

Masculine Domination

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— Co

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Preface to the
Eternalizing

This book, in which I have
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That question needs to be
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dehistoricization and *essentialization* of the structure of the sexual division and the corresponding principles of division. Posing the question in those terms marks an advance to the order of knowledge which can be the basis of a decisive advance in the order of action. To point out that what appears, in history, as being eternal is merely the product of a labour of eternalization performed by interconnected institutions such as the family, the church, the state, the educational system, and also, in another order of things, sport and journalism (these abstract notions being simple shorthand markers for complex mechanisms which must be analysed in each case in their historical particularity) is to reinsert into history, and therefore to restore to historical action, the relationship between the sexes that the naturalistic and essentialist vision removes from them (and not, as some have claimed I have said, to try to stop history and to dispossess women of their role as historical agents).

Combating these historical forces of dehistoricization must be the most immediate objective of an enterprise of mobilization aimed at putting history in motion again by neutralizing the mechanisms of the neutralization of history. This strictly *political* mobilization, which would open for women the possibility of a collective action of resistance, oriented towards legal and political reforms, contrasts both with the resignation that is encouraged by all essentialist (biological or psychoanalytical) visions of the difference between the sexes and with a resistance that is reduced to individual acts or the endlessly recommenced discursive 'happenings' that are recommended by some feminist theoreticians - these heroic breaks in the everyday routine, such as the 'parodic performances' favoured by Judith Butler, probably expect too much for the meagre and uncertain results they obtain.

To call on women to engage in a political action that breaks with the temptation of the introverted revolt of small mutual support groups - however necessary these groups may be in the vicissitudes of everyday struggles, in the home, the factory or the office - does not mean, as one might think and fear, inviting them to subscribe without a struggle to the ordinary forms and norms of political struggle, at the risk of finding themselves annexed or swallowed up by movements alien to their own preoccupations and interests. It expresses the wish that they

will work - within the social order - by the organizations that have been created by symbolic domination, of which they are one of the main victims. It is a call to a collective organization of resistance, especially symbolic ones, and legal institutions which are necessary for their subordination.

I would probably not have entered
if I had not been compelled
research, I have always been
the *paradox of doxa* - the fact
we find it, with its one-way
whether literal or figurative,
broadly respected; that their
subversions, contraventions and
ordinary concordance of the
implied in five minutes' move
de la Bastille or Place de la
prisingly, that the established
ation, its rights and prerogatives
ultimately perpetuates itself
ical accidents, and that the n
tence can so often be perceived
And I have also seen masculin
imposed and suffered, as the
cal submission, an effect of
gentle violence, imperceptible

I am not sure whether giving thanks
those concerned, and an I shall sign
(men and especially women) with
documents, references and ideas; and
work will be worthy of the occasion

exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, mis-recognition), recognition, or even feeling. This extraordinarily ordinary social relation thus offers a privileged opportunity to grasp the logic of the domination exerted in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognized both by the dominant and by the dominated – a language (or a pronunciation), a lifestyle (or a way of thinking, speaking and acting) – and, more generally, a distinctive property, whether emblem or stigma, the symbolically most powerful of which is that perfectly arbitrary and non-predictive bodily property, skin colour.

It is clear that in these areas one must above all restore the paradoxical character of *dom* while at the same time dismantling the processes responsible for this transformation of history into nature, of cultural arbitrariness into the *natural*. And to do so, one has to adopt the point of view on our own world and our own vision of the world which is that of the anthropologist, capable of showing that the principle of division (*nomos*) which founds the difference between male and female as we (mis)recognize it is simultaneously arbitrary, contingent, and also socio-logically necessary. It is no accident that, when she wants to suspend what she magnificently calls 'the hypnotic power of domination', Virginia Woolf resorts to an ethnographic analogy, genetically relating the segregation of women to the rituals of an archaic society: 'Inevitably, we look upon societies as conspiracies that sink the private brother, whom many of us have reason to respect, and in his stead a monstrous male, loud of voice, hard of fist, childishly intent upon scoring the floor of the earth with chalk marks, within whose mystic boundaries human beings are penned, rigidly, separately, artificially; where, daubed red and gold, decorated like a savage with feathers, he goes through mystic rites and enjoys the dubious pleasures of power and dominion while we, "his" women, are locked in the private house without share in the many societies of which his society is composed.' 'Mystic boundaries', 'mystic rites' – this language, the language of the magical transformation and symbolic conversion produced by ritual consecration, the basis of a new birth, is an invitation to

1. V. Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1939), p. 121.

orient research towards an specifically symbolic dimension.

And so one has to seek economy of symbolic good, a ruinous choice between the 'ideal' [*ideal*] (perpetuated by would-be 'materialist' studies between the sexes in terms of what are called 'symbolic' but partial). But, before the ethnology can make it possible by Virginia Woolf, of scientific operation of which we know it's the product, or, in the analysis of a society originating in the androcentric primitive objective archaeology of our instrument of a genuine social

This detour through an order to break the relationship us to our own tradition. The real efforts that have been long collective labour of socialization of the social between causes and effects a construction ('genders' as sexual the grounding in nature of the both reality and the representation times imposes itself even on

2. It only to show that my previous convention, I refer the reader to the in which I insisted that, when an ethnology can 'become a particular Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (London: published in 1980).

3. Thus it is not uncommon for a common vision of the sexes as and to ignore the degree of overall female performances and the differences observed in various domains. worse, they often let themselves their object, by the principles of

But does not this quasi-analytical use of ethnography to historicize and so denaturalize what seems most natural in the social order, the division between the sexes, run the risk of bringing to light constants and invariants – which are the very basis of its socioanalytical efficacy – and thereby of ratifying and eternalizing a conservative representation of the relationship between the sexes, the very one which is condensed in the myth of the 'eternal feminine'? Here one has to confront a new paradox: entailing a complete revolution in the approach to what researchers have aimed to study under the rubric of 'women's history': do not the invariants which, beyond all the visible changes in the position of women, are observed in the relations of domination between the sexes require one to take as one's privileged object the historical mechanisms and institutions which, in the course of history, have continuously abstracted these invariants from history?

This cognitive revolution would inevitably have consequences at the level of practice, and, in particular, in the formulation of strategies aimed at transforming the present state of the material and symbolic power relation between the sexes. If it is true that the principle of the perpetuation of this relationship of domination does not truly reside (or, at least, not principally) in one of the most visible sites in which it is exercised – in other words, within the domestic sphere, on which some feminist debate has concentrated its attention – but in agencies such as the school or the state, sites where principles of domination that go on to be exercised within even the most private universe are developed and imposed, then a vast field of action is opened up for feminist struggles, which are thus called upon to take a distinctive and decisive place within political struggles against *all* forms of domination.

language, either seeking to measure differences identified in that language – such as the more 'aggressive' nature of men or the more 'timid' nature of women – or using ordinary and therefore value-laden, terms to describe those differences. See, for example, among many others, J. A. Sherman. See *Related Cognitive Differences: An Essay on Theory and Evidence* (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1978); M. B. Parlee, 'Psychology: review essay', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1 (1975), pp. 118-35 – especially on the balance-sheet of the mental and behavioral differences between the sexes drawn up by J. E. Gurai and A. Scheinfeld in 1968; M. B. Parlee, 'The Pre-menstrual Syndrome', *Psychological Bulletin*, 80 (1973), pp. 454-65.

A magr

Being included, as man or trying to comprehend, we features of the masculine or schemes of perception and stand masculine domination modes of thought that are the hope of breaking out of the strategy for objectifying the This strategy, the one I shall ing an exercise of transcending the 'categories of understanding' the 'forms of classification' (but which, as products of so that they remain unmodified experiment. This will consist of the objective structures of historical society, at once strange and familiar, that instrument of a socioanalytical science that is capable of the unconscious.¹

1 I would probably not have masculine perception contained in (I discuss below) if I had not received vision (V. Wood, *To the Lighthouse*

Beyond the conquests and conversions they have undergone, and no doubt in reaction against them, the highland peasants of Kabylia have preserved structures which, protected in particular by the relatively unaltered practical coherence of behaviours and discourses partially abstracted from time by ritual stereotyping, represent a paradigmatic form of the 'phallosarcissistic' vision and the androcentric cosmology which are common to all Mediterranean societies and which survive even today, but in a partial and, as it were, exploded state, in our own cognitive structures and social structures. The choice of the particular case of Kabylia is justified when one knows, on the one hand, that the cultural tradition that has been maintained there constitutes a paradigmatic realization of the Mediterranean tradition (this is readily confirmed by consulting the ethnological research devoted to the question of honour and shame in various Mediterranean societies – Greece, Italy, Spain, Egypt, Turkey, Kabylia, etc.);² and on the other hand, that the whole European cultural domain undeniably shares in that tradition, as is shown by a comparison of the rituals observed in Kabylia with those collected by Arnold Van Gennep in early twentieth-century France.³ I could no doubt also have drawn on the tradition of ancient Greece, from which psychoanalysis has borrowed the greater part of its interpretative schemes, underpinned by the substantial research done in the field of historical ethnography. But nothing can replace direct study of a still functioning system that has remained relatively untouched by semi-learned reinterpretations (because of the lack of a written tradition). As I have indicated elsewhere,⁴ analysis of a corpus like that of ancient Greece, whose production extends over several centuries, runs the risk of artificially *synchronizing* successive and different states of the system and above all of conferring the same epistemological status on texts that have subjected the old mythico-ritual heritage to various more or less extensive reworkings. The interpreter who claims to act as an ethnographer is thus liable to treat as 'naïve' informants authors who themselves were already acting as (quasi-) ethnographers and whose mythological evocations, even the seemingly most archaic ones, such as those of Homer or Hesiod, are already learned myths implying

2. Cf. I. Peristiwaty, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), and J. Pata-Rácz, *Mediterranean Civilization: Essays in the Social Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1963).

3. A. Van Gennep, *Manuel de folklore français contemporain* (3 vols, Paris: Picard, 1957–58).

4. Cf. P. Bourdieu, 'Lecture, lectures, lectures littéraires', in *Choses dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987), pp. 137–43.

omissions, distortions and reifications. When, like Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization*, a researcher chooses to subject with Plato, ignoring Aristotle, Sophocles, Herodotus or Aristotle, Socratic philosophers, in whom the truth is more clearly visible.⁵ The same applies to scientific works (especially those which distinguish what is borrowed from what is original, or on some essential points, hire the truth into learned myth) and to the structures of the unconscious and of knowledge.

The social context

In a universe in which, as in Kabylia, sexuality is not constituted as a separate entity, but remains immersed in the social whole, the whole cosmos, sexual attributes remain inseparable from the social whole, with anthropological and cosmological implications, thus a danger of misinterpretation. The constitution of the sexual system (and its eroticism) has caused us to lose sight of the cosmology that is rooted in a social body, of its movements and of its values, and is charged with social meanings, for example, associated with the position of the upper position in the sexual system.

The division of (sexual) space, according to the opposition between the upper and the lower, while arbitrary when taken in itself, and subjective necessity from the point of view of homologous oppositions (up/down, inside/outside, belated/early, right/left, straight/curved, spicy/bland, light/dark, out/in, etc.), which in some cases corresponds to the opposition (up/down // go up/go down // go out/in). Being similar in c

sufficiently concordant to support one other, in and through the inexhaustible play of practical transfers and metaphors, and sufficiently divergent to give each of them a kind of semantic thickness, resulting from overdetermination by harmonics, connotations and correspondences.⁵

These universally applicable schemes of thought record as differences of nature, inscribed in objectivity, variations and distinctive features (of physique, for example) which they help to make exist at the same time as they 'naturalize' them by inscribing them in a system of differences, all equally natural in appearance. As a result, the anticipations they engender are endlessly confirmed by the course of the world, in particular by all the biological and cosmic cycles. So it is not clear how the social relation of domination, which underlies them and which, in a complete reversal of cause and effects, appears as one application among others of a system of sense relations perfectly independent of power relations, could emerge to consciousness. The mythico-ritual system here plays a role equivalent to that performed by the legal system in differentiated societies: in so far as the principles of vision and division that it proposes are objectively adjusted to the pre-existing divisions, it consecrates the established order, by bringing it to known and recognized, official existence.

The division between the sexes appears to be 'in the order of things', as people sometimes say to refer to what is normal, natural, to the point of being inevitable: it is present both – in the objectified state – in things (in the house, for example, every part of which is 'sexed'), in the whole social world, and – in the embodied state – in the habitus of the agents, functioning as systems of schemes of perception, thought and action. (Where, for the purposes of communication, I speak, as I do here, of categories or cognitive structures, at the risk of seeming to fall into the intellectualist philosophy that I have always criticized, it would be better to speak of practical schemes or dispositions: the word 'category' sometimes seems appropriate because it has the advantage of designating both a social unit – the category of farmers – and a cognitive

5. For a detailed table of the distribution of activities between the sexes, see P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), p. 217.

structure and of showing the concordance between the object structures, between the share, between the course of it, that makes possible what of the 'natural attitude' of pointing to its social condition apprehends the social world with the socially constructed natural, self-evident, and of legitimacy. It is because deep-rooted mechanisms, agreement between cognitive and consequently the domain (for example, in modern socio-educational system) that philosophical stances can attribution (or sociodicy) to more or less conscious and 'discourse', etc.).

The strength of the mass it dispenses with justification itself as neutral and has no aimed at legitimating it.' immense symbolic machine domination on which it is labour, a very strict distribution sex, of their place, time and space, with the opposition the market, reserved for

6. It has often been observed that the masculine gender appears as natural to the feminine, which is explicit. I have been able to verify this in the case where only female features are present. 'Le sexe de l'écriture. Note sur la la *Revue des Sciences Sociales*, 1990, 10, 117-120.'
7. It is remarkable, for example, that in the sexual hierarchy (except for P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, the 'natural' position of man and relate subsequently).

schemes which, being organized in accordance with these divisions, organize the perception of these objective divisions.

Masculinity, virility, in its ethical aspect, i.e. as the essence of the *vir*, *virtus*, the point of honour (*nif*), the principle of the conservation and increase of honour, remains indissociable, tacitly at least, from physical virility, in particular through the attestations of sexual potency – deflowering of the bride, abundant male offspring, etc. – which are expected of a 'real' man. Hence the phallus, always metaphorically present but very rarely named, concentrates all the collective fantasies of fecundating potency.⁹ Like the doughnuts or the wheat-cake, eaten on the occasion of births, circumcisions and the cutting of teeth, it 'rises' or 'raises'. The ambiguous scheme of *swelling* is the generative principle of the rites of fertility which aim to induce swelling mimetically (the phallus and the womb), in particular through recourse to 'swelling' foods and which are called for at the times when the fecundating action of male potency must be exercised, such as marriages – and also at the start of ploughing, the occasion of a homologous action of opening and insemination of the earth.¹⁰

The structural ambiguity, manifested by the existence of a morphological link (for example, between *abba* (father), the penis, and its feminine form, *shabbat*, the breast), of a number of symbols linked to fertility can be explained by the fact that they represent different manifestations of the fullness of life, of the living thing that gives life (through milk and semen assimilated to milk:¹¹ when a man is away for a long time, his wife is told he will bring her back 'a pitcher of whey, curdled milk'; a man who is indiscreet in his extramarital relations is said to have 'spilt whey on his beard'; *pecca yssoua*, 'he has

9 The European tradition associates physical or moral courage with virility ('to have balls...') and, like the Berber tradition, explicitly makes a link between the size of the nose (*nif*), the symbol of the 'point of honour', and the supposed size of the phallus.

10 On foods that swell, *akt mshken*, cf. Z. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 250–3, and on the function of mythically ambiguous, or-coded, or 'fuzzy' acts or objects, pp. 267ff.

11 The most evocative term is *awbid*, literally meaning bladder, sausage, but also phallus (cf. T. Yacine-Titouh, 'Anthropologie de la peau. L'exemple des rapports hommes-femmes, Algérie', in T. Yacine-Titouh (ed.), *Amour, phantasmes et société en Afrique du Nord et au Sahara* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), pp. 1–27; and 'La fécondité et la représentation de la peur', *Cahiers de Littérature Générale, JWA*CV*, no. 34 (1993), pp. 19–43).

castes and drunk', means that 'not to spill whey on one's chest' is found between *shamellals*, female fertility, and *imellalen*, the only male that sits on two feet, found in the words designating the phallus, which through its root *adma* (to swell) that which is full of life and (full/empty, fertile/sterile, etc.) of swelling in the generat or c

By associating phallic er swelling which is immen reproduction (germination, *riation* of the sexual organs *re* indisputable natural propert isus, the most important been seen, the insertion of example) into a system o relationships. It thereby hel social *nomos* into a necessit the *symbolic consecration* o cosmic and biological one mythico-ritual system – wit grain treated as a resurrect rebirth of the grandfather return of the forename – a system and hence to the o ity, of which it is the objec

When the dominated app that are the product of dor when their thoughts and p dance with the very struct that is imposed on them, d acts of *recognition*, submissp spondence between the re world and the principles of to them, there is always r meaning of the things of th

12 On the scheme full/empty *Practice*, pp. 277–8, and also pp. 2

realities. The partial indeterminacy of certain objects authorizes antagonistic interpretations, offering the dominated a possibility of resistance to the effect of symbolic imposition. Thus women can draw on the dominant schemes of perception (top/bottom, hard/soft, straight/curved, dry/wet, etc.), which lead them to form a very negative view of their own genitals,¹⁷ in order to understand the male sexual attributes by analogy with things that hang limply, without vigour (*taǎlaleq*, *asraǎlaq*, also used for onions or meat threaded on a string, or *acherbib*, the limp, lifeless penis of an old man, sometimes associated with *ajerbub*, rag);¹⁸ and they can even draw advantage from the diminished state of the male member to assert the superiority of the female sexual organ, as in the saying: 'You, all your tackle (*taǎlaleq*) dangles, says the woman, to the man, whereas I am a welded stone.'¹⁹

Thus the social definition of the sex organs, far from being a simple recording of natural properties, directly offered to perception, is the product of a construction implying a series of oriented choices, or, more precisely, based on an accentuation of certain differences and the scotomization of certain similarities. The representation of the vagina as an inverted phallus, which Marie-Christine Fouchelle has discovered in the writings of a surgeon of the Middle Ages, obeys the same fundamental oppositions between positive and negative, up and down, that come into play as soon as the masculine principle is posted as the measure of all things.²⁰ Knowing thus that man and woman

are perceived as two variant physiology, one understand since, there were no analog female genitals, which were organs as those of men, but why, as Yvonne Knibichler anatomists (in particular, V the moralists, tried to find for the social status that the traditional oppositions betw and activity; passivity and to follow the history of the by Thomas Laqueur,¹⁹ exte the 'migration' of female vagina, to complete the de the founding role that they ferences between the male construction which can be t sion of androcentric reason the social statuses assigned

The schemes which ste organs and, even more, of se male or female body itself, boundary being marked by who keeps her belt tight, w

13. Women consider that their genitals are beautiful only when hidden (the welded stone' (*yetmad*) or placed under the protection of *sem*, the charm (unlike the male organ, which has no *sem*, because it cannot be hidden). One of the words designating the vagina, *raǎlma*, is like the French *œuf*, used as an expletive (*ah raǎlma!*) to express stupidity (a 'raǎlma face' is a flat, anorphous face, without the relief of wit by a fine nose). Another of the Berber words designating the vagina, and one of the most pejorative, *achemid*, also means *œuf*.

14. All these words are of course taboo, as are some apparently anodyne terms such as *shazan* things, tools, lawful, cookery, *laǎlmal* ingredients, or *azadkwé tuǎ*, which often serve as euphemistic alternatives. Among the Kabyles, as in our own tradition, the male sex organs are, euphemistically at least, referred to as tools, instruments — which is perhaps related to the fact that, even today, the manipulation of technical objects is systematically assigned to men.

15. Cf. Yacine Titouh, 'Anthropologie de la nuit'.

16. M.-C. Fouchelle, *Corps et chirurgie à l'époque du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983).

17. Cf. E. W. Laqueur 'Orgasmology', in C. Galagher and *Modern Body: Sexuality and Society* (University of California Press, 1981).

18. Y. Knibichler, 'Les médecins civil', *Annales*, 31, no. 4 (1976), p. 18.

19. E. W. Laqueur, *Amor Veri* (R. Nadjar and N. Tazi (eds), Zone).

20. Among the countless studies and naturalists to the natural sciences — the logic is the same), *Nature's Body* (Boston: Beacon Press) is ascribed to [the] females 'of find in their own wives and daughters, they concluded that 'only guardian of their chastity' and 'thus the heard, often associated women, who are less noble' (p. 12).

virtuous, chaste) and the symbolic dividing line, at least for women, between the pure and the impure.

The belt is one of the signs of the closure of the female body – arms crossed over the bosom, legs together, closely tied garments – which as many analysts have shown, is still expected of women in European and American societies today.²¹ It also symbolizes the sacred barrier protecting the vagina, which is socially constituted as a sacred object and therefore subjected, in accordance with Durkheim's analysis, to strict rules of avoidance or access, which very rigorously determine the conditions of consecrated contact, that is to say the legitimate – or, conversely, the profaning – agents, moments and acts. These rules, which are particularly visible in matrimonial rites, can also be observed in the United States today, in situations where a male doctor has to perform a vaginal examination. As if ²² the potentially sexual connotations of gynaecological examination had to be symbolically and practically neutralized, the doctor undergoes a ritual tending to reassert the barrier, symbolized by the belt, between the public person and the vagina, which are never perceived simultaneously: he first addresses a person, face to face; then, once the person to be examined has undressed, in the presence of a nurse, he examines her while she lies with a sheet covering the upper part of her body, observing a vagina that is in a sense dissociated from the person and so reduced to the status of a thing, in the presence of the nurse, to whom he addresses his remarks, speaking of the patient in the third person, finally, in a third stage he again addresses the woman, who has dressed in his absence.²³ It is obviously because the vagina continues to be constituted as a fetish and treated as sacred, secret and taboo that trade in sex remains stigmatized both in the ordinary consciousness and in the letter of the law which denies women the choice of working as prostitutes.²⁴ By involving money, some male eroticism associates the search for pleasure with the brutal exercise of power over bodies reduced to the state of objects and with the sacrilege of transgressing

21 Cf. for example N. M. Henley, *Body Politics: Power, Sex and Nonverbal Communication* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1977), esp. pp. 89ff.

22 J. M. Henlin and M. A. Biggs, 'The sociology of the vaginal examination', in J. M. Henlin (ed.), *Down to Earth Sociology* (New York and Oxford: Free Press, 1991), pp. 235–47.

23 American law forbids living on immoral earnings', which implies that only the free gift of sex is legitimate and that the exchange of sex for money is sacrilege par excellence inasmuch as it is a trade in what is most sacred in the body (cf. G. Plestersen, 'The whore stigma, female dishonour and male unworthiness', *Social Text*, no. 37 (1993), pp. 39–64).

the law that the body (like the gratuitous offering, presupposing

The body has its front, the sexually undifferentiated and passive, submissive, as is the Mediterranean, insults (in particular gesture) denouncing homosexual face, forehead, eyes, mouth, *presentation* which concentrates honour, *nif*, which requires a them in the eye; and its hidden honour requires a man to con- tion of the sexual division of the link (asserted by psychoanalysis is established: the public, act the body – facing up, confront in the face, in the eyes, speak men; women, who, in Kabyl must in a sense renounce the in public with eyes directed to only utterance that suits them: the manly speech which is de- same time as being mediated.

Although it may appear to spring all the forms of uni-

24 Money is an integral part of. Because the perverse fantasy is in- currency by its abstract character of- leon (P. Klossowski, *State of France*. 'With this challenge, Sade prove contained at the very core of volu- contrary to enjoyment than the f- l'Édit de Nantes (Paris: Éditions de 25 'There is no worse insult than been 'had', 'screwed' (menduk, qaz 26 In accordance with the usual coline representation: an accident that it demands or helps to pred- is never done' – they are talkative and seven nights without coming agreement, they must say 'yes' to

ploughshare and furrow, sky and earth, fire and water, etc. – the sexual act is itself conceived in terms of the principle of male primacy. The opposition between the sexes is set in the series of mythico-ritual oppositions – up/down, above/below, dry/moist, hot/cold (of a man who desires it is said that 'his *kamin* is red-hot', 'his pot is burning', 'his drum is heating'; women are said to have the capacity to 'douse fire', 'give coolness', 'quench thirst'), active/passive, mobile/immobile (the sexual act is compared to a millstone, with its moving upper part and its immobile lower part, fixed to the earth; or to the relation between the broom, which comes and goes, and the house).²⁷ It follows that the position regarded as normal is that in which the man is 'on top'. Just as the vagina no doubt owes its threatening, dangerous character to the fact that it is conceived as empty, but also as the negative *inversion* of the phallus, so the sexual position in which the woman mounts the man is explicitly condemned in a number of civilizations.²⁸ And the Kabyle tradition, not normally rich in justificatory discourses, appeals to a kind of myth of origin to legitimate the positions assigned to the two sexes in the division of sexual labour and, through the sexual division of the labour of production and reproduction, in the whole social order and ultimately in the cosmic order.

'It was at the fountain (*jadq*) that the first man met the first woman. She was drawing water when the man arrogantly approached and asked to drink. But she had arrived first and she was thirsty too. Angrily the man jostled her. She slipped and fell to the ground. Then the man saw the woman's thighs, which were different from his own. He stood in amazement. The woman, who was more cunning, then taught him many things. "Lie down," she said, "and I will show you what your organs are for." He lay down; she caressed his penis, which became twice as large, and she lay on top of him. The man felt great pleasure. After that he followed the woman everywhere to do the same thing, for she knew more things than him, how to make fire and so on. One day the man said to the woman, "I want to show you something too; I know some things too. Lie down and I will lie on you." The woman lay on the ground and the man lay on top of her. He felt

27 Cf. Yacine-Titouh, 'Anthropologie de La peur'.

28 According to Charles Malamoud, in Sanskrit it is referred to as *Viparita*, inverted, a word that is also used to refer to the world turned upside down, topsy-turvy.

the same pleasure and then said to you [who dominate]; in the home always the last words that count are liked to be on top of women, and why they must be in charge.

The intention of sociodidactic origin of culture understood in terms of the male principle, the founding opposition (in fact, already in opposition between the functions made to justify it) between the 'sexuality' of nature and the act of production, the anomie of the female place par excellence, the perverse seductress, nature stands the act subject to a new order of things, the fundamental and the cosmic order, and nature, the legitimate dominion of the female principle, symbolize the beam (*asalas alemmas*) or the female fork open to the sky.

On top or underneath, the alternatives describe the sexual act. To possess sexually, as in the act of 'fuck', is to dominate in the act, but also to deceive, mislead, resist seduction is not to be a man, a falsification of virility, whether to the logic of prowess, the act, although the extreme gravitation forbids open expression of the masculinity of other men. The masculinity of other men of virility contains the principle of sexuality which is declared in the Mediterranean area and by

29 Cf. Yacine-Titouh, 'Anthropologie de La peur'.

A political sociology of the sexual act would show that, as is always the case in a relation of domination, the practices and representations of the two sexes are in no way symmetrical. Not only because, even in contemporary European and American societies, young men and women have very different points of view on the love relation, which men most often conceive in terms of conquest (especially in conversations between friends, which give a prominent place to boasting about female conquests),³⁰ but also because the sexual act itself is seen by men as a form of domination, appropriation, 'possession'. Hence the discrepancy between the probable expectations of men and women as regards sexuality – and the misunderstandings linked to misinterpretation of sometimes deliberately ambiguous or deceptive 'signals', which result from this. In contrast to women, who are socially prepared to see sexuality as an intimate and emotionally highly charged experience which does not necessarily include penetration but which can contain a wide range of activities (kissing, touching, caressing, embracing, etc.),³¹ men are inclined to compartmentalize sexuality, which is conceived as an aggressive and essentially physical act of conquest oriented towards penetration and orgasm.³² And although, on this point like all the others, there are of course very great variations according to social position,³³ age – and previous experience – it can be inferred from a series of interviews that apparently symmetrical practices (such as fellatio and cunnilingus) tend to have very different significance for men (who are inclined to see them as acts of domination, through the submission and pleasure obtained) and for women. Male pleasure is, in part, enjoyment of female pleasure, of the power to give pleasure; and so Catherine MacKinnon is no doubt right to see the fading of orgasm as a perfect example of the male power to make the interaction between the sexes conform to the view of it held by men, who expect the female orgasm

30 Cf. B. Ehrenreich, *The Heart of Man: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1983); E. Anderson, *Sensations: Race, Class and Change in the Urban Community* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).

31 D. Boca-Zain and S. Eitzen, *Diversity in American Families* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), pp. 243–54; L. Rubin, *Intimate Strangers* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

32 D. Russell, *The Politics of Rape* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), p. 272; E. Russell, *Sexual Exploitation* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1964), p. 162.

33 Although for the sake of argument I have been led to speak of men and women without reference to their social position, I am aware that one would need to take account in each case, and, as I shall several times in the subsequent text, of the specifications that the principle of social differentiation imposes on the principle of sexual differentiation (and vice versa).

to provide a proof of their virility, extreme form of submission.³⁴ She always aims at the sexual possession in some cases it may aim at sheer domination in its pure state.³⁵

If the sexual relation appears as a relation of domination, this is because it is constituted on the principle of division between the sexes, male and female, and because this principle of division directs desire – male desire towards eroticized domination, and female desire towards eroticized submission. In the latter case, as the eroticized form of domination, as the eroticized form of submission, as in homosexual relations, the links between sexuality and social differentiation are particularly clear and the roles particularly active and passive ones, and the relations between the social positions and their meaning are particularly clear. The possibility of penetration on a man, is one of the most important elements of his *virilitas* that is never entirely lost. It is known that in a number of cultures penetration is conceived as a man's power to impose his domination (performed as such, as a sign of his superiority by 'feminizing' the other). In this way, among the Greeks, the loss of honour and the loss of the status of citizen,³⁶ while for a Roman the loss of honour with a slave was regarded as a sign of his superiority, according to John Boswell, 'penetration with the prerogatives of the master' and 'penetration to penetration was a symbol of the master's power'.³⁷

34 C. A. MacKinnon, *Feminism and the Subject* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 131.

35 Cf. R. Cozette, 'Possession', p. 100, in *Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), pp. 300–10.

36 Cf. for example K. J. Dover, *Men and Women in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

37 P. Veyne, *History and the Problem of the Past* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 26–32.

authority.³⁸ It can be understood that from this point of view, which links sexuality and power, the worst humiliation for a man is to be turned into a woman; and one might evoke here the testimonies of men who, as a result of torture deliberately designed to feminize them, particularly through sexual humiliation, jokes about their virility, accusations of homosexuality, etc., or simply the need to behave as if they were women, have come to discover 'what it means to be constantly aware of one's body, always exposed to humiliation or ridicule, and to find comfort in household tasks or chatting with friends'.³⁹

The embodiment of domination

Whereas the idea that the social definition of the body and especially of the sexual organs, is the product of a social labour of construction has become quite banal through having been advocated by the whole anthropological tradition, the mechanism of the inversion of cause and effect that I am trying to describe here, through which the naturalization of that construction takes place, has not, it seems to me, been fully described. For the paradox is that it is the visible differences between the female body and the male body which, being perceived and constructed according to the practical schemes of the androcentric worldview, become the most perfectly indisputable guarantee of meanings and values that are in harmony with the principles of that worldview: it is not the phallus (or its absence) which is the basis of that worldview; rather it is that worldview which, being organized according to the division into *relational genders*, male and female, can institute the phallus, constituted as the symbol of virility, of the specifically male point of honour (*ouf*), and the difference between biologi-

38 J. Brewell, 'Sexual and ethnic categories in postmodern Europe', in P. McWhirter, S. Sanders and J. Reijnen (eds), *Homosexuality/Intersexuality: Concepts of Sexual Orientation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 17.

39 C. J. Franco, 'Gender, death and resistance: facing the ethical vacuum', in I. E. Canadi, P. Weiss Eujen and M. A. Gurettin (eds), *Near at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

cal bodies as objective foundation of the sexes, in the sense of generalized social essences. Far from reproduction determining the sexual division of labour and, and social order, it is an arbitrary female body, of its uses and functions, reproduction, which gives an androcentric view of the division of labour and social order. Particular strength of the masculinity that it combines and condenses is the *relationship of domination by essence that is itself a naturalized social*

The work of symbolic construction is a performative operation of naming (*representations*, starting with reality is itself not negligible); it is a profound and durable transformation that is to say, in and through a body, imposing a *differentiated definition* of the body, in particular sexual one, the unworst of the feasible and membership of the other gender potentialities biologically impossible', as Freud puts it, of every artefact of the manly man or contrary *nomos* which institutes the on the appearance of a law of sexuality or, even today, a man at the end of a *socialization* of it is only after a formidable continuous socialization that instituted by the cultural arbitrary clearly differentiated according to division and capable of perception principle.

Existing only relationally, product of the labour of discursive and practical, which is the

a body *socially differentiated* from the opposite gender (in all the culturally pertinent respects), i.e. as a male, and therefore non-female, habitus or as a female and therefore non-male habitus. The formative process, *Bildung*, in the full sense, which brings about this social construction of the body only very partially takes the form of explicit and express pedagogic action. It is to a large extent the automatic, agentless effect of a physical and social order entirely organized in accordance with the androcentric principle (which explains the extreme strength of its hold). Inscribed in the things of the world, the masculine order also inscribes itself in bodies through the tacit injunctions that are implied in the routines of the division of labour or of collective or private rituals (consider, for example, the avoidance behaviours imposed on women by their exclusion from male spaces). The regularities of the physical order and the social order impose and inculcate dispositions by excluding women from the noblest tasks (leading the plough, for example), by designating inferior places for them (the edge of the road or embankment, for example), by teaching them how to hold their bodies (for example, bent, with arms folded on the chest, before respectable men), by assigning them menial and drudging tasks (they transport dung, and when olives are harvested, they and the children pick them up from the ground while the men wield the pole to knock them down), and, more generally, by taking advantage, in accordance with the fundamental presuppositions, of biological differences, which thus appear to be at the basis of social differences.

In the long sequence of silent calls to order, rites of institution occupy a place apart, by virtue of their solemn and extraordinary character: they aim to set up, in the name of the whole assembled community, a sacralizing separation not only, as is suggested by the notion of the rite of passage, between those who have *already* received the *distinctive mark* and those who have *not yet* received it, because they are too young, but also and more importantly between those who are socially worthy to receive it and those who are *forever excluded* from it, in other words the women;⁴⁰ or, as in the case of circumcision, the rite

40 In the contribution which rites of institution make to the instituting of manliness in male bodies should be added all children's games, especially

of institution of masculinity whose manliness it consecrate the initiation and who cannot what constitutes the occasion confirmation of manliness.

Thus, what the mythic dis rather naive way is enacted insidious and symbolically na these rites take their places in *eriation* aimed at accentuat external signs most immedia definition of his or her sex: practices appropriate to his o couraging inappropriate beha the opposite sex. This is the rites of 'separation', which ai mother and to ensure his gra aging and preparing him r Anthropological inquiry reve which, according to one p must perform in order to br with their mother and to expressly and explicitly acco the group, which, in the institution oriented towards in all the differentiated and d existence (manly sports and

those which have a more or less unmost to urinate as far as possible boys) and which, in their apparent ethical connotations, often inscribe *piechpin*, 'short-piss', means urge me to substitute the action of rite o stood in the sense both of what is and the act of instituting — the inst of passage, which probably owed it simply a precaution of common s concept: see P. Bourdieu, *Les rites* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), pp. 121–34).

41 Cf. in particular N. J. Chodorow *analysts and the Sociology of Gender* (1978).

the break with the maternal world, from which girls (and also, to their misfortune, the 'sons of the widow') are exempted - which enables them to live in a kind of continuity with their mothers.⁴²

The objective 'intention' of denying the female part of the male (the very one which Melanie Klein asked psychoanalysis to recover, through an opposite operation to that performed by ritual), of severing attachments to the mother, the earth, the moist, night, nature, is manifested for example in the rites performed at the moment called 'the separation in *amayer*' (*el azala gannayer*), such as boys' first haircut, and in all the ceremonies which mark the crossing of the threshold of the male world and which culminate in circumcision. Countless acts aim to separate the boy from his mother - using objects made with fire and tending to symbolize castrating (and male sexuality): knife, dagger, ploughshare, etc. For example, a newborn boy is placed on the right-hand (male) side of his mother, who herself lies on her right side, and between them are placed typically male objects such as a curling comb, a large knife, a ploughshare, one of the hearthstones. Likewise, the importance of the first haircut is linked to the fact that the hair, female in nature, is one of the symbolic links that bind the boy to the maternal world. It falls to the father to perform this inaugural cut, with a razor, a male implement, on the day of the 'separation in *amayer*', shortly before the boy's first visit to the market, i.e. at an age between six and ten. And the entry into the market - the boy's introduction to the world of men, the point of honour and symbolic struggles - continues the work of virilization (or defeminization): dressed in new clothes and wearing a silk heit in his hair, he is given a dagger, a padlock and a mirror, while his mother places a fresh egg in the cape of his boubous. At the gate of the market he breaks the egg and opens the padlock - manly acts of defloration - and looks at himself in the mirror, which, like the threshold, is an operator of reversal. His father guides him into the market, an exclusively male world, and introduces him to the other men. On the way back, they buy an ox's head, a phallic symbol - on account of its horns - associated with *rij*.

42 As opposed to those who are sometimes called in Kabylia 'the sons of men', whose upbringing falls to several men, the 'sons of the widow' are suspected of having messed out on the unremitting labour that is needed to prevent boys from becoming women and of having been abandoned to the feminizing action of their mothers.

The same psychosomatic work aims to virilize them by stripping which may remain in them 'the widow' - takes a more radical form. Because woman is constituted by default, even her virtues are defined by negation, as vice denied or as the work of socialization thereof, which all concern the body, the things which have to be inscribed in it. The young Kabyle woman introduces the principles of the female 'art of life' in the department, inseparably connected to how to put on and wear the boubous to her successive stages of life with her mother - and insensibly accustoms her to mimicry as by express obligation: to move or to hold her belt or her hair, to move or to hold her body when walking, to present herself.

This apprenticeship is ultimately remains essentially tacit: femininity is taught through an unremitting discipline of the body and is continuously inscribed in the choice of clothing or hairstyle. The attributes of a female identity are thus laid down: stances, gaits and postures which are the naturalization of an ethic. This can be summed up in a word, *qabel*, to face, face up to, (in a military 'attention'), the virilizing designates,⁴³ so female submission is translated in bending, stooping, - curved and supple postures which are seen as appropriate to women. These inculcate ways of bearing the weight on the male right hand and the female

43 On the word *qabel*, itself linked to the space and of the whole worldview,

holding the head or directing the gaze, directly in the eyes or at one's feet, etc.), which are charged with an ethic, a politics and a cosmology. (Our whole ethics, not to mention our aesthetics, is contained in the system of cardinal adjectives high/low, straight/twisted, rigid/supple, open/closed, etc., a good proportion of which also designate positions or dispositions of the body or some part of it, e.g. 'head held high', 'eyes downcast'.)

The submissive demeanour which is imposed on Kabyle women is the limiting case of what is still imposed on women, even today, as much in the United States as in Europe, and which, as a number of observers have shown, is summed up in a few imperatives: smile, look down, accept interruptions, etc. Nancy M. Henley has shown how women are taught to occupy space, to walk, to adopt appropriate postures. Using a method called 'memory work', which aims to evoke stories of childhood, discussed and interpreted collectively, Trigg Haug has also tried to bring to light the feelings linked to various parts of the body – the back which has to be kept straight, the stomach which has to be held in, the legs which must be kept together, etc., all postures which are charged with moral significance (it is vulgar to sit with the legs apart, a large stomach indicates lack of willpower, etc.).⁴¹ As if femininity were measured by the art of 'shrinking' (in Berber the feminine is marked by the diminutive form), women are held in a kind of *invisible enclosure* (of which the veil is only the visible manifestation) circumscribing the space allowed for the movements and postures of their bodies (whereas men occupy more space, especially in public places). This symbolic *confinement* is secured practically by their clothing which (as was even more visible in former times) has the effect not only of masking the body but of continuously calling it to order (the skirt tells a function entirely analogous to that of the priest's cassock) without ever needing to prescribe or proscribe anything explicitly ('my mother never told me not to sit with my legs apart') – either because it constrains movement in

41 E Haug et al., *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory* (London: Verso, 1987). Although the authors do not seem to be aware of it, this localisation of the subordination of the body, which encounters the complicity of women, despite the constraint it imposes on them, is wrongly marked socially, and the embodiment of femininity is inseparable from an *embodiment of distinction*, or, to put it another way, from contempt for the vulgarity associated with plunging necklines, too short mini skirts and too-heavy make-up (although this is generally perceived as very 'feminine' ...).

various ways like high heels on the hands, and above all the sk activities (cunning, various way them only at the cost of consc who constantly pull at a too-sh a plunging neckline or have to p while keeping their legs tog body, which are very deeply, and the demureness that are impose themselves unconsci cease to be imposed by clothin young women wearing trowse poses and postures, such as lea putting the feet on a desk, whic status – sometimes allow them amounts to the same thing, of s for women.⁴²

To those who may object th with the traditional norms a the scope now available for body as an index of liberati that this use of the body re to the male point of view (as women's bodies in advertisin a century of feminism) the refused manifests the symbol of feminist works have sho the combination of a power is known and recognized and tending to honour the

42 Cf. Henley, *Body Politics*, pp reproduction of a cartoon with the 'absurdity of the postures' expected. 43 Everything that remains in the femininity is made explicit in finish ment and entertaining, in which, as how to walk and stand (hands beh smile, how to go up and down sta behave at table ('the hostess must without anyone noticing'), how to how to dress ('no garish, aggressive

whom they are linked, and a duty of selective refusal which adds the price of exclusivity to the effect of 'conspicuous consumption'.

The divisions constitutive of the social order and, more precisely, the social relations of domination and exploitation that are instituted between the sexes thus progressively embed themselves in two different classes of habitus, in the form of opposed and complementary bodily *hexis* and principles of vision and division which lead to the classifying of all the things of the world and all practices according to distinctions that are reducible to the male/female opposition. It falls to men, who belong on the side of all things external, official, public, straight, high and discontinuous, to perform all the brief, dangerous and spectacular acts which, like the sacrifice of the ox, ploughing or harvesting, not to mention murder or war, mark breaks in the ordinary course of life; women, by contrast, being on the side of things that are internal, damp, low, curved and continuous, are assigned a) domestic labour, in other words the tasks that are private and hidden, even invisible or shameful, such as the care of the children or the animals, as well as all the external tasks that are attributed to them by mythic reason, that is to say, those that involve water, grass and other green vegetation (such as hoeing and gardening), milk and wood, and especially the dirtiest, most monotonous and menial tasks. Because the whole of the finite world in which they are confined – the space of the village, the house, language, tools – contains the same silent calls to order, women can only *become what they are* according to mythic reason, thus confirming, and first in their own eyes, that they are naturally consigned to what is low, twisted, picayune, futile, menial, etc. They are condemned to give at every moment the appearances of a natural foundation to the diminished identity that is socially bestowed on them: they are the ones who perform the long, thankless, tedious task of picking up from the ground the olives or twigs that the men have brought down with a pole or an axe; they are the ones who, delegated to the vulgar preoccupations of the everyday management of the domestic economy, seem to take pleasure in the petty calculations of debt and interest to which the man of honour does not stoop. (Thus I have a childhood memory from Béarn of the men, neighbours and friends, who had

killed the pig in the most ostentatious display of violent animal, the wielding of etc. – sitting all afternoon in the morning, playing cards, beer-drinking, while the women (and preparing sausages, pudding women themselves) remain in a relationship of domination with women not only the virtues also all the negative properties to their *maître*, like courtship, feature, intuition.

What is called 'female intuition' or 'intuition of the dominated' is, in the objective and subjective situations, the attentiveness and vigilance to avoid unpleasantness. A good example of the special perspicacity of the dominated, especially of women who are black house-muds (as described by de Laurens) is their sensitivity to tone) and are better at identifying verbally and decoding the implications of a survey by two Dutch researchers of their husbands in great detail. Their wives in very formal situations. The same authors suggest that black house-muds, when raised as heterosexuals, but in view, may adopt this point of view to a kind of cognitive and contribute to their special perspective of view of the dominant.

47. J. Rollins, *Between Women: Dialectic University Press, 1985*.

48. Cf. W. N. Thompson, *Queer Communication* (New York: Random House, 1987).

49. Cf. A. Van Stolk and C. W. de Vries, 'A comparison of two cases of catch-up and Society', *A*, no. 2-3 (1987), pp.

Being symbolically condemned to resignation and discretion, women can exercise some degree of power only by turning the strength of the strong against them or by accepting the need to efface themselves and, in any case, to deny a power that they can only exercise vicariously, as '*éminences grises*'. But (as Lucien Bianco says of peasant resistance in China) 'the weapons of the weak are always weak weapons'.⁵⁰ The symbolic strategies that women use against men, such as those of magic, remain dominated, because the apparatus of symbols and mythical operators that they implement and the ends they pursue (such as the love of a loved man or the impotence of a hated man) are rooted in the androcentric view in the name of which they are dominated. These strategies, which are not strong enough really to subvert the relation of domination, at least have the effect of confirming the dominant representation of women as maleficent beings, whose purely negative identity is made up essentially of taboos each of which presents a possibility of transgression. This is true in particular of all the forms of soft violence, sometimes almost invisible, that women use against the physical or symbolic violence of men, from magic, cunning, lies or passivity (particularly in sexual relations) to the possessive love of the possessed, that of the Mediterranean mother or the mothering wife, who victimizes and induces guilt by victimizing herself and by offering her inchoate devotion and mute suffering as a gift too great to be matched or as a debt that can never be repaid. Thus, whatever they do, women are condemned to furnish the proof of their malign nature and to justify the taboos and prejudice that they incur by virtue of their essential maleficence – in accordance with the logic, which can be described as tragic, whereby the social reality that produces domination often confirms the representations that domination invokes in order to justify itself.

The androcentric view is thus continuously legitimated by the very practices that it determines. Because their dispositions are the product of embodiment of the *negative prejudice* against the female that is instituted in the order of things, women cannot but constantly confirm this prejudice. The logic is that of the *case*, in the strong sense of a pessimistic self-fulfilling

50. L. Bianco, 'Résistance paysanne', *Annales Marx*, no. 22 (1997), pp. 138–52.

prophecy calling for its own fulfillment. It is at work, between the sexes: the same leave women to deal with in procedures (such as, in our societies, asking for discounts), in all of the behaviours inciting them to accuse women of 'spiritiveness' and even to block takings that have been allowed any credit if things go well.

Symb

All the conditions for the full thus combined. The precedents affirmed in the objectivity of inductive or reproductive activities the 'labour of biological and which gives the better part immanent in everyone's human similar conditions, and therefore as matrices of the perceptions of the society – being shared by all, impose centent. As a consequence: biological reproduction and the objectivity of a common on the sense of practices. A all reality, and in particular

51. The interviews and observational research into the economy of the opportunities to verify that this is to us (cf. P. Bourdieu, 'Un capital Sciences Sociales', 81–2 (Mar. 1990) always affect the same hierarchy of economy (except perhaps in the cases to assess their restorative utility, by manifesting their indifference which are often left to women).

are held, through schemes of thought that are the product of embodiment of those power relations and which are expressed in the founding oppositions of the symbolic order. It follows that their acts of cognition are acts of practical recognition, doxic acceptance, a belief that does not need to be thought and affirmed as such, and which in a sense 'makes' the symbolic violence which it undergoes.⁵²

Although I have no illusions as to my ability to dispel all misunderstanding in advance, I would simply like to warn against the radical misinterpretations often made of the notion of symbolic violence, which all arise from a more or less reductive understanding of the adjective 'symbolic', which is used here in a sense that I believe to be rigorous, and whose theoretical basis I set out in an article two decades ago.⁵³ Taking 'symbolic' in one of its commonest senses, people sometimes assume that to emphasize symbolic violence is to minimize the role of physical violence, to forget (and make people forget) that there are battered, raped and exploited women, or worse, to seek to exculpate men from that form of violence – which is obviously not the case. Understanding 'symbolic' as the opposite of 'real, actual', people suppose that symbolic violence is a purely 'spiritual' violence which ultimately has no real effects. It is this naïve distinction, characteristic of a crude materialism, that the materialist theory of the economy of symbolic goods, which I have been trying to build up over many years, seeks to destroy, by giving its proper place in theory to the objectivity of the subjective experience of relations of domination. Another misunderstanding: the reference to ethnology, of which I have tried to show the heuristic functions here, is suspected of being a way of restoring the myth of the 'eternal feminine' (or masculine) or, worse, of eternalizing the structure of masculine domination by describing it as unvarying and eternal. On the contrary, far from asserting that the structures of domination are ahistorical, I shall try to establish that they are *the product of an incessant (and therefore historical) labour of reproduction*, to which singular agents (including men, with weapons such as physical violence and symbolic violence) and institutions – families, the church, the educational system, the state – contribute.

52. The verbal or non-verbal cues which designate the symbolically dominant position (that of man, noble, chief, etc.) can only be understood by people who have learned the 'code' (rather like military 'stripes' which one has to learn how to read).

53. Cf. P. Bourdieu, 'Sur le pouvoir symbolique', *Annales*, no. 3 (May–June 1977), pp. 46c–12.

The dominated apply categories of view of the dominant to making them appear as natural, systematic self-depreciation, particular, as has been seen, in women have of their genitals repulsive (or, in modern societies have of their bodies as not of imposed by fashion), and, more a demeaning image of woman through the adherence that of the dominant (and therefore her thought of him, and her relation with him, she has only co with him and which, being the relation of domination, natural; or, in other words, which to perceive and appreciate by the dominant (high/low, male the product of the embodied classifications of which her so

Being unable to evoke here take a Virginia Woolf to do and cogent examples of concrete and often invisible violence: observations which, in their than description of the minute for example, that a large number want a husband who is older than themselves; two-thirds idea of a husband shorter

54. In interviews conducted in 1970 women to say they found it difficult. 55. In the same logic, Myra Marx Ferree die to the transformation of the domestic household tasks are perceived: covered the help they receive from them (cf. M. Marx Ferree, 'Sacrificing men and the family', in K. Brook *Are Going to Have Trouble with Men* Press, 1984), p. 73).

meaning of this refusal to see the disappearance of the ordinary signs of the sexual 'hierarchy'? 'Accepting an inversion of appearances', replies Michel Bozon, 'is to suggest that it is the woman who dominates, which, paradoxically, lowers her socially; she feels diminished with a diminished man.'⁵⁶ So it is not sufficient to note that women generally agree with men (who, for their part, prefer younger women) when they accept the external signs of a dominated position; in their representation of their relation with the man to which their social identity is (or will be) attached, they take account of the representation that men and women as a whole will inevitably form of him by applying to him the schemes of perception and appreciation universally shared (within the group in question). Because these common principles tacitly and unarguably demand that, at least in appearances and seen from outside, the man should occupy the dominant position within the couple, it is for him, for the sake of the dignity that they recognize a priori in him, but also for themselves, that they can only want and love a man whose dignity is clearly affirmed and attested in and by the fact that he is visibly 'above' them. This takes place, of course, without any calculation, through the apparent arbitrariness of an inclination that is not amenable to discussion or reason but which, as is shown by observation of the desired, and also real, differences, can only arise and be fulfilled in the experience of the superiority of which age and height (justified as indices of maturity and guarantees of security) are the most indisputable and universally recognized signs.⁵⁷

To follow through the paradoxes that only a dispositionalist view can make intelligible, one only has to note that those who show themselves to be most submissive to the 'traditional' model – by saying

56. M. Bozon, 'Les femmes et l'écart d'âge entre conjoints: une description contrastée', I: 'Types d'union et attentes en matière d'écart d'âge', *Population*, 2 (1980), pp. 327–80; II: 'Modes d'entrée dans la vie adulte et représentations du conjoint', *Population*, 3 (1980), pp. 585–602; 'Apparence physique et choix du conjoint', *INED [Institut National des Études Démographiques], Congrès et colloques*, 7 (1981), pp. 91–110.

57. One might also mention here the very subtle games through which, in Kabylia, some women (of honour), although dominant in practice, were able to adopt a submissive posture enabling the man to appear and see himself as dominant.

that they wish for a larger age categories of self-employed manual workers, in which means of acquiring a social unconscious adjustment to the structure of domination expressed in these preferences be a calculation of enlightened situations tend to weaken – will emerge from analysis relating to the position occupied by the objective dependency in (the same logic of adjustment also explaining why it can employment is a major factor to confirm that, contrary to choice of partner is not even nothing to rational calculation often partly *amor fati*, love of

So the only way to understand is to move beyond (by forces) and consent (to tion and voluntary, free, de The effect of symbolic d cultural or linguistic, etc.) knowing consciousness b tion, appreciation and acc and which, below the lev and the controls of the wil is profoundly obscure to i

58. Cf. B. Bastard and L. Car femmes: une ressource, mais no *Sociologie de Travail*, no. 3 (198

59. Among so many restricted, bolic violence associated with F exemplary character, those uffici independence Nigeria: the per everything native' is seen in a p tions have to teach active langu in schools) and to the 'marriage' adopting the bodily *bagis* of the as the British nasal accent (A

masculine domination and feminine submissiveness, which can, without contradiction, be described as both *spontaneous and extorted*, cannot be understood until one takes account of the *durable effects* that the social order exerts on women (and men), that is to say, the dispositions spontaneously attuned to that order which it imposes on them.

Symbolic force is a form of power that is exerted on bodies, directly and as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but this magic works only on the basis of the dispositions deposited, like springs, at the deepest level of the body.⁶⁰ If it can act like the release of a spring, that is, with a very weak expenditure of energy, this is because it does no more than trigger the dispositions that the work of inculcation and embodiment has deposited in those who are thereby primed for it. In other words, it finds its conditions of possibility, and its economic equivalent (in an expanded sense of the word 'economic'), in the immense preliminary labour that is needed to bring about a durable transformation of bodies and to produce the permanent dispositions that it triggers and awakens. This transformative action is all the more powerful because it is for the most part exerted invisibly and insidiously through insensible familiarization with a symbolically structured physical world and early, prolonged experience of interactions informed by the structures of domination.

The practical acts of knowledge and recognition of the magical frontier between the dominant and the dominated that are triggered by the magic of symbolic power and through which the dominated, often unwittingly, sometimes unwillingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting the limits imposed, often take the form of *bodily emotions* – shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, guilt – or *passions and sentiments* – love, admiration, respect. These emotions are all the more powerful when they are betrayed in visible manifestations such as blushing, stuttering, clumsiness, trembling, anger or impotent

Struggle for Power and Legitimacy, African Studies no. 31 (Leviston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993).

60) It is possible to understand in these terms the symbolic efficacy of religious messages (Papal bulls, preaching, prophecy, etc.), which is clearly based on previous religious socialization (catechism, church-going and, above all, immersion from an early age in a universe imbued with religiosity).

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('women are their own worst enemies') or even that they love their own domination, that they 'enjoy' the treatment inflicted on them, in a kind of masochism inherent in their nature. It has to be acknowledged both that the 'submissive' dispositions that are sometimes used to 'blame the victim' are the product of the objective structures, and also that these structures only derive their efficacy from the dispositions which they trigger and which help to reproduce them. Symbolic power cannot be exercised without the contribution of those who undergo it and who only undergo it because they *construct* it as such. But instead of stopping at this statement (as constructivism in its idealist, ethnomethodological or other forms does) one has also to take note of and explain the social construction of the cognitive structures which organize acts of construction of the world and its powers. It then becomes clear that, far from being the conscious, free, deliberate act of an isolated 'subject', this practical construction is itself the effect of a power, durably embedded in the bodies of the dominated in the form of schemes of perception and dispositions (to admire, respect, love, etc.) which sensitize them to certain symbolic manifestations of power.

Although it is true that, even when it seems to be based on the brute force of weapons or money, recognition of domination always presupposes an act of knowledge, this does not imply that one is entitled to describe it in the language of consciousness, in an intellectualist and scholastic fallacy which, as in Marx (and above all, those who, from Lukács onwards, have spoken of 'false consciousness'), leads one to expect the liberation of women to come through the immediate effect of the 'raising of consciousness', forgetting – for lack of a dispositional theory of practices – the opacity and inertia that stem from the embedding of social structures in bodies.

Although she shows well the inadequacy of the notion of 'consent' obtained by 'persuasion and seduction', Jeanne Favret-Saada does not really manage to escape from the choice between constraint and consent: in the form of 'free acceptance' and 'explicit agreement', because, like Marx, from whom she borrows the language of alienation, she remains enclosed within a philosophy of 'consciousness' (thus she refers to the 'dominated, fragmented, contradictory con-

sciousness of the oppressed [w]omen by the physical, just to take account of the *domination* on women, she cannot adequately explain the *mission* which constitutes the *domination*. The language of the 'image' is *reckless* here and there is *no* 'consciousness' in as much as it is the dominant principle of *vision*, a *fantasy* ('ideas in people's structures durably embedded'). Mathieu, in a text entitled 'C' probably gone furthest in the 'denies virtually all responsibility' 'once more casts all the blame' she has not abandoned the language as radical as she might be. 'possibilities of thought or act' 'oppressed' and 'the invasion' 'present power of men'.⁶⁶

These critical distinctions that the symbolic revolution cannot be reduced to forces and wills. Because it lies not in mystified consciousness but in dispossessed domination of which they are complicity that the victims of

61 J. Favret-Saada, *Domestication* (Feb. 1987), pp. 37–50.

62 N.-C. Mathieu, 'De la construction de sexe' (Paris: Côté-femmes, 1994).

63 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 190. It would be advances in the critique of the notion (such as the minimization, in favour of women) have found the of practices, particularly of (J. Favret-Saada in N. Richard, (2) Journ. Mathieu and N. Dube, *L'Amour des sexes* (Paris: Ecole des Hautes

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