

Married to capitalism

Womanhood is extra labour.

Research has shown that managing a household, children, and potentially an unhelpful partner constitutes a huge chunk of unpaid care work disproportionately exercised by women. On account of social norms and gender stereotypes that relegate the females of a family into care work by default, women across regions, socio-economic classes, and cultures spend part of their day fulfilling the expectations of their domestic and reproductive role (Ferrant G, Pesando L. M., and Nowacka K, 2014)

Traditionally, many of these obligations would arise/intensify as a woman walks into marriage, signalling the passageway from girlhood into the house *goddess*.

An account of the meaning of the household for the heterosexual married woman is neatly provided by Simone de Beauvoir in 'The Second Sex', where she dedicates a whole chapter to the figure of the married woman.

Bind to immanence and confined to the walls of the husband's house, she is left to renounce the interests and activities that have until then marked her life and ascends to the status of "wife, mother, and mistress of the house" (de Beauvoir 1949, p.481)

De Beauvoir directly denounces the structure of the conjugal community, which reduces the married woman to the husband's economic and social dependency, denying her autonomy. "The drama of marriage", as she writes, is that it relegates the woman to the house walls and motherhood where real activity and real work are possible only for man; the wife is deprived of a real choice.

The woman's dreams and ambitions are neglected and she is appointed to a lifetime of economic and social dependency. Some women manage to find real independence in their profession, but "many discover that work 'outside' only represents another source of fatigue within the framework of marriage" (ibid. p.536)

The proposed solution is to prohibit marriage as a viable career for women and to support the free choice of alternative paths - which need to be socially accepted and economically stabilizing. Marriage - is there no alternative?

As more than 70 years have passed, it is safe to affirm that an alternative career is possible for an increasing number of women, especially in capitalistic societies, where professional achievements are one of the main drivers of social affirmation. Does this mean that the woman is liberated from those feelings of tedious repetitiveness? Is the working woman the one who found meaning in life?

Resources

De Beauvoir, S. (1949), *The Second Sex*, *Vintage*.

Ferrant G, Pesando L. M., and Nowacka K. (2014), *Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes*. OECD Development Centre.

Extra notes:

Parallelism between the condition of the married woman in Simone de Beauvoir and the working employee in capitalistic society

- Lack of free choice and alternative career
- Sense of dissatisfaction and lack of purpose (bullshit jobs?!)
- Mark fisher > burnout and depression as increasing in our contemporary society, signal that there is something wrong with the system

Capitalism

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men represents an infringement of women's rights (UN, 2013) and also a brake on their economic empowerment (Ferrant G, Pesando L. M., and Nowacka K, 2014)

The gender gap in unpaid care work has significant implications for women's ability to actively take part in the labour market and the type/quality of employment opportunities available to them. (Ferrant G, Pesando L. M., and Nowacka K, 2014)

These caretaking obligations result in a loss of free time, which could be devoted to the cultivation of one's self.

Obviously, I root for easier and fairer access to work for women, and the achievement of true equality between all genders also in the workplace.