

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 socioidicy 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 pretension 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 *emayer*' (*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 *emayer*', 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 soft 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 'meanness' 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 Kabilia, 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-

sciousness 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 movements cannot be reduced to a simple conversion of consciences and wills. Because the foundation of symbolic violence lies not in mystified consciences 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: Côté-femmes, 1991).

63 *Ibid.*, p. 225.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

66 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. Echarat, O. Jourmet, 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 patrilineal 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: Maspéro, 1980), p. 88.