David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, eds. ***The History of the European Family: Volume 2; Family Life in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1789-1913.*** New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. 420p.

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Thorough and well-documented as well as genuinely interesting with a lively assortment of anecdotes, this collection of essays on how family life moved through various developments from the time of the French Revolution to the stirrings of World War I is a multi-textured and colorful resource for history professors or those who wish to give some backbone to literary studies of the period.

Much of the information in the essays harks back to the Revolution and its emphasis on human rights that was responsible, in part, for Europeans taking more control over childbearing and a subsequent decline in fertility rates during the following decades. Nevertheless, poverty wracked much of the population of the continent through the 19th century, even as advances in nutrition and hygiene lowered mortality rates and the fewer number of children were typically forced to labor at an early age, often at the expense of their education. Despite their chronicling of such numerous sad and unfortunate trends and circumstances for the European family, the ten different authors of these essays communicate sensitivity and fondness for the people from Russia to Portugal to England to Iceland, who managed to preserve the family institution amid the challenges of a tumultuously changing world.

The center of the book contains several pages of iconography including vintage paintings of various scenes in family life that are described in detail in the essays, floor plans of typical family homes, late 19- and early 20-century photographs of family groups, and covers of domestic magazines of the period. There are also maps of the continent of the period and several tables of population trends and other statistics.

The first essay, "Material Conditions of Family Life" by Martine Segalen, is one of the most basic of the collection as it discusses some rudimentary facts of typical European family lifestyles. Professors might well draw from details in her study to add a splash of authentic color to novels by the likes of Austen, Balzac, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Zola, or the Brontës. Her chapter contains such tidbits as the typically crowded sleeping conditions in lower class dwellings—in a French farm home, six adults, four children and three served shared five beds (17).

Segalen also discusses the carnivorous and carbohydrate-saturated diet of the average peasant and how such meals—heavy and fatty even by modern standards—

were necessary to workers whose main tool was their body. Interestingly, some of the tastiest dishes to come out of Europe at the time originally were developed as a "poor man's diet," such pizza in Naples (21) and crêpes in Brittany (25).

Segalen also mentions family mealtime as an example of gender inequalities prevalent in the century. "Until the end of the nineteenth century, women often ate standing up, while on their knees, or seated on a stool by the fireside. Only in the more affluent farmsteads with servants were they allowed to eat at the table" (18).

In the second chapter, "Living with Kin," David I. Kertzer also brings to mind family troubles evident in 19th-century novels as he focuses on the pros and cons of various inheritance laws. For example, if only the eldest son could inherit his family's land, he kept the estate intact and thriving, but his brothers and sisters could be destitute. The more equitable solution—the division of the estate equally among the children—often left tracts of land too small for anyone to make a viable living (48). Kertzer also discusses the rise of urban life and factories, which eased the need for land ownership, but created new problems, such as the need to regulate child labor.

Andrejs Plakans' essay on "Agrarian Reform and Family in Eastern Europe" (Chapter 3) further emphasizes land issues in the wake of the freeing of serfs in the mid-century. Although peasants were allowed to move from their birthplace or even immigrate to other countries, few could obtain lands of their own, and family members scattered out of economic necessity. A rural to urban migration pattern became a "flood in the second half of the century" (96).

Several subsequent chapters delve into laws in various European countries that regulated marriage, severely curtailed the rights of married women (in particular, under Article 213 of the French *Code Napoleon*) and restricted divorce in the tradition of medieval Christianity that was extremely long in abating. In "European Family Law," Lloyd Bonfield compares the situation in England, where a marriage could be dissolved only by an act of Parliament, and post-Napoleonic France, where divorce was allowed for a short time after the Revolution, but made virtually unattainable for decades after the Bourbon monarchy was restored in 1816.

In "Marriage" (Chapter 9), Josef Ehmer adds that divorce was also impossible in Italy, Spain, and Ireland. Because marriage in Europe was considered a public institution and therefore a pillar underpinning the stability of the whole social order, there were two schools of thought: to restrict divorce, and to prohibit divorce (183). "All in all, the marriage of the 19th century belonged rather to the past than to the future" (Ehmer 321), and it was not until 1912 that the Royal Commission in England dared suggest that "divorce may be a potentially stabilizing force within the community as well as a destructive one" (Bonfield 121).

Certainly the most shocking and enlightening essay in the book about the human condition is the fifth, entitled “Charity and Welfare” by Rachel G. Fuchs, which describes the plight of indigent families who struggled, often unsuccessfully, to stay together in a society whose government institutions and religious charities were insufficient to aid huge numbers of the poor. An interesting historical and sociological point made in this essay that would add to any sort of classroom study of Europe is that the French Revolution laid the groundwork for a relief system to aid all citizens. However, due to a shortage of government funds everywhere, these ideals were realized only a century later (161). Throughout the 19th century, the incurably ill, aged, and single mothers in particular often slipped between the cracks of whatever few charitable efforts were available.

Fuchs describes in detail the heart-wrenching concept of the “turning cradle” at foundling homes, a medieval practice that still operated for most of the 19th century. (Plates 7a and b in the iconography show two views of the turning cradle or “tour” at the Hôpital Saint Vincent de Paul founding hospital in Paris.) Unfortunately, this anonymous method of abandoning one’s baby to an institution, which was meant to prevent destitute mothers from engaging in abortion or infanticide actually did little to prevent infant mortality. The death rate of babies abandoned in this manner and sent out to rural wet-nurses was about 80% (160). Fuchs includes other horrific statistics about the numbers of abandoned children at the peak of the problem mid-century (174-175). Interestingly, Protestant countries tended to eschew such infant abandonment and to encourage searches for the guilty fathers in question, whereas Catholic countries prohibited father searches, ostensibly to avoid shaming the guilty parent and his family and to protect their property (177). Fuchs also discusses the concept of the workhouse, so reminiscent of *Oliver Twist*, which confined illegitimate children, the unemployed, homeless, and beggars, but attempted to aid the “deserving poor”: widows, orphans and the disabled (161).

Mary Jo Maynes’ “Class Cultures and Images of Proper Family Life” discusses the struggle of the typical European family to attain bourgeois status, but concludes that such a goal was impossible for most (226).

The migration patterns of the European poor, many of whom immigrated en masse to America, is the focus of “Migration” by Caroline Brettell. Her conclusion is that the exodus from Europe was, in part, a blessing for those staying behind who were left with more resources and land, and therefore better chances for survival (246).

Loftur Guttormsson’s “Parent-Child Relations” addresses the tension between the need for young children to obtain an education but also to work to help sup-

port their families. Although the Romantic movement created a new sensibility towards children and family, and Rousseau's influence stressed the importance of education, especially for boys, children from poor families still had to disrupt their schooling to earn wages. The school child was the outcome of a century-long process (280).

These essays are a valuable eye-opener about the sacrifices and struggles of European families who, as Segalen states, managed to survive, reproduce, and create a brilliant popular culture under material conditions that we Europeans (and Americans) at the dawn of the 21st century, would find unbearable. "Turning on the light, the water-faucet, feeling warm at home, are so much part of our culture that we do not realize at what physical costs these basic staples of life were acquired, with the labor of men, women and children, only a century ago" (39). Modern-day students would do well to augment their historical and literary studies with these fascinating reality bytes of 19th-century family life. ❋