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LVE

Filière : B/L

Session : 2024

Épreuve de : LVE Anglais

Consignes

- Remplir soigneusement l'en-tête de chaque feuille avant de commencer à composer
- Rédiger avec un stylo non effaçable bleu ou noir
- Ne rien écrire dans les marges (gauche et droite)
- Numéroté chaque page (cadre en bas à droite)
- Placer les feuilles A3 ouvertes, dans le même sens et dans l'ordre

In 1848 a reunion was held at Seneca falls, to discuss women's rights and their advancement. Defensors of the cause were present, both men and women - John Stuart Mill was notorious for supporting women's enfranchisement for instance - to discuss try to find the best way to push their agenda. They were able to agree on the need to give women the ballot, and this event was also the occasion for some to talk about the abolition of slavery, which was linked to women's rights since the beginning of feminist and abolitionist movements.

This highlights the complexity of the fight for women's rights, which has always been deeply linked ^{to} ~~with~~ the socio-economic context and intertwined with other struggles. These elements explain the long-lasting divisions between feminist movements and ~~its~~ their evolution. Four waves of feminism demanded new rights like the right to vote, an access to education, to ~~rep~~ birth control, and equality in the workplace. These changes occurred due to

historical and ideological evolutions, affecting women's rights movements, as ~~is~~ it is explained in the set of documents.

~~The~~ ^{The} first document was written by historian Christine Bolt and published in 1993. It stresses the important role played by social, economic and political evolutions in the shape of women's rights movements and their victories. It also underlines the differences between British and American feminism and the conviction of both type of women's rights activists that their country ^{was} ~~is~~ the most advanced regarding ~~the~~ their cause. This idea of exceptionalism also transpires in document 5, an extract of The Feminine Mystique, published by American writer Betty Friedan in 1963, in which ~~the~~ ^{the idea} the author ~~refutes~~ ^{refutes} that American exceptionalism helped ~~the~~ women's cause and on the contrary describes the American way of life as suffocating for women. ~~✶~~ Margaret Thatcher takes an opposite stance in document 3, which is a political speech. In 1988 she was still Great Britain's Prime minister, and her premiership would last another two years. As a Conservative politician, she advocates the need for a strong family unit and while she claims to defend women's right to work she also emphasizes the beauty of the role

of a housewife and encourage women to remain feminine whatever they choose to do. This opinion, inspired by Christian feminism and considering that men and women are different by nature and essence seems to be shared to some extent by Anne Julia Cooper, who stressed in document 4, A voice from the South that women have a duty to keep themselves informed of social changes in order to play their part, influence the course of events. Their purpose seems to be different from that of men, just like Blacks and Whites do not have the same legacy and thus role to play in history. Women are different not in their essence but because they have to help the country become more modern and trigger political change. This is what Barbara Beddison tries to do in Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women published in 1866: she defends women's enfranchisement by underlining their learning capacities and their practical knowledge, which could help Great Britain tackle social challenges of the time.

The study of this set of documents raises the following question: to what extent was the fight for women's rights shaped by historical and ideological evolutions?

I will stress that ~~the~~ economic mutations led to the imposition of new gender roles both in Great Britain and in the United States. Then, I will underline their effect on political reforms and

new ideas, which contributed to legitimate the fight for women's enfranchisement. I will eventually explain how both of these evolutions influenced the vision of women and had lasting effects on feminist movements, as ~~they~~ they created divisions among them.

The Industrial Revolution, which started in Great Britain at the end of the 18th century, influenced the formation of ~~the~~ women's movements according to Christine Bault in the first document, as the emerging white middle-class gained influence and women rebelled against their imprisonment inside of their houses. If this new economic paradigm was at the roots of progress, it also created new moral and social dangers starting in the 18th century: some thinkers started to condemn liberalism and trade as it promoted individualism and led people to selfishly accumulate goods instead of focusing on their family, their religion and their community. Middle-class women were accused of vanity as they started to decorate their house to display their social status, ~~and~~ ~~it~~ it is described in document 4 as a "womanly mania" (13). The link between individualism and femininity is also made by Margaret Thatcher in her speech, as for her the family unit is falling apart due to modern women's negligence. This threat was used for a long time to confine women 4/18

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to their houses and created a branch of feminism dealing with this issue by embracing motherhood and claiming that the ballot would help them tackle social issues. This argument became obsolete with the development of the consumer society in the twenties in the United States and after the Second World War in the United Kingdom. This is clear in the fifth document : women are seen as consumers because it is their natural role to gather things for the house and children. The new economic context also gave an argument against feminism but in the opposite direction.

The Industrial Revolution created new gender roles to tackle individualism : one confined women to their houses and the other gave them some autonomy. Though document 1 and 4 talk about perfectly cut "spheres" and the model of the breadwinner and the housewife, they do not mention the constant rise of women's rate of employment during the 19th and 20th century. Beyond those

ideologies, women were able to gain responsibilities and autonomy through their work (even though it remained a source of inequalities). The ~~third~~ ^{second} document thus defends women's enfranchisement by emphasizing their professional experience and their worker status: they are represented by "farmer-women" (L 45) and "business-women" (L 45-46). Women ~~the~~ working allowed activists to draw a parallel between them and men, and to refute the idea that men knew how to manage a country better because of their breadwinner status. This is opposed to Thatcher's stance, as according to her women can lead because of their different nature, and because a housewife has to manage the household's budget. This difference is the reflection of economic and ideological changes.

It is not surprising then that such a legacy continued to affect women's rights activists at the age of the consumer society. With the degradation of the economy (1929 crisis and oil crisis of 1973 and 1973) the role of the family became ~~more~~ ^{all the} more important: as Thatcher puts it, "However much welfare the states provides, the ^{family} provides more - much more" (L 41). It became a safety net for precarious people exposed to liberalism. This glorification of the family, which was also seen as a source of

display of prosperity
comfort and ~~of wealth~~ (the woman stays at home because the man earns enough money), was criticized by people like Betty Friedan. She associates feminist views and rejection of the consumer society, which only creates an illusion of happiness and fulfillment. The feminism of Margaret Thatcher is more of a conservative feminism, she wishes to protect the free market and to maintain a traditional society to prevent people from experimenting its negative effects. On the contrary, Friedan associates her feminism with left-wing ideas. She could have been influenced ~~with~~ ^{by} writers like Lewis Sinclair, who also described boredom in suburban areas and the lack of meaning ^{behind} of the American way of life.

These economic mutations influenced feminism and created setbacks but also encouraged the emergence of new rights and preoccupations. That is because they are linked to ~~rising~~ ^{growing} concerns for political freedom and the defense of liberties.

The American Declaration of Independence of 1776, written by Thomas Jefferson, represented a triumph of liberties: all citizens were granted the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".
~~The~~ The American Revolution set in stone some principles that would be used later on to fight for more freedom all over the world. The Boston Tea Party of 1773 and its slogan "no taxation

without representation" inspired women's rights activists who asked for the ballot for property-owners (including women) as soon as the beginning of the 19th century. Badtchon uses this argument as well in the beginning of her text: she stresses that it is unfair that women can hold office and "pay all taxes" (24) but cannot vote. This was a very common idea, also defended by Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the suffragets in Great Britain. She also used another one of the principles created by the American Revolution: not is justified if the ruler imposes unfair conditions and refuses to recognize the natural right of the people to choose their government. Other ideas also helped the feminist cause: the first document mentions the "heritage of Enlightenment ideas" (25-26). Thinkers like Thomas Paine, who wrote Common Sense to push for more political freedom or Malthus (1798, Essay on the principle of population) who argued in favor of a regulation of the population - as it grew exponentially it would soon be too great to survive on the goods it produces - and thus called for the reduction of the number of children per household and for waiting longer to get married. Such intellectuals were used as resources by activists, Malthus to put in perspective the need for women to stay in the house and Paine to demand more rights (women like Angelica Schuyler, read and took lessons from Common sense, and were influenced as well by the Revolution) 8/18

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Activism was also influenced by beliefs like the idea of an American exceptionalism - as it is explained by Bell - as American women believed it was the role of the United States to set a precedent and to grant more rights to women. It is also possible to read Freudan's text as a refutation of this principle or an attempt to show America that it ~~was~~ ^{is} not using its economic advantage the right way and does not fulfill its duties. In fact, she states that the United States are a model for the world: "the suburban housewife - she uses the dream image of the young American woman and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world" (L26-27). But this model is not the right one, it only leads to boredom and despair, and reproduces outdated traditional schemes.

New ideas and historical events helped fuel the fight for women's rights. But they also encouraged men to demand more political freedom. The first document talks about "expanding political rights and political toleration" and explains that it was a factor that helped women's right activism. 9/18

Bolt refers here to the progressive obtention of the ballot by Great Brittainmen: the Reform Act of 1832 dealt with rotten boroughs and increased the electorate so one out of five men could vote. Then the 1864 Act granted the ballot to all men above the age of 21. It was only in 1918 that British women could vote - the Representation of the People Act gave the ballot to women above 30 or who owned property - and in 1928 they could vote under the same rules as men. These evolutions shaped the feminist fight: although they were not part of the Chartist Movement (1838-1848) as it ~~did not~~ the People's Charter did not include women's enfranchisement as part of its six revendications, the extensions of suffrage gave them new arguments. It motivated the creation of the suffraget movement of Pankhurst and their violent fight. Nonetheless, the "more centralised British political system did undoubtedly limit the options of pressure groups" (272-73) as Bolt puts it, and while the successive reforms helped activists, the British institutions were against them. The House of Lords was firmly against women's enfranchisement and even Liberal MPs did not make it a priority - politicians like Lord Asquith were liked by feminists initially but their inaction angered them. Laws no 1/18

like the Cat and mouse Act (1913) allowing the liberation of women on hunger strikes while they recovered were used to destroy the movement.

The condition of women was also linked to other struggles for political freedom: document 1 states that they had "links with other reforms and endeavors" (p 33). The fourth document is a great example of this as it draws a parallel between women's situation and Blacks' one: they both need to stay alert and take part in social change, especially because their long period of oppression prevented them from developing their potential, they are still "new". Many women actually fought for the abolition of slavery (1837 in the UK and 1863 in the US) and American feminists were mostly in the Northern States (as the first document states) so the end of the Civil War (1861-1865) and the creation of the 15th, 16th and 17th Amendments to the Constitution to give the ballot to Black men and protect their civil rights were seen as progress. But it also divided feminist movements, as some were humiliated and thought that white women ought to vote before Black men while others were in favor of maintaining both objectives with no hierarchy. On a more positive note, it also allowed Black women to consider feminist views, though "black women ~~bar~~ remained largely untouched by middle-class feminism" (document 1, p 84-85). Women's rights activism also

associated with more modern forms of activism: it crossed paths with homosexual activists defending their rights - homosexuality was decriminalised in 1967 in the UK and gay marriage arrived even later, in 2015 in the US - or sex workers. This divided trends of feminism even more as it is completely opposed to the views of someone like Margaret Thatcher, who is in favor of womanhood and the model of the heterosexual nuclear family.

All of these social changes affected feminist movements: they were divided, rendered ineffective - or they benefited from windows of political opportunity on the contrary. But more importantly they transformed the vision of women, which is at the heart of debates between women's rights activists.

Economic and political change greatly affected religious beliefs. The first document mentions the influence of ~~the~~ Protestantism on feminism. In fact, the temperance movement which led to the Prohibition (13th Amendment to the Constitution, added in 1918) was mostly in favor of women's ballot - several states ~~so~~ had already adopted women's enfranchisement at the end of the 19th century - as women were seen as more religious and moral, they did not drink or leave the house and they had their family's best interest at heart. So they would necessarily vote to close pubs and ban

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<p>alcohol. This Christian feminism was a reaction by middle-class women to horrid social conditions (stemming from the Industrial Revolution) that promoted precarity and vices (Carlyle coined the term "Condition of England" to describe this problem in the UK) and it defended the idea that women were different - and morally better - from men, completed them. This is implicitly present in the second document: women's vote could "influence [increase] public spirit" (L36) because women without the ballot focus their blessings on their households but they could also help the nation. Thatcher also uses an essentialist definition of women, based on motherhood: she explains that "women a woman does not have to be masculine to succeed in a man's world" (L7-8), thus implying that women are inherently different, she is attached to the term "Madam" which materializes the gender difference, and she defines herself as a housewife and a mother before anything else. These views helped the women's</p>		
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cause because it was seen as more reassuring for men: women could work but were still willing to take care of the house and thus cumulate two jobs.

But such a vision also created disagreements among feminists: some, like Simone de Beauvoir (mentioned in document 5) defended the idea that women were not different from men initially, that it was the result of a social construct. The second document, even though it is influenced by essentialist ideas, also seems to consider women and men as equals, because they both work and share responsibilities. Christian feminism ~~also~~ ~~exclusionary~~ includes non-Christian ~~and~~, non-white ~~and~~ non-middle-class women: Anna Julia Cooper highlights the particularity of her identity, as she is a black woman. She identifies with other women but also with Black people and this gives her different responsibilities, a "colored woman's office" (245). Though she presents this in a positive light, it made it difficult to join a feminist movement at the time because Black women suffered from a double-erasure.

Christian feminism and the vision it gave of women also subjected women to new risks and oppression: an essentialist feminist like Thatcher

refuses to push for a complete equality before law: women have to remain "Madams", they are the wife or the daughter of someone before they can be anything else. It also creates the threat of propaganda: Thatcher, like the American society of the fifties are okay with women working but they tell them they will find greater joy in child-rearing - "Very few jobs can compare in long-term importance and satisfaction with that of a housewife and mother" (232-33). This gives only an illusion of choice as women marry young and are then trapped, they think their despair is their fault because they "were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents" (218-19, document 5). Equality only in law is not enough. Moreover, Christian values are incompatible with other feminist revendications like reproductive rights or sexual freedom: the Hays code, ^{which took effect} ~~put in place~~ in 1934, prohibited actors from kissing (or more) on screen to respect Christian values. Abortion was only made legal in 1967 in the UK and it ~~was~~ became a federal right in the US in 1973 (Roe v. Wade) after American feminists fought and even started to use the Karmen method to practice abortions themselves. The obtention of these rights was made possible by an evolution in the perception of women: they were not defined by motherhood anymore - they could choose their career over an accidental pregnancy and regulate

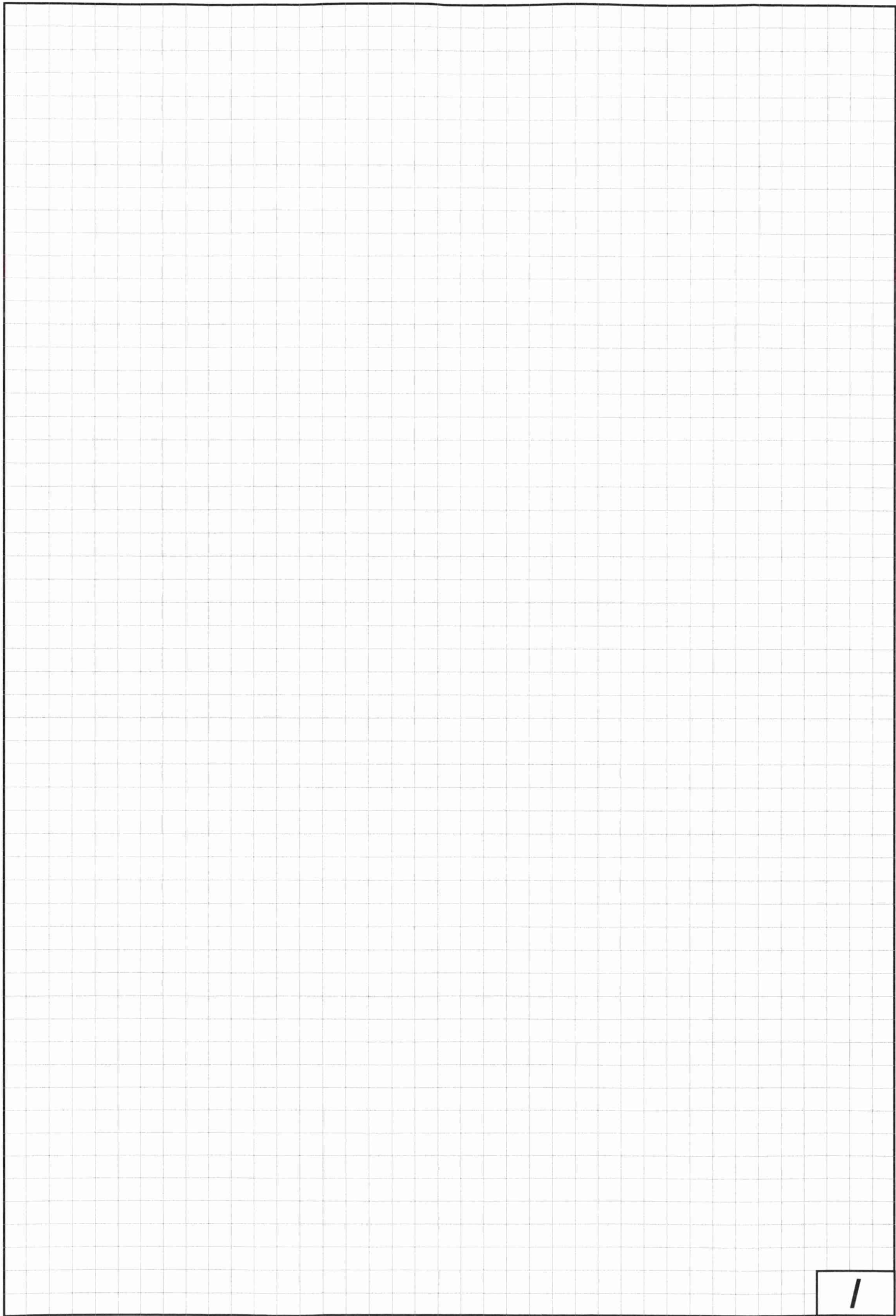
said pregnancies with birth control) - they were seen as active members of society who could work alongside men. So, if Christian feminism played a part in the conquest of women's rights and still exists today, it had to be dethroned by other movements which refused essentialism in order ~~to~~ for women to obtain new rights.

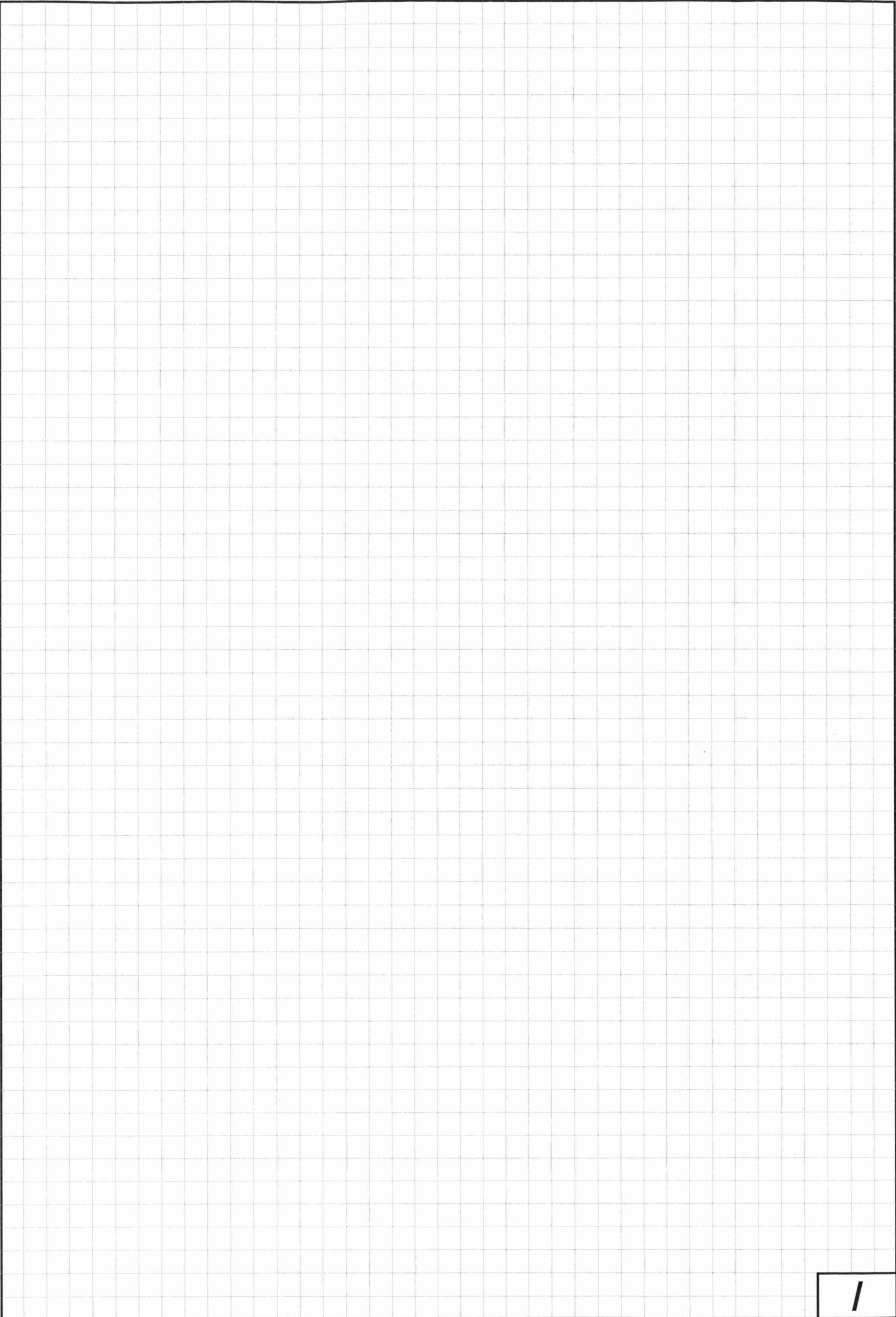
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<p>I explained that the economic mutations starting since in the 18th century gave more women the choice to work and consume new goods but also trapped them in their houses as the industrial revolution was seen as progress but also as a threat, destroying the family unit and corrupting people, thus calling for a new religious approach. This context also triggered a fight for more political freedom and liberties, something that helped women's cause as they had access to new ideas that they could use. Both of these elements transformed the vision of women, who were not seen as citizens but also mothers who constituted the last defense against complete individualism and the dispartion of the traditional family. This helped Christian feminism and white middle-class feminists to gain new rights but also led to new struggles and forms of alienation, and prevented more radical movements from voicing their opinions.</p> <p>The fact that Roe v. Wade (1973) was</p>		
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overturned by the Supreme Court in 2022 could be interpreted as a resurgence of the reduction of the woman to her essence (motherhood) due to religious beliefs. This major drawback underlines the fragility of women's rights and their reliance on the political context.





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