

LOVE, LABOUR AND TAPESTRY:
UNRAVELLING A VICTORIAN LEGACY

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Introduction

The function of this thesis has been to explore the reasons behind the demotion of highwarp tapestry (1) from a highly respected art form to the invisibility that typifies work designated as craft. In Canada it is classed with the decorative arts, native art and folk art, by our national institutions - which is to say that it is not seen as a professional activity. Therefore it is displayed in the Museum of Man, while the National Gallery is reserved for art with a "higher" value. (2) In exploring this question I have been led to examine the social context in which art in general, and tapestry in particular, is produced, the history of its production and the means by which status is assigned to it. In particular I have examined the influence of the gender of a practitioner on the status of an art form.

Highwarp tapestry has undergone no essential technical changes since its origins in early societies. It reached a peak of excellence during the late 15th and early 16th centuries with the collective contributions of patrons and producers. The producers (agents, cartoon makers and weavers), who were almost exclusively men, interpreting the iconography of patrons for whom it was a signifier of wealth and power. Tapestries had the status and the function of propaganda that television has today, and enormous sets of tapestry were actually taken into battle and sometimes lost there.(3) I will examine the process whereby the

status of tapestry has steadily declined since the Middle Ages. I will also look at the major change in production which has resulted in tapestries now being made almost entirely by women.

The conditions that determine whether an art work is considered to be a "professional" product or not are central to my thesis. As a result of a complex web of misconceptions which have developed, tapestry, which used to be regarded as "high" art, is now in the "outsider" category. In addition to reading secondary sources, my research has involved examining statements in catalogues for, and critical responses to, contemporary tapestry exhibitions. In 1985 I was also able to see the prestigious Lausanne Tapestry Biennale in Switzerland, and I went to Paris for the exhibition, "Architextures 85" (1945 - 1985) which was intended to "give an account of the present world status of an art form that has taken its place among the plastic arts." (4)

I have of necessity included personal experiences. Many of the conditions which affect the making of art in general are seldom published (or openly stated) but are revealed occasionally through verbal communication. Despite the nebulous character of this kind of information it is a real factor influencing the decisions of artists and is usually transmitted informally. Because the community of tapestry makers around the world is so small it is easy through a few clues to identify the people I will be referring to. Therefore I am unwilling to specify

sources of private discussions which might jeopardize the careers of some artists. I must request that such information be seen as a part of the mythology that surrounds the making of tapestry, and that my decision be interpreted as a reflection of the vulnerability of artists.

I. SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT TAPESTRY

Technical terms

There is considerable confusion about the term "tapestry" since it has taken on many meanings, some of which do not apply to the woven form at all.(5) The description "highwarp tapestry" is not quite adequate, even among the initiated, and to say "Gobelin tapestry" (which has come to be loosely used to describe pictorial tapestry) is particularly misleading to the initiated. In its classical form, Gobelin is quite different from the "low-warp" pictorial process practised in Aubusson - although both are woven from the back using little mirrors to monitor the process from the front of the work. Even in Gothic times the term "tapestry" would have been qualified by some adjective such as "Brussels tapestry" or "tapestry of Arras", and in fact Arras came to stand for tapestry in the way that Gobelin seems to do now. (6)

The Edinburgh College of Art, where I studied, has been radical in the way that it has adapted and simplified the Gobelin

method.(7) These modifications, which make it possible to work from the front, involve a pragmatism that inevitably gains some advantages and sacrifices others. Emphasis is put on the importance of the overall success of the work, with technical considerations being appropriate only to the circumstances of scale and context rather than to satisfy the requirements of a tradition. The result of such a liberal approach is that one might ask, "When does a tapestry cease to be a tapestry?" The answer should be, "Does it matter?" Unfortunately, it does matter because art is invariably categorized according to its situation in a hierarchy. A broad division is made between what is considered professional, and what, amateur, and it is only under professionally legitimized circumstances that there is the possibility of art being viewed and valued in a manner that is consistent with contemporary art practises. The question of how a particular piece of work is labelled is thus crucial in determining the apparatus of support that is available in order for the work to be given professional status.

Some historical background

Little is known about the developments that led up to the sudden proliferation of Medieval tapestries, and there is also an absence of analytical investigation dealing with the subsequent circumstances of tapestry making in the context of art production. F. P. Thomson provides an historical outline of

major tapestries and ateliers in Europe from the earliest productions until the 1960's.(8) Margaret Freeman's book, The Hunt of the Unicorn,(9) while it concentrates on the set of tapestries of that name in the Cloisters in New York, is the one book that illuminates a wide spectrum of factors concerning Gothic tapestries.

In the Medieval period, tapestry making, like other professions, was practised in family businesses in which the skills were usually handed down through apprenticeship of relatives. From 1451 to 1514, for example, three generations of Le Bacres worked in Arras as cartoon makers for tapestry.(10) Occasionally women were admitted into a profession in association with fathers or brothers. Marian and Helaine Regnault were said to be the only women cartoon painters at the time.(11)

The practise whereby the home provided a working unit in which the women and children were involved with the men in Medieval economic and artistic enterprises changed during the Renaissance. In Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology, Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker trace the economic and social circumstances which resulted in the separation between the domestic sphere and the public arena.(12) The distinction between art and craft also manifested itself during the Renaissance with the emergence of the concept that a male artist was a solitary genius touched by divine inspiration.(13)

The rise of the middle classes in the 17th and 18th

centuries brought increased affluence and defined market places with guild centres for men, which had the effect of confining women to the home and the work associated with food, cleaning, nurturing children, and care of the sick and the elderly.

Roszika Parker discusses these changes in The Subversive Stitch and also shows how aristocratic women, who had done tapestry, embroidery and illumination in the Medieval monasteries together with the monks, found themselves excluded from the professional sphere. They continued to practise the art of embroidery in their homes in the way that Mary Queen of Scots, for example, had done. (14)

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the middle class, seeking upward mobility, attempted to emulate the aristocracy through the practise of an embroidery which signified good breeding. The prosperity of a husband could be measured by the amount of essential work that his wife had to do and how much leisure she had. During her leisure time she was expected to do non-essential, (that is decorative), work to embellish the home. Needlework came to play such an important part in the preparation of women for their role in the domestic sphere that eventually it was synonymous with femininity. During the 18th century, Jean Jacques Rousseau, who had written that women were not made to run, stated that:

dressmaking, embroidery, lace making come by themselves.

... This spontaneous development extends easily to drawing,

because the latter is not difficult - simply a matter of taste; but at no cost would I want them to learn landscape, even less the human figure. Foliage, fruits, flowers and drapery is all they need to know to create their own embroidery pattern, if they can not find one that suits them.(15)

The Victorians thus inherited a set of attitudes towards labour, women and economics which had been evolving since the Renaissance. Their contribution was to institutionalize these attitudes. Through political and educational policies a patriarchal system maintained women's dependency and guaranteed that they would concern themselves with nurturing. This kind of work was, however, given little importance and was perceived as a product of the innate limitations of the feminine mind. On the other hand, women who displayed intellectual qualities were treated as unnatural.(16)

New middle class wealth associated with the industrial revolution caused a reshuffling of the class system with increased opportunities to rise within it. Social elevation and middle class respectability were aided by piety and by forging family ties with the aristocracy. Power achieved in the market place was laundered through a display of domestic virtue which was the duty of the wife. In order to have a legitimate place in this society, women had to become wives, and the Anglican church played its part in maintaining the conformity of women by

sanctioning a rigid class structure.(17)

The making of tapestry was not included in the conventions whereby women were expected to display their apparently natural facility for morality and decorative work in the home. On the contrary, tapestry retained its value as a commodity which proclaimed the success of a head of the household who could afford conspicuously expensive art work.

From the Medieval times through into the Victorian era tapestry was a professional art form carried on in studios almost exclusively by men who simulated fashionable trends in painting. Each tapestry derived its particular value mainly from the status of the painter who provided the cartoon, and this assured it a place in the art market.(18) The changes whereby tapestry making became largely a feminine pursuit have their origin in the Victorian era, when tapestry started to be made under circumstances that are identified with the domestic sphere. Thereafter, the amateur status of tapestry became increasingly the norm.

II. THE VICTORIAN BACKGROUND

Women as wives

Victorian attitudes towards women's proper sphere had a direct effect, not only on the status of women, but on the status of the arts associated with them and practised by them. An idealization of the family was taken to almost religious heights. For example, John Ruskin called it a "sacred place, and vestal temple" presided over by the woman as "the angel". He also enumerated the qualities desirable to the wifely role:

to fulfil this, she must be - as far as one can use such terms of a human creature - be incapable of error ... she must be enduringly, incorrigibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise, not for self development, but for self renunciation; wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side.(1)

The implication of this was that the role of the wife and mother was crucial in implementing the ideal. Yet, there were in England, in 1851 half a million more women than men, and, in 1872, three million out of six million adult women supported themselves and had relatives who were dependent on them.(2) The relevance of this situation to needlework is that it was one of the very few avenues available to women for earning a living. Genteel and middle class Victorian women who did not find a husband often suffered poverty. Married women were also usually

penniless and also without legal rights. An inheritance, unless otherwise stipulated, became the property of a husband or remained in the control of a male relative. Prenuptial contracts (where applicable among affluent families) stated that even the wife's "pin money" (an allowance from her marriage settlement), had to "be spent only on items that would 'keep up appearances' appropriate to the husband's social station." (3) Apparently there were many single women whose families could not afford to keep them. Their only options for employment were as governesses, sometimes even as prostitutes, or by selling needlework. The problem about the latter course was that it was considered disgraceful for a woman to receive remuneration for these skills which had come to be so totally associated with the home and with her gentility. This work (needlework had come to be called simply "work") ought to be done for love within the boundaries of the family, otherwise the women who sold needlework would sink into a lower, labouring class. To protect women from this shame, philanthropic institutions were set up to sell needlework and at the same time to guarantee anonymity for the maker. (4)

The role and status of embroidery

The stresses and anxieties of the campaign to find a husband for unmarried daughters were enormous. It meant the difference between a socially advantaged life, and shame that had possible repercussions for the whole family. One can understand how

important it was for the mother to pass on the skills that would prepare a daughter for marriage in her own or a better class. Samplers survive to demonstrate the role of needlework in inculcating the feminine, passive and moral virtues that would make a desirable wife with the proper social graces.(5) Roszika Parker even demonstrates that the passivity of a woman seated demurely at her needlework with downcast eyes was a source of sexual arousal for Victorian males.(6) Needlework, which was considered to be intuitive, provided a useful contrast with intellectual work. This concept reinforced the separation of needlework and women's work in the domestic sphere from that of the masculine activity of the market place. One was done for love and one was done for money. One was amateur and one was professional. The Victorians consolidated the hierarchy in the arts as part of their strong moral belief in the class system.

One can also imagine what pressures were brought against middle class and aristocratic women who did not display femininity and who wanted to take their artwork into the market place. Anthea Callen writes of the Victorian woman:

Thus she was beset with problems which are still with us today. To remain a woman within the social definition and starve, or emulate man and survive, but be left with the emotionally damaging consequences.(7)

May Morris, the daughter of William Morris, typifies the dependence of Victorian women, even though she was unusual

because of her father's radical ideas. She was eventually running the entire embroidery section of Morris & Co., and yet, because she was not paid to do this, could not marry a particular man until he was in a financial position to support her.(8)

The role played by Pre-Raphaelite women was consistent with Victorian males' nostalgia for some sort of Medieval feudal order in which a benevolent patriarch protected the weak. It followed that women had to be demonstrably fragile, and paintings often depicted languid, remote images of romantic women whose passivity conveniently provided a foil for the men of action and intellect.(9) This fantasy was so strong in the 19th century that often the past was reinvented to accommodate it. For example, it came to be said that the Bayeux tapestry (which is an embroidery) was made by Queen Mathilda herself, while her husband, William, was away conquering England. In fact it was made in the monastery of Bishop Odo in Canterbury.(10)

It can be seen that the idea of needlework as an inherently feminine activity did not extend to lower class women. Consequently, it was acceptable for them to take their work into the market place and they were the victims of scandalous exploitation. They worked, together with their children, in the textile industry and in their homes, doing outwork, under conditions that ruined their health and their eyesight.(11) The lower class connotations of manual labour contributed to a low status for art work that is labour intensive, and this is still

applicable. William Morris was well aware of the importance of class distinctions when he insisted that his tapestry and carpet weavers - who were men - wore starched collars and black striped trousers while working.(12)

Training facilities for women in art and design

Many Victorian prejudices can be seen in the development of their system for training in the arts and in the crafts. In the case of design schools, Anthea Callen has documented the convoluted process whereby training facilities were developed. The class system in England at the time had a major influence on the way that courses in the various institutions were devised. The academies catered for an elite who were generally expected to be gentlemen with independent means, and there was the assumption that training in design schools was directed towards people who had to earn a living. This resulted in a fundamental paradox because the craft and design institutions were not only expected to train men who were lower and artisan class but also women who were from the privileged classes. It had finally become recognized that destitute, single, genteel women posed a real economic problem. Campaigning for training for these women became a philanthropic exercise, and, initially at least the women had to demonstrate financial need in order to be granted admission into the design schools. There were separate facilities for men and women and the men's classes were held at

night (on the assumption that they had daytime jobs) while the women's instruction was during the day.(13)

Needless to say problems arose. One was that the women were doing better work than the men, who probably did not have the "advantage" of having spent their childhood being trained in the arts by an accomplished governess or mother. It seems, too, that the women were frustrated by having to keep within the bounds of what was considered 'design' and were working in a manner consistent with fine art. In 1848 a memorandum was sent by the Management Committee to Mrs McLan, the Principal of the women's school, who had played a crucial role in trying to develop good facilities for the women students. It read, in part:

The Committee are of the opinion, that in the Female school, it is not expedient to encourage painting in oil, and that all paintings on the very large scale which is adopted in this school are decidedly objectionable, not only on account of the great inconvenience they occasion in occupying so much space, but as incurring useless and unprofitable expenditure of the pupils' time and labour. The Committee are strongly of the opinion that studies on a smaller scale, carefully executed in detail, and having reference directly to such designs for manufactures and ornamental work as can be undertaken by females, and not merely to the practice of fine art, would be far more in accordance with the essential objects and purposes of the School of Design.(14)

The problems of sharing and allocating funding and space is evident in this memorandum. Having separate facilities was the cause of endless administrative wrangles between the two. Anthea Callen documents the vicissitudes resulting from the women's section having no autonomy.(15) The frequent conflicts of interest were usually settled in favour of the men's section, which controlled the other. Parents often expressed concern about the safety of their daughters who were studying in unsalubrious parts of the city. The overcrowding in the work area contributed to occupational injuries while "ventilation was non-existent, and fainting due to lack of oxygen was a frequent occurrence."(16)

Where training for lower class women was concerned, the curriculum was designed to maintain their social situation and prepare them for domestic employment. The Factory Act of 1833 required employers to provide two hours schooling a day for child workers. In the girls' school, an hour and three quarters was devoted to needlework.(17) At the Manchester School of Art, in his speech at prize-giving, Earl Granville (responding to the views of the painter, Redgrave, who depicted women in practical situations) stated that:

if you consider what Mr. Redgrave said about the sort of education which drawing confers, the precision and neatness it leads to, then the advantage of this kind of instruction must be apparent. I believe, after all, there is design in

the cutting out of a frock; and a friend of mine went still further, and suggested that to lay a knife and fork perfectly parallel to one another required the sort of eye which was perfected by a drawing lesson or two.(18)

Employment opportunities for women in the arts

A major problem was that once the women were qualified there was still no employment for them and, furthermore, they were causing added difficulties by competing with the men. As late as 1908, the designer Charles Ashbee, defending the Guild of Handicraft's policy of excluding women, wrote:

In the Guild's workshops our fellows are rightly nervous of this competition of the *amateur*, especially the *lady amateur*, and albeit with the utmost *consideration* they speak of her as *'dear Emily'* . I have seen a great deal of her work in the last ten years, she is very *versatile*, she makes jewellery, she binds books, she enamels, she carves, she does leather work, a hundred different *graceful* and *delicate* *crafts*. She is very *modest* and does not profess to any high standard nor does she compete in any lines of work where physique or experience are desired, but she is *perpetually tingling* to sell her work *before she half knows how to make it,* and she does compete because her *name is legion* and because, being *supported* by her

parents she is prepared to sell her *labour* for 2d. an hour where the skilled workman has to sell his for 1s. in order to keep up standard and support his family.(19)

I have analysed the language used here and marked with * those words that, either from a class or gender point of view, pertain to lesser status or denigrate the subject. I have underlined the patriarchal words, or words denoting desirable "masculine" characteristics. I would specially single out the word *versatile* because it is used euphemistically to imply that the women were not specialists with a thorough knowledge of anything in depth. The real source of their versatility was their need to be endlessly resourceful in order to be able to be ready for any scraps of employment that might come their way. Those that had highly specialised training would not find employment consistent with their qualifications. Mrs McLan, for example, retired as superintendent of the Female School of Design in 1857, on a government pension of 100 pounds sterling. Her starting salary in 1842 had been 150 pounds sterling.(20) Women's main employment continued to be as governesses, and their art training and skills to be directed towards domesticity.

An analysis of Victorian facilities for training women in art and design shows clearly that the systematic restriction of "women's art", and women students, was conscious policy within the training institutions. Other than to state that the apprenticeship of men in ateliers continued through the 19th

century, I can make no direct observations about how skills were transmitted in the tapestry medium. Because there were no facilities for teaching tapestry in the schools at the time and because women were consistently confined to embroidery (despite the evidence of their interest in and capacity for more general studies in art and design), it has been necessary to concentrate on the conditions that pertain to needlework.

III. WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF TAPESTRY

In the operations of William Morris's company, the embroidery section was entirely separate from that of tapestry and rug weaving. Morris is of particular importance to highwarp tapestry because he personally brought about a revival of the medium through a great deal of research, and by teaching himself the entire process of tapestry making. Rejecting the Gobelins methods, Morris wrote that he had made his first tapestry:

a piece of ornament with my own hands, the chief merit of which, I take it, lies in the fact that I learned the art of doing it with no other help than what I could get from a very little 18th century book.(1)

He designed and had looms built for his Merton Abbey studio which he set up in 1881. Whereas in the embroidery section Morris's innovation lay in the way in which he merged the current aesthetic of painting with that of needlework, in tapestry he also introduced entirely new concepts in production methods and attitude towards iconography. He also provided the initial impetus, through the Arts and Crafts Movement, for training people in tapestry making.(2)

The state of tapestry inherited by William Morris

While the art of embroidery was still being kept alive by the women from genteel homes at that time, tapestry was being practised only in the public sphere by professional studios, and it was not one of the skills that was included in the system for inculcating feminine virtues in young women. Victorian mothers and governesses did not teach tapestry to female children, and Morris inherited professional conventions surrounding tapestry that could in no way be confused with the amateur associations of embroidery. The exclusion of women from participating in professional art activities, which began in the Renaissance, had become increasingly entrenched by the 19th century. Where tapestry is concerned, for example, a statute that was introduced in France in 1756, employs language that is consistent with the convention for describing stereotypical "men's work" and thereby reveals the extent to which men were the sole producers of tapestry. The statute stipulates that, before being admitted to the profession, a weaver should be:

master of all the rules of proportion, especially those of architecture and perspective, of some knowledge of anatomy, of taste and accuracy in drawing, in colouring, and in shading, of grace of arrangement and grandeur in expression, of all styles and classes, figures, animals, landscapes, palaces, rustic buildings, statues, vases, woods, plants and flowers, of all kinds. He should add to these attainments a

knowledge of sacred and secular history, and should be able to apply properly the rules of good manufacture, and to discern that which produces beauty of texture and colouring.(3)

The fact that a knowledge of anatomy was a prerequisite would in itself have excluded women from being tapestry makers because they were barred from studying anatomy in the academies, a situation that had not changed much by the end of the 19th century.

In England tapestries were being made in the Mortlake tapestry workshop, and at various times there had been other workshops at Soho, Fulham, Exeter, and in Ireland and Scotland. The skills for these workshops usually came from immigrants from Belgium and France, and from Huguenot refugees. Tapestry operations were generally precarious but there had consistently been workshops in Belgium and France.(4) Professional workshops were committed to producing painterly effects or making historical and armorial propaganda, and their value lay in the aura of opulence that they conjured up rather than in their aesthetic integrity.

Morris's contribution

William Morris campaigned against the deplorable state of tapestry making, as he did against the state of design in general

at the time. (5) At Merton Abbey, he demonstrated that tapestry was a viable art activity that could be independent of painting. He used a smaller, more manageable scale than was the practise in professional ateliers at the time, and he worked from designs that were intended for tapestry. He returned to Medieval practices and gave the weavers freedom to interpret the cartoons in their own manner, thereby encouraging them to find inventive solutions suited to their style. Morris wrote that:

it is not desirable to divide the labour between the artist and what is technically called the designer, and I think it desirable on the whole that the artist and designer should practically be one...(6)

This brought a more lively quality to the work. Whereas the tapestry studios had been using literally thousands of shades and colours to approximate the illusion of painting, Morris limited the number of colours to the basic twenty or so that can be acquired from the natural dyes that had been used in Gothic tapestries. Burne Jones was usually responsible for designing the figures, and Morris for the general "mille fleurs" and border arrangements.(7)

The process of dyeing yarn and warping looms (that were much bigger than an embroidery frame) was physical and sometimes messy work, which was not suited to the image of the ideal Victorian woman. The situation had not changed since Jean Jacques Rousseau, a century before, had claimed that, "Tapestry making is

less to the young women's liking because furniture is too distant from their persons ..."(8) Indeed, Morris employed men to make tapestry, while the needlework section of the company was run entirely by women. Morris did embroidery too and he had consistently familiarized himself with the basic craftsmanship in all the media that he was interested in before he had others do work for him. For the embroidery section, he recruited all the women in his circle, from his wife, his daughters, and the daughter of W.B.Yeats, to his housekeeper, Mrs Nicholson.(9) This is where Morris's social reform philosophy broke down, because these women were not paid for their skill or time. The case of May Morris, who was not able to afford to get married when she wanted to, demonstrates the continued dependence of the women associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Morris showed what tapestry was capable of at its best, and that it was a medium that did not require the complex collaboration and ambitious iconography that had come to be associated with the French and Belgian workshops. Simple, direct iconography could be worked in tapestry, by possibly only one person, as it had been in the bible tapestries from the monasteries of Medieval Germany and Switzerland for example.(10)

The turning point in the status of tapestry

The paradox is that William Morris rescued tapestry from the stultifying production of elite painterly emulation but that, in the process of becoming an accessible activity, it lost its erstwhile high status. Despite his formidable attempts to democratize the arts, he never did succeed in elevating the crafts to the status of fine art; instead, tapestry came down to the status of craft. Thereafter, 20th century developments in the arts conspired to make tapestry become associated with women's work, although this had not been the case in Morris's time. (It is worth noting that although Morris had set up his handloom in his bedroom his professionalism has never been questioned.)(11)

With the demystification of its support apparatus, tapestry was no longer considered an elite and therefore professional activity. It is possible to say that since the turn of the century, everything that Rozsika Parker says about the declining status of embroidery in The Subversive Stitch becomes applicable to the status of tapestry. The medium that was once dignified with a professional status, has now come to be the subject of the complex network of received ideas surrounding art that is made by women and is therefore perceived as an amateur pursuit.

How the status of tapestry was affected by the rise of functional weaving in the early 20th century

Through the Arts and Crafts Movement tapestry also became associated with functional weaving and the "simple life".(12) Thereby, in addition to being classified with embroidery, it acquired some provincial and labour class connotations which identified it with cottage industries such as those in the Hebrides. These enterprises were about all that was left of traditional handweaving in Britain until the weaver, Ethel Mairet, revived the interest in cloth making in the early 20th century. After living in India, she returned to England in 1920 to set up her workshop, "Gospels", in Ditchling where she re-invented beautiful cloth with a distinct "ethnic character". Her influence on the cloth industry has been compared to that of the Bauhaus.(13)

Ethel Mairet was a part of the group that is connected with Eric Gill, and her rustic and purist handweaving studio has probably provided one of the prototypes for people attempting to live in a simple and ecologically responsible manner. This philosophy, which again became popular in the "hippie" era, deliberately renounced the ethics of professionalism. The professional art establishment, in turn, has responded by assigning tapestries to a grass roots category, even though some may clearly not have been made in the spirit of the back to nature ethic.

After William Morris

In retrospect, it appears that the commitment of William Morris, and of people like Ethel Mairet, is often misunderstood and confused with a social philosophy which is not thought to be practical or sympathetic to the kind of technological idealism that surrounded the modern movement in the early 20th century. The extraordinary output of ideas and visual artefacts that Morris generated has ensured that the tapestries from his workshop cannot be overlooked, but, thereafter the forces that control how tapestry is perceived have contributed to the increasing invisibility of the medium. History has applauded the work of William Morris, but it seems that where tapestry is concerned no one has been able to put into practise what they have learnt from him. Edinburgh is the exception.

In 1912, two weavers from Merton Abbey went directly to the Edinburgh Tapestry Company (The Dovecot Studio) which was started by the Marquis of Bute and W.G. Thomson. Unfortunately, these weavers were killed in the first world war, but Dovecot rallied, and eventually Archie Brennan became its artistic director in 1963, bringing the studio into a contemporary focus. He then started the department of tapestry at the Edinburgh College of Art, and later, with his help, a studio in Australia was opened. Archie Brennan also greatly extended the teaching of tapestry by giving workshops to guild and craft organizations in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.(14)

Tapestry itself has not played a part in the early 20th century modern and avant-garde movements. Since I have demonstrated, however, that it has come to be associated with needlework in general, it is valid to note how the "women's" media have fared in pioneering situations. Excellent information is provided by Isabelle Anscombe in her book, A Woman's Touch, where she deals fully with the role of women, who worked almost exclusively as needleworkers, in the Arts and Crafts Movement, in the United States, Glasgow, Russia, the Bauhaus, the Omega workshop and de Stijl. She demonstrates how the first professional opportunities became available to women who were well connected and could turn their good taste to profit in the role of interior designers. She has pointed out that:

Although women designers contributed little to the theoretical writing on modern design, their practical influence was enormous. The fact that their contribution has been overlooked has led to a narrow and distorted interpretation of the true scope and achievement of the design movements of the 20th century.(15)

and she goes on to say that the women's achievements have been consistently overlooked in the Modern Movement:

not simply because these were women's achievements but because design literature has focused on theoretical writings rather than on the objects produced by

designers.(16)

In France, Sonia Delaunay did work that broke with tradition by using domestic skills and materials. She "applied complex aesthetic theories to everyday objects", and she participated in a form of abstract art known as "Orphism".(17) She made the statement that "If painting has become part of our lives, it is because women have been wearing it". Sonia Delaunay was an artist whose contribution to art is only being appreciated belatedly. Referring to the Modern Movement, Isabelle Anscombe has noted that:

Most of the women who succeeded in making a name for themselves still did so only because they were able to enlarge the sphere of activity under the aegis of a husband, father or brother, as the women in the Morris circle had done.(18)

The career of Sonia Delaunay coincides with the activities of Jean Lurçat who engineered a revival of tapestry in France after the Second World War. She and her husband, Robert, were among the artists who Lurçat involved in having work interpreted in tapestry. However, apart from her innovation in the application of modern art concepts to cloth, and her influence in making other artists see the aesthetic value of textiles, she did not make tapestry herself or actively affect the course of its development.

IV. THE CURRENT STATE OF HIGHWARP TAPESTRY IN RELATION TO OTHER AREAS OF ART

Jean Lurçat and the Lausanne Tapestry Biennale

After the first world war Jean Lurçat, admitting his debt to William Morris, brought about a revival of interest in tapestry in France. He too studied Medieval tapestries and, working in the medium himself, restored technical integrity. By giving tapestry a higher profile, he was able to secure the collaboration of well established contemporary artists. People such as Picasso, Miro, Chagal, and Vassarely had paintings translated into tapestry. However, it seems that the medium itself, as practised by Lurçat and his colleagues, did not generate innovative options, and nor does it seem to hold its own compared to modern and avant-garde post war art activities. There is no doubt, though, that he renewed the interest of the art market in appreciating tapestries based on the work of already established artists.(1)

Lurçat's ability to promote tapestry led to the inauguration of the prestigious Lausanne Biennale in 1962. It was the Slavic artists participating in the first Biennale who provided an example of what the woven medium was capable of in contemporary terms. They had been trained thoroughly in the technical weaving traditions of their countries and were well acquainted with modern concepts which dominated abstract expressionism. Magdalena Abakanowicz from Poland, and Jagoda Buic from Yugoslavia, are two notable examples of artists who set the

direction towards large sculptural textile forms with a theatrical and expressive quality.(2)

The emergence of the fiber art movement

There was a confrontation between the new forms and the traditional woollen, woven tapestries made by Lurçat and his group. The innovators won, and thereafter, the organizers of the Biennale made it a mandate to their juries to select work that "broke new ground". Logically the result was a proliferation of process and materials, with the result that the works could be constructed in any way imaginable, with no limit on the kind of materials that could be used. The terms "nouvelle tapperie", or "fiber art", were generally accepted to describe the new forms. Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen (who prefer the term "art fabric") have documented the developments of the Biennale, and therefore of the international styles in fiber art. The characteristics of the sixties are dealt with in their first book, Beyond Craft: the Art Fabric, and of the seventies in The Art Fabric: Mainstream. These two books essentially have become the main source of information being disseminated amongst all kinds of people interested in contemporary textiles. Artists who are featured in these books are subsequently given validation in any other writing that deals with the subject.

During the sixties and seventies it was very necessary, and

healthy, to break with the rigidity of traditions and with the dominance of tapestries emulating paintings. Unfortunately, the baby, or more precisely the grandmother, went out with the bathwater and pictorial tapestry became an outcast. In a precarious situation where fiber art was struggling for professional recognition, it was dangerous for it to carry with it the baggage associated with the inhibiting dominance of studio executed tapestries based on designs of renowned artists. This meant that the movement had to protect itself from tapestry that employed a traditional process in a conventional manner, which in turn meant that any form of iconography had to go. Constantine and Lenor Larsen express this in the statement:

It is natural for diehards to be concerned about the direction of this world-famous Biennale. However, they must recognize that the changing character of Art Fabric reflects and parallels an art world in a state of flux.(3)

Professionalism in fiber art

The achievement of the Lausanne Biennale has been amazing because it allowed a new art form to come about that also had links with the ancient past. It was also able to divorce itself from the erstwhile high, but now moribund, art of tapestry based on painting styles. What it then had to do was establish its own professional prestige to distinguish it from the productions of

the very many hobbyists who work with fibre. Professionalism was demonstrated in the first place by sanctioning only the sculptural or conceptual links with the past, and then by creating works that were extremely large, technically and physically difficult to make, and which bore evidence of academic and formal research. The renewed interest in ancient processes found expression in formal manipulations and conceptual hybrids of a monumental and volumetric character which were at first very exciting. "Often the works resembled blown up sections of primitive or historical pieces." (4) Spheres of influence and study were set up, such as the Banff fiber art department, which initiated aspirants into the "high craft" discourse.

Having established a separate arena with its own professional elite, fiber art continues to be insecure because there is little difference between the appearance of an art fabric and many other art forms. (5) It would be logical for fiber art to integrate with the other recognized art forms but this would mean sacrificing what has been gained in the way of status by fiber art. Nor would integration be welcomed in the high art arena which already has problems of overcrowding. Instead, fiber art must constantly declare its unique quality while at the same time displaying an innovation that is consistent with assumptions and praxis of high art. As a result, with its exclusion from sustained training facilities and the critical discourse of art journals, it is always a little in the rear-garde, which is why it must claim high art figures such as Beuys and Christo as a

part of the movement by virtue of the materials they use.(6)

It is significant that The Art Fabric: Mainstream which was published in the early 1980's (no date is provided in the book) is predisposed to concentrate on process oriented constructions and does not feature pictorial work. An exception is the photo realism of Helena Hernmark which is not made in tapestry and therefore qualifies as an art fabric because she devised a mechanical method for giving the illusion of traditional tapestry. In other words, pictorial imagery is acceptable as fiber art, provided that it is not created in the traditional tapestry process.(7)

Therefore, an artist who currently persists in working in highwarp tapestry, where iconography is the main element, is considered reactionary in the fiber art arena. It seems important, in order to qualify as an art fabric, that either the traditional tapestry process is abandoned altogether (it can still be called "tapestry") or that there is some kind of pre-planning in which technical process makes a formal statement. This means that the work can be categorized as an art fabric or as "nouvelle tapisserie". If an art work can demonstrate that it has no inappropriate (that is accessible) links with the past, it becomes eligible for professional, or high, status within fiber art. Constantine and Lenor Larsen state that:

A major aspect of the 70's was a renewed interest in fabrics

that are not only loom woven but loom controlled. Unlike tapestry, these pattern weaves must be planned out and "built in" even before the warp making is started. There was an emphasis on formalist, structuralist methods and analytic investigation. The rules of the game were pattern repeats or lack of them..... (8)

In other words, if one works with the iconographic approach of a painter in the highwarp process the result is not an art fabric but neither is it obviously acceptable as a painting. Conversely, if one works with yarnlike materials in a three-dimensional form, the result might be fiber art or it might be sculpture.

I mention these details not to attack a very valid art form but to demonstrate that within the art fabric discipline that was spawned by highwarp tapestry, the latter is not very welcome. This can be seen in the regulations for the forthcoming 13th Lausanne Biennale in 1987 which indicate a bias that does not readily include highwarp tapestry although, the theme is "Celebration of the Wall". The regulations state:

We are insisting on the mural character of the theme. Provided that the work is executed in flexible fibre, textile, paper, metal or any other malleable material, the artist is free to interpret the mural theme in his own fashion.(my italics) To avoid any misunderstanding, it is to be noted that the notion of "celebration of the wall" does

not imply a return to tradition. The Biennale continues to be an avant-garde exhibition, and the Jury will give preference to works bearing witness to authentic research in the theme.(9)

The expression "authentic research" is a part of the professional terminology which is intended to mystify and exclude anyone who might have thought that iconography in highwarp tapestry could constitute an avant-garde statement. The authors of The Art Fabric: Mainstream emphasise the inappropriateness of iconography in fiber art when they criticize the reviews of the "Masterpieces of Tapestry" exhibition of Gothic tapestries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1947 for going "into verbal ecstasies in describing the iconography, with hardly a mention of yarns, or of the weavers' contributions."(10)

Highwarp tapestry in relation to other art forms

Having drawn a distinction between fiber art and tapestry, I will examine how highwarp tapestry fits into the apparatus of art networks. I will begin by looking at the categories that can all be called "highwarp tapestry". Within this limited area, yet further distinctions can be made, including the production of highwarp executed studio tapestry from designs by established artists. Essentially, tapestry made in ateliers continues to enjoy a system of patronage because it uses prominent artists who

have already established a name in the market. Confidence is generated among the patrons who are usually corporations. The potential for this kind of work must be encouraging because, despite the prevailing austerity in funding for the arts, in 1982 Ruth Scheuer (who trained in tapestry in France) acquired a studio in Greenwich Village at a cost of \$400,000 and spent another \$100,000 again to equip it.(11) This studio has done work, for example, by Joseph Raphael. There is, needless to say, not a clear distinction between the studio weaver, a studio director, and what I will refer to as the independent "tapestry artist" who is responsible for all stages of the work from design to exhibition. They may change roles from time to time. I will therefore refer to "studio (or atelier) tapestries" on the one hand, and on the other hand, simply to "highwarp tapestry" when it is made by a tapestry artist.

The benefits of the support system for studio tapestries do not extend to the lower status highwarp tapestries, which are often made in a workshop in the home of the tapestry artist because of the long hours involved. This contributes to their being labelled amateur through an association with domesticity. In addition, the tapestry artist must "compete" with the name of an established artist from the high art sphere even though the original painting has not in all cases translated into a successful tapestry. Therefore the tapestry artists tend not to receive commissions and, when they do, the remuneration is not consistent with their investment of time and degree of training.

The limiting influence of the trend towards large scale tapestries

A curious obsession with large scale has developed, which of course has parallels in painting, and for many of the same reasons. As a result, artists are subtly conditioned to avoid working in sizes that are consistent with the average painting, although such a scale is ideal for the making of tapestry by a single tapestry artist who wishes to have personal control over all the stages of the process. In addition, therefore, monumental tapestries are attempted without adequate experience, and care is sometimes sacrificed as a result of having a team of weavers who are not always adequately trained. Such tapestries do not wear well and have resulted in patrons vowing never to commission a tapestry again. The sagging of the Sutherland tapestry in Coventry Cathedral is a classic example of the problem. There are few ateliers which have the excellent record of the Dovecot studio in Edinburgh, where the three main weavers have eighty years of experience among them.

The emphasis on large scale means that, by today's standards, there would have been no Coptic or Peruvian tapestries made, and Kilim or Navajo rugs would not qualify as valid art because they are too small. Scale is also one of the ways in which "high craft" seeks to validate its professionalism because it mystifies the activity through the element of complexity. It

is as though the innovations of William Morris were being put into reverse and an accesible activity, such as tapestry, then reverts to the ambitious and mysterious scale of the French ateliers in order to become an elite activity in which only those initiated in the code know how to participate. In this way a high/low distinction has been created for tapestry within the crafts.

However, attempts have been made to provide a professional forum for small works. It is noteworthy that this interest was initiated by the British who are accustomed to seeing smaller tapestries because of William Morris and the work that is done in Edinburgh. Thus it was in London that the first International Biennale of miniature textiles was organized in 1974. This was followed by one in the United States in 1979. Constantine and Lenor Larsen were critical of the miniature exhibitions because:

Certainly these showcases provided a stimulus for small Art Fabrics in their many manifestations. However, the sheer number of entries submitted for jury selection indicated the desire of many eager amateurs to jump on the miniature bandwagon. Too often the work submitted revealed neither comprehension of the nature of materials, nor convincing intent on the part of the makers. In the titles of both the Lausanne Biennales and the London Miniature Textile presentations we face a problem of nomenclature. The use of the word "tapisserie" in the former and "textile" in the

latter would seem to indicate a conservative and traditional meaning and attitude in the field. However in the development of Art Fabric in the 60's and 70's, this approach is sadly out of date and not applicable to today's Art Fabric character".(12)

The term "convincing intent", is an example of language that is bound to mystify anyone who has not had access to training facilities or situations which will provide a familiarity with the vocabulary of professionalism in order to decipher the code.

Michel Ragon, in the guide to the "Architectures 85" exhibitions also expresses the following bias:

Large tapestries (and as far as I am concerned, tapestries are only justifiable in very large formats) create an active relationship between the floor space and ceiling space, between the furniture and the deambulatory space. One might easily retort that a small tapestry can convey the feeling of an intimate festivity, but easel painting already fills this role: whereas a large tapestry brings to architecture a ceremoniousness unattainable by any painting."(13)

As a result there is a special invisibility reserved for smaller, "easel sized", tapestries. The fact that the set of "Apocalypse" tapestries in Angers, which particularly inspired Jean Lurcat, is comprised of a series of smaller tapestries,

vindicates the kind of manageable scale that was also used by William Morris. Knowing that Medieval workshops were equipped to produce tapestries in great numbers, there is nothing mysterious about the number of pieces in the set of the "Apocalypse" tapestry except the brilliant inspiration of the iconography.(14) The statement that tapestry is only valid if it is made on a scale that is suitable for interior design in architecture is insensitive to the medium as an expressive art form. Nor is ceremoniousness only achieved through large scale, and furthermore it is also very debatable whether painting already fills the role of "intimate festivity" better than tapestry can do. Such prejudices are indicative of a defensiveness and a certain amount of confusion about entering into an assessment of individual highwarp tapestries on the basis of their intrinsic merit as art works.

In the absence of other criteria, the main legitimation for tapestry is through architectural commissions and therefore corporations provide fiber artists (in the widest sense) with one of the only ways to make a living unless they have a teaching post. Those that have validating teaching posts are more likely to receive commissions and also have the added advantage of being able to use their students to work on large tapestries. Architectural commissions usually demand an extremely large scale and there is subsequent pressure to commission work that covers an expanse of wall in the quickest and most profitable way. For this reason, the highwarp tapestry artist is also "competing"

with the art fabric, or "high craft" forms, which are usually less labour intensive than highwarp tapestry. It is not uncommon practise to have relatively unskilled workers produce simple fabric components in heavy materials that can then be assembled fairly quickly.

A variant of this was provided by an entrepreneur who combined both systems, by having the work of recognized painters produced in Mexico in a method that punched yarn into a backing which was then painted with latex glue. It was marketed under the guise of being a part of the Medieval tradition of the "Lady and the Unicorn".

Architectural commissions are also unlikely to go to tapestry artists who make tapestry that has idiosyncratic or controversial imagery. The categorizing of "decorative arts" carries with it an expectation that tapestry should be agreeable. For example, with the Toronto Dominion Bank's commissions it was stipulated that the "works would have to humanize the site, enhance its architecture and represent the highest standards of quality in craftsmanship".(15) Certainly the strength of tapestry is its humanizing effect, but if it is beautiful can it not also be serious?

Tapestries from third world countries

A category of highwarp that is adequately supported comes

from workshops in third world countries. The Oodi Weavers in Botswana and the Harrania workshop in Egypt are two examples.(16) These were started by trained experts who brought skills to areas where tapestry was not indigenous. These operations were characterized by some form of idealism that provided opportunities for workers in a depressed area and the intention has been that the workshops would become self-sufficient worker-run operations. In other cases, there has been simply the desire to find inexpensive labour for a business venture for the tourist trade.

It is worth noting that in third world countries there is a precedent for the tapestries to be fairly small and of a narrative character that is essentially about social issues. The Botswana tapestries deal with topical events and depict situations such as the benefits of building a dam, or the fact that the boys get boots to play soccer, while the girls do not even have organized games or shoes.(17) Such direct and compelling statements in art are consistent with other areas of folk art.

The tapestry artist thus "competes" again with two elements in this category. One is shoddy, quaint, inexpensive, mass-produced little tapestries. The other is very lovely folk art that is also inexpensive because it is usually subsidized by philanthropy. A big exhibition of the Harrania Egyptian children's tapestries was held at the Barbican Centre in London

in the summer of 1985. The exhibition was solidly subsidized by influential and well bred patronage. The British Ambassador wrote the foreword to the catalogue, while Harrods and Lloyds Bank were among the sponsors.(18) The prices for the Harrania tapestries started at 30 pounds sterling. On the other hand, the tapestry artist, like any other artist, cannot have low prices, and they themselves must also conduct the operation of a small business to keep records, buy supplies, comply with the red tape involved in sales tax, import duty, income tax, shipping art works, insurance and the arranging of exhibitions.

It is appropriate to mention at this point that one of the elements that characterizes the lively tapestries from third world countries is their disregard for technical precision. Working without a cartoon they often have uneven edges or diminishing widths. In this context, such irregularities have an integrity that is consistent with the vitality of, say, a kilim rug. Yet, in the western craft world, there is undue emphasis placed on technical elements and not on design or iconography. This means that many highwarp tapestry artists find that the only discourse available to them is one that is technically oriented. A terror of spontaneity can result in many perfectly square or rectangular, flat tapestries that are unmemorable and reinforce the high art world's opinion that it is not a viable art form. However, when tapestries are being made on a large scale their great weight makes it critical that the structure is technically sound so that they can endure over time.

Highwarp tapestry and the apparatus of support

When one comes to consider the relationship of the tapestry artist to the high art area, one finds that even though the makers share the intentions of a painter, they are not readily included in the art market. The explanation that the work is labour intensive and consequently expensive is often used, but that is not a valid criticism since those factors also apply to the paintings of Alex Colville or Chuck Close. In Canada, an experienced tapestry artist found that a viable commercial gallery owner would handle paper works but said that if the gallery took the tapestries it would get a bad reputation as a craft gallery. The quality of the tapestries was not the issue. The artist no longer works in tapestry. (19)

The implications of these situations is that the artists who work in highwarp tapestry are left without a support apparatus and as a result it is very much an endangered medium. The invisibility of most tapestries means that, on the one hand, it is unusual for artists whose interests lie on the cutting edge to select the medium, and on the other, when they do it goes unnoticed. Tapestries are not included by the avant-garde in artist run centres that provide an alternative to commercial galleries. It becomes apparent that it is not on the basis of material used that the distinctions are made, but according to

who makes the work, where it is made, and whether it has associations with the domestic sphere.

It can be seen that there are no clear conceptions about who should be making highwarp tapestry. There are also no clear conceptions about who the audience for tapestry might be despite the fact that I have found there is considerable interest in the medium and that it has a wide appeal. What is needed is a system of authentication which can give confidence in an art form that is, as yet inadequately, but inevitably situated in the art market.

Isolation amongst art groups

Art groups are so isolated from each other that there is no real shared vocabulary or system of referents. The leading artists associated with each are unknown to other groups and it is as though they were from totally different cultures. A major figure like the late German conceptual artist, Joseph Beuys, is usually unknown in most craft situations. While conversely, in this thesis I would need to include illustrations if I were going to make extensive reference to the work of the major fiber artists who have been working in the field for twenty years or more. Someone like Anni Albers might be known in fine art circles because of her husband Josef. It is significant that, of the few women's names that do stand out, such as those of Sonia

Delaunay, Sophie Tauber Arp and the women in the Russian Constructivist Movement, their celebrity is usually a result of their more famous husbands.

In Paris, when I was there in 1985, it was possible to see work in the "Architextures 85" exhibition (held in the Museum of Decorative Art), that could have been in the Museum of Contemporary Art at the Pompidou Centre. Conversely, many of the sculptures and installations from the Pompidou Centre would have been at home in the fiber art exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Art. Although these works have widely differing historical antecedents and exhibiting opportunities, their properties often look the same, and, therefore an intriguing question concerns the process whereby artists find themselves going into one stream or the other. It is also interesting to notice that there was a distinct gender division (and disparity of status) that correlates with the two facilities, since there were mainly women in the "Architextures 85" exhibition and men in the Contemporary Art exhibition.

In The Art Fabric: Mainstream, there is a quotation from Lawrence Alloway about the categories of art:

The exclusionary trend of American art writing has not spared the crafts. It was in the 18th century that different aspects of the arts were precisely separated. The more distinctions that we can make between things, the better of course, but systems of classification need to be

tested and revised. This has not happened with any regularity in the visual arts, and painting and sculpture have remained the core subjects of the "fine art" theory. ... The crafts, even when clearly outside a category of utility are generally assigned a lower status than the "fine" arts. The expansion of the definition of art, after Duchamp, easily includes postcards but not tapestries, xerox but not weaving. This is due to a prejudice against craft as the residue of an earlier manual phase of culture. As a result, discussion of crafts gets left to craft critics as specialists and art critics rarely feel called on to estimate, for example, fiberworks as sculpture.(20)

I would add that it seems that it has never been suggested that critics be called on to "estimate" a highwarp tapestry as painting. The only exception I know of was in an exhibition that I saw at the Institute of Contemporary Art Gallery in London in 1979, in which a tapestry was included in their "Narrative Painting" exhibition. The tapestry was a collaboration between David Hockney and the Dovecot Studio, but the latter did not receive credit in the catalogue.(21)

The insulation of the various groups from each other is compounded by geographic factors. The United States have mature artists working in well established craft schools, many of which received a sound early start from the influence of the European immigrant fugitives from the Nazi regime that gave them a direct

link to the Bauhaus. There is also an affinity with indigenous and ancient South American crafts which lead to the dominance of sculptural forms.(22) In her article, "Hybrides", in the catalogue for the "Architextures 85" exhibition, the Canadian, Marie Freshette, making a distinction between the strong North American emphasis on fiber art and the French emphasis on traditional tapestry, implies the low status that tapestry has in the fiber art arena when she states that in America ".... weaving has neither the privileged status nor the normative character it has in Europe, so American artists have a reason to ignore it."(23)

In France, the influence of Jean Lurçat is still strong, and the tradition of studio produced tapestries is most prevalent because of the stability of the state-owned Gobelin studio, and because of the activities of the Aubusson studios which are linked to a training facility there. Yet, I should mention my dismay at finding that an exhibition of Aubusson tapestries there was comprised of dismal little reproductions of unicorns, ladies, mille fleurs, madonnas, ballerinas, solitary roses, setting suns and all the stock images of a Sunday painter. These were made with astonishing skill, and I feel that such offerings to the tourist trade contribute a great deal to the bad reputation of pictorial tapestry. A similar exhibition of paintings would have gone unnoticed because they would be sold on the banks of the Seine and would not have been given authenticity in a prestigious museum.(24)

The kind of work that I saw in Aubusson is not adequately differentiated from good studio tapestry, whose status in France is evident in the fact that the Minister of Culture has used his influence to initiate and support the "Architextures 85" exhibitions in Paris. However, the insularity within the area of highwarp tapestry is revealed by the puzzling fact that the organizers failed to include the very considerable contribution to the revival of tapestry that was made by Archie Brennan and the Dovecot studio.(23) The production of tapestry in Edinburgh has been carried out since the turn of the century and in 1980 was given a major retrospective exhibition during the Edinburgh International Festival.(25)

Since the intention of the Paris exhibitions has been to provide an international survey since 1945, it must be concluded that there is not only an isolation of high art from other art, but of fiber art from tapestry, of studio tapestry from highwarp tapestry, and of highwarp tapestry from highwarp tapestry in different locations. Each seems to have its own discourse and its own support system - and some have neither.

Degrees of visibility

The invisibility of textiles can even be observed with prestigious and costly works like those that the Toronto Dominion Bank commissioned for 1985. The five tapestries and two sculptures were written about by John Bentley Mays in the Globe and Mail (26). After listing the names of the people who had made the tapestries, he says that several works were "outstanding", and that "they hang confidently in the lobbies of the Centre's buildings, as well they should; the reputations of most of these artisans (my italics) have been firmly established in the fiber-art arena." Two photographs and two columns are devoted to the two sculptures by the male "artists". Only one of the tapestries was made by a man. The tapestries - one of which is 78 feet by 13 feet. - are invisible. But even more invisible, (in the art context one might make a case for there being degrees of invisibility) are the majority of highwarp tapestries by artists which are made outside of architectural commissions.

There is a tragic demonstration of this kind of invisibility in the case of the Norwegian artist, Hanna Ryggen, who made narrative tapestries during the Nazi occupation of her country. Her imagery explicitly dealt with the atrocities of the Nazis as well as with other issues of social and personal concern. Her house and studio were searched when a tapestry of hers was in progress. The tapestry, "October 6, 1942", depicted the execution, without trial, of cultural leaders in Trondheim, but

although the Germans looked at the tapestry, they did not see its content because it was simply "women's work".(27). Instead they arrested her husband for his resistance activities. On the other hand, later, her subject matter did not go unnoticed by prospective patrons who were negotiating commissions for public spaces.

V. UNCONSCIOUS ATTITUDES AFFECTING HIGHWARP TAPESTRY.

Conventions and stereotypes about art forms that are perceived to be suitably feminine, are compounded by the roles that women unknowingly fulfil generally in the sexual, romantic, nostalgic and emotional fantasies of other people. These fantasies are usually not explicit because they too are buried in the unconscious of those who have the power to incorporate dependents into their security system. Compliments about femininity imply interest and a promise of security - and protection - which conceals the probability that there are in fact no professional opportunities being offered for participation in the real business of the market place where decisions are made. In the art world the compliments usually have some reference to the appearance of the artist or her domesticity and divert attention from the art work itself.

Language

In the catalogue for "Architextures 85", Claude Mollard writes in the Guide:

I have always been struck by the feminine symbols associated with the textile arts. As if the latter express a revenge taken by duration on transience, by truth on fashion; as if they also expressed a quest for *softness*, for what can be *folded without breaking,* for a *slow pace,* and finally

for *company*, because one hardly ever weaves alone.(1) (I have again used an * to emphasise words that denote an unprofessional acitivity.)

Mollard contrasts "feminine traits and those other art forms in which what is gestural, structural, metallic, cutting, or cutting up, broken, hammered, quick, aggressive, new...." (I underline the words that are intended as masculine and professional). The assumption that a need for company is "feminine" implies a scenario in which women like to chatter away like busy little bees while they work. One of the conditions surrounding 19th century conventions for young women was that they were never allowed to be alone in case they became too introspective, or possibly, so that the parents could monitor every aspect of their daughter's development to ensure that she went into the marriage market without any undesirable traits or flaws. (The concept of the chaperone as witness of purity was extended to all aspects of a young woman's life to guarantee that she had the right attitude towards marriage.) There is a case history of Freud's in which a young woman was even accompanied by her father during analysis.(2) Among the working classes, routine domestic work might have been done in groups, possibly to overcome boredom, or because overcrowding is usually a concomitant of poverty. Both situations, in which women were obliged to work in groups, have lead to the assumption that this is inevitably their choice and that they are by nature gregarious. By contrast, the "company" (or team) involved in a

conceptual art such as wrapping a mile of Californian coast would be consistent with the "masculinity" and "professionalism" of a military exercise.(3)

In another statement, Mr. Mollard, who is president of the centre national des arts plastique, also typecasts the two organizers of the exhibition, Denise Majorel who curated the woven component, and Michel Thomas who curated the multi-media part. Of Denise Majorel he writes:

(she) who has *devoted her life* to tapestry, the *face of Eternal Womanhood*, of *eternal Penelope*; on the other hand, Michel Thomas, who having gone beyond his scientific profession has dedicated his life to research and exploration.(4)(my emphasis)

This patriarchal language has not changed since Charles Ashbee was writing about the all male Craft Guilds in the early 20th century. It is noteworthy that even in France, which is the one place where collaborative highwarp tapestry has an undisputed reputation as a fine art, it is being seen as a signifier for femininity. Penelope, again, is referred to repeatedly in the catalogue and, is contrasted with Proteus by Claude Mollard when he states:

finally, going beyond the gesture of Penelope, confronted with nature, the fecund mother of all fibers on earth, have rediscovered grass, woven at home or in situ, as one used to

do in the countryside at harvest time...(5)

The identifying of tapestry and women with the earth and harvest time and the age-old evocation of nature implies the absence of any intellectual capacity in either and is contrasted with masculine strength and intellect. The tapestry component in the two exhibitions is also the signifier of the opposite of "new", which is an example of how innovation in tapestry is discouraged. By putting emphasis on the "old", tapestry is thus excluded from the mythology of the avant-garde.

The gap between what people believe that they know, and what they unconsciously believe or yearn for, has been the subject of research that is directly concerned with art activity and psychoanalysis.(6) There has been an analysis of how language perpetuates stereotypical attitudes, and there has been a re-examination of how women are depicted in the arts (7) Women artists are significant mainly by omission.(8) The process whereby history and taste are institutionalized has been questioned,(9) and in particular women are challenged to be conscious of the ways in which they perpetuate the status quo.(10) Deciphering patriarchal vocabulary is an appropriate method for understanding the process of domination, since the use of mystifying language is one of the ways in which a profession or power group arms itself against unwelcome newcomers.(11)

Politics

Annette Kolodny sums up the work that feminists have done to re-evaluate the contribution of women to society and culture when she quotes Adrian Rich (12) who wrote in Re-vision about the "act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes (my italics), of entering an old text from a new critical direction". Freudian psychoanalysis, in particular, has been so influential that it has conditioned three generations to accept Freud's biased perception of women's sexuality. On the other hand, Freud revealed how the intolerable conflicts imposed on women lead to the epidemic of hysteria which afflicted only middle class and affluent women.(13) In connection with hysteria, Freud also wrote that "constant needlework was one of the factors that rendered women particularly prone to hysteria because day-dreaming over embroidery induced 'dispositional hypnoid states'." (14) Since the majority of women did embroidery it could be stated that the majority of women were prone to hysteria!

The work of Mary Kelly, and in particular her Post Partem Document, (15) has generated a great deal of feminist discourse as it deals with Lacan's theory of the acquisition of gender specific language from the mother. The Post Partem Document raises, among others, the issue of how women are assessed by such factors as the smooth workings of their baby's digestion. Jo-Anna Isaak points out that essentially Mary Kelly contests and parodies male prerogative over theory.(16) She also provides a

focus for the question of how distinctions are made between professional and amateur work on the basis of what is done in the home and what is done in the market place - and what is associated with the home. A Campbell's soup can could only have been elevated to an aesthetic commodity when it was associated with a man, and with the blessing of the art market, because in fact in that context, it does not relate to the domestic sphere. (17)

One of the results of the process of re-examining how qualitative judgements are arrived at, is the realisation that a play of difference is necessary for a particular attribute to be emphasised. Martha Rosler states: "The truth is that, like all forms of connoisseurship, the social value of high art depends absolutely on the existence of a distinction between a high culture and a low culture." (18)

Similarly there is a device which emphasises the individuality (and masculinity) of high art by arbitrarily putting all women's work in one bracket. This attempt to isolate some inherently feminine attribute in art implies that there is a style of art that is common to all women and thereby avoids having to assess the work of a woman artist on its own merit. This device also has the effect of conditioning males to adopt appropriate masculine attitudes. Boys who display artistic interests are often mocked at, and accused of being like women, particularly if they choose to work in a discipline that is not a

part of masculine tradition. In one instance, a relative of mine in England lamented that the last male in the family line was "arty", which meant homosexual. There was the implicit assumption that the listener would understand this and realise that there would be no children to carry on the name. The macho image of people like Jackson Pollock has provided a powerful role model for "being one of the boys."

Rumour and hearsay play an important role in the amorphous network that constitutes the art establishment. An example of so-called advice that some students received is expressed in the following rumour: a male artist, who has recently become successful, apparently stated that in order to get invited to important parties, an artist should "dress untidily and talk dirty".(19) The significance of such rumours is that they provide no accessible or acceptable precedent for women artists.

Efforts to emphasise the distinction between high art and what was considered decorative has applied not only to women. The fact that when Kandinsky was involved with the Jugendstil he designed dresses, jewelery, furniture and handbags, has been very carefully separated from his "real" art. Norma Broude states that: "Matisse and Kandinsky created a dialectic to artificially support the high art versus low art distinction." and that: "in Matisse's case the critics did this more than he did."(20)

Nancy Chodorow in the introduction to her book The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of

Gender stresses the tenacity with which the myth of the biologically controlled character of women's nature function in order to perpetuate gender distinctions. Chodorow quotes Alice Balint's book Love for the mother and mother love:

The ideal mother has no interests of her own for all of us it remains self-evident that the interests of mother and child are identical, and it is the generally acknowledged measure of the goodness of the mother how far she really feels this identity of interests.(21)

I do not intend to raise the question of whether art making is more valuable than mothering, but simply to demonstrate that one of the factors contributing to making tapestry an endangered medium is that it must compete with the pressure on women to bear children.

Fantasies

The depiction of women in art has reinforced the dual image of women, as either good or bad, that has its origins in biblical doctrine. The polarized symbols of Eve (who takes the blame for all the dark side of human nature), and Mary (who through a virgin birth makes it possible for humankind to deny the dark things) have permeated art and conditioned women's behaviour. In both images, the woman is seen in terms of her relationship to others - usually men, children and the dispensing of charity and food.

In a Vanguard article, Dennis Lessard states that "style in art, whatever its miraculous self-defining nature, is the equivalent of etiquette in society".(22) Images of women have for centuries been intended to be looked at for male pleasure. In order to defuse the fear of the power of women's sexuality, they were shown in a passive and controllable way - as objects of desire. Recently, artists such as Judy Chicago and Nancy Spero have been using imagery that breaks with taboos about conventions for depicting women's bodies. Nancy Spero, for example, presents women participating actively in culture.(23) Judy Chicago's imagery, which depicts women's sexuality explicitly, generated so much controversy that initially she could not find a place to exhibit it.(24)

Ideologies

In addition, there has been art related research and writing concerning ideologies and interest groups. Adrian Piper states that, "formalism is a product of an ethnic group - a European descended, white, male, middle class."(25) There is a tendency for people not to acknowledge that a set of economic circumstances that are greatly to their advantage - both materially and emotionally - are based upon ideological myths. Most discrimination therefore is accompanied by some apparently scientific and irrefutable evidence. Failing that, there is the more subtle dissemination of a doctrine of taste that is only available to the initiated. George Steiner points out that in

matters of taste there is nothing but "blameless intuition" to substantiate a particular viewpoint. He states that you "count heads" to validate taste.(26)

Historical documentation

People are naturally reluctant to concede that ideology plays a part in evaluating culture because it means questioning the basis whereby we accept our inherited concept of the hierarchy of cultural and aesthetic excellence. Old Mistresses proves that there was more excellent work besides the acknowledged masterpieces, but that there has not been the same system for preserving, documenting and institutionalizing the other works.(27) There is the example of Mary Dalaney, a well known 18th century embroiderer and published author, who was the first person to work in collage, which she did at the age of 80. Collage was not accepted as a serious art form until it was again invented by Picasso in the 20th century.(28) Many of the women who have been neglected by history are celebrated in Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party", and the circumstances surrounding her own career are a well documented treatise on the reluctance of the art establishment to accept a woman seeking recognition as a professional artist on her own terms.(29) .

In many cases there was outright suppression of excellence and independence. For example, the Beguine Embroiderers at the end of the 12th century were a non-establishment, women's reform movement without a hierarchy. In 1243, Matthew Paris reported

that there were 2,000 of these nuns in Cologne and neighbouring cities. They gave up possessions, and instead of adopting the convention for monks and nuns to beg, they sold their labour and their embroidery. Their independence continually caused anger in the male church council (one bishop said that he would sooner see them married off), until finally, in 1312, the Archbishop of Cologne ordered the association to disband.(30)

The withholding of professional information implies a definite ideology, and this was demonstrated by a catalogue for an exhibition of Navajo rugs in 1974.(31) These vivid rugs are acknowledged to be on a par with modern abstraction in painting and have actually played a part in influencing some painting,(32) yet, they are described as having been made by "nameless masters of abstract art".(33) The women who made them did have names that have been recorded elsewhere.(34) American quilts are another example of an art form where the names of the makers are often omitted. It is frequently said, and assumed, that they were made from traditional patterns that were merely decorative, whereas, as Old Mistresses points out, they had, like Gothic tapestries, "both functional and propagandist or commemorative, personal, political, religious and social meaning."(35) Gothic tapestry, too, incorporated patterns that were used and used again in varying iconographies. Often a particular stock figure, with identical features, expression and costume will show up in succeeding tapestries but, because they were made in the public arena by men (when the medium had high status), it has not been

suggested that the re-using of cartoons made Gothic tapestries merely decorative.(36)

A contemporary example of how women's amateur status might be perpetuated by the withholding of professional information is provided by the faculty listing in the prospectus for the Edinburgh College of Art. Fiona Matheson, who has an international reputation in tapestry, is listed as Fiona Grierson.(37) Her husband, Douglas Grierson, was in fact a weaver at the Dovecot Studio under her directorship when she took over from Archie Brennan. In this way Fiona Matheson's professional identity is concealed, and who can estimate what opportunities for her in her life time, and for tapestry in general, have been lost as a result. An historian or critic, looking at the prospectus, might conclude that some unknown woman taught at the college, and thus Fiona Matheson's contribution goes unrecorded. There are many such small, apparently insignificant, instances of unconscious discrimination, or simply a thoughtless perpetuation of a convention, which have led to the absence of information regarding professional women artists.

The books of neither Janson nor Gombrich list any women artists, and both are much used texts in practically all art schools. Nor are there any women mentioned in Rollo May's book The Courage to Create, which has the following passage:

Hans Hofmann, venerable dean of abstract painters in this country and one of our most expert and experienced teachers,

remarked that art students these days have a great deal of talent but that they lack passion or commitment. Hofmann went on to say, interestingly enough, that his men students get married early for reasons of security and become dependent on their wives, and that often it is only through their wives that he, as their teacher, can draw out their talent."(38)

The talent of the women students, or of the wives of the male students, appears to have been invisible. This is an example of how insiduously prevailing ideologies have been passed on in the form of factual information by acknowledged experts. As this is usually done, however, by omitting any reference to women at all, there is seldom a specific point on which to base an argument. In his article, "Viewpoint: A new meaning of Meaning." George Steiner points out that for any evaluation of art there is invariably an opposite that can be justified, and that, "a critical theory, an aesthetic, is a politics of taste."(39)

Nor have class attitudes in relation to the labour involved in art making disappeared. Referring to the British class system, in 1910, Roger Fry points to the distinction that is made between work that is done with the hands and work that is perceived to have come from the intellect:

There is a certain social class-feeling, a vague idea that a man can still remain a gentleman if he paints bad pictures,

but must forfeit the conventional right to his "Esquire", if he makes good pots or serviceable furniture.(40)

The current use of the word "artisan" still carries with it the connotations of a lower class manual activity that is devoid of ideas, while the term "artist" reflects an intellectual pursuit that is perceived to be divorced from its process. The credibility given to art works that are executed by workers carrying out the ideas of an artist has put into disrepute artists who provide the craftsmanship to carry out their own ideas. As a result, most artists whose work requires that they undertake exacting craftsmanship are given a status that is the equivalent of the labourer while their concepts are ignored. This is particularly relevant to tapestry artists because of the practise of the tapestry studios which collaborate with painters, bringing the high art star system into the arena, and thereby diminishing the status of those who actually know how to make the medium work.

There are curious preconceptions about who is permitted to be a professional artist that are indicative of subtle class related prejudices. People who are identified with leisure or luxury are inclined to be seen as dilettantes. In particular advantaged women are not encouraged to be art practioners and instead their assets are directed towards philanthropy. Conversely, it is held that people who appear to be disadvantaged are not professionals either. This leaves a rather small group

who are eligible for the professionalism and success which are a product of familiarity with the code of the establishment.

Success

The notion of success also has implications for artists working outside of the major art centres, with New York at the apex. As a consequence, "outsider" art is thus also excluded from the sphere of professional, or "successful" art. The work of folk artists, native artists and Art Brut is usually not made with a market in mind, and therefore possibly represents an art form that has an integrity that is free of prevailing styles or trends in art. However, because these artists, in most cases, work without a knowledge of the professional codes and fashions, their work is evaluated as lesser. One might conclude that professionalism is accorded to people who have undergone certain initiation rites which are not easily accessible to the majority of people, and that it is those with power who dictate what the initiation rites are and who is eligible to participate in them. It can be observed that language is one of the devices that mystifies the code, while the apparatus for generating self-censorship serves to prohibit categories of people from the process of initiation.

VI. THE IMPLICATIONS OF WORKING IN HIGHWARP TAPESTRY

Patronage

Whether a medium is practised as a hobby or professionally is not in itself a problem because the two can be mutually supportive. They can co-exist happily, with a murky area in between, if there is some appropriate system for distinguishing them that is not imposed by one group on another. It is then up to the practitioners to choose their orientation. Photography has proved this since it became accepted as a high art although initially it suffered prejudices as a result of its applied form. Likewise, the association of tapestry with functional weaving and interior design detracts from its status as a visual art form. Rosler states that photography had to "re-engineer its own high culture/low culture split" and that "while art photography was divorcing its old audience and romancing a classier one, the industry was increasing its pursuit of amateurs and all the markets swell as a result." (1) Photography however, has the advantage of new technology on its side and the added patronage of an industry that sells equipment and supplies to a wide buying public of both sexes.

Sales of tapestry equipment and material, on the other hand, are mainly made to women, who are working as hobbyists, and who have learnt to "make do", and must be frugal. Therefore, the

medium does not have wealthy, self-interested patronage such as the facilities Kodak has provided for photography. Although there is wide interest in tapestry, because of its intrinsically reassuring quality and portability, the large potential audience of private patrons has not been encouraged. Furthermore, the viewing audience for tapestry is split into either an extensive community of hobbyists, or a small group of specialised collectors. There is very little in between, and so the majority of people are not receiving discriminating information about tapestry.

Audience

The hobby practitioners, who make up the majority of people who attend tapestry exhibitions, do not provide tapestry artists with a real support group, either as patrons, or for professional discourse. What is lacking is the machinery for differentiating good from bad tapestry. What is also lacking for highwarp tapestry is the process whereby an art form or an artist is judged to be worth collecting. I once stood in the Mendel Gallery and overheard a well-dressed woman call her friend over and say of my work, "This is lovely. I should make one of these." By contrast with Canada, I understand, in Scandinavia a tapestry is one of the first items that a newly married couple acquires. Consequently, in Scandinavia, a profession in tapestry is a viable option as a career.

Advertising

A comparison of advertising for the two media, photography and tapestry, also reveals a marked difference in image and association. Whereas advertisements for photographic equipment invite their customers to be contemporary and successful, advertising for looms and yarns always choose to stress a nostalgic, old world fantasy. The weaver, male or female, is dressed in a peasant-like outfit, and located in a rustic room with bowls of flowers. If it is a woman, her hair might be arranged in elaborate French braids to signify a leisurely life style, and she might be barefoot, with a pair of clogs lying nearby, to emphasise her naturalness. There is usually a basset hound, a spaniel or a child on the floor. With men there is a retriever or a black labrador, and possibly a Vermeer print on the wall. He wears spectacles because, if a man does weaving, it is necessary to demonstrate his intellect in case he is seen as effeminate.(2) Such images are not conducive to innovative art making, nor do they suggest that the activity is anything but amateur or dilettante. The people being depicted are not on their way to becoming wealthy, successful and innovative, but have already acquired financial independence in some passive and magical way. Weaving is presented as pure wishful thinking in a context that appears remote from contemporary reality.

Training

The attitude that is brought to the teaching of tapestry influences whether students see it as a vehicle for contemporary ideas or as some kind of endorsement of nostalgia for the past. Ideally, in a fine art training, current philosophies of contemporary art are taught and students encouraged to pursue explorations that will not lead to a pre-determined result. Too often, under the conditions in which tapestry is taught, preconceptions and stock solutions are applied in the approach to design. This is because the people who teach tapestry often do not have visual art training and may know relatively little themselves about the medium. As a result, tapestry is seldom, if ever, pushed to a level where its potential is adequately explored, because this takes time and has no guaranteed results.

The separation between contemporary art schools and craft schools guarantees that the distinction between a high art and lesser arts is maintained. The degree of separation may vary from circumstances where the crafts are taught within a school or department of design within the same institution as fine art, to the maintenance of totally autonomous institutions. In all cases, the craft, or design, facility has lower status than the fine art one and in Canada in particular there are few facilities of any kind for learning about textiles even in the broadest sense. The only specialised tapestry department that I know of is at the Edinburgh College of Art. If one examines the resumé's

of highwarp tapestry artists in international group exhibitions, it will be found that most have trained in Edinburgh, Poland or France at some time.

The importance of having a tapestry course taught in a fine art context, and not separately, is that a rigorous visual art programme (with great emphasis on drawing) as well as a humanities training, is vital to good tapestry making. However, since there is a long apprenticeship needed to acquire the technical skills, many autonomous craft schools do not offer a conceptual or philosophical approach consistent with their fine art counterparts, and cannot include staff who have specialised fine art training. Tapestry is usually taught within a generalized textile course with a strong emphasis on multi-harness loom control and pattern drafting for functional purposes. The influence of this approach was demonstrated to me when I was told by a teacher from a general textile department that if students ran into a problem with their tapestry, they could simulate it on a sample loom and show that to the instructor for discussion. Since tapestry should be viewed in the same way as painting is, it should also be taught so that problems are seen in the context of the whole, and not as if they can be technically isolated.

Because of the paucity of appropriate training facilities by far the most prevalent system for learning tapestry is through short term amateur sponsored workshops. Guilds provide a

self-help support group that seldom caters to the needs of the emerging professional. In the absence of certified courses, both teacher and students are forced to seek out weekend workshops or summer school facilities in various parts of the world. Often in these contexts it is expedient to use the "how-to" books which are all that are available, and which have abysmal illustrations. There is great pressure in a workshop situation to accomplish a finished piece within the short time allocated, so that the participants can have something to show for their expenditure of time and money. Usually there is a relative who has expectations that a predictable "masterpiece" will be brought back, and in addition there are likely to be babysitting fees that have to be justified.

Teaching

The people teaching these workshops will often be obliged to undertake prolonged correspondence and make long distance telephone calls to the organizers because the latter have little experience, or are not clear what it is that they want from the teacher. Then there is at least a week of preparation, which usually includes collecting equipment and material, providing their own books, maintaining an up-to-date set of slides, and invariably travelling to various centres, but the instructors are only paid for the two or three days of the workshop. Often a workshop is cancelled at the last minute for lack of enrolment,

without compensation for the teacher.

Employment opportunities

This kind of training does not provide actual formal qualifications. Ultimately a dedicated person will be well experienced, but they remain unemployable. Attitudes towards self-taught expertise do not show respect. This kind of attitude also applies to qualified practitioners in tapestry. A typical example was provided by a proposed craft school which invited about twelve weavers with a wide variety of experience and background to be on a planning committee. This would have involved attending meetings in that town over an extended length of time, reviewing proposals, and making recommendations for future courses. Yet there was to be no remuneration offered for either time spent out of the studio, or for consulting fees. By contrast, there will be a strong emphasis on computer assessed "modules" of competency for the students, which was not an item open for discussion by the consultants. (The software would certainly not have been donated.) I was also asked to help set up their history and slide reference facilities on a volunteer basis. A factor which contributes to such attitudes is that the expectations about women's role in philanthropy and volunteer organizations are carried over into the arts.

Support from art institutions

Important vehicles for legitimization of art are provided by granting agencies and public galleries, but since the juries and administrators, even when unprejudiced, are unlikely to know much about tapestry, there is a tendency to avoid it. I recently received an unsolicited apology from a curator, of a museum outside Saskatchewan, who volunteered that it was not possible to include my work in their collection because "there was no budget for contemporary craft." Occasionally, group exhibitions are organized which will provide some exposure and recognition, but the problem here is that the tapestries must usually be the property of the artist and often tour for two or more years. This means that the artist cannot sell the work before and possibly after the exhibitions, and has to find alternative means of support to subsidize the exhibitions. In Canada there is a system of artists' fees to provide some income in such situations, but this is not usually followed in the craft exhibitions and galleries.

The fact that craft organizations often have hobbyists on their board of directors, can result in inexperienced decision making. I was recently approached about being in an exhibition to be called "Canadian Tapestry" which will be held in Toronto and was given two weeks notice for submitting work.(3) Since no less than six months is needed to plan ahead in such a labour intensive medium, and most professionals have their work

committed for at least a year ahead, the exhibition is likely to receive old, or hastily prepared submissions. Thus, once again, the medium may be forced to fulfil the worst expectations of the art world.

A letter to the Ontario Craft News (4) typifies some of the problems that are frequently encountered in the way that many public galleries handle a craft exhibition. For the North York Arts Council's gala opening, there was a juried art and a juried craft show. The latter was described as follows: "The display looked more like a jumble sale than that of a show. There were too many works for the size of the small room. Fibre pieces that were clearly meant to hang on the wall were laid out on school desks like placemats." This was contrasted with the art show where the works "were arranged with care" in two large bright rooms that were more accessible than the area assigned to the crafts. There were also awards presented within only the art component, and it was announced that studio space was being provided for painters since many "are forced to work in small apartments."

Journals and critical discourse

Further distinctions between high and other art are maintained by the separation of journals and avenues of information that are concerned with critical analysis.

Assesments must be made without the endorsement of formal training institutions, or of the attendant master/protege' line. An additional impediment to critical discourse is that people (unless they already have a well established career) who attempt to write or criticize in craft areas find that art journals do not accept their articles and can then find no other professional forum. As a result they often specialise in some other approved area of art. When there is journal and media coverage of tapestry exhibitions it is usually confined to craft magazines which tend to have a straight reporting approach rather than a critically analytic one. The general media invariably neglect professional information and single out quaint personal anecdotes about the artist which reinforce an image of domesticity and an association with nature. Fiber Arts Magazine, which is the only journal covering textiles in North America, had a slighting and defensive bias in their review of The Subversive Stitch which has been one of the most valuable influences on my writing of this thesis. (Appendix (i)) The review goes some way towards explaining the absence of critical or feminist debate within the fiber art arena.

Selected group tapestry exhibitions

When I was in Lausanne during the 12th Biennale I went to the office of the organizers and requested reference material on criticism of the Biennale. They were most helpful, but I was told

that there was none. Fiber Art Magazine covered the Third Montreal Biennale simply by referring to some of the established names in the area that have already been endorsed by authorities such as Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen.(5) The Montreal Tapestry Biennale was also written about in Vanguard magazine by Marie Freshette in the 1985 summer edition.(6) The exhibition opened in June 1984: the proposals had been called for in 1982 with the intention of exhibiting the works in 1983. Thus the article, "Textile Art Today", which was indeed critical, was reviewing work that was three years old. I had work in the exhibition but have heard of no other critical attention being directed to this biennale, which also went to the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris. When I was there I enquired whether there had been any reviews, but it appears that summer exhibitions in France are seldom reviewed. I was told that the artists would receive xerox copies of the visitors' book.

I have since been trying to find out when my tapestry would be returned to me because the show ended in Paris in September 1985. Finally, a registered letter brought a response that informed me that it was currently in Norway and had been to Cannes and Tours. Because I was not told this at the time, I was prevented from being able to tell professional contacts of mine in the south of France and in Norway that they could go and see the exhibition. Nor could I find out what are the next venues for the exhibition before it returns to Canada. Such problems stem from the fact that, although the exhibition started at the

museé d'art contemporaine in Montreal, it is being toured by an essentially volunteer organization made up of people who are highly committed to fiber art, but are at the same time trying to be producers.

I mention these personal - yet nonetheless instructive - anecdotes because they demonstrate how little encouragement or incentives there are for working in this area, and why, therefore, there is not a great deal of good tapestry to be seen. These kinds of details are testimony to the fact that "the personal is political," because they reveal some of the obstacles that there are in conducting a career in tapestry in a manner that is consistent with professional expectations. It is information like this that substantiates my description of highwarp tapestry as an endangered activity.

VII. CONCLUSION

I have been confronted by the fact that tapestry, which had enjoyed high status as an art form until the end of the 19th century, has come to be assigned the low status of craft and that even within that category it is not very welcome in the high craft arena. It has not been possible to approach the process whereby this came about as though highwarp tapestry could be divorced from the social context in which it is made. I found that there are a wide variety of factors that influence assessments of tapestry and that many are based on preconceptions. Whether an art form is accredited with being professional or not, is a prerequisite for an assessment of its status. An examination of the complex apparatus, which assigns professional status to some art forms and an amateur one to others, logically led me to include some investigation of psychoanalytic, social, literary and feminist theories.

Many of the unconscious attitudes towards the practise of art today have their origins in the Victorian era, when the identification of women and needlework became entrenched in the class system in England. At this point tapestry, which had been practised as a male prerogative, became associated with traditional women's skills. Paradoxically, the highwarp tapestry medium started to become invisible at the very time when, in the hands of William Morris, it had recently become a viable art form again. Since then it has usually only been accorded high art

status when it reproduces painted images by established artists.

A misleading common error is to assume that the kind of material and process used is the clue as to how an art work is classified, whereas in fact the distinguishing element in the high art/low art status is an unconscious, or sometimes overt, association with domesticity, class and gender. Artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Eva Hesse, Christo, David Smith and Joseph Beuys, despite the materials that they use, are not classified as fiber artists and therefore exhibit in another arena, participate in a different discourse and enjoy a higher status.

To control language is to control attitudes. Because terminology influences, or expresses, unconscious assumptions it is a crucial factor in understanding the conventions whereby art objects are categorized. It explains, for example, why the "decorative" arts, tapestry, folk art and native art, are kept in one institution in Canada, the Museum of Man, while the National Gallery houses the kind of art that has a higher value. Highwarp tapestry as a professional activity therefore does not have a sustained support system and is usually invisible as a consequence. However, an encouraging development is that there are respected critics and writers who are willing to concern themselves with "outsider" art and to question the method whereby cultural connoisseurship is institutionalized. Lucy Lippard, for instance, has written:

Artists can help change the dominant culture's view of women by changing the context in which the deeply engrained connection between women and nature is perceived. Another way female culture has to be re-assimilated into the fine arts is through the unconscious absorption of utilitarian elements. Divorced from "high" culture in the Renaissance, "crafts" or "decorative" and "minor" arts have made their way back into the mainstream largely through feminists' restoration of women's traditional images and techniques. But this reconciliation of high and low cultures is only partial... (1)

Victorian attitudes towards women, needlework, morality and the class system are still so deeply hidden in custom and convention that many people scoff at the idea that they still exist. Their camouflage is enhanced by the fact that theoretically overt discriminatory practices have been eliminated. Although the need for respectability is gone, and there is a new aristocracy in the form of media stars, the competition still remains for social mobility towards stardom which has become the signifier of "success".

It is not easy to disentangle the processes whereby assumptions, preconceptions and fantasies about the nature of women's work, came to be applied to highwarp tapestry so that it was assigned a lower status in cultural evaluation. The way in which history is interpreted to accommodate entrenched

ideological stances is hard to unravel, and as a practitioner of an endangered medium, I feel that I am not in a position to be completely objective. However, I am in a position to know the situation from the inside, and also to know that the high art world is not entirely peopled by patriarchal villains. I believe that working on this thesis has been most beneficial for my work because, by "seeing with new eyes", I am better equipped to discern the false threads and the genuine threads in the Victorian legacy.

NOTES

Introduction

1. There is controversy about definitions of the various forms of tapestry. I use the term "highwarp" tapestry to mean essentially a pictorial or narrative tapestry. Highwarp tapestry can be made in a collaborative situation where a studio interprets the work of a renowned painter into tapestry, or, it can be made by individual artists who execute their own designs in tapestry. A fuller explanation is given in footnote #5.

2. A tapestry of mine in the Massey Foundation collection was exhibited in the Museum of Man, folded, on a flat surface with a pair of lobster mits from the Maritimes displayed on top of it.

3. Newdigate Mills, Ann, Gothic Tapestry. Unpublished research paper presented to Professor L. Bell in partial fulfilment of requirements for Art 303, Medieval Art History, University of Saskatchewan, 1984. p.35. (Charles V lost the "History of Clovis" (which measured 200 square feet) at the siege of Metz.)

4. Catalogue for "Architextures 85", Guide, 1985. Museum of Decorative Art, Paris.

I. SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT TAPESTRY

5. The term "tapestry" is no longer used with any precision. It can mean a "petit point" embroidery or "Nouvelle Tapisserie", which is fiber art that can be sculptural and constructed from any material imaginable. At the Gobelin studio in Paris a classical form of tapestry is practised on upright (highwarp) looms. Because the Gobelin studio is state owned they are not required to make a profit and can employ a time-consuming and tightly structured method. Aubusson, on the other hand, refers to a number of private studios in that town which operate independently of each other and must be cost efficient. In Aubusson, they work on horizontal (low warp) looms. Both Gobelin and Aubusson tapestries are worked from the back. The weaver, using a mirror, looks through the warp threads to monitor the front bit of tapestry that is currently being worked on. (The warp is a strong twine that is wrapped on the loom vertically under tension to provide the basis for structuring the weft threads which run horizontally.)

6. Newdigate Mills, Ann, Gothic Tapestry.

7. The Edinburgh College of Art offers a four year B.A. programme which specializes in highwarp tapestry. A fifth, post graduate year, is an option. Within the department, a day of life drawing

each week is obligatory, and students are encouraged to explore and develop non-woven forms before embarking on a tapestry in the traditional process. Graduates are sought after from around the world for restoration and to work in collaborative studios such as Westdean (which made the Henry Moore tapestries) and in the Victoria Workshops in Australia (which was able to become financially established after receiving their first major commission from the Centre of the Arts in Regina in 1976). The Dovecot studio of the Edinburgh Tapestry Company is distinct from the College of Art although many graduates and instructors have found employment there. The Dovecot studio is renowned for its sensitive approach to interpretation of paintings and has worked with such renowned artists as Motherwell, Nevelson, Frankenthaler and Hockney. See Edinburgh International Festival Exhibition Catalogue. Organized by the Scottish Arts Council. Master Weavers: Tapestries from the Dovecot Studios, 1912 - 1980.

8. Thomson, F.P. Tapestry: Mirror of History. New York: Crown Publishers, 1980.

9. Freeman, Margaret B. The Unicorn Tapestries. New York: Dutton, 1983.

10. Ackerman, The Mirror of Civilization, p. 108.

11. Ibid, p. 105.

12. Pollock, Griselda and Parker Roszika, Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p. 17.

13. Pollock Griselda, "Artists mythologies and media genius, madness and art history". Screen, 21 (1980): No. 3. p. 60.

14. Swain, Margaret, The Needlework of Mary Queen of Scots. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973.

15. Parker, Roszika, The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine, London: The Women's Press, 1984, p.123.

16. Casteras, Susan P. The Substance or the Shadow: Images of Victorian Womanhood. New Haven, Conn: Yale Center for British Art, 1982, p. 17.

17. Ibid, p. 19.

18. Pollock, "Artists Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History," p.63.

II. THE VICTORIAN BACKGROUND

1. Callen, Cynthia, The Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870 - 1914. London: Astragal Books, 1979, p. 20.
2. Ibid, p. 23.
3. Casteras, The Substance or the Shadow, p.10.
4. Callen, The Angel in the Studio, p. 24.
5. Parker and Pollock, Old Mistresses, p.65
6. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p.10.
7. Callen, The Angel in the Studio, p.27.
8. Ibid, p. 15.
9. Ibid, p. 29.
10. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p.26.
11. Callen, The Angel in the Studio, p. 26.
12. Thompson, Paul, "Celebrating Morris". A review of William Morris's Textiles by Lindsay Parry (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1983), Art History. 7 (1984): No 4.
13. Callen, The Angel in the Studio, p. 29.
14. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p. 26.
15. Callen, The Angel in the Studio, p. 30.
16. Ibid, p. 34.
17. Ibid, p. 32.
18. Ibid, p. 173.
19. Ibid, p 34.
20. Ibid, p. 26.
21. Ibid, p. 35.

III. WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF TAPESTRY.

1. Thompson, E.P. William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary. New York: Pantheon Books, 1955, P.102.
2. Christie, Mrs. Archibald H. Emroidery and Tapestry Weaving: A Practical Text-book of Design and Workmanship. In the Artistic Craft Series of Technical Handbooks, ed. by W.R. Lethaby, 4th ed. London: John Hogg. 1915. Writing about design in 1906 W.R. Lethaby refers to "what Morris called sham technical twaddle." Foreword. xiv.
3. Ackerman, The Mirror of Civilization, p. 317
4. Thomson, F.P., Tapestry: Mirror of History.
5. Thompson, E.P. William Morris, p. 102. Morris said of the Gobelins in Paris that it had degenerated into "a hatching nest of stupidity."
6. Ibid, p. 103.
7. Ibid, p. 108.
8. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p. 124.
9. Callen, The Angel in the Studio, p.10.
10. Thomson, F.P. Tapestry: Mirror of History, p. 54 for an example of a tapestry woven at the Dominican Convent of Adehuasen (1300-1325). Burrell Collection. Glasgow. The Burrell collection has numerous examples of the early Bible Tapestries.
11. Thompson, E.P. William Morris, p. 102.
12. Anscombe, A Woman's Touch, p. 145.
13. Coatts, Margot, A Weaver's Life: 1872-1952. London: British Crafts Council, 1983, p. 83.
14. Archie Brennan received an O.B.E. for his contribution to art. In 1980 he moved to Papua New Guinea and is apparently no longer involved in any capacity in the making of tapestry. It is tempting to speculate that the pressures of working in such a demanding medium, and in so many capacities, caused 'burn out'. This is a factor that contributes to making tapestry an endangered medium. Archie Brennan's generosity with his time when I first visited Edinburgh in 1976 led to my continuing to work in the medium.
15. Anscombe, A Woman's Touch, p. 12

16. Ibid, p. 13.
17. Ibid, p. 120.
18. Ibid, p. 29.

IV. THE CURRENT STATE OF HIGHWARP TAPESTRY IN RELATION TO OTHER AREAS OF ART.

1. Verlet, Pierre; Florisbonne, Michel; Hoffmeister, Adolf; and Tarbard, Francois. The Book of Tapestry: History and Technique. English Translation. London: Octopus Books, pp.118 - 122.
2. Constantine, Mildred and Lenor Larsen, Jack, Beyond Craft: the Art Fabric, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, no date.
3. Constantine, Mildred, and Lenor Larsen, Jack, The Art Fabric: Mainstream, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, no date, p. 25.
4. Ibid, p. 19.
5. Ibid. For example, Rauschenberg pp. 17, 23, 248, 265. Christo pp. 12, 13, 23, 86, 237, 246, 260. Also "Architextures 85" Catalogue has information about Josef Beuys p. 41.
6. Ibid, pp. 210 and 211.
7. Ibid. The preferences of the authors are evident throughout.
8. Ibid, p. 23.
9. 13th Lausanne Tapestry Biennale Regulations, p. 8.
10. Constantine and Lenor Larsen, The Art Fabric: Mainstream, p. 15.
11. Threads Magazine. Premier Issue. Oct/Nov, 1985.
12. Constantine and Lenor Larsen. The Art Fabric: Mainstream, p. 36.
13. "Architextures 85", p 9.
14. The "Apocalypse" set of tapestries at Angers which were made in the late 13th century.
15. Canadian Art. Fall, 1985, p. 14. Winter. 1985. In "Collage", p. 14.

16. Forman, W., Forman, B. and Wassef, Ramses Wissa, Tapestries from Egypt: Woven by the Children of Harrania. London: Hamlyn, 1961.

17. This is our life: Tapestries from Botswana, National Museum of Denmark. Danish Association for International Co-operation, p 32.

18. Egyptian Landscapes: Weaving from the Ramses Wissa Wassef School. Catalogue. The Concourse Gallery, Barbican Centre, 1985. London.

19. Private conversation, 1983.

20. Constantine and Lenor Larsen, The Art Fabric: Mainstream, p. 12.

21. Narrative Painting: Figurative Art of Two Generations, Selected by Timothy Hyman. Institute of Contemporary Art Gallery, Catalogue, London, 1979. "A play within a play" by David Hockney.

22. Constantine and Lenor Larsen, Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric, Among the strong influences on fiber art were Ed Rossbach, p. 216, and Sheila Hicks, p. 172.

23. "Architextures 85". Catalogue, p. 49.

24. Exposition de tapis and tapisseries du 15 juin au 31 septembre. Catalogue 1985 pieces exposees, Aubusson.

25. The Dovecot Studio in the Edinburgh Tapestry Company. (See Edinburgh Festival Catalogue Master Weavers) is distinct from the Tapestry Department of the Edinburgh College of Art. Tapestry students from around the world seek admission into the Tapestry Department. Maureen Hodge and Fiona Matheson have both been trained by Archie Brennan and have been active in the Dovecot as well being full-time teachers at the college.

26. Bentley Mays, John, "Things are Looking Up for Public Art", Globe and Mail, Saturday. Nov. 23. 1985.

27. Talley, Charles S. Contemporary Textile Arts in Scandinavia. Stockholm: Carmina, p. 27.

V. UNCONSCIOUS ATTITUDES AFFECTING HIGHWARP TAPESTRY.

1. "Architextures 85", Catalogue, p. 6.

2. Breuer, Josef and Freud, Sigmund. Studies on Hysteria. In The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. (Trans. and ed. by James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan

Tyson) London: The Hogarth Press, 1955. Vol.II. (The case of Frau von N.), p.101.

3. Christo wrapped a mile of California coast in the 1970's and the Pont Neuf in Paris in 1985.

4. "Architextures 85", Catalogue, p.7

5. "Architextures 85", Catalogue, p. 8.

6. Parker and Pollock, Old Mistresses, p. 132.

7. Ibid, p. 119. "Traditional iconography works against women's attempts to represent themselves."

8. Ibid, p. 136.

9. Wolff, Janet, The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan, p. 42.

10. Parker and Pollock, Old Mistresses, p.165. Women are cautioned against producing work which will "merely re-assert the dominant ideologies of our society".

11. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p.11.

12. Kolodny, Annette, "Dancing through the minefield: some observations on the theory, practice and politics of a feminist literary criticism", Feminist Studies 6. 1980: No.1.

13. Ehrenreich, Barbara and English, Deidre, For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women. New York: Anchor Press. 1978. p. 94.

14. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p. 12.

15. Kelly, Mary, Post Partem Document. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1983.

16. Isaak, Jo-Anna, Commentary on Post Partem Document by Mary Kelly. Vanguard. April, 1983.

17. Andy Warhol made prints using the image of Campbell's soup cans in the 1970's.

18. Rosler, Martha, Lookers, Buyers, Dealers and makers: Thoughts on Audience. Unpublished paper, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1979.

19. Anecdote told to me by an ex-student from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1986.

20. Broude, Norma, "Miriam Shapiro and 'Femme': Reflections on

the conflict between Decoration and Abstraction in 20th century art." Feminism and Art History, 1980, p. 316.

21. Chodorow, Nancy, The Reproduction of Mothering: psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 77.

22. Lessard, Dennis, "Art criticism and contemporary art history: towards a transformation," Vanguard, April, 1985.

23. Govier, Katherine, "Venus as Victim: The Dilemma of Women Painters: How to Reclaim their Image from Centuries of Male Domination," Canadian Art, Fall, 1985, p. 68.

24. Lippard, Lucy R, From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1976, p. 46. Judy Chicago's work on the "Los Angeles Women's building" at 743, Grandview.

25. Piper, Adrian, "Power Relations in Existing Art Institutions". Unpublished paper, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983.

26. Steiner, George, "A Viewpoint: A New Meaning of Meaning" Times Literary Supplement, November 8, 1985. p. 1262.

27. Pollock and Parker, Old Mistresses, in introduction: "Art history's methods and categories constitute a particular and ideological reconstitution of the history of art."

28. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p. 121.

29. Lippard, From the Center, p. 214. Judy Chicago talking to Lucy R. Lippard.

30. Parker, The Subversive Stitch, p. 43.

31. Pollock and Parker, Old Mistresses, p. 68.

32. Sikes, Gini. "By Design", Metropolis. April, 1985, p. 39. (A pamphlet sent to me from Spokane about Gloria Ross who acts as an agent in New York in organizing the making of tapestries from paintings. I have no further information about the provenance of the pamphlet). Kenneth Noland is among the painters who have acknowledged a debt to Navajo rug makers.

33. Pollock and Parker, Old Mistresses, p. 68.

34. Reichard, Gladys A, Weaving a Navajo Blanket, New York: Dover, 1947, p.1. For example, Maria Antonio, who taught Reichard from 1930 - 1933.

35. Pollock and Parker, Old Mistresses, p. 76.

36. Newdigate Mills, Gothic Tapestry.

37. Edinburgh College of Art prospectus supplement, 1981/82, p.7.

38. May, Rollo, The Courage to Create, New York: Bantam Books. 1975, p. 100.

39. Steiner, George, "Viewpoint: A New Meaning of Meaning", p. 1262.

40. Collins, Judith, The Omega Workshop, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 170.

VI. THE IMPLICATIONS OF WORKING IN HIGHWARP TAPESTRY

1. Rosler, Martha, "Lookers, buyers, dealers and makers: Thoughts on audience," p.20.

2. Numerous copies of Fiber Arts Magazine, which is the only North American journal devoted to textiles.

3. Ontario Crafts Council exhibition, 1986.

4. Ontario Craft News. Vol. 10. #6. August, 1985. Letter from Lyn Carter.

5. Constantine and Lenor Larsen, Beyond Craft: the Art Fabric and The Art Fabric: Mainstream.

6. Freshette, Marie, "Textile Art Today", Vanguard, Summer, 1985, p.16.

VII. CONCLUSION

1. Lippard, Lucy R, Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Pre-History, New York: Pantheon Books, 1983, p. 46.

APPENDIX

(i) Fiberarts, January/February 1986. Vol. 13. No.1.

Booknews The Subversive Stitch. Reviewed by Jessica Scarborough who is a Fiberarts contributing editor from San Jose. California.

p. 46. The entire review reads:

Rozsika Parker is clearly a thorough researcher - she has unearthed an almost unbelievable amount of material on the history of embroidery as well as embroidery from England and, to a lesser extent, America. The common denominator of this huge pile of material is Parker's feminism: "I hope to demonstrate how ideologies about women determine both the writing of history and the stitching of images." However, Parker is like a good cook who can't bear to leave out any of her favorite dishes when planning a meal and the result is a mishmash. Her approach might have worked better in a collection of essays than in a book-length treatise. The material is fascinating and Parker's interpretations are often sensible and enlightening, so there is much to recommend in this book, but this reviewer is disappointed that it isn't more tightly focused and boldly structured.

The following quotes should give some indication of the scope and flavor of the book:

The practices which isolated women after childbirth, although they are often accompanied by apparent control of childbirth by women, are closely linked to male domination. Conception and birth, as I have stated, are central to the content of *Opus Anglicanum* (ecclesiastical embroidery produced in England from approximately A.D. 900 to 1500). Yet they are presented in such a way as to circumscribe the power and significance of women. The ritual from which men were excluded (childbirth) was made public on the garments worn by the priests, taken out of the hands of women and placed on the backs of the priests.

Despite such plentiful evidence of the thought and care that went into the construction of these pictures, with their skilled handling of texture and color that echoes across the satin, commentators have dismissed stumpwork as simply 'quaint' because of the embroiderer's disregard for correct scale. Flowers tower above people ... Had the Stuart embroiderer worked to scale, the flora and fauna in her pictures would have been so small that their species and special characteristics would have been lost to sight.

The Victorians identified embroidery with femininity in the context of rigidly defined sex roles. Embroidery is still identified with femininity, but the framework has changed.

By the 15th century, male embroiders received 7 1/4 pennies a day while women were paid 4 1/4 to 6 1/4 pennies a day.

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