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## A magnified image

Being included, as man or woman, in the object that we are trying to comprehend, we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation. When we try to understand masculine domination we are therefore likely to resort to modes of thought that are the product of domination. Our only hope of breaking out of that circle lies in finding a practical strategy for objectifying the subject of scientific objectification. This strategy, the one I shall adopt here, consists in transforming an exercise of transcendental reflection aimed at exploring the ‘categories of understanding’ – or, in Durkheim’s terms, the ‘forms of classification’ with which we construct the world (but which, as products of that world, are largely attuned to it, so that they remain unnoticed) – into a kind of laboratory experiment. This will consist in treating ethnographic analysis of the objective structures and cognitive forms of a particular historical society, at once exotic and very close to us, both strange and familiar, that of the Berbers of Kabylia, as the instrument of a socioanalysis of the androcentric unconscious that is capable of objectifying the categories of that unconscious.<sup>1</sup>

1 I would probably not have been able to appreciate the analysis of masculine perception contained in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (which I discuss below) if I had not reread it with an eye informed by the Kabyle vision (V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 20).

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 'phallonic' 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.);<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> 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 'naive' 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. J. Peristiany, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), and J. Pitt-Rivers, *Mediterranean Countrymen: 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, 1937–58).

4 Cf. P. Bourdieu, 'Lecture, lecteurs, lettres, littérature', in *Choses dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987), pp. 132–43.

omissions, distortions and reinterpretations (and what can one say when, like Michel Foucault in the second volume of his *History of Sexuality*, a researcher chooses to start the survey of sexuality and the subject with Plato, ignoring authors like Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Herodotus or Aristophanes, not to mention the pre-Socratic philosophers, in whom the old Mediterranean heritage is more clearly visible?). The same ambiguity is found in all would-be scientific works (especially medical ones), in which one cannot distinguish what is borrowed from authorities (such as Aristotle, who, on some essential points, himself converted the old Mediterranean mythology into learned myth) from what is reinvented from the structures of the unconscious and sanctioned or ratified by borrowed knowledge.

### The social construction of bodies

In a universe in which, as in Kabyle society, the order of sexuality is not constituted as such and where sexual differences remain immersed in the set of oppositions that organize the whole cosmos, sexual attributes and acts are heavily charged with anthropological and cosmological determinations. There is thus a danger of misinterpreting their deep significance if one approaches them in terms of the category of the sexual in itself. The constitution of the sexual as such (which culminates in eroticism) has caused us to lose the sense of the sexualized cosmology that is rooted in a sexualized topology of the socialized body, of its movements and displacements which are immediately charged with social meaning – upward movement being, for example, associated with the male, through erection or the upper position in the sexual act.

The division of (sexual and other) things and activities according to the opposition between the male and the female, while arbitrary when taken in isolation, receives its objective and subjective necessity from its insertion into a system of homologous oppositions – up/down, above/below, in front/behind, right/left, straight/curved (and twisted), dry/wet, spicy/bland, light/dark, outside (public)/inside (private), etc. – which in some cases correspond to movements of the body (up/down // go up/go down // inside/outside // go in/come out). Being similar in difference, these oppositions are

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.<sup>5</sup>

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 causes 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

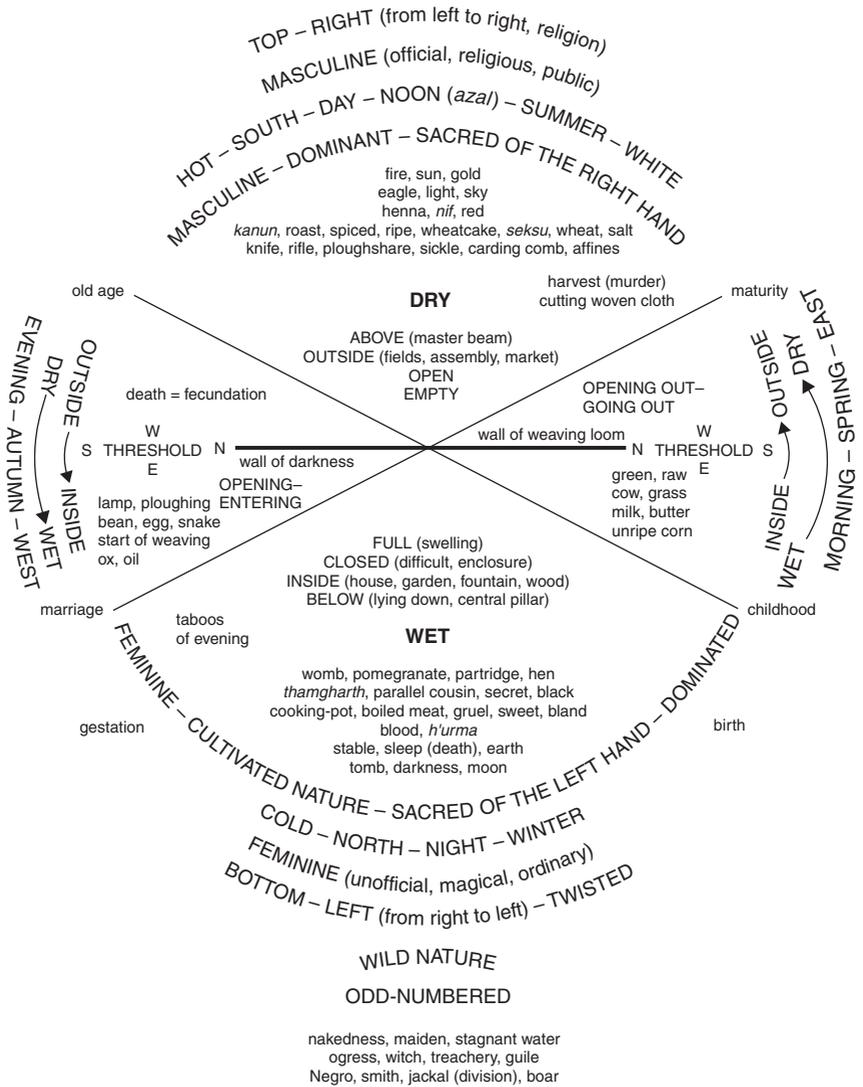
5 For a detailed table of the distribution of activities between the sexes, see P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), p. 217.

structure and of showing the link between them.) It is the concordance between the objective structures and the cognitive structures, between the shape of being and the forms of knowledge, between the course of the world and expectations about it, that makes possible what Husserl described under the name of the 'natural attitude' or 'doxic experience' – but without pointing to its social conditions of possibility. This experience apprehends the social world and its arbitrary divisions, starting with the socially constructed division between the sexes, as natural, self-evident, and as such contains a full recognition of legitimacy. It is because they fail to observe the action of deep-rooted mechanisms, such as those which underlie the agreement between cognitive structures and social structures, and consequently the doxic experience of the social world (for example, in modern societies, the reproductive logic of the educational system) that thinkers with very different philosophical stances can attribute all the symbolic effects of legitimation (or sociodicy) to factors belonging to the order of more or less conscious and intentional *representation* ('ideology', 'discourse', etc.).

The strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses with justification:<sup>6</sup> the androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it.<sup>7</sup> The social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded: it is the sexual division of labour, a very strict distribution of the activities assigned to each sex, of their place, time and instruments; it is the structure of space, with the opposition between the place of assembly or the market, reserved for men, and the house, reserved for

6 It has often been observed that, both in social perception and in language, the masculine gender appears as non-marked, in a sense neuter, in opposition to the feminine, which is explicitly characterized. Dominique Merllié has been able to verify this in the case of recognition of the 'sex' of handwriting, where only female features are perceived as present or absent (cf. D. Merllié, 'Le sexe de l'écriture. Note sur la perception sociale de la féminité', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 83 (June 1990), pp. 40–51).

7 It is remarkable, for example, that one finds practically no myths justifying the sexual hierarchy (except perhaps the myth of the origin of barley [cf. P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 76] and the myth aimed at rationalizing the 'normal' position of man and woman in sexual intercourse, which I shall relate subsequently).



This table can be read either in terms of the vertical oppositions (dry/wet, top/bottom, right/left, male/female, etc.) or in terms of the processes (e.g. those of the cycle of life: marriage, gestation, birth, etc., or of the farming year) and movements (opening/closing, going in/coming out, etc.).

Synoptic diagram of pertinent oppositions

women, or, within the house, between the male part, the hearth, and the female part – the stable, the water and vegetable stores; it is the structure of time, the day and the farming year, or the cycle of life, with its male moments of rupture and the long female periods of gestation.<sup>8</sup>

The social world constructs the body as a sexually defined reality and as the depository of sexually defining principles of vision and division. This embodied social programme of perception is applied to all the things of the world and firstly to the *body* itself, in its biological reality. It is this programme which constructs the difference between the biological sexes in conformity with the principles of a mythic vision of the world rooted in the arbitrary relationship of domination of men over women, itself inscribed, with the division of labour, in the reality of the social order. The *biological* difference between the *sexes*, i.e. between the male and female bodies, and, in particular, the *anatomical* difference between the sex organs, can thus appear as the natural justification of the socially constructed difference between the *genders*, and in particular of the social division of labour. (The body and its movements, matrices of universals that are subject to work of social construction, are neither completely determined in their significance, especially their sexual significance, nor completely undetermined, so that the symbolism that is attached to them is both conventional and 'motivated', and therefore perceived as quasi-natural.) Because the social principle of vision constructs the anatomical difference and because this socially constructed difference becomes the basis and apparently natural justification of the social vision which founds it, there is thus a relationship of circular causality which confines thought within the self-evidence of relations of domination inscribed both in objectivity, in the form of objective divisions, and in subjectivity, in the form of cognitive

8 Here one would need to be able to reprise the whole analysis of the mythico-ritual system (for example, on the structure of the internal space of the house, cf. P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 271–83; the organization of the day, pp. 253–9; and the organization of the farming year, pp. 219–48). Since here I can only mention the minimum strictly necessary for the construction of the model, I must invite readers who wish to give the ethnographic 'analyser' its full strength to consult *The Logic of Practice*, or, at least, the synoptic table reproduced here.

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

Manliness, 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

The structural ambiguity, manifested by the existence of a morphological link (for example, between *abbuch*, the penis, and its feminine form, *thabbucht*, 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:<sup>11</sup> 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’; *yecca yeswa*, ‘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, like *ufthyen*, cf. P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 250–3, and on the function of mythically ambiguous, overdetermined or ‘fuzzy’ acts or objects, pp. 262ff.

11 The most evocative term is *ambul*, literally meaning bladder, sausage, but also phallus (cf. T. Yacine-Titouh, ‘Anthropologie de la peur. 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. 3–27; and ‘La féminité et la représentation de la peur’, *Cahiers de Littérature Orale*, INALCO, no. 34 (1993), pp. 19–43).

eaten and drunk', means that he has made love; to resist seduction is 'not to spill whey on one's chest'). The same morphological relation is found between *thamellalts*, the egg, the symbol par excellence of female fertility, and *imellalen*, the testicles; it is said that the penis is the only male that sits on two eggs. And the same associations are found in the words designating semen, *zzel* and especially *laâmara*, which through its root *aâmmar*, to fill, prosper, etc., evokes plenitude, that which is full of life and fills with life: the scheme of *filling* (full/empty, fertile/sterile, etc.) is regularly combined with the scheme of swelling in the generation of fertility rites.<sup>12</sup>

By associating phallic erection with the vital dynamic of swelling which is immanent in the whole process of natural reproduction (germination, gestation, etc.), the social *construction* of the sexual organs *records* and symbolically *ratifies* certain indisputable natural properties. Together with other mechanisms, the most important of which is undoubtedly, as has been seen, the insertion of each relationship (full/empty, for example) into a system of homologous and interconnected relationships, it thereby helps to transmute the arbitrary of the social *nomos* into a necessity of nature (*phusis*). (This logic of the *symbolic consecration* of objective processes, in particular cosmic and biological ones, which is at work in the whole mythico-ritual system – with, for example, the germination of grain treated as a resurrection, an event homologous with the rebirth of the grandfather in the grandson, sanctioned by the return of the forename – gives a quasi-objective basis to this system and hence to the belief, also reinforced by its unanimity, of which it is the object.)

When the dominated apply to what dominates them schemes that are the product of domination, or, to put it another way, when their thoughts and perceptions are structured in accordance with the very structures of the relation of domination that is imposed on them, their acts of *cognition* are, inevitably, acts of *recognition*, submission. But however close the correspondence between the realities of processes of the natural world and the principles of vision and division that are applied to them, there is always room for a *cognitive struggle* over the meaning of the things of the world and in particular of sexual

12 On the scheme full/empty and on filling, cf. P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 277–8, and also pp. 241–2 (on the snake).

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,<sup>13</sup> in order to understand the male sexual attributes by analogy with things that hang limply, without vigour (*laâlaleq*, *asaâlaq*, also used for onions or meat threaded on a string, or *acherbub*, the limp, lifeless penis of an old man, sometimes associated with *ajerbub*, rag),<sup>14</sup> 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 (*laâlaleq*) dangles, says the woman to the man, whereas I am a welded stone.'<sup>15</sup>

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 Pouchelle 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 posited as the measure of all things.<sup>16</sup> Knowing thus that man and woman

13 Women consider that their genitals are beautiful only when hidden ('the welded stone' (*yejmaâ*) or placed under the protection of *serr*, the charm (unlike the male organ, which has no *serr*, because it cannot be hidden). One of the words designating the vagina, *takhna*, is, like the French *con*, used as an expletive (*A takhna!*) to express stupidity (a '*takhna* face' is a flat, amorphous face, without the relief given by a fine *nose*). Another of the Berber words designating the vagina, and one of the most pejorative, *achermid*, also means sticky.

14 All these words are of course taboo, as are some apparently anodyne terms such as *duzan*, things, tools, *laqlul*, crockery, *lah'wal*, ingredients, or *azaâkuk*, tail, 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 peur'.

16 M.-C. Pouchelle, *Corps et chirurgie à l'apogée du Moyen Age* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983).

are perceived as two variants, superior and inferior, of the same physiology, one understands why it is that, until the Renaissance, there were no anatomical terms to describe in detail the female genitals, which were represented as comprising the same organs as those of men, but differently organized;<sup>17</sup> and also why, as Yvonne Knibiehler shows, the early nineteenth-century anatomists (in particular, Virey), thinking in the same terms as the moralists, tried to find in the female body the justification for the social status that they assigned to it in the name of the traditional oppositions between inside and outside, sensibility and activity, passivity and reason.<sup>18</sup> And one would only have to follow the history of the 'discovery' of the clitoris as related by Thomas Laqueur,<sup>19</sup> extending it to the Freudian theory of the 'migration' of female sexuality from the clitoris to the vagina, to complete the demonstration that, far from playing the founding role that they are sometimes given, the visible differences between the male and female sex organs are a social construction which can be traced back to the principles of division of androcentric reason, itself grounded in the division of the social statuses assigned to men and women.<sup>20</sup>

The schemes which structure the perception of the sex organs and, even more, of sexual activity are also applied to the male or female body itself, which has its top and bottom – the boundary being marked by the *belt*, a sign of *closure* (a woman who keeps her belt *tight*, who does not *untie* it, is regarded as

17 Cf. T. W. Laqueur, 'Orgasm, generation and the politics of reproductive biology', in C. Gallagher and T. W. Laqueur (eds), *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

18 Y. Knibiehler, 'Les médecins et la "nature féminine" au temps du Code civil', *Annales*, 31, no. 4 (1976), pp. 824–45.

19 T. W. Laqueur, 'Amor Veneris, vel dulcedo appeletur', in M. Feher, R. Naddaf and N. Tazi (eds), *Zone*, part III (New York: Zone, 1989).

20 Among the countless studies showing the contribution of natural history and naturalists to the *naturalization* of sexual differences (and racial differences – the logic is the same), one might cite that by Londa Schiebinger (*Nature's Body* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993)) which shows how the naturalists 'ascribed to [the] females [of animals] the modesty they were hoping to find in their own wives and daughters'; how, after their research on the hymen, they concluded that 'only women were blessed with a hymen', the 'guardian of their chastity' and 'vestibule of the sanctuary' (pp. 93–4), and that the beard, often associated with male honour, distinguishes men from women, who are less noble (p. 120), and from other 'races'.

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.<sup>21</sup> 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 all the potentially sexual connotations of gynaecological examination had to be symbolically and practically neutralized, the doctor undergoes a ritual tending to maintain 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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 Non-verbal Communication* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1977), esp. pp. 89ff.

22 J. M. Henslin and M. A. Biggs, 'The sociology of the vaginal examination', in J. M. Henslin (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. Pheterson, 'The whore stigma, female dishonor and male unworthiness', *Social Text*, no. 37 (1993), pp. 39–64).

the law that the body (like blood) can only be given, in a purely gratuitous offering, presupposing the suspension of violence.<sup>24</sup>

The body has its front, the *site of sexual difference*, and its back, sexually undifferentiated and potentially female, in other words passive, submissive, as is recalled, in gesture or words, by Mediterranean insults (in particular the notorious one-finger gesture) denouncing homosexuality.<sup>25</sup> It has its *public* parts – face, forehead, eyes, moustache, mouth – *noble organs of self-presentation* which concentrate social identity, the point of honour, *nif*, which requires a man to face up to others and look them in the eye; and its hidden or shameful *private* parts, which honour requires a man to conceal. It is also through the mediation of the sexual division of the legitimate uses of the body that the link (asserted by psychoanalysis) between phallus and *logos* is established: the public, active uses of the upper, male part of the body – facing up, confronting (*qabel*), looking at another man in the face, in the eyes, speaking *publicly* – are the preserve of men; women, who, in Kabylia, keep away from public places, must in a sense renounce the public use of their gaze (they walk in public with eyes directed to the ground) and their speech (the only utterance that suits them is ‘I don’t know’, the antithesis of the manly speech which is decisive, clear-cut affirmation, at the same time as being meditated and measured).<sup>26</sup>

Although it may appear to be the original matrix from which spring all the forms of union of two opposing principles –

24 ‘Money is an integral part of the representative mode of perversion. Because the perverse fantasy is in itself unintelligible and non-exchangeable, currency by its abstract character constitutes its universally intelligible equivalent’ (P. Klossowski, *Sade et Fourier* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1974), pp. 59–60). ‘With this challenge, Sade proved that the notion of value and price is contained at the very core of voluptuous emotion and that nothing is more contrary to enjoyment than the free gift’ (P. Klossowski, *La Révocation de l’Édit de Nantes* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1959), p. 102).

25 There is no worse insult than the words designating the man who has been ‘had’, ‘screwed’ (*maniuk*, *qawad*).

26 In accordance with the usual logic of the negative prejudice, the masculine representation can condemn the feminine capacities or incapacities that it demands or helps to produce. So it is said that ‘the women’s market is never done’ – they are talkative and above all will haggle for seven days and seven nights without coming to a decision – or that, to indicate their agreement, they must say ‘yes’ twice.

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 *kanun* 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).<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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 (*tala*) 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 the woman: "At the fountain it's you [who dominate]; in the house, it's me." In the mind of man, it is always the last words that count, and since then men have always liked to be on top of women. That is how they became the masters and why they must be in charge.<sup>29</sup>

The intention of sociodicy is here unequivocal: at the very origin of culture understood as a social order dominated by the male principle, the founding myth institutes the constituting opposition (in fact, already in play, through for example the opposition between the fountain and the house, in the assumptions made to justify it) between nature and culture, between the 'sexuality' of nature and the 'sexuality' of culture. In opposition to the anomic act performed beside the fountain, the female place par excellence, and initiated by the woman, the perverse seductress, naturally informed of matters of love, stands the act subject to *nomos*, domestic and domesticated, performed at the behest of the man and conforming to the order of things, the fundamental hierarchy of the social order and the cosmic order, and in the house, the site of cultivated nature, the legitimate domination of the male principle over the female principle, symbolized by the pre-eminence of the master beam (*asalas alemmas*) over the vertical pillar (*thigejdith*), a female fork open to the sky.

On top or underneath, active or passive – these parallel alternatives describe the sexual act as a relation of domination. To possess sexually, as in the French *baiser* or the English 'to fuck', is to dominate in the sense of subjecting to one's power, but also to deceive, mislead, or, as we say, 'to have' (whereas to resist seduction is not to be deceived, not 'to be had'). The manifestations of virility, whether legitimate or illegitimate, belong to the logic of prowess, the exploit, which confers honour. And although the extreme gravity of the slightest sexual transgression forbids open expression of this, the indirect challenge to the masculinity of other men that is implied in every assertion of virility contains the principle of the agonistic vision of male sexuality which is declared more overtly in other parts of the Mediterranean area and beyond.

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),<sup>30</sup> 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 (talking, touching, caressing, embracing, etc.),<sup>31</sup> men are inclined to compartmentalize sexuality, which is conceived as an aggressive and essentially physical act of conquest oriented towards penetration and orgasm.<sup>32</sup> And although, on this point like all the others, there are of course very great variations according to social position,<sup>33</sup> 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 faking 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 Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1983); E. Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).

31 D. Baca-Zinn and S. Eitzen, *Diversity in American Families* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), pp. 249–54; L. Rubin, *Intimate Strangers* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

32 D. Russell, *The Politics of Rape* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), p. 272; D. Russell, *Sexual Exploitation* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), 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 and the pleasure derived from this extreme form of submission.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, sexual harassment does not always aim at the sexual possession that seems to be its exclusive goal: in some cases it may aim at sheer possession, the pure affirmation of domination in its pure state.<sup>35</sup>

If the sexual relation appears as a social relation of domination, this is because it is constructed through the fundamental principle of division between the active male and the passive female and because this principle creates, organizes, expresses and directs desire – male desire as the desire for possession, eroticized domination, and female desire as the desire for masculine domination, as eroticized subordination or even, in the limiting case, as the eroticized recognition of domination. In a case where, as in homosexual relations, reciprocity is possible, the links between sexuality and power are revealed with particular clarity and the roles taken in sexual relations, especially active and passive ones, appear as indissociable from the relations between the social positions which determine both their possibility and their meaning. Penetration, especially when performed on a man, is one of the affirmations of the *libido dominandi* that is never entirely absent from the masculine libido. It is known that in a number of societies homosexual possession is conceived as a manifestation of ‘power’, an act of domination (performed as such, in some cases, in order to assert superiority by ‘feminizing’ the other) and that, understood in this way, among the Greeks, it condemned the victim to dishonour and the loss of the status of a complete man and a citizen,<sup>36</sup> while for a Roman citizen, ‘passive’ homosexuality with a slave was regarded as monstrous.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, according to John Boswell, ‘penetration and power were associated with the prerogatives of the ruling male elite; surrendering to penetration was a symbolic abrogation of power and

34 C. A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 58.

35 Cf. R. Christin, ‘Possession’, in P. Bourdieu et al., *The Weight of the World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), pp. 309–16.

36 Cf. for example K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

37 P. Veyne, ‘L’Homosexualité à Rome’, *Communications*, 35 (1982), pp. 26–32.

authority.<sup>38</sup> 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'.<sup>39</sup>

### 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 (*nif*), and the difference between biologi-

38 J. Boswell, 'Sexual and ethical categories in premodern Europe', in P. McWhirter, S. Sanders and J. Reinisch (eds), *Homosexuality/Heterosexuality: Concepts of Sexual Orientation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 17.

39 Cf. J. Franco, 'Gender, death and resistance: facing the ethical vacuum', in J. E. Corradi, P. Weiss Fagen and M. A. Garretón (eds), *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

cal bodies as objective foundations of the difference between the sexes, in the sense of genders constructed as two hierarchized social essences. Far from the necessities of biological reproduction determining the symbolic organization of the sexual division of labour and, ultimately, of the whole natural and social order, it is an arbitrary construction of the male and female body, of its uses and functions, especially in biological reproduction, which gives an apparently natural foundation to the androcentric view of the division of sexual labour and the sexual division of labour and so of the whole cosmos. The particular strength of the masculine sociodicy comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two operations: *it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction.*

The work of symbolic construction is far more than a strictly *performative* operation of naming which orients and structures *representations*, starting with representations of the body (which is itself not negligible); it is brought about and culminates in a profound and durable transformation of bodies (and minds), that is to say, in and through a process of practical construction imposing a *differentiated definition* of the legitimate uses of the body, in particular sexual ones, which tends to exclude from the universe of the feasible and thinkable everything that marks membership of the other gender – and in particular all the potentialities biologically implied in the ‘polymorphous perversity’, as Freud puts it, of every infant – to produce the social artefact of the manly man or the womanly woman. The arbitrary *nomos* which institutes the two classes in objectivity takes on the appearance of a law of nature (people often speak of a sexuality or, even today, a marriage that is ‘against nature’) only at the end of a *somatization of the social relations of domination*: it is only after a formidable collective labour of diffuse and continuous socialization that the distinctive identities instituted by the cultural arbitrary are embodied in habitus that are clearly differentiated according to the dominant principle of division and capable of perceiving the world according to this principle.

Existing only *relationally*, each of the two genders is the product of the labour of diacritical construction, both theoretical and practical, which is necessary in order to produce it as

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;<sup>40</sup> or, as in the case of circumcision, the rite

40 To 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 par excellence, between those whose manliness it consecrates and those who cannot undergo the initiation and who cannot fail to see themselves as lacking what constitutes the occasion and the matter of the ritual of confirmation of manliness.

Thus, what the mythic discourse professes in an ultimately rather naive way is enacted by rites of institution in a more insidious and symbolically no doubt more effective way; and these rites take their places in the series of operations of *differentiation* aimed at accentuating in each man or woman the external signs most immediately corresponding to the social definition of his or her sexual *distinction* or encouraging the practices appropriate to his or her sex while forbidding or discouraging inappropriate behaviours, especially in relations with the opposite sex. This is the case, for example, of the so-called rites of 'separation', which aim to emancipate the boy from his mother and to ensure his gradual masculinization by encouraging and preparing him to confront the external world. Anthropological inquiry reveals that the psychological work which, according to one psychoanalytical tradition,<sup>41</sup> boys must perform in order to break free of their quasi-symbiosis with their mother and to assert their own sexuality is expressly and explicitly accompanied and even organized by the group, which, in the whole series of sexual rites of institution oriented towards virilization and, more generally, in all the differentiated and differentiating practices of ordinary existence (manly sports and games, hunting, etc.), encourages

those which have a more or less obvious sexual connotation (such as the contest to urinate as far as possible, or the homosexual games of shepherd boys) and which, in their apparent insignificance, are highly charged with ethical connotations, often inscribed in language (for example, in Béarnais, *picheprim*, 'short-piss', means ungenerous, miserly). On the reasons which led me to substitute the notion of rite of institution (a term that should be understood in the sense both of what is instituted – the institution of marriage – and the act of instituting – the instituting of the heir) for the notion of rite of passage, which probably owed its immediate success to the fact that it is simply a prenotation of common sense converted into a scientific-looking concept; see P. Bourdieu, 'Les rites d'institution' (in *Ce que parler veut dire* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), pp. 121–34).

41 Cf. in particular N. J. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 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.<sup>42</sup>

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 *ennayer*' (*el âazla gennayer*), 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 *cutting* (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 carding 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 *ennayer*', 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 belt 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 burnous. 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 *nif*.

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 missed 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 which, when applied to boys, aims to virilize them by stripping them of everything female which may remain in them – as it does in the ‘sons of the widow’ – takes a more radical form when applied to girls. Because woman is constituted as a negative entity, defined only by default, even her virtues can only be affirmed by a double negation, as vice denied or overcome, or as lesser evils. All the work of socialization therefore tends to impose limits on her, which all concern the body, thus defined as sacred, *h'aram*, and which have to be inscribed in the dispositions of the body. So the young Kabyle woman internalized the fundamental principles of the female ‘art of living’, of proper demeanour and deportment, inseparably corporeal and moral, by learning how to put on and wear the different clothing corresponding to her successive stages of life – little girl, nubile maiden, wife, mother – and insensibly acquiring, as much by unconscious mimicry as by express obedience, the right way to tie her belt or her hair, to move or keep still this or that part of her body when walking, to present her face and turn her eyes.

This apprenticeship is all the more effective because it remains essentially tacit: femininity is imposed for the most part through an unremitting discipline that concerns every part of the body and is continuously recalled through the constraints of clothing or hairstyle. The antagonistic principles of male and female identity are thus laid down in the form of permanent stances, gaits and postures which are the realization, or rather, the naturalization of an ethic. Just as the ethic of male honour can be summed up in a word, endlessly repeated by informants, *qabel*, to face, face up to, and in the upright posture (our military ‘attention’), the visible sign of rectitude, which it designates,<sup>43</sup> so female submissiveness seems to find a natural translation in bending, stooping, lowering oneself, ‘submitting’ – curved and supple postures and the associated docility being seen as appropriate to women. Early upbringing tends to inculcate ways of bearing the body, or various parts of it, the male right hand and the female left hand, ways of walking,

43 On the word *qabel*, itself linked to the most fundamental orientations of space and of the whole worldview, cf. P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 90.

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, Frigga 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.).<sup>44</sup> 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 fulfils 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

44 F. 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 inculcation of the submission of the body, which encounters the complicity of women, despite the constraint it imposes on them, is strongly 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 or the bag which constantly encumbers the hands, and above all the skirt which prevents or hinders certain activities (running, various ways of sitting, etc.), or because it allows them only at the cost of constant precautions, as with young women who constantly pull at a too-short skirt, use their forearms to cover a plunging neckline or have to perform acrobatics to pick up an object while keeping their legs together.<sup>45</sup> These ways of bearing the body, which are very deeply associated with the moral restraint and the demureness that are appropriate for women, continue to impose themselves unconsciously on women even when they cease to be imposed by clothing (like the small, quick steps of some young women wearing trousers and flat heels). And the relaxed poses and postures, such as leaning back on two legs of a chair or putting the feet on a desk, which some men – especially those of high status – sometimes allow themselves as a sign of power or, which amounts to the same thing, of self-assurance, are literally unthinkable for women.<sup>46</sup>

To those who may object that many women have now broken with the traditional norms and forms of restraint and who see the scope now available for the controlled exhibition of the body as an index of 'liberation', it only has to be pointed out that this use of the body remains very obviously subordinated to the male point of view (as is clearly seen in the use made of women's bodies in advertising, even today, in France, after half a century of feminism). The female body at once offered and refused manifests the symbolic availability which, as a number of feminist works have shown, is incumbent upon women, the combination of a power of attraction and seduction that is known and recognized by all, both men and women, and tending to honour the men on whom they depend or to

45 Cf. Henley, *Body Politics*, pp. 38, 89–91, and also pp. 142–4, the reproduction of a cartoon with the caption 'Exercises for men', showing the 'absurdity of the postures' expected of women.

46 Everything that remains in the implicit state in the ordinary learning of femininity is made explicit in finishing schools with their courses in deportment and entertaining, in which, as Yvette Delsaut has observed, girls learn how to walk and stand (hands behind the back, feet side by side), how to smile, how to go up and down stairs (without looking at the feet), how to behave at table ('the hostess must ensure that everything happens smoothly, without anyone noticing'), how to speak to guests ('charm and politeness'), how to dress ('no garish, aggressive colours') and how to use make-up.

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 all 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 morning, after a brief and somewhat ostentatious display of violence – the screech of the escaping animal, the wielding of big knives, the gush of blood, etc. – sitting all afternoon, and sometimes until the next morning, playing cards, barely pausing to lift a too-heavy cauldron, while the women of the house would bustle about preparing sausages, puddings and pâtés.) The men (and the women themselves) remain unaware that it is the logic of the relationship of domination which imposes on and inculcates in women not only the virtues that morality requires of them but also all the negative properties that the dominant view imputes to their *nature*, like cunning or, to take a more favourable feature, intuition.

What is called ‘female intuition’, a particular form of the special lucidity of the dominated, is, even in our own world, inseparable from the objective and subjective submissiveness which encourages or constrains the attentiveness and vigilance needed to anticipate desires or avoid unpleasantness. A good deal of research has brought to light the special perspicacity of the dominated, particularly women (and more especially of women who are doubly or triply dominated, like the black housemaids described by Judith Rollins in *Between Women*).<sup>47</sup> Women are more sensitive than men to non-verbal cues (especially tone) and are better at identifying an emotion represented non-verbally and decoding the implicit content of a dialogue,<sup>48</sup> according to a survey by two Dutch researchers, they are capable of describing their husbands in great detail, whereas men can only describe their wives in very broad stereotypes valid for ‘women in general’.<sup>49</sup> The same authors suggest that homosexuals, who, having necessarily been raised as heterosexuals, have internalized the dominant point of view, may adopt this point of view on themselves (which condemns them to a kind of cognitive and evaluative dissonance tending to contribute to their special perspicacity) and that they understand the point of view of the dominant better than the dominant understand theirs.

47 J. Rollins, *Between Women: Domesticity and their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985).

48 Cf. W. N. Thompson, *Quantitative Research in Public Address and Communication* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 47–8.

49 Cf. A. Van Stolk and C. Wouters, ‘Power changes and self-respect: a comparison of two cases of established–outsiders relations’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 4, no. 2–3 (1987), pp. 477–88.

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.'<sup>50</sup> The symbolic strategies that women use against men, such as those of magic, remain dominated, because the apparatus of symbols and mythic 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 infinite 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 *curse*, in the strong sense of a pessimistic self-fulfilling

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

prophecy calling for its own validation and bringing about what it foretells. It is at work, daily, in a number of exchanges between the sexes: the same dispositions that incline men to leave women to deal with menial tasks and thankless, petty procedures (such as, in our societies, finding out prices, checking bills, asking for discounts), in short, to disencumber themselves of all the behaviours incompatible with their dignity, also lead them to accuse women of 'petty-mindedness' and 'mean-spiritedness' and even to blame them if they fail in the undertakings that have been abandoned to them, without giving them any credit if things go well.<sup>51</sup>

### Symbolic violence

All the conditions for the full exercise of male domination are thus combined. The precedence universally accorded to men is affirmed in the objectivity of the social structures and the productive or reproductive activities, based on a sexual division of the labour of biological and social production and reproduction which gives the better part to men, and also in the schemes immanent in everyone's habitus. These schemes, shaped by similar conditions, and therefore objectively harmonized, function as matrices of the perceptions, thoughts and actions of all members of the society – historical transcendentals which, being shared by all, impose themselves on each agent as transcendent. As a consequence, the androcentric representation of biological reproduction and social reproduction is invested with the objectivity of a common sense, a practical, doxic consensus on the sense of practices. And women themselves apprehend all reality, and in particular the power relations in which they

51 The interviews and observations that we made in the course of our research into the economy of the production of real estate gave us many opportunities to verify that this logic is still at work, even today and close to us (cf. P. Bourdieu, 'Un contrat sous contrainte', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 81–2 (Mar. 1990), pp. 34–51). Although men can no longer always affect the same haughty disdain for the petty preoccupations of the economy (except perhaps in the cultural universes), it is not uncommon for them to assert their statutory loftiness, especially when in positions of authority, by manifesting their indifference to subordinate questions of practicality, 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.<sup>52</sup>

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.<sup>53</sup> 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 naive 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. 405–11.

The dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural. This can lead to a kind of systematic self-depreciation, even self-denigration, visible in particular, as has been seen, in the representation that Kabyle women have of their genitals as something deficient, ugly, even repulsive (or, in modern societies, in the vision that many women have of their bodies as not conforming to the aesthetic canons imposed by fashion), and, more generally, in their adherence to a demeaning image of woman.<sup>54</sup> Symbolic violence is instituted through the adherence that the dominated cannot fail to grant to the dominant (and therefore to the domination) when, to shape her thought of him, and herself, or, rather, her thought of her relation with him, she has only cognitive instruments that she shares with him and which, being no more than the embodied form of the relation of domination, cause that relation to appear as natural; or, in other words, when the schemes she applies in order to perceive and appreciate herself, or to perceive and appreciate the dominant (high/low, male/female, white/black, etc.), are the product of the embodiment of the – thereby naturalized – classifications of which her social being is the product.

Being unable to evoke here with sufficient subtlety (it would take a Virginia Woolf to do so) sufficiently numerous, varied and cogent examples of concrete situations in which this gentle and often invisible violence is exerted, I shall simply refer to observations which, in their objectivism, are more persuasive than description of the minutiae of interactions. Surveys show, for example, that a large majority of French women say they want a husband who is older and also (quite coherently) taller than themselves; two-thirds of them even explicitly reject the idea of a husband shorter than themselves.<sup>55</sup> What is the

54 In interviews conducted in France in 1996, it was very common for women to say they found it difficult to accept their bodies.

55 In the same logic, Myra Marx Ferree, who points out that the main obstacle to the transformation of the division of domestic labour lies in the fact that household tasks are perceived as 'unfit for "real men"', notes that women conceal the help they receive from their husbands for fear of diminishing them (cf. M. Marx Ferree, 'Sacrifice, satisfaction and social change: employment and the family', in K. Brooklin Sacks and D. Remy (eds), *My Troubles Are Going to Have Trouble with Me* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University 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.'<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup>

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 domination consentie', I: 'Types d'union et attentes en matière d'écart d'âge', *Population*, 2 (1990), pp. 327–60; II: 'Modes d'entrée dans la vie adulte et représentations du conjoint', *Population*, 3 (1990), pp. 565–602; 'Apparence physique et choix du conjoint', *INED* [Institut National des Études Démographiques], *Congrès et colloques*, 7 (1991), 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-gap – are found mostly among the social categories of self-employed craftsmen, shopkeepers, farmers and manual workers, in which marriage remains, for women, the prime means of acquiring a social position – as if, being the product of an unconscious adjustment to the probabilities associated with an objective structure of domination, the submissive dispositions that are expressed in these preferences produced the equivalent of what could be a calculation of enlightened self-interest. By contrast, these dispositions tend to weaken – with, no doubt, effects of *hysteresis* which would emerge from analysis of variations in practices not only according to the position occupied, but also according to trajectory – with the objective dependency that helps to produce and maintain them (the same logic of adjustment of dispositions to the objective chances also explaining why it can be observed that women's access to employment is a major factor in their access to divorce).<sup>58</sup> This tends to confirm that, contrary to the romantic representation of love, choice of partner is not exempt from a form of rationality that owes nothing to rational calculation, or, to put it another way, that love is often partly *amor fati*, love of one's social destiny.

So the only way to understand this particular form of domination is to move beyond the forced choice between constraint (by forces) and consent (to reasons), between mechanical coercion and voluntary, free, deliberate, even calculated submission. The effect of symbolic domination (whether ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic, etc.) is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousnesses but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the paradoxical logic of

58 Cf. B. Bastard and L. Cardia-Vouèche, 'L'activité professionnelle des femmes: une ressource, mais pour qui? Une réflexion sur l'accès au divorce', *Sociologie du Travail*, no. 3 (1984), pp. 308–16.

59 Among so many testimonies or observations of experience of the symbolic violence associated with linguistic domination, I shall only cite, for their exemplary character, those offered by Abiodun Goke-Pariola concerning post-independence Nigeria: the perpetuation of an 'internalized denigration of everything native' is seen in a particularly striking way in the relations Nigerians have to their native language (which they will not allow to be taught in schools) and to the language of the former colonizers, which they speak 'adopting the bodily *hexis* of the British . . . so as to produce what is regarded as the British nasal accent' (A. Goke-Pariola, *The Role of Language in the*

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.<sup>60</sup> 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 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993)).

<sup>60</sup> 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).

rage, so many ways of submitting, even despite oneself and 'against the grain' [*à son corps défendant*], to the dominant judgement, sometimes in internal conflict and division of self, of experiencing the insidious complicity that a body slipping from the control of consciousness and will maintains with the censures inherent in the social structures.

The passions of the dominated habitus (whether dominated in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture or language) – a somatized social relationship, a social law converted into an embodied law – are not of the kind that can be suspended by a simple effort of will, founded on a liberatory awakening of consciousness. If it is quite illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with the weapons of consciousness and will alone, this is because the effect and conditions of its efficacy are durably and deeply embedded in the body in the form of dispositions. This is seen, in particular, in the case of relations of kinship and all relations built on that model, in which these durable inclinations of the socialized body are expressed and experienced in the logic of feeling (filial love, fraternal love, etc.) or duty, which are often merged in the experience of respect and devotion and may live on long after the disappearance of their social conditions of production. Thus it is observed that when the external constraints are removed and formal liberties – the right to vote, the right to education, access to all occupations, including politics – are acquired, self-exclusion and 'vocation' (which 'acts' as much negatively as it does positively) take over from explicit exclusion. Exclusion from public places, which, when it is explicitly laid down, as it is among the Kabyles, consigns women to separate spaces and makes approaching a male space, such as the edges of the assembly place, a terrifying ordeal, may elsewhere be achieved almost as effectively through the *socially imposed agoraphobia* which may persist long after the abolition of the most visible taboos and which leads women to exclude themselves from the *agora*.

To point to the marks that domination durably imprints in bodies and the effects it exerts through them does not mean that one is offering support to that particularly vicious way of ratifying domination which consists in making women responsible for their own domination by suggesting, as people sometimes do, that they *choose* to adopt submissive practices

(‘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-*

*consciousness* of the oppressed [woman]’ or the ‘invasion of women’s *consciousness* by the physical, juridical and mental power of men’). Failing to take account of the *durable* effects that the male order exercises on women, she cannot adequately understand the enchanted submission which constitutes the specific effect of symbolic violence.<sup>61</sup> The language of the ‘imaginary’ which one sees used somewhat recklessly here and there is even more inadequate than that of ‘consciousness’ in as much as it inclines one in particular to forget that the dominant principle of vision is not a simple mental representation, a fantasy (‘ideas in people’s heads’), an ideology, but a system of structures durably embedded in things and in bodies. Nicole-Claude Mathieu, in a text entitled ‘On the dominated consciousness’,<sup>62</sup> has probably gone furthest in the critique of the notion of consent, which ‘denies virtually all responsibility on the part of the oppressor’,<sup>63</sup> and ‘once more casts all the blame on the oppressed’;<sup>64</sup> but, because she has not abandoned the language of ‘consciousness’, she is not quite as radical as she might be in her analysis of *the limitations of the possibilities of thought or action* that domination imposes on the oppressed<sup>65</sup> and ‘the invasion of their consciousness by the omnipresent power of men’.<sup>66</sup>

These critical distinctions are not at all gratuitous: they imply that the symbolic revolution called for by the feminist movement cannot be reduced to a simple conversion of consciousnesses and wills. Because the foundation of symbolic violence lies not in mystified consciousnesses that only need to be enlightened but in dispositions attuned to the structure of domination of which they are the product, the relation of complicity that the victims of symbolic domination grant to the

61 J. Favret-Saada, ‘L’arraisonnement des femmes’, *Les Temps Modernes* (Feb. 1987), pp. 137–50.

62 N.-C. Mathieu, ‘De la conscience dominée’, in *Catégorisation et idéologies de sexe* (Paris: Côte-femmes, 1991).

63 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 180. It should be noted in passing that the most decisive advances in the critique of the masculine vision of the relations of production (such as the minimization, in discourse and ritual, of the specific contribution of women) have found their most solid support in ethnological analysis of practices, particularly of ritual (cf. the texts brought together by N.-C. Mathieu in N. Echard, O. Journet, C. Michard-Marchal, C. Ribéry, N.-C. Mathieu and N. Tabet, *L’arraisonnement des femmes. Essais en anthropologie des sexes* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1985).

dominant can only be broken through a radical transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves. Symbolic violence is exercised only through an act of knowledge and practical recognition which takes place below the level of the consciousness and will and which gives all its manifestations – injunctions, suggestions, seduction, threats, reproaches, orders or calls to order – their ‘hypnotic power’. But a relation of domination that functions only through the complicity of dispositions depends profoundly, *for its perpetuation or transformation*, on the perpetuation or transformation of the structures of which those dispositions are the product (and in particular on the structure of a market in symbolic goods whose fundamental law is that women are treated there as objects which circulate upwards).

### Women in the economy of symbolic goods

Thus, dispositions (*habitus*) are inseparable from the structures (*habitudines*, in Leibniz’s sense) that produce and reproduce them, in both men and women, and in particular from the whole structure of technical and ritual activities that is ultimately grounded in the structure of the market in symbolic goods.<sup>67</sup> The principle of the inferiority and exclusion of women, which the mythico-ritual system ratifies and amplifies, to the point of making it the principle of division of the whole universe, is nothing other than the fundamental dissymmetry, that of *subject and object*, *agent and instrument*, which is set up between men and women in the domain of symbolic exchanges, the relations of production and reproduction of symbolic capital, the central device of which is the matrimonial market, and which are the foundation of the whole social order – women can only appear there as objects, or, more precisely, as

67 Anticipating some intuitions of modern philosophies, such as that of Peirce, Leibniz speaks of *habitudines*, durable ways of being, structures, resulting from evolution, to designate what is uttered in expression (G. W. Leibniz, ‘Quid sit idea’, in *Die Philosophische Schriften*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1890), vol. 7, pp. 263–4).

symbols whose meaning is constituted outside of them and whose function is to contribute to the perpetuation or expansion of the symbolic capital held by men. The true nature of the status conferred on women is revealed *a contrario* in the limiting case in which, to avoid the extinction of the lineage, a family without a male descendant has no alternative but to *take* for its daughter a man, the *awrith*, who, in contrast to patrilo-cal custom, comes and lives in his wife's house and who thus circulates like a woman, in other words as an object ('he played the bride,' the Kabyles say). Since masculinity itself is called into question here, both in Béarn and in Kabylia, the whole group grants a kind of arbitrary indulgence to the subterfuges that the humiliated family resorts to in order to save the appearances of its honour and, so far as it is possible, of the 'man-object' who, in abnegating himself as a man, calls into question the honour of the host family.

The explanation of the primacy granted to masculinity in cultural taxonomies lies in the logic of the economy of symbolic exchanges, and more precisely in the social construction of the relations of kinship and marriage alliance which assigns to women their social status as objects of exchange defined in accordance with male interests to help to reproduce the symbolic capital of men. The incest taboo which Lévi-Strauss sees as the act founding society, inasmuch as it entails the necessity of exchange as equal communication between men, is correlative with the institution of the violence through which women are denied as subjects of the exchange and alliance that are set up through them, but by reducing them to the status of objects, or rather, of *symbolic instruments* of male politics. Being condemned to circulate as tokens and thus to institute relations between men, they are reduced to the status of instruments of production or reproduction of symbolic and social capital. And perhaps, to complete the break with Lévi-Strauss's purely 'semiological' view, we should see the circulation of women in de Sade, which, as Anne-Marie Dardigna puts it, 'makes the female body, literally, an assessable, interchangeable object circulating among men like currency',<sup>68</sup> as the disenchanting or

68 A.-M. Dardigna, *Les Châteaux d'Éros ou les infortunes du sexe des femmes* (Paris: Maspero, 1980), p. 88.

cynical limiting case of Lévi-Straussian circulation, made possible by the disenchantment (of which eroticism is one aspect) associated with the generalization of monetary exchanges and displaying overtly the violence on which, in the final analysis, the legitimate circulation of legitimate women is based.

The strictly semiological reading, which conceives the exchange of women as a relation of communication and so masks the *political* dimension of the matrimonial transaction, a symbolic power relation aimed at conserving or expanding symbolic power,<sup>69</sup> and the purely 'economistic' interpretation (Marxist or other) which collapses the logic of the mode of symbolic production into the logic of a mode of strictly economic production and conceives the exchange of women as an exchange of goods both miss the essential ambiguity of the economy of symbolic goods. This economy, oriented towards the accumulation of symbolic capital (honour) transforms various raw materials – above all, women, but more generally any object that can be exchanged with formality – into *gifts* (and not products), that is, communicative signs that are, inseparably, instruments of domination.<sup>70</sup>

Such a theory takes into account not only the specific structure of this exchange, but also the social labour that it requires of those who perform it and above all the labour that is needed to produce and reproduce both its agents (active – men – and passive – women) and its very logic – contrary to the illusion that symbolic capital somehow reproduces itself by its own force, outside of the action of situated and dated agents. To (re)produce the agents is to (re)produce the categories (in both senses – the schemes of perception and appreciation and the social groups) that organize the social world, kinship categories, of course, but also mythico-ritual categories; to (re)produce the

69 On the consequences of the break with the semiological view of exchange in the understanding of linguistic exchange, see Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, pp. 13–21 and *passim*.

70 This materialist analysis of the economy of symbolic goods transcends the sterile debate between the 'material' and the 'ideal', perpetuated in the opposition between 'materialist' studies and 'symbolic' studies (which are often quite remarkable, like those of Michele Rosaldo, Sherry Ortner and Gayle Rubin, but are in my view partial: Rosaldo and Ortner have seen the role of symbolic oppositions and the complicity of the dominated; Rubin has seen the link with symbolic exchanges and matrimonial strategies).

game and the stakes is to (re)produce the conditions of access to the social reproduction (and not only to sexuality) that is ensured by an agonistic exchange aimed at accumulating genealogical statuses, the names of lineages or ancestors, in other words symbolic capital, and therefore durable rights and powers over persons. The men produce signs and actively exchange them, as partner-adversaries united by an essential relationship of equality in honour, the very condition of an exchange that can produce inequality in honour, or domination – which is missed by a purely semiological view such as Lévi-Strauss's. There is therefore a radical dissymmetry between man, the subject, and woman, the object of the exchange; between man, who is responsible for and controls production and reproduction, and woman, the *transformed* product of this labour.<sup>71</sup>

When – as is the case in Kabylia – the acquisition of symbolic capital and social capital is more or less the only possible form of accumulation, women are assets which must be protected from offence and suspicion and which, when invested in exchanges, can produce alliances, in other words social capital, and prestigious allies, in other words symbolic capital. To the extent that the value of these alliances, and therefore the symbolic profit they can yield, partly depends on the symbolic value of the women available for exchange, that is to say, on their reputation and especially their chastity – constituted as a fetishized measure of masculine reputation, and therefore of the symbolic capital of the whole lineage – the honour of the brothers or fathers, which induces a vigilance as attentive, and even paranoid, as that of the husbands, is a form of enlightened self-interest.

71 For each of the propositions put forward here, I could (or should) have indicated what distinguishes it on the one hand from Lévi-Strauss's theses (I have done so on just one point, which seemed to me particularly important) and on the other hand from various related analyses, in particular that of Gayle Rubin ('The traffic in women: the political economy of sex', in R. R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975)), who, in seeking to account for the oppression of women, picks up some features of Lévi-Strauss's seminal analysis, from a standpoint different from my own. This would have enabled me to do justice to these authors while demonstrating my 'difference', and above all to avoid the risk of seeming to repeat or resurrect analyses to which I am opposed.

The decisive weight of the economy of symbolic goods, which, through the fundamental principle of division, organizes all perception of the social world, weighs on the whole social universe, that is, not only on the economy of economic production, but also on the economy of *biological reproduction*. This explains why it is that, in Kabylia and also in many other traditions, the specifically female work of gestation and child-bearing is effaced in favour of the specifically male work of impregnation. (One notes in passing that, although Mary O'Brien, writing from a psychoanalytical perspective, is not wrong to see masculine domination as the product of men's effort to overcome their dispossession from the means of reproduction of the species and to restore the primacy of paternity by disguising the real work of women in childbearing, she fails to relate this 'ideological' work to its true foundations, that is, to the constraints of the economy of symbolic goods, which require biological reproduction to be subordinated to the necessities of the reproduction of symbolic capital.)<sup>72</sup> In the cycle of procreation as in the agrarian cycle, mythico-ritual logic privileges men's intervention, which is always marked, as on the occasion of marriage or the start of ploughing, by public, official, collective rites, at the expense of the periods of gestation, whether that of the earth, in winter, or of woman, which only give rise to optional and almost furtive ritual actions. On the one hand, there is a *discontinuous* and *extra-ordinary* intervention into the course of life, a risky and dangerous action which is performed solemnly – and sometimes, as in the first ploughing, publicly, facing the group; on the other hand, there is a kind of natural and passive process of swelling, of which the woman or the earth is the site, the occasion or the support, rather than the agent, and which requires of the woman only technical or ritual acts of accompaniment, actions that are meant to assist nature in its labour (like hoeing and the gathering of grass for the animals) and are therefore doubly condemned to remain unremarked. Familiar, continuous, ordinary, repetitive and monotonous, this 'humble, easy toil' as the poet puts it<sup>73</sup> is for

72 M. O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

73 P. Verlaine, *Sagesse*, I, viii (*trans.*).

the most part performed out of sight, in the darkness of the house or in the slack periods of the farming year.<sup>74</sup>

The sexual division is inscribed, on the one hand, in the division of productive activities with which we associate the idea of work, and more generally in the division of the labour of maintaining social capital and symbolic capital which gives men the monopoly of all official, public activities, of *representation*, and in particular of all exchanges of honour – exchanges of words (in everyday encounters and above all in the assembly), exchanges of gifts, exchanges of women, exchanges of challenges and murders (of which the limiting case is war). On the other hand, it is inscribed in the dispositions (the habitus) of the protagonists of the economy of symbolic goods – those of women, whom this economy reduces to the state of *objects* of exchange (even if, in certain conditions, they may help, at least by proxy, to orient and organize exchanges, in particular marriages); and those of men, on whom the whole social order, and in particular the positive or negative sanctions associated with the functioning of the market in symbolic goods, lays the obligation to acquire the capacity and propensity, constitutive of the sense of honour, to take seriously all the games thus constituted as serious.

When, as I have done elsewhere,<sup>75</sup> under the heading of the division of labour between the sexes, I described *only the division of productive activities*, I was *mistakenly* adopting an ethnocentric definition of work which I had myself already shown<sup>76</sup> to be a historical invention, profoundly different from the precapitalist definition of ‘work’ as the exercise of a social function which may be described as ‘total’ or undifferentiated and which includes activities that modern societies would regard as non-productive, because they have no monetary sanction; this is true – in Kabyle society and in most precapitalist societies, but also in the aristocracy of ancien régime societies, and in the

74 This opposition between the continuous and the discontinuous is also found in modern societies, in the opposition between the routines of women’s domestic work and the ‘major decisions’ that men tend to reserve for themselves (cf. M. Glaude and F. de Singly, ‘L’organisation domestique: pouvoir et négociation’, *Économie et Statistique* (INSEE, Paris), no. 187 (1986).

75 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 217.

76 P. Bourdieu, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1963), and *Algeria 1960* (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

privileged classes of capitalist societies – of all practices directly or indirectly oriented towards the reproduction of social capital and symbolic capital, such as negotiating a marriage or speaking in the men's assembly, among the Kabyles, or, elsewhere, playing a smart sport, holding a salon, giving a ball or founding a charitable institution. Such a restricted definition prevents a full understanding of the objective structure of the sexual division of 'tasks' or 'duties', which extends to all domains of practice, and in particular to exchanges, with the difference between public, discontinuous, extra-ordinary male exchanges and private, even secret, continuous, ordinary female exchanges, and to religious or ritual activities, in which similar oppositions are observed.

This primordial investment in the social games (*illusio*), which makes a man a real man – the sense of honour, virility, 'manliness', or, as the Kabyles say, 'Kabylness' (*thakbaylith*) – is the undisputed principle of all the duties towards oneself, the motor or motive of all that a man 'owes to himself', in other words what he must do in order to live up, in his own eyes, to a certain idea of manhood. It is indeed the relationship between a habitus constructed according to the fundamental division of the straight and the curved, the upright and the recumbent, the strong and the weak, in short, the male and the female, and a social space also organized according to this division, that gives rise – as urgent imperatives, things that *must* be done – to the agonistic investments of men, and the virtues, entirely composed of abstention and abstinence, of women.

Thus, the point of honour, that particular form of the sense of the game that is acquired through prolonged submission to the regularities and rules of the economy of symbolic goods, is the principle of the system of reproduction strategies through which men, the holders of the monopoly of the instruments of production and reproduction of symbolic capital, aim to secure the conservation or expansion of this capital – fertility strategies, matrimonial strategies, educational strategies, economic strategies, inheritance strategies, all oriented towards the transmission of inherited powers and privileges.<sup>77</sup> This necessity of

77 On the link between honour and matrimonial and inheritance strategies, see P. Bourdieu, 'Célibat et condition paysanne, *Études rurales*, 5–6 (Apr.–Sept. 1962), pp. 32–126; 'Les stratégies matrimoniales dans le système des stratégies de reproduction', *Annales*, 4–5 (July–Oct. 1972), pp. 1105–27;

the symbolic order, made into a virtue, is the product of the embodiment of the tendency of honour (that is, of the symbolic capital held in common by a lineage or – in the case of Béarn and the noble families of the Middle Ages, and no doubt beyond – by a ‘house’) to perpetuate itself through the actions of the agents.

Women are excluded from all the public spaces, such as the assembly or the market, where the games ordinarily considered the most serious ones of human existence, such as the games of honour, are played out. Indeed, they are excluded *a priori*, so to speak, in the name of the (tacit) principle of equality in honour, according to which the challenge, because it honours its recipient, is valid only if it is addressed to a man (as opposed to a woman), and a man of honour, capable of providing a riposte which, inasmuch as it too contains a recognition, bestows honour. The perfect circularity of the process indicates that this is an arbitrary assignment.

### Manliness and violence

If women, subjected to a labour of socialization which tends to diminish and deny them, learn the negative virtues of self-denial, resignation and silence, men are also prisoners, and insidiously victims, of the dominant representation. Like the dispositions towards submission, those which underlie the pursuit and exercise of domination are not inscribed in a nature, and they have to be learned through a long labour of socialization, in other words, as has been seen, of active differentiation from the opposite sex. Being a man, in the sense of *vir*, implies an ought-to-be, a *virtus*, which imposes itself in the mode of self-evidence, the taken-for-granted. Like nobility, honour – which is inscribed in the body in the form of a set of seemingly natural dispositions, often visible in a particular way of sitting and standing, a tilt of the head, a bearing, a gait, bound up with a way of thinking and acting, an ethos, a belief, etc. –

*governs* the man of honour, without the need for any external constraint. It *directs* (in both senses) his thoughts and practices like a force (one that can 'carry him away'), but without constraining him mechanically (he may evade the challenge, not rise to its demand); it guides his action like a logical necessity ('he cannot do otherwise' lest he deny himself), but without imposing itself as a rule, or as the implacable logical verdict of a kind of rational calculation. This higher force, which may lead him to accept as inevitable or self-evident, that is, without deliberation or examination, actions which others would see as impossible or unthinkable, is the transcendence of the social that has been made body and which functions as an *amor fati*, love of destiny, the bodily inclination to realize an identity that has been constituted as a social essence and so transformed into a destiny. Nobility, or the point of honour (*nif*), in the sense of the set of dispositions regarded as noble (physical and moral courage, generosity, magnanimity, etc.), is the product of a social labour of nomination and inculcation at the end of which a social identity instituted by one of the 'invisible demarcation lines' laid down by the social world and known and recognized by all inscribes itself in a biological nature and becomes habitus, embodied social law.

Male privilege is also a trap, and it has its negative side in the permanent tension and contention, sometimes verging on the absurd, imposed on every man by the duty to assert his manliness in all circumstances.<sup>78</sup> Inasmuch as its real subject is a collective – the lineage or the house – itself shaped by the demands immanent in the symbolic order, the point of honour presents itself as an ideal, or, more precisely, as a system of demands which inevitably remains, in many cases, inaccessible. *Manli-*

78 And first and foremost, at least in North African societies, his sexual potency, as shown, according to the testimony, recorded in the 1960s, of a pharmacist in Algiers, by men's very frequent and very widespread recourse to aphrodisiacs – always very strongly represented in the armoury of traditional apothecaries. Virility is indeed subject to a more or less masked form of collective judgement, not only at the time of the rites of defloration of the bride, but also through women's conversations, which dwell extensively on sexual matters and lapses in potency. The rush to procure Viagra, both in Europe and the United States, when it first appeared in early 1998, together with many writings by psychotherapists and doctors, shows that anxiety over the physical manifestations of 'manliness' is far from being an exotic peculiarity.

ness, understood as sexual or social reproductive capacity, but also as the capacity to fight and to exercise violence (especially in acts of revenge), is first and foremost a *duty*. Unlike a woman, whose essentially negative honour can only be defended or lost, since her virtue is successively virginity and fidelity, a 'real' man is someone who feels the need to rise to the challenge of the opportunities available to him to increase his honour by pursuing glory and distinction in the public sphere. Exaltation of masculine values has its dark negative side in the fears and anxiety aroused by femininity. Women, weak in themselves and sources of weakness, being the embodiments of the *vulnerability* of honour, of *h'urma*, the sacred of the left hand (female, as opposed to the male sacred of the right hand), and always exposed to offence, are also strong, armed with the weapons of weakness, such as devilish cunning, *thah'raymith*, and magic.<sup>79</sup> Everything thus combines to make the impossible ideal of virility the source of an immense vulnerability. It is this vulnerability which paradoxically leads to sometimes frantic investment in all the masculine games of violence, such as sports in modern societies, and most especially those which most tend to produce the visible signs of masculinity,<sup>80</sup> and to manifest and also test what are called manly virtues, such as combat sports.<sup>81</sup>

79 As has been seen in the myth of origin, in which he discovered with stupor woman's pudenda and the (unreciprocated) pleasure that she revealed to him, man is situated, within the system of oppositions that links him to woman, on the side of good faith and naivety (*niya*), the perfect antitheses of *thah'raymith*.

80 Cf. S. W. Fussell, *Muscle: Confessions of an Unlikely Body Builder* (New York: Poseidon, 1991), and L. Wacquant, 'Why men desire muscles', *Body and Society*, 1, no. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 163–80. Loïc Wacquant rightly stresses the 'predicament of masculinity' as revealed in body-building, a 'passionate battle, as Barry Glassner calls it, against their own sense of vulnerability', and the 'multisided process through which the masculine *illusio* . . . becomes progressively instilled and inscribed in a particular biological individual' (pp. 171, 173).

81 The construction of the traditional Jewish habitus in central Europe, in the late nineteenth century, can be seen as a kind of *perfect inversion* of the process of construction of the male habitus as described here: the explicit refusal of the cult of violence, even in its most ritualized forms, such as duelling or sport, led to a devaluing of physical exercises, especially the most violent ones, in favour of intellectual and spiritual exercises, favouring the development of gentle, 'peaceful' dispositions (confirmed by the rarity of rape and other crimes of violence) (cf. V. Karady, 'Les juifs et la violence stalinienne', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 120 (Dec. 1997), pp. 3–31).

Like honour – or shame, its reverse side, which we know, in contrast to guilt, is felt *before others* – manliness must be validated by other men, in its reality as actual or potential violence, and certified by recognition of membership of the group of ‘real men’. A number of rites of institution, especially in educational or military milieux, include veritable tests of manliness oriented towards the reinforcement of male solidarity. Practices such as some gang rapes – a degraded variant of the group visit to the brothel, so common in the memoirs of bourgeois adolescents – are designed to challenge those under test to prove before others their virility in its violent reality,<sup>82</sup> in other words stripped of all the devirilizing tenderness and gentleness of love, and they dramatically demonstrate the heteronomy of all affirmations of virility, their dependence on the judgement of the male group.

Some forms of ‘courage’, those demanded or recognized by armies or police forces (and especially the ‘elite corps’ among them) and gangs of delinquents, but also, in more banal fashion, by some work communities – and which, particularly in the construction industry, for example, encourage or force men to flout safety measures and to deny or defy danger with reckless behaviour that leads to many accidents – spring, paradoxically, from the *fear* of losing the respect or admiration of the group, of ‘losing face’ in front of one’s ‘mates’ and being relegated to the typically female category of ‘wimps’, ‘girlies’, ‘fairies’, etc. What is called ‘courage’ is thus often rooted in a kind of cowardice: one has only to think of all the situations in which, to make men kill, torture or rape, the will to dominate, exploit or oppress has relied on the ‘manly’ fear of being excluded from the world of ‘men’ without weakness, those who are sometimes called ‘tough’ because they are tough on their own suffering and more especially on that of others – the assassins, torturers and ‘hit men’ of all dictatorships and all ‘total institutions’, even the most ordinary ones, such as prisons, barracks or boarding schools – but also the new ‘hatchet men’ of modern manage-

82 The link between virility and violence is explicit in the Brazilian tradition, which describes the penis as a *weapon* (R. G. Parker, *Bodies, Pleasures and Passions: Sexual Culture in Contemporary Brazil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), p. 37). There is an equally explicit correlation between penetration (*foder*) and domination (p. 42).

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ment, glorified by neoliberal hagiography, who, themselves often subject to ordeals of physical courage, manifest their virility by sacking their superfluous employees. Manliness, it can be seen, is an eminently *relational* notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of *fear* of the female, firstly in oneself.