

Following last week's lecture on work, I am going to talk about the family; the other institution in most people's lives. I want to examine the role of the family, as part of the so-called 'affluent society'; and in particular I shall concentrate on the myth of 'permissiveness', which was a vital part of that society, and which especially brings into focus the situation of the middle class. Most of the lectures so far have been about the working class. So I hope, to some degree, to redress the balance.

Behind me you see two advertisements for films; and you will I expect, immediately recognise that they were two of the most popular and commercially successful films of the past decade - The Sound Of Music, and Dr Zhivago. I imagine many of you will have seen these films and so you will know what they are about. But I would like you to look for a moment at the way the posters present the films to the public. What aspects of the films are stressed? How does each poster define the essential theme of the film?

The Sound Of Music is, of course, a musical comedy set in the Austrian Alps. This is immediately obvious from the way the title is written, and from the background of the poster. But as the poster also implies, The Sound Of Music is about a family - a large, and an apparently 'happy' family. Led by Julie Andrews, their governess, the children are perfectly balanced around her, identically turned out, and identically (and somewhat nauseatingly) vivacious. But the harmony of family life only extends as far as the children. Father, you will observe, is out of it; he is solitary, stationary and grim. The guardian and protector, he will face the 'real' world; the threatening forces of Nazism, the tidal wave of politics which is about to engulf this happy musical scene.

Now consider Dr Zhivago, a historical romance set in revolutionary Russia. What has happened to the idyllic picture of family life? The tide of history which existed on the horizon of The Sound Of Music has broken through. The characters of the film are at the mercy of events. And centrally, the family structure is broken. The poster portrays on the left, romantic passion (Julie Christie and Omar Sharif); and on the right, jealousy, Zhivago's wife (Geraldine Chaplin) left in the cold. It is the 'eternal triangle'. Even the neat balance of poster design for The Sound Of Music has been replaced by a confusion of perspectives (horsemen charging between the characters) and an imbalance of personalities (the portrayal of Christie and Sharif is very much 'larger than life').

I would like to suggest to you that these two posters, and the films they represent, portray one of the major post war themes of British culture: the apparent break-up of family life. On the one hand, we have in Dr Zhivago, the 'permissive age' - adulterous passion set against a turbulent political crisis; the quest of the individual man, cut loose from his 'roots', for an identity (which he eventually finds writing love poetry with wolves baying at the door). On the other hand, we have what has come to be called the 'anti-permissive backlash' - the response of 'respectable people', who are typically like Mary Whitehouse, lower-middle class suburban housewives who have everything to lose from the new, 'progressive' arrangements. What ever happened to those large, traditionally bourgeois families that dominated Victorian literature? What has destroyed the 'Peter Pan'

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culture of the nursery? Like so many BBC serials: The Forsyte Saga, The Pallisers, and endless adaptations of Dickens, The Sound Of Music expresses nostalgia for a supposedly ideal, Victorian, form of bourgeois family life.

If you put your mind to it, I think you will find that this theme: permissiveness and the break up of the family, is all pervasive in contemporary popular culture. But I don't propose to spend this lecture discussing films; I am interested in the idea of the family, the vision of family life, which these films, in part, portray. I think we can come closer to this vision if we look at the institution which typifies the idea of the family: the monarchy.

Here is an extract from the Queen's Christmas message, 1973. You will observe that the Queen, who begins by talking about the marriage of Princess Anne, a cultural event I am sure many witnessed on TV, goes on to explicitly use the family as her theme when she talks about politics:

"We are constantly being told that we live in a changing world and that we need to adapt to changing conditions. But this is only part of the truth, and I am sure that all parents seeing their children getting married are reminded of the continuity of human life. That is why, I think, that at weddings all friends and relations can stop worrying for a moment and share in the happiness of the couple getting married. I am glad that my daughter's wedding gave such pleasure to so many people just at a time when the world was facing very serious problems..."

The Queen went on to discuss a conference of Commonwealth prime ministers:

"I was impressed by the spirit which brought together so many leaders from such different countries, and enabled them to discuss constructively matters which concern us all as friends. Those of you who are surrounded by friends - or, of course, who are members of a happy family - know this makes life much easier. Everything - the good and the bad, can be shared..."

Finally, it being Christmas, we are reminded of the 'not so fortunate': the old, lonely, sick and handicapped:

"A lack of humanity and compassion can be very destructive: how easily this causes divisions within nations and between nations. We should remember instead how much we have in common and resolve to give expression to the best of our human qualities".

I think this final sentence sums up so much of what the traditional family stands for. The family, supposedly, brings out the best in us. It is the arena in which we can give and take, show our feelings, give sympathy and compassion, be spontaneous and generous. By implication, other institutions outside the family are less harmonious. The rest of the world is divisive, competitive, harsh and brutal. It is partly the world of work, which we heard about last week. But it is also the world of historical change, of war and politics. The family, ideally provides stability and security both against the conflicts and calculations of the present, and against the uncertainties of the future. This is why people can 'forget about their troubles at weddings', and why they look backwards, to a golden age of big families, of music and nurseries, when their emotional identities are threatened.

Previous lecturers have discussed the historical changes in British society which were described as the 'affluent society'. I don't want to repeat the whole of the analysis here, but to briefly mention one element - the effect of the re-housing of communities upon the structure of the working class family. I expect you will know that in the post-war expansionist economic climate, the development of new industries (like electronics

and chemicals), often on the outskirts of big cities or near new towns where land was available, demanded the large-scale re-housing of working people from central areas to the suburbs. One can see this trend at work in Birmingham, where in twenty years (1951-71) large areas near the city centre, such as Aston, Newtown, Ladywood, Deritend, have been redeveloped. The old working class population has moved out, and been re-housed in areas like Erdington, Kings Norton, Northfield, Weoley Castle, or outside the city boundaries altogether at Redditch or Chelmsley Wood. Over-all the population of Birmingham has declined in twenty years by 9%, whereas that of the West Midlands as a whole has increased by 15%. So you can see that there has been a general drift away from the city. And the decline in city dwelling has not only affected the working class. More and more middle class people (employed by large industrial corporations which need highly flexible and mobile management teams, willing to uproot themselves and re-settle in new areas) have left areas like Moseley, Sparkhill and Handsworth, and gone to Solihull or Sutton Coldfield.

This general tendency of the 'affluent society' to uproot people, or to entice them away from the old communities towards new, better paid jobs, has profoundly affected working class family life. Let me remind you of Richard Hoggart's account of working-class family life before the change:

"Looking back on years of living in one, I should say that a good 'living-room' must provide three principal things: gregariousness, warmth, and plenty of good food. The living-room is the warm heart of the family and therefore often slightly stuffy to a middle class visitor. It is not a social centre but a family centre; little entertaining goes on there in anything approaching the middle class sense. The wife's social life outside her immediate family is found over the washing line, at the corner shop, visiting relatives at a moderate distance occasionally, and perhaps now and again going with her husband to his pub or club. He has his pub or club, his work, his football matches. The friends of either in all these places may well not know what the inside of their house is like, may never have 'stepped across the threshold'. The hearth is reserved for the family, whether living at home or nearby, and those who are 'something to us', and look in for a talk or just to sit. Much of the free time of a man and his wife will usually be passed at that hearth; 'just staying-in' is still one of the most common leisure time occupations".

In the old communities the home was an enclosed private space - and most people's social encounters took place at work, or in the local pub, or in the street. The family that moves away may certainly lose these contacts, and be quite isolated or vulnerable. It takes time, on a new housing estate in Northfield, to develop a community spirit to take the place of the old. In particular the community spirit of the old areas was especially developed by the women: a general notion of 'neighbourliness' which provided help and advice to the family - particularly the wife and her mother. Without this kind of support women may feel trapped - and the TV may come to provide the main window on the outside world. And for men too there are changes to cope with. The new plastic Ansells pubs, complete with juke-boxes, are often no substitute for the old locals. So the private family space may become his leisure centre - and not only 'just staying in' as do-it-yourself becomes the new craze.

Great things have been made of these changes by some Sociologists. They have argued that the working class on new housing estates are adopting a bourgeois family style, and this has added fuel to the 'embourgeoisment' thesis - the idea that in the 'affluent society' the working class aspire and become more like, the middle class. But my own impressions are that the 'home-centred' life-style of the working class has (a) always existed in

sense described by Hoggart - in the value placed on 'hearth and home'; and (b) does not preclude the development of community spirit even in tower-blocks. As I say, it takes time for the new communities to develop, and it is hardly surprising that people should remain nostalgic for the 'old-end' or the 'turning' where they grew up. But most working class people are highly resourceful and resilient. Despite the severe problems involved in re-housing - which puts particular stress on teenagers, and which has certainly affected the way working class men spend their leisure time - I think it can be argued that as a private space in a communal setting, the working class family has survived *.

Moreover the nostalgia of working class people for the old district and the old family ties, doesn't really explain the myth of permissiveness, the cult of the royal family, or the culture of The Sound Of Music. This culture goes much further. It is not simply a way of explaining the pressures brought to bear on family life by the re-housing of old communities. It is also an assertion that the family itself, and its central values, are being threatened. And it is an assertion typically made by the middle class rather than by the working class. For, after all, the working class has much to gain by starting a new life in the suburbs.

We are dealing here with what Stuart Hall referred to as a cultural myth. Certain real historical factors; mainly to do with redevelopment and re-housing, have been re-created in the myth of the 'permissive society' and the break-up of family life. Some of the real stresses and strains associated with the changes in working class life style - and especially the so-called 'delinquency' of working class kids - have been seen by the 'moral entrepreneurs' of the middle class as part of a general, moral decline in the 'fabric' of our society. So politicians have spoken of 'decadence', 'rootlessness', 'shiftlessness', and a lack of 'discipline' in modern Britain. You may recall a classic statement of this myth made last October, in Birmingham (where it seems, one of the most reliable audiences is to be found) by Sir Keith Joseph. On that occasion he said:

"The aspect of the Tory approach which I wish to discuss here tonight relates to the family and to civilised values. They are the foundation on which the nation is built; they are being undermined. If we cannot restore them to health, our nation can be utterly ruined, whatever economic policies we might try to follow. For economics is deeply shaped by values, by the attitude towards work, thrift, ethics, public spirit".

He went on to criticise universities and what he called 'the casuistry of some members of university staffs', but then went on:

"But worse still is the effect of these winds of change in the schools, particularly

*This argument, of course, remains to be proved. It is merely asserted here, and is unformulated in detail. But I think, for example, that my own research with the 'newly-affluent working class' of Kings Norton is indicating (1) the survival of the extended family - parents following children to the suburbs, even the same estates, (2) the survival of the working class community of women - around children, shops etc., (3) the survival of the 'hearth' - especially in the type of home improvements undertaken, ie. towards an ornate living room 'cosiness' focussed around the ever-present TV, and (4) the survival of masculine attitudes to leisure in the home which firmly demarcate the sexual division of labour. The working class 'ideology of domesticity' remains largely unchallenged.

in poorer districts among less gifted children, and in social work.

Some abuse their power and authority to urge or condone anti-social behaviour either on political grounds - against an 'unjust society', against 'authority', or as 'liberation from the trammels of the outmoded family'. But what has been the result? Drugs, drunkenness, teenage pregnancies, vandalism, an increase in drifting - now called by new names, but basically vagrancy. None of these phenomena is at all modern, or liberated; they are the very opposite of freedom, which begins with self-discipline".

There are, of course, many levels of this Tory philosophy - attitudes to work, education, youth cultures etc. - which it is not my theme to discuss. I want to spend the remainder of the lecture asking what it is about the family that makes it such a central component, such a driving force, in this reactionary argument. I want to emphasise again that the myth of permissiveness has been developed and cultivated to explain problems facing, not the working class, but the middle class : and these problems arise from a contradiction between two middle class ideologies - what I shall call the ideology of consumerism, and the ideology of domesticity.

The ideology of consumerism was part and parcel of the 'affluent society'. Industry did not simply make more and more commodities available; it also advertised them and attempted to direct the way they should be consumed. Articles were thus produced with the idea of consumption in mind.

The home was the prime target for consumer marketing and sales, and there are two main underlying reasons for this. Firstly, there is the basic fact that with the way our society is run, people need to consume at home in order to go out next day to work. The home, as we might say, reproduces the labour force - keeps it fed, clothed and in working order. Secondly however, this basic fact is added to by another, that there is in our society a fundamental sexual division of labour. By and large, it is women who reproduce the labour force, and men who go out to work. So the advertisers were able to tap a whole set of traditional attitudes which said that it is the duty of men to provide - to be the 'bread-winners', to bring home the goodies; and it is the duty of women to take and use what their husbands provide.

The result has been the saturation of the domestic market with, firstly, household gadgets for women (washing machines, fridges, various labour saving devices etc.), secondly, with TV sets on which is daily portrayed the ideal 'happy family' (consuming their corn-flakes or baked beans, and vying with their neighbours for 'the whiteness which shows'), and thirdly, with cars, (so that men can live up to their image as providers, and take the wife and kids out for ever extensive, and expensive, holidays in the sun.) The labour-force now not only reproduces itself at home; it also begins to see home as the symbol of its new status, as the just reward for effort. So a universal ideology of home-centred consumption, in adverts and in the media, became one of the most powerful supports for the expanding economy of the 'fifties and early 'sixties.

But though aspects of this ideology have influenced the working class, the fact remains that the chief consumers were the middle class themselves, the real beneficiaries of the 'affluent society'. And here the new home-centred life-style began to go much further than was at first envisaged. For middle class women the wave of household gadgets was accompanied by two other developments: (1) increased educational opportunity, and (2) in-

access to birth-control (both of which incidentally, decisively illustrate the benefits derived by the middle class from the Welfare State). I am sure that the later lecture in this course on the situation of women will touch on these points. For they enabled some middle class women to review their prospects as a whole; to seek new opportunities outside the home; to challenge discriminatory practices in employment; and to decisively reject their prescribed social role as passive consumers. For the middle class, the ideology of consumerism not only said 'you must buy more commodities', it also presented a new, bourgeois vision of the good life, central to which was the image of the fashionable cosmopolitan, emancipated woman of 'habits' and colour supplements.

The fight for emancipation by certain progressive, highly educated, highly affluent middle class women has had an increasing effect on the balance of sex-roles in their families. It has often involved a drive towards a new kind of 'companionship', based on the idea of 'equality', with each partner in a marriage being free to go his or her own way. Some sociologists are now arguing that there has been a decisive shift in the structure of the family as an institution. They talk of 'joint conjugal roles', or the 'symmetrical family' - with a neat balance in the nuclear family between the tasks members are expected to perform. And not surprisingly The Sunday Times and similar liberal middle class papers are turned on to these new prospects. Here, for example, is the opening of an article entitled 'Anyone for Open Marriage?', which appeared in January 1973:

"With all the stress that modern life imposes on marriage it ought to be coming apart at the seams. It isn't; yet the institution is changing in ways still hardly understood, and it will surely change further as the new forces unit dig deeper.

The situation is confusing but it is exciting; new possibilities are presenting themselves for a meaningful and satisfying relationship...

The ideal would be a genuine sharing of responsibilities both in the outside world and at home, as home-makers and parents. Husbands and wives would share the domestic burdens and the financial burdens... It presupposes a real equality for women - and men accepting that equality. It would also undoubtedly be made more feasible with the arrival of a genuinely shorter working week, with husbands and wives working at part time jobs, and filling in for each other at home".

To sum up what is quite a long and detailed article, it is argued that with the economic and social benefits of a consumer society, the modern wife can become a 'truly equal marriage partner' with a serious career of her own. This leads to an equalisation of roles as the wife no longer defines her status through her husband, and is no longer restricted to his friends and interests. On an everyday basis this involves the husband doing housework and looking after children.

Now taken as far as this, there is nothing in the new bourgeois family to which any self-respecting Tory would wish to object. After all, Sir Keith Joseph, in supporting Mrs Thatcher for the Tory leadership, did his own bit for 'role-equalisation' - it is the good old Tory idea of 'fairness!'. And an 'open marriage' scarcely threatens the family as such. It is a way of giving it some flexibility in an affluent age, whilst preserving the basic 'human qualities' of companionship, love and stability which the idea of the family represents - along with the monarchy and the church. The progressive, open marriage would seem to be the perfect compromise in a changing world.

But where this compromise breaks down, and where the myth of 'permissiveness' begins to take over, is the point at which the progressive, open, consumerist, middle class family begins to challenge some very basic and long-held social and cultural assumptions. These assumptions are not particularly to do with the jobs people perform, the opportunities they are presented with, or the commodities they are able to consume. For although there is sexual discrimination and prejudice, it is now, on the whole, quite acceptable in middle class circles for women to be educated, to work, and to spend more money. What is not so acceptable, especially to the Tory view of the world, is that the new public equality of women, and the new 'equalised' consumer life-style, should extend to traditionally private areas of family life; especially areas relating to sexuality and emotions.

For the rhetoric about 'the best of our human qualities' - about compassion and companionship - actually conceals some very fundamental notions of how we are expected to experience and show these qualities. And these fundamental notions are absolutely central to the idea of family life as we know it. They are developed in the family, in childhood, and perpetuated when we marry and have children ourselves. These are the notions which make up what I am calling the ideology of domesticity. It is an ideology which governs how we experience our selves, and our feelings for the people closest to us. I will mention three aspects of the ideology of domesticity.

1 Firstly, this ideology states that the private world is radically different from the public world. The world of work, and social contacts, is 'out there' - and typically, it is the man who has to face it. It is brutally competitive, riddled with status, put-downs, gossip, antagonisms and violence. But in the family this public world can be forgotten. The man comes home to his food, his pipe and slippers, and a wife to tell his troubles to. The tensions of the day are 'cooled out' by sympathy and understanding. And however big a fool he may make of himself, or whatever he does wrong, a man knows that his wife will accept him, unconditionally, for what he is to her. According to the ideology this relationship is intense and private, and only really achievable with one other person - the person to whom you get married.

2 Secondly, the ideology of domesticity states that the private sphere is mainly, if not exclusively, the responsibility of the wife. A husband and children are her destiny, her fulfilment. Careless about herself, she will sacrifice for them. If she works, she will be sure to make her work subordinate to her husband's; or at least, not let it interfere with her primary function, which is to look after him. Conversely, if he looks after the children, she will make it known to him that he is simply 'helping out', and anyway he doesn't do it as well as she does. He looks after the children, but she understands them, feels the screaming in herself, and gets up at night to feed them. In countless little ways the domestic set up is about demarcating responsibilities - who does what, when and to whom. But it is the wife for whom these responsibilities are essential; the husband can choose what he wants to do, the wife cannot.

3 Thirdly, the ideology of domesticity is about feelings; feelings associated with sexuality, which are deeply personal and very difficult to talk about. But the ideology states that there is no point in even trying to talk about them, because they are universally given, not socially developed (you either 'fall in love', or you don't), and in any

case every individual's feelings for another individual are unique. Alongside this uniqueness of feelings, goes the idea of choice. That your feelings are your own, and you can choose to share them with whom you wish. They are abstract feelings - a general capacity for love - which you choose to bestow on another special person.

But in fact, the emotional structure of the 'normal' person in our society is as much a cultural product as their ideas or values. It is formed in the interior of the family, in the interaction between parents and children. And this interaction is anything but anarchic. It is dictated by received popular wisdom; it is a systematic form of communication which develops particular social character types. I will mention just two typical traits of this character; emotional possessiveness (most people, when they find a relationship on this special level cling onto it for dear life), and emotional dependency (most people are excessively tied to, dependent upon, the recognition and approval of others). Possessiveness and dependency are emotional needs instilled into people by their parents - by the fear of loss of parents, or the threat of withdrawal of their love, a tactic which parents frequently unconsciously use in disciplining children. The whole fascinating area of socialisation and emotional communication is much too complex for me to explore fully here. (If you are interested in a fuller account I recommend The Politics Of Sexuality In Capitalism, Red Collective Pamphlet No I, part of which has been duplicated to illustrate this lecture). There are also, for example, typical character traits associated with sex: boys are brought up to be active and competitive; girls to be passive and submissive. And although there are undoubtedly individual exceptions to the rules, once we recognise that there are general rules to be broken, but which on the whole produce typical characters which conform to social expectations, we begin to undermine that part of the ideology of domesticity which states that feelings in the family are special and unique.

These three aspects of the ideology of domesticity - (1) the emotional distinction between the public and private worlds (2) the notion that women are responsible for the private sphere, especially as regards children, and (3) the idea that we have pools of feelings which we choose to bestow on other special people - these three aspects of the culture of the family make up the foundation, the bed-rock, of most people's social identities. No-one in this lecture hall will have escaped the influence of these ideas, and I imagine many will positively believe in them, especially the ideas regarding sexual feelings. So I'm sure you will agree that it is not surprising that people are very resistant to calling the ideology of domesticity into question, or even admitting to themselves that it is an ideology - that it simply expresses one, among many, possible ways of organising our social relationships. But the ideology of consumerism has, precisely, forced many middle class people to question the ideology of domesticity. And this questioning has led to all kinds of emotional despair, breakdown, and searching for mystical, romantic, Dr Zhivago-like solutions. For at a certain point it is impossible to hold to the progressive affluent, consumerist, emancipated image of the family and at the same time cultivate a traditional domestic set-up.

What then, are the specific ways in which the ideology of consumerism contradicts the ideology of domesticity? I want to briefly mention two points of contradiction before going on finally to look at the way the contradictions have affected family life itself.

Firstly, the 'open marriage' tendency of of the consumerist life-style, with more and more married women seeking jobs, education and money, has powerful emotional repercussions at home. Symmetry is not as easy to achieve as advocates of the 'symmetrical family' seem to think. It is not simply a matter of 'role-equalisation', with the husband doing more household chores while his wife goes out to work. A balance also involves some emotional equalisation, with the husband giving up part of his status as a worker, and the wife disengaging herself from a basic emotional identification with the home and children. Taken seriously, an open marriage means more than swapping roles or tasks, it also means the exchange of qualities and identities, which means going beyond the idea that these identities are given and chosen. Many people who are prepared to grant some flexibility to family life, are not prepared to suffer the traumatic possibilities of criticising and changing their own character structures - the dreams they have always lived by, the fulfilment they have always sought. So they stop short. And most frequently the progressive middle class 'open marriage' is a kind of compromise with domesticity; women earn pin money, or take spare time open university courses, men help with cooking and cleaning. But in the last resort, the women cling to their families and homes; and the men cling to their jobs and their powerful status as providers.

Secondly, the ideology of consumerism contradicts the ideology of domesticity because it is explicit and open about sexuality. With a consumer society, sex has become a topic for public debate. It is, of course, a prominent feature of advertising - as an image to sell products. To some extent the pornography trade has made sex itself into a commodity. But crucially, the old sanctity of the private sphere has been invaded, by products designed to transform it, and by TV sets carrying public messages about sex even into bedrooms. The end result of the sexual imagery, the commodities, and the endless public debate about sex (from the politics of abortion, to the preoccupation with sexual techniques in 'liberated' magazines) has been the gradual socialisation of sexuality. Sex is no longer a matter between individuals. It is a social relationship, and even, for some, a form of consumer ratification. But here again, most people have stopped short. Communal sex, 'swinging couples', wife-swapping etc., are everywhere (in people's heads) and nowhere (in reality) in middle class suburbia. In the end it is back to what you can trust - the privatised couple, the mutual companionship and recognition of marriage. People have made compromises. They will discuss sex more, maybe even read Forum, and more women will demand sexual satisfaction. But sexual behaviour still remains exclusively tied to the idea of marriage. It is intra-marital, or extra-marital; the marital bit remains.

So what I am saying is that the consumer society, especially as regards the new, progressive middle class, who rode the crest of the 'affluence' wave, posed two kinds of threat to the traditional domestic family. Firstly it offered a new equality within marriage, not only of roles and tasks, but also for those willing to take up the struggle, of statuses and emotional identities. Secondly it challenged the sexual foundation of marriage itself and opened up the possibility of alternative forms of relationship. In these ways the ideology of consumerism contradicted the ideology of domesticity. But the ideology of domesticity did not simply wither away. People had too much to lose: especially women, and especially members of the traditional, bourgeois middle class for whom domesticity was

their life-style.

The threat to the domestic ideal was met not only by compromise, but also by resistance. At one level, of family life itself, a day by day rearguard action was fought within families, particularly by parents (committed to the domestic ideal) against teenage children (Committed to consumerism, and the new 'open' sexuality). The case studies of Sanity, Madness and the Family by Laing and Esterson are to be especially recommended as illustrations of some of the rearguard tactics adopted by parents to curb their children's 'autonomy'. For example, Laing and Esterson describe Mrs Church and her daughter Claire. Mrs Church, who has had little emotional satisfaction elsewhere, channels her need for affection towards her family. She needs affection, and she demands it, but she can only express this affection in institutionalised domestic ways which, as Laing puts it, deny spontaneity, sexuality, anger. Mrs Church is afraid of people outside the family, and is insecure herself within it. So she projects her own insecurities onto Claire; she 'lives through Claire', and Claire cannot escape her mother's attentions.

Laing and Esterson describe, in the case studies of this book, families where a subtle kind of violence operates. This is not so much open aggression, as a kind of psychological terror, where people try to manipulate others into being projections of themselves. The process is called 'attribution', whereby one person attributes qualities to another, and then accuses that person of 'not loving them' if they don't live up to the expectations. Typically children are made symbolic receptacles for the insecurity of their parents. And the parents are usually lower middle class, religious, suburban couples, defensive about an idea of domesticity which they feel is under attack.

Again, this is not the place to fully discuss what Laing calls the 'politics' of the family. Laing's books are full of examples of family communications in which general ideological contradictions are made, within the family, into personal confrontations. The child, in rejecting his or her parent's life-style, faces a long drawn out struggle against the parents themselves, who often take the ideological contradiction personally, and attempt to deny that their children's culture has any value. The so-called 'generation gap' was one of the major cultural themes of the 'sixties. I think it is not to be regarded, as it often was, as an inevitable aspect of teenage rebellion, but rather as part of the stress imposed by the consumer society on the traditional family - in which parents and kids took opposite sides in an ideological contradiction. The Beatles' song "She's leaving home" absolutely pinpoints the contradiction I'm talking about; and the same theme is the subject of the film Family Life which again features a mother/daughter conflict in the suburbs. Part of the strength of the film is that it captures the typical dialogue of such a conflict: "After all we've done for you/We've sacrificed most of our lives/We've given you everything money can buy - and you've been ungrateful, you've thrown it all back in our faces..." etc., I'm sure you recognise the sort of thing I mean.

But finally, to return to the myth of the 'permissive society', I want to suggest that the myth was born out of this conflict, and gave expression to it. It was a myth which generalised from a particular experience, and abstracted from, and universalised the problems it set out to describe. It was the Mrs Churches of the world - highly respectable unemployed, suburban housewives, who returned again and again to see The Sound Of Music.

'The permissive society' was their myth. Formulated by Mary Whitehouse and Co., it was part of the armoury of resistance to the long drawn-out crisis of the middle class family, and the values formulated by the ideology of domesticity. This has been a major historical crisis for the middle class as a whole. Most of us in universities are living through it. Most of us, as students, face incredibly complex problems in moving away from home, and in working out new forms of sexuality and personal relationships. But though many middle class people are confused about sex, marriage and the family; and though there are widespread doubts and hang-ups, there are also exciting and liberating possibilities and experiments. Two later lectures, on students and counter-culture, and on women, will, I am sure, deal with how some alternatives to the traditional family have been developed in the last decade. Despite the rearguard action fought by Keith Joseph and others, 'the permissive society' has not simply produced deviants, vagabonds and neurotics; but it has also opened new paths to emotional fulfilment.

Postscript. For the bourgeois ideology of feelings; individualism leading to mysticism, (one of the great quests of the 'sixties), read DH Lawrence:

"She watched him with wide, troubled eyes. His face was incandescent in its abstract earnestness.

'And you mean you can't love?' she asked, in trepidation.

'Yes if you like. I have loved. But there is a beyond, where there is not love'. She could not submit to this. She felt it swooning over her. But she could not submit.

'But how do you know - if you have never really loved?' she asked.

'It is true what I say; there is a beyond, in you, in me, which is further than love, beyond the scope, as stars are beyond the scope of vision, some of them.'

'Then there is no love', cried Ursula.

'Ultimately, no, there is something else. But ultimately, there is no love'. Ursula was given over to this statement for some moments. Then she half rose from her chair, saying, in a final, repellant voice:

'Then let me go home - what am I doing here?'

'There is the door', he said. 'You are a free agent'.

He was suspended finely and perfectly in this extremity. She hung motionless for some seconds, then sat down again.

'If there is no love, what is there?' she cried, almost jeering.

'Something', he said, looking at her, battling with his soul, with all his might.

'What?'

He was silent for a long time, unable to be in communication with her while she was in this state of opposition.

'There is', he said, in a voice of pure abstraction, 'a final me which is stark and impersonal and beyond responsibility. So there is a final you. And it is there I would want to meet you - not in the emotional, loving plane - but there beyond, where there is no speech and no terms of agreement. There we are two stark, unknown beings, two utterly strange creatures, I would want to approach you, and you me. And there could be no obligation, because there is no standard for action there, because no understanding has been reaped from that plane. It is quite inhuman - so there can be no calling to book, in any form whatsoever - because one is outside the pale of all that is accepted, and nothing known applies. One can only follow the impulse, taking that which lies in front, and responsible for nothing, giving nothing, asked for nothing, only each taking according to the primal desire'. "

(Women In Love, Chapter 13)

Lawrence's radical subjectivism takes the ideology of domesticity to a perverse extreme. Defiantly 'irresponsible', extra-marital, his portrayal of sexual relationships nevertheless reproduces (in the structure of the dialogue) the myth of romantic love he attempts to destroy.