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GENDER, CLASS AND PRIMARY ACCUMULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the relationship between class and gender with respect to a particular historical problem: How did primary accumulation affect the lives of female petty producers and how did they, inturn, affect this process?

By primary accumulation, we are referring to the process whereby the conditions necessary for capitalism are established. In the U.S. and colonies, the process started in the Northeast by the mid-seventeenth century and spanned the continent by the twentieth century. We are particularly concerned here with the Northeast from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. This study is based within the Marxist tradition. Thus, women's roles are understood to be complex, not uni-determined.

This is not the story of 'what was done to women,' nor is it the story of 'the accomplishments of great women.' Rather, it is an analysis of an overdetermined process in which women are seen as active agents.

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> Woman's incapacity brought about her ruin because man regarded her in the perspective of his project for enrichment and expansion. And this project is still not enough to explain why she was "oppressed"; for the division of labor could have meant a friendly association.
>
> ----Simone de Beauvoir[1]

An issue both enigmatic and widely addressed, the experience of women in class societies remains a complex theoretical problem for scholars. In 1976, Joan Kelly Gadol called upon historians to develop a theory of social change that allows us to consider gender in the context of "modes of production."[2] More recently, Dorothy Smith, Michele Barrett and Rosalind Coward have suggested unique and fascinating ways to understand the relationship between class and gender.[3] This thorny problem is addressed here once again and simultaneously framed by a specific historic question: 'How did the process of primary accumulation in the northeastern United States affect the lives of women that participated in petty production ?' 'How did the complex lives of these women in turn affect the process of primary accumulation ?'

Primary accumulation refers to the process whereby the conditions necessary for capitalism are established. One crucial

condition of existence of capitalism is the separation of the direct producer from the means of production. Another condition is the accumulation of wealth, stored labor, in the hands of the soon to be capitalist class. The time frame for this analysis is mid-seventeenth to mid-nineteenth century Northeastern United States and earlier colonies.

The thesis here is that women engaged in independent or petty production were indeed active and essential agents in the primary accumulation process. As we shall see, although women's major responsibilities were in the "home," certain cultural and political aspects of these very household responsibilities brought women "out" of the home in interesting ways. Therefore their response to the competition and economic differentiation that characterized primary accumulation was contradictory, indeed overdetermined. Their response was shaped, in part, by the specific division of labor that secured certain economic conditions of independent production and in part by the intricate and tangled cultural, economic and political processes which together created a specific gender role.

The issue of women in primary accumulation is addressed here with a particular understanding of the relationship between class and gender. A class relationship is a specific form of extraction of surplus labor. A fundamental class relationship therefore involves the performance of necessary and surplus labor by the direct producers and the appropriation of the surplus by the

extractor.[4] Fundamental class relationships include feudalism, slavery, independent production, capitalism, socialism and primitive communism.

Gender, like class, is understood to be a social category with an apparent biological basis. Human development has created significant biological differences within the species known as sexual differentiation.[5] Gender, however, is a particular association of biological(sexual) characteristics with social roles. Under certain conditions, women and men take on specified roles within economic, cultural or political processes. The socially defined gender role has no clear relationship to the biological distinction. In other words, the biological differences do not, in and of themselves, create the socially associated roles. Thus, at no point in history do women of any particular class perform certain functions because of their reproductive capacities alone. Instead, the gender role is understood in the context of the historic conjuncture.

Perhaps this issue can be more clearly illustrated with the concept of race. Here again, human development has resulted in certain physical differences between "groups" of people, which we call race. Many biologists and evolutionists, however, are quite insistent that this concept of race is not significant biologically, rather it is significant socially.[6] Variations in skin color, hair texture, facial characteristics, etc., have no appreciable relationship to the internal workings of the human

organism. These superficial differences become significant, and are seen as differences of "race," only in a social context.

For example, the physical differences between the first European settlers and the Native Americans were hardly the deciding factors in the four century long history of conquest, coexistence and expropriation. These conflicts revolved around the use of land by primitive communist versus feudal, independent and later capitalist economic forms; they also involved conflicts of religion and culture in general. The physical differences took on importance only in the context of these other complex conflicts.

On the Relationship between Gender and Class

For this writer, working in the tradition of Marx and other historical materialists, the object of analysis is not class, or even the economy. It is society, which is all inclusive. The society includes many activites which are composed of economic, political and cultural processes. Class is simply one of the economic processes.

The varied processes that constitute social life both produce and are affected by gender roles. The gender roles and their effects are multi-faceted and complex. These roles change as society and class relationships change. Given this understanding of gender and class, we might ask: 'What gender roles appear to be prevalent at a particular historic conjuncture? ' 'How do these gender roles affect class relations and other important trends such as primary

accumulation?'

This approach is different from those which use a concept of "patriarchy." This is because the notion of patriarchy starts with, or includes, implicit assumptions about gender roles, i.e., that there exists some form of male domination from the start. For example, Ruth Bleier defines patriarchy as "...the historic system of male domination, a system committed to the maintenance and re-enforcement of male hegemony in all aspects of life--personal and private privilege and power as well as public privilege and power."[7] Heidi Hartman defines patriarchy as "...a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, through hierarchy, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women."[8]

Contrary to these understandings, there is no _a priori_ assumption here about absolute domination by one sex or gender. Instead, gender roles are understood to be multi-dimensional. Men may have control over certain processes or parts of processes at any historic conjuncture, but that does not mean that they control the society or that women have no effectivity.

Gender and Independent Production in the Northeastern Colonies and United States, 1650-1850

The division of labor

The northeast, during the colonial and early national periods, supported a social formation which included feudalism, independent

production and primitive communism. Our concern is with petty or independent production, which is defined as a class of direct producers that own and control the means of production--land, tools, animals, shops and barns. They perform necessary and surplus labor. Part, although not necessarily all, of the surplus may be extracted, as a tax, by a government. Thus, unlike a serf, slave or worker, the petty producer has a claim on part of the surplus. This will have important implications for our discussion of the role of women in primary accumulation. This process involved a slow and subtle differentiation between competing independent units of production. The ability of the independent unit to hold on to part of the surplus both resulted from and contributed to the process of competition and differentiation.

In the colonies and early national period, independent production was carried out on the basis of family or household production. The family was constituted by a husband, wife, children, sometimes unmarried siblings, particularly sisters of the husband or wife, and perhaps servants.[9] Within this household, there was a clear and sharp sexually defined division of labor.[10] The responsibilities of women and girls included cooking, food processing,tending fruit and vegetable gardens near the house as well as cleaning. Women were also primarily responsible for clothing production which always included spinning, and sometimes also meant carding and weaving. Men sometimes engaged in weaving. Women were responsible largely, though not exclusively, for child

rearing, which included aspects of formal education and religious training. Finally, women were responsible for teaching their daughters how to perform all of these household functions.

Men were responsible for farming and all its attendant tasks as well as building construction, hunting and fishing. Men were also primarily responsible for the home manufacture of those implements which were not purchased. Finally, men were responsible for teaching their sons how to perform these functions, and thus they were partially responsible for child rearing.

Although petty production was carried out on an individual family basis, certain activities were collectivized. For example, housing construction or house "raising" could not have been accomplished by one man alone unless he had nine or ten sons. Thus, male independent producers would take turns helping each other with this arduous task. Fence construction and the herding of domestic animals were carried out collectively in seventeenth century Massachusetts.

Other aspects of independent production were carried out communally, although the work was performed individually. For example, to counter boredom and isolation, women would gather together in groups to spin or sew (sewing bees). Often one member of the circle would read aloud to the rest. This custom was also prevalent amongst male craftsmen, especially shoemakers.

Lastly, differential development of skill, perhaps even individual preference, helped to create inter-family "change-

work" arrangements. For example, if a female petty producer was adept at certain forms of sewing or weaving, she might exchange tasks with another woman from another family. The latter might work in the former's garden in exchange.

It is important to note here that at different points in history or in different regions, independent production "looked" different. For example, from the earliest settlements through the nineteenth century, we may picture the relatively self-sufficient family farm, engaged in diversified labors. At other times and places, particularly in and around the cities or towns, we may be looking at more specialized craft production or agricultural production for a market. The key is that in all cases, both men and women perform necessary and surplus labor with self owned property.

Finally, it must be emphasized that, in some units of petty production, there were circumstances when the sexual division of labor broke down. This was most prevalent at the "frontier," whether it was western Massachusetts in the seventeenth century or Ohio in the nineteenth century. When the new house was under construction and the land being cleared, everyone's labor was essential everywhere. Women worked the fields and men or young boys did the milking.[11] This more nebulous division of labor, although temporary, illustrates one of the important assumtions of this paper, that the division of labor and gender roles as a whole, are not fixed. The gender roles come out of the ever-changing relationship between economic, political and cultural

processes. As these processes interact and change, the conditions which both create and are affected by gender roles change.

This concludes the discussion of the sexual division of labor which characterized the economic component of petty production. The division of labor is one site of the creation of gender roles. There are many other aspects of life affected by and affecting gender.

Gender in political and cultural life

Women who participated in petty production, albeit,all women could not vote until the twentieth century. What's more, most married women could not own property. Women owned property in their own right if they were widowed, single or orphaned. Thus, as some historians claim, women suffered "civil death" because they had few forms of representation in the political/legal arena.[12]

With the exception of the act of childbirth, where women dominated,[14] the family reproduction cycle, courtship, betrothal, marriage, conception, child rearing, separation and divorce, are understood here as areas of struggle between men and women and between parents and their children. The brief discussion which follows is schematic and offered here only as a contrast to much recent literature which suggests that these areas were male dominated.[14]

Women were expected to marry and trained to do so. Whereas men initiated marriage arrangements, women could refuse a proposal. But a refusal usually had to be justified by some evidence that the man could not provide the woman with the kind of life that she had been taught to expect. Marriage was often arranged through parents

and for them, a critical question was property transfers rather than love. Widows, however, could negotiate their own second marriages. Often a pre-nuptial agreement would be drawn up which protected the widow's right to the property that she recieved from her first husband and her parents.[15]

Although marriage was the socially sanctioned pre-requisite for sexual relations, there are clear indications of extensive voluntary pre-marital sex. Both Nancy Cott and Laura Ulrich found that the pre-marriage pregnancy ratios increased over the eighteenth century. Ulrich suggested that pre-marital sex was a way that young women could choose a marriage partner that was otherwise unacceptable to her parents. For example, Rebecca Cantlebury of Salem, Massachusetts, became pregnant and begged her mother to accept the man that '...God had appointed.'...'There was no finger of God in bringing them together,' the mother countered, ' It was the devil.' [16]

Once married, a women was expected to begin a family and to continue childbirth until it was no longer possible. The fertility rates for the period 1650-1850 vary, but they are high when compared to twentieth century standards. There is much information to indicate, however, that various forms of family limitation, including contraception, were used.[17] The struggle between men and women over conception took some interesting twists in colonial New England, where sexuality was hardly a private affair for most people. Especially for petty producers, houses had few bedrooms and whole families, including children, servants, husband and

wife often slept (and had sexual relations) in one room. "For a wife, there might be advantages to this crowding...When Abagail Wiley of Oyster River wanted to prevent her husband from 'coming to her,' she planted her two youngest children in the middle of the bed, rather than pushing them to one side as usual."[18]

In the nineteenth century, physical barriers to conception sometimes gave way to intellectual or psychological ones. Before the Victorian values of the era were articulated, most popular literature and personal accounts seem to indicate that women enjoyed sex, but chose to avoid it in the attempt to prevent yet another pregnancy. According to Nancy Cott and Daniel Scott Smith, some women in the nineteenth century tried to prevent pregnancy by denying their interest in heterosexual relations.[19] This denial was consistent with the Victorian notion of women as essentially "passionless creatures." Thus conception, like betrothal and marriage, may be seen as an area of struggle, rather than clear male domination.[20]

Similarly, ending a marriage, as well as beginning one, might be understood as an area of conflict. A marriage could be ended by death, desertion, separation or divorce, as the court records of colonial Massachusetts indicate.[21] Men and women left each other, although women who were unhappy tended to remain in the relationship longer than men, perhaps because the life of a divorced female in colonial society was less secure than that of a male.[22] During this period in Massachusetts,the grounds for divorce were adultery or desertion. Despite the fact that

these grounds were not actually established until the eighteenth century, twenty seven divorces were granted between 1639 and 1692.[23] Adultery, in particular, was tied up with the medieval concept of chastity as property. A woman's virginity and later access to her sexually, were understood as the property of first her parents and later her husband. Thus, adultery which involved sexual relations with a married women was a much more serious crime than sexual relations with a married man.

Thus far, gender has been examined with respect to economic production and the "family cycle" in petty production. The roles described are complex, conflicting and conforming. They are not easily summarized by "ultimate" or "essential" determinate qualities. After all, if societies are understood to be dominated by one overriding quality or characteristic, i.e. male domination, then change could only result from external forces-- perhaps extra terrestrial visitors ! Despite the unfortunate recent defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, the role of women and opportunities for self development in this nation <u>have</u> changed vastly over the last two centuries. These changes have resulted from complex forces, including tightly organized political struggles by women. The bases, ideology, confidence and verve necessary for these struggles were not extra terrestrial imports. They were amongst the complex results of the historic interplay of social processes such as those analyzed here. Indeed, female petty producers' responses to and involvement in primary accumulation is one such example. To fully understand their response, it is necessary to examine other important cultural processes in which women participated

with significant effects.

First, on a limited level, some women and girls were taught to read. This was particularly prevalent in the late colonial period in New England. We know that this was the case because of the existence of "dame schools" there. Female petty producers brought a few children together regularly in their own homes. where they taught them basic reading and writing skills. [24] There was usually a fee paid for these services, although it could have been part of a complex, change-work or barter arrangement. Second, when colonial towns in New England later established regular public schools, young single women were hired by the towns to teach the summer sessions. Although the winter and fall sessions usually excluded girls, they could attend the summer session along with the young children of both sexes .[25] What are the implications ?

We may understand women's role as teachers in the context of their role as child rearers. Part of teaching children the skills of survival was teaching them to read. However, as some women learned to read, and taught others, their self- understanding and actual experience might have changed.

Literacy, no matter how limited, accords one a certain amount of power, if not self-esteem. If a women can read signs, she can read religious tracts, political tracts, love letters, and newspapers. She can form opinions more readily. She is seen as one who can impart knowledge to others. She is someone with

thoughts beyond the household.

In a related cultural endeavor, religion, women's participation had significant effects as well. From the earliest settlements in New England, Puritan doctrine played an integral role in colonial society. The Puritan Church articulated an ideology that supported petty production. Specifically, the church stressed the survival of the whole community and disapproved of individual profiteering. Puritan ideology also specified particular "roles" for men and women, husbands and wives. For the Puritan elders, women were meant to mind home and hearth, but to act as helpmates, even as "deputy husbands."[26] The Puritan chruch, along with other denominations, opened its doors to women and encouraged their intensive participation. As early as the mid-seventeenth century, women outnumbered men in the New England churches, although the Puritan elders remained strictly male. Despite the fact that the Puritan hierarchy attempted to limit female leadership and prohibited female preachers, women became the most important adherents through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Quakers allowed women a greater, more autonomous role than did the Puritans. Women had "formally structured roles revolving around women's meetings, which were run for and by women members."[27] This was the exception rather than the rule.

Religious worship was a multi-faceted outlet for women. It was at once spiritual and social. Harriet Martineau, a contemporary British observer, remarked that "women pursued religion as an occupation;" because they were constrained from exercising their full range of moral, intellectual and physical powers

in other ways. [28] Nancy Cott suggests that religious activities can be seen as " a means used by New England women to define self and find community, two functions that worldly occupations more likely performed for men." [29]

Like literacy, women's participation in the church had complex effects. On a certain level, women would develop new forms of independence and confidence because respected individuals, outside of the family, such as ministers or elders associated with them and supported their activities. If some of these women had real "spiritual" experiences, then they had assurance and comfort in the knowledge that a superior force guided them. They had "proved" themselves, by various acts of faith to be worthy, another boost to self-esteem. In the early nineteenth century, church-going women also formed various reform and charitable organizations which provided women an area of autonomy, separate from men as well as a place to develop new skills and new social bonds.

Basic church doctrine, for most denominations, may have been conservative, yet the effects of active paritcipation in religious activity for many women were contradictory and may have lit the flames of the early women's suffrage movement as well as abolitionism and prohibition.

Female participants in petty production also engaged in other class and non-class activities. At least for the seventeenth century, Lyle Koehler has found that some of these women acted as wet nurses, midwives and medical practioners.[30] In preparation

for life as a housewife or "goodwive," young women were taught the "folk" technology of medicine. Herbal recipies for various ailments, or even "prevention lotions," were well known parts of the curriculum. In some cases, women had learned these mysteries from their doctor-husbands. Some women accumulated special knowledge and experience with herbal techniques, "chirorgery," or midwivery. They dispensed medical advice, along with men, although women, alone, acted as midwives at this time. When women were paid for these services, it was generally less than men.[31] Married women were legally bound to turn over any income to their husbands, thus, it is questionable whether income alone was the goal of these endeavors.

It appears that women whose husbands were skilled craftsmen sometimes worked with their husbands and learned some of the craft skills. Widows crossed the sexual division of labor barrier in many instances. With their husbands gone, they sometimes worked the fields with their children and/or took over the operation of a small shop or tavern.[32]

Finally, there are also some indications that women engaged in independent production marketed some of the goods which they produced in the home, as dairy products or cloth.[33]

We have a picture of diversity and contradiction. The role of a woman in petty production was hardly simple. The woman was responsible for all food processing, cooking, clothing manufacture and most child rearing. She was the ward of her

husband and she owned no independent property. Yet she could sometimes read and write. She participated in various forms of social life, outside of the household, through teaching, religious worship, midwivery or marketeering. She was not an "equal" partner, but she was a significant one. She had some opportunities for the development of an identity outside of the home.

Women and Primary Accumulation

How does this complex mosaic change with and affect the process of primary accumulation ?

By the mid-eighteenth century and through out the nineteenth century, independent production moved from relative self sufficiency to market production. Particularly in the rural areas, competition, starting in the late eighteenth century, accentuated previously small differences in size, fertility, proximity to markets and number of servants. Some farm families were unable to survive on their lands, and eventually were eclipsed. Other independent producers prospered and produced huge surpluses which they exchanged on the market. They were able to expand their farms and/or shops and perhaps to hire some of the less fortunate petty producers as wage laborers. The former slowly entered the ranks of the rising capitalist class, as the latter were slowly proletarianized. What was the role of women in this differentiation process ?

Given the nature of petty production, the process of

of competition was a function of the totality of labors performed, both women's and men's. Although men's work was primarily agricultural and the process of differentiation was hastened by the linking of this agricultural production to a market, there were significant aspects of women's labor and lives that could affect the situation.

J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, a man of letters in the mid-eighteenth century described that society through the eyes of a "typical" American farmer: "In the future details which I intend to give you of our modes of living, of our different home manufactures, of the different resources which an industrious family must find within itself, you'll be better able to judge what a useful acquisition a good wife is to an American Farmer, and how small is his chance of prosperity if he draws a blank in that lottery!" [34]

As women were in charge of the "household", the ways in which they used, prepared, and stored food could affect the survival of the unit. There is evidence that women marketed some of the products that they produced such as butter, soap and cheese. This might have been a response to competition in an increasingly commodified economy, and thus an additional source of income, either required for survival or for accumulation.

Another important response by women was to perform household labors for others in or out of their own homes. The early transitional growth of capitalism in the United States, particularly in New England, involved a domestic or putting out system.

Merchant -capitalists, lacking a steady supply of permanently landless labor, put out raw materials to women and children on the countryside. These female petty producers, with their children, worked on shoes, textiles or straw hats. They were paid by the piece; either in kind, on store orders or, occasionally, with cash. They were not yet wage laborers as they owned their own tools, worked in their own homes and controlled their own labor time. They still engaged in petty production, although now some of their labor was devoted to market production. Participation in this domestic production may have enabled the family to hold on to their land for a few years or until the next generation; conversely, it may have caused them to direct less of their attention to independent production and thus to become more reliant on domestic work and eventually wage labor.

In the eighteenth century wool and cotton textile industry, the putting out system was short lived due to the early development of powered machinery for spinning and weaving. Carding, finishing and spinning were usually centralized, but yarn was put out by merchants for weaving in the home between 1800-1840.[35]

In the boot and shoe industry, primarily located in eastern Massachusetts, the division of labor developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While leather cutting, and the final shaping and varnishing took place in the central shops, raw material was sent out to domestic workers, men, women and children, to "fit" (work on the uppers, side seam and binding) and to "make" (to last and bottom) the shoes. In one of the

leading towns, Randolph, Massachusetts, by 1830, the McLane Report indicated that 470 males over 16, 400 males under 16 and 300 women and girls were employed in the production of boots and shoes.[36] By 1837, the figures for males remained stable and females jumped to 677.[37] Women did not enter the shops in the shoe industry in most cases until the 1850's.

From the late eighteenth century foward, particularly in or near urban areas, some women, including petty producers attempted to augment family income by taking in boarders. Thus, these women could continue cooking, cleaning and working in the household and sell part of these "services" as a commodity to the boarder.

Some women hired themselves out in temporary day labor capacities as seamstresses.[38] Yet other women, who had acquired special skills in textile production, worked at "warping webs and making loom harnesses; carding wool, hatcheling flax and spinning."[39] It was not a large leap from this to permanent wage labor in a centrallized factory.

The first factories in the United States, which were in fact textile factories, were built in Rhode Island in the late eighteenth century. Initially, an entire family entered the mill (family system) and continued to perform those tasks with which they were already familiar, as they worked on textiles at home. Women and children were in carding and spinning, while men were in weaving. Barbara M. Tucker found that in Slatersville, R.I., many male petty producers refused to enter the mills.[40] Therefore children and mostly unmarried women were the first wage laborers there.

By 1814, the textile mills at Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts were established by the Boston Associates--a group of merchants. The first wage workers here were Yankee farm girls, unmarried daughters of petty producers in the surrounding towns. In some cases, these young women entered the ranks of the proletariat to help pay off family mortgages or to provide additional family income. In other cases, they wanted to broaden their horizons, or to save up for a dowry. The Boston Associates took great pains to assure the families of these young women that they would be well treated and protected. In this "tight" labor market, with few males available, the Boston Associates provided rigidly run dormatories for these young women, where their comings and goings might be monitored. Interestingly enough, as Laurie Nissonoff and others have found, some of these young women did not passively acquiesce to the conditions of wage labor, even under the paternalistic circumstances of Lowell and Lawerence.

As Nissonoff explained, between 1820 and 1840, the owners attempted to increase profits by lengthening the work day, reducing wages or speed up. In each case, the workers resisted by organizing demonstrations, walkouts or strikes. "Consequently, new forms of social control were instituted and a new work force (Irish, Canadian) was sought or created."[41] Other, more subtle forms of resistence included "short notice" (of qutting), frequent departures, or simple lack of deference to the plant authorities. Despite these infractions, the registers kept by a number of Lowell

companies indicated that these same young women would be rehired, after the various conflicts were quelled.[42]

We will never know whether all of these new "taskS" or activities were direct responses to changing economic conditions. We do know, however, that as the process of primary accumulation expanded, women engaged in independent production performed new and various form of labor outside of the home or produced for the market within the home. If their experience and universally sanctioned cultural identity had been only in relation to the home, perhaps these responses would not have been possible. If women were strictly relegated to a "privare sphere," like the gynaeceum, or women's quarters, for the wives of Greek citizens, how could they sell butter, take in boarders, work in factories or organize strikes ? Although "women's sphere" was defined, we must understand that it differed vastly from the "women's sphere" at other historical conjunctures.

The experience and gender role of female petty producers meant that these women could be active agents in the primary accumulation process. Some of their actions acted to shield the home unit from the process of proletarianization. Some of the activities, which were attempts to reproduce the conditions necessary for petty production, may have acted to imperil it.

For example, as some women sold domestically produced dairy products, took in boarders, or accepted domestic work from merchant capitalists, they might have enabled their families to continue

independent production. Indeed, they might have helped to accumulate a surplus which laid the basis for entry into the capitalist class. On the other hand, continued and growing reliance on domestic work or wage labor might have moved the members of the family away from independent production. Family farms may have been neglected and all labor increasingly devoted to domestic work and/or wage labor. As in the English case, domestic workers may have become indebted to merchants and forced to work off their debt with labor.

Women's response to changing conditions was shaped, in part, by the established division of labor. They used previously acquired household skills to make additional income while working in the home. Now, however, a portion of their product was destined for exchange in the market, rather than for home use. The conditions whereby independent production was reproduced had changed. The sexual division of labor and gender had been somewhat transformed as well. Some women began extensive interaction with people outside of the home. They were called upon to use the skills of their semi-autonomous "private sphere" publically. Their decisions and reactions directly affected the rate and forms of differentiation between participants in petty production. Primary accumulation was therefore not a process affected by males and visited upon females. Women were not outside of this most crucial process of social and economic transformation.

The current discussion of the relationship between gender and class has indeed been a multi-disciplinary undertaking. Along with historians, anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and economists have entered the fray.[43] This fact alone perhaps suggests that gender roles cannot be easily understood through a deterministic "one-level" or "uni-disciplinary" approach. The sighting of similar theoretical and concrete problems by scholars in many disciplines points to the need for theory that is characterized by complexity, by overdetermined rather than uni-determined social practices.

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1- Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, (New York: Random House, 1952), p.64, my emphasis.

2- Joan Kelly Gadol, "The Social Relations of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," Signs, 1 (Spring, 1976): 809-23.

3- Michele Barrett, Women's Oppression Today, (London:Verso Editions, 1980). Rosalind Coward, Patriarchal Precedents, (London, Routledge Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1983). Dorothy E. Smith, "Women, Class and Family," The Socialist Register, 1983, (London, The Merlin Press, 1983) : 1-44.

4- By necessary labor, we refer to the amount of labor required to reproduce the direct laborers, any amount over that is surplus.

5- There are some who would suggest that even these biological characteristics are social categories, see for example: Elizabeth Oakes, "The Anthropology of Gender, A Critique of Naturalism," unpublished paper presented to the annual meetings of Union for Radical Political Economy, December, 1984 in Dallas, Texas.

6- Stephen J. Gould, "Why We Should Not Name Human Races--A Biological View," in Ever Since Darwin, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973): 231-237.

7- Ruth Bleier, Science and Gender: A Critique of Biology and Its Theories on Women, (New York:Pergamon Press, 1984).p. 162.

8- Heidi Hartman, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in Women and Revolution, ed. Lydia Sargent, (Boston: South End Press, 1981), p. 14.

9- It should be noted that although our concern here is with independent or petty production, individuals or households may have participated in more than one class relationship simultaneously. For example, many petty producers had indentured servants, this relationship might be understood as a form of feudalism.

10- See for great detail : Julie Matthaei, An Economic History of Women in America, (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835 , (New Haven, Yale University Press), Julia Cherry Spruill, Women's Life and Work in Southern Colonies, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1972).

11- Matthaei, p. 32, Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters, (Little Brown and Co., 1980), p. 13.

12- Eleanor Flexner, A Century of Struggle,(New York, Antheum, 1973) p. 7.

13- Usually, midwives directed the process of childbirth, as other women assisted. Men were excluded from this event. The complex transformation of health care which took place during the nineteenth century practically excluded women from all areas

13- (continued) except nursing. For discussion of this and related matters see: Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, For Her Own Good, (New York: Double Day, 1978), Cathy Boyd, "The Rise and Fall of Midwivery: A Comparative Social History," (unpublished paper, 1981).

14- For example, Nancy Folbre, "Patriarchy in Colonial New England," Review of Radical Political Economy, 12(Summer, 1980): 4-13.

15- Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Family: Religious and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth Century, New England, (New York: Harper andRow, 1966), p. 58.

16- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Goodwives: Image and Reality in Northern New England 1650-1750, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1982), p. 122.

17- For example, see the advertisements for Hannay 's and Abernathy's Preventive Lotions from the United States Practical Receipt Book, published in 1844 which was a collection of then traditional recipies in Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon and Susan Reverby, eds., America's Working Women: A Documentary History, 1600 to the Present, (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p.17. See also, Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," Feminist Studies, 1 (Winter-Spring, 1973): 40-57, Linda Gordon, Woman's Body, Women's Right, (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), esp. Ch.3.

18- Ulrich, p.95.

19- Nancy F. Cott, "Passionless: An Interpretation of Victorian

19- (continued) Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," in Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds., *A Heritage of Her Own*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1979) pp.162-181.

20- It should be emphasized that the number of children in a family of petty producers was a complex and partially economic question. While many children meant many mouthes to feed, it also meant more workers. Questions of land division for the next generation are also important here.

21- Nancy F. Cott, "Eighteenth Century Family and Social Life Revealed in Massachusetts Divorce Records," in Cott and Pleck, eds., pp. 107-135.

22- Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: Urban Life in America, 1625-1742*, (New York :Capricorn Books, 1955). p. 387, Cott, "Eighteenth Century Family and Social Life..." passim.

23- Morgan, p. 30.

24- Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education, The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 129.

25- Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*,pp.30-32.

26- Ulrich, pp.35-50.

27- Norton, p. 127.

28- Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, pp.138-139.

29- Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, pp.138-139.

30- Lyle Koehler, *A Search for Power, The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth Century New England*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp.108-129.

31- Koehler, pp. 108-129.

32- Bridenbaugh, p. 108, Spruill, pp. 276-313.

33- Joan Jensen, "Cloth, Butter and Boarders: Women's Household Production for the Market," Review of Radical Political Economy, 12(Summer, 1980):14-25.

34- J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Sketches of Eighteenth Century America, (New York: Penguin American Library, 1981),p.299.

35- George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860 ,(New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1977). pp.215-220.

36- Louis McLane, "Manufactures of the United States, 1831-2" by the Secretary of the Treasury, 22nd Congress, 1st Session, House Executive Document, # 308.

37- A.E. Sproul, "Randolph, Massachusetts," in D.H. Hurd,ed., The History of Norfolk County, Massachusetts,(Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis and Co., 1884), p.208.

38- Norton, p. 25.

39- Norton, p. 25, and J.A. Preston, "To Learn Me the Whole of the Trade: Conflict Between a Female Apprentice and a Merchant Tailor in Antebellum, New England," Labor History 24(Spring,1983), pp. 259-273.

40- Barbara M. Tucker, "The Family and Industrial Discipline in Antebellum New England," Labor History, 20 (Winter, 1979-80):55-

41- Laurie Nissonoff, "Bread and Roses: The Proletarianization of Women Workers in New England Textile Mills, 1827-1848," Historical Journal of Massachusetts, IX(January, 1981):3-13, escp p. 4.

42- Elizabeth Tunis, "Beverly and Methuen Daughters at Lowell, 1830-40," (unpublished paper, 1974).

43- This is just a suggestive sketch: Anthropologists- Eleanor Burke Leacock, Myths of Male Dominance(New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981) Louise Lamphere and Michelle Roasldo, ed., Women, Culture and Society,(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).

Political Scientists- Jean B. Elshtain, ed., The Family in Political Thought, (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), Zillah Eisenstein, ed., Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).Sociologists-Psychologists- Ann Oakley, Woman's Work: The Housewife Past and Present, (New York: Pantheon, 1974). Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1978)