

Chapter Three

Women and proto-industrialisation in a corporate society: Württemberg woollen weaving, 1590–1760

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Introduction

Women's work is distinguished from that of men by the superior household productivity of females, a consequence of both biology and socialisation. Because women take into account their productivity in the household as well as in alternative market occupations in deciding how much time to allocate to the market,¹ and because women are often located close to the boundary between market work and household work, female employment reacts very sensitively to demographic and institutional changes altering the rewards of different uses of time. This mobile, flexible reserve of female labour plays a special role in greasing the wheels of the most petrified labour-market. How, then, does it change with economic opportunities? In particular, how did it change with the expansion of domestic manufacture in Europe in the early modern period?

Two theories give diametrically opposed answers to this question. One, the theory of proto-industrialisation, sees the expansion of domestic manufacture and the consequent 'transition to capitalism' as having greatly widened women's market role. The other, which one might call the English empirical historiography, sees the transition to 'capitalist organisation' as having decreased women's work in the market. Testing these theories using data from a particular European society – that of the former Duchy of Württemberg in south-west Germany – exposes lacunae in both, which can only be filled by taking into account the social and legal institutions which constrained the value of women's time in the market. The theory of proto-industrialisation rightly sees the expansion of rural industry as initially increasing women's market opportunities, but ignores subsequent institutional tightening which often restricted women to a narrow range of work in the new industry. The English empirical historiography rightly recognises

that women were excluded from many occupations as cottage industry expanded, but wrongly assigns responsibility to 'capitalism' rather than to the restrictive institutions which developed in some societies around an expansion of economic opportunities.

Proto-industrialisation is a name invented in the last decade for the rapid expansion of dense, export-oriented cottage industry in many parts of Europe between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries.² It is supposed to have paved the way for factory industrialisation and a 'transition to capitalism' by loosening communal and corporate institutions, opening up the countryside to capitalist markets, and breaking down the old homeostatic demographic regime by leading peasant households to 'exploit themselves', to expand their workforce and output (through earlier marriage and higher fertility) at below market wage-rates.

According to the theory, the new organisation of the proto-industrial family under the new form of production, and especially the new working role of women, was crucial in the development of capitalism. Proto-industrialisation is supposed to have broken down the traditional peasant sexual division of labour, as both men and women began to work at the same market-oriented tasks.³ As female market labour increased in importance, the economic and social freedom of women increased.⁴ Because women's market work was now more significant to rural households, and because of the 'pauperisation' the theory associates with the process of proto-industrialisation, the expansion of rural industry brought about a more individualised selection of marriage partners, on the basis of work skills, instead of property and parental planning.⁵ In the wake of these changes came, it is said, a loosening of political and patriarchal controls on female sexuality⁶ and greater freedom and mobility for women.⁷

These are wide and interesting claims. They are especially interesting in that they run counter to earlier English studies which view the transition to capitalism as having narrowed the range and extent of women's work in the market. Pinchbeck, who can be viewed retrospectively as a representative of this English empirical school, remarks on the decline in female employment during the eighteenth century, especially in crafts,⁸ and concludes that rural industry weakened women's earlier economic position, by establishing a tradition of low wages and causing the decline of female apprenticeship.⁹ In the rural woollen industries, she finds that 'women's work was most varied where the influence of capital in the trade was negligible ... As the industry became more highly organised their employment was attacked as competing with that of men, and on these grounds they were excluded from certain branches of the trade.'¹⁰

In the same vein, Clark portrays the transition to capitalism as having disenfranchised women of their medieval and early modern equality: 'many trades which in later times have become entirely closed to women were then

so dependent on their labour that sisters are mentioned specifically in rules concerning the conditions of manufacture'.¹¹ She sees women gradually being forced into household labour and dependence on their husbands: 'As capitalistic organisation developed, many avenues of industry were ... gradually closed to married women.'¹²

Berg, in a more recent echo of this school of thought, argues that the 'availability of more household employment in cottage manufactures in the eighteenth century' may have contributed to the decline not only in female apprenticeship, but also in adolescent service for girls, making them more subject to 'patriarchal authority at home'.¹³ She suggests that the flexibility of women workers in domestic industry, allocating time between 'household chores and casual industrial employment', resulted in 'a very irregular training for women', which tended to exclude them from lucrative or powerful positions in the trade. She concludes that 'the control of these industries went to men'.¹⁴ Using local settlement and apprenticeship records for the south of England, Snell likewise finds 'relatively more equal and sexually shared labour before the nineteenth century ... The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a narrowing of the possibilities for female artisan activity'.¹⁵

These English studies record outcomes – the narrowing of women's work in the market – but often assign causation unspecifically to the development of capitalist organisation. What specific dynamics or institutions of capitalist organisation were responsible for restricting women's work roles? Were they 'capitalist' institutions, strictly speaking?

The theory of proto-industrialisation ignores the variations in demography, and in industrial opportunities for women, resulting from the very great local and regional differences in industrial organisation and legal and corporate institutions in early modern Europe. Because female labour functioned as a 'reserve' of market labour, close to the boundary of choice between market work and household work, it adapted itself flexibly to the local organisation of specific rural industries, and resists classification by theories that try to view it in isolation from industrial and demographic structures.

The shortcomings of both general theories can be made empirically relevant by investigating women's labour-force participation in a rural industry quite unlike any in England. In the 1580s a new form of weaving, of the finer New Draperies, arose in the Nagold Valley of the Duchy of Württemberg, situated in the Swabian Black Forest south-west of Stuttgart. It drew in large numbers of peasants, rural artisans from other trades, old-style 'coarse woollens' weavers, unemployed journeymen, and women.¹⁶ For the next two hundred years, cloths from the valley were exported as far afield as northern Germany, France, Austria, and Italy. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, as many as 40 per cent of households in the most

densely proto-industrial communities were at least partly dependent on weaving for a livelihood. The Nagold Valley therefore experienced classic proto-industrialisation: dense and initially very rapidly expanding rural industry for export markets.

However, the social results of the expansion of rural industry in this region diverge from the predictions of the theory in two important respects. First, the demographic changes predicted by the theory are largely absent. Some densely industrial communities did experience faster population growth than agrarian communities; others did not. Weavers married at much the same age as other men, and they married older, rather than younger, women. By the early eighteenth century, weavers' fertility was lower than average, and in small towns and villages alike, they had smaller than average households. The demographic expansion irrespective of economic opportunities which the theory predicts does not seem to have taken place.¹⁷

Secondly, the expansion of rural industry in this region did not loosen social and communal institutions or pave the way for capitalist market society in the countryside. As soon as the new form of weaving began to expand, a new corporate group, the New Draperies weavers' guild, was formed around it, by a process of grass-roots lobbying.¹⁸ The guild exercised jurisdiction over village and small-town weavers alike. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the annual guild accounts and local court records demonstrates that from its establishment in 1598 at least until 1760 the guild intensified its control over entry,¹⁹ output, technological change, industrial lobbying and labour practices.²⁰ It elicited impressive financial and moral support from its members, and its regulations were actively enforced by village and small-town councils and by the dense network of Ducal bureaucrats and local officials.²¹ Weavers were heavily represented on village and town councils,²² and the exclusionary powers of the corporate communities relating, for example, to citizenship requirements, continued to be actively enforced throughout the period of proto-industrialisation.²³ In 1650, the distribution end of the industry was also granted a corporate monopoly by the Ducal government: for the next 150 years all weavers were legally obliged to sell their cloths to a single company of merchant-dyers, which also developed impressive local and national political clout and regulatory powers.²⁴

Thus with the advent of capitalism to the Württemberg countryside came an intensification of the economic power of the state, and a strengthening rather than a weakening of corporate groups. This result is by no means unique to Württemberg. Cross-cultural comparison reveals the existence of proto-industries – in Bologna, Castile, Languedoc and northern Germany – where corporate and regulatory institutions remained strong throughout the expansion of rural industry, where new guilds and merchant

companies were set up in response to the industrial expansion, and where capitalism came hand-in-hand with a strong regulatory state.²⁵ On the other hand, it shows agrarian countrysides – in England and The Netherlands – where corporate and regulatory institutions were already weak before proto-industrialisation.²⁶

It is no coincidence that cross-cultural comparisons show a similar variety in the demographic response to expanding rural manufacture. In some areas of rural industry – Shepshed in England, the Flemish communities studied by Mendels – there was population expansion, early marriage, high fertility, and large and complex households. In others – southern Flanders, Ireland, Bavaria in southern Germany, the Ravensberg area in northern Germany, Thimerais in southern France, and Bethnal Green and Sudbury in southern England – there was population stability, late marriage, low fertility, and small and simple households.²⁷ The demographic and productive choices of rural artisans did not exhibit a spontaneous reaction to the introduction of dense, export-oriented cottage industry, but rather adapted to it flexibly, according to the specific institutional context in each case.

In Württemberg, as in England, there was a strong popular tradition prior to and independent of proto-industry, in which women's rights to be economically active were recognised and informally tolerated. When new economic activities arose (such as proto-industry), women did initially move into them and take up a share of the new opportunities. Female labour was adaptable, but it was corporately and regulatively powerless. As corporate and bureaucratic regulation of the rural economy became more intense, women were often forced out of the unregulated niches they had previously occupied. In Württemberg, it was not the market-oriented or 'capitalist' organisation of expanding rural industry which narrowed women's opportunities, but rather the activities of interest-groups, which came in the wake of the expansion, concerned to regulate its allocation among social groups.

Forms of female work

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries women from peasant, proto-industrial, and traditional artisan households remained active in agriculture. Farming continued to be an important livelihood in both small towns and villages, as rural manufacture expanded. In 1736, after 150 years of proto-industrialisation, more than one-third of all family earning units in the most densely proto-industrial community in the Nagold Valley, the small town of Wildberg with 1,400 inhabitants, depended for a living partly on their own land.²⁸ In the town one-fifth of New Draperies weaving households and two-fifths of other households owned some land; in the

villages more than three-quarters of both New Draperies weaving and non-weaving households owned land.²⁹ Agriculture thus played a major role in the livelihood of households even under advanced proto-industrialisation.

Church court prosecutions for Sabbath-breaking record women carrying on the habitual daily toil of farmyard and field: 'mucking out the cowstall' on a Sunday,³⁰ or 'carrying hay out to the stall during the sermon'.³¹ Conflicts arose among females over the borrowing of farmyard implements and alleged agricultural trespasses. In 1632 one butcher's maid 'asked to borrow a dung cart in the plainant's house, whereupon his daughter is supposed to have said, they thought so much of themselves, why didn't they buy one? The maid went home and carried to her mistress's ear that his daughter had said that she should take the money from the stolen beasts and buy a cart with it'.³² There was a heavy seasonal demand for females in summer and autumn for haymaking and harvest. In the small towns, young women worked in gangs as grass-cutters. In 1616 a village forest warden sued a gang of eight female grass-cutters and New Draperies journeymen for jeering and throwing stones at him as he was leaving the town of Wildberg.³³

Among villagers engaged in agriculture, a woman's strength was a quality particularly valued in her by men. One woman, the young wife of a village shepherd, reported to the church court in 1658 that as she was walking home from penning the sheep, a village farmer had walked with her and 'on the way he said to her, he would like to sleep with her, she was so pretty and strong'.³⁴

Women could conduct whole agricultural businesses on their own. In 1619, the widow of the Wildberg *Kleemeister*, the 'untouchable' who doctored and buried animals and suicides, and did a multitude of other odd and dirty work in the pastoral sector, submitted a petition to the duke, asking for the right of free fodder in winter, 'since other masters receive hay and straw to feed those beasts which are put on ... in the wintertime because of the wolves ... so she petitions that she also should receive her share'.³⁵ She regarded it as no more than her right to be treated on the same footing as 'other masters'. In a petition of 1642, one village widow described how she was gradually bringing the family farm back under cultivation after the Imperial invasion. Although she had three sons, she was the chief mover in the business, and in the petition she entered into technical agricultural details concerning proper manuring, the state of the farm buildings, the quality of various fields, and the grain yields and tax obligations of different parts of the estate.³⁶

It might be argued that although women were active in agriculture, proto-industrialisation decreased the extent of non-market-oriented labour on family land. But proto-industrialisation does not seem to have decreased dependence on family farm land in the villages, but rather sustained it.

In the Nagold Valley, dense New Draperies weaving was associated with a less than average polarisation of village society into landed and landless groups: as late as 1736, 39 per cent of households in the six least proto-industrial villages were landless, compared to only 28 per cent in the three densely proto-industrial villages.³⁷ Of course, there were more purely agricultural households in the non-weaving villages (28 per cent compared to 19 per cent in the dense weaving villages), but it is essential to note that weaving did not bring about the disappearance of agricultural work on the household's own land in those villages in which weaving was most densely practised. There is no evidence that the less polarised, more by-employed pattern of livelihoods in the weaving villages involved either less or more participation by women in an economy in which they were already very active.

So active were women in selling agricultural products that they could get commercial reputations in the community. In a defamation case in 1622 a man insulted a neighbour's wife by telling her that 'people in town were talking about the way she sells her lard ... if [she] only sold a quarter of lard, it would be found to be lacking half a quarter'.³⁸

Women were also active in the food and drink trade. In 1602, when proto-industry had hardly begun, among the six tavern-keepers presenting their guarantors to the district court was a married woman running a drinking-house as her own business, responsible for naming her own guarantor.³⁹ Her husband did not appear in the matter.

Even heavy crafts such as milling, fulling and building were practised by women. In 1603 a woman appeared before the administrative court in Wildberg, who had bought a mill some years previously, had paid the considerable licence fee to the community, had invested her dowry in improvements, and had been supporting herself and her children from milling ever since.⁴⁰ A petition of 1657 for tax relief shows that one widow had been operating one of the three town mills herself and supporting herself on the proceeds; the petition stated that 'apart from the mill, [she] has no means'.⁴¹ In 1706, a miller's widow was fined by the church court for milling during the sermon.⁴² A 1736 population register lists a widow in the town supporting a household of four on a fulling mill and some land, and a widow in a village supporting a household of six on an ordinary grain mill and some land.⁴³ The female village grain miller can hardly be seen as a result of proto-industrial emancipation of women and it would surely be more appropriate to see both female millers as part of a long-standing economic tradition, independent of proto-industrialisation.

It was the wife who was often a craftsman's main assistant, even in such a heavy craft as building. One defamation case in 1656 arose between a mason's customer, and the mason and his wife who had been rebuilding a wall together. Although it is evident that the mason's wife was expected

to do the auxiliary tasks, she was present throughout the job, assisting in the whole course of the work, acting as journeyman or partner to her husband.⁴⁴ An artisan's natural partner even in heavy work was his wife, unless he was prosperous enough to keep a journeyman: in 1709 a fifty-year-old cooper and his wife were summoned before the church court, because 'on a day of repentance before the sermon, he made barrel wood and carried it in with his wife after the sermon'.⁴⁵ A serious dispute between a miller's and a fuller's wife arose in 1711 around the construction by a labouring gang of the waterway in the mill-ditch, a job which the miller and the fuller left to their wives to oversee.⁴⁶

Not only proto-industrial, but also other crafts were seen as being the business of both husband and wife. Serious marital conflict could arise from disputes about work. A Wildberg tailor and his wife were brought before the church court in 1715 for a dispute which arose, according to the wife, 'concerning the making of a [coat] breast'. The husband's defence was that 'his wife always wants to have the last word, and made him so angry that he gave her a couple of boxes on the ear, and when she wouldn't be quiet he beat her some more; if only she would give way to him such things would not happen'.⁴⁷

It was taken for granted that in the absence of her husband, a woman would carry on his craft. A furrier petitioned for release from military service in 1633 on the grounds that 'no woman can fulfil his craft'.⁴⁸ A woman evidently *would* be able to fulfil almost any other craft. A baker, petitioning in the 1640s to be let out of the first military muster in the town, claimed that 'because his wife is ill, if he had to go out again he would miserably lose everything he has'.⁴⁹ In 1668 a citizen complained to the governor's court that 'the fountains by the upper gate and in the market are running very poorly, the well- and fountain-master sees to it very carelessly, sends only his wife; better provision should be made'.⁵⁰ Even official tasks were exercised by the officeholder's wife in his absence. One of the town constables complained to the governor's court in 1670 that 'the butchers, also to some extent the other citizens, refuse to obey when in his absence something is commanded by order of the authorities through his wife; and instead resist, on the grounds that it is not she who is the town constable'. The authorities saw it as perfectly proper that the constable's wife should exercise his office in his absence, and issued an order to that effect.⁵¹

Whether the family gained its living from proto-industry, traditional crafts, or agriculture, a wife was seen as absolutely essential to the maintenance of a household, as is shown by the very low proportion of widowers in the population. In 1736, only 5 per cent of earning units in the town and villages of the district of Wildberg were headed by single or widowed males, and in the censuses of 1717 and 1722, only 1 per cent of households (residential units) were headed by such males.⁵²

The central importance of a wife is also shown by the petitions made by men of all occupations to be permitted to marry during Lent or Advent, or to remarry before the legal six months has elapsed since the death of the previous wife. In 1636 a farmer from the town of Nagold petitioned to be permitted to marry during Lent 'so that he can attend that much more properly to his lands'.⁵³ That year in a single month four villagers from the district of Wildberg petitioned to be allowed to remarry less than five months after the deaths of their wives, so essential was the wife's labour contribution to the household. One villager petitioned in 1657 to be permitted to remarry before the six-month time-limit, and to marry a woman to whom he was too closely related, on the grounds that '[he] has children and a heavy load of lands, for which reason he can no longer get along without a wife ... If he had to wait out the time, the field work would come in the middle, and he would thereby suffer noticeable impediment to the field work.'⁵⁴ A villager petitioned for tax relief on his land in 1664 on the grounds that 'he has been a widower for three years now ... can no longer maintain these lands and keep them under cultivation'.⁵⁵

But it was not merely in farming that the labour of a wife was essential. One Wildberg New Draperies weaver petitioned in 1620 to be divorced from his wife who had been officially consigned to the leper-house, on the grounds that 'without a wife he could not conduct a household, [but] must work for a master'. He had, in fact, already been obliged to leave Wildberg and work as a servant in Tübingen.⁵⁶ In 1627 a Wildberg butcher and tavern-keeper petitioned to remarry twelve weeks after his wife's death, on the grounds that he 'keeps a tavern, cannot without injury keep house with strangers'.⁵⁷ In 1636 a Wildberg shoemaker petitioned for dispensation to remarry only nineteen weeks after his wife's death 'on account of his craft, grievous military quartering and great disturbance in the household';⁵⁸ another man on the grounds that 'he has four small children, great poverty, and can keep no servants';⁵⁹ and a third because he held a town office.⁶⁰ A wife's assistance, therefore, was essential in every walk of life.

Certainly women were active in woollen weaving, as they were in other crafts. A case brought before the Wildberg court in 1623 reveals an underground network of women dealing in low-quality wool which did not meet guild standards. The women's husbands claimed that their wives had dealt without their knowledge while they were away on business.⁶¹ It is evident that considerable latitude was given to a wife to deal in the husband's absence. The weavers in this case were not, however, proto-industrial weavers, but rather old-style coarse woollens weavers selling to local markets. Proto-industrialisation was clearly not necessary for the active involvement of women in rural textile production.

The old-style weavers sold a large volume of cloths collectively to the Ducal court each year and in return had the right to buy a shipment of wool

from the Ducal flocks, known as the *Herrenwollen*. When this shipment arrived, it was shared out among the masters' wives, and the women went up to collect it. It was an event for the women of the district, a matter for envy and conflict among weavers' wives, an occasion for female street culture. This is shown in a defamation case of 1624, in which an old-style weaver's wife sent her sister up to fetch 'her' *Herrenwollen*, and a female neighbour challenged the woman's right to the wool on the grounds that it was rumoured among the women in the town that the woman's husband was weaving New Draperies instead of old-style woollens.⁶² Proto-industry and old-style weaving co-existed in the same community, often in the same household, and old-style weaving already involved the weaver's wife as co-owner of the rights and practice of the craft: a woman would employ her female relative to go and fetch 'her' wool 'in her name', gossip about industrial practice was spread 'about her', and it was an affair of public female sociability for women to envy and insult one another about economic privileges. Proto-industrialisation was not required for women to be economically active: it was happening already in the non-proto-industrial sector.

Not only the wool and yarn supply was female work. Many weaving tasks, such as the job of stretching out a newly made weft, were two-person jobs. Censuses show that by the early eighteenth century most New Draperies weaving households were small, with a mean size of 3.95 (compared to the non-weavers' 4.49), and almost one-fifth of weavers' households consisted only of the weaver and his wife (compared to one-tenth among the non-weavers). The obvious pair to stretch wefts together was the married couple. Many weaving couples appeared before the church courts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for 'stretching a weft during the sermon'.⁶³ But women outside the proto-industrial sector also appeared in such presentments: in just the fifteen years from 1705 to 1720, the wives of smiths, carpenters, coopers, innkeepers, and rope-makers, all were fined with their husbands for working on the Sabbath.⁶⁴

In the financial and investment sector of the textile industry women had been active long before the growth of New Draperies weaving. Women would lend money *auf Tücher* ('on [old-style] woollens') to male weavers from their inheritances or dowries. Sometimes women investing in this way would charge a somewhat higher rate of interest than the 5 per cent legal maximum, and cases appeared before the civil court, where weavers would plead 'not to have to pay more than the lawful interest'.⁶⁵ Of course the court would enforce the law, deciding that 'the plaintiff shall be satisfied with the money that has already been received, plus the lawful interest';⁶⁶ and the woman would be done out of her little profit. One New Draperies weaver reported to the civil court in Wildberg how 'he had to pay his sister for the second time, and not with cloths but rather a usurious interest;

to which he objected, saying he would no longer pay interest like this on the 60 Gulden; in the end his sister agreed that he might pay the lawful interest on the money, which he then continued to do for three years'.⁶⁷ Although the new weaving with its new capital needs offered new hopes of independence for women, the regulation of finance prevented women deriving from it an enduring increase in security.

Dense, export-oriented cottage industry did not bring about great changes in the scale or the nature of women's work in the small agrarian towns and villages of the Nagold Valley. Women were active in agriculture, in retailing, in heavy trades both in their own rights and as assistants to their husbands, and in the traditional textile crafts. When men were absent, it was taken for granted that women did their work. Little difference can be discerned in the work women did in the households of New Draperies weavers, compared to those of traditional textile and non-textile artisans.

Single women

This popular tradition of female involvement in all sectors of the economy, and the tendency for flexible female labour to fill the gaps created by shortages in male labour supply, should not be interpreted as showing that the early modern period was a golden age of female economic independence.⁶⁸ Married women or widows working under a husband's licence or on the family's land were a matter of course. Daughters and maidservants were similarly permitted in crafts and agriculture, although in crafts their work could be circumscribed by regulation. Women filling a labour shortage or operating in peripheral sectors of the economy were tolerated. Single women earning their own bread, operating their own businesses independently of any economic right derived from husband or father, were given a special pejorative name, *Eigenbrötlerinnen* (literally, '[females] earning their own bread'), and were subject to perpetual harassment by the community and the authorities to whom respectable citizens constantly reported them.⁶⁹

Court records from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century bear witness to a long tradition of attempts by officials, communities, and male craft groups to control independent women. There was general disapproval of single women earning a living without being formally contracted to a master. At the yearly governor's court in 1646, at which each citizen was asked in the presence of the whole citizenry if he had anything to report, one man complained that 'several single girls are lodging with several citizens here, who in his view should be instructed to engage themselves to masters'.⁷⁰ He named four citizens with whom such single women were lodging. The response of the authorities was immediate and severe: 'the whole citizenry is enjoined on pain of a *Frevel*

fine [three Gulden] to engage such girls to masters within three weeks, for if afterwards any are discovered [still unengaged], the said fine will without fail be inflicted'.⁷¹

Similar complaints in following years reveal some of the grounds for communal anxiety about these women. For one thing, they were too mobile. In 1647 a man complained that 'there are two *Eigenbrötlerinnen* in the town who dwell here on and off, and will serve no honourable master, which is counter to the Ducal ordinances'.⁷² The following year a citizen complained that 'there were unmarried girls here on their own, who do not bind themselves, or work for a master, which is not to be endured, namely one from Rotfelden in Mike The Board's house, one from Jesingen in Jeremiah's Hans's house, and from time to time one in Veit's house, who wanders in and out'.⁷³ Such women did not stay in one household like proper servants, but moved in and out of the town, threatening the settlement controls imposed by the corporate community as a means of licensing access to collective rights and privileges. In 1650 after further popular complaints the authorities decreed that such women should be expelled from their lodgings within fourteen days.⁷⁴

Service by single women was tolerated; independence was not. In 1660, a Wildberg linen-weaver reported that 'the girl who had been at the carpenter's place, and was recently ordered away by the authorities, is dwelling here again in the middle mill'; the response of the authorities was that 'so long as she day-labours she shall be endured; but should she try to be independent again, she shall be thrown out'.⁷⁵ So long as such women provided part of the pool of cheap labour for town citizens, they were permitted to stay; as soon as they started competing with citizens for employment, they were moved on.

They were also accused of competing with citizens for other resources. In 1660, for instance, one male citizen complained that 'there are some *Eigenbrötlerinnen* here, should be gotten rid of; in the market everything is grabbed away by them, no citizen can get anything any more'.⁷⁶ The community took this accusation seriously, and ordered that 'in the next few days there shall be a house-to-house visitation to see what *Eigenbrötlerinnen* there are here, whereupon the court shall consider the matter'.⁷⁷

Single women were supposed to go into service, married women to stay with their husbands. In 1623 the regulatory court ordered a Wildberg citizen to get rid of 'young Meg The Bucket' who was lodging in his house, 'but who has a husband in Effringen named N. Sper; is not to be put up with'.⁷⁸ In 1641 a neighbour reported to the court that 'the Öschelbronn pastor's wife, who has separated herself from her husband, is not to be put up with in the town'.⁷⁹

The expansion of New Draperies weaving does not seem to have relaxed the pressures forcing would-be independent women back under

family authority. Neither the corporate community nor the authorities cared for the idea of women achieving independence from family and masters alike by spinning. In 1626, when it might be expected that proto-industrialisation would have begun to emancipate women, two different citizens complained that 'Michel Fronmiller is lodging a lass who has been in at least three different services in one year, and spins perpetually at the wheel.'⁸⁰

Even in conditions of considerable male labour shortage, such as prevailed in the worst years of the Thirty Years War, a girl could be brought up before the regulatory court on the charge that she was 'said to go to no sermon or prayer session, to swear wantonly, and to spin every Sunday between the sermons';⁸¹ the authorities put her in the stocks.

Provisions in successive weaving ordinances limited the kinds of work which might be done by 'single girls and other persons' who, in addition to spinning yarn for the weavers (which they were entitled to do), made and sold wefts.⁸² The ordinances alleged that they thereby 'caused great damage to the wefts and the yarn'.⁸³ This unfitting work was also keeping single women from their proper places in the economy, and must be abolished so that 'such daughters may be caused to apply themselves to other and necessary house work and business, or enter into honourable service'.⁸⁴ Poorer masters saw the making and selling of wefts to richer masters as an important part of their prerogatives, and women caught infringing on it were fined heavily. Yet according to the theory, proto-industrialisation should have caused a *decrease* in the sexual division of labour.⁸⁵

Women were allowed to spin – indeed there was always a shortage of spun yarn – but the rural guild colluded with even its usual opponent, the merchant company, to prevent the army of female spinners from charging the high prices which scarcity would otherwise have commanded. Petitions and guild accounts are replete with the sufferings of weavers, caused by the price ceilings on cloths imposed by the state under pressure from the merchant lobby; but the weavers in turn imposed grievous price ceilings on the spinners. Maximum piece-rates for spinners, and penalties for weavers who paid higher rates, were laid down in the first and every subsequent New Draperies weaving ordinance.⁸⁶ The 1654 ordinance turned over completely the periodic revision of spinners' rates to the merchant company and the weavers' guilds, which allied in order to minimise their own production costs against the unincorporated spinners.

The ordinances were actually enforced. Even in the first, comparatively unregulated, phase of the industry's expansion, town and village weavers successfully acted together to protect their cheap source of spun yarn. In July 1618 two guild foremen froze the assets of rival weavers competing with the Wildberg corporation for cheap female labour in a

comparatively distant village.⁸⁷ Similar initiatives against the 'current disorders' among the spinners were undertaken even in the darkest years of the Thirty Years War.⁸⁸

As the century passed, the control of spinners increased. In 1670, when 'foreign' putters-out tried to have spinning done in some remote hamlets of the Nagold Valley, the guild instantly sent an official up to the hamlets, who informed the local authorities and confiscated the wefts and yarn.⁸⁹ The problem of regulating the spinners' attempts to evade the price ceiling was then taken under the control of the Ducal government. In 1671 the Ducal authorities issued prohibitions to two villages against spinning for 'foreigners', and ordered 'a list of all those in the villages who spin wool, with the addition of where to and whom for, with names, 13 pages', which was paid for by the rural weavers' guild.⁹⁰ Not long after, prohibitions were sent out to ten villages in the district of Wildenberg forbidding all wool-spinning 'out of the country', again paid for by the weavers.⁹¹

Both guild and local courts enforced the absolute prohibition against single females weaving or combing wool. In 1669, for instance, one citizen reported to a local court that 'a year ago Hannß Schrotten was forbidden to set his servant girl behind the loom and have her weave, on pain of a *Kleine Frevel* [3 Gulden] fine; however he does not comply with this, but rather has been having this girl weave from time to time all year'. The authorities' response was immediate and severe: 'Because he ignored the previous prohibition, he is fined a *Kleine Frevel* to the Duchy, and is commanded once again, absolutely not to have this girl do weaving; if he does not comply with this, he will be fined a *Kleine Frevel* again.'⁹²

As late as the second half of the eighteenth century, several masters were being fined each year for such offences as 'allowing his maid to comb, as though she were a journeyman, counter to the ordinance',⁹³ 'keeping single [female] combers, counter to prohibition',⁹⁴ or 'because he had a female work for him'.⁹⁵ Females were unable to escape regulation of their work even in the villages, for village masters were fined no less frequently for this offence than masters from the small town. Nor does it appear that this was only a pro forma enforcement of a much more widespread and uncontrollable delict, for on one occasion six masters were fined for keeping single female wool-combers 'as a first offence and just as a warning'.⁹⁶ The guild behaved as if by and large it was keeping the phenomenon under control.

One way in which the New Draperies industry did open new chances to women, at least in its more prosperous phase, before the Thirty Years War, was if they bound themselves to masters as servants. A list of servants and their wages in each community in the district of Wildberg in 1631 shows that communities which had a high proportion of weavers also had an excess of female over male servants (see table 3.1). In the three

Table 3.1 Sex of servants in the district of Wildberg, July 1631

Community	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Weaving</i>						
Wildberg	34	47	38	53	72	100
Sulz	14	40	21	60	35	100
Ebhausen	9	53	8	47	17	100
Total weaving	57	46	67	54	124	100
<i>Non-weaving</i>						
Oberjettingen	12	55	10	45	22	100
Gültlingen	11	48	12	52	23	100
Schönbronn	4	100	0	0	4	100
Total non-weaving	27	55	22	45	49	100
Grand total	84	49	89	51	173	100

Note: Servants of unknown sex are omitted.

Source: WHSA A573 Bü 5597, list of servants and their wages, July 1631.

most dense centres of New Draperies weaving in the district 54 per cent of servants were female, compared to only 45 per cent females among servants in non-weaving villages. The highest mean wages for female servants were in the town and one of the weaving villages (see table 3.2); but the lowest mean wage for female servants was in another weaving village, suggesting that the employment opportunities of women in this society depended less on proto-industrialisation, than on other, more local, characteristics of the labour-market.

According to the theory, proto-industry is supposed to have made women more mobile. In the weaving village of Sulz, for which the 1631 list records servants' communities of origin, female servants were much less mobile than males: four-fifths of male servants, but only one-half of the female servants were from outside the village in which they were serving (see table 3.2). Here one can see the operation of the corporate community on individuals' economic opportunities, for on average the highest wage rates in Sulz were being paid to servants native to the village. 'Foreign' servants earned 10 per cent less on average than servants native to the village.

But servants were not the primary source of labour in the New Draperies weaving industry. By 1736, in the dense weaving communities of Wildberg and Ebhausen, only one-fifth of New Draperies weaving households, but almost one-third of non-weaving households, had servants. It was in family roles within the household, or as unmarried spinners operating on the margin of subsistence, that women had to find their principal place in New Draperies weaving.

Table 3.2 Wages of servants in the district of Wildberg, July 1631

Community	Male		Female		Total	
	Mean wage	No.	Mean wage	No.	Mean wage	No.
<i>Weaving</i>						
Wildberg	10.0	33	4.0	36	6.8	69
Ebhausen	6.6	9	3.2	8	5.0	17
Sulz:						
total	7.6	16	4.4	20	5.6	36
native	9.7	3	4.6	10	6.0	13
outsider	5.6	13	4.2	10	5.2	23
Total weaving	8.8	58	4.0	64	6.2	122
<i>Non-weaving</i>						
Oberjettingen	6.3	12	3.7	10	5.1	22
Gültlingen	9.3	11	3.8	12	6.4	23
Schönbronn	12.0	4	—	—	12.0	4
Total non-weaving	8.4	27	3.8	22	6.3	49
Grand total	8.7	85	3.9	86	6.2	171

Note: Wages are given in Gulden.

Servants whose wages were not recorded are omitted.

Source: WHSA A573 Bü 5597, July 1631.

Why was this so? There are two reasons: one is that corporate communities, rural guilds and merchant companies formed a powerful coalition of pressure groups which, in seeking state enforcement of their own economic interests, obtained the desired profits at the expense of groups with little lobbying power. Women operating within the household under the licence of a male member of one of these pressure groups did considerably better than unorganised independent women. It was not that the weaving industry did not provide opportunities for women, but that its organisation into corporate pressure groups led to the exclusion and exploitation of unorganised (especially female) labour.

The other reason for this restriction of the economic opportunities of women is that the system of risk-sharing and collective insurance provided by the Württemberg system of corporate communities was threatened by the mobility, poverty, disorder, and unlicensed sexuality represented by the phenomenon of independent women.

The theory argues that proto-industrialisation saw a loosening of political and patriarchal controls on women and on female sexuality. In particular, illegitimacy and pre-marital pregnancy are supposed to have become more common. Nothing can have been further from the case in the Nagold Valley. As the seventeenth century progressed, Pietist pastors in town and villages increased the controls and penalties on pre-marital sexual activity. In 1645, Pietist church 'convents' or church 'censures' were

established, which met every few weeks and called before them all suspected moral delicts, previously covered less systematically by administrative courts. The baptism of a child born less than 36 weeks after the marriage of the parents was recorded as such in the register, and the phrase 'conceived in concubinage' written in the margin. Couples marrying when the woman was known to be pregnant were wedded in a special penitential prayer-session rather than the usual church service, and this too was recorded in the marriage register. In household listings, *Unehelich* (illegitimate) was included as part of an individual's census identity. By the late seventeenth century, all illegitimate births were being entered upside-down in the parish registers. In the early eighteenth century, after almost a century and a half of proto-industrialisation, illegitimacy rates, despite such conscientious registration, were extremely low, compared with densely industrial communities of comparable size in England.⁹⁷ Illegitimate births were about 4 per cent of the total for the population as a whole, but only 2 per cent among births to mothers with any connection with New Draperies weaving. The regulation of female sexuality does not seem to have become less strict as proto-industrialisation progressed.

This, too, can be associated with the corporate structure of local society. Illegitimate children could not inherit, they could not become a citizen of a town or village, save by special dispensation, and they could not be apprenticed to a craft. There was thus no room for them in New Draperies weaving, or any other sector of the economy, and they would merely become a burden on their mothers, and on the village or town poor-rate. In sheer self-protection, it was logical for the risk-sharing corporate community to place restrictions on the work and residence of unmarried women. The evidence suggests that it was largely successful in doing so.

Married women and widows

Women were permitted to be involved in proto-industry in their own right through inheriting the right to weave from a husband when he died. Although in this way large numbers of widows were permitted to earn a living, and thus participated in proto-industrialisation, it is not at all clear that it opened up new opportunities for them. A glance at household size shows that proto-industry enabled women to support fewer dependants than did other occupations. The households of New Draperies weaving widows in 1717 had a mean size of 2.56, whereas the non-weaving female-headed households had a mean size of 3.17. A female New Draperies weaver could feed and support 0.61 fewer people than her non-proto-industrial counterpart.

Nor did proto-industry open new working opportunities to women by enabling them to marry earlier in life. In the Nagold Valley, contrary

to the predictions of the theory of proto-industrialisation, New Draperies weaving was associated with later than average marriage for women. Among some three hundred reconstituted marriages in Wildberg at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the brides of New Draperies weavers were on average and on median almost a year older (at 26.5 years) than the brides of men of other occupations (at 25.6 years).⁹⁸ Parental consent was apparently still required for the marriages of village weavers' offspring, seventy years after the onset of proto-industrialisation. In 1655, a village weaver's son refused to consider himself betrothed to a girl, on the grounds that 'besides, [his] father will not consent that he take Schüz's daughter'.⁹⁹ The girl justified her insistence on the betrothal on the grounds that 'her stepfather Schüz is also of that opinion [that the betrothal should be kept] and this betrothal is not unacceptable to him'.¹⁰⁰

Just as the expansion of rural industry did not open up new opportunities for women through earlier or freer marriage, so also married women's work options continued to be circumscribed. Both the rural guild and the local courts excluded from New Draperies weaving widows and wives who had not inherited from their husbands the right to practise. At the quarterly regulatory court in 1629, for instance, a neighbour reported that 'Michell Henni's widow buys up yarn from time to time among the New Draperies weavers, although her late husband was no New Draperies weaver'.¹⁰¹ Only a year after the invasion of 1634, the guild, still in control of the industry in the countryside, exacted the maximum guild fine from a village widow of an old-style coarse woollens weaver for practising the New Draperies craft on the grounds that her husband had never been apprenticed to it.¹⁰²

Although women could inherit the right to weave, the corporation prevented them from transmitting it to their children. The coming of proto-industry had not made economic life more open for one woman, whose father had been a Nagold Valley New Draperies weaver, but who had married a non-Württemberger, and who petitioned in 1657 to be permitted to apprentice her son to the craft; the guild would not accept the boy 'on the grounds that he is foreign'.¹⁰³

The theory of proto-industrialisation argues that the expansion of cottage industry brought women out of 'private' household production, in which they took a subordinate, domestic role, and where their relationships with the outside world were mediated through the market labour of the husband, into 'public' market production, in which they took an active role in the outside world.¹⁰⁴ The English empirical historiography argues, on the contrary, that as cottage industry expanded women were gradually being forced into household labour and dependence on their husbands.¹⁰⁵ For Württemberg, this is a false dichotomy: both market and household work by women was a matter of public knowledge in

corporate communities. This is one of the factors which made it easier to regulate, as church court presentations for Sabbath-breaking show. In 1707 three women were fined by the church court for doing laundry on the monthly Day of Prayer and Repentance.¹⁰⁶ In 1711, a woman reported by a female neighbour for spinning for her New Draperies weaver son charged in turn that the neighbour 'also sews on Sunday, which the [neighbour] did not deny, saying that ecclesiastical and temporal [persons] had done the same'.¹⁰⁷ Both women were punished.

Distinctions between public market work and private household production were blurred by the corporate nature of this society, and it would be wrong to draw a firm line between the two, or to assign very different roles to women on either side of the line. Women moved in and out of the market flexibly according to changes in productivity and regulatory constraints; even in household work they were publicly engaged in the economic and social life of the community. For instance, communities required that hot-water laundry be done in the public washhouse, as a fire-protection measure; court minutes bear witness to the careful enforcement of this regulation. Whereas men might be able to preserve social distinctions, all women, regardless of social status, had to work publicly together at the communal washhouse.

This apparently held good for the very highest echelons of rural society. As late as 1657, the highest-ranking Ducal official in the district, the *Keller*, reported to the Wildberg church court that 'his wife had complained to him woefully that when she went into the washhouse today, Hanß Georg Haug's wife and daughter came up to her and accosted her with bitter words, saying that Haug's son had been unjustly put in the stocks, and unjustly driven out of town'.¹⁰⁸ Far from refusing to have anything to do with these women, who came from a far poorer section of the community, the *Keller's* wife was stung into defending her husband's actions, saying that the woman's son 'was not treated unjustly; they don't sit up there to do injustice to people, the *Herren* [members of the communal court] had a hard job to do, they take their oaths to do as little injustice as possible to anyone'.¹⁰⁹ The *Keller's* daughter became involved in the quarrel, saying 'her father does injustice to no-one, her father did not do it alone, the church-censors did it'.¹¹⁰ The dispute ended in physical violence (the *Keller's* wife threw a washing-slab at Haug's wife) and general recrimination, with the two Haug women using the female privacy of the washhouse to criticise the behaviour of the community officials as a group.

A complex picture emerges of a vigorous female working life surrounding the washhouse and its well, in which women accused and defended their menfolk and expressed forthright opinions about the public life of the community. The case ended not with a hardening of the social gap between the official's female relations and those of the petty offender,

but with a public apology between the two women, and a personal plea on the part of the *Keller* and his wife to the court to be lenient with Haug's wife – a reaffirmation of corporate female sociability. Was this public or private production?

Nor did it require proto-industry to endow women with economic and moral authority within marriage. Marriage was a partnership, in which the law gave dominance to the man, but in which the logic of the situation could easily redress the balance. For instance, women continued to view the land which they brought into marriage as their own, and went to considerable lengths to defend it. In the early seventeenth century one woman whose husband was facing foreclosure for debt, argued in the court that 'she ... had not acquiesced in this contract and debt; they should go after the husband, for her husband brought nothing to her; what she has is hers'.¹¹¹ One Wildberg woman petitioned for divorce in 1640 on the grounds that her husband 'did not farm her land equally with his own'.¹¹² A villager's wife justified leaving her husband in 1651 on the grounds that her husband 'had dissipated her property'.¹¹³ In 1652 the elderly wife of a Wildberg man asked the church court to see that her and her husband's property was inventoried because he 'dissipates what she earns'; the court ordered that inventories be made.¹¹⁴ Another villager's wife complained to the church court that 'he alienated and sold what she brought [to the marriage], for which reason she could not keep house with him ... but if he gave back what he had sold, then she would keep house with him as is right; ... she brought with her some 50 Gulden, which he spent on a piece of land, and sold the piece of land without her prior knowledge and consent'.¹¹⁵ The conflict was resolved by the man 'promis[ing] to provide her with other security on it [the 50 Gulden] within a month'.¹¹⁶

A woman could also exert enough economic authority within the marriage to force her husband to go back on an agreed sale. In 1613, one husband reported to the court that 'when he told his wife of the sale she refused to acquiesce in it, saying it was her inheritance, her third share was not for sale'.¹¹⁷ Pressed by the other party and by the court, the man stuck by his guns throughout six pages of court minutes, repeating that he could not go ahead with the sale 'since it simply did not please his wife', and finally naming eight witnesses to give evidence of her resistance.¹¹⁸ In one household where the house was owned by the woman from a previous marriage, the woman's new husband was evidently merely living on sufferance. The sixty-year old couple came before the church court in 1712, six months after their marriage, 'charged with living evilly with one another ... he complains that he gets no bread to eat; [the wife answers] that it occurred on account of eating, that it was impossible for them, in these expensive times, to keep the man with as much bread as he eats; she would allow him what he earns'.¹¹⁹

The theory also argues that proto-industrialisation gave rise to a 'more individualised selection' of marriage partners, a weakening of patriarchal controls within the family, and the rise of the affectionate, egalitarian, companionate marriage.¹²⁰ However, the evidence indicates that notwithstanding their legal subordination, women traditionally had a great deal of economic and moral authority within marriage. As Wrightson put it for seventeenth-century English marriages, 'it would seem unwise to make too sharp a dichotomy between the "patriarchal" and the "companionate" marriage, and to erect these qualities into a typology of successive stages of family development'.¹²¹ It is improbable that the allocation of economic and other decision-making powers within marriage was a simple function of the occupation of the family. It may be that the optimal allocation of these powers did not change so much as we imagine, but rather merely the external structure of prices, technology and institutions within which these powers were expressed. So long as rural society was corporative and the rural economy subject to regulation and corporate lobbying, even the external expression of women's powers within marriage may have changed very little.

Conclusion

In the Nagold Valley we have observed a society in which women were economically very active, but where their activity was strictly channelled. Neither of the two general theories of women's work under expanding cottage industry can explain this. The theory of proto-industrialisation focusses on the expansion of flexible female labour into market gaps, but because it ignores institutions cannot explain either the previous economic power of women or the subsequent process of exclusion of women from the new opportunities. The English empirical historiography takes the traditional economic powers of women, and their subsequent restriction, as its starting-point, but assigns responsibility unspecifically to capitalism, rather than identifying specific social constraints. A theory of women's work which takes into account both its flexibility in allocating time between the market and the household, and its sensitive response to institutional changes altering the rewards of different uses of time, can explain both the enduring economic powers of women, and the expansions and contractions in women's market work under rural industry.

Demographic shifts (including the effects of war) and technological changes (such as the expansion of New Draperies weaving) could open up niches in labour-markets which male labour could not for the moment fill. Women, with their greater flexibility and more limited existing opportunities, could readily shift out of the household and into the market. But the system of legal and corporate institutions in the society was such that

women were pushed out of these niches when the male labour supply adjusted to fill them. Without corporate groups of their own to represent them, in the longer term women tended to occupy only those interstices of the local economy where the earnings were not worth lobbying for – or they adopted a position in the household of a male, who did have the right to industrial practice.

Repeatedly we have seen how the flexibility of women's labour was an essential element in all parts of the early modern economy. Women were active in farming, distribution, retailing, heavy trades and textiles; and were sexually valued for their strength. A craftsman or farmer's wife was his main assistant, exercising the craft in his absence, and rendering householding untenable when she died. For similar reasons, we may guess, communities which harassed women in independent business tolerated them when they entered service or provided day-labour. New Draperies weaving edged single women out of weaving, combing and weft-making, which competed with men, but set them to work to fill the scarcity of spun yarn. Married women, on the other hand, moved flexibly in and out of public and private production, between which there was no sharp dichotomy. In so far as women greased the wheels of the labour-market, they were permitted an enormous range of economic activity; their flexibility was a valued attribute to the whole economy.

The obverse of the flexibility women's labour was its exploitability, which was due to its lack of corporate organisation in an economy dominated by corporate pressure groups. What enabled women to be squeezed out of certain forms of economic independence was their very flexibility: the fact that women were not organised into pressure groups and were thus at the mercy of government regulation in response to those who were so organised. When put under pressure by corporate groups, it was more worthwhile for female labour to return to household production, to exercise market production from within a male-headed household, or to adapt by moving to a less constrained (but consequently less lucrative) part of the market.

Why did women not in turn set up pressure groups? Partly, their flexibility and fragmentation made the relative costs of adapting far lower than the costs of organising to lobby, which were very high. Almost all the women with resources to spend on such a project were already yoked into the system of male corporations, by the close working partnership of marriage, with the additional incentive of inheriting the husband's rights on his death. Those women with an interest in economic independence, specifically in organising in opposition to existing pressure groups, exercised far less economic power; they were scattered, poorly informed, and completely lacking in support from the authorities. The grass-roots organising campaign of the New Draperies weavers to obtain their guilds

in the 1590s, or that of the merchant-dyers to obtain their company monopoly in the 1640s, show the absolute necessity of state support for corporate organisation. Existing corporations were certain to oppose the establishment of organised female labour (for example, a spinners' guild) since independent women were already seen as competing for resources and livelihood niches against men with families to support. Situated, as they were, close to the boundary of subsistence, early modern communities and individuals were rationally averse to risking innovations in economic and social organisation which posed even a potential threat to livelihoods.

This institutional inertia raised the costs of organising female labour to an unrealistic level, and the flexibility of female labour reduced the costs of adapting to institutional constraints. Thus women tended, as we have seen, to drift to the (powerless) periphery of the economy, except where there was a shortage of male labour, or a powerful male pressure group which was able to exploit female labour to reduce its own costs. In explaining ebbs and flows in women's work in the market, it is not necessary to invoke a spontaneous reaction of households to the spread of a new occupation, nor a widespread change in social mores concerning women's independence accompanying 'the spread of the capitalistic organisation of industry'.¹²² Changes in relative productivities of working in the household and the market are sufficient to explain women's allocation of time to different forms of work. The findings of this chapter indicate that a knowledge of the specific functioning of institutional constraints on these relative productivities is indispensable for an understanding of the great shifts in the European economic and demographic system between the early modern period and the present.

Notes

- 1 This is a commonplace of labour economics; see, for example, R. G. Ehrenberg and R. S. Smith, *Modern Labour Economics: Theory and Public Policy*, 2nd edn, 1985, Glenview, Ill., pp. 193–218.
- 2 The term first appeared in F. F. Mendels, 'Proto-industrialization: the first phase of the industrialization process', *Journal of Economic History*, 32 (1972). The most exhaustive development of the theory is in P. Kriedte, H. Medick and J. Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization: Rural Industry in the Genesis of Capitalism*, Cambridge, 1981, first published as *Industrialisierung vor der Industrialisierung*, Göttingen, 1977.
- 3 Kriedte, Medick and Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization*, pp. 61–2.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 70.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 8 I. Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850*, London, 1930, p. 293.

- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 11 A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, London, 1982 (originally published 1919), p. 183.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 196.
- 13 M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures 1700–1820*, London, 1985, p. 156.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 15 K. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor 1660–1900*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 309.
- 16 W. Troeltsch, *Die Calwer Zeughandlungskompagnie und ihre Arbeiter: Studien zur Gewerbe- und Sozialgeschichte Altwürtembergs*, Jena, 1897.
- 17 S. C. Ogilvie, 'Corporatism and regulation in rural industry: Württemberg woollen weaving 1590–1740', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1985, chapter 6.
- 18 *Ibid.*, chapter 2.
- 19 *Ibid.*, chapter 4.
- 20 *Ibid.*, chapter 5.
- 21 *Ibid.*, chapter 2 and *passim*.
- 22 *Ibid.*, chapter 5.
- 23 *Ibid.*, chapter 2.
- 24 *Ibid.*, chapter 2.
- 25 C. Poni, 'A proto-industrial city: Bologna: XVI–XVIII century', in *Eighth International Economic History Congress 'A' Themes*, Budapest, 1982; A. G. Enciso, 'Economic structure of Cameros' dispersed industry: a case study in eighteenth century Castilian textile industry', in *ibid.*; J. K. J. Thomson, *Clermont-de-Lodève 1633–1789: Fluctuations in the Prosperity of a Lanquedocian Cloth-making Town*, Cambridge, 1982; and H. Kisch, 'From monopoly to laissez-faire: the early growth of the Wupper Valley textile trades', *The Journal of European Economic History*, vol. 1 (1972).
- 26 On England, see K. Wrightson, *English society 1580–1680*, London, 1982; on The Netherlands, J. de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age, 1500–1700*, Berkeley, 1974.
- 27 On Shepshed, see D. Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism*, London, 1977; on Flanders, Mendels, 'Proto-industrialization'; on southern Germany, J. Knodel, 'Demographic transitions in German villages', Population Studies Centre Research Report, University of Michigan, no. 82, 1982; on the Ravensberg villages, W. Mager, 'Haushalt und Familie in protoindustrieller Gesellschaft: Spenge (Ravensberg) während der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts: Eine Fallstudie', in N. Bulst, J. Goy, and J. Hoock (eds.), *Familie zwischen Tradition und Moderne: Studien zur Geschichte der Familie in Deutschland und Frankreich vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, 1981; on Thimerais, see B. Derouet, 'Une démographie sociale différentielle', *Annales ESC*, vol. 35 (1980); on southern Flanders, C. Vandebroek, *Handlingen van de Geschieden Oudheidkundige Kring*, Oudenaarde, 1976; on Ireland, L. Clarkson and B. Collins, 'Proto-industrialization in an Irish town, 1820–21', in *Eighth International Economic History Congress 'A' Themes*, Budapest, 1982; on Bethnal Green and Sudbury, see M. Clarke, 'Household and family in Bethnal Green 1851–1871', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1986.
- 28 Württembergische Hauptstaatsarchiv (Württemberg State Archive, henceforth WHSA) A573 Bü 6967, *Seelentabelle*, 1736. Even including the mostly single-person female-headed fragments of families, lodging with other households, but deriving a separate livelihood from spinning or charity, more than one-quarter of earning units owned land.
- 29 *Ibid.*

- 30 Pfarrarchiv Wildberg (Wildberg Parish Archive, henceforth PAW) Kirchenkonventsprotokolle (henceforth KKP) I, 26 August 1646, fol. 3v–4v: 'dem Kuchstall gemüset'.
- 31 PAW KKP I, 26 August 1646, fol. 5r: 'vnd. der Predig hew, in stall getrag'.
- 32 WHSA A573 Bü 86 Jahresvogtgericht (yearly governor's court, henceforth JVG), 19 November 1632, fol. 169r: 'habe, Friderich bub. Magt, ein Mistbehren, in anbringers hauß entlehnen wollen, darüb. sein dochter gesagt haben solle, Sie haben sonnst all hoffart, warumben Sie das nicht auch Kauffen, die Magdt were heimb zogen, Unnd Ihrer Frawen zu ohren getragen, ob hette sein dochter vermelt, solls gelt, von dem gestohlenen Vich nemmen, Unnd ein beeren darumb Kauffen.'
- 33 WHSA A573 Bü 15 fol. 298v 25 January 1616.
- 34 PAW KKP I, 7 May 1658, fol. 190r: 'habe Er vnderweegs Zue Ihren gesagt Sie seye so hipsch vnd starckh Er möchte bey Ihren schlaffen'.
- 35 WHSA A573 Bü 122 fol. 61r, 15 December 1619: 'Nachdem man Andere Maister hew unnd Straw zuerhaltung des Jenig vüchs so man zue wintters Zeitten uff das Luder, wegen der wölff thuett, besolldung haben, ... Alls Pittett Sie, man wolle Auch derselben Thaylhafftig mach.'
- 36 WHSA A573 Bü 128 fol. 69r, 22 June 1642.
- 37 WHSA A573 Bü 6967, *Seelentabelle*, 1736.
- 38 WHSA A573 Bü 15 fol. 568v, 16 January 1622: 'die leütt redeten In d. Statt, Wie sie Ihr schmalz Verkaufte ... Wann sein fraw nuhr ein Vierling schmalz Verkaufte, so fehle es ein halber vlg.'
- 39 WHSA A573 Verhörstag (administrative court, henceforth VHT) Bü 25 fol. 22v, 23 December 1602.
- 40 WHSA A573 VHT Bü 24 fol. 25r, 23 February 1603.
- 41 WHSA A573 Bü 129b fol. 19r, 5 January 1657: 'habe auß. d. Mühlin sonst Keine mittel'.
- 42 PAW KKP IV, 26 February 1706, fol. 254r.
- 43 WHSA A573 Bü 6967, *Seelentabelle*, 1736.
- 44 PAW KKP I, 5 September 1656, fol. 141r.
- 45 PAW KKP IV, 31 May 1709, fol. 268v.
- 46 PAW KKP IV, 17 July 1711, fol. 280v–281v.
- 47 PAW KKP IV, 4 January 1715, fol. 315r–315v.
- 48 WHSA A573 Bü 127 fol. 83v, 28 October 1633.
- 49 WHSA A573 Bü 127 fol. 95v: 'müeste also, weil er ein Kranckhe Fraw wann er widerumben fort müesste ehelndtlich Umb dz seinige kommen'.
- 50 WHSA A573 Bü 90 Vogt- und Rüggericht (governor's and regulatory court, henceforth VRG), 1 December 1668.
- 51 WHSA A573 Bü 90 JVG, 24 October 1670.
- 52 WHSA A573 Bü 6967, *Seelentabelle*, 1736; WHSA A573 Bü 6965, *Seelenregister*, 1717; WHSA A573 Bü 6966, *Seelenregister*, 1722.
- 53 WHSA A573 Bü 128 fol. 3v, 16 February 1636: 'damit er desto füeglicher seinen güetern abwartten'.
- 54 WHSA A573 Bü 129b fol. 19v, 9 January 1657: 'habe Kinder Und ein schwehr Gueht, dahero Er sich ohne einer weib nicht mahr außbringen khönde ... Sintemahlen wan Er der Zeith erwarten müeste die Veldt geschäftten ins mittel kämen, Und Er dardurch an Veldt geschäftten mercklich impediert werde.'
- 55 WHSA A573 Bü 129c fol. 21v, 6 February 1664: 'Motiven: Seye ein Witwer bey 3 jahren her ... khönne die güether nimmer manuteniren und im baw erhalten.'
- 56 WHSA A573 Bü 122 fol. 79v, 23 April 1620: 'khende ohne weib nit heußlich. whonen, mießte einem Maister schaffen'.
- 57 WHSA A573 Bü 125 fol. 28v, 9 April 1627: 'Treibt wüthschaftt, Kann mit frembd. leüth. ohne schad. nit haußen.'
- 58 WHSA A573 Bü 128 fol. 2r, 27 January 1636: 'wegen seiner handthierung, beschwehrlicher quartierung und großer haußunruhr'.
- 59 WHSA A573 Bü 128 fol. 2r, 27 January 1636: 'hatt 4 Kleine Kinder große Armutey, kan kein gesindt zue erhalten [sic]'.
- 60 WHSA A573 Bü 128 fol. 3v, 21 February 1636: 'er der Statt diener'.
- 61 WHSA A573 Bü 16 fol. 15r ff 9 December 1623.
- 62 WHSA A573 Bü 16 fol. 79v, 19 August 1624.
- 63 For instance, PAW KKP I, 26 February 1647, fol. 15r: 'haben u. schinen Sonntag vnder der Predig ein Zettel angespannt'.
- 64 PAW KKP IV, 1705–20.
- 65 WHSA A573 Bü 15 fol. 379r, 15 December 1618: 'verhof weit. s nitt dan den landleüfigen Zins Zegeben schuldig'.
- 66 *Ibid.*, fol. 379v: 'der Clager mitt [inserted: den] empfangnen geltt samptt dem landleüfigen Zins, verniget sein soll'.
- 67 WHSA A573 Bü 16 fol. 3r, 20 August 1623: 'hette er ermelter seiner schwester, die thuech nicht, Aber dargegen einen Wucherlichen zinß Zum Andern Mahl raichen muessen, da er sich nuhn beschwehrt, dz er solche 60f nicht mehr Also Verzinsen Wolle, Were sie, die schwester mit Ihme eins Word., das geltt, landtleüffig zu Verpensioniren, Welches er Also 3 Jahrlang Continuirt'.
- 68 As Alice Clark portrays the situation of women in seventeenth-century England, in *Working Life of Women*.
- 69 The term *Eigenbrötlerinnen* referred to single women who 'earned their own bread', without either supporting a family of their own, or being a servant or dependent in the family of an adult male or a widow with land or an inherited right to practice a craft. They were generally disapproved of in Swabian society, and ultimately the term became one of opprobrium, referring to an eccentric or a recluse.
- 70 WHSA A573 Bü 86 fol. 265r, 24 November 1646: 'bei etlichen burgern alhie, hielten sich etliche ledige magden auff, welche seines erachtens dahin anzuehallten weren, daß Sie sich verding. thetten'.
- 71 *Ibid.*: 'Einer gantzen burgerschaftt Verbotten bei einer frevel straff, dergestallten, daß sich solche möchten in 3 Wochen Verdingen [~~crossed out: sollen~~] dann wo sich eine oder die ander hernach erfinden solle würdt obbemelte straff Unnachlässig eingezogen werd.' Three Gulden was more than half a year's wages for a servant-girl, and a considerable sum for most households in the community.
- 72 WHSA A573 Bü 86 fol. 384r, 2 November 1647: '2 Aigen bröthlerin hats in der Statt, die hin unnd wider sich aufhalten, Unnd Keinem Ehrlichen maister dienen wollen, So wider die Fürstl: ordnungen.'
- 73 WHSA A573 Bü 86 fol. 211r, 17 November 1648: 'weren ledige Madtlen für sich selbstn alhie, die sich nit verdingen: oder einem Maister schaffen thetten, so nit zuegeduld, Namblich Ins Bretten Michelins hauß eine von rothfelden, Ind des Jeremiaßen hanßen hauß eine von Jesingen, so Jeweilen ins Veiten hauß, auß Und ein wandern thette'.
- 74 WHSA A573 Bü 86 fol. 300r, 29 October 1650.
- 75 WHSA A573 Bü 90, 16 July 1660.
- 76 WHSA A573 Bü 90, 29 October 1660.
- 77 *Ibid.*
- 78 WHSA A573 Rüggericht (regulatory court, henceforth RG) Bü 86 fol. 95r, 23 May 1628: 'die Jung Kübelgretha ... die doch ein Mann von Effringen Namens N: Sper, habe, were nit zuegedulden'.
- 79 WHSA A573 JVG Bü 86 fol. 225, 1 November 1641: 'des Pfarrers weib von Eschelbronn, so sich selbstn von Ihrem man schaidet, in der Statt nicht zue gedulden'.

- 80 WWSA A573 JVG Bū 86 fol. 58r, 30 October 1626: 'Michel Fronmiller haltte ein dūren uff, die in einem Jahr wohl drey dienst gehabt, spinne Immertz am radt.'
- 81 WWSA A573 RG, Bū 86 fol. 206r, 4 June 1640: 'Margretha Michel Geckhlins see: dochter solle in kein Predigt Undt bettstundt gehen, Leichtfertig schwören, Undt alle Sontag zwisch. d. Predigt. spinnen.'
- 82 Troeltsch, *Die Calwer Zeughandlungskompagnie*, p. 445: 'Ledige dōchtern und Andere Persohnen'.
- 83 *Ibid.*: 'grossen ufschlag In den zug und das Garn verursacht'.
- 84 *Ibid.*, p. 446: 'dergleichen Tōchtern zu andern und nohtwendigen hauss Arbaiten und geschāfften Auzuehalten, oder sich in Ehrliche Dienst einzuelassen verursacht werden'.
- 85 Kriedte, Medick, and Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization*, pp. 44, 51–2, 60–2, 91, 95.
- 86 Troeltsch, *Die Calwer Zeughandlungskompagnie*, pp. 446ff.
- 87 WWSA A573 Bū 791 fol. 19r.
- 88 WWSA A573 Bū 816 no folio, 6 March 1641: 'vorlauffend Vhnordnungen'.
- 89 WWSA A573 Bū fol. 38–9, 8 January 1671.
- 90 WWSA A573 Bū 826 Zettel 15: 'ein Designation aller der Jenigen in Dorffschafften, welche wolle spinnen, mit dem Anhang wahin? vnd wem mit Namen, 13 Blatt'.
- 91 *Ibid.* 'vßer Landts'. Similar initiatives were undertaken in following years, e.g., WWSA A573 Bū 827 fol. 46 and Zettel 1, 10 February 1672.
- 92 WWSA A573 Bū 90, 1 November 1669.
- 93 WWSA A573 Bū 896 (1744–45): 'um willen Er seine Magd der Ordnung zuwider gesellenweiß kammern laßen'.
- 94 WWSA A573 Bū 897 (1745–46): 'haben wider das verbott ledige Wollen Kämmerin gehalten'.
- 95 WWSA A573 Bū 908 (1756–57): 'weil er sich durch 1 weibs bild schafen lassen'.
- 96 WWSA A573 Bū 897 (1745–46): 'zum erstenmal nur Zur Warnung'.
- 97 For further discussion of illegitimacy see S. C. Ogilvie, 'Coming of age in a corporate society: capitalism, pietism and family authority in rural Württemberg, 1590–1740', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 1 (1986).
- 98 Ogilvie, 'Corporatism and regulation in rural industry', chapter 6.
- 99 PAW KKP I, 31 August 1655, fol. 127v: 'vnd will der vatter Balthas Pfeiff. auch nicht Zuegeben, daß Er deß Schüz. Tochter nemme'.
- 100 PAW KKP I, 31 August 1655, fol. 127v: 'der Stieffvatter Schüz ist auch der mainung vnd solcher Ehe v. spruch Ihme nicht zue wid'.
- 101 WWSA A573 Bū 86 fol. 132v, 27 October 1629: 'Michell hennis Wittib, Kauffe hin Unnd Wid. bey der Knappenschafft garn auff, da doch Ihr mann seeliger Kein Knapp gewees.'
- 102 WWSA A573 Bū 810 no folio.
- 103 WWSA A573 Bū 129b fol. 28f, 5 January 1657: 'Ess wolle aber dz handwerckh daß Knäblin nicht recipiren vß ursach. daß es frembd sey.'
- 104 Kriedte, Medick, and Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization*, pp. 61–3.
- 105 Clark, *Working Life of Women*, p. 126.
- 106 PAW KKP IV, 28 January 1707, fol. 261r.
- 107 PAW KKP IV, 21 August 1711, fol. 283v.
- 108 PAW KKP I, 11 June 1657, fol. 160v: 'daß Ihme von seiner haußfrawen were wehemuethig clagendt Angebracht worden, daß alß sie heutigs tags in daß wäsch hauß gangen, seye hanß Georg haug. fraw vnd dochter Zue ihren in dz wäschhauß kommen, sie mit rawen wortten angefahren Zue ihren vermeldt man [inserted: habe] ihren deß haug. bueben ohnschuldiger weiß in dz narrenhäußlen gelegt und ohnschuldiger weiß außer der Statt vertriben'.
- 109 *Ibid.*, 'mann werde Ihne nicht ohnrecht gethon haben man sitze nicht droben dz man d. leüth ohnrecht thue die herrn haben ein schwehres auff ihnen sie thuen ihren aiden darauff dz sie souhl müglich niemandt ohnrecht thuen wollen'.
- 110 *Ibid.*, fol. 165r: 'ihr vatter thue Niemandt ohnrecht, Ihr vatter habs nicht allein gethon die Kirchen censores habens gethon'.
- 111 WWSA A573 Bū 15 fol. 157r: 'Sie hab ... nitt In diß Contract vnd schuldt bewilligt, soll dem Mann Angreifen, dann er Ir Mann nichts Zue Ihr gebracht, waß sie hab, sey Ihr.'
- 112 WWSA A573 Bū 128 fol. 50v, 20 August 1640: 'bawte Ihre gütlin nit gleicher die seinen'.
- 113 PAW KKP I, 3 September 1651, fol. 66v: 'habe er Ihro daß Ihrige verthan'.
- 114 PAW KKP I, 15 October 1652, fol. 82r: 'verthue, was Sie auffbringen'.
- 115 PAW KKP I, 10 December 1652, fol. 87r: 'Er Ihr das Zugebracht abalieniert vnd verkhaufft, desswegen Sie nicht mit Ihm haussen khönde ... so Er aber das verkhauffte wider erstatten werde, als dan wölle Sie mit Ihm hausen, wie recht ist. ... Sie Ihn in die 50f Zugebracht, so Er auff ein gütlein gewendet, vnd das gütlein ohn Ihr vorwissen vnd willen verkhauffet.'
- 116 *Ibid.*: 'verspricht, innerhalb monats frisst, Sie vmb solches anderwärts Zuversichern'.
- 117 WWSA A573 Bū 15 fol. 141r, 28 January 1613: 'da nun er c: solchen Kauf seiner hausf: Angezaigt, Hab sie In solchen Kauff nitt bewilligen wöllen, sey Ir Erbugett, Sey Ir drittertheyl nitt fayhl'.
- 118 *Ibid.*: 'dann seinem weib Ain mahl der Kauf nitt Lieb'.
- 119 PAW KKP IV, 21 October 1712, fol. 292v.
- 120 Kriedte, Medick, and Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization*, pp. 61–3.
- 121 Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 104.
- 122 Clark, *Working Life of Women*, p. 41; see pp. 306–8 for a succinct statement of the argument that the advent of capitalism changed beliefs concerning women's independence.

Women's work
and the family economy
in historical perspective

*Edited by Pat Hudson
and W.R. Lee*



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