The Devaluation of Women's Labor

The criminalization of women's control over procreation is a phenomenon whose importance cannot be overemphasized, both from the viewpoint of its effects on women and its consequences for the capitalist organization of work. As is well documented, through the Middle Ages women had possessed many means of contraception, mostly consisting of herbs which turned into potions and "pessaries" (suppositories) were used to quicken a woman's period, provoke an abortion, or create a condition of sterility. In *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception in the West* (1997), the American historian John Riddle has given us an extensive catalogue of the substances that were most used and the effects expected of them or most likely to occur.[61] The criminalization of contraception expropriated women from this knowledge that had been transmitted from generation to generation, giving them some autonomy with respect to child-birth. It appears that, in some cases, this knowledge was not lost but was only driven underground; yet when birth control again made its appearance on the social scene, contraceptive methods were no longer of the type that women could use, but were specifically created for use by men. What demographic consequences followed from this shift is a question that for the moment I will not pursue, though I refer to Riddle's work for a discussion of this matter. Here I only want to stress that by denying women control over their bodies, the state deprived them of the most fundamental condition for physical and psychological integrity and degraded maternity to the status of forced labor, in addition to confining women to reproductive work in a way unknown in previous societies. Nevertheless, forcing women to procreate against their will or (as a feminist song from the 1970s had it) forcing them to " produce children for the state,"[62] only in part defined women's function in the new sexual division of labor. A complementary aspect was the definition of women as non-workers, a process much studied by feminist historians, which by the end of the 17th century was nearly completed.

By this time women were losing ground even with respect to jobs that had been their prerogatives, such as ale-brewing and midwifery, where their employment was subjected to new restrictions. Proletarian women in particular found it difficult to obtain any job other than those carrying the lowest status: as domestic servants (the occupation of a third of the female work-force), farm-hands, spinners, knitters, embroiderers, hawkers, wet nurses. As Merry Wiesner (among others) tells us, the assumption was gaining ground (in the law, in the tax records, in the ordinances of the guilds) that women should not work outside the home, and should engage in "production" only in order to help their husbands. It was even argued that any work that women did at home was "non-work" and was worthless even when done for the market (Wiesner 1993: 83ff). Thus, if a woman sewed some clothes it was "domestic work" or "housekeeping," even if the clothes were not for the family, whereas when a man did the same task it was considered "productive." Such was the devaluation of women's labor that city governments told the guilds to overlook the production that women (especially widows) did in their homes, because it was not real work, and because the women needed it not to fall on public relief. Wiesner adds that women accepted this fiction and even apologized for asking to work, pleading for it on account of their need to support themselves (*ibid.*:

The prostitute and the soldier. Often a camp follower, the prostitute performed the function of a wife for soldiers and other proletarians, washing and cooking for the men she served in addition to providing sexual services.

A prostitute inviting a client. The number of prostitutes increased immensely in the aftermath of land privatization and the commercialization of agriculture which expelled many peasant women from the land.

84–85). Soon all female work, if done in the home, was defined as "housekeeping," and even when done outside the home it was paid less than men's work, and never enough for women to be able to live by it. Marriage was now seen as a woman's true career, and women's inability to support themselves was taken so much for granted, that when a single woman tried to settle in a village, she was driven away even if she earned a wage.

Combined with land dispossession, this loss of power with regard to wage employment led to the massification of prostitution. As Le Roy Ladurie reports, the growth in the number of prostitutes in France was visible everywhere:

> From Avignon to Narbonne to Barcelona "sporting women" (*femmes de debauche*) stationed themselves at the gates of the cities, in streets of red-light districts... and on the bridges... [so that] by 1594 the "shameful traffic" was flourishing as never before (Le RoyLadurie 1974: 112–13).

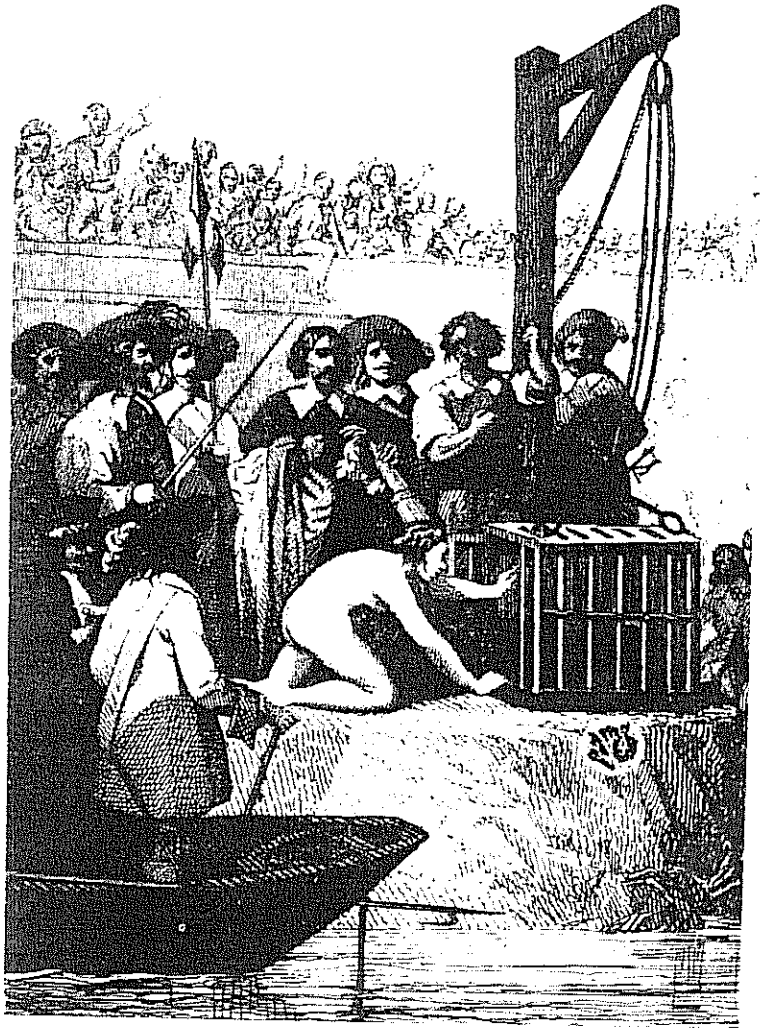
The situation was similar in England and Spain, where, everyday, in the cities, poor women arriving from the countryside, and even the wives of craftsmen, rounded up the family income with this work. A proclamation issued by the political authorities in Madrid, in 1631, denounced the problem, complaining that many vagabond women were now wandering among the city's streets, alleys, and taverns, enticing men to sin with them (Vigil 1986: 114-5). But no sooner had prostitution become the main form of subsistence for a large female population than the institutional attitude towards it changed. Whereas in the late Middle Ages it had been officially accepted as a necessary evil, and prostitutes had benefited from the high wage regime, in the 16th century, the situation was reversed. In a climate of intense misogyny, characterized by the advance of the Protestant Reformation and witch-hunting, prostitution was first subjected to new restrictions and then criminalized. Everywhere, between 1530 and 1560, town brothels were closed and prostitutes, especially street-walkers, were subjected to severe penalties: banishment, flogging, and other cruel forms of chastisement. Among them was "the ducking stool" or *acabussade* — "a piece of grim theatre," as Nickie Roberts describes it — whereby the victims were tied up, sometimes they were forced into a cage, and then were repeatedly immersed in rivers or ponds, till they almost drowned (Roberts 1992: 115–16). Meanwhile, in 16th-century France, the raping of a prostitute ceased to be a crime.[63] In Madrid, as well, it was decided that female vagabonds and prostitutes should not be allowed to stay and sleep in the streets and under the porticos of the town, and if caught should be given a hundred lashes, and then should be banned from the city for six years in addition to having their heads and eyebrows shaved.

What can account for this drastic attack on female workers? And how does the exclusion of women from the sphere of socially recognized work and monetary relations relate to the impositon of forced maternity upon them, and the contemporary massification of the witch-hunt?

Looking at these phenomena from the vantage point of the present, after four centuries of capitalist disciplining of women, the answers may seem to impose themselves. Though women's waged work, housework, and (paid) sexual work are still studied all too often in isolation from each other, we are now in a better position to see that the discrimination that women have suffered in the waged work-force has been directly rooted

in their function as unpaid laborers in the home. We can thus connect the banning of prostitution and the expulsion of women from the organized workplace with the creation of the housewife and the reconstruction of the family as the locus for the production of labor-power. However, from a theoretical and a political viewpoint, the fundamental question is under what conditions such degradation was possible, and what social forces promoted it or were complicitous with it.

The answer here is that an important factor in the devaluation of women's labor was the campaign that craft workers mounted, starting in the late 15th century, to exclude female workers from their work-shops, presumably to protect themselves from the assaults of the capitalist merchants who were employing women at cheaper rates. The craftsmen's efforts have left an abundant trail of evidence.[64] Whether in Italy, France, or Germany, journeymen petitioned the authorities not to allow women



A prostitute being subjected to the torture of the accabussade. "She will be submerged in the river several times and then imprisoned for life."

Like the "battle for the breeches," the image of the domineering wife challenging the sexual hierarchy and beating her husband was one of the favorite targets of 16th and 17th-century social literature.

to compete with them, banned them from their ranks, went on strike when the ban was not observed, and even refused to work with men who worked with women. It appears that the craftsmen were also interested in limiting women to domestic work because, given their economic difficulties, "the prudent household management on the part of a wife" was becoming for them an indispensable condition for avoiding bankruptcy and for keeping an independent shop. Sigrid Brauner (the author of the above citation) speaks of the importance accorded by the German artisans to this social rule (Brauner 1995: 96–97). Women tried to resist this onslaught, but — faced with the intimidating tactics male workers used against them — failed. Those who dared to work out of the home, in a public space and for the market, were portrayed as sexually aggressive shrews or even as "whores" and "witches" (Howell 1986: 182–83).[65] Indeed, there is evidence that the wave of misogyny that by the late 15th century was mounting in the European cities — reflected in the male obsession with the "battle for the breeches" and with the character of the disobedient wife, pictured in the popular literature in the act of beating her husband or riding on his back — emanated also from this (self-defeating) attempt to drive women from the workplace and from the market.

On the other hand, it is clear that this attempt would not have succeeded if the authorities had not cooperated with it. But they obviously saw that it was in their interest to do so. For, in addition to pacifying the rebellious journeymen, the displacement of women from the crafts provided the necessary basis for their fixation in reproductive labor and their utilization as low-waged workers in cottage industry.

Women: The New Commons and the Substitute for the Lost Land

It was from this alliance between the crafts and the urban authorities, along with the continuing privatization of land, that a new sexual division of labor or, better, a new "sexual contract," in Carol Pateman's words (1988), was forged, defining women in terms — mothers, wives, daughters, widows — that hid their status as workers, while giving men free access to women's bodies, their labor, and the bodies and labor of their children.

According to this new social-sexual contract, proletarian women became for male workers the substitute for the land lost to the enclosures, their most basic means of reproduction, and a communal good anyone could appropriate and use at will. Echoes of this "primitive appropriation" can be heard in the concept of the "common woman" (Karras 1989) which in the 16th century qualified those who prostituted themselves. But in the new organization of work *every woman (other than those privatized by bourgeois men) became a communal good*, for once women's activities were defined as non-work, women's labor began to appear as a natural resource, available to all, no less than the air we breathe or the water we drink.

This was for women a historic defeat. With their expulsion from the crafts and the devaluation of reproductive labor poverty became feminized, and to enforce men's "primary appropriation" of women's labor, a new patriarchal order was constructed, reducing women to a double dependence: on employers and on men. The fact that unequal power relations between women and men existed even prior to the advent of capitalism, as did a discriminating sexual division of labor, does not detract from this assessment. For in pre-capitalist Europe women's subordination to men had been tempered by the fact that they had access to the commons and other communal assets, while in the new capitalist regime *women themselves became the commons,* as their work was defined as a natural resource, laying outside the sphere of market relations.

The Patriarchy of the Wage

Significant, in this context, are the changes that took place within the family which, in this period, began to separate from the public sphere and acquire its modern connotations as the main center for the reproduction of the work-force.

The counterpart of the market, the instrument for the privatization of social relations and, above all, for the propagation of capitalist discipline and patriarchal rule, the family emerges in the period of primitive accumulation also as the most important institution for the appropriation and concealment of women's labor.

We see this in particular when we look at the working-class family. This is a subject that has been understudied. Previous discussions have privileged the family of propertied men, plausibly because, at the time to which we are referring, it was the dominant form and the model for parental and marital relations. There has also been more interest in the family as a political institution than as a place of work. What has been emphasized, then, is that in the new bourgeois family, the husband became the representative of the state, charged with disciplining and supervising the "subordinate classes," a cate-

gory that for 16th and 17th-century political theorists (Jean Bodin, for example) included the man's wife and his children (Schochet 1975). Thus, the identification of the family as a micro-state or a micro-church, and the demand by the authorities that single workers live under the roof and rule of a master. It is also pointed out that within the bourgeois family the woman lost much of her power, being generally excluded from the family business and confined to the supervision of the household.

But what is missing in this picture is a recognition that, while in the upper class it was *property* that gave the husband power over his wife and children, a similar power was granted to working-class men over women by means of *women's exclusion from the wage.*

Exemplary of this trend was the family of the cottage workers in the putting-out system. Far from shunning marriage and family-making, male cottage workers depended on it, for a wife could "help" them with the work they would do for the merchants, while caring for their physical needs, and providing them with children, who from an early age could be employed at the loom or in some subsidiary occupation. Thus, even in times of population decline, cottage workers apparently continued to multiply; their families were so large that a contemporary 17th-century Austrian, looking at those living in his village, described them as packed in their homes like sparrows on a rafter. What stands out in this type of arrangement is that though the wife worked side-by-side with her husband, she too producing for the market, it was the husband who now received her wage. This was true also for other female workers once they married. In England "a married man... was legally entitled to his wife's earnings" even when the job she did was nursing or breast-feeding. Thus, when a parish employed women to do this kind of job, the records "frequently hid (their) presence as workers" registering the payment made in the men's names. "Whether the payment was made to the husband or to the wife depended on the whim of the clerk" (Mendelson and Crawford 1998: 287).

This policy, making it impossible for women to have money of their own, created the material conditions for their subjection to men and the appropriation of their labor by male workers. It is in this sense that I speak of *the patriarchy of the wage*. We must also rethink the concept of "wage slavery." If it is true that male workers became only formally free under the new wage-labor regime, the group of workers who, in the transition to capitalism, most approached the condition of slaves was working-class women.

At the same time — given the wretched conditions in which waged workers lived — the housework that women performed to reproduce their families was necessarily limited. Married or not, proletarian women needed to earn some money, which they did by holding multiple jobs. Housework, moreover, requires some reproductive capital: furniture, utensils, clothing, money for food. But waged workers lived poorly, "slaving away by day and night" (as an artisan from Nuremberg denounced in 1524), just to stave off hunger and feed their wives and children (Brauner 1995: 96). Most barely had a roof over their heads, living in huts where other families and animals also resided, and where hygiene (poorly observed even among the better off) was totally lacking; their clothes were rags, their diet at best consisted of bread, cheese and some vegetables. Thus, we do not find in this period, among the working class, the classic figure of the full-time housewife. It was only in the 19th century — in response to the first intense cycle of struggle against industrial work — that the "modern family" centered on the full-time housewife's unpaid reproductive labor was generalized in the working class, in England first and later in the United States.

Its development (following the passage of Factory Acts limiting the employment of women and children in the factories) reflected the first long-term investment the capitalist class made in the reproduction of the work-force beyond its numerical expansion. It was the result of a trade-off, forged under the threat of insurrection, between the granting of higher wages, capable of supporting a "non-working" wife, and a more intensive rate of exploitation. Marx spoke of it as a shift from "absolute" to "relative surplus," that is, a shift from a type of exploitation based upon the lengthening of the working day to a maximum and the reduction of the wage to a minimum, to a regime where higher wages and shorter hours would be compensated with an increase in the productivity of work and the pace of production. From the capitalist perspective, it was a social revolution, overriding a long-held commitment to low wages. It resulted from a new deal between workers and employers, again founded on the exclusion of women from the wage — putting an end to their recruitment in the early phases of the Industrial Revolution. It was also the mark of a new capitalist affluence, the product of two centuries of exploitation of slave labor, soon to be boosted by a new phase of colonial expansion.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, by contrast, despite an obsessive concern with the size of population and the number of "working poor," the actual investment in the reproduction of the work-force was extremely low. Consequently, the bulk of the reproductive labor done by proletarian women was not for their families, but for the families of their employers or for the market. One third of the female population, on average, in England, Spain, France, and Italy, worked as maids. Thus, in the proletariat, the tendency was towards the postponment of marriage and the disintegration of the family (16th-century English villages experienced a yearly turnover of fifty percent). Often the poor were even forbidden to marry, when it was feared that their children would fall on public relief, and when this actually happened, the children were taken away from them and farmed out to the parish to work. It is estimated that one third or more of the population of rural Europe remained single; in the towns the rates were even higher, especially among women; in Germany, forty percent were either "spinsters" or widows (Ozment 1983: 41–42).

Nevertheless — though the housework done by proletarian women was reduced to a minimum, and proletarian women had always to work for the market — within the working-class community of the transition period we already see the emergence of the sexual division of labor that was to become typical of the capitalist organization of work. At its center was an increasing differentiation between male and female labor, as the tasks performed by women and men became more diversified and, above all, became the carriers of different social relations.

Impoverished and disempowered as they may be, male waged workers could still benefit from their wives' labor and wages, or they could buy the services of prostitutes. Throughout this first phase of proletarianization, it was the prostitute who often performed for male workers the function of a wife, cooking and washing for them in addition to serving them sexually. Moreover, the criminalization of prostitution, which punished the woman but hardly touched her male customers, strengthened male power. Any man could now destroy a woman simply by declaring that she was a prostitute, or by publicizing that she had given in to his sexual desires. Women would have to plead with men "not to take away their honor" (the only property left to them) (Cavallo and Cerutti

1980: 346ff), the assumption being that their lives were now in the hands of men who (like feudal lords) could exercise over them a power of life and death.

The Taming of Women and the Redefinition of Femininity and Masculinity: Women the Savages of Europe

It is not surprising, then, in view of this devaluation of women's labor and social status, that the insubordination of women and the methods by which they could be "tamed" were among the main themes in the literature and social policy of the "transition" (Underdown 1985a: 116–36).[70] Women could not have been totally devalued as workers and deprived of autonomy with respect to men without being subjected to an intense process of social degradation; and indeed, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, women lost ground in every area of social life.

A key area of change in this respect was the law, where in this period we can observe a steady erosion of women's rights.[71] One of the main rights that women lost was the right to conduct economic activities alone, as *femme soles*. In France, they lost the right to make contracts or to represent themselves in court, being declared legal "imbeciles." In Italy, they began to appear less frequently in the courts to denounce abuses perpetrated against them. In Germany, when a middle-class woman became a widow, it became customary to appoint a tutor to manage her affairs. German women were also forbidden to live alone or with other women and, in the case of the poor, even with their own families, since it was expected that they would not be properly controlled. In sum, together with economic and social devaluation, women experienced a process of legal infantilization.

Women's loss of social power was also expressed through a new sexual differentiation of space. In the Mediterranean countries women were expelled not only from many waged jobs but also from the streets, where an unaccompanied woman risked being subjected to ridicule or sexual assault (Davis 1998). In England, too, ("a women's paradise" in the eyes of some Italian visitors), the presence of women in public began to be frowned upon. English women were discouraged from sitting in front of their homes or staying near their windows; they were also instructed not to spend time with their female friends (in this period the term "gossip" — female friend — began to acquire a disparaging connotation). It was even recommended that women should not visit their parents too often after marriage.

How the new sexual division of labor reshaped male-female relations can be seen from the broad debate that was carried out in the learned and popular literature on the nature of female virtues and vices, one of the main avenues for the ideological redefinition of gender relations in the transition to capitalism. Known from an early phase as *"la querelle des femmes,"* what transpires from this debate is a new sense of curiosity for the subject, indicating that old norms were breaking down, and the public was becoming aware that the basic elements of sexual politics were being reconstructed. Two trends within this debate can be identified. On the one hand, new cultural canons were constructed maximizing the differences between women and men and creating more feminine and more masculine prototypes (Fortunati 1984). On the other hand, it was established that women were inher-

A scold is paraded through the community wearing the "bridle," an iron contraption used to punish women with a sharp tongue. Significantly, a similar device was used by European slavetraders in Africa to subdue their captives and carry them to their ships.

ently inferior to men — excessively emotional and lusty, unable to govern themselves — and had to be placed under male control. As with the condemnation of witchcraft, consensus on this matter cut across religious and intellectual lines. From the pulpit or the written page, humanists, Protestant reformers, counter-reformation Catholics, all cooperated in the vilification of women, constantly and obsessively.

Women were accused of being unreasonable, vain, wild, wasteful. Especially blamed was the female tongue, seen as an instrument of insubordination. But the main female villain was the disobedient wife, who, together with the "scold," the "witch," and the "whore" was the favorite target of dramatists, popular writers, and moralists. In this sense, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593) was the manifesto of the age. The punishment of female insubordination to patriarchal authority was called for and celebrated in countless misogynous plays and tracts. English literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period feasted on such themes. Typical of this genre is John Ford's *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* (1633) which ends with the didactic assassination, execution and murder of three of the four female characters. Other classic works concerned with the disciplining of women are John Swetnam's *Arraignment of Lewed, Idle, Forward, Inconstant Women* (1615); and *The Parliament of Women* (1646), a satire primarily addressed against middle class women, which portrays them as busy making laws in order to gain supremacy over their husbands.[72] Meanwhile, new laws and new forms of torture were introduced to control women's behavior in and out of the home, confirming that the literary denigration of women expressed a precise political project aiming to strip them of any autonomy and social power. In the Europe of the Age of Reason, the women accused of being scolds were muzzled like dogs and paraded in the streets; prostitutes were whipped, or caged and subjected to fake drownings, while capital punishment was established for women convicted of adultery (Underdown 1985a: 117ff).

It is no exaggeration to say that women were treated with the same hostility and sense of estrangement accorded "Indian savages" in the literature that developed on this subject after the Conquest. The parallel is not casual. In both cases literary and cultural denigration was at the service of a project of expropriation. As we will see, the demonization of the American indigenous people served to justify their enslavement and the plunder of their resources. In Europe, the attack waged on women justified the appropriation of their labor by men and the criminalization of their control over reproduction. Always, the price of resistance was extermination. None of the tactics deployed against European women and colonial subjects would have succeeded, had they not been sustained by a campaign of terror. In the case of European women it was the witch-hunt that played the main role in the construction of their new social function, and the degradation of their social identity.

The definition of women as demonic beings, and the atrocious and humiliating practices to which so many of them were subjected left indelible marks in the collective female psyche and in women's sense of possibilities. From every viewpoint — socially, economically, culturally, politically — the witch-hunt was a turning point in women's lives; it was the equivalent of the historic defeat to which Engels alludes, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), as the cause of the downfall of the matri-


THE 220

Parliament of VVomen.

With the merrie Lawes by them newly Enacted. To live in more Eafe, Pompe, Pride, and wantonneffe: but efpecially that they might have fuperiority and dominerie over their husbands: with a new way found out by them to cure any old or new Cuckolds, and how both parties may recover their credit and honefty againe.

London, Printed for W. Wilson and are to be fold by him in Will yard in Little Saint Bartholomewes. 1646.

Aug: 14 - London 1646.

Frontispiece of THE PARLIAMENT OF WOMEN *(1646), a work typical of the anti-women satire that dominated English Literature in the period of the Civil War.*

archal world. For the witch-hunt destroyed a whole world of female practices, collective relations, and systems of knowledge that had been the foundation of women's power in pre-capitalist Europe, and the condition for their resistance in the struggle against feudalism.

Out of this defeat a new model of femininity emerged: the ideal woman and wife — passive, obedient, thrifty, of few words, always busy at work, and chaste. This change began at the end of the 17th century, after women had been subjected for more than two centuries to state terrorism. Once women were defeated, the image of femininity constructed in the "transition" was discarded as an unnecessary tool, and a new, tamed one took its place. While at the time of the witch-hunt women had been portrayed as savage beings, mentally weak, unsatiably lusty, rebellious, insubordinate, incapable of self-control, by the 18th century the canon has been reversed. Women were now depicted as passive, asexual beings, more obedient, more moral than men, capable of exerting a positive moral influence on them. Even their irrationality could now be valorized, as the Dutch philosopher Pierre Bayle realized in his *Dictionaire Historique et Critique* (1740), in which he praised the power of the female "maternal instinct," arguing that that it should be viewed as a truly providential device, ensuring that despite the disadvantages of childbirthing and childraising, women do continue to reproduce.

Colonization, Globalization, and Women

While the response to the population crisis in Europe was the subjugation of women to reproduction, in colonial America, where colonization destroyed ninety five percent of the aboriginal population, the response was the slave trade which delivered to the European ruling class an immense quantity of labor-power.

As early as the 16th century, approximately one million African slaves and indigenous workers were producing surplus-value for Spain in colonial America, at a rate of exploitation far higher than that of workers in Europe, and contributing to sectors of the European economy that were developing in a capitalist direction (Blaut 1992a: 45–46).[73] By 1600, Brazil alone exported twice the value in sugar of all the wool that England exported in the same year (*ibid.*: 42). The accumulation rate was so high in the Brazilian sugar plantations that every two years they doubled their capacity. Gold and silver too played a key role in the solution to the capitalist crisis. Gold imported from Brazil reactivated commerce and industry in Europe (DeVries 1976: 20). More than 17,000 tons were imported by 1640, giving the capitalist class there an exceptional advantage in access to workers, commodities, and land (Blaut 1992a: 38–40). But the true wealth was the labor accumulated through the slave trade, which made possible a mode of production that could not be imposed in Europe.

It is now established that the plantation system fueled the Industrial Revolution, as argued by Eric Williams, who noted that hardly a brick in Liverpool and Bristol was not cemented with African blood (1944: 61–63). But capitalism may not even have taken off without Europe's "annexation of America," and the "blood and sweat" that for two centuries flowed to Europe from the plantations. This must be stressed, as it helps us realize how essential slavery has been for the history of capitalism, and why, periodi-

cally, but systematically, whenever the capitalist system is threatened by a major economic crisis, the capitalist class has to launch a process of "primitive accumulation," that is, a process of large-scale colonization and enslavement, such as the one we are witnessing at present (Bales 1999).

The plantation system was crucial for capitalist development not only because of the immense amount of surplus labor that was accumulated from it, but because it set a model of labor management, export-oriented production, economic integration and international division of labor that have since become paradigmatic for capitalist class relations.

With its immense concentration of workers and its captive labor force uprooted from its homeland, unable to rely on local support, the plantation prefigured not only the factory but also the later use of immigration and globalization to cut the cost of labor. In particular, the plantation was a key step in the formation of an international division of labor that (through the production of "consumer goods") integrated the work of the slaves into the reproduction of the European work-force, while keeping enslaved and waged workers geographically and socially divided.

The colonial production of sugar, tea, tobacco, rum, and cotton — the most important commodities, together with bread, in the production of labor-power in Europe — did not take off on a large scale until after the 1650s, after slavery had been institutionalized and wages in Europe had begun to (modestly) rise (Rowling 1987: 51, 76, 85). It must be mentioned here, however, because, when it did take off, two mechanisms were introduced that significantly restructured the reproduction of labor internationally. On one side, a global assembly line was created that cut the cost of the commodities necessary to produce labor-power in Europe, and linked enslaved and waged workers in ways that pre-figured capitalism's present use of Asian, African, and Latin American workers as providers of "cheap" "consumer" goods (cheapened by death squads and military violence) for the "advanced" capitalist countries.

On the other side, the metropolitan wage became the vehicle by which the goods produced by enslaved workers went to the market, and the value of the products of enslaved-labor was realized. In this way, as with female domestic work, the integration of enslaved labor into the production and reproduction of the metropolitan work-force was further established, and the wage was further redefined as an instrument of accumulation, that is, as a lever for mobilizing not only the labor of the workers paid by it, but also for the labor of a multitude of workers hidden by it, because of the unwaged conditions of their work.

Did workers in Europe know that they were buying products resulting from slave labor and, if they did, did they object to it? This is a question we would like to ask them, but it is one which I cannot answer. What is certain is that the history of tea, sugar, rum, tobacco, and cotton is far more significant than we can deduce from the contribution which these commodities made, as raw materials or means of exchange in the slave trade, to the rise of the factory system. For what traveled with these "exports" was not only the blood of the slaves but the seeds of a new science of exploitation, and a new division of the working class by which waged-work, rather than providing an alternative to slavery, was made to depend on it for its existence, as a means (like female unpaid labor) for the expansion of the unpaid part of the waged working-day.

So closely integrated were the lives of the enslaved laborers in America and waged laborers in Europe that in the Caribbean islands, where slaves were given plots of land ("provision grounds") to cultivate for their own use, how much land was allotted to them, and how much time was given to them to cultivate it, varied in proportion to the price of sugar on the world-market (Morrissey 1989: 51–59) — plausibly determined by the dynamics of workers' wages and workers' struggle over reproduction.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the integration of slave labor in the production of the European waged proletariat created a community of interests between European workers and the metropolitan capitalists, presumably cemented by their common desire for cheap imported goods.

In reality, like the Conquest, the slave trade was an epochal misfortune for European workers. As we have seen, slavery (like the witch-hunt) was a major ground of experimentation for methods of labor-control that were later imported into Europe. Slavery also affected the European workers' wages and legal status; for it cannot be a coincidence that only with the end of slavery did wages in Europe decisively increase and did European workers gain the right to organize.

It is also hard to imagine that workers in Europe profited from the Conquest of America, at least in its initial phase. Let us remember that it was the intensity of the anti-feudal struggle that instigated the lesser nobility and the merchants to seek colonial expansion, and that the conquistadors came from the ranks of the most-hated enemies of the European working class. It is also important to remember that the Conquest provided the European ruling class with the silver and gold used to pay the mercenary armies that defeated the urban and rural revolts; and that, in the same years when Arawaks, Aztecs, and Incas were being subjugated, workers in Europe were being driven from their homes, branded like animals, and burnt as witches.

We should not assume, then, that the European proletariat was always an accomplice to the plunder of the Americas, though individual proletarians undoubtedly were. The nobility expected so little cooperation from the "lower classes" that initially the Spaniards allowed only a few to embark. Only 8,000 Spaniards migrated legally to the Americas in the entire 16th century, the clergy making up 17% of the lot (Hamilton 1965: 299; Williams 1984: 38–40). Even later, people were forbidden from settling overseas independently, because it was feared that they might collaborate with the local population.

For most proletarians, in the 17th and 18th centuries, access to the New World was through indentured servitude and "transportation," the punishment which the authorities in England adopted to rid the country of convicts, political and religious dissidents, and the vast population of vagabonds and beggars that was produced by the enclosures. As Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker point out in *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000), the colonizers' fear of unrestricted migration was well-founded, given the wretched living conditions that prevailed in Europe, and the appeal exercised by the reports that circulated about the New World, which pictured it as a wonder land where people lived free from toil and tyranny, masters and greed, and where "myne" and "thyne" had no place, all things being held in common (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; Brandon 1986: 6–7). So strong was the attraction exercised by the New World that the vision of a new

society it provided apparently influenced the political thought of the Enlightenment, contributing to the emergence of a new concept of "liberty," taken to signify masterlessness, an idea previously unknown in European political theory (Brandon 1986: 23–28). Not surprisingly, some Europeans tried to "lose themselves" in this utopian world where, as Linebaugh and Rediker powerfully put it, they could reconstruct the lost experience of the commons (2000: 24). Some lived for years with Indian tribes despite the restrictions placed on those who settled in the American colonies and the heavy price to be paid if caught, since escapees were treated like traitors and put to death. This was the fate of some young English settlers in Virginia who, having run away to live with the Indians, on being caught were condemned by the colony's councilmen to be "burned, broken on the wheel... [and] hanged or shot to death" (Koning 1993: 61). "Terror created boundaries," Linebaugh and Rediker comment (2000: 34). Yet, as late as 1699, the English still had a great difficulty persuading the people whom the Indians had captivated to leave their Indian manner of living.

> No argument, no entreaties, no tears [a contemporary reported]... could persuade many of them to leave their Indian friends. On the other hand, Indian children have been carefully educated among the English, clothed and taught, yet there is not one instance that any of these would remain, but returned to their own nations (Koning 1993: 60).

As for the European proletarians who signed themselves away into indentured servitude or arrived in the New World in consequence of a penal sentence, their lot was not too different, at first, from that of the African slaves with whom they often worked side by side. Their hostility to their masters was equally intense, so that the planters viewed them as a dangerous lot and, by the second half of the 17th century, began to limit their use and introduced a legislation aimed at separating them from the Africans. But only at the end of the 18th century were racial boundaries irrevocably drawn (Moulier Boutang 1998). Until then, the possibility of alliances between whites, blacks, and aboriginal peoples, and the fear of such unity in the European ruling class' imagination, at home and on the plantations, was constantly present. Shakespeare gave voice to it in *The Tempest* (1612) where he pictured the conspiracy organized by Caliban, the native rebel, son of a witch, and by Trinculo and Stephano, the ocean-going European proletarians, suggesting the possibility of a fatal alliance among the oppressed, and providing a dramatic counterpoint to Prospero's magic healing of the discord among the rulers.

In *The Tempest* the conspiracy ends ignominiously, with the European proletarians demonstrating to be nothing better than petty thieves and drunkards, and with Caliban begging forgiveness from his colonial master. Thus, when the defeated rebels are brought in front of Prospero and his former enemies Sebastian and Antonio (now reconciled with him), they are met with derision and thoughts of ownership and division:

> SEBASTIAN. What things are these, my lord Antonio?
> Will money buy them?
>
> ANTONIO. Very like; one of them is a plain fish, and, no doubt, marchetable.
>
> PROSPERO. Mark but the badges of these men, my lords,
> Then say if they be true. This mis-shapen knave,
> His mother was a witch, and one so strong
> That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,
> And deal in her command without her power.
> These three have robbed me; and this demi-devil—
> For he's a bastard one — had plotted with them
> To take my life. Two of these fellows you
> Must know and own. This thing of darkness I
> Acknowledge mine. (Shakespeare, Act V, Scene 1, lines 265–276)

Offstage, however, the threat continued. "Both on Bermuda and Barbados white servants were discovered plotting with African slaves, as thousands of convicts were being shipped there in the 1650s from the British islands" (Rowling 1987: 57). In Virginia the peak in the alliance between black and white servants was Bacon's Rebellion of 1675–76, when African slaves and British indentured servants joined together to conspire against their masters.

It is for this reason that, starting in the 1640s, the accumulation of an enslaved proletariat in the Southern American colonies and the Caribbean was accompanied by the construction of racial hierarchies, thwarting the possibility of such combinations. Laws were passed depriving Africans of previously granted civic rights, such as citizenship, the right to bear arms, and the right to make depositions or seek redress in a tribunal for injuries suffered. The turning point was when slavery was made an hereditary condition, and the slave masters were given the right to beat and kill their slaves. In addition, marriages between "blacks" and "whites" were forbidden. Later, after the American War of Independence, white indentured servitude, deemed a vestige of British rule, was eliminated. As a result, by the late 18th century, colonial America had moved from "a society with slaves to a slave society" (Moulier Boutang 1998: 189), and the possibility of solidarity between Africans and whites had been severely undermined. "White," in the colonies, became not just a badge of social and economic privilege "serving to designate those who until 1650 had been called 'Christians' and afterwards 'English' or 'free men'" (*ibid.*:194), but a moral attribute, a means by which social hegemony was naturalized. "Black" or "African," by contrast, became synonymous with slave, so much so that free black people — still a sizeable presence in early 17th-century America — were later forced to prove that they were free.

Sex, Race and Class in the Colonies

Would Caliban's conspiracy have had a different outcome had its protagonists been women? Had the instigators been not Caliban but his mother, Sycorax, the powerful Algerian witch that Shakespeare hides in the play's background, and not Trinculo and Stephano but the sisters of the witches who, in the same years of the Conquest, were

being burned in Europe at the stake?

This question is a rhetorical one, but it serves to question the nature of the sexual division of labor in the colonies, and of the bonds that could be established there between European, indigenous, and African women by virtue of a common experience of sexual discrimination.

In *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (1992), Maryse Condé gives us an insight into the kind of situation that could produce such bonding, by describing how Tituba and her new mistress, the Puritan Samuel Parris' young wife, gave each other support at first against his murderous contempt for women.

An even more outstanding example comes from the Caribbean, where low-class English women "transported" from Britain as convicts or indentured servants became a significant part of the labor-gangs on the sugar estates. "Considered unfit for marriage by propertied white males, and disqualified for domestic service," because of their insolence and riotous disposition, "landless white women were dismissed to manual labor in plantations, public construction works, and the urban service sector. In these worlds they socialized intimately with the slave community, and with enslaved black men." They established households and had children with them (Beckles 1995: 131–32). They also cooperated as well as competed with female slaves in the marketing of produce or stolen goods.

But with the institutionalization of slavery, which was accompanied by a lessening of the burden for white workers, and a decrease in the number of women arriving from Europe as wives for the planters, the situation changed drastically. Regardless of their social origin, white women were upgraded, or married off within the ranks of the white power structure, and whenever possible they became owners of slaves themselves, usually female ones, employed for domestic work (*ibid.*).[74]

This, however, was not an automatic process. Like sexism, racism had to be legislated and enforced. Among the most revealing prohibitions we must again count that marriage and sexual relations between blacks and whites were forbidden, white women who married black slaves were condemned, and the children resulting from such marriages were enslaved for life. Passed in Maryland and Virginia in the 1660s, these laws prove that a segregated, racist society was instituted from above, and that intimate relations between "blacks" and "whites" must have been very common, indeed, if life-enslavement was deemed necessary to terminate them.

As if following the script laid out by the witch-hunt, the new laws demonized the relation between white women and black men. When they were passed in the 1660s, the witch-hunt in Europe was coming to an end, but in America all the taboos surrounding the witch and the black devil were being revived, this time at the expense of black men.

"Divide and rule" also became official policy in the Spanish colonies, after a period when the numerical inferiority of the colonists recommended a more liberal attitude towards inter-ethnic relations and alliances with the local chiefs through marriage. But, in the 1540s, as the increase in the number of *mestizos* was undermining colonial privilege, "race" was established as a key factor in the transmission of property, and a racial hierarchy was put in place to separate indigenous, *mestizos*, and *mulattos* from each other and from the white population (Nash 1980).[75] Prohibitions relating to marriage and female sexuality served here, too, to enforce social exclusion. But in Spanish America,

A female slave being branded. The branding of women by the devil had figured prominently in the European witch-trials, as a symbol of total subjugation. But in reality, the true devils were the white slave traders and plantation owners who (like the men in this picture) did not hesitate to treat the women they enslaved like cattle.

segregation along racial lines succeeded only in part, checked by migration, population decline, indigenous revolt, and the formation of a white urban proletariat with no prospect of economic advancement, and therefore prone to identify with mestizos and mulattos more than with the white upper-class. Thus, while in the plantation societies of the Caribbean the differences between European and Africans increased with time, in the South American colonies a "re-composition" became possible, especially among low-class European, *mestiza*, and African women who, beside their precarious economic position, shared the disadvantages deriving from the double standard built into the law, which made them vulnerable to male abuse.

Signs of this "recomposition" can be found in the records which the Inquisition kept in 18th-century Mexico of the investigations it conducted to eradicate magical and heretic beliefs (Behar 1987: 34–51). The task was hopeless, and soon the Inquisition lost interest in the project, convinced that popular magic was no longer a threat to the political order. But the testimonies it collected reveal the existence of multiple exchanges among women in matters relating to magical cures and love remedies, creating in time a new cultural reality drawn from the encounter between the African, European and indigenous magical traditions. As Ruth Behar writes:

> Indian women gave hummingbirds to Spanish healers for use in sexual attraction, mulatta women told mestiza women how to tame their husbands, a loba sorceress introduced a coyota to the Devil. This "popular" system of belief ran parallel to the system of belief of the Church, and it spread as quickly as Christianity did in the New World, so that after a while it became impossible to distinguish in it what was "Indian" or "Spanish" or "African" (*ibid.*).[76]

Assimilated in the eyes of the Inquisition as people "without reason," this variegated female world which Ruth Behar describes is a telling example of the alliances that, across colonial and color lines, women could build, by virtue of their common experience, and their interest in sharing the traditional knowledges and practices available to them to control their reproduction and fight sexual discrimination.

Like discrimination on the basis of "race," this was more than a cultural baggage which the colonizers brought from Europe with their pikes and horses. No less than the destruction of communalism, it was a strategy dictated by specific economic interest and the need to create the preconditions for a capitalist economy, and as such always adjusted to the task at hand.

In Mexico and Peru, where population decline recommended that female domestic labor in the home be incentivized, a new sexual hierarchy was introduced by the Spanish authorities that stripped indigenous women of their autonomy, and gave their male kin more power over them. Under the new laws, married women became men's property, and were forced (against the traditional custom) to follow their husbands to their homes. A *compadrazgo* system was also created further limiting their rights, placing the authority over children in male hands. In addition, to ensure that indigenous women reproduced the workers recruited to do *mita* work in the mines, the Spanish authorities legislated that no one could separate husband from wife, which meant that women were forced to follow their husbands whether they wanted it or not, even to areas known to be death camps, due to the pollution created by the mining (Cook Noble 1981:205-6).[77]

The intervention of the French Jesuits in the disciplining and training of the Montagnais-Naskapi, in mid-17th century Canada, provides a revealing example of how gender differences were accumulated. The story is told by the late anthropologist Eleanor Leacock in her *Myths of Male Dominance* (1981), where she examines the diary of one of its protagonists. This was Father Paul Le Jeune, a Jesuit missionary who, in typical colonial fashion, had joined a French trading post to Christianize the Indians, and turn them into citizens of "New France." The Montagnais-Naskapi were a nomadic Indian nation that had lived in great harmony, hunting and fishing in the eastern Labrador Peninsula. But by the time of Le Jeune's arrival, their community was being undermined by the presence of Europeans and the spread of fur-trading, so that some men, eager to strike a commercial alliance with them, were amenable to letting the French dictate how they should govern themselves (Leacock 1981: 39ff).

As often happened when Europeans came in contact with native American populations, the French were impressed by Montagnais-Naskapi generosity, their

sense of cooperation and indifference to status, but they were scandalized by their "lack of morals;" they saw that the Naskapi had no conception of private property, of authority, of male superiority, and they even refused to punish their children (Leacock 1981: 34–38). The Jesuits decided to change all that, setting out to teach the Indians the basic elements of civilization, convinced that this was necessary to turn them into reliable trade partners. In this spirit, they first taught them that "man is the master," that "in France women do not rule their husbands," and that courting at night, divorce at either partner's desire, and sexual freedom for both spouses, before or after marriage, had to be forbidden. Here is a telling exchange Le Jeune had, on this score, with a Naskapi man:

> "I told him it was not honorable for a woman to love anyone else except her husband, and that this evil being among them, he himself was not sure that his son, who was present, was his son. He replied, 'Thou has no sense. You French people love only your children; but we love all the children of our tribe.' I began to laugh seeing that he philosophized in horse and mule fashion" (*ibid.*: 50).

Backed by the Governor of New France, the Jesuits succeeded in convincing the Naskapi to provide themselves with some chiefs, and bring "their" women to order. Typically, one weapon they used was to insinuate that women who were too independent and did not obey their husbands were creatures of the devil. When, angered by the men's attempts to subdue them, the Naskapi women ran away, the Jesuits persuaded the men to chase after their spouses and threaten them with imprisonment:

> "Such acts of justice" — Le Jeune proudly commented in one particular case — "cause no surprise in France, because it is usual there to proceed in that manner. But among these people... where everyone considers himself from birth as free as the wild animals that roam in their great forests... it is a marvel, or rather a miracle, to see a peremptory command obeyed, or any act of severity or justice performed" (*ibid.*: 54).

The Jesuits' greatest victory, however, was persuading the Naskapi to beat their children, believing that the "savages'" excessive fondness for their offspring was the major obstacle to their Christianization. Le Jeune's diary records the first instance in which a girl was publicly beaten, while one of her relatives gave a chilling lecture to the bystanders on the historic significance of the event: "This is the first punishment by beating (he said) we inflict on anyone of our Nation..." (*ibid.*: 54–55).

The Montagnais-Naskapi men owed their training in male supremacy to the fact that the French wanted to instill in them the "instinct" for private property, to induce them to become reliable partners in the fur trade. Very different was the situation on the plantations, where the sexual division of labor was immediately dictated by the planters' requirements for labor-power, and by the price of commodities produced by the slaves on the international market.

Until the abolition of the slave trade, as Barbara Bush and Marietta Morrissey have

documented, both women and men were subjected to the same degree of exploitation; the planters found it more profitable to work and "consume" slaves to death than to encourage their reproduction. Neither the sexual division of labor nor sexual hierarchies were thus pronounced. African men had no say concerning the destiny of their female companions and kin; as for women, far from being given special consideration, they were expected to work in the fields like men, especially when sugar and tobacco were in high demand, and they were subject to the same cruel punishments, even when pregnant (Bush 1990: 42–44).

Ironically then, it would seem that in slavery women "achieved" a rough equality with the men of their class (Momsen 1993). But their treatment was never the same. Women were given less to eat; unlike men, they were vulnerable to their masters' sexual assaults; and more cruel punishment were inflicted on them, for in addition to the physical agony women had to bear the sexual humiliation always attached to them and the damage done, when pregnant, to the fetuses they carried.

A new page, moreover, opened after 1807, when the slave trade was abolished and the Caribbean and American planters adopted a "slave breeding" policy. As Hilary Beckles points out, in relation to the island of Barbados, plantation owners had attempted to control the reproductive patterns of female slaves since the 17th century, "[encouraging] them to have fewer or more children in any given span of time," depending on how much field labor was needed. But only when the supply of African slaves diminished did the regulation of women's sexual relations and reproductive patterns become more systematic and intense (Beckles 1989: 92).

In Europe, forcing women to procreate had led to the imposition of capital punishment for contraception. In the plantations, where slaves were becoming a precious commodity, the shift to a breeding policy made women more vulnerable to sexual assault, though it led to some "ameliorations" of women's work conditions: a reduction of work-hours, the building of lying-in-houses, the provision of midwives assisting the delivery, an expansion of social rights (e.g., of travel and assembly)(Beckles: 1989: 99–100; Bush 1990: 135). But these changes could not reduce the damages inflicted on women by field-labor, nor the bitterness women experienced because of their lack of freedom. With the exception of Barbados, the planters' attempt to expand the work-force through "natural reproduction" failed, and the birth rates on the plantations remained "abnormally low" (Bush 136–37; Beckles 1989, *ibid.*). Whether this phenomenon was a result of outright resistance to the perpetuation of slavery, or a consequence of the physical debilitation produced by the harsh conditions to which enslaved women were subjected, is still a matter of debate (Bush 1990: 143ff). But, as Bush points out, there are good reasons to believe that the main cause of the failure was the refusal of women to procreate, for as soon as slavery was eradicated, even when their economic conditions in some respect deteriorated, the communities of freed slaves began to grow (Bush 1990).[78]

Women's refusals of victimization also reshaped the sexual division of labor, as occurred in Caribbean islands where enslaved women turned themselves into semi-free market vendors of the products they cultivated in the "provision grounds" (in Jamaica, "polinks"), given by the planters to the slaves so that they could to support themselves. The planters adopted this measure to save on the cost of reproducing labor. But access to the "provision grounds" turned out to be advantageous for the slaves as well; it gave

them more mobility, and the possibility to use the time allotted for their cultivation for other activities. Being able to produce small crops that could be eaten or sold boosted their independence. Those most devoted to the success of the provision grounds were women, who marketed the crops, re-appropriating and reproducing within the plantation system what had been one of their main occupations in Africa. As a result, by the mid-18th century, enslaved women in the Caribbean had carved out for themselves a place in the plantation economy, contributing to the expansion, if not the creation, of the island's food market. They did so both as producers of much of the food consumed by the slaves and the white population, and also as hucksters and market vendors of the crops they cultivated, supplemented with goods taken from the master's shop, or exchanged with other slaves, or given to them for sale by their masters.

It was in this capacity that female slaves also came into contact with white proletarian women, often former indentured servants, even after the latter had been removed from gang-labor and emancipated. Their relationship at times could be hostile: proletarian European women, who also survived mostly through the growing and marketing of food crops, stole at times the products that slave women brought to the market, or attempted to impede their sales. But both groups of women also collaborated in building a vast network of buying and selling relations which evaded the laws passed by the colonial authorities, who periodically worried that these activities may place the slaves beyond their control.

Despite the legislation introduced to prevent them from selling or limiting the places in which they could do so, enslaved women continued to expand their marketing activities and the cultivation of their provision plots, which they came to view as their own so that, by the late 18th century, they were forming a proto-peasantry with practically a monopoly of island markets. Thus, according to some historians, even before emancipation, slavery in the Caribbean had practically ended. Female slaves — against all odds — were a key force in this process, the ones who, with their determination, shaped the development of the slave community and of the islands' economies, despite the authorities' many attempts to limit their power.

Enslaved Caribbean women had also a decisive impact on the culture of the white population, especially that of white women, through their activities as healers, seers, experts in magical practices, and their "domination" of the kitchens, and bedrooms, of their masters (Bush 1990).

Not surprisingly, they were seen as the heart of the slave community. Visitors were impressed by their singing, their head-kerchiefs and dresses, and their extravagant manner of speaking which are now understood as a means of satirizing their masters. African and Creole women influenced the customs of poor female whites, whom a contemporary portrayed as behaving like Africans, walking with their children strapped on their hips, while balancing trays with goods on their heads (Beckles 1989: 81). But their main achievement was the development of a politics of self-reliance, grounded in survival strategies and female networks. These practices and the values attached to them, which Rosalyn Terborg Penn has identified as the essential tenets of contemporary African feminism, redefined the African community of the diaspora (pp. 3–7). They created not only the foundations for a new female African identity, but also the foundations for a new

Above: A family of slaves (detail). Enslaved women struggled to continue the activities they had carried on in Africa, such as marketing the produce they grew, which enabled them to better support their families and achieve some autonomy. (From Barbara Bush, 1990.)

Below: A festive gathering on a West Indian plantation. Women were the heart of such gatherings as they were the heart of the enslaved community, and the staunchest defenders of the culture brought from Africa.

society committed — against the capitalist attempt to impose scarcity and dependence as structural conditions of life — to the re-appropriation and concentration in women's hands of the fundamental means of subsistence, starting from the land, the production of food, and the inter-generational transmission of knowledge and cooperation.

Capitalism and the Sexual Divison of Labor

As this brief history of women and primitive accumulation has shown, the construction of a new patriarchal order, making of women the servants of the male work-force, was a major aspect of capitalist development.

On its basis a new sexual division of labor could be enforced that differentiated not only the tasks that women and men should perform, but their experiences, their lives, their relation to capital and to other sectors of the working class. Thus, no less than the international division of labor, the sexual division of labor was above all a power-relation, a division within the work-force, while being an immense boost to capital accumulation.

This point must be emphasized, given the tendency to attribute the leap capitalism brought about in the productivity of labor only to the specialization of work-tasks. In reality, the advantages which the capitalist class derived from the differentiation between agricultural and industrial labor and within industrial labor itself — celebrated in Adam Smith's ode to pin-making — pale when compared to those it derived from the degradation of women's work and social position.

As I have argued, the power-difference between women and men and the concealment of women's unpaid-labor under the cover of natural inferiority, have enabled capitalism to immensely expand the "unpaid part of the working day," and use the (male) wage to accumulate women's labor; in many cases, they have also served to deflect class antagonism into an antagonism between men and women. Thus, primitive accumulation has been above all an accumulation of differences, inequalities, hierarchies, divisions, which have alienated workers from each other and even from themselves.

As we have seen, male workers have often been complicitous with this process, as they have tried to maintain their power with respect to capital by devaluing and disciplining women, children, and the populations the capitalist class has colonized. But the power that men have imposed on women by virtue of their access to wage-labor and their recognized contribution to capitalist accumulation has been paid at the price of self-alienation, and the "primitive disaccumulation" of their own individual and collective powers.

In the next chapters I further examine this disaccumulation process by discussing three key aspects of transition from feudalism to capitalism: the constitution of the proletarian body into a work-machine, the persecution of women as witches, and the creation of "savages" and "cannibals" both in Europe and the New World.

and Massimo Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System* (1981). The authors point out that the main purpose of incarceration was to break the sense of identity and solidarity of the poor. See also Geremek (1994), 206-229. On the schemes concocted by English proprietors to incarcerate the poor in their parishes, see Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1 (1909: 793). For France, see Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (1965), especially Chapter 2: "The Great Confinement" (pp. 38-64).

56. While Hackett Fischer connects the 17th century decline of poulation in Europe to the social effects of the Price Revolution (pp. 91-92), Peter Kriedte presents a more complex picture, arguing that demographic decline was a combination of both Malthusian and socio-economic factors. The decline was, in his view, a response to both the population increase of the early 16th century, on one side, and on the other to the landlords' appropriation of the larger portion of the agricultural income (p. 63).

An interesting observation which supports my arguments concerning the connection between demographic decline and pro-natalist state policies is offered by Robert S. Duplessis (1997) who writes that the recovery after the population crisis of the 17th century was far swifter than that after the Black Death. It took a century for the population to start growing again after the epidemic of 1348, while in the 17th century the growth process was reactivated within less than half a century (p. 143). This estimates would indicate the presence in 17th-century Europe of a far higher natality rate, possibly to be attributed to the fierce attack on any form of contraception.

57. "Bio-power" is the concept Foucault used in his *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1978) to describe the shift from an authoritarian form of government to one more decentralized, centered on the "fostering of the power of life" in 19th-century Europe. "Bio-power" expresses the growing concern, at the state level, for the sanitary, sexual, and penal control of individual bodies, as well as population growth and population movements and their insertion into the economic realm. According to this paradigm, the rise of bio-power went hand in hand with the rise of liberalism and marked the end of the juridical and monarchic state.

58. I make this distinction with the Canadian sociologist Bruce Curtis' discussion of the Foucauldian concept of "population" and "bio-power" in mind. Curtis contrasts the concept of "populousness," which was current in the 16th and 17th centuries, with the notion of "population" that became the basis of the modern science of demography in the 19th century. He points out that "populousness" was an organic and hierarchical concept. When the mercantilists used it they were concerned with the part of the social body that creates wealth, i.e., actual or potential laborers. The later concept of "population" is an atomistic one. "Population consists of so many undifferentiated atoms distributed through abstract space and time" — Curtis writes — "with its own laws and structures." I argue, however, that there is a continuity between these two notions, as in both the mercantilist and liberal capitalist period, the notion of population has been functional to the reproduction of labor-power.

59. The heyday of Mercantilism was in the second half of the 17th century, its dominance in economic life being associated with the names of William Petty (1623–1687) and Jean Baptiste Colbert, the finance minister of Louis XIV. However, the late 17th-century mercantilists only systematized or applied theories that had been developing since the 16th century. Jean Bodin in France and Giovanni Botero in Italy are considered proto-mercantilist economists. One of the first systematic formulations of mercantilist economic theory is found in Thomas Mun's *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (1622).

60. For a discussion of the new legislation against infanticide see (among others) John Riddle (1997), 163–166; Merry Wiesner (1993), 52-53; and Mendelson and Crawford (1998), who write that "[t]he crime of infanticide was one that single women were more likely to commit than any other group in society. A study of infanticide in the early seventeenth century showed that of sixty mothers, fifty three were single, six were widows" (p. 149). Statistics also show that infanticide was punished even more frequently than witchcraft. Margaret King writes that Nuremberg "executed fourteen women for that crime between 1578 and 1615, but only one witch. The Parliament of Rouen from 1580s to 1606 prosecuted about as many cases of infanticide as witchcraft, but punished infanticide more severely. Calvinist Geneva shows a much higher rate of execution for infanticide that witchcraft; from 1590 to 1630, nine women of eleven charged were executed for infanticide, compared to only one of thirty suspects for witchcraft (p.10). These estimates are confirmed by Merry Wiesner, who writes that "in Geneva, for example, 25 women out of 31 charged with infanticide during the period 1595–1712 were executed, as compared with 19 out of 122 charged with witchcraft (1993: 52). Women were executed for infanticide in Europe as late as the 18th century.

61. An interesting article on this topic is Robert Fletcher's "The Witches Pharmakopeia" (1896).

62. The reference is to an Italian feminist song from 1971 titled "Aborto di Stato" (State Abortion).

63. Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (1991), 78. For the closing of brothels in Germany see Merry Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (1986), 194-209.

64. An extensive catalogue of the places and years in which women were expelled from the crafts is found in David Herlihy, *Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays*. Providence: Berghahan, 1978–1991. See also Merry Wiesner (1986), 174–185.

65. Martha Howell (1986), Chapter 8, 174–183. Howell writes:

"Comedies and satires of the period, for example, often portrayed market women and trades women as shrews, with characterizations that not only ridiculed or scolded them for taking on roles in market production but frequently even charged them with sexual aggression" (p.182).

66. In a thorough critique of 17th-century social contract theory, as formulated by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, Carol Pateman (1988) argues that the "social contract" was based on a more fundamental "sexual contract," which recognized men's right to appropriate women's bodies and women's labor.

67. Ruth Mazo Karras (1996) writes that "'Common woman' meant a woman avail-

able to all men; unlike 'common man' which denoted someone of humble origins and could be used in either a derogatory or a laudatory sense, it did not convey any meaning either of non-gentile behavior or of class solidarity"(p. 138).

68. For the family in the period of the "transition," see Lawrence Stone (1977); and André Burguière and François Lebrun, "Priests, Prince, and Family,"in Burguière, et al., *A History of the Family: The Impact of Modernity* (1996). Volume Two, 95ff.

69. On the character of 17th-century patriarchalism and, in particular, the concept of patriarchal power in social contract theory, see again Pateman (1988); Zilla Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* (1981); andMargaret R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes To Women In Early Modern Society* (1995).

Discussing the changes contract theory brought about in England, in the legal and philosophical attitude towards women, Sommerville argues that the contractarians supported the subordination of women to men as much as the patriarchalists, but justified it on different grounds. Being at least formally committed to the principle of "natural equality," and "government by consent,"in defense of male supremacy they invoked the theory of women's "natural inferiority," according to which women would consent to their husbands' appropriation of their property and voting rights upon realizing their intrinsic weakness and necessary dependence on men.

70. See Underdown (1985a), "The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England," in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (1985), 116–136; Mendelson and Crawford (1998), 69–71.

71. On women's loss of rights in 16th and 17th-century Europe, see (among others) Merry Wiesner (1993), who writes that:

"The spread of Roman law had a largely negative effect on women's civil legal status in the early modern period both because of the views of women which jurists chose to adopt from it and the stricter enforcement of existing laws to which it gave rise" (p. 33).

72. Adding to the dramas and tracts also the court records of the period, Underdown concludes that "between 1560 and 1640... such records disclose an intense preoccupation with women who are a visible threat to the patriarchal system. Women scolding and brawling with their neighbors, single women refusing to enter service, wives domineering or beating their husbands: all seem to surface more frequently than in the period immediately before or afterwards. It will not go unnnoticed that this is also the period when witchcraft accusations reach a peak" (1985a: 119).

73. James Blaut (1992a)points out that within a few decades after 1492 "the rate of growth and change speeded up dramatically and Europe entered a period of rapid development." He writes:

"Colonial enterprise in the 16th century produced capital in a number of ways. One was gold ands silver mining. A second was plantation agriculture, principally in Brazil. A third was trade with Asia in spice, cloth and much more. A fourth element was the profit returned to European houses from a variety of productive and commercial enterprises in the Americas....A fifth was slaving. Accumulation from these sources was massive (p. 38).

74. Exemplary is the case of Bermuda, cited by Elaine Forman Crane (1990). Crane writes that several white women in Bermuda were owners of slaves — usually other women — thanks to whose labor they were able to maintain a certain degree of economic autonomy (pp. 231–258).

75. June Nash (1980) writes that "A significant change came in 1549 when racial origin became a factor, along with legally sanctioned marital unions, in defining rights of succession. The new law stated that no mulatto (offspring of a black man and an Indian women), mestizo, person born out of wedlock was allowed to have Indians in encomienda. ... Mestizo and illegitimate became almost synonymous" (p. 140).

76. A *coyota* was a part-mestiza and part-Indian woman. Ruth Behar (1987), 45.

77. The most deadly ones were the mercury mines, like that in Huancavelica, in which thousands of workers died of slow poisoning amidst horrible sufferings. As David Noble Cook writes:

"Laborers in the Huancavelica mine faced both immediate and long term dangers. Cave-ins, floods, and falls as a result of slipping shafts posed daily threats. Intermediate health hazards were presented by a poor diet, inadequate ventilation in the underground chambers, and a sharp temperature difference between the mine interiors and the rarefied Andean atmosphere....Workers who remained for long periods in the mines perhaps suffered the worst fate of all. Dust and fine particles were released into the air by the striking of the tools used to break the ore loose. Indians inhaled the dust, which contained four dangerous substances: mercury vapors, arsenic, arsenic anhydride, and cinnabar. Long exposure... resulted in death. Known as *mal de la mina*, or mine sickness, it was incurable when advanced. In less severe cases the gums were ulcerated and eaten away...(pp.205-6).

78. Barbara Bush (1990) points out that, if they wanted to abort, slave women certainly knew how to, having had available to them the knowledge brought from Africa (p. 141).