

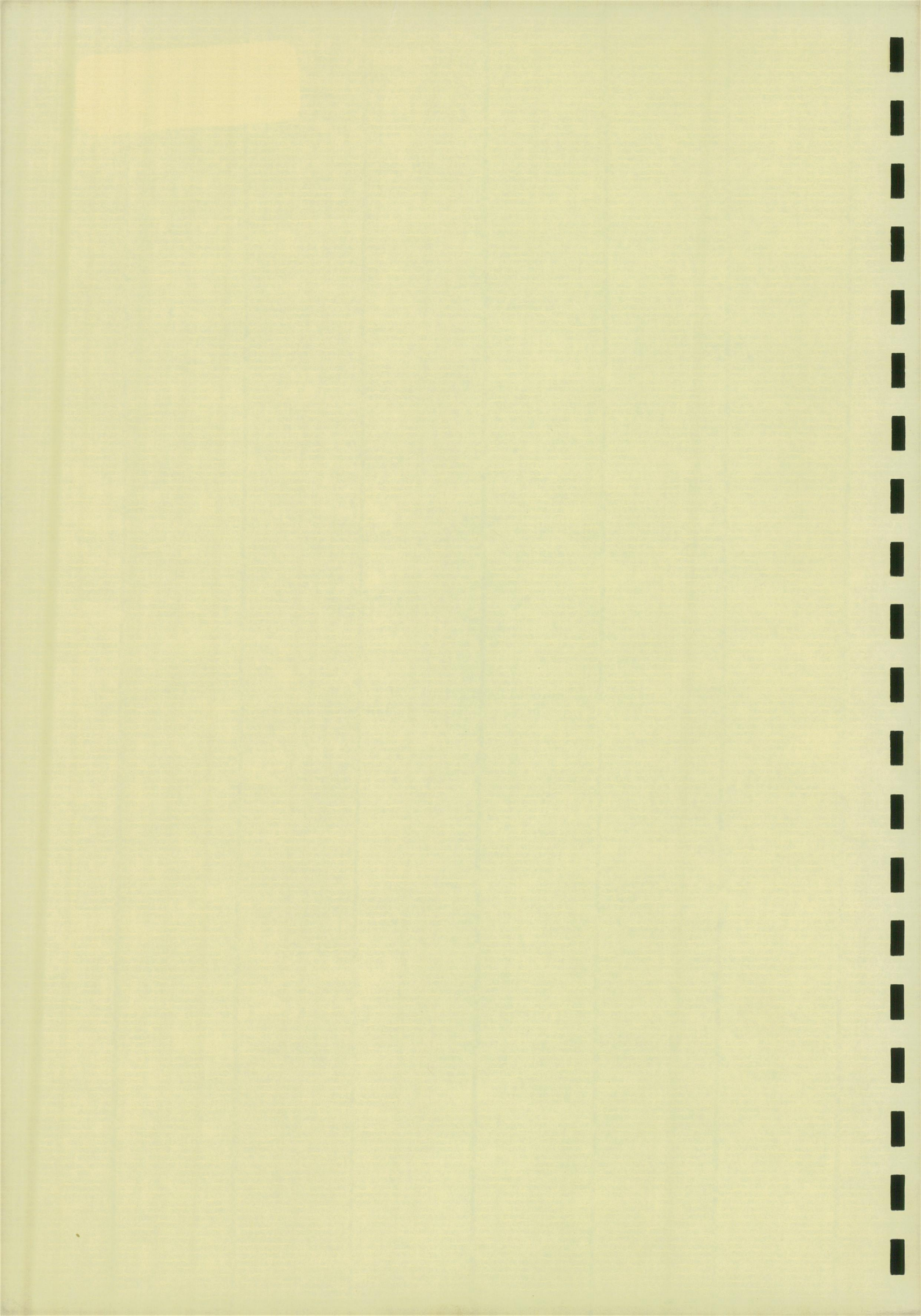
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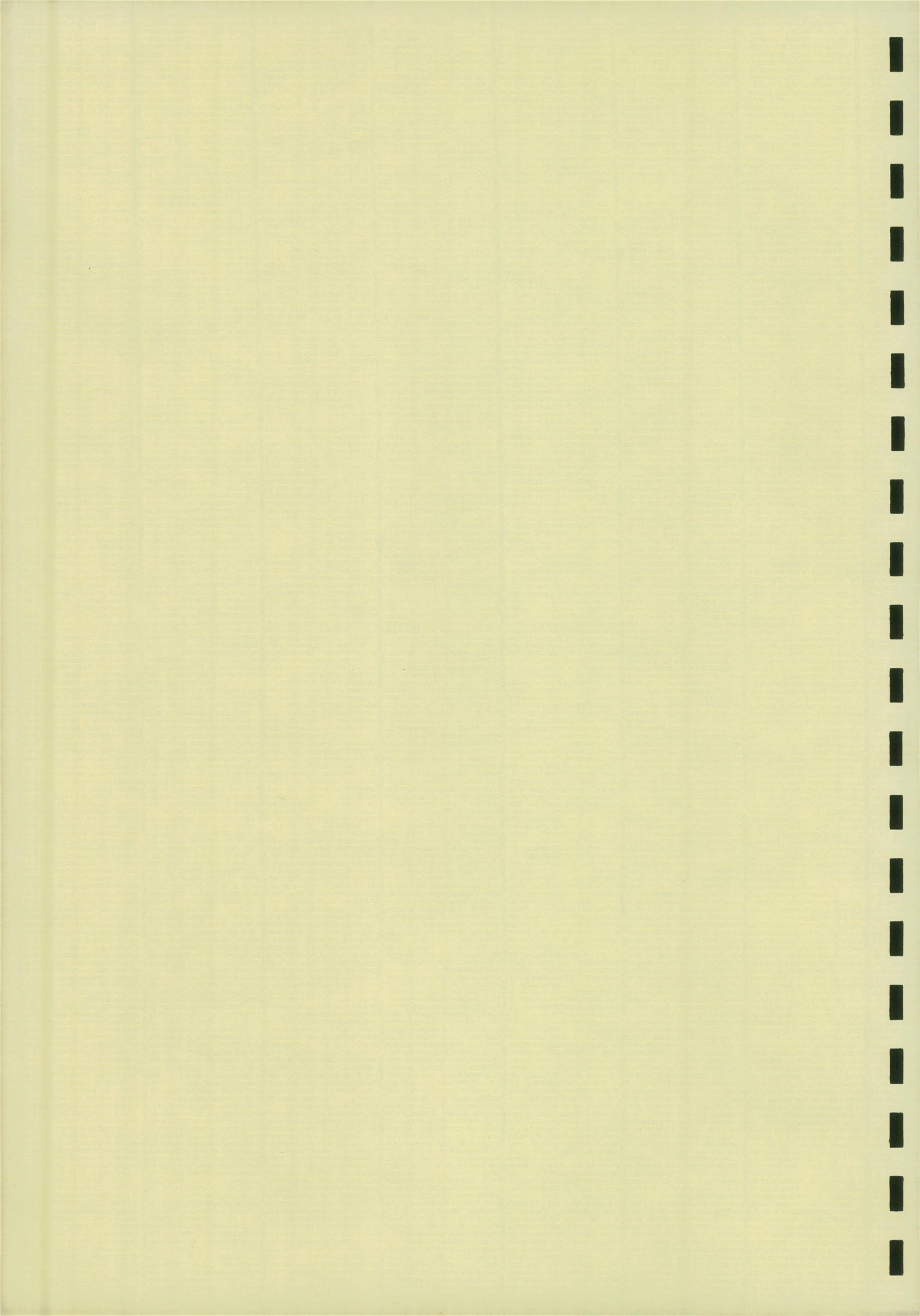
National Of Art & Design  
4th Year Painting Joint Course

**A Delicate Subject**  
Jeanette Doyle

Submitted to the The Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies in  
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1993



A thesis is an opinion, an opinion is an option.  
What we must and what we have, control our options.  
It's useful to be curious, that's my opinion.



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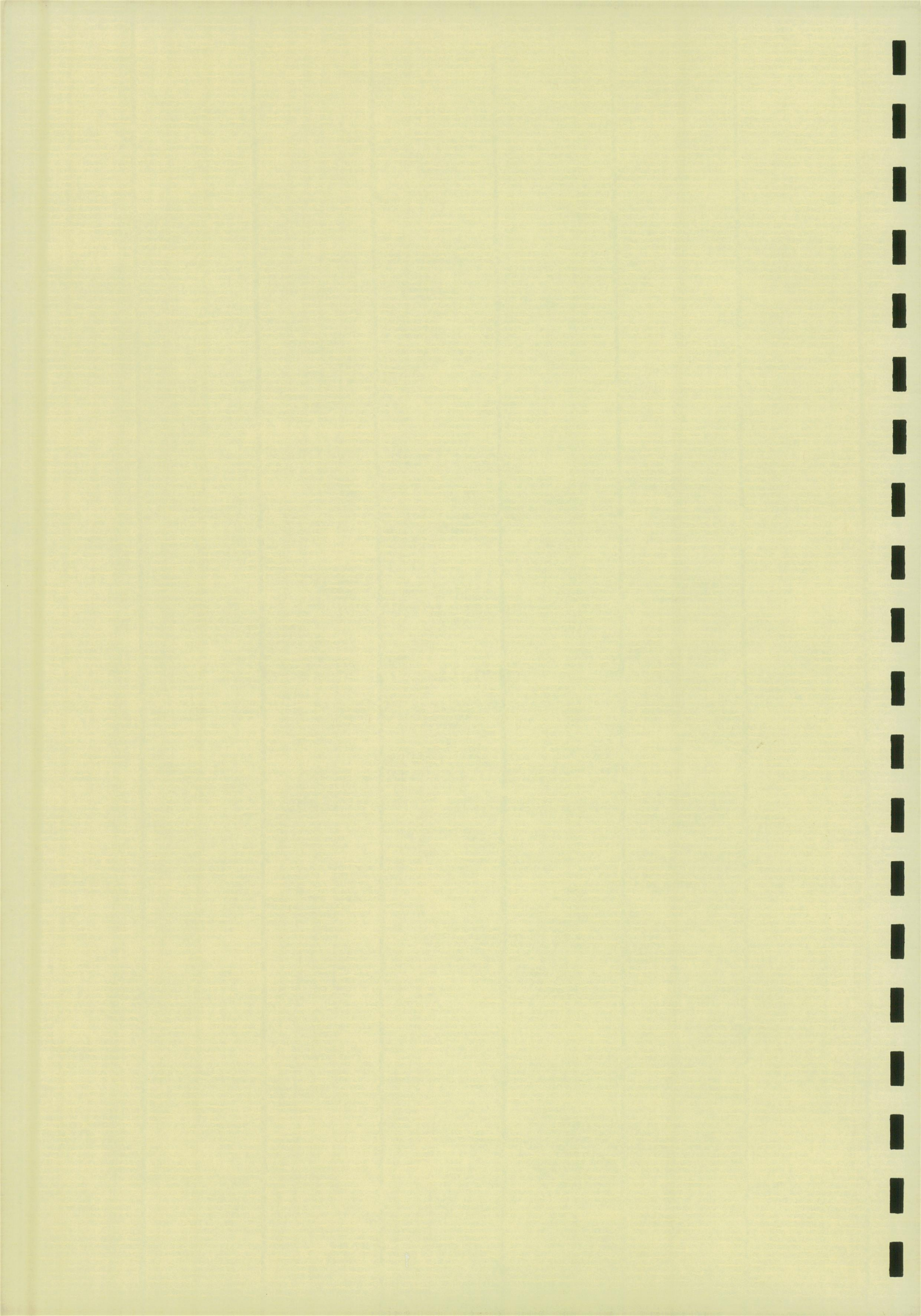
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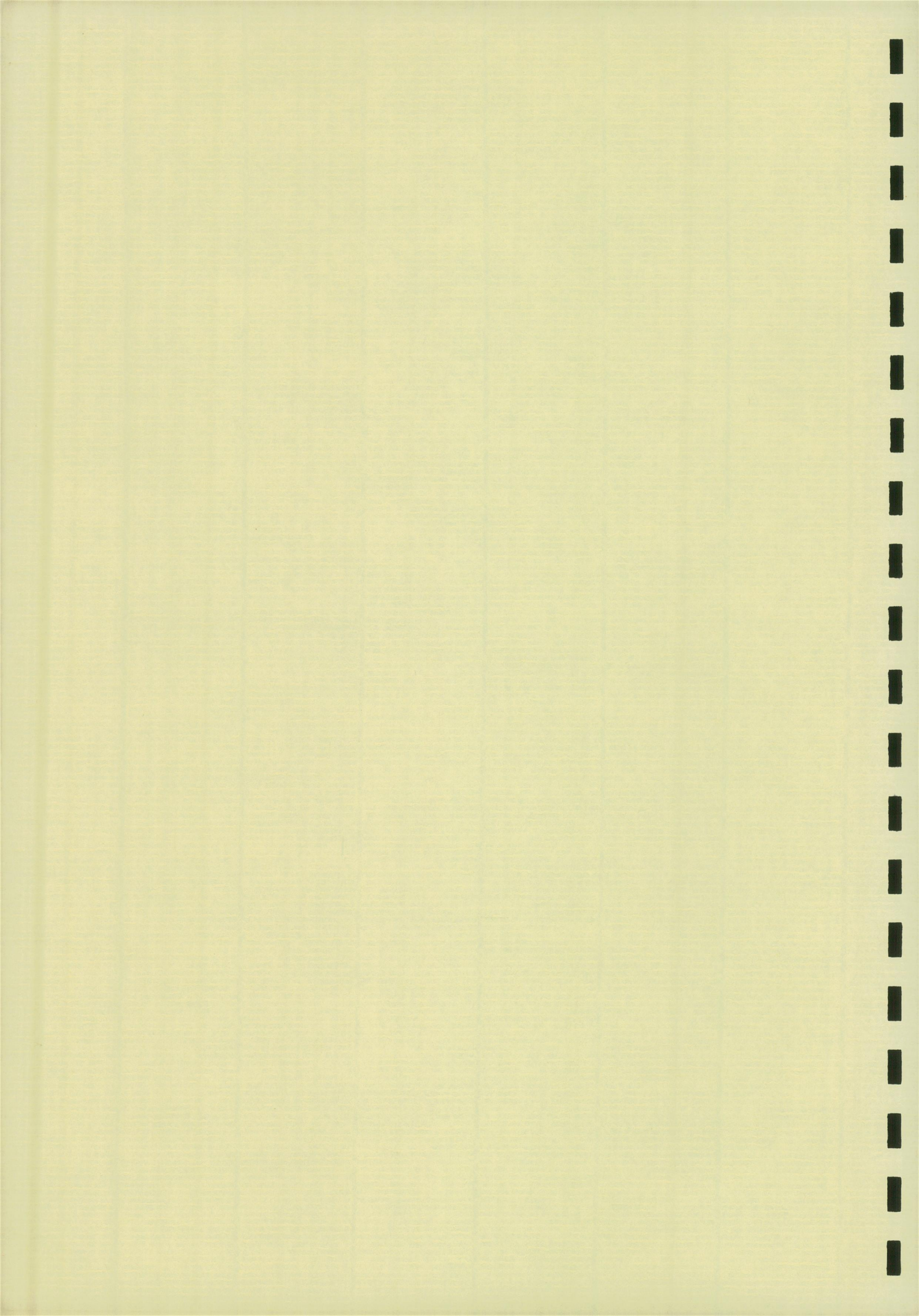
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thesis





This thesis sets out to investigate what a written article or procession of verbal symbols make apparent in the context of an art college thesis. Life is a sign making a 'significant' existence wherein our biological behaviour is encapsulated into histories. Theory translates breath into signs. This practice has been forced to inspect itself.

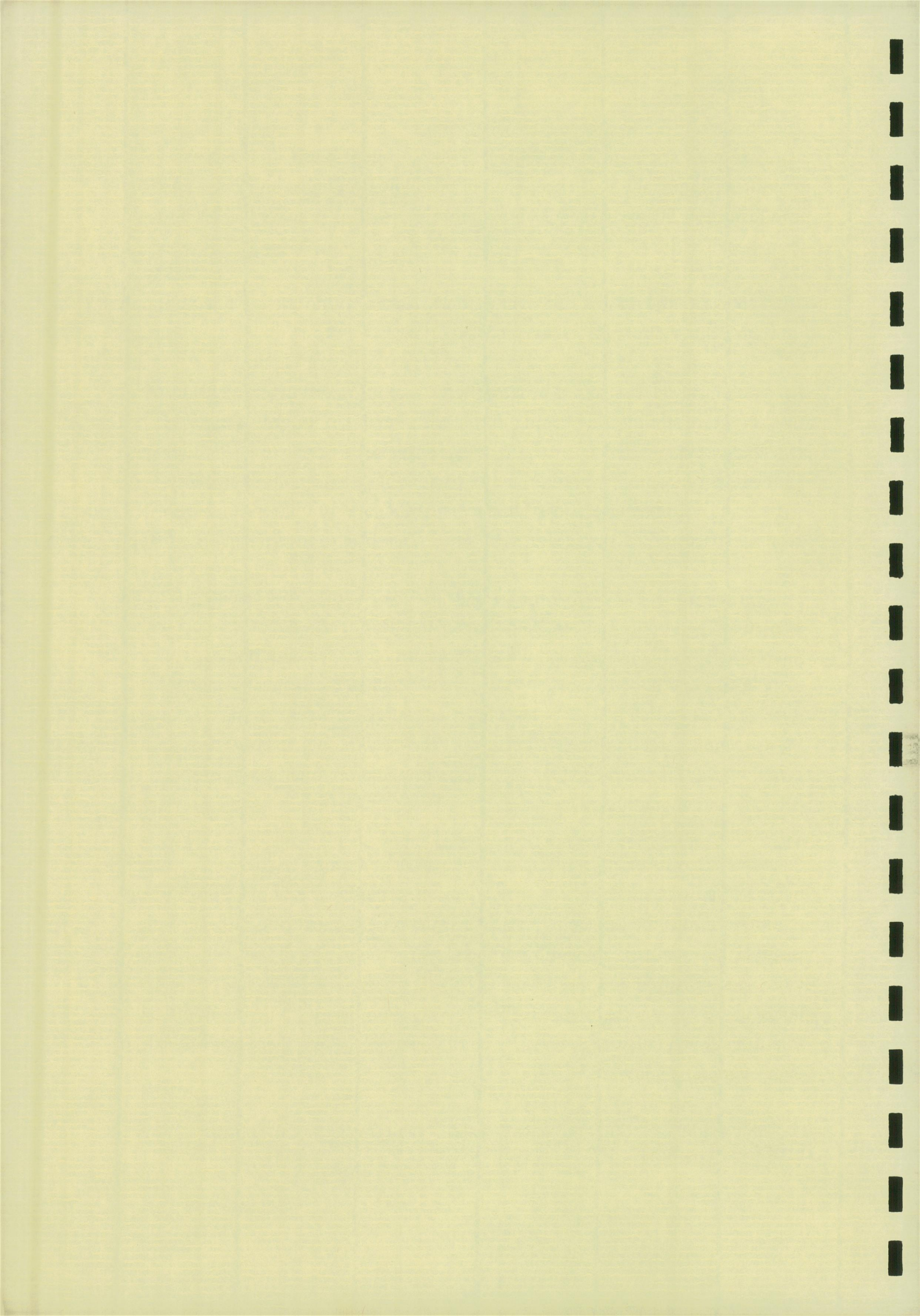
Texts lubricate the mind's rule over matter. The body and life are lived not only through a library but also in everyday experience.

An axiological relationship is at work here. "Communication strategies insofar as they structure signification belong to rhetoric , the theory of persuasion." ( 7, p 11)  
Day to day life and the construction of consensus reality are to an extent affected by the texts of the library and certainly by wider texts - the texts of actuality.  
"The print writing space offers a linear sequential and unified writing and reading space and encourages us to think of the world in those terms." (8 p 13)

The pornographer claims that the genitals are the site of sexual exchange. In the same way the intellectual can claim the written text as the site of intellectual intercourse. In the written text we also concern ourselves with bodies. This thesis is the result of a body of work. Writing an art college thesis means taking reference from either a body of texts or a body of visual work. In the case of a thesis commenting on the visual arts it is necessary to refer to both ideas and visual work. The thesis is then an issue, contingent on other structures, a progeny and another body.

Each thesis has its own perspective in the way that a progeny does and the nurture/nature argument here also applies. The thesis is certainly a product of the forces that came into being in its construction - its nurturing. It is also the result of two natures, the nature of the text and the nature of the author, both have been nurtured and moulded. The thesis by its nature uses its format and language to present its intention. The thesis is identical with its intention. Its intention however is not necessarily its title. For every text there is a subtext, for every version a subversion.

The vocabulary of this thesis is literary. " Literature ( literally) means a lot of

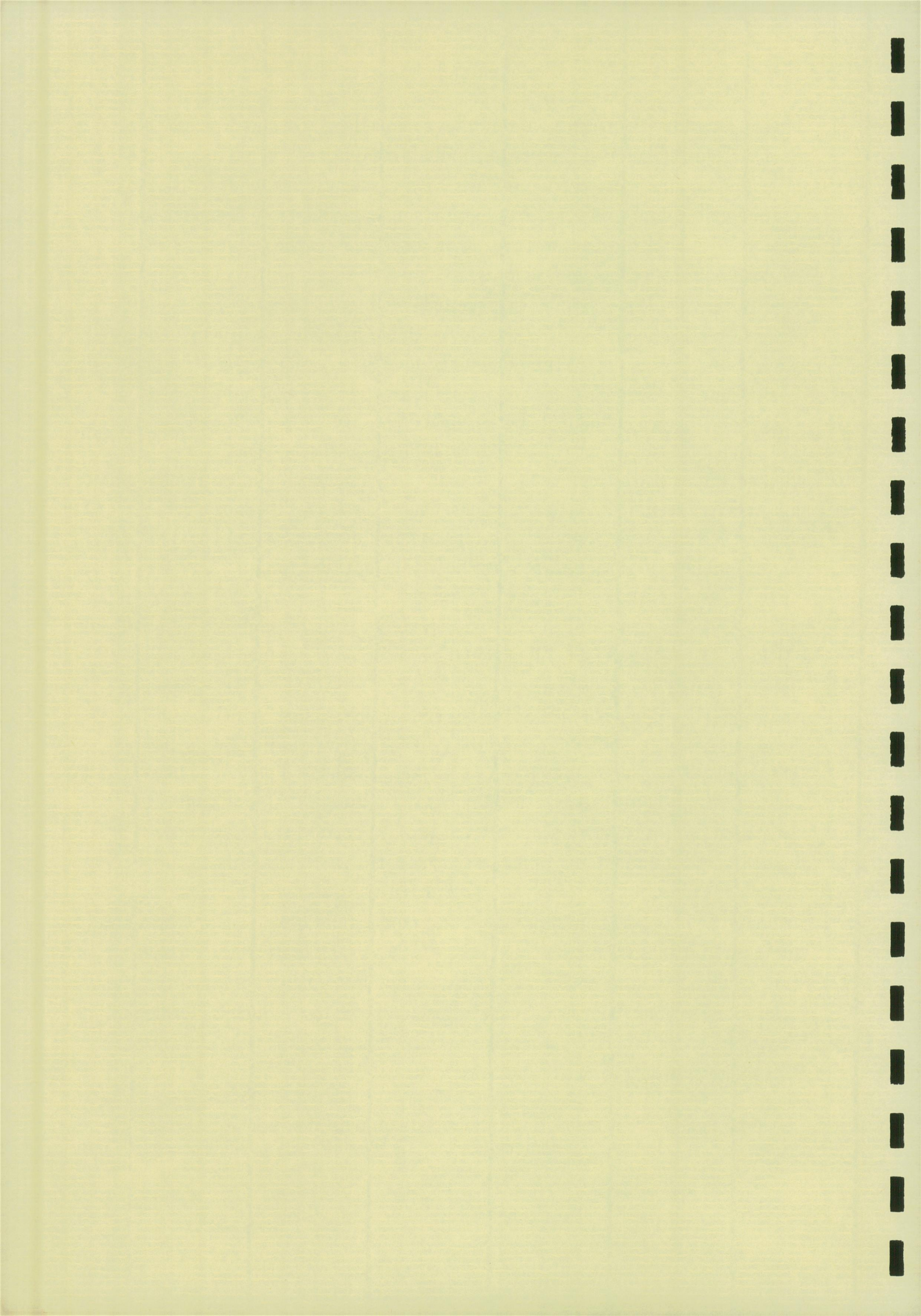


letters." (9, p 15) The written word utilises a verbal language and expresses it visually. Flusser claims that according to the second law of thermo-dynamics a book is an unnatural object because " nature is a system which tends to lose information." ( ibid ) A book stores information and is therefore deemed to be unnatural. A book however to a greater or lesser extent is the result of loosing information because the premise for what should be stored or the cause of priority has been lost. While a written article retains and presents information the lost or hidden element is the agenda which has led to its construction. There is a tension between the overt intention and the reason certain codes have been nurtured which make particular forms of information relevant and other forms irrelevant. There is an implicit and an explicit message " .. an exilir not of memory but of reminding" (13. p19) what is offered is the "appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant" ( ibid) or so in any case Socrates claimed the King said to Thoth to who the invention of the various arts is attributed, including writing.

Flusser claims that literature is made up of two codes , that of language and that of letters "Furthermore not only do letters mean sounds but they have to be aligned in rows like pearls in a necklace" (9, p15) The art college thesis uses this language to describe what is often but not exclusively a visual language - that of the visual arts. The verbal translates the visual and relocates it within a different arrangement of meaning. Both forms of communication are likely to be located within the same cultural bias. When they have a different cultural agenda the translation of the visual work into the visual- verbal ie written work means that the work is read through the values which are held by the culture describing it.

Although a book stores up information a certain amount of information is lost. Information that the author deemed irrelevant for example a painting or the work of a group whose gender, race or age are not deemed appropriate . Alphabets make sound visible . Books concretise ideas. Libraries institutionalise ideologies. Theweleit, writer of male fantasies tries to come at history already absorbed by the body expressive only in lived experience

Certain parts of our bodies and certain body effluvia are colonial territories, colonised phenomena (defined by the authority of the state, our



parents, the gods ,the CIA of our muscular contractions). They are occupied territories we drag around with us. (37, p 414)

“My body is not me it is a lump of meat inhabited by a virus called language” (20, p26)

You could say that day to day life does not concern itself with texts however the receiver and the producer are both part of the text and part of reality. Adorno claimed that materiality must be both construed and denied within the materialist dialectic

“Those works of art are enlightened which manifest true consciousness while doggedly keeping their distance from empirical reality.” ( 2, p 214) However in the same text he states “Materiality is always historical irrespective of what artists themselves might think” ( ibid)

The written word

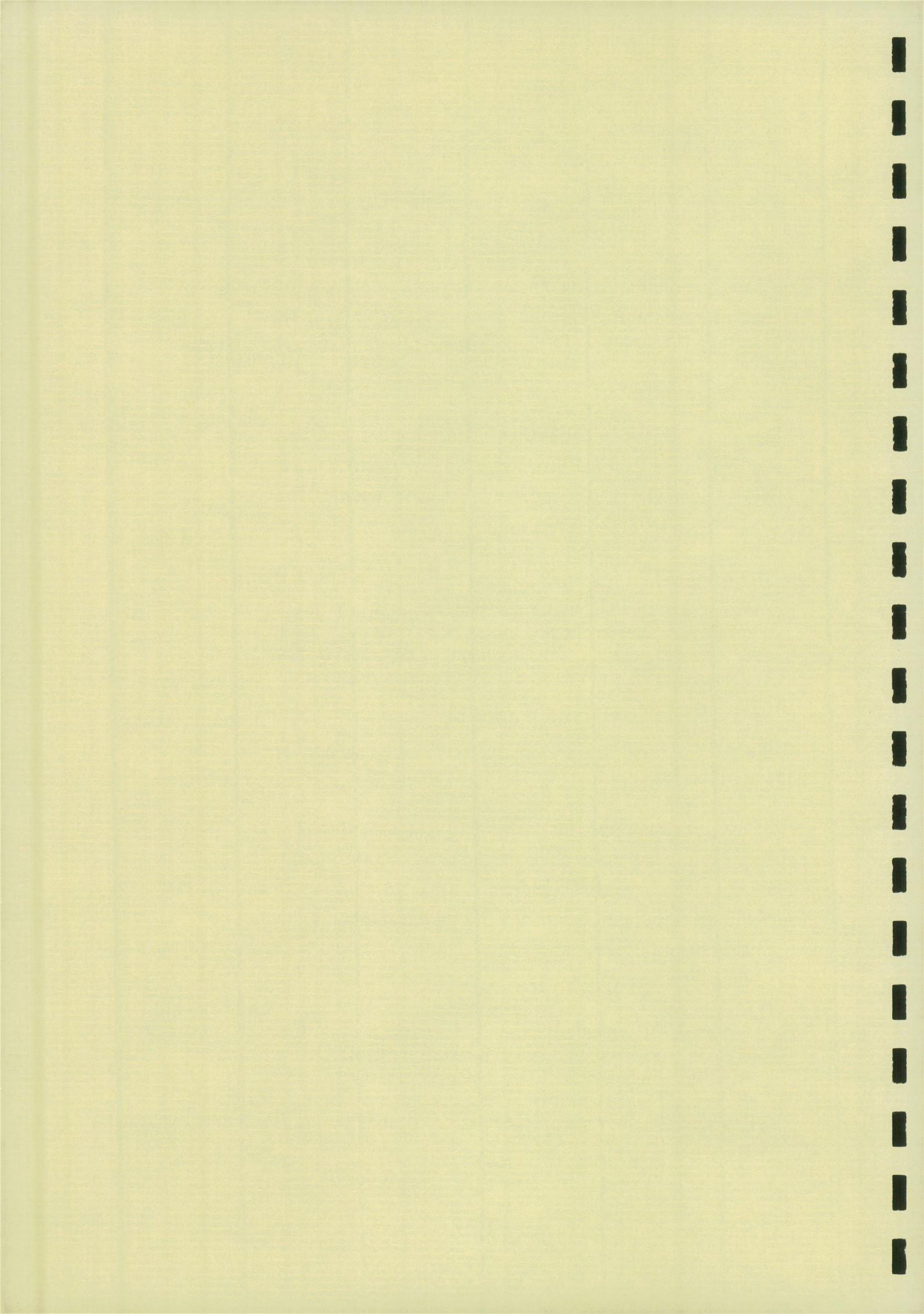
puts, agreements , laws, commandments on record. It made the growth of states larger than the old city states possible. It made continuous historical consciousness possible. The command of the priest or King and his seal could go far beyond his sight and voice and could survive his death. (13 p20)

A library is also a system which stores information in books. The authority of the library deems which books are relevant and which are not. Books are aligned in rows “like pearls in a necklace”. (9, p 15)

“The whole book points at its final stop - that is what linearity is all about but beyond that full stop the book points out at its reader.” ( ibid ) Libraries also point out at the systems that demanded them. Languages like libraries are constantly being added to and there is a certain amount of flux but the vocabulary has a basic core of priority.

The notion of self similarity strikes ancient chords in our culture, an old stream in western thought honours the idea - the power of self similarity though begins at much greater levels of complexity. It is a matter of looking at the whole. ( 11 p 115)

The language we speak is not something we innately know. It is a thing we learn



from those who nurture us. We learn the language, vocabulary and accent of our environment. We can seek information but our positioning determines what information is most readily available. This thesis is largely constructed by quotes from other sources. Each word that we use is a quote which we have learned. To more ambiguous words we can give our own meaning. How we use words or sentences changes their meaning because they form relationships in different contexts.

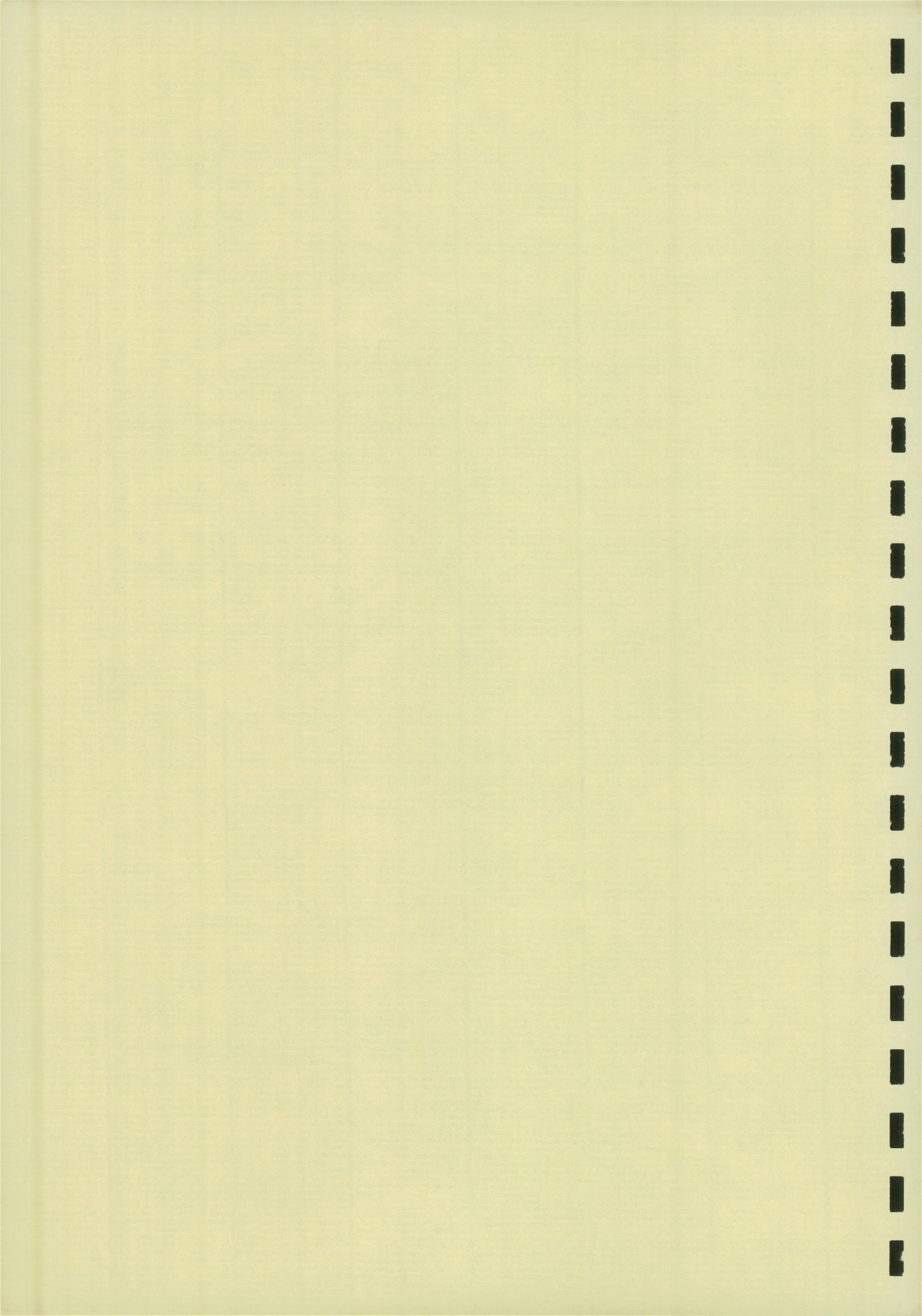
In the same way the meaning of broader quotes are changed by re-contextualisation. A word, a sentence or paragraph is altered by the place it takes, in a particular arrangement. Each text from its smallest particle to the document itself exists in a relationship. It is relative not only to its present situation but to meanings it has gathered before its immediate use or consumption.

Any text in general and this text in particular is dependant on three parts - the subject, exterior text and the addressee. The subject, here myself, is one trained by a patriarchal, western hegemony. The subject is working with a history which is not merely a given but is also a construct; the re-presentation of the past in the present. We are rooted firmly in a cultural bias.

As long as domination remains the hopeless, self destructive task of trying to comprehend yourself as an 'ego' a nomad within an identity will inevitably resemble the colonial African's determined effort to feel French. That's what happens when you attempt to become an intentional 'ego' ( a unified notion) before eliminating the fiefdoms of the colonial masters. ( 37, p414)

History is written by the victor from what is to an extent an arbitrary arrangement of information which is available in a cognate language. When assessing symbols of experience it is important to take into account the technique of production of the values which create this experience.

The deconstruction of the subject in literary theory is aimed to dislodge the idea of the author with all the attendant conditions of author-ity. Barthes claims that it is language that speaks and not the author. I would say that it is the text not just what is colloquially understood as text but the text or what Spivak would call 'weave' of experience that speaks and not the author. Foucault retains the author





but without the creative implication. Barthes claims that the image to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author. The explanation for the work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it. This is true of the authors of visual work as it is of literary work. However the author is part of a much larger structure ie socio-political, politico-economic, psycho-sexual. Education, law , economics and gender affect individual identity and artistic production. The notion of a text has been domesticated into a verbal text. Epistemic violence can be exerted using the violence of selection. As pornography reduces and cuts the body to smaller parts so the text is reduced and cut.

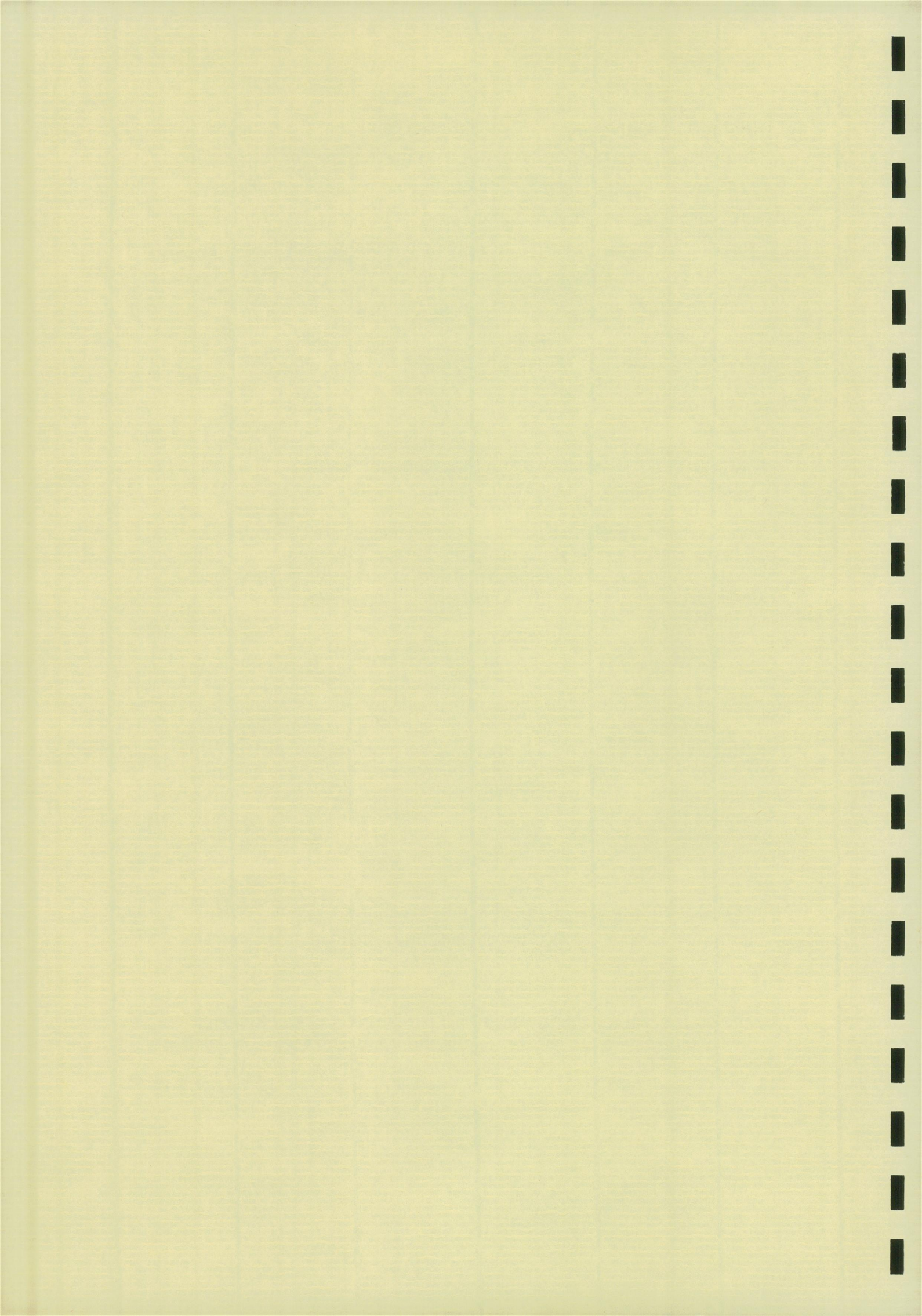
I argued that female authors and artists have disappeared from the histories culture precisely because they were not granted the same kind of life - the same kind of individuality of their brother artists.( 5, p 146)

There are two critical enterprises that are dangerously close to each other, one is the feminist task of exposing the fractures that must mask the selves and oeuvres of all female creatures in our culture. The other critical exercise is the postmodern task : of fragmenting selves and oeuvres completely ( 5 p 148)

Postmodernism can be viewed not as a style but a cultural dominant. It is no longer appropriate to project ' an idea of the historical period as massive homogeneity ( binded on either side by inexplicable 'chronological' metamorphoses and punctuation marks). This is the point at which we must remind the reader of the obvious, namely that this whole global, yet American postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense , as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror. (14, p 57)

The fact is that culture can ignore or sanitise real human pain. Particularly when the communications' networks in existence mean that we are in a position to informed. This

suggests that political apathy or at least paralysis is integral to the post modern age. Could we guess the influence the second wave of feminism has exerted ( and continues to exert) on women in the arts ? The very notion of a feminist art is represented as out of step with the times. To dream of a changing society via the arts is an anachronism, even an



awareness of a 'project of emancipation' jars with the mood of a male dominated elite.( 5, p 146)

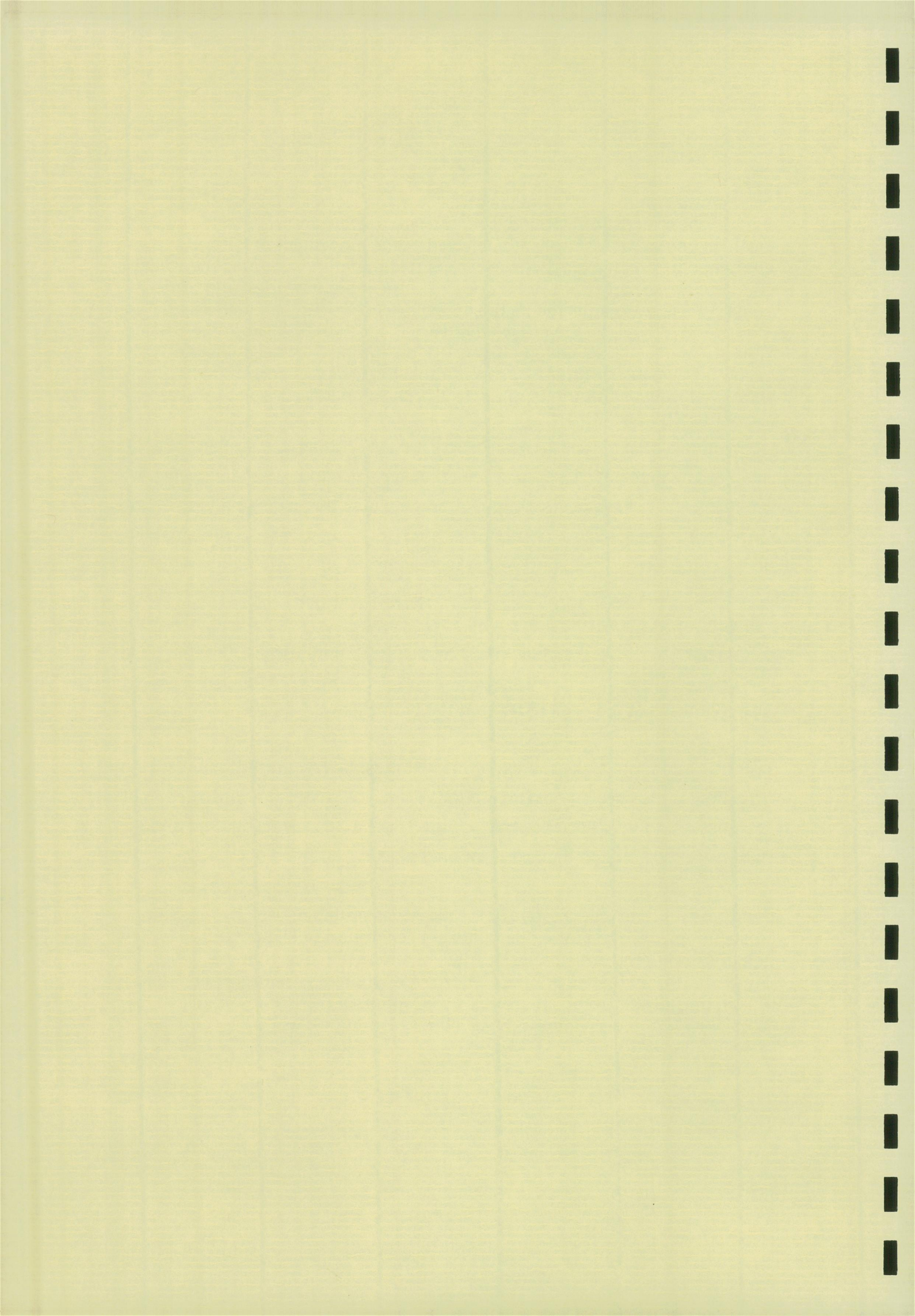
It is certain that there is a strange quasi-Sartrean irony - a winner/loser' logic - which tends to surround any effort to describe a 'system'. A totalising dynamic, as these are detected in the movement of contemporary society. What happens is that the more powerful the vision of some increasingly total system or logic - the more powerless the reader comes to feel. Insofar as the theorist wins by constructing an increasingly closed and terrifying machine, to that very degree he loses, since the critical capacity of his work is thereby paralysed, the impulses of negation and revolt, not to speak of those of social transformation, are increasingly perceived as vain and trivial in the face of the model itself. ( 14 , p57)

Subscribing to a system that deconstructs is still subscribing to a system. We collect words which have been said before, reconstruct and rearrange them. We collect ideas which have been thought , quote them and rearrange them. " You produce an infinite sequence of originals", Barbara Kruger 1984. There are many theories posing as the truth, once we acknowledge one truth we define it by rejecting other truths. We must know the limits of narratives and acknowledge that this thesis exists within a hegemonic ideological construction. While it may question structures, this thesis makes choices according to the old rules.

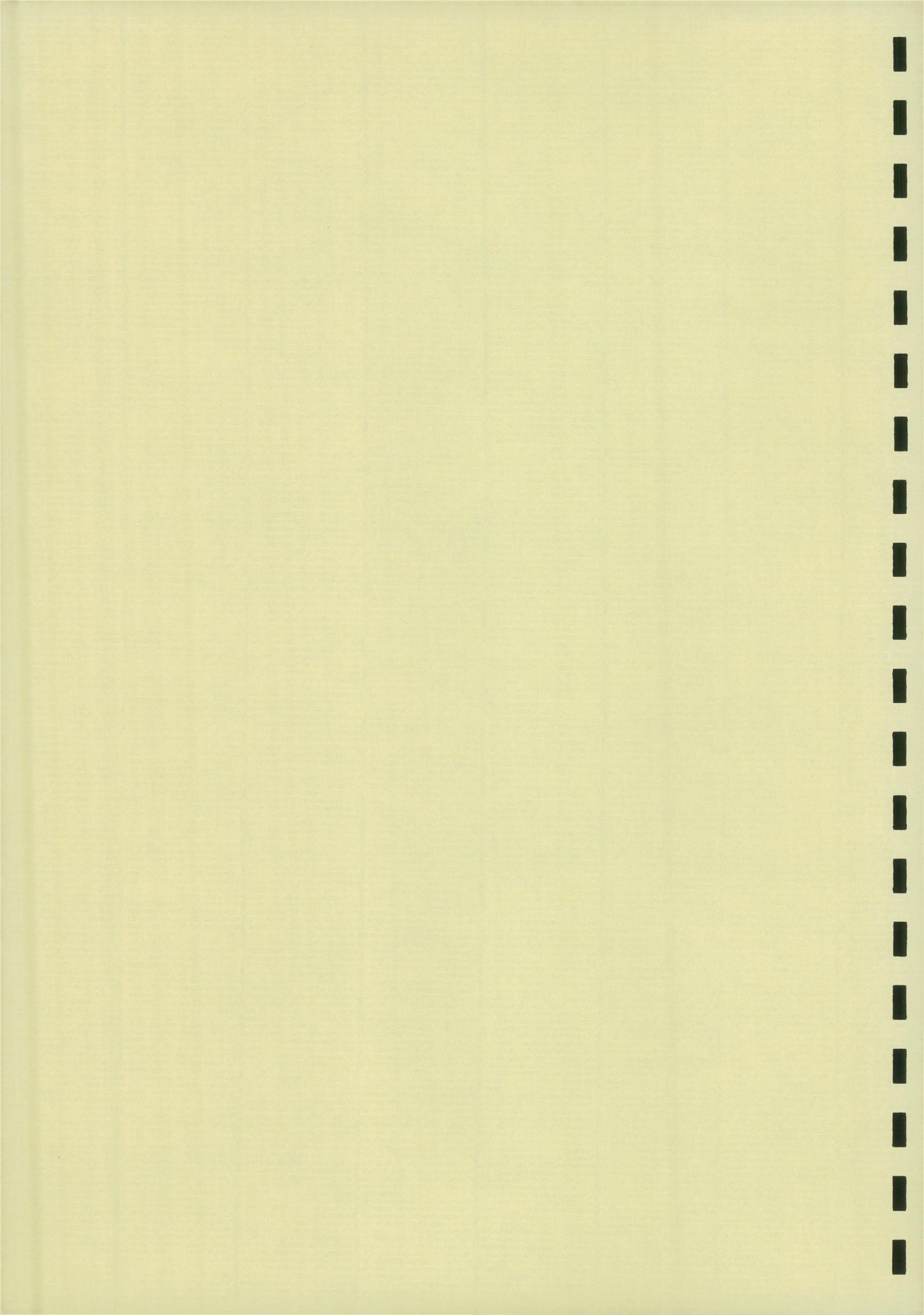
"What counts is not the printed text but the performance." (2, p 46)

The specific intention or the subtext of the text must be recognised, as must be the construction of the necessity of its creation. The necessity of the construction of this text answers a very specific brief. Unless this situation is recognised and its limitations acknowledged the text is an inert object.

Traditional literary theory has of course never prohibited the investigation of such topics as the Florentine political background in Dante, Milton's relationship to the schismatics or Irish historical illusions in Joyce. I would argue, however, that such information even where it is not recontained as it is in most instances by an idealistic conception of the history of ideas - does not yield interpretations as such but rather at best its ( indispensable) preconditions.( 15, p 17)



anti/thesis



Perhaps the most significant of the gifts of typography to man is that of detachment and non-involvement - the power to act without reacting. (21 ,p 157)

That most potent gift bestowed on western man by literacy and typography. His power to act without reaction or involvement. It is this kind of specialisation by disassociation that has created western power and efficiency. Without this disassociation of action from feeling people are hampered and hesitant. Print taught man to say 'Damn the torpedoes . Full steam ahead.' ( 21 , p 162)

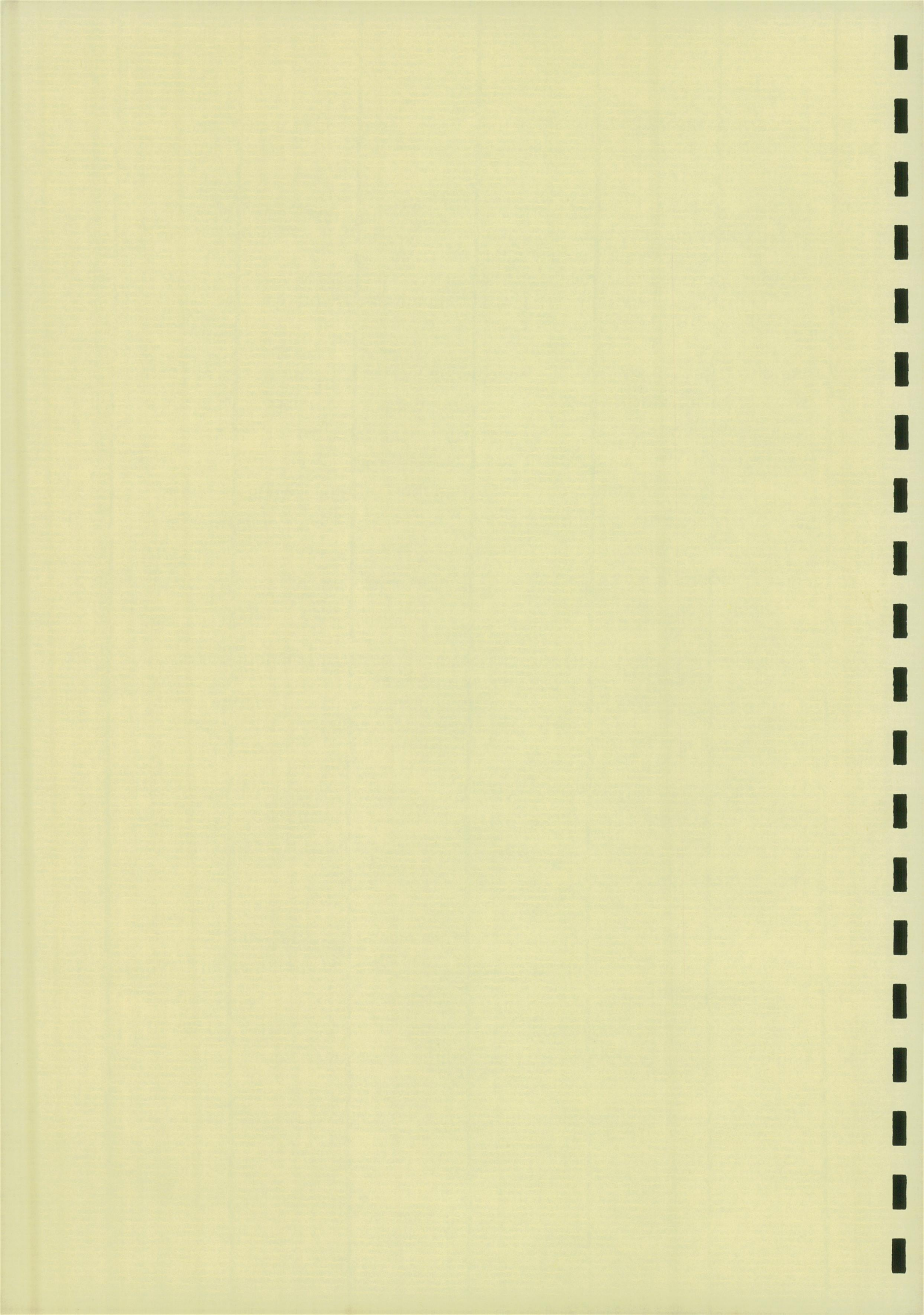
But of course everything we do is a reaction including breathing. 'Western man' is a reactionary construct. We must explore the construction of what is deemed natural. The writing of any thesis is potent not only in what it says but in what it leaves unsaid. The fact that our language uses the words 'man' and 'mankind' as signs for the whole human race shows that male dominance and masculine superiority has been institutionalised and has been so deeply entrenched in our own historical experience it is deemed normative. He encompasses she. When there is a sexist language and sexist theories available the observation of reality is also likely to be sexist.

The seal was set on male superiority forever when in 1746 John Kirkby formulated his *Eighty Eight Grammatical Rules* . These rules, the product of Kirkby's own imagination ; contained one which indicated the esteem in which he held the female : Rule Number Twenty One stated that the male gender was more comprehensive that the female.( 31, p 148)

In Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists". She shows how great 'artists' are constructed by the practitioners of art history which is itself a cultural construct but can itself be presented as a natural evolutionary phenomenon.

Sensitivity and hysteria are expected from women and considered a weakness. These same qualities in men are conventionally associated with genius. Women with metaphysical interests have been historically marked as witches and regarded as suspicious and dangerous. On the other hand heightened sensitivity , emotional volatility and visionary capabilities in men were seen as talents.

"By the end of the eighteenth century genius has acquired romantic grandeur : it





had been transformed from a kind of talent into a type of *being* who walked a sublime path between 'sanity and madness'." ( 5, p 76)

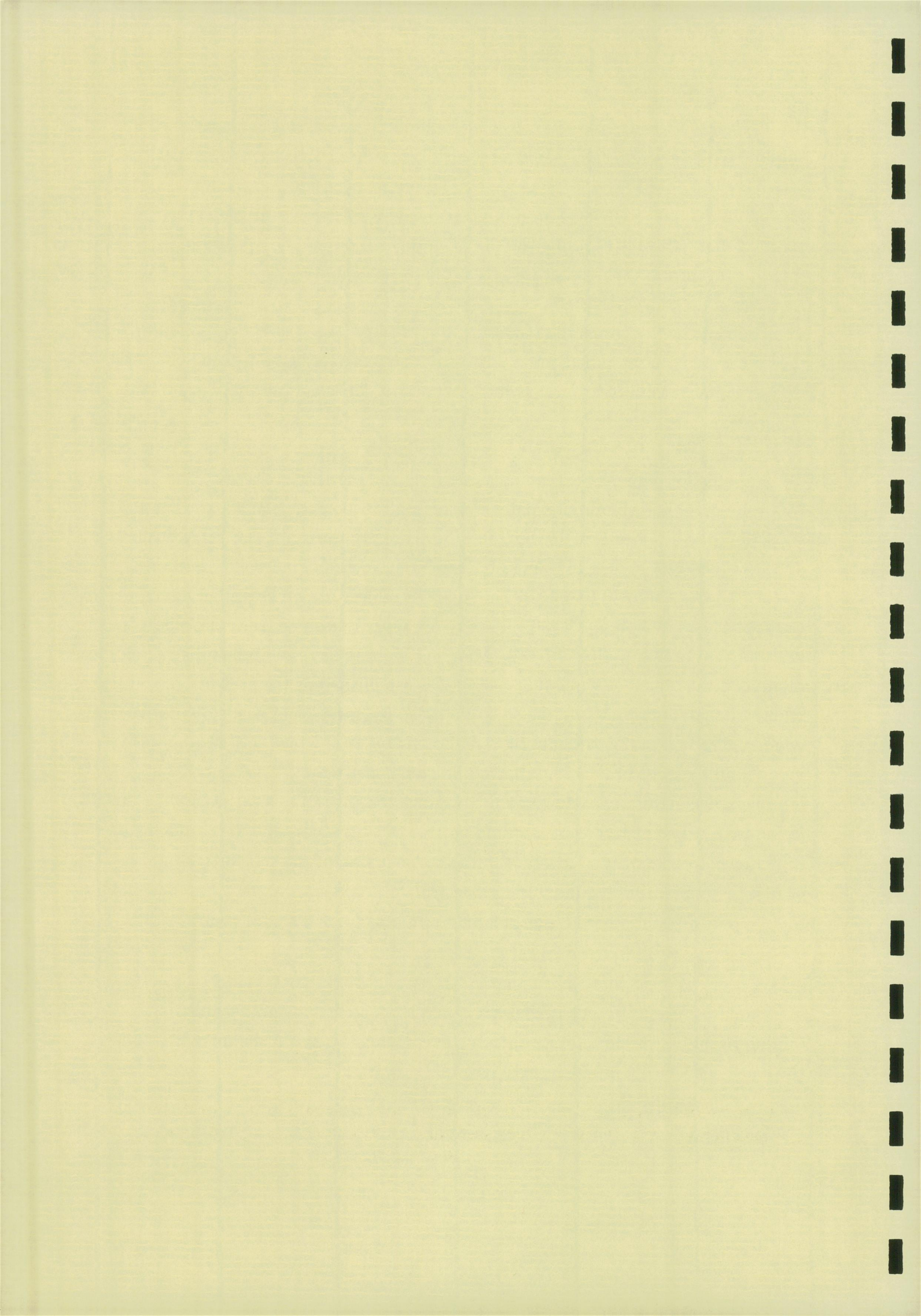
The genius as a type is not natural but contrived. Kant quoted by Battersby claimed that nature is the constructor. "Genius is the innate disposition (ingenious) through which nature gives rule to art" ( ibid)

The concept of the genius, the maverick, the male protagonist is dependent on the cult of personality which is constructed. " To deprive the bourgeoisie not of its art but of its concept of art, this is the precondition of a revolutionary argument" (25, p 21)

The impetus for genius is explained as redirected male sexual energy. The genius was constructed as effeminate male. Presenting female genius as an argument is subscribing to a patriarchal concept and therefore reinforcing it. Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parer show the impossibility of constructing a parallel paradigm of *Old Mistresses* in their 1981 text. The feminist dialect has an essential value but cannot be seen in isolation. A discussion on 'what is woman' cannot occur without reinforcing ' what is man'. Men and women have relationships each is relative to the other. A version of reality was established as the bulwark of society where one gender oppressed the socio-political, psycho-sexual needs of another gender. The text of this situation was reinforced by texts which described it as a given and by a culture which reflected its own construction. The content of feminism was naturally affected by the original and pivotal text. It was imperative that that second sex should be able to gain access an alternative history and alternative identity. However in the construction of the self for women the structures in place necessitated the reconstruction of man as other. It is important to say "what is man, that he was obliged to produce such a text of history" ( 32, p33)

To counteract an imbalance perhaps it is necessary to create another imbalance. Highlighting the colloquial incongruity of replacing 'he' with 'she' makes visible the construction of what is deemed natural.

Reversal of roles' has often been useful as a consciousness raising device,



as a means of getting beyond the limitations of the language trap and in order to elaborate on the significance of being able to assume full membership of humanity , a few researchers have attempted to reverse the situation and to find out what happens when the dominant group encounters this - for them unusual and artificial - situation of being excluded from reference. As Casey Miller and Kate Smith found, the men did not like it, they protested vigorously and of course they invoked the argument invented and used by their forefathers, that it is grammatically incorrect to leave men out. ( 31, p 158 )

I prefer the term anti-sexist (adopted from Spivak) because it does not make gender specification and oppression merely a woman's issue. Hegemony is not merely political it is also intellectual and through the mind the body is colonised : Emphasising how differences have been created is, to my mind more valuable than simply stressing the difference. It is important to inspect the subtlety of the perpetuation of 'otherness'.

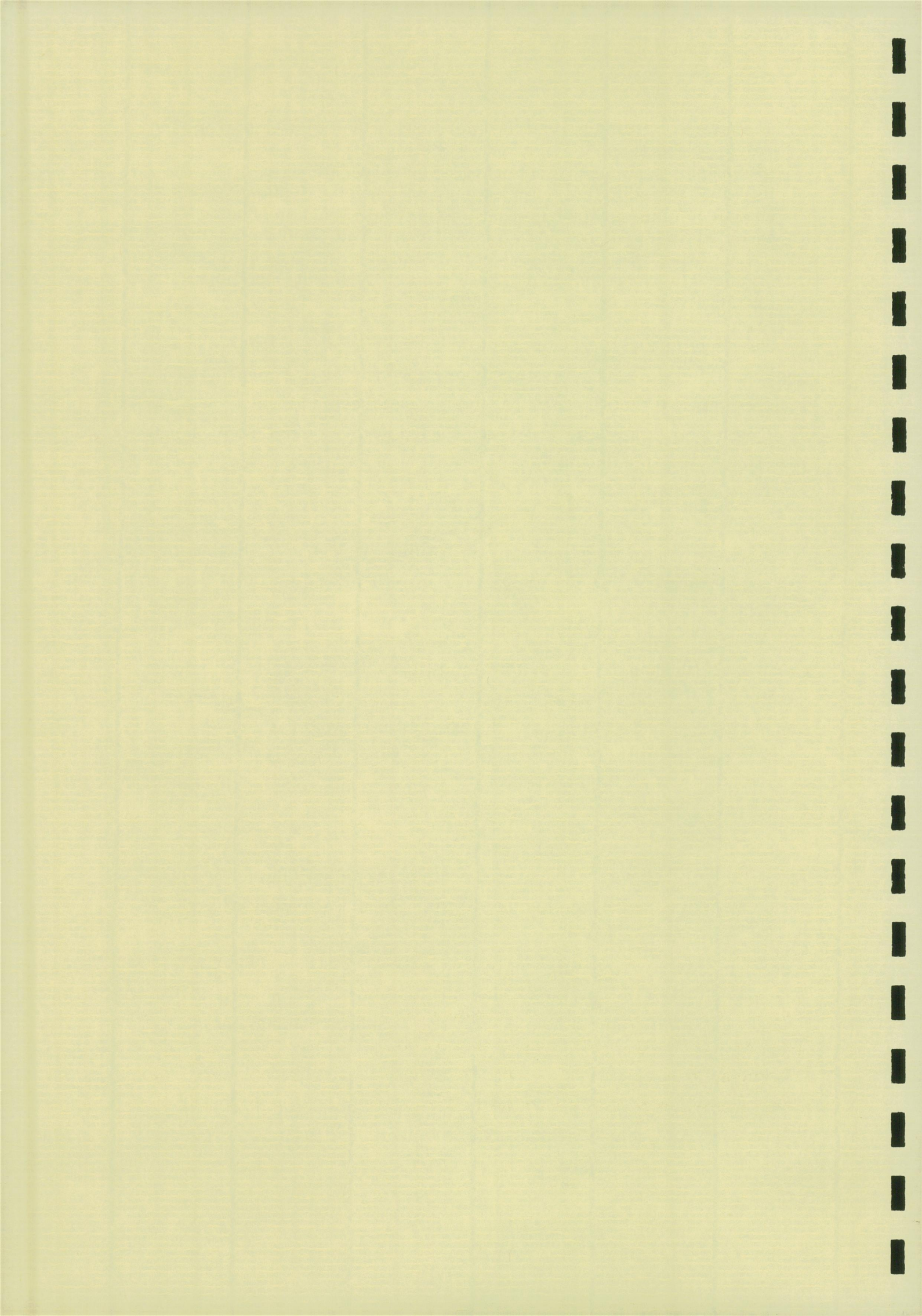
Ideology is strongest when it operates as nature. Making sense, making love or making enemies are far more complex practices than the intercourse between the genders.

"Why on earth should we be on that impossible ahistorical quest for a purist position." ( 33 p 150 ) The hyper- intellectualising of feminism in art practice in a sense negates the dirt beneath the hard phallic tower of knowledge. The dirt between the bricks is still a part of the story. Notions of gender must become broken down and the pieces conflated with an understanding of their construction.

"Post Modernists have proclaimed the death of the author. But for an author to die he must first have lived. In other words . She must first have lived" ( 5 , p146)

Layers upon layers of 'fact' can result in the transmogrification of the source . Therefore it is important to examine the process and perpetuation of the construction.

In some of this editing and translation that we can locate in the politics of naming. For example the imagery of Adam and Eve that has percolated



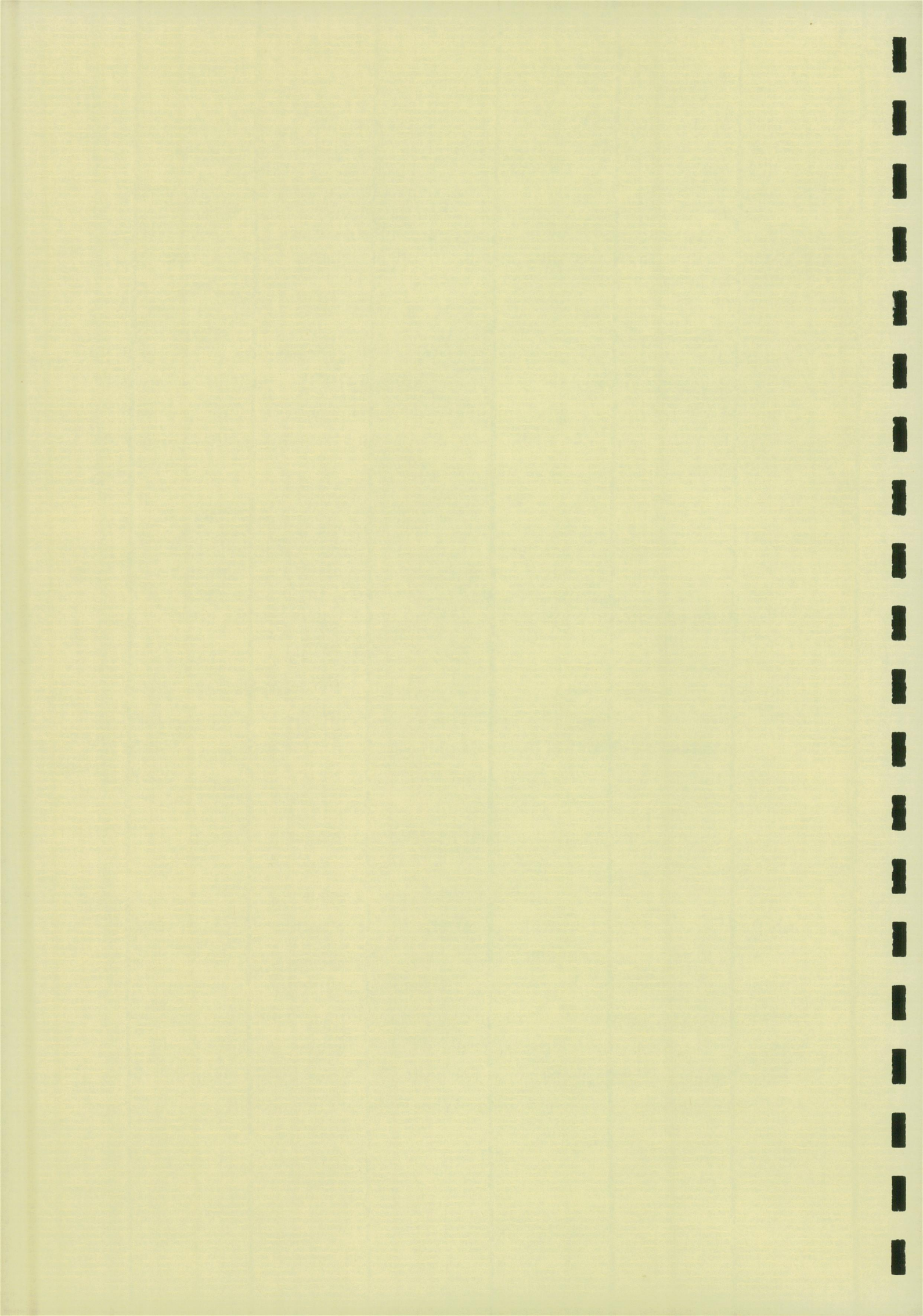
through our culture usually takes the form of Adam being created first then Eve being made from Adam's rib ( this gross distortion of the male 'giving birth' to the female is an archetypal example of false naming by males ) although this is the most popular narrative it must be noted that it was not the only narrative available when the editing of the bible was being undertaken. ' The Bible does not give one creation story but several states Chiera (1938) and 'the one which happens to be featured in Chap. One of Genesis appears to be the one which has least vogue among the common people. ( 31, p 166)

The production of signs is concerned not simply with reflecting the actual but with constructing what is considered factual and so with the construction of what is perceived as reality. It is tempting to use the systems of thought and the methods of oppression to try to eradicate it . We could present another version of Genesis where man is subservient to woman.

Man 'became arrogant saying 'It is I who am God and none other apart from me' When he said this he sinned against Eternity. And a voice came forth from above the realm of absolute power, saying ' You are mistaken Samuel which is ' God of the blind' . And he said if any other thing exists before me let it become visible to me . And immediately Sophia stretched forth her finger and introduced light into the Matter. ( 5, p 48)

There is no proof of psychological difference between the sexes. However this is not to deny the mental handicap created by social conditions. For instance the confusion between the natural functions of the body and our experience of those functions through a perception of the body shaped by external influence. There is a perception of menstruation and motherhood as disabling handicaps. ' Through this perception culture has transformed these neutral events into actual handicaps.

Culture intervenes here on two levels. Firstly the devaluation of women's bodies and physiology and secondly the material handicap created by social conditions. The interpretation of the phenomena is internalised and reappears as strongly felt shame. To say 'my body has felt the pain of degradation and abandonment' is to expose a real felt condition however it also exposes the internalisation of the interpretation of neutral phenomena. The suffering caused by not being able to accept one-self must here be examined. What is the self one accepts when self is



taken without question and equated with the historic person : When the historic person is not mentioned it is implicitly denied. The historic individual being considered as a natural person is a historic and reactionary notion. By omission and implication one can objectively go in the same directions the dominant ideology and further repression.

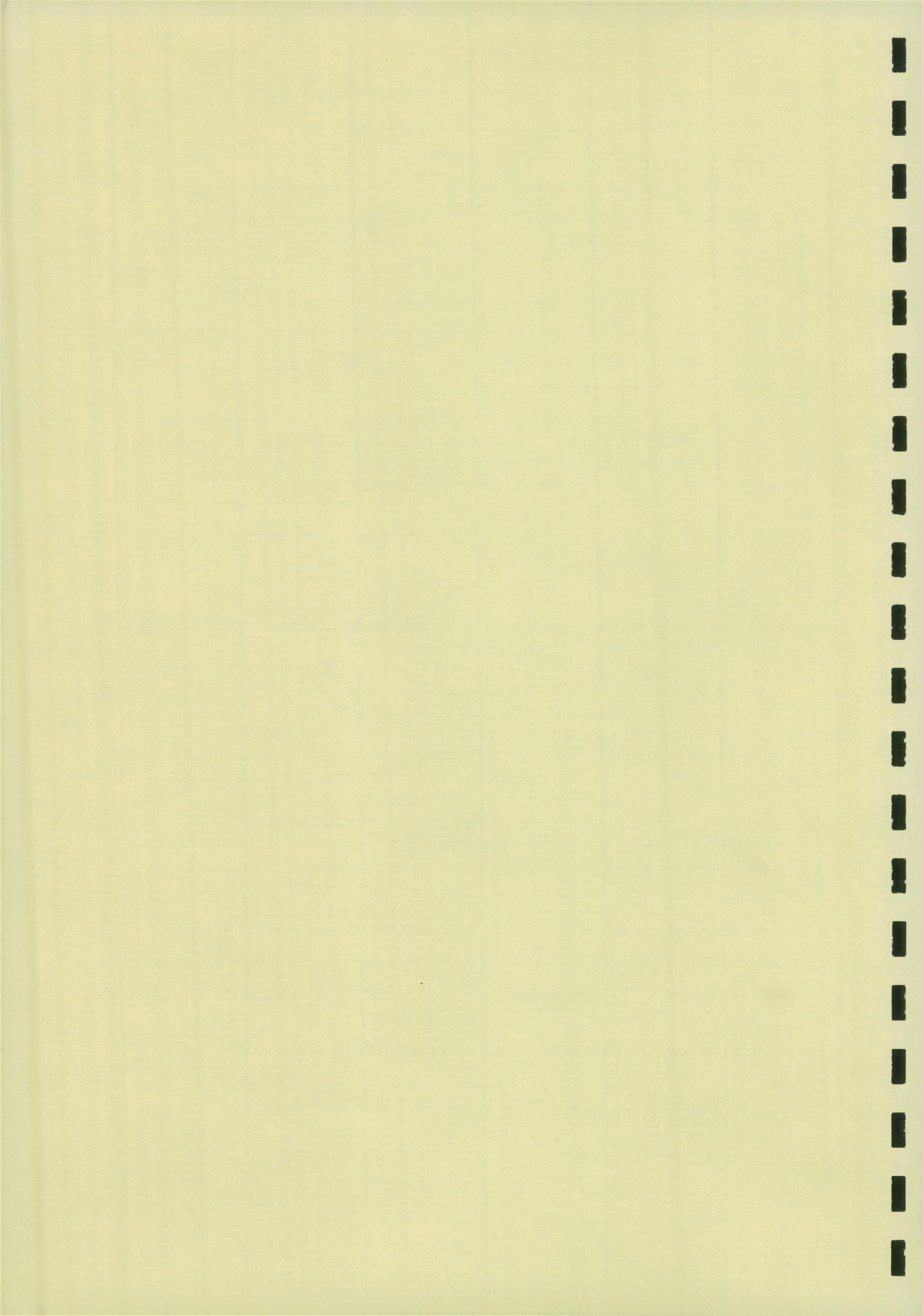
The itinerary is of course not that simple. This sort of idealism is not always appropriate. Women's studies, women's exhibitions etc are not constructed to isolate women but to reply to a specific need. Judy Chicago asks

Would I rather have existing museums show an appropriate number of women artists ? Yes, is that the reality? No, in the absence of that reality it is absolutely imperative for women to take responsibility for the institutionalisation of our own culture. ( 22 , p123)

Unless the paradigm of oppression is broken down it simply re-emerges with a different agenda. For instance

the subtle discrimination some women of color have experienced in white feminist think tanks. 'I'm very disillusioned with the women's movement says African American artist Hwardena Pindell who worked as curator at New York's Museum of Modern Art from 1971 - 1979 . Whenever there is publicity , the white women are pushed out front. I've run into a fair number of white women who want to appear to be liberal but whose personal interactions indicate that they want to be in charge, They want to colonise the issues of women of colour. I've had conversation and experiences with white women who've said they don't want the issue of racism to dilute the issues of feminism. 28% of the population of the US is non-white, yet out of 160 current members of the Association of Art Museum Directors only three are non-white. ( ibid)

This woman has chosen to describe herself as 'a woman of color' . The painter knows that no colour can exist in isolation . Colours are unstable and change in relationships to other colours. Each colour is relative . When people are described as non-white this sets white skin as the means by which colour is measured. White is normal non-white is deviant. This terminology is used by someone who describes herself to be as a 'woman of color' and the intention is therefore not to be derogative. This shows the depth of internalisation of the





colonisers' value system when that value system is seen as neutral.

In Ireland racism is not seen as a paramount issue because there are very few 'people of color'. 'Other' is defined by gender, class and religion. However the economic forces of the art market, for instance, magazines and international exhibitions ensure that Ireland is included in the New Internationalism.

Whether this New Internationalism has been created by critics it is difficult to say.

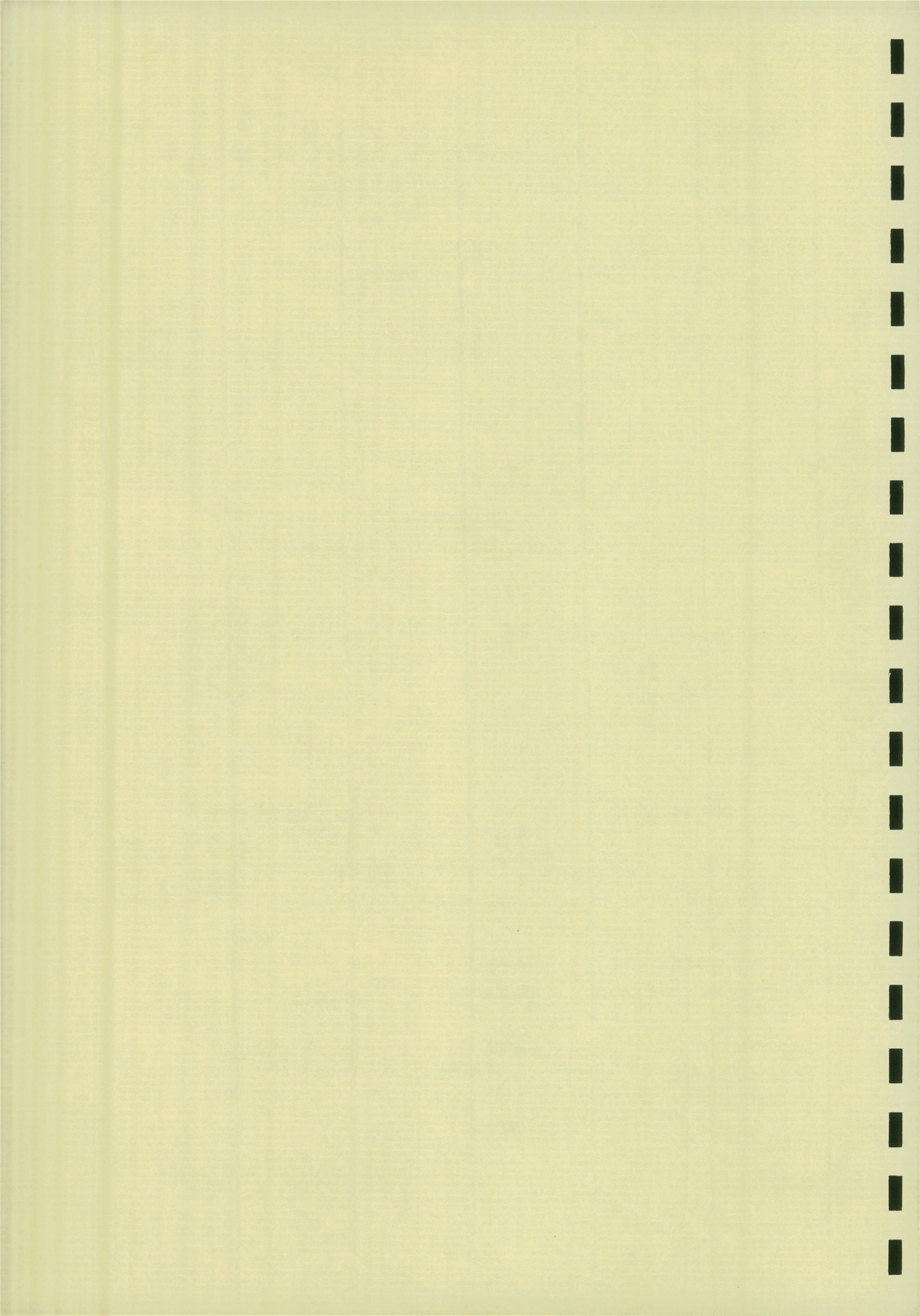
We have come to a point where theory could be seen to have reduced art to a footnote, a supplement which fulfills conditions required of it by the over determinations of a dominant discourse. ( 19, p 11 )

The convergent paths of self and national identity are paralleled in the convergent paths of theory and practice. One often being a parallel text to the other. The construction of ideas of self can be seen as a parallel text to the construction of a nation's notion of its own identity and the development of receptive and contingent histories. This is 'the principle of self similarity' at different scales.

New Internationalism breeds acceptance of pluralities. Ideas of decentralisation are in common currency and yet are ignored belligerently. However we cannot decentre structures of cultural imperialism. They are the structures that enable us. We can not say 'lets decenter imperialism' we must negotiate with it , recognising that negotiating is not always a positive term.

Richard Hamilton who could be called Britain's foremost interactive artist showed clearly a lack of understanding of the Irish situation when commenting in Dublin on the 'The Citizen' , he declared that there could not possibly be any excuse for the IRA, their existence, he said, was incomprehensible. However the hunger-strikers interested him because he said they were not killing anyone. One might suggest that the entire socio-political situation be taken into account and they were after all killing themselves.

for the more sophisticated audience who also knew something of the North's crisis the paintings explicitness was unpalatable as it echoed the religious pictures of the Catholic tradition rather than a modern or modernist art and society ( 10, p 118)



I would argue that the import of critical and cultural theory has affected the arts and visual arts and one of the outcomes is an interest in national and local history and culture as has appeared elsewhere ( ibid)

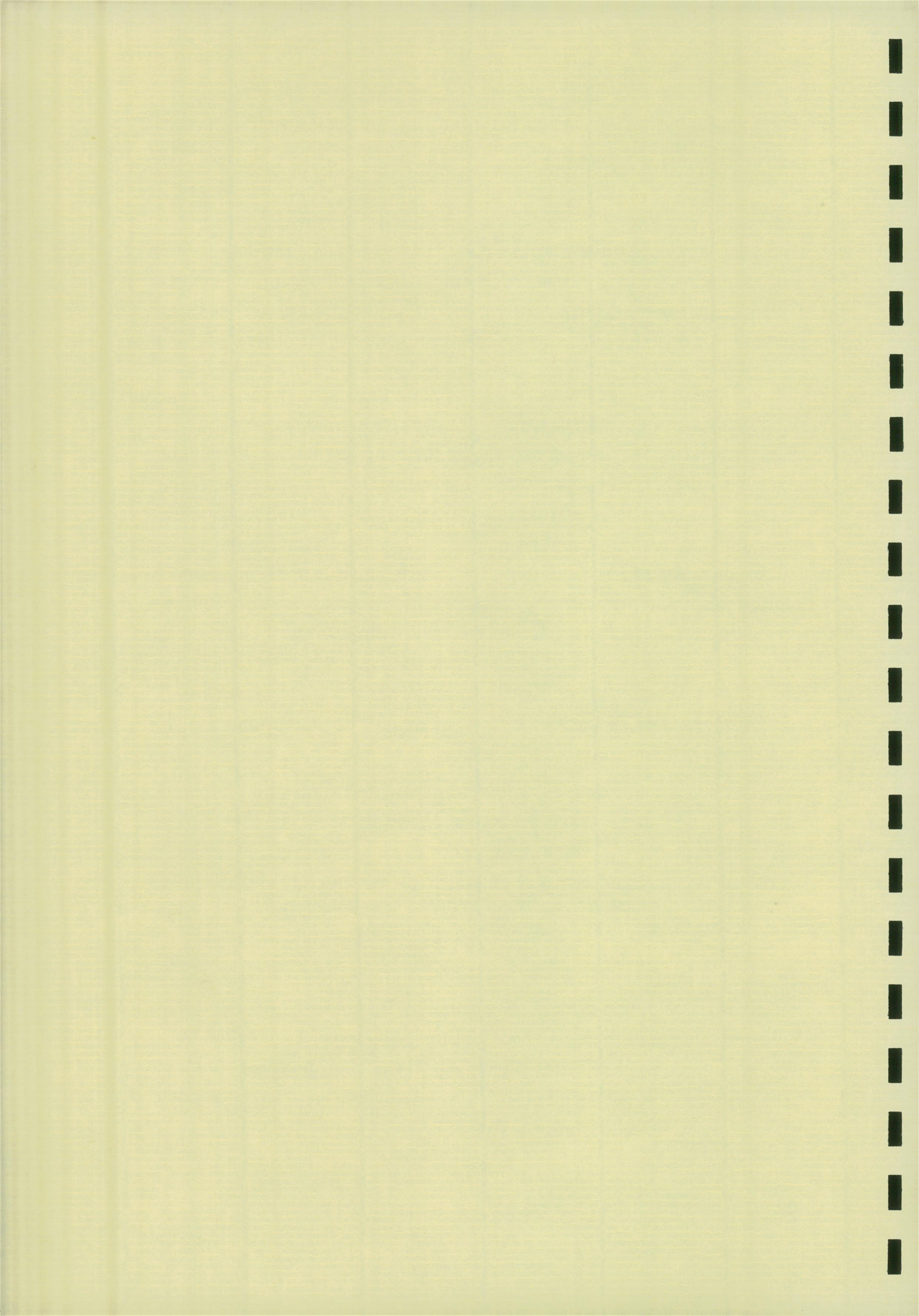
In France a linear development can be seen through deconstruction and feminist theory for instance Barthes, Derrida, Baudriard, Lyotard etc. Key representative artists include Giacometti 'Le Nez' . Examples of contemporary artists are Boltanski and Annette Messager. A personal relationship between Boltanski and Messager is also part of the subtext of their recognition. Messager's work can be seen in the French tradition yet she claims to have been influenced by De Beauvoir but little else. However while certain influences can be seen as explicit there are many implicit interventions. It is in a sense ironic that Classic Modernist practice as exhibited by Marc Rothko, Barnett Newman et al for example, spiritualist abstraction was in tandem with Clement Greenberg's site and time specific theory. It is also interesting how the German school of philosophy ie Kant, Nietzsche, Hegel and Heidegger etc and the cult of Superman found expression or resistance in the decadence of the Expressionism and Neo-expressionism and the purism of fascism. The criteria for what constitutes a person's national identity is not of course that simple.

Gorky was regarded as American though he was Russian (sic). Picasso was Spanish although he spent most of his life in France. Le Broquay is sometimes regarded as a British artist though he was born in Ireland and lives in France. ( 3, p 1)

In Ireland we are most at home with the construction of ideas of our national and cultural identity. Brian O Doherty claims

Now it is commonplace to say that the Irish are a literary and imaginative people but they are visually blind. While this is not strictly true it is not remote from the truth ( 24, p 2)

He seems to infer that because in Ireland there is historical evidence of a literary tradition and not much evidence of a visual tradition that is what the Irish are as 'a people' . However there are specific historical reasons for a medium of expression chosen. The word, written or spoken is more appropriate as a medium to an oppressed people because its production can be achieved very quietly and with few tools. O Doherty goes on to say



"Now it seems to me that the younger Irish artists, perhaps unknown to themselves are reverting to a kind of art dear to their ancestors." ( ibid) This sort of thinking indicates that the thing called 'Irishness' is an extra diagetive fact. The kind of art practised by our ancestors was practised at a specific time , at a specific place for specific reasons.

Unless that situation - which has vanished into the past - is somehow mentally restored, the painting (or the Book of Kells, Ardagh Chalice or High Crosses) ' will remain a reified end product and be unable to be grasped as a symbolic act in its own right , as praxis and as a production (14, p38)

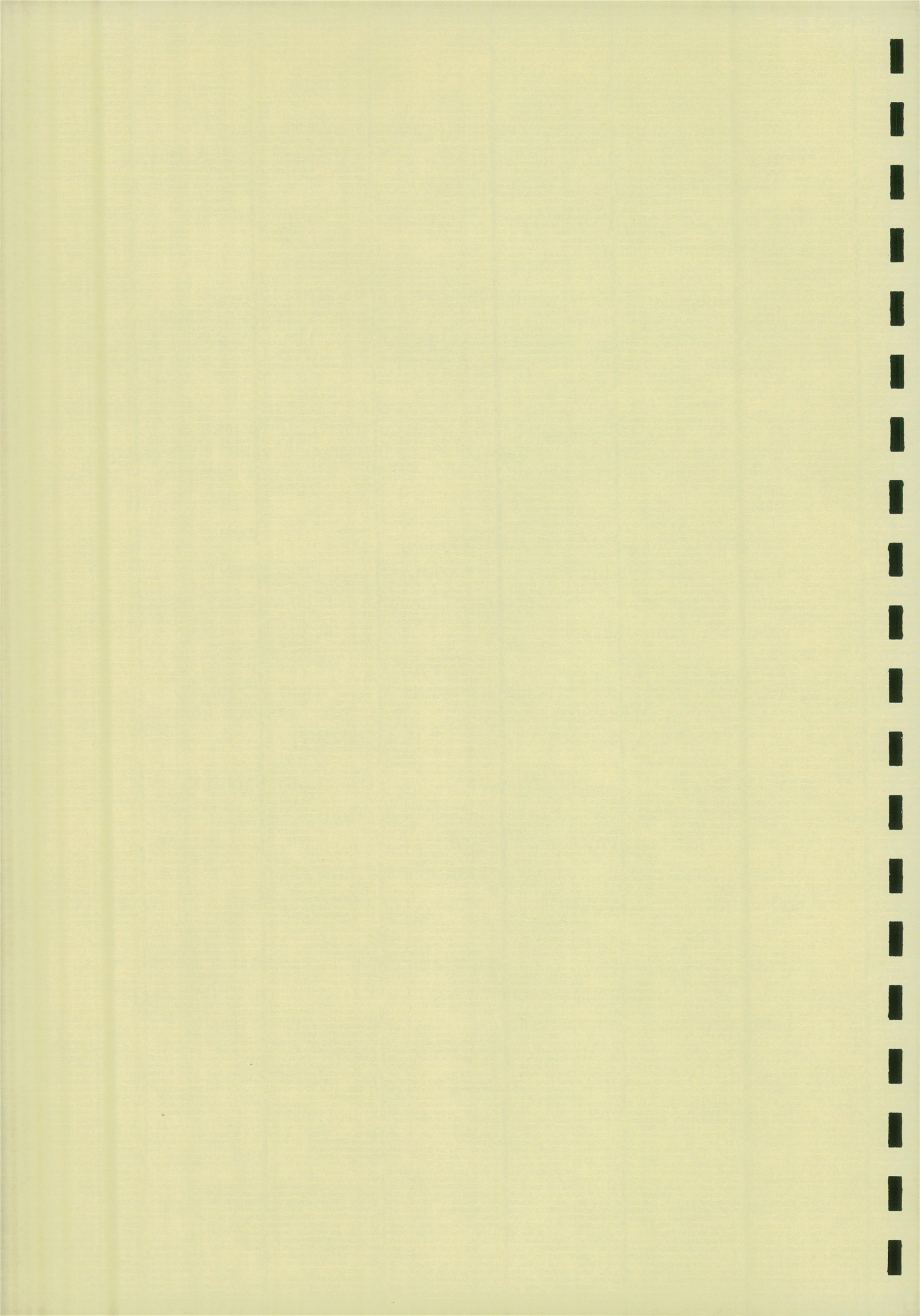
One way of reconstructing the initial situation to which the work is somehow a response is by stressing the raw materials, the initial content, which it confronts and which it reworks, transforms and appropriates (ibid)

We are inclined to conform to certain traditions. Unknowing engagement indicates the subtle insidiousness of the construction of a frame of reference. Notions of identity are so subtly plaited into notions of self that one does not have to voluntarily engage.

Reading is a position where I (or a group of us with whom I share an identificatory label) make this anonymous web my own , even as I find in it a guarantee of my existence as me , one of us . (34, p270 )

Reading here does not necessarily mean reading a written text but reading a situation . When we read about Irish artists 'feeling at home with the visual equivalent of the word' that it is the 'Irish way' we are reading several things, one of them is the promotion of a notion of Irishness . There are many layers and hierarchies of information.

The 'Irish way' is not something that simply glows in the dark. It is a reaction either to a specific political or economic situation or/and an image of itself which has been constructed according to its own brief. One is tempted to see the reflections of oneself in a mirror which is simply a screen of projections. We can be paralysed by images, words and fantasies. Notions of national identity have been constructed out of a series of subtle relationships which occur and are



reinforced by a parachronistic translation and the codes of behaviour we carry in our bellies.

Ireland is not an island, metaphorically at least . It is difficult to quantify the effect of foreign influence.

During the post war period the artistic centre of gravity gradually shifted away from Paris to New York and the West coast of the United States. The full impact of this was not felt in Britain and Ireland until the arrival of major exhibitions of America Art in London in the late 1950's. ( 29, p 1)

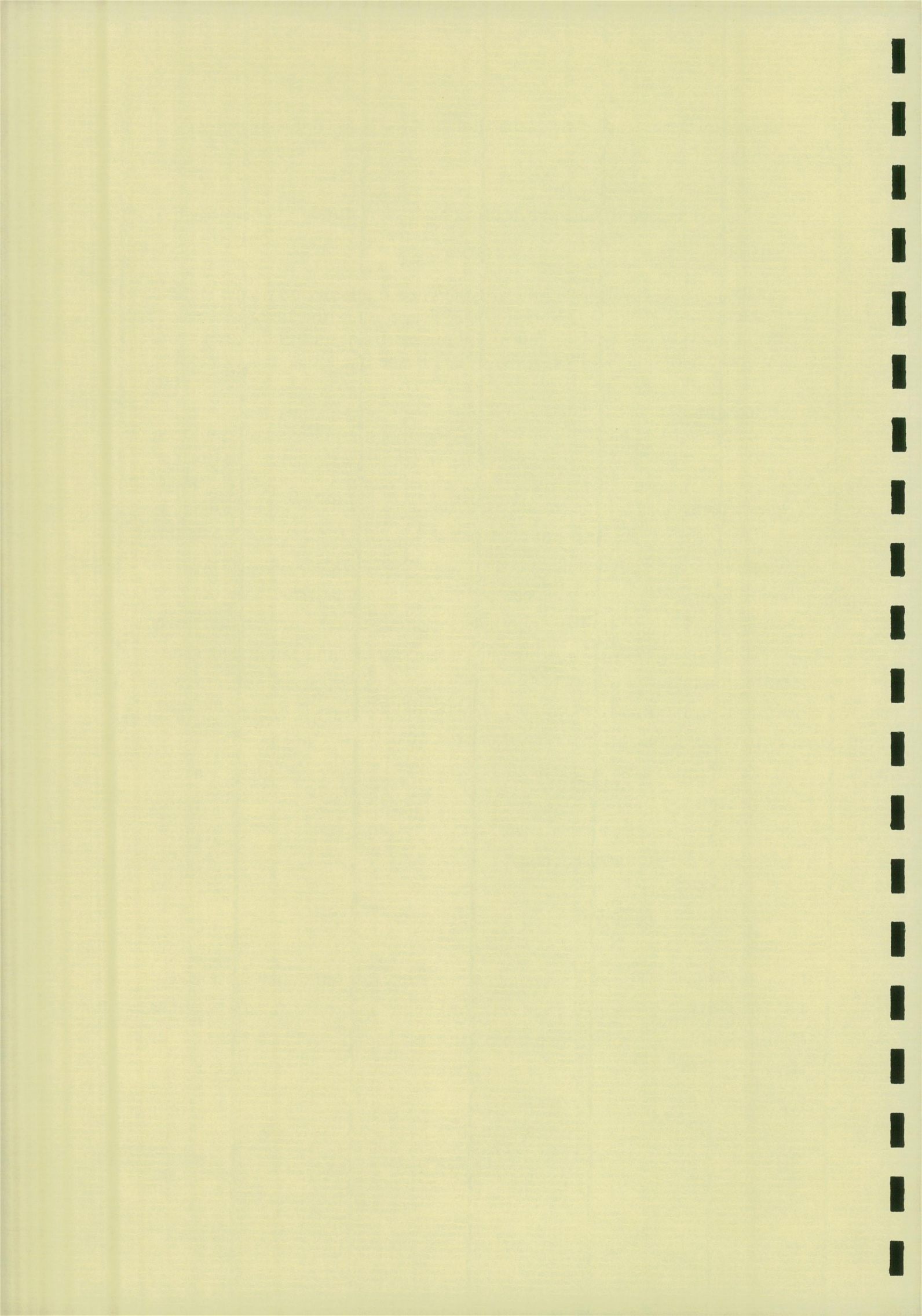
The individual artist whether in Tokyo, New York or Sao Paulo is confronted by the activity of art everywhere without the mediation of inherited outlook or style ( ibid)

While influences can be traced and cause and effect exposed , it is difficult to negotiate these structures from hindsight. Prehistory for instance is less about what prehistoric people made of it than what archaeologists today make of it. It is difficult to make mute stones speak yet there is a sophisticated level of speculation. We are familiar with the conflicting and the imaginative theories of archaeologists. Historical affirmation sustains European chauvinism . The relationship between our image of ourselves and our image of our history are reciprocal and mutually re-influencing. To make history is to make something out of that which makes us. History makes us in its own image.

What can I say to you?  
That is clean, new, untrammelled  
free of smears and fresh from  
mother tongue?

( 17, p 14)

From the stance of the late twentieth century the cultural maturity of the Egyptian State is presented as an early link in the inevitable linear development of European culture rather than the culture of a country in black Africa. Europe until the thirteenth century was a net importer of finished goods and a net exporter of primary goods.





It was by no means obvious to the inhabitants of Europe that their continent was poised to dominate much of the rest of the Earth. 'A considerable part of European culture was in any case borrowed from Islam just as Muslim societies had borrowed from China through the media of mutual trade, conquest and settlement. ( 16, p 3)

History is not linear it does not as a piece of text progress towards a full stop. It is 'created by dynamic shift and countershift'. There was never a united Europe in which all parts acknowledged one secular or religious leader. "No country was free of internal tensions and all regarded the others as rivals rather than allies in the struggle against Islam." ( 16, p 4)

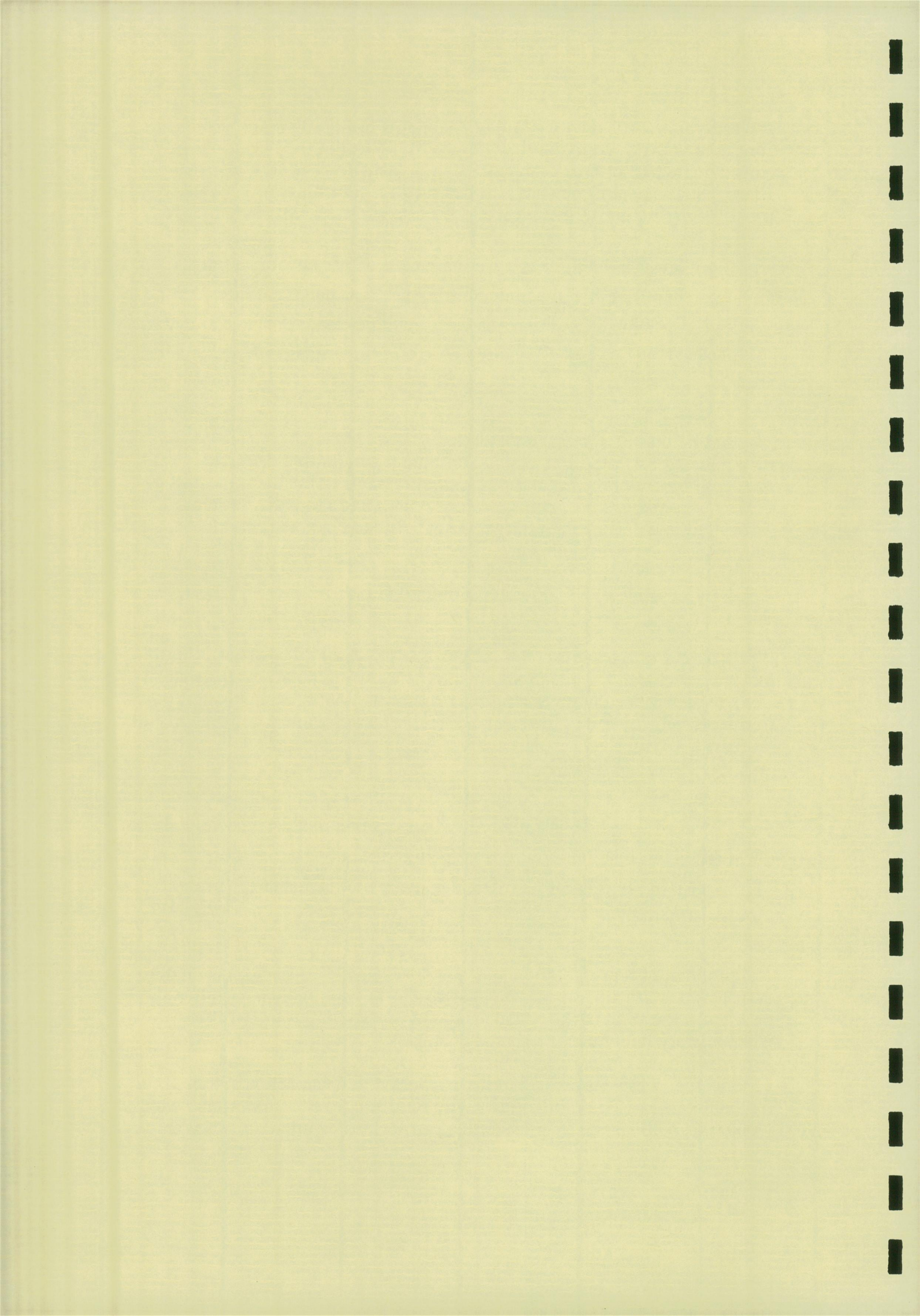
Depending on one's point of view, this process of revision may prove to be a blessing ; if indeed the power accumulated by Europe from the sixteenth century onward and then inherited by the United States did not emanate from a unique genius, perhaps 'the fall of the West' need not be attributed to a decline in Western 'virtue'. Indeed factors other than inherent capacity or intelligence may account for the rise and fall of nations in the world system. Perhaps we need to construct a new storia ( the Italian term is much more honest than its English counterpart) (1, p111)

While the narrative begins about 1450, it is not until the sixteenth century that the process of European domination is shown to be established. Even Marx wavered , originally seeing the origins of Western capitalism in the thirteenth century but later revising his views by insisting on the sixteenth century (1, p115)

In November 1991 there was a conference on Afro-centricity held in London with a view to reconstructing a black history. A history before slavery, before Africa was seen merely in relation to Europe. Having said this - tracing a history is to look at the past in the present which brings the relationships of the present to bear on the situation.

The problem of representation and most particularly of the representation of history : as has already been suggested this is essentially a narrative problem, a question of the adequacy of any storytelling framework in which history might be represented ; (14, p 49 )

If someone presented us with what purported to be an actual account of a football game, based on interviews with only one team's supporters , we would be justifiably be skeptical of the conclusions. And yet this is what



much historical sociological writing does. It is only by following the rules of triangulation that we can escape the tautological process of confirming basic assumptions. Non- Western histories and sources must be included among 'the respondents' if bias is not to re-confirm itself. ( 1, p118)

It is claimed that the nose of the sphinx was destroyed because it signified the Negro nose. A ubiquitous body based symbol was destroyed and replaced by signs. The significance of theory and carbon dating ruled over the instantaneous indicator of the 'other'.

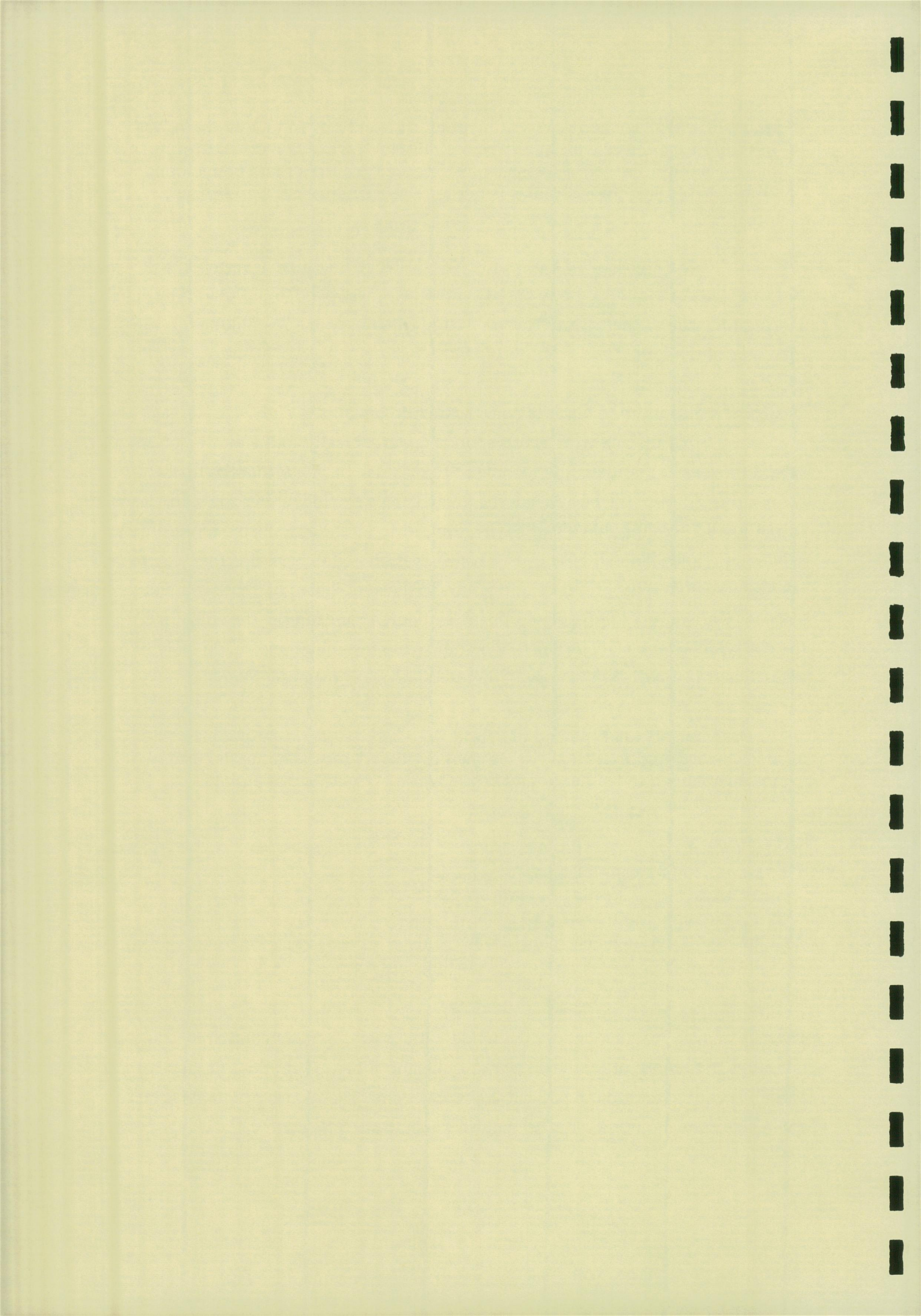
Malcolm X also rewrote black history - much to his own design. He claimed with reason that the site which corresponds geographically to the garden of Eden would have been populated by 'people of color' . He decided that the further away from paradise the body went the greater the sin - the whiter the skin. Jesus Christ would certainly have had a dark complexion but he is always represented as having white skin and blue eyes. Appropriation is the most effective way to take power from what could be dangerous in the symbolism of another belief system. Christianity appropriated pagan symbols. For example the wells in Ireland which were a site of Pagan worships were reclaimed and made 'holy' wells. Their pre-christian history obliterated and their meaning altered.

In December 1943 at the end of World War 2 thirteen ancient papyrus books were dug from cliffs edging the Egyptian desert. Among the fifty two texts contained in leather bound books was a poem called *Thunder, Perfect Mind* ( 5, p 48)

For I am the first and the last  
I am the honoured and the scorned one  
I am the whore and the holy one  
I am the wife and the virgin  
I am the barren one and many are her sons .....  
I am the silence that is incomprehensible  
I am the utterance of my name

(ibid )

These texts were condemned by the white fathers of the church and are as 'old if not older than those of Mathew, Mark , Luke and John'. 'I am the utterance of my name' is equivalent to the biblical 'I am that I am'. The names of female saints have also been slightly altered so that they would become male.



If material production itself is not conceived in its specifically historical form, it is impossible to understand what is specific in the spiritual production corresponding to it and the reciprocal influence of one on the other. Otherwise one cannot get beyond the inanities. (25 , p 77 )

For instance we hear of Christian missionary involvement in China between 1870 and 1900.

These groups reflected the profit seeking as well as the soul seeking of the late nineteenth century. Some missionaries invested in foreign lands and minerals ; others preached morality and profit at once by asking that saved souls wear North Carolina textiles. (18 , p 205)

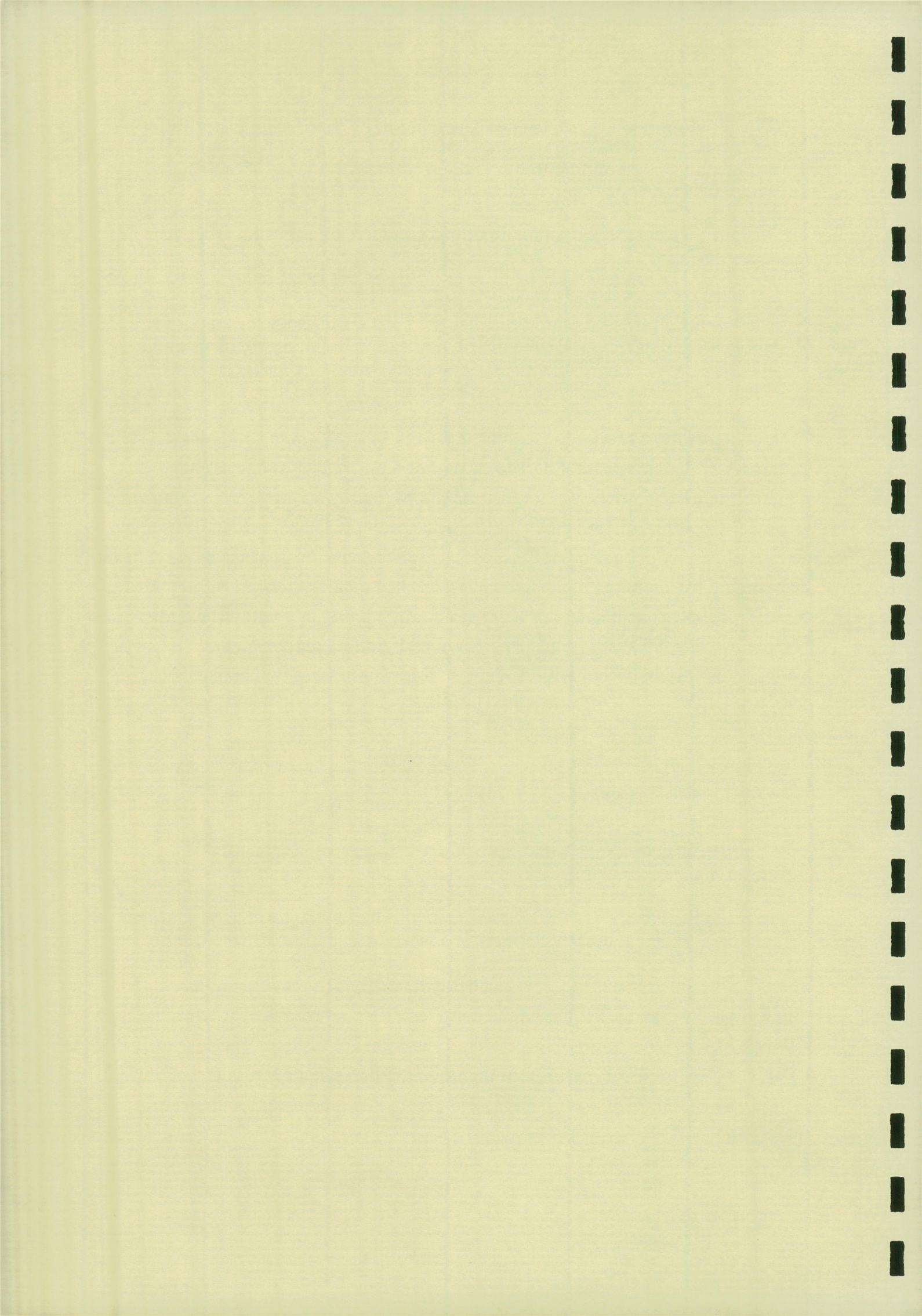
Colloquial reality “ cannot help but be influenced by the grand syntheses produced by the globalists.” (32., p18 ) We consume local accounts of global events without a handbook of implicit prejudice. Histories are written by those in power who deform, reform or form the history of the subaltern. History may, like art apparently, be dead but histories endure as narratives which make choices according to ready made rules . We have broached a period when every ethnic group or people conciliated by a belief structure or preference will write and rewrite its personal shard of history. There will undoubtedly be many visions at variance. A disconnected arrangement of micro narratives will at least temporally replace the meta-narrative.

The colonised “may speak or write in a dominant language even as he or she tries to recover a native original” ( 30, p 15)

Nativism, alas, reinforces the distinction by reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner ( ibid)

To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like negritude Irishness , Islam and Catholicism is in a word to abandon history (ibid)

History is not merely a given, it is a construction. The stereotypes, myths and animosities encouraged by imperialism are fertilised in “what T.S. Eliot called the cunning history [and contrived] corridors” ( 30 ,p20) of history. The colonialisation of history writes out the unwhite, the unmale but does not allow for the excavation of the path it has sealed because its tongue and tools are that which control it.

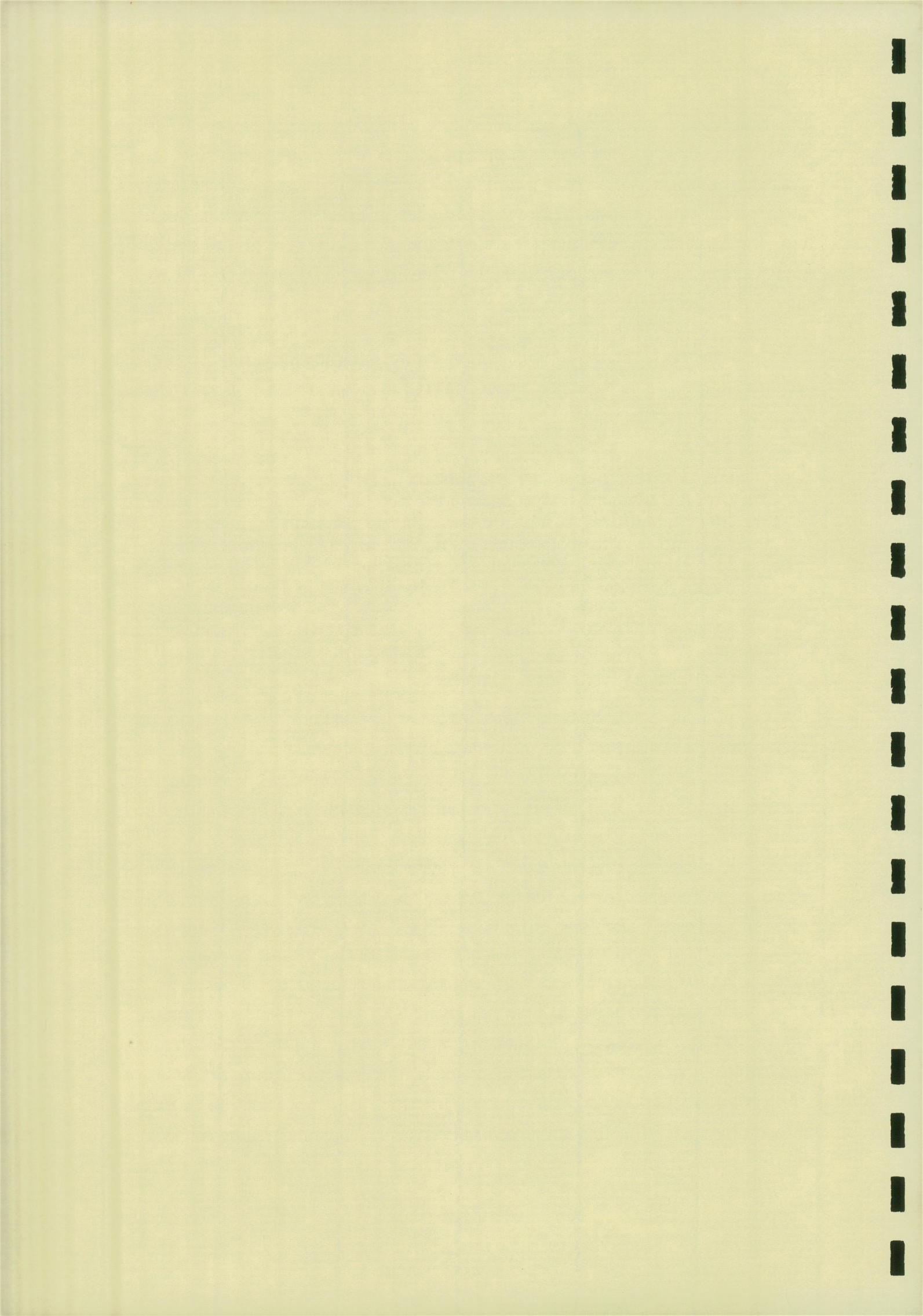


The construction of a history and conceptual framework is made by the layering of material and negotiating within the boundaries of certain 'givens'. The presence of any fact or piece of information denotes the absence of other fact and other piece of information. However every idea to a certain degree exposes its bias and its necessity and in a sense this is the important piece of information. Our ways of thinking and our skills limit the amount of information that we have access to.

To construct histories we are dependent on "raw materials harvested by archivists and the semi-processed goods prepared by regionally and temporally specialised glossers." (1 ,p118)

If history is written by the victor it must almost by definition 'deform' the history of the others (to adopt the term used by J. C .van Leum to describe this defect in Southeast Asian studies). Scholars work best in their own language and are able to access works in cognate languages more easily than in 'foreign' tongues. Available in translation are accidental arrays of documents that *some-one* thought worthy of dissemination. Furthermore in seeking explanations from the plethora of data about the past we naturally select out 'relevant' facts - their relevance having been determined by our working hypotheses drawn from our partial an global glosses. These are dangerous methods. ( ibid)

Even when language is shared it does not mean that its vocabulary is shared from region to region for instance the difference between 'standard' English and 'non-standard and Negro English'. The English that is used in Ireland is often a direct translation from the Gaelic. This version of the language does not occupy the same linear sentence structure for instance "Now look what you're after making me do". It is possible that this denotes a way of thinking. Standardising sentence structure and the structure of the text not only affects that which is thought and said but also patterns or ways of thinking. The subtle content of a piece can also changed radically through translation and cannot be challenged or even understood by those who for one reason or another do not have access to bilingual or poly-lingual skills. Non-English 'histories' are often re-written in signs which do not correspond to the original. As letters are replaced different facts are prioritised. This can be true of someone's personal history or the history of a nation. As letter replaces letter the translator's meaning structure overrides the original text . This text is then presented for the consumer as the original





intervened only by the neutral hand of the translators.

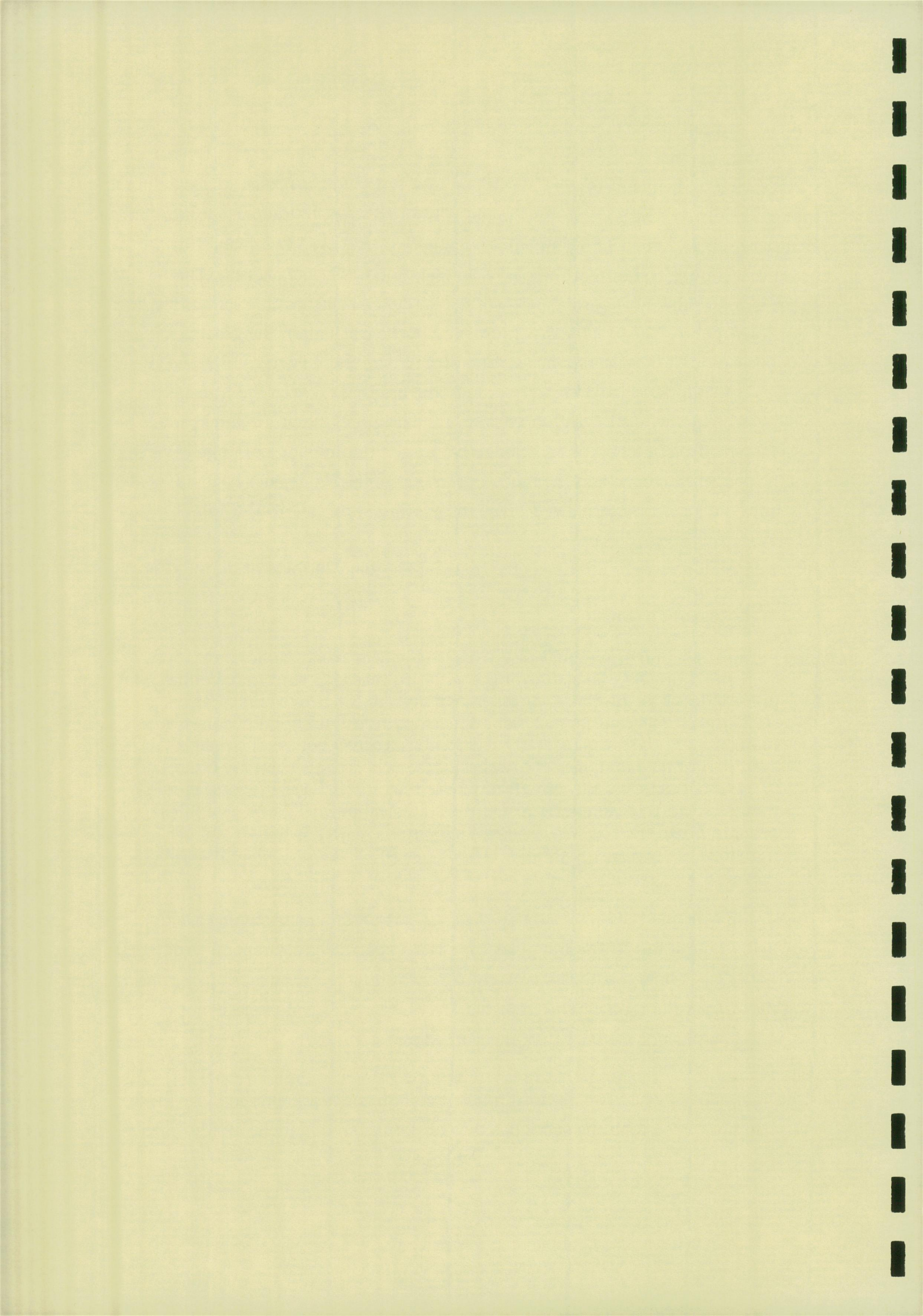
One's sense of self is radically changed by translation for instance in Gaelic there is no word for 'I' there is 'only 'me', 'to me', 'from me' etc. In the present tense the sense of self and the action cannot be separated as they are in English. It is not said that 'I hunger' but that there is 'a hunger on me'. 'Ta ocras orm'. The translation of the most basic particle of the language is impossible - it simply does not correspond. The greater the complexity of the translation the greater the magnification of the discrepancies. The difficulty is there even if the translator has a respect for and is trying to be true to the original. When the translator believes he or she has the right to colonise the original, the original text could be butchered. This butchery is sanctioned because the dominant language is viewed as the proper language and the mode of thought it propagates has been advocated by imperialism and internalised through repetition and 'naturalisation'.

Even in regions where English is the 'natural language' a form of domination occurs.

in the allocation of national resources to the arts, or of the honours to their practitioners, the claims of the 'elite' culture will tend to have the precedence over the claims of the 'mass' culture. To take a somewhat similar example, the characteristic speech patterns and linguistic usages of the dominant class are generally regarded as 'correct', or what counts as the grammar of the language; the usages of the subordinate class are often said to be 'incorrect' or ungrammatical where they differ from the former, even though such usages may represent the statistical norm. These examples serve to illustrate that what is essentially an *evaluative* matter can be transformed into an apparently *factual* one by virtue of the legitimating power of the dominant class. ( 25, p 83)

Exclusion is formed often by subtleties. There are certain codes which are not explicitly taught but learnt and perpetrated in a specific environment. An extreme case is how to address an arch-bishop or how to eat an artichoke. This is another form of language which immediately exposes anyone who is not included because of the quality of their breeding.

The subtleties of exclusion are insidious. If certain codes are emulated by those who do not understand the subtleties they are considered 'gauche' by those who



know.

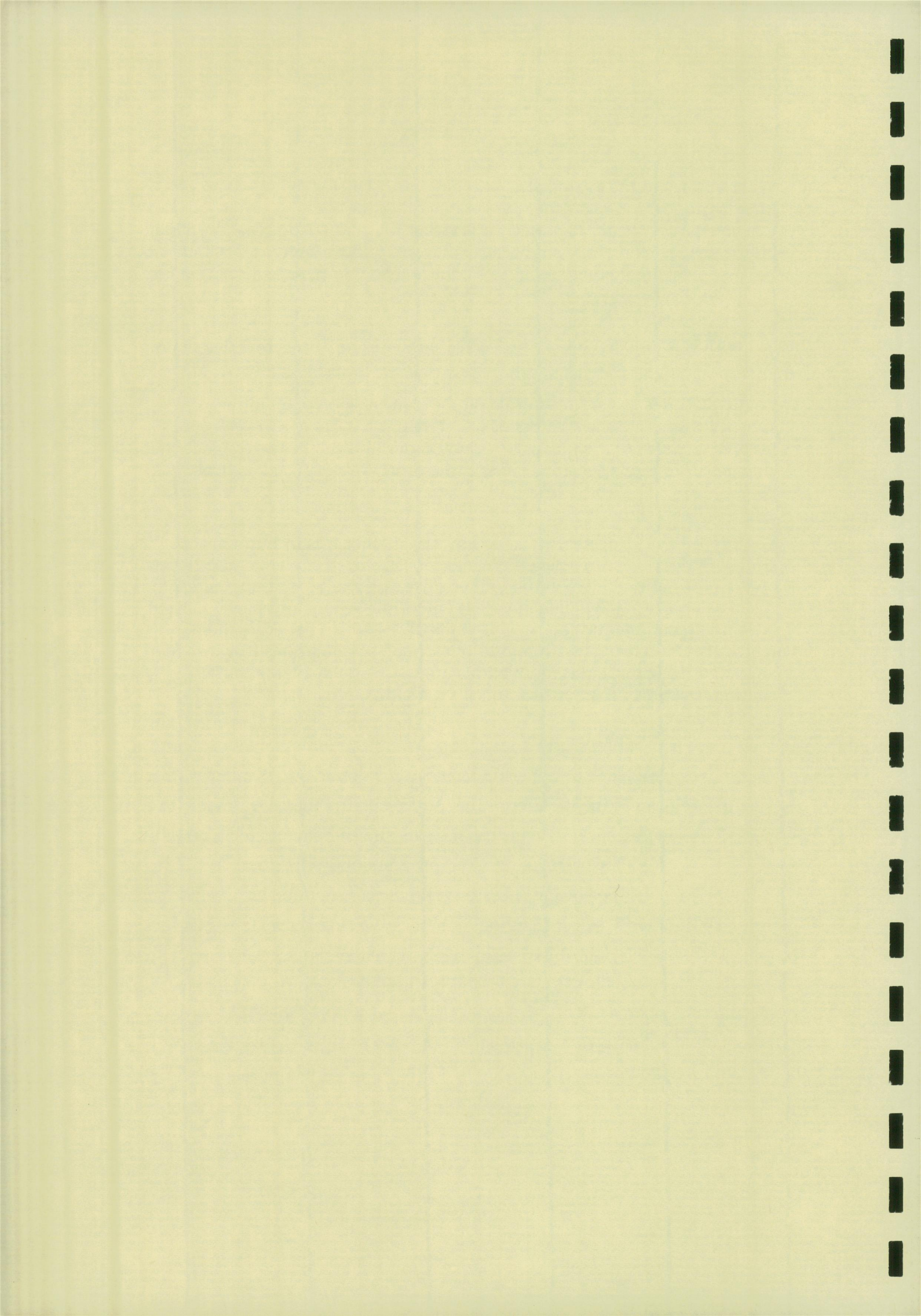
What applies to the evaluations of the reward structure ; thus to accept Marx's proposition regarding the genesis of 'ruling ideas' is not to subscribe to a conspiracy theory of society; it is rather to acknowledge that moral and political rules hold sway not because they are self evidently right but because they are made to seem so by those who wield institutional power. (25, p 84)

Indeed with certain language codes such are the discrepancies that one dialect cannot be understood by the another group.

linguistic codes are basic controls on the transmission of a culture or subculture and are the creators of social identity. Changes in such codes involve changes in the means by which order and relevance are generated, changes in role relationships , and in the procedure of social control. ( 38, p50)

The problem of educatability at one level, whether it is in Europe, the United States , or newly developing societies , can be understood in terms of a confrontation between the universalistic orders of meaning and the social relationships which generate them, of the school and particularistic orders of meaning and the social relationships which generate them which the child brings with him to the school. Orientations towards meta-languages of control and innovations are not made available to these children as part of their critical socialisation. ( 38, p55)

This reference is part of a study on language and property which investigates the cycles of poverty and lack of domestic access to the dominant 'standard' structure of discourse reinforces the identity of the 'other' making the child unable to fully participate in the education structure as it exists and thereby unable to gain the reward society offers for participation and progression in the dominant educational systems. For instance there is still a sizeable number of American Negroes - undoubtedly larger than the number of standard speaking Negroes - whose speech may be radically non-standard. The non-standard feature of speech in such persons may be due to in part to the influence of non-standard dialects of whites with whom they or their ancestors have come into contact, but they also may be due the survival of creolisms form the older Negro field-hand speech of the plantations. To ensure their social mobility in modern American society , these non-standard speakers must undoubtedly be given a command of standard English.



In many ways the plight of a Negro child who enters school speaking non-standard dialect is similar to that of a foreign language speaking child entering an American school. And while it can be argued that no Negro dialect is as different from standard English as is, say, Spanish this does not necessarily mean that the linguistically Negro's task is that much easier. For while the boundaries between a fully fledged foreign language and English are usually clearcut ( the Spanish speaking child for example will usually know at any given point whether Spanish or English is being used so will the teacher) the many similarities between any Negro dialect and standard English make it difficult to tell exactly where one leaves off and the other begins. ( 38,p369)

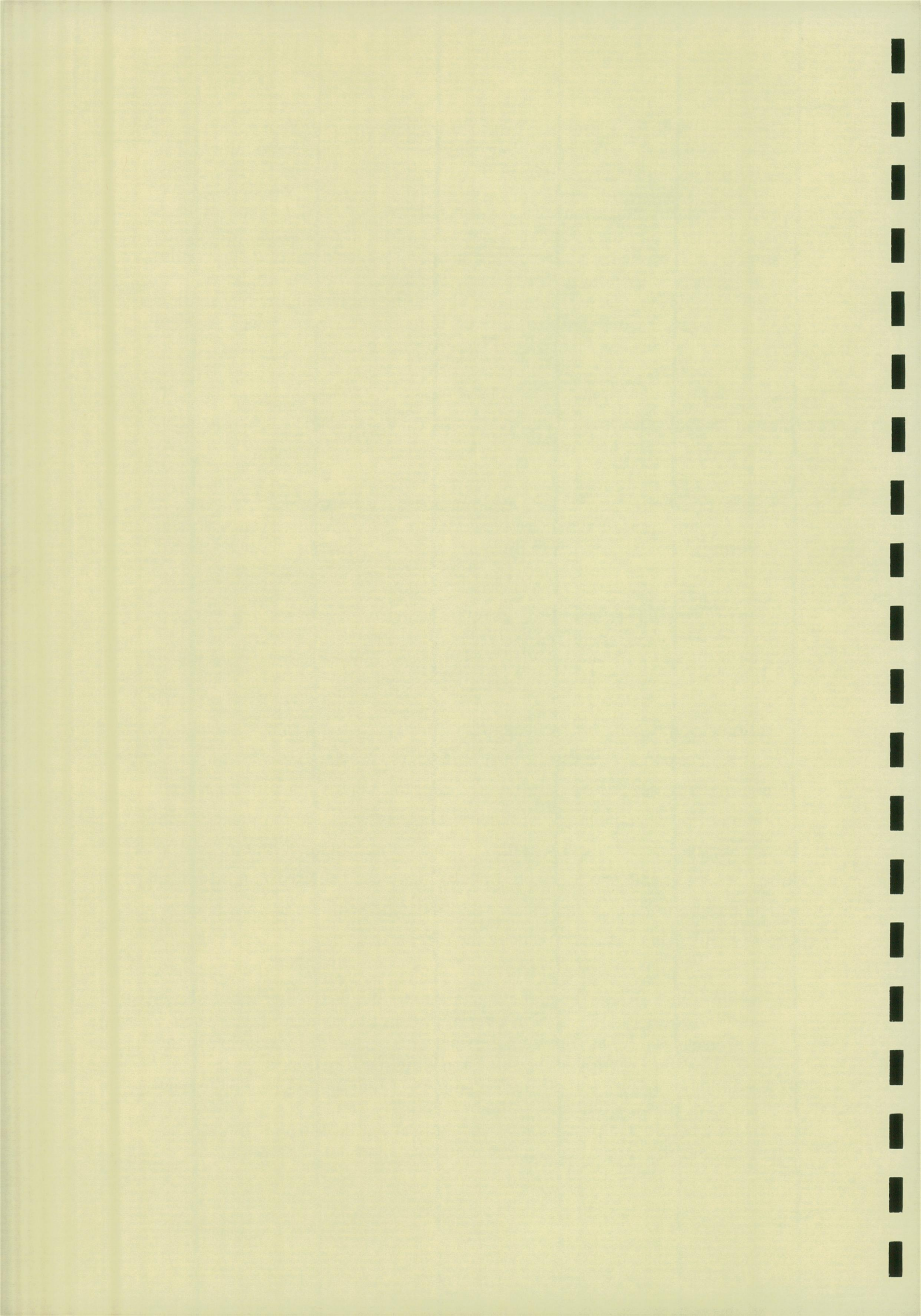
Considering the educational prospects as they stand at present the linguistically different Negro child might well say "I wok down de road an? de road so lone some" ( ibid)

This is a fairly understandable example. To say "we were eating - and drinking too" in Jamaican Creole would be "We ben nyam - an we drink too" in the Creole English in Surinam in South America. "We be de nyang - en' we de dringie, too' (38, p 374)

However there is a 'lack of interest on the part of many English teachers in the Standard English of Negro children' and this is 'in large part, part of the product of a normative view of language which has long been the mainstay of traditional teacher training. (38, p369)

Education systems can often reflect and perpetrate the way things are, for instance the long and expensive college education for lawyers, doctors and other professional degrees ensure that they are kept in the most part for sons and daughters of professionals. Even when grants are available families with low resources often cannot survive without the earning power of the individual while they are at college. Students are also likely to fulfill expectations of them. If societal and parental expectations are that the child will attend college he or she probably will. This is also conversely the case.

The differences in the level of expectation do of course correspond to very real differences in the actual market opportunities open to the two sets of school leavers . It has thus sometimes been suggested that the secondary modern system performs a useful and humane function in psychologically preparing future members of the underclass for the harsh realities of the world awaiting them outside the school gates. However this may be, such a process also has political implications in so far as it encourages the future underclass in the art of accommodating to low



status. The more successful the educational system is in doing this the more difficult becomes the task of radical groups in encouraging the disprivileged to reject their own low status. ( 25 , p 63)

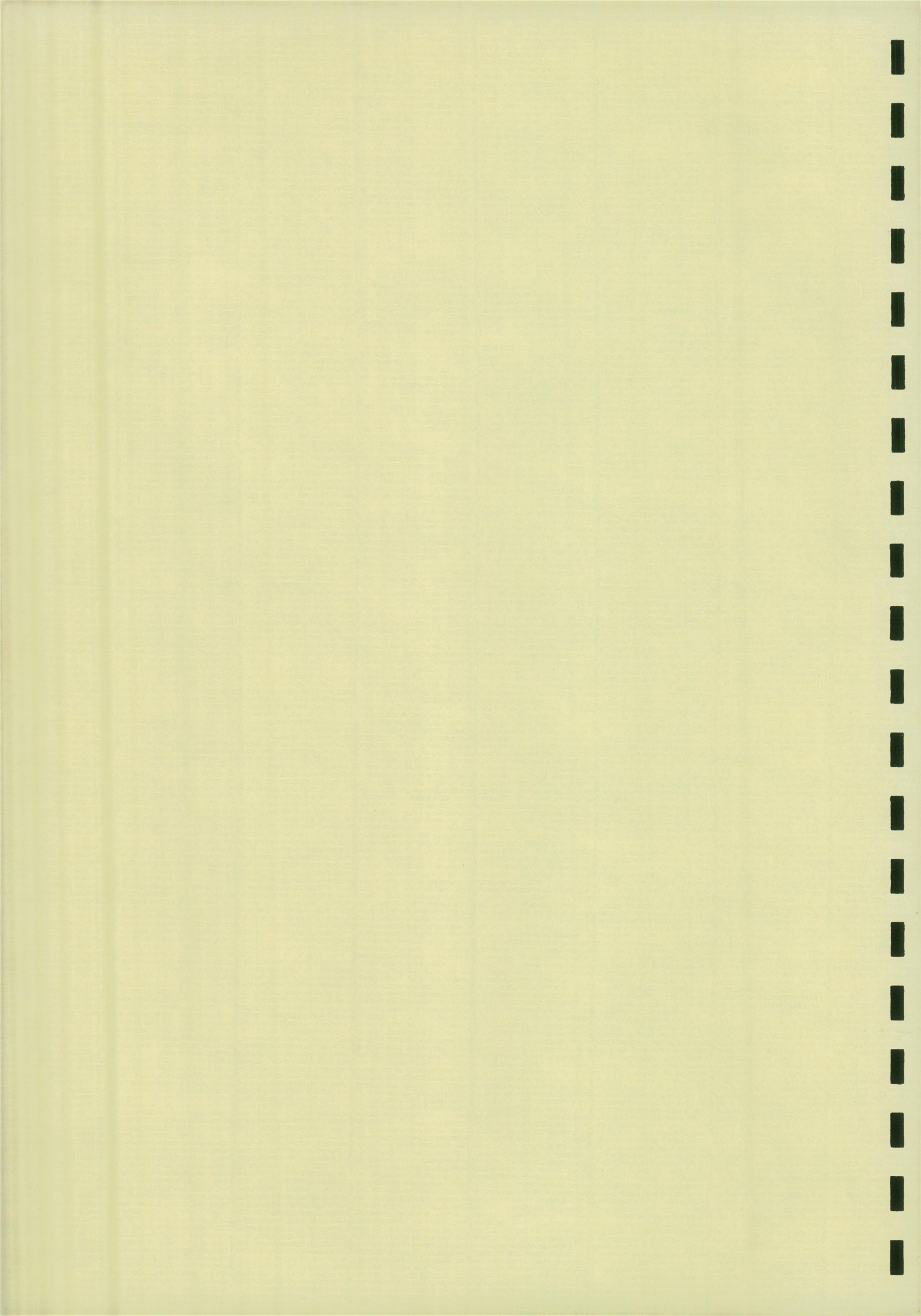
The most educated sector of society therefore is one most likely to subscribe or be reared in a system which subscribes to a dominant discourse. This conceptual framework may be reacted against for various reasons but a certain amount must have been internalised as normative and certain codes must be subscribed to. A thesis such as this for instance while attempting to understand and breakdown dominant ideologies must present itself in standard English therefore reifying that as a neutral and proper structure. All the text sources are in the English language because the author does not have adequate language skills to source alternative texts. The information used is the information available in print. I have also, I hope, paradoxically asserted the right to a valid point of view, based on facts which are backed up by reference.

This thesis is a patchwork of quotes. We constantly quote : every word we use is a quote from a text we heard once. We then patch these words together to form natural sentences. The quotes I have used here are just larger text particles fused together to construct what could be called an original text because it is the only text arranged in this particular way. It is important then to define the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are a part and which is in turn part of them.





synthesis



The other factor which affects the text is the addressee. Identity - substance- cause - goal is the structure of the Indo-European sentence. The subject or the creator of the text is assuming another role, desiring his or her own voice. The writer has been and is presumably currently the addressee of exterior texts.

We produce historical narratives and historical explanations by transforming the socius upon which our production is *written* into more or less continuous bits that are *readable*. How these readings emerge and which ones get sustained have implications at every possible level. (34, p 269)

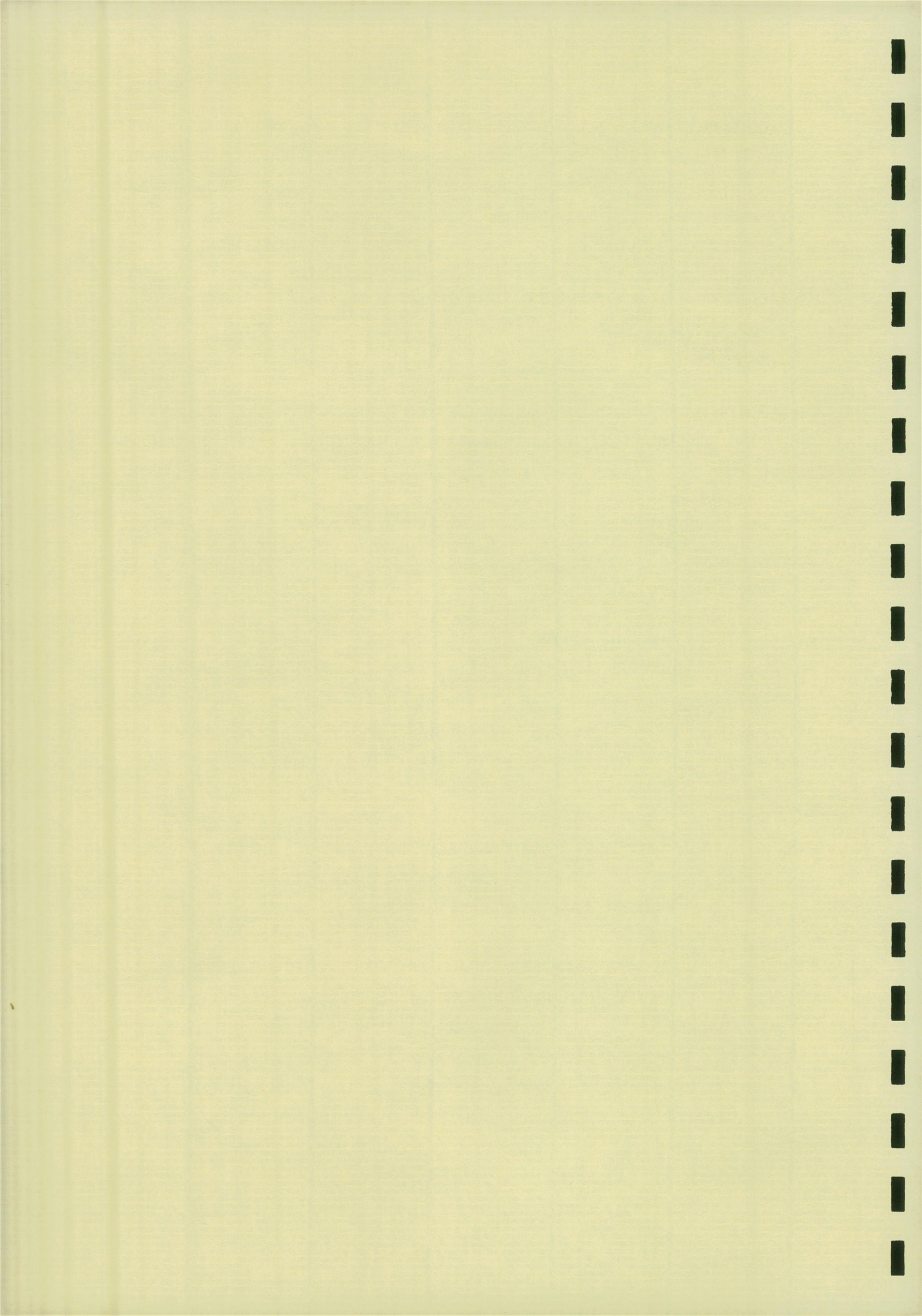
It is important to recognise the subtext, or cause - goal , which is the subject's intention. The subtext of this essay is as much about its exchange value as it is about itself.

The development of material production is in each given period at the same level as that of the intellectual production; Its ideologies are born and die along with the conditions that determine them. [ Kant cited by Battersby : ( 5, p77)]

To construct an academic thesis is to apply for an academic reward. It is also to produce something which if successful will be fluid enough to enter into the stream of discursive practices. Everything signified within the physical space of this folder is subject to evaluation according to a specified value system and is conscious of that, whether successful or not in addressing the criteria.

The exterior texts must be physically available in a cognate language and approved. The exterior texts will therefore be sharply edited and to an extent accidental. The texts available for perusal will be constrained by venturousness of the subject, here myself, stock available and then selected.

Linear history appears as an abstraction. The only way a writer can participate in history is by being specific through the process of reading and writing ; that is through the practice of a signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure. While substructures may oppose each other the encompassing structure remains sustained. History and morality are written within the infrastructure of texts which become self perpetuating structures.



our view of history is a very different view. It 's also cumulative but its a view where we can see the way in which narratives compete with each other, which one rises , which one falls, who is silent and the itinerary of the silencing rather than the retrieval. And we can also see that we ourselves our bound to narrate. (30, p 15)

It is important to look carefully rather than cynically. It is not that there is no truth but there are many truths and each truth has a specific situation . Every text contains the author's or explicit meaning , and the conventional or implicit meaning. In any binary relationship there is a primary and a secondary meaning.

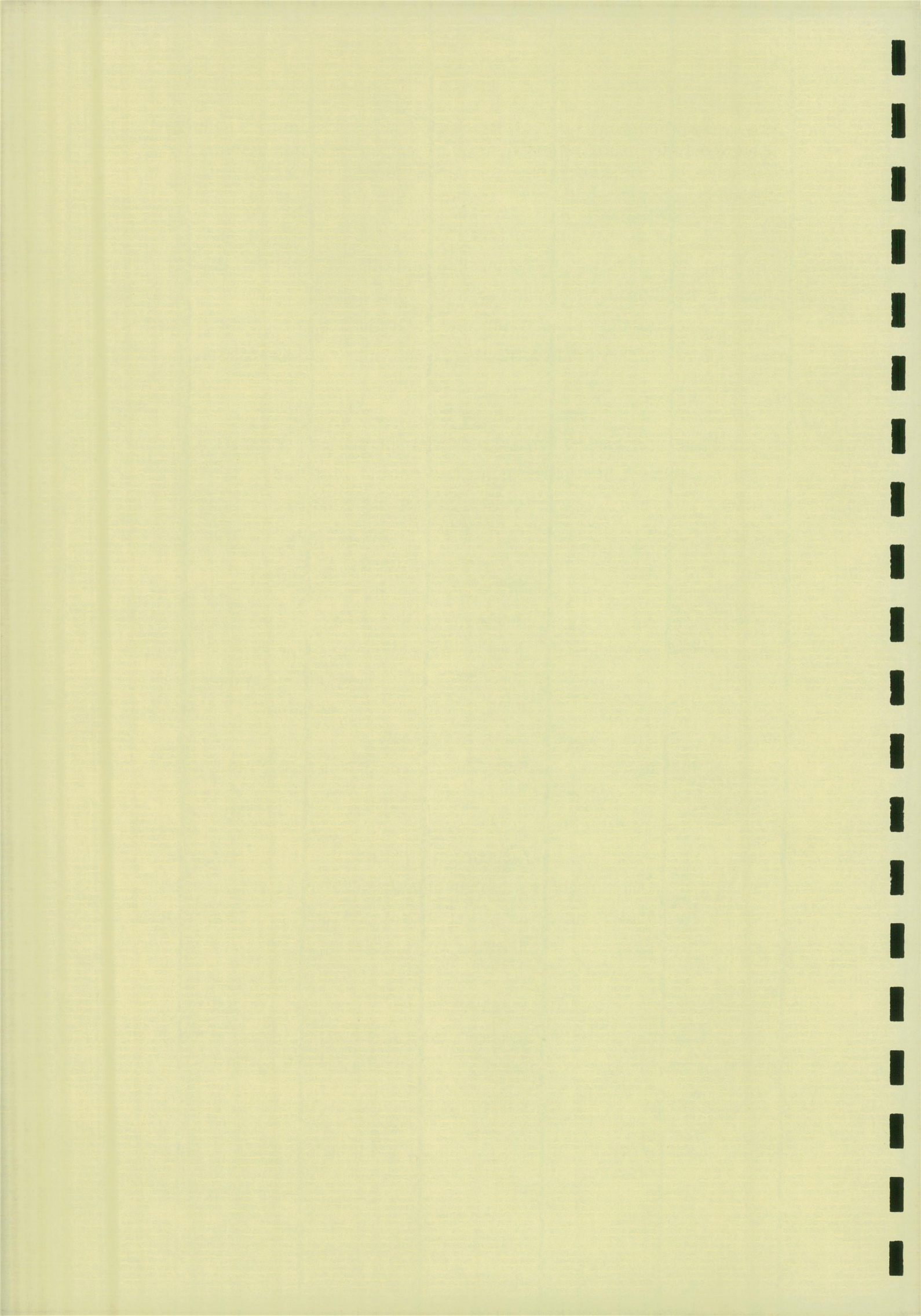
Dualism is inherent in Western culture ; true / false, male /female, literal/metaphysical, clear/unclear. Because the latter is unsaid does not mean that it is ineffable. Women, the second sex are often rendered invisible and then said to be mysterious. We are familiar with the notion of the mysterious foreigner. Ineffable because their existence is not communicated clearly. We cannot do without opposition to construct argument.

The rewriting of the history of the 'other' challenges consensual history. A compounded set of facts is no longer relevant from our vantage point. Notions of receptive histories have been deconstructed. It is not the document which is important but the activity. The content of this thesis is a patchwork of small signs and symbols. Discursive practices are inconclusive and often more about themselves than about their content. That is true of this article though more self-consciously.

This texts unity lies not in its genesis but in its orientation, the necessity of a document such as the thesis is its implicit agenda. This thesis is written in competition for an academic qualification. Its function as a form of currency proceeds its explicit agenda which is its subject matter.

We are obliged to produce truth verbally maybe we can find a new way of reading where old values are not erased but re-recognised taking into account the technique of production. We must recognise the limit of the narrative. We speak this language and it speaks us.

To an extent all that I'm suggesting is that one turn back on history as a



production of various kinds of narrative and that one offer the idea that there will be an objective analysis which will then be an end of the narrativisation ; because one is also caught up within narrating oneself. (30,p 34)

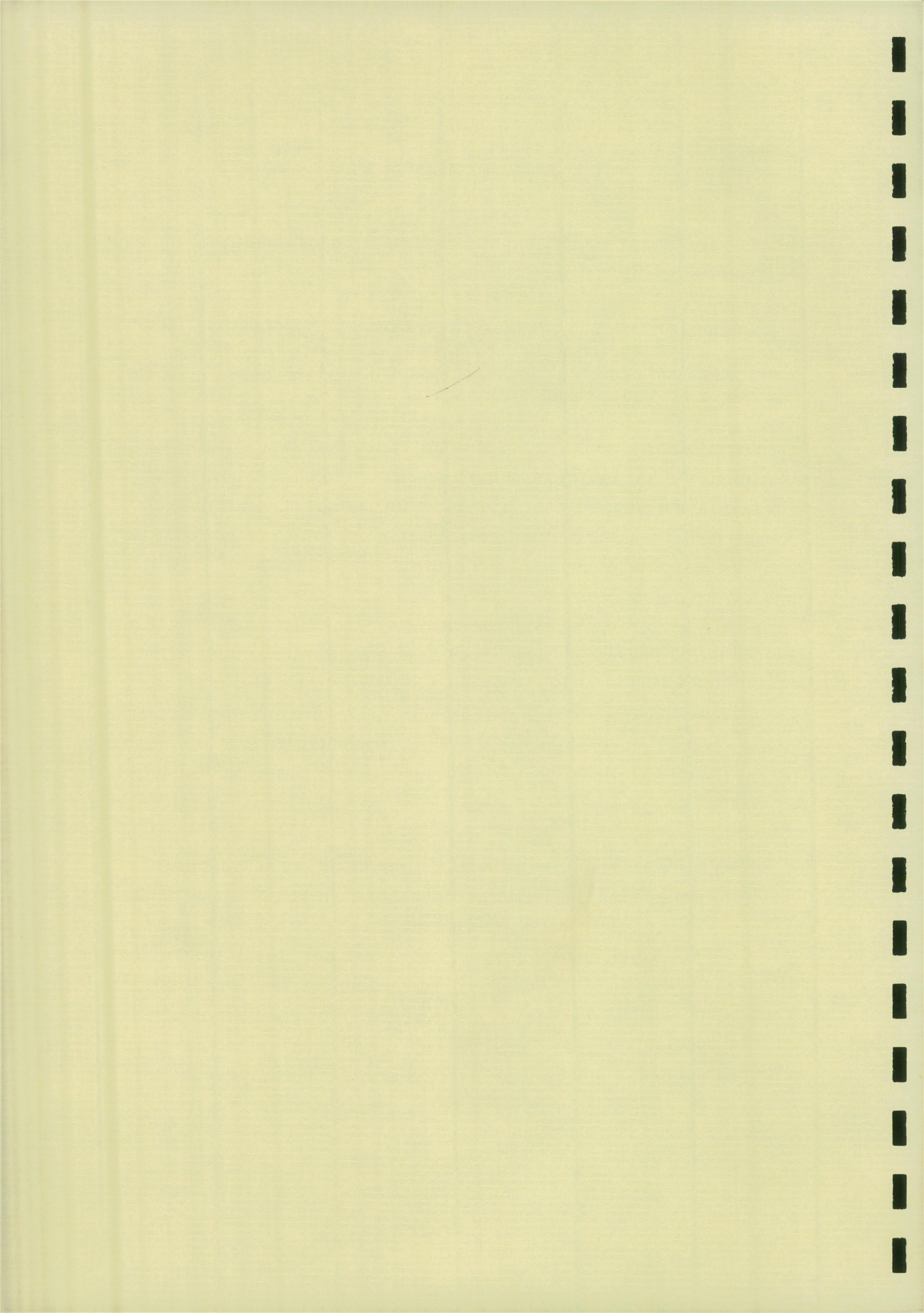
How can we critically examine received opinions when the language of criticism has been co-opted by the powers in place.

Unlearning one's privileged discourse so one can be heard by people who are not within the academy is very different from clamouring for anti-intellectualism - a sort of complete mono-syllibification of one's vocabulary within academic structures. ( 35, p 57)

Oppression is most insidious in its subtleties. Each thread must be teased out and not reinforced by the application of the converse. A critical work must be extremely careful when attempting to undermine the very culture it speaks through because by using its language it can bolster it. Instead of promoting truth we should look at how truth is made.

When trying to construct alternative histories there is a danger that they will be assimilated into mainstream history as a peripheral and compensatory gesture. These histories would then be marginalised and the previous silence go uncommented upon. The lack of documentation of women in history is as real a fact as a battle and can be covered over by historians simply filling in the gaps as if they had not existed. To look at how gender and race are constructed would be more holistic and valuable.

He will say the he is logical and she illogical. He will say that he is a linear thinker and that she is a lateral thinker. Subject to the whims of her emotion and biology . He will say that his world is external and that he is a projector. He will say that her world is dark and fecund and mysterious. He will explore virgin soil , chart it. He will practise husbandry with the soil, explore silent, dark , fecund nature - regulate and own it. He will make decisions , understand. He will stand over his understanding. He will plunder the earth he feared, and worshiped and replace it with a temple rising like a hard phallus from the dirt beneath it. He will regulate growth and nature. He will destroy it before it destroys him. He will make his mark.





[ written to echo the spirit of Susan Griffin's

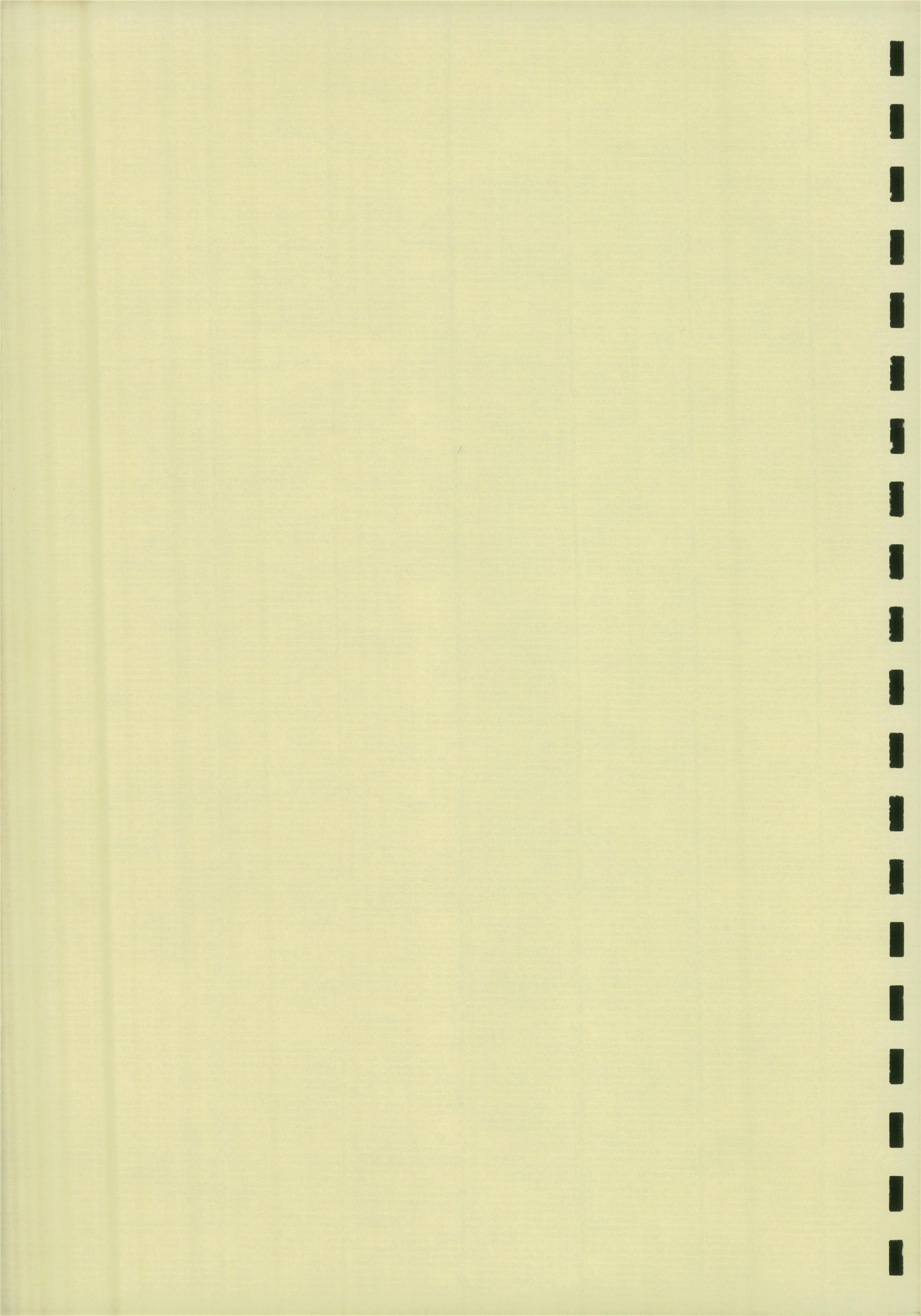
writing ; 12 ]

Written texts are constructed as a mosaic of quotations. Categories are part of the textual tradition. Big texts are broken down into little texts ie. sentences. The text absorbs and becomes the transformation of other texts. This is what Derrida calls the grafting of text unto text. Language uses the mastery of description over the phenomena it proposes to describe. We assume that words have a stable meaning and that we have mastery over language. However it is important to study the text as ideologeme and to recognise it as such.

Linguistic truth exists in conjunction with extra linguistic or nonlinguistic truth and reality. The text of textuality is what Spivak has called a weave. Textuality is not linguistic or verbal. Nature, the body and life are lived not only through their representation but also through their process. When theory freezes the procession, will rules over the willful. The Western subject attempts to master sensation with logic. The narrative exists within a hegemonic ideological construction. The act of constructing an argument is an act of mastery which endorses the violence of selection.

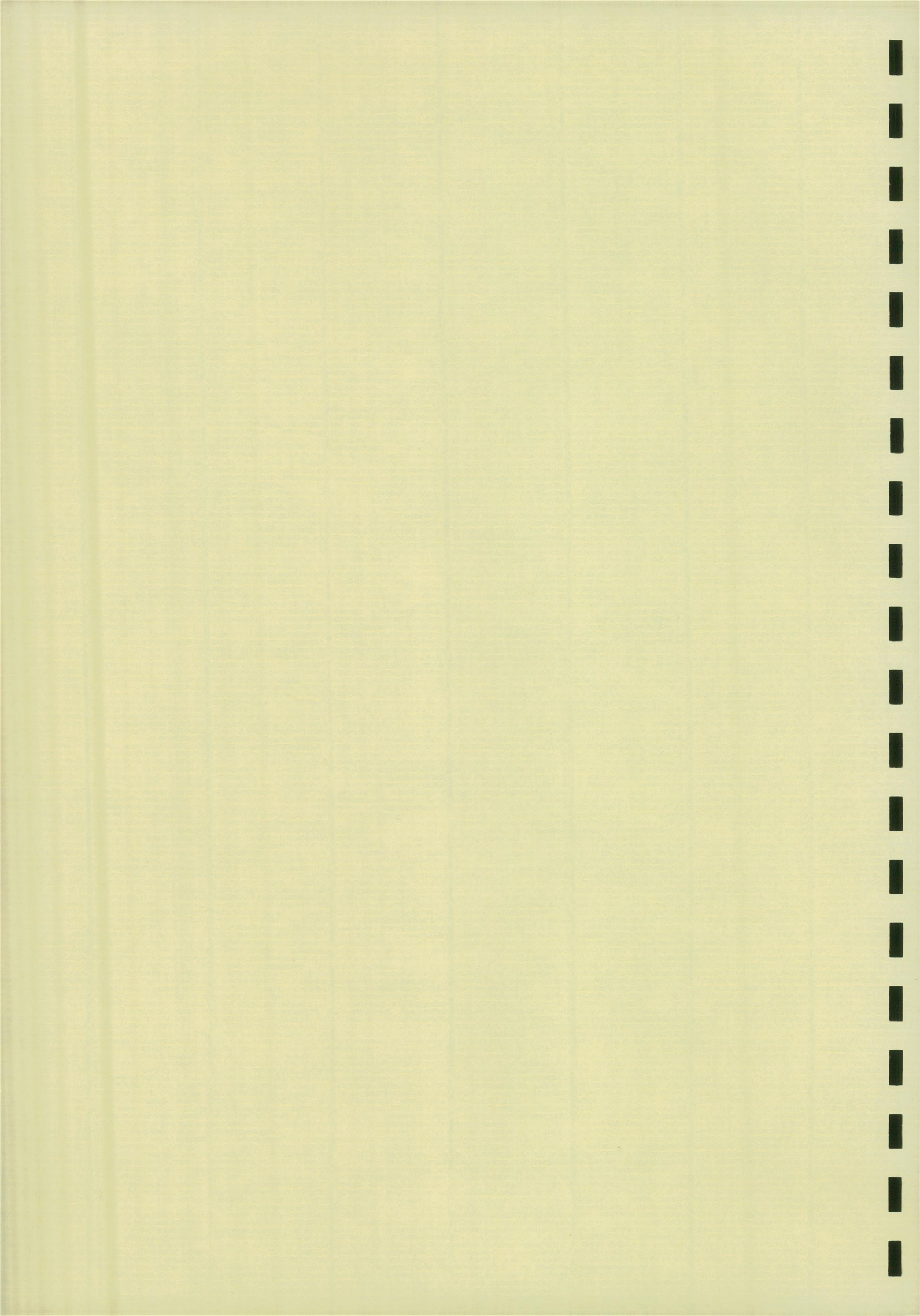
"The notion that we are effects within a much larger/text/tissue weave is much different from saying that everything is language." (30, p 25)

We use symbols to create impressions of ourselves. When the visual, for example visual art is translated into the visual- verbal ,that is writing ; when we use words to theorise about what we experience with our eyes and our skin ; when we use words which are evolutionary, linear and contingent to describe a work which is experiential and static we are using signs to understand symbols. The sign and signifying structures are dualistic, hierarchical and hierarchising. It is not only the sign which is important but the signifying structures which inform social practice.



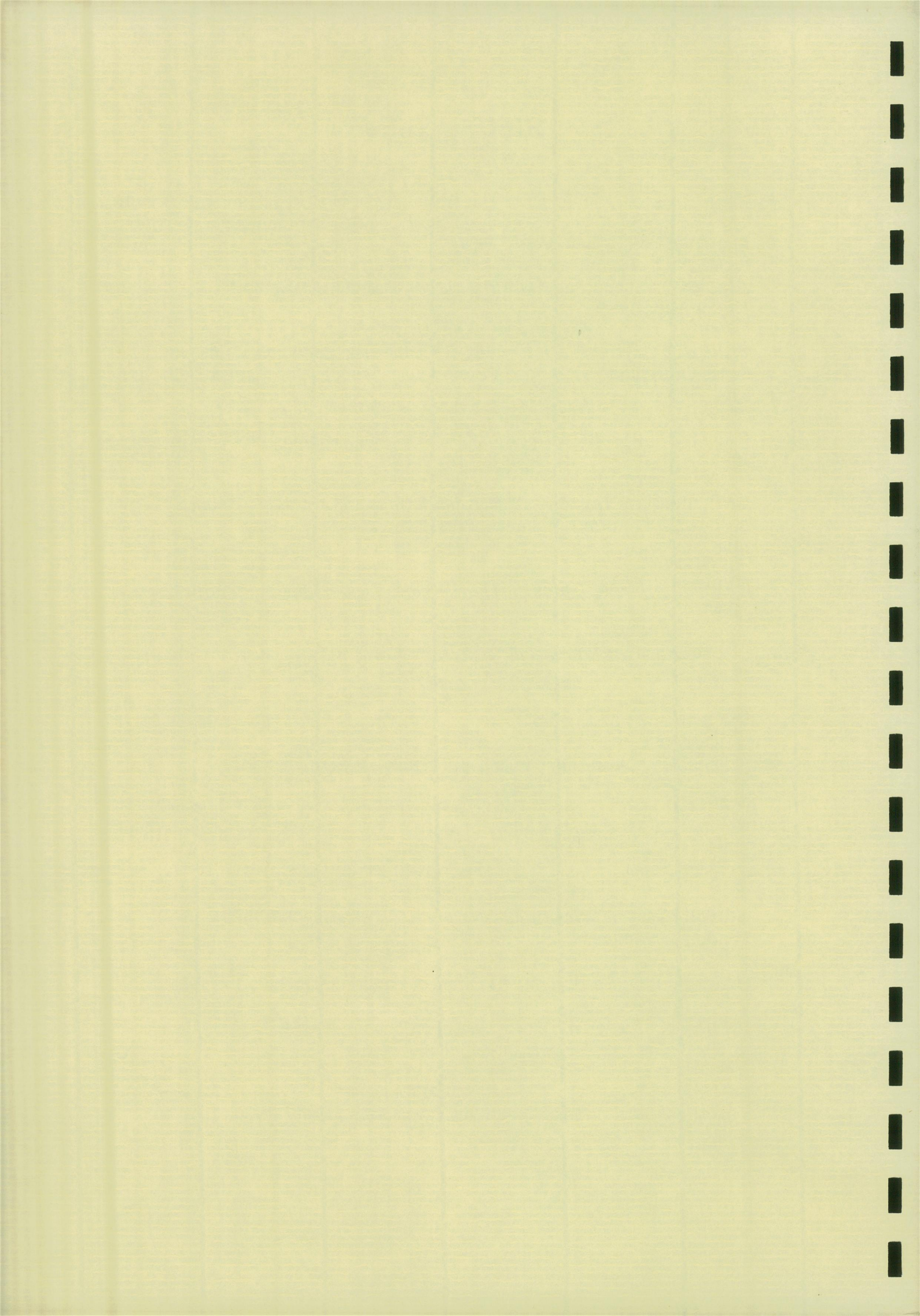
Now that we have seen each other  
said the unicorn.  
If you believe in me.  
I'll believe in you.  
Is that a bargain?

(6, p120)

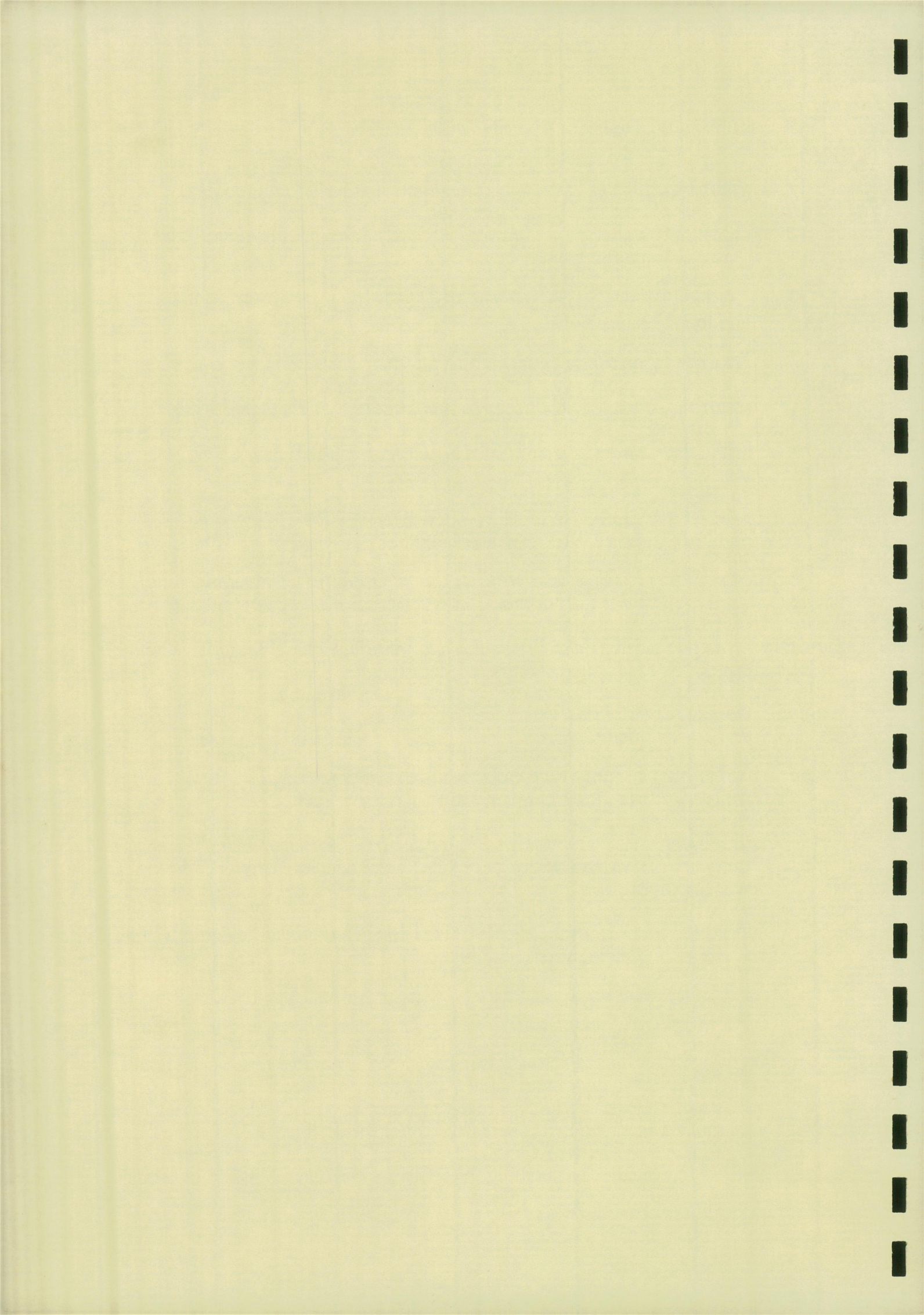


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