

In so compressed a narrative, it is clearly impossible to include everything, or for that matter to do justice to conflicting scholarly interpretations. Thus, for instance, not all scholars would agree with Toynbee on the Thera eruption and the Mycenaean takeover of Crete. Similarly, his views on the consequences of Hannibal's devastations have been rightly challenged by P.A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower*, and others. The statement that "From 108 B.C. onwards, Rome was virtually governed by war-lords" is highly debatable. There seems no evidence for the existence of the so-called "Silk Road" in the traditional form accepted by Toynbee. The Mesoamerican civilisations are summarily treated and, oddly enough, possible ecological factors in their decline are ignored. "Western civilization 1563-1763" rates ten pages, from which one derives the impression that the major political figure of the period is Leopold I; Elisabeth of England is not mentioned, nor any French king except Henri IV, and he only for changing his religion.

Toynbee's treatment of the past hundred years is particularly idiosyncratic. Of individuals, J.J. Thomson, Mahmud II, Atatürk and Gandhi rate a mention, but not Hitler, Stalin or Mao Tse-Tung. North America barely exists. No single event in U.S. history in this period is even mentioned, and the U.S.A. itself appears only as one of the eight "great powers" before 1914, after which it apparently ceases to be of world importance. On the other hand, we do learn that "the teaching profession's bargaining power is weak", although "their social value is at least as great as that of workers in any other profession." The wars of the twentieth century are a "spectacle of human wickedness and folly", a judgement with which few will cavil; exempt from this condemnation, however, are the British in 1940-41 and the Turks in 1919-22. Considering how hard it is to gain Toynbee's approval (Pericles, Sophocles and Socrates are all condemned for excessive and unenlightened patriotism), the Turks may feel highly honoured.

The conclusion? "Some form of global government is now needed". There are too many "local sovereign states", just as there are too many "academic 'disciplines'". "Mankind is in a crisis... and the outlook is perplexing". To quote A.E. Housman's famous parody of a Greek tragic chorus: "In speculation/I would not willingly acquire a name / For ill-digested thought; / But after pondering much / To this conclusion I at last have come: / *Life is uncertain.*" Would the Oxford University Press publish such lucubrations from a writer of lesser eminence? They do not enhance Toynbee's posthumous reputation.

The book has no illustrations. The index is unreliable, although 45 pages long, and the principle on which even proper names are included or excluded is obscure. Only five of the maps have even rudimentary indications of physical relief. The price is \$19.50.

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EDWARD SHORTER. — *The Making of the Modern Family*. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

"I got the idea for this book," writes Edward Shorter in the chatty style that pervades much of this volume, "when sitting with Chuck Tilly and Ann Finlayson around the breakfast table one morning. Chuck had said that, in order to really pin down how social change transforms people's lives, what we needed was a general history of the family..."

We still need one. For the book that grew out of this breakfast conversation, while important, interesting and in many ways deeply impressive, is not a "general history of the family" in Western society. As a matter of fact, it is probably a better book than any such "general history" would ever be. But it is important to specify quite clearly what the author has and has not achieved, for the book deserves to be discussed and debated in terms of what it really does rather than in terms of what the title and preface imply.

Inevitably this book will be compared to the classic work by Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*. Certainly Shorter is the first historian since Ariès to tackle the history of the family in such a broad and imaginative fashion. Nevertheless, there are a number of important differences between the two books. One difference is temporal: Ariès was primarily concerned with the evolution of family life from the Middle Ages to the French Revolution; Shorter, in contrast, examines the transformation of family life from the eighteenth century to the present. A second difference is social: Ariès concentrated on the upper classes, arguing that changes which took hold there eventually trickled down to the lower orders. Shorter, however, is concerned exclusively with the middle and lower orders of society — even the *haute bourgeoisie* is excluded — and while he agrees that some changes trickled down to ordinary people from above, he argues that other changes began among the lower orders and were diffused upward. A third difference is methodological: Ariès drew largely on literary and artistic sources; Shorter could supplement these with masses of statistical studies which have proliferated in the fifteen years since *Centuries of Childhood* appeared. But the fourth and by far the most important difference between Ariès and Shorter lies in their contrasting conceptions of what the core of family history is. To Ariès, what mattered most were changes in adult attitudes about children and in the role of children in family life. In Shorter's book, however, children are hardly in evidence. To be sure, Shorter discusses the relationship between parents and their offspring at two crucial points in a child's life: infancy and late adolescence. But the intervening years are totally neglected, and Shorter has nothing to say about education, about discipline, about relationships between siblings, and about the way in which children adjusted to the parental deaths and remarriages which formed such a constant backdrop to family life before the twentieth century. It is such omissions that prevent Shorter's book from being anything like a "general history of the family."

The bulk of the book, in fact, is devoted to just three closely-related aspects of family life: courtship, sex, and marriage. How Shorter deals with these topics, however, can evoke nothing but admiration. For he has woven a mass of confusing and sometimes even conflicting information into a coherent and integrated argument about the transformation of family life in Western society since the eighteenth century.

Shorter begins, of course, with family life in "traditional" Europe — which he cautiously confines to the post-medieval era. Normally anyone who discusses family life in the early modern period is drawn into the great debate about household structure — nuclear vs. extended. But although Shorter briefly discusses this issue, he can stay pretty clear of the controversy. For to him the crucial thing about family life is not which relatives lived under one roof but how they felt about each other. And here the answer is simple: they felt hostile. Spouses lived together in sullen discord, babies were treated with indifference, grown children and their parents engaged in a constant battle of wits about who would really control the family's property. For companionship and guidance people looked not to their families but to their peer groups within the community, which provided

more congenial opportunities for socializing. It was the peer group and community which also laid down norms about such crucial issues as the choice of marriage partners — and which enforced a rigorous suppression of premarital sexual activity.

All of this began to change, however, in the eighteenth century, as a “surge of sentiment” swept through Western society. The surge came, in fact, from two different directions. From below, from the lower classes, came a mounting desire to throw off communal controls and select marriage partners on the basis of emotional compatibility. To this was added a growing willingness among unmarried women to explore the joys of premarital sex — resulting in an unprecedented explosion of illegitimate births between 1750 and 1850. From above, however, the “surge of sentiment” took a different form. Young women of the propertied classes were still shielded from premarital sex and guided into appropriate marriages. But in the eighteenth century they began to withhold their babies from the wet-nurses and started to build home lives centred around affectionate concern for their infants. These two trends — “romantic love” welling up from below and maternal love trickling down from above — eventually merged into the cult of domesticity which triumphed in the nineteenth century. Communal festivals and peer-group contacts fell into decay as the cozy, privatized life of the home became the central focus of people’s emotional lives.

All of this, Shorter argues, was part of the process of modernization, and at the root of modernization lay the introduction of capitalism. The spread of capitalism created employment opportunities for lower-class people — including women — which freed them from the tyranny of parents and community. And the economic growth ushered in by the Industrial Revolution gave middle-class women the wealth and leisure to engage in a more home-centred life. The modern family, then, was a product of capitalism.

All of this gives just the barest outlines of Shorter’s approach. He goes on, for example, to integrate recent changes in family life into his argument, describing the trends that began in the 1960s as a “second sexual revolution.” But the details of his argument can only be appreciated by a careful reading of the text. What must be emphasized here is the patience and precision with which Shorter has built up his model. The trouble with family history is that the documentation is so irregular. For some aspects, there exist staggering amounts of material — almost all of which, by the way, Shorter seems to have read. For other aspects, “traditional” conditions can only be deduced by working backwards from nineteenth-century data. And for yet other parts of the story there is no evidence whatsoever. To work with such materials obviously requires at times great flights of imagination. Shorter is scrupulously careful, however, to alert the reader every time he crosses from verifiable data into imaginative speculation.

There are certainly things in this book that may irritate some readers. The author’s informal, conversational style becomes a bit tiresome at times, and the statistical details about recent changes in sexual behavior are surely somewhat excessive. No doubt any definitive “general history of the family”, if ever written, would suffer from no such blemishes. But it might also lack the adventurous spirit and intellectual excitement of this volume. Perhaps this is not exactly the book which Professor Tilly envisioned that morning at the breakfast table, but it is a major contribution to social history and a worthy — indeed, indispensable — companion to *Centuries of Childhood*.

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