

## Review Article

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### THE FAMILY AND CHANGE

A discussion of Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) and Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

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With the work of Philippe Ariès, Philip Slater, Eli Zaretsky, Edward Shorter and Richard Sennett, the privatization and individuation of personal life have become grand themes of historical speculation.<sup>1</sup> All of these scholars, and others, agree that a historical trend towards privatization has in fact occurred. Not all of them, however, agree on the desirability of such a trend. Of the authors whose books are reviewed here, Eli Zaretsky weighs the positive and negative aspects of privatization, while Edward Shorter is among those who clearly approve and welcome the trend.

Zaretsky's slim volume is the reissue of a two part article, originally published in *Socialist Revolution* in 1973. It is an uneasy mixture of explication of contemporary feminist analysis, socialist revision of this analysis, and a modified functionalist historical sketch of the family under capitalism. Zaretsky sees the contemporary family as an institution in which personal life can develop: "The rise of capitalism isolated the family from socialized production as it created a historically new sphere of personal life among the masses of the people. The family now became the major space in society in which an individual self could be valued 'for itself'" (p. 31). Zaretsky is critical of some feminist thought for seeing the family too simply as an oppressive institution. He also notes the shortcoming of much socialist thought which uncritically accepts capitalist devaluation of housework and

the private arena because of their absence from systems of exchange. His desire to understand the family as an “integral part of society that changes continuously as a whole” (p. 32) is indeed well-taken and important. Zaretsky’s essay has quite legitimately been influential because it restores family and the private arena as important categories to be examined for an understanding of the process of large-scale structural change in the past. The radical and revolutionary ideologies of the twentieth century, as Zaretsky interprets them, are expressions of a hope that “humanity can pass beyond a life dominated by the relations of production” (p. 77). This study is his contribution to that hope.

Zaretsky’s study was not intended to be an historical study, despite the misleading blurb on the back cover attributed to Christopher Lasch: “One of the clearest discussions of the history of the family.” *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life* is primarily a study of ideology; what history it contains is derivative and sketchy. Although Zaretsky has done no historical research and does not claim to have done so, he is dealing with the past, and as he does, he does not make very effective use of available published work. More importantly, his use of evidence from literate sources and his concentration on ideology turns the reader from the concrete question of *what* happened to the working class family with the development of industrial capitalism, to the abstract question of, *why*? The lack of evidence means that Zaretsky’s historical argument must be judged unproved:

For those reduced to proletarian status from the petty bourgeoisie, one’s individual identity could no longer be realized through work or through the ownership of property – individuals now began to develop the need to be valued for themselves. . . . The family became the major sphere of society in which the individual could be foremost – it was the only space the proletarians ‘owned’. Within it, a new sphere of social activity began to take shape – personal life (p. 61).

Zaretsky sees the emergence of personal life as a twentieth century phenomenon, rooted in the early stages of industrial capitalism.

Here Zaretsky fails to explain the meaning of a “sphere” of social activity. He appears to be speaking of the possibility of individual autonomy. Thus he follows the spread of an ideology of personal freedom and identity from the middle class to the working class with the transformation of the mode of production. What he needs to prove his argument is evidence that work, before capitalism, produced a sense of individuality, and that the family, for proletarians, was the source of such a sense after industrialization. I do not believe he can find such evidence.

Was a sense of individual identity a product of the work of the petty bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century? Was "individual identity" a relevant category for shopkeepers, artisans, and land-owning peasants before industrialization? Their primary work identification was with the household and family in which they lived and worked, with the family which owned the property or shop. The community and the artisan corporation were also countervailing loyalties which diminished any sense of individualism. It is present-minded and anachronistic to seek individualism in such an economic and value system. Zaretsky's misreading of the attitudes of these groups comes from the fact that he does not examine the material life, the organization of work and the statements of these social groups themselves. The resistance of peasants and workers to capitalism lay not in a desire to preserve individualism but in the need to protect their control over their work, the organizational and political bases in community, craft, and family. I question whether earlier workers ever had that sense of individualism which Zaretsky attributes to them.

On the other hand, did the family become increasingly valued as a source of individual identity among proletarianized workers? Zaretsky accepts the notion of nineteenth-century socialists and middle class reformers that the family was greatly modified by industrialization and lost most of its economic meaning. The family did, of course, lose its productive function. The costs of industrial growth were indeed heavy, and they were borne in a very unequal way by the families of the popular classes. These families had to migrate to find work. They had to submit several family members to crushing work schedules and miserable wages in order to make ends meet. In the process, the family acted not as a comfort, but as a resource, and that is why, it seems to me, the working class family, though changed in the process, emerged strong and viable in the twentieth century. The family survived, and thrived, because it adapted and offered a way to cope with industrial change. It was the main institution which served the popular classes as a buffer to the large-scale processes of structural change such as industrialization and urbanization. The family was frequently the only resource of the proletarian. Family and kin sponsored migration, found jobs, provided housing and services for workers. Children contributed to their parents as they grew up and went to work. Wives worked when their wages were needed; they bore children, the future hope of family prosperity; they managed consumption for family members who were in the labor force. It was not because it was the sphere of a private life separate from work that the proletarian family survived, but because it continued to provide many basic needs for its members. Zaretsky's belief that the working class joined the middle class search for personal autonomy as a consequence of a kind of ideological

*embourgeoisement* is not supported by the evidence. His choice of evidence from ideology but not from material life, makes the working class family seem a passive institution, acted upon from above in the process of economic change. I would argue that the family was an active force in moderating the effects of such change, and in the process influenced the outcome in a real way. An important missing piece of evidence is the link between personal life choices and increased productivity, increased per capita wealth and declining infant and child mortality.

Zaretsky's problem is that in weaving together structure, behavior, and ideology, he doesn't keep his strands straight. The result is a rather lumpy piece of work. On such a simple matter as time and place, he is often unclear. There are few dates as guidelines, few geographic limitations; there is no sense of unevenness of change over time and space. Most important, there is no separate examination of changes in family by class.

Zaretsky's interpretation of the family stresses its social meaning. He sees the commodity productive function of the family economy replaced by its role of reproducing the labor force (p. 33). Yet can we understand the economy and social reality of the family only from the view of society at large or through the ideology of the middle class? Seen from the perspective of the family, not from the perspective of society, reproduction looks different. Children could be wage earners; later they could support their parents in old age. With the development of education, an institution promoted in the self-interest of the ruling class, children could be the route to improved status and well-being for the working class as well as for the middle class family. Much of what Zaretsky sees as the emergence of personal life is the growing orientation of families toward children as a kind of property, as infant and child mortality declined in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as better wages and higher productivity reduced the need for child labor.

Thus Zaretsky's problem with evidence is aggravated by the fact that although he is writing about the family, he analyzes economic activity and reproduction only at the level of society. He has no handle on the interconnections between economy and family in the areas of production, reproduction, and consumption. When he examines economy and reproduction, he works on the societal level; only when he studies personal life does he go to the family as the unit of analysis. The lack of comparability in the analysis stems from this methodological inconsistency. Although he would like to be dialectical, he is stuck with a one-way developmental scheme, based on abstract evidence and reducing the institution of the family to a passive object which reacts to powerful economic forces and is shaped by vaguely

functional ideologies. Zaretsky's book is provocative and useful; what is needed now is the examination of historical evidence to test his theory. I suspect that the ideological explanation of changing family life will be much less attractive once it is tested against adequate historical evidence.

Shorter's *The Making of the Modern Family* is long on evidence. He provides us with a wealth of historical evidence and overwhelms us with claims that this evidence proves his argument. I find Shorter's study a culture-bound, elitist interpretation of change in family life. It shows contempt for ordinary people of the past and for their culture. It embodies an ahistorical refusal to understand such people on their own terms. The "traditional" world he describes is a world full of emotionless humanoids addicted to irrational and damaging custom. Shorter feels no need to analyze or understand this world. He sees no value in it; it has no interest except as a voyeuristic foil to his exaltation of present-day opportunities for self-expression and hedonism.

Shorter claims to have written a history of feeling, of how a "surge of sentiment" beginning in the eighteenth century has transformed life in Western Europe and the United States. He examines this transformation in three areas: 1) the relationship between men and women in courtship and sexuality; 2) mother-infant relationships; 3) the boundary between family and community. The plan of the book is simple and clear. Two chapters review household and community, men and women, in "traditional" society. (He defines the "traditional" period as that time between the Reformation and the middle of the eighteenth century.) Four chapters examine change in the three areas described above. (There are separate chapters for sexual revolution and romance.) One chapter gives us an explanation for the changes, and a concluding chapter suggests the direction for continuing change.

The "reason why" the sweeping revolution in sentiment has occurred, Shorter tells us, is market capitalism. "At the same time that mentalities were undergoing the historic shift toward individualism and affection, the economic substructure of the world in which village people lived was in upheaval as well" (pp. 255–256). Capitalism entailed the growth of markets and geographic mobility for persons; it meant an improved material standard of living; it meant the growth of an industrial proletariat. From the temporal coincidence of these economic and social changes and the growth of sentiment, Shorter concludes that they must be connected:

Is there a direct causal relationship between the two? May we argue that the illegitimacy explosion or the surge of sentiment in courting was

propelled upward by these economic changes? Although any satisfactory explanation must alternately be complex and incorporate many different kinds of variables, I believe that laissez-faire marketplace organization, capitalist production, and the beginnings of proletarianization among the work force were more important than any other factors in the spread of sentiment . . . The logic of the marketplace positively demands individualism (pp. 258–259).

Shorter elaborates this argument further in his concluding discussion. The explanation is plausible; it is catchy and simple. Does he prove it? The links between the economic changes and changes in feeling are not adequately identified or described. The crude comparisons of the two-stage model – before and after – are oversimplified. Temporal correlations are likely to be weakened by numerous other variables. The remainder of this review examines three aspects of Shorter's work: his sources, method, and explanation.

Shorter makes a point of telling us that he does not use literary sources, which he believes (quite rightly) to be biased in favor of middle class experience and attitudes. Instead, he uses quantitative sources, complemented by observations by literate middle class persons who were "close to the people but not of them." He rejects primary reliance on quantitative social and economic indicators because "such investigations make deadly reading, [and] they still leave open to inference what these men and women *felt* about each other as they were generating all those children – and what they felt about the children" (pp. 10–11). In order to trace *feeling*, the task he has chosen for himself, Shorter must rely on middle class observers.

He substitutes doctors and lower-level bureaucrats for the novelists he mistrusts. Yet these groups shared contempt for the peasant and urban working class life they were describing. He also relies on antiquarians and folklorists who compulsively collected the customs of a disappearing world that they much *admired*. Shorter provides a stunning compendium of contemporary observation, particularly of the French peasantry. Somehow, however, he accepts only the attitude of those who wrote of it with scorn. The result is a melding of favorable and unfavorable reports into an unsystematic description of the "traditional" past, laced with amused or horrified contempt and misunderstanding.

In the end, these observers and Shorter come up with a description of behavior which is little different from that of the novelists whose work he eschews. The only difference is that the novels are labelled fiction. The

arranged marriage, the wedding feast and the county fair in *Madame Bovary*, the selfish peasants of *La Terre*, the socially awkward and drunken Parisian workers of *L'Assommoir*, the sensuous miners of *Germinal* would be quite at home in *The Making of the Modern Family*.

Shorter's middle class observers were biased, just as the novelists were, and for the same reasons. He acknowledges as much: "We have to struggle desperately to untangle the doctors' enlightened, urbane, rationalistic prejudices from the reality . . ." (p. 11). These observers were the agents of change; they were the carriers of ideas about proper behavior which they were seeking to impose on the peasants and workers whose unenlightened, cloddish behavior they were reporting. Shorter claims that he disentangles their prejudice from his facts, but the results simply don't show.

The second chief source for Shorter's data are statistical records. Shorter has done a mammoth job of assembling scattered series and producing new series. The appendices contain comparative data on the fertility of landed and landless labor, age differences between spouses, temporal patterns of conception, and infant mortality. These should be useful to other scholars, as will be the exhaustive notes to these tables. The problem is that the data and Shorter's questions pass like ships in the night, both bulking large, but never touching. Shorter claims, "the core of the history of the family is precisely this chronicle of sentiments. The structures that encase a family's life are, after all, fairly visible" (p. 9). But are they? We need to know the structural framework of the past: how the material base shaped and constrained family life. Shorter systematically excludes this from his text. Statistics tell us about behavior; Shorter is asking how people think and feel. To answer his questions he needs to resort to biased sources, the middle class observers, who were always ready to say how people felt. The question then is, does he do this critically?

Here we turn to Shorter's method. Shorter is scrupulous in criticizing his sources. For example, on the question of male supremacy and lovelessness in the French peasantry, he cites several early ethnographic accounts. He then notes, "This sort of ethnology soon reaches its limits. We have no way of knowing whether these peasant couples held hands before the evening fire, carressed each other tenderly . . ." This time, his sources give him no clue. That does not prevent Shorter from concluding: "But it seems unlikely. The emotional distance separating the couple appears unbridgeable . . ." (p. 60). Sometimes he provides a contrary case or two, such as the "one Lyon husband who willed all his goods to 'my dearest wife, the object of my most tender affection and to whom I owe my life's happiness.'" He concludes

nevertheless that “relations between men and women in the household seem to have been affectionless everywhere in France” (p. 61). Although he has endeavored to find middle class observers who are likely to be close to the people, he has not limited his conclusions to what his sources can tell him.

How can such sources be used critically? Shorter’s main criterion for accepting an interpretation as correct is the frequency a given kind of observation appears among his sources. This criterion is no improvement over the frequency with which nineteenth-century French novelists reported the selfishness, social bumbling and coldness of the peasantry.<sup>2</sup> Shorter could have made his compilation of observations more systematic by internal comparison by geographic region, class, productive system, and so on. Symptomatic of the lack of this comparison is the fact that there is no map of France in the book. Such a map could help the reader locate the villages and regions Shorter is talking about. These place names give a false concreteness to the book. In two pages (59–60), we read testimony about wife-husband relations in Deux Sevres, the Ain, the Jura, and the Rhone.<sup>3</sup> Yet we have no clue about how to interpret this testimony. Shorter’s explanation is an insult to his readers’ intelligence. It is a deduction based not on the facts culled from random reports, but on the alleged fit of these facts with his argument.

For specific examples of this method of presentation, let us look more closely at two sections of the book: that on the “First Sexual Revolution” and that on “Mothers and Infant,” both of which call on substantial statistical data for proof.

Shorter builds his case for the sexual revolution of the mid- to late-eighteenth century on the increased rate of illegitimacy which occurred in many parts of Europe at about that time. He has gathered (and published in several articles, so these data are not included in this book) temporal series of illegitimacy ratios and the incidence of prebridal pregnancy in many areas. In his book, he enlivens the account of what he claims to be a vast increase in the rate of intercourse (and the pleasure people get from it) with the comments of alarmed contemporary moral critics. It is true that the people he quotes were not “thin-lipped pastors, aching for fire and brimstone to fall upon Sodom and Gomorrah; these were not crackbrained moralizers in the fastness of some provincial nest” (p. 97). Shorter is disingenuous in suggesting, however, that these observers were disinterested or unbiased. They too feared certain alleged consequences of the “collapse of morality”: increased potential for disorder among the popular classes and decline of their productive capacity. They were biased because of their fears; their description of the pathology of working class illegitimacy must be examined with suspicion and systematically compared with other evidence.

There are three kinds of evidence for the premarital sexual revolution on which Shorter builds his case. He tells us quite frankly that “each [is] rather spindly in itself, but together sufficient to main the case.” These are 1) “the illegitimacy ratio alone, which is a rather ambiguous demographic indicator; 2) ... premarital pregnancy, ... which in itself is an indicator of little else than sexual behavior within courtship; 3) ... middle class observers ... whose testimony, alone, might reflect little more than the libidinal preoccupations of the observers themselves.” Shorter then insists, “Taken together, these three indicators point to a massive change in premarital sexual morality in the years 1750–1850” (pp. 97–98). Again Shorter has described evidence of a behavior change – the likelihood that marriage would take place after a couple had intercourse and before the birth of a child – and deduced a change in feeling. He also insists that we accept three flawed types of evidence as a substitute for one good piece of evidence. Three times zero is still zero; his argument is not a substitute for an effective proof. The only directly relevant evidence is not the quantitative data but the biased middle class description.

The examination of relationships between mothers and infants is similarly handled. Shorter tells us, “Mothers in villages and small towns across the continent from Cornwall to Lettland seldom departed from the traditional – often hideously hurtful – infant hygiene and childrearing practices, and this is what lacking ‘spontaneity’ is all about. Nor did these mothers often (some say ‘never’) see their infants as human beings with the same capacities for joy and pain as they themselves” (p. 169). The statistical evidence: the high rate of infant mortality and the widespread recourse to wet nursing (in France) until the end of the nineteenth century. (The decline of both these indicators is late for Shorter’s case, but here he does make internal comparisons to strengthen his position. Thus the middle class use of wet nurses declined earlier, he claims, and so did infant mortality in that class.) He notes that poverty and the need for a mother’s productive work were involved, but he makes little effort to understand circumstances. Not a hint that the lack of changes of clothing for infants, as for adults, was due to poverty. No clue that swaddling was a way to keep babies warm and safe in interiors inefficiently heated by fire. Not much suggestion that there was no safe alternative to human milk for infant feeding until the end of the nineteenth century. If a mother could not nurse, a wet nurse was a safer alternative than artificial feeding. In 1857, one British observer of French foundling hospitals’ use of wet nurses for infants saw it as much superior to the English custom of giving infants artificial feeding.<sup>4</sup> Mortality rates were generally lower with wet nurses than with artificial feeding. This is not to suggest that the mortality of infants sent to wet nurses was not shockingly high, nor that there were not

many abuses in the system. It is that Shorter's insistence that wet nursing was symptomatic of lack of concern for infants is simply wrong.

His interpretation of the fact that wet nursing was relatively seldom used by French and English factory workers is simply ludicrous:

It is significant that the one group that never either boarded out its own infants on a large scale or took in nurslings from outside was the factory workers, the spearhead of modernization. Although women in industrial plants often used day nurses, or hand fed their infants, they did not send them from home for long periods.... If despite the direst poverty and sorest temptations to fail the 'sacrifice test,' proletarian women kept their infants at home, it must have been because their attitudes were already modern (p. 177).

He cites three examples in support of this assertion that factory workers were modern because they seldom used wet nurses. The behavioral description is correct, for both France and England. But was the cause a modern attitude of love and concern for infants? The textile cities of Lancashire and of France's industrial Nord had enormously high infant mortality, a fact which was directly tied to the lack of breast feeding. The distribution of wet-nursing in France primarily in artisanal and commercial cities suggests that we must look elsewhere for an explanation of why industrial workers did not use wet nurses.<sup>5</sup> The internal comparison of circumstances in industrial and artisanal cities and between England and France suggests to me that the long-continued use of wet-nursing was not a consequence of old-fashioned attitudes and heedlessness for children, but of small scale, household production units, in France as compared to England, and within France artisanal cities as compared to industrial. In such households, wives were likely to work, but it was hard for them to nurse their own children. There was a rough correlation between scale of industry and wet-nursing. In France, there was continuation of artisanal production well into the twentieth century. So the wet-nursing was tied to French "backwardness," not of attitude, but of industrial structure. These artisanal, commercial cities had a long-established symbiotic relationship with nearby country areas where poor peasant women, their former industrial by-employment destroyed by industrialization, were willing to nurse urban infants. In textile cities, demand for female workers was so strong, that young women from the countryside came in to work in the mills. There were relatively few rural women seeking income through nursing. The network of connections between urban workers and nearby peasant women willing to take in nurslings was not there. In the textile city, furthermore, there were few job opportunities for older married women who

were no longer able to work in the mills. (Mill work was not only sex-specific, it was also age-specific, employing mostly young persons.) These older women were available as baby tenders in the industrial cities.

The child care techniques which Shorter sees as so thoughtlessly destructive probably never disappeared in France and elsewhere in Europe. My mother, born in 1905 in an artisanal family in Piedmont, Italy, was swaddled in a narrow winding cloth and sent out to a wet nurse. The cloth is a jacquard weave cotton with a flowered white on white design, neatly embroidered (with her initials) by her mother. My first child, born in a provincial city in France in 1955, was swaddled (with his arms free) in the “maillot français,” a wrapped set of diapers and blankets, immobilizing him from his armpits down. It was the very “maillot” that the doctors Shorter quotes so despised. These babies were not abused; they were being treated in accordance with custom but it was custom infused with solicitude. Ironically, the practice in most American hospital nurseries has returned to the concept of swaddling. Babies are again tightly wrapped in receiving blankets, for the nursery attendants insist this is comforting to the babies, and reduces crying. Cradles and rocking have also come back into common practice. Shorter credulously accepts and offers us this observer’s report: “most pernicious is the rural practice of forcing children to go to sleep through immoderate rocking, through swinging and shaking, through lugging up and down and loud singing, methods which are sooner appropriate to effect ... stupidity and idiocy” (p. 170). Rocking, singing, swinging are today accepted and prescribed infant care.

Shorter acknowledges the shortcomings of his infant mortality statistics, which illuminate us not at all on the causes of infant death. (Most infants died of gastrointestinal disease or upper respiratory infection. The former was as likely to be due to artificial food as to wet nurses, and the latter to infectious process not susceptible to the medical technology of the time.) “None of these statistics offer a “definitive” proof of the crystallization of maternal affection. ... Yet the way these mothers acted was clearly changing” (p. 195). Although his statistics prove little, he insists on his interpretation: “the point is that these [traditional] mothers did not *care*, and that is why their children vanished in the ghastly slaughter of the innocents that was traditional child rearing. Custom and tradition and the frozen emotionality of ancien-régime life gripped with deadly force. When the surge of sentiment shattered this grip, infant morality plunged, and maternal tenderness became part of the world we know so well” (p. 204). As a historian, I leave contemporary social scientists the task of criticizing Shorter’s understanding of the love-lighted present.

Shorter's use of comparative method, called on when convenient, omitted when not, is suspect also in an even more crucial way. Again, we find him conscientiously explaining what he's up to: "Unfortunately, the solid, primary evidence I have to present concerns mainly France, with parts of Germany and Scandinavia thrown in from time to time. And not even all of France or all of Bavaria ... but only peasant and propertied France towards the end of the eighteenth century, and Bavaria ... towards the middle of the nineteenth" (p. 14). Candor aside, he makes his claim: "When the quantitative data for these [other] numerous countries come out as the qualitative, descriptive material for France and Germany suggest they should, the scholar can take heart that many patches are like his own. It is precipitous, of course, on my part, to suggest that all of them are, but I think I'm right" (p. 15). Despite his breezy candor, however, Shorter ignores the chief danger in the form of aggregate comparison he uses: that of compositional effects. He is comparing life in rural, peasant France, using it as a proxy for traditional Europe, to twentieth-century urban life, in France and the United States, a proxy for modern society. Industrialization and urbanization have seen enormous transfers of population to urban settings and wage earning work. There have been numberless changes in the material aspects of life, in levels of mortality and fertility, and in the attitudes of populations faced with new sets of constraints and opportunities rising out of the economic system they find themselves in. Is Shorter's story the story of attitude change or the history of the growth of urban, industrial populations? The only way to know is to compare seventeenth-century peasants and twentieth-century peasants, seventeenth-century urban bourgeois and twentieth-century ones, eighteenth-century wage earning workers and twentieth-century ones. The differences among the groups strongly resemble the chronological development Shorter claims happened. If we wish to find sentiment and love in a couple in traditional Europe, do we have to look beyond "Romeo and Juliet"? There was affection and caring in the upper classes of traditional Europe. Likewise, the personal lives of the twentieth-century Basque peasants studied by Pierre Bourdieu were constrained by family property interest just as were the eighteenth-century peasants Shorter tells us about. The twentieth-century working class couples studied by Elizabeth Bott enjoy their sociability with sex segregated peers and family members. The working class couples of Paris interviewed in the 1950s by Chombart de Lauwe and those of the Bay Area of the 1970s surveyed by Lillian Rubin are as frozen in their inability to communicate feeling to each other as are Shorter's traditional people.<sup>6</sup> His notion that workers, as the victims of industrialization, were also victors in terms of personal freedom and self-expression through sexuality, is untenable. Shorter's unsystematic and sloppy comparisons make it impossible to sort out compositional and developmental changes.

What of his conclusions? I have no quarrel with his list of the “reasons why.” There is no doubt that markets have enlarged, that standards of living have increased, that there has been a great increase in the proportionate importance of proletarian wage earners in the population, a decrease of small property owners and small scale household productive units. These are the relevant processes. Why doesn’t Shorter discuss them more fully, and explain the links between them and changes in mentalities as he goes along? Why doesn’t he tell us the effect of these processes on work, on standard of living, on place of residence, on property holding, on fertility, on the size and composition of classes? Why instead are we barraged with modernization, “the dissolution of this structured, changeless, compact, traditional order” (p. 21), surges of sentiment, birth of feeling, sexual expression, and the like? Shorter’s aggregate comparisons, his slick *ex post* explanations give no picture of the unevenness and cost of the processes he so smoothly pulls out of his hat in chapter seven. Finally, although much of his statistical data are demographic in nature, Shorter omits any description of overall demographic change, either on the aggregate or on the household level.

*The Making of the Modern Family* provides us with useful quantitative data, many fascinating impressionistic reports. Digging out this material was a real tour de force. Shorter introduces the notion of social history methods — theory testing, study of the past away from politics at the center, comparison, collective biography. But in the end, we are left with a biased, incomplete and optimistic account of how social change has transformed people’s lives. This account leaves out the internal complexity of the process, forgets the costs, and glorifies the present. No one advocates a return to the grim reality of pre-industrial Europe, with its high mortality, low economic productivity, discomforts, threat of starvation. The historical problem of change in the family is still waiting to be solved.

## NOTES

1. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, Robert Baldick, trans. (New York, 1965); Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* (Boston, 1970); Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life* (New York, 1976); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York, 1975); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1977). Two recent studies which emphasize the public links of family life are Elizabeth Pleck, “Work and Family,” *Journal of Social History* (Winter 1977) and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy* (New York, 1977).
2. See Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848–1945* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 131–135.
3. The Ain and the Jura are adjacent mountainous departments in the east; the Rhone

is the department in which Lyon is located, and the Deux Sèvres is in the West.

4. Dr. Routh's study, 1857, comparing mortality in French foundling hospitals between infants put out to wet nurse and infants reared by hand, cited in Margaret Hewitt, *Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry* (London, 1958), p. 139. Hewitt notes further (footnote 89, p. 211) that mortality in the London Foundling Hospital was also reduced when breast milk was substituted for artificial milk.
5. See Hewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–154, *passim.*, Louise A. Tilly, "Occupational Structure, Women's Work and Demographic Change in Two French Industrial Cities, 1872–1906," *Le Mouvement Social*, forthcoming, and George Sussman, "The Decline of the Wet-Nursing Business in France, 1874–1914," *Journal of Family History*, forthcoming.
6. Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network*, (London, 1957); Pierre Bourdieu, "Celibat et condition paysanne," *Etudes rurales* 5, 6 (1962–63), pp. 32–135; Paul Henry Chombart de Lauwe, *La vie quotidienne des familles ouvrières* (Paris, 1956), p. 52 and *passim.*; Lillian Breslow Rubin, *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class Family* (New York, 1976), especially pp. 114–133.

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