weak defences against the expropriation of its surplus. The civilization of broken gender ended in the proto-industrial interval (FN 125), which transfigured the gendered couple into a (3) genderless economic partnership between a wage laborer and a shadow worker. I therefore speak of this third period as the civilization of economic sex. For (4) the present emergence of a de-sexed, synthetic gender line propagated by a variety of true believers and challenged by a bewildering variety of alternative gropings, I dare not coin a name. For literature on the transition from vernacular to broken gender see FN 77; for an introduction to family history, FN 121. On the legal history of the couple during the civilization of broken gender, see esp. Gaude-ment (op. cit., FN 77). Velma Bourgeois Richmond, "Pacience in Adversitee: Chaucer's Presentation of Marriage," Viator 10 (1979): 323-54 provides a repertory of the literature that explores the difficulties of the modern critic or historian when he attempts to establish late medieval attitudes toward sex, mutuality, and love. John K. Yost, "The Traditional Western Concept of Marriage and the Family: Rediscovering its Renaissance-Reformation Roots," Andover Newton Quarterly 20 (1980) and Alberto Tenenti, "Famille bourgeoise et idéologie au Bas Moyen Age," in G. Duby and J. Le Goff, eds., Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiéval. Actes du Colloque de Paris 1974, Ecole française de Rome edition no. 30 (1977): 431-40 both deal with the discovery, in Florence, that marriage could be conceived of as a life-long enterprise undertaken by a couple, at the time of Dante and of Boccaccio (died 1375) and that marriage was the lot of noblemen and peasants - the learned man had to seek a better state. By the time of Leon B. Alberti (born 1404) a citizen, to be respected in Florence, had to live a family life. "The appearance of matrimonial unity was as important as the appearance of corporate unity is today, and for the same reasons," says Mary Carruthers, "The Wife of Bath and the Painting of Lions," Proceedings of the Modern Language Association 84 (1979): 212. The Héptameron of Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, is a mine for the study of mid-sixteenth-century attitudes toward the couple. Edward Benson, "Marriage ancestral and conjugal in the Héptameron," Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies 1, 2 (1975) analyzes this. During the sixteenth century the character of economic life changed in ways that rewarded the trader and artisan whose wife could help directly in his business, so that the abilities and values of the marriage partner became, for the first time in history, economically important. The coupling of two gendered but newly compliant pairs of peasant hands was important for the landlord, who wished to extract higher levels of rent; it was equally important for the artisan for a new kind of enterprise. The Héptameron is full of information on the bitterness that this evoked in the relationship between the sexes because neither understood that the couple had been organized as a corporation.

VII. From Broken Gender to Economic Sex

The purpose of this essay is not a history of gender but the elaboration of concepts allowing us to disentangle gender from sex within a history of scarcity. Reflecting on the declining Middle Ages, I have tried to show that a new economic order was instilled in souls through conscience. Conscience then weakened the guardians of vernacular gender several centuries before sex could replace it. A long period of broken gender separates the yoking of couples in conjugal wedlock from their industrial polarization into wage and shadow work. This time of broken gender differs greatly from place to place and could be given various names. To call it the war on subsistence highlights the rise of the nation-state. To call it the enclosure of commons underlines the transformation of common gender domains into genderless productive resources. To do justice to the processes involved, one would also have to call this era the age of witchcraft, the period of the birth pangs of sex. It begins when conscience is first fashioned, and ends when sexism becomes trivial.

Gender-blind historians describe it as a "transition to a capitalist mode of production," thereby hiding the fact that an ahistorical novum emerged from the mutation: a consumption-dependent producer who is necessarily sexist.

Pre-capitalist societies are based on gender. Subsistence is a

121 FAMILY HISTORY

I have drawn heavily on this new discipline to formulate the distinction between gender and sex. The seminal book in the field has been for me Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Random House,
neutral term for this gendered survival. The shift to capitalism coincides anthropologically with the decline from broken gender into the regime of sex. Societies in which the reign of gender has broken down are capitalist; their genderless subjects are individual producers. Curiously, this decisive transformation has not yet been identified as the crucial anthropological condi-

1965). Most studies on family history that have appeared since then must chew on the ideas formulated by Ariés; some of his critics do so in anger, and others, like myself, with relish. On the reception given to Ariés, see Adrian Wilson, "The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariés," History and Theory 19, no. 1 (1980): 137-53. I would have written neither Deschooling Society nor the present book without the guidance I have received from Ariés. So far, however, most studies on family history are gender-blind. For an orientation to the new discipline, a good guide is Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914* (Bristol: Macmillan & Co., Economic History Society, 1980). The author dedicates each of the three chapters of his book to one of the major currents that have developed within the discipline: (1) the quantitative demographic study of age at marriage, patterns of childbearing, and patterns of contraception; (2) the changing attitudes toward domesticity, privacy, sentimentality, and community control over the family, as well as different forms of childbearing; and (3) new approaches to the economic history of the modernizing household. As a general introduction to the field, I recommend to the beginner J.-L. Flandrin (op. cit. FN 85). The author interrelates with great competence demography, the study of mentalities and of behavior, and the typology of household structures. Good access to the studies on family history published in the French journal *Les Annales: Economie, Société, et Civilisation* [elsewhere, *Annales, ESC*] is now available to English speakers through an anthology: R. Forster and O. Ranum, eds., *Family and Society*, trans. Patricia Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). The correlation between demography and attitudes, as these differ by class, can be found in various contributions to C. Tilly, ed., *Historical Studies of Changing Fertility* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978). Exemplary local studies of the nineteenth-century family in England are: D. Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (Chatsworth, CA: Academy Press, 1977) and, for the United States, P.J. Greven, *Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970). The diversity of family forms that can prevail at the same time within the same area is highlighted by P.J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Childbearing, Religious Experience and the Self in Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1977). The process by which the proto-industrial mill and the police converge to

tion that accounts for the transition from pre-capitalist economies to the growing commodity dependence for everyday needs called "capitalism."


122 CAPITALISM

I use the term pre-capitalist with more confidence than the term capitalist, and I use both terms *faute de mieux*. On the use of these terms, see above all Edwin Descherpe, "L'histoire du mot ‘capital’ et dérivés" (Brussels: Dissertation at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1964) as well as Edgar Salin, "Kapitalbegriff und Kapitallehre von der Antike bis zu den Physiokraten," Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte 23 (1930); Jean Dubois, "Le vocabulaire politique et social en France de 1869 à 1872 à travers les œuvres des écrivains, les revues et les journaux" (Paris: Larousse, 1963) as well as the much simpler article by Bert Hoselitz, "Zur Begriffs geschichte des Kapitalismus," Saeculum 18 (1967): 146-63. The opposition for pre-capitalist/capitalist societies is significant for me, because it is the most common way to designate a social transformation that in fact coincides with the transition from the reign of gender to the regime of sex. Further, the distinction I make within the reign of gender between vernacular lifestyles and the epoch of broken gender allows me to distinguish in pre-capitalist Europe two successive stages: the stage of subsistence based on the complementarity of vernacular gender, in which commodities play a decidedly secondary role; and the stage of broken gender, in which the enhanced productivity that resulted from economic wedlock greatly increased the level of simple commodity production. What has been called simple commodity production thus turns out to be mainly that surplus that can be extracted from gendered wedlock (FN 77). In contrast to these two, in the next stage capitalist commodities are the product of a society based on an entirely different household; they are the product of economic – which means
it in a text, but only Sombart gave it familiar currency. Fernand Braudel still finds it necessary to apologize for its use in the title of *Material Civilization, Economy and Capitalism from the 15th to the 18th Century*, a magnificent portrait of economic life after the Reformation and before the French Revolution. An economic Breughel, he depicts a vast canvas of material, institutional, and political life during those centuries. He brings to life a post-medieval Europe, teeming with fairs, markets, and workshops, expanding trade routes and associations. Throughout, he underscores the fact that what he calls capital, capitalist, capitalism only very slowly penetrates into the procurement, production, and exchange of primary necessities. He carefully searches for the changes that might explain this

genderless – work. This work was imposed because the household’s dependence on capitalist commodities during a first stage of industrialism was principally conceived of as depending on wage labor: by the end of the twentieth century, it is comprised overwhelmingly of a dependence on shadow work (FN 30). Gender analysis thus allows me to add a further category to the two distinguished by Karl Polanyi, *Trade and Market in the Early Empire* (chapter 5, op. cit., pp. 64-96, FN 33) and also in “The Semantics of Money Use,” *Essays by Polanyi* (op. cit., pp. 175-203, FN 11). Polanyi makes a distinction between trade goods and the commodities offered by merchants. On the reception of Polanyi’s categories, see Humphreys (op. cit., FN 5). I accept this distinction in a general way and do not here relate it to gender. However, the simple commodity, which Aristotle “discovered,” I contrast to the capitalist commodity, the industrial good or service, because the former is of gender origin while the latter is not.

123 THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION


penetration, and the reasons exponential capital accumulation became a factor affecting the everyday existence for most people before the beginning of the nineteenth century. He identifies growing market dependence, legal conditions protecting long-range accumulation, and overseas expansion of economic space as the converging conditions without which capitalist/industrial production could not have become dominant. But throughout the three volumes he consistently overlooks the universality of gendered existence in pre-capitalist societies and the loss of gender in the transition to capitalism. For him, gender is not a crucial historical factor.

To write the history of the foundations on which our world stands is quite different from the attempt to tell the story of what has been lost. For the historian who looks at the past in a rearview mirror, sickle and scythe are but local farm tools once used in the harvest, replaced by techniques when modernization occurs. If such history pays any attention to mentalities and sentiments, it tends to focus on the characteristic alienation, loneliness, and exploitation that grow apace with the new techniques. It examines the pain inflicted on people by the new market economy, mechanization, or hunger. The other injury resulting from the loss of traditional gender, now washed away through the new plumbing, remains the hidden side of the sorry story. What did she lose with the sickle? What else went with the scythe he had to give up? To write the story of the motley losses, one has to rummage around and ferret out the specific vernacular feelings, which have barely left a trace. The historian has to describe the death of a gendered reality that, despite its existence through millennia, has eluded his colleagues.

To prepare for such a task, I have tried to provide a background for my theoretical reflections with a stage outline marked by an occasional charcoal sketch. In several of these, I wanted to illustrate societies’ housebreaking that precedes wedlock. Now one story only must suffice to enliven my description of the birth pangs of economic sex: A Lutheran village in Württemberg bears witness to the reactions of men and women faced with the first imposition of genderless work.

Between 1800 and 1850, the unusual number of four dozen divorce proceedings were recorded in Württemberg. David Sabean has tried to interpret the grounds given for the dissolu-
tions, grounds unlike any adduced in earlier times. To understand what had occurred, he had to consider the economic transformation of the region during this period. A railroad was being built, tenancy was being altered, and most of the families were being forced from homesteading toward producing cash crops from fruit trees. Plum and apple orchards, together with the large-scale production of sugar beets, replaced diversified farms and kitchen gardens. Putting in and harvesting the cash crops proved to be more labor-intensive than homesteading had been. And the change occurred in one generation. Women were suddenly forced to join men in men's work in order to earn enough family income to buy what had formerly been grown in the garden plot. They were also forced to work more and faster in the kitchen. The divorce proceedings reflect how deeply disturbing these innovations were for both men and women, how helpless each felt, how unable to understand the implications of their seemingly rational decisions. Women complained that men suddenly ordered them around at work, a totally new experience for them. No matter how much the gender-defined work of women might seem subordinated to that of men, the notion that men could direct women in the work itself had so far been unimaginable. Women resented the loss of domain. Women also complained that, while men had time after working at the rhythm of the plow to relax at the inn, they had to hurry back and forth between the hoe and the kitchen. Envy of a new kind, envy for the other gender's schedule and rhythm, thus appeared, an envy destined to remain as a central characteristic of modern life, an envy fully "justified" under the assumptions of unisex work but unthinkable under the shield of gender. The men, on the other hand, regularly complained that their women were inferior to their mothers: Formerly their diet had been rich and varied; now they had to eat spätzli day after day. The curtain closed on the epoch of broken gender and conjugal coproduction. In this microcosm, we see vividly how the new script for the industrial age was to be written. For the drama to live and move, the stage had to be peopled with heterosexual actors who were also economically neutered workers.

In most versions of the modern drama, a short intermission separates gender from sex – the reign of gender (where the household obtains its subsistence from the apportioned tasks accomplished by the sets of non-interchangeable hands) from the regime of industrial economics (where genderless hands produce commodities in exchange for pay). During this proto-industrial intermezzo, unisex work, to be performed in the home, is forced on the household. Thus, the household is transformed into a mill where gender is ground down until only sex is left. The sufferings this crushing of gender caused both men and women have gone largely unreported. Two reasons can be offered to explain this blind spot. On the one hand, the new experience of economic misery became the glue of proletarian unity. Wage labor brought a new kind of pain that annihilated women and men. All wage laborers suffered from the very same epidemic of disorientation, loneliness, and dependence. These feelings brought forth political interpreters and an elite of a new class. The diagnosis of the universal woe became the career field for new professions – educators, physicians, and other social engineers – which thrived on the production of policies, guidance, and therapies. The self-interest of both the revolutionary leader and the socialization merchant precluded any attempt to understand the gender-specific pain of loss. On the other hand, the pain of impoverishment, due to the obliteration of gender, constituted something quite different in each region; few possessed a language suitable for translating the subtle vernacular varieties of this pain of loss.

While the stage for factory labor was being hammered

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124 THE LOSS OF RURAL GENDER


125 THE PROTO-INDUSTRIAL INTERSTICE

Social historians use the term "proto-industrial" to highlight the unique patterns of popular culture in the transition from simple commodity production to the capitalist mode of production in nineteenth-century Europe. See P. Kriedte, H. Medick, J. Schlumbohm, Industrialisierung vor der Industrialisierung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978), especially Medick, pp. 90-154.
together and a modern economic set was being constructed, but before the script was rewritten for the new and unfamiliar sex roles, novel critical theories were conjured up for the avant-garde theater. The genius of Marx and Freud can be appreciated only by those who see how early in the development of the modern drama they defined its rules. They forged the definitive concepts that would be used to describe and orchestrate the new kind of actor, industrialized “man.” Seven hundred years earlier, the Church had imputed genderless sin to genderless souls. Now the genderless power of genderless humans in a genderless cosmos became the key transcendental characteristic of the categories used in a new kind of metaphysics. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, a dozen natural scientists, simultaneously though independently, redefined the *vis viva universi* (the living force of the universe) as energy, sometimes bound, sometimes free. Helmholtz is usually credited with the feat of having formulated the laws by which physical energy henceforth fits the assumptions of scarcity that are constitutive of formal economics. During the same decade, the labor force was made into a key concept, by which the human contribution to human existence could be treated as a scarce resource. Finally, a generation later, Freud, textually repeating sentence from Helmholtz, attributed psychic energy in the form of libido – sometimes bound, sometimes free – to the human. The new canonists fabricated their theory of secular man and his salvation on assumptions derived from chemistry and fluid mechanics. They claimed to find a genderless power that, as capital, circulates through social conduits and, as libido, through psychological channels. Thus, during the first three-quarters of our century, we have had to live with energy, labor, and sexuality as “the facts of life.” Now that the code word “crisis” is abroad, perhaps we can publicly question their reality.

Society needs a past. To have a sense of the present, the living require a past that fits them. There is no first person plural, no “we,” without its myth of creation. The two-gendered “we” of all times was kept alive by each society’s rituals, feasts, and taboos. Industrial society, too, needed a myth of creation; it could not exist without one. So it created a special institution to provide each household with “news” and a constant sense of a “past.” The past became an industrial enterprise.

The scheme through which industrial society churns out its past has been called history. For one hundred years, history has fabricated a continuity between the genderless present and the gendered past, legitimating the descent of sex from gender. With an increasingly refined methodology, the new science has interpreted the story in sexist categories to give a past to our economic world. Without such economic reconstruction of a gendered past, the contemporary world of sexist economics could not have been made attractive, especially to those against whom it has consistently discriminated. History has joined myriad synthetic ties of sentimentality to a realm of gender that the contemporary world had in fact abandoned to begin its frenzied journey. Historians have woven a tapestry to make us feel comfortable in our sexist environment, but the fabric has been manufactured out of industrial fibers. Powerful enterprises attempted to make the past appear as seed, a primitive form of the present; its languages, customs, and institutions being the genuine ancestors, the embryonic forms, of those that are contemporary and familiar. Our library shelves are crowded with books that attribute a class structure to Greek city-states, which call the Sophist peddling his tricks a forerunner of modern educators, which report on the sex life (sic!) of Mesopotamia. I write this essay to counter such a *centralist* perspective on history. And I reject the label of scientific historian, for I will not reconstruct the past with key words, nor with concepts mined in utopia, yet I believe in honoring the dead by research that is public, disciplined, documented, and critical.

I have tried to direct attention to the break between gender and sex, to bring into view the chasm that divides the present from the past. I have tried to expose the counterfeit genealogy of sex that underlies economic history. It is a fiction needed by a sexist society that cannot face its lack of legitimate ancestry. The grounding of sex in gender is spurious. Both sex and gender have social origins, but they stem from unrelated matrices. The matrix of sex is Alma Mater; the matrix of gender can only be found beyond “the cavern of the seven sleepers,” “lodged in rock-clefts on the branches of enormous hollow yews.” (Robert Graves, *White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* [New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1948], p. 13).

Whether they are born outside the matrix of gender or first
delivered from and then educated into the matrix of sex, women must face men. Each matrix, however, endows them with a different relative power. Under the reign of gender, men and women collectively depend on each other; their mutual dependence sets limits to struggle, exploitation, defeat. Vernacular culture is a truce between genders, and sometimes a cruel one. Where men mutilate women’s bodies, the gynaecaeum often knows excruciating ways to get back at men’s feelings. In contrast to this truce, the regime of scarcity imposes continued war and ever new kinds of defeat on each woman. While under the reign of gender women might be subordinate, under any economic regime they are only second sex. They are forever handicapped in games where you play for genderless stakes and either win or lose. Here, both genders are stripped and, neutered, the man ends up on top. No wonder that it is the woman who now “discovers” the transmogrification of gender by economics. Typically, she complains that “she” is invisible to others and to herself. She can neither perceive herself in the regime of economics as an equal partner, nor can she recognize herself in a gender. The turgid scenarios of political science, constructed with a set of assumptions about the equality of all men, do not apply to her. The sexist utopia of Herland fails to provide the rank consolations of the locker room, and attempts to reconstruct women’s past with key words only caricature the enterprise of scientific history, as such. Now, by their passionate inquiries within this double bind, women’s studies have cemented the pivot to upset the scientific app Les.cart.

In this essay I have not tried to explain why society places the man on top and the handicap on the woman. I have controlled my curiosity in order to be free to listen more attentively to the report of the losers, to learn not about them but about the battlefield that is the economy. Industrial society creates two myths – one about the society’s sexual ancestry and another about the movement toward ever greater equality. Both myths are unmasked as lies in the personal experience of the neuter of the second sex.

I set out to argue that the fight against sexism converges with efforts to reduce environmental destruction and endeavors to challenge the radical monopoly of goods and services over needs. I have argued that these three contemporary movements con-}

verge because economic shrinkage is the common condition for all three. And the recognition that economic cutback, for reasons specific to each movement, is for each not just a negative necessity but a positive condition for a better life can lead from theoretical convergence to concerted public action. I have further argued that these three movements represent three aspects of an attempt to recover the commons, the commons in that sense in which the term designates the precise inverse of an economic resource. For this undertaking I wished to suggest a theory to clarify the concepts necessary for a history of scarcity.

The historical transition from gendered subsistence to dependence on scarce products establishes my argument. Scarcity is historical, as historical as gender or sex. The era of scarcity could come to be only on the assumption that “man” is individual, possessive, and, in the matter of material survival, genderless – a rapacious neutrum economicum. And this assumption, incarnate in institutions from wedlock to schools, transforms the subject of history. That subject is no longer the gens, or the lares, which designate the ambiguous and asymmetric match of a self-limiting set of women and men. Rather, the subject becomes a construct of ideology fashioned into a spurious “we,” a construct like class, nation, corporation, or partnerly couple. For a theory on the action necessary for the recovery of the commons, I think it important to explore the etiology of this transmogrification of history’s subject.

I have no strategy to offer. I refuse to speculate on the probabilities of any cure. I shall not allow the shadow of the future to fall on the concepts with which I try to grasp what is and what has been. As the ascetic and the poet mediate on death and thus gratefully enjoy the exquisite aliveness of the present, so we must face the sad loss of gender. I strongly suspect that a contemporary art of living can be recovered, so long as our austere and clear-sighted acceptance of the double ghetto of economic neuters then moves us to renounce the comforts of economic sex. The hope for such a life rests upon the rejection of sentimentality and on openness to surprise.