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M.A. Thesis

*(Partial requirement for a Master of Arts in Modern European Studies
at the Australian National University, Canberra, 1978)*

TOWARDS A FEMINIST THEORY OF WOMEN'S LITERATURE

Submitted November 1978

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I, Peter Howarth, hereby declare that the work represented by this thesis is all my own, and that I have acknowledged all sources used.

29/11/78

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INTRODUCTION – FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

One of the most persistently productive and researched areas of contemporary feminist theory is that of literature and literary criticism. From Simone de Beauvoir's incorporation of an analysis of five authors in the theoretical section of *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Montherlant, D.H. Lawrence, Claudel, Breton and Stendahl) to Shulamith Firestone's examination of the would-be "objective" portrayals of the male/female experience (Herbert Gold, Malamud, Updike, etc.), literature has been seen to play an integral part in the understanding of women's position in society. Kate Millet organized *Sexual Politics* around an analysis of the misogyny revealed in the novels of Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and D.H. Lawrence while the examples provided by literature form an important part of her argument in Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*. Significantly, both these writers were specialists in literature, the latter lecturing in English at Warwick University. It was these books which accompanied the development and growth of the women's liberation movement at the end of the sixties (*Le Deuxième Sexe* although translated in 1953 was not issued in paperback until much later). A noticeable feature of these books which have become almost classics in the field of feminist theory, was the attempt to reach a comprehensive picture of the condition of women, not only from a subjective viewpoint but from an objective historical, sociological, political, economic and literary point of view as well. *Le Deuxième Sexe* provided a prototype for this kind of approach, the first part being an objective analysis of the condition of women, the second part being a subjective description of the ways in which women experience that condition. It is no wonder that the critics had difficulty in comprehending this work when it was published, expressing both bewilderment and a begrudging awe at the sheer bulk, complexity and wealth of detail of this work. They were understandably confused at the compelling yet conflicting arguments, the reasoning which was both detached and impassioned, and above all the revelation of something that seemed obvious but had nevertheless been hitherto unrecognized. It is both a strength and a weakness of *Le Deuxième Sexe* that it attempted such a comprehensive view of women's oppression, the weakness deriving from the fact that de Beauvoir had to base many of her assertions on scanty evidence, much of it biased while at the same time being unclear as to the nature or the extent of the situation that she was defining. She herself acknowledges that she has difficulty in articulating the question she is seeking the answer for: "D'ailleurs y a-t-il un problème? Et quel est-il? Y-a-t-il même des femmes?"¹ De Beauvoir merely expressed the feeling which confronted many of the pioneers of the women's movement. Betty Friedan even entitled the first chapter of her *The Feminine Mystique* "The problem that has no name". It was the novelty and the diffuseness of the problem which led these theorists to cast the ambit of their enquiries so wide.

Literary criticism which had been an important element in the earlier theoretical analyses of women's condition as a whole, later became an activity in its own right. Feminist literary journals, articles and books abounded. However, along with the fragmentation and increasing specialization of the specific areas of feminist theory has come a certain remoteness of the parts from the original whole of a comprehensive and coherent view of the condition of women. This process is reflected in the composition of women's studies courses in universities: at first women's studies courses tended to be interdisciplinary and radical in the sense that they challenged the traditional concepts of the purpose and methods of academic courses. But as time went on, they retreated into individual departments to work on feminist approaches to the traditional specialized disciplines. In the field of literary criticism one can observe an analogous process. At first, feminists attempted to make literary criticism into part of an encyclopaedic feminist theory using a rough-and-ready dialectical method of a movement to and fro between the text, the author and the society in which the work originated. This approach was due partly to a reaction against the prevalent hegemony of formalist criticism which by refusing to engage in any extrinsic method was felt to be a useless and elitist pastime, largely irrelevant to the comprehension of a society in which the students of the time were highly critical of the prevailing values. In the general criticism of authority and established values the current approaches to literary criticism were also questioned. As one American feminist put it at the time: "... the majority of literary critics and professors in the United States desparately believe that there is no relationship between art and life which allows them to study literature as a privately created world completely independent of its social and political context".² It was found that the methods and criteria of the standard type of criticism taught in universities were inadequate for understanding a novel like Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, which although technically imperfect was yet felt to be extraordinarily relevant to hundreds of thousands of women college students who had shared the same experience as Esther Greenwood. It was in this general climate that feminist criticism originated. Kate Millet was one of the original exemplars; she formulated her approach in the following terms:

It has been my conviction that the adventure of literary criticism is not restricted to a dutiful round of adulation, but is capable of seizing upon the larger insights which literature affords into the life it describes, or interprets, or even distorts. . . . I have operated on the premise that there is room for a criticism which takes into account the larger cultural context in which literature is conceived and produced. Criticism which originates from literary history is too limited in scope to do this; criticism which originates in aesthetic considerations, "New Criticism", never wished to do so.³

Much of the work which has subsequently appeared on women and literature has taken for granted the importance of "the larger cultural context in which literature is conceived and produced". In a survey of this early work made by Cheri Register, it becomes apparent that there were three stages in the development of feminist criticism in America.⁴ Firstly, there was the examination of works of literature, often literature written by men, searching for the kind of

stereotypes of women contained in them. Perhaps the best and most representative of this type of criticism is Mary Ellman's *Thinking about Women*.⁵ Secondly, in an effort analogous to the feminist historians' attempts to recover the lost history of women, feminist literary critics began to look at the works of women writers who had previously been undervalued, misinterpreted, ignored or forgotten. As a result of this activity writers like Kate Chopin, Dorothy Richardson and Jean Rhys were "rediscovered". The rediscovery of women writers and the definition of a female literary tradition was accompanied by the question of whether different critical assumptions should be brought to the analysis of women's work, given the manifest prejudice and inadequacy of "male" criticism. On this question there were two main schools of opinion. The first, represented by critics like Patricia Meyer Spacks believed that "a special female self-awareness emerges through literature in every period". Spacks framed the questions around which she organised her research as:

What are the ways of female feeling, the modes of responding, that persist despite social change? Do any characteristic patterns of self-perception shape the creative expression of women?⁶

The second school of thought was uneasy about the notion of a "female imagination" concerned that this type of approach would encourage the idea of innate sexual difference. As Elaine Showalter put it:

The theory of a female sensibility revealing itself in an imaginary form specific to women always runs dangerously close to reiterating the familiar stereotypes. It also suggests permanence, a deep, basic, and inevitable difference between male and female ways of perceiving the world.⁷

There is a danger in this method of creating, or rather reinforcing the existing literary apartheid where, in Ellman's words "women cannot comprehend male books, men cannot tolerate female books... there must always be two literatures like two public toilets, one for Men and one for Women".⁸

The third phase in the development of feminist literary criticism is the emergence of a method of criticism which can be employed to establish the function of literary criticism in the movement for liberation. One of the most complex questions that has arisen has been the problem of determining whether new feminist writing should try to reflect the actual situation of women or whether it should try to provide positive role models to help women in their efforts towards self-actualization. This is a problem directly comparable to that which faced Marxist literary critics in the nineteen-twenties and thirties who debated whether literature should only reflect reality or whether it should try to change that reality by influencing it in the direction of socialism.

In response to this dilemma, recent articles in feminist literary journals have voiced a need

for feminist critics to concern themselves more with a theoretical grounding to their criticism. In the Canadian journal "A Room of One's Own", Constance Rooke suggests that the initial enthusiasm and righteous anger which inspired the movement to identify the sexism which pervaded both literary texts and the established canons of criticism, may have gone too far without examining its own assumptions. While the initial enthusiasm was valuable for reinvigorating literary studies with a new sense of relevance and purpose, she suggests that this enthusiasm may have had its day and may even become professionally hazardous.⁹

Another danger, as I see it, in this somewhat directionless surge of feminist literary criticism, is that unless there is a constant reiteration of the theoretical premises upon which this criticism is based, however rudimentary this may be, it may lose contact with the practical activity of the feminist movement and become an isolated academic discipline. There has to be a continual recognition and restatement of a commitment to the principles of literature's radical connection with society and the usefulness of criticism. There is a distinct possibility that in ignoring or forgetting these basic principles feminist literary criticism will be "co-opted" by the "system". The fear of these priorities for this purpose should still have the discipline in the forefront possibility is expressed by Carole Ferrier in an article in the journal *Hecate*: "any feminist criticism that is not part of a general critique of our social system is likely to float off into a consciousness raising that is not very far removed from the glorification of "human nature" in which most conservative literary criticism is grounded".¹⁰

In order to sustain its momentum, feminist literary criticism has to go back and re-examine its original impulses, particularly Millet's notion of the political nature of literature and the rejection of formalism. On rereading, it is apparent that these principles were reached more or less spontaneously – that is, as a response to the immediate situation rather than as a result of a lengthy theoretical process. Formalism was rejected because it was the prevailing critical doctrine at the time and was found to be wanting; the political nature of literature became obvious when the political nature of the socially determined sexual division of labour was articulated and the hitherto concealed, or rather unrecognized, sexist content of literature and literary criticism was revealed. But there seems to be little indication that these insights were not new, or that there had been a whole tradition of literary criticism based on these postulates which had been suppressed, ignored and discredited in America after the war. Fraya Katz-Stoker's article is one of the few which does draw attention to the school of Marxist criticism of the thirties. She cites a number of influential critical works from this period, including those of Christopher Caudwell, V.K. Parrington, Granville Hicks, John Strachey and Ralph Fox. She goes on to suggest that this tradition was suppressed during the McCarthy era to whom the usurping school of "New Criticism" owed its ascendancy:

The history of criticism in the United States is intimately bound up in the history of politics. Not only did New Criticism rise with and support the reactionism of the past twenty-five years, it reflects the thoroughness with which anti-communism and anti-Sovietism have penetrated even literary studies. It has become standard literary procedure to decry the tyranny of social realism in socialist countries but no one seems to see the mirror effect in this country. At the same time when formalism became the majority artistic heresy in the Soviet sphere, a non-formalist critic (even worse if he were a Marxist) became a dead person in American academic circles. Some, like Edmund Wilson, recanted, and some, like Margaret Schlauch, left the country.¹¹

In her opinion, it was only with the birth of the seventies that "literary criticism has awakened from a hypnotic trance which was self-induced shortly after the Russo-German pact and the outbreak of war in 1939." It is not surprising then that feminist literary criticism should appear to start from scratch. In the late 1960's in America, as in Great Britain and Australia, most of the Marxist critics who wrote in English were all but forgotten, or, like Arnold Kettle, ostracized, while the European critics like Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Goldmann were only just being translated. Sartre was perhaps the best known figure, although less as a critic than as a philosopher. Hegelian criticism, as opposed to the Soviet tradition, was relatively unknown in the English speaking world, so much so, that Frederic Jameson who introduced some of the new European critics to America was able to say of the Marxist criticism then known that it was of "a relatively untheoretical, essentially didactic nature, defined more for the use of the night school than in the graduate seminar . . ."¹²

It may be that the negative response and sometimes open hostility displayed by left wing groups towards the women's movement engendered a distrust among feminists of much Marxist dogma, including Marxist literary criticism. Certainly, feminism has learnt to look at Marxism with a critical eye and to cast doubts about the value of socialist theory for the liberation of women. This guardedness has combined with the inclination of some feminists towards the rejection of all male ideology and the construction of a feminist theory *de initio*, so that the contribution that Marxist literary theory could make to feminist theory has not yet been fully realized. It is my opinion that, in Simone de Beauvoir's words, "just as the proletariat makes its own use of the heritage of the past, so women must take over the tools forged by men and use them for their own interests . . . what is called for is a revision, not a repudiation, of knowledge."¹³ This is particularly true in the case of Marxist literary criticism which has had a long tradition of dealing with almost identical questions to those being posed by feminist critics today — such as the relation of literature to the individual's experience of society, the role of literature in the development of a revolutionary theory and consciousness, how to deal with literature of the past in the light of future goals, and so on. Feminism has in common with Marxism that they are both theories which describe and determine the struggles of men and women to free themselves from exploitation and oppression.

It is therefore my intention in this thesis to demonstrate that feminist literary criticism can benefit from a kind of holistic approach proposed by Marxist theory which takes into account the structural and ideological composition of the society from which women's literature, both in the particular and the general, originates.

Departing from a Marxist analysis of the organisation of the relations of production in capitalist social formations which assign to particular social groups more or less exclusive and well-defined functions according to sexual identity, I hope to demonstrate that these relations of production are maintained principally by ideology, reinforced in the final instance by the repressive violence of the state apparatus.

The ideology which defines the role and status assigned to women in the relations of production and the various material forms in which that ideology is manifested are essential factors in the shaping of women's literature. Not only do these forces affect the external circumstances surrounding female literary production, but also they have a profound influence upon the very nature and composition of that literature. I will further argue that the hostility shown towards women's work in literature is a result of women's literary career aspirations being in conflict with the ideological forces which determine the relations of production. Moreover, the general opposition to female literary production, combined with their social and economic circumstances, conspired to make women writers as a group more vulnerable to being co-opted by capitalist methods of production, with profound and often negative effects on the quality and content of their writing.

Most of my literary data comes from nineteenth century England not only because this period is often regarded as the classical era of women's literature, but also because this was the period in which women entered the literary profession as they never had before, a fact which coincided with, and was to some extent a result of, the rapid development of the material means of the mass production of literature. At the same time, the ideological division of labour and the subjection of women assumed their starkest and most contradictory aspect in this era. The analysis is still very relevant to our own day, however, since many of the circumstances that shaped women's literature then still exist today. Just as importantly, contemporary women writers are seen, and see themselves as often as not as writing within a female literary tradition, the lineaments of which were sketched out in this early Victorian period.

RULING CLASS AND RULING IDEAS

The most important theoretical premise from which to start is that of dialectical materialism. This is the fundamental principle of Marxist criticism from the earliest fragments of comments on literature by Marx and Engels, through to the Hegelian aesthetics of Lukács. The principles of dialectical materialism were elaborated in a condensed form in Marx's preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859).

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political super-structure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determine their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.¹⁴

It is these principles which form the foundation of Marxist criticism's argument that a writer's work cannot be comprehended if the critic remains on the level of what he wrote, of the isolated text, or even of the literary tradition to which he belonged. To do so would be to abstract the work from the material context of its genesis and thus deprive the critique of any success in reaching beyond a superficial comprehension of its meaning. The justifications for this point of view are simple and have been reiterated to the point of tedium: writers, like all human beings are social creatures – they live in society, they enter into relationships with others, they are formed by, and in turn form their society. That society is, so to speak, the raw material of the work of literature. This simple truth was expressed with dry humour by Trotsky in his criticism of the Russian formalists who tried to diminish the significance of the social nature of art by exaggerating its individuality:

No one can jump beyond himself. Even the ravings of an insane person contain nothing that the sick man had not received from the outside world . . . Artistic creation, of course, is not a raving, though it is also a reflection, a changing and a transformation of reality in accordance with the peculiar laws of art. However fantastic art may be, it cannot have at its disposal any other material except that which is given to it by the world of three dimensions and by the narrower world of class society.¹⁵

Trotsky's phrase "the peculiar laws of art" is significant here because it is an indication of the complexity of the relationship between the work of art and the social situation of its origins. The connection between the work of literature and the concrete social relations of the author's environment are not direct, but are "mediated" by ideologies in which the author participates. The ideologies are of course derived from the economically determined structure of social relations. Ideologies consist of definite, historically relative ways of living in the world and of interpreting reality which both explain and justify the way societies are structured. This brings us to

the second theoretical premise upon which Marxist literary criticism is based: that the class that controls the means of production also maintains an ideological hegemony over the whole society. Marx and Engels stated this idea most succinctly in *The German Ideology*:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.¹⁶

Thus every society and every class within that society has an ideology appropriate to it which is determined by the ruling class. The ruling class will naturally construct an ideology which serves to enhance, consolidate or maintain their power derived from the monopolization of economic opportunities, and the concomitant status, exclusiveness and privileges that they enjoy. To do this, the ruling class develops a scheme of values and ideas that upholds their own behaviour and condemns that of the other classes. By their monopoly on the means of mental production the ruling class both consciously and unconsciously imposes a mental framework on society through which the existing relations and values that are historically relative appear to be universal and absolute truths. The concept of ideology has been defined best in its general sense as "systematically distorted knowledge".¹⁷

One of the methods of this "systematic distortion of knowledge" is to abstract knowledge from its object in the real world and to reify it. This means to disregard the changing, developing nature of reality and to hypostatize a historically determined moment of it into a universal and absolute truth. Associated with this process is the fragmentation of the knowledge of the totality of reality into partial and isolated pieces. This is part of the process of specialization inherent in the capitalist system of production. Specialization of the whole field of knowledge into compartmentalized disciplines prevents a knowledge of the whole which would include the knowledge of the operations of ideology, the class structure and the relativity of knowledge itself. Georg Lukacs calls these fragments of knowledge "fetishistic categories":

For the function of these fetishistic forms is to make capitalist society appear suprahistoric, and a real knowledge of the objective character of phenomena, a knowledge of their historic character and actual function in the totality of society, forms an undivided act of knowledge.¹⁸

Thus the only valid method of understanding reality is to regard it as a "concrete totality", thus seeing the interrelationship of all the hitherto isolated facts. To understand an ideology it is necessary to determine the state of relations between different classes in society and then in turn analysing the relation of these various classes to the mode of production.

Literature is not identical with ideology, but it is related to it. Ideology, in the more particular sense used by Louis Althusser, is the "lived" relation between men and their world, or a reflected form of this unconscious relation, for instance "philosophy". This means that ideology is the imaginary way in which the real world is experienced, and in this way ideology is related by nature of its operation to literature. Both are imaginary means of experiencing the real world.

The relevance of the analysis of ideology to the question of feminist literary criticism is immediately apparent when we consider the attention given to the ideological apparatus which is responsible for the maintenance of the sex-role stereotypes. Images of women in fiction, in the media, in education have been exposed for their function in imposing and perpetuating these stereotypes. Kate Millet encapsulated the extent and nature of the ideological component in the sexual class structuring of society in her theory of sexual politics:

Sexual politics obtains consent through the 'socialization' of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role, and status. As to status, a pervasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female. The first item, temperament, involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category ('masculine' and 'feminine'), based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, "virtue", and ineffectuality in the female. This is complemented by a second factor, sex role, which decrees a consonant and highly elaborate code of conduct, gesture and attitude for each sex. In terms of activity, sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest and ambition to the male.¹⁹

The existence of a complex network of forces that maintain an ideology of the sex/class division seems clear; after ten years under the attack of feminism, the ideology of "the feminine mystique" has undergone a defensive change, become somewhat camouflaged, but is still as essentially strong as ever. In order to understand the operation of this ideology and the necessity for its endurance under the capitalist formation we must discover what it does that makes it so essential to the smooth persistence of the economic system it serves. To investigate the "feminine mystique" as an isolated fact without relating it to the economic structure of society can only lead to the fetishistic forms of knowledge that Lukács condemned. In the same way, feminist literary criticism to which an analysis of the ideology of sexism is an essential prerequisite has to develop a knowledge of the whole organic composite of society in which that ideology operates. We must ask ourselves what precisely are the relations of the classes and sexes to each other and to the means of production? What is the structural function of women's ascribed role in the conditions of production?

THE REPRODUCTION OF THE FORCES OF PRODUCTION

When the oppression of women is considered from a historical materialist approach, its integral function in the capitalist system of production becomes clear. It can be seen that under capitalism women have two important functions, all linked to the notion of reproduction. They are: (1) the physical reproduction of the forces of production, i.e. labour power, firstly through the maintenance of the worker through domestic labour in the home and secondly through the biological reproduction of the workforce of the future; (2) the reproduction of the relations of production through ideology. The distribution of these functions is socially variable, but nevertheless broadly applicable to all women. While working class women generally perform all the tasks in the reproductive function herself, often in conjunction with a job in the paid labour force, middle class women may employ and supervise others to perform all the reproductive tasks but the actual propagation of children. Nevertheless, her role is still a reproductive one in that she does not contribute directly to the creation of surplus value. Moreover, when women do enter the workforce themselves, they customarily find that their jobs are merely extensions of their domestic tasks, cleaning, catering, teaching, nursing, hairdressing, secretarial work, etc.; in other words, reproductive tasks. The sexual division of labour is officially sanctioned and thus for practical purposes, enforced, by a wide spectrum of legislation such as taxation laws, welfare laws, etc., which effectively curtail the capacity of women to be economically independent.

The importance of the notion of reproduction is stressed in Louis Althusser's essay, "Ideology and the State", where he observes: "As Marx said, every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced would not last a year. The ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production."²⁰

It must be emphasized that reproduction is the *ultimate* condition of production, and that it is the fundamental nature of this function that belongs principally to women that accounts for the intransigence of sexual discrimination in the face of feminist pressure for change. The division of labour along sex lines is an essential element of capitalism's continued existence.

In order to exist, every society must necessarily reproduce the conditions of its production in two forms: the productive forces and the existing relations of production. The reproduction of each of these categories involves two aspects, material reproduction and ideological reproduction.

The Material Reproduction of the Forces of Production: Labour Power

A central concept for the material reproduction of labour-power is Marx's labour theory of value, a theory which is itself at the very heart of Marx's whole system. For Marx, labour-power is a commodity like any other which is sold at a price, the price being constituted in the form of wages. Like any other commodity the price of labour-power is equal to the amount of labour expended to create it in the first place. It is part of the general mystification of wages that while the labourer believes that the money he receives after a full day's work is equivalent to the value of the labour-power that he has expended when in fact he need only have worked part of the day to obtain the value of his subsistence — the value of the reproduction and maintenance of his labour-power — the rest of the working day being spent on creating value over and above that of his subsistence for the benefit of the employer, i.e. surplus value. This is because bourgeois economics sees the sale of labour-power as the sale of labour, thus obscuring the fact that the wage represents the cost of producing the labour-power in the first place. This conceptual obfuscation of the real object of the transaction between the labourer and the capitalist is directly responsible for the obscurity of the fact that labour is expended on the production of the worker's labour-power before he even enters into the bargain with the employer. The labour expended on the production of labour-power is that performed by women in the home. A certain portion of the wage is spent on commodities essential to life (housing, food, clothing, etc.), but then these commodities have to be transformed by the labour of the housewife (cleaning, cooking, laundry, etc.). Thus through the labour that the housewife expends on the commodities necessary for maintaining the worker's life as well as her own life so that she can continue to perform her reproductive function, domestic labour becomes a part of the mass of past labour congealed in labour-power. Domestic labour creates value (both use-value and exchange-value) when the labourer enters into the labour market in order to exchange his labour-power for the means of subsistence, thus renewing the cycle. The value the domestic labourer creates is equivalent to the "production costs" of her own maintenance. Thus domestic labour performed by women is an integral part of the market production basis of capitalist society. "... behind every factory, behind every school, behind every office or mine is the hidden work of millions of women who have consumed their life, their labour-power, in producing the labour-power that works that factory, school, office or mine."^{2 1}

The non-recognition of domestic labour derives from an examination of two consequences that flow from the indirect relation of domestic labour with the creation of surplus value — that *raison d'être* of capitalism: the privatization and the technologically and economically backward nature of labour performed in the home. Because domestic labour does not contribute directly to the creation of surplus-value, it is not seen as real labour and thus appears to have no value in monetary terms, receiving no direct remuneration. The subsistence of the worker's family is

considered as an integral part of the wage and the wife is entirely dependent on the goodwill of her husband to give her part of his paypacket for the purchase of the commodities necessary for their combined existence. His earning of the wage in productive labour gives the husband (or father) the authority to control its use. The "unreal" quality of domestic labour has a dialectical relationship with the mystification of the wage system. The belief that the worker sells his labour rather than his *labour-power*, combines with the hidden nature of domestic labour (performed within the home, out of sight) in the reproduction of that *labour-power*, and contributes to the endurance of the mystification of the wage system. Similarly, because of the apparently indirect relation of domestic labour to capitalism and the production of value, this sphere of labour has remained more or less unaffected by the increasing rationalization and technical efficiency of industry. In industrial production any increase in productivity per man-hour creates a proportional amount of surplus-value, and thus an effort to raise productivity is an imperative for the expansion of capital, expansion being the sine qua non of the system. It is not so in the home where the organization of labour remains relatively unchanged and technological development in the form of "labour-saving" appliances tend to intensify and diversify the scope of housework, if it is the woman's sole occupation – in accordance with the well-known "Peter Principle".

The separation of labour into a domestic and an industrial sphere, the former reproducing the labour-power required by the latter, is the social basis upon which capitalism is built. In pre-capitalist social formations the family was organized as a self-sufficient economic unit in which production and consumption were undifferentiated. The sexual division of labour was determined by concrete activity rather than by specific roles in a market mechanism. Both men and women produced for immediate consumption as well as a surplus for exchange. Women were not confined to a role of reproduction as opposed to production as is the case in the capitalist model, but were engaged in production in a much more important way inasmuch as their production was of a secondary, more advanced nature: women tended to take the tasks that converted raw materials into finished products, such as spinning and weaving. It was activities of this kind that produced a surplus for the social unit. The assumption of these very manufacturing tasks by nascent industry at the beginning of the industrial revolution simultaneously deprived women of their status as producers. The development of capitalism was predicated on the destruction of these economically self-sufficient units, so that the population of labourers had to rely on the sale of the only commodity they had left to sell – their labour-power. Their dependence on wage-labour led to a split in the hitherto united complex of production and consumption. The men now spent their labour-power in the production of surplus, while women henceforth became confined to the sphere of consumption in the role of reproducers of labour-power. At the same time, we see a hardening of the ideology which prescribes roles and functions

according to gender and the categorization of certain tasks as “women’s work” with increasingly pejorative overtones. The role of women as consumers, the apotheosis of which Betty Friedan describes in *The Feminine Mystique*, is yet another reason for the devaluation of domestic labour whilst at the same time it serves to reinforce the isolated and privatized nature of women’s activity.

The large component of unproductive labour in domestic work (that is, labour not contributing directly to the creation of surplus-value) has an important consequence when women become part of the general work-force. The dominant ideological model for sex-determined functions in capitalist society places women in non-productive situations in the home. In reality, a large number of women do work outside the home.* With the development of technology and its profitable application to the unproductive labour performed in the home, many women are drawn into social labour in the service areas, which cater for the needs of a society in which the increasing standards of luxury expand consumption.

The ambivalent nature of women’s participation in the work-force ensures that their work is generally accorded a low status and low reward while they constitute a large proportion of the unskilled and part-time workforce.* The unreal quality of domestic labour, the dependence on the husband’s wage and the isolation of the nuclear-style home render women’s unemployment invisible, thus cushioning the impact of capitalist crises.

This point leads us on to ask why the nuclear family and women’s privatized domestic labour persists in advanced capitalism — at least so far as it is the ideological norm. Women’s role in cushioning capitalist crises is one, but also, in their domestic labouring capacity, women bear the brunt of the hardship felt by the proletariat during economic recessions. The quantity and quality of the means of subsistence required for the reproduction of labour power remains more or less constant, while the ability of the wage to purchase the necessary commodities is sometimes inadequate. In this situation the woman is required to work harder in order to close the gap between the inadequate wage and the needs of the reproduction of her husband’s labour-power. She meets these needs by producing commodities herself that she would formerly have bought. In fact, it could be argued that the domestic labour of women keeps the minimum wage to a level below the actual amount necessary to the subsistence of the working class and thus contributes to an increase of the surplus-value. This is also one reason why the socialization of

* See Appendix, Table 1, 8 and 9

*See Appendix, Table 2

childcare and housework has been unattractive to capitalism despite the potential increase in consumption and surplus-value resulting from the routine participation of all women in the labour market, because these benefits would be offset by the increase in the subsistence level and hence the value of labour-power.

The pressure felt by housewives when there is a reduction in the real buying-power of wages and their role in the reproduction of their husbands' labour-power also works in capital's favour in another way. During industrial disputes women suffer from the cessation of the husband's wage much more directly since the onus is upon them to maintain the house and family. Thus women have an interest in short-term solutions to disputes between workers and employers as against the long-term strategies of the unions. Women can play a conservative and compromising role which ultimately acts in capitalism's favour. The dependence of the workers' has always been encouraged by bourgeois ideology which sets great store by family values and domestic virtues, an ideology that has its unwitting counterpart in proletarian sexism: to be able to say that one's wife has no need to work is a mark of status and success in many capitalist societies.

In a footnote to his article, "The Housewife and her Labour under Capitalism," Wally Secombe claims that the housewife is intensely *oppressed* within the nuclear family under capitalism but that she is not *exploited*. She is not exploited because, according to Secombe, "surplus value is not extracted from her labour".²² However, as we have seen, domestic labour is variable in terms of intensity and duration, and any amount of labour extracted over and above that needed for the minimum of maintenance and reproduction of the husband's labour-power could be seen as surplus-value accruing to the husband in terms of increased leisure, or savings on commodity purchase, or to the capitalist in terms of lowering the minimum subsistence level and increasing the productivity of the labourer. Moreover, if the woman is in a position to seek outside work, if then the wages she earns represent the minimum amount necessary to maintain and reproduce her labour-power, then this sum can be subtracted from her husband's wage which was formerly calculated to represent the minimum amount necessary to reproduce both his and her labour-power. Thus, although the woman still reproduces her husband's labour-power (now she works twice as hard, a sixteen hour day) his wage can no longer reflect her dependency. The result is a general depression of the minimum wage and an increase of surplus-value. In fact, male hostility to women's entry into the labour-market often derives from a recognition of this potential threat, it being known that the low pay of women lowers the pay of all workers generally. At the same time it is a standard argument that women should be paid less because the ideological norm maintains that women have no one to support apart from themselves, while men are regarded as the bread-winners of whole families. But whatever hard-won value the working-woman's wage adds to the family budget is offset by the additional expenditure involved in the necessary consumption of additional commodities. If the woman is

out of the house all day, it is inevitable that more pre-packaged, ready-cooked food, more off-the-hook clothing more disposable items are going to make up for the time and energy consumed in work outside that would otherwise have been spent making these items in the traditional way. The coincidence of the expansion of take-away food establishments and the augmentation of the female work-force has been frequently cited as an illustration of this tendency.

Having examined the function that the capitalist ideology and mode of production requires of women we are now in a position to see why this ideology persists even though the reality is frequently quite different. The ideology of women's reproductive role is evident in an abundance of discriminatory practices based upon the assumption that women are dependents and economically non-productive. The most readily observable of these practices are those codified in the legal apparatus where laws governing property ownership, taxation, social security, financial contracts, etc., make separate provisions for men and women and for married and unmarried women. Moreover, the power of the ideology is such that it often contradicts its own legal provisions in the attempt to enforce conformity with the sex-role stereotypes. For example, if a woman decides to live with a man, even if she does not marry him, she is regarded as his dependent and loses her right to claim unemployment benefits, supporting mother's allowances and so on. In fact, the position of the state as regards the single adult woman is that of a father or husband: it assumes responsibility for the woman only so long as there is no man available to do so. Even though in reality a large proportion of married women participate in the work-force, the ideology which recognizes only their reproductive role begets all kinds of "disincentives" in the form of low wages, poor conditions, dull, repetitive and trivial work, discriminatory taxation measures, official reluctance to aid childcare schemes, and the disallowance of childcare costs as a deductible claim from income tax although childcare is nearly always a necessary expenditure incurred in the earning of an income. The fact that there is such a contradiction between the actual conditions and the official version of reality in itself indicates the existence of an ideology operating as we defined it above, as "systematically distorted knowledge . . . the distortion being affected (in general) by the structures of interests and values underlying the activities of groups producing *and* consuming knowledge."^{2 3}

Now we must turn to the second aspect of the reproduction of the forces of production to which women make an essential contribution.

The Reproduction of Labour-Power (ii)

Women are not only required to reproduce the forces of production by servicing labour-power for the present, but also by reproducing labour-power for the future. This function has two aspects: biological reproduction and cognitive, or ideological reproduction.

It is in maternity that women achieve their physiological destiny, but as de Beauvoir states, it is no longer necessarily an inevitable social destiny. However, bourgeois ideology would like to have it that maternity is woman's "natural" vocation. The struggle between the state and the women's movement has been most intense around the issue of women to control their own fertility. In France, the movement was first centred around the debate on abortion which culminated with the act to provide legal pregnancy terminations in November 1974. At the present moment, in Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and the U.S.A. to mention only a few countries, there is increasing pressure from the ruling classes to regain a measure of control over the reproductive capacity of women which had been ceded earlier through the liberalization of abortion laws. It is significant that these laws coincided with fears about global overpopulation, and that now that there is a recurrence of ideas resembling those of the "race-suicide" type, in the form of anxiety about the falling birth-rate in Western countries versus the increase in third world countries, there are moves to reduce women's control over their fertility.

The reproductive capacity of women has always been the fundamental factor governing their social and political status ever since the discovery of the idea of paternity. As Eva Figs put it:

Once a man knows that there is a physical link between himself and the child in his woman's womb, that, provided no other man has been allowed to impregnate his woman, the child will definitely be his, a continuation of himself, all kinds of things become possible. The idea of a personal continuity is born, if man can only control his woman he becomes, in a sense, immortal. Power and property can be passed down through his sons and so clutched beyond the grave. By playing down the all-important role that woman plays in procreation, by regarding her as a mere vessel in which he plants his seed, man discovers and exploits a new sense of power, a new domination over his environment.²⁴

The lack of status, the lack of autonomy and the confinement that women have suffered through the centuries and continue to suffer derive directly from the desire of men to control or "colonize" women's wombs: the devices invented to secure this control have been numerous, from the mental controls of religious and secular taboos to the modern ideology of the "feminine mystique". These mental controls have always been supported by physical controls, from the practise of infibulation, chastity belts, purdah, ostracization of adulteresses, the victimization of bastards to the capital punishment meted out to abortionists. In contemporary bourgeois society, the controls exercised by the state apparatuses over women's fertility are not so crude as in earlier and less advanced social formations, but nevertheless still exist. Apart from the pervasive and persuasive ideological encouragement to become mothers, the low-paid, monotonous and future-less jobs that are the lot of the majority of young women workers make marriage and maternity seem an attractive escape. Moreover, the economic inducement to maternity within marriage as the norm is reinforced by the economic hardship and moral obloquy imposed on women who voluntarily or unwillingly give birth out of wedlock.

The issue of the control of reproduction has been a centre of contention since the early stages of capitalism when Malthus calculated in 1798 that there was a natural and inevitable tendency for population to outstrip all possible means of subsistence. Malthus worked out that while the amount of cultivatable land in the world increased arithmetically, the population that depends upon that land for subsistence, increases geometrically. Malthus's arguments are still effective nearly two centuries after he formulated them, as can be seen by the dire predictions of the Club Of Rome. His only hope for a solution to the dilemma was that the poor would exercise "moral restraint" by marrying late and refraining from procreation. Malthus's ideas were taken up by both socialists and capitalists, so that within both factions the issue of birth control involved bitter internecine disputes. Capitalist ideologues maintained that on the one hand unchecked procreation amongst the working class would create a competition for jobs and thus keep the level of wages down and create a climate of disunity among the proletariat which would inhibit political action. On the other hand, it was argued that the poverty and misery engendered by uncontrolled expansion amongst the lower classes would inevitably politicize them and allow them to realize their revolutionary potential. To this argument was added that of the eugenicists who became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century in association with social Darwinism. They maintained that people of the lower classes and foreigners were breeding at a faster rate than their own classes and nationalities and that they would inevitably become swamped in a debased and polluted strain of mankind. The socialists were similarly split on the issue of birth control. One faction, responding to the "Malthusianism" (used in a pejorative sense) of the ruling class regarded birth control as a capitalist means of weakening the working class and keeping them under control. The other faction saw the overpopulation amongst the poor as the weakening factor, preventing any militancy by keeping the workers preoccupied with the day to day struggle for the basic means of subsistence. But the fact remains that it was always those on the side of the proletariat who did anything practical in the way of disseminating contraceptive information to working class women. Even so, the argument on both sides seldom considered that what was at issue was women's right to choose whether or not they wanted to have children and in what manner and with whom. The question was always debated with little regard for women's individuality or humanity. The impression is rather of women being an extension of their wombs rather than their capacity for maternity being an attribute of their human-ness. The situation has always been, and remains as Germaine Greer expressed it: "between the extremes stands the individual woman, whose womb has become a vehicle of government policy."²⁵ The liberalization of abortion laws and the increased availability of contraception in the last few years have masked the control that the ruling class still exercises over women's bodies. At the time a stabilization of population growth and an increase in sexual "permissiveness" coincided with (or at least, did not contravene) state policies. But the maintenance of the control over women's reproductive capacities by the state is evident in its reluctance to cede any of the long-term contraceptive measures such as free vasectomies or tubal

ligations on demand.

The childbearing capacity of women is a fact that Marxist-feminists have had difficulty in assimilating into a world-view that seeks to eliminate inequalities between social groups. But the fact remains that only women can bear children, only women have that particular reproductive power and as a consequence there are special needs and issues which have a unique relevance to women irrespective of the prevailing social conditions. For instance, the rights of maternity leave, maternity sick pay, maternity benefits and health care are rights that women should have on the grounds of their unique reproductive power. This does not mean that this unique power should be considered as something that should exclude women from all other spheres of social existence either as a compensation or a justification, (a trap that the earlier feminist movement at the turn of the century fell into), but that because it is a uniquely female power, its control should be in women's hands. It is this power that men have attempted to control by the creation of all kinds of social restrictions and customs, not only in order to determine wider population goals, but also to ensure the transfer of property to legitimate (i.e. the father's) offspring.

That women's fertility is controlled by the state is as evident in the restrictions on abortion in western countries as it is in the blackmail of underdeveloped countries by the developed states to lower their birth rates by any means including compulsory sterilization, or face a curtailment of aid. Behind the blandishments and the abstract language of international negotiation is the threat that Third World women will only be mothers on pain of starvation. The situation in capitalist countries is as Benoitte Groult expresses it; quoting a speech by Jean Taittinger during the 1973 abortion debate in France: "Tous les jours, depuis des dizaines d'années, mille femmes ont avorté dans l'angoisse et l'illegalité et tous les jours, une de ces mille femmes en est morte. Comme en 1795, il faut être mère sous peine de mort."²⁶ Groult also recognizes that the issue is not so much the availability of contraception or abortion but the right of women to choose whether or not to have children. She finds that the fundamental principle at stake is that men fear that they will no longer be masters. She quotes a reformist deputy, Jacques Médecin who said: "Je ne peux admettre que l'idée que la loi fasse de la mère la seule et unique responsable des enfants à naître" and then proceeds to castigate this admission with devastating irony:

Quand on sait de quelle façon depuis des siècles tant de pères ont fui leurs responsabilités, quand on connaît le sort qu'ils ont réservé à leurs bâtards dont on aurait pu croire qu'ils étaient nés par parthénogénèse, quand on apprend que presque un père divorcé sur deux ne verse pas la pension alimentaire de ses enfants, on a envie de rire en écoutant M. Jacques Médecin. Ou de pleurer.²⁷

In many ways, then, women's capacity for reproduction is the complement of men's labour-power in that it is a capacity of an individual which becomes the property of others and appears as something alien and hostile. Just as men's labour-power is alienated from them when they

sell it to capital, so women's reproductive power is alienated from them when the control of it is exercised by others, whether it be an individual man or the state. Women are exploited for their reproductive power just as men are exploited for their labour-power. This fact is expressed most crudely in the official exhortations to women to bear children for the sake of national defence, or to administer the colonies as when in 1935 Neville Chamberlain fulminated against the day when "the British Empire will be crying out for more citizens of the right breed, and when we in this country shall not be able to supply the demand,"²⁸ or when in March 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt condemned the widespread use of birth control by married couples saying that it was a sign of moral disease. Like other race suicide alarmists he specifically attacked women, branding those who avoided having children "criminal against the race . . . [they] should be the object of contemptuous abhorrence by healthy people."²⁹ The official promotion of maternity in Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and in the Soviet Union are too well known to comment upon. Less crude, although possibly more effective is the persuasion of the socialization to which women and men are exposed from childhood that prepares them for the inevitable social fulfilment of parenthood. From their first doll and their early initiation into the drudgery of housework to their education which even in the last decade explicitly attempted to prepare girls for marriage and motherhood, women are conditioned to believe implicitly that it is right, proper and "natural" for a woman to find fulfilment in giving birth to children. The whole ideology which derives from the sexual division of labour and which dictates the categories of "masculine" and "feminine" reinforces the idea that maternity is the supreme and exclusive purpose of a woman's life. It has elevated something that is a specific attribute of women into a single, universal and obligatory duty.

The Reproduction of Labour-Power (iii)

So far we have examined the role of women in the material reproduction of the forces of production, i.e. labour-power, (i) by the servicing of present labour-power, and (ii) by the physical reproduction of the next generation of workers. Now we must turn to the third aspect of the reproduction of the forces of production: the ideological formation of labour-power.

In his essay, "Ideology and the State", Louis Althusser recognized that in addition to the material requisites of labour-power, it must also be reproduced ideologically in order to acquire the necessary skills and demeanour to perform the various tasks allotted in the structure of productive relations:

. . . it is not enough to ensure for labour power the material conditions of its reproduction if it is to be reproduced as labour-power. I have said that the available labour power must be "competent", i.e. suitable to be set to work in the complex system of the process of production. The development of the productive forces and the type of unity historically constitutive of the productive forces at a given moment produce the result that the labour-power has to be (diversely) skilled and therefore reproduced as such. Diversely: according to

the requirements of the socio-technical division of labour, its different "jobs" and "posts".³⁰

These skills are increasingly provided for outside the strict confines of production. Where, formerly, training was received at the actual work-site, the house for women, the factory floor for male apprentices, the office for future administrators, now these functions are increasingly being taken over by the education system and other institutions. But more important than the actual "know-how" instilled in future workers and administrators by the education system is the teaching of correct behaviour and language according to the particular niche in the hierarchy that the student is destined to occupy. As Althusser says:

... the reproduction of labour-power requires ... at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class "in words".³¹

With respect to women, the applications of this view are obvious. The role women are destined to play in the structure of the relations of production is that of reproduction, as we have already seen, and it is for this role that their educative experience prepares them. This experience begins even before the actual entry into formal education. Apart from all the behavioural and temperamental conditioning that determine the individual's adherence to one or other of the sex-defined categories, little girls are educated from an early age in the skills of reproduction. They are given dolls to play with allowing them to practise their future maternal roles; if they have younger brothers or sisters they are often asked to assist with the tasks involved in feeding, cleaning or minding them. Both her sex and her confinement in the house make it more certain that the little girl will be obliged to help with the housework – sweeping, dusting, peeling potatoes and so on – that her brother would be excused.

This pre-school training of girls for their future function in the reproduction of labour-power continues within the education system, but it takes on a more negative aspect in that women are discouraged from learning the skills of production that will be the province of boys. The history of women's struggle for equal educational opportunities is in itself instructive: the right of women to education was a frequent theme of early feminists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and has been central to feminist claims as late as the 1930's when we see Virginia Woolf demanding the same rights that Mary Wollstonecraft had demanded one and a half centuries earlier. It is also significant that the first practical achievements of the women's education demands were the industrial training of working class women and the training for charity work of middle class women. At the present moment, it appears that superficially, at least, women have achieved equality in educational opportunities, but a closer examination shows that in fact the overall effect of education is still to provide for a division of labour

according to sex. Arguments are still heard in favour of the functional orientation of girls' education that would teach them "social graces", housecraft, cooking, needlework and mothercraft, and although these arguments are no longer fashionable there is still a prevalent, if unspoken assumption among teachers, educational administrators and the general society alike that women are destined to become wives and mothers. It is quite common, for example to hear people advocating the restriction of women's entry into the schools for training exclusive professionals like doctors and lawyers on these grounds. This general assumption affects children throughout their educative experience and has the result of a marked differentiation of attainment among boys and girls. Figures show that despite equal (and often higher) academic achievement of women throughout the education system where they compete with men, yet the higher up the education "ladder", the fewer the number of women participating. Thus, in Great Britain for example, it appears that although the number of boys and girls entering for 'O' Level exams was identical, and the performance of girls was slightly better, they were nevertheless less inclined to proceed to 'A' Levels than boys:

Percentage of all leavers gaining GCE passes

	Boys	Girls	
3 or more 'O' Level passes	28	29	
5 or more 'O' Level passes	21	22	
2 or more 'A' Level passes	13	9	
3 or more 'A' Level passes	9	6	32

As the table shows, at the higher level of secondary education, there is a clear difference between the sexes. It appears that more boys than girls achieve 'A' Level passes. This is not due to a higher failure rate among girls, but is rather the result of the tendency of fewer girls to enter fewer subjects. Despite their slightly better results, more girls left school before the age of eighteen than did boys (14% v. 12%). Moreover, girls tend to attempt fewer subjects because they are advised to or because they feel incapable of doing more.

When it comes to higher education we find that the tendency for women to be sifted out of the areas of higher attainment is more pronounced: in 1969-70, 19% of boys compared with 23% of girls leaving school went on to full-time further or higher education. However, more than half of these girls went into colleges of higher education to take mostly short-term, low-level courses such as short-hand and typing, catering and book-keeping. In contrast, only one in six boys are to be found in these lower status institutions. Among those doing part-time further education we find 38% of boys attending part-time courses as against only 12% of girls. This is partly because employers are much more likely to give boys time off work for part-time study

than they are girls. It is inevitable that in these circumstances something like 85% of women in the work-force have no job skills. Perhaps the most instructive figures are those which show that only 5% of girls are apprenticed on leaving school and of these 90% chose hairdressing. However, in 1977, the average wage for qualified women hairdressers was £29.80, around two thirds of the average female wage.³³

The same pattern of under-achievement is repeated at university level: in 1970, 30% of undergraduates were women, 16% of postgraduates, 9% of university teachers and 1% of professors were women. At no time do women show an inferior standard of academic achievement, nor are there any formal impediments to achievement. These British figures are echoed in France where the number of boys (including apprentices) between 14 and 18 who are undertaking full-time education is greater than that of girls of a similar age. In post secondary education it appears that girls choose courses of shorter duration (48% of students in 3-year courses and 57% in 2-year courses are girls).*

All this is evidence in support of Althusser's thesis that the education fits children for their future roles in society by determining the distance that they go in their studies and the quality and content of their learning. Perhaps the most convincing evidence of the way in which this system operates to determine the positions of men and women vis à vis the productive apparatus is the way in which boys are channelled towards the productive "know-how" of mathematics and science, while girls are channelled towards the arts and humanities.* It almost goes without saying that mathematics and science are the avenues to power and prosperity in this society where most of the top professions require a mathematical background. From an early age girls are found to score better in tests of verbal ability while boys are better at numeracy. It seems that this is a result of a combination of factors which are environmentally determined and ultimately derive from the ideological sexual role models. Peer group pressure and teacher expectations both spring from assumptions about the innate capacities of the female. Mathematical ability is generally considered in some way "unfeminine", their competition with men is seen paradoxically as hopeless and destructive of their chances of being sexually attractive to their male competitors. Women who are slow maths learners are excused on the grounds that they don't have a "mathematical mind" instead of being encouraged by remedial tutoring. The result of this coordinated discouragement is that many women are unprepared for the mathematical calculations involved in the sciences. Figures from Great Britain show that in the mid sixties only 25% of girls who passed in two or more 'A' Levels did so in science subjects alone,

*See Appendix, Tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

*See Appendix, Table 7

compared with 66% who passed in arts subjects only. On the other hand, 57% of boys passed in science subjects compared with 38% who restricted themselves to the arts. In 1970 more than four times as many boys as girls took 'O' Levels in Physics and nearly three times as many took 'O' Level chemistry.³⁴ These figures become significant when one considers the fact that it is easier to get university places in pure or applied sciences than in arts or social sciences. In an article entitled "Math Anxiety", Sheila Tobias underlines the significance of women's mathematical "anxiety" which she claims has a disproportionate effect on "females and racial minorities of both sexes".

Of the entering class at Berkeley in 1973, Sells reported 57 per cent of the males brought with them four years of high school math, but only 8 per cent of the entering females had the same preparation. Thus, 92% of the women in the first-year class were not even eligible to take any calculus or intermediate level statistic course. Moreover, all but five of the twenty majors at Berkeley in the early 1970's required either calculus or statistics. Women, then, were crowding themselves into the remaining five fields (the humanities, music, social work, elementary education, guidance and counselling), not only because of sex-role socialisation but because of math avoidance.³⁵

The curtailment of educational opportunities for women, the channelling of women away from the "know-how" applicable to the productive sphere ensure that women are confined to the function of reproduction which is what society requires of them. It also ensures, partly as an added inducement to remain in the reproductive sector, that women who enter the workforce are confined to low-pay, low-status and low-skilled jobs. In other words, the educational apparatus serves to reproduce those skills in women necessary for their function in the productive process.

THE REPRODUCTION OF THE RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

(i) Ideology

So far I have been dealing with the reproduction of the forces of production; now we must turn to the consideration of the relations of production. We have examined the function of women's oppression within the capitalist system of production, where women are typecast into reproducers of labour-power outside the immediate domain of production. We have seen how, despite the large number of women engaged in paid employment, the dominant social definition of woman is as a wife and mother. This definition and its material practice gives us a scheme where, in the continual process of production and reproduction of the forces of production in the form of labour-power, we have three different modes of relating to that labour-power: (i) the possession of it by the labourer as a commodity, (ii) the exploitation of it by anyone with the capital to purchase it, and (iii) the reproduction of it for resale. These relationships are the relations of production. It is the relations of production that define the function and hence status of each group within society. To maintain the existing class structure the existing relations of production have to be maintained. To understand this is to understand why the oppression of women persists, and to understand both we must turn to an examination of the State, because it is the function of the State to maintain the prevailing class structure.

In the "Ideology and the State" Althusser evokes the Marxist classics of *The Communist Manifesto* and the *Eighteenth Brumaire* to support the notion that the State is in the last resort a "machine of repression" which functions to maintain the domination of the ruling class and the subjection of the working class. To Althusser's analysis it is necessary to add that the State also serves to maintain the existing social relations between the sexes, which, as we have seen, are ultimately based on the economic premises of production and reproduction. The repressive State apparatus of the police, the courts, the prisons and so on, backed up in the final instance by the military serves equally well to maintain class relations as it does to maintain the social relations between the sexes, as any women who have posed a serious threat to the sexual status quo have learned at their cost. As recently as 1943, Mme Giraud, a laundress was guillotined in France for performing abortions, while the small number of rape victims who attain a conviction against their aggressors testifies to the bias of the judicial apparatus in such cases. Kate Millet underlined the repressive nature of the patriarchal state when she remarked that "the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance — in short, every avenue of power within society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely within male hands."³⁶ The crucial concept is that of *power*. Althusser makes the important distinction

between the State apparatus and State power: the State apparatus may (and has historically) survive the transfer of State power from one class to another. It is the power rather than the apparatus of the state which is the object of class struggle. Althusser makes this distinction in order to propose an analysis of something that classical Marxism has hitherto neglected to systematize. Having differentiated between State power and State apparatus, he now sees that State apparatus as consisting of two distinguishable but ultimately interdependent aspects: the (repressive) State apparatus and the Ideological State apparatuses. The State apparatus is, as we have seen, composed of the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, etc. Under the category of the Ideological State apparatuses, Althusser lists a number of institutions which he names as:

- the religious ISA (the system of different churches),
- the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private "Schools"),
- the family ISA,
- the legal ISA,
- the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties),
- the trade-union ISA,
- the communications ISA (press, radio, television, etc.),
- the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.).³⁷

To these Ideological State apparatuses I would add the ISA of psychiatry, which, as radical psychiatrists like Thomas Szasz, R.D. Laing and David Cooper have shown, is frequently used as potent means of obtaining ideological consensus. Its application to women has been documented by Phyllis Chesler in her *Women and Madness*: where persuasion fails, coercion and restraint take over.

There are a number of factors which distinguish the Ideological State apparatuses (ISA's for short) from the (repressive) State apparatus: whereas the latter is unified by a direct relationship to the ruling class, i.e. the class possessing state power, the former are a plurality whose unity is not immediately visible. This gives rise to the observation that the ISA's are predominantly in the private sector while the State apparatus is quite obviously in the public sector. That the ISA's nevertheless function as agents of the State is possible because of an identity of interest between the two sectors: the ruling ideology is the ideology of the ruling class. The third distinction that Althusser makes is this: that the Repressive State apparatus functions predominantly by violence, while the Ideological State apparatuses function predominantly through ideology. Both, however contain elements of each other in that the repressive State apparatus needs to have a functional ideology to maintain cohesion and continuity, while the ISA's contain elements of violence evident in punishment, excommunication, censorship, etc. It is this mutual participation in each other's "methodology" which provides a pattern of mutual support and interaction between the State apparatus and the ISA's. In the light of this interaction it becomes clear in what lies the unity behind the diversity of the various ISA's:

If the ISA's "function" massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, *beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of 'the ruling class'.³⁸

It is self-evident that there will be an identity of interest between those who control the repressive State apparatus and those who control the ISA's since both apparatuses are the means by which the ruling class holds the power of the State. Control of both kinds of apparatus is a necessary condition for retaining control over the society as a whole. Althusser states with emphasis that, to his knowledge "no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses."³⁹ The truth of this is born out by the banal but nevertheless apposite observation that in cases of military coups, where the rebels control the ultimate guarantee of the repressive State apparatus, namely the military, the primary object of contention is invariably the means of communication, radio, television, telecommunications networks, etc. It is only a small step from here to the conclusion that Althusser makes to the effect that "the Ideological State Apparatuses may not only be the *stake*, but also the *site* of the class struggle, and often of bitter forms of class struggle."⁴⁰ To support this important contention, he quotes Marx's statement from the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, to the effect that it is necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production and "the ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out."⁴¹ This is a significant statement not only because it establishes a common ground between Althusser and the Marxist humanists he so forcefully decries, but because it makes explicit Marx's imprimatur to the so-called superstructural issues that vulgar Marxists condemn. It makes intelligible the importance placed by all oppressed groups on the influence of education, religion, literature, cinema, the media, etc., on the success or failure of their struggle for liberation. In terms of the feminist offensive, this idea renders coherent all the isolated challenges to the male hegemony in education, the law, the media, the trade-unions and the literary world of publishing and criticism, whilst at the same time maintaining a perspective on the economic origins of the whole issue.

Having posited the existence of these Ideological State apparatuses as agents of the class that controls the State power, related to, though differentiated from the Repressive State apparatus, Althusser then goes on to ask what their function is and what makes them so important. The answer is, of course, that their function is to reproduce the relations of production. The reproduction of the relations of production is, according to Althusser, secured by the legopolitical and ideological superstructure: "for the most part, it is secured by the exercise of State Power in the State Apparatuses, on the one hand the (Repressive) State Apparatus, on the other the Ideological State Apparatuses."⁴² The repressive State apparatus has the task of securing the conditions necessary for the operation of the ISA's, so that the latter can act behind the

shield of the former, rather as the forces whose task is to secure "the hearts and minds", to use the jargon of Viet Nam, follow in the wake of the forces of "pacification". The repressive State apparatus establishes and maintains the relations of production by force, while the ideological state apparatuses follow, justifying that situation and making it seem not only right, but also "natural".

The most important of the ISA's in Althusser's opinion is the education system, because, under capitalism education is universal and compulsory. It teaches values of submission to authority, civic responsibility, nationalism, etc., (besides the appropriate skills of each sector of the division of labour) that contribute to the continued rule of society by a powerful minority. It takes children of every class from an early age and teaches them the "know-how" required by an increasingly technical mode of production combined with the ruling-class ideology. At periodic intervals, groups are ejected from the education system with the appropriate "know-how" and ideology to suit the position they are to occupy in the exploitative hierarchy. Althusser believes that school has replaced the Church as the chief ideological State apparatus. In economic social formations preceding capitalism, the Church incorporated the educational and cultural ideological functions now appropriated by the school. But both the Church in pre-capitalist formations and the school in our epoch are linked to the family, because it is the family that has always had the role of primary socialization. But before we proceed to examine the function of the family as an ideological State apparatus, the importance of which Althusser underestimates, we must briefly examine the particular way in which he conceives the idea of ideology.

For Althusser, ideology is almost coextensive in meaning with "reality". Ideology corresponds to the way we experience the world and interpret it. In his essay "Marxism and Humanism", he defines ideology as "a system (with its own logic and rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society."⁴³ Ideologies have the function of integrating and unifying the disparate elements of society, giving the members the idea of the totality of their social formation in history.

So ideology is as such an organic part of every social totality. It is as if human societies could not survive without these specific formations, these systems of representations (at various levels), their ideologies. Human societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration and life.⁴⁴

Ideology is the way in which people "live" their world; it informs their perception of the world in all its facets. It is a kind of unconscious structuring of consciousness. In fact Althusser uses Freud's theory of the unconscious as an analogy for his idea of ideology, in that both are eternal in the sense that they are trans-historical. It is this that leads him to distinguish between

ideologies and ideology (the theory) in general. Ideologies have a history because they are products of historical circumstance, for example, the German ideology criticized by Marx and Engels.

Ideology in general is a "representation" of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. In the formulation of this thesis Althusser sharply differentiates his position from that of Feuerbach and the early Marx of *The 1844 Mss* and *The Jewish Question*. Feuerbach and the young Marx held that ideology was the representation of the real conditions of existence in imaginary form made necessary by the material alienation which prevailed in society. Contrary to this view, Althusser claims that "it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relations to these conditions of existence which is represented to them there."⁴⁵ This is also the basis for his radical differentiation of science from ideology, science being that aspect of knowledge which deals with the real conditions of existence. Thus his scorn for the "humanists" who follow the young Marx, whose theories are necessarily ideological rather than scientific (like his own) because they deal with the imaginary conditions of existence.

Althusser also believes that ideology has a material existence because it is only expressed in material actions and institutions: the Ideological State Apparatuses. Ideologies have force only so long as they are represented in ideological apparatuses which act and induce action in their subjects. Their imaginary relation to the real relations of their existence takes on a material form in specific actions, prescribed by and performed in ideological apparatuses:

The individual in question behaves in such and such a way, adopts such and such a practical attitude, and, what is more, participates in certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which 'depend' the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject. If he believes in God, he goes to Church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance (once it was material in the ordinary sense of the term) and naturally repents and so on. If he believes in Duty, he will have the corresponding attitudes, inscribed in ritual practices 'according to correct principles'. If he believes in Justice, he will submit unconditionally to the rules of the Law, and may even protest when they are violated, sign petitions, take part in a demonstration, etc.⁴⁶

Thus we have the apparently paradoxical situation where individuals act the ideology and are in Althusser's words, simultaneously acted *by* it. This is because ideologies only exist in so far as they are given material existence in actions. The relationship between an ideology and its subject is a reflective one, or as Althusser puts it, "specular". This is because, according to his central thesis, "ideology interpellates individuals as subjects."⁴⁷ Because ideology is trans-historical — as omni-present as the unconscious, we are always acting within ideology, we are always subjects, or, as Althusser expresses it, "you and I are *always already* subjects." This seems obvious, he says, but this in itself is an ideological effect:

It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognise* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'⁴⁸

This reaction is a sign of the ideological-recognition function of ideology. Its counterpart is *misrecognition*. Our identities "recognized" by others and by ourselves are collages of such recognitions. Our identity as "man" or "woman", "worker", etc. are forms of ideological recognitions. Ideology "calls" subjects and the subjects "recognize" the call as being directed at them:

... ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing . . .⁴⁹

But this interpellation presupposes the existence of a kind of platonic ideal of the ideology or Subject by which the individual subject is interpellated. Thus the Subject's interlocutors, or interpellates are the mirrors and reflections of the ideal Subject. This mutual recognition of Subject and subject creates a kind of perpetuum mobile which involves a paradox of freedom and determinism expressed in the ambiguity of the word "subject", meaning both "a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions" and "a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission."⁵⁰

This "doubly specular" nature of the relationship between ideology and individuals or subject and Subject has a number of results which Althusser summarizes as follows:

1. the interpellation of 'individuals' as subjects;
2. their subjection to the Subject;
3. the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects' recognition of each other, and finally the subject's recognition of himself;
4. the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: Amen. [ainsi soû-t-il].⁵¹

This inbuilt structure of mutual recognition ensures that having been taught the ideology by the education system, the family, or other ideological apparatuses, the subjects will "work themselves", without any interference and apparently according to their own volition. Only "bad subjects" who question the existing order, flout the prevailing ideology or refuse to answer the interpellation of the Subject, have to be dealt with by the repressive State apparatus.

The relevance to women of Althusser's theory of ideology and the State is clearly apparent. As we have seen, women have an important and well-defined role in the social structure of the relations of production. This position occupied by women is secured by all the ideological State apparatuses mentioned by Althusser, the most important ones being the education system

(which I have already dealt with) and the family, which is perhaps the material form *par excellence* in which the practices and rituals of women's inferiority are inscribed. It is significant that women's liberation has confronted each one of the ISA's on a variety of issues. Very briefly, by way of illustration rather than exposition, taking Althusser's tentative list of ISA's we can see how each contributes to the maintenance of women's position in the productive hierarchy. Feminism has attacked the religious ISA for its patriarchal, misogynist doctrines, its opposition to abortion and contraception, its support of traditional family values and its refusal to ordain women priests: the legal ISA for discriminatory legislation of all kinds as well as its virtual monopoly by men; the political ISA for lack of female representation and for discriminatory policies; the trade-union ISA for non-recognition of women's work, hostility towards women in the labour-force, and lack of enthusiasm for promoting women's issues such as maternity leave, child care facilities, etc. the communications ISA for being the most visible mediator of sexist values and stereotypes; the cultural ISA for excluding, ignoring or misrepresenting women. All these diverse ideological apparatuses are linked together by a single ideology which dictates what woman is and what her role and position should be. This ideology interpellates the individual woman as subject and she in turn recognizes herself in that ideology. There exists an ideologically constructed ideal woman which by its very nature is unattainable, but which all "good subjects" are supposed to strive for. This ideal naturally changes in accordance with changes in the fundamental structure of the relations of production — for example, from the pious, self-abnegating, maternal creature of the Victorian age, to the competent, educated, yet essentially "feminine" mother of the 1950's and 60's, to the "liberated" working mother of today — but nevertheless it always reflects the relation of women to their function of reproduction. Perhaps the most visible example of the "existence" of this ideological construct is to be found in the literature designed for women, especially weekly magazines. These have an enormous circulation and a correspondingly widespread and effective ideological impact: in England, "Woman" has a circulation of two million; the "Australian Woman's Weekly" is the largest-selling magazine per capita in the world with three million readers in a country of thirteen million; in France, publications under the heading "arts ménagers, journaux de mode, revues féminines" outsell any other category except that of "informations générales ou politiques". The content of these magazines is almost exclusively geared towards housewives and mothers, but are nevertheless read by young and single girls to whom are devoted sections on teenage fashion and pop stars, thus preparing them for their future roles. These magazines are positively oriented towards the family, enthusiastically suggesting methods for its care and maintenance. Their regular features consist of recipes, knitting and crochet patterns, home-crafts, beauty advice, child-care and home-care advice, romantic fiction, advice on medical problems and personal columns. Seldom, if ever, do these magazines which purport to deal with the interests of women feature articles in favour of abortion, equal pay, etc., issues which would seem to be of far greater importance to women. In fact, to the eye of anyone who stands outside the focus

of this ideology, the overwhelming impression of these magazines is one of stultifying trivia. Benoîte Groult points out the ideological function of these magazines when she compares the contents of women's magazines with those of men. Clearly it would seem absurd to see a man's magazine dealing with suggestions on how to make brioches, advice on how to remove sauce stains or to maintain the crease in one's trousers, or how to play with the children on Sundays, she says. The ideological ideal is to be found in the physical image to which every woman is invited to aspire, but never actually succeeds in attaining. As Groult says, men know by experience "qu'ils peuvent se permettre d'être chauves, amputés, bedonnants ou vieux, sentir la vieille pipe ou avoir le nez de Cyrano et être néanmoins aimés par la plus jolie fille du monde."^{5 2} But women on the other hand are under constant pressure to conform to the ideal of masculine desire. As soon as girls become old enough, their magazines carry advertisements that make them aware of themselves and their defects. Girls' and young women's magazines are full of advertisements for beauty aids claiming to improve on nature. The basic premise of this advertising is that the person it is aimed at should be made to feel inadequate, unsuccessful, flawed or unattractive without the particular product. Groult encapsulated the situation of women in everyday life vis à vis the ideological paradigm in her *Ainsi soit-elle*:

L'éminent Paul Guimard écrivait en 1971 dans un éditorial de *L'Express* consacré à "la Française des spots" telle que les archives télévisées pourraient la révéler à un sociologue de l'an 3000: "Voici donc les femmes de nos vies en cette deuxième moitié du XXe siècle: elles sont affligées d'innombrables disgrâces. Leurs cheveux sont secs, fourchus, cassants, fragiles. Leur peau est grasse, éruptive, à la merci du soleil comme du froid . . . Des rides ravinent prématurément leurs visages et plissent leurs cous. Les dents des femmes d'aujourd'hui s'entartrent volontiers, phénomène d'autant plus regrettable qu'il s'accompagne d'une propension à la fétidité de haleine . . . On notera que les préoccupations de ces malheureuses franchissent rarement les frontières de l'univers des détergents. Hantées par la blancheur, elles se racontent de pathétiques histoires de linge pollué, d'éviers grasseux, de sols tachés, à l'exclusion de tout autre sujet de conversation."^{5 3}

From earliest childhood women are confronted with an abstract model of perfection against which to measure themselves. A "good" girl should do this, behave thus, appear in such a manner, they are told. Later, this kind of exhortation takes the form of the "true woman", the "feminine" woman, or the "good wife". These models of perfection are always apotheoses of the role required of women in the relations of production, that is, subsidiary but supportive to men. These models or Subjects penetrate into every aspect of life, and each Ideological apparatus has an appropriate ideological ideal, sometimes positive, sometimes negative. For example, the religious ISA requires women to be pious, self-effacing, unobtrusively engaged in charitable, ministering activity, while the family ISA's model is the devoted wife and mother. Other ISA's have negative models which in effect say that "good", "true" or "real" women have no place within the pattern of rituals and practices which pertain to them. Women who do not conform to these ideological models, who do not recognize themselves as subjects when interpellated by

the Subject, are regarded as either not "true" women, (that is somehow genetically mutant, sexually inadequate or in some way damaged), or are condemned as "bad" women, whores or mistresses or lesbians who are out to corrupt society and merit intervention by the repressive State apparatus.

These ideological models operate in and determine every level of social existence, and it is their repetition from generation to generation that ensures that the position and function of men and women in the relations of production remain the same. But perhaps the most tragic or cynical aspect of the ideological reproduction of the relations of production which gives to women this undervalued, subordinate role, is the contribution that women themselves make towards its survival. In my opinion, Althusser was right in linking the family to the most important ideological apparatuses in pre-capitalist social formations, the church and the school. Nevertheless, I believe that he underestimates the importance of the family as a crucial ideological apparatus, for it is in the family that the highly significant primary socialization takes place. The conclusions of modern psychology have made it almost indisputable that the broad and fundamental patterns of personality are established during infancy. By the age of two according to some sources, five according to others, the psychological fate of a person has been determined. Certainly by the time a child enters primary school, its adaptation to the sex-role stereotypes has already been decided. And since infants are almost invariably committed to the care of their mothers or women hired to act as nursemaids, we can see the significance of women in the process of primary socialization, in the mediation of ideologies to the new members of society. Thus, the third function of women in capitalist society, after those of reproduction of the forces of production by servicing current labour-power and reproducing future labour-power, is that of ideologically reproducing the relations of production based on the sexual division of labour.

It is in the bringing up of children that, as Juliet Mitchell puts it, "woman achieves her main social definition."⁵⁴ With the profound changes brought about by the increased knowledge and use of contraception in the last two generations, with correspondingly smaller families and the intensification of the mother/child relationship, the emphasis has progressively been on the quality of upbringing of children rather than on the quantitative production of them. Consequently the impact of the primary socialization process carried out by the mother has correspondingly increased, and the concentration of the ideology of which the mother is the subject is all the stronger. For it must not be forgotten that the attitudes and values that the mother mediates to her child are the product of primary socialization in her own family and of the secondary socialization in the various other ideological apparatuses to which she has been subject. This is evident from almost the moment of birth, if not before, when preferences are expressed for a boy or a girl with all the concomitant values and assumptions based on gender. Boys are invariably valued higher in patriarchal societies, and are consequently treated with more

attentiveness and tolerance. Benoîte Groult succinctly expresses this almost involuntary depreciation of girls as against boys:

J'ai moi-même eu trois filles. Mais quand je le dis, j'ai l'impression idiote d'en avoir fait moins que si je pouvais répondre: "J'ai trois garçons." Pour trois garçons, on vous dit Aah, d'un air admiratif. Pour trois filles, ou pire pour quatre ou cinq, on vous regarde en hochant la tête: "Ah? C'est dommage . . ." Et pourtant, j'aime les filles. Et pourtant, je suis féministe et convaincre de l'égalité des sexes.^{5 5}

The depreciation of girls is evident in a mother's behaviour towards her newly born child. Groult writes that in a sample of mothers of children of both sexes, 34% of mothers who gave reasons for not breast-feeding their babies were the mothers of girls: 99% of mothers of boys breast-fed their infants. The length of this breast feeding was appreciably greater for boys: at two months forty-five minutes as against twenty-five for girls. Moreover, girls were generally weaned earlier. A study by H.A. Moss showed that at three weeks of age mothers held male infants 27 minutes more per eight hours than females: at three months, fourteen minutes longer.^{5 6} Mothers tend to stimulate and arouse males more, both by tactile and visual stimulation, and it is well known that the quality of stimulation is an important influence on personality development. It has been shown that mothers manifest a different response to signs of irritation in their babies according to whether they are male or female. Intractable irritability is in keeping with the cultural expectations of masculine behaviour, and so mothers tend to pay less attention to male infants who express irritation, thus reinforcing and encouraging aggressive, vociferous behaviour. In a study of the development of female sex-role identification Ruth Hartley suggests four processes which are essential to the transmission of gender roles to very young children: manipulation, verbal appellation, canalisation and activity exposure.^{5 7}

The first process, manipulation, is similar to that of moulding described by anthropologists in other cultures. An example of this process is the way mothers "fuss with" a little girl's hair, dress her in feminine cloths and tell her that she is a "pretty little girl", which is also an example of verbal appellation. The corollary of this verbal appellation is for example, to call a child a "naughty little boy". Both manipulation and verbal appellation have an enduring effect in constituting an individual's self-identity in which the gender differentiation component is inbuilt.

Canalisation involves directing childrens' attention to specific objects or aspects of objects. Sex-differentiated toys are a good example of objects which establish patterns of favourable and unfavourable response towards objects and activities of adult life which these represent. Thus if children have played with dolls, miniature tea sets and soft toys, then these kind of objects will have an emotional appeal in later life. In the same way mothers will tend to choose toys for their little girls of the same type that they enjoyed or coveted at the same age.

Activity exposure is the process of socialization in which children are exposed to the activities of adults which become example of behaviour to imitate. Thus, in a traditional nuclear family the mother will be observed doing the indoor domestic chores, while the father is seen to go out to work in the "outside" world. Children want to be like their parents and tend to class themselves in the same gender group as the parent, so that they try to reproduce the actions, attitudes and emotional responses exhibited by real life or symbolic models. Imitation and identification with these models are reinforced by rewards and punishments and differentiation of activities. For example, Sears, Maccoby and Levin show that even with five-year olds American mothers tend to differentiate between assigned chores. Girls are confined within the home making beds, washing dishes and laying the table; boys more often have chores which take them outside such as emptying the rubbish, mowing the lawn, etc.^{5 8} But often boys are excused chores, or are absent from the home and thus unavailable; at the same time, dirtiness and untidiness are more tolerated among boys on the grounds that "boys will be boys."

From an early age boys are encouraged to seek challenges, to strive to the limits of their capabilities. Girls on the other hand are often taught that they are incapable of meeting challenges and consequently that they should not attempt to overcome difficulties. Thus the inferiority and underachievement of girls becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This "Pygmalion" effect of the impact of expectations on performance and achievement was dramatically illustrated by an experiment conducted in a Californian school by Jacobsen and Rosenthal where the investigators took a group of children at random and told their teachers that these children were expected to make "intellectual spurts" in the near future. When these children were subsequently tested, it was found that their performance was substantially better than that of the control group.^{5 9} The tendency among girls to underachieve is evident throughout life, although it becomes more pronounced between the ages of fourteen and seventeen when there is a shift from acting adult sex roles to actually performing them. At this age achievement seems all the more in contradiction to the expectations of the future, and with the social model of the present. In an investigation into the sex differences in the socialization of adolescents (by Aileen Schoeppe) it was found that boys put more emphasis on developing qualities of autonomy and self-directiveness, while girls emphasized conformity. Ann Oakley writes that: "One American study reported that over half a sample of 163 American college women pretended to be intellectually inferior to their boyfriends, 14% very often and 43% sometimes."^{6 0} More significant is the differentiation between males and females of the relation between IQ measurements and achievement. While males who achieved high IQ scores in childhood were found to reach a high occupational level, among women there was no correlation between IQ measurement and occupational achievement. Two thirds of those women with IQ's of 170 or above were housewives or office workers.

The fundamental patterns of underachievement in later life are laid down during childhood, along with all the other aspects of sex-role identification which, as we have seen are an essential factor in the operation and maintenance of the relations of production. It is primarily through the mother that the ruling ideology reproducing the relations of production is instilled in the child. Thus the mother is responsible for the reproduction of the sexually based division in its ideological aspect not only for the present but also for the future.

It is in the process of transmitting ideology from one generation to another that it acquires an objective facticity. A child has to accept that what is transmitted to it as reality is the only, unalterable, self-evident reality. The very objectivity of this reality reflects back on the mother's apprehension of reality in a way which serves to verify the original, "doubly specular" ideology, reinforcing its obviousness. The transmission of ideology from parent to child is in itself a guarantee of its ideological authenticity.

The structure and function of the bourgeois model family are inevitably inclined towards a conservation of the existing order. As an ideological State apparatus it operates in such a way as to reproduce the existing relations of production as long as the requirements of production are thereby met. The sexual division and exploitation of women's labour will continue so long as they are ideologically confined to a subordinate and reproductive role and are charged with the primary care and socialization of infants. Berger and Luckmann, in their *Social Construction of Reality* sum up the importance of this primary socialization in providing the mental premises for life:

Since the child has no choice in the selection of his significant others, his identification with them is quasi-automatic. For the same reason, his internalization of their particular reality is quasi-inevitable. The child does not internalize the world of his significant others as one of many possible worlds. He internalizes it as *the* world, the only existent and conceivable world, the world *tout court*. It is for this reason that the world internalized in primary socialization is so much more firmly entrenched in consciousness than worlds internalized in secondary socializations. However much the original sense of inevitability may be weakened in subsequent disenchantments, the recollection of a never-to-be-repeated certainty – the certainty of the first dawn of reality – still adheres to the first world of childhood. Primary socialization thus accomplishes what (in hindsight of course) may be seen as the most important confidence trick that society plays on the individual – to make appear as necessity what is in fact a bundle of contingencies, and thus to make meaningful the accident of his birth.^{6 1}

This crucial function of mediating ideology to infants at their most impressionable and malleable age is one reason why pressures for more socialized childcare has met with so much resistance. Of all the obstacles to women's full participation in the work-force, their expected role of caring for pre-school children has been the most important. With the development of sophisticated technology capitalism increasingly requires quality in its labour-force rather than

quantity, and accordingly the importance placed on socialization and education has increased proportionately. It is argued against socialized childcare that collective socialization would reduce the spirit of competition, individualism and respect for authority. Moreover, it is claimed that adequate primary socialization requires a close and emotional relationship with at least one individual — a relationship that only a mother devoted to full-time domestic duties could fulfil. However, perhaps the most cogent argument in the capitalist's arsenal against women's liberation and socialized childcare is the economic one. It has been estimated that it would require a minimum of one adult to five children to cope adequately with pre-school children, not counting administration and subsidiary staff. The average family has a ratio of two and a half children to one woman at no additional cost.

I have tried to indicate the importance of the family as an ideological state apparatus in showing how the sexual division of labour and consequently the social relations of production founded on that division is reproduced ideologically by the mother's socialization of her children. It is a particularly cruel twist which makes women the agents of their daughter's oppression in this way. It is a theme that recurs frequently in the writing of women who are attempting to break out of their stereotyped sex roles. The bitterest conflict is nearly always between the mother and daughter as the daughter rebels against the values inculcated in her from birth by her mother, values which are by definition those which give the mother a sense of meaning, significance and worth. The examples are numerous: one thinks of the influence of the long-dead Mrs Ramsay over her children in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*; the conflict between Martha Quest and her mother in Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* series; Simone de Beauvoir's ambivalent feelings towards her mother in *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* and *Une morte très douce*. The feminist poet Robin Morgan restates this theme, but with a new understanding that there is more to the conflict than the two immediate personalities:

Who sent us to that wilderness we both now know,
although I blamed you for that house of women
too many years.⁶²

The family, then, is the institution within which are laid down many of the fundamental categories upon which much of the ideological superstructure is built — the most important being sex-roles and the patterns of authority and submission essential to a class society.

This brings us to the end of the analysis of the position and function of women in capitalist social formations. We have seen how the state, using a combination of repressive and ideological apparatuses, acts to channel women into a reproductive role: reproduction not only in the most usual sense of biological reproduction of the species, but also in the senses of the reproduction of labour-power by the servicing of present labour-power and the ideological conditioning of

future labour-power.

Althusser's analysis of ideology is directly relevant to the understanding of literary creation. This is because writers, like any other human beings in society "live" an ideology. As we have seen, ideology corresponds to the way we see the world and the way we interpret reality: it determines all our actions and thoughts. It is the unconscious structuring of unconsciousness. It is inevitable then, that ideology should be a major factor in the consideration of any literary work: not only the substance of the work — what it says just as much as what it omits to say — but also the external circumstances that determine its very existence are conditioned by ideology. Not least in the consideration of the part played by ideology in the production of literature is the fact that not only the authors are affected by the ideology which is "an organic part of every social totality" but also every other person in the productive chain from producer to consumer. The process of selection which operates on the raw manuscript, on the part of the reader, the publisher, the bookseller and eventually the public, is also conditioned to a large extent by the prevailing ideology. The consideration of the part played by ideology in the production of literature is especially important in the examination of literature written by women. When we reflect that the ideology which places women in a subordinate, dependent, reproductive position in relation to men is the ideology of those who control the means of production, and when we also observe that the means of literary production (i.e. the publishing apparatus) is also controlled by the latter, then we must concede that the prevailing ideology must have some influence on women's literature.

Furthermore, when we recall Marx's statement that "the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it",⁶³ and connect it with Althusser's assertion that cultural production, including literature, is an Ideological State apparatus, then we can surmise that there will be a conflict between the authentic artistic expression of the ruled class and the interests of the ruling class which controls the means of literary production.

Finally, when we consider that the ideology prescribes for women an economically dependent, reproductive role in society and equipped them emotionally and intellectually in accordance with this prescribed role, we must suppose that professional writing is an activity which basically conflicts with the material and ideological dictates of women's lives. For when Marx wrote that "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life", and that "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life", he was referring to individuals as much as to wider social groups. Women, as we have seen produce their material life conditions in a specific way — in the reproduction of labour-

power. It has been established that in consequence they have a different social, political and intellectual life and so it could also be inferred that they have a different consciousness. Evidence of this emerges in literature, for example, where the cultural idea of the feminine provides a source of conflict in women's literature, and suggests that this idea is an imposed, alien quality and not an intrinsic, innate attribute of femaleness. The idea of the feminine is seen by male writers as something intrinsic to the condition of being female, whereas among women writers it is seen as an attainment to aspire to, a quality to strive for. Like the advertising ideal which all women are invited to emulate, and whose pursuit guarantees the enormous circulation of women's magazines, the orientation of women writers towards the concept of the feminine in literature indicates that there is an ideological factor operating that is in conflict with reality. In other words, that there is a conflict evident in women's literature between the authentic expression of the human consciousness and the ideological dictates of the prevailing conditions of production that results in certain distortions, deflections and mutations in the expression of authentic experience. It is through the concept of literature as a productive practice that I intend to approach the question of these ideological factors which bear upon the creation of works of literature, for it is only when seen as a productive activity that all the ideological factors, both internal and external, governing literature can be understood.

ART AND LITERATURE AS PRODUCTION: MATERIAL LABOUR AND ARTISTIC LABOUR

It is well known that Marx wrote very little concerning art and literature and certainly never wrote any sustained and coherent work on aesthetics. The letter to Lassalle of April 1859 on *Franz von Sickingen* and a number of passing references to literature from Sophocles to Eugene Sue have become the slim basis for a rather top-heavy strain of Marxist literary criticism that deals with literature from the points of view of form, ideology, politics and consciousness alone. The centre of preoccupation has been the question of the relationship of literature and art to the society in which it appears, that is, to the relations of production and the mode of production of that society, and to the class identity of the author and the nature of his political commitment. Little attention has been paid, however, as Walter Benjamin pointed out, to "the function of a work *within* the literary production relations of its time."⁶⁴ Although this idea came to be recognized to some extent *in fact* by Gorki, Lunacharsky and the Commissariat for Education in the Soviet Union in September 1918 as well as by Mayakovsky and the other Futurists,⁶⁵ Benjamin's essay "The Author as Producer" appears to be the first *theoretical* account of it. More recently, the work of Pierre Macherey has developed the idea of the author as producer rather than creator, while the Mexican aesthetician Adolfo Sanchez Vazquez has dealt directly with the aesthetic implications of Marx's numerous references (particularly in the *1844 Manuscripts*) to art as a form of labour.

The close association of art and labour is most evident in Marx's early philosophical writings in which he most explicitly expresses a philosophy of man. This philosophy constitutes the ethical impulse of Marx's whole oeuvre and is present, if unstated, in the necessary form of a purpose behind all his later "scientific" writings. The concept which connects labour and art is that of objectification, the process by which man appropriates nature.

Marx conceived of man as being constituted of two different aspects which, following Feuerbach, he labelled as that of "natural man" and that of "species man". He defined these aspects of man in his critique of Hegel's *Phenomenology* at the end of the *1844 Manuscript*. Both "natural man" and "species man" are characterized by certain needs and powers appropriate to each. Powers are understood as faculties, abilities, functions or capabilities which exist at any moment but which also contain within themselves the potential for development in determinate directions. Powers achieve their material form in actions upon objects which also serve as concrete signs of the stage of progress reached in the development of those powers. "Needs" are the desire felt for objects which exist in man and animals as drives or wants.

“Needs” and “powers” complement each other in that powers are the means by which needs are fulfilled, while the existence of needs calls forth the powers to meet them into existence.

Thus “natural man” and “species man” are known and defined by their respective needs and powers. The powers associated with natural man are the basic functions of living which man shares with animals – eating, labour, procreating, and I would suppose, sleeping. Needs are the physical desires or drives towards the objects and actions which sustain life at its biological level. In fact, this attribute of natural man, that his needs direct his powers to external objects for their fulfilment, is an essential definition of man as a being:

To say that man is a *corporeal*, living, real, sensuous, objective being with natural powers means that he has *real, sensuous objects* as the object of his being and of his vital expression, or that he can only *express* his life in real, sensuous objects. To *be* objective, natural and sensuous and to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or to be oneself object, nature and sense for a third person is one and the same thing. *Hunger* is a natural *need*; it therefore requires a *nature* and an *object* outside itself in order to satisfy and still itself. Hunger is the acknowledged need of my body for an *object* which exists outside itself and which is indispensable to its integration and to the expression of its essential nature.^{6 6}

Objects are essentially the whole of nature, so that the relationship between man as an objective being and nature is one that is essential, internal and reciprocal. Man realizes himself in the objects of nature, while nature realizes itself in man, so that the exercise of man’s powers takes place as a transfer and transmutation of elements within an organic whole. Thus we can see the basis of Marx’s claim that natural science and the science of man are identical, because the history of man is the history of man’s acting on nature, and natural history has the same relationship as its object. The depth of this symbiotic relationship of man with nature is expressed in Marx’s definitive statement:

The universality of man manifests itself in practice in that the universality which makes the whole of nature his *inorganic* body (1) as a direct means of life and (2) as the matter, the object and tool of his life activity. Nature is man’s *inorganic body*, that is to say nature in so far as it is not the human body. Man *lives* from nature, i.e. nature is his *body*, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man’s physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself.^{6 7}

Since all men have this relationship with nature it follows that individuals have a reciprocal and necessary relationship with their fellow beings of the same order, thus establishing that man is essentially social. But this relationship with nature and his fellow men implies that man is also limited by nature, so far as the exercise of his powers are determined by the existence of the objects of nature, by the quality and quantity, just as his needs can only be fulfilled by those objects. In this sense Marx says that man is determined by nature. This also implies that man in “sensuous” and “suffering” in that he experiences his relationship with nature through his senses.

All the qualities that define man so far have been natural qualities, those basic mechanisms

of survival and reproduction which Marx also defines as animal and of which he says: "the animal is immediately one with its life activity. It is not distinct from that life activity: it is that life activity". Species-activity on the other hand is what distinguishes man from the rest of nature in that man is the only being whose life activity is "free and conscious activity":

Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life activity. Only because of that is he a species-being. Or rather, he is a conscious being, i.e. his own life is an object for him, only because he is a species-being. Only because of that is his activity free activity.⁶⁸

Consciousness of one's life-activity means that one is also conscious of others doing the same thing and thus implies a mutual recognition which extends to the whole human race. It also gives a temporal dimension to man's existence engendering a sense of history and the knowledge that there will be a future. Species activity is materialized in "the practical creation of an *objective world*, the *fashioning of organic nature*."||⁶⁹ that is, in free and conscious production. The kind of production that man engages in is different from that of animals such as beavers, bees, ants or (weaver) birds which produce nests instinctively to satisfy compelling physical needs, because man "produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need."⁷⁰ It is this conscious, purposive activity that gives man the unique ability to produce "in accordance with the laws of beauty". Production is the realization of man's species powers in objects, to which man relates in a dialectically connected series of three moments: "perception", the direct contact of man with nature through his senses, "orientation", the classification, valuation and general understanding of the objects perceived and the network of relationships within nature, and "appropriation", the constructive utilization of those objects. Each power, corresponding to a sense, has its own unique mode of appropriation. Marx lists these senses, man's "human relations with the world" as "seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, contemplating, sensing, wanting, acting, and loving".⁷¹ As we have already foreshadowed, objects exist for powers only in the mode in which those powers are gratified. As Marx says:

The *manner* in which [objects] become [man's] depends on the *nature* of the object and the nature of the *essential power* that corresponds to *it*; for it is just the *determinateness* of this relation that constitutes the particular, *real* mode of affirmation. An object is different for the *eye* from what it is for the *ear*, and the eye's object *is* different from the *ear's* . . . Man is therefore affirmed in the objective world not only in thought but with *all* the senses.⁷²

Through this interaction with nature over the course of history, man's powers, the objects in which they are realized and the modes of appropriating those objects develop. This dialectical interrelationship ensures that there are no powers for which appropriate objects are non-existent, and subjectively, objects are non-existent for men without the powers to appropriate them. Marx uses the example of music to illustrate this point, saying that beautiful music does not

exist for the unmusical ear. The senses have to be developed to a suitable level in order to appropriate the object, and the development of these senses through the humanization of nature is identical with the process of history:

For not only the five senses, but also the so-called spiritual senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.), in a word, the *human* sense, the humanity of the senses — all these come into being only through the existence of *their* objects, through humanized nature. The cultivation of the five senses is the work of all history.⁷³

This development of human powers is naturally dependent on the mode of material production of a given society. The path of development of man's powers through history can not only be observed in the modes of appropriation of objects but also in the objects themselves: in Bertell Ollman's words, "more indicative still of the quality of appropriation of each generation and class are the actual results, the changes in form, shape, number, etc., that are achieved. For only man, being what he is at this time and place, would have done these things, with these objects, in this way."⁷⁴

Throughout history we can see in the objects of man's production, his tools, his dwellings, his art, customs, institutions, etc., signs indicating the state of development of his powers. Given the limitations inherent in nature, man can only appropriate that for which he has the corresponding powers. Thus the objects themselves reveal the quality of these powers, and also the way in which these objects are appropriated expresses the state of these powers. For example, the statues of Easter Island can tell us a lot about the state of civilization reached by the people who produced them without our knowing anything else about them. Anything that man produces is the objectification of himself, and is therefore the expression of his essence; Marx includes intellectual production and behaviour materially inscribed in institutions: "Religion, the family, the state, law, morality, science, art, etc., are only *particular* modes of production and therefore come under its general law."⁷⁵ But the most significant witnesses to the stage of development of man's powers are those objects produced as a means of subsistence: "As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with *how* they produce."⁷⁶ This is because material production is the most necessary and time-consuming of all man's activities; it is for this reason, of course, that he worked at such length on his analysis of industrial production before his intended work on art and law which he never accomplished. For Marx considered that "the history of *industry* and the *objective* existence of industry as it has developed is the *open* book of the essential powers of man, man's psychology present in tangible form . . .":

In everyday, *material industry* . . . we find ourselves confronted with the *objectified powers of the human essence*, in the form of *sensuous, alien, useful objects*, in the form of estrangement . . . *Industry* is the *real* historical relationship of nature, and hence of natural science, to man. If it is then conceived as the *exoteric* revelation of man's *essential powers*, the

human essence of nature or the *natural* essence of man can also be understood.⁷⁷

Man "duplicates" himself in nature by means of his material products, and the way in which he does this is through the mediation of activity. The objects of nature can be appropriated without activity, as for example when we contemplate a landscape and feel our senses enriched and developed by the forms and colours we perceive. But if we were to paint that scene, or write or sing about it, this would be a higher degree of appropriation, mediated by activity. Activity is thus the movement of man's powers in the world, the process of objectifying himself in nature. A more specialized form of activity is that of work which is defined as activity which produces use-values. It is here that the connection between artistic and material production becomes apparent: both are forms of activity, the objectification of man's human powers in and the appropriation of the objects of nature. The difference is that material labour produces use-values and artistic labour produces aesthetic values. Use-value is essentially the purpose for which an object is produced. Not only are material objects such as tools, houses, clothes, etc., use-values, but also other products which as we have seen can include "religion, the family, the state, law, morality, science, etc.," are use-values. Thus, a religious dogma, connubial loyalty, a state constitution or a heroic saga can "be" just as much use-values as a pair of pliers. Productive activity exercises and develops man's powers. In producing an object, all man's senses are engaged to some extent in the planning, the execution and the concentration required by its production. At the same time, man's powers develop in the active exercise of them. As we have seen, "the nature of individuals depends on the material conditions determining their production."⁷⁸ By altering the material conditions, that is nature, by his activity, man alters the conditions of his existence. Thus the creation of new objects calls forth new needs and new powers to satisfy them. It is only in tropical climates, according to Marx, that nature is "adequate" and needs no modification by man to suit his needs, and so demands no development of man's powers. The division of labour also contributes to the development of man's powers through activity in that it allows a more efficient, hence more profound and accelerated transformation of nature.

The division of labour is merely the most visible evidence that man's powers can only develop in association with others, that is, in a social context. The realization of human powers in the objects of nature through the medium of productive activity necessarily requires the co-operation of others because this activity is only possible with and for others: it may be active cooperation in the execution of some work requiring diverse skills, concentration and goals, or it may be passive cooperation as in the case of the use of a language to communicate with others. The satisfaction of man's needs necessarily creates a reciprocal bond between the individual and his fellow human beings. The primary relationship is of course the sexual relationship which Marx regards as initially the only social relationship born out of the need of man to daily reproduce his life and propagate his kind, but which later, with the increase of population engendering

new needs, becomes a subordinate relationship.⁷⁹ Thus:

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship. By social we understand the cooperation of several individuals no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of cooperation, or social stage, and this mode of cooperation is itself a "productive force."⁸⁰

The cooperative nature of production is underlined by the necessary identity of production with the social activities of consumption, distribution and exchange. The division of labour intensifies the interdependent relationship of the individuals within a society and multiplies the identity of needs among groups of people. These needs coincide with the development of the powers of many individuals to the same level. This is obvious when we remember that needs and powers are mutually dependent for their existence and that objects (including man-made objects) only exist so far as there are powers to appropriate them. An individual must be sufficiently developed for others to be able to adequately objectify their powers in him. The most complete mutual appropriation of man and man would seem to be found in a communist society where the development of the powers of others are seen to be the premise for the development of one's own powers, and hence the interests of others are intimately one's own interests. Some of Marx's bitterest words were directed against the capacity of money to intervene and distort this relationship between a power and its object whether that object was a human being or anything else. "Money", stated Marx, "is the universal *confusion* and *exchange* of all things, an inverted world, the confusion and exchange of all natural and human qualities".⁸¹ With the mediating power of money, individuals are able to appropriate objects for which they have not developed the powers:

... I am *mindless*, but if money is the *true mind* of all things, how can its owner be mindless? What is more, he can buy clever people for himself, and is not he who has power over clever people cleverer than them? ...⁸²

The true relationship of a power with its object would be one of a true expression of the individual's life corresponding to the object of his will. This is the aim of history where in a communist society the relation of man to the world will be a human one and where "love can be exchanged only for love, trust for trust and so on. If you wish to enjoy art you must be an artistically educated person; if you wish to exercise influence on other men you must be the sort of person who has a truly stimulating and encouraging effect on others."⁸³

The most suggestive measure of man's species powers in their development towards a human, that is communist realization, is found in the sexual relationship between men and women, because, as we have seen, Marx regarded this as "the immediate, natural and necessary relationship of human being to human being".

In this natural species-relationship the relation of man to nature is immediately his relation to man, just as his relation to man is immediately his relation to nature, his own natural condition. Therefore this relationship reveals in a sensuous form, reduced, to an observable fact, the extent to which the human essence has become nature for man or nature has become human essence for mankind. It is possible to judge from this relationship the entire level of development of mankind.⁸⁴

In the *Manifesto*, Marx states that "the bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production" and says that bourgeois marriage is simply private prostitution.⁸⁵ The condition of women inevitably debases men, since men are unable to objectify their powers in this essential relationship to any degree of human satisfaction. In reducing women to such a low status man impedes the progress of humanity towards the goal of history, "the true *appropriation* of the *human* essence through and for man."⁸⁶ Of course, it is the whole edifice of the capitalist relations of production which alienates man from his human essence and reduces him to his animal essence which is the major stumbling block to this goal, but Marx regarded the degradation of women as an important result of the reigning power of private property.

The close and fundamental connection of an aesthetic theory with Marx's ontological conception of man is quite clear in Marx's early work. He frequently uses artistic images and metaphors to illustrate his notions of the development and deployment of man's powers in nature: the creation of artistic objects is seen as a kind of higher extension of man's human powers of appropriation, as a sign, as it were, of his transcendence of his animal state. We often see the assertion that art is a form of production, as when in the *1844 Manuscripts* we read that "religion, the family, the state, law, morality, science, art, etc., are only *particular* modes of production . . ." In the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels speak of "mental production" and "mental labour", and in the introduction to the *Grundrisse* he speaks of the "production of art". The connection between art and the activity which produces use-values lies in the fact that both consist of the objectification of human powers in nature. That this need to "*express* his life in real, sensuous objects" is an absolute condition of mankind's existence, we have seen already. This need of man to realize his powers in the objects of nature is not merely a result of his need to survive and propagate his species, to affirm his natural life, but is a requirement of his species-life: "the object of labour is therefore *the objectification of the species-life of man.*"⁸⁷ In fact, it is only when man can produce objects that exceed the demands of his immediate physical needs both in quantity and quality that he is free to contemplate his subjectivity realized in his products. It is this freedom from production for immediate consumption that sets man off from animals, because it allows him to be conscious of his product as an object of his creation and thus allows him to stand back as it were and see his personal powers realized in the material form of the object. This freedom and self-consciousness is the beginning of the multiplication of needs, powers and appropriate objects that enrich and expand man's senses and his relations with the world. It is for this reason that for Marx man is "self-created" and is "a

result of his own labour."⁸⁸ Man's relationship to his objects is thus a necessary one: he is only subject so far as he objectifies himself, and his objects only exist so far as they realize his subjectivity. Neither subject nor object exist by or for themselves. As we have seen, this human need for self-creation is met in the activity which realizes man's powers in nature, namely: labour. The products created by labour express man's species-life as nature transformed, i.e. humanized; they satisfy man's needs, and in their realization of ideas, will, imagination and skill, they objectify human powers. The products created by artistic labour also satisfy these human needs and express human powers to the elevation of man's senses, including his self-perception and the enrichment of his relations with the world. Art and labour both spring from the fundamental conditions of man's ontology, his condition as an objective being and his unique status as a human being. Art and labour are similar in that both are activities which in the transformation of the raw materials of nature give expression to human powers and develop human needs. Both are in fact modes of appropriating nature and self. Both human labour, as opposed to natural labour or alienated labour, and artistic production share the premise that they are free and conscious. When man produces merely to satisfy his physical needs and guarantee his subsistence as under the capitalist system of production or in a natural condition, then his labour is forced and is therefore no longer an expression of his human powers nor the fulfillment of his human needs. In the same way truly artistic production can only exist in a situation in which there exists a freedom from a hand-to-mouth preoccupation with the brute necessities of physical subsistence. However, the production of the means of subsistence, that is, the production of material life is necessarily a precondition for artistic or theoretical production because as Marx wrote in the *German Ideology*, "life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things".⁸⁹ It is only upon the satisfaction of these first needs that the conditions for the establishment of new needs are developed. These first needs are realized in the production of "practical-utilitarian" objects that are judged and valued for their usefulness and ability to satisfy these needs. Clearly the quality of subjectivity realized in practical-utilitarian objects is limited by their ability to satisfy these specific determinate material needs. However, when a situation exists in which these material needs have been satisfied, the scope for the subjective objectification of man's human essence in his products increases. Thus art is the creative activity shaped by human goals, as is labour, but which, unlike labour, is not limited by the material utilitarian demands of the reproduction of life, in the expression of human subjectivity.

Artistic production appears therefore as an extension or an elevation of man's fundamental need to realize himself as a species-being. The very distance of aesthetic objects from the satisfaction of immediate physical needs is in itself an affirmation of man's species-being according to Marx's differentiation of human production from the production of birds, bees and beavers

of which, as we recall, he said: "they produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so, while man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need."⁹⁰ Aesthetic objects are the objects *par excellence* of man's subjective duplication of himself in nature and in which he can contemplate his humanity unrestricted by practical-utilitarian considerations.

The production of aesthetic objects thus plays a leading role in the development of man's powers of appropriation through the humanization of the human senses. Just as we saw that for the practical-utilitarian productive activities there was a chain-reaction causing the development of man's powers, of new needs and of the general enrichment of man's relations with the world, so with aesthetic production new objects create new needs and are met by new powers corresponding to new senses. The objects of artistic production are eloquent witnesses to the development of man's senses and aesthetic sensibilities: "as individuals express their life, so they are"; this not only applies to material production but also to artistic production. As with all objects of man's labour they only exist as long as there exist the powers to appropriate them. We remember that Marx illustrated his thesis that objects exist for men as confirmations of their essential powers with an example taken from the field of artistic production, namely music: "only music can awaken the musical sense in man and the most beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear." The development of art is therefore, like the development of material production, an indication of the level to which man's powers have matured in their interaction with nature. A painting by Giotto, for example, expresses quite a different level of appropriation and development of man's senses to that expressed in a Raphael two centuries later. Each artistic object contributes to the development of man's senses so that his powers of appropriation are continually expressed in higher and more human forms of art: "the cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous history."

In the same way that man's practical-utilitarian powers were a social product, so obviously are his aesthetic powers. Artistic production has a social nature precisely because it depends on this social "cultivation of the five senses". Artistic production cannot take place in isolation: even if the artist produces for his own satisfaction he produces according to aesthetic criteria engendered by this historical cultivation of the senses and "in accordance with the laws of beauty." In another sense, artistic production, like the labour which expresses man's species-being, is social: it relies on the social cooperation that frees the artist from the necessity of spending his life producing for his immediate physical subsistence. This social cooperation may take the form of a division of labour or the utilization of accumulated labour (necessarily cooperative) in material products. Moreover, artistic production like any other production is only one moment of process which also includes exchange and consumption, a process which is preeminently social. Marx makes clear this social nature of artistic production using Raphael as an example:

Raphael as much as any other artist was determined by the technical advances in art made before him, by the organization of society and the division of labour in his locality, and, finally, by the division of labour in all the countries with which his locality had intercourse. Whether an individual like Raphael succeeds in developing his talent depends wholly on demand, which in turn depends on the division of labour and the conditions of human culture resulting from it.⁹¹

We can see, therefore, that artistic production is closely related to material production, and except for the fact that the aim of the former is the production of primarily aesthetic values while that of the latter is essentially the production of practical-utilitarian values, they have many attributes in common. In short, to use Marx's words, "art . . . [is] only a particular mode of production and therefore comes under its general law."

THE IDEOLOGICAL OBSTACLES TO WOMEN'S ENTRY INTO THE SPHERE OF ARTISTIC PRODUCTION

So far in this paper, I have tried to establish two major points: firstly that the productive relations of society require that women should be kept in a subordinate, economically and socially dependent, reproductive position, and that this situation is maintained by a combination of ideological and material forces controlled ultimately by the class that wields State power; and secondly, that artistic creation is a productive activity closely related to labour which produces use-values, and which requires a certain freedom and independence from the all-absorbing task of reproducing the means for one's material subsistence. Now, putting these two points together, it should be apparent that the material and ideological life conditions of women would seem to be incompatible with the requirements of artistic production. This is not only because their function is basically a reproductive one, entailing a corresponding "social, political and intellectual life", and that artistic creation is a productive activity requiring a "social, political and intellectual" life of an almost diametrically opposed quality, but also because art is an ideological apparatus and as such is controlled by the ruling class. For women to engage in artistic production would mean a break with their socially prescribed reproductive and dependent roles and a radical departure from the ideological conventions that maintained the relations of production. It would also require a social and economic independence at complete odds with the social experience of women. In Virginia Woolf's words, "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."^{9 2}

The fact that significant artistic activity is so often a professional activity makes the prospect of an individual woman negotiating her livelihood unlikely in a society where women themselves were the objects of barter. Because women have had neither the status nor the skills, nor the freedom necessary for it, artistic production has been defined as a male preserve, and because of this it was inferred that women did not have imaginative or creative "brains". In patriarchal societies, the only women who have had the "social, political and intellectual life" suitable for artistic creation have belonged to the social elite. The Elizabethan period produced a number of female scholars and poets, such as Jane Weston, Elizabeth Danviers, Elizabeth Melville and Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, sister of Sir Philip Sidney. In the seventeenth century Lady Winchilsea and Margaret of Newcastle are perhaps the most important women poets, although none of these women are widely known at all. None of them belonged to the middle classes or the lower gentry as did Chaucer, Gower and Shakespeare for example.

So much a part of women's social stereotype did artistic sterility become that any serious

interest on the part of a woman in writing or painting or music beyond the requirements of a decorative social accomplishment, was vociferously decried by men and women alike. Virginia Woolf quoted the bitter complaint of Lady Winchilsea as evidence of this opposition to any attempt by women to write seriously:

Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,
Such a presumptuous creature is esteemed,
The fault can by no virtue be redeemed.
They tell us we mistake our sex and way;
Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play,
Are the accomplishments we should desire;
To write, or read, or think or to inquire,
Would cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time,
And interrupt the conquests of our prime,
Whilst the dull manage of a servile house
Is held by some our utmost art and use.⁹³

The opposition existed long before women began to enter the literary market-place in any great numbers. Significantly, their entry into this market-place was by way of one of the few literary avenues that had been open to women; that of letter-writing. Personal journals and letters have traditionally been acceptable means of literary expression for women, presumably because these forms of writing were by definition personal and therefore ostensibly designed for private rather than public consumption, and consequently were not considered as serious writing. Even to-day personal journals and diaries of women are amongst their most successful and popular publications; for example, the diaries of Anais Nin outsold any of her novels; similarly Simone de Beauvoir's *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* was by far her most successful publication; Svetlana Allilouyeva's *Vingt lettres à un ami* made publishing history in France by earning her 15 million francs. In England, the publication of Virginia Woolf's diaries and letters has become almost an industry on its own.

The entry of women into the literary market via the epistolary novel did not involve an insurmountable break with tradition. Any scruples about the inappropriateness of a woman writing for publication could be glossed over by the ostensible moral purpose of these heavily didactic works, which only served to establish and reinforce the puritan ethic of the rising bourgeoisie. Even so, women were reluctant to acknowledge their publications with any pride, and many published anonymously. Elaine Showalter records that "In 1791 Elizabeth Inchbald prefaced *A Simple Story* with the lie that she was a poor invalid who had written a novel despite 'the utmost detestation to the fatigue of inventing'."⁹⁴ She goes on to quote a letter by Mary Brunton written in 1810 to explain to a friend why she preferred to publish anonymously:

I would rather, as you well know, glide through the world unknown, than have (I will not call it *enjoy*) fame, however brilliant, to be pointed at, — to be noticed and commented upon — to be shunned, as literary women are, by the more unpretending of my own sex;

and abhorred as literary women are, by the pretending of the other! — my dear, I would sooner exhibit as a rope dancer.⁹⁵

However, it is when writing is recognized as a *profession* for women that we can see the origins of all the impediments to women's engaging in serious writing. As we have observed, the whole purpose and result of the sexual division of labour under the capitalist system of production is to ensure that women are confined to a reproductive role, as opposed to men whose formative social experience destines them for a productive role. This differentiation of roles is essential to the maintenance of the relations of production. Every factor that determines our social existence is founded upon this sexual differentiation of roles. We have seen how these roles are maintained and enforced by the various ideological and repressive state apparatuses. We have also seen how the attempts of women to enter the paid labour-force are impeded and discouraged by all kinds of means, such as inferior or inadequate education, poor rewards for unrewarding work, the burden of additional domestic labour, as well as the prejudice that it is not quite "proper" for married women to work (this latter applies more to middle class women, but also affects working class women who are encouraged to aspire to middle class standards). This division of society into producers and reproducers is inscribed in ideology, which means that it is all-pervading and coercive, ideology being taken in Althusser's definition: "... men *live* their actions, usually referred to freedom and 'consciousness' by the classical tradition, in ideology, *by and through ideology*; in short . . . the 'lived' relation between men and the world, including History (in political action or inaction), passes through ideology, or better, *is ideology itself*."⁹⁶ It is this same ideology that governs women's entry into the literary profession. In the same way that this ideology which prescribes for women a reproductive role says that women should not engage in paid labour (even it turns a blind eye to the exploitation of working class women), it also says that women should not engage in the profession of writing. And when women defy the prescription of ideology and go out to work or become professional writers there are all kinds of obstacles and impediments that govern the conditions of that work or that writing. As we have seen, the creation of artistic objects is a productive activity and is thus in itself outside the confines of women's allotted role. Hence we find all the ideological objections to women's writing in the nineteenth century and the persistent ideological assumption (present to this day) that women lack the requisite faculties for great writing, just as they are said to lack the necessary (innate) skills or faculties for becoming company directors, astronauts or admirals of the fleet. It is commonplace, for example, for male critics to express surprise that a book written by a woman could be good, let alone as good as ones written by men. Mary Ellman's *Thinking about Women* (1968) is an incisive analysis of the sexist assumptions explicitly or implicitly contained in much current literary criticism. In her words, "with a kind of inverted fidelity, the discussion of women's books by men will arrive punctually at the point of preoccupation, which is the fact of femininity. Books by women are treated as though they themselves

were women, and criticism embarks, at its happiest, upon an intellectual measuring of busts and hips".⁹⁷

These assumptions and the kind of disparaging criticism which is founded upon them were absolutely *de rigueur* in the nineteenth century and unquestionably resulted in a devaluation of women's writing both by the writers themselves and by the general public. Just as we saw the results of ideological role assumptions on the achievement of women in education, the assumption that women write inferior, or at any rate, "feminine" books, would have undoubtedly contributed to women's underachievement in literature. These assumptions have also led to the neglect or the casting into oblivion of so many good novels written by women; those of Jean Rhys, Dorothy Richardson and Kate Chopin, to mention only three authors.

Victorian male critics often took recourse to arcane pseudo-scientific theories to justify their prejudice that women wrote inferior books. It was said, for example, that women's procreative functions sapped their energy and intellectual sensitivity to the extent that their capacity for intellectual creation was irreparably impaired. Women themselves internalized many of these assumptions and wrote always with the negative and depressing knowledge that their best efforts would always be inferior to anything written by men. The force of these arguments was so strong and persistent that even in 1928, Virginia Woolf was able to suggest that women's physical weakness meant that they were less capable of writing long books than men, despite the fact that women's contribution to the Victorian three-volume novel was notorious to the point of satire.

Literature reviewers of this period writing in the contemporary journals and magazines invariably proceeded according to the stereotyped judgements of the innate qualities of women's writing:

... women writers were acknowledged to possess sentiment, refinement, tact, observation, domestic expertise, high moral tone, and knowledge of female character; and thought to lack originality, intellectual training, abstract intelligence, humor, self-control, and knowledge of male character. Male writers had most of the desirable qualities: power, breadth, distinctness, clarity, learning, abstract intelligence, shrewdness, experience, humor, knowledge of everyone's and open-mindedness.⁹⁸

Some women tried to confront this double critical standard directly, as when Charlotte Bronte wrote to the critic of the *Economist* that: "To you I am neither man nor woman. I come before you as an author only. It is the sole standard by which you have a right to judge me — the sole ground on which I accept your judgement."⁹⁹ A more devious way of circumventing prejudicial criticism was the adoption of male pseudonyms. The examples of Currer and Acton Bell and George Eliot inspired dozens of imitations in the nineteenth century.

In addition to the ideological assumption that women were physically and intellectually incapable of writing, there were other equally damaging ideological arguments martialled to dissuade women from writing. In Edmond Gosse's *Father and Son* it is recorded that Mrs Gosse used to invent stories to amuse herself and her brothers:

Having, I suppose, naturally a restless mind and busy imagination, this soon became the chief pleasure of my life . . . I had not known there was harm in it until Miss Shore, a Calvinist governess, finding it out, lectured me severely and told me it was wicked. From that time forth I considered that to invent a story of any kind was a sin.¹⁰⁰

It was further held that women authors were selfish to write for personal gain or glory when their time and energy would be better spent caring for their families or doing charitable, self-effacing deeds. Women writers, especially before 1850 were popularly regarded as ink-stained viragos whose "natural" maternal instincts had been abandoned. Dickens's biting caricature of Mrs Jellabee is well known as a representation of career women as negligent untidy mothers, concerned only with "education of the natives of Borrioboola-Gha" and other distant and abstract matters, while her proper sphere, the home, is an anarchic mess of children run wild and dinners uncooked. Conscious of this image, and conscious that their writing was only of secondary importance to their domestic duties, women writers made fierce efforts to be model housewives, and if they had children, mothers. Thus, like most women who engage in any paid labour, women who wanted to make a career out of writing were obliged to shoulder the burden of two full time jobs. Perhaps the most telling example of the kind of encouragement a woman could expect to receive in the pursuit of a literary career was that given to Charlotte Bronte by the then Poet Laureate Robert Southey when she wrote to him in 1837 asking for advice: "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life and it ought not to be."¹⁰¹ The effect of this advice was, as could be expected, to discourage any literary activity and to create in her a sense of shame, guilt and failure for feeling the temptation to read or write:

I carefully avoid any appearance of pre-occupation and eccentricity which might lead those I live amongst to suspect the nature of my pursuits. Following my father's advice — who from my childhood has counselled me, just in the wise and friendly tone of your letter — I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I am teaching or sewing I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself, and my father's approbation amply rewards me for the privation.¹⁰²

The specious moral arguments brought forward against the inclination of women to write probably had all the more impact for the fact that an extraordinary number of nineteenth century women writers were the daughters, sisters or wives of clergymen.

Another effect of this general ideological discouragement of women with an urge or a need to write was that women on average published their first books much later in life than

men, although as the example of women authors became more common and more respectable, women began to publish at a younger age. Of the earlier generation of women, those born between 1800 and 1820, including the Brontes, Mrs Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett, Harriet Martineau and George Eliot, only 55% had published by their thirtieth birthday, whereas male writers with few exceptions throughout the century published in their mid-twenties. By the end of the century, among those born between 1880 and 1900, including Virginia Woolf and Ivy Compton-Burnett, 58% had published by their twenty-fifth birthday and nearly 75% by their thirtieth.¹⁰³ In many cases of course, this late starting was a case of publish or perish: with professional writing and governessing just about the only possible professions for middle class women, women were probably more dogged about refusing to accept defeat after the rejection of a manuscript. Men on the other hand, having been educated and trained for alternative professions would have been more inclined to abandon their literary ambitions if they had not succeeded in publishing by their thirties. But it was probably the differentiation in educational opportunity that proved to be the major stumbling block to potential women writers significantly delaying the start of their careers. The lack of a suitable education (and in Victorian times this meant a thorough knowledge of the classics, Latin and Greek) was an important determinant of women's writing, not only of its content, but of its very creation. In the nineteenth century most women writers were self-taught. In a study of Victorian writers by Richard Altick it was found that "the percentage of literary men who had attended a university or other post-secondary school rose from 52.5% in 1800-35, to 70.9% in 1870-1900 and to 72.3% by 1900-35."¹⁰⁴ As for women, only about 20% had been given some formal schooling, and it was not until the first thirty years of the present century that university-educated women entered the profession and even then they only represented 38% of all women writers. Attainment of a classical education comparable to that of their brothers was felt to be an essential prerequisite for any kind of public writing by women in the nineteenth century. They made prodigious efforts to gain acceptance by male reviewers who made it their practice to make wholesale condemnations of the female intellect on the basis of the slightest errors of detail in classical knowledge. Harriet Martineau records in her autobiography how it took her thirteen years of studying after leaving school (she was one of the fortunate few who received any formal education at all) in order for her to feel herself adequately prepared to be a writer. And this was achieved in the face of family disapproval and constant interruption, for

it was not thought proper for young ladies to study very conspicuously; and especially with pen in hand. Young ladies (at least in provincial towns) were expected to sit down in the parlour to sew, — during which reading aloud was permitted, — or to practise their music; but so as to be fit to receive callers, without any signs of blue-stockings which could be reported abroad.¹⁰⁵

Intellectual accomplishment was felt to be unbecoming in a woman and so there was often a sense of shame and freakishness associated with those who achieved intellectual distinction.

There was always the sense that any display of learning or intelligence would invite the disparaging epithet of "blue-stocking" or the accusation of being "unwomanly", and in an era when her "womanliness" was about the only social value a woman possessed, these epithets had a great deal of force. In 1928, the differentiation of educational opportunity was still regarded by Virginia Woolf as one of the primary reasons for women's inferiority in the arts. In Simone de Beauvoir's autobiography, for example, she records how her studying used to upset her father because it meant that she was destined to earn her own living and pointed to his failure to provide her with a dowry. Despite coming second only to Sartre in her final examinations at the Sorbonne, in a class which included such intellectual heavyweights as Aron, Levi-Strauss and Simone Weil, and despite the extensive breadth of knowledge displayed in her works, there is always a sense of discomfort about her intellectual achievements as she repeatedly minimizes them in relation to those of Sartre.

The fear of displaying their erudition lest they wound the intellectual vanity of males has bedevilled women writers since they first took up the pen to earn their living. Self-depreciation and flattery of the male ego has been one of the standard tactics used by women in dealing with the male — owned and controlled publishing apparatus and the male literary establishment. Showalter quotes a letter from Mrs Oliphant, who was a pre-eminently hard-headed, unsentimental business-woman and a prolific writer, to the publisher John Blackwood, in which she expresses with abject humility the doubt whether "in your most manly and masculine of magazines a womanish story-teller like myself may not become wearisome."¹⁰⁶ Even George Eliot sternly advised erudite women to hide their learning in the presence of men, and when Virginia Woolf makes the suggestion that women should learn to be critical and objective about men she does so with a self-deprecating timidity that displays a consciousness of potential male disapprobation:

And then I went on very warily, on the very tips of my toes (so cowardly am I, so afraid of the lash that was once almost laid on my own shoulders), to murmur that she should also learn to laugh, without bitterness, at the vanities — say rather at the peculiarities, for it is a less offensive word — of the other sex.¹⁰⁶

The prejudice that erudition and scholarship were a masculine preserve survived even at a time of intense feminist activity at the turn of the century when in attempting to reject male values and traditional female roles feminist writers like Olive Schreiner, Sarah Grand and George Egerton attempted to set up a separate sphere of female intellectual activity based on sensitivity, emotion, subjectivity and articulating themes of women's ties with nature, maternity, suffering and "inner space", which still left men the sphere of traditional scholarship and literary activity.

Perhaps all these moral or ideological considerations that acted as impediments to the production of literature for publication by women can be attributed to the privatized situation of women in capitalist society. As we have seen, it is almost an essential condition for the performance of women's role of the reproduction of the human means and relations of production that it be carried out in private, that is, in isolation from both the actual productive process, and from other women engaged in the reproductive role. It is essential because the privatization of domestic labour obscures and mystifies its relation to capitalist production and the creation of surplus value. Privatization makes it appear that work done in the home is not real work and therefore deserves no reward, a result that goes on in turn to disguise the essential contribution of that work to capitalist production. We have also seen that the subjection of women is closely related to the institution of private property. Women have traditionally been regarded as private property themselves and also as a conduit for the transfer of private property between men and between generations. The gynaeceum, purdah, the chastity belt are only extreme material manifestations of the ideology that rules that women should stay out of the public eye, not venture out of doors, only to be seen or express themselves in relation to their men, not "make an exhibition of themselves" or unite in opposition to their overlords. To write for publication is a direct infringement of this ideology. The very word "publish" from the Latin *publicare* and *publicus* means to make public, to place before or offer to the public, often something which is by nature private, like a will, a libel or marriage bans. Robert Escarpit in his *Sociology of Literature* mentions that the oldest use of the word "publier" cited by Littré dates from the thirteenth century and means "selling at a public auction", and he goes on to suggest:

Let us retain this idea of the public auction of a work, this deliberate and almost brutal exposure of the secret of creation to the anonymous light of the public square. There is implied a kind of willful violence, an accepted profanation, all the more shocking in that it brings financial considerations into play. To publish a work drawn from oneself for commercial reasons is a bit like prostituting oneself. *Publicare corpus*, says Plato.¹⁰⁸

The repugnance felt for the public exposure of one's private thoughts and feelings must have exercised a considerable force of self-censorship on women's writing, especially among women of that class which provided an overwhelming proportion of women writers — the pious bourgeoisie. It has been noted that those women who wrote most intimately of the female experience in British literature, Olive Schreiner, Jean Rhys and Doris Lessing, were all immigrants who escaped the standard upbringing of middle-class girlhood. Even so, Olive Schreiner's letters still show a pronounced dislike of self-exposure: "The best stories and dreams I have had nothing would induce me to write at all because I couldn't bear any person to read them."¹⁰⁹

So far we have dealt with some of the pressures that strongly militated against any attempt by women to become professional writers. The source of our knowledge of these pressures is

to be found principally in the letters, diaries and memoirs of those women who succeeded in overcoming them to launch a literary career. One wonders how many potential Brontës or Austens never had the courage or the opportunity to circumvent the force of those ideological pressures. As Showalter says:

Many women who exhibited precocious talents for literature never wrote books. The leap from diaries and letters to three-decker novels was a leap of consciousness that many women never felt strong or independent enough to attempt.¹¹⁰

What were the conditions then, in which women were able to escape or overcome the force of the ideology that ruled that literature was a masculine activity, a public activity that true, "womanly" women should shun?

The answer is quite clearly that the conditions under which women were able to begin a career of writing obtained only when the effectiveness of the ideology was for some reason diminished. As we have seen, ideology finds its material existence in the actions and practices of an ideological subject governed by rituals that are in turn determined by the institutions of an ideological apparatus. Ideology is embodied, if you like, in human subjects, or, as Althusser puts it:

there is no ideology except by the subject and for the subject. Meaning, there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, *by the category of the subject* and its functioning.¹¹¹

Now, the principal ideological apparatus in which are inscribed the actions, practices and rituals of the subjugation of women is the family. The individuals who constitute the particular family group are hailed or interpellated by that ideology according to the Althusserian dictum: "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of that subject."¹¹² Thus, the ideology of the family hails individuals as wife/mother, husband/father, son/brother, daughter/sister, and so on. Ideology interpellates these individuals because they function in a particular way, and they function in this way because they are interpellated by the ideology: "The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing."¹¹³

Within the family, individuals relate to one another according to their functions, inter-subjectively interpellating each other at the same time as they are interpellated by the general ideology of the family. Thus a husband will function as a husband so far as he has a wife and vice versa. One cannot by definition exist without the other. At the same time, they will function as husband and wife in the way determined by the overall ideology of sexual relations.

The outstanding fact about women writers is that a large proportion of them began their

careers in anomalous family circumstances. Showalter finds that of the women writers born between 1800 and 1900, only about half of them married, and of these, many, like Elizabeth Barrett and George Eliot only did so after they had begun their careers and established a professional reputation. A number of these married women writers were, like Mrs Oliphant, widows. In the general population, 85% of women married. She finds, moreover, that of these married women writers only about 65% of them had children, and those who did have children had far fewer than the Victorian norm of six children per family.

This fact would seem to suggest that women were able to become professional writers only to the degree to which they were able to escape from the family and the stereotyped ideologically determined role that their status of womanhood would have obliged them to perform. They were to some extent immune to the effects of the ideology because, lacking husbands (or having husbands tolerant of their profession if they married after the start of their career) the intersubjective interpellation of the ideology lacked any force. Since ideology is transmitted through individuals in the form of concepts conveyed or actions or relationships, and the more immediate the relationship the more effective the ideology, then obviously for women outside the structure of the normal family that ideology would have a diminished impact. For, as Althusser stated, ideology only exists in concrete subjects and "by the functioning of the category of that subject", and because a large proportion of women writers are not in a position to function within the categories interpellated by the ideology of the family, they were able to escape the full effects of that ideology on the pursuit of their literary careers. The ideology of the family that casts women in a reproductive role and classifies that role as a subordinate, privatized and financially unrewarded one, operates to maintain the relations of production essential to the reproduction of the capitalist system, and is therefore concentrated on those categories of function integral to this structure of productive (and exploitative) relations. Those who are marginal, who are not integrated into the structure of the productive and reproductive relations to some extent escape the most intense and effective zone of operation of the ideology. In the same way, since only a small proportion of women writers had children, most of them were spared the task of mediating sex-role stereotypes to offspring, a process which, as I described above, serves to reinforce the objective facticity of the ideology in the mother. Of course, it must not be forgotten that the sheer time and effort involved in motherhood would have considerably reduced a woman's capacity to pursue a literary career. However, the burdens of motherhood must not be exaggerated for a time when writing earned comparatively high financial rewards and paid domestic labour was extremely cheap. For example, Charlotte Bronte was paid £20 a year in 1841 as a governess (with £4 deducted for laundering her no doubt insignificant governess's wardrobe), whereas she received £100 as the first payment for *Jane Eyre* followed by five similar payments. A governess's annual wage, according to Ellen Moers was only

eleven times as much as the retail price of a copy of *Jane Eyre*.¹¹⁴ It was the force of the ideology which insisted that the literary life was of secondary and minor importance compared with the woman's reproductive role as wife, mother or daughter that was just as significant an obstacle to the professional writing careers of women as the actual burdens of domestic labour. This labour was even exaggerated by the ideology which asserted that a woman who was not totally dedicated to her maternal or wifely duties was a poor example of womanhood. According to Mrs Gaskell:

no other can take up the quiet regular duties of the daughter, the wife, or the mother, as well as she whom God has appointed to fill that particular place: a woman's principal work in life is hardly left to her own choice; nor can she drop the domestic charges devolving on her as an individual, for the exercise of the most splendid talents that were ever bestowed.¹¹⁵

It is a measure and an indication of the economic roots of the ideology which establishes the sexual division of labour that its force and effectiveness is augmented or decreased in proportion to the relative economic power of the ideological subjects. The effective power of the producer over the reproducer is determined by the degree of absoluteness of the division of labour. As I have pointed out, one of the essential features of this division of labour is that ideally women should be dependent on the wage earned by their husbands. The means of her subsistence is computed along with his as the basis of the minimum wage upon which is calculated the profit derived from the production of surplus-value. The hostility evinced by bourgeois society where work, wealth and productivity are accorded positive value, towards females who attempt to transgress the confines of their traditional roles, is a result of the decrease in the power conferred on them by ideology and guaranteed by an economic monopoly. As we have seen, the force of ideologies is determined by the functioning of the categories of concrete objects, and where the functioning of these categories is anomalous or non-existent, the inter-subjective "doubly-specular" operation of ideology is diminished, ambiguous or non-existent, and consequently the force of the ideology is diffused and refracted. This is the case of those women writers who were single, had supportive husbands and established careers, or who were obliged to support financially husbands or relatives who were incapable of supporting themselves. An indication of the way that the force of the ideology of the subjugation of women decreases in anomalous or marginal circumstances is to be found encoded in the legal apparatus governing Victorian society, where women lost their power to control property or wealth upon marriage, whereas single women retained that right. For example, in 1850 Mrs Gaskell received the unprecedented sum of £20 for a short story: "I stared", she wrote, "and wondered if I was swindling them but I suppose I am not; and Wm has composedly buttoned it up in his pocket."¹¹⁶

The primacy of the economic foundation of the ideological disincentives to women writers

is highlighted by the case of Charlotte Yonge, who when she presented her first novel to her wealthy and authoritarian clergyman father, was severely admonished that a lady only published for three reasons; love of praise, love of money or the wish to do good. As Showalter puts it:

Mr Yonge was willing to bestow his approbation and withhold his anger if Charlotte was willing to write didactic fiction and to give away the profits. By doing good and taking no pay she was safely confined in a female and subordinate role within the family, and remained dependent on her father.¹¹⁷

It is only when the ideology that prescribes the reproductive role for women is not inter-subjectively enforced that women were able to attain a position of enough strength to challenge it. Financial crises involving loss of earning power of the family's male provider was frequently the occasion for the start of many a woman's literary career. The impecuniousness of the Reverend Calvin Stowe, the improvidence of Branwell Brontë, the importunateness of Harriet Martineau's mother and aunt, the untimely death of Mr Oliphant and the financial ruin of Monsieur de Beauvoir are well known as the source of so much female literary production. These are all cases where the ideological role models of producer and reproducer based upon the sexual division of labour are upset or reversed.

Writing, teaching and fanciwork were about the only occupations to which genteel middle class women deprived of a source of subsistence could turn to without a radical rupture with their environment. For these women and those single women who wished or needed to earn an independent income, professional writing was by far the most attractive prospect. Governessing, as the case of Charlotte Bronte reveals, was very poorly paid and a year spent writing an average three volume novel of which the copyright could be sold for £100 earned up to five times as much as could be earned in twelve months as a governess. The example of Adeline Sergeant, is instructive: she wrote seventy-five novels, none of which did particularly well, but writing at the rate of five novels a year and selling the copyrights for £100 a time, she made a comfortable living, in her best year, 1902, she made £1,500. Mrs Oliphant, who wrote more than one hundred and fifty published works after the premature death of her artist husband, managed to send her three sons to Eton from the proceeds of her writing. Mrs Gaskell able to buy a house out of her earnings at a cost of £3,000 "... for Mr Gaskell to retire and for a home for my unmarried daughters."¹¹⁸

Thus women were only able to engage in literary production by means of a loophole as it were, in the ideology which made it a rule to exclude women from all spheres of production. But women were only able to make use of this loophole because of a contradiction of capitalism that permitted the contravention of ideological standards for the sake of maximizing profit.

It was a similar contradiction that permitted the inhuman exploitation of working class women in factories and mines by a society that ostensibly upheld the sanctity of the family and motherhood. Alternatively, it could be argued that this ideology was a ruling class ideology that only applied to the women of the ruling class.

Women were only able to enter the literary profession, hitherto almost exclusively a male preserve, because there was a market for literature, especially fiction which could not be wholly supplied by male writers. The sharp increase in the number of fiction titles published at the end of the eighteenth century was directly due to the success of the circulating libraries, which also exercised a considerable influence over literary production for a century and provided a major outlet for women's novels. But the really dramatic expansion of literary production took place in the thirty years between 1820 and the mid-century when, according to Raymond Williams, the annual issue of titles rose from 580 to 2,600, a large proportion of which were novels. At the same time the introduction of steam-printing to books in the 1830's and 40's and the development of cheaper bindings made of cloth and board to replace leather allowed the price of new books to be halved, with a proportionate increase in production. A rapid increase in the population from seven million in 1750, eleven million in 1801, nearly twenty-one million in 1851 to thirty-seven million in 1901 coupled with a gradual but steady increase in literacy and the expansion of the middle-class also had an important effect on the production of literature. It was precisely at this time, from the 1840's on that women began to enter the profession in sufficient numbers to provoke complaints from male writers about the invasion of their preserve, although in fact, as Altick's study shows the proportion of women writers to men between 1800 and 1935 was about 20%.

WOMEN WRITERS AND THE CAPITALIST PRODUCTION OF LITERATURE

It was the whole ideological, economic and social environment surrounding the entry of women into the literary market that played a large part in determining the content, quality and form of women's literature. For the period when women began writing in significant numbers (from the 1840's) more or less coincided with the development of a means of literary production which permitted the capitalist exploitation of the expanding market for reading matter. The development of the instruments of production allowed for the first time the truly *mass* production of literature. The appearance of practicable type-setting machines, the stereotyping process, the chemical pulp process of paper production which reduced the proportional cost of paper in publications from two thirds to under one-tenth, permitted an unprecedented increase in the quantity of cheap printed material. At the same time, in accordance with the Marxist formula, there was a corresponding development in the means of distribution and consumption. The mass consumption and mass production of literary products was only made possible by the development of the means of mass distribution – the railways. E.J. Hobsbawm records that "in 1830 there were a few dozen miles of railways in all the world – chiefly consisting of the line from Liverpool to Manchester. By 1840 there were over 4,500 miles, by 1850 over 23,500."¹¹⁹ The introduction of railway bookstores by companies like W.H. Smith & Son provided outlets for cheap editions such as the Parlour Library and the Railway Library which reached a large, new and rapidly growing public.

However, contrary to the hopes and expectations of certain members of the educated elite, the mass production of literature did not lead to the proliferation of the classics, "highbrow" or "improving" literature for the edification of the uncultured masses, but instead produced a boom in sub-literary literature and the development of numerous para-literary genres. This situation led Matthew Arnold to complain in 1880 that instead of a widespread availability of civilized culture, the market was dominated by

a cheap literature, hideous and ignoble of aspect, like the tawdry novels which flare in the bookshelves of our railway stations, and which seemed designed, as so much else that is produced for the use of our middle-class seems designed, for people with a low standard of life.¹²⁰

The debasement of literature by the exploitation by capitalism of the means of mass production and exchange is a question which bears on Marx's thesis in the *Theories of Surplus Value* that capitalism is hostile to art.

The hostility of capitalism to art has its origins in the close relation of artistic production and the activity of material production. As we have seen, both activities have the same purpose and result of objectifying man's species powers in nature. Under the reign of the capitalist system of production the object of labour is separated from its producer and becomes the property of the capitalist. Thus the labourer is said to be alienated from his product; instead of the object of his labour confirming his species being, it now stands opposed to him as an alien object and denies it.¹²¹

Because the objects of his labour become alien to him so too does the whole of nature, since nature becomes less and less a means of life for the labourer, both in the sense of the means of life of his labour and of his subsistence. His means of subsistence is unrelated to what he produces, so that, for instance, it is immaterial to him whether he produces a ball bearing or a book since the alienation of his product reduces the interaction between the worker and his object into an abstract exchange of labour-time for money.

The objects of labour are estranged from the worker because his activity is estranged. Labour is no longer a means of self-expression and affirmation of the labourer's species-being, but is merely a means of subsistence; it has lost its free, conscious and creative character. The alienation of labour thus reduces man to his animal existence of merely surviving, reproducing himself through the basic natural activities of eating, drinking, sleeping and procreating. Because alienated labour does not belong to his essential being, the worker

does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind. Hence the worker feels himself only when he is not working; when he is working, he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working. His labour is therefore not voluntary but forced, it is *forced labour*.¹²²

Man is alienated from his fellow human beings because he can no longer relate to them as a species-being. Since he no longer possesses the object of his labour in which he has realized his subjectivity, he can no longer relate cooperatively and affirmatively by means of social production. His product belongs to an alien being, the capitalist, whose interest are opposed to those of the worker:

through estranged labour man not only produces his relationship to the object and to the act of production as to alien and hostile powers; he also produces the relationship in which other men stand to his production and to his product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men. Just as he creates his own production as a loss of reality, a punishment, and his own product as a loss, a product which does not belong to him, so he creates the domination of the non-producer over production and its product.¹²³

Labour, as we know, is in Marx's opinion the very definition of man a human being, and

therefore the alienation of labour means the dehumanization of man; it means the reduction of him to his natural, animal being. Through alienation man loses all contact with his human specificity and becomes an inhuman object abstractly related through the medium of an objectified abstract relationship (money) to other dehumanized objects.

In the same way that capitalism dehumanizes man's powers of production it also dehumanizes his powers of consumption. As we have seen, in order to appropriate an object, one must have developed the necessary powers of appropriation to a level suitable to these human powers realized in the object. But under capitalism there is only one power necessary for the appropriation of objects: ownership. Money is the means by which the power of ownership is expressed, just as money is the means by which the worker realizes his need for subsistence. As Marx said, "money is the *pimp* between need and object, between life and man's means of life."^{1 2 4} Money is the abstraction of all man's needs and powers and thus constitutes the universal value of all things. When labour becomes not the realization of human essence in the objects of nature but forced activity undertaken for a subsistence wage, then money appears as the alienated essence of man's species being. Thus human essence, labour, and the products of labour are all reduced to the one abstract entity known as commodity.

The inimicability of capitalism to artistic production lies in its hostility to that process shared by art and labour whereby both activities ideally realize man's species being in nature. By making commodities out of the products of man's species activity capitalism destroys the creative nature of those activities. Art and labour start out on a common basis as creative activities that express human essence, but they draw apart and become opposed to each other as the labour which creates practical use-values becomes wage-labour and loses its creative nature. Thus as long as artistic labour remains free from exploitation for surplus value it appears free, conscious, creative and human — all that material labour should be. But capitalist commodity production which tends to reduce all products to a standard or exchange value constantly threatens artistic products with a similar fate. In Vázquez's words: "The threat which constantly hangs over art in capitalist society is precisely this: that it will be treated in the only way that interests a word ruled by the law of surplus production, that is, according to economic criteria, as wage labour."^{1 2 5}

Artistic production increasingly takes the form of wage labour as artistic products are released into an anonymous market system of exchange that reduces them to the status of commodities. Commodities, by their very nature as abstractions, obliterate the concrete qualities that are expressed by their use-values. Instead, the value of a commodity is expressed by its exchange value which represents a unit of value common to all other commodities. In the form of commodities, the products of labour "have absolutely no connection with their physical

properties and with material relations arising therefrom."¹²⁶ The commodity is therefore eminently the product of dehumanized, alienated labour since the human subjectivity realized in it is eliminated. Instead of a product being the expression of a human power, and the means of satisfying a human need, and by so doing establishing a human relationship, as a commodity it does none of these. Its producer created the product neither to realize his subjective powers nor to meet the needs of any concrete individual but only to gain the basic means of subsistence. The owner of the product is only interested in its use-value so far as it affects the commodity's exchange value. But as a capitalist, the owner of the product is only interested in the exchange value which not only reproduces the variable part of the capital (that is the cost of the reproduction of labour power) that he has invested in it, but which also creates surplus value in the process of circulation. In other words, the capitalist is only interested in artistic products so long as the labour-power objectified in them is productive, i.e. surplus value. The only form of productive labour, for the capitalist, is wage-labour, the characteristic of which we have briefly discussed above.

Wage-labour, by its very nature is inimical to the nature of art: the quality of art as art is directly dependent on the degree to which its production escapes the form of wage labour. Wage labour denies the human relationship of a product which it reduces to the status of a commodity. A commodity is neither the expression of human powers nor the satisfaction of human needs. Yet art has these functions in the purest form. A work of art produced by wage labour cannot embody human relations but only relations between things; it would be a contradiction of its own artistic status. An example of this can be found in mass-produced fiction where we say that the characters never come "alive", are "wooden", are not "real".

Wage labour, as we have seen, is coercive, forced labour, undertaken unwillingly only out of the need to subsist. In this situation production does not exist for the producer, but rather the producer exists for the production. But artistic production, as a pre-eminently human activity, is in essence free production. When artistic production is undertaken as a means of survival, it ceases to be undertaken freely and thus debases its artistic nature. Marx touched on the threat to art, to writing in particular in his discussion of the freedom of the press:

A writer naturally must earn money in order to be able to live and write, but under no circumstances must he live and write in order to earn money . . . The writer in no wise considers his work as a *means*. It is an *end in itself*, so little is it a means for him and for others that he sacrifices *his* existence to *its* existence, when necessary . . . The writer who degrades [the press] by making it a material means deserves, as punishment for this inner slavery, outer slavery — censorship.¹²⁷

Marx, with his long and trying experience with the publishing apparatus, and his chronic financial straits, was very much aware of the difficulty of reconciling freedom of expression with the need to live.¹²⁸ Art is also dehumanized and the artist's freedom curtailed by the imposition

of the external necessity of having to produce for an anonymous commodity market. The subject/object relationship is destroyed when the artistic product becomes a commodity. The artist no longer affirms his species being in it; he no longer creates for a concrete consumer, but for an abstract market; he no longer produces because of an inner need but because of an outer necessity. The consumer no longer feels his species being confirmed in the aesthetic product because its commodity status denied the expression of the artist's subjectivity; it no longer fulfils or develops his human powers of appropriation, since it can be appropriated by that very substance that was the artist's reward for his labour: money. Vázquez delineates the consequences of artistic production for the commodity market for the creative freedom of the artist:

When an artist creates because of a need to earn a living, and consequently for the market, he creates for another rather than for himself, but this other has an external relationship with him, much as the relationship between worker and capitalist. His activity assumes a formal, abstract character; the more abstract and formal, the more the artist limits his individual creative personality in deference to tastes and ideals which govern the market. This limitation of the artist's creative personality implies a limitation of his creative freedom, because this freedom can only manifest itself in the realization of this personality and not in the leveling along with other personalities which is necessarily imposed to the extent that artistic labor becomes formal and abstract in response to the exigencies of the market. Creative freedom is a necessary condition for the realization of the artist's personality, but is incompatible with an extension of the laws of capitalist material production to the sphere of art.^{1 2 9}

The capitalist criteria of productivity actually favour those artistic products that most closely conform to the definition of a commodity. The aesthetic value of the object is a matter of more or less indifference to the capitalist whose only interest in it is in its ability to generate a profit on his investment. He evaluates the work of art in terms of its exchange value rather than its aesthetic use-value or its human significance. The products most conducive to the realization of surplus value are those returning the highest profit on the original investment. In the publishing industry, for example, which involves a risky and delicate judgement balancing the estimate of the size of a book's public, the size of the edition, the format, the binding, thickness of paper, the illustrations, etc., any factor that reduces the element of risk, chance or guesswork is likely to increase the profit margin. One of the most effective ways of doing this is to standardize the product and thus exercise some control over its consumption. This is particularly effective with stereotyped components like detective and espionage fiction, science fiction, romance, westerns, war fiction and certain types of children's books. Through the selection and promotion of products of proven popularity, the calculations of production and consumption can be made with more accuracy. In this way, tried and tested forms, genres and writers are favoured at the expense of new or innovative products.

The kind of products chosen and promoted by capitalist methods of production tend to

run counter to more truly aesthetic products. This tendency is reinforced by the dialectical interaction between objects and the powers of those who appropriate them.

Artistic objects that are created freely, consciously as the full objectification of the artist's sensibility can only be perceived and appropriated by someone whose powers and sense are developed to a corresponding level. At the same time, the appropriation of that object will both develop the consumer's powers to a new level and will also create in him new needs. However, an artistic product of which the human content is alienated could not possibly develop the consumer's powers and senses, but could only correspond to the powers and sense of a consumer who was similarly alienated. Instead of each new object resulting in "a fresh confirmation of *human* powers and a fresh enrichment of human nature", new objects and modes of production under capitalism have the effect of reversing this development:

Each person speculates on creating a *new* need in the other, with the aim of forcing him to make a new sacrifice, placing him in a new dependence and seducing him into a new kind of *enjoyment* and hence into economic ruin.¹³⁰

The application of this idea to the domain of literary production is particularly striking when we reflect that the ideal product for a capitalist publisher is the book which is consumed quickly and discarded and which creates an appetite for more of the same fare. Books that are read slowly, read repeatedly and enjoyed in a novel way at every rereading are less profitable. Consequently, best sellers tend to emphasize sensation over sophistication, a dynamic plot over the subtle unfolding of an intricate relationship and extraordinary situations and protagonists over the ordinary and mundane. It is certainly true that novels of this nature have a kind of addictive effect that stimulates a demand for more while only temporarily satisfying the appetite for fantasy. Marx describes this effect in the vitriolic terms that he characteristically reserves for the more iniquitous effects of capitalism:

... the expansion of production and needs becomes the *inventive* and ever *calculating* slave of inhuman, refined, unnatural and *imaginary* appetites — for private property does not know how to transform crude need into *human* need. Its *idealism* is *fantasy, caprice* and *infatuation*. No eunuch flatters his despot more basely or uses more infamous means to revive his flagging capacity for pleasure, in order to win a surreptitious favour for himself, than does the eunuch of industry, the manufacturer to steal himself a silver penny or two or coax the gold from the pocket of his dearly beloved neighbour.¹³¹

In accordance with the rule of mutual determination of production and consumption, the production of debased or alienated literature thus sets up a vicious cycle of demand and supply that does nothing to develop or elevate the human powers of the participants in the relationship. For the production of alienated literature, like the production of unalienated literature, creates its own public:

The need which consumption feels for the object is created by the perception of it. The

object of art — like every other product — creates a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty. Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject.¹³²

Similarly, consumption determines production inasmuch as the object of production is only realized in consumption and also consumption forms the goal and purpose of production. Products are created to satisfy specific needs and are only realized in the satisfaction of these needs.

This mutual determination of production and consumption has important implications for the ideological content of aesthetic products. Unalienated art which sets up a progressive dialectic between the product and its consumption, will necessarily be innovative and experimental as it develops in tandem with the development of the powers of perception and appropriation of its public and strives to satisfy the new needs created in the act of consumption. With alienated art, however, which does not develop or “humanize” man’s powers, the interaction between production and consumption is static. The result is that the art that most successfully escapes ingurgitation by capitalist forms of production questions reality, while the art that is most successfully produced according to capitalist formulae affirms reality. This fact was recognized by Walter Benjamin in his essay “The Author as Producer” when he wrote that “the tendency of a work of literature can be politically correct only if it is also correct in the literary sense.”¹³³ He believed this because he believed that “this tendency may consist in a progressive development of literary technique, or in a regressive one.”¹³⁴ A progressive technique involves a progressive political orientation, because capitalism seek to freeze the development of artistic technique in its tracks, and in its place attempts to reproduce existing products in a movement as it were, of lateral expansion. Artistic technique develops despite capitalism rather than because of it. In opposition to the development of artistic technique, capitalism seeks to turn artistic objects into commodities. It was this process that Brecht and Benjamin tried to warn intellectuals about: the tendency of the capitalist apparatus of literary production to treat their work as commodities regardless of its concrete qualities. As long as they were not aware of this tendency of capitalism, and of their own status as producers vis à vis the publishing apparatus, then they would only succeed in supplying that apparatus instead of changing it:

... to supply a production apparatus without trying, within the limits of the possible, to change it, is a highly disputable activity even when the material supplied appears to be of a revolutionary nature. For we are confronted with the fact — of which there has been no shortage of proof in Germany over the last decade — that the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication is capable of assimilating, indeed of propagating, an astonishing amount of revolutionary themes without ever seriously putting into question its own continued existence or that of the class which owns it. In any case this remains true so long as it is supplied by hacks, albeit revolutionary hacks.¹³⁵

Benjamin’s recognition of the bourgeois domination of the publishing apparatus anticipates Althusser’s recognition that literature is one of the many Ideological State apparatuses. The

publishing apparatus is controlled by the bourgeoisie and serves its interests, namely the retention by that class of the control over the State power.

Contrary to the usual formulation that regards high or serious literature as bourgeois as opposed to "popular" or trivial literature, in fact, ideologically speaking, the opposite is true. For in the bourgeois social formation, for which intellectually "its starting-point and its goal are always, if not always consciously, an apologia for the existing order of things or at least the proof of their immutability,"¹³⁶ it is the so-called "popular" literature in which bourgeois reality is affirmed. Serious literature, on the other hand, which discourses upon the themes of change and development rather than the resolution of threats to the existing order and a return to the *status quo*, questions reality, casts doubt upon banal anodynes and is, in Arnold Kettle's words "revolutionary in the sense of evoking the revolutionary nature of reality. For reality is not something static, separate or cosy; it is something changing and challenging."¹³⁷

The mass production of literature along capitalist lines coincided, or rather was concomitant with, the rise of the publisher as distinct from the printer and bookseller as a middleman who coordinated the various elements of literary production on a mass scale; selection, manufacture and distribution. Hitherto, the author had entered into direct negotiation with the printer who was often also a bookseller in order to publish his work. The publisher as an independent entrepreneur who took the risk of producing a book in return for the profits was a product of the second half of the eighteenth century. By the time that the publisher was fully established, he came to exercise enormous power over the whole domain of literary production, being responsible not only for the success or failure of literary works, but also for their very existence. For the publisher takes the role of mediator between the writer and the public, exercising considerable influence over each party through his often subjective criteria of selection:

Selection presupposes that the publisher — or his delegate — imagines a possible public and chooses from the mass of writing which is submitted to him the works best suited for that public. This sort of conjecture has a twofold and contradictory nature: on the one hand, it involves a judgement of fact as to what exactly the possible public desires, what it will buy; and on the other hand, a value judgement as to what *should be* the public's taste.¹³⁸

It is this individual with such powers of censorship that women were obliged to deal with when they entered the literary market. In some ways the existence of someone skilled in business, impartially seeking a profit and capable of dealing with harsh, unsentimental financial transaction assisted women in their efforts to publish. Such business dealing would have been difficult to reconcile with the ideological notions of seemly behaviour for women. But at the same time, the material obstacles and ideological prejudices which impeded first-hand business dealing by women, coupled with the kind of isolation in which many rural writers like the Brontës lived in, would have made women writers more dependent on the goodwill of their

publishers. Their lack of business skills and the consequent dependence on their publishers was evident in, and reinforced by, the most common method of payment for manuscripts: the outright sale of copyright. This meant that writers were under constant pressure to produce more work in a system that has all the marks of the reduction of literary work to wage labour. Showalter gives Dinah Mulock Craik as an example of the tone of supplication that women writers were forced to adopt when addressing their publishers: after writing three novels for which she sold the copyrights for £150 each, she wrote a fourth, *Head of the Family* which went into six editions, but for which she received nothing more; feeling cheated, she wrote to the publisher Edward Chapman in an apologetic tone, and seeking a gallant response to her professions of female weakness:

Do you think that out of the profits of all that you could spare some addition to the one hundred and fifty pounds you gave me? — I know that it is not a right — and yet it seems hardly unfair . . . I have not been able to work this winter — and may not be able to finish my fireside book for months — so that it becomes important to me to gather up all I can — My head is tired out with having worked to [sic] hard when I was young — and now when I could get any amount of pay, I can't write.¹³⁹

It was only after they had gained some measure of financial security that women could adopt a more assertive tone and demand their rights from their publishers.

However, the whole set of material and ideological circumstances surrounding the entry of women into the professional writing market served to make women much more dependent on their publishers than male writers; a dependency that left them open to the most profound inroads of capitalist publishing methods on their creative freedom.

At the inception of the era of mass literature, capitalist publishing interests were fortuitously provided with a socially depressed group of educated or semi-educated writers for whom writing was often a desperate and sole source of income and who were thus ideal for manipulating into a dependent proletariat of literary production. Moreover, members of this group were often in the highly malleable position of being both grateful and half-incredulous for being able to publish at all, and guilty that they should do so, such were the ideological prejudices against women writers. All these factors, financial insecurity, lack of self-esteem, anxiety when they were engaging in an “unwomanly” activity and a long cultivated habit of deference to male authority and intellect tended to make women more readily acquiescent to the demands, advice and direction of publishers. Very few were in the position of George Eliot to maintain enough of an independent and high-minded stance to castigate the “silly novels by Lady Novelists”. More typical of women writers’ dependence on the goodwill of their male publishers is the example given in a letter by Mrs Elizabeth Lyn Linton, otherwise “unfemininely” capable and astute, to her publisher Blackwood on the occasion of his disapproval of a piece of her work:

I am so very sorry you did not like it! Could I not alter it to suit you? Indeed, indeed I am teachable and grateful for criticism, kindly (if not illnaturally) bestowed, and have very little literary selfwill in the way of holding to my own against the advice of wiser and more experienced people . . . If I could interest such a man as yourself I could fear nothing and would gladly farm out my talent to his guidance and to his advantage as well as my own.¹⁴⁰

As a result of their equivocal entry into the profession women were in no position to assert an "authentic voice of their own". Even if they were not channelled by necessity or force of habit into churning out volume upon volume of domestic novels and sensational romances aimed specifically at a female public, women writers were still very conscious of the restricting standards of what it was suitable for a woman to write and for women to read.

One of the inevitable tendencies accompanying mass production is the fragmentation and specialization of production and consumption. The expansion of literary production in the nineteenth century was no exception, with the development of genres and specialized publics. It was well known, to the point of becoming a rather jaded joke at their expense, that women had a propensity for indulging in romantic novels. The abundant leisure of the restricted and privatized middle class women and the widespread custom of women reading aloud to each other certainly point to the novel having a large female public. It has also been suggested that the tremendous growth of newspaper consumption would have reduced the amount of time available to men for the reading of fiction. The novelists were very much aware of this female audience and produced their work with this in mind. Some of the highest moral didacticism and lowest sentimentality in Dickens, for example, could only be aimed at women.

But if women tended to be more realistic about male/female relationships, they nevertheless wholeheartedly endorsed the prevailing ideology of the family and the subordination of women, and except for a few notable exceptions never openly challenged the productive relations governing society or the sexual division of labour integral to those productive relations. The fact is that ever since the rise of the bourgeoisie and its liberal ideology there had been a small but persistent strain of feminism in English radical politics. The women associated with feminist issues often belonged to the same milieu as the women novelists, corresponded with them, and even at times were friends with them. But although the women writers were necessarily conscious of their almost unique position in having a rewarding profession and economic independence, seldom, if ever, did women writers associate themselves openly with feminist issues. No established woman writer of any distinction came out in support of the suffrage movement, although several feminists turned to writing fiction during the course of the struggle. On the contrary, most women writers disapproved of female emancipation and some actively and vocally campaigned against it, Mrs Humphrey Ward in Rosalind Miles' words "proving so effective in the anti-suffrage league that she is personally credited with retarding the emancipation by some

years".¹⁴¹ Even the greatest of women writers remained tepid when it came to the "condition of women" question. When quizzed on this subject by her friend and biographer Mrs Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë replied that there were "evils – deep-rooted in the foundation of the social system, which no efforts of ours can touch: of which we cannot complain: of which it is advisable not too often to think".¹⁴² George Eliot, who contributed substantially to the foundation of Girton College, was nevertheless wary of publically endorsing feminist claims, painfully conscious as she was of her precarious position in society as an eminent novelist and intellectual and at the same time living with Lewes outside the bonds of matrimony. In support of Eliot's feminist views the passage from *Daniel Deronda* is often quoted where the Princess Halm-Eberstein exclaims bitterly to her son:

You are not a woman. You may try – but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out – "this is the Jewish woman: this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by fixed receipt".¹⁴³

It is tempting to regard this statement as personal, but it must not be forgotten that this woman is a foreigner and an opera singer, both dubious qualities to the average middle class English reader. Moreover, she has totally rejected her female role, rebelling against her father's authority, taking a career, giving away her only child, probably practising birth control and openly claiming "I had a right to be free. I had a right to seek my freedom from a bondage I hated".¹⁴⁴ But, as she herself says, "every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster" and there is no doubt that she would indeed have been considered a monster by Eliot's readers. To underline the dangers of such an unorthodox approach to life, the Princess is portrayed as embittered and full of doubts as she nears the end of her life the victim of a painful terminal disease. The other women in the novel who rebel against the submissiveness and self-effacement of the traditional female role suffer equally harsh fates: Mrs Glasher, having left her husband for Grandcourt finds herself doomed to suffer for ever "the lot of a woman destitute of acknowledged social dignity", while Gwendolen is left in reduced financial circumstances with an almost intolerable burden of guilt and separated from the man she has come to love and depend on.

In the more typical novels of the same era adherence to the ideology of the family and patience and passivity was more overtly and didactically prescribed. At a time when Caroline Norton, whose alcoholic husband had prevented her from seeing her dying child, was campaigning to limit the legal control of husbands over wives, and shocking stories of abuse suffered by wives at the hands of their husbands were circulating, many novels dealt with the themes of noble endurance, patience and martyrdom of oppressed wives and mothers. Mrs Henry Wood, for example, wrote the best seller *East Lynne* (1862) in which a wife, frustrated,

disappointed and bored to death by her marriage runs away with a vile seducer, abandoning her husband and children. As a reward for this betrayal of her female role, she is abandoned by her lover, and loses her illegitimate child in a train crash where she is hideously disfigured. In penance she returns in disguise to her husband as a governess to her own children, to find that he has divorced her and married her worst enemy. To further rub salt into her wounds, she has to preside over the deathbed of her son without revealing her identity. Mrs Wood goes so far as to authorially intervene so as to make her message absolutely clear:

Lady-wife-mother! Should you ever be tempted to abandon your home, so will you awaken! Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life, though they may magnify themselves to your crushed spirit as beyond the endurance of woman to bear, *resolve* to bear them; fall down upon your knees and pray to be enabled to bear them.¹⁴⁵

So unanimously did women writers uphold the moral virtues of marriage and motherhood that it appears that it was almost a condition of women's entry into the domain of literary production that they should not question the ideologically prescribed reproductive role to which the capitalist relations of production required women to conform. It is almost as if they felt obliged to redouble their efforts to promote the values of domesticity and self-denial the more that they themselves became independent of the home, and the duties of marriage and maternity the more they found the means of self-expression and self-determination. As Rosalind Miles exclaims with some chagrin:

Again and again it is astonishing to realise the ardour with which these women embodied in their fiction the imposed social attitudes of the dominant sex. Women writers were more influential even than men in keeping other women in a carefully defined and rigidly restricted place. To borrow a metaphor from political philosophy, their colonisation by male supremacists was complete, they policed each other.¹⁴⁶

This almost universal conformity of women writers with the sexist values of their patriarchal society is not so astonishing when we consider, as we have done, the total configuration of the society and its relations of production within which they initiated their careers with such difficulty. As we have seen, the whole social experience of women, then as now, was designed to fit them for their role as reproducers — reproducers of labour power and reproducers of ideology. Their primary role, their destiny and their social definition was found in marriage and maternity. Literature, on the other hand, had been almost exclusively a male preserve, and to become a professional writer conflicted with all the values and expectations they had absorbed from birth. Furthermore, literature was a branch of artistic production, and all production was dominated and controlled by men. What else could they do but adopt the values and ideology of the producers? As Elaine Showalter puts it: “. . . rather than confronting the values of their society, these women novelists were competing for its rewards. For women, as for other subcultures, literature became a symbol of achievement.”¹⁴⁷

But if these women novelists of the nineteenth century had escaped their social destinies to become producers in one sense, in another they still conformed to their ideologically prescribed function: the reproduction of the ideology which maintained the relations of production. As we have seen, one of the most important functions delegated to women in the capitalist social formation is the mediation of ideology to her children in a way that reproduces the ideology of class – and sex– divided society through time from generation to generation. The reproduction of the governing ideology of a society is clearly an essential condition for maintaining the relations of production and thus the whole social formation of a society. Thus, while women escaped from the actual conditions of domesticity with its concomitant function of the material and ideological reproduction of labour power, they still retained the function of ideological reproduction. Instead of transmitting the ideology of the family and female subordination to children, in time of burgeoning feminism, they adopted the function of transmitting ideology to their peers. Just as women who engaged in careers outside the home such as nursing or teaching found that their jobs were extensions of their domestic roles, so too did women writers find that their literary careers developed along lines already marked out by the very ideology they were obliged to reproduce. The extension of women's ideological role into literature was most evident in the religious novels which developed rapidly in the 1890s as women attempted to make use of the only avenue open to them to join the debate surrounding the Oxford Movement. Moral guardianship was also evident in the novels of social criticism which exposed the injustices of slavery, industrial exploitation and other social evils. The novels of Minna Kautsky and Margaret Harkness which achieved fame by being criticized by Engels typify this genre which women felt free to adopt because it conformed with their social role as nurturers and moral police. Women were able to champion all kinds of oppressed minorities in their novels – slaves, chartists, millhands in Yorkshire, revolutionaries in Europe, patriots in Italy, persecuted religious minorities – but they were never able to openly challenge their own oppressors.

There were only two modes of expression open to women novelists, the archetypes of which were Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. The former established a feminine tradition in literature which persists to this day, not only in English literature but also in American and French literature. She achieved this by casting the themes of a woman's passionate search for identity and its resolution in a dominating man in the old mould of the Gothic romance, and in doing so, she earmarked this form for women. George Eliot became the representative of the "honorary male" mode in which the writer adopts a masculine tone along with male standards and values. Both modes of course adopted and endorsed the ideological standards of the sex-based social hierarchy, making it clear that women who broke the bounds of their proper sphere would inevitably suffer.

However, it is evident that many women writers did not accept the male values and ideology wholeheartedly, but instead found a number of ways to sublimate the rebellion they felt against the injustice, the confinement and the restrictions that were their lot as women. The anger and frustration they felt found an avenue of release in the protest fiction which I have already mentioned, as they profoundly identified with the situation of other oppressed and exploited groups. Virginia Woolf identified an undercurrent of suppressed anger in women's literature which in her opinion marred their work, feeling as she did that literary labour should be undertaken in an atmosphere of calm and in a mood of impassive detachment. As an example of the distortion suffered by a work in which this suppressed anger and frustration bubbles to the surface she quotes the passage in *Jane Eyre* where Jane longs to escape the restrictions of her quiet secluded life as a country governess so that she could travel, visit the towns, meet people and enrich her life:

Who blames me? Many, no doubt, and I shall be called discontented. I could not help it: the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes . . .

It is vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.¹⁴⁸

Woolf regards this passage as a defect which deforms and twists her book and prevents her from getting "her genius expressed whole and entire". Nowadays we would see this current of suppressed anger as a positive factor which generates the electrifying tension, the pace and drama which compelled the reader of Brontë's original publishers Smith and Elder to read through her manuscript in one day. For the whole story of *Jane Eyre* is the story of Jane's resistance to various forms of male tyranny; resistance against the tyranny of John Reed at Gateshead Hall, against the brutal repression of her individuality by Mr Brocklehurst at Lowood, the ascetic denial of her sexuality at St John Rivers and against sexual domination of Rochester. Woolf believed that *Jane Eyre* like many other women's novels had "a flaw in the centre that had rotted them" and that this was because Brontë "had altered her values in deference to the opinion of others"¹⁴⁹ I believe, to the contrary, that *Jane Eyre* achieved greatness precisely to the extent that Brontë had not "altered her values in deference to the opinions of others". She was able to express her anger at the oppression she suffered, albeit in an oblique and metaphorical way, and objectify her subjectivity in the work so that her essential humanity was communicated to others not only of her own generation but also of succeeding generations. She was able to do this partly because she was relatively free from all the ideological and material conditions which really did

succeed in "deforming and twisting" women's novels. The extent to which *Jane Eyre*, which after all was founded on the rather hoary form of the traditional Gothic romance, and which has since inspired innumerable banal chronicles of governesses and rich, rugged, paternal patricians, was atypical is to be seen in the reception it received at the time of its publication. As Ellen Moers writes:

Jane Eyre was read as a dangerous and angry book in its own time, a woman's book in the radical sense of the term; "we do not hesitate to say," said the *Quarterly Review* in 1848, "that the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre*".¹⁵⁰

It is perhaps a recognition of the relatively unalloyed realization of woman's humanity in this novel that it has become one of the paragons of women's writing all over the western world.

The restrictions on women's freedom to express themselves completely and honestly were numerous and complex. We have examined some of them. The material and ideological obstacles to publication; the tendency for women to be reduced out of necessity to artistic wage-labouring, having nothing else to sell but their labour; the ideology which makes professional artistic production an alien activity for women. These restrictions were both internal and external. Virginia Woolf identified one source of restriction as "The perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue" . . .

. . . that persistent voice, now grumbling, now patronizing, now domineering, now grieved, now shocked, now angry, now avuncular, that voice which cannot let women alone, but must be at them, like some too conscientious governess, adjuring them, like Sir Egerton Brydges, to be refined; dragging even into the criticism of poetry criticism of sex; admonishing them, if they be good and win, as I suppose, some shiny prize, to keep within certain limits which the gentleman in question thinks suitable.¹⁵¹

The internal counterpart of "the eternal pedagogue" was "the Angel in the House", Woolf's term for the internalised ideology that insisted that women should write in a feminine way, charming, sympathetic, refined, and never crude, forthright or improper. It was that property in women's conditioning that, to use a loaded term, emasculated their writing, which prohibited them for reasons of propriety from frankly talking about their feelings, from expressing passionate but unseemly desires, from discussing their bodies or sex or from being critical of men in general:

This I believe to be a very common experience with women writers — they are impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex. For though men sensibly allow themselves great freedom in these respects, I doubt that they can realise or control the extreme severity with which they condemn such freedom in women.¹⁵²

This attitude persists even now for what else but the *frisson* produced by an awareness of the

sex could have been responsible for the success of novels like Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* which is neither a particularly good novel nor sexually frank by male standards.

One way in which women were able, at least in part, to get around these ideological restrictions was to make use of a male persona. Not only did authors adopt male pseudonyms, and there is evidence that this stratagem was not only practised for reasons of personal concealment or in the hope of impartial criticism, but that it affected the whole tone and content of the work; they also transmuted their "unfeminine" desires, feelings, behaviour, etc. into male persona. By projecting themselves into their male characters, women writers were able, on the grounds of realism, to give expression to a far wider range of human behavioural possibilities. It is a device which is still current among women writers and it is certainly an eloquent comment on a society in which the sex-based division of labour and ideologically determined roles prohibits women from realising the full range of their human potential in their female characters. A case in point is Simone de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins*, in which she felt it necessary to split the fictional representation of her own personality (many of de Beauvoir's characters are heavily autobiographical) into a male part and a female part. Even though she herself is a writer, she felt it inappropriate to portray a fictional writer as a woman:

Peignant un écrivain, je désirais que le lecteur vît en lui un semblable et non une bête curieuse; mais beaucoup plus qu'un homme, une femme qui a pour vocation et pour métier d'écrire est une exception. (Ce mot n'est synonyme ni de monstre, ni de merveille; je le prends dans un sens statistique.) Je n'ai donc pas confié mon stylo à Anne mais à Henri¹⁵³

Even using this device, however, women were still inhibited when it came to writing frankly about sexual experience or expressing openly feminist views. To take the example of de Beauvoir, again, there is only one explicit sexual scene in her entire fictional work, occurring in *Les Mandarins* (this scene was almost completely expurgated in the English translation). Sartre, on the other hand, whose values, social milieu, formative intellectual experience and influences, and indeed whose whole adult life have been practically identical with those of de Beauvoir, evinces none of these same inhibitions in his fiction.

The fact that we can use a writer like Simone de Beauvoir to illustrate many of the obstacles that women have to face to write freely and honestly is evidence of the enduring nature of these obstacles; they are not only a nineteenth century British phenomenon, but are still current and in many other countries besides. Simone de Beauvoir is herself an anomaly, as she readily admits, in that she is one of the very few women in France who are able to live solely on the proceeds of their writing. The total number of professional writers in France is itself minimal, and although there are no figures, the proportion of professional women authors must be even smaller: of the 9,000 who publish regularly in that country, only 600 "bénéficient du statut d'écrivain professionnel et ont droit aux avantages sociaux qu'il prouve,"¹⁵⁴ and only 500 live

solely by their pens (1977 figures). Novelists would make up an even smaller number since of the 7,600 new titles published annually, representing the work of between 6,000 and 6,500 authors, only between 1,500 and 2,000 are novels, and this figure has been decreasing each year. This is in a country where the proportion of the population who read books at all is comparatively high, 43%, compared with Canada (40%) and Australia (35%), for instance; in Great Britain the figure is 55%. France is therefore a favourable microcosm of the book publishing business, and it is worth examining the situation in that country in some detail as an illustration of the problems that face all women writers to-day.

One informative indicator of the situation of the contemporary woman writer in France is the awarding of literary prizes. These prizes are important to authors because the winning of them is a great assistance to becoming financially independent. This is not so because of the prize money involved (the sum is often nominal: 5,000F for the *Prix Fémina*; 20,000F for the *Grand Prix National des Lettres*), but because a prize-winning novel assures the author of a best-selling edition the following year. Where an addition of 100,000 represents a best seller, the winner of the Goncourt can expect an edition of 120,000 to 500,000; the Fémina 80,000 to 180,000; the Renaudot 60,000 to 100,000; and the Prix Interallié 100,000. In 1973, the Goncourt winner was assured an edition of 460,000 with half a dozen translations and royalties of between 600,000 and 1,000,000 francs. Simone de Beauvoir's winning of the Goncourt in 1954 for *Les Mandarins* meant that she could buy a car and a flat and live in comfortable, though by no means extravagant circumstances for the rest of her life. But again, de Beauvoir's case is singular: the Prix Goncourt had been awarded annually since 1903 (with a single omission in 1940), but it had only been awarded to one woman before her (Beatrix Beck in 1952). Since then, only one other woman has been awarded the Goncourt (Anna Langfus in 1962). The other prizes show a similar predominance of male winners: The Prix Albert-Londres has been awarded continually since 1933, but never to a woman; the Grand Prix National des Lettres has been run since 1951, but only in 1975 was it won by a woman, Marguerite Yourcenar; the Prix Theophraste-Renaudot has been awarded 52 times and only four of these to women. Perhaps most significant is the case of the prestigious Prix Fémina which was founded in 1904 by the directors of the review "Vie Heureuse" (later succeeded by "Fémina"), "pour encourager les lettres et rendre plus étroites les relations de confraternité entre les femmes des lettres"; this prize was only won by women 21 times in its entire history.

The lack of representation by women writers among the literary prize-winners may be in part due to the fact that, with the exception of the Fémina, there has been only one woman elected to the juries who decide the prize-winning novel (Françoise Mallet-Joris was elected to the Goncourt jury in 1970); but it is more likely that the dominance of men in this domain is the concrete result of all the impediments that women face in their literary careers.

Simone de Beauvoir is also exceptional in that she had an education and a job. She was one of only 10% or so of women of her generation who were in a position to undertake higher education. More significantly, perhaps, is the fact that she remained unmarried, and established a liaison with a man who encouraged rather than hindered her writing and did not restrict her freedom: of her generation (those born between 1906 and 1910) 90.5% of women married before the age of fifty. The fact that she could work as a lycée teacher also put her in a fortunate, but singular position for a woman writer. As we have seen, the number of full-time novelists is very small, and the financial returns for published works nowadays rarely represent a comfortable standard of living. An author's income can be calculated fairly accurately, and an examination of the figures show that while the income of publishing houses has increased by a third in the four years from 1970, authors' income in France is often below the minimum wage. Unless an author sells the copyright of his work outright, he can expect royalties on sales of 3% to 6% on paperback and 5% to 20% on bound books. The percentage is often progressive, and an established author can receive 10% on the first 6,000 copies, 12% from 6,000 to 20,000, and 15% above that; 20% is a very rare figure. Paperbacks sell on average at 3F a copy, hardbacks at 10F. However, most literary works are only published in editions of 5,200 or less; 24% from 6,000 to 12,000, 8% from 12,000 to 18,000; 6.5% from 18,000 to 24,000, 5% from 24,000 to 36,000 and 7.5% above 36,000. Professional writing is thus a livelihood which hardly guarantees a comfortable life-style; as the writers of *Quid 1977* put it:

Un romancier régulier (ils sont rares) qui vendrait tous les ans un roman à 30.000 ex (en édition brochée à 10F) s'assurait un revenu d'ouvrier qualifié. Que son roman ne tire qu'à 10.000 et son revenu descendra au-dessous du SMIG . . .¹⁵⁵

Robert Escarpit described the situation more succinctly: "a young novelist who takes his manuscript to a publisher with the idea of making ten thousand francs from the sale of his work has less chance of making that amount than if he bought the tenth part of a ticket in the National Lottery."¹⁵⁶

The poor financial returns for writing ensure that most writers have to have other sources of income. A survey quoted by Escarpit published by *L'Express*, November 27, 1954, dealing with 128 novels published that year showed that; 41% were written by 'men of letters', 16% by professors, 10% by lawyers, 7% by civil servants, 5% by engineers and 2% by doctors.¹⁵⁷ As we have seen, it is from these very positions which allow a social, economic and intellectual life compatible with writing, that women are excluded. It is for this reason that women who wish to make a career out of writing are often forced to turn to . . .

. . . the vast domain of the alimentary literature of the "potboilers", as the English say. That kind of work may have its moments of nobility, especially in the detective novel and the adventure novel; it also has its moments of ugliness. Organized in *factories*, potboilers can provide comfortable incomes to those *managers of literature*, of whom

Alexander Dumas was an example, but who flourish today more than ever. It is here that the proletariat of the pen, slave labourers, find work in writing what others sign or what the merchants of this sub-literature bring out under pink, candy-coated pseudonyms. Nine-tenths of the population satisfy their reading hunger with such novels.¹⁵⁸

In this thesis I have tried to demonstrate how women's writing cannot be meaningfully considered apart from the social, economic and ideological circumstance of its authors. I have tried to show how the capitalist system of production allocates women a role in the social formation that is essential to the reproduction of the human means and relations of that productive system. The sexual division of labour uninvolved in this system is maintained and reproduced by various ideological apparatuses, the most important being the family and the school, ultimately guaranteed by the repressive apparatus of the State. It is the same ideology that prescribes women's reproductive and powerless role in the capitalist social formation that determines their entry into the literary market, firstly by creating an array of material and ideological obstacles to that entry, and secondly by ensuring that their literary work accords with the ideology of the ruling class which controls the means of literary production.

Understanding these social circumstances conditioning women's writing, we are in a better position to understand why the works of female authors of the past have little to offer contemporary feminists in the way of positive role models, and why so many of them appear to have gone over to the other side as it were. It was simply a matter of conforming to the ideology of the system, or suffering artistic death. Often feminists turn to these authors in the hope that, because they have risen above, or at least attained a different perspective on the narrow and stultifying destiny of the average woman, women writers of the past will have something positive to say about the condition of women: just as often this quest is disappointed. Women writers who seem clearly to offer feminist themes and positive heroines in their works, like Christina Stead, for example, are found to reject feminism with an unexpected acerbity. Simone de Beauvoir only declared herself a feminist over a decade after the publication of *Le Deuxième Sexe*.

It is only in the last five years or so that there has seemed to be a positive chance that women's writing can be liberated from the ideological tyranny of the male ruling class. The setting up of women's presses and publishing houses such as Virago in London, *L'édicions des femmes* in Paris, the Feminist Press in New York, Daughters Inc. in Vermont and the Shameless Hussy Press in California, has meant that women have some control over the means of literary production, and have an ideological apparatus of their own.

NOTES

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Table 3. THE GROWTH OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE ECONOMY

COUNTRY	1960		1970	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Australia	1,800,000	35.0	2,200,000	38.0
Belgium	1,200,000	30.0	1,500,000	32.0
Canada	1,500,000	28.0	2,000,000	32.0
Denmark	1,000,000	35.0	1,300,000	38.0
France	1,800,000	28.0	2,200,000	30.0
Germany	1,500,000	32.0	1,800,000	35.0
Japan	1,200,000	25.0	1,500,000	28.0
Sweden	1,000,000	40.0	1,300,000	42.0
United States	1,800,000	28.0	2,200,000	32.0

APPENDIX

Figures obtained from *The Role of Women in the Economy: a Summary based on ten National Reports* by Martha Darling for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 1975.

Australia	1970
Canada	1970
Denmark	1970
France	1970
Germany	1970
Japan	1970
Sweden	1970
United States	1970

Table 4. PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

COUNTRY	1960		1970	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Australia	1,800,000	35.0	2,200,000	38.0
Belgium	1,200,000	30.0	1,500,000	32.0
Canada	1,500,000	28.0	2,000,000	32.0
Denmark	1,000,000	35.0	1,300,000	38.0
France	1,800,000	28.0	2,200,000	30.0
Germany	1,500,000	32.0	1,800,000	35.0
Japan	1,200,000	25.0	1,500,000	28.0
Sweden	1,000,000	40.0	1,300,000	42.0
United States	1,800,000	28.0	2,200,000	32.0

Table 1: THE GROWTH IN WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION, 1950-1972

COUNTRY	WORKING WOMEN ^a AS % OF ALL WOMEN					
	YEAR	%	YEAR	%	YEAR	%
Australia	1954	26.3	1961	28.9	1971	37.1
Belgium	1950	24.0	1960	23.2	1971	26.1
Canada	1950	23.2	1960	27.9	1972	37.1
Denmark	—	—	1967	49.1	1972	53.5
Finland	1960	53.5	1960	48.4	1970	48.8
France	1954	38.4	1962	36.2	1973	48.4
Italy	—	—	1962	24.1	1971	19.2
Japan	1955	56.7	1960	54.5	1970	49.9
Sweden	1950	33.6	1965	48.7	1973	55.2
United States	1950	33.9	1960	37.8	1972	43.8

a. Includes unpaid family helpers working 15 hours per week or more.

SOURCES: National reports and supplements; International Labour Office, *1971 Year Book of Labour Statistics*.

Table 2: PROPORTION OF LABOUR FORCE WORKING PART-TIME (LESS THAN 35 HOURS PER WEEK), BY SEX (IN PER CENT)

	WOMEN		MEN
	TOTAL	OF WHOM MARRIED WOMEN	
Australia (1973)	27.1	36.6	3.2
Canada (1962)	18.1	—	3.8
(1972)	24.9	—	6.2
Denmark (1972)	43.0	—	7.0
France (1971)	13.2 ^a	—	1.7
Japan (1960)	8.9	—	5.1
(1971)	13.1	—	4.3
Sweden (1973)	37.0	49.0	3.4
United States (1967)	26.1	—	9.2
(1972)	28.7	—	10.3

a. Less than 30 hours per week.

Table 3: PERCENTAGE OF FEMALES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AROUND 1950, 1965 AND 1972

COUNTRY	AROUND 1950		AROUND 1965		AROUND 1972	
	YEAR	%	YEAR	%	YEAR	%
Australia	1955	28	1965	34	1971	36.2
Belgium	1952	26	1966	25 ^a	1971	30 ^a
Canada	—	—	1968	28	1972	39.7
Denmark	1950	24	1965	35	—	—
Finland	1952	39	1965	48	1971	47.2
France	1955	32	1965	39	1971	43.4
Italy	1950	25	1964	32	—	—
Japan	1950	10	1965	24	1972	29.6
Sweden	1951	29	1962	38	1972	36.6
United States	1950	32	1965	39	1972	42.0

a. University only.

SOURCES: — Educational Expansion in OECD Countries since 1950 (Background Report No.1), OECD 1970, p.35.
— National Reports and Supplements.

Table 4: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AND MEN CONTINUING TO HIGHER EDUCATION, 1965

COUNTRY	ALL INSTITUTIONS		UNIVERSITY		COMPLETING UNIVERSITY	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
Belgium	25.7	17.7	13.3	5.9	7.5	2.3
Canada	—	—	—	—	18.4	9.3
Denmark	18.8	12.0	13.7	6.4	4.5	0.9
Finland	—	—	10.0	10.2	—	—
France	—	—	12.2	11.0	—	4.2
Italy	18.5	11.0	18.1	10.5	4.6	2.6
Japan	23.6	11.6	21.8	4.6	16.3	3.2
Sweden	16.0	14.3	14.3	10.6	7.9	4.0
United States	44.0	33.5	31.2	24.9	26.5	18.1

SOURCE: Analytical Report on the Development of Higher Education 1950-1967, OECD, ED(70)3, Tables II-9 and V-3.

Table 5: RATES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION AND ENTRY INTO UNIVERSITY

COUNTRY	WOMEN AS % OF MEN COMPLETING SECONDARY SCHOOL	WOMEN AS % OF MEN CONTINUING TO UNIVERSITY
Belgium	71.9	57.8
Denmark	84.7	66.1
Finland	135.1	73.8
France	101.6	88.4
Italy ^a	74.3	80.2
Japan	95.9	23.1
Sweden	103.6	70.6
United States	104.9	75.8

a. Long secondary education and all institutions of higher education.

SOURCE: Analytical Report on the Development of Higher Education 1950-1967, OECD, ED(70)3, Table III-11.

Table 6: WOMEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF ENROLMENTS IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES

COUNTRY	BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL	PERSONAL SERVICES	MEDICAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES	INDUSTRIAL AND TECHNICAL	ALL COURSES
Canada (1970)	82.4	81.9	78.8	9.6	51.9
Finland (1967)	66.4	—	92.0	14.1	41.8
France (1971)	95.0	—	80.0	5.0	46.5
Japan (1971)	63.8	—	90.0	2.9	37.3
United States (1967)	79.3	80	94.6	2.3	66.5

Table 7: WOMEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF ENROLMENTS IN UNIVERSITY COURSES, 1965

COUNTRY	1	2	3	4	5	6	WOMEN AS % OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
Australia ^a	29.9	1.3	23.1	64.0	1.7	20.5	35.1
Belgium	27.6	0.9	22.7	45.5	18.8	17.2	25.0
Canada	17.9	0.9	45.5	40.4	6.1	19.1	28.0
Denmark	22.3	4.2	31.3	50.8	30.0	6.1	36.1
Finland	36.2	3.7	37.8	75.5	26.1	43.3	49.1
France	31.0	5.9 ^b	34.9	65.0	28.0	—	41.3
Italy	31.3	0.5	17.0	74.0	15.0	15.8	35.5
Japan	12.4	0.4	35.1	42.8	—	5.7	20.0
Sweden	25.0	5.9	26.4	63.0	20.3	38.3	35.0
United States	26.1	0.4	43.9	49.7	3.4	24.0	39.0

a. SOURCE: Australian National Report, 1971 data.

b. France supplement, 1971-2 data.

SOURCE: Analytical Report on the Development of Higher Education 1950-1967, OECD, ED(70)3, Table IV-13.

1. Pure Science
2. Technology (includes engineering)
3. Medical sciences
4. Humanities
5. Law
6. Social science

Table 8: PROPORTION OF WORKING WOMEN AND MEN IN MANAGERIAL LEVEL JOBS

	% OF WOMEN	% OF MEN
Australia	2.5	8.6
Finland	0.4	7.8
Japan	0.5	6.1
United States	4.8	20.

Table 9: PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES
(Women as a percentage of all persons in category)

COUNTRY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	WOMEN AS % OF TOTAL
Australia (1971)	42.3	12.0	48.3	63.8	—	13.7	13.1	15.5	62.7	31.6
Belgium (1961)	42.2	8.3	51.5	33.9	17.5	4.5	17.8	15.9	64.3	27.0
Canada (1972)	41.2	14.3	38.8	72.0	14.9	15.3	8.8	14.1	59.1	33.6
Denmark (1965)	50.8	14.4	42.7	62.9	18.3	9.5	26.9	17.0	77.6	38.4
Finland (1970)	—	4.5	63.3	62.2	—	23.0	15.6	33.2	63.1	—
France (1968)	20.1	12.8	57.8	60.8	14.0	12.0	20.4	37.9	79.1	34.9
Japan (1972)	41.8	5.2	31.7	46.8	—	12.4	31.9	20.0	53.1	32.4
Sweden (1973)	45.9	10.0	47.5	78.8	—	—	15.2	22.2	79.1	40.9
United States (1970)	39.9	16.6	38.6	73.6	5.0	31.5	8.4	9.5	60.0	38.0

SOURCE: National reports and supplements: International Labour Office, 1971 Year Book of Labour Statistics.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Professional and technical | 4. Clerical, office workers | 7. Manual workers |
| 2. Managerial and administrative | 5. Craftsmen, artisans | 8. Agricultural workers |
| 3. Sales workers, commerce | 6. Operatives, transport | 9. Personal services, recreation |

Table 10: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN HIGH STATUS OCCUPATIONS
(Women as a percentage of all persons in occupation)

COUNTRY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Canada (1971)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Finland (1968)	21.5	2.0	3.2	0.5	3.5	—	8.9 ^a	—	14.0	4.5
France (1968)	1.6	4.4	2.0	0.5	—	18.0 ^b	20.0	—	20.0	—
Japan (1970)	2.8	0.8	1.0	—	—	2.5	9.5	1.2	17.7	4.8
Sweden (1971)	14.0	15.0	2.8	—	—	6.7	12.0	—	—	10.1
United States (1971)	2.4	4.3	2.0	0.2	4.6	3.0 ^b	7.1	15.3	22.0	16.6

a. Chief doctors only.

b. Lawyers only.

1. Elected office — National Parliament
2. Elected office — local and regional levels
3. High civil servants
4. Corporate management: officers and board members
5. Labour union leaders: officers and board members

6. Lawyers and judges
7. Physicians
8. Primary and secondary school principals
9. Academic staff in higher education
10. Managerial level jobs

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