

European women's lives changed in the course of the nineteenth century politically, economically, and socially. Identify and explain the reasons for those changes.

As the nineteenth century and the industrial revolution progressed, the lives that European women lived changed dramatically. Despite the obstacles that they faced in the social arena, women attained more rights thanks to the reforms of the period and the Industrial Revolution which occurred concurrently. This resulted in women attaining the right to own property in European states over time, become more active in society through being patrons of the arts, and they also saw more active economic involvement, being able to participate in factory work and unskilled labor. Women's status in society in the political, economic, and social arenas changed in these ways thanks to the industrial revolution's facilitation of these occurrences through making jobs more accessible and making the blessing of these rights upon women more logical and amenable to the men of society. The Romantic period of art that was inspired as a response to Enlightenment thinking and the Industrial Revolution, seeking to provide an escape, also helped in this respect by inspiring emotion, drive, identity, and protest.

The right to own property in European states was one of the most significant changes that women experienced economically and socially in Europe during the 19th century. As the Industrial Revolution progressed and men sought jobs in the cities, independent farmland had to be sold or managed by other family members. This duty had to fall to women, which helped encourage lawmakers to pass laws allowing such occurrences. Women with greater independence in the city or made widows due to the death of husbands in the factories or through factory work also had to be able to own property in order to properly facilitate their survival. These factors helped to encourage lawmakers to finally agree to allow women to own property. Considering the move away from rural society to industrial society, this move was an amenable one to most Europeans. If there was no need for land to be passed from father to son, what logical reason remained to erect a barrier to females owning property? After all, they were going to have to operate independently at points in their lives in an industrial, urbane society. This was only the proper course of action to take. In so doing, women attained economic, social, and political influence by being able to gather up property assets that they would be able to leverage financially, in social situations, and financially in politics. This greatly changed the role that women played in society by giving them such powers that they had not possessed before.

Women also changed in their roles in society as they became more involved in art and culture. Wealthy women, or even middle class women or labor 'aristocrats', now with a higher standard of living and a higher financial ability were lent towards the purchase of recreational, artistic products. Now with influence thanks to certain respects now granted them and in some countries, the right to own property, these women sought to leverage themselves more in society by sponsoring cultural activity that would behoove them and successive generations.

The evolution of artistic thinking from the Enlightenment and Neoclassicism to Romanticism also included the evolution of Enlightenment ideas of liberty to include ideas of emotion and identity, things that all fit well with the goal of developing movements for women's rights. If women possessed identity, passion, and a desire for freedom, the ingredients for future expansion of the role of women in society could be combined. As such, woman, for reasons either recreational, financial, or sociopolitical became involved as patrons of the arts, using their financial resources to back cultural development in European countries. This gave them power in impacting the development of European culture and intellectual thinking, and therefore the course that societal norms and political norms would take.

Besides the involvement of women in the economy through being able to own property, women became more economically involved and independent as demands for labor continued to increase as the industrial revolution progressed. With jobs no longer requiring years of training and skill (which would require one to be a man as a prerequisite to gaining financial resources to pursue such a course), the door was opened not only for lower class workers to enter the labor force, but also women. Many opportunities to educate or train themselves were denied to women. With the Industrial Revolution came the facilitation of greater independence as women had to manage more domestic affairs and operate more independently as men worker long hours in factories and pursued recreational activity at other venues (taverns, brothels, etc.). The low wages that existed at points in the Industrial Revolution necessitated children entering the labor force to supplement family income, but it also encouraged women to do the same. These factors led to women entering the workforce as unskilled labor in factories, such as in the textile industry. This made the more involved in the production of goods in the economy and therefore economic capital. Combining this with the clout that women possessed in culture and society as a result of the reforms that had occurred and the actions they had pursued (patrons of the arts), it becomes clear that women attained great power in society, at least comparatively so when considering what power they possessed mere decades earlier.

The Industrial Revolution, Romanticism, and other events and conditions of the 19th century helped to perpetuate the constant change of the role of women in society in Europe. Thanks to shifting populations and economic conditions from rural to urban and from skilled to unskilled, as well as enduring Enlightenment thinking and new artistic and cultural movements, women were able to attain several new developments in society. They gained social, political, and economic influence as they gained the right to own property, influence culture through the sponsoring of art, and become more involved in the labor force and in the economy. More women, just like men, attained a higher standard of living in general, even if more work was required, and this facilitated even more change and reform that would prove important in continuing the development of the role of women in European society in successive decades.