Introduction (Sibelan Forrester)
  ○ “Women were a vital part of the cultural process of their times and scholars in recent decades have worked to recover and interpret the records that inform us about their experiences” (1)

Women and Urban Culture (Barbara Apern Engel)
  ○ During Reform Era (1855-1881), even provincial towns evolved into urban centres
  ○ influx of peasants in cities, many women were seeking work in service sectors of the economy
  ○ “For women, writes Richard Sennett, the public life of the city was ‘where one risked losing virtue, dirtying oneself, being swept into a “disorderly and heady swirl” (21)
  ○ women had new opportunities for redefining and expressing the self
  ○ examines “townswomen”, a rarely-studied group. Tiny Russian “middle class”
  ○ “attitudes towards female pleasure seeking appear to have grown more tolerant over time in this milieu, with urban culture and the more individualistic values of the marketplace having a discernible impact on some women” (26)
  ○ Idea of women pre-changes:
    ■ divorce = adjudicated by religious courts had a high social stigma, only very extreme cases would permit it
    ■ “Under Russian law, a wife owed her husband ‘unlimited obedience’ and required his permission before she could take a job, go to school, etc.” (27)
  ○ Gives 3 examples of female “townpeople” (Read if necessary, mostly good for background info)
  ○ Conclusion: although changes were occurring, it was difficult for women to break out of their current positions.
  ○ “They remind us that while cultural change may offer new ways of conceiving and expressing the self, individuals also act within the social and institutional structures of their particular time and place, which, like material realities, constrain as well as enable their choice” (40)

Russian Peasant Women’s Culture: Three Voices

Russian Women and the Arts

Russian Women and Writing

Violence against Russian Women
  ○ “What happened in the first half of the nineteenth century that demoted Russian women to the lowest level ever? Why did protection from rape, allegedly high in the 17th century, suddenly cease in the nineteenth century and leave women aont to prove their right to bodily integrity?” (211)