

work is based exclusively on secondary sources, and is intended to be a general synthesis of the major studies of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. The bulk of the text concentrates on the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, and research is heavily weighted towards Germany, with occasional references to England and France, and even fewer references to Southern and Eastern European countries. Unfortunately, the book suffers from lack of attention to detail. The goal of any broad historical overview is to demonstrate sweeping changes over a long period of time, but it is necessary to provide specific examples to support such claims. Greater use of specific historical examples would have strengthened Mitterauer's arguments considerably, for at times it is difficult to determine the time and location of the events he discusses. As well, little attention is paid to divisions along the lines of class or gender and in this way the historical category of youth Mitterauer presents us with is a homogenous one. After problematizing the notion of "youth" at the beginning of his study, Mitterauer proceeds to describe the experiences of a group of people he presumes to be youths, and in this way he assumes the category "youth" to be fixed. While the distinction between rural and urban youth is maintained nicely throughout the study, the failure to distinguish the experiences of male and female, working- and middle-class youths is a significant one. While this book might be useful as a text in an

undergraduate history or sociology course, it does not contribute in significantly new ways to our understanding of the field.

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Wally Seccombe. *Weathering the Storm: Working Class Families from the Industrial Revolution to the Fertility Decline.* London and New York: Verso, 1993. Pp. 286. \$74.95 Can. cloth.

This fascinating book is the sequel to *A Millennium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe*. *A Millennium* focused on the development of peasant families through the Middle Ages and their transformation during the early modern era with the development of the proletariat. *Weathering the Storm* deals with changes in family forms in the first and second industrial revolutions and with the fertility decline in Northwestern Europe during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The author expects the book "to stand on its own, intelligible without reference to its predecessor," and it certainly does.

The central thesis questions the poorly explored assumption that "the stable family of recent memory is apparently continuous with 'the Western family' as far back as we can discern." The author successfully demonstrates that the so-called traditional family is

a recent development that rose to pre-eminence in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Indeed the analysis leads the reader to the conclusion that "the golden age of the male-breadwinner form of the nuclear family, culminating in the 1950s, is an unusual era in family history."

In outlining his theoretical and methodological framework of explanation, Seccombe employs the mode of production, a central category of historical materialism. He expands this category of analysis to include the production of people and their labour-power. He thus breaks the construct infrastructure and superstructure and provides a new avenue for the discussion of the perennial question of relative autonomy. Not only does he move away from a structural-functionalist mode of explanation but he makes clear that "no telos may be imputed to the socioeconomic system as a whole. The family formation strategies of subordinate classes respond to their own subsistence imperatives." His aim is to explore the interplay between capitalist constraints and proletarian choice; proletarian families find creative ways to survive and/or improve their lot.

Seccombe then moves on to deal with the effects of an increasingly centralized manufacture, the separation of the workplace from the household, the augmentation of the nuclear families, and the perceived crisis of the working-class family in the mid-nineteenth century. He argues that the propertied classes eventually found a way to cope with social problems by encouraging the formation of a male-breadwinner family wage norm. The process of re-

grafting domestic patriarchy would take some time. Seccombe's argument has relevance for the current discussion on patriarchy that tends to neglect its various phases in relation to the development of capitalism.

The author provides a general discussion of the reproduction of the labour force in Northwestern Europe in the first stage of the Industrial Revolution. He discusses the relationship between working and living conditions and what he calls the "residential circumstances" of the reproduction of labour. He argues that the physical and mental strength of the proletariat was depleted in the first stage of industrialization.

In the context of the second industrial revolution of 1873 to 1914, Seccombe examines the emergence and consolidation of the male-breadwinner norm and the significance of schooling in articulating a hegemonic ideology. He analyzes the household life leading to the very root of the inequity now being denounced by contemporary feminists: the segregation of duties and spheres of authority between spouses.

Seccombe's explanation of proletarian fertility decline focuses on spousal sexual relations. He discusses the scientific and religious discourses of the time regarding contraception, the impact of the feminist movement on working-class women, and the interaction of working-class families with the economic context. He does not base his argument only on adjustment to socio-economic conditions, but insists that the links to the reproduction of the cycle of labour-power should be understood as "culturally

mediated connections." Furthermore he explores the subjective transformation of the spouses. Perhaps one of the major contributions of this analysis is the understanding of marital sex relations as a site of gender struggle in the movement toward the modern form of family limitations as well as toward women's personal intimate liberation.

This book makes a significant historiographical contribution in terms of knowledge and methodology. It shows the richness of historical materialism when it is removed from positivistic interpretations. It provides a new basis for a discussion of hegemony as a process and the generation of the hegemonic articulating principle of the value system. The author makes clear how the concept of the so-called traditional family acquired a universalizing quality and became a hegemonic principle, one that the bourgeois class found useful and in its own interest. There was even such "spontaneous consent" that the trade unions embraced the concept in their own discourse. Within this context the reader can understand why the feminist movement, certainly a middle-class one, articulated a discourse that contained great tensions and contradictions between the emphasis on maternal duties and related non-problematic assumptions about women's superior moral characteristics and the pursuit of autonomy. The author provides important material to help comprehend the shift of women's reproductive responsibility from procreation to mothering within the framework of the new traditional family.

Finally, this book is an indictment of the uses and abuses of the historical past by the New Right to refashion capitalist hegemony. The author clearly differentiates the nuclear family from what is called in retrospect the traditional family. The latter is a rather recent construct, conceived as a peaceful counterweight to the market, based on the male bread-winner model, and a segmented division of work between spouses.

Weathering the Storm is a timely book that rescues human agency from the darkness of unexamined human experience and challenges those who distort the past in an attempt to ensure a world safe for profit.

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Lesley Johnson. *The Modern Girl: Girlhood and Growing Up*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993. Pp. 184. \$29.45 Cdn. paper.

When first I picked up this slim volume whose cover features a photograph of "Miss Teenager of 1955," I was expecting a light-hearted look at youth in Australia in the post-war years. On the contrary, the book turns out to be a major analysis and critique of the modern western concept of growing up as a woman. Johnson uses historical evidence, social definitions of the "proper" transition from girlhood to adulthood of Australian women during the 1950s and 1960s, to