

How this economy
powered by
machines, turned



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How did the changes brought about by the factory system challenge the family? How do some of the authors included in Chapter Four, in Rogers, treat this issue? Does Mary Shelley have any insights or criticisms with regard to the family and industrial society? The changes brought about by the factory system changed drastically the whole family structure.

This is especially evident from the way children and women were treated in the industrial society. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* discusses changes within the family from two different perspectives one of which is Victor's and the other one that of the creature. The Industrial Revolution created a unique new category of people who were dependent on their job alone for income, a job from which they might be laid off without any reason. The factory worker had no land, no home, and no source of income but his job. Working in the factory meant more self-discipline and less personal freedom for workers.

The system tended to depersonalize society and reduced workers to an impersonal status. This Economy powered by machines, turned people into machines as well. Even though life overall was improving, the industrialism brought misery to the workers and their families. Family structure and gender roles within the family were changed by the growth of the industrial society. Families as economic unit did not exist anymore. Productive work was taken out of the cottage. A new pattern of family life emerged.

Families now worked on factories and mills for people they did not know. Production was the key in the industrial society and family was a minor issue. Families were less closely bound together than in the past - the economic link was broken. Children became an essential part of the factory

system. Little children could work in such areas where a normal-sized adult would not fit. So factory and mine owners depended on child labor greatly.

They especially depended on children who were good with their hands and parents realizing an extra income often forced their children into work. As a result, children got abused and injured constantly. In *Aspects of Western Civilization*, Rogers refers to different accounts of children being physically deformed for life as a result of their employment. He also provides statistics on children's death causes, which include causes like: falling down the shafts, drowning in the mines, suffocating of choke-damp.

“ An imperfect abstract from the registration of deaths for the year 1838, gives a total, in p. 177-178 Perry Rogers also includes Friedrich Engels' work *The Impact of the Factory System on Women and the Family*. Engels discusses the conditions that women were put into due to the Industrialization. The family unit was broken down when women started working for the factories because they would work more than thirteen hours a day. This kind of employment left the women no time for the family functions such as cooking dinners and caring for children. Very often women would come back to work three days after the childbirth.

Women had no time nor health to care for their children the regular way. It is noted that in factory districts some parents used narcotics to keep their children still. Dr. Johns, Registrar in Chief for Manchester, is of opinion that this custom is the chief source of the many deaths from convulsions.

p. 186 Mary Shelley discusses the family issues in Frankenstein as well. She starts by talking about Victor's obsession with science and how it influenced his family bond.

Victor's interest in science begins when at fifteen he witnessed a huge oak tree blasted by a lightning bolt. This event caused him to forgo his former readings and begin studying natural phenomena, especially the subjects of electricity and galvanism. This could be paralleled to 'Industrial Revolution' in Victor Frankenstein's life - time of transition. "It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world." (chapter 2) This desire led Victor to creating life just like the desire of