

THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF WIDOWS

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Sociology
Faculty of Human Sciences

February 1997

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Mary Barnaby

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This thesis draws critically upon the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu to develop a theory of the social location of widows. The thesis presents widowhood as a set of objective social relations regulated by the objective structures of marriage, gender and death.

In the course of the discussion a critical analysis of Bourdieu's theorization of gender is advanced. The potential of Bourdieu's work for feminist theory is identified, particularly in his explanation of the mechanism of gender relations, however, the analysis also demonstrates that the phallogentric presuppositions embedded within Bourdieu's theorization of gender have to be addressed before the theory's potential for feminist practice can be realised.

The thesis examines the meaning of death and bereavement and their symbolic significance for the regulation of the relations of widowhood. It argues that the current construction of the widow, which underpins bereavement counselling practices, can be problematic for the social position of the widow and her understanding of herself. The analysis also develops the concept of social immortality as a theory for understanding the social position of the widow and her relationship to her deceased husband.

A model of the objective relations of the widow has been developed by means of a comparative analysis of contemporary practice with the history of the social structures of marriage and death in the regulation of the social relations of widowhood. This analysis has identified that changes in the symbolic meaning of marriage and death is pivotal to an understanding of the social location of the widow. The model of the objective relations of the widow has been used to interrogate accounts of widowhood collected from women widowed before the age of sixty. From this analysis a theory of the social location of widows has been developed which provides a means of understanding the social reality of the widow as the history of the product of specific social relations, both as an objective class and as the subjective experience of an individual social agent.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Lyn Bryant and Michael Sheppard for their unfailing encouragement; who, in supervising this study, guided me, whilst allowing me the freedom to explore. I also wish to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for financial support. Throughout this project I have been sustained by the understanding and tolerance of my family and friends. I am especially grateful, to my daughter Alice, who has been a constant inspiration, and to my mother, for her unconditional love and support. Finally, I would like to thank the widows who participated in this research, who, through the candour of their accounts, gave me a greater insight into the struggles and achievements of life as a widow.

Mary Barnaby

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

This study was financed by a studentship from the Economic and Social Research Council.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken which included supervised reading and the completion of a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Science Research Methods.

Signed..........

Date..... 5 Aug 1997.....

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A common reaction of many young and middle aged people when asked if they know any widows is a "No", then, after a moments reflection they may add "Oh yes, my grandmother/aunt/mother is a widow" - identifying widowhood with an older generation. Only if death has touched their social circle recently are they likely to be aware of widowhood amongst young or middle aged women. And yet, if pressed further, the majority of people through family, friends, neighbours or work have had contact with a woman who has been widowed 'out of time', before old age. Whilst improved morbidity means that one in three marriages are no longer ended by untimely death as they were in the 19th century, that function has been taken over by divorce, women are still widowed prematurely. The widow still exists in our society, but she has faded from our attention, she has been subsumed under the labels of lone mother, elderly dependent or independent single woman. For the woman who is a widow however, these umbrella terms are inadequate since they ignore her history which can make her feel that her status is unique and not like that of the other women who live without husbands.

If few of us have to search very far in our social group before finding a woman who's marriage has been ended by premature death why is her presence of such little significance? If being widowed 'out of time' has become a remarkable event why is such little remark made of it? Why is such little attention paid to the widow compared with the divorced or separated woman, the unmarried mother, the elderly woman, and the independent woman who chooses not to marry? These women are all the subject of social concern and debate, but the situation of the widow only comes to the forefront of the public gaze when linked to deaths which are seen as extraordinary or heroic, as in the killing of the headmaster Philip Lawrence; or when their plight stirs a sense of social debt as in the support of the campaign by war widows' equality of pension. Even then when the widow does stand in the limelight the attention is fleeting and transitory, whilst the position of divorced and separated women, unmarried mothers and elderly women are a constant presence in the public mind.

The research recorded in the following pages is an account, not only of the social position of widows, but also of an intellectual journey in which I became critically aware of the

constructed constitution of the most 'natural' social facts that I used to make sense of the social world, and, of the way in which social science can either reinforce the dominance of the 'givenness' of these social structures or be a self-reflexive instrument for their critical evaluation. The impact of the intellectual developmental aspect of the research activity meant that my conceptualization of the phenomenon of widowhood underwent a radical change part way through the research process. This account charts the progress but it is not related in chronological order since inherent in intellectual growth is a spiralling process of reflection and re-assessment which would present the reader with a repetitious and confused report if related as it occurred. This thesis is therefore constructed in the logical order that the benefit of hindsight has given and the demands of a clear explication requires. My conceptual mindset at the beginning of the research process is the point at which the account begins.

The Start of the Journey

This research sets out to investigate the social location of widows and to understand why this group of women whose status is defined by the most profound aspect of human experience - death - should have such a muted presence within our social awareness. The literature on the social situation of the widow, as opposed to the widow as defined by 'problems' of bereavement, is sparse. Arber and Ginn [1991] highlight the need for research into the implications of widowhood for older women. The only study of the social situation of the widow in this country, *'Widows and their Families'*, was carried out by Peter Marris [1958] as part of the Institute of Community Studies Bethnal Green trilogy with Wilmott and Young [1962], *'Family and Kinship in East London'*, and Townsend [1963], *'Family Life of Old People'*. Using a symbolic interactionist perspective Helena Lopata has carried out extended research into widowhood focussed on the diversity of communities in the United States of America. She has published extensively but her major work is *'Women as widows: support systems'* [1973], which reports on research into the support systems of widows in first generation immigrant families and *'Current Widowhood: Myths and Realities'* [1996] which is an overview of the major themes which have characterized her research.

As a widow myself, part of the initial impetus for the research arose from my desire to discover if my own experience of twelve years of widowhood from the age of thirty six was similar to that of other women. Although Arber and Ginn [1991] had highlighted the need for research of the elderly widowed, the paucity of literature on younger widows

indicated that there was a need for investigation amongst this age group as well. I decided therefore to restrict the research to women who had been widowed before the age of 60, in this way I hoped to avoid a conflation of the issues of widowhood with those of old age.

Coming to the research from a Social Work orientation I had a profound desire to respect the experience of other women and not to force their reality into abstract concepts derived from 'grand theory'. Traditionally exploratory research and a concern not to impose any preconceived explanations on the data has indicated a qualitative research method, particularly open ended interviewing. As Reinharz (1992) observes open ended interviewing allows the researcher to explore peoples views of reality, allowing a free interaction between the researcher and interviewee which maximises the possibilities of discovery. The concern of this research whilst exploratory was also to move beyond description of the widows situation to explanation. The Grounded Theory strategy for qualitative research in which theory 'is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents' [Strauss and Corbin,1990:23] was developed by Glaser and Strauss [1967]. It is a well recognized procedure for the analysis of qualitative data, [Bryman and Burgess, 1994], and is used by an increasing number of researchers, [Turner,1981], although Bryman and Burgess observe that there are relatively few genuine cases of the use of the Grounded Theory approach. The concern with the discovery of theory and rejection of verification of pre-existent theory and its adoption by previous qualitative studies, particularly feminist studies in comparable areas: Arendell's [1986] study of mothers and divorce, Fishman's [1990] research into the experience of prisoner's wives, Hart's [1976] study of the effects of divorce on social identity and Richardson's [1985] study of single women in affairs with married men, suggested the suitability of Grounded Theory for this research.

I was also aware that because of their 'hidden' nature finding subjects to interview without time consuming searching of the Register of Births and Deaths might be difficult. In the event finding widows was not a difficulty; however, there was the problem of selecting a 'representative' sample. The adoption of Grounded Theory, where the sampling is led by the needs of the emerging theory overcame this difficulty. Grounded Theory also appeared to honour my determination to respect the experience of the widows I was to interview since it emphasised the discovery of theory which is inductively derived from the phenomenon it represents, rather than hypothetico-deductive theorising where data is used to verify or falsify speculative theories which had been

produced in a vacuum away from lived experience. Whilst drawing insights from the earlier work this research set out to be exploratory and concerned with discovery rather than the verification of pre-existent theories.

In operationalising the Grounded Theory analytic procedures I was however confronted with epistemological difficulties which I only understood after I had been introduced to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. As a consequence of struggling to comprehend Bourdieu's sociology I developed a more critical theoretical perspective which I brought to bear, not only on the shortcomings of Grounded Theory, but also the gendered presuppositions underpinning Bourdieu's theorising. The development of this critical epistemic reflexivity led me to reformulate the research question in terms which constituted the 'givenness' of widowhood as the subject of the investigation and the analysis. In this way I was able to return to the data collected in accordance with the procedures of Grounded Theory and carry out a re-analysis. This analysis uncovered the manner in which the experience of the widow both constitutes, and is constituted by, the institution of widowhood.

The work therefore started as Grounded Theory research of the Social Location of Widows, but became a critical social theorisation of the institution of widowhood and the position of women who are widowed, illustrated by descriptions of the experience of widowhood drawn from widow's interviews and letters. In order to explicate the epistemological foundation of the development of this social theory of widowhood, and to record my own intellectual journey, the critical exposition of Bourdieu's sociology, and the resulting critique of Grounded Theory, is included as part of the development of the social theory of widowhood. This is outlined in the structure below:

Chapter II summarizes the Grounded Theory method and then describes the collection of data and the problems which confronted me when attempting to implement the Grounded Theory protocol. Chapter III is an uncritical introduction to the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu which leads to a discussion which is the start of my development of a new *modus operandi*. Chapter IV is a critical examination of Bourdieu's theorization of gender which informs the discussion in Chapter V of the importance of corporeal specificity in the theory of the habitus for Bourdieu's conceptualization of social change. Chapter VI is a critique of Grounded Theory founded on the insights gained from grappling with Bourdieu's thinking. In Chapter VII I reformulate the research question and set out the practical application of the method as the construction of an abstract model of the objective relations of widowhood with which I will interrogate the data

collected by interview and letter. In the following four chapters I construct this model: Chapter VIII and XI are an analysis of the history of the social structures embodied in the institution of widowhood; Chapter X is an investigation of the implications of the contemporary structures of marriage for widowhood; Chapter XI is an analysis of the significance of death and bereavement for the meaning of widowhood. In Chapter XII I use examples of the social practice of widowhood drawn from the data to illustrate the model constructed in the earlier chapters and to demonstrate some of the ways in which widowhood is experienced. Chapter XIII draws on Bourdieu's theory and uses the objective model of the institution of widowhood and the subjective experiences of widows to construct the Hysteretic Predicament of the Widow; a social theory of widowhood which addresses the interrelationship of the exterior structural and interior emotional realities of the phenomenon. Finally Chapter XIV reflects on the significant developmental points in the course of the research and identifies some issues for future investigation.

CHAPTER II

GROUNDED THEORY

The First Encounter

Outline of Grounded Theory

The Grounded Theory approach to the analysis of data and discovery of theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss [1965 and 1967] in their study of dying in which they had an overriding commitment to research and discovery, linked with a rejection of *a priori* theorising. It was advanced as a 'polemic against hypothetico-deductive, speculative theory' [Layder, 1982:110]. Glaser and Strauss criticised the emphasis in sociology on the verification of existing 'grand theories', for example the work of Parsons; they argued that because such theories were 'ungrounded' they did not reflect the experiences of people in the real world and that theory should fit the data rather than 'data fit the theory'. Whilst some 'grounded theorists' place an emphasis on grounded theory always being substantive theory, Layder [ibid], Glaser and Strauss incorporate a notion of 'formal theory'. Substantive theory is that developed for an *empirical* area of enquiry eg. patient care, whilst formal theory is developed for a conceptual level of inquiry eg stigma, social mobility. (Both are middle range that is between grand theory and a working hypothesis), [Glaser and Strauss, 1967 and 1971]. Substantive and formal theories are both generated by comparative analysis, but for substantive theory comparisons are made within the same substantive area whilst formal theory is generated by comparisons of different substantive areas. Glaser and Strauss also use a method of generating theory by a technique they call 'rewriting'; this involves rewriting substantive theory omitting substantive words, for example in their substantive analysis of patients dying in hospital they rewrote 'temporal aspects of dying as a non-scheduled status passage' as 'temporal aspects of non-scheduled status passage'.

One of the primary objectives of Glaser and Strauss was to make strategies and methods of qualitative research systematic and to make explicit the links between qualitative data and formal theory. This objective has been continued in the work of Strauss and Corbin [1990] where the analytic techniques have been carefully systemized in a formal procedure. The method inductively builds a theory from the research data of a phenomenon by using a systematic set of procedures involving the generation of 'categories' which fit the data. The dimensions of these categories are then developed by

constant comparison to develop a model of the causal conditions which give rise to it. Throughout the analytical process there is a constant interplay between the sampling, which is 'theoretical' and the analysis of the data. Initially 'open sampling' is employed when the aim is to discover as many potentially relevant categories as possible. The initial data gathering is followed immediately by analysis [open coding] which categorizes and names the phenomena. The researcher returns to the field and samples on the basis of the identified theoretically relevant concepts - 'theoretical sampling' - but is guided by openness rather than specificity at this stage, in order to be open to the widest range of dimensions of the phenomenon. Analysis then takes the form of 'Axial Coding' where the aim is to relate the categories identified by earlier analysis and to find evidence of variation between them. This phase of the analysis focuses the sampling on uncovering and validating the relationships between categories; the field work determines whether the statements of relationship hold up. The final analytical process is 'Selective Coding' where the intention is to integrate the categories to form a theory; the sampling in the field is now discriminate, a deliberate choice been made to choose samples which will verify the theory. The sampling will continue until 'theoretical saturation' is reached. Strauss and Corbin describe this as a state where no new or relevant data is emerging; the development of a category is 'dense' in that all its elements and variations are accounted for, and the relationship between categories are well established and validated. The verification of the theory is posited as an on going process throughout its development since hypotheses are constantly compared against reality, modified and retested: negative cases are used to further develop the density of the developing theory.

As an inexperienced and uncritical researcher such a clear and authoritative explication of the procedure to be followed seemed to present a legitimate way of honouring my desire to respect the experience of the widows and also of producing research that met the criteria of validity in the social science community. As I tried to put into practice the Grounded Theory method, referring frequently to the procedures and techniques detailed in Strauss and Corbin [1990] *'Basics of Qualitative Research'*, difficulties began to appear. At the time the significance of these initial problems was lost to me, I assumed they were the result of my inadequate grasp of Grounded Theory, it was only on reflection that I realised that the problems rose not so much from my intellectual inadequacy but the shortcomings of the approach I had adopted.

My instinct was to be totally non-directive in the interviews and just say "tell me what it is like for you being a widow ?" With hindsight I now understand that the premise on

which such a supposedly non-directive approach is based is problematic, but at that point I hadn't acquired the necessary 'epistemological vigilance' to see the fallacious standing of this belief. In the event I lacked the confidence to interview in such an unstructured manner and I adapted the approach advocated by McCracken [1988] starting with preliminary biographical details, then asking the question "What is it like for you being a widow?" with a list of prepared opening questions to different topic areas to be used depending how the interview developed. This list [Appendix I] also acted as a check list to ensure that all the subject areas had been covered.

My need to structure the interview, however informally, was the source of the first 'feelings' of unease with Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is characterised by firstly a commitment to research and discovery leading to the development of theory and secondly by the rejection of *a priori* theorising, whether 'grand' or 'middle range'. The rejection of *a priori* theorising has been read as a *tabula rasa* view of inquiry by Bulmer [1979] and to a certain extent by Layder [1982]. However, this overlooks the importance placed on 'theoretical sensitivity' and 'the use of literature' by Strauss and Corbin [1990]. It was therefore quite within the terms of Grounded Theory to draw on the literature and my own knowledge and experience in compiling a schedule of interview topics. However, there appeared to me to be a tension between this acceptance of the constructions that literature and experience presented and the claims that theory 'discovered' through Grounded Theory "is the most powerful way to bring reality to light" [Strauss and Corbin, *ibid*:22]. It appeared to me that the such a 'reality' would be pre-determined by the questions asked. Lack of confidence in my own reasoning combined with an impatience to interview prevented me from engaging with this difficulty and I explained it to myself as a necessary compromise in the practicalities of research.

I planned to tape-record interviews with widows, in their own homes, transcribe the recordings using the '*Ethnograph*' programme for text based data, and analyse the data following the Grounded Theory procedures. As the interest of this research was the social location of the widow, rather than the effects of bereavement or of old age, I wished to interview women who had been widowed before they were sixty years old and who had been widowed at least two years. I had anticipated that I would have difficulty in finding widows and had intended to use the 'snowball' technique once I had made an initial contact. In the event this was not necessary as I discovered a social club for widows and widowers with over sixty members in the age range of the research. I made contact with the organiser who gave me a list of names of widows whom she considered

'suitable'. I wrote to these women and had three responses, who I interviewed. By chance, at the same time a regional daily newspaper expressed interest in the research and printed an interview about this research and my own experience as a widow. In response to this interview I received forty seven letters from widows of all ages, some with long and detailed descriptions of their experiences. I replied to all these letters and interviewed four selected on the basis of age, length of time widowed, emotional content of the letter and the geographical location. In the course of these interviews I was given the names of two other widows who I subsequently contacted and interviewed. The interviews varied in length from one to six hours, most lasted approximately four hours; since some of the widows found it extremely cathartic to talk I allowed their needs to determine the length of the interviews. In total I had data from in-depth interview with nine widows [Appendix II] who I had discovered from three different sources plus the letters from a self-selected group of widows.

In Grounded Theory research the data collection and data analysis are closely interwoven processes occurring alternately as the analysis directs the sampling of the data. It was in the analysis of the first batch of interviews that I encountered further difficulties with Grounded Theory. The first stage of the analysis is 'open coding' in which the data is compared, conceptualized and categorised and 'axial coding' in which the focus is on specifying a phenomenon in terms of the condition that gives rise to it, [Strauss and Corbin, 1990]. This appears perfectly straight forward until put into practice: the analysis of the following passage which was part of a response to a question "What are the things you find most difficult to cope with ?" demonstrates the difficulty.

"I think whenever there is any kind of a problem or crisis. Yes, you have your family, I'm not saying that, but its not the same, when he came home I could say so-and-so, so-and-so happened, leave it to him and that was it. He was a very strong charactered person, my husband. He was born in Plymouth, but his people came from Newcastle and of course people from Newcastle, up there the man's the head of the family and that's it, so he always had that sort of inborn in him. He took control of everything which made it even worse cos up until then I hadn't even been in control of paying bills, he always done it all you see, always. He just gave me my money each week and he took control of everything. I was just thrown right in at the deep end in every respect you could think of really"

For this widow it is natural for a man from Newcastle to be 'the head of the family', and it is equally natural for her to have a dependent role. This woman's acceptance of the naturalness of her situation appeared to me as problematic since I interpreted it as a function of socialisation into particular gender role stereotypes. However, in spite of Grounded Theory's references to theoretical sensitivity I could not see how the introduction of any analysis which interpreted this data as an example of structural gender inequality could be introduced whilst remaining within the data. An analysis of this widow's marriage in terms of gender inequality would be imposing an interpretation which did not represent this woman's understanding of her marriage. Any theory that developed from this analysis could not therefore make claims for its validity by reference to the representational relationship of the data to the phenomenon in question, since it placed a different interpretation on the phenomenon to that of the widow whose 'reality' it represented. This dilemma arose again and again as I sought to analyse the data following the dicta of Grounded Theory, since whilst I interpreted the difficulties that the widows described as structural constraints, they understood them as the natural and inevitable consequence of widowhood. It seemed to me that the prescriptions of Grounded Theory prevented me from developing any theoretical explanatory construction of the data and restricted me to a quasi-theoretical description of the experiences of this group of widows.

I found myself presented with an *impasse* but at this early stage I failed to understand its genesis, it was only after I had been introduced to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, the subject of the next chapter, that I began to understand the cause of my confusion in analysing the interviews and was presented with a way out of the cul de sac into which Grounded Theory had led me.

CHAPTER III

BOURDIEU TO THE RESCUE !

An Introduction to the Work of PIERRE BOURDIEU and the Development of My Theory of Practice

Introduction - Pierre Bourdieu 's oeuvre

Since the 1950s Pierre Bourdieu has published a diverse range of work including social theory, social research, education, cultural studies, linguistics, religion, art, museums, photography and philosophy. This broad spectrum of work, in its disregard of disciplinary boundaries, addresses the totality of social experience. It is, however, not just in the breadth of his work that Bourdieu addresses the truth of the human condition, but in his fundamental commitment to illuminate the fallacious nature of the deep-seated antinomies that lie at the centre of theoretical explanations of social life: oppositions which result in a fragmented and unbalanced understanding of the totality of social experience. These are antinomies which are embedded in the language we use, for, as Norbert Elias argues, our everyday language leads us to "draw involuntary conceptual distinctions between the actor and his activity, between structures and processes, or between objects and relations" [1978:113]. This can be seen in the way "we always feel impelled to make quite senseless conceptual distinctions, like 'the individual *and* society', which makes it seem that 'the individual' and 'society' were two separate things, like tables and chairs, or pots and pans" [ibid]. Bourdieu's constant purpose is to bridge and dissolve this dualistic thinking within social science, the thinking which posits objectivist knowledge against subjectivist knowledge, theory against practice, and structure against agency. The implications of his challenge to these dichotomies, which have been the basis of classical social theoretical debate, are not, however, confined to the ivory towers of academia, since the empirical grounding of his work and his desire to change the way we see society, ensures that it retains its relevance to lived experience.

Bourdieu's intellectual roots draw nourishment from many sources including Weber, Marx, Durkheim, Levi-Strauss, Saussure, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Austin and Merleau-Ponty, but whilst they are widespread they are firmly lodged in the European -

as opposed to the Anglo-American - intellectual tradition and in reading his work it is important to be aware of the intellectual environment in which he has developed his ideas and in which they circulate. To read Bourdieu (or any social theorist) without the "double work of elucidation: of his or her ideas and of the intellectual universes in which these come to circulate" [Wacquant, 1993:235] can result in a distorted and contradictory perception. In Bourdieu's case distortion has resulted in attempts to classify him as a Marxist, a structuralist, a Weberian, and Durkheimian, [Harker, 1990:224n7], whilst others debate his modernist or postmodernist standing, [Calhoun, 1993]. Such attempts at labelling Bourdieu are themselves indicators of the failure of commentators to undertake the 'double work of elucidation' and are, as Harker et al [1990] comment, mildly ironic "[s]ince Bourdieu has spent much of his career attacking classifications and trying to avoid them". It is not appropriate to make a detailed analysis of Bourdieu's intellectual biography here but it would be a violent traducement of his *modus operandi* if some backdrop was not given to the social conditions of its production and functioning, since such a socioanalysis is considered essential by Bourdieu himself, [Bourdieu, 1993:268]. Bourdieu's thought is not static and final but always developing since it is developed in relation to intellectual fields, in particular France, but also world-wide, which themselves undergo continual transformation . He describes his early ethnographic studies as the work of the 'happy structuralist' [1990b], but he became disenchanted and increasingly critical of its exclusion of active creative agents from social explanation. His work developed from his realization of "the fictitious character of the mundane oppositions that divided the intellectual fields" [Bourdieu, 1993:269] in particular the oppositions between the 'humanism' of existentialism represented by the radical subjectivism of Jean-Paul Sartre, the radical objectivism represented by Levi-Strauss and the anti-humanism of structuralism represented by Althusser. Whilst Sartre refused to recognize any durable dispositions so leaving social reality voluntary and therefore arbitrary, Althusser reduced human agency to the function of mere 'bearers' of the structure, (the notion of the unconscious fulfilled the same role in Levi-Strauss, [Bourdieu, 1990a].

Bourdieu's work was and continues to be a reaction against intellectual conformity, in this he describes himself as having a "propensity to anti-intellectualism" [1993:269] in his belief that social science must make a break with the intellectual doxa in order help cure its 'infantile disorders'. It is here that Bourdieu emphasises the importance of the

principle of *reflexivity* and pin-points the illusion of intellectual superiority which is perpetuated by its defective and self-deluding application.

A final, but cardinal point which needs to be made about the reading and interpretation of Bourdieu's work is that it should not be limited to a purely theoretical dimension. The theoretical instruments which he has produced have all been developed in the course of empirical projects and "were intended not for theoretical commentary and exegesis" but for "*comprehension through use*"; in fact Bourdieu makes it clear that he thinks "through theoretically constructed empirical cases" [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:160]. To use Bourdieuan terminology, which will be explicated below, his aim is to produce and transmit "a scientific habitus, a system of dispositions necessary to the constitution of the craft of sociologist in its universality [1993:271]. Bourdieu's rejection of the reading of his work as theoretical treatise is best summed up in his own words "the conviction - which, from the beginning, inspired my research strategies -that one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality, historically situated and dated, but only in order to construct it as an instance (*cas de figure*) in a finite universe of possible configurations" [1993:271-2]

It is in the light of this emphasis on the *logic of research*, which is *inseparably empirical and theoretical* that the following explication of Bourdieu's method is discussed, but for the purpose of simplification and, I hope, clarification I have temporarily divorced his concepts from the empirical work in which they were developed. The 'logic of research' will, however, be re-established in the concluding section in the practical application of the development of a sociological habitus. Whilst Bourdieu refuses the splintering of theoretical and research operations into isolated activities, since this separation only serves to reproduce the division of social science, he also resists a simple ordering of the priority of concepts. In fact Bourdieu's work is particularly resistant to presentation as "a set of logically interconnected propositions framed in terms of precise, unambiguous concepts" [Brubaker, 1993:217]. Bourdieu does not define concepts, [Wacquant, 1989] they are intrinsically flexible and he characterizes them in a variety of ways which makes attempts at a summary of their meaning problematic, however for exegetical purposes it is necessary to make some arbitrary divisions in order to understand Bourdieu's sociological 'tool box'. I will therefore start by considering Bourdieu's resolution of the objective subjective dialectic and then discuss his concepts of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* before describing the role of the habitus in *social practice* and the significance of

practical logic. The implications of relations of domination for the habitus will then be discussed as will Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic violence*. Finally I will outline the overriding importance of *epistemic reflexivity* in Bourdieu's sociological method. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of *social theory as habitus* in the development of a *critical social theory* which is the foundation of the evolution of my *modus operandi*.

Bourdieu's resolution of the objective subjective dialectic

Bourdieu argues that the task of sociology is to uncover the *structures* of the social world as well as the *mechanisms* which bring about their reproduction or transformation. He defines social formations as "systems of relations of power and relations of meaning between groups and classes" [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:7]. He maintains that the social universe is peculiar because its structures lead a double life, this is his notion of '*double objectivity*'. Structures exist in the '*objectivity of the first order*' the social structures of the distribution of material resources and the means of appropriation of socially scarce goods and values and they also exist in the '*objectivity of the second order*', the systems of classification, the mental and bodily schemata that are the symbolic templates: these are the perceptual and evaluative systems by which social agents understand their everyday life. Bourdieu is therefore arguing that there is an invisible world which goes on inside peoples heads and there is the world outside, the world in which history, social structures and unifying patterns are to be found. He presents a means of understanding the relationship between the individual's internalised experience of themselves and their social reality - their subjectivity - and the objective world which frames the individual and towards the production and reproduction of which the individual contributes. He states that " [t]here exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world - particularly into dominant and dominated in the various fields - and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to it" [ibid:12]. These correspondences exist, indeed they are structurally homologous because they are '*genetically linked*' - the mental are the embodiment of the social.

This notion of double objectivity straddles the objectivist subjectivist dialectic, the structure agency debate, because Bourdieu argues society must be subject to two readings. The first in the '*objectivity of the first order*' when it is read from a structuralist perspective uncovering the objective regularities organising society which

may not be apparent to each individual living her unique life. Within the structuralist perspective there is, however, a trap for it risks reifying the explanatory structures it constructs with the result that social life is reduced to a passive activity determined by the logic of the materialist explanation. In this way the objectivist explanation destroys the experience of agents which it is trying to capture, it fails to recognize that the consciousness and interpretations that agents have of the social world are an essential component in the construction of social reality. The second reading of society, in the 'objectivity of the second order', rescues structuralism from its reductionistic *impasse*. It is here that Bourdieu draws from the subjectivist perspective which asserts that social reality is the accomplishment of actors who construct their social world through the practices of everyday life, [Garfinkel, 1967]. The subjectivist conceives the social world as one whose meaning is immediately available to individual social actors who are defined as alert and conscious individuals making rational decisions and actions. Whilst the value of this position lies in its recognition of the importance of commonsense knowledge, intuitive meaning, and practical competency in the continual production of society, like structuralism its explanation of the social world has significant limitations. Firstly, by conceiving society as nothing more than people 'doing things together', [Becker, 1986], something that people actively create with nothing prior to the action, nothing which externally governs the form of the social order, means that it is impossible to account for the reproduction of that social order. Secondly, the subjectivist perspective cannot account for the categories which are used in the construction of the social world. As Bourdieu says "If it is good to recall, against certain mechanistic visions of action, that social agents construct social reality, individually and also collectively, we must be careful not to forget, as the interactionists and the ethnomethodologists often do, that they have not constructed the categories they put to work in this work of construction". [1989:47, translated by Wacquant 1992]

Bourdieu's notion of double objectivity, with its two readings of the social world transcends the false antinomies of objectivism and subjectivism, structure and agency. He captures the double reality of the social world and weaves the two readings together stressing "the dialectic articulation of the two moments (objectivist and subjectivist)" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:11n21]. Double objectivity is a method in which firstly the commonsense understanding is removed to reveal the objective structures that define the external constraints on interactions and meanings, then the subjective experience of individual actors is reintroduced in order to understand the constructions which determine

the actions of agents. The hierarchy of the two readings is, however, fundamental to the method, "although the two moments of analysis are equally necessary, they are not equal: epistemological priority is granted to objectivist rupture over subjectivist understanding", Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992: 11]. This is because the viewpoints of individuals will vary systematically with the point they occupy in objective social space.

Bourdieu's 'tool box' - Habitus, Field and Capital

Whilst Bourdieu's epistemological vigilance insists on the priority of the objectivist rupture over the subjectivist understanding this does not mean that he asserts the ontological priority of structure or agent, the collective or the individual, for Bourdieu "the stuff of social reality - of action no less than structure, and their intersection as history - lies in relations" [ibid:15], it is the *primacy of relations* which transcends the dualistic alternatives, and as we saw earlier it is in the relations of power and meaning that Bourdieu defines social formations. This relational perspective stems from the influence of the structuralist tradition in Bourdieu's thinking, clearly explicated by Marx, "Society does not consist of individuals; it expresses the sum of connections and relationships in which individuals find themselves" [1971:77]. However, for Bourdieu the social world is not an integrated system, a 'society' ruled by an overall logic such as capitalism, the social world must be understood as a *space*, divided into enumerable *fields*, each defined by its own values and regulative principles. Within these fields individuals are in a relationship of struggle, this struggle is either to change or maintain the boundaries and values of the field. An individual's success in this struggle is decided by the *capital* they hold. It is in the concept of field and in Bourdieu's other key concept of *habitus* that his emphasis on the overarching primacy of relations is apparent, for both these concepts can be understood as 'bundles of relations'. Whilst a field is a particular set of objective social relations maintained in specific frames of power, the substance of history, the habitus is the set of relations 'deposited' within the cognitive schemes and the physical dispositions of individuals: the habitus is therefore history - action and structure - embodied in human beings.

The analytical concepts of habitus and field are therefore pivotal to an appreciation of Bourdieu's understanding of social reality and deserve further examination. The habitus is a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation and action whilst the metaphor of a

field denotes a structured system of social positions, dominant, subordinate or homologous. Bourdieu sees society as a multitude of relatively autonomous fields of 'play', each with its specific values and regulative principles. It is important to grasp the relational nature of the idea of a field, it is not an inanimate site in the sense of a cartographical form, it is a *space of play*, a space created by the beliefs and activities of the players which arise from their habitus. These principles define the socially structured space which is the field and within which the agents struggle. Classes and other antagonistic social collectives are continually engaged in a struggle to improve the definition of the world that is most congruent with their practical interests. The position agents have in the struggle is determined by their *capital* - power and by their habitus. One of Bourdieu's key insights, [Calhoun, 1993], is that there are immaterial forms of capital - cultural, symbolic, and social - as well as a material or economic forms and that with varying levels of difficulty it is possible to convert one of these forms into the other. Bourdieu sees capital as something that is used, therefore power is always a resource rather than a system. The struggle in the field, which takes the form of both 'conflict and competition' is over both the capital specific to the field and the form and boundaries of the field. The relationship of field and capital creates and legitimates belief in the value of the capital specific to a particular field, for example physical prowess in the field of 'sport', scientific knowledge in the field of 'science' and aesthetic judgement in the field of 'art'. Although Bourdieu uses the metaphor of the market place in discussing power and places, an emphasis on the relationship of capital and labour (which has caused some critics, [Jenkins, 1992] to argue that his position is ambiguous), he also directs our attention to the role of capital in social exchange and argues that to see capital only in 'economic' terms, where intention and interest directs the exchange obscures the true meaning of social exchanges normalised by terms such as gift. Bourdieu identifies how gifts are also exchanges in symbolic capital but social etiquette causes a *misrecognition* of the reciprocal nature of the exchange, [Bourdieu, 1990b].

Habitus and Social Practice

Bourdieu explains social practice in terms of the relationship between habitus and capital occurring within the specific logic of a given field. An agent's capital is itself the product of the habitus, just as the specificity of a field is an objectified history that embodies the habitus of the agents who have operated in that field. The habitus is self-reflexive in that

each time it is animated in practice it encounters itself both as embodied and as objectified history.

Whilst the concept of field describes the site of agents' activities it does not explain why they adhere to the specific values and regulative principles of a particular field, it does not account for the regularities and reproduction of the social order which the subjectivist explanation ignores. It is in the notion of habitus and the practices that arise from habitus and which in turn shape it that Bourdieu attempts to find the answer. Habitus is central to Bourdieu's theory of practice, with it he seeks to transcend the opposition between theories which see practice (social interaction) solely as *constituting*, as in phenomenology and those that see social interaction as *constituted* as in the structural functionalist approach. Bourdieu sees social life as interaction between social structures, dispositions and actions, in which each is structured by and, at the same time, structures the other. This occurs since social structures and the embodied knowledge of those structures produce 'orientations to action' which in turn are constitutive of social structures. This is because continual experience of a particular social condition, implants a set of *dispositions* that internalize the exterior social environment, so that the constraints of the outer social reality become internalized within the mind. These dispositions then give rise to practices, perceptions and attitudes which are unconscious and experienced as 'natural'. The dispositions of the habitus are characterized as 'inculcated', 'structured', 'durable', 'generative' and 'transposable'. The inculcation of the disposition is a gradual process in which childhood experience is particularly significant and becomes embodied as 'second nature'. The disposition can be understood as structured since it reflects the social condition in which it was acquired whilst they are durable since they are embodied, part of the pre-conscious behaviour of the body and therefore particularly resistant to change. Finally dispositions can be understood as generative and transposable since they are capable of producing an infinite variety of behaviours and attitudes in fields other than those in which they were acquired. The institutions of 'motherhood' and the 'family' can be understood as such embodied social structures. The objective structures of 'motherhood' and 'family' become embodied, taken-for-granted knowledge, which produces particular ways of behaving; this behaviour, even when it fails to achieve the 'ideal' objectified in motherhood and the family constitutes and reinforces these institutions. The generative and transposable nature of these dispositions can be seen in the way 'mothering', that is caring, is expected of women as an occupation particularly in environments that evaluate their success by their replication of a 'family atmosphere' for example in residential 'homes'.

Practical Logic

It can be seen that Bourdieu's conception of practice is not as a wholly conscious act, but neither does it just happen: practice is not without purpose. He explains this by the notion of *strategies*. He uses strategies to make it clear that social practice is not objectified, rule governed action. The strategies of practice are located in, and arise from, the actors experience of reality, it is their *practical sense* or *practical logic*. It should be noted that Bourdieu does not use logic to indicate action that follows clearly identifiable rules, his logic is a 'fuzzy' logic and by qualifying it with 'practical' he seeks to show that "the logic of practice is logical up to the point where to be logical would cease being practical" [Bourdieu, 1987:96]. He is seeking to capture the imprecise, indistinct and indefinite nature of reality which cannot be encapsulated by sterile rules. Bourdieu sees practice as a process of improvisation which is itself "structured by cultural orientations, personal trajectories, and the ability to play the game of social interaction" [Calhoun et al, 1993: 4]. From this then it can be seen that strategies, the improvisations of the habitus, are not just responses to environmental stimuli, nor do they simply express the subjective intentions of individual actors, they are improvisations which are structurally grounded.

In this understanding Bourdieu confronts the problem of the regularity of social life not with the notion of transcendent rules but in the relationship between field and habitus. The field he argues is a 'structure of probabilities' in which the rules are not external to the game, but part of the game. It is not therefore the rules of the game which determine the regularity of social life, but the interplay between the habitus of the players and the activities which make up the field: here is the function of the habitus as a structuring mechanism. The habitus therefore provides an analytical link between internal and external structures. It functions with the world in a relationship of 'ontological complicity', not of that between a subject and an object, which implies conscious cognition and action, but with a relationship of non-reflective familiarity which precondition the intentions.

Domination and Symbolic Violence

Domination is an aspect of social practice and relations within the field. Bourdieu argues that our perception of the world involves cognitive operations by which it is given order

- a system of classifications (taxonomies) which organize perception and structure practice . This categorisation is based on an archetypal binary model - 'de-vision', which he argues is the universal principle and there exists a correspondence between the classificatory systems - the mental structures, and the social structures, the one being the embodiment of the other. This correspondence fulfils a crucial political function because it means that there exists agreement "between the objective divisions of the social world - particularly into dominant and dominated in the various fields - and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to it" [ibid:12]. These principles of vision and division, the systems of classification, are therefore not just ways of ordering the world, that is instruments of knowledge, they are *instruments of domination* because "[t]he conservation of the social order is decisively reinforced by.....the orchestration of categories of perception of the social world which, being adjusted to the divisions of the established order (and, therefore, to the interests of those who dominate it) and common to all minds structured in accordance with those structures, impose themselves with all appearances of objective necessity" [ibid:13]. The power of the classificatory systems rests in their tendency to represent the social structures from which they arise as 'natural and necessary' rather than as the historically contingent result of power imbalances between categories such as gender or ethnic groups.

The classificatory system through which relations of domination are sustained is therefore a *stake in the struggles* of social life. This is a stake in the routine interactions of individuals' daily life as much as in the wider sphere of collective struggles of politics and culture. By this Bourdieu means that the categories which are used to organize and represent individuals (and groups) are continuously produced by and are a stake in the power relations between classes. This can for example be seen in the efforts of occupational groups such as Social Workers to be seen as 'professional', which is resisted by members of other groups, such as GPs who already hold the professional cachet, or in the efforts of some women's groups to have 'home-maker' recognized as an occupation.

The phenomenon of domination has diverse manifestations in the social world from the national relations of colonialism and imperialism to the individual relations between a man and a woman. Bourdieu argues however, that all these phenomena can be characterized by the notion of *symbolic violence*, that is a 'soft' violence, a censored euphemized violence that is legitimate and therefore unrecognized as violence; symbolic violence is a "*violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*

..... social agents are knowing agents who, even when they are subjected to determinisms, contribute to producing the efficacy of that which determines them insofar as they structure what determines them. And it is almost always in the 'fit' between determinants and the categories of perception that constitute them as such that the effect of domination arises" [ibid:168]. Here then we see the role of the habitus in the social practice of domination because a *misrecognition* of the nature of the relations of domination occurs, individuals are subject to symbolic violence because there is an acceptance of these structures as 'natural and necessary' - an uncontested *doxic* acceptance of the daily life of the world - rather than a recognition that they are the result of historically contingent power imbalances. This blindness to the arbitrary nature of social reality Bourdieu calls *doxa*, it relates to the unquestioning acceptance of the way things are and excludes the possibility of an alternative. The doxic acceptance of symbolic violence can, however, become a stake in the struggles of the field since Bourdieu argues that the classificatory systems - symbolic systems - are social products that do not just reflect social relations but contribute to their formation. There is therefore, the possibility of changing the social world by changing the symbolic system [ibid:14].

Bourdieu posits gender domination as the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence [ibid:170] since it "shows better than any other that *symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of mis-recognition that lies beyond - or beneath- the controls of consciousness and will*, in the obscurities of the schemata of habitus that are at once gendered and gendering" [ibid:171-2]. The notion of symbolic violence being accomplished beneath the controls of consciousness is crucial to an understanding of social relations between men and women and the practice of gender domination since it makes clear that when Bourdieu speaks of the 'complicity' of the social agent in the symbolic violence carried out against them he is not implying notions of responsibility or of 'blaming the victim'. It is also the key to explaining the difficulties of the feminist movement in 'raising feminist consciousness' and to understanding the reaction of women who collude with, or actively defend or justify, behaviour which objectivizes women.

It is also important to understand that Bourdieu rejects notions of submission and resistance when describing the relationship between the dominated and dominating. He argues that this language prevents us understanding practices and situations that often have an 'intrinsically double skewed nature'. For example, if a marginalised group have

no other means of resisting than to positively proclaim the very properties that mark them as dominated, as in the declaration 'black is beautiful', Bourdieu questions whether that is resistance. Similarly, can a woman's adoption and projection of 'male valued' characteristics such as ruthlessness and militarism be seen as submission? Mrs Thatcher stands out as a recent high profile example of this behaviour. This, Bourdieu argues, is the 'unresolvable contradiction' which is part of symbolic domination, resistance can be alienating and submission can be liberating; the dominated are often condemned to a choice between two solutions which can be understood as equally bad, they either choose to oppose the system by excluding themselves from it and so seal themselves into the condition of being dominated, or they choose assimilation and co-optation by the system.

Bourdieu's 'epistemic reflexivity'

So far I have described a series of concepts which Bourdieu uses to explain the social world but the significance of his approach is in the reflexive rigour with which he approaches social theory. Loic Wacquant remarks that "if there is a single feature that makes Bourdieu stand out in the landscape of contemporary social theory, it is his signature obsession with reflexivity" [ibid:36]; Bourdieu's analysis rests upon "a self analysis of the sociologist as cultural producer and a reflection on the sociohistorical conditions of possibility of a science of society" [ibid].

Bourdieu is of course not the first to use idea of reflexivity in sociology. Reactivity has been a major concern for qualitative researchers in their anxiety to produce 'valid' research and reflexivity, [Abbott and Sapsford, 1992, Hammerlsey and Atkinson, 1983] and is seen as a way to combat personal and procedural reactivity. Linstead [1994] argues however that undeclared in this concern is the positivistic idea that there is an absolute knowledge of the phenomenon being studied that the subjectivity of the researcher distorts. This point was made earlier by Merleau-Ponty -"As long as one clings to the positivist ideal of the absolute spectator, of knowledge with no point of view, then one's personal situation and responses can be seen only as a source of error" [Merleau-Ponty, 1979:109]. The realisation that the values of the researcher cannot be eradicated and that the positivistic ideal of a value-free social science cannot be achieved resulted in the notion of a reflexive sociology that required that the researcher's experience of the world be made explicit. However as Linstead comments "As laudable a pursuit as self-knowledge might be it nevertheless fails to improve the quality of our

social knowledge" [1994:1325]. This is because firstly the 'confessional' aspect creates a debatable sense of trust; secondly complete self-knowledge is unattainable so any self-declaration can only be partial; thirdly and most significantly, "the notion of 'reflexive' sociology implicitly follows the positivist line in treating the observer as passive, and social life as an object, even though admitting technical inadequacy" [ibid:1326].

'Bias' is an inherent phenomenon of human perception but the methods of 'reflexive sociology' urge us to behave as though it ceases to be a concern for those evaluating the research, it assumes that a positivistic style of evaluation is possible, and by so facilitating it by implication also desirable. There is therefore an internal conflict; whilst on the one hand reflexive techniques acknowledges individual subjectivity on the other they seeks to deny it by conforming to the criteria of positivistic science. This is not to argue that the researcher should ignore the implications of the inter-subjective nature of the research process but that personal disclosure should not be presented as a 'confession' to gain confidence and give a less partial view. For example Stanley and Wise [1983:33] suggest that 'being a woman' and having a feminist consciousness gives authority to research. Nor should it be used as an attempt to elide bias, or to counter criticisms of the suitability of a research instrument, a belief which underpins much research self-labelled as 'feminist', for example Rienharz [1992]. Rather it should be presented as " a phenomenology of the possible origins of the researcher's interest" [Linstead,1994:1336]. For as Moi [1985:44] has pointed out we cannot fully grasp our own 'horizon' of understanding: there will always be unstated blindspots, fundamental presuppositions and 'pre-understandings' of which we are unaware and the notions of psychoanalysis inform us that the most powerful motivations on our psyche often turn out to be those we have most deeply repressed. It is therefore difficult to believe that we can ever be fully aware of our own perspective. The prejudices one is able to formulate consciously are precisely for that reason likely to be the least important ones.

Bourdieu's 'epistemic reflexivity', which addresses the problem of 'bias' by moving beyond it, is defined as the "inclusion of a theory of intellectual practice as an integral component and necessary condition of a critical theory" [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:36]. Rather than a concern with the personal experience of the individual researcher, reflexivity is focussed on 'the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in the analytical tools and operations'. It is not that Bourdieu denies the importance of the

social origins of the researcher, but he argues that these are the most readily controlled by mutual and self-criticism, although as I indicated above this certainty is problematic. More important for Bourdieu than the researcher's personal motivations is the position of the researcher in the academic *field* "that is, in the objective space of possible intellectual positions offered to him or her at a given moment, and , beyond, in the field of power" [ibid:39] and, of even more significance, is the 'intellectual unconscious' - the *intellectual bias* - which Bourdieu argues is the cause of greater bias than the personal circumstances and experiences of the researcher.

It is 'intellectual bias' which fails to appreciate the presuppositions upon which thinking about the world is based. Here Bourdieu is referring to the differing logics of the practical world and the theoretical world; the former being the 'fuzzy' logic of strategic vagueness and improvisory practice whilst the latter is based on logical reasoning', that is, the intellectual disposition which carries out social research by seeing, interpreting, constructing and acting on the social world by constructing theory in *logical* terms. Terms which are characterized as structures of logical entities such as concepts, variables, and propositions, which possess logical properties such as generality or abstractness, which stand in logical relations to each other, relations of consistency or contradiction, for example, and which perform particular logical operations such as deduction or codification. These presuppositions are built into the instruments of research - interview techniques, coding procedures. Bourdieu makes it clear that "whenever we fail to subject to systematic critique the presuppositions inscribed in the fact of the thinking world, of retiring from the world and from action in the world in order to think that action, we risk collapsing practical logic into theoretical logic" [ibid:39].

Reflexivity therefore requires more than personal self reflection, it requires permanent sociological analysis and control of sociological practice, the systematic exploration of the "unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" [ibid:40] . This is achieved by the process of objectification of the objectification. The first objectification is that of the act of observation which is inherent in the act of research but it is in the objectification of the act of observation, in the objectification of the research assumptions - from the initial construction of the object of the research to the techniques of the method used - that epistemic reflexivity is employed to achieve what Bourdieu argues is a genuine science of human practice.

Social Theory as Habitus

In the introduction to this chapter I discussed the problem of an exegesis of Bourdieu's social theory becoming a theoretication of theory or a sort of 'theoretical theory' and that Bourdieu intended that his theory be made to work rather than be treated in this manner. Making Bourdieu 'work' means more than a systematic application of the concepts of habitus, field and capital to data, it requires that *theory should be treated as habitus*. This is the quintessential element of Bourdieu's sociological method which may be totally overlooked if Bourdieu is read as a sociological theory amongst the gamut of theories¹. For theory to be treated as habitus requires more than reflexivity it means having *the disposition to think in dispositional terms*. It requires treating the propositions of habitus, capital, field, practice, etc not as some logical 'meta -theory' but as characteristics of a very particular set of intellectual habits, of intellectual dispositions to see, to interpret and to construct the social world and to act towards research in a specific way. It requires more than an understanding of the inadequacy of theoretical logic to capture the fuzzy practical logic of the social world, it requires an appreciation that research is itself a social practice and like all other practices it is governed by a habitus, in this instance a sociological habitus, which is itself regulated by practical logic. This is not to suggest that logical reasoning is rejected, but that it is treated as an instrument of research appropriate for a particular situation. To understand sociological practice in the logocentric terms in which theory is commonly framed ignores the improvisory nature of the sociological habitus, it denies the practical nature of its logic and in so doing denies the practical directive and generative power that theory needs in order to capture the nature of the social world.

To think theory as habitus however requires more than the reflexive inculcation of the nature of the dispositions of the habitus and of the difference between practical and theoretical logic, it also requires the incorporation of the dispositions for thinking theory critically. One of the difficulties of a sociological investigation is that the exploration is limited by the boundaries of taken for granted knowledge so that even when new knowledge is discovered it can lose its dynamic potential because it is tamed by being interpreted and fitted into schemes which we take as self evident knowledge and therefore

¹ I am indebted to Rogers Brubaker [1993] for this crucial insight, see also Bourdieu's [1993:271] agreement with Brubaker's analysis.

beyond question. Critical social theory assists the process of going beyond the familiar world to recognize new possibilities since it constitutes the 'givenness of the world' as the subject of investigation and analysis. This can be achieved by thinking 'the theory of fields', by inculcating a disposition to think in relational rather than substantive terms. For example in thinking of the phenomenon power it means rejecting a notion of power as having an underlying existence and of understanding power as only having an objective existence in relations. When this critical thinking is combined with the reflexive dispositions of the sociological habitus, then, in constituting the givenness of the social world as the subject for analysis, the sociological habitus is also self-conscious about its own historicity, its own place in discourse and amongst cultures and its own role in producing the 'facts' it seeks to explain. This approach to an investigation of the social world can be encapsulated in Bourdieu's aphorism that the first and most pressing scientific priority is *to take as one's object the social work of construction of the pre-constructed object* [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:229]

In this chapter I have attempted to summarize the essential elements of Bourdieu's sociology and I have discussed their practical application in the development of a sociological habitus. The inculcation of a social theory as habitus is an *active* process, it would, therefore, be a travesty of the critical moment to accept Bourdieu's work passively. In view of this, in the next two chapters I will engage in the activity of *'thinking with a thinker against a thinker'*, [Bourdieu, 1990a:49] in the context of two issues that have particular relevance to the position of widows: firstly, the objective structure of gender and secondly, the possibility of the transformation of social relations.

CHAPTER IV

GENDER:

An excavation of Bourdieu's understanding of gender

Introduction

In Chapter III I made an exploratory foray into the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, identifying some of its significant features and highlighting the importance of developing a critical sociological habitus. Bourdieu argues that the 'stuff of social reality' lies in relations, since sexual difference is the very quintessence of these relations, in this chapter, I will examine his treatment of gender and sexual difference in the light of critical feminist theory. Whilst Bourdieu's work is the subject of a growing library of analysis in the English language, in the context of gender it has only received limited attention: Risseuw [1991] used Bourdieu's notion of habitus and the universe of discourse to analyse changes in gendered relations in Sri Lanka, Moi [1991] examined the appropriateness of Bourdieu for feminist theory in the context of literary and cultural criticism, whilst Kraus [1993] considered the relevance of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence and his theory of social practice for understanding the gendered division of labour. Moi suggested that until Bourdieu's essay '*La Domination masculine*' [1990c] he has "not had much to say about women" [Moi, 1991:1020]. I believe this view is mistaken, the concept of gender opposition is integral and implicit within much of his writing; the opposition of dominant and dominated for which he takes male and female as the paradigm, is the "foundational hypothesis that anchors Bourdieu's sociology" [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:12] and is set out in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, [1977], *Distinction* [1984] and *The Logic of Practice*, [1990b]. I do, however, agree with Moi that the place of gender in his thought is under-theorized and, more importantly, I would argue it is riven with contradictions and tensions which need to be uncovered before it can be utilized for feminist practice.

Feminist theory has a two fold task: firstly of developing an *explanatory-diagnostic analysis* of women's oppression across history, culture and societies; and secondly, the political project of aiding women in their struggles to be emancipated from oppression and exploitation by articulating an *anticipatory-utopian critique* of the norms and values of contemporary society and culture, [Benhabib, 1992]. The first task requires critical, social-scientific research, while the second is primarily normative and philosophical, but, I would argue, the two tasks are not separate moments since it is the values of the latter

that drive the former. In seeking to achieve an anticipatory-utopian critique feminism is faced with a dilemma, for if it moves outside the norms and values of the orthodoxy it no longer has recourse to legitimation through the recognized criteria of rigorous scholarship, however, if it remains within the orthodoxy, it is trapped by the discourse which constructs Woman. Amongst feminist theorists there is no consensus on the most elementary questions about gender: gender is the site of struggle. The complexity of the questions asked and the variety of approaches to gender are not a sign of the weakness of feminist theorizing, rather they are " symptoms of the permeability and pervasiveness of gender relations and the need for new sorts of theorizing" [Flax, 1990:53]. However, the important fact is that gender relations have been problematized, they are no longer a 'natural fact'. Grosz [1995] suggests that feminist theorizing can be divided into two categories, on the one hand there is a broad group who focus on Woman as a *knowable object*; this group includes theorists such as Juliet Mitchell, Michele Barratt, Nancy Chodorow, Shulamith Firestone, Marxist feminists, psychoanalytic feminists and those concerned with the social construction of subjectivity. On the other hand there is a diverse range of theorists who deconstruct the discourse which creates Woman *as* object and seeks to develop discourses which take Woman as the *subject* of knowledges. Among this wide ranging group are Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Gayatri Spivak, Jane Flax and Elizabeth Grosz, many of these writers are committed to the notion of *autonomous sexual difference*. Bourdieu's conceptual tool bag has the potential to be utilized for feminist theory, but the critical evaluation of the anticipatory-utopian moment requires that any patriarchal or phallogocentric presumptions are made visible. In this chapter I will seek to uncover any male-centred presuppositions underlying Bourdieu's understanding of gender and sexual difference. In the analysis I will confront the dilemma of legitimacy by using theories developed from the second category of feminist writing and working within the orthodoxy focus on the fractures and fault lines within its discourse to demonstrate the limitations in Bourdieu's sociology; in this way I will present a heretic discourse containing potential for change.

Identifying and disentangling Bourdieu's understanding of gender is a demanding task since while he has specifically theorized gender relations in '*La Domination masculine*' [1990c], he also argues that the sexual difference of bodies is the paradigmatic model of the cognitive structures of the habitus. From within the complexity of his writing his analysis of gender posits arguments that occupy the poles of both phallogocentric and feminist positions. It is not possible therefore to give a definitional summary of his

treatment of gender, particularly as the very fact of the existence of these tensions and contradictions raises questions about his sociological habitus. Bourdieu's work on gender relations can be characterized as addressing three questions: *what* gender domination is, *why* it occurs and *how* it is maintained. In answering these questions I believe Bourdieu has under theorized the significance of the presuppositions on which his explanation is grounded: his 'what' founders on an assumption of a pre-cultural sexed body and his 'why' on a monocausal reduction of women to their reproductive capacity, while his 'how', which is his most productive area for analysing the specific consequences of gender relations, needs development of the sexual specificity of the corporeality of the body. The implications of the under theorization of these issues also has significance for the epistemological rupture of reflexivity. First in this chapter I will outline Bourdieu's explanation of gender, I will then uncover the presuppositions on which it is grounded starting at the surface by focussing on the problematics underlying the sex/gender opposition and the heterosexual matrix, I will then excavate deeper levels of tension by focussing on the phallogentric nature of the dichotomous presuppositions inherent in Bourdieu's instruments of analysis. This will be followed by an examination of the implications of this critique for Bourdieu's project of reflexive objectification. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the potential of Bourdieu's account of the mechanisms that maintain gendered relations for the explanatory-diagnostic task of feminist theory.

Bourdieu and Gender

Bourdieu understands the 'what and how' of gendered relations as a twofold inter-connected operation, gender relations are produced

" first by means of the social construction of the vision of biological sex which itself serves as the foundation of all mythical visions of the world; and, second, through the inculcation of a bodily hexis that constitutes a veritable embodied politics. In other words, male sociodicy owes its specific efficacy to the fact that it legitimates a relation of domination by inscribing it in a biological which is itself a biologized social construction." Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:172] .

The fundamental of his understanding of gender is therefore that it is a social construction functioning through a process of dominance which is unquestioned because it appears 'natural'. He argues that the male view of the world "the 'phallogentric' cosmology" [ibid:171] in which Man experiences himself as Human, in other words as Universal, dominates, since it needs no justification because it is founded in our male and

female, collective unconscious. There is a "quasi-perfect and immediate agreement which obtains between, on the one hand, social structures such as those expressed in the social organization of space and time and in the sexual division of labour and, on the other, cognitive structures inscribed in bodies and minds" [ibid]. In answering the question of 'why' Bourdieu proposes a 'solution' to "the riddle of the inferior status that is almost universally assigned to women" [ibid:173]. He argues that male domination is

"founded upon the logic of the economics of symbolic exchanges, that is, upon the fundamental asymmetry between men and women instituted in the social construction of kinship and marriage: that between subject and object, agent and instrument." [ibid 174].

In these exchanges men are the subjects and women the objects who circulate as symbols of male power, invested with symbolic functions derived from both from their reproductive capacity and their evaluation in terms of male sexual desire .

Uncovering Bourdieu's Assumption of the Sex-Gender Opposition and the Heterosexual Matrix

First I will examine Bourdieu's notion of gender as a biologized social construction, I will then consider his proposal of the 'origin' of the inferior status of women. The notion of the social construction of gender, that is the sex/gender matrix, understands gender as the political social marking of an ahistorical, fixed, biologically determined body; in other words sex is opposed to gender, there is a distinction between the 'real' biological body and the represented body of cultural practice. This notion of the inscription of culture on the tabula rasa of the body is challenged by feminists such as Butler [1990] [1993] Grosz [1994] [1995] and Irigaray [1985] who seek to take patriarchal discourses rather than Woman as knowable object as their focus. They argue that the opposition between sex and gender is fallacious and the product of the very power relation which creates gender domination. In theorizing the social construction of gender Bourdieu has uncritically accepted the presumption of an ahistorical, fixed biologically, sexed body. This is a surprising oversight since the questioning of the 'given' presumptions of analysis is the foundation upon which Bourdieu's sociology stands and he specifically identifies this danger in the analysis of gender and maintains that he avoids the pitfall by grounding his analysis in his ethnographic research among the Kabyle of Algeria:

"I use this device to circumvent the critical difficulty posed by the analysis of gender: we are dealing in this case with an institution that has been inscribed for millenia in the objectivity of social structures and in the subjectivity of mental structures, so that the analyst has every chance of using as *instruments* of knowledge categories of perception and of thought which he or she should treat as *objects* of knowledge." Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:171].

However, I believe that in spite of this declaration he has been insufficiently reflexive about the dominance of phallogentric thought in the structuring of the mental schemata the habitus and has uncritically accepted the sex/gender opposition.

The presumption of a binary sex/gender system "implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" [Butler, 1990:6]. However, if gender is socially constructed then gender becomes a "free-floating artifice", the cultural meaning that the sexed body assumes, cannot be said to follow from sex in any one way, it is just as reasonable for *man* and *masculine* to signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. This raises the question of the 'given' nature of biological sex: are the 'natural' facts of sex - anatomical, chromosomal, hormonal etc the products of scientific discourses in the service of political and social interests at a particular historical moment? For example Kessler [1990] examining the medical 'normalising' of inter-sexed infants in the USA notes that in the choosing of a sex for an ambiguously sexed infant, the male sex is privileged over the female. If the fixity of sex is contestable then perhaps sex, as well as gender, is culturally constructed; as Butler argues perhaps 'sex' "was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" [1990:7]. If this is true then gender is no longer the cultural interpretation of sex, because sex, itself, is a gendered category. Gender therefore becomes not just the cultural meaning of a pre-given sex, gender is the means by which the categories of sex are designated, therefore, as Butler argues,

"gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or a 'natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts" [ibid].

This means that the production of sex *as* the prediscursive is the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*, that is the notion of sex as a natural, biological fact is an effect of the power relations of gender domination which produces the effect of a prediscursive sex while concealing the operation of its discursive production. I am therefore suggesting that Bourdieu, by failing to question the power relation implicit in the production of a prediscursive sex, is assuming the fixity of the biological body and using it as an instrument of analysis when it should be an object of analysis.

Further tensions and contradictions and instances of 'under-theorizing' of gender appear when we consider Bourdieu's proposal for the explanation of the "original roots" of

gender domination "in the exclusion of women from the games of symbolic capital" [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:134n88]. The very possibility that the oppression of women has a single cause to be found in the hegemonic or universal structure of masculine domination is itself now generally criticised in post-structuralist feminist thought, for example Scott [1988b], Riley [1988], Butler [1990] and Smart [1995] [1992] and Fraser and Nicholson [1990]. The category of Woman is neither a passive dupe nor a singular unity which has existed unchanged through history, rather each moment, historical and cultural, brings into being its own construction of Woman which it proclaims 'natural'. Bourdieu's monocausal explanation and search for an 'origin' fails to take account of the variations in the construction of Woman² and complexities of gender oppression in different cultural contexts and raises suspicions about his construction of the category Woman.

It is possible that Bourdieu's positing an 'origin' owes much to his early association with the structuralist anthropology of Levi-Strauss. Butler [1990] in a critical analysis of the structuralist anthropological position, identifies that it is a perspective which is underpinned by the view that there is a biological or natural female who is transformed into a socially subordinate 'woman'

" 'sex' is before the law in the sense that it is culturally and politically undetermined, providing the 'raw material' of culture, as it were, that begins to signify only through and after its subjection to the rules of kinship" [ibid:37].

As I have already argued postulating a pre-discursive singular, universal nature conceals the relations of subordination it constructs and naturalizes. The nature (sex)/culture (gender) discourse is itself political, therefore any theory which searches for a mechanism which transforms nature defined in terms of natural sex into culture defined in terms of asymmetrical gender relations is reifying the discourse which creates them. Further by grounding his explanation of gender domination in the exchange of marriage and kin relations³ Bourdieu is conflating procreation and sexual desire and presuming the 'universal logic of heterosexuality'. He is accepting the doxa that regulates social practice and not questioning the power relations which underpin these assumptions, but

² Blackwood [1994] for example describes how the female cross-gender role in certain North American tribes allowed women to assume the male role permanently and to marry women in a society with a basically egalitarian mode of production.

³ Bourdieu [1992] associates his position with feminists such as O'Brien [1981] in which reproduction labour is paralleled to economic labour within a Marxist framework and 'patriarchy' is presented as man's compensation for, and attempt to counteract, the alienation of the reproductive consciousness. This argument tenders a phallogentric representation of women in which they are defined solely by their reproductive biology, it conflates sexuality and desire assuming heterosexuality as the norm, and it makes universalistic assumptions about paternity.

as Butler argues, "the naturalization of both heterosexuality and masculine sexual agency are discursive constructions nowhere accounted for but everywhere assumed " [1990:43] Heterosexuality is a discourse which privileges the position of the male as the norm by which the desire and the sex of the female is defined, the female is the 'other' to the male subject⁴.

Bourdieu describes a form of sexual desire :

"women are forced continually to work to preserve their symbolic value by conforming to the male ideal of feminine virtue defined as chastity and candour, and by endowing themselves with all the bodily and cosmetic attributes liable to increase their physical value and attractiveness" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:173]

but this is sexual desire described in terms of masculine sexual agency which leaves women as passive vessels. In this monocausal explanation Bourdieu is at risk of constructing Woman as determined by male dominance and male sexual agency, but as feminists such as Smart [1992] and Scott [1988b] have demonstrated "Woman, is not merely subjugated; she has practiced the agency of constructing her subjectivity as well" [Smart, 1992:7]. Arguing the agency of the subject is entirely congruent with Bourdieu's notion of the habitus as constituting and constituted, but it appears that there is a contradiction between Bourdieu's conception of the agency of the individual in the working of the habitus and his conception of the agency of Woman in his understanding of male domination founded upon the economics of symbolic exchange. Is he making the phallogocentric assumption of equating male with the universal 'humanity' ? Bourdieu fails to ask why it is women who are exchanged, why not men ? He presents women as the passive clay responding to male sexual agency. Bourdieu in taking heterosexuality as a 'given' is again using as an *instrument* of analysis that which should be an object of *analysis*, it is an explanation grounded in the *orthodoxy*. He does not question the way in which the *heterosexual matrix* characterizes

"a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality " Butler [1990 :151n6]

in other words the 'givenness' of heterosexuality is an effect of the gendered relations of domination.

⁴ This is the Lacanian notion of 'desire' derived from the Platonic tradition, where desire is conceived negatively as a 'lack' which the subject experiences and actively seeks an object to satisfy, but the 'lack' of desire is an unfillable absence .

Excavating Deeper Levels of Tension in Bourdieu's Instruments of Analysis : The Phallogentric Nature of Dichotomous Opposition of Western Reason

So far in this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate that Bourdieu's treatment of gender and sexual difference is under-theorized, that it is riven with tensions and contradictions which I have argued arise from his failure to attend to his own warning of using as *instruments* of analysis what should be *objects* of analysis. In this section I will seek to rectify this omission by taking as the object of my analysis the instruments of Bourdieu's analysis of gender, namely the gendered nature of dichotomous reasoning of mainstream Western philosophical thought which views the human subject as made up of dichotomously opposed characteristics : mind and body, reason and passion, psychology and biology etc. In other words, in spite of Bourdieu's project of transcending the arbitrary antinomies of sociology and his detailed explication of the mechanisms of domination of dichotomous thinking, in analysing his treatment of gender there hovers in my mind a suspicion that deep within the complexities of his sociology his analysis rests on an uncritical acceptance of the orthodoxy of the mind/body dichotomy with its implicit phallogentric assumptions.

Dichotomous or binary opposition operates by the mutual exclusivity of the opposed terms. In binary opposition the division is between one term and its opposite, there is never the possibility of a term which is neither one nor the other, or which is both. The dichotomous relationship is regulated by the 'law of contradiction', it can only be 'A' or '-A', the one term is positively defined and the other term is defined only as the negative of the first. This means that one term 'A' has a positive status and an existence independent of the other; the other term is purely negatively defined, it has no form of its own and its limiting boundaries are those which define the positive term. In the mind/body opposition, the body is what the privileged term, the mind, is not; the body is implicitly defined as unruly, an interference to the superior characteristics of the mind which is defined in terms of reason that transcends the flesh. Implicit within this definition, the body is understood as nonhistorical, naturalistic, passive, a nature that needs control and containment, (a definition which I have already suggested Bourdieu takes as given); the body is therefore coded in terms which devalue it. Correlated with the coding of the mind/body are the phallogentric associations man = mind / woman = body. The male/female dichotomy has three distinct phallogentric forms :- in the first women are represented as the *opposites* or negatives of men; in the second women are

represented as the same or similar to men - conceived as *identical* or *equal*; in the third women are represented as men's *complements*. In each instance female is conceived as a version of masculine - it is either a negation of, an identity with, or a joining into a larger whole. When phallogentrism occurs the two sexual symmetries, that is the point of view of each sex regarding itself and the other, is reduced to one, the male, which assumes itself to adequately represent the other. However, the power of dichotomy of the male/female opposition is frequently hidden because the dichotomous structure is often *represented* as if it were a relation of *difference* between two autonomous terms.

The following descriptions by Bourdieu of social practices in Kabyle society, while intended to demonstrate the power of dichotomous oppositions, suggest Bourdieu's uncritical adoption of phallogentric constructions and the correlation of female with devalued terms. For example :

"between man, invested with protective, fecundating virtues, and woman, at once sacred and charged with maleficent forces, and, correlatively, between religion (male) and magic (female)" [1977: 89]

and again

"the opposition between movement outwards towards the fields or market, toward the production and circulation of goods, and movement inwards, towards the accumulation and consumption of the products of work, corresponds symbolically to the opposition to the male body, self-enclosed and directed towards the outside world, and the female body, resembling the dark, damp house, full of food, utensils, and children, which is entered and left by the same inevitably soiled opening". [1977:91-92]

In *The Logic of Practice* he takes as given a construction of sexuality in terms of domination and submission :

"In other words, when the elementary acts of bodily gymnastics (going up or down, forwards or backwards, etc) and, most importantly, the specifically sexual, and therefore biologically preconstructed, aspect of this gymnastics (penetrating or being penetrated, being on top or below etc) are highly charged with social meanings and values..." [1990b:71].

Again in *Logic* he takes as fixed, a phallogentric construction of the relationship between man and woman, allying man in opposition both to the 'natural world' and woman :

"All the symbolic manipulations of body experience, starting with displacements within a symbolically structured space, tend to impose the integration of body space with cosmic space and social space, by applying the same categories (naturally at the price of great laxity of logic) both to the relationship between man and the natural world and to the complementary and opposed states and actions of the two sexes in the division of sexual labour and the sexual division of labour, and therefore in the labour of biological and social reproduction." [1990:77].

The problem with the above passages, which Bourdieu is using to develop his concept of the habitus and the paradigm of division for the mental schemata of the habitus, is that for this reader, in spite of his intention of reflexivity, it is not clear to what extent he is describing the values of the Kabyle and to what extent he is interpreting them through his own cognitive structures. Is his analysis grounded on the values of both Kabyle men *and* women? In a traditional Islamic society it is doubtful that he had equal access to men and women, is he therefore assuming that the women's perspective is entirely concordant with the men's? In analysing what he acknowledges is the 'phallogocentric cosmology' of the male vision of the world, it still appears that he succumbs to the phallogocentric practice of universalizing the male perspective and constructing Woman entirely as determined by Man. The language, particularly the analogies and metaphors employed by Bourdieu in his descriptions and analysis of the relations between men and women in Kabyle society sits uncomfortably with an analysis that seeks to be aware of presuppositions and it raises questions about the cognitive schemata which Bourdieu employed in his perception of Kabyle society. Is he viewing the gendered domestic practices of the Kabyle through perceptual categories and language that is inherently phallogocentric?

This question can I believe be resolved by considering his analysis of the relation of the body to the habitus in *Logic*, where his analysis is not problematised by emotive language. Bourdieu argues that 'knowledge' of the body is within the habitus below the level of consciousness, it is not an 'image' which can be distanced by reflection. This bodily dimension of the habitus arises firstly from the incorporation of the schemes of perception of the culture and secondly, and Bourdieu argues more importantly, the body does not imitate the cultural constructions, it *becomes* them :

"What is 'learned by the body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is."
[1990b:73].

This view of the body as a fundamental dimension of the habitus resonates with feminists such as Grosz's [1994] concern with the place of the body in constituting subjectivity and the need to understand the body as functioning "interactively and productively"⁵.

However Bourdieu's analysis parts company with Grosz, and raises questions about his retention of the phallogocentric mind/body dichotomy in his argument, when he goes on to

⁵ Grosz [1994] argues that recognizing the subject as corporeal is a means of resisting and neutralizing the neutering of male definition which subordinates female by making universalizing phallogocentric assumptions which hide the cultural effacement of women.

distinguish between embodied knowledge and objective knowledge, arguing that the embodied nature of knowledge in the body is

" particularly clear in non-literate societies, where inherited knowledge can only survive in the incorporated state. It is never detached from the body that bears it and can be reconstituted only by means of a kind of gymnastics designed to evoke it, a *mimesis* which, as Plato observed, implies total investment and deep emotional identification. constantly mingled with all the knowledge is reproduces, and this knowledge never has the objectivity it derives from objectification in writing and the consequent freedom with respect to the body. And it could be shown that the shift from a mode of conserving the tradition based solely on oral discourse to a mode of accumulation based on writing, and, beyond this, the whole process of rationalization that is made possible by (*inter alia*) objectification in writing, are accompanied by a far-reaching transformation of the whole relationship to the body, or more precisely of the use made of the body in the production and reproduction of cultural artifacts." [1990b:73].

Bourdieu is therefore arguing that the body remains associated with what he describes as 'non-literate societies' which he opposes to the 'objectivity' available to literate societies, here Bourdieu makes a correlation between literacy/mind/objectivity/rationality opposed to oral/body/subjectivity/emotion and by implication the phallogentric correlation with male/female. This is significant, not because I wish to 'demonise' Bourdieu from some radical feminist perspective but because an anticipatory-utopian feminist critique seeks a change in oppressive gender relations and the mind/body dichotomy is the orthodoxy which maintains the status quo in Western thought.

The feminist critique of the phallogentricism inherent in the mind/body dichotomy is associated with profound problematising in contemporary scholarship of the notion of the possibility of an objective knowledge, which can be broadly characterised as the conflict between objectivity and subjectivity. This conflict, which can be traced back to ancient Greece and has continually confronted Western philosophy, today engages a spectrum of thinkers, for example Derrida, Foucault, Habermas, Heidegger, Husserl, Jameson, Lyotard, Rorty and of course Pierre Bourdieu, whose resolution of the objective subjective dialectic with the notion of 'double objectivity' was summarised in Chapter III. Feminism is also seeking a course through these linked problematic dichotomies. On one side it seeks to expose the absence of Woman from existing knowledges and the patriarchal or phallogentric, rather than neutral nature, of universal metatheories. On the other side it resists the more radical positions of the 'postmodern' critique of reason that reject categories of gender, class, race etc, for as Bordo [1990] argues a failure to recognize the locatedness and limitations of the reality of the embodied existence leads to relativism,

"a universe composed entirely of counter-examples, in which the way men and women see the world is purely as *particular* individuals, shaped by the unique configurations that form that particularity" [ibid:151],

a position which negates the political task of feminism. Bourdieu, at first glance, *appears* to offer a solution, presenting as Calhoun remarks "a sensible third path between universalism and particularism, rationalism and relativism, modernism and postmodernism" [Calhoun,1993:62], *but*, as I have already argued, in the context of gender Bourdieu's position is contradictory and underpinned by phallogocentric assumptions. Nonetheless Bourdieu does offer potential for the explanatory-diagnostic task of feminism, which I will examine later in this chapter, but, to take full advantage of this potential, it is necessary to find a safe route across the dangerous mire of hidden phallogocentric assumptions; feminist theory of 'sexual difference' offers possible safe stepping stones. Although starting from a position different from that of Bourdieu, it is driven by the same critical impulse, and has some productive points of contact with Bourdieu's theorising of the body.

Feminist analyses of 'sexual difference' expose the foundational tensions in Bourdieu's sociology by questioning whether knowledge can ever be split from the sexual specificity of the body that produces it. This is done, not by going *outside* male centred knowledge and thus sacrificing the legitimacy of the orthodoxy, but by excavating the fissures and stresses *within* the prevailing norm. They address the 'crisis of reason' presented by the postmodern critique by examining the implications of accepting the role the body plays in the production and evaluation of knowledge, arguing that whatever class and race differences may divide women (and men)

"sexual differences demand social recognition and representation, and these differences no amount of technological innovation or ideological equalization can disavow or overcome. These differences may or not be biological or universal. But whether biological or cultural, they are ineradicable. They require cultural marking and inscription" Grosz [1994:18].

This commitment to a notion of the fundamental and irreducible differences between the sexes is not essentialism because there is a recognition of differences between members of the same sex rather than a reduction to universalist essences or categories. Feminists of 'sexual difference' argue that western thought historically has privileged the conceptual or mental over the corporeal, in so doing it has denied its own materiality and the material conditions of the production of knowledge. By denying or inadequately acknowledging the corporeality of the conditions of production of knowledge, it has denied the sexual specificity of the materiality and the relevance of the sexual specificity of bodies to the

production of knowledge, [Grosz, 1995]. Knowledge is not purely conceptual nor is it merely intellectual, it is a practice which does things, but as a practice knowledge denies its historicity and posits an indifference to values so that it functions as a transparent tool to be directed by the user. However, as Grosz points out, knowledges are products of our materiality :

"Knowledges are a product of a bodily drive to live and conquer. They misrecognize themselves as interior, merely ideas, thoughts, and concepts, forgetting or repressing their own corporeal genealogies and processes of production. They are products of bodily impulses and forces that have mistaken themselves for products of mind."
[1995:37]

The corporeality of the knowing body must be recognised as sexually specific, it is inadequate to represent it as the universal 'human' since this is a representation that takes a specific mode of corporeality as its ideal and erases difference, the universal of the human body is a guise for the masculine. Grosz argues that once it is understood that the knowledge of western reason occupies

"only one pole of a (sexual) spectrum instead of its entirety, the possibility of other ways of knowing and proceeding - the possibility of feminine discourses and knowledges - reveals itself" [1995:38].

Until the masculinity or maleness of knowledges is recognized as doxic, there cannot be the possibility of another knowledge, since until that recognition there is no possibility of other knowledge with which it can be contrasted.

Like the feminists of 'sexual difference' Bourdieu understands knowledge as a practice, a social product, but the corporeality of knowledge, the relevance of the sexual specificity of bodies to the production of knowledge, needs to be recognized in his epistemology. Once again we are confronted with a tension in Bourdieu's work, for whilst on the one hand he argues that the 'body' is a material point of reference and an organizing metaphor because the principle of division which is the paradigm for the mental schemata of the habitus is grounded in 'biological' (sexual) differences, on the other hand he denies the sexual specificity of the 'body', treating it as a universal body, the male ideal against which the female body is defined. In other words, if the division between male and female bodies is the paradigm for the conceptual schemata of the habitus then the schemata upon which knowledge is grounded cannot be divorced from the perceiving body, there cannot be one knowledge, there must be a conceptual schemata which is produced by the male body and a conceptual schemata which is produced by a female body, that is ways of knowing from both poles of the (sexual) spectrum. To deny the

sexual specificity of the knowledge is to invoke the phallocentrism of universalistic thinking.

Paradoxically, although Bourdieu denies the sexual specificity of knowledge by conceiving the conceptual paradigms of knowledge as universal he provides a clear account of the mechanisms of gender domination which results in this phallocentric conception of knowledge being misrecognized because he argues that knowledge is not a mere reflection of the world but it has a constitutive power which contributes to the reality of the object of knowledge. Sexually specific bodies, that is the unspecified raw material of the body that social inscription produces as subjects of a particular kind, are therefore the result of a power struggle, bodies are the site of struggle, for

"systems of classification are not so much instruments of knowledge as instruments of power" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:14n26].

It is with this account, the 'how' of gender domination, which is the aspect of Bourdieu's understanding of gender that has such potential for the explanatory/diagnostic task of feminism that I will conclude this chapter, but first I will consider the implications of the sexual specificity of knowledge for Bourdieu's project of epistemic reflexivity.

The Possibility of Reflexivity

In the objectification of the act of objectification examined in Chapter III it will be recalled that while Bourdieu acknowledged the importance of reflexivity about the social origins of the researcher his primary concern was with the intellectual unconscious embedded in the analytical tools and operations. I intimated in Chapter III that Bourdieu over-estimated the level of personal reflexivity that was possible, the foregoing analysis of his treatment of gender demonstrates the impossibility of total personal reflexivity and it also problematises the *nature* of the knowledge achieved by the second act of objectification. The critique of feminists of 'sexual difference' identifies that knowledge cannot be divorced from the knower. It is not that epistemology has ignored the role of the body in the production of knowledge, but that scholarship has only conceptualised the body in the dichotomous terms that neutralizes its sexual specificity, in that way the formative role of the body's sexual specificity in the production of values of truth and knowledge (objective, verifiable, causal and quantifiable) is ignored, [Grosz, 1994]. While such a position no longer has the finality of 'the truth' it not a relapse into relativism, rather it a position that demands that all the parameters of the criteria of particular knowledges are acknowledged. It is a position that allows a critical perspective

that is open to continual development. In the context of the objectification of the act of objectification it uncovers the unconscious phallogentric presuppositions which unwittingly obliterate the *autonomous difference* of Woman. It is also a position that is congruent with Bourdieu's notion of the two logics: the 'fuzzy' logic of practice and the logic of science, since it further reinforces the disjunction between them. With this caveat to the double act of objectification in mind I will now turn to Bourdieu's account of the mechanisms of relations of gender domination.

The Mechanism of Gender Relations

It will be recalled that Bourdieu argues that gender differentiation is socially constructed, the primary experience of the social world is that of *doxa*, an unquestioning acceptance of the self-evident correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the real divisions and the practical principles of division which function

"below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will." [1984 :466]

This is not a deterministic notion, however, the doxic perception of the world is not a simple mechanical reflection, it is *constructed* and *active* since the act of cognition whilst below the level of consciousness involves principles of construction that are external to the constructed object; perception is a constant reconstruction and reinforcement between the real divisions and the principles of division.

The 'real' divisions, for example, the divisions of sexual procreation - the corporeal specificity of the body - and the principles of division, that is the schemata for making sense of the world, are embedded in the body in a bodily *hexis* which is

"a basic dimension of the sense of social orientation, is a practical way of experiencing and expressing ones sense of social value"[1984:474].

The bodily *hexis* is a social conditioning inscribed on the body, the body's social physiognomy, and is apparent in the most basic of behaviour, such as ways of sitting, walking, speaking. The dispositions of the habitus also give a 'sense of ones place', a social orientation, a guide toward the social position suited to ones 'property' - in the sense of objectified material property and symbolic cultural property, in this context gender - this ensures that individuals social practices are adjusted to their properties. This 'sense of ones place' is also a sense of practical anticipation which ensures that social agents understand the meaning of a particular social practice of another agent and its significance for their own position in social space. A simple example of this can be seen by observing the postures of students sitting in a seminar group, while social

conditioning inclines men to sit in a manner which monopolises surrounding space as a right, women are more likely to contain themselves within the geometry of their chair; the unconscious perception of this variation in space occupied is a reinforcement of the bodily hexis and at the same time an enactment and reinforcement of the symbolic cultural property of individual men and women.

This can be summarised in Bourdieu's statement that

"The elementary actions of bodily gymnastics, especially the specifically sexual, biologically pre-constructed aspect of it, charged with social meanings and values, functions as the most basic of metaphors, capable of evoking a whole relationship to the world"
[1984:474]

The socially constructed schemata of perception means that the habitus is both gendered and gendering, it is a '*contrainte par corps*' - an imprisonment brought about through the body . Bourdieu argues that this somatization of gender differentiation is a progressive and two fold process, firstly by the social construction of sexually differentiated bodies and secondly by the embodiment of this differentiation as a bodily hexis. Earlier in this chapter I problematised the concept of social construction as the *explanation of gender*, arguing that this notion is an *effect* of the power relations of the orthodox discourse, here however Bourdieu provides an account of social construction as the *mechanism* of gender relations that has great potential for feminist theory. This is especially evident in his account of *gender domination* and of how the differentiation in power between male and female continues and is legitimated and justified by women as well as men.

Bourdieu explains that the socially constructed nature of gender differentiation becomes an '*embodied politics*' since as will be recalled from Chapter III, the correspondence between social and mental structures are not simply instruments of knowledge they are also '*instruments of domination*'. The embodied politics of gender domination functions as an act of *symbolic violence*, it is the paradigm of all acts of symbolic violence. The symbolic violence of gender domination is accomplished because it is *misrecognized*, it needs no justification because as we have already seen it is an act of cognition

"that lies beyond - or beneath - the controls of consciousness and will, in the obscurities of the schemata of habitus that are at once gendered and gendering" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:171-2]

Man experiences himself as universal with monopoly over all that is *human*, in this *man equals human*. This state of being is doxic, taken for granted and legitimated since it represents the agreement experienced by men and women between social structures, in

the social organisation of time and space, in the sexual division of labour, and the cognitive structures, the perceptions of the body inscribed in the mind which are the schemata for making sense of the social world. The habitus of individual women and men both reflect these relations of domination and re-enact them. It will also be recalled from the preceding chapter that in considering the phenomenon of domination Bourdieu rejects notions of submission and resistance when describing the relationship between the dominated and dominating, he argues that this language prevents us understanding the intrinsically double skewed nature of relations of domination

"[r]esistance can be alienating and submission can be liberating. Such is the paradox of the dominated and there is no way out of it"
Bourdieu [1987:184]

For example within academia, or other hierarchical institutions, those women who decide to actively resist what they believe to be the gendered nature of the institutional structures and practices are often marginalised, whilst those who submit by adopting the dominant practices are more likely to gain recognition.

Bourdieu also demonstrates that it is not just women who are constrained by the symbolic violence of gender domination. The phenomenon of misrecognition means that men are also subject to it; their experience of themselves as holding a universal monopoly is not through an act of coercion or constraint but through the 'somatization of the cultural arbitrary', it is doxic, beneath the controls of conscious will, paradoxically therefore the dominant are dominated by their domination. In an unusual analysis of Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* Bourdieu examines this paradox and demonstrates the constraints and demands that

"any man must make, in his triumphant unconsciousness, to try to live up to the dominant idea of a man" Bourdieu Wacquant [1992: 173]

It is the unconscious nature of the domination which gives it its power, 'the dominated are dominated in their brains'. Whilst it is true, as Bourdieu suggests, that this is a dimension of symbolic domination which is almost always overlooked by feminist critique, it is congruent with the analysis of feminists of 'sexual difference' such as Irigaray and Grosz, and the critique of the phallogocentric nature of the dichotomized foundation of Western reason which I discussed earlier. The notion of a bodily hexis also has parallels with feminist concern with corporeal specificity of the body although Bourdieu's emphasis is on the embodiment or inscription of objective structures whilst feminists of 'sexual difference' emphasise the manner in which the subjective experience of the body is inscribed on its surface.

Feminists of 'sexual difference' argue that the power of the phallogocentric representations of women can be seen in the way they actively constitute the body's very sensations and pleasures - the phenomenology of bodily experience. This means that the way women experience their bodies is pre-determined by the phallogocentric discourse. Bourdieu and feminists such as Irigaray are congruent in their understanding of what Bourdieu describes as the 'somatization of social relations of domination' because within the concept of habitus we can see the relationship between the 'body as constructed in discourses' and the 'real body'. It is discourse that shapes the schemata of the habitus that determine how we perceive and experience our bodies, it territorializes the human body into a male body or a female body, the meanings in discourse shape the materiality of the real body and its desires. Male, phallogocentric discourses have historically shaped and demarcated woman's body but Bourdieu fails to explore the significance of a woman constrained to experience her body within the structure of male desire; nor does he address the potential this contains for changing asymmetric gender relations. It is feminists' of 'sexual difference' understanding of the isomorphism between patriarchal power relations, the structure of dominant or socially recognised discourses, and the socially produced phallic male body that allows the freeing of a conceptual space for a more adequate representation of woman. At the same time it also creates an opportunity to address the paradoxical dimension of symbolic domination identified by Bourdieu - 'the domination of the dominant by his domination', for the deconstruction of the phallogocentrism also releases men from their domination. In positing isomorphism between male sexuality and patriarchal language feminists of 'sexual difference' are not reducing asymmetric gender relations to men's psychological need to dominate or an essentialist effect of a 'natural' impulse; neither is there a causal anatomical link between male bodies and the dominant discourse. It is not men who form discourse in their image, but phallogocentric discourses which produce the 'masculinity' of male sexuality, therefore for men as for women a transformation of the phallogocentric discourse can change men's experience of their sexuality and desire. Feminists of 'sexual difference' stand close to Bourdieu in the way in which they see bodies as the bearers of meanings and values, the products of social inscription, however, they go beyond Bourdieu's closure around the status quo and release a potential for change. The analysis of feminists of 'sexual difference' moves beyond the polemic of 'demonising' men and reducing women to male 'sex objects' [MacKinnon, 1994]. Rather than representing domination in the simplistic and dualistic terms of two homogeneous and antagonistic

categories which stereotype men and women, the 'enemy' for feminism becomes the symbolic system which constrains men as much as women, although with very different results.

Feminists of 'sexual difference' have been criticised, [Moi, 1985], for presenting an elitist, classist, narcissistic, intellectualistic, ahistorical doctrine which is irrelevant to the lives of socially marginalised women globally. Whilst it is true that their focus on the masculinist signifying economy of Western metaphysical thought may appear to assume a universality, it cannot be doubted that this is the dominant discourse underpinning capitalism, which has exploitative ramifications across the globe. Some feminists have questioned how the discourse of the body can liberate from material oppression and can traverse the cultural and historical contexts in which gendered relations take place. How will it alter economic, political and cultural forms of oppression? But as Spivak [1981] has observed, the repression of women's bodies is world wide, whilst culturally specific, for example, clitoridectomy, where the symbolical construction of women as exchange objects requires the destruction of the clitoris as an autonomous source of sexuality which is independent of reproductive functions and patriarchal control. It must also be remembered that the structures of language and other signifying practices such as art and literature which mediate awareness of the body and the self, interact with and reinforce material and social structural oppression. It is, however, undoubtedly true that, while the theory of sexual difference illuminates the constraining nature of the discourse of Western thought it does not articulate gender with other categories of domination. This is a limitation of 'sexual difference' theory which needs to be rectified. Scott [1988a] demonstrates how this articulation can take place, by highlighting how other classifications, such as class (but also race, age, disability etc) are, like gender, created through difference and are often constructed by reference to sexual difference. She argues that gender is important in analysing *all* social meaning

"It is in analyzing the process of making meaning that gender becomes important. Concepts such as class are created through differentiation. Historically, gender has provided a way of articulating and naturalizing difference. One cannot analyze politics separately from gender, sexuality and the family. These are not compartments of life but discursively related systems;"
Scott [1988a:60].

The theorists of 'sexual difference' whilst providing a critical analysis of the most doxic assumptions lack a grounding in practice, they need to relate gender and sexual difference to other classificatory systems. There is a rift between the theory of sexual difference and its operationalisation in tools for empirical analysis; it is here that Bourdieu is so

useful. In order to understand how his sociology can be utilised I will examine the intersecting relations of domination which contribute to the habitus: firstly, how gender connects to the other conceptual schemata of the habitus - the objective divisions of age, ethnicity, social class etc which function below the level of consciousness and discourse; secondly, how gender relates to Bourdieu's key concepts of field and capital. Whilst Bourdieu does not answer this question directly it is possible to distil the answer from work such as *Distinction*, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* and the *Logic of Practice*.

First to consider the question of the inter-related functioning of the various 'classes' of perception. It must be remembered that Bourdieu uses 'class' interchangeably both as "a universal principle of explanation and classification, defining the rank occupied in all possible fields" [1984:114]

and as an indicator of social class. It should also be noted that

"[s]ocial class is not defined by a property (not even the most determinant one, such as the volume and composition of capital) nor by a collection of properties (of sex, age, social origin, ethnic origin - proportion of blacks and whites, for example, or natives and immigrants - income, educational level etc.), nor even by a chain of properties strung out from a fundamental property, (position in the relations of production) in a relation of cause and effect, conditioner and conditioned; but by the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices" [1984:106].

Bourdieu also makes it clear that

"[s]exual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions. This is why there are as many ways of realizing femininity as there are classes and class fractions, and the division of labour between the sexes takes quite different forms, both in practices and in representations, in the different social classes" [1984:107-8]

The same of course can be said of masculinity although significantly Bourdieu chose to restrict his observation to the feminine. Bourdieu is not arguing for a hierarchy of oppressions amongst gender, age, class, race etc., but for a process of inter-relationship between them, which structures the habitus. After all one is not *just* a woman or a man, a whole gamut of other mental schemata are involved when we define ourselves or others define us - age, education, race, economic resources - for as Phillips [1992] remarks "[it] would be nonsense to suggest that gender was the sole determinant of our lives". Bourdieu allows an analysis of the ways that relations of power inherent in class, race gender and sexual orientation intertwine, reinforce and contradict each other in historically specific contexts - the political project which drives feminist analysis.

Now to consider the relationship of gender to capital and its working within the field. The relationship between these conceptual tools Bourdieu summarises in the formula :

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

It will be recalled that while the habitus is the set of relations embedded in the mental structures and embodied in the physical dispositions, the field is a set of objective social relations maintained in a contested frame of power: the power an individual commands is determined by their capital. Capital - property - may exist in an embodied form as dispositions or in an objectified form as goods or qualifications, which can be cultural/symbolic, social and economic. Bourdieu's notion of capital should not be understood just in Marxist terms and linked to labour, he emphasis that capital is a resource and his significant insight is that there are immaterial forms of capital -cultural, symbolic and social - as well as material and economic, and with varying levels of difficulty it is possible to convert one form into another.

I have already discussed how gender functions as a disposition but, it also functions as capital. From the formula above, it can be seen that capital is intimately linked with the habitus, but the relationship is not linear and arithmetic, since capital has the capacity of influencing, even determining the nature of the dispositions of the habitus as well as being a resource determining positions within the field.

"Economic and social condition, as identified by occupation, gives a specific form to all properties of sex and age, so that it is the efficacy of the whole structure of factors associated with a position in social space which is manifested in the correlations between age or sex and practices" [1984:106].

The reverse of this is also true, the symbolic value of the properties of an individual have different values in different fields, therefore the significance of gender in determining position in the social space is variable, gender is not a fixed property. Bourdieu states that

"In practice, that is , in a particular field, the properties, internalized in dispositions or objectified in economic or cultural goods, which are attached to agents are not all simultaneously operative; the specific logic of the field determines those which are valid in this market, which are pertinent and active in the game in question, and which, in the relationship with this field, function as specific capital - and, consequently, as a factor explaining practices. " [1984:113]

This means that the particular social weight - power - that the range of 'properties' has in any particular relationship depends on the logic of that particular field. Bourdieu suggests the effects of gender domination with its accompanying 'logic of the division of labour between the sexes' is weakened as educational capital and cultural capital grows

"the effect of assignment by status which makes politics a man's business is less likely to occur, the greater the wife's educational capital, or when the gap between her capital and her husband's is small or in her favour" [1984:109].

The low valuation of the symbolic capital associated with the gender 'female' is compensated for by high educational capital. So Bourdieu allows us to see that whilst the gendering of the habitus is a powerful influence on behaviour and a power resource as a form of symbolic capital, the multiplicity of possibilities of relationship in the formula [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice allows for an infinity of combinations which encompasses the heterogeneity of individually unique women and men.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to evaluate the potential of Bourdieu's social theory for feminism's task of developing an explanatory-diagnostic analysis of women's oppression and of aiding women in their struggles for emancipation by articulating an anticipatory-utopian critique. The analysis has uncovered a paradox, for while on the one hand it has revealed Bourdieu's uncritical use of the phallogocentric assumptions of Western reason as an instrument of analysis, on the other hand his conceptualization of social relations provides feminism with a powerful and effective tool for understanding the mechanism of oppressive gender relations and his notion of the sociological habitus has been the means of understanding how we are all to a varying degree (including Pierre Bourdieu) trapped within the phallogocentric discourse. The question that now occurs is whether Bourdieu's sociology, with a critical development of the theorization of gender would meet the needs of the feminist project of emancipation. Can Bourdieu be used to *change* the situation of oppressed groups? It is to this question that I will turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL CHANGE

The Importance of Corporeal Specificity in the theory of the Habitus

The analysis of Bourdieu's theorising of gender in Chapter IV concluded by questioning the potential within his sociology for the transformation of oppressive social relations, an issue which, unlike his analysis of gender, has been the subject of extensive comment. In this chapter I will consider some aspects of those comments, then continuing the theme of the importance of corporeal specificity identified in the context of gender, I will focus on Bourdieu's under-theorization of this aspect of the habitus, demonstrating how a recognition of the specificity of the body ameliorates the deterministic logic of Bourdieu's model of social practice. I will conclude the chapter by briefly considering the potential for change inherent in the complexity of contemporary society.

In an introduction to Bourdieu's work Harker et al [1990] describe his social theory as limited to attempts at assessing how short-term alterations occur rather than an account of historical transformation, and criticizes him for dissolving agency into all encompassing structures with no allowance for innovative options or any measure of autonomy from structures. Jenkins [1982] [1992] characterises Bourdieu's model as a circular relationship between practice and structure in the production of the habitus that has a 'backbone of determinism' which arises from the failure of his project to transcend the subjective objective dialectic. Calhoun [1993] argues that Bourdieu does not offer much purchase on the transformation of social systems and has no notion of *systematic pressure* for revolutionary change, having a bias toward social reproduction rather than social change, with little 'notion of creativity'. However, he suggests that with more development his conceptual apparatus can be used in an approach which does allow historical, organizational and cultural specificity. Others, such as Lash [1993] are more positive, arguing that Bourdieu provides a basis for the analysis of historical and social change in cultural practices and that his theory has coherence and unusual breadth. Risseuw [1991], though not without reservations, found Bourdieu good for analysing power, resistance and gender transformation in Sri Lanka; Moi [1991] while remarking that Bourdieu "comes across as somewhat bleak, or even despondent" [1991:1033] about

the possibility of change in gender relations is optimistic about the potential for change within his theory, arguing that Bourdieu himself, is an agent of social change, because *Distinction* is a theoretical intervention which by the very fact of exposing the foundations of the bourgeois esthetics will contribute to its transformation. For Moi, Bourdieu's pessimism about changes in gender relations arises from the foundation of his analysis in the traditional near-doxic Kabyle society, she writes that "his reliance on his Kabyle material makes him underestimate, in my view, the level of crisis we are experiencing in gender relations today. On his own theory, such social crisis produces the conditions for social change on a scale unthinkable in a more doxic society. "

[1991:1033]

Whilst, as I have already indicated in my analysis of gender, I find contradictions within Bourdieu's social theory grounded in an uncritical acceptance of the phallogocentric presuppositions of Western reason, there are also assumptions implicit within some of the criticisms above, which need to be uncovered before evaluating the substance of their critique. First to consider the notion of the autonomous agent, Elias, whose work has influenced Bourdieu maintains that notions of the autonomy of the individual are historically specific. He argues in *The Court Society* [1983] that by the sixteenth century in Europe psychological insights and personal observation were playing a progressively larger part as people began to take more conscious account of how their behaviour would be interpreted by others. It is contemporary psychology that has led us to assume that the essential determinants of a person's behaviour come from 'inside', independent of his or her relation to others. Elias argues that the individual person's mode of self-experience has itself changed in the course of social development, and that the preoccupation of much of modern western philosophy and sociology with the experience of the single isolated adult individual is itself the product of the European civilizing process from the Renaissance onwards. From this perspective the concept of individual identity and creative agency with any notion of autonomy from structure becomes more problematic than some of Bourdieu's critics admit, such a notion must be understood not as a given but as itself open to debate. Bourdieu, who forcefully rejects criticisms of determinism, takes this point further when he remarks that

"[t]he notion of habitus provokes exasperation, even desperation, I believe, because it threatens the very idea that 'creators' (especially aspiring ones) have of themselves, of their identity, of their 'singularity' " ! , Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:133]

Whilst I reject a notion of human beings as plastic, a form entirely moulded by our environment, I am equally suspicious of any notion that we create ourselves.

The concept of change is similarly problematic. While commentators such as Harker et al [1990] distinguish between social ruptures and qualitative changes in society in contrast to the day to day transformations which continually occur, I maintain that this is a false dichotomy, social ruptures and qualitative changes are the cumulative effect of day to day transformation; it is only in retrospect that the distinction between 'social rupture' and 'day to day transformation' can be made by the *post hoc* assessment of the speed of the transformation. It is only with the benefit of 'hindsight' that the arbitrary decision is taken to interpret particular historical events as a revolutionary social rupture rather than the final culmination of a process of the day to day transformation.

Risseuw[1991] makes a similar point about the cumulative effect of small changes on what is 'taken for granted', arguing that changes may seem imperceptible, but when viewed from one generation to the next there is a transformation of what appeared to be 'beyond the sense of limits' of one generation, to what is 'normal' or 'obvious' to the next.

The questioning of the presumptions about the nature of social change is also implicit within Jenks's [1993] comments about Bourdieu's critics, when he argues that, in spite of the complex of traditions and thought in Bourdieu's work, reading has often focussed on the negative elements of his thesis with the result that the metaphor of reproduction has been developed as 'copy' or 'imitation' rather than as 'regeneration' or 'synthesis'.

Jenks argues that reproduction is a concept which

"serves to articulate the dynamic process that makes sensible the utter contingency of , on the one hand, the stasis and determinacy of social structures and, on the other, the innovation and agency inherent in the practice of social action. Cultural reproduction allows us to contemplate the necessity and complementarity of continuity and change in social experience." [1993:116].

He argues strongly for understanding cultural reproduction as a continuous process which has inherent within it the possibility of transformation because of the emergent quality of experience of everyday life.

"Culture as a process, is emergent, forthcoming, it is continuous in the way of reproducing and, as with all social processes it provides the grounds for and the parallel context of *social action* itself " Jenks [1993:119]

He argues that Bourdieu posits a close fit between cultural constructs, social structures and agents' actions because there is a high degree of correspondence mediated between them which is generated by the habitus. Social reproduction approximates historical change because the possibility of historical change rests in the limited conjuncture

between a social structure and the actions of agents mediated by the habitus, never between the cultural order and the social structure.

In turning to Moi [1991], I agree with her characterisation of Bourdieu's analysis of the potential for change in gender relations as 'gloomy' since he states that

"the liberation of women can come only from a collective action aimed at a symbolic struggle capable of challenging practically the immediate agreement of embodied and objective structures, that is, from a symbolic revolution that questions the very foundations of the production and reproduction of symbolic capital and, in particular, the dialectic of pretensions and distinction which is at the root of the production and consumption of cultural goods as signs of distinction" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:174]

The process of the reform of gender domination therefore requires the transformation of the cognitive schemata with which we make sense of the world (this leaves unanswered the crucial question of the substance of transformed gender relations, a topic beyond the scope of this chapter). I do not however share Moi's optimistic evaluation of the potential for change arising from objective crisis in Bourdieu's social theory since the force of his arguments is on the stability and continuity of relations of domination in modern society where the self-regulating systems are decisive links in the reproduction of patterns of social relations.

"The greater the extent to which the task of reproducing the relations of domination is taken over by objective mechanisms, which serve the interests of the dominant group without any conscious effort on the latter's part, the more indirect and, in a sense, impersonal, become the strategies objectively oriented towards reproduction: it is not by lavishing generosity, kindness or politeness on his charwoman (or an any other 'socially inferior' agent) but by choosing the best investment for his money, or the best school for his son, that the possessor of economic or cultural capital perpetuates the relationship of domination which objectively links him with his charwoman and even her descendants. Once a system of mechanisms has been constituted capable of objectively ensuring the reproduction of the established order by its own motion....., the dominant class have only to *let the system they dominate take its own course* in order to exercise their domination; but until such a system exists, they have to work directly, daily, personally, to produce and reproduce conditions of domination which are even then never entirely trustworthy" Bourdieu [1977: 189-90] .

This is a most pessimistic forecast for the potential of changing oppressive social relations. Moi, in her optimistic assessment, focuses on Bourdieu's analysis of the role of an objective crisis in triggering social change, whilst a preliminary examination of this is an encouraging augury for the feminist political task, a consideration of Bourdieu's explanation of the forces regulating the habitus leads to the conclusion that whatever

triggering objective crisis occurs, for Bourdieu, ultimately, social action is determined by objective conditions.

This judgement is congruent with criticisms that Bourdieu presents a "deterministic model of social reality and the practice of social relations" Jenkins [1982:278], however rather than reiterate well established criticisms I wish to further develop the critical analysis of Bourdieu from Chapter IV, which will both identify an under-theorization of an element of the habitus arising from his 'unconscious' retention of the objective subjective opposition and will suggest a change of emphasis in the theory which ameliorates its structural determinism. This analysis will be developed on a model of social action which, while pessimistic about the possibility of utopian change, does allow a more adequate understanding of the 'fits and starts' of social practice.

In my analysis of Bourdieu's understanding of gender his lack of attention to the corporeal specificity of the body led me to question his uncritical retention of phallogocentric assumptions, this same neglect of corporeal specificity highlights an imbalance in his notion of the habitus. Contradictions and under-theorization of the concept of the habitus once again points to the conclusion that in spite of his intention of epistemic reflexivity Bourdieu has an uncritical retention of the disembodied assumptions of Western reason founded on a universal body. Bourdieu's neglect of the corporeal specificity of the individual gives the appearance of a social being as a *tabula rasa* on which the habitus is inscribed and embodied, this can be seen in Bourdieu's conception of the 'object' of social science, that is corporeal beings :

"Individuals or groups are objectively defined not only by what they are but what they are reputed to be, a 'being-perceived' which, even if it closely depends on their being, is never totally reducible to this. Social science therefore has to take account of the two kinds of properties that are objectively attached to them: on the one hand, material properties, starting with the body, that can be counted and measured like any other thing of the physical world; and on the other hand, symbolic properties which are nothing other than material properties when perceived and appreciated in their mutual relationships, that is, as distinctive properties." [1990b:135].

Now while it is true that an individual 'is never totally reducible' to 'what they are' neither are individuals *only* the properties that are 'objectively attached to them'. A holistic view of the object of social science, one not grounded in dualistic thinking, would understand social being and social practice as a synergistic matrix in which none of the elements can be privileged since it is in their interaction that each element increases the effect of the others. To define the object of social science in Bourdieu's terms is to understand human

beings as passive and disassociated from the specificity of their bodies, it assumes that it is the giving of meaning that brings all symbolic properties into existence, ignoring that those symbolic properties arising from our specific corporeality exist before they are given arbitrary meanings. Bourdieu emphasises the role of objective structures in the formation of social practice and minimizes the specificity of the individual, but individual human beings are genetically different (except for identical twins). Corporeal beings have differing physical and mental capacities and characteristics; these corporeal differences are not social constructions, they exist, it is the value we give them that is the arbitrary construction, the symbolic value which is accorded being dependent upon the logic regulating the specific field for example the differential in the symbolic value of physical dexterity compared with intellectual ability in football. Bourdieu in his conception of the habitus and social practice, glosses over the significance of individual genetic specificity, he states that

"The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (eg the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them" [1977:72]

However whilst Bourdieu's emphasis is on objective conditioning of dispositions, there is within his definition of dispositions the opportunity to articulate the specificity of genetic inheritance. Bourdieu states that

"The word *disposition* seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of habitus (defined as a system of dispositions). It expresses first the *result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a *way of being, a habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*." [ibid: 214 n1][italics original]

This definition privileges the objective conditioning of dispositions, whilst subsuming the contribution of a pre-existing corporeality. Inherent within this is an assumption that dispositions are inculcated on a universal body, there is no recognition of the uniqueness of the structure on which the habitus is inscribed and embodied, however, the individual genetic specificity of each human being must result in variations in the processes of inculcation which characterise the dispositions of the habitus, such variations can lead to significant differences in social practice. It is this second aspect of the habitus, the pre-existing predisposition of the body, which needs to be recognized in its full

specificity in order to achieve a holistic conception of the object of social science. In this chapter I am seeking to fully incorporate the corporeal specificity of the social being and develop from Bourdieu's social theory *a model of social change which understands social agents as active within the constraints of the synergistic matrix of both their genetic inheritance and their social environment*. Ultimately of course, this is also a deterministic model of social action but the parameters of action are broader than those posited in Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, where I believe there is inadequate attention to the theorisation of the interaction of dispositions arising from objective conditions interacting with the ordinary genetic endowment. The conviction which a model carries is decided in the end by that which most closely represents a reader's perception of the reality of social life, the knowledge cannot be disassociated from the knower, however this does not detract from a rigorous analysis, rather the declaration of the direction from which a subject is approached, such as that above, determines the critical parameters.

Having drawn attention to Bourdieu's minimizing of corporeal specificity in the structure of the habitus and in the light of that criticism, I now wish to focus on the possibility of changing oppressive gender relations. Within the limitations of this chapter it is not possible to develop all the ramifications of a more balanced incorporation of corporeal specificity in the habitus, I am therefore going to limit the examination to the implications for social change triggered by an objective crisis, which Moi identified as an optimistic prospect for the transformation of oppressive gender relations. In examining this area of Bourdieu's theory I will demonstrate that by inserting a more commensurate recognition of the corporeal specificity of the social agent into the habitus that it is possible to release the theory from its deterministic cul-de-sac and provide the potential, though constrained, for change. First I will summarise Bourdieu's theory for change arising from an objective crisis and identify why it does not have the optimistic potential that Moi proposes, then I will suggest how the greater acknowledgement of corporeal specificity within the habitus can enhance its potential.

The *habitus* mediates the conjuncture between agency and structure:

"The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus. It follows that these practices cannot be directly deduced either from the objective conditions, defined as the instantaneous sum of the stimuli which may appear to have directly

triggered them, or from the conditions which produced the durable principle of their production. These practices can be accounted for only by relating the objective *structure* defining the social conditions of the production of the habitus which engendered them to the conditions in which the habitus is operating, that is, to the *conjuncture* which, short of a radical transformation, represents a particular state of this structure." [1977:78].

Within the habitus there is therefore tension between the 'generative' creativity and the controlled 'improvisations', an energy which can on the one hand originate extempore performance while on the other is constrained by the circumstances which both stimulate action and govern the cognitive processes which make sense of the need for action. It is a tension between the inherent force in social relations for continuity and the innate possibility of originality, agents' actions have the potential to be as much producers of events as they are products of events. It must also be remembered that the habitus is an *open system of dispositions*, it is not a static concept, it is processual, accounting for and giving the possibility of change. Bourdieu describes each state of the social world as being

"no more than a temporary equilibrium, a moment in the dynamics through which the adjustment between distributions and incorporated or institutionalized classifications is constantly broken and restored" [1990b:141].

This is a conception of social relations in which the habitus is constantly readjusting, but it can also undergo transformation,

the "habitus can also be transformed via socio-analysis, ie via an awakening of consciousness and a form of 'self-work' that enables an individual to get a handle on his or her dispositions ...(but) The possibility and efficacy of this kind of self-analysis is itself determined in part by the original structures of the habitus in question, in part by the objective conditions under which the awakening of self-consciousness takes place" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:133n86.]

From this account it will be seen that there are two requirements for social change to occur: the 'awakening of consciousness', which will in part be a function the unique make-up of the individual, that part of every person that is their genetic inheritance and, 'the objective event'. The essential question is what circumstances will trigger a change in the balance of this relationship? What motivates social agents to seek a change in their social relations? And more fundamentally, how does a relationship come to be seen as one of domination?

Bourdieu highlights this when he states that

" I do not see how relations of domination, whether material or symbolic, could possibly operate without implying, activating

resistance. *The dominated, in any social universe, can always exert a certain force*, inasmuch as belonging to a field means by definition that one is capable of producing effects in it (if only to elicit reactions of exclusion on the part of those who occupy its dominant positions). The logic of adjustment of dispositions to positions allows us to understand how the dominated can exhibit more *submission* (and less resistance and subversion) than those who see them through the eyes ie the habitus of the dominant or the dominated dominant, that is, less than intellectuals would envision." [ibid:81].

In other words *the relationship of dominant and dominated is not constituted as such until it is perceived as a relationship of dominance either by the participants on the field of play or the observers to the game, it is only when it is conceived as dominance that the arbitrary rather than pre-given nature of the relationship is understood and there is motivation for change*. It is Bourdieu's notion of the *universe of discourse* and the concept of *doxa* together with the concept of the misrecognition of symbolic violence discussed in the previous chapters that allows us to understand this crucial aspect of social reality.

The concept of the doxic acceptance of the 'givenness' of social structures was introduced in Chapter III, when it was seen that Bourdieu argues that every society has an inclination to produce "the naturalization of its own arbitrariness" Bourdieu [1977:164]. It will be remembered from the discussion of the mechanisms of gender domination, that the arbitrary nature of the social construction of gender is naturalized. The most effective mechanism producing this phenomenon is the relationship between an individuals actual opportunities and their desires. Out of this dialectic comes the *sense of reality* or *sense of limits*

"the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the ineradicable adherence to the established order" [ibid].

When there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective external structures and the subjective mental structures, the natural and social world appear self-evident, that is *doxic*. By contrast the *orthodox* and the *heterodox* indicates that there recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs. The essential difference between a doxic society and the other two is that defence of the 'natural' immediately admits that it is no longer self-evident, it undermines its legitimation. In a doxic society there is no place for resistance leading to change or transformation since the question of legitimacy does not even arise.

There is a direct relationship between the stability of the objective structures and their embodiment in the dispositions of the habitus and the extent of the field of doxa - that which is self-evident and therefore goes unquestioned, which in turn determines the limits of individuals aspirations. Discourses have a potent role in establishing the *authority* and *necessity* of the *collective* doxic belief since the dispositions which arise from this belief are confirmed and reinforced by other members of the social group and by cultural institutions such as language, myth and art.

"The self-evidence of the world is reduplicated by the instituted discourses about the world in which the whole group's adherence to that self-evidence is affirmed" Bourdieu [1977:167].

The bringing of individual subjective experiences into the province of discourse structured in accordance with the principles of the habitus arising from the doxic belief confirms the socially approved authority of the experience. It also helps to ensure that individuals' reactions to events and associated behaviours are attuned to the collective expectation so that, for example, in contemporary society weddings are publicly celebrated whilst divorce is unacclaimed

Because the doxic belief is self-evident it is silent about itself, the concept of an opinion does not arise, 'it goes without saying because it comes without saying'.

"The adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world is the absolute form of recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness, since it is unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy, and hence from conflict between groups claiming to possess it" [1977:168].

The arbitrariness of doxa can only become revealed retrospectively and negatively when it becomes the object of competing discourse - constituted as a *field of opinion*. The undiscussed can only come into discussion as a result of an objective crisis

"which, in breaking the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence practically"[1977:168-9].

This occurs when the social world no longer is seen as a 'natural' phenomenon, it is at this point that relations of domination are recognized.

Although crisis is the trigger necessary for the arbitrary nature of relations of domination to be recognized, that is for the doxa to be challenged, *crisis does not necessarily produce a critical discourse*. It can produce a disorientation - a *hysteresis effect* a "structural lag between opportunities and the dispositions to confront them " [1977:83] whilst relations of domination continue to be recognized as doxic. However when the 'private experience' of a crisis recognizes itself in "the *public objectivity* of an already constituted

discourse, the objective sign of recognition of their right to be spoken and to be spoken publicly" [1977:170] it undergoes a *change of state*. For example a woman who has been raped and understands this personal crisis through the doxic construction of 'Woman as temptress' responsible for arousing Man's 'natural' and 'uncontrollable urges', will not be an agent of social change; her acceptance of the doxic/orthodox construction of gendered sexual relations will further reinforce those relations. However if this woman found that the language of the everyday order, the discourse of gender domination, did not give voice to her private experience of the crisis of rape and recognized her experience in the authorized language of the heretic discourse of feminism, then her private experience would undergo a change of state and become authorized and legitimated through the public objectivity of an already constituted discourse. This is where the power of heterodoxy rests since 'heretical' discourses produce the groups which they designate, it is from these groups that the critical discourse draws its authority and legitimacy. Heretical discourses exert power because they literally produce groups by expressing them

"they [heretical discourses] derive their power from their capacity to *objectify* unformulated experiences, to make them public - a step on the road to officialization and legitimation - and, when the occasion arises, to manifest and reinforce their concordance"[1977: 170-1].

In the example of the woman who was raped, it is the recognition of her experience as survivor in the objectified discourse of feminism rather than as the responsible and guilty party, that may raise her 'feminist consciousness' and encourages her to join other women to campaign for the rights of rape survivors. The phenomenon of the legitimation of personal experience through heretical discourse can be seen in action in numerous heretic groups today, for example the disability rights campaign and the lesbian and gay movement.

Bourdieu therefore traces a developmental process in which the *meaning* of social relations *changes* from a 'natural' unquestioning acceptance to the site of challenge and struggle in which groups increasingly become aware of the arbitrary structure of the power relationship that maintains it. However Bourdieu tells us that

"It is only when the dominated have the material and symbolic means of rejecting the definition of the real that is imposed on them through logical structures reproducing the social structures (ie the state of the power relations).....that the arbitrary principles of the prevailing classification can appear as such ..." [1977:169]

Without material and symbolic capital the dominated remain trapped, but the nature of domination is the limitation of material and symbolic power therefore Bourdieu's social

theory is a theory for the maintenance of the *status quo*. How then does a heretic discourse become instituted as public? And how does a critical discourse produce a material change in objective conditions?

In spite of the pre-eminence that Bourdieu gives to the objective conditioning of the dispositions to resolve this dilemma he has to recognize the importance of the corporeal specificity of the habitus, since it is the predisposition of an individual which provides the catalyst for change :

"The conjuncture capable of transforming practices objectively co-ordinated because subordinated to partially or wholly identical objective necessities, into *collective action* (eg revolutionary action) is constituted in the dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, a *habitus*, understood as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, intergrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, and on the other hand, an *objective event* which exerts its action of conditional stimulation calling for or demanding a determinate response, only on those who are disposed to constitute it as such because they are endowed with a determinate type of dispositions (which are amenable to reduplication and reinforcement by the 'awakenings of class consciousness', that is, by the direct or indirect possession of a discourse capable of securing symbolic mastery of the practically mastered principles of the class habitus). Without ever being totally co-ordinated, since they are the product of a 'causal series' characterized by different structural durations, the dispositions and the situations which combine synchronically to constitute a determinate conjuncture are never wholly independent, since they are engendered by the objective structures, that is, in the last analysis, by the economic bases of the social formation in question." [1977:82-3]

It is therefore the *predisposition* of an individual that provides the catalyst for change; for example it was only the persistent determination of eighteen years campaigning of war widows like Iris Strange that resulted in the removal in April 1990 of discriminatory anomalies in the rules regulating war widows' pensions so that equal pension provision was made for all war widows regardless of which war had produced their widowhood, [Lomas, 1994] .

So once again we are presented with the tensions and contradictions within Bourdieu's social theory, on the one hand he privileges the dispositions of the habitus but on the other, when he seeks to account for 'collective action' he has to turn to the specificity of the individual to account for the catalyst for change. If more equitable attention is given to the articulation of predispositions arising from genetic inheritance as well as dispositions conditioned by objective structures in the functioning of the habitus, then Bourdieu's

model of social action would provide an account more appropriate to the social reality in which social agents are active *'within the constraints of the synergistic matrix of both their genetic inheritance and their social environment'*. I suggest that Bourdieu fails to do this because in spite of his intention of transcending the subjective-objective divide his theory remains grounded in it, consequently he under-theorises the significance of corporeal specificity which results in a structural deterministic notion of the habitus.

In this chapter I have discussed how the habitus can be reconstituted, supported by an empirical illustration of social change. In the final section below I will consider the future potential for change and the implication for feminism.

It can be argued that the habitus of people in traditional societies is less complex than those of people living in capitalist societies. Elias [1991] suggests that in the early stages of social development, when people lived in hunter-gatherer bands social habitus and identification had only a single layer, because when people thought of 'we', it always referred to the same specific group of people; in today's complex society there are a multitude of networks with the associated 'we' identities. Elias stressed the need, when looking at processes of habitus and identity formation over long periods to think in terms of "changes in the We-I balance" [1991:155-237]. He contended that long-term increases in the scale and complexity of social interdependence produced more and more complex layers of we-image in people's habitus and sense of identity. The more complex the layers of the habitus we-identity the greater the ranges of dispositions and strategies it can give rise to, so the greater the possibilities of change. Mennell's [1994] discussion of Bourdieu's notion of habitus in relation to Elias' analysis of the development of the We-I balance of identity likens the identities of the habitus to layers of 'filo pastry'.

It will be recalled that the habitus allows for a process of continual correction and adjustment as the dispositions are confronted with objective structures. The strategies of action, the decision making possibilities, are socially produced and reflect the organization of the fields in which they act and their own trajectories through them. In a doxic - 'traditional' society the decision making of social actors is more predictable because it is determined by doxic belief and the identity layers of the habitus may be simpler. In an orthodox society however, decision making becomes more complex and less predictable since 'traditionality' no longer co-ordinates action and there are far more layers of 'filo pastry' in the habitus, as the range of options that an individual can take

increases so her predictability to others decreases, this is antithetical to the maintenance of a stable pattern of social relations, [Calhoun,1993:80]. The less stable the pattern of social relations and the more complex the organisation of social fields the more probable it becomes that the individual will be confronted with objective events which will be experienced as crisis, which may be the trigger for the articulation of a heretical discourse leading to a challenge of the doxa/orthodoxy and so to change. The pattern of gender relations today can be understood as part of this more complex social network, not only in western society but in parts of Africa, the Indian sub-continent and Asia, so perhaps the potential for a transformation of the relations of gender domination is more optimistic than Bourdieu concluded from his analysis of Kabyle society.

Where does this leave emancipatory feminist theory ? There is increasing potential in contemporary 20c society for transformation of gender relations by challenging the doxa/orthodoxy, but the dominant system is maintained by its own momentum. It is to the individual habitus that we must look for the trigger for change. I have argued that Bourdieu's theory of social action is contradictory and privileges objective determinism, but with development the concept of the habitus and his theory of the doxa and the discourses of orthodoxy and heterodoxy explain both the mechanisms of domination and where the possibility of change lies. It is the system of dispositions, formed in the past and active in the present which is the foundation of the continuity which is apparent in the social world and it is in the corporeal specificity on which these dispositions are inculcated that the potential for social change lies. For change to be truly transforming the classificatory systems, in particular gender, the paradigm of all the classificatory systems, which makes a specific contribution to the power relation of which it is a product through its embodied nature in the habitus, has to be changed. The possibility for change is latent in individuals however the prospect is far from utopian. To allow Bourdieu a concluding note

"there is a probability, inscribed in the social destiny associated with definite social conditions, that experiences will confirm habitus, because most people are statistically bound to encounter circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their habitus" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:133].

The prospect for feminism's anticipatory-utopian project is not encouraging, but then the impossibility of its achievement is implicit within the 'utopian' definition of its aim !

CHAPTER VI

RETURN TO GROUNDED THEORY

Looking Back and The Way Forward

It will be recalled that in Chapter II I traced the problems that I encountered when attempting to put into practice the Grounded Theory method of Glaser and Strauss, I found myself confronted with an *impasse* until I was introduced to the work of Pierre Bourdieu as a possible solution to my difficulties. In the subsequent chapters I have tracked the intellectual journey I have travelled in trying to confront his sociology critically. In reflecting on the mental tussles that have engrossed me and the changes in my thinking, I am now discomfited by the naivety of my original approach to this research. Whilst a theoretical tussle with Bourdieu's writing is an addictive occupation and one which I could happily continue further, epistemology is not to be a substitute for research and I need to return to the empirical focus of this thesis. I have now reached the point when I can address the problems I discovered in Grounded Theory and put my newly found sociological habitus to practice in the particular case of the widow. The theme of this and the next chapter is looking back and looking forward: this chapter will develop a critique of Grounded Theory and Chapter VII will reformulate my approach to the research topic.

Critique of Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is described as a qualitative research method which builds a theory that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena it represents. A Grounded Theorist claims the test of the scientific validity of a grounded theory rests on its ability to meet the criteria of fit, understanding, generality and control, in relation to the reality it represents, [Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1990]. By bringing Bourdieu to bear on the Grounded Theory method I will demonstrate that the total absence of epistemic reflexivity in Grounded Theory undermines all its claims to validity and that far from being a research method which grounds theory in the 'real' world, it is a positivist method, which creates a theory and then seeks empirical data to verify it in a similar manner to the hypothetico-deductive method of which Glaser and Strauss were so critical.

It will be recalled that in Chapter III I outlined Bourdieu's 'obsession' with epistemic reflexivity. I will now examine the concept in greater detail since it is a crucial element of my analysis of Grounded Theory. The practice of reflexivity is a critical practice which leads to the exploration of the "unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine thought" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:40]. It is a constant challenge to the scientific doxa and critique of research techniques and procedures which Bourdieu argues constitutes the precondition of true scientific rigour, rather than a mechanistic adherence to the narrow canons erected by 'methodological monism' which obscures the absence of true critical practice. The target of epistemic reflexivity is "the *social and intellectual unconscious* embedded in analytic tools and operations" [ibid]. This unconscious, which is of course part of the schemata of the habitus, 'blurs the sociological gaze', it has three origins: firstly the *social* roots of the individual researcher; secondly the researcher's position in the *academic* field; thirdly, and most importantly *intellectualist bias*. It is this bias that Bourdieu argues is more far reaching and more distorting than both the social and academic bias because it is this bias that obscures the researcher's awareness of the difference between abstract logic and *fuzzy* (practical) logic. We are engaging in intellectualist bias whenever we fail to subject to systematic critique the "presuppositions inscribed in the fact of thinking the world, of retiring from the world and from action in the world in order to think that action" [1990d:382]. By allowing intellectualist bias to blur our sociological gaze we attempt to explain practical logic with theoretical logic and, by so doing, do a violence to social experience; or alternatively we collapse practical logic into theoretical logic and mistake commonsense knowledge for scientific knowledge or take the commonsense understandings of the world as 'given'. It can be seen therefore that for Bourdieu, the essential element of reflexivity is not the individual unconscious of the researcher, although this is important, but the epistemological unconscious of her research discipline, the nature of her sociological habitus.

It is important to understand that the practice of epistemic reflexivity means that at no point in the research act can the empirical research be divorced from theory, each is an integral part of the other, each interpenetrates the other entirely and "[t]he first and most pressing scientific priority.....(is) to take as one's object the social work of construction of the pre-constructed object" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:229]. This Bourdieu argues is where the point of genuine epistemic rupture is situated, it is a 'break

with commonsense', that is with the representations shared by everyone. *'The preconstructed is everywhere'*, it is in our everyday classificatory systems and descriptions such as typologies like 'delinquent', 'professional', 'elderly'.

At all times the sociologist has to be aware of uncritically borrowing "*its problems, its concepts, and its instruments of knowledge from the social world*" [ibid:236], since this can lead to the recording "as an empirical given independent of the act of knowledge and of science which performs it, facts, representations or institutions which are the *product of a prior stage of science*. In short, it records itself without recognizing itself "[ibid] . Here Bourdieu is referring to the dialectic relationship of the *double objectivity* of the habitus in the wider context of social science which receives back from the social world the questions it poses about the social world. Scientific issues become reified as objective facts, for example the concept of the 'poverty gap' has become commonsense knowledge and an uncritical researcher who does not exercise epistemic reflexivity is in danger of accepting this pre-constructed concept as an empirical given. In addition the very language with which we make sense of the research is "an immense repository of naturalized preconstructions, and thus of preconstructions that are ignored as such and which can function as unconscious instruments of construction" [ibid:241]. None of the terms we use unthinkingly because they are the social categories of understanding shared by society like 'young', 'old', 'wife', 'spinster' are free from the social arbitrary. An empiricist social science receives the construction of the object, the concepts and categories from the social world *as it is*, in effect it fulfils a conservative function and ratifies the *doxa* -- it fails to see that "the *political implications* of the doxic experience of the world which, as fundamental acceptance of the established order situated outside the reach of critique, is the most secure foundation of a conservatism more radical than that which labours to establish a political orthodoxy" [ibid:247]. Bourdieu clearly demonstrates that the object of the research itself and the research instruments - the instruments of knowledge - must be subject to epistemic reflexivity. A research topic must not adopt uncritically pre-constructed categories, there must be an awareness of the boundaries and definition being created by arbitrary classifications which are determined by relations of domination .

Grounded Theory cannot produce rigorous science because it has no notion of epistemic reflexivity. Layder [1994] suggests that Grounded Theory has always been regarded as an empirical research tradition rather than an overarching theoretical framework but, to

define Grounded Theory as a research tradition does not release it from its founding assumptions even though it may be offered as free floating . The recent presentation of Grounded Theory procedures and techniques by Strauss and Corbin [1990] certainly promotes the idea of Grounded Theory as untrammelled by any epistemological foundation. After a brief introductory reference to its origins in Symbolic Interactionism and the influence of Paul Lazarsfeld, they state that

" Grounded theory can be used successfully by persons of many disciplines. One need not be a sociologist or subscribe to the Interactionist perspective to use it. *What counts are the procedures and they are not discipline bound*" (italics added) [ibid:26].

However the notion that a research method can be divorced from its theoretical foundation is a fallacy leading to the production of flawed science since

" research is simultaneously empirical (it confronts the world of observable phenomena) and theoretical (it necessarily engages hypotheses about the underlying structure of relations that observations are designed to capture). Even the most minute empirical operation - the choice of a scale of measurement, a coding decision, the construction of an indicator, or the inclusion of an item in a questionnaire - involves theoretical choices, conscious or unconscious, while the most abstract conceptual puzzle cannot be fully clarified without systematic engagement with empirical reality" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992: 35] .

The assumptions which lead Grounded Theory to be presented as a method devoid of theoretical foundations can be traced to its foundation in Symbolic Interactionism and the positivist social science canons associated with Paul Lazarsfeld . The purpose of this chapter is not, however, a critique of Symbolic Interactionism since the material deficiencies of this subjective perspective have already been briefly considered in Chapter III, rather its purpose is to understand the deficits of Grounded Theory procedures as part of the process of fusing theoretical construction and practical research in the development of my own *modus operandi*. Inevitably however my discussion will at times refer back to Grounded Theory's interactionist and positivist empiricist foundations since this is the source of the problems which bedevil this approach.

First to assist the reader and ensure the clarity of the argument I wish to make I will rehearse the outline of Grounded Theory first tendered in Chapter II. It is characterized by its rejection of *a priori* theorizing and uses a systematic set of procedures to inductively develop a theory which is derived from, and constitutes a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation, [Strauss and Corbin, 1990] . It is a method which guides all the stages of research from the formulation of the research

problem, through the analysis of the data to the presentation and evaluation of the resultant grounded theory. The core of the method is *theoretical sampling* "on the basis of concepts that have proven theoretical relevance to the evolving theory" [ibid:176], this is continued until *theoretical saturation* is achieved. The sampling is guided by the analytic techniques of *open coding*, which is a process of "examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" [ibid:61]; *axial coding*, a procedure for relating the previously identified categories; and *selective coding*, in which the categorisation of data is refined around the *core category* or central phenomenon. An important aspect of the successful discovery and building of Grounded Theory is the development of *theoretical sensitivity*, this is defined as a 'personal quality of the researcher' which allows her to have 'insight' into the meaning of the data. It is developed by studying the literature and by drawing on personal and professional experience. As well as building the theory through the integration of the identified categories Strauss and Corbin also emphasise the importance of *process*, the linking of action/interaction sequences to identify *change*, that is relationships of the phenomena understood in terms of cause and effect. Finally the action/interaction process of the phenomena is analysed in the framework of the *conditional matrix*, this is a diagrammatic conceptualisation of action/interaction occurring within concentric circles of social contexts from an outer 'international level' which "includes such items as: international politics, governmental regulations, culture, values, philosophies, economics, history, and international problems and issues like the environment"[ibid:162] through circles decreasing in size denoting, in order, the conditional levels of: 'national'; 'community'; 'organizational and institutional'; 'sub-organizational, sub-institutional'; 'group, individual, collective'; 'interaction'; to the central conditional level of 'action pertaining to a phenomenon'. A 'visual representation' is then made of the 'logical relationships' between the categories of the phenomenon in the form of *logic diagrams* which can be used in the presentation of the research.

Whilst Grounded Theory has been adopted as a research method in many 'qualitative' studies it has not been without its critics, for example Bulmer [1979], Layder[1982] and Hammersley [1990]. Bulmer doubts the possibility of a *tabula rasa* approach to enquiry and is critical of the Glaser and Strauss conceptualisation of theory. Layder[1982] seeks to make a 'constructive critique' of Grounded Theory which aims to define some of the central weaknesses of the approach, such as the dismissal of *a priori* theorising, whilst presenting "a highly modified form" [ibid:110] in the context of the "links between macro

and micro levels of analysis" [ibid:101] . Hammersley [1990], considering Grounded Theory in the context of a wider argument about the 'theoretical description' produced by ethnographic research also critiques the possibility of rejecting *a priori* theory since all descriptions are structured by theoretical assumptions, and congruent to Bulmer, he argues that the Grounded Theorists claim to 'discover theory' is not a theoretical explanation but the production of a 'reproduction model' which "simply portray the phenomenon of interest 'in its own terms' " [ibid:609]. He also identifies the inherent confirmation of the status quo within the approach and the lack of critical thinking.

I believe that Bourdieu allows me to cast a new and more penetrating light on the deficiencies of Grounded Theory since whilst previous criticisms have been within the constraints of the sociological debate over the macro/micro, structure/agency, theory/practice, Bourdieu makes it possible to step outside these artificial oppositions and challenge the very premise on which they are posited. He transcends this dialectic, his notion of habitus allows the analysis of the behaviour of individuals as regulated by some external norm without being determined by that norm or conscious rationality. Bourdieu attempts to capture the everyday, unthought manner with which people live their lives, but at the same time grounds that seemingly unconscious behaviour in their objective social situation. He is able to do this with his concept of epistemic rupture which enables him to explain the subjective experience objectively, by producing 'an account of an account', by including the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in the act of objectivising.

Since Grounded Theory is characterized by its rejection of *a priori* theorising I will start with this issue. In effect their rejection of theory was not as total as critics have implied since they placed great emphasis on the technique of 'theoretical sensitivity', however they, and incidentally, it appears, critics such as Bulmer [1979], Layder [1982] and Hammersley [1990], totally divorce the theory of social practice from the theory of knowledge - the division between theory and method is so firmly entrenched that there is no conception of theoretical presuppositions determining the research instruments nor any notion of the 'pre-constructed' nature of the data and emerging categories.

The rejection of *a priori* theorising arises from the interactionist belief that prior theoretical grounding can 'block discovery' because "such knowledge enforces separations, establishes boundaries and blocks useful access to phenomena " [Rock

1979:194] and that "authentic knowledge is not furnished by scientific method but by immediate experience" [ibid:183], This 'authentic knowledge can only be grasped in the language of commonsense

"The sociologist who looks to immediate understanding will shed 'scientism'. He seeks to explain the common-sense world of his fellows in the language which most nearly approximates its forms. Rather than invoke the alien logic of science he centres his descriptions around commonsense " [ibid:195]

This is a position which posits undistorted communication between subject and observer and it privileges language with a transparency of meaning. Bourdieu argues that language cannot be understood in isolation from its cultural context and the social conditions of its production and reception, therefore the analysis of communication and discourse is part of the sociological function. The practice of language is a power relation, an aspect of the *linguistic habitus* and *linguistic market*, Bourdieu [1991]. The linguistic habitus combines the culturally specific use of particular words with the ability 'to speak properly' and the social capacity to use the words appropriately. The linguistic market refers to the social sanctions which define what can and cannot be said. 'What' is said and 'how' is determined by the speakers *anticipation* of the reception of her discourse. Human communication as a power relation is characterised by inequality in the competence of language and the struggle to define what may be spoken and how it is spoken. The possession of 'capital' through the use of the dominant legitimate language are signs of wealth and signs of authority and are therefore functions of symbolic domination and symbolic violence. Words therefore have power in the conditions of their reception and authorisation in which they are socially constructed, language therefore plays a part in the social construction of reality, it does not give a transparent access to that reality.

The interactionists were of course correct in their suspicion about the uncritical adoption of 'theory', the mistake in their position was in maintaining that the 'truth' of the social world could only be understood in the immediate experience of the observable world,. They failed to appreciate that by reacting so radically to logico-deductive theorising they were taking a hyper-empiricist positivist position. While their identification of the difference between commonsense and science was correct, recourse to commonsense for validity was no more an authentic representation than that produced by the logic of science (I will examine the difference between commonsense and the logic of science in

greater detail below). The Interactionists portrayed an uncritical and naive innocence about the commonsense world and the nature of 'reality', failing to appreciate that our perceptions are guided by arbitrary constructions which are the result of the struggles of relations of domination.

Glaser and Strauss [1968] and Strauss and Corbin [1990] subscribe to a modified interactionist position since while they place great importance on ignoring

"the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas. " Glaser and Strauss [1968:40]

they also emphasise 'theoretical sensitivity'. This is conceptualised as an uncritical activity whereby the researcher draws on literature and personal experience to gain insights into the meaning of the data. It incorporates a notion of 'skeptism' in that such knowledge is considered 'provisional' until it has been verified by data

"any theoretical explanations or categories brought to the research situation are considered provisional until supported by actual data (are found to fit this situation)" Strauss and Corbin [1990:45].

However, such verification is a fabrication since all data is "in fact the product of a formidable *abstraction* - it is always the case since all data are constructions " [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:226], so rather than verifying existing theory by reference to concrete reality, one construction is being used to verify another with no awareness of the constructed and arbitrary nature of either. The failure to appreciate this arises from intellectualist bias, a belief in the transcendental authoritativeness of the empirical world, and the transparency of language, which leads to the assumption that research data is 'objective' and a direct correspondence with the real. It offers knowledge that cannot understand its origins or take responsibility for its effects. It can be seen therefore that the notion of 'theoretical sensitivity' is founded on presuppositions that discredit Grounded Theory's claim to scientific validity and have no resemblance to the interpenetration of empirical research and theory which is necessary for a rigorous social science.

The absence of epistemic reflexivity or radical doubt as Bourdieu sometimes calls it, and the resultant unconscious 'intellectualist bias' causes Grounded Theory to proffer a contradictory stance, for whilst on the one hand it emphasises the importance of the observable phenomenon, the 'given' world and bases its claim of validity on its ability to faithfully represent the phenomena studied, on the other hand it posits a method of

coding, analysis and theory construction which is positivistic and founded on the abstract logic of science. The crux of this contradiction is the differing logics of practice and science.

"Practice has a logic which is not that of the logician. This has to be acknowledged in order to avoid asking of it more logic than it can give, thereby condemning oneself either to wring incoherences out of it or to thrust a forced coherence upon it" [Bourdieu, 1990b: 86].

In order to clearly demonstrate the incoherences and forced coherence within Grounded Theory I will consider in greater depth the notions of *practical sense* - commonsense and the *logic of practice* outlined in Chapter III. Bourdieu has demonstrated that social action is not governed by neat regularity and cannot be deduced from a normative principle, it is governed by practical sense. It is practical sense which "orients 'choices' which, though not deliberate, are no less systematic, and which, without being ordered and organized in relations to an end, are none the less charged with a kind of retrospective finality" [ibid:67]. Practical sense is a sort of 'feel for the game' which results in "the almost miraculous encounter between the *habitus* and a field, between incorporated history and objectified history" [ibid:66] which makes possible, the anticipation of the game (it should be remembered that Bourdieu uses the metaphor of 'the game' for social interaction). It also makes the game seem *sensible* to the players since it gives the game meaning and direction and being part of and taking part in the game means a commitment to the game and its presuppositions, that is its doxa. The doxa of the game is not however available to the spectator - the researcher - therefore the *sense* of the game cannot be available to researcher. This is because you cannot *live* the beliefs of another person with different conditions of existence, you cannot acquire that doxic relationship which is the

" immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense Those who want to believe with the beliefs of others grasp neither the objective truth nor the subjective experience of belief. They cannot exploit their exclusion in order to construct the field in which belief is constituted and which membership makes it possible to objectify; nor can they use their membership of other fields, such as the field of science, to objectify the games in which their own beliefs and investments are generated, in order to appropriate, through participant objectification, the equivalent experiences of those they seek to describe and so obtain the means of accurately describing both." [ibid:68]

The spectator, the social researcher, therefore has to be aware that she cannot have the understanding of a social practice that the social agent has. In addition the very fact of her spectating means that there is a disjunction between the unconscious sense of the game that the social actor has and the sense that the spectator makes of the game, which changes the meaning of the game for the spectator and significantly for the research process, can lead to questions which distort the sense of the game

"one only has to suspend the commitment to the game that is implied in the feel for the game in order to reduce the world, and the actions performed in it to absurdity, and to bring up questions about the meaning of the world and existence which people never ask when they are caught up in the game" [ibid].

The presupposition of Grounded Theory that it can observe and capture the reality of social phenomenon is a myth, it is not possible to stand in another person's shoes and see as another does, the subjective experience cannot be grasped. The Grounded Theory claim to validity in representing the reality of social life is therefore false since social practice cannot be represented in the manner it claims.

The practical sense of social action has

"a generative spontaneity which asserts itself in the improvised confrontation with endlessly renewed situations, the practical sense of social action follows a *practical logic*, that of the fuzzy, of the more-or-less, which defines the ordinary relation to the world" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:22]

which is "expressed in the language of tact, skill, dexterity, delicacy or *savoir-faire*" Bourdieu [1990b:80], it cannot be expressed in the language of the mechanical model or of the abstract and logical theory. The fundamental difference between the logic of practical sense and the logic of science is in the contradiction between the construction of time in science and the meaning of time in action. A social agent's acts can be characterized as a response to an overall and instantaneous assessment of the whole set of circumstances that confront her, that is not to what she sees - the past, but to what she foresees - the future, and she decides in conditions of uncertainty, conditions which exclude the distance, perspective and detachment which are the prerogative of the time of science. The temporal structure of social practice - its rhythm, its tempo, its directionality is part of its meaning

"[i]n short, because it is entirely immersed in the current time, practice is inseparable from temporality, not only because it is played out in time, but also because it plays strategically with time and especially with tempo"[ibid:81].

By contrast for science time disappears, there is no uncertainty, science detemporalizes practice,. Science "tends to destroy practice by imposing upon it the intemporal time of

science" [ibid]. This is because science can only construct time after the event, reconstruction in a theoretical model destroys the temporal reality of practice as it happens.

The synoptic totalizing account or diagram gives an instantaneous view of facts which only unfold in time. This produces a totalizing perspective which is not available to the social actor and leads to the analyst confusing the actors point of view with the spectators point of view and results in looking for answers to questions that social actors never ask because they have no need to ask them. Bourdieu suggests that instead of asking such artificially created questions the researcher should be "*wondering if the essence of practice is not precisely that it excludes such questions.*" [ibid:83][italics added]

Grounded Theory does not appreciate that the temporal meaning of social practice is destroyed by imposing upon it the intemporal totalizing account of science. This is apparent in the Grounded Theory treatment of time with the analytic technique of 'process' which is defined as "the linking of action/interactional sequences, as they evolve over time" [Strauss and Corbin, 1990:157] Process within the researched phenomenon is explained diagrammatically as a linear sequence of 'phenomenon' confronted by 'changing conditions' causing 'changing action' resulting in a 'desired goal' and it is presented as a means of bringing a notion of 'time and movement' into the analysis. "The time that elapses between each change in conditions and corresponding change in action/interaction, which make up one part of a sequence or series, may be a moment, a week, or longer. The duration of, or amount of time between, each part of a sequence is not as important as the conception of its passage or movement." [ibid:150]. 'Change' itself is objectified, with properties of speed, direction and scope. The process of the action/interaction is then analysed 'transactionally' within the context of the 'Conditional Matrix'.

Within Grounded Theory then 'process' is seen as

"a way of giving life to data by taking snapshots of action/interaction and linking them to form a sequence or series" Strauss and Corbin [1990:144]

however rather than giving *life* to data it totally destroys the essence of social practice, in fact Bourdieu clearly states [1990b:67] that viewing social practice as series of snapshots destroys the design and the intention which is the unifying thread of the *sense* which governs it. The totalizing synoptic view constructed by the analytical technique of

'process' artificially creates intervals and correspondences that are not equivalent to practice "Since all the divisions and subdivisions that the observer may record and cumulate are produced in different situations, separated in time, the question of how each of them relates to the unit at a higher level or, *a fortiori*, to the divisions or subdivisions of the 'periods' to which it is opposed, never arises in practice" [ibid:84] Bourdieu makes it clear that

" one has no chance of giving a scientific account of practice - and in particular of the properties it derives from the fact that it unfolds in time - unless one is aware of the effects that scientific practice produces by mere totalization" [ibid:82]

an effect to which the Grounded Theory procedure is oblivious. Discovering a 'cause and effect' which are not known to the social actor is not producing a representation of that actor's experience, the notion of 'process' treats time in a way that is not experienced by the individual social agent, therefore it creates a practice which is an artifact of the analytic process and then asks questions of that artifact.

It is not, however, just at the procedural level that Grounded Theory is deficient. The presuppositions of Symbolic Interactionism on which the concepts of action/interaction, process, change and the levels of the Conditional Matrix are founded mean that there is no notion of a social realm beyond that of the activity itself. The absence of a theoretical framework in the presentation of Grounded Theory results in the meaning of the concepts used being ambiguous, for example it is unclear whether the Conditional Matrix is presented a heuristic device or as an objective social order. There are a number of significant weaknesses which need to be identified. Firstly the conceptualisation of action/interaction as a series of discrete and isolated units that can be linked sequentially is a simplistic conceptualization which ignores the relational essence of social practice and the manner in which social practice is the outcome of a continual relationship in the *habitus* between embodied history and objectified history. The cognitive schemata of the *habitus* reproduce objective structures, therefore they cannot be isolated from their conditions of production. Similarly the objective structures cannot be isolated from the cognitive schemata;

"[t]he interactions, which are accepted at their face value by people of an empiricist disposition.....conceal the structures that are realized in them" Bourdieu [1990a:127]

Any analysis has to take this interrelationship into account.

Secondly the conceptualization of the social order as a series of conditional levels made up by simple mechanical addition of individual orders ignores their arbitrary and

constructed nature which varies in accordance with the relations of domination which define them. In the determination of the collective and groups, not all judgements have the same weight, and the dominant groups are able to impose the decisions most favourable to their own position. The meaning of the position of social agents in social space is not just the function of the objective position, it is the product of the schemes of perception and appreciation which are the incorporated product of a class condition (that is, a particular position in the distribution of material properties and symbolic capital). The contextual conditions of the matrix therefore provide no means of analysing the relationship which constrains and contributes to the logic of social practice - they take no account of the structural inequalities such as gender, class and ethnic divisions which constrain and circumscribe action.

Thirdly the conceptualization of change as a function of conditions fails to grasp that change in social practice is the outcome of a disjunction between objective conditions and the schemata of the habitus which is determined by a recognition of the relations of domination inherent in both the mental schemata and the material conditions. Change cannot be separated from the individual social actor's habitus or the objective social condition as it is a function of both. In addition the Grounded Theory notion of change implies a logical progression from objective condition to action which assumes that social actors are rational, free, self-controlled and consciously motivated moving forward in a stable and coherent manner, this ignores the nature of the dispositions of the habitus.

It is not only the Grounded Theory notion of 'process' and 'change' which is so inimical to social practice, the coding techniques destroy the logic of practice with the logic of science

"Open coding fractures the data and allows one to identify some categories, their properties, and dimensional locations. Axial coding puts those data back together in new ways by *making connections between a category and its sub-categories*. " Strauss and Corbin [1990:97] [their italics].

Practical logic organizes actions by a few 'generative principles' which are not governed by the rigours of logic. Social activity owes its coherence, which is both unified and regular but also 'fuzzy' and imprecise, to the fact that it is the product of practices that can fulfil functions in respect of objective conditions but which are also convenient and easy to learn and use. Social practice obeys a *'poor' and economical logic* [Bourdieu, 1990b:86]. The principle of the economy of logic is that "no more logic is mobilized than is required by the needs of practice" [ibid:87]. This is not the logic that science

obeys. In social practice, actions are only performed in succession therefore the same thing may in different 'universes of practice' have different even opposed meanings but this 'confusion of spheres' caused by the approximate application of the same schemes to different logical universes, which is apparent to the 'scientist', passes unnoticed by the social agent and is not illogical since practice obeys economical logic, however an attempt at a scientific construction of this social action destroys it

"The logicism inherent in the objectivist viewpoint inclines one to ignore the fact that scientific construction cannot grasp the principles of practical logic without forcibly changing their nature. Objectification converts a practical succession into a represented succession, an action oriented in relation to a space objectively constituted as a structure of demands (things 'to be done') into a reversible operation performed in a continuous homogeneous space" [ibid:90].

It becomes clear from this that far from the analytical procedures of Grounded Theory giving the 'scientific rigour' that Strauss and Corbin claim, they in fact create a 'reality' which is an artifact of the analytic procedures. By categorising and fracturing and then reassembling the data through the techniques of 'open' and 'axial' coding the analytical procedure creates relationships and associations which do not exist in practice. Further this calls into question the concept of 'theoretical sampling', a pivotal aspect of Grounded Theory since it "[i]s sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven theoretical relevance to the evolving theory" [Strauss and Corbin, 1990:176]: a theoretical relevance which is founded in the grounded theory's representation of the phenomena under examination. If the theory is evolving from the artifacts of the analytical process, in other words it has created relations of simultaneity, succession and symmetry out of nothing, then theoretical sampling is being determined by the needs of a constructed artifact that has reconstructed social practice according to a logic which destroys that very practice. Rather than producing a theory grounded in the data which is seen to represent 'reality', it is searching for data, which are constructions, to verify a theory which is a construction, the very hypothetico-deductive notion that it was developed to combat !

Having 'looked back' and examined the deficiencies of Grounded Theory 'the way forward' is to bring my developing sociological habitus to bear on the research topic I set out in Chapter I. This is the challenge which the next chapter addresses.

CHAPTER VII

A PRACTICAL SOCIAL REALIZATION OF THE METHOD

Having determined that Grounded Theory is a flawed method for understanding social reality I now need to establish the practicalities of a method for investigating the social location of widows, I need a practical transmission of my sociological habitus. In moving from the abstract to the practical I have been greatly helped by the '*The Paris Workshop*' Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992] in which Bourdieu offered a 'practical social realization of the method'. My *modus operandi*, my intended manner of working, can be summarised in two principles: firstly the practice of the 'radical doubt' of epistemic reflexivity by taking as my object *the social work of construction of the pre-constructed object*. The schemata of practical sense, that is common sense, are objectivized in order

"to wrench scientific reason from the embrace of practical reason, to prevent the latter from contaminating the former, to avoid treating as an instrument of knowledge what ought to be the object of knowledge, that is, everything that constitutes the practical sense of the social world, the presuppositions, the schemata of perception and understanding that give the lived world its structure. To take as one's object commonsense understanding and the primary experience of the social world as a nonthetic acceptance of a world which is not constituted as an *object* facing a subject is precisely the means of avoiding being '*trapped*' within the *object*. It is the means of submitting to scientific scrutiny *everything that makes the doxic experience of the world possible*, that is, not only the preconstructed representations of this world but also the cognitive schemata that underlie the construction of this image." Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:247]

Secondly by remembering at all times that the *stuff of social reality lies in relations* and that we must resist "our primary inclination to think the social world in a substantialist manner" [ibid:228]. By this Bourdieu means that we have an inclination to reify concepts such as 'class' and 'power', thinking of them as realist notions: tangible, concrete realities rather than shared relationships in social space.

How does this reflect upon my research topic of 'the social location of widows'? By taking the 'widow' as the focus of my research I am accepting a pre-constructed object produced through the arbitrary classification of a population. It is at this point that I have to start with *the social work of construction of the pre-constructed object*. Bourdieu escapes from the realist mode of thinking of class, power and social location (the

reification of these concepts) by thinking in terms of the 'field of power', by that he means

"the relations of force between social positions which guarantee their occupants a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter into the struggles over the monopoly of power, of which struggles over the definition of the legitimate form of power are a crucial dimension" [ibid:229-30].

Rather than realist questions of dominant class and status the issue then becomes the identification of the frames of power and of the definition of the boundaries of the field. To escape the pre-constructions of the substantialist, realist mode of thinking I therefore have to construct the object of my research in relational terms and understand the widow *as a set of objective social relations maintained in a specific frame of power, that is in a field*. However, Bourdieu warns against "studying exhaustively a very precise and well circumscribed object" which he suggests means an intensive study of a limited fragment of the totality of the relevant elements of the theoretical ensemble, but devoid of any theoretical justification. (His criticisms are directed particularly at the formulation of PhD topics ! Bourdieu 1992:232) He argues that preferable to the intensive analysis of a practically graspable fragment of the object is the extensive analysis of the true object. Unfortunately this ideal is not practicably realisable within the constraints of a PhD. Fortunately Bourdieu suggests a compromise, recommending knowing the space from which the object under study has been isolated, even if only with secondary data. In this way it is possible to know the nature of the reality from which the fragment has been *abstracted* and to trace the contours of the main force lines that structure the relations which constitute the object. By doing this Bourdieu says

"you will not run the risk of searching (and 'finding') in the fragment studied mechanisms or principles that are in reality external to it, residing in its relations to other objects." [ibid:233]

The space from which the research object - the widow, has been isolated will be constructed following Bourdieu's recommendations in the form of highly abstract, objective relations by *analogical reasoning*, that is reasoning based upon the correspondence in certain respects between things otherwise different. Bourdieu argues that this *comparative method*

"allows you to think relationally a particular case constituted as a 'particular instance of the possible' by resting on the structural homologies that exist between different fields (e.g., between the field of academic powers and the field of religious power via the homology between the relations professor/intellectual, bishop/theologian) or between different states of the same field (the religious field in the Middle Ages and today for instance)" [ibid:234]

He particularly favours the study of different historical periods as this helps to objectivize and to control the prenotions that are held about the correspondence of social practices at different times and it alerts us to the historical context of words that we use to name these practices since it is an illusion that words continue to mean the same thing. For this research the comparative method will be used in determining the structural homologies that exist in the institution of widowhood at different historical periods.

By constituting the research object and the space from which it is isolated in the form of abstract objective relations I will be *building a model*. Bourdieu argues that this ensures a true break with empiricist passivity, which does little more than ratify the preconstructions of common sense, and with empty grand theorizing. The model, which unlike the Grounded Theory visual representation of relationships between concepts, remains at all times a *logical model*. It gives an account of observed facts in the most coherent and economical way but is never treated as the *real principles of practice*, for then it would become false and dangerous. The model links data so as to

"function as a self-propelling programme of research capable of generating systematic questions liable to be given systematic answers, in short, to yield a coherent system of relations which can be put to the test *as such*. The challenge is systematically to interrogate the particular case by constituting it as a 'particular instance of the possible', as Bachelard [1949] put it, in order to extract general or invariant properties that can be uncovered by such interrogation".
[ibid:233]

This method Bourdieu argues allows the researcher to particularize, to perceive it as a particular case and to generalize, to discover through the application of general questions, the invariant properties that it conceals under the appearance of singularity; this, he maintains prevents producing abstract-concrete concepts by using unanalysed native words or facts.

In the light of this the research question can be reformulated from the empiricist impulse recorded in Chapter I "to investigate the social location of widows and to understand why this group of women whose status is defined by the most profound aspect of human experience -death- should have such a muted presence within our social awareness," to: *the analysis of the objective class habitus of the set of objective social relations called widowhood and the construction of the field, that is the specific frame of power, in which widowhood is maintained*. In this analysis I will adumbrate the main force lines which define widowhood and from this it will be possible to trace the dialectic relationship that creates the habitus defined by these relations. It will be necessary to question the social

conditions which make possible the correspondence between social structures and mental structures, the objective structures of the world and the cognitive structures through which we apprehend them and I will also be questioning whether that correspondence still exists and if it is changing, what are the social conditions that are making that change possible. These are not static questions for Bourdieu demonstrates [1990:141] that each state of the social world is only a moment of temporary equilibrium, an instant in the dynamics through which the adjustment between distributions and incorporated or institutionalized classifications is constantly broken and restored, therefore the definition of widow will be changing. I will be questioning in what way the boundaries of the definition have changed and how the power relations determining the boundary have changed.

In the building the model of the social location of the widow the first task is to establish and define the field in which the objective relations of widowhood are maintained.

Bourdieu defines a field as

" a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relations to other positions (domination, subordination, homology etc.) ." Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:97] .

The structures we call 'marriage', 'family', 'widowhood', 'childhood', 'parenthood', 'cohabitation' etc are a system of objective relations between both social agents and the institutions of the Church and State ⁶ . The objective relations between these positions define the individual positions of husband, wife, father, mother, widow, partner etc and have implications for the expected behaviour and opportunities available to their occupants. The relative distribution of capital between institutions and between individual positions determines the access to 'profits' which range from the domination of the secular authority over the religious in controlling the symbolic meaning of marriage to the material profit of individual access to pension and welfare benefits. The space in which this network of objective relations takes place can therefore be defined as a field, which, for the purpose of identification I will designate *'The Field'* . I have

⁶ The designation of 'the Church' and 'the State' is not intended to imply that either "is a well-defined, clearly bounded and unitary reality which stands in a relation of externality with outside forces that are themselves clearly identified and defined" [Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:111] rather each is a designation for an ensemble of fields, in the first instance theological and in the second administrative or bureaucratic. Within these fields struggles take place over the power to determine christian orthodoxy or to rule through State policy.

chosen this indeterminate designation rather than terms such as 'marriage', 'family' or 'kinship' to maintain the conceptual abstraction of the model and to avoid the ideological baggage of the pre-constructed object.

Bourdieu posits a *general theory of fields*, [ibid:106] listing all the invariant properties common to all fields with which a field can be identified. The validity of the identification of '*The Field*' as a field can therefore be determined by applying the criteria of the theory of fields. However the construction of the social space of the object is not a once and for all act but an ongoing process of trial and error, therefore the details of the invariant properties of '*The Field*' only emerged in the course of the analysis which is recorded in later chapters. I therefore seek the reader's forbearance in accepting the properties summarised below before the evidence of their relevance has been presented. '*The Field*' can be constituted as a field because it exhibits the following invariant properties of fields. First, the field is always a mediation between the practices of the individuals in it and the surrounding social and economic conditions, the external determinations undergo a *re-structuring* through the specific logic and forces of the field. In the context of the '*The Field*' re-structuring can be observed in the way that the logic of gender causes external economic conditions such as low wages to be experienced differently by men and women⁷. Second, in every field there are struggles between the dominant and dominated and the *homologies* between the struggles within different fields has a political effect in that it represents the struggle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy and as such may be seen as a *euphemized* form of the ideological struggle between classes. This property can be seen in the struggle of women to overcome the symbolic domination in the '*The Field*', evidenced in the inequalities in matrimonial law⁸, which has homologies with the struggles against gender domination in all fields and is the paradigm of all struggles between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Third, the '*The Field*' demonstrates the invariant principle that fields are systems of relations that are independent of the populations which these relations define for example, marriage .

Having demonstrated that '*The Field*' meets the definitional criteria of a field, it is next necessary to consider its boundaries which are stakes in the field

"the struggle over the legitimate definition, whose stake - the word definition says it - is the boundary, the frontiers, the rights of admission" [ibid:245]

⁷ see Pahl [1989] for a study of the allocation of resources between couples.

⁸ see Smart [1984] for a full analysis of the role of the law in the reproduction of the asymmetric nature of marriage relations.

The boundaries are "situated at the point where the effects of the field cease" [ibid:10]. In *'The Field'* the struggles over the meaning of marriage and its structure are pivotal in defining both social positions within *'The Field'*, and its boundary for as Chandler [1991] so appositely observed 'marriage casts a long shadow' touching the lives of everyone. Today we are all categorised in some degree by our relation to marriage, whether as the child of an unmarried mother, as a homosexual couple, as a divorced man, as a spinster or as a family of husband and wife/ mother and father and dependent children. Marriage determines which objective positions enjoy the profits available for those within the *'The Field'*, such as pension rights, welfare benefits and social recognition and which positions are excluded from these profits.

In using the pre-constructed object marriage, in defining positions within *'The Field'* we have to be aware that its meaning is arbitrary therefore the meaning of every position defined in relation to marriage is also arbitrary, but this arbitrariness is veiled by the doxic nature of its pre-construction. This becomes apparent when the changing and historically specific meaning of marriage is considered. Prior to the Marriage Act of 1753 all forms of consent properly made according to prevailing custom and in front of witnesses constituted a valid marriage according to canon law, [Gillis1985; Stone 1979,1992]. However, since 1753 only unions legitimated by State and Church ceremonies are recognised as marriage. This change which is an effect of the changing relations of power between the Church and the State, changed the meaning of marriage and consequently the capital differential between positions within the field, relations which previously had been valid marriages became sexual relations outside the law⁹.

As well as building a model of *'The Field'* it is also necessary to build a model of the objective widow. Widows can be categorised as an objective class since they constitute a set of agents

" who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence imposing homogeneous conditionings and producing homogeneous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices; and who possess a set of common properties, objectified properties, sometimes legally guaranteed (as possession of goods and power) or properties embodied as class habitus (and, in particular, systems of classificatory schemes)", Bourdieu [1984:101].

⁹ "There are in effect two types of sexual relationships, marital and extramarital. This dichotomy, as well as the standard terminology used to describe sexual relations that are independent of a legal marriage contract, is itself a manifestation of the priority of marriage in sexual matters. In law this privileging of marriage goes as far as regarding all extramarital sexual relationships as unlawful. This does not render them illegal but it means that such relationships are still legally condemned" [Smart, 1984:144]

The elements of the classificatory scheme of the objective class of the widow are: firstly a widow is a woman, secondly she was married, thirdly her husband has died, fourthly she has not remarried. However it will be recalled from the earlier discussion of definition of the field that marriage is a variable property therefore the objective relations between the position of a widow and other positions in the field are historically specific.

The class habitus of the objective widow is that shared set of historical relations deposited as mental and corporeal schemata which function as practice unifying and practice generating principles. It will be recalled that the habitus is self-reflexive, each time it is animated in practice, it encounters itself both as embodied and as objectified history in the specificity of the field, the habitus and practice are both constitutive and constituting, summarised in the formula:

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

Bourdieu [1984:101]

Every widow is a unique with her own life trajectory which will produce specific dispositions of her habitus, as a widow, a member of an objective class, she will share particular class properties with other widows, governed by the specific logic of '*The Field*', which determines the objective class habitus of the widow. It is therefore the class properties - the capital - of the widow which will lead to the objective class habitus. Capital is a social relation, therefore the value of the capital embodied as the objective class habitus of the widow can be analysed by comparing firstly the historical development of relations which are objectified in the logic of the field, secondly by comparing positions in the contemporary '*Field*'.

The focus of the analysis will be two of the classificatory criteria of widowhood - marriage, death and will regrettably, but necessarily, be limited to where these issues have direct and significant relevance to the class habitus of the widow. The third classificatory criteria of gender will not be considered as a separate question because the logic of gender determines not only the objective position of the widow but also that of all women (and men) within the field: gender only has a function in determining the class habitus of the widow when it interacts distinctly with the criteria of marriage and death. Similarly notions such as 'motherhood', waged labour, the 'public and private spheres', the role of 'the State', the changing nature of sexuality¹⁰ are constituting forces in the habitus

¹⁰ For example there is an intriguing coincidence between the 1753 Marriage Act and the changing understanding of sexual difference in the move from the "one-sex/flesh model to a two-sex/flesh model" [Laqueur, 1990] in the eighteenth century.

of *all* women and not distinctive aspects of the objective class habitus of the widow. These issues will only be touched upon when they contribute to a difference in the relative capital between the position of the widow and other positions in the field since there is only scope within this thesis for a broad brush outline of the structuring forces of *'The Field'*, a detailed examination of their implications will therefore be glossed over.

In addition it should be noted that the analysis is being restricted to a Western European, particularly a British, context. This is in no way meant to privilege one culture over another, neither is it intended to suggest that the embodied history of the contemporary widow in Great Britain is only that of the Anglo-Saxons. The habitus of widows today personifies a diverse cultural background, variations between individual widows about the religious significance of the meaning of marriage will inculcate unique dispositions in the individual habitus, in the same way variations of awareness of other cultural practices such as *suttee*¹¹ and levirate marriages¹² will be embodied in the habitus of individual widows. However the model I seek to construct is that of the *objective class* habitus of widows within Great Britain which is regulated by the dominant white culture¹³.

I have now achieved a 'social realization of the method' which I will put into practice in the following chapters by building a model of the objective class habitus of the widow and *'The Field'* in which it is constituted. Bourdieu demonstrates that social reality is historical through and through since each state of the structure is "both the product of previous struggles to transform or conserve the structure, and, through the contradictions, tensions and power relations that constitute that structure, the source of its subsequent transformations." [Bourdieu, 1990a:42].

I will therefore be seeking to uncover the embodied history in the institution of widowhood today. The model will be built, first by considering the struggles and transformations in the structure of marriage and then by examining changes in the structure of the social practice of death, in each case the implications for the objective class habitus of the widow will be identified. The model that will be built from this analysis will then be used to interrogate the interview data collected from individual widows, constituting the data as 'particular instances of the possible'; in this way I will

¹¹ The Hindu practice of a widow sacrificing herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

¹² The custom of compulsory marriage of a childless widow to the deceased husband's brother, any children of this union are counted not as the brother's but as the dead man's children.

¹³ There are however critical general issues about what are constant and what are variable in human society and the general theory of fields would make it possible by comparing geographically and culturally specific class habitus of widows to determine what is constant about the habitus of widows as a universal class.

develop an understanding of the reality of the situation of widows that encompasses their collective and individual experiences.

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE:

The Regulation of Woman - 'The Temptress'

Introduction

In the previous chapter I established the meaning of marriage as a stake in '*The Field*' which emerges as a product of the competition between the players, both individual and institutional, in particular the Church and the State, terms which it will be remembered are being used as a synecdoche for ensembles of fields. For the Church authority over the doxa of marriage as the conduit between the Creator and his Creation had homologies with its historical dominance in the social, intellectual, political and to a large extent the economic fields of social practice. For the State, authority over the doxa of marriage is a stake in maintaining political and social stability; the stake for the State is focused on the material world whilst the stake for the Church is the eventual celestial kingdom reached through the material world. Changes in the meaning of marriage are therefore connected to changes in relations of domination within '*The Field*' .

For both Church and State women's bodies pose a threat of 'potential unruliness' and as Smart [1992] has observed marriage is a systematic mode of regulating those dangers, however the meaning of that danger has varied with the changes in the construction of Woman. In the passage of time from the establishment of the early Christian Church to the present day the perception of women's sexuality in western culture has changed from a Biblical imagery of Woman as sexually aggressive with hungry and lustful appetites that tempted men to their downfall in sin¹⁴, to the shift in the eighteenth century to Woman perceived as sexually passive but susceptible to unruly impulses because of her menstrual cycles and reproductive capacities, [Laqueur, 1987 and 1990]. Traces of these beliefs remain deeply imprinted in the contemporary construction of women's sexuality while being overlaid with a notion of equality constructed in terms of a male conception of female desire. For the Church, Women represented a threat to Man's salvation, a moral danger as the cause of Man's sin and fall from grace. For the State, the danger,

¹⁴ The theological stance, endemic in Christianity, which following Augustine, held that all human sexual acts even within marriage, were flawed by carnal lust and therefore a dangerous and subversive threat to the spiritual order [Sadgrove, 1993].

while often couched in moral tones as a threat to the 'natural' order, has been one of political and economic instability resulting from a woman's reproductive capacity.

For both the Church and the State, there has been, however, a contradiction in these constructions, for while being powerful as sexual agents the doxa of gender domination also meant that Woman was constructed as weak and in need of protection, particularly as a Mother. This long-standing tension in the construction of Woman - the Madonna /Eve/Magdalen dichotomy is apparent in St Jerome's writing in the fourth century [Letter 22 to Eustochium]

"But after a virgin conceived in the womb and bore for us a child the curse had been abrogated. Death came through Eve, life through Mary" Mierow [1963: vol 1 p.54].

It must also be remembered that there is an interplay between class and sex in the manner in which the doxa of gender regulates social practices such as motherhood - gender is classed and class is gendered - so that at one moment the threat of Woman's unruly body is treated as a 'sex issue' and at the next it is treated as a 'class issue'. In *'The Field'* marriage is a structure which encompasses the polarities of the contradictions posed by the construction of Woman.

Marriage is therefore a union with both spiritual and secular meaning, founded on (and in turn contributing to) the logic of gender domination. Whilst the Church dominated *'The Field'* the 'religious' construction of woman and the sacramental nature of marriage governed the orthodoxy legitimating the State's legal definition of the conjugal relationship. As secular authorities gained ascendancy over the religious so the orthodoxy regulating gender domination and the meaning of marriage changed - female sexuality became couched in passive terms and the economic dependency of the marriage relationship became more openly acknowledged¹⁵. The relationship between the doxa of gender domination and that of marriage is not however unidirectional, it is the nature of the mechanism of *social practice* that the logic of gender both constitutes marriage and is in turn constituted by it. Marriage is therefore constitutive of 'Woman' and regulating 'Woman' and the changing meaning of the doxa of marriage brings into being a new construction of 'Woman' which each orthodoxy proclaims 'natural'. It is important to remember, however, that the position of 'Woman' is not that of a plastic cultural dupe, the interaction of the *habitus* with the objective social structures means that 'Woman' is a determined and a determining social agent as the long history of

¹⁵ Marriage has of course always been a relationship of economic dependency but the economic *purpose* of marriage became more openly acknowledged.

feminist consciousness clearly illustrates, [Lerner, 1993]. The 'game' between the 'players' in *'The Field'* is continuing, heterodox beliefs about gender and marriage challenge and modify the legitimacy of the regulating orthodoxy of marriage today.

This simplistic portrayal of the continuing struggle over the orthodoxy regulating *'The Field'*, which is a deliberate gloss of the Gordian knot of the interactions between social practice, class, capital and habitus, has been drawn in order to accentuate the two principle force lines arising from the Church and the State, which have the primary significance for the meaning of marriage and hence the meaning of widowhood: the cardinal concern of the Church being the control of Woman - personified as Eve, the temptress - while that of the State being that of Woman the Mother - the potential for instability arising from her reproductive capacities. The theme of Marriage in the construction of Woman and the struggle for dominance over the field will be present in this and the next two chapters as I will seek to explore through a broad brush historical review the objective class habitus of the widow. As a doxic belief the construction of Woman as Eve was more overt when the Church maintained authority over the structure of marriage and it was the logic underpinning the secular structure of primogeniture. As the dominance of the Church receded, the temptress construction of Woman became more covert in the logic of gender domination with which the State regulated *'The Field'* ¹⁶. The image of 'Eve' remains today, embedded deep within the structures of the habitus, but it is obscured by notions of social stability understood in economic terms. It is this change in emphasis which structures this and the following chapter.

The Antecedents of *'The Field'* in the 1990s

The cultural arrangements by which men and women organize their heterosexuality are diverse but are universally marked by a change in social status, which invests the new position with a higher value of social capital. In western culture these heterosexual unions have been legitimated by the construct of 'marriage', the meaning of which has been shaped by Judaeo-Christian belief founded in the Book of Genesis's depiction of marriage as paradise, although it must be remembered that the Church and the State ceremonies are "relatively recent additions, which have been grafted onto older popular rites whose legitimacy was dependent on no written law" [Gillis,1985:6]. Early

¹⁶ Holcombe [1983:37] posits a similar position - "One might argue that if the common-law rules of identity of husband and wife reflected the sacramental view of marriage held in medieval times, then the opposite view of husband and wife in equity resulted from the breakdown of the doctrines and power of the Church in the Reformation and post-Reformation ages."

Christians regarded chastity as the most truly moral way of life, however, since the flesh was weak concupiscence could be contained by the vows of the sexual fidelity within marriage¹⁷, in which the doxic belief was that marriage was a sacrament, an indissoluble union made between a man and a woman before a patriarchally defined God¹⁸. This union was regulated by the logic of gender domination, in which the man undertook to both protect the woman, providing for her physical needs and to control 'the potential unruliness' of her body, the woman accepted the controls and constraints in return for the man's protection because it was ordained by God.

Prior to 1753 marriage was not the clearly defined legal status with which we are familiar today. While the authority of the Church predominated, the essence of marriage was the freely given and witnessed consent of the spouses¹⁹. In its struggle to establish authority over marriage in the face of pagan practices the Church accepted the validity of various marriage forms whether occurring as the public ceremony performed in accordance with the prayer book, generally favoured by the elite, the clandestine marriages performed privately by a clergyman, or the 'popular' practice by verbal contracts of spouses made in front of two witnesses and often accompanied by folk rituals. In spite of the inculcation of a set of moral beliefs from the earliest age by religious education²⁰ until the second half of the eighteenth century, church marriages may well have covered only a minority of those living as couples and a substantial number of the population almost certainly never went through any form of marriage at all [Bridget Hill, 1989]. However, while all these modes of marriage were recognised under canon law only those performed before a clergy man were valid and binding marriages in common law. The passage of the 1753 Marriage Act²¹ which regulated marriage and outlawed the verbal contracts of folk

¹⁷ St Paul I Corinthians 7:1-2 "It is good for man not to have sexual relations with a woman. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband."

¹⁸ 1662 Book of Common Prayer, Solemnization of Marriage : "*Dearly beloved, we are gathered here together in the sight of God*"

¹⁹ 13c Pope Innocent III had decreed that the free consent of both spouses, not the formal solemnities by a priest was the sole essence of marriage.

²⁰ Church attendance was obligatory until the Civil Wars. The role of the Church in inculcating the sanctity of marriage and its patriarchal construction was fundamental. In 1623 on the instructions of King James I a copy of the *Homilies* was placed in every church next to the Bible. The Homilies (Book I published in June 1547 and Book II in 1563) were compiled at the instigation of Archbishop Cranmer and were intended to bring conformity to the newly established Church of England and to educate its uninformed clergymen. An appropriate Homily was read in Church every Sunday. The Homily on marriage was to be read immediately after the solemnization of marriage, its intent was "to establish patriarchy, commanded by God and instituted in Paradise, as the foundation of family life" [Klein 1992:13]. This reinforced the dominion of husbands over wives made explicit in the Form of Solemnization of Marriage in the Book of Common Prayer.

²¹ The law of marriage in England was not significantly altered from the twelfth century until the 1753 Marriage Act introduced by Lord Hardwicke, it was not touched again until the insitution of civil

rituals recognised by canon law, was an important landmark in the struggle between the Church and the State as it established the dominance of the authority of the State over the legal definition of marriage. Whatever the detail of the public rites, for a woman marriage conferred a higher status than spinsterhood which was seen as a failure of a woman to achieve her 'natural' pre-ordained destiny in marriage and childbearing ²².

The variation in marriage customs and their conflicting legal validity makes it difficult to use 'marriage' as a defining criteria to identify unifying principles which would constitute the properties of the objective class of the widow. Even after Hardwicke's Marriage Act the definition of marriage was not clear cut since common-law marriages were not eliminated, Gillis [1985:111] estimates ²³ approximately 8% of all unions in 1749 were common-law rising to 12% at the end of the the eighteenth century and to a peak of 15% in the middle of the nineteenth century. The identification of the married remains problematic today, the number of couples cohabiting is rising, for example, the General Household Survey found an increase in 1970s and 1980s in premarital cohabitation as precursor to marriage ²⁴ and "there is a tendency for women in long-running consensual unions to describe themselves as married" [Gibson, 1994:115] which then raises the question of how these women describe themselves should their partner die.

In view of these difficulties I have turned to the objective structure of the Law to assist in identifying the objective class habitus of the widow. In this chapter, in focussing on the antecedents of the contemporary '*Field*', I will first examine the position of the married woman under Common Law and Equity and secondly the religious and secular meaning of widowhood. I will conclude with a comparison of the objective class capital of widows, married, and single women, as part of the process of establishing the objective class habitus of the widow.

registration in 1836.

²² During the Middle Ages it was only in the labouring classes that there were unmarried women, in the upper classes, almost without exception unmarried women entered a nunnery [Shulamith, 1983:96].

²³ "The actual rate of common-law marriage is a dark area that cannot be easily determined from the parish records" [Gillis, 1985:110].

²⁴ Premarital cohabitation 1% of women under 25 in 1960-64 whereas in 1980-84 24% [Gibson 1994].

The Legal Construction of Marriage

As I have already indicated 'marriage' has a much older and more universal political significance than the Christian construction of a union in the eyes of God, it was [and sometimes still is] an alliance between kin groups, in which women were the object of exchange in the transfer of capital - material and symbolic, in particular the transfer of land. In Feudal England the transfer of land²⁵ through primogeniture was the bed-rock of social stability, the Common Law, that is the law common to all England, which originated in feudal law and local customs, developed for the protection of property, including debts and credit. In a system where stability rested on primogeniture, women, whilst being the vehicle for transmission also represented a threat to social order through the fear of spurious issue. It is the fear of this threat which is reflected in the distinction in Common Law between the legal status of a married and unmarried woman²⁶, a distinction which is never made in determining a man's legal status.

A marriage in the context of the Common Law meant a marriage solemnized in church before a priest. Before the second half of the eighteenth century only a minority went through that form of marriage, the Common Law jurisdiction over marriage would therefore only have been relevant for a small number of marriages, predictably those involving substantial property. However, a wife's legal status objectified the doxa of gender domination, it was therefore an important factor in determining the position of *all* women in society, particularly since a married woman was placed in the same legal category as a criminal, a lunatic and a minor. It will be recalled that the objective class capital of the widow is a social relation. Therefore constraints that the law placed on a married woman invested a widow by comparison, [or single woman²⁷], with more class capital. The legal status of a married woman in Common law therefore needs to be considered in greater detail.

²⁵ Stone [1990:6] argues that marriage was more important than purchase and sale in the transfer of land.

²⁶ Holcombe [1983] suggests that the law was merely embodying the economic and social realities of the position of women in the Middle Ages, however this ignores the interactive nature of the relationship between objective structures and social practice; it also overlooks the longstanding nature of relations of gender domination; for example, the position of married women under the guardianship of their husbands in earlier Germanic Law and that women's civic status had been restricted in classical Rome on the basis of woman's limited intelligence and light-mindedness *imbecillus sexus* [Veyne in Aries and Duby, 1987].

²⁷ It must be remembered that it is only recently that single women have lived in separate households, historically it was more usual for a woman to remain in the household of her parents or her employer until marrying.

In Common Law the premise was that a woman's husband was her guardian, under whose 'wing, protection and cover' she lived, this meant that by marrying a woman lost her legal identity and became incorporated into the legal personality of her husband, the doctrine of *couverture*. It was assumed that a husband would support his wife but since they were legally one person there was no way she could enforce that responsibility. As *femme covert* a wife was unable to make a will without her husband's consent²⁸, make a contract in her own name²⁹, arrange credit or take any legal action against her husband or a third party. In addition as a wife's moral guardian³⁰ a husband had the right to control a woman by physical force³¹ and regardless of his character and behaviour a father had absolute control over children until they reached 21, the age of maturity. *Couverture* also gave a husband property rights over his wife's body so that an act of adultery was the property offence of a trespass³² by the wife's lover, for which the husband was entitled to seek compensation³³. A married woman's rights in respect of property were dependent on the legal category of that property but the overriding principle of *femme covert* meant that once married a woman had no property at her disposal³⁴. Real property (freehold and copyhold land) was in the husband's 'guardianship' for his life³⁵ and reverted to the wife's control on his death. Personal property which a woman had at the time of her marriage and acquired during the marriage, including any earning, passed to her husband's absolute ownership; 'paraphernalia' (clothing and personal ornaments) reverted to a wife's possession on her husband's death but were liable for settlement of his debts [Holcombe, 1983]. It was only on the death of her husband that a wife

²⁸ Even when made with her husband's consent a will could be revoked at any time prior to the will being proved [Holcombe, 1983].

²⁹ In the medieval period some women had been able to trade in their own name with the property rights of a single woman [Shulamith, 1983] By the nineteenth century this right had disappeared everywhere but in the City of London [Holcombe, 1983].

³⁰ Until 1925 a husband was responsible for any criminal act his wife committed in his presence.

³¹ The judicial view was that a husband could chastise his wife with 'a stick no thicker than his thumb'.

³² Stone [1990:242] quotes Judge Kelynge's description in 1756 of sexual intercourse with another man's wife as 'the highest invasion of property'.

³³ After the end of the sixteenth century there was a gradual shift in elite society from assuaging slighted male honour through the ritualised violence of the duel, to the commercial values of seeking monetary compensation in the legal market place.

³⁴ In England in the twelfth century there was an element of community of matrimonial property; for example, women trading in their own rights and making wills, but by the thirteenth century the concept of *femme covert* was well established. It must be remembered however, that although under *femme covert* the husband controlled all forms of property, in practice wives often managed substantial areas of family finances. In general wives had greater financial responsibility in poorer families, but this pattern was not universal; for example, in times of war when husbands were absent or where a husband regarded a wife's financial skills highly, she might take a major part in managing finances [Pahl, 1989 and Holcombe, 1983].

³⁵ The wife had to agree freely if it was to be disposed of, she was examined separately in court to determine whether she agreed to the disposal.

regained her separate legal identity. The law therefore granted widows a status it denied married women, consequently widows had symbolic power not available to married women.

As the social structure began to change during the the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century from an agrarian foundation with small-scale family-based commercial and industrial businesses to larger scale enterprises, the form of property changed. Common law did not adequately protect the patrilineal transmission of fortune derived from commerce and industry, so the wealthy classes turned to Equity and the Court of Chancery for the development of trust settlements to ensure that property remained within families and that husbands through testamentary freedom could not disinherit their wives or profligately squander the family inheritance. In equity property could be settled separately upon a married woman for her use according to the terms of the trust, managed by a nominated trustee responsible to the court. The separate property created by the trust would be protected by the Court of Chancery against a woman's husband's common law rights. In this way a father could settle property [of any type] on his daughter and her children, or a husband could settle property on his wife - an act impossible under common law.

The rights a married woman enjoyed with respect to her separate property were dependent on the creation of the trust, but if she enjoyed unrestricted rights then she had unlimited powers with none of the property restrictions of married women under common law. As Holcombe [1983:44] observes "Clearly the position of married women with separate property in equity was greatly superior to that of women who came under the provisions of the common law. At nearly every point where the law discriminated against wives, equity afforded them relief, with the result that the legal rules and the equitable rules applying to married women's property stood in startling contrast to each other". However, the significance of this freedom should not be exaggerated, it was only available to a minority of married women since the costs involved made settlements in equity out of reach of all but the very wealthy women. Even more importantly it applied only to a wife's separate property in equity, it in no way altered a husband's common law rights over a wife's person or other property.

In 1882 the Married Women's Property Act was introduced, it was hailed as a victory for feminist principles. The Act gave married women the same rights as men and unmarried

women over every sort of property which a woman possessed at the time of marriage or to which she became entitled after marriage. It also empowered women to carry on trades or businesses independently of their husbands, using their separate property. However, these principles were couched in the terms of the rules of equity in that the Act did not refer to a woman's 'own property' but to her 'separate property'. In other words the act bestowed upon married women a special status as owners of separate property governed by equitable principles and in the years that followed this raised many practical legal difficulties, for example in the separation of property on divorce³⁶. In the event the material benefits of the Act were only enjoyed by the minority of wives who had independent means or the few married women who were able to earn sufficient to acquire their own property, most women were denied access to an income which would make them independent and remained financially dependent on their husbands. It seems therefore that the main 'victory for feminist principles' was psychological for, as a contemporary commentator quoted by Holcombe [1983:218] declared, "The difference caused by mental change is much greater than the difference caused by material change".

Whilst the position of married women today in respect of property is without doubt far superior to that of women before 1882, marriage continues to be a relationship underpinned by many of the assumptions of common law and the majority of women remain financially dependent upon their husbands. The circumstance of marriage in the 90's will be explored in Chapter X, next in this chapter I will examine the religious and secular construction of widowhood.

The Religious and Secular Position of the Widow

The religious orthodoxy was that marriage was an indissoluble union, therefore the question of the status of the surviving partner, when death terminated the earthly span of marriage, had inferences for its sacramental nature. The ecclesiastical conception of the inferior status of woman subjugated to man, derived from creation and her role in

³⁶ Until the 1964 Married Women's Property Act a wife who was not earning a living by waged work and who had no previous savings or inherited wealth, had no access to money of her own; even money saved out of the housekeeping allowance was not deemed hers. Until the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act 1970, the Married Women's Property Act 1882 was the grounds for excluding women from any share in the matrimonial home if they could not establish strict legal ownership; married women could only claim a share in the matrimonial home if they had made a substantial *financial* contribution to its purchase, they could also only claim items of furniture etc if they had actually paid for them. Even if a wife's earnings had paid for food, heating bills and children's clothing while her husband's earnings had paid for the mortgage and household goods, she could not legally claim any beneficial interest in the property or its contents. Non-financial contributions such as housework and childcare were dismissed [Smart, 1984:78].

original sin, meant that when the extant partner was female, her status was doubly problematic. The Church had both to respect her connection with marriage in order to uphold the sacramental doxa and it had to regulate the dangerous nature of her sexuality which was now freed from the control of her husband. The early Church resolved this dilemma, first, by protecting the widow, which indicated her honourable status³⁷ and, by inference, the importance of marriage, (older widows were worthy of particular respect and were termed *ordo viduarium*³⁸ [Shulamith,1983]), and second, by advocating that widows did not remarry, as chastity was the most truly Christian way of life. Many widows at the beginning of the middle ages entered monastic life. However, if that ideal could not be achieved their dangerous bodies were to be controlled by remarriage³⁹. Until the fourteenth century widows were under the protection of the Ecclesiastical courts, classified as *personae miserabiles* [Shulamith, 1983], but by the late Middle Ages, congruent with the declining power of the Church, this classification gradually disappeared and jurisdiction was transferred to the secular courts.

The didactic literature of the Middle Ages presented chastity as the most important trait of a woman, irrespective of her social class, vocation or married status, however, authors of the period did regard remarriage as natural, and gave widows advice on their behaviour in their new marriages⁴⁰. In the the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century the didactic literature, while accepting that remarriage occurred, continued to encourage widows to aspire to the Christian ideal of chastity. Juan Iivis Vives's book *A Very Fruitful and Pleasant Book called the Instruction of a Christian Woman* published in English circa 1529⁴¹ made it clear that a wife's subjection to her husband continued after his death - "let her take for a solemn and great oath to swear by her husband's soul

³⁷ 1662 Prayer Book Psalm 9 : "The Lord careth for the strangers; he defendeth the fatherless and the widow".

³⁸ from the latin *vidua* : a widow

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 7:8,9 : "Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

1 Corithinians 7:39 "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord".

⁴⁰ While it must always be remembered that the prescriptions of the moralistic writings do not represent social practice, [Macfarlane,1978], they do provide an insight into the orthodoxy of the day. At a period when law and custom imposed restrictions on the speech and writing of women so that there is little material about the lives of widows, the didactic literature is an important source of information [Klein,1992].

⁴¹ Vives was Spanish, a humanist and pupil of Erasmus; like Erasmus he was concerned with classical learning and Christian exegesis. The 'Instruction' was the first and most influential Renaissance treatise on the educating of women; intended to be used by women as a book of moral instruction.. It was widely known throughout Europe in the orginal Latin and was also translated into English, Castilian, French, German and Italian [Klein,1992].

and let her live and do so she shall think to please her husband, being now no man but a spirit purified and a divine thing" [Chapter III 'Of Minding Her Husband' quoted in Klein,1992:120]. Richard Brathwaite's *The English Gentlewoman* published in 1631 advised that widows, who by their situation deserve honour, should live private and solitary lives in which their task is to "instruct others in the practice of piety, reclaim others from the paths of folly, and with virtuous convoy guide them to glory" quoted in Klein [1992:253]

The control of a widow's sexuality through chastity continued as the Christian ideal into the the nineteenth century when Queen Victoria was the epitome of the 'honourable estate of widowhood', an example which many widows emulated, sometimes from choice if they had the freedom of financial security. Those Victorian widows who did remarry often voiced qualms about its propriety since remarriage was felt to reflect adversely on the quality of the attachment to the first husband and doubts were expressed about the possibility of forming a deep regard to the second husband [Taylor, 1983]. The language of 'attachment' and 'regard' in which these qualms were voiced reflects the change in the construction of female sexuality from the earlier aggressive and active understanding to the transition to a passive female sexuality resulting from the change from the 'one-body' model of sexual differentiation to a 'two-body' model in the eighteenth century [Hitchcock,1996; Laqueur,1990].

The widowed condition, particularly during the prescribed period of mourning for the deceased husband, was marked by the wearing of widow's weeds. Whilst the history of mourning ritual reveals that men were prominent in the public ceremonies of the funeral rites, it was on widows that social expectations placed the most restrictive mourning customs [Taylor, 1983]. The etiquette of mourning and the wearing of weeds were significant indicators of the widow's status and served three functions: firstly, they marked the widow's isolation from society because of her association with death; secondly, they were a symbol of the widow's chastity and piety; thirdly, mourning dress, which was expensive, was a way of displaying the wealth and status of the deceased and the bereaved family. Prior to the sixteenth century elaborate funeral rites and the wearing of mourning dress was limited to royal circles, but with the changing economic structure the practice gradually spread through all sections of society so that by the nineteenth century mourning dress was worn by all classes. The distinctive black of the widow's weeds was taken from the style of the nun's habit in the Middle Ages ⁴² and probably

⁴²

Prior to the Middle Ages there was little differentiation between mourning dress and ordinary

originated from wealthy widows entering a religious order, either for a period of mourning or as a vocation. As mourning dress was adopted more widely after the abolition of the sumptuary laws in the the seventeenth century, widows weeds began to be influenced by changes in fashion, but the basic elements were retained: the use of black only relieved by touches of white, the covering of the head and the veiling of the face, an overall effect of simplicity symbolising grief, chastity and pious rejection of the pleasures of everyday life.

By the second half of the nineteenth century the suffocating etiquette of mourning had reached its apogee when there was an obsessional concern amongst all classes to demonstrate respectability which resulted in the characterisation of the Victorian widow as a figure shrouded in all enveloping black crape ⁴³. Whilst widows were required to withdraw from social life and wear mourning for two and a half years ⁴⁴ and many chose to remain in half-mourning colours for the remainder of their lives, widowers, by comparison, were only required to wear black for three months and unlike widows were free to marry as soon as they wished, even during the period of mourning for their dead wife ⁴⁵. It is interesting to conjecture on the coincidence of these oppressive restrictions of mourning practice with the the nineteenth century 'understandings' of women's unstable and unruly reproductive functions, where the whole metaphor of women's bodies became one of instability of womb and mind [Laqueur,1990]. Were the physical and social constraints of widow's weeds a control on this dangerous sexuality when it was at its most vulnerable ? Did this oppressive mourning ritual act as a surrogate for the control of the deceased husband ? Intriguing questions which sadly fall outside the focus of this thesis. After the Great War the elaborate ritual of mourning declined and by 1965 Gorer observed that mourning customs had "practically disappeared in England" [Gorer,1965:51]. Today a widow wears black at a funeral by choice rather than social expectation and observing formal mourning after the completion of the funeral rites is likely to cause censure rather than approbation.

dress [Taylor,1983].

⁴³ Crape - a transparent crimped, dull silk gauze, first imported into Britain before 1690, then brought in by Huguenot refugees and eventually popularised by Courtaulds (a Huguenot family) in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁴ Full (deep) mourning lasted a year and a day when the widow dressed entirely in black bombazine draped in heavy plain crape; second mourning lasted nine months with less crape; ordinary mourning lasted three months in black silk with no crape; half mourning lasted for the final six months: colours for half-mourning were soft mauves, violet and heliotrope [Taylor,1983].

⁴⁵ If a widower married during the mourning period, the new wife had to join her husband's mourning, wearing black in memory of her predecessor.

Having examined the Christian construction of widowhood I now wish to turn to its secular meaning and the State's control of marriage through its legal definition and interest in the stability of the social order founded on the ownership of property. It will be remembered from the earlier description of the Common Law concept of coverture that the husband's proprietary rights over his wife were material as well as corporeal. Whilst the disposal of a man's sexual property rights over his widow were governed by moralistic teachings and social pressure, the disposal of his material property was controlled by Common Law. Any real property which a woman had owned on marriage reverted to her control on the death of her husband, in addition she had a life interest in one third of her husband's land, the right of *dower*⁴⁶. Originally, the Church in its guardianship role of widows and orphans had administered dower through the Ecclesiastical courts, but from the end of the fourteenth century jurisdiction was transferred to the secular courts, an intimation of the decreasing power of the Church in the struggle with the State for dominance in *'The Field'*.

As already remarked, from the the sixteenth century onwards property increasingly came to be held in forms other than land and the trust system administered in Equity by the Court of Chancery was developed to protect property from passing away from the wife's children or the family of origin⁴⁷. With the rise of Equity the Common Law system of dower became less relevant and dower was eventually removed by the Dower Act of 1833. However no legislation was introduced in its place to safeguard the rights of widows other than that offered by trusts in equity and that was only available to women in the propertied classes. The support of widows was left to the personal whim and inclination of their husband since the principle of testamentary freedom allowed a testator to leave his property away from his wife and family. This was the situation until the Inheritance (Family Provision) Act 1938⁴⁸ which gave a widow the right to apply for reasonable provision from the estate of her deceased husband, [Ross Martyn, 1985].

⁴⁶ The right to dower was not uniform.

⁴⁷ All forms of property, real and personal, were protected by the Court of Chancery according to the terms of the trust, usually drawn up by fathers for daughters with male relatives as trustees. The Law of Equity, administered by the Court of Chancery, was the 'guardian of the weak and unprotected, such as married women, infants and lunatics', it therefore had a different view of the nature of marriage from Common Law, protecting a wife from her husband, exercising 'exorbitant rights' [Holcombe, 1983].

⁴⁸ The 1938 Act gave the right to apply for reasonable provision to four classes of persons: wives and husbands; daughters who had not been married, or who were, by reason of physical or mental disability, incapable of maintaining themselves; infant sons; and sons of full age who were, likewise by reason of some mental or physical disability, incapable of maintaining themselves [Ross Martyn, 1985:3].

The Objective Class Habitus of the Widow

"The comfortable estate of widowhood, is the only hope that keeps up a wife's spirits"

John Gay, Beggars Opera, 1728

This eighteenth century depiction of the situation of a widow and a wife succinctly summarises their objective positions in *'The Field'*. While a wife was the legal property of her husband, a widow had a separate legal identity, was able to own property and litigate on her own behalf. The objective situation of the widow was described by the anonymous author of *The Law's Resolution of Women's Rights* published in London in 1632 [Klein 1992]. The writer suggests that a widow consider most seriously before embarking on remarriage, not for spiritual reasons but because as a widow she has new freedom as she is no longer under the subjection of parents or husband. The author further suggests that remarriage could be sheer folly since all she brings to the marriage will be her husband's; better to seek consolation in God than a man who may squander her inheritance.

Although the development of Equity after the sixteenth century ameliorated the restrictions on a wife's property her situation under the 'guardianship' of her husband remained unchanged. It was not until the 1882 Married Womens' Property Act that a wife was granted a separate legal identity. Until this Act the objective social capital of the widow was superior to that of the wife. In addition the position of the widow in relation to the sacrament of marriage accorded her symbolic capital when compared to unmarried women or wives living apart from their husbands. This was signified by the wearing of widow's weeds and the adoption of the epithet 'Widow' as a form of public address. The decline in these public signs of widowhood indicated a decline in the symbolic capital of the widow.

However, while the objective model of the position of the widow indicates greater social and symbolic capital than the position of other women in *'The Field'* this does not represent the reality of a widow's situation which would also have been determined by her economic capital and the regulating logic of gender. For most widows the reality probably would have been that their economic circumstances and their situation as women *per se* meant that remarriage, in spite of its disadvantages, was preferable to the independence and freedoms of widowhood. For those widows who did not inherit from

their husbands and who were not able to remarry or cohabit survival was precarious. There were few opportunities for employment and the level of wages paid to an unskilled woman often made it impossible for a widow to support herself (and her children). Many had to resort to poor relief. Therefore whilst the objective social and symbolic class capital of the widow in the context of her legal construction was superior to that of the married woman, the economic and gendered social structures could erode the advantageous position of the widow in *The Field*.

Nevertheless the superior social and symbolic capital of the widow was embodied in the objective class habitus of all widows, epitomized in John Gay's reference to '*the comfortable estate of widowhood*' and is still present today in the metaphors of '*merry widow*' and '*grass widow*' for describing the state of widowhood.

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE:

The Regulation of Woman - 'The Mother'

Introduction

In the introduction to Chapter VIII I argued that for the Church the stake in the dominance over the doxa of marriage was an aspect of its overall authority over temporal and spiritual dominions. By contrast, for the State the stakes were stability in the material world which was based on the inheritance of property through the male blood line. For the State the purpose of marriage was the regulation of heterosexual relations to ensure that spurious offspring were not introduced thereby threatening the stability of the patrilineal system - an act which was considered a felony [Spensky, 1992].

Legitimacy was, however, only a concern in families where the transmission of wealth was an issue, the labouring classes treated motherhood outside marriage much more leniently ; at periods when the number of hands to labour was of importance, proof of fertility was welcomed, at periods when the number of mouths to feed was a constant threat to survival, illegitimacy was tolerated less [Gillis, 1985]. In the main the State had little interest in motherhood and illegitimacy in the labouring classes until the issues of support and dependency became central to State policy ⁴⁹.

'Motherhood' is a broad concept with a range of meanings which vary by class and are historically specific. Before the twentieth century married women would be pregnant or nursing an infant for most of their adult lives, however it was only in the eighteenth century with the development of the concept of 'childhood' and the growth of medical science that there was an increasing emphasis on 'motherhood' ⁵⁰ as a domestic role in the construction of Woman. This notion gained momentum in the nineteenth century and by the middle of that century motherhood became an issue of social policy and the articulation of class and sexuality within the doxa of gender constructed motherhood in

⁴⁹ In 1623 an Act was passed which focussed particularly on the infanticide of illegitimate children by unmarried mothers [for which the punishment was hanging] and which placed the burden of proof of innocence on the unmarried mother of the dead infant rather than the more usual practice of placing the burden of proving guilt on the State [Smart, 1992: 16].

⁵⁰ Gerda Lerner [1993] notes that the concept of motherhood is historically connected to the concept of childhood which Phillippe Aries [1962] argues did not come to be considered a separate category until the seventeenth century.

both an eugenicist and an imperialist context. By the end of the nineteenth century the focus on women's sexuality and the transmission of property through blood ties widened to a concern about sexuality in general and the State found a new means of controlling women through marriage, by introducing a raft of legislation that enforced motherhood and controlled women's sexuality.

Motherhood as a regulating construction of Woman is the underlying theme of this chapter. I first wish to consider it in the context of the shift in the dominance over the orthodoxy of marriage between the Church and the State and the ending of marriage by divorce, then I will examine the way women were regulated through motherhood when they were without the support of a man.

The Church, The State and The Ending of Marriage

No matter how energetically the Church maintained that marriage was a bond of sexual fidelity, the 'weakness of the flesh' could stretch the conjugal union to breaking point. It is through the history of divorce that the changing meaning of marriage and the erosion of the ancient power of the Church can be clearly seen. Associated with that erosion of power is the decline in the symbolic and social capital of the widow.

The Reformation had introduced legalized divorce into Europe, but in England, although Protestant, the medieval Catholic ban on divorce remained entirely unchanged until the passage of the 1857 Divorce Act, when Parliament rejected the theological principle of the indissolubility of marriage and introduced secular divorce in which control over matrimonial affairs moved from the church to the civil court. This was a major milestone in the struggle between the state and the church over the meaning of marriage and marked the increasing dominance of the secular authority over the religious.

Until the 1857 Divorce Act, with the rare exception of Acts of Parliament⁵¹ only available to the very rich, death was the sole agent for ending marriage, although there were forms of marital separation. The Ecclesiastical Court held jurisdiction over marital law and only granted *separatio a mensa et thoro*, separation from bed and board without permission to remarry, on the grounds of adultery or desertion for seven years. As well as *mensa et*

⁵¹ Parliamentary Divorce - a full legal severance of a marriage by a judicial body allowing both spouses to remarry, granted by Private Act of Parliament between 1690 - 1857 on grounds of various marital grievances; after Parliamentary divorce husbands retained Common Law rights to children. The costs of the procedure put this beyond all but the very wealthy and best-connected, in addition, although a few women were granted divorce by this procedure, it was in general only open to men.

thoro which could be granted to a husband or a wife, there were other private forms of separation,⁵² however, the Common Law principle of *coverture* meant that matrimonial separation left most wives without means of supporting themselves.

Desertion was, of course, also an option open to wives in unsatisfactory marriages, but a woman needed to be very desperate to leave her husband since, unless she had family to go to for support, or had unrestricted use of separate property in equity, the penalties she faced were severe. Socially she was likely to be an outcast ending up destitute and in receipt of poor relief or having to resort to prostitution. Any property she may have brought to the marriage was retained by her husband, all her personal property including any savings or future earnings, any business stock and tools, all were liable to seizure by her husband at any time; in addition as her legal identity was incorporated in that of her husband she was unable to enter a legal contract, use credit, borrow money, or buy or sell property. Her children were controlled entirely by their father and he was legally free to place them how and where he wished and to deny her any contact. Finally, if her husband chose to sue her in the Ecclesiastical Court for separation from bed and board, she lost her Common Law right to dower.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period when the State's concern with social order had broadened to include the stability of the family unit. This was idealised in terms of the private domain of the home watched over by the 'Angel of the House': the man's refuge from the harsh realities of the public sphere and a symbol of the social stability founded on the presumption of paternity in the transmission of property. The threat of spurious issue had widened in its significance, no longer was it restricted to the landed classes tied to the rules of primogeniture, a spurious issue had become a danger to the middle classes whose wealth was transmitted by partible inheritance. This anxiety about the nature of the social order underlay "a surge of juridical activity concerning sexual and reproductive behaviour" [Smart 1992:13], including legislation on abortion, infanticide, baby farming and prostitution⁵³. This legislation, the dark side of the

⁵² i. 'private separation' - an agreement embodied in a deed of separation drawn up by a conveyancer; available to those with property. It was popular from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. The legal status was problematic and although the conveyancing deed allowed the separated wife to act with the economic independence of a single woman, she was never entirely free since at any time her husband under Common Law could revoke the deed and reinstate his property rights over her.

ii. 'wife sale' - ritual of husband publicly selling his wife, along with legal responsibility for her and her upkeep, to another man; an infrequent practice which reached its peak between 1780 and 1830 when 300 cases were recorded. The significance of the practice was that it clearly emphasised the legal nature of the relationship between husband and wife, although when tested in the courts such an ending of marriage was declared invalid, illegal and immoral [Stone, 1990].

Victorian definition of motherhood, constructed a model of Woman as Carer which was regulated by the twin orthodoxies of sex and class articulated with that of gender. The 1857 Divorce Act needs to be seen in the context of this juridical activity.

Whilst the 1857 Act improved the situation of women⁵⁴ so that a wife could escape from an abominable marriage, the doxic logic of gender domination, which underpinned all social practice, justified a continued discrimination against a wife: while a husband could divorce a wife for adultery alone, a wife had to prove an offence in addition to the husband's adultery. The intention of the Act was not therefore to make divorce readily accessible, it was to be an effective control on the sexuality of wives [Vogel,1992]. This was demonstrated by the comments in 1862 of Sir Cresswell Cresswell, a member of the judiciary, who said "It will probably have a salutary effect on the interests of public morality, that it should be known that a woman, if found guilty of adultery, will forfeit....all right to the custody of, or access to, her children" [quoted in Smart, 1984:121] .

It is noteworthy that this legislation was introduced after a period of gradual change in the nature of sexual practice. At the beginning of the eighteenth century sexual practice "was an activity characterised by mutual masturbation, much kissing and fondling, and long hours spent in mutual touching, but very little penial/vaginal penetration - at least before marriage By the end of the century sex had become increasingly phallo-centric. Putting a penis in a vagina became the dominant sexual activity - all other forms of sex becoming literally fore-play it was the penis which became the active member" [Hitchcock,1996:79]. Consequently it is reasonable to assume that with the growth of a phallo-centric sexual economy extra-marital liaisons were more likely to

⁵³ Other significant legislation includes :
1861 Offences Against the Person Act
1866 and 1869 Contagious Diseases Acts
1872 Infant Life Preservation Act
1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act
see Smart [1992] for discussion.

⁵⁴ Benefits of 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act :

- i. Privately separated or deserted wives were protected from economic exploitation by their husbands.
- ii. The husband no longer had right to legal possession of children. In judicially separated or divorced couples either parent could be awarded custody and/or visiting rights. (Sergeant Talfourd's Act in 1839 had had removed the presumption of custody of children under age of 7 from the father to the mother).
- iii. A wife could now defend herself in court in cases brought by a husband for damages against a wife's lover.
- iv. Grounds under which wives could petition for divorce extended to include desertion for two years with cruelty.

result in pregnancy and the adultery of the wife increased the risk of introducing spurious offspring into the patrilineal family system. Hitchcock also accounts convincingly for the nineteenth century construction of Woman as 'unstable', arguing that "The increasingly phallo-centric and penetrative sexual culture of the late eighteenth century both encouraged and made possible the denigration of female sexuality and perceived passivity. In the process it also reflected and contributed to women's increasingly restricted role in society as a whole. Men, newly concerned about their penises, were in a very restricted sense, liberated; while women, biologically redefined in order to deny them a sexual role, were repressed and their sexual activity was more heavily policed" [ibid:80]. This was reflected in the nineteenth century polarisation between the public and the private spheres.

The 1857 Act marked the formal transfer of the power in regulating marriage from the Church to the State, which concluded a long period of struggle, from that point the role of established Church became one of influence rather than control and that influence gradually declined. Moves during the first half of this century to introduce equality of access to divorce for wives and husbands on the grounds of adultery, (granted by a private members bill in 1923) and the inclusion of desertion as a valid cause for divorce were resisted by the Bishops in the House of Lords on the grounds that granting any extension of cause beyond female adultery was against the express word of Christ. However, the internal cohesion of the church on the issue of divorce was declining and the 1937 Divorce Reform Act extended the grounds for divorce. By the 1960's the Church accepted the idea that divorce should be considered as no more than a legal remedy for 'irretrievable matrimonial breakdown' (*Putting Asunder* [1966], the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Group). The influence of the theological arguments on sexual and moral issues had declined to such an extent that no Bishop mentioned the sanctity of marriage according to the words of Christ when the 1969 Divorce Reform Bill passed through the House of Lords. This was a striking contrast to the struggle that had preceded the 1857 Divorce Act and marked the final victory⁵⁵ of the state over the church in the definition of the meaning of marriage when the ancient theological principle of matrimonial fault as the ground for divorce was removed with the notion of 'no fault divorce'. Coincident with the Divorce Reform Act, the Law Reform [Miscellaneous Provisions] Act 1970 finally removed the notion of adultery by a woman as a 'property' offence by another man for which the 'wronged' husband could claim

⁵⁵ That is not to imply that the struggle does not continue as was evidenced in the 'guerilla warfare' over the 1996 Family Bill.

damages. The concept of no fault treated divorce as a purely secular issue, with the legal recognition of an 'irretrievable matrimonial breakdown'. Without any moral or religious implications⁵⁶, the evidence for irretrievable breakdown remained adultery and cruelty⁵⁷ plus a new criteria of separation⁵⁸.

Even though the influence of the Church declined after the 1857 Act the sense of moral shame arising from matrimonial fault continued to stigmatise wives who committed adultery. For example, the 1925 Guardianship of Infants Act⁵⁹ whilst extending custody rights to divorced and separated mothers did so under very stringent conditions hedged around by the Victorian values of sexual morality. However, in spite of the stigma attached to divorce, particularly for women, the number of divorces increased, with the First and Second World Wars marking significant shifts in the long-term pattern of the divorce rate. After WWII legal aid was introduced for divorce proceeding, so "for the first time in English history, divorce had been thrown open to the poor" [Stone, 1990:402]. Previously the cost of litigation meant that divorce was still considered a luxury or vice of the rich and not really concerning the poor. However the disgrace associated with divorce still remained; it arose from a combination of the legacy of nineteenth century sexual morals and the shame of the collusion and duplicity often involved in procuring the necessary evidence of adultery. The disgrace was particularly marked for working class women who had to confront "the stigma of criminality, public degradation and punitiveness" associated with the Magistrates Courts when seeking the enforcement of maintenance orders granted on separation and divorce [Smart,1984:76]. In the 1960's, Nicky Hart, in her study of the 'status passage' to divorce, found that divorce continued to be stigmatised as a 'deviant social category': "Death is fate, divorce means failure to most" [1976:109]. Many of Hart's sample thought that the success of marriage "was pre-ordained; failure was equal to a breach of nature, and the architects of it must be somehow less than human. They were abnormal, certainly wrong, and by the same interpretation they were freaks" [Hart,1976:151]. Today, when divorce has become the routine solution to conjugal disharmony, the very increase in divorce numbers adds

⁵⁶ The principle was accepted by the main christian church groups, it was argued by the proponents of the bill and generally supported, that rather than undermine family life, easier divorce would promote marriage by allowing those in 'dead' marriages to divorce and legitimate their cohabiting relationships.

⁵⁷ The legal definition of cruelty had been substantially 'softened' by case law since 1890 and was expanded in the 1969 bill to cover any behaviour because of which the petitioner 'cannot reasonably be expected to live with the respondent' [Stone,1990:407].

⁵⁸ A two-year separation following mutual agreement or a five year separation without mutual agreement:

⁵⁹ Guardianship of Infants Act 1925 gave mothers the same *formal* rights as fathers to apply for custody of children on divorce or separation.

weight to its acceptability and suggests both the experience and resultant status are bearable [Gibson, 1994; Stone, 1990]. The Church of England Synod finally conceded in 1981 that there were circumstances in which it could be proper for a divorced person to marry again by church ceremony during the lifetime of their former partner, and now very publicly within the Royal Family, divorce has become the accepted procedure for ending a relationship which failed to bring the desired level of satisfaction. This would suggest that divorce has been finally sanitized and has lost the objective stigma of social censure. However, although the concept of matrimonial fault is discarded, when a court is exercising judgement over the custody of children an element of moral evaluation remains. What constitutes the best interests of the child is the outcome of struggles over the regulating orthodoxy underpinning *'The Field'*. Whilst the child's moral health, associated with the automatic rights of the father, held sway at the turn of the century, gradually the child's need for 'mother love' has gained primacy. Nonetheless the child's *moral* upbringing remained the court's concern up until the 1960s, so that the adultery of the mother would preclude custody; it was taken for granted that an 'immoral' woman could not mother a child properly and deprivation of her children continued to be a control of a woman's sexuality. Today the family courts have shifted from preserving the rights of parents towards promoting the welfare of the children and the notion of establishing the moral rights of the *innocent* and *deserving* wife is supposedly no longer the prime concern of the law. But, as Smart [1984] observed, covert imputations of guilt are still made against spouses, particularly wives, who do not fulfil gender role expectations and they can sway the court in awarding custody of children.

The Regulation of Women without the support of a Husband through Motherhood

In seeking to examine the objective class habitus of the widow, it is necessary, as discussed in Chapter VII, to seek those structures which are common to all widows, those sets of relations which determine the position of all widows, not the circumstances of individual widows. In the same manner that the Law provides an objective structure for analysis so do structures which can be characterised under the broad heading of Welfare, with origins in the system of Poor Relief; these are structures which particularly centre on the position of Woman as Mother. In focussing in Chapter VIII on the position of the widow in the law there is a risk of giving the impression that all widows were beneficiaries from their husbands' estates. This of course is a distortion of the reality, for

the majority of ordinary women, widowhood was not a 'comfortable estate'. Women had longer life expectancy than men, the greatest variance being amongst the poor, poor women therefore were more likely to be widowed with young children to support and less likely than men to remarry if widowed. Women's work opportunities were more limited than those of men and they could only earn between one third and one half of male manual workers wage, they were therefore less able to support themselves if widowed, particularly if they had dependents, and many widows had to seek assistance from charities or poor relief to live.

The principle behind poor relief has always been that relief was to be achieved first and foremost through kinship responsibility and only when that is non-existent through community and State responsibility [Gittens,1985]. Marriage was the structure through which responsibility and dependency was established and the notion of responsibility of kin continues today as a mainstay of the stability of the social order. The contemporary orthodoxy is that the conjugal family unit dependent on the male breadwinner reinforces the incentive for regular and hard work. Marriage, which pivots on the woman as carer, provides a stable, supportive emotional environment for rearing and servicing responsible citizens, [Wilson,1977]. In this way the community, in the guise of the State⁶⁰, ensures that the population does not become a financial liability. The patriarchal family educates children in authority and is seen as a necessary environment for socialising children; living outside this conjugal family structure was and is seen as a threat to social order.

The gradual conversion of poor relief from the responsibility of the Church to a function of the State began in the fourteenth century ⁶¹ reflecting the struggles between the two institutions; coincident with this the symbolic class capital accorded widows by the Church lapsed and destitute widows became a residual category dependent on the vagaries of poor relief. The Poor Law Act of 1601 introduced the idea of three 'classifications' of paupers⁶², but there was no State responsibility for relief and the implementation showed considerable local variation. It is in the attempts at centralized control of local poor relief in the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and the succeeding

⁶⁰ It must be remembered that the 'State' encompasses the pressures between socio-economic classes, for example fears of the middle class about disruptive effects of the unemployed.

⁶¹ Poor Law Act of 1388

⁶² The impotent poor (the aged, the chronic sick, the blind, the lunatic) accommodated in 'poor houses' or 'almshouses'; the able-bodied who were set to work in a 'house of correction' with children apprenticed to a trade; the able-bodied who absconded or persistent idlers were punished in the 'house of correction' [Fraser,1984].

directives, that it becomes possible to trace structures that have become embodied in the objective class habitus of the widow at the end of the twentieth century.

The doxic logic of gender relations throughout the nineteenth century was informed by and in turn reinforced, the growing orthodoxy of 'science'; its effects can be seen within the Poor Law legislation which sought to maintain social order through the inter-related constructs of class and gender. Ideas about the political economy and the growing interest in statistical data arising from social investigation legitimated the beliefs in 'class' divisions. Concurrent with this, growing medical scholarship investigated the biology of the female body through the prism of the doxa of gender, and so justified the relations of domination. The 1834 Poor Law was premised on the patriarchal household with dependent women and children supported by a male breadwinner and the belief that poverty was the fault of the poor themselves. Throughout the nineteenth century the tension between these two notions left unsupported women in a desperate position. The intention of the Act was to withdraw relief from the 'able-bodied', men judged capable of work and though it acknowledged a category of 'non able-bodied' - the aged, children and the mad - it ignored the problem of poverty amongst able-bodied women - the widow, the deserted wife, the wife of the absentee soldier or sailor etc.- constructing all women as non-wage earning dependents even though "single mothers, including widows and deserted mothers, were a significant category of applicants for poor relief" [Thane,1978:35].

The regulations of the Poor Law were rigorous; the right to relief, which was constructed in terms of the male-headed household, was linked to the man's place of birth, where he was deemed to be 'settled'. This posed great difficulties for some widows applying for poor relief who were removed⁶³ to the parish of their husband's birth as the only place with an obligation to support them, even though they knew no one there. Parishes with low poor rate incomes had a particular incentive to 'remove' long-term burdens such as widows with young children. In the 1840s legislation was introduced which allowed outdoor relief to be granted to widows. This therefore made a distinction between 'deserving' widows suitable for outdoor relief and 'undeserving' women fit only for the workhouse. However, some guardians justified giving only workhouse relief to widows

⁶³ A statute of 1846 did however allow that 'settlement' could be established by five years continuous residence in a parish and that widows should not be removed within twelve months of their husbands death. The period of residence was subsequently changed to three years in 1861, and one year in 1865, although removal to parish of birth was still possible due to the imprecise wording of the statutes [Thane,1978:36].

on the grounds that granting relief automatically to widows would discourage fathers from standing by their families when alive and insuring them against their death. Deserted wives fared even worse and could be refused relief since the argument was that they should not be a charge on the rates as they had husbands alive who should be responsible for their support. While in the second half of the nineteenth century the value of infants and children was being reassessed (reflected in legislation such as 1872 Infant Life Protection Act), social policy remained concerned with regulating the 'fact' of motherhood rather than its 'quality' [Smart,1992:23]. Many Boards of Guardians, whose construction of the widow was informed by the twin themes of class and sex within the Victorian doxa of gender, were undecided whether the primary role of the unsupported working class widowed mother was motherhood or work. Some local guardians were unconvinced about the capacity of poor widows to bring up their children and there was an increasing emphasis on improved institutional relief and workhouse schooling.

In the 1870s Poor Law policy attempted to reduce the number receiving outdoor relief by proposing that the 'deserving' should be guided to receive private charitable relief and that single women, like single men, had a duty to work. While the category of widowed mothers was less opprobrious, they were also required to work and out-relief was denied able-bodied mothers of only one dependent child: they were to work and rear their child. Where there were more children, the policy was to take one or more children into the workhouse school in preference to giving the widowed mother outdoor relief since the belief was that institutional care was superior to that provided by the mother.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century the gap between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' widened, the emphasis on 'respectability' caused Poor Law unions to make relief dependent on the character or conduct of a widow, sometimes graduating the scale according to their estimate of the recipients character. Widows receiving out-relief were subject to detailed checks on their circumstances by 'cross visitors' (paid officials) in particular to ensure that they were not secretly cohabiting with men who could be held responsible for their support. Relief could be denied those of 'immoral habits', 'habitual drunkards and bad characters'⁶⁴. Sometimes widows were refused relief if their deceased

⁶⁴ Thane [1978] quotes this Bradford rule as a general example:
"all widows with dependent children whose character will bear the strictest investigation (ie with respect to sobriety, morality and general behaviour) who are unable to go out to work in consequence of their whole time being required in properly attending to their children, who have no adult male lodgers, whose children do not sell or beg in the streets, who attend to their children's health and cleanliness and whose habits in every way are satisfactory to the guardians or their visiting inspectors, to be allowed 5s p.w. for the mother, 4s for the first child, 3s for the second child, 2s for each of the other children."

husband's funeral insurance had been 'lavishly or improvidently expended'. As the century progressed, the orthodoxy of 'respectability' imposed by the upper classes became what Spensky [1992:105] has described as 'the wealth of the labouring classes' and rigid distinctions between the deserving and undeserving became part of the schemata of the habitus which determined the symbolic capital of widows, deserted wives, divorced women and unmarried mothers.

In 1911 a Relief Regulation Order was published as a result of the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Law Report. Among its recommendations were repeats of earlier warnings about deserted wives and the danger of 'collusion' with their husbands. It allowed outdoor relief to be given to a widow provided she has had no illegitimate child since widowhood, but there was no clear guidance on the treatment of the widows and their families beyond warning guardians to take account of individual circumstances and recommend respectable mothers as suitable cases for charity. Among unmarried mothers the 'innocent' were to be distinguished from the 'depraved'.

It is often argued that the social policy introduced by the Liberal Government after 1906 (including free school meals, old age pensions, national health and employment legislation) rectified many of the shortcomings of the Poor Law by granting rights to state benefits to many of the 'respectable deserving poor' [Thane,1978:77], but these changes were in the context of the patriarchal household with male breadwinner and dependent wife and children. The 1911 National Insurance Act provided state assistance with emphasis on the individual male worker insuring himself and his family by means of contribution from his own wage. The Act failed to provide cover for married women or widows; "The deserted mother, the sick or unemployed wife still had no resort but the unpredictable attentions of the Poor Law" [Thane,1978:48]. The lack of provision for widows was not rectified until 1925.

The assumption of the conjugal domestic unit in which the woman as a mother was a supported dependent continued through the interwar years and appeared in the principles underlying the Beveridge Report from which current Social Security provision developed. Beveridge continued to maintain the orthodoxy of the sanctity of the dependent nuclear family, throughout he stressed the importance of the family as an

economic unit, with man and wife treated 'as a team'; in effect the one person of Common Law, as the dependent of a man entitled to economic support from him, both for herself and their children [Wilson,1977:150].

The 1948 National Assistance Act which implemented the Beveridge Report began with the historic 'The Poor Law shall cease to have effect', but the concerns of the Poor Law to control women's sexuality remained in the insistence that unsupported mothers should in the first place look for support from the father of their child. The punitive attitude toward their moral status had strong echoes of the nineteenth century attitudes toward the deserted wife and unmarried mother as 'fallen women', failed and degraded examples of womanhood, it also reflected the doctrine of fault in marriage breakdown. Whilst the National Insurance scheme provided a widows benefit based on their husbands' contributions which they were able to draw even if they returned to work, those women who had strayed outside the conjugal unit were dependent on the means-tested safety net of the non-contributory Supplementary Benefit.

The sexuality of the woman not living with a husband and reliant on the National Insurance Scheme was controlled by the Cohabitation Rule, which remains a crucial criteria of current Social Security legislation. The rule embodies the patriarchal family structure and the continuing interest of the State in marriage as the foundation of social stability, since the justification for the Cohabitation Rule is that to treat a single woman living with a man differently from a married woman, that is, as economically dependent on him, would discourage marriage [Wilson,1977:81].

In the post-war period social stability became increasingly linked with the *quality* of mothering and the importance of the 'maternal bond' [Bowlby,1969]. The interest of the State with marriage and controlling the sexuality of women became focussed on the emotional and nurturing quality of the mothering women provided, and the orthodoxy became that the child needed a stable and loving environment which the mother provided through her husband: the 'healthy' child developed in the patriarchal family sustained by the 'contented' housewife and mother. The focus on women outside marriage centred on their ability to provide the necessary quality of mothering which would ensure healthy, that is, non-delinquent, children.

Widows became important as *mothers*, not as *former wives*. This became particularly apparent in the State's treatment of the widow, where the long linkage of her status to the importance of marriage changed to a focus on her status as a mother. In 1988 the age of entitlement to a Widow's Pension, based on her husband contribution record, was increased from widowhood at age 40 years to age 45 years, and the rate of pension paid is calculated on a sliding scale of entitlement. A widowed *mother*, however, receives a standard allowance for herself, plus allowances for dependent children, at whatever age she is widowed. The position of a widow whose children cease to be dependent before she is aged 45 years is particularly difficult since she will receive no widows pension and will become dependent upon Income Support. Clearly after 1988 the State had no interest in maintaining the meaning of marriage as a relationship of responsibility between two adults and was only concerned with it as the environment for raising children. Marriage therefore had little symbolic value for the capital of the widow once she ceased to have responsibilities as a mother.

Implications for the Objective Class Habitus of the Widow

The model of the objective class of the widow is determined by the force lines which structure the position of relations in '*The Field*'. This chapter has traced a shift from the dominance of the institution of the Church to that of the State over the meaning of marriage. Contingent with that shift, the understanding of the foundation of social order has moved from a basis in the patrilineal transmission of property to the stability of the patriarchal family unit. The role of the woman has changed from a transmitter of property to a mother judged by the quality of her mothering.

The 1857 Divorce Act marked the accession of the State over the orthodoxy of marriage and the 1969 Act marked the final abandonment of the sanctity of marriage and with it the widow lost the symbolic capital attached to her marital status in relation to divorced women; she became just another category of single woman. However, the habitus is embodied history and embedded in the objective class habitus of the widow is a paradox which results from the introduction of the nineteenth century divorce legislation. While the doxa of the indissolubility of marriage was destroyed the approbation that attended a wife's adultery, particularly one who a husband disowned, served to increase the symbolic capital of the widow who was already invested with the symbolism of piety and chastity. This notion of deserving respectability was further reinforced by the assessment criteria of the Boards of Guardians in administering the New Poor Law and it remains

within the structuring of the current social security legislation with its distinction between non-means tested benefits available for widows and mean tested benefits for other categories of lone parents. However, the changes in the attitudes to sexual relations outside marriage, reflected in the abandonment of the concept of matrimonial fault means that the objective value of the widow's symbolic capital derived from her 'deserving and respectable' status, untainted by the stigma of divorce, is declining, although as a product of history it remains embodied in the habitus. As a mother a widow is subject to the same determinants as other women caring for children alone.

As I observed in the conclusion to the previous chapter the practical position of women who have been widowed is not just determined by their objective class capital, it intersects with economic capital and the regulating effects of the doxa of gender. Whereas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a widow could have enjoyed comparative freedom by the nineteenth century this freedom had disappeared, as she was constrained by the extreme polarities of gendered social space which confined the ideal of Woman to the private sphere of the home, which Hitchcock [1996] argues can be linked to changes in sexual practice. For widows the irony is that whilst as women they benefited from the changes in the construction of Woman and the practice of gender domination, which can be identified in the history of the Matrimonial Law, as widows it is the meaning of marriage which is the foundation of their objective class capital and it is in those very changes that the erosion of the capital of the widow can be traced.

CHAPTER X

MARRIAGE:

THE FIELD in the 1990s

Introduction

Chapters VIII and IX have presented an overview of the antecedents to the configuration of the objective relations of *The Field* in the 1990s; they have sketched the positions of agents and the institutions of the Church and the State, and their dominance over the orthodoxy of marriage. From this analysis the meaning of marriage has emerged as the cardinal determinant of the objective class capital of the widow, and the shift from the religious to the secular symbolism of marriage has resulted in a decline in the value of the widow's symbolic and social capital. However, it has also become clear that the orthodoxy of marriage can only be understood when it is articulated with that of gender and class (and in other contexts it would also be necessary to consider the difference of race, disability etc). Indeed gender is so implicated in the politics of *all* social relations that there is no way of analysing one without the other.

In understanding the habitus as the product of history it must be remembered that the objective class habitus of the widow not only embodies the history of *'The Field'*, it also embodies the temporal dimension between the objective position of wife and the objective position of widow. The genetic linking between the objective structures and the perceptive and evaluative schemata are sedimented within the habitus chronologically. Therefore the habitus of the wife is a constituent of the habitus of the widow. It is this aspect of the objective class habitus of the widow that I will address in the first part of this chapter by examining the orthodoxy regulating contemporary marriage. I will then briefly examine the demographic changes in *'The Field'* and I will conclude by outlining a model of the objective class habitus of the widow in the 1990s. Whilst the politics of the dominance of the State over the orthodoxy of marriage and its maintenance of social order through the stability of the patriarchal construction of the family continues to be central to the discussion, there will be a greater emphasis on the articulation of gender with marriage. This is in order to understand the contribution that the class capital of the objective category of 'wife' makes to the objective class habitus of the widow.

The Orthodoxy Regulating the Contemporary Marriage

In the contemporary '*Field*' the act of marriage is no longer an indissoluble sacramental union, a container for the concupiscent weakness of the flesh. This change is apparent in the Alternate Service Book's [1980]⁶⁶ revision of the Book of Common Prayer's [1662]⁶⁷ reasons for marriage. Whilst marriage was always for love and companionship, love was not understood in terms of sex which was associated with carnal lust and sin; the aim of sexual relations within marriage was not for pleasure but for procreation. In the Alternate Service Book, however, marriage is described in companionate terms with child bearing relegated from the top to the bottom of the list, there has therefore been a change in the meaning of 'love' in the marriage vows, sex is no longer a sin, it is now linked with love and pleasure .

This companionate doxa regulates both the practice of the *formation* of the contemporary marriage bond between a man and a woman and the *expectations* of the nature of the married relationship. It implies a belief in romantic love between two adults, equal in position, who set out to share all their domestic life together with the assumption that they are not only sexual partners and lovers, but companions, friends, and confidantes who will spend most if not all their leisure time together [Richards,1993]. Marriage is now seen as the vehicle for personal fulfilment for men as well as women, it is a primary provider of satisfaction and pleasure, and that fulfilment is private and home-centred. The media, particularly television, the epitome of home-centred activity, reinforces the feeling that 'togetherness' is the consummate life style. The doxa of companionate marriage is not a harmless 'neutral' and 'natural' institution, it creates a standard of private 'togetherness' which prioritises coupledom as the ideal form of social relations and presents other positions in the field as incomplete [Barrett and McIntosh, 1991:54]. Coupledom idealizes interpersonal relationships, presenting them as the only path

⁶⁶ ASB [1980] Marriage Service states that "Marriage is given, that husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy. It is given that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love, and, through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives. It is given, that they may have children and be blessed in caring for them and bringing them up in accordance with God's will, to his praise and glory."

⁶⁷ Book of Common Prayer [1662] states that Matrimony was ordained "First, It was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name. Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body. Thirdly, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity."

towards personal fulfilment. Storr [1989] argues that coupledness is a comparatively recent phenomenon

"[e]arlier generations would not have rated human relationships so highly; believing, perhaps, that the daily round, the common task, should furnish all we need to ask; or, alternatively, being too preoccupied with merely keeping alive and earning a living to devote much time to the subtleties of personal relations" [1989:1].

Gellner [1985] makes a similar point, arguing that the discourse of psycho-analysis, particularly object-relations theories ⁷⁰, have become so dominant, have become the orthodoxy, even doxic, that it now determines how everyone in Western culture understand their personal relationships. Our capacity to make intimate personal relationships has become the touchstone of our evaluation of our happiness and personal fulfilment:

"it is widely assumed that those who do not enjoy the satisfactions provided by such relationships are neurotic, immature, or in some other way abnormal" Storr [1989:6].

It is agreed by psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists that human beings are social creatures who require each others support and companionship, a need most coherently expressed by Bowlby ⁷¹. However, the modern idealization of love and the discourse of psychoanalysis, which leads us to believe that intimate interpersonal relations are the only path to personal fulfilment, has caused us to neglect the significance of less intimate social relations in the wider community.

Marriage has always had the potential to be a loving and emotionally supportive relationship but this was seen to develop *from* marriage rather than to be the criteria *for* marriage. In the past wealth and political influence or fertility and the ability to be a good housewife/provider were more likely to be openly acknowledged as the deciding factors in partner selection than romantic love and sexual compatibility. Today the doxa of the companionate marriage is embedded in the habitus resulting in the economic grounds for the individual selection of a marriage partner being unconsciously obfuscated behind a veil of emotional commitment.

The contemporary doxic belief in the companionate, personal nature of marriage also obscures marriage's function as a social legitimation of the asymmetric commitment between a man and a woman, entailing certain rights, responsibilities and duties and

⁷⁰ Object-relations theorists believe that from the beginning of life, human beings are seeking relationships, not merely instinctual satisfaction; this is a development of the Freudian theoretical scheme which emphasised psycho-sexual development.

⁷¹ However Storr [1989] argues that Bowlby [1980] was mistaken in his insistence on intimate attachments as *the* hub around which life revolves, arguing rather, that it is *a* hub.

creating a sphere of life which is considered private; a commitment which is asymmetric because it is regulated by the misrecognized symbolic violence of gender domination. The common law presumption of the wife as the property of the husband may have disappeared in the 1970's but it remains embodied deep in the pre-conscious disposition of the habitus of women and men as an effect of the regulating logic of gender domination and is objectified in social practice, for example, the custom of the woman adopting the man's surname on marriage. It is the doxic belief in the equal nature of companionate marriage which causes the symbolic violence of gender domination to be misrecognised, it clouds the manner in which authority in marriage is still vested in the male head of the household although now, more often exercised covertly, rather than in the overt display of the traditional patriarchal family structure.

Whilst the biblical authority for the patriarchal marriage structure arising from 'natural law' has diminished, the rationale for the authority of companionate marriage continues to be established in 'natural law' through a doxic belief in the 'naturalness' of the family, the private, conjugal, nuclear, self-supporting family which is implicitly heterosexual. This doxa constructs all other social arrangements, such as living alone, as 'unnatural', marginal. The orthodoxy is that family and marriage are synonymous, and the meaning of 'family' has now become a site of struggle in *'The Field'*. The heterodoxy is that marriage is one of a diversity of legitimate family forms⁷². The *profits* at stake in the struggle between the heterodox and the orthodox are, for example, the social recognition beyond the gay community of the 'marriage' between a homosexual couple which would invest their relationship with the social capital entitling them to the state pension and welfare benefits available to orthodox married couples.

The regulating logic of the doxic 'naturalness' of the family stems from its concern with basic biological events which are seen as the 'private' core of family activity - procreation, birth and raising of children, eating, sleeping, sexuality and the primary relationships portrayed by ties of kinship. In this conjugal family structure there is a division of labour in which men's responsibilities are imaged as the supporting 'breadwinner' whilst women's are home-maker, carer and motherhood. The authority for this gendered division of labour continues to be founded in the logic - the doxic practical sense - of gender and heterosexuality, it is the misrecognized symbolic violence of

⁷² Apart from the 'traditional' nuclear, conjugal family there are three other important patterns of family life: partnerships formed by unmarried couples who live together, families with one parent present, and households formed by parent and step-parent families [Gibson 1994].

gender domination. The *genetic linking* of the *double objectivity* of these structures of the family reinforces and hence legitimates the regulating doxic belief embedded in the individual habitus of men and women and the orthodoxy of cultural ideals and the social policy of state institutions; this legitimation then obscures and further reinforces the symbolic violence intrinsic within the construction of marriage. It must also be remembered that whilst the defining power of marriage is, and had always been, gender, the relationship between gender and marriage is dialectic, the defining of the boundaries of marriage continues to also be a defining of gender.

Companionate marriage also obscures the legal structure of marriage, formalised in the marriage vows. The change in the meaning of marriage is echoed in the contemporary emphasis of matrimonial law highlighting the underlying nature of the marriage contract as an economic and financial exchange rather than a contract based on sexual fidelity and moral obligations; the obligations that the courts enforce, are those concerned with finance and property. In principle family law understands marriage as a life-long relationship⁷³ even though it may be only a brief physical and emotional one. As Smart [1984] observes it is clear that the legal position of married women today is a vast improvement on that which I described in Chapters VII and IX, however although women may have a position of formal equality with men before the law their experience in practice is often very different since women continue to experience social disadvantage. Bernard [1982] observed that there are 'two marriages'⁷⁴, the "psychological costs of marriage seem to be considerably greater for wives than for husbands and the benefits considerably fewer". Bernard suggests that for a wife little has changed since the eighteenth century when Mrs Millamant in William Congreve's *The Way of the World* spoke of 'dwindling into a wife'; marriage changes female into neuter - "women at marriage move from the status of female to that of neuter being", it is only young unmarried girls who are expected to be entirely female, as soon as they are married they are expected to mute their sexuality somewhat, and when they are mothers this neutralization is carried even further [Bernard, 1982:42]. Wives conform more to husbands' expectations than husbands do to wives, and the differential in the experience

⁷³ Although the concept of 'clean break' divorce settlements have attempted to curtail the life-long commitment.

⁷⁴ This phenomenon was also noted by Phillips [1988:584-5] who observed the affect of 'two marriages' in research in Cleveland Ohio: divorcing wives complained of physical, mental or verbal cruelty, quarrels about money, drinking, neglect of home and family and absence of love, whilst divorcing husbands complained about parents-in-law and unsatisfactory sex. Pahl [1989] discusses the variation in financial arrangements in marriages which are indicative of the nature of the marriage and the relationship between men and women.

of marriage increases with the passage of time, resulting in wives having an increasingly negative and passive outlook [Bernard, 1982:28]; this difference is not a function of sex but of the misrecognised symbolic violence of gender domination.

It is the symbolic violence of gender domination that determines both the division of labour and the value placed on that labour. Waged work signifies full participation and membership in society whereas un-waged domestic responsibilities have a denigrated value. As I argued in Chapter IX motherhood has been used to regulate women, motherhood defined within the context of the heterosexual couple; but the symbolic violence of this control has been misrecognized as mothering has been glorified as a woman's chief vocation and central definition [Thorne,1982; Chodorow,1978; Allan, 1985; Oakley, 1974]. Included within the 'natural' role of mothering are the unpaid homemaking and caring tasks, 'naturalness' is the justification for their gendered allocation. Women therefore are allotted tasks which have low economic and symbolic capital value, which determines their inferior position in *'The Field'*; this inferior position then legitimises the doxa of gender domination.

Changing patterns of female employment⁷⁵ have helped to reduce the dominance of the demeaned housewife role, but women's employment is concentrated in the 'caring' sector which has low social capital value and all research shows that wives who are employed continue to bear the brunt of domestic responsibilities. Being employed solely at unpaid domestic work is a normal stage in the career of a wife, and although it is for a shorter time than in the past, the break from paid employment reduces a woman's career opportunities and income potential. A wife's employment and wages, although they may be critical in maintaining the standard of living of a family, are devalued and seen as secondary, the money allocated for 'extras' rather than basic household needs; a wife continues to be constructed as the homemaker dependent on a breadwinning husband, [Pahl,1989; Hunt, 1980]. The logic of gender domination also regulates the patterns of financial control/management within the marriage. Pahl found that when the household income is low with the effect that managing the finances "is a demanding chore rather than a source of pleasure" [Pahl,1989:120] then typically women *manage and control* finances; when the household income is higher the source of the income becomes more important, so that where the husband is sole wage earner he is more likely to retain

⁷⁵ In 1900 one tenth of married women worked outside the home, the 1990 General Household Survey indicates that seven out of ten wives aged below sixty are employed outside the home [Gibson,1994].

control while delegating *management* to the wife. The higher the proportion of income contributed by the wife the more likely that she will control the finances. Whilst the concept of 'equality in marriage' has led to an increase in shared management, it is the relative cumulative social, economic and symbolic capital of the husband and wife, which is always regulated by the logic of gender that determines who ultimately controls finances ⁷⁶ .

The allocation of domestic tasks is also determined by the gendered division of labour, there is a hierarchy of labour with tasks such as carpentry, car maintenance and electrical repairs stereotypically allotted to a man and consequently valued more highly; indeed this characterisation as a male task invests such activity with the mystique of a requirement of a 'higher' male skill level which disadvantages women who live alone. The centrality of denigrated domestic responsibilities in the construction of a wife's role has significant implications for a wife's social identity.

Domestic tasks are by definition private which means that the social interaction and leisure activities of those employed at housework is determined in a different way from those in waged work. The 'space', physical and temporal, that a person has for leisure is structured by gender and the dominant division of paid and domestic work [Deem,1982]. Studies have shown that compared to men women have less 'free' time to give to leisure and less money [Allan,1985:45; Pahl, 1989:146-7]. Women who are mothers of young children are the least likely to be employed and they are also likely to be less socially integrated. This is because the mothering tasks can curtail a woman's social opportunities and shape the social ties that are developed; this focus on the woman only as a mother can erode a woman's individuality and rob her of any sense of freedom .

The full time housewife is therefore doubly trapped in her home by her work and by restricted opportunity for leisure, she is dependent upon her husband for social involvement inside as well as outside the home and where leisure pursuits are shared the gendered division of labour often relegates women to domestic roles. In addition a wife often has to rely on a husband's patronage and protection: wives often lack money for social/leisure activities, husbands dominate access through control of the car and the assumption of female childcare, many women do not like to go out alone for reasons of

⁷⁶ "among couples who share management of their finances overall control is still related to such characteristics as employment status, qualifications, social class and income contribution" [Pahl,1989:121].

both physical security and the predominance of couple orientated activities. Employed wives are less dependent as work provides a wider social network but even then the compensation for the isolation of domestic work is only within the context of that employment and domestic responsibilities still restrict a wives social opportunities. Research indicates that for wives socio-economic class influences the extent of their social isolation ⁷⁸ whereas, whatever their class, husbands have a greater opportunity for social intergration.

From this short analysis of the objective structure of contemporary marriage regulated by the logic of gender, it is apparent that the objective position of the wife is determined by the low value of the economic, social and symbolic capital that she can mobilise. The asymmetric structure of marriage constructs a wife as the dependent property of a husband. This is reinforced by the gendered division of labour inside and outside the home and the denigrated symbolic value of the wife's labour contribution. In addition the exclusive and couple orientated focus of companionate marriage leads to the neglect of less intimate social relations and privileges a wife's social relations with her husband and with other couples, a social contact which is dependent on the patronage of her husband. Access to other social networks, outside of the marriage are mediated by the husband, particularly for wives who are mothers of young children. It is of consequence to our sense of self that we are acknowledged and recognized as important, therefore restricted interpersonal relations have a deliterious impact on a wife's self-image. These objective structures, which are the result of the articulation of the doxas of gender and marriage, condition the objective class habitus of the wife with dispositions of dependence and self doubt. This does not mean that the dispositions of every wife will be conditioned to the same level of dependence, but the objective class nature of the conditioning means that traces of the dispositions of dependence and self doubt will be embodied in the habitus of all wives and this disposition will be carried forward into widowhood.

⁷⁸ Allan's [1985] research shows that middle class wives have more friends than their working class equivalents, middle class wives develop non-kin relationships and extend them beyond there original context, for example; from work into the home; whereas working class wives keep relationships within narrow confines: the home is a private area reserved for family. The isolation of working class wives is therefore likely to be greater, since kin may be geographically dispersed.

Demographic Changes in 'The Field'

Family breakdown is not a new phenomenon but the causal circumstances have changed. It is now established that the accepted remedy for ending a marriage that does not meet the companionate expectations of either spouse is divorce. Stone [1990] points out that statistically marriage today has reverted to a pattern which existed in the nineteenth century, whereas then it was death, not divorce that ended marriage. "In the first year of this century, the Divorce court granted some 500 divorces; in 1990 the numbers had become some 153,000: the current total, when standardized against the marriage population, is a 140-fold increase on that of 1900" [Gibson,1994:126].

The 1991 Census recorded that widows represented approx 6% of the total population, this is a declining proportion of the population since in 1978 there were 115 widows compared with 26 divorced women per thousand women, by 1988 the number of widows decreased marginally but the number of divorced women had doubled. The majority of widows, 66%, are aged 70 years and over, this reflects the changed pattern of mortality since the nineteenth century.

"The married man in the age group thirty-five to forty-four had six times greater risk of death in 1900 than his counterpart in 1985"
Gibson [1994:127]

This means that the number of young widows in the population is declining. In 1901 six out of ten widows were under 65 years of age, in 1985 it was only two out of ten widows, and in the age group 35 to 54 years the number of new widows per one thousand married women dropped from 23 in 1978 to 17 in 1989. The proportionate size of the widowed population increases with age, with the majority of widows aged over 54 years, 0.5% are aged 34 years and under and 5.5% are aged between 35 and 54 years. By comparison the majority, 52.5%, of divorced women are aged between 35 and 54 years and 15.9% are aged 34 years and under, however the proportion of women in the 65 or more age group who have divorced and not remarried is likely to increase fivefold (2.5% to 13.3%) between 1985 and 2025. The evidence suggests that those women who divorce or are widowed at a young age have the greatest chance of establishing a second marriage whereas the probability of remarriage falls with age. The older divorced woman is likely to be at a financial disadvantage when compared with a widow of the same age since a wife aged 45 or more is especially vulnerable to the financial consequences of divorce. She is likely to have given up earnings and occupational pension potential by spending at least part of her career as a full-time housewife and on divorce she will have forfeited

the financial protection and safeguard that the widow enjoys from her husband's occupational pension and life insurance schemes⁷⁹ [Gibson, 1994; OPCS,1988].

Concurrent with the change in the relative numbers of widowed and divorced women is an increase in the number of families headed by a lone mother. During the twenty years from 1971 to 1991 the number rose from 7% to 18% of all families. However, the proportion headed by widows in that period decreased by half to 1% of all families. In the same period the number of families headed by a divorced mother rose from 2% to 5% of all families. There is little variation in the mean number of dependent children in families headed by widows and divorced mothers. However, there is a variation in age, the median age for divorced mothers being 36 whilst that of widowed mothers is 47, (a very high proportion -one half - of all never-married mothers are aged under 25 years). Housing tenure is related to age and socio-economic position as well as marital status, a high proportion of widowed mothers - one in three - own their homes outright compared to only 6% of divorced lone mothers; more than one in four are in the process of buying. Whilst lone parents are more likely to rent their accommodation from the local authority than the average household, lone parent local authority tenants are twice as likely to be never married than widowed [Haskey,1987; 1989] .

With the change in social attitudes associated with the introduction of the 'no-fault divorce', has come an acceptance of cohabitation as "an institutionalized part of premarriage selection patterns" [Gibson,1994:115]; one in seven children born in 1990 will have parents living in consensual unions and although past experience suggests they will eventually marry, pregnancy no longer propels the couple to matrimony and parents no longer coerce their children into a 'proper' wedding. It appears that we are following the pattern of Sweden where changing values have resulted in "unmarried cohabitation and marriage becoming almost indistinguishable..... by 1980 young couples were bearing more children outside marriage than within it though it appears the majority will eventually marry" [Gibson,1994:116] . It is, however, important to remember that although alternative family forms have become commonplace over the last twenty years four out of five children were living with their married parents in 1990 confirming that the most popular form of family parenting remains the wedded relationship although it is evident that non-conventional family patterns will be more prevalent in tomorrow's family [Gibson,1994].

⁷⁹ The equitable allocation of pension and life insurance benefits on divorce is currently subject to examination.

The demographic changes have implications for the objective class position of widows. The decline in the number of young women who are widows and the high presence of widowhood amongst women aged 70 years, with an increasing number aged 75 years and over [OPCS, 1988:12], means that widowhood is more and more perceived as an issue of old age. This is compounded by the increasing number of divorced women in the population relative to the number of widows, particularly aged 54 years and under, which means that younger widows as a residual category of marriage are also a diminishing group in the population. These factors combine to construct the objective condition of widowhood as a synonym for old age with its associated negative social and symbolic capital. Contingent with this is the 'institutionalization' of unmarried cohabitation, which reinforces the decline of the social and moral significance of marriage and the erosion of marriage as an element of the symbolic capital of the widow.

Although the statistics above suggest that the economic capital of widows as a group is higher than that of divorced women and mothers who have never-married, this is only relative to the younger section of the widowed population. In the contemporary '*Field*' the majority of widows are over 70 years of age, a social sector with a low income, therefore as an objective class widowhood has a low level of economic capital; this may change in the future when there is a higher proportion of financially disadvantaged divorced women amongst the elderly age group.

The Objective Class Habitus of the Widow in the Contemporary '*Field*'

In this final section I will draw together the discussion in the previous three chapters to outline a model of the objective class habitus of the widow in the 1990s.

The objective structure of marriage has been identified as the principle source of the widow's social and symbolic class capital in the past, however marriage is no longer an indissoluble sacramental union regulated by the religious orthodoxy, it is now a secular consensual contract regulated by the State. Whilst religious belief may be a powerful influence in the dispositions of individuals and the meaning of marriage continues to be the site of struggle, the change in the legitimating authority of the objective structure of marriage means that the symbolic capital of the widow has declined.

Marriage is now a legal financial contract between the two spouses and the State [Smart, 1984], misrecognized as a private companionate relationship. Companionancy is not a neutral institution since the private inclusive nature of the couple marginalises all those who are without partners, remarriage is proffered as the only escape from this inferior social position. The objective projection of 'singleness' as 'unnatural' imbues the position of widow with negative social capital. As a legal financial contract marriage contains no obligations beyond the contractual commitments, its ending is a private occurrence in which the State holds a 'watching brief' to ensure the structure of patriarchal dependency is maintained. Marriage as a contract has no objective capital significance beyond the value of a successful financial outcome whether through a divorce settlement or inheritance on death. Whilst the relative absence of acrimony in the process of inheritance may at first sight appear to enhance the widow's social capital in comparison to a divorced woman, it must be remembered that the salient historical point about the widow's 'comfortable estate' was her freedom to *control* her inherited wealth, now this distinction between widowhood and divorce has been removed and with it the social capital differential has lapsed. There is now only one area in which the widow is distinguished from the divorced woman or single mother: the State, in its fight to maintain the orthodoxy of marriage and stability of the family, still upholds the distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' in the Income Maintenance regulations. However as discussed in Chapter IX, that is only in the context of the widow as mother and in view of the withering of the stigma of divorce and the growing number of lone parents who are at present forced to rely on Income Support. The opprobrium of a means-tested benefit has faded through familiarity, and the widow is now neither better nor worse than any other woman raising children alone.

The asymmetric nature of the marriage regulated by the logic of gender domination accords the objective position of a wife a lower value social, symbolic and economic capital within *The Field*. Although on a personal basis a wife may enjoy the benefits of the capital her husband holds in other fields, the wife is dependent on the husband's patronage and the objective structure of marriage conditions the dispositions of the wife's habitus as dependent and self-doubting, which is carried forward into the objective class habitus of the widow. The gendered division of labour within the home and workplace and the privatised nature of the domestic sphere constrain the ability of a widow, or any other woman outside marriage, to support herself. Whereas in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries in the domestic based economy a widow had the skills and

opportunity to continue her deceased husband's trade, today a woman suddenly bereft of support has to fall back on the restrictions of the gender divided labour market with its inherent limited financial rewards. This reinforces the conditioning of the habitus laid down as a wife.

Improved morbidity increasingly leads widowhood to be associated only with old age. This is not to deny the tradition of the image of the widowed 'old crone' within folk mythology [Warner, 1994], but the objective experience of early death structured an acceptance, even expectation of young widowhood, within the habitus. Today the statistical expectation is of young divorce and old widowhood; the objective class capital of the widow therefore acquires the negative social and symbolic capital of old age.

Marriage is no longer a unique relationship. However hard the State and the Church may strive to maintain the orthodoxy and promote its importance as the foundation of social stability, the challenge of the heterodox variety of living arrangements appears to have removed marriage's doxic 'naturalness'. Marriage is now a relationship which we can choose to enter and discard at will as the frequency of divorce and remarriage demonstrates. This 'disposable' nature of marriage has totally eroded the symbolic significance of widowhood. As Bauman [1992] remarks, in the frequency of divorce and separation the departure of the putatively 'life-long' partner has been rehearsed so many times that there is now no difference between the rehearsal of divorce and the 'real' performance of mortality; indeed the 'loss' of the widow is seen as less 'damaging' than, and preferable to the 'loss' of divorce, since "marriage breakdown is preceded by a history in which individuals will have experienced rejection, animosity and personal hurt"[Clulow, 1991:176]. In this construction there is an implicit assumption that the widow has enjoyed the nurturing and loving environment of the idealised companionate marriage. However, there is little social capital for the widow from this assumed association with a 'good' and 'successful' marriage, since it is an entirely private arrangement which publicly cannot be distinguished from any other heterosexual partnership.

Death is a highly problematic association for the widow. Whilst historically her contact with death has raised mixed and conflicting emotions, the metaphysical nature of her grief was always a source of awe and respect, and of symbolic capital; today the significance of death has been reduced, we have become accustomed to choose to replace

the old with the new and improved whilst the old still retains its use and value, in other words before its 'natural' death. Disposability has become the nature of our society, it is a daily rehearsal of death which seems to inoculate against death, a daily confrontation which prompts indifference [Bauman 1992]. It is to the changing significance of death for the objective class habitus of the widow that I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

DEATH

An Examination of its Significance for the Objective Class Habitus of the Widow

Introduction

In this Chapter I will consider the final classificatory criteria of the objective class of the widow - death. Widows, with the exception of orphans, have a closer relationship to death than any other position in *The Field* because, although as *individuals* others may have close and intensely painful connections with death, widows, widowers and orphans are the only social statuses which are *defined by their relationship to death*.

Death, the awareness of our mortality, is inscribed in the objectivity of social structures and the subjectivity of mental structures. Death, the biological reality of our mortality, is always present in our awareness, even when not acknowledged. Its presence is embodied in our institutions and social practice, since the most salient features of everyday life are strategies with the ultimate intention of eluding death: in contemporary western society we have a constant concern with health and fitness which is present not just in the obvious context of medicine but in how we educate our children, how we travel and ultimately how we treat the environment of the planet. Death is as fundamental to the dispositions of the habitus as sexual difference; death is a doxa as cardinal to the meaning we give to life as birth.

The event of our mortality is objectified in the social practices of dying, grief, and bereavement which we experience as 'primordial', forgetting that they are preconstructed, the products of human accomplishment. Research [Stroebe, 1987] indicates that there is cultural variation in the emotional response we understand as 'grief'; while there is disagreement amongst emotion theorists about the extent of the somatic and cultural contributions to grief behaviour the concept of the habitus rises above this distinction and allows us to understand the self-reflexive nature of any 'emotional' behaviour. The practices of death, are social relations and, like the social relations of gender, although culturally and historically variable, always seem fixed and indisputable because of their reference to natural physical phenomena. As social relations the objective structures of death are political articulations since they represent the dominance of a particular meaning or discourse which is imposed, through the

mechanism of symbolic violence on the events of daily life. Meanings are not transparent and shared, they are constructed in difference and are variable, always in flux and open to contest and redefinition. The rhetoric of death appeals to the objective 'experience' of people, but that experience only exists through its conceptual organisation - what counts as experience is not established by collecting empirical data, whether sociological, medical, psychological or therapeutic, but by analyzing the terms of the definitions imposed by the current orthodoxy. As Scott remarks " The categories within which empirical data are placed, after all, are not objective entities but ways of perceiving or understanding, of assigning importance or significance to phenomena or events" [1988a:56]. Like Bourdieu, Scott is alerting us to the danger of the preconstructed. It is this 'pre-constructed' nature of concepts and their political function which is the heart of this thesis and will continue to be reflected in the underlying focus of this chapter which will explore the significance of death for the objective class habitus of the widow in the context of the variable meaning of death through difference, the inter-relationships between the social practices of death, grief and bereavement and the authority which legitimates the orthodoxy regulating these practices .

Durkheim [1968] argued that the expression of grief was guided by the practices of the particular society and was not a natural movement of private feelings. In twentieth century Western culture, however, it has been psychology which has dominated the study of grief and bereavement, although this is not to suggest that the cultural significance and variation in death and mourning practices has been ignored. There has been extensive anthropological research : Goody [1962], Radcliffe-Brown [1922], Wilson [1939] and Wilson [1957], and in Western culture Aries [1981] Gorer [1965] and Marris [1958 and 1974] have made important studies of grief. Recently sociologists have shown a renewed interest in death, for example Prior [1989] Walter [1991] and Clark [1993]. Whilst this work provides a rich source of material on the contemporary effects of death the predominant tendency has been to accept the meaning of death as 'given'. An exception to this trend is the writing of Bauman [1992] whose exploration of mortality and immortality starts from the hypothesis that culture turns death into a historical and culturally specific artifact, and Walter [1994] who has constructed three models of death and bereavement practices.. It is the analyses of Bauman and Walter that I have used as a spring-board for an examination of the significance of death for the objective class habitus of the widow. There are, however, critical limitations to both analyses which I will consider briefly first.

Bauman [1992] argues that death is the root of cultural creativity because culture gives life a meaning which seeks to overcome the limitations of biological reality; culture offers the possibility of transcending death through immortality; whilst mortality is given, we create immortality. Whilst concurring with Bauman's analysis I would argue that he fails to address the gendered dynamics of cultural creativity. As Bourdieu [1990c] has highlighted culture is a social relation of domination which symbolic violence causes us to misrecognize:

"the social mechanisms of domination which prevent us from conceiving culture, that is, the asceticism and sublimation in and through which humanity institutes itself, other than as a social relation of distinction asserted against a nature which is never anything other than the naturalized fate of dominated groups" quoted Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:174n128]

We cannot isolate biological reality from the immortality that is created by culture since the paradigm of immortality is biological regeneration - the genetic link between parent and offspring - and in patriarchal society it is the regeneration of the male seed which is privileged. It is significant that it is the *widow* who was tainted with the scent of death, *not the widower*, the symbolism appears in common expressions and names: the 'black widow' spider, the 'widow' bird, the 'grey widow-maker'. This symbolic construction of the image of the widow - the emphasis the woman - reappears throughout the history of mourning ritual [Taylor, 1983], it is an effect of the symbolic violence of gender domination. I would argue that the widow represents not only the death of the husband through the institution of marriage, but *the termination of that most potent symbol, the regeneration of the male 'seed', the most fundamental transcendence of mortality by biology.*

Both Bauman and Walter posit a model of epochal change⁸⁰; implicit but undeclared within such models are ideas of the integral unity of both the inner worlds of individual social agents and their external social worlds together with an assumption of epochal changes with a teleological purpose. Whilst both writers warn the reader that their models are 'abstract idealizations' there is a constant risk of reification since the boundary between any model and life is slippery⁸¹. We can only understand the

⁸⁰ Bauman [1992] uses pre-modern, modern and post-modern and Walter [1994] traditional, modern and neo-modern.

⁸¹ Bourdieu attempts to overcome this in his use of language, he does not 'step forward' to use the 'ordinary language' to give the impression of intimacy with his subject and the impression of a correspondence with reality, he 'steps back' to use language that ensures that the reader is at all times aware that she is not reading 'reality', but an account, a model which has been constructed. -This stepping back of epistemic reflexivity, is seen as Bourdieu's most significant contribution, but whether it can only be achieved by his particularly inaccessible style of writing is open to debate [Jenkins, 1992].

meaning we give to life today by reference to our interpretation of the meanings we believe it had in the past, and correspondingly our interpretation of the past can only be relative to contemporary meanings. It is on these shifting sands that an analysis of the meaning of death must stand. Rather than develop epochal models I am going to focus on the changing nature of the doxa with reference to Bauman's and Walter's models, I will use the term pre-modern to refer to that period before the Enlightenment movement in Western Europe.

The Elusiveness of the Meaning of our own Death

Bauman [1992] highlights how our consciousness, and consciousness of our consciousness is the most significant thing which defines us from animals, not only do we know, but we know we know and once we know we cannot unknow; we can suppress knowledge, we can temporally not remember, but we can never not know what we once knew, and the most fundamental thing that we know is that we are mortal, our eventual death is inevitable. Epicurus reasoned that we will not be here when our death has come, we will not experience it when it has come, we do not experience it now, before it comes, so why should we worry before its coming; and yet for most of us such cool logic fails to offer solace for the dread of death. Epicurus is right, however, it is impossible to imagine our *own* death, it cannot be perceived. Perception is an intentional activity which grasps an object beyond the self, even the notion of self-perception creates an object which the sensing subject perceives, an object in a shared world, but our own death cannot be such an object, it is a nothing, which is the end of perception, therefore beyond the perception of the self. What we know of death is through the death of others, for the death of another person is an event in a world of objects which can be perceived. We cannot know the void of our own death but we know that in the death of another, for example a beloved partner, we would face a void, a nothing, which however painful it may be, we could not escape. A void, which, while it would seem so total as to be beyond our comprehension, would in every detail of its nothingness be achingly and vividly within our comprehension. The meaning of death is created by the difference that we know that the death of a beloved person would bring to our daily reality. It is here that the widow's connection with death has been so powerful, so potent, she exudes 'the scent of mortal destiny' [Aries,1977]⁸²; but not as Aries implies as a reminder of our personal mortal destiny, no, the scent she exudes reminds us of the mortality of an other, the only death the subject can perceive. Her very status is a declaration of the void death

⁸² *L'Homme devant La Mort* cited by Bauman [1992:189].

leaves, it is not that the death of a husband is more painful than the death of say, a child, but the widow's status is a public declaration of the only way we experience death. This meaning of death is a personal meaning, created in the difference it makes to individual experience; but to examine the objective class habitus of the widow it is necessary to identify the doxa which regulates these social relations of death.

The Preordained Doxa of Death

In pre-modern Western society death was an ever present and close familiar of daily life, not an extraordinary event as it is in contemporary Britain; death could strike quickly and at any time, particular in the form of infectious disease, most notoriously 'the plague'. Philippe Aries distinguishes between the pre-modern and contemporary understanding of death, highlighting the difficulty of understanding the meaning of death in another society:

"The ancient attitude in which death is simultaneously close, familiar, and diminished, defused - is sharply opposed to our own in which death becomes a terror so powerful that we no more dare to pronounce its name. This is why, when we describe that familiarized death as tamed, we do not mean that it was savage before and later became domesticated. What we have in mind is, on the contrary, that death has become savage today while it was not wild before. The most ancient of deaths was a tame one."

Aries [1977] cited by Bauman [1992:95]

This daily familiarity with death was characterised in art and literature as the *danse macabre*, human existence shadowed by the skeleton, it was epitomised in representations of the vanity of earthly glory, the shallowness and brevity of human beauty. In the pre-modern world the familiar nature of death was not questioned, it was doxic, the world was a 'vale of tears', preordained by a monopolistic God. Even injustice was foreordained to maintain the balance of Creation by a Providence whose design eluded mortal beings. Death like life was according to God's will, and, as the final sacrament, was accompanied by ritual and prayer which carried the soul through purgatory to its eventual salvation with its Maker.

The world and the human soul were equally timeless and the timelessness of the religious message affirmed and embodied the timelessness of what already existed. Religion did not give meaning to life - life just *was* - it did not need meaning giving to it - giving meaning is a modern notion. Life was not therefore construed as a task, or a challenge, it was an changing flow, a stagnant and self-repetitive routine broken only by the

interruption of transient events such as war or plague which were a "temporary disturbance, a momentary departure from the place things have been, should be and will be again" [Bauman,1992:91].

The Deconstruction of Death

It was the Age of Reason which brought a challenge to the daily shadow of death. The Church's authority over the doxic acceptance of death, as the normal inescapable God-sent fate, was challenged by the heterodoxy of the philosophy of the Enlightenment with its vision of human history as progress to universal liberty through increasing 'scientific' knowledge. A philosophy which liberated individuals from an external determining fate so that they became responsible for their own lives, and the rewards and punishments they received were of their own making. These heterodox views became the orthodoxy and eventually the doxic logic which regulated the functioning of the State, supplanting the preordained doxa authorised by the Church. Death was no longer the entry into another phase of being, it was "reduced to an exit pure and simple, a moment of cessation, an end to all purpose and planning", death became "the thoroughly private ending of that thoroughly private affair called life" [ibid:130].

In an age that believed that human life guided by human reason, was capable of enlightening the ignorant and civilizing the wild, death persisted as a reproof and challenge to the potency of human reason. Bauman argues that in the modern world "Of all the adversities of earthly existence, death soon emerged as the most persistent and indifferent to human effort. It was indeed the *major scandal*" [Bauman, 1992:134]. The modern orthodoxy of the challenge to overcome death underpins the deconstruction of mortality by medical science; we no longer *die* we are *killed* by something which has to be explained. Death is still invincible and omnipotent, but it has been deconstructed into particular *causes* which can be avoided or resisted. We do not accept death for itself, we ask "what did she die of?". Even the very old do not die of mortality, we have to know that the heart failed or that an organ of the body was destroyed by cancer. Death is no longer the unavoidable fact of human life, the fact of nature; it has been deconstructed into *avoidable* causes which are amenable to human action:

"Death is primarily regarded as an illness and an aberration rather than something that is natural [and] the physician is supposed both to certify death and state its cause ... These certificates also illustrate the belief that although human beings die from many causes at once, it is always possible to isolate a single and precipitate cause of

death ... Death is conceptualized as an ailment that is amenable to intervention"
Prior [1989] cited Bauman [1992:139]

Death is no longer the inevitable and accepted companion which shadows us through life, death is now our adversary, our opponent with whom we are locked in continual battle, whether in fighting nicotine addiction, reducing obesity, or ensuring our children wear cycle helmets; resisting death has become the meaning of living. Death has been diminished to innumerable conquerable and avoidable causes, and the existential *angst* generated by mortality for which there is no cure has been reduced to a treatable *anxiety*. *Angst* paralyses with its awareness of the uncertainties and paradoxes inherent in the state of being human, anxiety promotes action to avoid risks and protect health. The emphasis on preventability and the concurrent disappearance of 'natural' mortality with its implicit unavoidable character means that each death, and life, becomes a private and individual responsibility "If my death is caused by something I have done, or by something I could prevent from happening [and thus by my inaction or neglect] survival is reconfirmed as my private matter and private responsibility" [Bauman,1992:142]. Death is treated as if it were "a communicable disease ... the consequence of personal neglect or untoward accident" [Fulton,1965:41 cited Bauman,1992:135]. Death is embedded in the habitus as a personal *failure* and a private *problem* which leaves the dying more alone with the ultimate fate of all life.

Death has been rendered a guilty secret and now it is "treated as inherently shameful and abhorrent, so that it can never be discussed or referred to openly, and experience of tends to be clandestine and accompanied by feelings of guilt and unworthiness" [Gorer 1965:171]. The modern shame of death has become sedimented in the dispositions of the habitus as an unwillingness to talk about death openly and an inability to discuss it meaningfully or behave naturally with those affected by death. Norbert Elias [1985:23] noted "a peculiar embarrassment felt by the living in the presence of dying people. They often do not know what to say. The range of words available for use in this situation is relatively narrow". We cannot speak to the dying and bereaved because we have no vocabulary that is suitable - because our language is a language of survival. The language of survival, the language of meaningful action offers nothing to the dying who can do nothing, who face no task requiring action. The language of survival is an *instrumental* language which serves and guides instrumental *action* - a language of means and ends, of actions that derive their meanings from ends they serve, and their reason from serving the ends well. Death cannot be expressed in such a language - it has

to be translated into the vocabulary of *potentially* terminal yet also potentially curable diseases. It represents the fundamental *norm* of human existence as an *abnormality*. " In the language of survival, practical concerns with specific dangers to life elbow out the metaphysical concern with death as the inescapable ending to existence " [Bauman 1992:130], so leaving the dying without a language which adequately expresses the phenomenon of death. The dying die not so much in *loneliness*, as *in silence* since there is nothing which can be communicated about it in the only language we share - the language of survival. Because we cannot communicate, because there is no action we can take, we are confronted by failure in a world which judges human quality by the effectiveness of action, therefore in the embarrassment at our impotence in the face of the dying, we keep silent, we keep away. There is a cessation of contact between the living and the dying, a 'social death' [Mulkay,1993; Glaser and Strauss,1965] which precedes 'biological death' [Walter,1994].

The change in the meaning of death has importance for the widow, whilst her connection with death has always raised mixed and conflicting emotions, the shift to a death which is a personal and private failure means that she is no longer associated with an event which is a preordained destiny, now she is linked to a death which is a personal responsibility. However, for the widow the shame of death is doubly insidious, she is identified with the shame of her husband's failure, but also she has a personal failure because she has not fulfilled the dispositions of nurturing and caring of her gendered habitus. This failure is reinforced by the isolation she experiences, it is not only the dying who die in silence because of the inadequacy of language, the bereaved grieve in silence. This orthodoxy of death regulates the objective social structures that constitute the construction of the widow which is embedded in the habitus of the social collective and when a wife is widowed her subjective experience confirms the association with the stigma of death.

The Deconstruction of Dying

Death and survival have therefore been reduced to 'problems' and solving problems is the task, the project, for which the 'rational' agents are equipped. Mortality has not been conquered but in the deconstruction of death the unwinnable challenge has been replaced with smaller winnable battles, triumphs over individual causes - the elimination of smallpox, the replacement of defective hearts and the saving of premature babies. Taking Bauman's analysis a stage further I would argue that the modern deconstruction of *the fact* of our mortality is accompanied by a deconstruction of *the act* of our mortality,

dying has been reduced to a process. This is clearly exemplified in Elizabeth Kubler-Ross influential work 'On Death and Dying' [1970] where dying is fragmented into a series of manageable stages: denial, anger, bargaining, and depression. Whilst the intention was to help those caring for the dying to be able to understand their needs, the paradox is that the reduction of death to a process provides a surrogate for the confronting the existential predicament of human life so that the meaning of death continues to be denied. Levine [1988] observing nurses in American hospitals commented that "For some the stages of dying have been a way of not touching the living truth of death but instead disguising it in ideas and models. For many, such concepts, rather than bringing them deeper into the experience of another, have allowed a certain quality of disconnectedness with the process by concretizing the flow. How many times at nursing stations have I heard, 'He's in denial', or 'He's in the anger stage', 'He's hitting depression now'" [Levine,1988:234-5].

The Heterodoxy

Whilst the doxa of the pre-modern era was that life was a preparation for future spiritual salvation, the orthodoxy of the modern era, that regulates the meaning of life, is the notion of a project aiming for a future goal of a better world. The meaning of the present is legitimated in terms of the contribution it makes to that future earthly achievement.

However, that orthodoxy is being challenged by an increasingly powerful heterodoxy :

"To assure the arrival of the future, the present had to refrain from pre-empting it, from draining the resources the future would need. The present could contribute to the future gratification only by delaying the current one - by forbearing its own measure of happiness and joy. Projects presented abstemiousness as self-fulfilment [however] in the society that emerged at the far end of the modern era it is the majestic yet distant immortal bliss that is being deconstructed into a sackful of bigger or smaller, but always within-reach, satisfactions" Bauman [1992:163,164]

For this growing heterodoxy it is the quality of the present moment that matters, not the sacrifice for some future; life has lost its meaning in terms of 'transcendent aims', now "no unsatisfying moment, however brief, may be justified in terms of the service it renders to some future accomplishment" [Bauman,1992:193]. The heterodox emphasises the 'here and now' and new concern is manifested in the importance of the 'quality of life' and arising from that is a growing stress 'on a good death as part of a worthwhile life'⁸³ evidenced in the growth of the hospice movement⁸⁴ and the emergence

⁸³ Dr John Collee review in Observer Life 11 June 1995 p.70 of 'A Good Death - A Guide for Parents and Carers Facing Terminal Illness at Home' by Dr Elizabeth Lee [1995] Rosendale Press.

⁸⁴ Although only a minority, approximately 7%, of all deaths occur in or have been cared for by Hospices, Hospice Information Fact Sheet Service 'Where People Die and Hospice Provision' Fact Sheet 7.

of professionals in palliative care. A 'quality' death is the culmination of a 'quality' life, for the fulfilment of the present moment, not as the qualification for some future salvation. "A good death is about being in control, knowing what to fight for and knowing when to let go. A good death is about knowing who you are and creating space to do things your own way. A bit like a good life, in fact," [Collee,1995]. Walter [1994] argues that for the good death control has moved from the medical discourse to the discourse of the self. I question whether the shift is that simple, I would argue that while the authority for determining 'what is best' may be the individual dying - the self, the *legitimator* of the authority of the self in the 'good death' is the professional in palliative care. This change in the definition of dying reflects struggles for dominance in the professional medical field.

The Practice of Bereavement

I now wish to turn to the meaning of death through the social practices of grief since the relationship between death and grief is dialectic, each is constituent of the other. As the meaning of death changed with the shift of dominance between the authorizing doxas of religion and science, so the social practices of grief and bereavement changed. Walter [1994] argues that in the pre-modern world where death was understood as the "will of God", grief was a condition of the soul or spirit which focussed on the future salvation of the deceased. It was structured by the mourning rituals regulated by the doxa authorised by the Church where the expression of grief and consolation is through prayer and in the support provided by the community of kith and kin. As we have seen with the rising dominance of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, the doxa of science became the regulating logic of the State and the authority of religion over death dwindled. As this happened the focus of death moved from the soul to the body⁸⁵ and death became the shameful secret, a private problem and failure, which could be expressed only within the privacy of the nuclear family. Publicly the contaminating contact with death was to be contained with silence and courage.

In the rationalisation of the modern era grief, like death, has been deconstructed, and like death it has changed from the pre-modern concern with the condition of the soul to modern concern with the condition of the body. Freud's 1917 essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' was a significant landmark as it distinguished between normal and

⁸⁵ The body, in the form of Christ's body, was central to the doxic belief in preordained death, but it was the dead body as the sign of the soul, rather than the living body which was important [Binski,1996].

pathological responses to death, thus invoking the concepts of 'normal' and 'abnormal' grief. Prior to Freud's essay, although it was believed that extreme grief could result in insanity it was never viewed as pathological. Klein [1940] reinforced the pathologisation of grief maintaining that the experience of grief is analogous to the manic-depressive state. The 'symptomatology' of grief was first established by Lindemann [1944] and its reduction to a somatically sited disease was forcefully argued in an influential article by Engel [1961] 'Is Grief a disease?', in which he likened grief to pathogenic bacteria. The early writing of Colin Murray Parkes, probably the most influential work amongst the general public in Great Britain, continued the characterization of grief as an illness - "That grief is a mental disorder there can be no doubt, since it is associated with all the discomfort and loss of function which characterizes such a disorder" [Parkes, 1965:1], although by the time he published his seminal work '*Bereavement*' [1975] he had modified his view slightly to - "On the whole, grief resembles a physical injury more closely than any other type of illness.....But occasionally.....abnormal forms arise, which may even be complicated by the onset of other types of illness" [Parkes, 1975:19]. The use of the language of illness has profound implications for the meaning of bereavement, the metaphors of disease become embedded in the habitus, both its conscious and unconscious practices, and objectified in the social practices of grief where it is treated as the *other* of the healthy, untainted population. Death and its associated grief has of course always been the other of life, but the effect of the deconstruction of grief is to distance it from its direct relationship with death, which has, as I have argued already, lost its existential significance, and to ground it in illness and the body. The widow is no longer normal, she has an illness called grief, her abnormality marginalises her, taints her, since illness is an encumbrance, an embarrassment to healthy, 'normal' people.

Not only has grief been changed from an existential to a material condition but, like death, it has been reduced from an overwhelming *angst* to a containable *anxiety*. Grief is no longer an overpowering singular experience but a series of surmountable tasks (similar to Kubler-Ross's stages of dying) leading to a recovery which paradoxically is both a 'new life' and a return to 'normal'. Parkes [1986] epitomises this paradigm, which is typical of the modern notion of life as a project, defining grief as 'a distinct psychological process' [1986:27] in which the passive subject of the bereaved proceeds through stages of numbness, pining, disorganisation and despair to 'recovery'; in the same mode Backer et al [1982] list three stages : yearning, anger and guilt, and

disorganization; Kavanaugh [1972] lists seven stages: shock, disorganisation, volatile emotions, loss, loneliness, relief and re-establishment; Worden [1991], in the context of mental health, lists a similar framework of psychological tasks which the bereaved need to accomplish to 'recover'. In all these models the regulating logic is the orthodoxy of life as a project, the importance of the deceased person is relegated and the professional/medical expert is defining the experience of bereavement and is helping provide a 'cure'. This construction of grief as an illness from which the widow will recover by going through a defined process is firmly embedded in our objective and subjective structures. In a recent edition of *The Archers* BBC Radio 4 [9 May 1996], Carolyne breaks down after the memorial service for her husband, Guy Pemberton, and is comforted by her friend Shula, herself a widow, who says that by weeping she is '*beginning the healing process*' .

The doxa regulating the social practice of grief has changed therefore from the pre-modern concern with the *extinction of life and the condition of the soul of the deceased* to the modern concern with the material body and the *loss it represents to the living* - the bereaved. It is not only the 'shame' of death that has led to the euphemism of death as a 'loss', it is because death now means a loss - *a loss which affects the functioning of the living* . The concern of the professional is to return the bereaved from the abnormal condition of grief with its implicit notions of illness, and risk of social instability, to normality that is an independently functioning social agent. This has changed the meaning of death from a unique and metaphysical event to a loss on a scale of a variety of material losses which affect social functioning. For example, Ward [1988] describes all losses we experience whether inanimate objects, the ending of relationships or changes in social situations such as unemployment as "little deaths".

Stroebe et al's [1993] '*Handbook of Bereavement*', which is a comprehensive international interdisciplinary collection of recent research on "bereavement's impact and effects and possibilities for social or policy intervention and treatment", is the embodiment of this orthodoxy of grief as an abnormal condition and a loss detrimental to social functioning. The modern meaning of death is apparent in the tone of the very first sentence of the editors introduction, where instead of talking about the impact of *death*, they write of "[t]he *loss* of a loved one" [my italics]. Bereavement is understood as a loss experience which "raises logistical and policy issues for the health and social services agencies of every community". This deconstruction of grief into the modern

logic of potential avoidable causes or resolvable problems is apparent in the listed objectives of the *Handbook* :

"to assess the state of understanding of the grief process, to detail its effects and outcomes, and to examine the efficacy of various types of intervention.....

.....with regard to health consequences, public health and epidemiological studies have identified illness and mortality consequences and predictors of differential outcome of bereavement. Clinicians and therapists have learned a great deal about the phenomenology of grief, predictors of abnormal grieving and poor outcome, and the effectiveness of intervention programmes. Physiological theory and research have concentrated on the identification of mechanisms by which loss may affect the immune system, lead to changes in the endocrine, autonomic nervous, and cardiovascular systems, and account for increased vulnerability to external agents.

As for social and economic consequences, such as social status changes, network alterations, or financial implications, psychological theories and research have considered issues of coping with loss, the potentially adaptive functions of grief for the social group, the parallels and differences between different types of loss (eg parent vs spouse, widowhood vs divorce), and the problematic processes of support and care giving. Sociologists have explored the impact of widowhood on access to social roles, construction of new identities, and a host of further issues." Stroebe et al [1993:4].

As is apparent from the above extract the issue is not the *meaning of death*, but the *impact of the loss* on the widow's functioning as a member of society; the widow [or any other bereaved person] becomes a problem to be contained and managed and returned to the 'reality' of those who have not experienced this phenomena and by implication are 'normal'. Grief has moved from the doxa of its traditional focus on the deceased to the orthodoxy of the modern focus on the bereaved. However, whilst being an objectification of the orthodoxy of the treatment of grief as an illness this volume has within it an intimation of the rising force of heterodox beliefs about bereavement and grief. In one chapter Silverman and Worden [1993] argue that there should be a departure from the language of 'sickness' in describing grief and it should be replaced with a model of grief as a normative life-cycle event. This is a move within the meaning of grief which mirrors the development of a 'good death as part of a worthwhile life'. (The inclusion of this competing discourse of grief within the *Handbook of Bereavement* demonstrates the process of change, it is an effect of the competition over the domination of the orthodoxy in the professional medical/psychological/therapeutic field. Stroebe et al effectively are modifying the orthodoxy to encapsulates the heterodox discourse).

This heterodox discourse of the 'good grief' focuses on the bereaved (concern for the deceased has long since past, the emphasis, as we have already seen, is on the bereaved's

loss not the deceased's *death*) and it is an active and shared experience which, like the 'good death' is concerned with control and choice, it promotes the values of self understanding and growth. Thomas Attig's [1991] article '*The Importance of conceiving of grief as an active process*' epitomises the good grief movement. He rejects the passive concepts of grief as an illness proceeding through the stages of recovery and resolution and proclaims grief as an active process "*rich in choice*" [my italics],

"the bereaved can experience their grieving as life enhancing in yielding (a) increased feelings of strength and security in their own person, (b) deepened self-understanding and self-esteem, (c) enhanced capacities to understand and respond sensitively to others, (d) improved critical perspective on personal relationships, and (e) enriched perspectives on reality and the human condition" [1991:392].

Ward [1988] has a similar approach seeing death as an 'opportunity for growth'. This is a discourse which positively proclaims the quality and importance of the here and now, but this should not be interpreted as a new freedom, a liberation from the orthodoxy of a slow and painful recovery from the abnormality of bereavement; active grieving has its own constraints, it is the responsibility of the individual, this is implicit in the word active, since no longer does grief happen to you, you must do it, although success is your personal reward, failure is your personal inadequacy by which you will be judged.

As well as being an active process a good grief is a *shared* experience. Whereas the modern orthodoxy only authorised the display of emotion in the privacy of the most intimate family, the heterodox discourse constructs grief as an emotion shared in the company of those who are able to 'facilitate the exploration of feelings'. Such exploration may be with an appropriately enlightened friend, but is more likely to be with a counsellor, usually female, or in the company of other bereaved people in a self-help group. This sharing further reinforces the individual responsibility since it is not about passively receiving words of consolation but actively declaring emotions and experience. Ironically the discourse of sharing which is intended to reduce the isolation of the bereaved is constructed in a manner which has the reverse effect; not everyone is *authorized* to share, only those who are professional facilitators of sharing or who personally identify with the experience of bereavement are defined as having the appropriate ability. This stress on counselling skills can lead family and friends to feel that they are unqualified to help with such a specialized task with the result that the bereaved are even more isolated, thrust back on the company of similarly bereaved or the limited availability of professional counsellors. The heterodoxy may deny the medicalization of grief, but it is still constructed as the other of life, the abnormal

requiring particular skills and knowledge. The evangelists of the 'good grief' who promote it as the resolution of the problem of the widow's isolation are ignoring a salient element: the discourse of the good grief, which is intended to resolve problems of isolation, may actually be creating new ones.

Sharing grief is not only a face-to-face activity, experience can also be shared by writing about it, the later part of the twentieth century has seen a burgeoning of published personal accounts of bereavement: for example Lewis [1961], Caine [1974], Lerner [1978], Collick [1986], Truman [1988] and Hilliard [1996]. Holloway [1990] has made an extensive survey of this literature and has concluded that the reasons for writing and sharing by publishing are "to put feelings down on paper and thereby release or objectify the pain of bereavement, and the desire to help others going through a similar 'uncharted' experience" [1990:18]. It is this sharing with others which is significant. It is reasonable to assume that some people have always kept private records of their feelings, but this discourse of sharing is a validation of your own and others' experience and suggests that death is no longer a shameful event; a private problem and failure but something that can be talked about publicly. However, there is a tension between this positive practice of grief (and death) in the heterodoxy of sharing and the authority of the orthodoxy which regulates the meaning of grief. The bereavement literature is defined as *pathography*, a term used by Walter [1994] and Hawkins [1990]. This is a description which maintains the orthodoxy of constructing grief as an abnormality or sickness, which means that while the heterodox discourse of sharing is public, it remains a sharing between those whose identity is reinforced as abnormal, marginal to normal society.

One of the central tenets of the heterodoxy of the good grief is the image of 'doing it my way', that there is no right or wrong way [Walter, 1994:82]. However, it is naive to believe that this is possible. Walter [1994] argues that "(i)n pathography, a culturally specific experience of grief or dying is presented not as cultural, but on the one hand as personal, and on the other hand [if the reader identifies] it is experienced as universal. Reading pathography both affirms the bereaved reader's experience, and - in implying the universality of that experience - misleads" [1994:127]. This is a danger that Walter sees specifically for the bereaved reader. However, its effect is not limited to the individual who is bereaved, it has a far wider significance. The bereavement literature of the discourse of sharing is an objectification of the subjective experience of the habitus which occurs not only on the written page but on the stage and screen⁸⁶ and it is an

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Personal accounts of bereavement are not limited to the page, C.S Lewis 'A Grief Observed' has

essential element of popular entertainment in self-help orientated radio talk shows and soul searching television programmes. While this confirms the individuals subjective experience by its institutionalization, in its institutionalization it also creates an objective structure which becomes part of the collective habitus and as such creates expectations of behaviour. This discourse of sharing therefore has a covert, misrecognized political significance and as Calhoun [1995] remarks such discourse

"often fail to institutionalize attention to their own publicness and to recognize their implicit politics. Many of these discourses are 'public' in the sense of being open to a variety of different participants, but not in the sense of thematically constituting themselves as *about* public matters. This has profound implications for the ways in which they can empower their participants and suggests an important politics about what discourses are either able or inclined to present themselves as being about matters of public significance" [1995:217].

The ironic paradox for those who are challenging the dominance of orthodox bereavement practices and promoting the principle of 'doing it my way' is that, the very act of sharing that the freedom of the good grief legitimates, objectifies the discourse as an orthodoxy with norms and expectations which both mould the social practice of bereavement and constructs those who do not conform to it as the marginalised 'other' - the very opposite of what they are seeking to achieve.

The implications of the deconstruction of grief and the heterodoxy of the 'Good Grief' for the objective class habitus of the widow

When death was preordained there was a respect inherent in the widow's status arising from her spiritual tie with her deceased husband. This was also apparent in the didactic literature discussed in Chapter VII. However when the familiarity with death was lost and death became a shameful failure, particularly in the twentieth century, the widow lost the revered metaphysical link and was associated with the stigma of death - her social and symbolic capital was reduced and the failure of death was assimilated into her habitus, reinforced by the social isolation of the lack of meaningful communication and the guilt inherent in the caring dispositions of her gender conditioned habitus.

The deconstruction of grief and bereavement reduces widowhood from a significant existential experience to inconvenient and distasteful, but resolvable, problems. The notion of stages of grief and the similes of illness are embodied in objective social practices and the internal schemata which are used by bereaved people to guide their

been adapted for stage and a film starring Anthony Hopkins with great popular success and recent film accounts of widowhood include 'Truly, Madly, Deeply' and 'Three Colours Blue'.

behaviour and to understand their experience; however whilst these frameworks provide a structure for articulating feelings they can also distance the bereaved from their feelings in the same manner which Levine observed in nursing staff. The notion of normal and abnormal grieving can also lead widows to assess their feelings and behaviour against a standard they understand to be normal and if there is some disparity this can cause considerable stress, particularly as abnormality is associated with mental disorders. The historical figure of the widow raised mixed and conflicting emotions which all contributed to her identity. The metaphysical nature of her grief was a source of respect and fear. The deconstruction of grief to bodily ailments contaminates her identity.

I have suggested that a heterodoxy is gaining strength which challenges the authority of the medicalisation of grief, it is seen as a freedom to grieve as you need but is underpinned by the discourse of the good grief - the shared grief. Walter [1994] argues that having 'feelings' has been 'normalised' which validates the experiences of the bereaved and makes them feel more secure. This overlooks the role the doxa has in moulding feelings, in changing the mental schemata of the habitus through which the individual experiences themselves intersubjectively. It also overlooks that if a widow does not experience feelings in the manner the literature validates them she will feel 'wrong' and isolated.

The assumptions of the understanding of bereavement are not only sedimented in the habitus of the individual widows but in the collective habitus of the society in which she lives. However, there is not a simple transition from one phase of doxic belief to another, the objective structures and practices which were regulated by beliefs long since discarded by the ruling orthodoxy, to varying degrees lie embedded in the general habitus of society. It is not that we move through one construction, discard it and move on to the next, each discourse is sedimented layer upon layer within the habitus, and the thickness and density of each strata will depend on other elements of our habitus, such as socio-economic class, religious belief, community culture and education. For example, the good grief, with its exploration of feelings, is a white middle class construction which may well be alien to a working class widow. But, although alien, the public nature of this discourse will mean that she, and the community in which she lives will be aware of it; she may not be empowered to use it, but inevitably it contributes to the schemata of her habitus. This merging and intermingling of the discourses of bereavement and death presents tensions and confusions both for the widow's individual understanding of her own experience and in the objective construction of the identity that others recognize. As

an individual social agent a widow may be intimately concerned with the reality of the *death* of her husband and have profound concerns about his future salvation. However, the social construction of grief is of *her loss*, therefore there may be a disjunction between the two which creates confusion and guilt for the bereaved woman and a misunderstanding of the reality of her experience by people in general.

Social Immortality

Finally in this chapter I wish to develop a concept of *Social Immortality* and consider its implications for analysing the objective class habitus of the widow. It will be recalled that I adopted, with reservations because of its lack of a critical gendered dimension, Bauman's hypothesis of culture as the social artifact we created to achieve immortality. I now want to consider a particular aspect of the construction of immortality and develop it in conjunction with the concept of social death, which Mulkay [1993] defines as "the cessation of the individual person as an active agent in other's lives" [1993:33]. In Mulkay's usage social death can precede biological death as in the case of a person who is in a 'vegetative state', or it can succeed biological death because social existence may continue long after the actual death; social death is also an interactional event which describes the social existence of the bereaved as well as the deceased. I am interested in developing the concept in relation to the deceased, specifically the period following biological death leading to social death which I am terming *Social Immortality*.

Social immortality is distinct from spiritual immortality, it is activity in the material world rather than some alternative state of metaphysical salvation, it describes the deceased individual's continued influence and existence as an agent in the on going social world of other people. It is a concept which has increasing analytic relevance when considering the modern and contemporary meaning of death and the shift from 'my death' to 'thy death' [Aries,1981]. These changes are reflected in the forms of memorial of death. Whilst pre-modern tombs reflected the gender specific earthly works of the individual, male being worldly or spiritual and female maternal, which were evidence of their potential for eventual celestial salvation, as concern for death changed to 'thy death', so memorials reflected the grief of the survivors remaining on the material earth, rather than the achievements of the deceased. Social immortality can also be distinguished from the more general immortality of fame, culturally created thorough history; perhaps the most obvious example is Jesus Christ who, while being an historical figure, can also

be perceived as having social immortality since he continues as an *active* agent in the lives of others. By comparison Julius Caesar, whilst having historical immortality in the dimension of everlasting fame, does not continue as an *active* agent in the ongoing social world, therefore he does not have social immortality.

Whilst social immortality may become doxic and result in global collective movements such as Christianity, its essential element is its effect on the individual habitus, therefore it is not limited to socially venerated historical figures, it is just as relevant within the family circle: a dead father, grandmother or aunt will be socially immortal while they continue to be an active influence in the lives of the next generation. Social death may of course have preceded biological death or coincided with it in which case there will be no period of social immortality. Social immortality can be embodied positively, for example in the motivation of a granddaughter to achieve something which would have given pleasure to her dead Grandmother, or it can be negative, for example the determination of a son not to replicate his father's authoritarian behaviour. The active power of social immortality is variable, whilst often it is most influential immediately succeeding the biological death, eventually fading like the sepia tones of old photographs, it can remain a force within a family for generations, becoming part of the 'family doxa'.

Social immortality is related to the social, symbolic and economic capital of the deceased⁸⁷, although it is not totally determined by it, as it is possible for the living to carry out practices to maintain and magnify the social immortality of a dead person. A deceased husband's social immortality is particularly important for the objective class habitus of the widow since the power and extent of his social immortality - the number of people in whose eyes he continues to exist as an active social agent - will have a bearing on the widow's own social and symbolic capital. In other words, if his social immortality is only active in the habitus of the widow, it will only influence her social relations towards other people, but if his social immortality is active with people other than the widow it will influence their behaviour towards her. In this way the widow's social and symbolic capital is enhanced by her position as *his* widow. The case of Stephanie Lawrence, the widow of Phillip Lawrence, the headmaster killed outside his school while trying to protect a pupil provides a recent example of the functioning of social

⁸⁷ The circumstances of the death will also have implications for the deceased's social and symbolic capital: for example differing values of capital will be attached to 'heroic' death compared with a suicide. Lopata [1996:90] makes a similar point observing that the role of the widow during the mourning process is difficult if her husband's death is connected with a stigma such as suicide or AIDS.

immortality; it demonstrates the manner in which a widow can enhance the social immortality of her dead husband and hence her own social capital.

Historically, funerals, mourning rituals and memorials had an important role in the maintenance of social immortality, although today these practices have waned. But the personal accounts of bereavement discussed earlier as well as appeals and campaigns have a similar function. The decline of mourning rituals has been remarked by a number of writers, most notably Gorer [1965] who argued that the absence of mourning etiquette has left the bereaved without a publicly recognised structure for grieving. I would however question that and argue that what Gorer and others have identified as an absence of structure was not an absence in the sense of the void that he suggested rather it was a change from the remembered Victorian orthodoxy. However the atrophy of public mourning does have implications for the objective class capital of the widow that have not been recognised. Elaborate funerals and mourning rituals indicated the wealth and status of the bereaved family [Taylor, 1983], and in the context of the bereaved widow would have indicated the economic and social capital of her deceased husband and the influence of his social immortality. Mourning ritual has always fallen more heavily on women especially when a husband died, this was particularly marked in the nineteenth century when the elaborate etiquette of mourning reached its apogee. Given the high mortality rates at that time it meant that

"the great majority of middle class women would have spent many years, in total, enclosed within the ritual of death sequences through which expression was given to the collective bereavement of their families. Among poorer people, for obvious economic reasons, this extended ritual confinement and symbolic adornment of women was impossible..... Nevertheless, the middle-class pattern of activity in relation to death percolated to the lower classes and furnished a model of proper conduct to which many less wealthy people aspired". Mulkay [1993:39]

As well as the lengthy and elaborate mourning sequences and the wearing of mourning dress of an exaggerated severity, one of the primary tasks of the Victorian widow was to keep alive the memory of her dead husband by means of regular prayers, by continuing to celebrate his birthdays, by visiting his grave, [Mulkay, 1993] and by turning his most intimate possessions, such as a lock of hair, into a shrine of remembrance. Whilst these highly ritualised practices did seriously restrict the scope of a widow's social activities for an extended period they did have a beneficial effect. By assiduously attending to her mourning duties the widow enhanced the social immortality of her deceased spouse and in so doing maintained her own social capital, firstly by her association with the memory of her husband and secondly by demonstrating her personal piety and devotion in accordance with the social expectations of the period. The social capital which could be

gained from this was such that some widows, particularly middle class women, following the example of Queen Victoria, chose to remain within the restrictions of mourning for life [Davidoff, 1973] .

Bauman considering immortality in the sense of a wider cultural artifact, argues that at the end of the twentieth century immortality like death, has been deconstructed, it has become transient, lost its immortality and become mortal. Implicit within the notion of immortality is the idea of living in perpetuity but now "permanence is nothing but the sequence of evanescences, time is nothing but a succession of episodes without consequence" [1992:190-91]. Consequence has been lost since *disappearing* has replaced *dying*, unlike death disappearance is not final, nor forever, there is no certainty of its permanence. Things disappear from view but the disappearance is not irretrievable, it is an event in a cycle which may return many times, even the finality of death has been turned into a suspension by *cryonics*. In its deconstruction immortality has lost its significance and its meaning. This degradation of immortality therefore reduces the importance of the influence of a dead husband's social immortality on the objective class habitus of the widow. With the disappearance of public mourning practices it has become much more difficult for a widow to maintain the public dimension of her husband's social immortality, and other practices have less consequence than formerly. The objective class capital of the widow has therefore declined in two ways: the association with her husband's capital, as her husband's widow, is less available to her and as there is no longer a social expectation to maintain her husband's memory, that source of personal social capital has also disappeared.

CHAPTER XII

THE SOCIAL PRACTICE OF WIDOWHOOD

"Basically widowhood has to be faced, you cannot say 'I don't like it, I want to do something else' therefore you have to carry on with life making the best of life as it is, however difficult that may be" from a letter written by a woman widowed eight years before at the age of 47 after 20 years of marriage.

Introduction

In Chapter VII I formulated the aim of this research as *'the analysis of the objective class habitus of the set of objective social relations called widowhood and the construction of the field, that is the specific frame of power, in which widowhood is maintained'*. In this way I aimed to move beyond the 'lived experience' of the individual widow to identify the practice unifying and practice generating principles of widowhood as a class. In the preceding chapters I have explored the objective social relations of widowhood and outlined significant force lines in *The Field*. In this chapter I will endeavour to place some flesh on the bones of the model by returning to the practice of individual widows and drawing on the experiences of the widows I interviewed and who wrote to me: how widows *'carry on with life'*. In using this data to illustrate the model of the objective social relations called widowhood I am not suggesting that these accounts are typical of the lives of all widows, rather I am using the data as 'instances of the possible'. First, however, in order to clarify the relationship between the objective structures of the model and the accounts of these widows I wish to remind the reader of the mechanism of the habitus and the relationship between the class habitus and the individual habitus.

Bourdieu argues that history has two realizations, in bodies and in things, this is the relation between the habitus:

"the durable and transposable systems of schemata of perception, appreciation, and action that result from the institution of the social in the body",

and fields:

"systems of objective relations which are the product of the institution of the social in things or in mechanisms that have the quasi reality of physical objects" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:126]

and the social practices and representations arising from those relations.

The individual habitus is the class habitus in so far as it reflects the class, but it is also a product of the unique history of the individual :

"the singular *habitus* of members of the same class are united in a relationship of homology, that is, of diversity within homogeneity reflecting the diversity within homogeneity characteristic of their social conditions of production. Each individual system of dispositions is a structural variant of the others, expressing the singularity of its position within the class and its trajectory
The principle of the differences between individual *habitus* lies in the singularity of their social trajectories, to which there correspond series of chronologically ordered determinations that are mutually irreducible to one another. The *habitus* which, at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences, which are modified by the new experiences within the limits defined by their power of selection, brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class"
Bourdieu [1990b:60].

The widows' accounts, their subjective reality, are therefore united in a relationship of homogeneity as member of the objective class of widow and their habitus will have a commonality of dispositions reflecting the objective structures of widowhood discussed earlier, but their accounts also reflect the diversity of their social conditions of production and individual genetic makeup : the length and nature of their marriage, their economic circumstances, personality, health, religious beliefs, the nature of their husbands' deaths, family support etc. In the remainder of this chapter I will draw on the widows' accounts to explore the common themes which reflect the objective structures and orthodoxies which unite the practice of the objective class habitus of the widow.

The Importance of the Status of Marriage

Earlier I identified marriage as the pivotal structure in defining both social positions within *The Field* and its boundaries, it is therefore not surprising to find that inspite of the objective decline in the symbolic capital of marriage, for a widow, her married status is cardinal to her sense of herself, her self concept: for example one widow said "I feel slightly more confident and pleased that somebody loved me enough to marry me". Implicit within this comment is the doxic understanding of marriage as a rite of passage which is a public confirmation of the status of Woman, a belief also reflected in the following extract

"I don't want people to think I'm a spinster, [laughter] its terrible isn't it. I think its absolutely dreadful to think that. spinster is a bad word, immediately you see this thin person with a little bun at the back, I do anyway [laughter]

Whilst the fact of their marriage was important to these women they did not necessarily wish to call themselves 'widow'; one woman wrote "I hate being called a widow, I still feel that I am my husband's wife". And some women preferred to view themselves as a 'woman alone' rather than as a 'widow' which they felt had implications of old age. In spite of this, however, without exception, all the widows I interviewed felt strongly that they did not want to be confused with a divorced woman and they all asserted that they would always make that distinction clear because it reflected on the quality of their marriage⁸⁸. The comments of this widow sums up their feelings and the implicit lingering stigma of divorce "I would feel that people had to know my correct status it's like somebody forgetting your name, no I'm a widow I'm not divorced. I think possibly there's a bit of a smug feeling attached to being a widow it happened to me, I didn't contribute to the finishing of my marriage". The comments of the youngest widow I interviewed also reflected the stigma associated with divorce "having been single and divorced and married and widowed, every status there is, I know that being widowed carries a greater respect than being divorced; as a divorcee I was a danger, a threat to other women, specially if they were married".

Remarriage

The widows' belief in the importance of their marriage as a status did not necessarily mean that they were anxious to remarry, whilst none of the women totally excluded the possibility of remarriage and a minority of those who wrote or were interviewed declared a desire to remarry, many expressed reservations. Some were grateful for a happy marriage and felt they couldn't repeat it, for example, one woman who had a proposal from a widower said "Life is complicated enough without adding to the complications, another family. I had a very happy marriage, been very fortunate, twenty years, not many people have that, do they? I didn't think I could commit myself to that, it wouldn't be the same"

Others couldn't face the possibility of a repeat of illness and death; "sometimes I've thought it would be nice to have another partner and then I thought could you really face up to getting fond of somebody and then something like that happening again?"

Several who had developed confidence and independence and had come to value the freedom of living alone were unsure about giving that up; "I don't think I could adapt to anybody now. I've got so used to doing everything my own way and pleasing myself that I don't think I could". It must also be remembered that the conditions of eligibility for

⁸⁸ This reaction also occurred spontaneously in some of the letters I received.

the receipt of widows' pensions [state and occupational] is a financial inhibition to some widows remarrying; one widow who wrote was particularly resentful of this restriction.

A noteworthy theme in both the interviews and letters, reflected the tension between the difficulties that the lack of a male support presents practically, socially and emotionally, and the price that a woman has to pay within marriage structured by relations of gender domination; this tension emerged in the notion of a widow's close relationship with a male companion whilst still living independently. Some of the widows who wrote to me had formed such a relationship, while others felt that this would be the perfect solution to their situation as widows, since they missed the sense of being 'looked after', someone to buy the parking ticket, to take them out to dinner. For example, one widow said when asked about remarriage "I really don't know, I have thought about it, I think I would more like friends as opposed to a relationship, just occasionally I feel I would like to be taken out to dinner and not have to pay the bill, you know that sort of type". Another woman, in answering the question "would you like to remarry?" described this 'ideal situation' in some detail: "Certain aspects would be nice, I think the ideal situation would be someone a little distance away so you weren't actually married to them, who would share your interests but would also have some of their own so you are not in each others pockets, who doesn't think of you as someone who is going to cook and darn their socks but who would be there to say 'Do you want that wood sawn up? Okay, now you can make me a pie'. And then to share outings and things, but whether to jump into bed with people, I'm not so sure about that, and people cluttering up your bathroom, the intimacies of sharing a home, I don't know about that. You've been your own boss for a while, if you want to do something you don't have to ask. There are pleasures in living on your own, some compensations. I wouldn't rule it [marriage] out entirely, you might just meet someone and you forget all the little nitpicking things and think how marvellous some one to share your life with, perhaps just at the time when you can travel a little bit, I haven't ruled it out but I haven't gone looking for anybody".

Living Alone and the Sexual Division of Labour

The extract above highlights the reality of widowhood, the practical and social implications of the absence of a man which arise from the misrecognized symbolic violence of gender domination in the asymmetric structure of marriage that creates a disposition of dependency; this is embedded in the mental schemata governing a widow's practice and mental representations of herself and her abilities leaving, her ill equipped

for life alone. Whilst the widow above missed her husband's skill in cutting logs, other wives missed a husband's control of the financial affairs of the household - "Jack⁸⁹ did all that, he even paid the gas and electricity bills, I was very much looked after" - or his knowledge about the car, or his driving the car and making travel arrangements; they missed his guidance over major household expenditure buying washing machines or carpets. One woman, widowed seven years said "decisions, particularly ones involving money, to do that on my own was very difficult, I still don't like doing that". The doxa of gender domination and the sexual division of labour means that the practical problems of daily living can be more difficult for a woman than a man. One widow describing the problems of employing workmen for tasks previously done by her husband said "its quite a hassle wondering who I should get to do things for me. I have the car serviced, there again I find that a hassle because I think they take advantage of a woman".

Depending on their particular circumstances and personalities widows had a variety of ways of adjusting to this absence, this lack of 'male guidance and knowledge'. Some sought help from family, friends and neighbours, others found work provided a replacement source of 'male knowledge', "if I'm unsure of something around the house I ask some of the men in the office. I don't ask them to do it, they don't offer to do it. How do I go about doing this, for instance the washing machine I got the man from the company to come around and sort it and he explained to me what was wrong with it. I got him to write it down and draw a diagram and I took it to this chap in the office and I said this is what he said is wrong with it, is he telling me the truth?" However, whatever level of support a widow might have, it was unlikely to be a replacement for her dead husband, when asked what she found the most difficult things to cope with. One widow said, "I think whenever there is any kind of a problem or crisis, yes you have your family, I'm not saying that, but its not the same, when he came home I could say so-and-so and so-and-so happened, leave it to him and that was it".

Some women saw their changed circumstances as a challenge and faced it with a determination not to seek any outside assistance, having a fear or repulsion of appearing 'a poor little widow'. One widow was particularly adamant about not seeking help saying "I wouldn't ask, oh no way, I'd rather go on my knees and scrape along the ground." Many of the widows in struggling with those areas of life that they had been excluded from by the gendered structure of marriage found they could cope and as a

⁸⁹ All name have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the widows who contributed to this research.

result their confidence in their own abilities blossomed : "I feel I'm quite capable, I feel I'm able to do most things, I don't think I was before I never had anything to do with the financial side of my life, he would give me a set figure a month for the housekeeping and that was it, I knew the bills came in but I never knew what bills or how they were paid..... I have learnt to do an awful lot of things for myself that I didn't think I was capable of such as with the car, the garden, the house. I won't say I'm a perfect do-it-yourself person but I'll have a damn good try before I'll let anybody else in the place". This discovery of capabilities they didn't know they had was reflected by most of the women, they may not have relished their independence but they were proud of their achievements. I asked the widows I interviewed how widowhood had changed them, leaving the women to interpret change in whatever way they wished, it was marked that many of them felt that their confidence had increased, not just as part of the adjustment to the death of their husband's but in reference to their confidence as a former wife, this was often described as becoming " more self sufficient" or "I stand up for myself more now than I used to".

Coupledness and the Social Life of the Widow

Husbands, as was apparent in the widow's description of the 'ideal situation' above, are not only providers of practical support, they are also social companions, indeed, because of the orthodoxy of coupledness they are often the entree to a social sphere. Coupledness, the idealization of intimate inter-personal relationships which has become the touchstone of our evaluation of happiness and fulfilment is inscribed within the dispositions of the habitus, it presents itself as a 'natural', that is doxic, life condition and implicit within it is the fundamental opposition of couple/single, aligned with perceptions of positive and negative; this opposition structures practice and the perception of practice. Articulated with the doxa of coupledness is that of gender domination, which privileges the heterosexual couple over all others. These regulating logics of *The Field* define the negative symbolic and social capital of the objective class of widowhood, they therefore determine the attitude of others, particularly couples, towards her and the perception the widow has of herself and her single state.

It was the experience of every widow in the group researched that widowhood changed the character of her social interaction, where previously she and her husband had friends who were couples, these relationships would either end completely or the character of the relationship would change. One widow wrote : "When my husband died I

foolishly assumed I would retain my old friends, not so ! After the nine day wonder I might just as well be living on the moon". Another widow who experienced the total cessation of a previously full social life said: "we used to go out with people as couples we would go out to dinner, go out to the pub, meet up for the day it was as although a knife had been put through a slice of cake, it just went like that". For this woman the rupture was so marked that by the second Christmas of her widowhood she found she was only receiving half the previous number of Christmas cards. The widow of a headmaster, herself a supply teacher said : "you certainly don't get invited to the same kinds of gatherings [gave example of drinks parties] which you would if its a couple".

Another woman found that the social life she and her husband had enjoyed with a couple, close friends since her husband had been an apprentice just 'fizzled out' :

"In the beginning, this particular couple that we used to go out to all the birthdays and everything, came down here to see me after he had died, they said we'll carry on doing that, we'll still go out like we did, but we never did. I don't know why, I think I've been out with them twice over the years, it just all fizzled out like. I still see them and their son is [my son's] best friend really. We're all in touch but we don't have those evenings out. I thought in the beginning, well that'll be nice, we'll still be able to do that, but we didn't".

Several of the widows found, that where couples did maintain the social contact the nature of it changed, it was limited to a domestic setting rather than a public one, and then the invitations were for informal, family occasions. One widow, who was childless, remarked "You would be invited as a couple to meet up with the other couple, they won't invite a widow on her own. Instead of being invited out for dinner you are perhaps invited out for tea with the children, that sort of thing". Another widow found she was only included in women only gatherings : "My husband and I had a good circle of friends with plenty of social meetings and meals at each others homes. I have not been asked to a dinner party or drinks dos in the past four years. I have been invited to ladies hen nights, suppers when hubby is away and the wife is bored".

This exclusion of the widow from social activities in which she was previously included should not be seen as a conscious premeditated act by the couple , rather it can be understood as an unconscious self protective strategy of the habitus

"[t]hrough the systematic 'choices' it makes among places, events, and people that might be frequented, the *habitus* tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products" Bourdieu [1990b:61].

It is the unconscious and *fuzzy* logic of practice that causes couples to only seek social interaction with other couples since this reinforces the perceptions of objective social reality as 'natural' in the mind, and it protects the habitus from confrontation with the crisis (of mortality) which the widow represents.

It must also be remembered that capital is efficacious in a given field

"both as a weapon and as a stake in the struggle [capital is] that which allows its possessors to wield a power, an influence, and thus to *exist*, in the field under consideration, instead of being considered a negligible quantity", Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:98].

The socialising of married life can be seen as a sub-field of '*The Field*', and the reduced social capital of widowhood can place a widow in a 'negligible' position. The extent to which a widow will maintain her position in the 'socialising sub-field' will depend on the extent of other species of capital she may hold, including that which she has 'inherited' from her husband by the public recognition of his social immortality, and her *strategic orientation toward the game*, that is her social trajectory and the dispositions which are the product of her relation to a particular distribution of objective life chances.. This research was not designed to measure the social capital of individual widows and to compare it with their previous position in their married social network, but it was noticeable that those widows who had initiated social contact with their married social network were less isolated from couples than those who, for reasons of inclination or opportunity, had not done so. The following comments illustrate the diametric positions: a woman widowed twelve years previously said she "did try very hard to keep in touch" with the result that "I've got, very, very good friends from our past life together about four or five couples who come and stay here and I go and stay there, with whom I feel totally at ease, unthreatened, comfortable, happy", whereas another widow whose contact with former couple friends had ceased entirely said "they [former friends] weren't interested and I thought I'm not going to hassle myself about it. I have often thought about it, but I thought why put yourself through it by going and asking them what happened." . The relevance of the social capital 'inherited' through the *social immortality* of the deceased man can be seen from the comments of the widow of a farmer who described how some couples, both husband and wife, had been very supportive practically and socially since the death of her husband and said " I'm sure they have done

it because of [my husband] not because of me, they [the husbands] were his old bachelor friends". The power of the activity of the deceased husband's social immortality on the widow can also provide the motivation to maintain contacts, for example, the widow referred to above who had made a conscious effort to retain friends of the marriage said, "another thing that I found was quite important actually was keeping up with friends who I might just have let go myself, but I felt it was important to keep in touch with the people he had actually worked with, some of the people he had liked, perhaps some of his colleagues"

Just as widows find ways of adapting to the loss of practical male support, so they adapt to the changes in their social life resulting from their single situation. A minority admitted actively seek a replacement male companion through 'lonely hearts' columns and singles clubs but to most widows this was anathema; they compensated for the lack of a male companion by engaging in a different range of social activities and building a new social network around single women, often other widows. These widows would either be women who had been within their existing social network and the shared experience of widowhood brought them together, or they were widows they discovered through clubs and organisations. Support groups for widows and widowers, such as Breakaway, were important for some of the women I interviewed but organisations such as the Women's Institute and the Ramblers Association were also pivotal for establishing new social networks.

The Ramblers⁹⁰, with their programme of Sunday walks played a particularly significant role for two of the widows I interviewed, since Sundays are a day when widows are often particularly aware of their partnerless condition " I find Sunday is the worst day, I must admit I used to spend Sunday after Sunday in tears because I didn't know what to do with myself, then I thought you've got to do something on a Sunday so I've taken up walking. I go out walking with a group of friends [Ramblers], well they are friends now and we go out walking most Sundays, and the Sundays that I don't go walking I can actually cope now, because I know that it's only one Sunday that I might not be walking".

⁹⁰ Although I have no statistical knowledge of the breakdown of the membership of the Ramblers Association it is noteworthy that their magazine regularly carries advertisements from Introduction Agencies, suggesting that it has a high percentage of single members.

Anniversaries, Family Celebrations and Holidays

If Sunday is a black hole in the widow's week, then for many Christmas is an abyss. These comments are typical responses to questions about Christmas : "Christmas is awful"; ,, "[I cope] very badly with every Christmas, very badly". One widow described the previous Christmas she had spent alone: "I was just in here and I just pretended it wasn't Christmas day, I'm quite good at pretending. What I find difficult is other people because they don't want to think of you on your own on Christmas day they are all going on about doing this, doing that and I want to say why don't you shut up about Christmas, I just say I wish Christmas was over, I'm fed up with the whole thing. I'd like to be in a family at Christmas but it's just not possible so I just keep a low profile". However, even widows who spend Christmas with their families can find it an experience which heightens the absence of a partner: "Christmas brings it all back again, before we were always the centre, but now I'm always on the outside, not quite pass the parcel, oh well we've got to have mother, but that sort of thing".

Whilst the difficulty of coping with Christmas was a common theme, other anniversaries such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and the anniversary of their husband's death produced a variety of responses. While some widows always marked such days with a private ritual, such as walk where they had distributed their husband's ashes, others said such days often passed, almost without their noticing them. However, occasions which are frequently marked by family ritual are more problematic, for example one widow marked her Silver Wedding anniversary by having an 'open house' for friends, and events like graduations, weddings and baptisms can be poignant occasions when the pain of a husband's death is reawakened. The marriage of daughters emerged in the interviews and letters as particular milestone achievements for widowed mothers. For the bride's mother a wedding is traditionally an emotional and stressful family event and this can be heightened without the support of a husband : "I found it very difficult when my daughter was married, I had to organise the day in the way I could cope with it I knew I wouldn't be able to cope with a sit-down meal because he [deceased husband] would be missing". A successful wedding stands as a public achievement for a widowed mother on which she can congratulate herself, for example, one widow said "I was pleased that I was able to do it [daughter's wedding] financially, it was difficult without a Dad but it did work out and everyone said it was a happy occasion, it was also sad, one of the cousins from Canada came over to give her away, seeing her come down the aisle on his arm, it was very difficult..... I imagine it was the sort of wedding that my husband would have

thought okay I was pleased I was able to do that, plan it and organise it and keep everybody happy".

Widowhood presents a woman accustomed to the companionship of marriage with the continual challenge of learning to do things, large and small, on her own, but, by and large she is learning to do them within the security of a familiar environment. Holidays however, present a different challenge, since implicit within the notion of a holiday is change from the familiar routine; this means that holidays, with their association with memories of times of shared happiness, can be particularly demanding for a widow as she is constantly confronted with her solitary state in a companionate world. It is only a minority of widows accustomed to the support and companionship of a husband who can face holidaying entirely alone. Many visit family and friends, managing to travel alone but reassured by the knowledge that there will be the security of a familiar and welcoming face at the holiday destination. Others arrange holidays with widowed friends or join organised groups, although this is difficult when the widow is the only solitary holiday maker, one widow described her experience on a coach tour: "I got to the hotel and I sat there, I wouldn't force myself on anybody and I heard a couple of women saying to each other 'I could never go on my own like that, could you ?' It made me feel like I was a leper or something. Anyway I did and I would sort of tag along with one couple, then I'd tag along with another, I wouldn't tag along with the same one all the time because they'd get annoyed. there is just so many people they don't want any intruders like, it seems as if they're just with their husband and that's it, they don't want anybody else".

Emotional Isolation

Nevertheless, however well a widow learns to cope with her changed situation, and 'gets on with life', learning to be independent and discovering capabilities and resources within herself that she was unaware of, there can still, even after years of widowhood be moments of intense emotional isolation. One woman, who had been widowed for fifteen years, said:

"It's this feeling that nobody really cares about you, there's nobody who really cares how you feel any more". In many of the interviews reference to these feelings of isolation surfaced when widows reflected on their health: "I was home for a whole week coughing like mad I was up there lying in that bed coughing and coughing and I thought, I'm here on my own like this, I've got nobody in this place of my own"... [Of

course the widows are not the only people who live alone and face this situation but the change in the circumstances of the widow makes the isolation particularly intense].

The Importance of Employment Outside the Home

In analysing the social practice of the individuals in this group of widows a factor that emerged from all the interviews and many of the letters was the importance of an occupation outside the home in providing structure and purpose in the widows life. Work can have two roles in the life of the widow, firstly it can be an economic necessity, in this context a young widow who has not worked while married or has been restricted to temporary or part-time employment can be particularly disadvantaged when suddenly having to support herself.

A woman who had been married at sixteen and was widowed after 28 years of marriage recounted how difficult it had been for her to find work: " See when my children were born obviously I was just a housewife and mother, I didn't go to work at all until my youngest was eleven years old, that was a little part-time job of an evening, that was against my husband's wishes, he didn't want me to do it, fortunately he earned quite good money, he was a self-employed bricklayer so money wise there was no need for me to work, but I just felt I wanted to, but that sort of part-time job turned into a full time job and for about two or three years I worked full time. Well, then I was made redundant and my husband said, well I don't want you to go back to work, I prefer you to be home here when I get home from work and all this. So I said fair enough, so therefore you see I wasn't even working when my husband died, so I needed to go and find a job which I found very difficult, see I never had any skills, didn't have a career or anything like that, obviously most of my life was home here with the children, so I found that to be hard".

Those widows who had had careers as married women found the structure of their jobs pivotal in holding the fabric of their lives together, as one said "Work was a saving for me". Others who hadn't worked previously and were economically secure found that taking up voluntary work was an important aspect of building life as a widow: "it gave structure to the week. I had to get up, I had to wash my hair, bath and be clean. It gave me a reason and I felt I was doing something". Another woman said "I really enjoyed that, it was only a part-time job but it was terrific, it gave me structure, this is one of the things which is awful when you are suddenly left, everything collapses so you don't have any routine, so this gave me routine, gave me self respect".

The Widow - An Outsider

The tenor of the social practice I have described in this chapter, using extracts from the widows' accounts, is of women getting on with life, facing the world. Viewed by the rest of society, the non-widowed, these women are 'recovering', 'getting back to normal'. This is the expectation fostered by the orthodoxy of grief and bereavement, as one widow said "after six months people expect you to be, you know, normal, back to life as though nothing has happened", but to understand the accounts of these women only as a process of adjustment is a repudiation of the experience of widowhood. Widowhood is not a recovery, a return, it is a new being, a new habitus has to be formed, and in the complex self-reflexive and ontological relationship between the habitus as constituted and the habitus as constituting, disjunctions can occur between the embodied experience of widowhood and the objectified structure of social expectation.

In talking with these women, it became apparent that in spite of the momentous personal significance of their widowhood, as an objective structure, others saw widowhood as inconsequential: a negligible residue of marriage. These widows felt there was no role for them to fill, whilst many still believed they were their husbands' wives this position was no longer recognized socially, and yet there was no guidance about how they should behave as widows, no explicit social expectation. None of the widows I spoke to felt there was any specific expectation to dress or behave in a particular way although they were aware of earlier mourning practices. The public ritual of mourning, they felt, was limited to permission to be sad and weepy for a limited period and they all accepted as given the orthodoxy of bereavement as a private process of recovery. The nearest any of the widows came to describing any expectation of behaviour were two of the women who lived in small communities. One said, "I suppose having lived in the same area always where most of the places I go I would be known I think most of the standards are the same as if I were married" and the other felt that as a widowed mother she had to be careful about what she allowed her children to do or the community might "raise their eyebrows." It is left to the widow to find a role for herself and her widowhood is a barrier to social acceptance; suddenly she is excluded and she feels that all the shared structures and shared knowledges that she took for granted are destroyed, she is an outsider and no longer understood. As one widow said of her married acquaintances, summing up the feelings of all the widows I spoke to and who wrote to me, "they have no idea what it feels like to be on your own having lost a husband". It is to this aspect

of widowhood, the disjunction between the embodied experience and history objectified in the structure that I will turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HYSTERETIC PREDICAMENT OF THE WIDOW :

A Social Theory of Widowhood

In the previous chapter I illustrated some aspects of the social practice of widowhood arising from the objective structures conditioning the dispositions of the habitus, that is how widows '*carry on with life, making the best of life as it is*'. However, to limit the analysis of the widows' accounts to uncovering the power relations that structure widowhood is inadequate since it fails to confront the emotional personal dimension of the reality of widowhood. In this chapter, in order to remedy the deficiencies of Chapter XII and present a complete representation of the habitus of the widow, I will construct a social theory of widowhood: the Hysteretic Predicament of the Widow, which will provide an understanding of the emotional subjective experience of widowhood in the context of the relations of power which structure *The Field*.

As I remarked in the final section of the last chapter, widowhood is not a 'recovery', nor is it just an adaptation to a change of objective structures in the manner of acclimatizing to a change of job, or moving to a new neighbourhood; widowhood is an ontological change, a change in being which starts from the moment of a husband's death, for as one widow wrote: "Half of me had gone ... when we were married they said we would become one flesh. I didn't really understand how this would happen, or even if it would at all, but it did and I never knew until he died". In Chapter XI I argued that the orthodoxy of the bereavement literature drawing on psychology and psychiatry understands grief as a recovery process, the discourse reduces the significance of grief from an overpowering singular experience to a series of surmountable tasks which the widow has to achieve in order to 'recover. If she fails to complete this process then she has not fully 'recovered', she has not adjusted to 'normal' life and may even be considered to be in a condition of 'unresolved grief'. The initial reaction to death can produce somatic effects. This widow's account vividly describes the sensations: "I just had no idea what had hit me, I thought grief was something you got over, I had no idea the effect grief has on your body and your mind, I did feel sort of mind blown. I felt as if I had been blown up from inside, blasted outwards, every little bit of me, mentally, physically and this awful feeling of fear, total absolute panic and terror. I felt like somebody

in space spinning around. ... I used to mutter to myself, there are so many millions of people in the world and there's only this one person who has died yet it has affected me to such a profound degree, I can't understand it". Whilst the somatic effects of grief, such as those described above, fade, it was apparent from the interviews and letters, that many widows, while carrying on and making the best of life still had, after many years of widowhood, a deep core of their being that had not returned to 'normal', had not totally adjusted to their new situation in the manner that a 'recovery from grief' posited. To the external world they had 'coped', 'picked up the pieces and carried on' but internally there was a disjunction, an incomplete fit between their being and their new lives; for example one woman, a widow for eleven years, told me that in spite of an active family and social life "I feel as though I don't belong anywhere, I don't have a role in life". This feeling of not belonging, of being excluded and apart, cannot be acknowledged publicly, firstly because the non-widowed do not understand and secondly because the orthodoxy of recovery from grief leads the widow to feel that this sense of disconnectedness arises from her personal inadequacy not her objective situation as a widow. The later belief is apparent in this woman's comment: "I feel I'm still an odd bod in that everybody else, not everybody because there's a lot of people in my situation, its really myself I think, I can't come to terms with it".

All the extracts above from widows' accounts describe highly emotional and subjective experiences but it is possible to understand these 'feelings' in terms of the abstract model of the objective class habitus of the widow: they are all, whether the profound initial grief reaction or the long-standing and deep-seated private sense of exclusion, possible instances of the *Hysteretic Predicament* of the widow.

The *Hysteretic* Predicament of the Objective Class of the Widow

The conditioning of past experience of the social world on the mental schemata of the habitus governs the perception of new experiences therefore when the habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, "it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world and itself for granted" Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992:127] . However, if the habitus encounters an environment which is dramatically different from that to which it is objectively adjusted, *the dispositions function out of phase and practices are ill-adapted*; Bourdieu calls this an *hysteresis* effect, that is the dispositions are adjusted to conditions that no longer obtain, [1990b:62] . This is the

situation of the woman who is widowed, the dispositions of her habitus are adjusted to an objective position as a wife, a position that disappeared with the death of her husband.

Widowhood is both habitus and structure, it is the subjective experience of the widow and the objective institution which is the product of power relations. *In widowhood hysteresis affects both the dispositions of the widow and the practices of widowhood, resulting in a Predicament which is inevitable and unresolvable.* The *Hysteretic Predicament* of the widow is that in the first instance her dispositions are adjusted to conditions that no longer obtain and in the second instance the system of relations which is the institution of widowhood and the social practices and representations that arise from those relations are ill-adapted to the concrete reality of widowhood: they are adjusted to the definitions of the situation which arise from mental schemata governed by the orthodoxy rather than mental schemata conditioned by the concrete experience of widowhood.

It is the sociology of Bourdieu which allows us to appreciate the nature of the *Hysteretic Predicament* of the widow - if we accepted the false antinomies of the dualistic conception of the social world as subject and structure then widowhood would be a single act, a matter of adaptation to a new situation and there would be no predicament - however, the social world is the genetic linking of the social structures and of the mental schemata within the habitus, this allows us to understand widowhood as an ongoing condition of ontological relationship between subject and structure. The *Hysteretic Predicament* is an effect of the relationship between the widow as habitus and the widow as structure, and by drawing on Bourdieu's [1977] theory of the *universe of discourse* to develop the concept of a *disjunction* I will demonstrate the inevitable and unresolvable nature of the widow's *Hysteretic Predicament*.

A *disjunction* develops between the individual schemata of the widow and the orthodoxy that governs the social perception of the widow, this occurs as the mental schemata of the widow are modified by her *private* experience of widowhood. This disjunction is an effect of the unrecognized symbolic violence of the relations of domination which structure *The Field* and legitimate the orthodoxy regulating the logic governing *The Field*. The orthodoxy designates *the universe of discourse*, the way of thinking and speaking the social world, not only the things that are expressed, but also what is authorized and legitimate. The orthodoxy designates what is authorized and legitimate

to express about widowhood, widows therefore have their reality imposed through the structures reproducing relations of power. However, in 'crisis situations' the everyday order of the orthodoxy through which reality is thought and expressed is challenged; 'crisis situations' "call for an extraordinary discourse capable of giving systematic expression to the gamut of extra-ordinary experiences" Bourdieu [1977:170]. I would argue that for the widow, widowhood is such a 'crisis situation', the language of order, the discourse of the orthodoxy is inadequate for giving systematic expression to the extraordinary experience of widowhood. Through her *private* experience of her 'extraordinary' status of widowhood the mental schemata of the widow are modified so that there is a disjunction between her mental schemata of widowhood and those of society which are regulated by the misrecognized symbolic violence of the orthodoxy, there is a disjunction between the reality of the *private* experience of the widow and the reality expressed through the orthodoxy of widowhood; in other words, those not widowed cannot understand (at least not totally) the condition of widowhood because the language available to them to understand does not reflect the concrete private reality of the widow.

There is therefore a twist in the Hysteretic predicament of widowhood, not only does the habitus of the widow encounter an environment which is dramatically different from that to which it is objectively adjusted, but the habitus of society, the 'non-widowed', in encountering the concrete fact of widowhood, encounters a reality different from that to which *it* is objectively adjusted by the ruling orthodoxy. However, the misrecognized symbolic violence of the relations of domination which legitimates the orthodoxy prevents society, the dominant group who are able to impose the scale of preferences most favourable to their own positions, from appreciating the disjunction between the modified schemata of perception of the widow arising from the crisis of widowhood and that of society arising from the orthodoxy. The nature of the mechanism of the universe of discourse means that this disjunction of the Hysteretic Predicament can never be conjoined because *private* experience can only be given public recognition, the right to be spoken publicly, when it is recognized "in the *public objectivity* of an already constituted discourse", but the ability "to impose the legitimate mode of thought and expression" is a function of the struggle for power, and success in that struggle is determined by the capital that an agent or group can wield, Bourdieu [1977:170]. The objective class of the widow holds negligible capital, therefore has no power in the struggle to *change the state* of the *private* experience to the *public objectivity* of an authorised language; so that their

private experience is authorized and legitimated. Therefore although on an *individual* basis the 'non-widowed' may legitimate the experience of a widow, *structurally* experience of widowhood remains marginalised, unrecognized and isolated from all but other widows. It is this aspect of the Hysteretic Predicament of the Widow which allows us to understand the subjective experience of the isolation which characterises widowhood .

The widows in this research while relating how they cope with their changed circumstances also graphically described the reality of their hysteretic predicament of a 'fish out water', of a creature in an environment which had suddenly become alien and frightening. All that these women had taken for granted about themselves and their world, as stable and lasting and known, was shattered with the deaths of their husbands. As one woman who had been widowed at 39, eight years previously, said "it was if everything that surrounded the marriage of partnership, of friendship, of socialising, of status, it all had to be undone and you could only reassemble it with what was relevant to singleness, and friendships and socialising aspects all changed, it wasn't the same any longer". Another woman who had been widowed aged 45 years, twelve years before, said, : " I can remember the morning after [he] died coming down stairs and thinking I shall never be able to relate to these people again I thought the whole thing was going to collapse because [he] wasn't there".

In Chapter XI I referred to the isolation of the widow resulting from the inadequacy of language to express the phenomenon of death and grief, this isolation is not, however, limited to the death of her husband and its immediate aftermath, it is an awareness that others do not understand the reality of her life. It was notable that the widows I interviewed, although at times finding it emotionally painful, all appreciated talking to me as another widow, as one woman said: "I have talked about things other people can't understand and don't want to hear" . This awareness, that the meaning of a life event, as significant as the death of your husband, is not understood by other people, can contribute to the isolation of some widows for the remainder of their lives, one widow wrote : "Just as robust people often do not understand illness, I think most married people do not understand and do not want to understand widowhood".

A woman aged 47, who had been a widow for eight years, said "I just find it really odd I cannot communicate what it is like to be on my own to my friends unless they are on

their own as well, then they know what I am talking about, and I've come to the conclusion that they just never will. Time after time after time I will get that it is no different for you than it is for me, these are people with homes [ie married] and jobs I think you don't know what you are talking about, you just don't know what you are talking about, I'm speechless". Another widow volunteered the importance of talking to other widows who shared experience common to the objective class of widows. She felt isolated, even from her sisters, both older, who were married, because of their inability to understand, whereas widowed friends "... have all been there, we've all been through it, everybody feels differently, but they know what you're talking about". This widow's comments are an experiential illustration that

"the singular *habitus* of members of the same class are united in a relationship of homology, that is, of diversity within homogeneity reflecting the diversity within homogeneity characteristic of their social conditions of production" Bourdieu [1990b:60].

In the remainder of this chapter I will focus on the accounts of individual widows in order to demonstrate further some of the ramifications of the Hysteretic Class Predicament of the Widow . As in the examples above, the widow's accounts will vary in the degree that dispositions function out of phase, the level of adaptation which the widow has achieved and the extent of her awareness of the disjunction of the Hysteretic Predicament, that is the diversity which reflects the unique history of each widow, but these accounts will also reflect the homogeneity characteristic of the relationship of homology of members of the same class.

The Social Practices of Death and the *Hysteretic* Predicament of the Widow

The sense of disorientation arising from the absence of social conditions generating practice to guide the widow in her new situation is exacerbated by the particular nature of the event - death - that has propelled her into this alien world. As we saw in Chapter XI the objective institution of death and its subjective experience is of a private and personal failure, in which the widow is isolated through the inadequacy of communication. These definitions and interpretations of death are so firmly embedded in the general social *habitus* that they regulate and constrain the interaction between the bereaved and other people, they condition the widow's emotions and impede both her ability to express them and the ability of others to accept them. The isolation is poignantly expressed in the following poem written by one of the widows I interviewed :

"Don't cross the road. Oh please, don't cross the road.

I'm so alone now that he has gone and I do so want to talk about him.

I know you feel uncomfortable in my presence.
I know you don't know what to say, but please, don't go away.
You see you don't have to say anything, only be there.
I know you are afraid you might upset me.
I know you are afraid I might cry. Well I might.
I probably will, but please, don't be embarrassed by my tears.
You don't have to do anything, just be there.
Oh please, Don't go".

Historically, mourning practices marked the position of the widow but today, particularly for the young widow, these practices have virtually disappeared and the emerging heterodox of the 'good grief' that I identified in Chapter XI creates no clearly defined position to condition the dispositions of the bereaved. The widow is left to 'do it her way' and this creates confusion and tensions, since lying sedimented in the habitus are traces of earlier practices and perceptions of the deceased's death overlaid by the doxic acceptance of the medicalised discourse of grief with its emphasis on the bereaved's loss. A young widow's account clearly demonstrates the confusion and guilt of the hysteretic predicament which can result from the absence of well defined social practices and the associated dispositions:

"the actual grieving process, the ability to, everything the whole lot, the mental side, the emotional side, the physical side, it's a loss, you've lost in all those areas and you need to be able to get it out of your system, to clear it out, but I was well aware that when I was doing it, it was all for me, it was not for my husband's passing it was more for how am I going to manage now that your not here. all this mourning process was to do with how I felt, it was impossible and I didn't get the balance right between the ability to mourn and to grieve and keep it separate from self pity". This extract illustrates how the discourse of grief as a process which has to be passed through to ensure a normal and healthy future has conditioned the schemata which regulated this widow's self-perception and determined the values with which she appraised her behaviour and her expectation of how others would judge her.

The hysteretic disjunction can be further deepened for the widow by the mixed messages she receives about society's expectations of her behaviour. One widow, who belonged to 'Breakaway', which meets in a hotel, was taken aback at the attitude of the manager to the

atmosphere amongst the group members : "he was surprised when we said we were widows because during the evening we were laughing and joking and chatting We were a very cheerful group and I think people were surprised, perhaps thinking we should be all sad all the time". Another widow found the inconsistency in attitudes confusing, since on the one hand she was expected to go through the 'process' of grief, and on the other she was expected to be 'normal' after a few weeks: "I found the whole process of mourning quite difficult, I knew that I needed to do it, I knew that society said that I should, my friends said that I should but at the same time their behaviour didn't lead me to believe that what they were saying they believed in".

The Hysteretic Predicament : The Orthodoxy of Grief and the Unacknowledged Importance of Social Immortality

In Chapter XII I discussed how the medical discourses of death and bereavement can distance professionals from the realities of the experience of the bereaved, which is an example of the isolating effect of the Hysteretic predicament, the disjunction between the orthodoxy and the private experience. One widow of three years wrote of her experience with her doctor:

"On the rare occasions I have been to the doctor, she once said to me, 'he's not coming back, you will have to accept it'. I replied I had accepted it but it didn't stop me thinking about things [later in the letter this woman explained how present her husband was in her life]. The last time when I went about some ache she said she thought it was 'unresolved grief'. In fact it was a physical thing because I suffer from asthma, so I thought that was wrong". This letter demonstrates how the active presence of the deceased husband in a widows' life, that is social immortality, conflicts with the orthodox discourse of widowhood and isolates the widow. This can lead widows to question their mental health. For example, one widow I spent a day interviewing, who had described an active and fulfilling life since her husband had died twelve years before, talked of how rarely a day passed when she didn't think about him and, because he remained such an important presence in her life, she sought reassurance from me, asking whether this was healthy, whether she had really "let go" of her grief.

The discourse of widowhood with its orthodoxy of 'recovery' from grief and return to 'normal' leads society, consciously or unconsciously, to ignore the existence of the deceased husband, this can be very isolating for a widow for whom he continues as an active presence. One widow said " people [married people] seem to ignore that you had a

husband, its never mentioned by some people. I don't know if people are frightened or what it is. My daughter-in-law says perhaps people are afraid of upsetting you, but I say that I'd prefer to be upset than ignored. It is as though that part of my life never existed".

Even though the social immortality of a deceased husband is not acknowledged publicly, it is a powerful presence for many widows often motivating their lives. For example one woman, a widow of four years wrote that she was "determined to keep things going just as if my husband would be returning and say ' Well done sweetheart' ". The active power of a husbands' social immortality is, however, a variable force and can fade as the years go by, for example, a widow who described the responsibility she felt to behave in a manner which would reflect well on her husband's memory said: "he was a very thoughtful and considerate person so I thought that it was very important to be considerate and think about other people and keep one's respect up in the right places, to be the sort of person that other people would respect so that they would respect him, so they wouldn't think that he had married an absolute 'nerd' [laughter]". She then went on to say that the feeling of responsibility continued but was not so strong now, after twelve years of widowhood. Whilst the power of a husband's social immortality may dwindle as an active force in the every day detail of life it can maintain considerable potency on 'special occasions'. For example, a woman who had been widowed twelve years wrote of the financial strain her daughter's intended marriage was for her, but said "I feel it's my duty to see her married, my husband would have wanted me to, he loved her very much".

The Hysteretic Predicament and the Familiarity of Divorce

Whilst the orthodoxy conditions an attitude that the 'loss' of bereavement is the same as the 'loss' of divorce (or any other 'loss'), the widow in her mental representation of widowhood and divorce makes a clear distinction; all those I interviewed were adamant that there was a difference between the two 'losses'. I remarked in the previous chapter how all the widows said it was important that their status of widow should be distinguished from that of other lone women since widowhood was a material element of their mental representation of themselves, it meant both that they had been married and that their marriage had not ended in failure; however, these widows also believed that, important as this distinction was to them, society disregarded it. The following comments demonstrate the significance of the distinction between divorce and widowhood for their mental representations of themselves:

"its just this feeling that widowhood is something that happened to you whereas divorce is something that you had a hand in some ways, you effected it in some ways, whereas widowhood was just thrown at you, you had no choice".

" I think I'm different. I think they go through something entirely different. A divorced person must feel sad in a different way because it's a sort of failure on somebody's part, but I don't feel it, your husband has been taken away from you, none of you decided that, its just happened, in the other case it just hasn't worked out and they have gone their separate ways. I think it's different". When others do pay attention to the difference between divorce and widowhood, it can be in a manner that denigrates the significance of bereavement, further reinforcing the disjunction of the hysteresis, for example, one widow wrote with some indignation: "so many women who are separated or divorced tell me a widow is lucky because she knows where her husband is !"

The Hysteretic Predicament of the 'Young Widow'

Whilst the individual widow experiences her new situation as alien she is in an objective position which has a long genesis. A position, as I have argued in the preceding chapters, that today has uncertain boundaries conflated with all categories of 'women without husbands' and defined by negatively valued symbolic capital. In addition with improved morbidity widowhood is now associated with old age so that the negative mental schemata that pattern old age also condition widowhood, further reinforcing the widow's negatively valued symbolic capital. However, the practices of old age are unsuited to a young widow and resented if, lacking any other expectation, other people force her to adopt them. One woman widowed in her early forties said: "People label you and they want to put you in a pigeon-hole, society wants to make sure you stay with your own. I find myself pushed in a slow relentless fashion into a widow draw and most other widows are in their sixties and seventies and whilst we have something in common, we don't have something in common, and I do find that very difficult". Another wrote: "I have been living the life of an old woman since I was 44 when my husband was killed in 1980, people automatically relegate widows to bus trips, clubs, doing good works ...".

The hysteresis effect is objectified in the declaration of young widows, women widowed 'out of time', of the lack of other widows of their age within their social group, it is often experienced as a lack of support. The following comments are typical of this felt need:

"I just don't know anyone else in my age group who is in the same position"

"I didn't know anybody who was widowed I was breaking new ground and there was nobody out there who I knew, who could support me in what ever it was I was going through". One young widow, aged 28 years, who I happened to meet socially, told me that she was waiting for the marriages of the friends in her social circle to breakup so that she wouldn't be appear such a 'freak' ! Where a young widow is the first in her social group to be widowed friends perception of her experience are a pattern to condition the adaptation of their dispositions to widowhood: "I felt a bit like a pioneer, I had nobody to talk to, no reference who had gone through the same thing, but Mary [a friend recently widowed] had got me I think I've been able to help her quite a lot". A woman who was widowed at 44 recounted how friends who had been widowed subsequently had found her an example to follow: "ladies who have been widowed since I was widowed have said to me, it did me a lot of good when I had a little talk with you, it helped me, one or two have said they looked at me and thought W. had survived, if she can do it I'm sure I can as well", in a minor way therefore she provided a cognitive model which shaped the adaptation of their dispositions for widowhood.

Widowhood is of course equally painful and isolating for older women and after many years of marriage it is likely that the dispositions of wife have become deeply embedded and the mal-adaptation of the hysteresis effect may be more traumatic, but unlike the younger woman, the older widow will have the problematic advantage of being conditioned by the expectations of old age and the experiences of her contemporaries.

Hysteresis and the Loss of Identity

On the death of their husbands many widows lose their sense of identity, one widow described herself as "floating, searching for something to re-identify herself with", another said : "I think I was very much his wife, maybe I don't have much of an identity now, especially as I don't take as active role in 'town' as I did you still hear people talking, well her husband was so-and-so, not what she is. Its not the lady who runs the playgroup, chairman of the WI or whatever, it's still very much identification through husbands past and present". . She went on to say "I think you have to come to terms with not just the loss of a husband and a father but a loss of status in the world, whatever your husband's status was a little of it rubs off on you and that's taken away from you, so

that as time goes on you're just a face in the crowd. I don't think that happens quite so much with widowers as widows, perhaps because the wife is still attached to the husband's job, the wife of the managing director or whatever, whereas suddenly she was the wife of the managing director whereas he could still be the managing director even if his wife had died". Another widow whose life as a wife had been entirely concerned with supporting her husband who was a doctor, and had felt that she was entirely an appendage in his shadow, said: " I think I'm a jolly sight more assertive, I do things now I would never have dreamt of doing I think one of the ways I've changed is that I've become a much, much more confident person I feel very much my own person. I felt confident in the situation I was in [as a wife] but now I feel a much more integrated person, I don't worry about other people, I can cope with practically any social situation whereas before I might have felt a bit sort of, well they were always *his* friends and colleagues".

A widow's sense of identity arises from her sense of herself reflected back to her through her relations with other people.

"the representations that agents have of their own and other agents' positions in social space (and also the representations they give of them, consciously or unconsciously, through their practices or their properties) are the product of a system of schemes of perception and appreciation which is itself the incorporated product of a class condition (that is, a particular position in the distribution of material properties and symbolic capital)." Bourdieu [1990b:139-140].

As a wife, the widow's identity had therefore been the product of her position as the wife *of her husband*, it was not marriage *per se* that gave her identity but the asymmetric, gendered nature of marriage. In Chapter X I argued that the gender domination in marriage is obscured by the doxa of companionancy and in the previous chapter I identified the impact of coupledness on the social practice of the widow, I will now consider the implications of the doxa of the companionate marriage for the hysteretic condition of the widow.

Coupledness and the *Hysteretic* Predicament

The doxas of coupledness and gender established in the schemata of the habitus of the widow also determine her practice in a complex interaction between the mental representations she has of herself and her perceptions of the established order regulated by the doxas of which her habitus is a product. The widow, in her mental representations of herself, sees herself as lesser, as incomplete and thus a figure of embarrassment; the lower social capital of widowhood means that she can no longer interact with the married

couple on equal terms. For example one widow said: "I go to their house now, I don't go to anything outside with them its not going out for the evening like it used to be, like when we used to go out as a foursome, all that's stopped". Question : Was it you that stopped it ?" Widow: "No, no, nobody bothered I don't think, it wasn't for me to suggest it, was it really". Another widow wrote: "Well I feel at times very much like a second class person, the position I held as half a partnership is no longer there. When you are a couple you can say to another couple 'let's do this or that' but though I still have ideas, its hard for one person to ask a couple to do things with her".

The doxas of coupledness and gender can determine a widow's social activity in a numerous ways. For example, they constrain the relationship a widow feels she can have with married women friends, taking care not to "intrude" when the husband is at home. One widow spoke of how she would "only visit when the husband was out", another said she wouldn't "just drop in on a happily married couple because I would get the feeling of, oh, here she is again, hasn't she got a home to go to". One widow particularly regretted the loss of a woman friend since the husband had retired and was consequently at home more " because he's now retired I don't call her up and say I've got the day off, shall we do something ?"

This reticence on the part of the widow may actually contribute to the 'dropping off' of the couple friendship which widows experience. One widow recounted the difficulty she felt in contacting a couple who had been close and supportive friends : "I used to go around on my way home from work and then I thought perhaps they don't want me. I mean they have never made me feel that they don't want me, but because you're the one making the move all the time, you think why don't they phone now and again, why doesn't the wife phone and say 'what are you doing?' or 'can I pop around and see you' or just 'come and see me', but they don't do that...". Another widow described how early in her widowhood friends were insistent in including her in parties but she "just didn't like it at all" because it was really too soon for her to feel emotionally stable enough to attend but because she had turned down some early invitations "you got left behind and the invitations declined over the years". Such a decline in invitations, and the reticence of the widow in the previous example can be understood as an effect of the *disjunction of the Hysteretic Predicament*, the orthodoxy is that the widow should be returned to 'normal' as soon as possible, but for the widow such a 'return' is impossible.

It was also clear from the group of widows that the doxic constructions of Woman through the discourse of gender, Woman as Temptress and Woman as Dependent, in other words an effect of the misrecognition of the symbolic violence of gender domination, were powerful forces governing their behaviour and their perception of the attitude of married women towards them. Many of the widows spontaneously declared the importance of not appearing 'predatory' when in the company of married couples and some widows said they modified their behaviour so as not to appear as a 'threat', for example :- "I think people feel a bit uncomfortable if you're on your own, they worry that you might be predatory".

q : "Have you had people saying things that make you feel they think you might be predatory ?"

w: "No, it's a general thing, feeling a bit sensitive that anybody might think it, I haven't made any moves that anybody might think that but it's something you are on your guard about, you have to be careful".

q: "Does that affect the way you behave with people, this feeling of being on your guard?"

w: "If I was at a party and I found myself enjoying talking to a husband for a bit I'd make sure I spent an equally long time enjoying talking to the wife as well".

q: "Is this something that you would have done when your husband was alive ?"

w: "I don't think I would have taken any notice of it or thought about it, but when you're on your own you're rather aware of it, particularly on occasions that people go as a couple".

Another woman, widowed at 34 wrote about: "Always feeling the odd one out and worried if someone's husband asked me to dance more than once, so that his wife wouldn't think the worst". Other widows were careful to explain to me that their married friends would not see them as a danger, one widow saying: "I mean I'm not a siren type, nobody has ever worried that I was going to make approaches to their husband or anything like that". Another woman wrote : "I am not good looking, or even the slightest bit flirtatious with men, but what most would call 'a good sort of sensible body' so I'm definitely not a threat to their marriages !"

This fear of appearing 'predatory' can change the way other people's behaviour is interpreted. As one widow said: "you get the feeling that if a helpful husband said 'I'll do that washer on your tap and the wife came with him, although you know the wife, you might think, 'oh I wonder why she had to come as well, does she think I was going to be

after her husband or something', stupid thought, but it wouldn't cross your mind except the fact that you're a widow".

The Hysteretic predicament arising from dispositions conditioned by the doxa of gender and coupledness can also constrain the widow's activities in public. One woman who had been widowed for eleven years said: "I don't like going to things like the theatre by myself, everybody's together". Another woman when driving a long distance would "take an orange juice and a sandwich and a book, if it's a really nice day I'll sit by the car, I might pull into a 'Little Chef' for a coffee but I'm not over keen on lunch or whatever on my own". I remarked in the previous chapter that for many widows the weekend is particularly difficult since it epitomises shared activities: "I find Sunday is the worst day Sundays is so family orientated, even if you go to Church on a Sunday there is husband and wife, two children or whatever, even if it isn't it appears to be; if you go to a pub on a Sunday it's full of children with Mum, Dad whatever, even if I took myself to the beach there was always a family, or even if there was Mum and Grandpa there was always more than just one person, whereas during the week I could quite happily walk along the sea front and not worry about it, Sunday just got me".

The effect of *hysteresis* even spreads to family relationships, some widows find that their lower social capital changes their social position within their family. One widow wrote: "I can't help feeling left out. I have got used to going to weddings or other events on my own now but seldom get invited out. Even my own family (three married with children now) don't include me very often unless they need help with the children". Whilst for others, although there may not be a change, the hysteretic effect has altered their perceptions, a widow with two married children said "I don't feel I belong. Always out on a limb, the little moon going around a big sun, but never part of something, going around something I think they genuinely do need me and want me, but I still feel I'm intruding to some extent".

Whether this arises from the mental representations the widow has of herself as a result of objective social experiences outside the family circle, or whether it is a reflection of the changed nature of family interaction, the crucial factor is the constitutive, and constituting nature of these representations; if the widow perceives her position in the family as marginalised, this becomes internalised in the dispositions of the habitus as a fundamental structuring principle of her practice, which then becomes an external

socially qualified sign of the family representation of her position, reinforcing the internal mental representations in her habitus.

The Disposition of Dependency and the *Hysteretic* Predicament

In Chapter XII I noted how the asymmetric nature of marriage created a disposition of dependency, but that although the hysteretic effect of the gendered construction of marriage inculcates dispositions which leave a woman ill-adapted to single life, it is possible for those dispositions to be modified or even changed and many of the widows I interviewed, although not relishing the responsibilities of their independence, were proud of what they had achieved. Below are the accounts of two women, which typify the situation of many widows; it demonstrates the manner in which husbands often 'care' for wives, in other words the sexual division of labour, and also how the private, inclusive nature of marriage can erode a woman's confidence. The first extract is from a woman married for twenty four years, widowed at age forty nine, four years before the interview, who had given up her career as a nurse on marriage because her husband "didn't approve of working wives" : "I feel I'm quite capable, I feel I'm able to do most things, I don't think I was before I have learnt to do an awful lot of things for myself that I didn't think I was capable of I feel more able to go out and meet people than I did because if I didn't want to speak to anybody I could always have a chat to Harry . I think a lot of that [confidence] is because of the voluntary work I do I work on reception [at a hospice], before [widowhood] I would never have done that".

q : "Have you been quite surprised at some of the things you can cope with ?"

a: "Yes definitely. I think I was fairly cosseted.....".

q: "So you've grown in confidence a lot in the last three years?"

a: "Oh yes very much so".

And second, the comments of a widowed mother of two young daughters:

q: "How would you say being a widow has changed your life ?"

a: "Oh quite a lot, I had to do lots of things I had never done before, that my husband had done, with the business of the house, making decisions about money which he might or might not have shared with me, or he might have..... not taking a lot of notice of what I might say about it. I became more decisive, you had to do things which you never visualised doing alone, like selling a car and buying another one".

However, not all women were able to gain greater confidence as they learned how to adjust to single life, for some the interplay of their personal social trajectory with the hysteric predicament resulted in a downward spiral of increasingly poorer self representations and ill adapted practice. For example, one woman who had married in her forties and continued in her administrative career, had seven years previously been widowed after eight years of marriage and found that with widowhood her confidence had gone : "I suppose in one way I have changed because I had a car and a house of my own which I bought by myself before I married, having relied on somebody who was a strong character I find I can't even check the tyre pressures, things I loved to do before".

In the previous chapter I drew attention to the important role an occupation outside the home played in creating structure in the life of the widow. The disposition of dependence arising from the symbolic violence of gender domination in marriage can mean that a widow has little confidence as well as few skills to offer in the labour market when she is forced to find paid employment, this has a further negative impact on her mental representation of herself when she is confronted with difficulty of finding work. One widow discovered in August, after her son had left school, that her widow's pension would be reduced by more than 50% "I was below the age of 50, so the fifty went down to twenty two pounds from December, I had a little warning but nothing like enough, it was absolute panic". Before marriage this woman had done poorly paid agency secretarial work: "I thought I'm going to have to work a full week, which I hadn't done before, for fifty weeks of the year, I'd never done that, never, can I do it, I haven't got the stamina, nor have I got the skills any more, everything has changed". However, this woman was fortunate, she took a 'returning to work' course and with new found skills found she had the confidence and ability to start a career teaching adults needing educational support, this work provided her with a purpose in life and personal fulfilment.

The Widow as Mother and the *Hysteretic* Effect

Some of the widows I talked to and who wrote to me were mothers who had been widowed while they still had dependent children living at home, this meant that their experience of widowhood differed from the other widows since their dispositions as mothers continued to be suitably adjusted to caring tasks after the death of their husbands. For example, one widow who had two daughters aged nine and thirteen when

her husband died unexpectedly after a four week illness said: "It was a quite extraordinary time really, you think afterwards how did we get through it, the girls were still going to Brownies and Guides, still going to their choir practice and my older daughter was still going to school in the city. I'd be driving her in, or picking her up or whatever, life went on. I was doing my best to run the house there's a pattern to your life and there really doesn't seem anything to do but follow the pattern".

For these widows who were also mothers the maintenance of stability in their children's lives provided the structure of their own lives. Mothering in a manner which accorded to the orthodoxy of motherhood, governed their behaviour and was also the cognitive schemata by which they evaluated their practice so that what they and others saw as 'good mothering' was a source of positive mental representations of themselves in their habitus. One widow, whose only child had just graduated, speaking of the effort of being a lone parent for twelve years said: "Everybody says I've done a good job with him but its taken a toll on me really I think. This neighbour across the road said one day, 'you've done well with him, you could have had a lot of trouble with him'. I could have had trouble if I'd gone gallivanting off and leaving him, but I think I deserve some credit, it isn't just magic he's turned out how he has". Another widow, comparing herself to another lone mother said: "I'm working with this girl who is going through a divorce ... she's got two boys, it wasn't very long at all before she was going off to these singles clubs, she's got these teenage boys and they were staying home and records playing and neighbours complaining and everything. I couldn't have done anything like that. I'd have thought it was my place to be home with those kids I don't suppose the kids will turn out any the worse for it, it's just that I looked on it as my duty to bring them [her children] up as they had nobody else".

Two of the widows I spoke to chose to refuse career opportunities which would have increased their financial security and took lower paid work which fitted around their assessment of their children's needs: "I thought if I go back to teaching will I be home to help them with their home work, will I be able to pick them up from school so I decided not to do it and by the time I thought I might have gone back to teaching it was incredibly difficult to even get back on the supply list I probably sacrificed a lot economically but it was unusual for me not to be here for them, it seemed that was the only thing I could offer, stability". The responsibility of children also limit a widow's opportunity to re-establish a social life: "In the very beginning when he was ten,

people would say if you want to go anywhere I'll baby-sit, I did it a few times and then as he got older he said I don't want a baby-sitter, I'm too big for a baby-sitter, and it got that it was all so much trouble I just didn't go anywhere really". These restrictions are, of course, very similar for all lone mothers, but their importance is the value that the widow's assessment of her 'good mothering' has for her mental representations of herself.

It appears that while motherhood can delay the *full* impact of the widows *hysteretic* predicament it does not necessarily protect her against it, for with the final departure from home of her youngest child she is confronted with her mal-adaptation for living alone in the 'empty nest' syndrome. Naturally the effect of this varied but it could be traumatic. This widow found it particularly stressful : "suddenly my son had left home, I was entirely on my own for the first time in my life, I had no purpose, what did I do with my life, I just did not know what to do and where to go, I felt the whole world had fallen apart". Another widow who had been a single parent since her son was aged 10 said: "the eight years, although it was hard going and knowing what to do and how to control him ... it was a nice time really because we became very close and then he went to college and I am left in limbo". Some widowed mothers appreciated the freedom of the release from parenting responsibilities, but they were still aware that the future was one of solo living: "in some ways it was quite nice, you can have a bath at 1 o'clock in the morning without 'Oh Mum !' I even perhaps enjoyed it a little bit and then the monotony and the futility of it, theres only me now, is anybody really going to mind if I chopped up the furniture for firewood or did something outrageous, you just had the feeling it was just you".

From the interviews with widowed mothers it did appear that the presence of children and the necessity of maintaining a stable environment for them meant that a significant element of the dispositions of the widow's habitus continued to be suitably adjusted to her social world and that this ameliorated the impact of the *hysteresis* effect. However, because of the small number of women interviewed, who were widowed whilst their children were dependent, it is inappropriate to draw a general conclusion about this phenomenon, nevertheless, the functioning of the disposition of motherhood does appear to be a significant factor delaying the implications of the hysteretic predicament of widowhood.

Conclusion

The widows who took part in this research understood the experiences and feelings that they described as the 'natural' consequence of widowhood, but, as I have argued in the preceding chapters, the meaning we give to bereavement and widowhood is a social relation and is historically specific: an arbitrary social construction. This is not to deny the somatic responses, but to privilege the fundamental nature of the evaluative and perceptual schemata with which we make sense of and create our social world. By working with Bourdieu's sociological tools I have attempted to develop a theory of the *Hysteretic Predicament of Widowhood* which I believe allows an understanding of bereavement and widowhood that reflects social reality but distances it from the 'commonsense understanding' of its emotional and doxic construction :

"The object of social science is a reality that encompasses all the individual and collective struggles aimed at conserving or transforming reality, in particular those that seek to impose the legitimate definition of reality, whose specifically symbolic efficacy can help to conserve or subvert the established order, that is to say, reality".

[Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 1990:141]

CHAPTER XIV

REFLECTIONS ON A JOURNEY AND NEW HORIZONS

It is the nature of travel, that arrival at a destination opens new horizons and presents the imagination with fresh possibilities, therefore this chapter is written not as a conclusion with its implication of finality and closure, but rather as a reflection upon a journey in which the destination is also the point of new departures. Whilst throughout the purpose of the journey has been an investigation of the social situation of widows, the route followed has been determined by the development of the critical and self-reflexive dispositions of my sociological habitus. The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu has provided the theoretical workshop from which I have drawn my analytical tools and to which I have returned constantly to hone their critical edge. From a starting point grounded in the experience of widows I have travelled a personal route which has led me to problematise the explanations which constitute our access to the social world, the nature of the social facts about which we theorize and the practical actions we take to test propositions and understandings; a questioning relevant to all social agents, whether researchers or private persons. I learnt that the 'truth' of widowhood was not to be found, as I had believed, exclusively in the accounts of women who had been widowed, but in the articulation of a widow's experience with the power relations which construct the 'givenness' of widowhood as the 'natural' outcome of a situation into which a wife is thrust by the chance of death. The institution of widowhood is a social relation, the arbitrary outcome of the forces which structure the meaning of gender, marriage and death, so that even the 'natural' expression of grief is experienced through a socially constructed orthodoxy.

In reflecting on the exploration and analysis recorded in the preceding chapters there are certain landmarks which stand as points of significant development. The first, the guiding star of my intellectual journey, was Bourdieu's emphasis on reflexive rigour. The inclusion of a theory of intellectual practice, the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in analytical tools and operations is one of the hallmarks of Bourdieu's sociology. This is an integral and necessary condition of critical social theory which must be self-conscious about its origins, its historicity, its position in discourses and

amongst cultures, and its practical effects in producing the knowledge which it seeks to explain. It is the absence of this critical reflexivity which results in methods such as Grounded Theory positing a validity which is an artifact of its analytical process. By embracing the notion of reflexive rigour, which meant that the theoretical and empirical moments of the research were inseparable, I found that while respecting the reality of the experience the individual women I interviewed I was nonetheless able to understand those experiences as the history of the product of objective social structures and of the mechanisms which bring about their reproduction and transformation.

The possibility of a totally self-reflective sociological habitus is however questionable, we can never escape the history of the concepts we incorporate into our theories or uncover all the presuppositions arising from our social and intellectual unconscious; the social knower cannot be totally ruptured from the social knowledge. Whilst Bourdieu seeks to remove the trace of the knower by his process of the objectification of the act of objectification, the trace cannot be completely erased since it remains, embedded in the presuppositions of the epistemology on which Bourdieu's act of objectification stands. Social knowledge can never be transparent since the knower is always corporeally specific, gendered, historically situated, with an unconscious mind, subject to linguistic and social determinants. This is not to relapse into relativism since the *critical* moment of a reflexive social theory protects us from residing in the false assurances of the validity of knowledge grounded in the 'truth' of experience.

The manner in which knowledge cannot be completely ruptured from the knower is demonstrated in Bourdieu's theorization of gender where tensions and contradictions occur which raise questions about unconscious presuppositions embedded in Bourdieu's own sociological habitus. In spite of a self-conscious declaration of the deeply embedded nature of the institution of gender and the inherent difficulties it presents a science of social practice, Bourdieu is unable to disassociate his theorization from his gendered origins which leads him to use as instruments of analysis constructs such as the sex/gender opposition and the heterosexual matrix, which should be objects of analysis. There are also tensions within his understanding of social practice, with a privileging of the objective conditioning of dispositions of the habitus which subordinates the significance of the contribution of the pre-existing genetic inheritance, presenting a deterministic model of social reality. This representation is, however, a matter of

emphasis rather than substance which a more balanced attention to corporeal specificity rectifies.

However, in spite of the contradictions and tensions within Bourdieu's work and the suspicion of deep-seated phallogentric presuppositions, his sociology has stimulating potential for feminist theorizing, a potential which has possibilities for further investigation. Feminists are struggling to escape from the blind alley of producing a 'feminist way of knowing' which, under the guise of discovering the specificity of female subjectivity merely reconstructs the relations of domination. Feminists need to develop theoretical tools for understanding difference in a non-essentializing way, tools for the explanatory-diagnostic analysis of women's oppression which are shaped by the anticipatory-utopian critique of the norms and values of contemporary society. Bourdieu's concepts and his emphasis on critical and reflexive rigour offer feminism a means of articulating abstract theorization with a practice that addresses the minutia of the lived experience of oppressive social relations, a means of addressing the heterogeneity of experience encapsulated in the homogeneous construct Woman.

In analysing the situation of women who were widowed Bourdieu's theoretical tools provided a key to understanding how the behaviour of widows is determined to a large extent by their history and the objective structures of the social world; of how, to the extent that they accept their social world unquestioningly, widows' behaviour contributes, without their realising it, to the maintenance of the existing structures of dominance; of how the social interaction of the widows is not a product of internalised rules, but a process of improvisory adjustment between objective structures and their embodiment within individuals; of how the difference between individual widow's accounts can be understood without relapsing into relativism.

Widowhood is a both a subjective experience and a set of objective social relations, all widows share homogeneous conditions of existence which produce homogeneous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices which are also heterogeneous arising from their individual specificity and unique social origins. Widows are therefore the product of the history of the social field and their accumulated experience of a path within that field. Embedded within the objective class habitus of the widow are the metaphors of widowhood: 'merry widow', 'deserving widow', 'grass widow', 'black widow' [spider]. These metaphors are encapsulated in the comic figure of

the Pantomime Dame who is a caricature of the widow as a product of history: the freedom and independence of the widowed woman compared with the dependent situation of a wife under Common Law and the respectability accorded to the widow's situation through her tie with the sacrament of marriage. As marriage became a secular institution which either party was free to dissolve and the legal construction of Woman became more equitable the symbolic advantage of widowhood was eroded and the widow, while still a residual category of marriage, became just another single woman.

The widow today, is not only the product of the history of widowhood, but also of her objective class habitus as wife. The asymmetric nature of the institution of marriage regulated by the logic of gender domination means that as a class, wives have lower class capital than their husbands, this, to a large extent, determines the dispositions that a wife carries into widowhood. In addition the companionate nature of contemporary marriage prioritises coupledom and as a class isolates widows from the social network of marriage. This conditioning of the dispositions of the habitus places the widow in a situation of hysteresis since her dispositions, governed by past conditions of production are unfitted for her objective situation as a widow.

The isolation of the widow is compounded by the social construction of the nature of the event - death - that thrusts a wife into widowhood. Death has been deconstructed and grief individualized which removes from the widow the symbolic capital historically associated with mourning and the social immortality of the dead husband. In the course of this research it was only possible to make a limited exploration of the possibilities of the concept of social immortality. This is an issue which is open to further inquiry. In addition the research into the history of mourning practices and into the implications of the history of sexual practice for the construction of Woman uncovered an intriguing coincidence between the establishment of the phallic sexual economy and the gendered and confining practices of Victorian mourning etiquette which again provokes further investigation.

The deconstruction of death means that on the one hand people are no longer 'familiar' with death, we have distanced ourselves from its ultimate reality and metaphysical significance and have no language to communicate with the grieving. On the other hand we seek to diminish its significance by reducing death and accompanying grief to a series of surmountable challenges; in this process death is reduced to a loss which functions like

any other loss. No longer are the grief stricken sustained by focussing on the eventual salvation of the soul, ultimately determined by an external deity; the deconstruction of death and grief has emerged as the movement for a 'Good Death' followed by a 'Good Grief', where salvation comes from within the individual. The practitioners of the Good Grief promulgate a new orthodoxy of bereavement in which grief is an experience of development and self-empowerment. Whilst this is presented, in good faith, as a liberation from the isolation of bereavement, its practitioners fail to take account of the political implications of a public discourse which legitimates a new orthodoxy and expectations of behaviour, against which the bereaved and those around them assess the performance of grief. Ironically rather than enhancing the situation of the widow it seems that the supposed freedom of the 'Good Grief' can add to the widow's hysteretic predicament. The widow no longer has the security of the externally imposed boundaries of behaviour and she has to exercise the empowerment of the freedom to choose how to grieve from a socially powerless position. It was apparent from some of the widows interviewed that confusion about how they should grieve was a cause of distress. However, this was not the main focus of the research and it was a small sample. Further investigation is needed on the impact of the Good Grief movement on the hysteretic predicament of the widow.

The hysteretic predicament of the widow arises from the disjunction within the habitus between the objective structure of widowhood regulated by the dominant orthodoxy and the subjective experience of her situation. This was experienced by the widows interviewed with varying degrees of disorientation and marginalisation. Many facets of hysteresis were displayed by these women, but it is its implications for a widow's identity which epitomizes the importance of the hysteretic predicament. Identity is integral to our relations with others; who it is possible, appropriate or valuable to be, is decided by socially sustained discourses which pattern how we view and constitute ourselves and how others see us. I have traced how the socially sustained discourses about widowhood have been etiolated. Today there is no defining identity for a widow, no established trajectory that a woman can follow when her identity as a wife, with its socially accepted expectations, is extinguished by the death of her husband. Identity rests on recognition by others, but what are the social bases of recognition of the widow? The defining categories are devalued: the distinction between the deserving widow, a figure of sympathy, respect and even admiration, and that of other women fending on their own, who had to bear the opprobrium associated with divorce, unmarried motherhood and

spinsterhood, has been eroded. Whilst the disappearance of discriminatory and oppressive attitudes is a cause for celebration, it is ironic, that for widows as an objective class, this change in social attitudes signals the loss of the objective class capital and hence the identity of the widow.

It must also be remembered that recognition does not follow immediately on socially sanctioned identities, there is a need for successful presentation or performance but what is the widow to perform? There is no concrete identity awaiting her in a network of interpersonal social relations, no role imposed by her social situation, such as wife or mother, to which she adjusts, she is left in limbo. Identity is not just a reflection of our inner self it is socially nurtured and constructed and its value is determined by the logic of the field in which it functions. The success a woman who is widowed will have in constructing a new identity will depend not on the objective class capital of widowhood, but the capital she can command which functions in other fields. Without such resources a woman may remain trapped in the isolation of the hysteretic predicament of widowhood, marginalised by society and experiencing herself as 'incomplete', 'unable to move on', 'lacking motivation', 'a fifth wheel', or 'a small moon circling the sun'. Such self-descriptions are often described in psychological terms in the bereavement literature, but the social theory of the hysteretic predicament of the widow provides a framework for integrating the subjective experience of widowhood, the psychological models of bereavement and the objective structural conditions.

Widowhood is not just the activity of a social agent reacting to the stimulus of an objective structure; this makes widowhood a simple process of readjustment. Neither is widowhood nothing but a process of 'carving out a new life': the widow creating the structure of her world; this is a construction of the widow's situation which ignores the objective and subjective constraints which limit her. Both of these constructions of widowhood can result in those who are less successful at 'recovery' and at 'making a new life' perceiving themselves and being perceived as being, in some way inadequate or failures.

This thesis, by drawing critically upon the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, and the accounts of women who have been widowed in mid-life, presents a social theory of widowhood which encompasses the notions of both the above constructions of widowhood and moves beyond them. It provides a means of understanding the social reality of the widow as the

history of the product of specific social relations, both as an objective class and as an individual social agent. In conceptualising widowhood as a Hysteretic Predicament, the theory demonstrates how the subjective experiences of individual widows are the product of the articulation of their specific dispositions with two social phenomena: firstly, that the social world in which they are living lacks the objective structures to condition the dispositions of the habitus of the wife to the objective situation of a widow; secondly, that there is a disjunction between the orthodoxy which legitimates the meaning of the objective structures of widowhood and the widow's lived reality of the social relation of widowhood. Bourdieu, by demonstrating that the social world is a genetic linking between objective structures and subjective perceptions allows us to understand that the reality of widows' lives is an ongoing ontological relationship which can be comprehended through the Social Theory of the Hysteretic Predicament of the Widow.

Appendix I

INTERVIEW

Topic Areas and 'Prompts'

Biographical Details

Date of birth

Place of birth

Brothers and sisters

age,
where live,
family.

Parents

- a. mother's age- lives at - died - your age ?
- b. father's age -lives at - died - your age ?
- c. parents marital status - your age when [divorced/remarried etc]

Education

Employment

Marital History

- a. when married - age at marriage
- b. husbands age at marriage - occupation
- c. previous marriage

Children

- a. age - gender -where live - marital status
- b. grandchildren - gender - age - where live

Death of husband -

when ? - how old was he ? - how old were you ?
was it sudden/expected ?
been widow for ? years

EXPERIENCE OF WIDOWHOOD

What is it like for you being a widow ?

How has **life changed** since you became a widow ?

SELF IMAGE

How would you **describe your feelings about yourself** now ?

How do you **feel about yourself** now compared with when your husband was alive ?

Did you **identify yourself as the wife of you husband** ?

Do you think of yourself as still **married** ? Do you wear your **wedding ring** ?

How do you think of yourself **compared with other women** ?

Is this **different** from the way you used to think about yourself ?

How do you think of yourself **compared** with women who have been **divorced** ?

What is your **image** of a widow ?

Do you think of yourself, **describe yourself** as a widow?

How do you think **other people think of you** ? Do they think of you as a widow ?

Has being a widow has **changed you as a person** ?

Do you feel you should **behave differently** as a widow ?

Do you **behave differently** now ?

Do you think **people expect you to behave differently?**

Do you feel that **people treat you differently** now as a widow ? Casual acquaintances as well as people you might meet in a more official capacity - government officials, doctors etc

Do you do feel you have a **responsibility towards your husband**, to do some things because he would want you to ?

RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY

Has your **relationship with your family changed** since your husbands death ? - **parents, brothers/sisters, children**

What about your relationship with your **husbands family** ? Has that **changed** ?

SINGLE PARENTHOOD

What has it been like **bringing up your children alone** ?

Have there been particular **difficulties** ?

Have you had **support** from family and friends ?

SOCIAL LIFE

How would you describe your **social life** when your husband was alive. Has it **changed** ?

What is your **social life like now** ?

How do you get on with **old friends now** ? Do you see them often? Has the relationship **changed** ? How do you get on with the **wives/husbands** ?

Were old friends that you still see originally your friends or your husband's ?

Have you made many **new friends** since you have been widowed ?

How did you meet them ?

Are these **women friends, men friends or couples** ?

Are many of your **friends widows** ? Do you find widows are a particular support ?

Do **men** treat you **differently** now ?

Do people expect to you to have men friends and form **new relationships** ?

Has your relationship with your **neighbours changed** since your husband died ?

DOING THINGS ON YOUR OWN

What sort of things do you find difficult to cope with?

Do you feel very **alone** ?

How do you feel when you are with **couples** ?

How do you cope with **anniversaries, Christmas and birthdays** ?

Do you **drive** ?

Do you go **out for the day** on your own ?

How do you feel about going to places like a **cinema or restaurant** on your own ?

How do you manage for **holidays** ?

How do you manage with **practical things** in the house and garden ?

Have you had any **offers of help** with anything from anybody ?
family/friends/neighbours

Did you **accept** the offer ? if not, why not ?

Do you ever feel **vulnerable** as a widow ?

FINANCIAL SITUATION

How has being widowed **affected you financially** ?

Do you feel your **standard of living** has changed ?

Is there more **financial restriction** on your life than there used to be ?
Do you find dealing with financial matters **difficult** ?

HOUSING

Has widowhood caused any difficulties with **housing**?

OCCUPATION

Do you **work** ?

Were you employed when your husband was alive ?

Has being a widow **affected your employment** ?

What part does your work play in your life ?

HEALTH

How has your **health** been ?

REMARRIAGE

How would you describe your marriage ?

What about the **future** ? Do you want to **remarry/live in relationship** ?

FUTURE

How do you want your life to be now ? What are the things that are **important** in your life now ?

Is there anything you'd like to **change about your life** now?

ADVANTAGES ?

Is there anything you **like about being a widow** ? independence/freedom/less cooking, washing etc

Is there anything you'd like to **change about the situation of widows** ?

What sort of **status** do you feel widows have in society ?

Appendix II

Widows Interviewed

<u>Source</u>	<u>Age Widowed</u>	<u>Years Widowed</u>
Social Club	46	8
" "	53	8
" "	44	15
'Snowball'	51	11
"	43	15
Letter	45	12
"	49	4
"	39	8
"	48	8

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