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Fay Weldon, writer, looks back on a period of anger and paralysis.

What has been momentous is the fact that nothing has happened. People have been too eaten up with anger to let anything happen. Outrage is a stimulant of sorts but I hope to see a flowering of the arts now that it is over. Perhaps we have been seeing that already in the last year or so. There has been a change that pre-dated Thatcher's departure, a much more open-minded mood. There has been a vacuum into which ideas are beginning to flow again so I'm feeling more cheerful. But it will be a long time before the young people who have grown up in this period will be able to believe that there is any other motive for human behaviour than self-interest. This is ingrained into a miserable, depressed generation. It will take a long time to cheer them up.

Rabbi **Julia Neuberger**, a visiting fellow at the King's Fund Institute, surveys the damage.

Although it has become commonplace to talk of the Thatcher revolution, Margaret Thatcher was, to some extent, the expression of a change rather than its cause. There has been a shift in emphasis, and accountants have never been so important, but people, particularly public spenders, have had to be accountable for what they do. That will be a lasting legacy. Less permanent, and already diminishing, is the 'get-rich-quick, high-spending, let-the-wealth-trickle-down-to-the-poor' school of thought. But there will be lasting damage to the least advantaged in our society, because cuts in social and support services, particularly from voluntary organisations funded by national and local government, cannot be replaced by the charitable sector.



Mark Fisher, shadow minister for the arts, sees more of the same until the next election.

The cultural legacy of Margaret Thatcher's 11 years in power is a nasty little cocktail of neglect, underfunding and censorship. In the media, her maxim has been: 'If you don't like it, ban it'. Hence the pressure on *Real Lives* and *Death On The Rock*, the injunctions over *My Country Right Or Wrong* and *Spycatcher*, the confusion of the Zircon tapes, the Sinn Fein ban and Section 28.

In the arts, the 80s have seen the regional and national theatre sliding into deficits totalling 16m, and the RSC being forced to abandon its London programme at the Barbican. There are physical holes in the roofs of our major museums. It has all reflected the extent of her own personal interests. She re-reads Frederick Forsyth and her idea of a real cultural achievement would be a British victory in the European Song Contest. Like all bad fairies, she leaves two party gifts, the poll tax, which will ensure that local authorities arts expenditure will have to be cut back, and her cultural clone, John Major. Together, they will make sure that the nasty taste of this cultural cocktail will linger on until the general election.

Carmen Callil, managing director of Chatto & Windus publishers, reflects on a national blight.

She caused a feeling of despair, a lack of hope among 80% of the population. Her vision of life was poisonous as if she tainted the air we breathe. There was a sort of magic about her, something pagan. She has condemned all powerful women to a miserable future for at least the next 15 years. But I think she suffered a lot from sexism herself. People, especially men, were terrified of her in a way that they wouldn't have been if she were a man. They gave her extra power because they thought she was stronger than she really was because of her sex. It's their own fault.

Angela McRobbie on a revolution in the family

Diverse Solutions

The cultural revolution which has taken place during the Thatcher years has been led by women. Men have been trailing behind, sometimes gaining from the fruits of female determination and reluctantly falling into rank. More often they have been losing some of their advantages and resenting the speed and scale of the transformations which have so affected their expectations about 'private life'.

This quiet, private revolution has transformed the way we live. From the late-70s, it has been in our family lives and the relations between men and women that the most sweeping changes in British society have occurred. Despite Margaret Thatcher's desire for a return to family values, a theme which was so patently unenforceable and unrealistic that it eventually became a lament, these changes have been of such magnitude that the family will never be the same again.

It is the breakdown of the traditional family form and its replacement by a diversity of domestic living strategies which is most apparent and which has given the policy-makers and the politicians the greatest cause for concern. During the Thatcher years, heterosexual women have gained sufficient self-confidence and self-esteem to refuse to remain in an unhappy or violent marriage. No longer do they need the status of marriage or the existence of a husband to feel valued.

In the majority of cases it is now women who initiate divorce proceedings. It is they who decide to call it a day. For all but the poor and the unemployed, this means a dramatic drop in standards of living, but it is a price that women are willing to pay. Indeed, if one research study carried out in the mid-1980s is anything to go by, newly-divorced women, despite being worse off, *feel* much better off and are able to exercise more control over what money they have and therefore make it go further.

For middle-class women there is often the move

downmarket to less desirable parts of town, and the genteel gentrification this brings to neighbourhoods which for some reason were overlooked by the speculators and developers of the mid-1980s. The single-parent family 'trapped' on the council estate is not quite as negative a stereotype as it often seems. Precisely as a response to the prevalence of this new way of living, a greater degree of co-operation and support has grown up in many of these estates. This is mostly comprised of shared childcare and informal child-minding to allow single mothers to work for a few hours a day 'off the cards'.

Alongside this is the flooding into higher education of mature women, including single parents of all social backgrounds, who through the access courses established in the polytechnic sector have been able to study for a degree. These students are keen and conscientious, with an eye on the labour market, where they know their wage-earning capacity will be greatly enhanced as a result of their degree status. There is no other so socially mixed area of education as this.

What has happened to the husbands of these women, or in the case of the unmarried 'teenage mothers', the fathers of their children? Middle-class men tend to re-marry quickly and start a second family. Their ex-wives are slower to take the plunge again, and instead will spend time on improving their job qualifications and looking after the children.

Middle-class remarriage has contributed to recent debates about feckless fathers. It is not only working-class or unemployed men who evade their financial responsibilities. The problem is, however, that where a new family has been established, the first family, almost inevitably, will take second place financially. There will be a drop in the standard of living even when an equitable arrangement is arrived at. This alone changes the nature of the long-term expectations

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of family life.

The male partners of teenage mothers, 10 years on, are still playing shadowy roles. A study carried out a few years ago on the Peckham estate in south London suggested that such men, often long-term unemployed, drift from one relationship to the next, returning home to their parents when things go wrong, and then moving in temporarily with a new girlfriend, before finding themselves homeless again. The brutal fact is that, rejected or marginalised by the labour market, these men are of no economic value to women.

All the studies have shown that among the lowest reaches of the class hierarchy, many young women will become pregnant outside marriage and remain at home with their parents until they eventually find their own accommodation. Maternal poverty is the cost of this choice, but once again, young

women appear to prefer single to married poverty. That way they remain more in control.

As yet it is unknown what effect these new forms of living will have on children growing up today. Presumably it depends on the quality of relationships between parents and children, and the emotional stability which prevails, rather than on the actual shape which new forms of living take.

This is a revolution which has occurred in spite of Margaret Thatcher. Indeed, it left her - and the opposition - bewildered and confused, uncertain as to how to respond. The trauma of the end of the family is more likely to affect the politicians (who are not immune to the changes themselves) and the policy-makers worried about the increasing cost of such changes, rather than the children and young people for whom they have already become the norm.



Andrew Neil, editor of the *Sunday Times*, looks back on a revolution in print.

The revolution in newspaper publishing is perhaps one of the great success stories of the Thatcher years. In 1979, British trade unionism was the worst in the democratic world in its failure to defend the wages and conditions of its members and reluctance to allow the government of the day to rule the country. There is no finer example of the trade-union revolution than Wapping. There may have been problems with the way it was carried out after it became clear that negotiating the introduction of new working methods wasn't going to work, but few people even on the Left would want to re-fight the Wapping battle.

The subsequent introduction of 21st-century technology, the increase in titles, the dynamism and improved quality of the product among the quality newspapers is a microcosm of the positive aspects of the cultural revolution of Thatcherism. Jaguar, British Steel and British Airways might all be more profitable, but newspapers are the best all-round example of the progressive culture of the Thatcher years.

Colin MacCabe, head of production at the British Film Institute, checks the uneven balance of the Thatcher years.

Thatcher's greatest achievement was to call the Unionists' bluff and insist both that the future of Northern Ireland was dependent upon majority wish and that the republic had a legitimate interest in the North's affairs. She was the first British politician to face down the Unionist threat.

For the rest, the balance is almost entirely negative. She accelerated rather than halted our industrial decline, she accentuated the production of a disaffected underclass, she made bad universities and schools worse, she coarsened public life. But in all this she merely went with the grain rather than against it. In the end, I am not sure that she counted for all that much. She was, above all, the product of the weakness of the Labour Party.



Ursula Owen, publishing director of Virago Press, looks beneath the glitter.

Thatcher's effect on the culture has been much as her effect on everything - a certain amount of glitter on top covering layers of neglect and a good deal of silencing of the less fashionable voices. A lot of things have been going on in the arts, but many of them have been in spite of Thatcher's policies. Some would say we've learnt things from her: how to respect bottom lines, operate within our incomes, not waste money. And I suppose the Left has learnt lessons from the 70s; about being professional, about having to make things work financially to survive. But a lot of people knew these things, and we've always given her more credit for teaching us this than she deserves.

She's encouraged conglomeration, obsession with the bottom line, a certain kind of elitism and a belief in sponsorship which can't be sustained as a serious way of funding the arts. She's centralised power in culture as well as in everything else, and the problem is that this narrows down the imagination. If you don't have culture coming from the roots of communities, you stop risk-taking, you make a boring consensus culture.

It's fashionable to sneer at the idea of culture coming out of the communities, it conjures up dreary, second-rate arts endeavours. But there are countless examples of highly imaginative things coming out of local beginnings.

It will take years to recover from the lack of interest in proper planning for cities and of funding for the theatre. But, providing the right things are done to support and fund the innovative and imaginative ideas, though it will take time to recover, I don't believe she's done permanent damage.