

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

THE TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM
IN ENGLAND: ORGANIZATIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL
EFFECTS UPON WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

BY

JACK S. KAPAC

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

MARCH, 1981

THE TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM
IN ENGLAND: ORGANIZATIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL
EFFECTS UPON WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

BY

JACK STEVEN KAPAC

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

© 1981

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

ABSTRACT

The study explores the effects of the transition from feudalism to capitalism upon the English peasantry, particularly how new production relations affected household organization, the social roles of women, and the evolution of familial and sexual ideology. The temporal framework is roughly the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Material has been drawn from a wide range of published sources, including the relevant anthropological literature, social and economic history, and a number of related disciplines.

The production functions of the household have been stressed. Organizational and ideological transformations affecting women and the family were found to be class specific in nature. Domestic organization is structured by such features as land inheritance patterns, the nature of wage labor, occupational status, and the necessity of balancing a favorable producer/consumer ratio within the household. These features were examined for both feudal peasant and early working-class households. Within feudalism, land inheritance is the primary structural determinant of household organization; variations of inheritance patterns were discussed. With the development of capitalist agriculture, and the transformation of the peasantry into a rural proletariat, this organizational determinant disappears, and new determining features come into being, especially the necessity of exploiting the household as a labor reserve. The nature of agrarian wage households and households involved in cloth production were analyzed and compared,

with significant differences being found between them. Domestic organization will vary under differing production conditions.

The domestic roles of women under feudalism and early capitalism were also examined and compared. Areas investigated include the sexual division of labor, female contributions to household production, and the historical development of the "housewife" role. Feudal peasant women did not participate fully in all surplus or rent-producing activities. This participation varies historically within feudalism, and is dependent on the type of rent relations present. Under certain feudal rent relations, a "housewife" role can develop. There are significant differences, however, between the "housewife" role in feudalism and early capitalism. This role, or confinement of women to the domestic sphere, is intensified and sanctified among the newly emerging bourgeoisie of early capitalism, but is weakly developed within the early working class. Within the working class, however, female participation in agricultural production declines for several reasons, predominantly because of new forms of agricultural organization.

Several aspects of familial and sexual ideology were also examined. These include social control of female sexual activity, female social status, and new conceptions of love and sexuality. The historical development of such attitudes was related to the changing organization of marriage and family life. Social control of women is found under both feudalism and early capitalism, and the structural bases of this control were discussed. Notions of female sexuality undergo dramatic historical changes, and the possible reasons for this were examined. Changing ideological perspectives may be class specific in

nature and development. There are indications of a new social assertiveness for some women, especially among cottage industry workers, where the nature of family/work life promotes a sex-role fluidity. Among the bourgeoisie, however, the withdrawal of women from production activities and confinement to the domestic sphere encourages a rigid sex-role polarization, and the development of a "feminine" mystique. Within this class, the ideology of "romantic love" receives its fullest expression. It was suggested that this perhaps represents a new structural device to strengthen the family unit once its production functions have been undermined.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Louise Sweet (Department of Anthropology), Dr. David Stymeist (Department of Anthropology), and Dr. Henry Heller (Department of History), for their advice, suggestions, and assistance in the creation and completion of this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF THE FEUDAL PEASANT FAMILY.....	7
3. PEASANT WOMEN AND FEUDAL PRODUCTION.....	23
4. THE TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM.....	39
5. RURAL PRODUCTIVE ORGANIZATION IN EARLY CAPITALISM.....	52
6. STRUCTURAL BASES OF PEASANT AND EARLY WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES.....	61
7. IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF FAMILY LIFE.....	83
8. WOMEN, PATRIARCHY AND SEXUALITY: SOME CONSIDERATIONS....	91
9. CONCLUSIONS.....	127
REFERENCES CITED.....	136

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period in English history of tremendous economic and social change, the transformation of a feudal agricultural society into early capitalist society. The particular focus of this present study will be an investigation of the changes this transition effected upon English peasant domestic organization and, in conjunction with this, how peasant women's social roles were transformed. My interest in this topic followed from a previous interest in medieval European social history in general, and European witchcraft in particular. In a graduate course, I had prepared a research design investigating some of the sociological aspects of the large-scale late medieval European witch-hunts, and the particular ways in which these trials affected peasant women throughout England and Western Europe. Here, the work of Erik Midelfort was of great interest, especially his contention that a model of changing social roles for Western European women is the key element to an understanding of the virulent misogyny of the period, a misogyny receiving social expression through witchcraft belief and persecution (1972:185). This statement led me to formulate larger questions about specific aspects of social change, events occurring at a different and more generalized analytical level. The well known European witch "craze" correlates remarkably well both spatially and temporally with

the transformation of European societies from feudal to capitalist organization.

An investigation was begun of this seeming connection, and a number of new problems and issues soon emerged. Indeed, in a short period of time, my original concern with the sociology of European witchcraft was submerged in a new interest in English peasant women, and a complete shift of focus occurred. The transformation from a feudal manorial economy to one of capitalist agriculture produced profound changes in patterns of land use and the relation of the English peasantry to the land. It completely transformed productive relations in general. Midelfort's concern with changing social roles for women, in conjunction with historical changes in the nature of productive relations, focused my interest on the role of peasant women in social production and how this may have changed. Research along these lines and on the general "social role" of women in any society soon made apparent that a widening of scope was necessary. Mitchell has called women's historical condition a "specific structure," a "complex unity" of different elements grounded in the material conditions of existence. She writes:

In a complex totality, each independent sector has its own autonomous reality though each is ultimately, but only ultimately determined by the economic factor.... The key structures of women's situation can be listed as follows: production, reproduction, sexuality, and the socialization of children. The concrete combinations of these produce the 'complex unity' of her position; but each separate structure may have reached a different "moment" at any given historical time. Each then must be examined separately in order to see what the present is, and how it might be changed (1976:385).

A holistic approach to questions on women's historical condition is therefore necessary. Any study of women's roles in production necessitates a familial or domestic organizational context: "A history

of women's work must be a history of the family" (Tilly and Scott 1978:7).

The historical reasons for this context are clear. Until quite recently historically, and certainly within the time period with which this study is concerned, the nature of women's work was largely structured by the organization of the household, the organization of a "family economy." This "family economy" represents an interdependence of work and residence, of subsistence requirements with labor needs and resources. The household or domestic unit may function as the production unit in a society or it may not, depending upon the specific nature of social production relations. Such factors as land inheritance patterns, the importance of wage labor, and occupational status are determinate variables in organizing the "family economy," and the influence of these variables will be discussed at length. The household under both feudalism and early capitalism becomes the focal point of a balancing of resources and productive labor, although there are significant differences in how this is achieved. I have not chosen a hard and fast definition of "household" as opposed to "family" or "domestic unit," and these phrases will be used interchangeably, their meaning made clear by context. This paper is not a study of "kinship" as such, but of the householding unit involved in interdependent production and consumption relations. The separation of "kinship," for example, from "household" is an analytical distinction not necessary for my purposes here; the nature of the historical material, and the issues to be investigated precludes rigid definitions and necessitates a certain conceptual fluidity. Where such analytical distinctions are necessary, they will be noted.

As an anthropologist, I am interested in how the historical transition of feudalism to capitalism affected both English peasant domestic organization and women's place within it. These changes are economic, organizational and ideological in nature. I have taken as the key variable new capitalist productive relations rather than the analytically distinct and historically later development of "industrialization," which has sometimes been confused as being identical with "capitalism." This conceptual confusion has led to some very misleading approaches, particularly the grossly oversimplified periodization of English history into "traditional" or "non-industrialized" as opposed to "industrial" England. The historical process of English industrialization, and its social consequences, are, however, beyond the temporal scope of this study, which concerns itself in the main with the early centuries of English capitalism. Particular attention will be focused upon such variables as property transmission and changing labor needs, and their influence upon domestic organization. An attempt will also be made to analyze the relations of Mitchell's key structures --production, reproduction, and sexuality (socialization of children will not be discussed)--to each other, to domestic organization, and to larger social transformations.

Family history, where it has received any attention at all, has until very recently been invariably concerned with the bourgeois and aristocratic classes. This research is based largely on such literary sources as letters, diaries, poems and sermons, the products of a literate ruling class. The historiography of European family research, according to Berkner (1973:397), has followed a definite developmental pattern. Studies of medieval kin organization and family life are

almost exclusively concerned with the nobility. This focus changes to wealthy urban patricians in the Renaissance, to the literate upper middle class in the eighteenth century, and finally to the working class in the nineteenth century. For these reasons, information on English peasant and early working-class domestic organization is more difficult to obtain, especially information concerning rural populations. (In this study, I have restricted myself, perhaps arbitrarily, to an investigation of rural as opposed to urban populations, for reasons of space.) Where information is available, it is scattered widely through various disciplines such as economic history, agricultural history, women's history and historical demography. But material does exist in sufficient quantities to make an investigation possible.

The range of material and the synthetic nature of much of the discussion to follow presented considerable difficulty in the organization of analysis. The data has been structured into a number of more or less inclusive chapters, with some necessary cross-referencing. In Chapter 2, peasant domestic organization under feudal production relations is discussed, with particular attention to its structural determinants (predominantly land inheritance), women's relation to land inheritance, and variations of these phenomena within feudalism itself. An examination of the production roles of feudal peasant women is presented in Chapter 3. In Chapters 4 and 5 is discussed the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the socio-economic consequences for the peasantry. This analysis includes the emergence of new methods of rural production organization, and the effects of these methods upon both the family, and women's labor. A comparison of the structural bases of peasant and early working class families

follows in Chapter 6, especially concentrating on changing labor requirements and their influence upon the domestic sphere. Chapter 7 considers ideological and attitudinal components of medieval and early capitalist family life. In Chapter 8, there follows a detailed analysis of ideological perspectives on women, sexuality, and patriarchal authority, the relation of these both to each other, and to the historical development of production relations and domestic organization in English society. The conclusions of the present study are presented in Chapter 9, as well as suggestions of further research possibilities.

CHAPTER 2

STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF THE FEUDAL PEASANT FAMILY

English feudalism, the socio-economic organization of post-Norman conquest England, can be generally described in the following manner: it was characterized by a number of small, relatively self-sufficient manors controlled by a noble class, within which peasants were allowed to cultivate land for their own consumption in exchange for rent. This rent could take the form of money rent, less commonly rent in kind, or labor rent, in which the peasant provided labor services for the landlord. The landlord's most visible and resented prerogative was his control of peasant labor, a scarce commodity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the "classic" period of feudal social organization. This appropriation of labor power was manifested legally by the division of the peasant population into two major judicially defined groups, the "villein" and the "free" cultivator. Villein tenants were obliged to provide arduous labor services in addition to cash payments of various kinds, while free tenants paid mostly money rents and were generally less controlled by legal strictures. There developed quite early in English feudalism, a significant internal differentiation within the peasantry in terms of legal status, control of land, and wealth. Villeins and free tenants would reside side by side within the same village, and between these two legally defined groups, there

were proprietors of varying gradations of legal status and legal obligations, controlling various sizes of holdings or possessing no land at all. This social complexity is further enhanced by the historical development of the feudal mode of production itself, the main features of which will be discussed in Chapter 4. As a present illustration, we may cite the gradual disappearance of labor services themselves, and their replacement by generalized money rents and especially the increasing profits of seigneurial taxation. (Labor rent is not an essential element in feudal productive relations.) These seigneurial taxes covered all aspects of the peasant's life; examples include death duties ("heriot"), license fees to sell livestock or enter a new holding, residence taxes ("chevage"), marriage taxes ("merchet"), as well as fees paid for the use of the lord's mill, oven or wine-press. Fees such as these, which came to be viewed by the peasantry as increasingly arbitrary, in combination with heavy labor services, were the primary issues involved in the various peasant uprisings found throughout the feudal period. The interests of the feudal aristocracy were served therefore by the existence of a self-sufficient peasantry involved in agricultural production, with appropriation of peasant surplus ensured by land ownership and legal mechanisms. There were great variations on this above-mentioned scheme, within England and in Western Europe as a whole, but this variation revolved essentially around the ways by which peasant surplus over subsistence needs (in terms of money, rent in kind, labor services, or combinations of these) was appropriated by the ruling class (Hilton 1974:209).

The "family" as a social entity, and women's place within it, are historically grounded in the material conditions of production,

consumption and reproduction. It is worthless, therefore, to discuss a generalized "feudal family" without attention to these conditions. Even the more specific term "peasant feudal family" must be further broken down, for peasant family organization is decisively structured by accessibility of agricultural land and methods of inheritance. It is clear that varying systems of property inheritance will produce, and will in turn be influenced by different forms of familial and household organization. This is not to imply that the "family" is merely a passive set of social relations changing mechanically in response to changing material conditions. Mechanical materialist approaches of this kind may have difficulty, for example, in analyzing certain kinds of family historical development. Similar family structures may entail different functional consequences; certain kinds of historical development may be cyclical rather than linear in nature. One of the results of this present research is the realization that the English peasant family as such is a flexible entity, adapting to changing conditions and needs, and, in turn, affecting these conditions and needs in a reciprocal relationship. This relationship can be viewed, for example, from the perspective of the effect of familial organization upon its material bases, either in perpetuating them or coming into contradiction with them. This contradiction may impel subsequent social development. These ideas will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 6.

The feudal peasant family, and women's place within it, is not an unchanging "given," but has a history of development, difficult though it is at times to discern crucial aspects of this development. As the field of enquiry in this paper is "feudal" England, loosely defined as post-Norman conquest England, and more particularly thirteenth,

fourteenth and fifteenth century England, developments prior to this period can only be sketched in (the paucity of available data makes this less a matter of choice than of necessity). Lancaster (1958), in a general discussion on Anglo-Saxon peasant social organization, concludes that peasant kinship was bilateral, traced through both men and women. She finds no evidence for the kin group as a clearly delineated or structured corporate body, performing such corporate functions as the control of agricultural land. Old English cousin terms are not well differentiated, and there appears to be no preferential marriage patterns. The fact that there is an elaboration of male kin terms, as opposed to female kin terms, leads her to speculate that a kindred rather than a linear descent group as such, formed the social body of reference for the individual, with some dependence on male kin for purposes of feud or defense. Though she notes (1958:359) that little evidence on formal rules of inheritance within Anglo-Saxon society has survived, it appears that a man's wife, his children, and some close kin expected to receive some property; the testator apparently possessed some freedom of choice in bequeathing land, and there seems to be no socially defined preferences for sons or daughters, or older children vs younger children inheriting. Women could and did inherit large pieces of property, and were free to bequeath them as they wished. Anglo-Saxon laws in general provide evidence that women had a higher social profile and possessed more freedom in some areas than was the case in subsequent centuries. Ethelbert's laws from the seventh century provide for the payment of a "brideprice," although this term is misleading; the payment actually seems to be a form of endowment bestowed upon the bride for her future support. This, no doubt, is

one of the historical foundations of the well-known "widow's bench" in feudal England, a common-law practice by which a woman was entitled to a portion of her deceased husband's property. Although divorce as a complete severance of marriage was not approved either legally or by the Church in Anglo-Saxon society, the separation of a married couple was surprisingly casual, a wife leaving her husband being entitled to one-half of the goods they possessed.

Although the historical record is sparse, it appears that some kind of partible inheritance in land was generally practiced in Anglo-Saxon times. Very early in the feudal period, it appears that a unigeniture system of land inheritance evolves, primarily due to the interests of a new ruling class, the landed Norman nobility. The evidence for this is not direct, but is suggested by a number of social facts. It is in those areas of England, primarily the eastern regions of Kent and East Anglia, which had undergone the least amount of "manorialization" (intense landlord control, with attendant heavy labor services), that partible inheritance in land remains a general practice. Cross-cultural comparisons of peasant societies have found that impartible inheritance favors the development of a strong and independent nobility, while partible inheritance encourages the maintenance of a highly centralized, bureaucratic form of government (Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971:1065). The reasons for this historical and functional correlation are not entirely clear. Other historical research has shown however that methods of surplus-extraction themselves, either in the form of labor services (thus influencing the organization of labor) or from taxation (hence encouraging fragmentation of units of taxable land) have a determinate effect in favoring

the development of particular forms of agricultural organization (see Brenner 1976, for an application of this approach to an understanding of the differential economic development of pre-industrial France and England). Further historical research will no doubt delineate more clearly the processes by which this transformation from partible to unigeniture systems of inheritance occurred over England. Faith (1966: 86) detects such a development in her studies of early Cambridgeshire estates:

Here the eldest son inherited by right, but was obliged to set aside a certain amount of land for each of his brothers. This custom, which combined the legal doctrine of primogeniture with the practice of partibility may well represent one stage in the evolution from one system to another in that particular area - an evolution which was completed in those manors during the latter part of the fourteenth century.

The growing power of the landlord class, as revealed in the development and imposition of a primogeniture inheritance system throughout England, will produce profound effects upon peasant social organization. The strengthening of the landed nobility, for example, will increase the local lord's power and interest in mediating disputes and controlling local institutions of governance and warfare. As these institutions in Anglo-Saxon society seem to have been largely kin-based, the functions of local kin associations are undermined.

Systems of inheritance, as was stated previously, create determinate effects upon peasant familial organization. The anthropologist Jack Goody has stressed that the social mode of productive property transmission must be seen as the key element in understanding kin and family structure, and that it plays a decisive influence upon the nature of residence and marriage patterns, kin terminology, and sexual behavior (see Goody 1976). Within English feudal society, and peasant societies

in general, there is a necessary connection between household formation and access to scarce resources (land):

It was the holding which, as the locus of economic obligation, served as the cornerstone of feudal property relations, and it was on its basis that the rent-producing labour force was organized and provided for (Middleton 1979:152).

An understanding of peasant family organization cannot however depend solely on an awareness of these "external" material determinants; one must as well take into account the internal dynamics of family life itself, its developmental processes. These comprise, in the main, a self-regulating unity of labor, consumption and reproduction. The peasant economy of household producers is characterized by a developmental cycle dependent upon the relations between these three analytically distinct spheres of activity. Medick states:

(A)lthough the behavior of the family economy is influenced by the external conditions of production, it is not entirely determined by them. Rather, it depends in the main on the balance between production and consumption within the family. This labor-consumer balance does not originate, however, merely in the subjective preferences of the family members. Its logic is determined by socio-structural factors. It rests on the structural and functional nexus of the 'ganze Haus' (household producers) as a self-regulating socio-economic formation, which organizes and combines production, consumption and reproduction through the common labor relations of the family members (1977:299).

Medick's work, greatly influenced by the Russian economist Chayanov, is specifically addressed to the nature of family organization of the "domestic industry" producer under early capitalism, but his insights can be fruitfully applied to the feudal peasantry. This internal dynamic of the regulation of domestic organizational processes, such as the labor-consumer balance, and its effect on such phenomena as sexual division of labor, will be discussed at a later point.

At this point, we can turn to a closer examination of the English feudal peasantry. Feudal England was characterized by two systems of land inheritance. Within the partible system, all male children inherited land equally. Under unigeniture systems, only one son will inherit the holding. Two types of unigeniture systems were found in England; primogeniture, by which the eldest son was the rightful heir, and ultimogeniture, by which the youngest son came into possession. Ultimogeniture or "Borough English" as it was called, was very limited in its distribution, and little seems to be known about it. Henceforth, when discussing unigeniture systems, I will be referring to primogeniture only.

These two very different systems had pervasive effects on local peasant domestic organization and social life in general. As was mentioned previously, partible inheritance was in all probability, the characteristic mode of property transmission among the Anglo-Saxon peasantry, and it was transformed into primogeniture through most of England early in the medieval period. Partibility in itself is characteristic of a "freer" peasantry, less subject to coercion or labor services, and producing money rent. Its distribution was also affected by such ecological and demographic factors as the availability of land, alternative resources, and population pressures:

Partible inheritance continued to be practiced over wide areas which were characterized by either sparse populations, or by dense populations supported by fishing, small industries, and exceptionally rich pasture land. In other words, partible inheritance is found where there was enough land for all sons, or where land was not especially significant and the distinction between land and chattels not vital to the survival of the family (Howell 1976:117).

Areas of partible inheritance were characterized by a number of functionally co-related features: small settlements, with independent

holdings not subject to village communal rules; holdings as compact pieces of land rather than the scattered strips typical of impartible systems; money rent rather than heavy labor services, an indication of the peasant's relative strength in contrast to a weakly developed lordship; and a household structure known as the "joint-family." A "joint-family" household structure is the result of several married children remaining on the holding. In East Anglia and Kent, groups of such patrilineal kinsmen working the land as an independent unit were called "participes" or "herdes." Legal provisions existed for the physical partitioning of the holding, and hence the dissolution of the "joint-family," if this was desired. This type of family organization was found also in southern and western France, as well as Italy, although it is very rarely encountered anywhere in Western Europe after 1550 (Wheaton 1975:614). In general functionalist terms, males provided most of the agricultural labor in such a system, retaining control over their heirs by keeping their sons on the patrimony. Sons brought their wives in, daughters married out, thus ensuring both a continuity of tenure and adequate labor supply.

Primogeniture inheritance, on the other hand, was structured such that the holding was preserved from fragmentation by becoming the property of one heir, the eldest son. Functional correlates of this system include large compact villages, classic "open-field" agricultural methods (the distribution of holdings in scattered strips), and heavy "manorialization." The associated family type is the nuclear or "stem" family, in which siblings may remain on the family holding only if they do not marry. Goldschmidt and Kunkel (1971) provide cross-cultural corroboration from 46 peasant societies of this functional relationship,

patrilocal stem families being correlated with impartible inheritance, and the joint-family with systems of partibility. It is not my intention here to provide a descriptive account of peasant families or peasant life in general. General ethnographies of English peasant life (Homans 1941; Bennett 1938) are readily available and can be easily consulted. Rather, an attempt will be made here, and in subsequent chapters, to analyze the interaction of peasant family organization with the material bases of production, and the relationships of these to such topics as marriage patterns, women's participation in production activities, and the sexual division of labor.

FEUDAL WOMEN AND LAND INHERITANCE

The position of feudal women in terms of peasant land inheritance should be the first of these questions to be examined, for it was the landholding that formed the cornerstone of feudal property relations, and provided the basis for household formation. Jack Goody (1976) has coined the term "diverging de-evolution" to describe inheritance of production resources by both males and females in societies not organized in unilineal kin groups. "Diverging de-evolution" of property, Goody believes, is of functional value in class societies especially, societies where large concentrations of property are to be found. In such societies, high status is based upon economic differentiation, and the control and maintenance of a daughter's status is assured by her sharing of wealth. This inheritance usually takes the form of a dowry. The fact that women are liable to a share of family property may entail different social developments, for example, a high degree of patriarchal control over unmarried but marriageable daughters. Or, it may

encourage social patterns of endogamy as one way of limiting the consequences (the possible alienation of land from the family) of transmission of property through women.

Of especial interest here is Goody's contention that "dowry" can be considered conceptually to be a kind of inheritance by women, with similar structural consequences. It is property inherited at marriage, rather than at death. The married couple then possesses a "conjugal fund" of property for the creation of a household. From the free peasantry of thirteenth century Lincolnshire, comes an example of men providing small marriage portions for their daughters and sisters:

In return for a yearly rent of 2 pence, Wigot of Holme about the year 1210 gave an acre and a half of meadow in the north part of his strip to Siwat, son of Hugh, in free marriage with Edith his daughter.... The duty of providing for their sisters was clearly felt to be incumbent on brothers. In the early thirteenth century Robert the priest, son of Stepi, granted to his sisters, Maud and Alice, a toft and four acres of arable land in Saltfleetby to hold for their lives at a rent of 8 pence (Stenton 1957:79).

In class societies where the conjugal group is established on a property-holding basis, divorce presents the exceedingly difficult problem of dismantling the conjugal "fund," and is usually prohibited.

Goody discusses several other social consequences of endowment of women:

When both land and goods are given to women as an endowment, then the results are striking not only because of the subdivision itself, but also because of the continual recombining of portions in new conjugal estates. The consequences of a landed dowry are several; one at least is to stress in-marriage or alternatively the sale or exchange of scattered plots; such a scattering is especially likely to occur when the rules, such as those of the Catholic Churches, prohibit close marriage.... It is a marked feature of these religious regulations, which were promulgated with such force in Europe, that

they prohibited the kinds of unions of first cousins that earlier societies in the area permitted and even encouraged (1976:20-21).

Contrary to what Goody states, there is no evidence for preferential cousin marriage in either Anglo-Saxon England (see Lancaster 1958) or for the early medieval period. But he is correct in his observation that the Catholic Church's pronouncements on marriage restrictions within certain degrees of consanguinity could present the feudal peasant with some problems of finding a suitable marriage partner. After 1215, Canon Law forbade marriage within the fourth degree, between partners who shared a common great-great grandfather. Bennett (1938:245) has estimated that within some communities, 50% of the villagers may have been so related. This dilemma, no doubt, accounts for the common practice of clandestine or common-law marriages within the village, lacking the formalities required by Canon Law (see Sheenan 1971), and the continual criticism of the peasantry by the Church, for its incestuous depravity.

It appears, however, that the endowment of daughters with land was a rare phenomenon in feudal England, especially in areas of impartible inheritance. Rather, they received household goods or sums of cash (see Homans 1941:140-141). Most peasant women were granted with rights to land only as wives, at the Church door, by their new spouses. This distinction between women gaining access to land either as "daughters" or as "wives" may have significant consequences, for it is really only as inheriting daughters that the possibility exists for the alienation of family holdings, coming under the control of the daughter's male spouse. Women only rarely received land in such a manner, although throughout the feudal period the Church tried to

promote the right of women to inherit land in this way, for it was often the beneficiary of a woman's bequeathed goods. Where circumstances allowed the inheritance of holdings by daughters, as in cases where there were no sons within a family, the lord took a specific interest in her case, and it was necessary to gain his approval of her marriage choice (Bennett 1938:241).

Peasant women were, however, usually endowed with land as wives, by their husbands, in amounts varying from one half to one third of his holdings. This right in land allowed them to provide for themselves as widows, although the holding itself would be passed on to the couple's children. The role of widowed women in feudal England is of especial interest in terms of land inheritance. Common-law and custom defined explicitly the rights a widow could exercise over her husband's estate, and the right to support from the land when it was taken over by her son. Examples from court rolls of women inheriting the tenancies of their deceased husbands are numerous throughout the medieval period (Raftis 1964:36-42) and for sixteenth and seventeenth century small freeholders (Howell 1976). Common-law and manorial custom, however, undergo transformations as the general pattern of feudal land tenure is dissolved in the transition to capitalist agriculture. In social terms, this transformation involved a new dichotomy between "custom" and "law," and new legal attempts to define "property" in capitalist terms, extricated from "community" and use-values. Customary rights as such disappear under new market conditions, and by the end of the seventeenth century, a widow's medieval common-law right to a share of her husband's personal estate is effective only in Wales, the province of York, and the city of London (Stone 1977:196). Female

control of tenancies did continue throughout the transition period, but their numbers declined. This decline can be attributed to the worsening conditions of the peasantry as a class, rather than as a special directive aimed against women, although the loss of widow's rights was to their misfortune:

(I)f we accept that between 1660 and 1760, there was a severe decline in the numbers of yeomen, both free and copy, it may follow that there will also have been an equivalent decline in the effective female agrarian presence. Where lands came out of customary tenure, and were leased out again at will, they would be leased to men. A tenancy-at-will carried no widow's estate; at the most, it would be allowed as a favour (Thompson 1976:357-358).

The erosion of the rights of widows occurs against the larger social background of changing conceptions of property within early capitalism, particularly the replacement of community support or use-values in land by its entry into market conditions of exchange-value. This ideological transformation within rural England is reflected socially by continuous peasant uprisings over such issues as enclosure of land and loss of rights over common land throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As widows, peasant women could exercise considerable independence, being removed from the direct patriarchal control that could affect them as daughters or wives. It is for this reason perhaps that widows and widowhood were viewed rather ambivalently throughout the feudal period. Along with their status as being relatively free of male control, their possible remarriage entailed possibilities of disrupting regular patterns of inheritance by male children, or the loss of such rights altogether. The production of illegitimate children, and the rights of these children in their mother's property, might cause

tremendous legal complications. For these reasons, the lord took great interest in the behavior of widowed women, especially in ensuring their chastity. Fines for fornication, or humiliating public displays were often imposed for a widow's unchastity and the possibility existed that she might lose any controlling interest she had in her deceased husband's holdings. Bennett (1938:255) reports a manorial custom in western England whereby an unchaste widow could regain entry to her holdings only by riding a black ram into manorial court repeating the jingle: "Here I am/Riding upon a black ram/Like a whore, as I am.../Therefore, I pray you, Mr. Steward/Let me have my land again." Widow remarriage appears, however, to have been a very common practice. They were prime marriage partners for men who lacked a holding, and the demographic realities of medieval life (high mortality rates and low life expectancies) ensured that large numbers of marriages disrupted by death would exist. This rate of remarriage is particularly high in areas of land shortages, whereas on colonizing manors, widow remarriage is much less common. As was stated previously, inheritance of a holding by a widow's son could be threatened under certain conditions. In areas of particularly acute shortages of land, a very young landless man might marry an elderly widow with a tenancy. Inheritance by her son would then become complicated by the necessity of outliving a young step-father. In situations such as this, a charivari might be organized by the son to announce his anger or displeasure. Charivaris were public displays of ritualized hostility, common in the medieval villages of England and Continental Europe, directed against individuals whose actions met with community disapproval. They might be comprised of loud noise-making outside the

accused's home, the banging of pots and pans, parades through the village, and various pranks played on the accused. Their very existence, and their widespread occurrence in cases of widow remarriage illustrate the kinds of social tensions inherent in peasant family life; in particular, they demonstrate the problems that might arise with female rights in land tenure, and how women might be constrained because of their procreative functions by certain kinds of property relations. In sum, an examination of the organization of production resources (land inheritance) is the key to an understanding of both the structuring of peasant domestic organization, and the status position of women within feudal society.

CHAPTER 3

PEASANT WOMEN AND FEUDAL PRODUCTION

The role of peasant women in feudal agricultural production has rarely been examined in detail. Until very recently, few scholars showed any interest at all in the question, beyond the generalization that women "aided" in the work, or the provision of general check-lists of the tasks of the respective sexes; men ploughed, did hedging and ditching, mowed and reaped at harvest, spayed or gelded farm animals; women planted crops, winnowed grain, gathered straw and stubble, spun cloth, and were involved in a variety of domestic duties such as food preparation, brewing, and the care of poultry and small livestock. (For the role of medieval women in other occupations, see Hilton 1975: 104-105 as money lenders and brewers; Casey 1976:228 as weavers; Casey 1976:229, 232-233 in the trades; Beard 1946:233 in guilds.) There was a reciprocal dependence of the sexes, whose combined efforts brought in the crops. Hence the necessity of marriage for the successful operation of a holding. Every manorial court roll provides evidence of widows operating the holdings of their deceased husbands, of women engaging in commercial transactions and legal litigation, of female tenants being responsible for customary rents and services (including such heavy tasks as road-building and driving plough oxen), and of being brought to fine in court for failure to fulfill these legal obligations.

On the surface, such evidence suggests that English peasant women participated fully in all productive enterprises and enjoyed a social "egalitarianism" with peasant men. This assumption has been incorporated into much recent feminist scholarship, suggesting that the development of capitalist social relations is responsible for a subsequent degradation of women's status and authority, largely because of her withdrawal from social production and relative confinement to the domestic sphere (see Middleton 1979:148 and notes). In his groundbreaking article on the sexual division of labor within the feudal peasantry, Middleton discusses and challenges several of those widely-held ideas, particularly the assumptions that peasant women participated fully in all productive enterprises (especially surplus production activities), and that the "domestic labor" or "housewife" role for women within capitalism represents a break with feudal patterns of domestic organization. The social reality is much more complex. These issues are of especial relevance to contemporary socialist feminist debates on the evolution of domestic labor and the "housewife" role under capitalism. Recent feminist historical and sociological research has drawn attention to the "historical" nature of family life, and its role in social production, consumption and reproduction, yet much of what has been written under this impetus, Middleton believes, shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the effects of capitalist productive relations upon familial organization, and becomes instead an ahistorical polemic. Issues such as women's participation in production, sexual division of labor and female wage labor in feudalism are all inter-related, and the variables affecting their nature, and how these might change or remain constant with the transition to capitalism will be

discussed here and in subsequent chapters.

FEUDAL WOMEN AND SURPLUS PRODUCTION

The first of these topics is the assumption that under feudalism, peasant women participated fully in all productive activities; more specifically, that they partook fully in surplus appropriated by the ruling class in the form of labor services, rent in kind or money rent. Middleton's research has discovered that peasant women's participation in surplus production varies historically under feudalism, and is grounded in the exact nature of the existing surplus-extractive relations. Where labor services, for example, form a significant obligation on the part of tenants, women holding tenancies (usually widows) are fully expected to provide the services due from their holdings. But this labor was not necessarily their own, and labor service by male proxies was common. Manorial lords were keen to ensure a sufficient labor force attached to a holding. Male laborers were demanded for some services (Homans 1941:211), even if this meant, if there was a male labor shortage within the family, the hiring of male wage-labor rather than the utilization of available female family labor.

These sexual distinctions seem to have been operating with particular force in the allocated usage of scythes for mowing crops, and sickles for reaping them. An historical study of agricultural labor in England (Roberts 1979) confirms this division. An analysis of manorial records, in combination with an examination of available pictorial evidence of harvest work (the majority of illustrations representing the years 1100-1500 in England, France and the Netherlands) reveals that women are never shown at work with scythes (mowing), and only rarely as reapers, with these few appearing for the most part

after 1400. This different allocation of agricultural tasks is perceived to have been made on the social attribution to males of greater strength. The technological development of a heavier, longer-handled but more efficient scythe confines its use to the strongest man.

Roberts adds:

Some suggestive evidence from the medieval period confirms the impression that the allocation of sickles and scythes would have been made on the basis of strength. A record of "the rent called womanswork" in Lincolnshire documents from the period 1258-1322, seems to refer to the allocation of certain labour services specifically to women. Given that women clearly were liable to provide mowing and reaping services in this period, the identification of the specific 'woman's work' was probably intended to indicate labour of a different kind altogether. Since women were obliged to perform or find proxies to perform all manner of laborious tasks, the division of labour was drawn in terms of strength rather than of the task concerned: 'womanswork' probably referred to a form of general agricultural labour which was distinguished by its lower productivity. In this particular case, the service itself had been commuted for a money payment of rent (Roberts 1979:9).

It is likely, therefore, that a sexual division of labor is present here, although social conventions were malleable; the occupational segregation of labor positions of the sexes is responsive, to a great extent, on the availability of labor power. Where labor shortages occurred, women without hesitation were employed in traditionally "male" activities such as reaping and ploughing. The high mortality rates and low life expectancies of feudal England must have made such shortages common. Following the Black Death of 1348, women were commonly employed as reapers, and where wages were involved, received the same pay rates as men (Roberts 1979:15). State legislation to control labor and labor supply following the Black Death did not discriminate in this regard. The Ordinance and Statute of Labourers of 1349 and 1359 decreed both men and women under the age of 60,

regardless of free or villein status, to be under compulsion to work for prescribed wages.

The evidence suggests that where surplus-extractive relations were present in the form of labor-services due the lord, women were probably not participating regularly in surplus production. Middleton (1979:153) posits that rent paid as labor-service, or as money rent from wage labor, allowed immediate identification of persons so engaged in producing "surplus," and becomes historically associated with a far more radical segregation of the sexes in respect to surplus production and domestic responsibilities. This situation stands in contrast to systems in which the case for money rents is obtained through revenues from the marketing of small commodities, such as beer, dairy products or cloth. Female involvement in and contribution to surplus production is assured in such petty production.

FEUDAL WOMEN AND WAGE LABOR

The existence of wage labor, particularly female wage labor, under feudalism is an often neglected aspect of feudal production relations. Data is lacking for the proportion of wage-laborers on the manorial estates, and this condition would vary with such factors as local labor supply, manorial organization and access to markets. Some fragmentary evidence does exist, however, to illustrate relevant variables. This evidence derives from Hallam's (1958) analysis of some thirteenth century manorial censuses from a Benedictine priory in Lincolnshire. Hallam compares Weston manor, characterized by impartible inheritance organization, with Moulton manor, characterized by a partible system. Partible systems of land inheritance create better economic opportunities for peasant children, and this is

reflected in the statistics for out-migration. He concludes that 47.7% of adult offspring leave the impartible community of Weston, in contrast to a total of 32.4% for partible Moulton, a more than 15% differential. A situation exists where almost one half of adult children leave Weston Manor in order to seek a livelihood, while less than one third do so in Moulton. Some interesting data is also presented on the occupational alternatives chosen (if there was a choice) by Weston males. Of the 68 known adult sons in the census, 26 leave the community. Of these 68 sons, 12 become clergymen, 15 become "emigrants" and 8 become vagabonds. The total of these 3 groups is 35, which exceeds the number known to have left the community (26). Perhaps some remained in the village as clergymen, vagabonds or wage laborers. The 15 cited as "emigrants" must have left the immediate area, but emigration possibilities in the thirteenth century must have been limited. Emigration probably involved migration either to urban areas, or to areas of land reclamation and colonization typical of thirteenth century England. Perhaps they travelled seeking wages as harvest workers. Unfortunately, data such as Hallam presents is non-existent, as far as I am aware, for female peasants. His analysis does illustrate, however, that restricted access to land, a consequence of inheritance organization, promotes out-migration and increases that proportion of the population dependent to some degree on wage labor.

Wage labor in itself does not signify that feudalism was "capitalist," nor that with its appearance (which is historically quite early), a transformation to capitalism is taking place. In contrast to conditions under capitalism, the bulk of the feudal population is not separated from the land, generalized commodity production does not

exist, and wage labor itself supplements feudal rent, rather than becoming the primary productive relation (for a discussion of wage labor under feudalism see Hindess and Hurst 1977:254). Rent remains the primary mode of feudal exploitation. Wage labor is, however, utilized extensively on some manors for demesne production (the "demesne" being the lord's own cultivated land), either for direct consumption by the lord, or for sale in local markets. This wage labor could be either "free," being contractual, or "unfree," or legally obligatory; permanent unfree agricultural workers who worked for wages were called "famuli." The primary source for these wage laborers would be the landless poor. The system of primogeniture reproduces structurally a reserve army of labor, non-inheriting sons and daughters. Attempts to prevent the fragmentation of land holdings through unigeniture systems of inheritance do so only by creating a stratum of unemployed. Cultural rules strive to restrict the ability of this stratum itself to reproduce; as has been discussed, non-inheriting siblings could stay on the holding only if they remained unmarried. This group would be enlarged by small landholders with insufficient holdings, using wage labor as a supplement to their subsistence requirements. Such a situation might develop in both primogeniture systems, and in areas of partibility, where fragmentation of land holdings has occurred. Wage labor would be largely utilized by the manorial lord himself, as the peasant's own labor requirements were for the most part fulfilled by family or kin. Richer peasants with larger holdings might employ servants (complications involved in this system of labor distribution will be discussed in Chapter 6). One factor militating against the use of wage labor by villagers was the fact that much work in the

village was performed by mutual cooperation between households, as frequent litigation about the non-performance of such duties testifies (Hilton 1974:210).

It is the area of female wage labor, particularly agricultural labor, which is of primary interest here. Many women appear in the ranks of wage laborers (Hilton 1975:102-103), and it appears that women are among the first permanent wage-earners, forming a significant proportion of the "famuli." The fact that so many women appear among the "famuli" attests to their often precarious place within the manorial economy. Permanent wage earners in feudalism tended to be unmarried men and women, for marriage usually depended on the attainment of a holding. Access to land was much more restricted for women than men, and depended upon marriage (they could achieve some control as widows). Even where women did control land holdings, they were much more likely to have been cottars, or very small landholders (Middleton 1979:160), hence probably dependent to some degree on supplementary wage labor. The reasons for this concentration of independent women landholders in the poorer strata of the village community are obscure, but two possible reasons might be suggested. Firstly, women might inherit land in default of male heirs, and this situation was probably more common in poorer, smaller families, where the small size of the family itself might militate against the presence of male heirs. More likely perhaps is the fact that widows with large amounts of land would be more attractive prospects for landless males than widows with very small holdings, and thus more likely to remarry.

Women therefore were regular participants as "famuli" or permanent wage laborers, and as "free" laborers, performing work to

supplement their income. There were several differences between these two groups. Amongst the "famuli," sexual occupation segregation was prevalent:

It is among the permanent famuli, the unfree wage-laborers, that we find the first clear signs of the pattern of occupational specialization and discrimination between the sexes that later came to typify free wage-labour under capitalism (Middleton 1979:160).

Female famuli, or full-time manorial servants tended to follow service or domestic occupations such as being house servants or dairymaids, occupations with relatively low wages. Wage differentials among the famuli are a function of occupational specialization; that is, women tended to receive lower wages than men because they were concentrated in the lowest paying occupations, although where they performed "men's" work, they received the same wages as men. This last feature was no doubt dependent on the local availability of labor. Hilton (1975:103) states that full time female servants were usually paid less than men, though this might vary from manor to manor. He provides an example from Beauchamp Manor (1366) where dairymaids received the same wages as male plough-drivers, swineherds and oxherds, but less than plough-holders and shepherds, traditionally "male" occupations.

A woman's position in the "free" army of reserve labor (increasingly more important through time, as money rents replace labor services) would share similarities with peasant men, although it appears that her prospects were more limited. Middleton believes (1979:162) that regular paid daily work was largely a male prerogative. Where females are found participating in regular wage-labor, it is in occupations that again are at the lower-end of the wage scale. Again though, this division was not rigid, but responsive to local

conditions of labor supply and availability. "Free" women laborers may have been in a superior bargaining position than the lower paid famuli, but were vulnerable in that this legally compulsory labor could be forced to perform at lower wages. Hilton (1975:102-103) provides several examples of female agricultural workers receiving the same pay as men for the same tasks - both sexes performing similar manual tasks (haymaking, weeding, carrying corn, breaking stones) on some Leicestershire estates around 1400, and female reapers and binders in Gloucestershire (1380) receiving the same rates (4d a day) as males. These examples of equal opportunity may be a result of the devastating labor shortages incurred by the Black Death of 1348, which destroyed between one quarter and one third of the English population; as discussed previously, Roberts (1979) finds pictorial evidence for female reapers only during this period (1400 and after). Wage rate charts for the period 1268-1394 (Casey 1976:230) show consistently lower wages for traditionally female work (planting peas and beans, gathering straw, weeding) as opposed to male tasks (hedging, ditching, reaping and mowing, spaying and gelding of livestock), although again, where females performed these tasks, they were paid men's wages. It also appears that women were consistently excluded from mowing with scythes, mowers being the highest paid harvest workers, at least in the fourteenth century (Ritchie 1962:108, Appendix B - 2). This exclusion would increase in significance as English agriculture shifts to large-scale corn production, and more and more corn comes to be mowed. This shift and its consequences for women will be analyzed in the discussion of early capitalist agriculture (Chapter 5).

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSEWIFE ROLE

In sum, it cannot be said that peasant women participated fully in all production activities, or that occupational segregation with wage differentials represents something new with the emergence of capitalist social relations. Neither can it be held that the development of a discrete sphere of "domestic labor" or the role of "housewife," with female exclusion from social production, are direct creations of a capitalist mode of production; the inference in this is that capitalism produced a new restricted role for women. The issue is much more complex than this generalization will allow. Middleton raises this question and other related ones:

The study of women's participation in surplus labour...is interesting not least because of the light it may shed on female involvement in communal and class activities. The fact that women are largely 'hidden from history' is commonly acknowledged. What may be less clear is whether that invisibility has been due to the blinkered vision of predominantly male historians who have simply failed to notice the feminine contribution to public life, or whether women have been prevented from 'making history' in all ages by virtue of a relative confinement to the seclusion of the hearth (not that this would excuse the historian's traditional lack of interest in the private domain). Among socialist feminists, the current conventional wisdom is that the sharp dissociation of public and private spheres was a consequence of the rise of capitalism. But if that is so, why do relatively few women's names appear in the recorded histories of peasant uprisings in the feudal era, or even in the annals of local class struggles over levels of rent? The historians cannot be entirely to blame for that. Does the general absence of peasant women from the front line of the class struggle indicate that they were already excluded from direct involvement in surplus production? Or was that absence dictated by other motives: subjection to male authority perhaps or some contemporary sense of sexual decorum governing the kinds of behavior in which women might decently engage? (1979:149-150).

Middleton's questions lead to a consideration of how a particular form of sexual division of labor ("housewife") might develop. Formulations of the relation between the development of capitalism and the creation

of a new restricted role for women are true as far as they go, particularly in the case of bourgeois women (see Chapters 7 and 8), and working-class women towards the end of the nineteenth century (a development beyond the scope of this study). The "housewife" role is a function of certain productive relations, but these are not necessarily capitalist in nature.

Middleton, in his exploration of the relationship between the feudal sexual division of labor, domestic responsibilities and varying property relationships within the feudal mode of production, comes to the conclusion that domestic responsibilities and chores (cooking, taking care of the sick, cleaning the house) were characteristically female, and under certain conditions, a distinct "housewife" role could emerge. This is particularly associated with areas of heavy labor services and large families, where women were exempted from labor duties in order to perform household duties. (Heavy labor services and large households are co-related variables in that both are characteristic of impartible family organization.):

It is surely interesting that a combination of large and heavy labor dues were the conditions most conducive to the creation of a distinct and separate housewife role among the peasantry.... The gradual spread of commutation would have encouraged a reversal of this trend and while it would be foolish to exaggerate the similarities between the functions of housewives in peasant and industrial economies, this does suggest that the divorce of housework from surplus production was not a smooth and uninterrupted process or a simple consequence of capitalization. Functionalist theories of a progressive differentiation of roles as societies grow structurally more "complex" are also contradicted (Middleton 1979:159).

As Middleton warns, comparisons of "housewives" under feudalism with "housewives" (particularly the bourgeoisie) under capitalism are not entirely valid. For example, within feudalism, there is a relative

dissociation between "domesticity" and "motherhood." Historically, it appears that it is only within bourgeois culture that children come to be identified as the centre of family life, and the role of a "mother" to be the paramount attribute of women. Furthermore, under capitalism, use-values are submerged by exchange-values, and domestic labor comes to be identified with non-productive labor, isolated from social life and disparaged to a greater extent.

The "housewife" role in feudalism is grounded, as has been demonstrated, in the nature of production relations, particularly mechanisms of surplus-extraction. It would show, therefore, a history of development in conjunction with the internal historical development of the feudal mode of production itself. One might predict that this role would be more widespread in early feudalism, where heavy labor services predominate, and would diminish in significance with the later commutation of these services to money rent. Much of this money rent was derived from sources of home manufacture, products such as beer and cloth. Peasant petty commodity production was, to a great extent, within the hands of women, and women take a full part in village commercial transactions involving beer, grain, hay, cloth and livestock (see Bennett 1938:229-230; Hilton 1975:44-45). As money rents come to predominate, these home manufacturers increase in importance. Occupational segregation, where it existed, probably had little effect on the relative contributions of both sexes to surplus production, and it may be that women's participation increases. It appears that the "housewife" role was but weakly developed in the poorest strata of the English peasantry (Middleton 1979:161), those dependent to some degree on either casual or more regular wage labor,

and this is in part attributable to the necessity of some kind of role flexibility among this group. Cases of women employed in traditional male tasks in response to local labor shortages have already been mentioned. This trend would perhaps increase as the ranks of the poor and the landless increase, and wage labor comes to predominate in economic life. The role of female wage-labor under early rural capitalism has distinctive features, however, and these will be discussed in Chapter 6.

It has been noted that there has as yet been no satisfactory explanation put forward for the role of sex in occupational specialization within the feudal peasantry (Middleton 1979:155). The female monopoly on such home industries as brewing, for example, cannot be directly attributed to the ease with which it merged with domestic responsibilities; women not necessarily involved with these responsibilities, such as widows and single women, also partook in this domestic production. Conversely, such home industries as agricultural tool manufacturing were monopolized by males. It may be that the question of the origins, or social bases for a sexual division of labor cannot depend on the analysis of a single mode of production in itself, although this may account for some of its specific features. Does the fact that where peasant women are identified with specific occupational tasks, these tasks (food production, brewing, cloth-making) tend to be generally nurturant activities? If this association is present, is it restricted to feudalism, or is it present in a number of productive modes, in class as well as non-class societies? What is its relationship to patriarchy, and what is the relationship of patriarchal control of women itself to the existence of social

classes? These larger theoretical questions go much beyond a comparison between feudalism and capitalism, and the role of women within these respective modes of production. It is only very recently that such questions are being formulated, although much of their intellectual impetus derives from Engels' The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State, first published in 1884. Academic attention to these issues is largely the result of the emergence of feminist scholarship, and especially a new interest in the "anthropology of women." Much of the work in this field is in the pioneering stage and still largely speculative. Some of these issues are of direct relevance to my field of inquiry, and will be discussed at length in Chapter 8, "Women, Patriarchy, and Sexuality: Some Considerations."

One might look within the feudal mode of production itself for the structural bases of the sexual differentiation of status and authority found within it. There is no particular reason why occupational specialization in itself would lead to such differentiation. It may be more useful to relate this pattern of male authority and general subordination of feudal women to patriarchal ideologies, to the institutional mechanisms by which the system reproduced itself, the structural reproduction of productive relations in terms of land inheritance:

It was as landholders rather than social or surplus producers that feudal peasants attained a degree of independence and entered the public domain (Middleton 1979:165).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the land holding formed the cornerstone of feudal property relations, the basis of a rent-producing labor force. Land was the major productive resource, and it was by one's relation to the holding itself that the individual was socially defined, and

entered into public life (i.e. Middleton's previous observations on women's involvement in local class struggles). Control of the productive resources (land), though ultimately being in the hands of the manorial lord, was structured in the main by inheritance rules to pass through the male. Female tenants controlling a holding were usually widows, and their behavior was still subject to imposed patriarchal constraints; moreover, these women tenants were concentrated in the poorer strata of the peasantry, and thus relatively powerless. Engels (1973) proposed that it was woman's exclusion from socially identified "necessary" labor which accounted for her dependence and subjection to male authority. This approach is too simplistic, as an examination of feudal peasant women has shown. These women participated fully in all areas of social production, yet the cultural pattern remains one of female subjection to male authority. It appears that it is women's relation to surplus production, rather than social production in itself, which is the important variable. Under feudalism, surplus-extractive relations, in the main, consisted of labor services and money rent. It is the variation in female participation in these relations which appears to be socially significant, and determinant in such matters as the development of a "housewife" role. Ultimately, these variations function within the larger social framework of the reproductive mechanisms of feudal social relations - land inheritance patterns. The key to an understanding of her participation, or lack of it, is in the organization of control over feudal productive resources.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM

The processes by which the feudal mode of production was transformed into capitalism are many and complex, and the subject of much disagreement. It is not my purpose here to discuss the varying proposals (see Wallerstein 1974; Hindess and Hirst 1977; Hilton 1953). Rather, attention will be focused on the changes this transformation produced in the organization of English agriculture, and the consequent effects upon the peasantry. The most significant of these changes is the gradual loss of land control by the feudal nobility, and through the centuries, their eventual replacement by a new ruling class, the capitalist farmer. In close association with this trend, and partly as a result of it, is the replacement of labor services by money rent and cash taxation. These changes can be seen to be occurring as early as the thirteenth century, but their fullest development comes with the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; it is within this period that a qualitative social organizational transition to capitalist agriculture has taken place.

An explanation of the "crisis" of feudalism, or the reasons for its collapse, are not, as previously stated, the purpose of this discussion. But it can be stated that a decline in the income of manorial lords, seen in terms of a resource strain or overconsumption by a minority class given the overall low level of agricultural productivity,

is a prime factor in explaining subsequent events (Wallerstein 1974: 35). Brenner expands on some of the demographic and ecological consequences of this contradiction within feudal production relations:

(T)he surplus-extractive relations of serfdom tended to lead to the exhaustion of peasant production per se; in particular, the inability to invest in animals for ploughing and as a source of manure led to deterioration of the soil, which in turn led to the extension of cultivation to land formerly reserved for the support of animals. This meant the cultivation of worse soils and at the same time fewer animals - and thus in the end, a vicious cycle of the destruction of the peasants' means of support, the crisis, pushing the population over the edge of subsistence (1976: 50).

A simple Malthusian model of rising population (soil exhaustion - famine and disease - restoration of population balance with available resources) cannot, however, be taken in isolation as an explanation for historical change. Such equilibrium/disequilibrium models are cyclical in nature, and may be an inherent aspect of a particular social system. There is nothing in such cyclical developments which would necessarily lead to large-scale qualitative transformations in production relationships. Brenner himself critiques such demographic models of historical change and illustrates through a comparative analysis of English, French and German developments, that demographic trends can be understood and their consequences evaluated only in the context of existing class relations. For example, rising rents may accompany rising populations, but this is not a simple demographic "fact"; the success of a manorial lord's attempt to raise rents higher than a fixed rate is dependent upon the legal status and power of the peasantry itself, an outcome of local class struggles. Much of Europe in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries was characterized by population pressure on resources, leading to a familiar Malthusian

pattern of land shortages, disintegration of holdings and rising rents, but different outcomes proceeded from similar demographic events in different areas, determined in the final analysis by local class conditions. Brenner expands on this approach in his comparative analysis of economic development in pre-industrial England and France. Both countries experienced a similar demographic pattern in the late feudal period, but with widely divergent results in the organization of agricultural production and subsequent economic development. In France, local peasant rights and power were more entrenched than in England, and the peasantry retained control over the land. As population increased, an extreme fragmentation of holdings occurred. Within England, however, the superior strength of the new capitalist farmer over the peasantry allowed the consolidation and creation of larger, more efficient farms. Brenner estimates that by the end of the seventeenth century, French peasants controlled 45-50% of the land, compared to a total of 25-30% for their English counterparts (1976:73). Historically, a strong peasantry would not allow the pre-conditions of agrarian advancement, the increased productivity of capitalist agriculture, to appear. An historical irony develops; the strength of the late feudal French peasantry leads to later seventeenth century misery and Malthusian cycles of disease and mass starvation within France; England rarely encounters these massive famines after the seventeenth century. These differential developments are dependent on historically specific class struggles and their results, primarily the power and assertiveness of local peasantries.

In England, the years 1300-1450 can be considered to be the period in which the general crisis of feudal organization was most

fully expressed. By 1300, the deteriorating economic position of the manorial lords is already evident. This situation was greatly aggravated by the Black Death of 1348, which killed from one quarter to one third of the European population. Loss of available labor power was an important consequence; more important perhaps was a resultant decline in taxation income, and a lower demand for agricultural products (Wallerstein 1974:108). The nobility had by this time acquired much of their income through marketing manorial produce in urban areas. Declining incomes left the landlord with two alternatives:

On the one hand they could convert feudal obligations into money rent which would...increase income to the demesne owner, but involved a gradual transfer of control over the land. That is, it made possible the rise of the small-scale yeoman farmer either as tenant on fixed rates or, if better off, as independent owner.... The (other) alternative then open to the landlord was to convert his land to pasture: cattle or sheep. In the fifteenth century, both wool prices and meat prices had seemed to resist the effects of depression...and in addition, the cost in then scarce hence expensive labor was less (Wallerstein 1974:108).

The first alternative, transfer of control over the land, seems to have been the common practice in the fourteenth century. Enclosure for pasturage, and consequent alienation of land from the peasantry becomes more important in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Another common practice of the English nobility was mass manumission of serfs, the selling of freedom from legal obligations to those who could afford a specific cash sum (Hilton 1969:51). Short-range solutions such as these may have alleviated the immediate economic problems of the nobility, but in the long run undermined the very bases of their economic control and power.

The decline of feudal production relations and its effects upon the English peasantry should be examined in more detail. Reductions



in the lords' incomes benefitted the wealthier peasants, who were able to take advantage of these economic problems by buying tracts of arable land, or buying their legal freedom. For the majority, however, this decline led to the nobility's increasing attempts to intensify appropriation of peasant surplus. The final result of this increasing exploitation was the polarization of the peasantry into a mass whose economic situation deteriorated, and a small group of richer peasants who prospered (for a discussion of the development of the rural proletariat see Wallerstein 1974:251-254).

By the thirteenth century there already existed, as has been discussed in previous chapters, a growing internal differentiation of the English peasantry. This differentiation was dependent upon the size of land holdings, and the possession of a plough team adequate for subsistence needs. Small landholders or cottars, generally possessed less than 5 acres of land, and supplemented their income by rural craft production or casual wage labor. There were also a growing number of legally free peasant farmers, especially in areas of weak lordship. These peasants generally paid money rents rather than labor services, and had a limited freedom of movement. It must be remembered that a peasant's legal status had great consequences for the kinds of services he owed his lord. The "villein" or customary tenant owed labor services and a broad range of obligatory taxes. In legal terms however, the "villein" was considered superior to the "nativi" or those considered servile by birth. Increasing acquisitiveness by the lords broke down and dissolved many of these legal distinctions, usually by means of intensifying labor obligations. From the thirteenth century onward, for example, the "villein," previously "free"

by birth, was considered legally "unfree." Hilton states:

The verbal distinction between neifty (servile by birth) and villeinage did not amount to very much because the pressure of landowner demand for extra revenue (including extra labor services) from the manorial population resulted in the total confusion of the two, to the disadvantage, naturally, of the villein or customary tenant (1969:14-15).

These legal developments are significant, but of more immediate concern here is the historical development of the English rural proletariat during the transition period, the changing relations of the peasantry to the agricultural land.

This process of "proletarianization" will vary, of course, from area to area, but some general observations can be made. While a shrinking surplus resulted in the general worsening of peasant conditions, the wealthier tenants, especially free tenants, exploited the economic difficulties of the ruling class. They were able to acquire more and more land as estate fragmentation becomes general policy in the later fourteenth century. These peasants themselves begin in greater numbers to hire wage labor, the dispossessed peasants, who as customary tenants had no control over the land owned by the lord. They also begin to produce for the growing market of non-agricultural producers in the cities and towns. This situation led to certain kinds of requirements, detrimental to peasant producers:

To make land fully alienable, to have production for commodity sale as the overriding consideration of agriculture, one has to eliminate not only various kinds of feudal tenure systems one has to eliminate also the peasant farmer, for the peasant may hold on to the land and engage in marginal kinds of productive activities for considerations that do not maximize short-run profitability (Wallerstein 1974:247).

Large areas of peasant land were withdrawn from the area of "custom," tenancy in exchange for labor services, and/or rents of various kinds,

and were sold outright or converted to leasehold, held by those who could afford specific cash payments.

The "classic" feudal pattern had been the inheritance of land tenure rights within the family, but by the fourteenth century, this system had already begun to disintegrate. This disintegration is largely the result of the general dissolution of feudal property relations, and the development of a rural land market. Within the feudal manorial system, peasant land holdings could expand and contract in size as demands and labor resources in the individual peasant household changed. As the household grew in size, it might acquire more arable; as it contracted, it would adjust the area under cultivation accordingly. This process was an integral aspect of the developmental cycle of the peasant family itself, a process which will be analyzed in Chapter 6. At the present time, it will suffice to say that this balancing of land distribution corresponding to peasant household needs was effected by sub-letting of land among the peasants themselves. This does not imply the existence of a general peasant land "market" within feudalism; land redistribution was temporary or cyclical in nature, and the land itself could not be permanently alienated. From an examination of manorial records, Hyams (1970) concludes that no convincing evidence exists for a general peasant land market in the early thirteenth century; he does speculate however that the development of such a market, with the salient feature of permanent land alienation, would probably occur earliest in East Anglia and eastern England in general. It was in these regions that partible land inheritance was relatively common, and landlords were less hostile to the alienation of arable land from its original

cultivators. Howell's research (1976:135) reinforces the impression that reports of a general feudal land market are greatly exaggerated. She observes that a "market" as such has meaning only where the unit of exchange is at least a quarter or half virgate of land (8-15 acres); the vast majority of land transfers are significantly less than this, and represent leases rather than sales, allowing for the developmental cycle of the peasant household.

Yet, as the crisis of feudalism is expressed, an increasing instability of the familial inheritance pattern becomes apparent. It appears especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; peasants are still attempting to provide their children with land, but it appears that it no longer matters that this would be traditional "family" land. Manorial records from Brightwaltham in south-eastern England illustrate these flux conditions:

Ralph Faber's land descended within his family until 1340 when John Faber, "being poor" surrendered most of it to two other tenants; the de Cruce land passed twice by inheritance in the fourteenth century after which some was lost by forfeiture, some by alienation; some of the land of the Bisothewoode family went out of their hands in the 1290's, the rest descended by inheritance within the family unit until 1367 then some was lost by the marriage of a Bisothewoode widow and the rest was sold or surrendered early in the fifteenth century (Faith 1966:90).

By 1426, on the manors Faith has studied, the greater part of villein land was held by new men; on some estates, non-familial transactions varied from 70% to almost 90% in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Hilton (1969:34) provides complementary evidence from a Berkshire village; in the period 1379-1394, there is a 64% turnover in the surnames of families occupying holdings, and up to an 80% turnover rate in some proximate communities.

The precise reasons for these changes can be attributed to any number of general or more localized factors. The Black Death of 1348 may have made more land available because of high death rates, and perhaps a less rigid adherence to property rules. The declining power of the feudal lords may have led to less control over land transfers. These and other variables should be observed in the greater social context of the dissolution of feudal property relations, effecting a polarization of land in the countryside. The long-range result was the formation of the new landed yeomen and gentry classes (individuals drawn from both the richer peasantry and the nobility), and the attendant decline of the small and middle peasantry and their transformation into a rural proletariat. The middle peasantry especially seems to have suffered in this process, as Spufford demonstrates in her analysis of land distribution in the parish of Chippenham. She compares these distributions for the years 1544, 1636, and 1712; the polarization is evident:

The larger copyholds of two yardlands and upwards were not affected; nor were the minute holdings of less than six acres which helped to support the more fortunate cottagers. But the middle range of sixteenth-century holdings, from a half-yardland, or approximately fifteen acres, to one-and-a-half yardlands, or forty-five odd acres, had with one single exception, disappeared completely (1636).... (T)he figures for 1544 and 1712 show that the proportion of landless cottagers in Chippenham, or those with only a couple of acres, rose sharply from 53 per cent in 1544 to 74 per cent in 1712; tenants with thirty to forty-five acres disappeared; and the 3 per cent of men with over ninety acres in 1514 were replaced by 14 per cent of tenants with 90 to over 250 acres (Spufford 1976:160-161).

It is interesting to note that one of the factors involved in this process of polarization may have been a structural feature inherent in feudal patterns of peasant inheritance itself. This feature is the desire on the part of the landholder to provide for non-inheriting

members of his family, setting aside small amounts of cash for his sons, or providing cash dowries for his daughters. Spufford provides numerous examples of this practice in her analysis of the wills of Cambridgeshire peasants, of fathers attempting to provide sums such as dowries out of the future profits of the holding. In his 1588 will, William Sampfield, a laborer, leaves a cottage, a garden and an orchard to his only son. In addition to providing accomodation for his mother, the heir is to provide a cash sum of 13s 4d for four years, to be divided equally between his two sisters (1976:159). This fragmentation or diversion of capital away from the holding to provide such legacies could place the small or middle peasant cultivator in a precarious position; economic conditions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were difficult for the small farmer, and such diversions of money away from the working of the holding often placed him in debt, and vulnerable to forfeiture of land.

Rural mobility was endemic in England from the fourteenth well into the seventeenth century. In the earlier feudal period, the Black Death had reduced population to the point where labor became a scarce commodity. Tenant families left their villages in great numbers, especially the poor and landless, to seek high wages as agricultural laborers or urban workers. This possibility was enhanced by the declining power of the nobility to control peasant movement because of the general social upheaval of the time. Subsequent polarization of land ownership and processes of rural proletarianization greatly increased the numbers of rural labor migrants. Figures from the fourteenth century are lacking to illustrate the extent of this situation, but there is some suggestive data from the seventeenth century,

although these figures may be higher than in the earlier period. In the years 1607-1650, half the surnames of the inhabitants of a Norfolk village disappear from the public records; in Clayworth, Nottinghamshire (1676-1688), over 60% of the family surnames are lost (Hill 1969: 60). One might assume, for the earlier period, that depopulation and consequent scarcity of labor would work to the advantage of the peasantry. There is some indication of rising wages in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but their general economic position did not improve, and may have in fact worsened. In response to depopulation and scarce labor power, many lords shifted their arable land to pasture; the result of this was a reduction in the total caloric output of agriculture, rather than a higher per capita food intake as might be expected because of higher per capita units of arable land available to the population (Wallerstein 1974:36). In fact, meat consumption declines among the lower classes (Wallerstein 1974:56). Widespread enclosure of land for pasturage had the effect of making arable land scarce even for the reduced population. In addition, the general lengthening of leases towards the end of the fifteenth century (Hilton 1969:45) made the fixed rental rates of such a sum that few could afford it. Neither could these individuals afford the purchase of draught animals necessary for cultivation. Enclosure, in addition to decreasing access to arable land, effectively dissolved the communal use of common land, the pastures, woods and marshes which had previously provided grazing for peasant stock, firewood and building materials, and wild foods. The effect of enclosure upon the commons has produced a large literature (see Everitt 1967:406-412). It is sufficient here to state that this loss significantly increased

peasant dependence upon the large landowners and wage employers.

The period of 1540-1640 represents the grand shift in England from a rural peasantry to a rural proletariat (Wallerstein 1974:252). As a social class, the peasantry is of minimal importance by the middle of the eighteenth century. The economic structure of the countryside had been transformed, and the new social classes of capitalist agricultural production had replaced feudal productive relationships. Capitalist farmers--the yeomen and the gentry--were now producing agricultural goods for a market, utilizing the wage labor of the rural proletariat on large, consolidated holdings. Productivity increased significantly, through the adoption of a number of technical innovations, the cultivation of new land, and the systematic application of business calculations to farming. Within feudal agriculture, heavy surplus-extractive relationships had discouraged the improvement of production techniques. It has been estimated that approximately 50% of the villein's total product was appropriated by the feudal landlord (Brenner 1976:49). This surplus was invested in military expenditure or conspicuous consumption rather than in the improvement of agricultural techniques, although Brenner demonstrates that such technology was available at the time. The lord's desire to increase his surplus was usually attempted by his appropriations of a larger share of a constant or declining output, at the expense of his tenants. In contrast, the English capitalist farmer routinely raised agricultural productivity by capital improvement and reinvestment.

In sum, the last half of the sixteenth century saw the crystallization of processes that had been in operation for at least two centuries before, with a massive redistribution of land and income in

favor of a new class, the capitalist farmer. In 1646, England abolished the last legal trappings of feudal tenure (Hill 1969:146), but such laws had already been long obsolete. By the seventeenth century, the vast majority of the English population was still involved in agricultural production, most of these being wage workers or very small tenant farmers. Their economic position, in terms of access to resources had become in many cases more precarious than that of their feudal peasant ancestors. Furthermore, the transformation from feudal to capitalist production relations produced changes both in the material conditions of household formation and the processes of its internal development. These changes, both organizational and ideological in nature, will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 5

RURAL PRODUCTIVE ORGANIZATION IN EARLY CAPITALISM

Estimates vary for the size of the "laboring" population in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, the phrase referring to the mass of rural poor: the dispossessed peasantry, small tenant farmer, permanent wage laborers and those individuals employed in domestic cloth industries, particularly wool. From a study of sixteenth century manorial surveys, it appears that two thirds of the rural holdings consisted of little more than a garden (Everitt 1967:401), making supplementary wage labor necessary even for those who owned land. Legislation in 1589 had decreed that no cottage was to be constructed with less than four acres of land attached, this being perceived as some kind of minimal level of subsistence. Brenner (1976:63) calculates that large capitalist farmers controlled 70-75% of the cultivable land by the end of the seventeenth century, with approximately 47% of the entire English population being comprised of rural laborers, cottagers, and paupers (Everitt 1967:401).

The extent of rural poverty in Tudor and Stuart England is well known and has been extensively documented (for a detailed description of agricultural laborers see Everitt 1967; for a description of the later period 1750-1850, especially rural class struggles, see Hobsbawn and Rude 1970). Within some villages, one-third to one-half the residents were legally classified as "paupers," and this figure itself

does not take underemployment into consideration. Increasing polarization of wealth proceeds (1) as the rural population comes to be more dependent on wage labor, and (2) as certain structural features of the English economy weaken the position of rural wage labor, both in terms of wages themselves, and employment opportunities. The decline of the purchasing power of wages throughout the period is well known (Wallerstein 1974:80). One study of farm wages for the south-east Midlands (1500-1640) shows them to be halved over that entire period; wages increase three times (from 4d to 1s a day), while the cost of living rises six times (Everitt 1967:435). The organizational weakness of the wage-earners themselves impeded the development of an effective wage struggle. Many workers were paid once a year, creating an inflexibility in negotiating power. A large labor reserve of unemployed and underemployed kept wages low and the English state took an active interest in fixing maximum rather than minimum wages.

In addition, the expansion of cereal crops such as corn for market production produced maximum seasonal fluctuations in agricultural labor needs. This demand was especially heavy at harvest time, but it provided for less and less year-round agricultural work. This shift to especially corn production initiates a grand scale pattern of labor migration in rural England, a drift to the corn growing south and east during harvest. Parallel patterns working to the disadvantage of wage earners can be demonstrated for the traditional service sectors as well as the agricultural sector, especially servanthood for both men and women. Most master-servant relationships even within Tudor times had retained a personal and paternal appearance, the employer traditionally being responsible for both the material

maintenance and the spiritual welfare of his employees. This "feudal" relationship was, however, rapidly giving way to a specifically commercial nexus. Older communal obligations, such as communal feasts provided by employers, were coming to be viewed as more and more of a nuisance. Increasing prices of foodstuffs encouraged masters to adopt the more profitable practice of paying wages in cash rather than in food and board, making servants more vulnerable to inflationary trends. A strictly wage relationship, the decrease in length of terms of service, and an increasing frequency of job mobility all came to undermine customary patterns of obligation and privilege (for an interesting discussion of this decay see Hobsbawm and Rude's Captain Swing, Chapter 2).

At this point, I would like to investigate in more detail the position of female wage laborers in early capitalist England, particularly in the agricultural sector, and compare their position with that of their feudal counterparts as discussed in Chapter 3. Much of their life experience is similar to male agricultural laborers; as members of the working class, women would inevitably share the social conditions and economic opportunities of that class. Yet, there are additional considerations. To begin, the fear that market activity or wage labor would somehow "taint," "degrade" or corrupt an essentially pure female nature is nowhere to be found among the working class. These notions are essentially creations of bourgeois patriarchal ideology (to be discussed in Chapter 8), and are, indeed, irrelevant and antithetical to the social conditions of the working class. Early ruling class labor legislation did not concern itself with such strictures, as evidenced by the 1563 Elizabethan Statute

of Laborers:

By this Act, every woman, free or bound, under 60, and not carrying on a trade or calling, provided she had no land, and was not in domestic or other service, was liable to be called upon to enter service either in the fields or otherwise, and if she refused, she was imprisoned until she complied; whilst all girls who for twelve years had been brought up to follow the plough, were not allowed to enter any other calling, but were forced to continue working in the fields (Boulding 1976:104).

The continuing presence of female agrarian labor was both necessary and assured, yet a number of features worked against them. Some of these detrimental features, particularly female concentration in the lower-paid agricultural tasks (exclusion from mowing) have been observed under feudalism. Yet, these inequities were, for a number of reasons, intensified under early capitalist agricultural organization, and were of greater consequence to the individuals themselves.

Women's traditional exclusion from the use of the scythe (mowing) came to be of more consequence as the use of the scythe increased in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The use or the predominance of the sickle (operated by men and women) as opposed to the scythe (operated by men) will influence the availability of work for female wage labor; these changes in production techniques were dependent upon a number of variables. Within some feudal areas, for example, the use of scythes was expressly forbidden by communal legislation, as it cut the crops lower than sickles and thus left less stubble for communal pasturage use (Roberts 1979:14). The major determinant it appears, of the spread and increase of scythe use (to the disadvantage of female laborers), was an increasing reliance upon commercial corn production. Mowing with scythes cut larger quantities of corn and grass with each stroke than could a reaper using a sickle, but

required more subsidiary workers to gather it because of its scattering effect. At this point, careful cost-accounting calculations would be made by the capitalist farmer (see Roberts 1979:17, for examples); it appears that mowing with scythes was generally considered to be still the most economically efficient method of harvesting:

The use of scythes to cut corn thus reduced the opportunities for women to work at the highly-paid job of cutting the crop, though the opportunities for less well-paid work in the fields (i.e. gathering) might well be increased (Roberts 1979:13).

Thus, features central to the development of early capitalist agriculture decreased higher-paying employment opportunities for women, and concentrated them in the ranks of such lower-paid positions as gatherers and rakers. Roberts gives an example from the agricultural writings (1641) of a capitalist farmer, Henry Beard. Beard discusses the organization of labor in pulling peas:

We imploy aboute their labour our mowers (i.e. men), binders (men) and onely some of the ablest outliggers (i.e. gatherers:women), wheare we think good. The men have 8d a day and the women 6d a day; they usually make the right hande furre (furrow), the farre furre, and therein goe usually women and the weakest sorte of them (1979:9).

The most important of these features is probably the decreasing diversity of crops grown, and the increasing spread of corn monoculture, as a system of exchange-value for agricultural products replaces their use-value for direct consumption by the cultivators. Leguminous crops such as beans and peas had previously offered more opportunities for reaping as opposed to mowing, but came to be replaced by corn production with an attendant decrease in higher wage possibilities for women. One additional fact is of paramount importance: whatever the structural parallels of female occupational segregation under both

feudalism and early capitalism, much of this feudal segregation operated in terms of obligatory labor services, rather than wage labor. In other words, female exclusion from particular agricultural tasks will have much more detrimental consequences for them when they are dependent upon such tasks for a livelihood.

Various regional factors operated to retard or occasionally reverse the process of the diminution or exclusion of female agrarian labor. The major factor, and one that appears to have been influential under feudalism as well, was the availability of labor supply. It appears to be an historical constant that chronic labor shortages will weaken strong sex-role segregation. Although, for example, the use of the scythe was considered to be more cost-efficient than reaping with sickles, scythe mowing was responsible for more crop damage in harvesting. Therefore, where a large harvest labor force was available, for lower wages, it might be more efficient to hire more reapers (including women) than mowers. Conversely, labor shortages might encourage the use of the faster-cutting scythe. Where male labor was particularly abundant, arguments might be made for the necessity of replacing women altogether in traditionally female tasks. Especially after the Civil War, with the dissolution of standing armies, it was suggested that the former soldiers take up the duties of "dairy-maids"; they would:

...milke the cows, a thing only used by women through the prevalency of custome, but fitter for men, in regard of women's tendernes and danger of going out in the wet, besides the labour of bringing it home (Roberts 1979:12).

Whether in fact this suggestion was widely followed is unknown. But it reflects the social fact that female agricultural laborers were in a much more precarious economic position than their male counterparts.

Even where their labor was heavily utilized, records reveal consistently lower wages, even in those occupations in which men too participated. A survey of sixteenth and seventeenth century wage rates reveals that female reapers' wages varied widely, though they were consistently lower than male reapers; they varied from rates 90% to 44% of these male wages (Roberts 1979:19), though averaging approximately 60-67%. Comparisons of male and female servants' wages show a similar disparity. Male agricultural laborers were generally married individuals, and it was not expected that their wives should work all year round for wages; maximum wage rates were fixed accordingly, to the disadvantage naturally of married women. Single women as well were being gradually forced out of agricultural wage labor, and into positions of domestic service, either in rural or urban areas. It became nearly impossible for a woman to be independent in rural areas; the resources available to married women were restricted in nature, and single women, for the most part, were live-in servants under the authoritarian control of their employers. For married women especially, lack of employment opportunities led to an increasing dependence on rural textile manufacturing.

For a very large percentage of the English rural population, and of especial importance to rural working-class women, employment opportunities came with domestic cottage industry, especially wool manufacture. These spread throughout the countryside in the sixteenth century, until their gradual decline in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with cloth industrialization. Wool trades were of vital importance to the English economy, woolen goods forming one third of English exports by the end of the seventeenth century.

Perhaps one quarter of the rural population was linked with this industry, either in a full-time or part-time capacity. Clark (1919:97) gives a figure of one million persons as being exclusively employed in these trades, although this figure may be somewhat high. The early introduction of these manufactures into rural areas was largely the result of the restrictive nature and the strength of the guilds in urban areas, and the availability of cheap landless labor in the countryside. Some of the pre-conditions for the acceptance and spread of rural cloth and generalized commodity production were found to a certain degree under both primogeniture and partible systems of land inheritance; the later dissolution of old tenurial systems increased a dependence on either full-time or supplementary wage labor. As has been discussed, impartible inheritance created structurally a landless strata of peasants who might be dependent to some degree upon wage labor. The position of supplementary wages in areas of partibility and land fragmentation have also been described. Such a pattern is illustrated in the statement given by an elderly tenant in West Yorkshire in 1634:

(B)y reason of such division of tenements, the tenants are much increased in number more than they once were; and the tenements became so small in quantity that many of them are not above three or four acres apiece and generally not above eight or nine acres, so that they could not maintain their families were it not by their industry in knitting coarse stockings (Thirsk 1961:70).

Parallel developmental processes are also observable in Western Europe, especially the conduciveness of land fragmentation to the introduction of rural cloth industries; for a Swiss example, see Braun (1966). Rural industries themselves may have encouraged further sub-division of land holdings amongst the peasantry by the introduction of an

economic basis other than land for the founding and support of a family.

Domestic industry itself profoundly affected processes of familial organization and development for the rural proletariat. Under capitalist social relations, wage labor becomes the principle production relationship. Within early capitalist agriculture, the laborer's family or domestic unit becomes a wage unit, pooling its resources. Within domestic or cottage industry, the family becomes both a wage unit and a productive unit, all family members within the home contributing to the production of cloth. The father weaves, assisted by his elder sons; the mother spins, her daughters helping prepare the wool for the spinning wheel, while the youngest children make the thread into skeins. The wool industry seems to have been especially dependent upon the labor of both women and children (see Clark 1919:93-149 for a general history of feminine participation in the textile trades). This productive organization was so distinctive that Medick (1977) believes this functional interrelationship between family economy and merchant capital constituted a comprehensive set of social production relations. He labels this mode "proto-industrialization," finding in it traits of a distinct socio-economic system. The nature of this system, and its relation to rural family organization and development will be discussed and compared to the domestic organization of agricultural laborers in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

STRUCTURAL BASES OF PEASANT AND

EARLY WORKING CLASS FAMILIES

Historians and demographers studying medieval and early modern England have, in the last two decades, been involved in a controversy concerning the rural family "type" characteristic of these periods. Was the domestic or household unit of a "nuclear" family type composed in the main of a married couple and their unmarried children?; or was it "extended," typified by co-residence of a three-generation household, a married couple and their unmarried children, in addition to the parents or unmarried siblings of the male spouse? The major "pro-nuclear" proponent in this argument is the historian Peter Laslett, who views the nuclear family as representing the major type of domestic organization in early rural England. Laslett bases his conclusions on the relatively constant numerical size of the household or residential group from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century, and invests his interpretation with great ideological significance:

Could it be that because the English had always lived in this peculiarly individualistic personally responsible fashion, where every marriage meant a new household, that England had been the first to adopt individualistic attitudes, capitalist organization and the industrial way of life? (Laslett 1970: 77-78).

This conclusion comes into direct conflict with the views of medieval social historians such as Homans (1941), who view the peasant domestic group as being typically an extended one. It is neither possible nor

necessary to document here all the details of this issue (see Middleton 1979:158, note 25, for a summary of the relevant literature). This controversy may be largely a non-issue, resulting from faulty theoretical conceptualization and methodology on the part of some historical demographers, particularly the practice of deducing household structure and domestic organizational patterns from such raw statistical data as mean household size (MHS). According to this line of reasoning, if one observes a small MHS, one is necessarily dealing with a nuclear family structure; a larger MHS is taken to indicate that kin other than the nuclear family are in residence. A discussion of this problem is directly relevant to an understanding of feudal and early modern domestic organization and its processual development.

Medick (1977) in particular has criticized Laslett's approach of isolating MHS (mean household size) from its social and developmental context. In simple terms, statistics such as MHS, in themselves, tell little about household structure or familial organization; neither are they sensitive indicators of structural changes. Most important, reliance upon statistical models encourages a static conception of domestic organization, and the development of discrete and mutually exclusive ideal types or categories, such as "nuclear" as opposed to "extended." This reliance upon statistical indices for the creation of discrete and opposing categories has also been criticized by the anthropologist Jack Goody (1972). To place the "family" (usually the residential group) in opposition to "kinship" (larger family systems) is inadequate and misleading, as all societies with more inclusive patterns of kin organization contain within them smaller, segmented domestic groups. Goody has demonstrated that the size of such units

(MHS) is related to such social functions as production, consumption and child-rearing; but these functions must be understood in their social context, their relations to the phase or stage of the developmental cycle of the domestic group itself. From a comparative survey of African ethnographic sources, and others from around the world, Goody points out that MHS is very similar for most agricultural populations, although these populations are widely divergent in their methods of social and domestic organization.

The analysis of the family developmental cycle, the processes of its growth, stasis and decline, provides an alternative method of investigation to the static approach of delineating family or domestic "types." This more illuminating conceptualization was developed by British social anthropologists. An excellent introductory discussion can be found in Myer Fortes (1958). For general analytical purposes, Fortes divides this cycle into three main stages - a phase of expansion, from marriage to completion of the procreative unit; its fission or dispersion, through marriage, and individuals leaving the domestic unit; and its replacement in the social structure, with the death of parents, by the families of their children. It can be seen that indices such as MHS will capture only a fragment of this cycle, that the residence pattern which it measures is but a crystallization in one point of time of a particular phase of the cycle.

Fortes chooses to concentrate on the reproductive aspects of this cycle; here, I wish to emphasize the productive functions of the domestic unit, with special attention to familial labor requirements and resources, and how these are met or influenced by the developmental cycle of the domestic unit. This discussion will involve an

investigation of how peasant family organization is moulded both by external conditions of production and internal developmental processes, and how these two analytically distinct spheres are related. Within the feudal mode of production, the social mode of the transmission of productive property--land inheritance--functions as the decisive structural determinant of familial/domestic organization. This forms the primary external condition of production (see Chapter 2). Access to land becomes the necessary pre-condition for marriage and the formation of a family:

In any society where husbandry is nearly the only means of subsistence, a man's status as a landholder or landless man is in close relation with his status as married or single. So it was in England in the thirteenth century, as the word "anilepiman" shows. "Anilepi" is an early form of the word "only." "Anilepiman" means single man, unmarried man, but an "anilepiman" was also a landless man (Homans 1941:136-137).

Unigeniture (primogeniture) and partible systems of land inheritance will produce fundamentally different organizational patterns in respect to residence structure and household composition. Within the most prevalent system in feudal England, primogeniture, only the eldest son inherited the holding and only he could marry; male and female siblings could remain as producers and consumers on the family holding only upon the condition that they remained unmarried. The male heir could not marry until he obtained control of tenurial rights, either after the death of his father, or more commonly, around the age of 22, when the land was transferred to him and legal provisions made for the support of his retiring parents. Inherent social mechanisms therefore exist to promote the formation of three generation, "stem" families, with parents and unmarried siblings co-residing with the heir and his family (Krause 1956:421).

If it is accepted that a consequence of primogeniture was the formation of "stem" households, how does one explain Laslett's contention that there is little statistical evidence (MHS) for its existence in early modern England (the sixteenth century). It could be answered that within the earliest period for which Laslett possesses adequate data, the sixteenth century, the dissolution of feudal property relations is already near completion, with the consequent transformation of pre-conditions for peasant household formation and development. Others have refuted Laslett's assertion of the rarity of the three-generation household in England on methodological and interpretive grounds (Berkner 1972). A number of demographic factors are relevant here. Under calculations drawn from demographers on life-cycles under conditions of high mortality, Hajnal (1965:124) estimates that over 50% of children would have lost their father by the age of 17. Using similar data, Berkner calculates that under conditions of high mortality and low life expectancy, only 27% to 29% of peasant families would contain three generations. In other words, many married peasants would produce only a couple or a single child who would survive to maturity; in such cases, primogeniture households might not show unmarried siblings in residence, and partible households would not pass through a "joint-family" phase. Low life expectancies will diminish the survival period of three-generation households. In his own study of the developmental family cycle among the eighteenth century Austrian peasantry, Berkner (1972) directly addresses Laslett's conclusion. He stresses the danger of using demographic data in isolation from an understanding of the developmental dynamics of the peasant household. He points out, for example, that Laslett has not controlled

his figures for the age of the household head at the time the MHS is calculated. Berkner finds that when this variable is controlled, the "extended" or three-generation household emerges as a normal phase of peasant family life. Spufford (1974:114-118) provides additional evidence from sixteenth and seventeenth English data to counter Laslett's claims.

Within the less common partible inheritance system, all sons are liable to equal inheritance of the holding; therefore, all can marry and raise families. The land is farmed communally, although legal mechanisms exist for its division if this is desired. A more detailed comparison of how partible and impartible households differ in composition and development would be of great interest, but the data existing for partible households is fragmentary. This is probably due to the fact that (1) partible inheritance is less common than primogeniture, and (2) it appears earlier in the historical record, in many cases being antecedent to the development of impartible systems (see Chapter 2). Some thirteenth century data (Hallam 1958) suggests that households within areas of partibility were larger, with more adult resident children than primogeniture households; this can be attributed for the most part to extensive labor migration of non-inheriting sons and daughters within areas of impartibility, as has been discussed in Chapter 3. In any case, it is interesting to note that within both types of feudal tenurial organization, certain pre-conditions are already appearing to facilitate the development of capitalist enterprises in rural areas. Primogeniture systems, though preventing the fragmentation of holdings, reproduce structurally a stratum of non-inheriting sons and daughters, dependent in some cases upon wage labor.

Social rules control the growth of this stratum, for these individuals did not usually marry and reproduce. Partible inheritance, on the other hand, may encourage the fragmentation of land holdings and thus increase the importance of supplementary wage labor or petty commodity production such as cottage crafts. The determinate nature of property transmission loses its significance as the peasantry is transformed into a rural proletariat, dependent in the main upon wage labor. In this case, the labor resources and labor requirements of the family itself become decisive in structuring domestic organization. These resources and requirements are a significant feature of feudal social relations as well, but they must be viewed in the context of land access and land control. An additional factor in feudalism is the common surplus-extractive relation of labor services, a relation having significant effects upon peasant domestic organization.

In general terms, the nature of the surplus requirements of the feudal aristocracy encouraged the development of a relatively self-sufficient peasantry, producing and consuming its own subsistence needs. Much of the agricultural labor that the landlord needed to command was of an intense but seasonal nature, especially at planting and harvest times. A slave-type of labor organization would have been counter-productive under such conditions, for it would have meant maintaining much of the manorial population in idleness through parts of the year. (It would be interesting to investigate whether in fact there is a correlation between social modes of labor organization, such as slavery, and ecological variables, such as type of crop or climatic conditions that would require intense year-round activity rather than seasonal concentrations; how would, for example, northern

or temperate areas compare in this regard to tropical areas?) It was both the lord's interest and his intent that the agricultural holding should support a labor force sufficient to provide cultivation of the tenant holding, and provide a labor force sufficient for his own needs. Where these labor services were required, they could be of an intense nature. On some manors in the Midlands and southern England, for example, each household had to provide at least one man for four days a week to work demesne land, with extra labor required both in the summer and the autumn (Hilton 1973:108). For these reasons, the lord would take a keen interest in the remarriage of widows controlling their husbands' land, in order to ensure at least a sufficient male labor force. These ruling class interests also necessitated the prevention of the permanent accumulation of land within certain lineages, both because of the attendant difficulties of calculating and providing labor services from these holdings, as well as the danger of some kind of threat from powerful serfs. This desire served village communal interests as well. The ambitions of richer peasants were a constant point of contention in manorial court records.

Within the context of inheritance patterns and labor requirements, the basic problem, and the internal dynamic, of the peasant family was the balancing of its labor needs and resources with its consumer requirements. This is evidenced in the developmental cycle of the peasant family, the cyclical nature of its growth, stasis and decline. The male heir, upon marriage, takes control of the holding and is under legal obligation to maintain his parents. Unmarried siblings are allowed to participate in the activities of the holding. The household expands in size with the creation of a new family, then

declines as parents die, sisters marry and move on, or non-inheriting brothers perhaps migrate out. The cycle then repeats itself. The changing composition and size of the household, hence its demands and resources, necessitates the adjustment of agricultural land resources. Areas under cultivation expand and contract through the mechanism of the leasing of small pieces of land; this is not a "land market" per se, as these acquisitions are not permanent. As sons marry and come of age, more and more land is added to the arable; when adult members die or move on, the land is left fallow or taken over by nearby households in their expanding stages. This process might be labelled as a cyclical redistribution of land. Within feudal peasant communities, this land redistribution cycle was intermeshed and complemented with a cyclical redistribution of labor, primarily in the form of adolescent servanthood. Young men, and especially young women, would be sent from households with a surplus of labor and work within households where extra labor (domestic duties, care of children, general agricultural tasks) was required. To a very great degree, the size of the family land holdings would determine the nature of household organization by defining the parameters of labor requirements. Smith (1979) in a study investigating kin-solidarity within feudal villages provides clear evidence for this. Smith has analyzed over 13,000 manorial court records of sales and leases of land, lending of agricultural equipment, and various kinds of economic transactions for the manor of Redgrave in the years 1259-1293. Redgrave manor was an area of hamlets and small farms, with large numbers of small (under 2 acres) tenants. He concludes:

(Individuals with small holdings) were so land deficient that union of kin was impracticable as a solution to their

economic dilemma, as was also union with similar economic deficiencies. The dilemma was resolved by the establishment of small nuclear families in which children did not remain long at home. This group also included some celibate males and spinster females who, like the small domestic groups, were unable to engage in relationships of an informal and hence reciprocal nature, and instead embarked upon much more formal or legal and contractual relationships with the rest of the community. They hired themselves out as day labourers on the manorial demesne or to wealthier tenants: and their children were likely to have been servants in the households of others (1979:244).

Smith finds that it was the middle peasantry, those controlling between 2 and 10 acres of land, who were the most likely villagers to seek and create the development of strong kin ties and labor cooperation. Richer peasants were less likely to do so, as much of the labor they required for their larger holdings was drawn from the children of the land-deficient poor.

Thus, a number of variables will produce a determinate effect upon peasant domestic organization; labor needs themselves are mediated through structural determinants such as inheritance rules and holding size. These variables might produce contradictory effects. Though, for example, several features of medieval peasant life might encourage high fertility and large families (a young marriage age, and a lack of systematic birth control), other features would work against it and create a paradox for the peasant producer. While most labor needs were supplied by family or kin members, it might not always be advantageous to keep or maintain within the family such a labor reserve. Areas of heavy labor services, for example, required large numbers of workers, but in a seasonal cycle; it might be more advantageous to hire at certain times of the year, wage labor for the fulfillment by proxy of these duties, rather than the addition of permanent family

members. Patterns of cooperative labor among villagers presents another alternative to the creation and maintenance of a large labor reserve within the family. Possibly, systematic infanticide of female children might balance an unfavorable laborer/consumer ratio within the household, specifically in areas where female labor is less utilized (see Chapter 3). Infanticide was practiced in medieval England, but it does not seem to have been either particularly common, or selective for females. Selective female infanticide has however been discovered for the poorer peasantry of early medieval France (Kellum 1974:368). Overall, it is likely that female children were more commonly exported from smaller families than male children, to work in the houses of others. In England, this pattern would be intensified with the dissolution of feudal property relations, the polarization of land ownership, and the consequent creation of vast numbers of very small or landless peasants.

Thus within feudalism, both a cyclical redistribution of land and labor worked together to achieve a balance, to attempt a regulation between familial resources and familial needs. As discussed, these resources and needs would vary with the economic position of the household itself. Statistical indices such as mean household size represent a crystalization in one point of time of the interlocking or meshing of these complementary cycles; taken in isolation, by themselves, these indices may mask the nature of peasant domestic organization and its developmental processes. With the development of capitalist social relations, the disappearance of feudal inheritance patterns and such feudal characteristics as obligatory labor services, different preconditions and structural determinants of household organization appear.

I will concern myself here with the situation of rural agricultural wage laborers and domestic industry workers. Within both types of households, the family and household becomes predominantly a labor reserve, rather than a group structured by inheritance considerations, or a unit created as a consequence of residence patterns (i.e. primogeniture encouraging the stem-family). Different occupational groups will vary in household composition and development as a result of differential labor requirements.

RURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN EARLY CAPITALISM

The structural basis of agricultural wage labor households follows a fundamentally different pattern from that of domestic industry households, for a number of related reasons; there are certain structural parallels for wage households to the type of household described previously for landless, wage-dependent peasants within English feudalism (Smith 1979). Women of this class worked where possible as live-in servants, generally married at 25 to 30 (a relatively late age), and then settled independently with their husbands as laborers or cottagers. Married servants appear to be quite rare. These women are being increasingly recruited from the poorer ranks of society, with the disappearance of the small tenant farmers as a class:

(T)he General View of the Agriculture of Berkshire in 1813 lamented 'that good servants are every year more scarce and difficult to be found. The best domestics used to be among the sons and daughters of little farmers...but since that valuable order of men has been so generally reduced in every county and almost annihilated in some, servants are of necessity taken from a lower description of persons (Hobsbawm and Rude 1979:41).

The economic position of married women laborers is no doubt the major explanation for their late age at marriage and the beginnings of the

formation of a new household. Women were expected to bring to their marriage some kind of dowry, a contribution to the "conjugal fund" either in the form of money, or the possession of artisan skills. Female servants therefore were in a position of delaying this until their dowries could be accumulated, in contrast to women in domestic industry whose artisanal skills were learned early in life as they worked with their parents. As was stated in Chapter 5, married women were not expected to work full-time for wages, outside the home. Their wages for agricultural labor were fixed at a lower-level accordingly, and in some areas, there was no wage legislation concerning women over the age of 30 (Hill 1961:32). Their employment prospects, as married women, were distinctly limited in nature. Even in later periods, there is little evidence that such developments as industrialization improved employment opportunities for married women outside the home (Stone 1977:662). These jobs were taken for the most part by young single women. Women of this laboring stratum were forced to balance their domestic duties, such as the care of children, with attempts to bring in some kind of family income supplement. These attempts included the small-scale marketing of dairy products, poultry and eggs, and an endless variety of tasks, assisted by their children, which might bring in a few pennies. Within the households of rural wage laborers, adolescent servanthood as a mechanism of redistributing a surplus of labor within the household is maintained. Laborers' households were smaller in size than those of artisans or domestic industry workers, because of the lesser number of co-residing children; this has been demonstrated in a number of demographic studies of seventeenth and eighteenth century England (Wall 1978:195; Chambers 1972:37).

The English Poor Laws especially seem to have produced detrimental effects upon the family life of English laborers. These laws were codified and standardized at the Speenhamland meeting of rural magistrates in 1795, although they had, in various forms, been in operation long before this. The Poor Laws were seen to function as a supplement to wages, thereby allowing the payment of non-living wages, gathered through taxation of land-owners. It was the general consensus of seventeenth and eighteenth century writers and policy-makers that the country needed more laboring "poor." Large populations were linked with low wages, low prices, and general prosperity. Claude Meillassoux has written of the retention of certain aspects of the "domestic economy" in later capitalist England, in relation to the position of migratory factory labor. This preservation of pre-capitalist enclaves is also common in African colonial areas, for the migratory native population. Such a retention may function to stabilize certain forms of capitalist development. Meillassoux's historical observations of a later period can also be applied to an understanding of certain functional aspects of the Poor Law system:

Unlike the domestic economy, capitalism does not fulfill all the needs of the labourer. Historically, the economic superiority of capitalism over the feudal economy was that it did not take charge of the unproductive.... Through low wages and precarious employment the labourer is periodically expelled from the capitalist sector and sent back to the rural area. The maintenance of an economy providing collective security is an absolute requirement for these laborers. The solution is either to perpetuate the obsolete rural economy or set up some form of integrated rural economic organisation able to fulfill such needs. In this case the function of protection will be emphasized and take a religious and paternalistic turn (1973:89).

In many ways, the Poor Laws functioned as such an "integrated economic organisation," providing some kind of security for the rural population,

although it served primarily the interests of the landowners themselves, allowing non-subsistence wages. Workers were encouraged to work as little as possible, since nothing could get them more than the officially stated minimum subsistence. Not surprisingly, contemporaries noted generally rising poor rates and falling productivity. This system created for the rural laborer an almost complete dependence upon local parish authorities who administered relief; this relief took the "religious and paternalistic" tone described above, and was usually described as "charity."

This paternalistic interest often took the form of local parish officials attempting to control the size or reproduction of the wage-laboring population, primarily through the discouragement of marriage and the setting up of a new household. These interests were largely contradictory to the interests of the workers themselves. Young single men, for example, under parish poor law received much less than married men, and were the ones most likely to be forced into such degrading parish labor as road gangs. Single women were often put into the position of needing a marital union to guarantee some sort of economic security, however precarious, especially in rural areas where servanthood seems to have been their only alternative as an unmarried woman. In addition, children could bring some supplementary income, either in assisting their mother in her tasks, or as servants (female) or wage-laborers (male) contributing to the family income. Parish authorities, on the other hand, feared the creation of new pauper households dependent upon local relief. In some nineteenth century Swiss and German states, legislation was enacted prohibiting the marriage of the poor; in these areas, up to 40% of the female population would remain single

at the age of 50 (Van de Walle 1968:486-487). Such Draconian measures were not enacted in England, but rural officials were vigilant in monitoring the behavior of the poor, especially non-settled parishoners whose children might become dependent on local relief. Under the Poor Laws, a man was legally responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children. Where a pregnancy was discovered, a single woman might be forcibly married, her suitor sometimes having to be brought to the wedding ceremony in chains (Marshall 1954:299); an unwed mother might be driven from the parish itself. Similarly, large-scale removals of "undesirables" were often undertaken by local officials. In the county of Middlesex, for the period 1690-1698, a total of 212 persons were removed from particular areas - 49 single women, 9 widows, 47 women with children, 56 children, 40 married persons, and 11 single men. Women with or without children appear to have been at a particular disadvantage in terms of their economic security and dependence. Migratory married couples were more welcome in the towns, and greeted with suspicion by authorities in rural areas, where a laborer's wages were not considered sufficient for the maintenance of a family (Marshall 1954:298).

Familial organization among the rural working class participating in domestic industry or cottage manufactures entailed an even greater intensification of the household as a labor pool, as a production unit, than is the case with agricultural wage laborers. Within both strata, the disappearance of traditional peasant control of land tenure had several consequences. The elder generation no longer controlled the pre-conditions for the formation of marriages of their children, possessing no sanctions such as disinheritance which they might

conceivably have exercised previously. The patriarchal control of marriage choice loses its power base among the working class; furthermore, the impetus to form three-generation households dissolves with the destruction of land inheritance as a determinant of residence patterns. Marriage and family formation are no longer, in Medick's phrase, "tangibly determined" by property relations, although they still retain their bases in the foundations of the production process, specifically labor requirements. The choice of marriage partner can become, for example, more individualistic and personal, although this choice is still shaped by material considerations, such as the skills and work capacity of the partner. Various studies of Western European artisan marriages show very high rates of occupational endogamy. Within domestic industry, female occupational skills in textile manufacture come to replace dowries of cash or small pieces of land, as among the peasantry, and dowries of cash as among female servants. Earlier marriages appear within this class because a young couple is at the peak of their productive capacity, and the creation of a large family is the only method by which to acquire some economic security. In addition, the replacement of cash by work skills as a form of dowry would discourage delays in marriage. Marriage and family were necessary to the survival of the worker in domestic industry. A shoe-maker from Northampton describes this situation:

No single-handed man can live; he must have a whole family at work because a single-handed man is so badly paid he can scarce provide the necessaries of life.... As soon as they (children) are big enough to handle an awl, they are obliged to come downstairs and work (Medick 1977:305).

Children were, to use the then contemporary phrase, the "capital of the poor man." Their labor, which was more intensively exploited than

among wage-labor families, was necessary for the maintenance of the family. Early capitalist production was labor intensive in nature, with a low productivity per worker due to the slight possibilities for capital investment in labor-saving devices (Coleman 1955:287). Perhaps child labor is historically present wherever productivity and wages are low. In any case, early child labor legislation was greeted with great hostility by the rural working classes; child labor seems to have become a moral issue of public concern only with industrialization, and the consequent employment of children outside the domestic unit.

The material conditions of domestic industry therefore provided the impetus for relatively earlier marriages, and the retention of child and adolescent labor within the home. There is a fundamental change in the self-regulating domestic system of balancing a laborer/consumer ratio. Among this class, servanthood as a precursor to adulthood largely disappears, as adolescents remain living with their parents and participating in the family economy. Commonly, such households come to contain kin such as nieces and nephews, unmarried brothers and sisters, widows and widowers, in addition to the married couple and their children. On the surface, this residence pattern may appear to be merely a variation of the older peasant extended family. Medick's lengthy analysis (1977) of the processual features of domestic industry family life, considers this pattern as arising from fundamentally different conditions than those which confront the peasant household. He conceptualizes this "extended" household structure as representing a worker "redistribution of poverty," an attempt to resolve the fundamental contradictions of proto-industrial household development. This

contradiction is formed in part both by the external conditions of production, engendered by the prevalence of poverty and low wages, and the internal cyclical development of the family itself. As was stated previously, reproductive strategies within this class entailed the creation of large numbers of children, which soon increased the supply of labor out of all proportion to demand. Domestic workers were unable to live independently, yet the necessary raising of children both distracted the mother from her necessary labor and, in the early stages of family formation, increased the number of non-producing consumers within the household. As children grow, they can work and contribute substantially to the family's economic resources, but their early marriage and departure to begin their own household brings their parents and younger brothers and sisters back into poverty:

It was precisely this temporal disjunction between production and reproduction within the proto-industrial family which trapped it between... 'primary misery' (arising from the conditions of the proto-industrial system) and... 'secondary poverty' (brought on by the family life cycle) (Medick 1977:306).

The creation of "extended" domestic groups among rural industrial workers, the recruitment of labor from kin circles, represents an attempt to counterbalance an unfavorable laborer/consumer ratio within such households, the 'secondary poverty' engendered by the family life cycle. In contrast, the "extended" or stem-family amongst the feudal peasantry was created as a consequence of the need to maintain the integrity of the peasant holding.

It is a commonplace of social scientific thought that capitalist social relations work to "undermine" the family unit, largely because its productive functions are thought to disappear. Such may be the case with, for example, families dependent upon agricultural wages,

but it has been demonstrated that different classes and occupational groups will follow fundamentally different developmental patterns. Peasant families are linked by production and consumption, as are those also of rural industrial workers; the domestic structure of these two types may show certain parallels in organization, though these similarities derive from different material conditions. Households of agricultural wage laborers are linked primarily by consumption; though such households may become potential wage-pools (a feature encouraging structural cohesion), other factors may diminish a structural cohesion, particularly the migratory nature of early agricultural wage labor, and the placement of children as servants in other homes. The evolution of the English working-class family shows a cyclical rather than a unilinear development, a development which can be understood only by reference to historically specific productive conditions. It is a flexible entity constantly adapting to provide for the needs of its members. Later conditions, particularly those generated by industrialization may also show a trend toward the formation of extended households. One study of nineteenth century Lancashire workers shows a common three-generation household pattern in which grandparents take residence in their children's homes in order to take care of their grandchildren while the parents work (McKendrick 1974:185). Among French-Canadian factory workers in nineteenth century New Hampshire, patriarchal extended households were maintained and intensified, functioning to recruit, house and discipline a reliable labor force (Stone 1977:664). Such organizational patterns may produce changes in other areas of social behavior, particularly in regards to women's roles. Medick writes of the rural industrial family:

The restrictive conditions under which the family economy had to ensure its survival in fact necessitated a 'maximum... of familial cooperation.' This had to be achieved by optimally redistributing and balancing the scarce labor resources of the individual family members. Under certain branches of production this imperative could go so far as to erase the traditional division of labor between the sexes and the age groups (1977:26).

Some aspects of the effects of familial organization upon socio-sexual role behavior and attitudes will be discussed in Chapter 8.

An awareness of the developmental cycle of the rural peasant or working-class family provides both a contextual framework and a fuller comprehension of many other aspects of social life, particularly the role of the "aged" or the "young." "Adolescence" is one such topic, and although it is not possible to present such a discussion here, a few observations can be made. Throughout the late medieval and early modern period, the life experiences of adolescents as a specific age-group are inextricably linked with their positions within the developmental cycle of the family, particularly as this is manifested by familial labor requirements according to different production relations. Labor redistribution will influence age-specific and sex-specific mobility patterns. Servanthood or apprenticeship was a life experience of many adolescents in late medieval and early modern England, specifically within smaller peasant households and wage-labor households. The decline of servanthood as a life-stage of individuals involved in domestic industry has already been noted, though this decline may have been sex-specific (male) in nature. Peasants might send one or two daughters away to earn their keep, while weavers might keep more co-residing children at home under labor-intensive production conditions. Other artisans such as shoemakers might send away daughters because the smaller labor force they required was filled by themselves, their

wives, their sons and male apprentices. Within one 1599 English community, almost 75% of girls seem to be living away from home as servants (Tilly and Scott 1978:35).

Several features would militate against the creation of a rural adolescent sub-culture, particularly the placement of adolescent servants in scattered homes, their submission to strict patriarchal master control, and their isolation from one another as a peer group. In large urban areas, however, especially London, male apprentices formed a highly visible sub-culture, documented by Steven Smith (1973). Within London was concentrated the largest adolescent peer group in England, active as a group in political and religious rioting, and social activities. A commentator in 1647 described the apprentices as a group with "...a kind of supernatural sympathy, a general union which knits their hearts in a bond of fraternal affections" (Stone 1977:376). Control of their behavior came to be seen as a serious social problem. City regulations governed their dress, their hair length and social activities; adults commonly viewed them as "rowdies." In rural areas, servanthood comes particularly to be seen as a form of adolescent social control, and master-servant relations were often overtly antagonistic in nature. English servants seem to have been especially prone to charges of "immorality"; female domestics in seventeenth century England provided the vast majority of infanticide defendants (Beattie 1975:84), though they were rarely found guilty. The changing socio-sexual experiences of single working-class women will be analyzed in Chapter 8, as part of a general attempt to locate some of the historical roots of sexual attitudes and the relation of such ideological issues to changing domestic organizational patterns.

CHAPTER 7

IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF FAMILY LIFE

Any discussion of the changing conceptions and conditions of English family life must address itself to the major work in the field, Lawrence Stone's 1977 work The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800. An attempt to satisfactorily summarize the contents of this large study (over 700 pages) would be pointless; the book itself may be consulted. But a number of Stone's arguments, particularly those pertaining to peasant and early working-class family life will be examined and evaluated.

Stone's book is largely a history of the emotional components of family life, a discussion of the historical development of the types of sentiment found within it. Since 1500, the English family, in Stone's schema, has gone through three main stages. The first of these is the "Open Lineage Family" (1450-1630), a type, Stone implies, which characterizes feudal peasants as well. This "type" is characterized by member loyalty to the larger kin group, rather than the "nuclear family"; the interests of the group predominate over the interests of the individual. Such families, according to Stone, lack relationships of emotional involvement and mutuality; this lack inhibits the development of emotional or sexual satisfaction:

What is being postulated for the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is a society in which a majority of the individuals that composed it found it very difficult to establish close emotional ties to any other person. Children

were neglected, brutally treated and even killed; adults treated each other with suspicion and hostility; affect was low and hard to find (1977:99).

Stone proposes a rather crude causal model of high mortality rates being responsible for this state of affairs:

The omnipresence of death coloured affective relations at all levels of society, by reducing the amount of emotional capital available for prudent investment in any single individual, especially in such ephemeral creatures as infants. One result was the neglect of infants by their parents, which in turn reduced the latter's prospects of survival. This was a situation which encouraged the concept of the family as a group of replaceable surrogates, both spouses and more particularly children (1977:651-652).

This supposed neglect and abuse of children, it is proposed, had damaging psychological and social consequences:

(C)hild-rearing practices, especially swaddling, the lack of a single mothering figure, and the crushing of the supposedly sinful will by brute force at an early age, tended to create special psychological characteristics in adults: suspicion towards others, proneness to violence, and an incapacity to develop strong emotional ties to any one individual (1977:653).

Stone's assertions on the "emotional timbre" of peasant and early working-class families can be attacked on a number of grounds. His dependence on largely ruling class literary works for this information is disturbing, though perhaps understandable. Also suspect is his practice of deducing emotional or ideological states from bare demographic data, particularly mortality rates. No one will deny that mortality rates, both adult and infant, were extremely high in the medieval and early modern periods. A number of demographic studies attest to this fact. Inquest analyses from fourteenth and fifteenth century English parishes show an infant mortality rate in the range of 30-50% (Hanawalt 1977). Infanticide does occur in late medieval England, though it does not seem to be especially prevalent (Kellum 1974); there are some indications however, as discussed in the previous

chapter, that ninth century French peasants may have been practicing systematic female infanticide on smaller, less productive farms. Detectable infanticide in early modern England occurs most frequently among female domestic servants (Beattie 1975:84); their fear of immediate dismissal or public humiliation upon bearing an illegitimate child can hardly be construed as a cultural pattern indicating a social neglect or abuse of children. Remarriage of widows and widowers is especially common where adult mortality is also high. One study of a sixteenth century parish of Surrey County reveals that over a 30 year period, 27% of all brides were remarrying widows, with the median time between the death of one's spouse and subsequent remarriage being 9 months for widows, and 4 months for a sample of widowers (Hair 1970:64). Social practices such as these may conflict with our own sense of social decorum, but they hardly indicate an emotional void in reference to marital partners.

Stone is correct in his descriptions of the demographic realities of medieval peasant life, but is rather too confident in extrapolating from these what the "emotional timbre" of family life must have been. In addition, he makes a number of unsupported general assumptions. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Smith (1979) has demonstrated that the development and maintenance of extended kin ties among the feudal peasantry was conditioned by the nature and size of property holdings. It cannot be said that the "peasantry" forms a homogeneous category, characterized by "member loyalty to kin." As a residence group, the nuclear family already exists within the poorer households of the community. Stone is not sensitive enough to the possible variant features of peasant domestic organization. It is true that the

development of a corporate village sense, especially in areas of primogeniture and stem-family development, may impede the creation of a corporate family sense, as Stone would agree; but areas of partible organization, correlated ecologically with areas of weak lordship, may encourage the development of a strong family identity. Such evidence would be very difficult to measure, if it is in fact measurable. In conjunction with his assumptions about extended family life, Stone posits that the "communal" or "kin" raising of children would of necessity "distance" the child and biological parents, producing cold and emotionally tenuous relations. Putting aside objections to ethnocentric psychologism, there is no evidence that English peasant children were raised in a communal situation; it appears rather that as in most agrarian societies, children were cared for by their mothers, elder sisters or grandparents within the household, and that by the age of 8-12, children were relatively independent and performing agrarian tasks around the home. Edward Shorter, in his The Making of the Modern Family, makes similar charges of parental neglect in early working-class families, of abandonment of children to murderous wet-nurses; his charges have been challenged by Tilly (1978:430). Counterexamples of Stone's assertions of parental indifference can be found in manorial coroner rolls. In a study of such material, Hanawalt (1977:20-21) provides several examples of peasant parents sacrificing their own lives attempting to save their children from fires or accidents.

Ultimately, evidence concerning the "emotional timbre" of peasant family relations is ambiguous and difficult to come by. It is not even clear how this question could be operationalized, what kind of data would be useful, or how that data is to be interpreted. We possess

no writings by peasants themselves on their families, and the types of emotional relations present within their families, though a study of peasant folk songs might be of some value in this regard. Such writings of the later English bourgeoisie form the main source of information on how they perceived these things. In place of this personal testimony, one must turn to other sources of information. Some legal statistical data is available for the English feudal peasantry, but can be subject to widely diverging interpretations. Crime records in general, and homicide records in particular, may tell us something about the tensions existent in medieval social and family life, though these rates are everywhere recognized as very crude indices. Hanawalt (1977) has computed from her surveys of medieval rural inquest records that only 8% of homicide cases in feudal England were inter-familial, in comparison with rates of 53% for modern Britain and 30% for the United States. These very different rates tell us nothing in themselves, and are subject to contradictory interpretations. Does this low feudal rate indicate that familial relations were so close, or so intense, that the preservation of peace and the prevention of violence within the domestic sphere were of paramount importance? Or does it mean that family structures and relations were looser, with less intense familial relationships; this lack of intensity would make domestic tensions less prevalent. A case could be made for either explanation. There may as well be other unknown factors involved.

Familial or domestic tensions and hostilities may be endemic in any peasant society where access to productive resources such as land is limited; Berkner (1972) provides some eighteenth century Austrian examples of such issues arising in father and son relationships.

Property disputes may arise in many situations, particularly between male siblings within unigeniture inheritance systems, and between remarrying widows and their own children or step-children. In one study of fourteenth century English crime, it was discovered that property disputes account for fully 33% of the familial cases brought before the manorial courts (Westman 1974:7). Remarriage of widows and consequent threats to the orderly inheritance rights of her children provide the impetus for the prevalence of such ritualized hostility as the charivari displays. An interesting corroborating fact is the extent and popularity of the Cinderella stories in European folklore, stories highlighting the conflicts between children and their step-parents. Goody notes that over 130 versions of this particular folktale have been recorded from all over Europe (1976:54).

Yet, this evidence on the possibilities of tension and disruptions within the peasant household does not lead one to conclude, as Stone has done in his book, that peasant family life was nearly void of positive emotional content; for an excellent critique of Stone's book, emphasizing this point, see Thompson (1977). We have given the previous example of parents sacrificing their lives for their children. Peasant attempts to provide something for their non-inheriting children, such as small sums of cash or household goods, can also be construed as indications of some kind of familial feeling or desire to provision children as much as possible, rather than attitudes of cold indifference. Ultimately, the lack of peasant writings themselves, especially important in such a subjective field of investigation, presents great obstacles to such an understanding.

Stone is much more persuasive, and has at his disposal much more

supporting evidence, in his discussion of the ideological and emotional historical development of the bourgeois family. This history spans the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. This development is not my particular interest in this study; a small sketch will be made however to provide some background material for the discussion in the next chapter on women, sexuality and patriarchy. Bourgeois familial development, according to Stone's conceptual scheme, is comprised of two major overlapping types, the second developing out of the first. He begins with the Restricted Patriarchal Family, historically prevalent among the upper classes c. 1530-1700. From this type emerges c. 1640-1800, the Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family.

The ideological components of the Restricted Patriarchal Family are most forcefully expressed by the Puritan writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Stone, the main features of this family type are the increasing isolation or withdrawal of the family from social life, the dissolution of kin and local community loyalties and an increasing attachment to the ideals of the nation state and the Church. In sum, we see the emerging bourgeois class defining its own individualistic social and economic interests. Within religious and political thought, domestic and family life become a microcosm of social life, organized on principles of hierarchy and deference, particularly the total submission of wife and children to patriarchal authority. Puritans and other Protestant English sects endowed "marriage" and "family" with great ideological significance. Women especially, though possessing spiritual equality with men, are seen as being necessarily subordinate to the wills of their husbands. It is in the sixteenth century that English law develops the view that

a wife and her husband became one unit in marriage, a major consequence of this being that the husband acquires control of his wife's property or estate. As one woman complained in a contemporary newspaper, "matrimony to a woman (is) worse than excommunication in depriving her of the benefit of the law" (Stone 1977:195). The patriarchal nature of early English bourgeois life has received much critical attention, scholarship for the most part based on literary evidence such as sermons, letters and diaries. Excellent studies include Thomas (1958), George (1973), Zaretsky (1976:38-55), and Hill (1972).

In the seventeenth century, the Restricted Patriarchal Family comes to be replaced by a family type in which further internal bonding is strengthened by relations of greater emotional and affectional import. The Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family comes to be organized upon principles of person autonomy and stronger emotional ties; children become increasingly the centre of home life, and a greater sense of equality emerges among family members. In conjunction with this, there develops in the eighteenth century an increasing conceptual dichotomy of work/home; according to Zaretsky (1976), this dichotomy creates a whole new subjective world, and a number of new psychological needs and concerns. These specific issues, because of their class origin and temporal dimension, are not the major concerns of this present study. Several features of these developments are, however, relevant to an understanding of changing social attitudes to English women in the transition from feudal to capitalist social relations. These features, especially in their relation to sexual ideology, will be analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

WOMEN, PATRIARCHY AND SEXUALITY:

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The history of human sexuality cannot be examined in isolation from other social phenomena, particularly cultural conceptions of sex roles and proper sex-role behavior, ideas on marriage, and ideological issues such as "human nature" and "morality." (In western societies, "morality" has largely confined its concerns to sexuality.) These in turn must be related to the larger material bases of a society, its social organization in general and more particularly, the organization of production, reproduction and consumption. This relation is not a mechanical one, one of direct "cause" and "effect," but a relation mediated through a number of processes--economic, sociological, psychological and ideological--which are ultimately, however, grounded in social conditions. It is the task of the investigator to seek out and explain these complex mediations, and the possible contradictions that arise from them. Particular ideas or modes of behavior may develop in opposition to each other; or they may produce unintended consequences. To complicate the issue further, there is the usual problem in historical research of the nature of sources dealing with social attitudes and social behavior, particularly in regards to human sexuality. Most relevant English sources are literary in nature, and largely the products of ruling elites, be they the feudal aristocracy, the clergy,

or the emerging bourgeoisie of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their writings on morality in general, and sexuality in particular, are polemical in nature and consist largely of attacks upon the sexual behavior, real or supposed, of other social classes. Historically, it appears that such attacks constitute a common weapon in ideological or class struggles (the sexual depravity of the "present" as opposed to a golden age of the recent "past" is a closely related historical constant). The European clergy of the Middle Ages ceaselessly labelled heretical sects, rightly seen as a subversive threat to the socio-political power of the Church, as sexually depraved. The feudal aristocracy assures itself that the peasantry is "brutish" and incapable of the finer nuances of courtly love. The emerging bourgeoisie acquires a moral superiority by denouncing with great regularity the sexual degeneracy of an aristocracy in decline. In addition, they are appalled at the immorality of the working class. A witness to the Poor Law Commission of 1834 reports:

(I)t is scarcely possible in a civilised country and where Christianity is professed, for there to be less delicacy on the point of chastity than among the class of females in farm services and the labouring community generally.... The moral sanction is wholly ineffective amongst the labouring classes (Thomas 1959:206).

In our own day, somewhat anachronistically, similar charges are hurled by various competing social factions, charges whose origins appear largely to be derived from Biblical strictures filtered through a Hollywood vision of "decadence" and "corruption."

It appears that sexual ideology and censure (defined usually in terms of "promiscuity," and largely in terms of women) forms a part of a larger social power structure, especially its components of domination and subordination. This is especially relevant if one is interested

in examining social attitudes about women and how these may vary historically and by social class.

In this chapter, I hope to explore some of these attitudes, especially concerning peasant and working-class women; an attempt will be made to discuss these attitudes and their relations to economic status and position in social power structures, as well as some aspects of their historical development in relation to the social transformation of feudalism to capitalism. Much of this discussion will concern itself with a key element in sexual ideology, the notion of "patriarchal" control of women, and their submission to male authority both at the family and higher social levels. Until very recently, these issues have been largely ignored or avoided by historians and social scientists, for a variety of reasons. In addition, much if not most of the existing relevant material is, as stated before, literary in nature; it concerns itself largely with discussion of "woman" and her nature, written by and for ruling class men in a patriarchal society. Fortunately some independent data does exist against which some of these literary attitudes may be measured and evaluated. Finally, both the scarcity of data and the lack of developed higher-level conceptual and theoretical approaches to human sexuality make inevitable the fact that much of what will be discussed is frankly exploratory and speculative in nature. Issues will be raised to which answers cannot presently be given.

Let me begin by framing the time period in question with quotations of widely held views in contemporary sources upon the nature of female sexuality. The first is taken from the fifteenth century "Malleus Maleficarium," the standard "textbook" on witchcraft and its

detection in medieval Europe. It is a good example of the clerical misogyny reflecting the social and medical ideas of the time: "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust which is in women insatiable" (Zilboorg and Henry 1941:159). Four hundred years later, Acton, the leading late Victorian authority on sex, informs his readers that "happily for society," the notion that women possess sexual feelings is a "vile aspersion" (Thomas 1959:215). An article in an 1850 English newspaper echoes this doctrine of woman's basic asexuality, with some relief:

Were it not for this kind decision of nature, which in England has been assisted by that correctness of feeling which pervades our education, the consequences would, we believe, be frightful (Thomas 1959:215).

These quotations illustrate a number of points. Social conceptions of sexuality show a history of variation (in this case, a complete reversal). They do not remain an historical constant. Furthermore, sexuality, in recent Western societies at least, becomes a focal point or locus for social anxieties and concerns for social control. Some of these concerns are inextricably bound with cultural power patterns of domination and submission, both class and individual in nature. In these quotations, and within the feudal and capitalist societies which produced them, women are viewed as being necessarily subordinate to men, be they sexually voracious or completely desexualized. Patriarchal control of women, reflected in male conceptions of female sexuality, cannot be adequately understood solely as an historical creation of capitalist social relations, although many writers seem to think so. This belief is not supported by the anthropological or historical evidence.

SEXUAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

What is the relationship of capitalism to patriarchal ideology, and patriarchal expression in sexuality, particularly differential norms of sexual behavior for men and women, the familiar "double standard"? This question has in recent years produced a growing literature, particularly in feminist and Marxist academic circles. For reasons of space, it is not possible to present here a full discussion or evaluation of the sometimes complementary, sometimes opposing arguments being put forth. Rather, an attempt will be made to draw upon this source material and relate it to my main concern, the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and the effects upon women. For fuller discussions of the relation between Marxist and feminist dialogues on these issues, especially the relation of patriarchy to social organization, see Hamilton (1978:76-105), Zaretsky (1976:13-22), and especially Middleton (1974).

Many feminist-oriented scholars have asserted that Marxist and New Left scholarship has been negligent, inadequate or inconsistent in its approaches to issues such as sexuality, patriarchal ideology, and the oppression of women. They especially object to the commonly held view that male control over women (of which sexual ideology is a part) arises predominantly under capitalist social relations; here, it is claimed, the exclusion of women (particularly bourgeois women) from social production, and relative confinement to a strongly demarcated domestic sphere, resulted in their increasing dependence upon and subordination to men. This, many critics maintain, is correct as far as it goes, but remains an inadequate conceptualization of the problem. Male control over women is not viewed as being historically specific

to the development of capitalist productive relations, but as a cultural universal; its nature, strength and specific structure will vary however with the material conditions of existence. One of the most visible components of this domination is male control over women's sexual activities, although it should be noted that sexual control in itself does not necessarily imply economic oppression. The two processes are analytically distinct and although they usually exist in conjunction with each other, the exact relation between them remains unclear.

What are the origins of a possibly universal sexual stratification? This has become one of the central questions in a number of recent feminist and "anthropology of women" investigations. Simple "materialist" explanations for its prevalence, such as the universality of child-bearing, or an almost universal sexual division of labor, possess little explanatory power at all. There is nothing inherent in the natural process of childbirth itself that would give rise to social polarities of power. Sexual division of labor is so endlessly variable in form that in itself it can hardly be considered a fundamental or even biological determinant. Some investigators consider the exact social nature of the sexual division of labor to be the key to an understanding of sexual stratification, with social status, power or prestige being dependent upon the economic importance of the respective sexes' productive activities. This is a useful insight, but a limited one; in itself, it does not account for the fact that even in societies where women produce the greater part of subsistence (such as in hunting and gathering societies), it is the male activities such as hunting and warfare to which high prestige values are attached. Obviously, many complex variables are at work here. Certain aspects of sexual

stratification, primarily the idea of women as male "property," have been considered to be a basic feature of kinship systems; women are controlled both because of their reproductive functions (Collins 1971: 8), and the necessity of their being exchanged among kin groups to form alliances. Male control of female sexuality, as typified by cultural ideals of female chastity and pre-marital virginity, can in some ways be conceptualized as the operation of property rights over women, rights enforceable only by males. The relationship between possibly relevant variables is, however, unclear. For example, sexuality and reproduction are inevitably linked, until very recently, for women, but not necessarily for men. Furthermore, contrary to expectations, cultural expectations of female chastity or virginity are not restricted to class societies or societies characterized by the existence of private property, where proper heirship becomes a paramount concern. Sexual control over women is found even in societies organized around egalitarian rather than class relations:

Such a society, an Indian tribe in Central Brazil, is described by Yolanda and Robert Murphy in Women of the Forest. They found that although women do not necessarily recognize the ideology of male dominance, as expressed in religious ceremonies, male sexual control over women does exist. 'We tame them with the banana' is the succinct boast of the Mundurucu men, who resort to gang rape in extreme circumstances (Legates 1979:261-262).

Recent investigations into the problem have been influenced by symbolic anthropology in general, and Levi-Strauss in particular, especially his idea of a universal socially perceived polarity and tension between "nature" and "culture" (social life). According to this perspective, there exist universal cultural conceptual categories which are necessary pre-conditions for the development of sexist ideology; this ideology will take its particular forms according to

social and historical circumstances. Ortner (1974:71-92) uses this perspective in a very interesting examination of sexual stratification. She claims that all societies, within their symbolic systems, conceive of "nature" and "culture" as opposed spheres of activity or states of being, and that all societies value "culture" over "nature." Because of their more sustained and intimate role in reproduction (i.e. such physiological functions as lactation and menstruation), women's bodies seem to place them "closer" to "nature." Women's closer identification with "natural" existence places them in such nurturant social roles and duties as child-care and cooking, a closer association with the "family" in general. Again, cultural conceptual categories come into operation; the "family" is seen as closer to "nature" than extra-familial systems of social organization, hence potentially disruptive and necessarily subordinated to social control:

...the family (and hence women) represents lower-level, socially fragmenting, particularistic sorts of concerns, as opposed to inter-familial relations representing higher-level, integrative, universalistic sorts of concerns. Since men lack a "natural" basis (nursing, generalized to child care) for a familial orientation, their sphere of activity is defined at the level of inter-familial relations. And hence, so the cultural reasoning seems to go, men are the "natural" proprietors of religion, ritual, politics, and other realms of cultural thought and action in which universalistic statements of spiritual and social synthesis are made (Ortner 1974:79).

Ortner's suggestions are interesting, but speculative; the breadth and widespread implications of her ideas precludes any attempts here to discuss or evaluate them systematically. (A similar approach characterizes Mary Douglas's stimulating study of cultural patterns of taboo, Purity and Danger.) It is not my intention here to present an ethnographic check-list of examples of sexual stratification at all levels of cultural development; any number of "anthropology of women's"

texts (i.e. Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974) or articles such as Ortner's will provide the reader with this.

Social control over women, as expressed in the imposition of stronger restraints on female as opposed to male sexual behavior, is found under both feudal and capitalist social relations. English feudal society was a patriarchal society at all levels, as evidenced by medieval Christian conceptions of sexuality in general, and women in particular. The intellectual and philosophical superstructure of medieval society was largely articulated by a clerical class; their world-view was grounded in the traditional Judaeo-Christian acceptance of sex as being entirely purposive, limited to a procreative function. Sexuality was both an imposed responsibility and a necessary secular evil, which could lead the faithful away from God if not controlled. This ideological outlook is expressed socially through such phenomena as the thoroughly ambivalent clerical attitudes towards marriage, the idealization or cult of virginity (especially female), and a pervasive misogyny. "Woman" is attributed the role of Eve, as a temptress leading men away from God. Here perhaps are some parallels with Ortner's previous suggestions, on the fundamental tension that exists between the "family" and "society," and their cultural expression in medieval Christianity. The "family" represents man's most fundamental, hence "natural" attribute. The philosophical duality of medieval Christian thought (the "flesh" vs the "spirit"), as well as its emphasis on the importance of a hierarchical and integrated social formation, would perceive this "natural" attribute of man with some suspicion. Women's more visible connection with such "animal" functions as reproduction would place her in a position necessitating close social control. In

fact, medieval opinion was in accord on the sexual voracity of women and their constant seductive threat to men. Women were weak, guided by essentially evil impulses. Medieval dogma on the inferiority of women drew not only from this religious/philosophical fund, but received full support from the medical and scientific views of the time (see Bullough 1973). Interestingly enough, some of these ideas undergo an almost complete reversal with the emergence of the bourgeoisie. Early Protestant theology, closely allied with early bourgeois English social thought, was still fundamentally uneasy about human sexuality; in contrast to medieval beliefs, however, it taught the essential goodness of family life and conjugal relations; life-long celibacy such as was professed by the priesthood was considered "unnatural." Later bourgeois thought (as seen in the two Victorian sources quoted at the beginning of this chapter) came to assert that women had no sexual drives at all, and were constantly threatened by male lust. The historical development of some of these changes will be discussed at length at a later point.

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF SEXUAL IDEOLOGY

Medieval Christianity produced an elaborate philosophical superstructure concerning human sexuality. On a more mundane level, it can be said that all societies control sexual behavior in some way, especially in its reproductive functions. In peasant societies where land inheritance and the reproduction of an adequate labor force are of paramount importance, sexual activity will be channeled into specific areas. On a broader cultural level, societies in which women can inherit productive property such as land, are typified by strong social rules governing both marital and sexual activities; in such

societies, for example, female pre-marital chastity is upheld (Goody 1976:14). In feudal England, the lord of the manor took a great interest in such matters. Female serfs who produced illegitimate children were liable to be fined in court, and unchastity for women produced greater consequences than male activity. An heiress could be denied access to her inheritance for unchaste behavior--sex outside of marriage--, a penalty not usually demanded of men. Women's sexual activities in general were viewed as a positive threat to male patriarchal control. In light of this, it is difficult to accept occasional descriptions of female "independents" in medieval life. Boulding describes these women as:

...the hardworking, fun-loving women who moved partnerless through the Middle Ages, always able to pick up the pennies they needed at a fair or celebration of some kind. When they were willing to settle in a town, they were not infrequently supported by town councils, glad to have resident entertainers for their community. Besides being entertainers, they ran the soup kitchens and the first-aid stations in wars, including the Crusades. They were good soldiers when they were needed as fighters.... Marriage was not on their agenda, and at times, up to one-fourth of the women in Europe belonged in their company (1976:109).

Boulding gives no sources for these assertions, and nothing in the historical record evidences such a large-scale social phenomenon. It is not entirely clear what she is in fact describing. Vagabonds? Circus Performers? Prostitutes? Female Mercenaries? No doubt such individuals existed, but the "fun-loving" independent woman Boulding so admiringly describes was a rare individual in medieval society, and would likely have encountered much social hostility.

The interests of both the manorial lords and the clergy in enforcing "proper" sexual behavior amongst the peasantry was met with

parallel interest at the village level. Individualistic sexual or "romantic" interests represented potential threats to village corporate or kin interests especially where marriage and reproduction formed the basis of land control and the operation of tenancies. In contrast to the often romanticized view held of pre-industrial or pre-capitalist village life, examination of manorial records reveals much monitoring of individual behavior by kin and neighbours, endemic gossip, and a minimum of privacy. While data of this type are rare for early medieval peasant life, sixteenth century English Church court records exist in great numbers. These were known as "bawdy courts" because of their almost exclusive concern with such sexual crimes as fornication, bridal pregnancy, incest, adultery, prostitution, transmission of venereal disease, and slander concerning sexual matters. From these records, it appears that most convictions were brought about through neighbour informants and local "constables" who were empowered to enter any house at will. Married couples whose behavior was considered indiscrete were also liable to prosecution. On the basis of these records for the sixteenth century counties of Essex and Colchester, one researcher (Emmison 1973:1) estimates that between 5000 and 7500 persons of each adult generation (out of an estimated adult population of 35,000-40,000) were presented for immorality with subsequent fines or penance; approximately 13-20% of the adult population was, at one time or another, brought up on morals charges. Evidence such as this should sensitize the researcher to the wide gulf that may exist between socially proscribed and actual behavior, in feudal or any society. Unfortunately, little more can be said about the actual sexual behavior of the English peasantry, or their own ideas about sexuality.

The changing patterns of familial and domestic organization (as discussed in the two previous chapters) produced changing conceptions of human sexuality, particularly female sexuality. These conceptions were largely mediated through ideologies of marriage and the family, transformations which were class specific in development. Although evidence for attitudes about marriage, the family, and women, is much more readily available for this period than for feudal England, it must be kept in mind that most of this largely literary data is bourgeois in origin; their experiences and ideas should not be projected upon the working-class, whose material conditions of marriage and family formation were fundamentally different. Early English bourgeois attitudes, especially as manifested in Puritan thought, have received much critical attention (see Schnuker 1975; Hamilton 1978:50-75; Zaretsky 1976; Thomas 1959; Stone 1977; and especially George 1973). On the other hand, the effect of developing capitalist social relations upon the sexual ideology of the working class has received little attention at all. Where such research has been conducted, it has largely been as a result of Edward Shorter's work and the debate his ideas have stimulated. In fact, most of the recent studies in the historical sociology of sexuality can be attributed to his influence.

Shorter, in a series of controversial articles, has proposed that one of the historical consequences of capitalism has been the "liberalization" of sexual attitudes and behavior among the working class. His work is of particular interest here as it concerns itself with working-class women. His basic argument is that beginning in the eighteenth century, capitalist social relations freed young women from patriarchal control and encouraged the development of widespread

attitudinal changes: "heightened" individual consciousness, the pursuit of ego-gratification, and ego-expression through increased romantic and sexual activity. The social connection between coitus and marriage is smashed: "For the unmarried woman, capitalism meant personal freedom, which meant in turn sexual freedom" (Shorter 1973:624). Shorter's ideas can be criticized on many grounds, but his arguments and the counter-claims they have generated deserve a closer examination.

His proposals are largely the result of the deduction of attitudes and attitudinal changes from changing demographic patterns in England and Western Europe, especially illegitimacy rates. It is generally accepted by historical demographers that eighteenth century Western Europe witnessed soaring bastardy rates, correlated in time with the full-scale emergence of capitalist social relations (Shorter 1972: 351). Regional variations do occur, but there does seem to be an associative trend of large numbers of illegitimate births with changing social organization. In Germany, for example, counties with the greatest polarization or concentration of land ownership have as well the highest rates of bastardy (Shorter 1971:250 note 21). England experiences its greatest numbers of illegitimacies from the mid sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth centuries (Laslett and Ooster-veen 1973). Throughout England, France and Germany, working-class single women, especially domestic servants, seem to be especially prone. From these rising rates, Shorter assumes an increase in pre-marital sexual activity, resulting from a relaxation of traditional moral strictures. These changing demographic patterns are really the only historical data Shorter uses for his ideas; he has, however, elaborated at some length on these ideas, and his proposals are of

value in promoting a discussion of female sexuality and its relations to the larger bases of social organization.

The most common approach to the study of changing sexual attitudes and behavior is the "culture disorganization" model (Shorter 1972); here, it is assumed that socio-economic change produces or increases "libertine" sexual behavior by the corrosion of established norms, "social anomie" or "value confusion." This "collapse of morality" perspective comes to view sexual changes as a kind of social pathology; economically marginal groups of individuals are perceived as being especially susceptible. "Scientific" approaches such as this have a distinctly moralizing tone, and are easily assimilated into the ideological weaponry of a reactionary ruling class. The "culture disorganization" model constitutes essentially a static view of social life, with hidden or stated assumptions of a "golden age," eternal moral verities, and the operation of sexual behavior and attitudes in a social vacuum. In itself, this kind of conceptualization is useless scientifically and can tell us nothing of processes of attitudinal change, their origins and development.

It is true, as Shorter claims, that with the dissolution of peasant life many restrictions on the sexual behavior of the young were weakened. As family life is disassociated from the transmission of property, patriarchal control over marriage and reproduction is correspondingly reduced:

When for young people the tie between family enterprise and labor force participation was broken, the link also was smashed between marriage and sex (Shorter 1972:338).

As older forms of social organization collapse, Shorter posits the creation of a new proletariat or working-class subculture, typified

in part by the development of a new value system for women. The major components of this new morality are a sense of personal autonomy, ego-gratification and self-expression. Within this subculture, sexuality becomes "expressive" rather than "purposive," a positive desire for physical and emotional gratification. (Usually, these kinds of intellectual developments are attributed to the rise of bourgeois individualism and romanticism, rather than developments internal to the working-class.) Shorter believes that this value-structure develops within the proletariat as a result of their exposure to the psychological component of individualism within the market relations of capitalism. The positive creation of a new value system could only develop however under certain pre-conditions - the break-up of traditional family patterns, the rejection of community and parental control, and finally, the disappearance of property transmission (land) as the major structural determinant in familial relations. Early capitalist development had provided these necessary pre-conditions, and had provided as well a positive impetus for value creation:

(I)t was inevitable that individuals caught up in capitalism would apply to other realms of their lives the lessons they had learned in the market, so that the pursuit of self-interest and the maximization of individual advantage would come to hallmark such intrinsically non-market realms of life as attitudes to authority, awareness of obligations to the community, and indeed responsibilities to the family itself (Shorter 1972:354).

Unfortunately, Shorter is extremely vague about the exact nature of the social mechanisms by which such a value transfer could take place. As far as I am able to determine, the only specific mechanism he discusses is education; his analysis is a bizarre combination of murky psychologism and convoluted logic:

The final sensitizing variable crucial in value change appears to be exposure to primary education. Formal education, if only of a rudimentary sort, is calculated precisely to give the individual a sense of self by teaching logical thought. Learning to read requires the acquisition of linear logic, which mode of thought then surely spreads to other intellectual processes and levels of perception, to say nothing of the logical capacities instilled by other kinds of formal education. Logic and rationality are just other words for ego control, the psychostructural state of mind whence expressive sexuality flows. It is surely significant that the illegitimacy explosion coincided closely in time with the spread of primary education and in space with the diffusion of literacy among the population.... It appears that liberal sexual attitudes probably flowed from heightened ego awareness and from weakened superego controls (Shorter 1971:252).

In other words, Shorter claims that a causal relationship exists between the acquisition of literacy and liberal sexual behavior. His "explanation" merits little consideration. An examination of materials on early working-class education (Thompson 1965:375-379) would lead one to an opposite conclusion. It seems that the Methodist Sunday schools prevalent during the period were more interested in perpetrating, in Thompson's phrase, "psychological terrorism" upon working-class children, and in inculcating attitudes of deference to authority and religious guilt.

In sum, Shorter claims that throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a working-class subculture with a free and easy attitude towards sex was created. He attributes this development to the breakdown of traditional patterns of familial organization and parental control, in conjunction with mass exposure to a "market-place mentality" and the creation of a new value system of individualism and self-expression. Subsequent declines in illegitimacies in the nineteenth century are a product of the spread of contraceptives. These developments, according to Shorter, arise within English and

Western European urban working-class communities, spread to rural areas, and subsequently diffuse upwards to the bourgeoisie:

The middle classes, as the lower, were exposed to marketplace mentalities and education, yet their sexual attitudes throughout the 1800's remained defiantly puritanical.... How ironical that those middle-class types who preached the gospel of autonomy - liberalism, laissez-faire capitalism, and universal suffrage - were the most repressed people sexually. In class terms, they were the movers and doers, the bourgeoisie d'affaires. Yet those who favored economic collectivism and political community were the most liberated sexually, with a high degree of personal control and autonomy. In class terms, they comprised the proletariat (Shorter 1971:256).

This "irony," we are informed, can be explained by the dissolution of family life among proletariats, and the survival of notions of "petty-bourgeois honor" among the bourgeoisie.

Shorter's whole thesis, that working-class women were pioneers in freeing sexuality from the constraints of marriage and reproduction is romanticist in the extreme and entirely without historical foundation (one wonders, for example, how he can speak of female emancipation without widespread knowledge and use of birth control). His conclusions depend entirely upon rising illegitimacy rates throughout England and Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From this increase, Shorter assumes that more and more unmarried women were having sexual intercourse. But in reality, what is present here is the survival or persistence of feudal peasant courtship practices under new socio-economic conditions, conditions inhibiting marriage upon discovery of pregnancy (these conditions will be discussed in more detail at a later point in the chapter). Pre-marital intercourse in English peasant communities was considered a formal betrothal of marriage; marriage usually took place once a woman became pregnant by her suitor (see Sheenan 1971). This practice no doubt ensured that

the peasant wife could provide children, necessary as labor sources in agricultural communities. Bridal pregnancy, though denounced by the Church, was so common in peasant society that it aroused little, if any, social condemnation. Hair (1970), in a study of English rural bridal pregnancy, found approximately 20% of the brides in his sample to be pregnant for the period 1540-1700, and 40% of all brides in later periods. Other demographic analyses have confirmed this phenomenon. The practice seems to have been present in English rural areas well into the nineteenth century; an author of an 1833 study of rural laborers comments:

Sexual intercourse was almost universal prior to marriage in the agricultural district...marriage was generally deferred till pregnancy fully declared itself (Thomas 1959:206).

Two recent articles, by Tilly, Scott and Cohen (1976), and Fairchilds (1978), directly address Shorter's conclusions, and provide a number of criticisms of his work. Above all, they claim, Shorter has confused the connection between fertility patterns, as expressed in high illegitimacy rates, and women's familial and working experience; he provides no evidence that eighteenth century women were either working more in the market-place, hence assimilating "capitalist" values, or that their family roles and attitudes differed substantially from their immediate predecessors.

Tilly, Scott and Cohen (1976) provide abundant evidence that in the eighteenth century, women remained and predominated in customary work, in domestic service, domestic industry and handicraft production. Their source material is French, but the situation of English working-class women was similar, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. There were no revolutionary changes at this time in terms of working women's

increasing participation in capitalist production, a trend which would be necessary to support Shorter's hypotheses. In England, large-scale participation of females in factory work begins only in the middle of the nineteenth century. In fact, early capitalist development may have reduced women's participation in certain economic sectors; the reorganization of agriculture and its effects upon female wage labor have already been described in Chapter 5.

Young single women who did work away from home were not seeking emancipation, or asserting a new-found independence, as Shorter claims. They were, rather, seeking work where they could find it; in many cases, they sent some of their wages to help support their families back home (see Braun 1966 for Swiss examples), and attempted to maintain ties with their families. They worked out of necessity for the survival of their families. The fact that female wages were usually the lowest on the wage scale made it impossible in most cases for them to live independently although domestic industry, as discussed in Chapter 6, encouraged younger marriages. Those areas which did offer employment to single women were precisely the areas least conducive to the expression of personal autonomy:

In Italy and France, factory dormitories housed female workers, and nuns regulated their behavior and social lives. In the needle trades in British cities, enterprising women with a little capital turned their homes into lodging houses for piece workers in their employ.... Domestic service, the largest single occupation for women, was also the most traditional and most protective of young girls! (Tilly, Scott and Cohen 1976:455)

In sectors such as domestic service, marriage was discouraged; unmarried pregnancy had dire consequences, usually automatic dismissal, poverty, and the eventual turning to prostitution in order to survive.

There is no evidence at all for the existence of Shorter's "libertine" worker sub-culture in Western Europe, either in rural or urban areas. Sexual activity on the part of young single women represented not a search for emancipation, but an attempt to create a family unit, supportive both economically and emotionally. Consensual unions, for example, represent an old working-class phenomenon in French and English urban communities.

Free unions seem to have increased as more and more young men and women left their native towns and villages and moved to larger towns or cities. For some, there was no point in legalizing a union because there was no property to protect. For others, consensual union was the prelude to marriage - the period during which women worked and accumulated the dowry required for a "proper" marriage. Children born in this period were legitimated at the wedding ceremony. Often, young people did not know priests or ministers to perform the ceremony. Many too, scorned the rituals of the Church (Tilly, Scott and Cohen 1976:469).

There is nothing existent in such social patterns to indicate that sexual activity for single women had become transformed into an activity of "ego-gratification," resulting from the acquisition of an "autonomous" personality. How then can increasing illegitimacy rates be explained? As was mentioned previously, much of this can be attributed to the survival of old value expectations within new social contexts - primarily, expectations of marriage upon discovery of pregnancy in a social situation where many factors such as poverty and the instability of local populations due to labor migration worked against the fulfillment of these expectations. In a study unique for Western Europe, Fairchilds (1978) explores the sexual attitudes and expectations of early working-class women themselves, based on personal testimony rather than statistical data. Her research complements that of Tilly, Scott and Cohen; the materials she uses are French in origin, but her

conclusions can be generally applied to the experiences of working-class unmarried women in England. Fairchilds has analyzed the contents of 3000 eighteenth century "declaration de grossessen," taken from the public records of the town of Aix en Provence for the years 1727-1789. Required by French law, these "declarations" were personal statements on the circumstances surrounding their illegitimate pregnancies, dictated by the women themselves. Fairchilds concludes that lower-class women, most born and raised in rural areas, viewed sex as a means to an end, as a pledge or betrothal of marital intent. This was a common courtship practice in European peasant communities. There is no evidence of women seeking personal or sexual fulfillment in these documents. Sexual foreplay is very rarely mentioned and intercourse itself is brutal and quick, taking in some cases the appearance of a ritual rape. Feelings of guilt usually accompanied the act. In other words, personal gratification is rarely, if ever, a female consideration in these encounters. As might be expected, some of this activity was coercive in nature, female domestic servants especially, being exploited by their masters. But most of it appears to be attempts by the women involved to establish a relationship leading to an expected marriage. Fairchilds finds that almost 70% of these sexual encounters were with identifiable social equals, and it is her impression that most of the marital promises made by the men involved were sincere. Fairchilds concludes:

Marriage was of overwhelming importance to lower-class women. Not only did it legitimize their sexual relationships in the eyes of society, and save them from the scorn accorded to spinsters, but it also provided them with their only hope of economic security (1978:641).

Delays of marriage, or the dissolution of the engagement took place for a number of reasons: the saving of a dowry, the wish to inform one's parents (usually living some distance away), and most important, the high mobility of working-class men, who were often forced to travel great distances to find work. Illegitimacy rates were generally lower in rural areas than in the towns and cities. A more stable population ensured less anonymity and more social cohesion, hence a greater potential for community pressure upon the man to marry once a pregnancy had been discovered. An additional factor may have been the fact that early marriages were made possible, and even encouraged, by rural domestic industries; as Medick has pointed out, the young household was at the peak of its productive capacity. Fairchilds notes (1978:651) that illegitimacies increase dramatically in rural areas of Provence after 1750; this she attributes to worsening economic conditions for the peasantry, with attendant difficulties in saving dowries and increasing rural labor migration delaying or terminating marital engagements. Parallel social developments occur in England; here, the extremely high cost of wedding licenses (the issue of which had become a profitable business for the Church) enhances the difficulties of establishing a "proper" marriage. Hill (1972:253) finds that at York, in the 1630's, the average price for a marriage license was 10s; at Norwich for the same period, they averaged at more than 13s. Quite simply, many working-class individuals could not afford Church weddings. Such weddings became eventually a status symbol only the rich could afford, a status symbol that the poor came to despise.

Shorter's hypotheses on the effects of capitalist social relations upon single working-class women do not withstand critical scrutiny.

Yet there does appear to be some transformation of women's social roles, as expressed in a new assertiveness or participation in political action. This transformation particularly affects married working-class women, the wives of artisans and women in domestic industry. New labor conditions seem to be responsible for this, although the exact relation between a changing sexual division of labor, and a new "public life" for women is unclear. As was discussed in Chapter 3, Middleton has found little evidence that women took active roles in local feudal class struggles, on issues such as rent or labor services. There is, however, a long tradition of female participation in the heretical sects of the Middle Ages, movements in which political and economic aspirations were merged with millinerian ideas. Protestant sects, with their emphasis on female spiritual (rather than secular) equality, attracted many women, especially wives and daughters of urban artisans and the bourgeoisie. In many cases, involvement in these religious struggles led to "unnatural" feminine behavior, the flouting of conventional social behavior; Protestant women holding public debates with Catholic priests, as occurred in France, is just one example. These movements are, however, beyond the scope of the present study, although a close examination of them would no doubt be useful in discovering how medieval women attempted to wield power.

Within certain branches of early capitalist organization, specifically domestic industry, household organization could be characterized by a flexible allocation of sex-role responsibilities and duties. This flexibility appears to be much more pronounced than within the feudal peasantry. Women were in the vanguard of peasant household industries; as the centres of the household, they could control food expenditures,

which meant deciding on how most of the family's income was to be spent. Among cottage workers, husbands might perform such traditional female tasks as cooking, sweeping, and milking the cows while his wife weaved or spun. This behavior aroused horror in contemporary bourgeois observers, who saw in this a complete reversal of the natural order (see Medick 1977:312-313). Public action and public consumption (i.e. communal drinking, smoking in public), which Medick views as symbolic extensions of sex-role prestige, come to characterize female behavior among the rural artisan classes. This "public action" might be articulated as political action, such as the eighteenth century grain "riots" characteristic of English rural communities. These were community actions organized against excessive profiteering in grain, changes in old marketing practices, and generally perceived violations of the legitimate rights and concerns of the community. It appears that in England for the first time, women become involved publicly in great numbers in local class disputes, much more so than within feudal class struggles. This can be at least partly attributed to their new power base, the partial dissolution of rigid sex-role functions within, at least, the artisan and domestic industry classes. These grain "riots" were often, if not usually, initiated by women. Thompson describes such a scene in 1801 Sussex, quoting from contemporary sources:

A number of women...proceeded to Gosden windmill where abusing the miller for having served them with brown flour, they seized on the cloth with which he was then dressing meal according to the directions of the Bread Act, and cut it into a thousand pieces; threatening at the same time to serve all similar utensils he might attempt to use in the same manner. The amazonian leader of this petticoated convalcade afterwards regaled her associates with a guinea's worth of liquor at the Crab Tree public house (1971:82).

The new influx of working-class women into political activity is doubtlessly the impetus for the phenomenon of "political transvestism." In a study of the significance and symbolic import of ritualized sex-role inversion in early Western Europe, Davis (1975) has discovered the appearance of "political transvestism," public or class actions such as the tearing down of enclosures, or the punishing of rent-gouging landowners, by men dressed in women's clothes. It appears historically in the seventeenth century, and continues into the eighteenth century, especially in England, France, Wales and Scotland. These actions appear to be predominated by men involved in artisan or domestic industry trades. Davis gives some English examples:

In 1629, 'Captain' Alice Clark, a real female, headed a crowd of women and male weavers dressed as women in a grain riot near Maldon in Essex. They sacked a ship thought to be exporting grain to the Netherlands. In 1631, in the dairy and grazing sections of Wiltshire, bands of men rioted and levelled fences against the king's enclosure of their forests. They were led by men dressed as women who called themselves 'Lady Skimmington.' In May 1718, Cambridge students followed 'a virago or a man dressed in woman's habit, crowned with laurel' to assault a Dissenting meeting house. Two years later, laborers in Surrey rioted in women's clothes, and at mid-century, county men disguised as women tore down the hated tollbooths and turnpike gates at the Gloucestershire borders, to the sound of drumming and loud shouts. In April 1812, 'General Ludd's Wives,' two weavers dressed as women, led a crowd of hundreds to smash steam looms and burn a factory at Stockport (1975:148).

It might be suggested that men adopted female dress in order to evade identification by authorities, although the records give the impression that many of these disguised men wore highly theatrical and conspicuous clothes; in addition, little seems to have been done to complete a total female disguise, as beards are often mentioned. "Political transvestism" was an act of a symbolic nature and is in



itself suggestive about social developments concerning women. As with all behavior containing symbolic or ritual elements, causal variables may be quite complex. There seem to be at least two levels of symbolic thought working here. The first of these is the growing participation of women in community political actions, such as the grain riots. At a deeper level, it represents a view of women as embodying a "moral authority" in regards to community action, legitimising dissent by making it appear to be the protection of customary community rights. In other words, the participation of women (or in this case, men appearing publicly as women) lends a moral authority to action. This belief, which will be discussed at a later point, is essentially a creation of bourgeois ideology, an ideology which in its development stressed the natural "goodness" of the female (in opposition to feudal ideology, which emphasized woman's essential sinfulness). It could be argued then that "political transvestism," as a social phenomenon, represents a fusion of these two different impulses: the public participation of women in social and political activities, arising from artisan social life, and on the other hand, the natural goodness and moral superiority of "woman," a belief filtering down from bourgeois thought.

Among the newly emerging bourgeoisie, new social concepts of the family, marriage, and women develop. The main ideological features of the bourgeois family have already been discussed in Chapter 7. Here, I will expand upon those features directly relating to women, their sexuality, and patriarchal authority. Although the experiences of bourgeois women are not my main concern in this present study, the attitudes developed towards them are the attitudes of the new ruling

class, and these attitudes come to dominate all levels of social life. The central core of these developments is the investiture of the "family" and "marriage" with great ideological significance, and a consequent change in attitudes towards family life and women's place within it.

Within the bourgeoisie, women come more and more to be defined strictly by their role within the family, as "wives" and "mothers." Attendant upon these changes is the development of new ideas about sex-role behavior and female sexuality in general. These changes, and the relationships between them are quite complex. Bourgeois ideology produced the dialectical effect of both "constraining" sexuality in some areas (especially the maintenance and elaboration of patriarchal sexist attitudes), and "liberating" it in others (specifically, the increasing separation of sexual behavior itself from a narrow reproductive function, a development allied with and propelled by such cultural trends as affective individualism, subjectivism, and romanticism).

The gradual withdrawal of bourgeois women from productive activity has come to be seen as the primary structural determinant of these new ideological perspectives. Middleton traces this development very clearly:

Though long pre-dating the advent of capitalism, sexism nevertheless received powerful reinforcement and was stimulated into new forms of expression as a result of the exclusion of the wives of the bourgeoisie from the market sectors of the economy during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Simultaneously, the increasing predominance of the capitalist mode of production over other economic forms gave rise to an ideology that not only urged the untrammelled ascendancy of economic activity as such, but asserted that the free market was the natural form of economy, and even that its principles underlay all forms of economic activity. Since women, or rather bourgeois women, were now excluded from participation in

the market sectors, bourgeois ideology (in incorporating the beliefs of sexism) came to the conclusion that women, in the confines of their homes, were marginal to the central processes of social life. The spheres of men and women, sundered in actuality, were held to be separate on the grounds of natural distinction, and the life deemed appropriate for the wives of the bourgeoisie was raised to an ideal plane far removed from the vital yet mundane activities in which their husbands were engaged. Moreover, since this exclusively male activity consciously embodies the principles of rationality and economic aggression, it is not surprising that the feminine character was now defined in terms of their opposites: irrationality, intuition, emotionality, empathy, passivity, etc. The dependency of women on men (which was real enough among the bourgeoisie) and the restriction of the feminine role to wifedom and motherhood, confirmed a situation where women invariably lived through other people (their husbands or their children) or, more accurately, through other males (1974:181-182).

This social understanding of the isolation of the "family" from the "economy," and the subsequent creation of a psychological "public" and "private" domain develops in early capitalism with the breakdown of bourgeois household production. This development was given ideological impetus with newly emerging Protestant theologies, especially Puritanism. The relation between the rise of capitalism and religious developments has, of course, produced a voluminous literature; this relation was not merely, however, bourgeois naked self-interest finding expression in new ideologies sanctifying market relations. Several of the new sects, especially Puritanism, contained elements hostile to merchant capitalism, with repeated condemnations of "rising greed" and economic exploitation.

Early English Protestant thought was not homogeneous in nature, but the new importance of the "family" and "conjugal union" as the cornerstones of social life was unanimously proclaimed. They were perceived as being especially necessary for the maintenance of social

stability. A typical opinion is that of the seventeenth century preacher Gouge:

Marriage is the Preservative of Chastity, the Seminary of the Commonwealth, seed-plot of the Church, pillar (under God) of the world, right-hand of providence, supporter of lawes, states, orders, offices, gifts and services-the glory of peace, the sinewes of warre, the maintenance of policy, the life of the dead, the solace of the living, the ambition of virginity, the foundation of countries, cities, Universities, succession of Families, Crownes and kingdomes; Yea (beside the being of these) its the wellbeing of them being made, and whatsoever is excellent in them, or any other thing, the very furniture of heaven (in a kind) depending thereupon (Hamilton 1978:56).

In seventeenth century Western Europe, conceptions of marriage and the family as "seminaries of the Commonwealth" were closely allied to the political processes of the strengthening of the state. Jean Calvin, for example, viewed the subjection of a woman to her husband as a guarantee that both would defer to the authority of centralizing governments; French legislation of the time explicitly recognized that the strengthening of paternal control within the family was a necessary and complementary aspect of a strong and centralized political state (Davis 1975:128).

This perceived social function of the bourgeois family, esteemed as a building block and reflection of the body politic, imparted new meanings to women's role within it. Zaretsky (1976:28) has noted that this involved a simultaneous advance and retrogression in her status, for she came to be fixed more firmly than ever within the family unit, in her capacities as wife and mother; on the other hand, the "family" came to possess a higher status than ever before. There is at this time little or no change in woman's generally considered inferiority to men. Medical and scientific concepts of the seventeenth century

are little changed from the preceeding medieval period, especially in considerations of female sexuality (see Smith 1976 for a discussion of seventeenth century gynecological theory). There are the beginnings, however, of more positive views of human sexuality and reproduction than in the medieval period. Sexual activity for women comes to be seen as necessary for their well-being. Married women were thus considered to be healthier than widows or virgins. Life-long celibacy, a medieval virtue, ceases to be exalted (especially for men) and comes to be regarded as something quite unnatural. A new sanctified view of "motherhood" emerges, a view quite foreign to feudal culture in spite of a pervasive medieval iconography relating to the Virgin Mary and the Christ child. Puritan ideology especially lauded motherhood as necessary both to women's salvation, and the total scheme of salvation (Schnuker 1975). This new cultural emphasis and sanctification of women's role in reproduction comes to develop its own antithesis. Using French sources, Aries (1972:106) discovers that open allusions and discussions of birth control among bourgeois women appear in the seventeenth century. Birth control itself comes to be less linked, as formerly, with judgements about its degenerate and near criminal nature, and a number of texts indicate an increasing female frustration with frequent pregnancies. English evidence indicates a similar trend. Whether this new awareness is limited to bourgeois wives, or encompasses working-class women as well, is difficult to determine. Most of the relevant source material is comprised of women's diaries, letters and memoirs, the products of a literate class. Intellectual developments such as these are instrumental in establishing the pre-conditions for the division of

sexuality itself from procreation, and the related development of the ideology of romantic love as the basis and 'raison d'etre' of marriage.

Yet, these developments must be viewed in the social context of the strengthening of patriarchal controls within the bourgeois family. In spite of the fact that sexual fidelity and moderation are expressed as being the "duty" of both sexes, it is female sexual behavior which receives the most attention. Thomas expresses this asymmetrical concern in his quotations from a number of sixteenth and seventeenth century English sources:

(F)undamentally, female chastity has been seen as a matter of property; not however, the property of legitimate heirs, but the property of men in women. The language in which virginity is most often described should tell us this, for it is that of the commercial market. 'The corrupting of a man's wife, enticing her to a strange bed,' says The Whole Duty of Man, 'is by all acknowledged to be the worst sort of theft, infinitely beyond that of goods.' A maid who loses her virginity is described by a sixteenth century writer as 'unthrifty' and a hundred years later, a poet tells us that 'Wives lose their value if known once before.' In other words, girls who have lost their 'honor' have also lost their saleability in the marriage market (1959:209-210).

The sixteenth century writer Vives expresses these patriarchal concerns more bluntly:

A woman hath no power of her own body but her husband ...thou dost the more wrong to give away that thing which is another body's without the owner's license (Thomas 1959:213).

The harshness of this cultural pattern of domination and submission was tempered in the bourgeois family by the dictums of "companionship" and "conjugal affection"; the full flowering of "romantic love" was a somewhat later historical development (perhaps as contradictions within the bourgeois family are intensified?). In the early centuries of the bourgeois/Puritan family, "love" as the guiding impulse in the

choice of a marriage partner was viewed warily, especially when property concerns were involved. Under feudal Catholicism, "love" was generally conceptualized as related to spirituality and love of God, while "courtly love" (largely a literary fiction and very restricted in its application) denied the compatibility of love and marriage altogether. This denial can no doubt be attributed to the fact that most aristocratic marriages were arranged, with little concern for individual choice.

The historical evolution of the social ideology of "romantic love" is a complex development. Many aspects of this development are beyond the scope and concerns of this particular study, but several of its developmental pre-conditions can be traced to features of the sixteenth and seventeenth century bourgeois family. Of primary interest is the fact that the economic dependence of bourgeois women upon their husbands increases as their role in social production diminishes. The anthropologist Levi-Strauss (1971) has suggested that a sexual division of labor, observed in most if not all human societies, constitutes a social device to institute a reciprocal state of dependence between the sexes. Historically, this reciprocal dependence was shattered in the bourgeois family, as it loses its productive functions and becomes almost exclusively a unit of consumption. With these factors in mind, Roberta Hamilton's work is of especial interest. She proposes (1978:100) that "romantic love" as the central, socially defined reason for marriage is perhaps a necessary historical development within the family under capitalism. As the family becomes almost entirely a unit linked by consumption, new and more powerful ideological components are needed

to reinforce its structure; "romantic love" becomes the "glue" which bonds the family unit together after its economic structural bases have been undermined. The reciprocal nature of the sexual division of labor is eroded within the bourgeois family. Men are no longer at least partially dependent upon the labor of their wives, wives no longer perform important duties, domestic or otherwise; "love" becomes the sole legitimate reason for marriage and the raising of a family.

Both Hamilton's and Levi-Strauss's insights on the social nature of inter-sexual relationships are suggestive, but speculative. "Romantic love," the individual choice of a partner because of the perceived gratification (emotional and otherwise) that partner will provide, may be a social creation peculiar to conditions found under capitalist social relations. In other cultures, primarily those organized through kinship, the existence of corporate kin groups controlling productive resources such as land, may lead to the development of proscriptive marriage rules, inhibiting the development of "romantic love" as a social ideology. It would be presumptuous and arrogant, however, to deny that affectional or emotional bonds exist in these societies for this reason. Unfortunately, these kinds of questions and issues have been largely ignored by anthropologists.

It has been suggested that "romantic love" is an ideology especially suited to the existence of patriarchal relations within the early bourgeois family. Within this situation, marriage becomes woman's prime social expectation; yet, the only resource she possesses is her sexuality. Collins elaborates upon this, and points out in particular the elements of female sexual repression inherent in "romantic love," and how this repression comes to serve the interests

of women themselves:

The most favorable female strategy in a situation where men control the economic world, is to maximize their bargaining power by appearing both as attractive and as inaccessible as possible. Thus develops the ideal of femininity, in which sexuality is idealized and only indirectly hinted as an ultimate source of attraction, since sexuality must be reserved as a bargaining resource for the male wealth that can only be stably acquired through a marriage contract. An element of sexual repression is thus built into the situation in which men and women bargain with unequal goods.... In contrast to the male supported female chastity norm of traditionalistic societies, the romantic sexual repression is upheld principally by the interests of women. A hierarchy of moral evaluation emerges among women, in which women who sell their favors for short-run rewards (prostitutes, "loose" women) are dishonored; this moral code reflects female interests in confining sexuality to use as a bargaining resource only for marriage.... Within marriage itself, women can use their improved bargaining position to demand the extension of sexual property norms to the husband. Adultery becomes tabooed not only for women, but for men (1971:13-14).

Within this ideological superstructure, developing under conditions in which women are becoming economically and socially dependent upon men, one can detect several elements of bourgeois familial and domestic patterns; these include notions of "possession" of one's partner, and especially the ideal of "femininity" itself, arising from a strong polarization of sex role behavior and expectations. "Femininity," defined in terms of passivity and purity, becomes a moral virtue preserved by female isolation from the "real" world, and confinement to the domestic sphere. This definition is no doubt at least partly responsible for the elaborate mystification and idealization of relations between the sexes in later bourgeois thought, its conceptualization in terms of spiritual devotion and aesthetic beauty. An intensification of this patriarchal outlook is expressed in the growing belief that women (at least upper class women) were basically

asexual, as illustrated by the nineteenth century comments quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Within this social context arises a dialectic of purity and degradation in regards to women, expressed in the opposition of working class to bourgeois females in the outlooks of bourgeois men. The conditions of working class life were antithetical to the development of an ideology sanctifying women's socio-economic isolation from the world. These women, active in the "real" world, and lacking the leisure time and resources to cultivate "femininity," were characterized by an "animal" or "lascivious" nature. Hence, they were more sexually "available" to bourgeois men; social contempt and sexual desire are not necessarily incompatible, and may in fact be complementary attitudes in situations where sexual behavior contains elements of power relationships. These kinds of intellectual and social attitudes are most intensely expressed in nineteenth century England. Fascinating as they are, however, they are beyond the historical scope of this present study.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

Unfortunately, many discussions of the influence of capitalism upon "the family" or upon "women" are phrased in such general or polemical terms as to be meaningless. One of the results of this study has been to discover how class specific such transformations are, for the material basis of domestic organization will vary significantly with different class or occupational conditions. Domestic organization itself is structured by the interplay of two analytically distinct yet mutually dependent social spheres - the external conditions of production (features such as land inheritance patterns, the existence or importance of wage labor, and employment opportunities) and the internal developmental dynamic of the household itself, a constant adjustment of balancing of labor resources with consumer demands. Within feudalism, patterns of domestic organization are structured by such "external" conditions as inheritance practices (with variations arising out of primogeniture and partible systems), and the nature of surplus extractive relations present, be they labor rent, money rent, or a combination of these. The holding itself was the basis of the rent-producing labor force. The internal development of the peasant family itself, the expansion and contraction of the household, was manifested both by a cyclical redistribution of land (sub-letting) and a cyclical redistribution of labor,

predominantly in the form of adolescent servanthood. These redistributive processes functioned within the context of such productive conditions as the size of the family holdings. The poor would send their children away, the middle peasantry responded to labor needs by the maintenance or extension of kin ties, while the richer peasantry would hire servants where required, the children of the poor. Various features of feudal domestic organization can perhaps be viewed as features coming into contradiction with feudal production relations, although this approach has not been emphasized here and would require further research. For example, both primogeniture and partible inheritance systems reproduce a stratum of either landless peasants, or peasants with fragmentary land holdings. In both cases, wage labor may become a necessary source of income. Does this represent a potential undermining of feudal productive organization (rent-producing land holdings)? Or is wage labor of some type an inherent feature of feudal social relations, hence lacking the potential to promote qualitative changes in the productive organization? In addition, as discussed in Chapter 4, attempts made by the peasantry to provide for children not inheriting land, may result in the very destruction of the material base of peasant domestic organization itself; the diversion of capital away from the farm, particularly under conditions of economic instability, may be a factor in the alienation of land from the peasantry. Again, whether this forms a general social trend, or is only of local or isolated significance, would require further investigation.

Land inheritance as a structural determinant disappears with the transition to capitalism, a development discussed in Chapter 5.

Under new capitalist relations, the vast majority of the rural population becomes dependent upon wage labor, either as agricultural workers or in the field of the domestic cloth industry. Labor resources and requirements become the decisive factor structuring domestic organization, as discussed in Chapter 6. These factors are also at work within feudal households, but in the context of land access and control. The effect of changing production relations upon domestic organization is not a straightforward or necessarily linear development. It does not necessarily involve, as is commonly thought, a change from an "extended" to a "nuclear" household, or a necessary shrinking of the domestic unit because of the assumed loss of its productive functions. This schematic approach is not sensitive enough to the particular effects of specific production relations. In a study of eighteenth century French rural poverty, Sabaen (1976: 98) detects a lack of familial cohesion and concludes that in the absence of property, there is little tendency to develop strong or cohesive extended kin ties. Smith's research (1979) confirms this pattern among the poorer feudal peasants, whose households are characterized by a lesser number of co-residing children, and a general lack of extended kin ties. This small "nuclear" household is also typical of agricultural wage laborers under early capitalism (see Chapter 6). Within his study, Smith found that it was the middle feudal peasantry that was the group most likely to develop extended kin ties. The polarization of the land-holding rural population in early modern England and the consequent disappearance of the middle peasantry altogether would have eliminated this kin tie expansion tendency. This pattern of "kin contraction" has also been noted for

the emerging bourgeois family (Stone 1977). Under certain conditions however, particularly where circumstances necessitate an intensive exploitation of the household as a labor pool, an opposite tendency develops, a tendency to intensify or extend familial/domestic relations. Medick (1977) has noted this process for proto-industrial workers, and the existence of "extended" households under later conditions of industrialization has been noted in Chapter 6. The reasons as to why wage families should in some cases be limited in size, as is the case with agricultural wage laborers, and "extended" under later industrialization (a period outside of this study) would be of great interest to investigate. Such differences are perhaps dependent on the levels of wages themselves (making cohesion economically desirable, a better balancing of labor/consumer demands) and the availability of wage labor for both women and children. These kinds of features are perhaps more common under conditions of industrialization; a comparative analysis is however, beyond the scope of this present study.

The roles of women within the domestic group, particularly their production functions, have also been explored, with an attempt made to discern changes in these roles, and how these possible changes are related to changing economic organization. Within feudalism, peasants entered the public domain as landholders. Women rarely inherited rights to land, and where they did so, it was usually as widows endowed with such by their husbands. Their rights were limited ones of maintenance rather than the ability to transmit the holding. A sexual division of labor does exist within feudalism; women did not necessarily participate in all surplus production activities. This

participation varies historically, and is grounded in the exact nature of the surplus-extractive or rent relations present. Variations in these include labor rent, money rent, and their combination; money rent can be further analytically divided into money rent generated from wage labor, or petty commodity production and marketing. Labor service rent and rent derived from wage labor become historically associated with a segregation of the sexes in respect to surplus production and domestic responsibilities. Middleton's research (1979) in particular discovers a distinct "housewife" role developing among this group, with a relative female isolation from surplus production activities. This stands in contrast to increased female participation where rent is generated through such activities as marketing of petty commodities. A "housewife" role then may show a cyclical historical development; it is a function of certain production relations, though these relations are not necessarily capitalist in nature, as has been sometimes assumed. It is true, however, that this role of confinement to the domestic sphere is maintained and intensified especially among the bourgeoisie; it is, on the other hand, weakly developed in the poorest strata, where economic flexibility and need militate against a female withdrawal from labor activities. Wage labor under feudalism has been discussed in Chapter 3. It should suffice here to note that women participated to a great extent in this labor, although they were concentrated in the lowest-paying occupations. The strength of this occupational segregation will vary, however, with the local availability of labor.

Women's roles and contributions in domestic production do undergo changes with the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and in some

cases a new more restricted role develops. This development is not specifically the result of a new cultural denigration of women appearing under capitalism, although some new ideological components occur, as discussed in Chapter 8. It is rather the result of changing economic conditions which entailed new relations of the household or domestic unit to production activities. It should be remembered then that peasant women were peasants first of all, and were affected as members of a specific class in the transition period. This seems to me a straightforward and incontestable point, but is rarely mentioned especially in studies which rely on bourgeois literary evidence to assay social attitudes towards "women." Early capitalism did create new restricted roles for women among the bourgeoisie, and within the agricultural wage labor class. Here, new forms of agricultural organization, particularly the growth of corn monoculture, adversely affected women workers. The reasons for this have been discussed in Chapter 5. Again, however, the labor intensive nature of early modern English agriculture ensured some kind of feminine agrarian presence, concentrated though it may have been at the lowest occupational levels. Outside of domestic industry, there were few economic opportunities for married women; it was not considered proper for them to work full time for wages. Within this class, and for female domestic industry workers as well, marriage was often necessary for some kind of economic security, however tenuous it may have been.

Some aspects of developing familial and sexual ideology have been investigated in Chapters 7 and 8, particularly how ideological developments may be related to changing social conditions. Much of what has been said is at a high level of analytical abstraction, and

frankly speculative in nature. I have concentrated here on patriarchal sexual ideology, and its relation to wider areas of social patterns of dominance and submission. Patriarchy is not a mode specific phenomenon; some suggestions have been put forward concerning the structural roots of sexism as it is manifested in such ideology, and the nature of these roots under both feudal and early capitalist social conditions. An example of changing ideological perspectives is the transformation of "woman" as a sexually voracious being in feudal thought, to a completely de-sexualized being within later bourgeois thought. Such changes are largely mediated through changing perspectives on marriage and the family, perspectives which may be class specific in nature and development. A lengthy analysis of Shorter's hypotheses on the "liberalizing" effects of capitalism upon the sexual attitudes of working-class women has been presented, and concludes that his ideas are without historical foundation. Women are still seeking marriage, and their sexual attitudes remained geared to this purpose. There are some indications, however, specifically among artisan and domestic industry groups, of a new, more visible social role for women, as expressed in communal political activity and a seemingly more developed "public life." Within these groups, the nature of the work process promotes a fluidity of accepted sex-role behavior, as manifested in the interchangeable performance of household tasks in some branches of domestic industry, and the lack of a developed "feminine" role or mystique which comes to develop among the bourgeoisie. Within the bourgeoisie, familial and marital relationships come to be ideologically sanctified. The most visible expression of this sanctification is the increasing polarization of sex roles

within the household (as women withdraw from social production and are increasingly confined to the domestic sphere), and the increasing emphasis on the emotional or affective content of family life. These developments merit further investigation, particularly the social and psychological consequences of familial isolation from social life (the creation of a private/public world dichotomy) and their influence on such subsequent intellectual developments as romanticism. It has been speculated that the emergence of the ideology of "romantic love" can be conceptualized as a cultural device to mask power relationships within the bourgeois family, as an idealization buttressing stress points. Or, it may represent a necessary cultural development once the disintegration of a reciprocal dependence of a sexual division of labor is effected by changing production relations. A fuller understanding of these questions would necessitate a separate investigation.

There exist then many related problems concerning women and familial organization that would merit further research. The changing social experiences of adolescents and the elderly are two such topics. The role of servanthood as an adolescent life experience has been briefly discussed in Chapter 6, particularly its relation to domestic labor requirements. Changing familial patterns may also have produced changes in the lives of the elderly. Under feudal social relations, inheritance of land was structured such that aged parents were ensured care and maintenance by their inheriting children. How are these conditions changed, and what consequences follow for the aged under conditions where the household becomes dependent upon wages? Further research may also delineate more clearly the relation of

changing English and Western European demographic patterns to evolving domestic or familial organization. Hajnal (1965), for example, detects a fundamental demographic shift in Western European marriage practices occurring within the transition period, a pattern not present in the feudal period. This shift involves a relatively high age at marriage, and a high proportion of the population who never marry at all.

Attempts to explain this shift in purely intellectual terms, by, for example, the spread of certain ideas about marriage (i.e. Noonan 1968) have not been satisfactory. Other scholars, such as Spengler (1968), speculate on the social and economic consequences of this fundamental change in marital practices, particularly its possible influence in determining subsequent economic development. An understanding of this demographic shift would necessitate investigating the relations of this development to changing domestic organization, as well as to changing production relations; how, for example, certain aspects of working-class life might encourage differing reproductive strategies. Possibly, age at marriage will be influenced by the economic opportunities available to women. Urban conditions may differ significantly from rural conditions in this regard. These issues and other related ones would require further extensive research. As this study has attempted to demonstrate, research of this kind necessitates a holistic perspective of social life and social processes, in particular an examination of the specific nature of production or class relations, their historical transformation, and the relation of these changes to such issues as the nature of family life and the social position of women.

REFERENCES CITED

- Aries, Phillipe
1972 "An interpretation to be used for a history of mentalities," in Popular Attitudes toward Birth Control in Pre-Industrial France and England, Orest and Patricia Ranum, editors. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, pp.100-125.
- Beard, Mary
1946 Woman as a Force in History: A Study in Traditions and Realities. New York: Collier Books.
- Beattie, John
1975 "The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth Century England," in Journal of Social History 8:80-116.
- Bennett, H.
1938 Life on the English Manor: A Study of Peasant Conditions 1150-1400. Great Britain: Cambridge at the University Press.
- Berkner, Lutz
1972 "The stem family and the developmental cycle of the peasant household: an eighteenth century Austrian example," in American Historical Review 77:398-418.
- 1973 "Recent Research on the History of the Family in Western Europe," in Journal of Marriage and the Family 3:395-405.
- Boulding, Elise
1976 "Familial Constraints on Women's Work Roles," in Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation, Martha Blaxall and Barbara Reagen, editors. Supplement to Spring 1976 issue of Signs: The Journal of Women in Culture and Society 1(3, Pt.2):95-117.
- Braun, Rudolf
1966 "The Impact of Cottage Industry on an Agricultural Population," in The Rise of Capitalism, David Landes, ed. New York: MacMillan Co., pp.53-64.
- Brenner, Robert
1976 "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," in Past and Present 70:30-74.

- Bullough, Vern
1973 "Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women," in
Viator 4:485-501.
- Casey, Kathleen
1976 "The Cheshire Cat: Reconstructing the Experience of
Medieval Women," in Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays, Berenice Carroll, editor.
University of Illinois Press, pp.224-249.
- Chambers, J. D.
1972 Population, Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial
England. London: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, Alice
1919 Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century.
London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd.
- Coleman, D. C.
1955 "Labour in the English Economy of the Seventeenth
Century," in Economic History Review, 2nd series
8:280-295.
- Collins, Randall
1971 "A Conflict Theory of Sexual Stratification," in Social
Problems 19(1):3-21.
- Davis, Natalie
1975 "Woman on Top," in Society and Culture in Early Modern
France: Eight Essays by Natalie Davis. Stanford
University Press, pp.124-151.
- Douglas, Mary
1966 Purity and Danger. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Emmison, F. G.
1973 Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts.
Colchester: Denham and Co. Ltd.
- Engels, Frederick
1973 The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the
State, Eleanor Leacock, ed. New York: International
Publishers.
- Everitt, Alan
1967 "Farm Labourers," in The Agrarian History of England
and Wales 1500-1640, Joan Thirsk, ed. Cambridge
University Press, pp.396-465.
- Fairchild, Cissie
1978 "Female Sexual Attitudes and the Rise of Illegitimacy:
A Case Study," in The Journal of Interdisciplinary
History 8(4):627-667.

- Faith, R. J.
1966 "Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs in Medieval England," in *Agricultural History Review* 14:77-95.
- Fortes, Myer
1958 "Introduction," in *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*, Jack Goody, ed. Cambridge University Press, pp.1-14.
- George, Margaret
1973 "From 'goodwife' to 'mistress': the transformation of the female in bourgeois culture," in *Science and Society* 37:152-177.
- Goldschmidt, Walter and E. J. Kunkel
1971 "The Structure of the Peasant Family," in *American Anthropologist* 72:1058-1076.
- Goody, Jack
1972 "The evolution of the family," in *Household and Family in Past Time*, R. Wall and P. Laslett, editors. Cambridge Press, pp.103-124.
- 1976 *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain*. Cambridge University Press.
- 1976b "Inheritance, property and women: some comparative considerations," in *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800*, Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, and E. P. Thompson, editors. Cambridge University Press, pp.10-36.
- Hair, P.
1970 "Bridal Pregnancy in Earlier Rural England Further Examined," in *Population Studies* 24:59-70.
- Hajnal, John
1965 "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in *Population in History*, D. V. Glass and D. Eversley, editors. London: Edward Arnold Publishers, pp.101-143.
- Hallam, H. E.
1958 "Some thirteenth century censuses," in *Economic History Review* 10(3):340-361.
- Hamilton, Roberta
1978 *The Liberation of Women: A Study of Patriarchy and Capitalism*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Hanawalt, Barbara
1977 "Childrearing Among the Lower Classes in Late Medieval England," in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 8(1):1-22.

- Hill, Christopher
1961 The Century of Revolution 1603-1714. London: Sphere Books.
- 1969 Reformation to Industrial Revolution: The Pelican Economic History of Britain 1530-1780. Penguin Books.
- 1972 The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution. New York: Viking Press.
- Hilton, Rodney
1953 "The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism," in Science and Society 17(4):340-348.
- 1969 The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England: Studies in Economic History. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- 1973 "The Manor," in The Journal of Peasant Studies 1(1): 107-109.
- 1974 "Medieval Peasants - Any Lessons?," in The Journal of Peasant Studies 1(2):207-219.
- 1975 The English Peasantry in the Late Middle Ages: The Ford Lectures for 1973 and Related Studies. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hindess, Barry and P. O. Hirst
1977 Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. and George Rude
1970 Captain Swing. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Homans, George
1941 English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century. Harvard University Press.
- Howell, Cicely
1976 "Peasant inheritance customs in the Midlands 1280-1700," in Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800, Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, and E. P. Thompson, editors. Cambridge University Press, pp.112-155.
- Hyams, Paul
1970 "The Origins of a Peasant Land Market in England," in Economic History Review, 2nd series 23:18-31.
- Kellum, Barbara
1974 "Infanticide in England in the Later Middle Ages," in The History of Childhood Quarterly 1:367-388.

- Krause, J. T.
1956 "The medieval household: large or small?" in *Economic History Review*, 2nd series 9:420-432.
- Lancaster, Lorraine
1958 "Kinship in Anglo-Saxon Society," in *The British Journal of Sociology* 9:230-250, 359-377.
- Laslett, Peter
1970 "The comparative history of the household and family," in *The Journal of Social History* 4(1):75-87.
- Laslett, Peter and K. Oosterveen
1973 "Long Term Trends in Bastardy in England," in *Population Studies* 27(2):255-285.
- Legates, Marlene
1979 "Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Nuclear Family," in *Women's Studies* 6(3):259-276.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude
1971 "The Family," in *Family in Transition: Rethinking Marriage, Sexuality, Child Rearing and Family Organization*, Arlene and Jerome Skolnick, editors. Boston: Little Brown and Co., pp.50-72.
- Marshall, Dorothy
1954 "The Old Poor Law 1662-1795," in *Essays in Economic History: Vol. 1*, E. M. Carus-Wilson, editor. London: Edward Arnold Publishers, pp.295-305.
- McKendrick, N.
1974 "Home Demand and Economic Growth: A New View of the Role of Women and Children in the Industrial Revolution," in *Historical Perspectives: Studies in English Thought and Society*, N. McKendrick, editor. London: Europa Publications, pp.152-210.
- Medick, Hans
1977 "The proto-industrial family economy: the structural functions of household and family during the transition from peasant society to industrial capitalism," in *Social History* 2(3):291-315.
- Meillassoux, Claude
1973 "The Social Organisation of the Peasantry: The Economic Bases of Kinship," in *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 1(1):81-90.

Middleton, Christopher

1974 "Sexual Inequality and Stratification Theory," in
The Social Analysis of Class Structure, Frank Parkin,
editor. Tavistock Publications, pp.179-203.

1979 "The Sexual Division of Labor in Feudal England,"
in New Left Review 113/114:147-168.

Midelfort, Erik

1972 Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684: The
Social and Intellectual Foundations. Stanford University
Press.

Mitchell, Juliet

1976 "Four Structures in a Complex Unity," in Liberating
Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays,
Berenice Carroll, editor. University of Illinois
Press, pp.385-399.

Noonan, John

1968 "Intellectual and Demographic History," in Daedalus
97:463-485.

Ortner, Sherry

1974 "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Women,
Culture and Society, Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise
Lamphere, editors. Stanford University Press, pp.67-82.

Raftis, J. A.

1964 Tenure and Mobility: Studies in the Social History of
the Medieval English Village. Toronto: Pontifical
Institute of Medieval Studies.

Ritchie, Nora

1962 "Labor conditions in Essex in the reign of Richard II,"
in Essays in Economic History: Vol. 2, E. M. Carus-
Wilson, editor. London: Edward Arnold Publishers,
pp.91-111.

Roberts, Michael

1979 "Sickles and Scythes: Women's Work and Men's Work at
Harvest Time," in History Workshop: A Journal of
Socialist Historians 7:3-28.

Rosaldo, Michelle Z, and Louise Lamphere (editors)

1974 Women, Culture and Society. Stanford University Press.

Sabaen, David

1976 "Aspects of kinship behavior and property in rural
Western Europe before 1800," in Family and Inheritance:
Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800, Jack Goody,
Joan Thirsk, and E. P. Thompson, editors. Cambridge
University Press, pp.96-111.

- Schnuker, Robert
1975 "Elizabethan Birth Control and Puritan Attitudes," in
The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 5(4):655-668.
- Sheenan, M. M.
1971 "The formation and stability of marriage in 14th century
England: evidence of an Ely register," in Medieval
Studies 33:228-263.
- Shorter, Edward
1971 "Illegitimacy, Sexual Revolution, and Social Change in
Modern Europe," in The Journal of Interdisciplinary
History 2(2):237-272.

1972 "Capitalism, Culture, and Sexuality: Some Competing
Models," in Social Science Quarterly 53(2):338-356.

1973 "Female Emancipation, Birth Control, and Fertility in
European History," in American Historical Review 78:
605-640.
- Smith, Hilda
1976 "Gynecology and Ideology in seventeenth century England,"
in Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical
Essays, Berenice Carroll, editor. University of Illinois
Press, pp.97-114.
- Smith, Robert
1979 "Kin and Neighbours in a Thirteenth Century Suffolk
Community," in The Journal of Family History 4(3):219-
256.
- Smith, Steven
1973 "The London Apprentices as Seventeenth Century Adoles-
cents," in Past and Present 61:149-161.
- Spengler, J.
1968 "Demographic Factors and Early Modern Economic Develop-
ment," in Daedalus 97:433-446.
- Spufford, Margaret
1974 Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the
Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Cambridge Univer-
sity Press.

1976 "Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution in
Cambridgeshire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth
centuries," in Family and Inheritance: Rural Society
in Western Europe 1200-1800, Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk,
and E. P. Thompson, editors. Cambridge University
Press, pp.156-176.

- Stenton, Doris
1957 The English Woman in History. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Stone, Lawrence
1977 The Family, Sex and Marriage. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Thirsk, Joan
1961 "Industries in the Countryside," in Essays on the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, F. J. Fisher, editor. Cambridge at the University Press, pp.70-88.
- Thomas, Keith
1958 "Women and the Civil War Sects," in Past and Present 13:42-62.

1959 "The Double Standard," in The Journal of the History of Ideas 20:195-216.
- Thompson, E. P.
1965 The Making of the English Working Class. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.

1971 "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," in Past and Present 50:76-136.

1976 "The grid of inheritance," in Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800, Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk and E. P. Thompson, editors. Cambridge University Press, pp.328-390.

1977 "'Happy families': a review of Lawrence Stone's 'The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800'," in New Society 8:499-501.
- Tilly, Louise
1978 "The Family and Change," in Theory and Society 5:421-434.
- Tilly, Louise and Joan Scott
1978 Women, Work and Family. Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Tilly, Louise, Joan Scott and M. Cohen
1976 "Women's Work and European Fertility Patterns," in The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 6:447-476.
- Van de Walle, E.
1968 "Marriage and Marital Fertility," in Daedalus 97:486-501.

- Wall, Richard
1978 "The Age at Leaving Home," in The Journal of Family History 3(2):181-202.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel
1974 The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century. New York: Academic Press.
- Westman, B. H.
1974 "The Peasant Family and Crime in Fourteenth Century England," in The Journal of British Studies 13(2): 1-18.
- Wheaton, R.
1975 "Family and Kinship in Western Europe: The Problem of the Joint Family Household," in The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 5(4):601-628.
- Zaretsky, Eli
1976 Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life. New York: Harper and Row.
- Zilboorg, G. and G. Henry
1941 A History of Medical Psychology. New York: W. W. Norton and Co.