproductive lives of women and the conditions of children over the nineteenth century and fueled the impulse to protect them. While the "crisis" of depopulation was a key context in Fuchs's work that drove much of the sentiment resulting in concrete aid to women and children, these articles make no mention of it. In fact, reference to the reproductive potential of the women featured in these articles is mostly absent, even though the need for protection of their bodies is an overarching theme. This silence around declining fertility and high infant mortality clearly demonstrates that other issues incited state protection or coercion of those perceived to be vulnerable or threatening to the social order. These articles are examples of the work of a new generation of scholars who have been inspired to look beyond women's roles as reproducers and to investigate the countless other ways the state intervened in and intersected with the private choices of women or their families. In this regard, they are indeed a testament to the enduring legacy left by Rachel Fuchs.

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