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PRE-RAPHAELITE PAINTINGS OF VICTORIAN WOMANHOOD

BY

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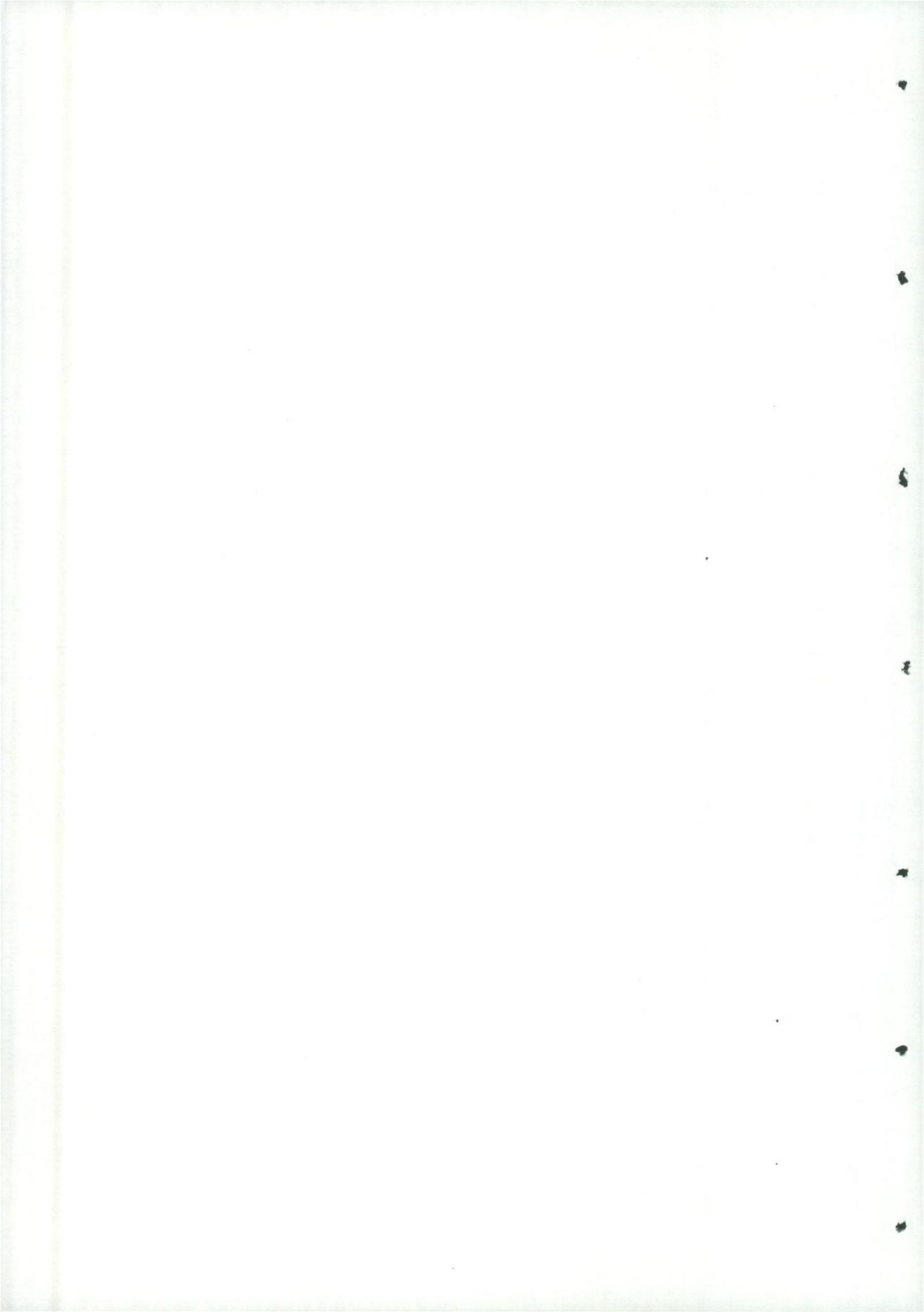
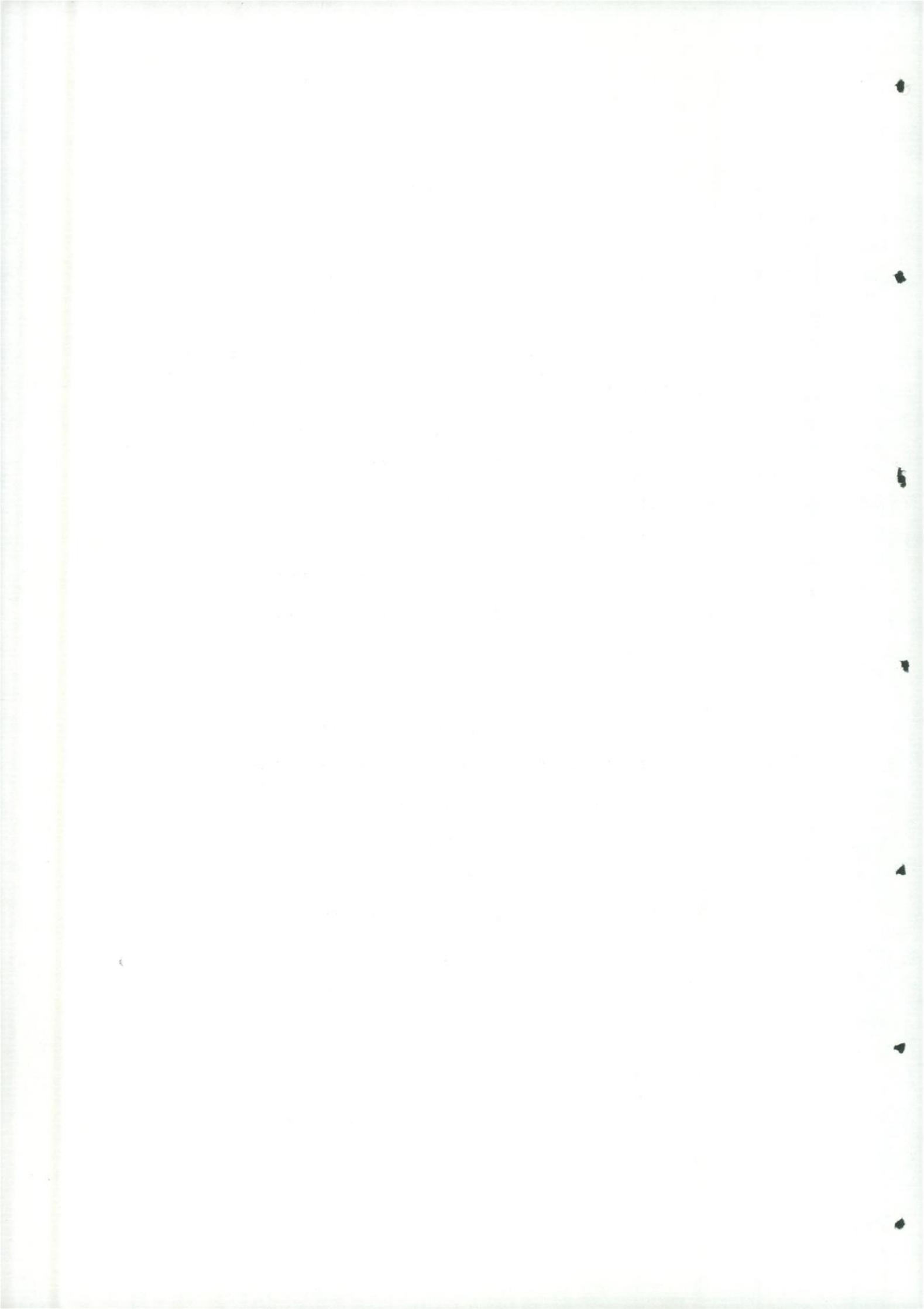


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INTRODUCTION

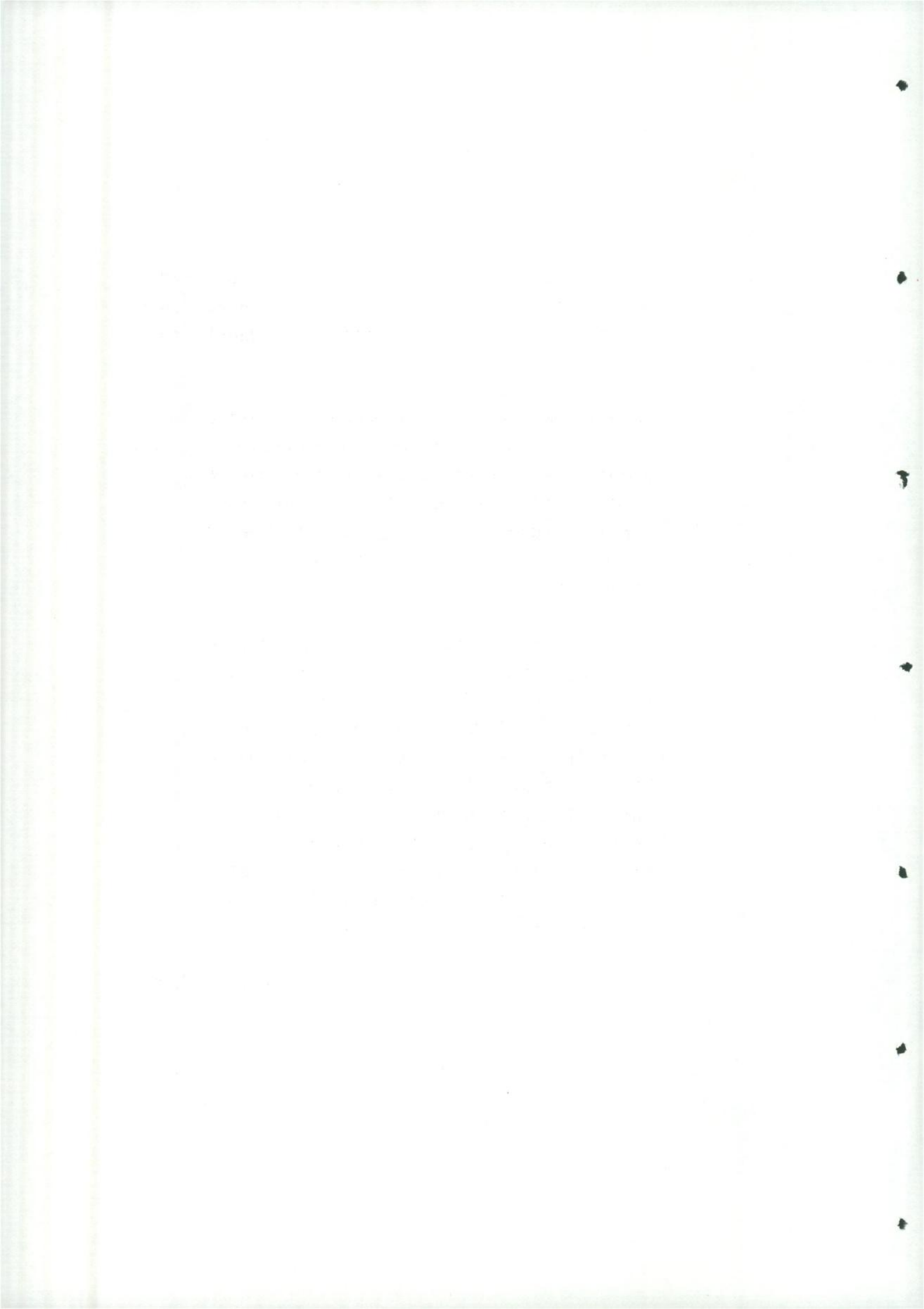
The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848, a year of political unrest in Europe. This brotherhood was established by three young artists who wanted to improve British art. The three founder members were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt. They were later joined by four other members including Rossetti's brother, William Michael Rossetti.

The movement was strongest in its earliest years and floundered after Millais's abandonment of the group in 1853, when he became an associate of the Royal Academy.

During the 1860s Rossetti revitalized Pre-Raphaelite painting as he decided to paint his favourite subject, beautiful women, and this occupied him up until his death in 1882.

In 1857 Rossetti gathered seven friends together for the decoration of the Oxford Union building. Although the group was given no name they were actually a second Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which ignored Hunt and Millais. The new group consisted of William Morris, Edward Burne Jones, Arthur Hughes, Prinsep and John R. Spencer Stanhope. I shall be discussing the work of Hughes in a chapter on courtship (chpt.3) and the work of Spencer Stanhope in a chapter on prostitution.

Although the pre-Raphaelites are better known for their paintings depicting scenes from romantic poetry and literature, they were aware of social issues in Victorian times and illustrated some of these concerns in their work. Pre-Raphaelites such as Hughes illustrated the sadness and frustration associated with long Victorian engagements. Millais tackled many marital issues in his pen and ink drawings of the 1850s. Rossetti and Hunt both dealt with the issue of the wayward and fallen woman.



The Pre-Raphaelites were not the only painters depicting such themes in their work. In the early 1840s Richard Redgrave portrayed the plight of working women such as governesses and seamstresses and also the unmarried mother. The Pre-Raphaelites also influenced older established painters of the time such as Augustus Egg, who was inspired to paint his Past and Present of 1858 after Hunt's Awakening Conscience.

There was not a Pre-Raphaelite movement in Ireland, but there were Irish artists working in a similar vein such as William Mulready, Daniel Maclise and Frederick W. Burton. I have included William Mulready's paintings in chapters on courtship and widowhood as I feel that there are similarities between his work and that of the Pre-Raphaelites.

The paintings of Mulready have been included in my discussions on courtship and widowhood. Mulready was a well established artist when the Pre-Raphaelite movement was founded as he was sixty-two years old while Burton and Maclise were thirty two and forty years of age respectively. I have included Mulready in my discussion for several reasons. As early as 1840 Mulready was painting in thin layers of pure colour over a white background. Mulready's use of brilliant colour and attention to detail in his treatment of stones, plants, costumes etc was simulated in Pre-Raphaelite paintings some years later.

John Ruskin, art critic and writer, in his Pre-Raphaelitism of 1851, praises Mulready for his drawing and brilliant colour which ranks him alongside the Pre-Raphaelites. Ruskin seems to have forgotten that Mulready was well established as an artist prior to the formation of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Mulready also taught at the Royal Academy Schools where he encountered Hunt and Millais. Millais based one of his paintings, The Rescue, on a scene Mulready did for The Vicar of Wakefield 1853. Hunt says that they the students were fortunate to have Mulready as a teacher and that he himself listened carefully to any advice Mulready might give him.

Shortly before his death in 1863 when Mulready was seventy seven he praised the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood for their artistic endeavours. While the brotherhood welcomed his praise they felt it was rather belated.

Ruskin felt that Mulready showed potential to be a Pre-Raphaelite but was unsuccessful because of his frivolous subjects and established eighteenth century compositions. This criticism of Mulready is very unfair as Mulready did paint contemporary scenes such as The Widow, which Ruskin thought was unfit for pictorial representation (I shall discuss this painting in chapter 4) and The Convalescent from Waterloo which focuses not on the heroic side of war but instead on the anguish it causes families. Neither paintings were well received by the critics and Mulready found them hard to sell. In his paintings such as The Toyseller and Train Up a Child..... which show a negro toyseller and Indian beggars, you get some idea of public feeling in England towards foreigners.

In my thesis I shall discuss Pre-Raphaelite drawings and paintings of women, I have deliberately chosen to omit the typical Pre-Raphaelite paintings of women such as Rosetti's femme fatales and instead concentrate on their depictions of women in everyday life.

Chapter 1 shall consist of a brief description of prostitution in Victorian England. This is important with

regard to Chapter 2. In Chapter 2 I shall discuss Pre-Raphaelite paintings of the fallen woman. Symbolism is an essential feature of all Pre-Raphaelite art and paintings of the fallen woman are no exception. The repeated use of certain images is to be found in nearly every picture of my discussion which creates an idealised portrayal of the prostitute and her surroundings and her inevitable fate.

In Chapter 3 I shall look at the importance of symbolism in scenes of courtship, a favourite Victorian pastime. It was a favourite subject for painters and writers alike of that period. There were numerous books written on courting etiquette. I shall be examining the importance of symbols in the Pre-Raphaelite paintings on courtship. I shall be looking at long engagements and Victorian attitudes on sexuality.

Chapter 4 is a progression of Chapter 3 as I shall be discussing Pre-Raphaelite paintings of marriage. While many of the Pre-Raphaelites depicted courtship scenes only Millais illustrated marital scenes. His pictures of marriage scenes were controversial as he depicted scenes of loveless marriages and infidelity. I shall conclude this chapter with an examination of Millais's and Mulready's paintings of widowhood and discussing them in relation to Victorian feelings towards widows.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROSTITUTE IN VICTORIAN SOCIETY

The Victorian society and in particular as depicted by the Pre-Raphaelite painters is the focus of my discussion in this thesis. This chapter sets out the background of Victorian morality in how they viewed prostitution.

The prostitute or fallen woman was made an outcast by the Victorian code of purity and piety. However this "great social evil"¹ as it was called was not regarded as a legal offence. The night walker could be disciplined for creating a disruption, but her client was not reprimanded at all. So men were free to do whatever they wished as long as they were discreet. Such behaviour in women though was regarded with moral outrage. According to Mrs. Caroline Norton, an advocate of women's rights, and herself a victim of a broken marriage "the faults of women are visited as sins, the sins of men are not even visited as faults" (Wood, 1976, p135).

Women turned to prostitution primarily due to economic reasons not because they were evil, despite what the Victorian public might have thought. Many female workers were forced into part-time or eventually full time prostitution because they could not support themselves on low wages. These women generally hung around in parks.

By 1850 there were at least 50,000 prostitutes known to the police in England and Scotland, and 8,000 of them were living in London. Numerous books were written on the subject by doctors, social workers, poets and novelists who highlighted the issue of prostitution. Among the list of books written was one by William Tait "Magdalenism" which informed the public about the hazard of prostitution.

Footnote ¹Marsh, 1987, p77

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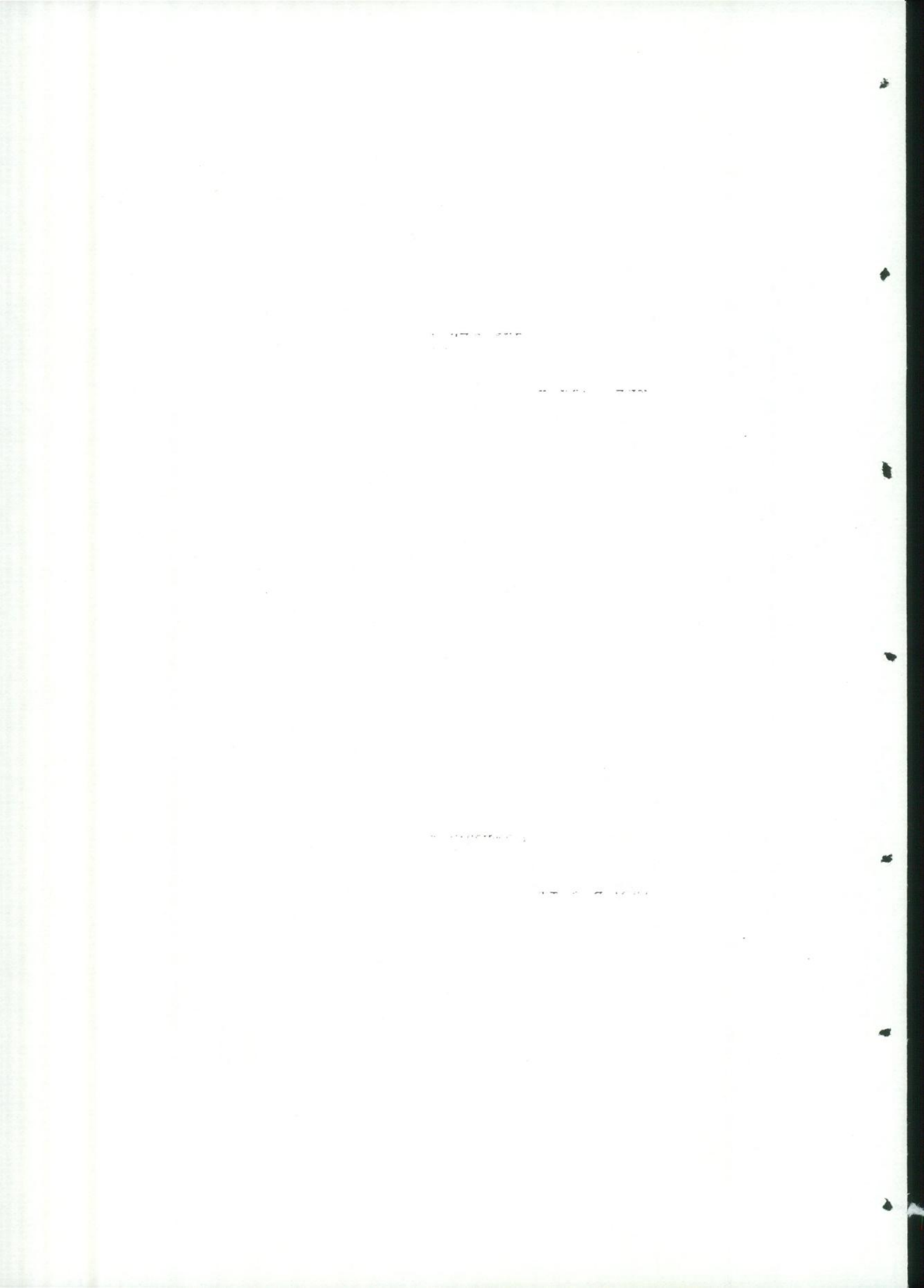
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A favourite Victorian diversion was the rehabilitation of the prostitute. Charles Dickens, the writer, established a home for them which was called Urania Cottage. The politician Gladstone (known as old Glad-eye by the girls) embarrassed many of his political colleagues by his customary nocturnal excursions in pursuit of penitent prostitutes. Such a pastime commendable though it may have been was a little idealistic as we find out in a book by H.G. Jebb's "Out of the Depths" published in 1859 which was the story of a reformed prostitute's own life. In the book she describes the hardship of acquiring reputable work. Even when she was successful, she was frequently dismissed when her past occupation was discovered. Therefore it was not surprising that many prostitutes had no wish to reform, as prostitution was a lot easier than working as a domestic servant or seamstress for a low wage. Some prostitutes did very well for themselves such as successful courtesans like Catherine Walters the famous "Skittles" who lived a long unrepentant life in her own house in respectable Mayfair. However women like Catherine Walters would not have been in the majority.

Gradually Victorians realised that prostitution was as much the responsibility of men as it was of women. Rossetti realised that for every fallen woman there was a fallen man as his poem "Jenny" reiterates "A cipher of man's changeless sum, of lust, past, present and to come" (Faxon, 1989, p44). According to the "Westminster Review" in 1850 English society should feel pity "for the prostitute who on her nocturnal rambles drives herself nearly mad with regret towards her entry into prostitution and her present degradation. The career of the prostitute is shortlived and inevitably doomed" (Nead, 1984, p31). This article reflected some concern for the prostitute and their plight and similar subject matter was the basis of a poem by Thomas Hood in 1844 which I shall discuss in Chapter 2. The mythology of the prostitute as a wretched victim whose future was doomed was consistently used in a variety of



publications on prostitution from medical to parliamentary reports, novels, poems and paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites.

CHAPTER 2

The Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting

The theme of the fallen woman was to prove very popular with artists and writers during the nineteenth century. The Pre-Raphaelites were not the first Victorian artists to paint scenes with fallen women as Richard Redgrave had painted the Outcast in 1851 showing a father ordering his unmarried daughter from his home. Holman Hunt however was the first artist to deal with the thorny issue of the kept woman in his painting The Awakening Conscience 1853-1854. D.G. Rossetti's painting of a prostitute Found was to occupy him for twenty eight years of his life.

It was not only male members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle who tackled the issue of the fallen woman. Female followers of the group such as Joanna Boyce, Anna Howitt and Anna Blunden painted such subjects also. Howitt seemingly gave up painting altogether after she received an unfavourable review from John Ruskin of her painting of the fallen woman in the Castaway.

The Pre-Raphaelite painters were not revolutionary in their depiction of the prostitute as they used well known symbols in their paintings to create an idealized prostitute that was instantly recognizable to the public.

It is interesting to examine the reasons the Pre-Raphaelites had for adopting the theme of the fallen woman. I feel it could refer back to their interest in medieval art and literature. Annie Miller, a prostitute, was Hunt's model in the painting The Awakening Conscience. I feel that Hunt regarded himself as being Annie's knight in shining armour as he wished to rescue her from a life of drudgery. He arranged for her to be educated in aspects of grooming, etiquette and learning with the intention of making her his wife. However Annie disappointed Hunt with her liaisons with other men and he gave up the idea of marrying her.

1947

1948

In this chapter I shall be looking at a selection of paintings by the Pre-Raphaelites depicting the fallen woman. These are as follows: The Awakening Conscience, Found, The Gate of Memory, Thoughts of the Past, I am Starving, and Virtue and Vice.

I shall discuss the importance which recurrent images play in idealising the prostitute. These images took on a symbolomatic form in the iconography of the painting and are common to a number of paintings which depict the prostitute. The images or symbols I shall discuss include such forms as bridges, rivers, walls, flower and animal imagery, references to the countryside, time of day, clothing and the interior.

Images of bridges and rivers have taken on emblematic meanings when they appear in three out of the six depictions of fallen women. The bridge is absent from The Awakening Conscience, The Gate of Memory and Virtue and Vice. Thomas Hood's poem "The Bridge of Sighs" which appeared in 1844 had an import role to play in the notoriety of the bridge and river. Hood was inspired to write the poem after the attempted suicide of a seamstress into a river. This poem was illustrated by many artists of the time including Millais. The image of the prostitute taking her life by drowning was an important component in visual representations of the fallen woman and reflected a number of discussions in newspapers and articles. In Millais's Virtue and Vice 1853 (Fig.1) he depicts the plight of the underpaid hard working seamstress, whether or not to become a prostitute or die in her garret. The objects in the room play great importance such as the poster on the wall with the words "distressed needlewoman". The seamstress in the painting is faced with two options, to turn to prostitution as the gaudy vision on the table recommends or keep her virtue and perish away in her garret.



Fig. 1. J.E. Millais Virtue & Vice 1853



In Millais's illustration to Thomas Hood's poem The Bridge of Sighs (Fig.2), he chose to depict the fallen woman before committing suicide. The prostitute stands beside the waters edge, her shawl pulled tightly around her for warmth. The woman looks quite respectable, she is not shabbily dressed and her hair is arranged in a tidy bun. This is a romanticised portrayal of the prostitute as she stands proudly surveying the river. She has a wide eyed expression and according to mythology about the fallen woman she could be recalling happier memories from her life. The bridge is illuminated by a few lights and St. Pauls is barely visible behind it through the fog and darkness. Darkness features in most paintings portraying prostitution as it suggests corruption and evil. Only The Awakening Conscience, Thoughts of the Past and Found are depicted during daytime.

In the unfinished oil painting Found (fig.3) the drover belongs to the world of daytime and brightness and also good honest hard work. He probably had to rise very early that day to come to London to sell his calf. However the prostitute associated with depravity belongs to the night. Perhaps he comes upon her after a night spent street walking. In The Gate of Memory 1857 (Fig.4) the prostitute stands alone underneath the darkened arch and the lantern hanging overhead suggests it is night-time. The children, representing innocence and purity, play near its light.

Rossetti commenced his Found composition in 1854 and struggled with it for the remainder of his life, a period which lasted nearly thirty years. There were many reasons for this such as Rossetti disliked painting outdoors and spent weeks painting the calf, as Ford Madox Brown said 'like Durer hair by hair'.¹ Also he was not a skilled draughtsman and found the composition difficult to come to terms with.

Footnote: ¹(Surtees, 1977, p27)





Fig. 2 J.E. Millais The Bridge of Sighs 1858





Fig.3 D.G. Rossetti Found 1854-1880





Fig.4 D.G. Rossetti The Gate of Memory



After Hunt had undertaken The Awakening Conscience which was the secular counterpart to his The Light of the World 1853, Rosetti felt there was no incentive to complete Found as people would say he had painted it in the wake of Hunt's painting. It is likely that both men began their paintings around 1853, fortunately for Hunt he completed his the following year.

In Found, I am Starving 1857 (Fig.5) and Thoughts of the Past 1858 (Fig 6) there are the bridge and river emblems which indicate the future destination of the prostitute.

Some lines from Thomas Hood's poem refer to the isolation of the prostitute:

Near a whole city full, Home she had none
Where the lamps quiver,
So far in the river
She stood with amazment
Houseless by night....
But not the dark arch, or the Black flowing river
Mad from life's history, Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurl'd - Anywhere, anywhere out of the
world'

(Casteras, 1987, p132)

This last passage confirms the image of the prostitute finding salvation and refuge through her own suicide. The wall is another emblem used by the Pre-Raphaelites, it echoes scenes of courtship which I will discuss in Chapter 3. Walls belong to an architectural man made setting and it figures in Found, The Gate of Memory and I am Starving. The wall as it appears in the above paintings loses its association with courship as city scapes suggest the stifling of love. In Rosetti's earlier sketches for Found (Fig.7 & 8) the brick wall separates the prostitute from a graveyard. Her positioning beside the cemetery suggests her death is near, which reinforces what James B. Talbot says about the prostitute in his "Miseries of Prostitution" she "drags on for years and then sinks to her grave" (Casteras, p134, 1987). There is a tombstone visible in the graveyard with the following barely legible words "there

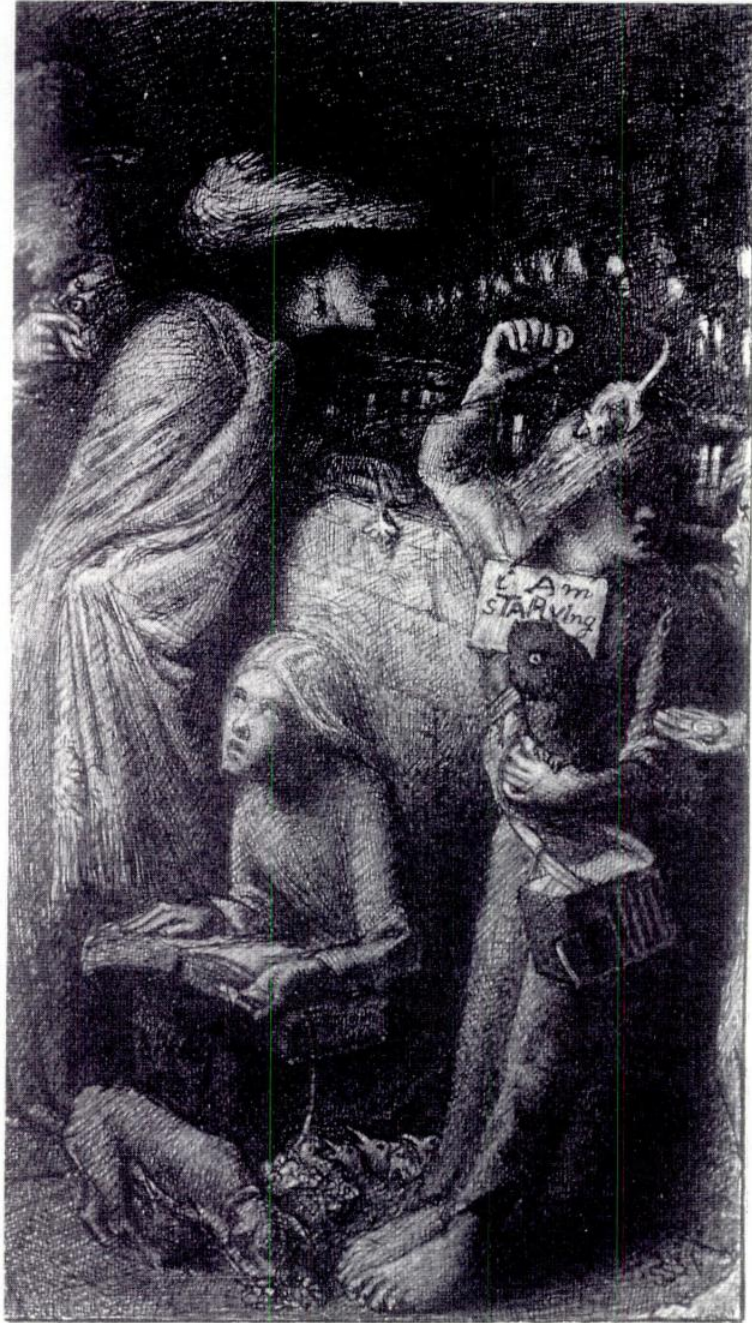


Fig.5 Simeon Solomon I Am Starving 1857





Fig.6 J.R.S. Stanhope Thoughts of the Past 1858-9



is joy... the angels in he... one sinner that" (Casteras 1987, p134). I think this suggests that if the prostitute "sinner" repents she will find peace.

Now we have the image of the city playing an important role in the descent of the fallen woman. The nineteenth century industrial revolution created overcrowded cities which were the breeding ground for the fallen, the promiscuous, the diseased and immoral. In all the paintings discussed in this chapter the woman is living in the city. However there are subtle references which indicate her country origins or emblems which suggest the purity of nature in Found, The Awakening Conscience, The Gate of Memory and Thoughts of the Past. Rosetti described Found as a "an early morning London street scene. A drover has come to the city to sell his calf at market, but has recognised the woman as somebody from his past, and rushed over to her, she in her shame has sunk to the ground". (Marsh, 1987, p82). A description underneath one of the drawings for Found (Fig.7) suggests that the couple were engaged "I remember thee: the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal" (Jeremiah 2.2). As many writers have noted it is important that the prostitute meets her former fiance as this creates an almost fairy-tale past of lost innocence in the countryside. Now that her past in the shape of the drover has caught up on her, she feels remorse about her lowly state. This self awareness was essential in Victorian times if the prostitute was to repent she could be saved. According to Nead in Found Rosetti manipulates middle class values concerning the purity of work and the countryside versus the corruption of the city and immorality (Nead, 1984, p34).

Such manipulation is also found in The Awakening Conscience, (Fig.9) the singing of a Thomas Moore song:

Oft in the stilly night
When slumber's chain has bound me
Fond memory brings the light
of other days around me.

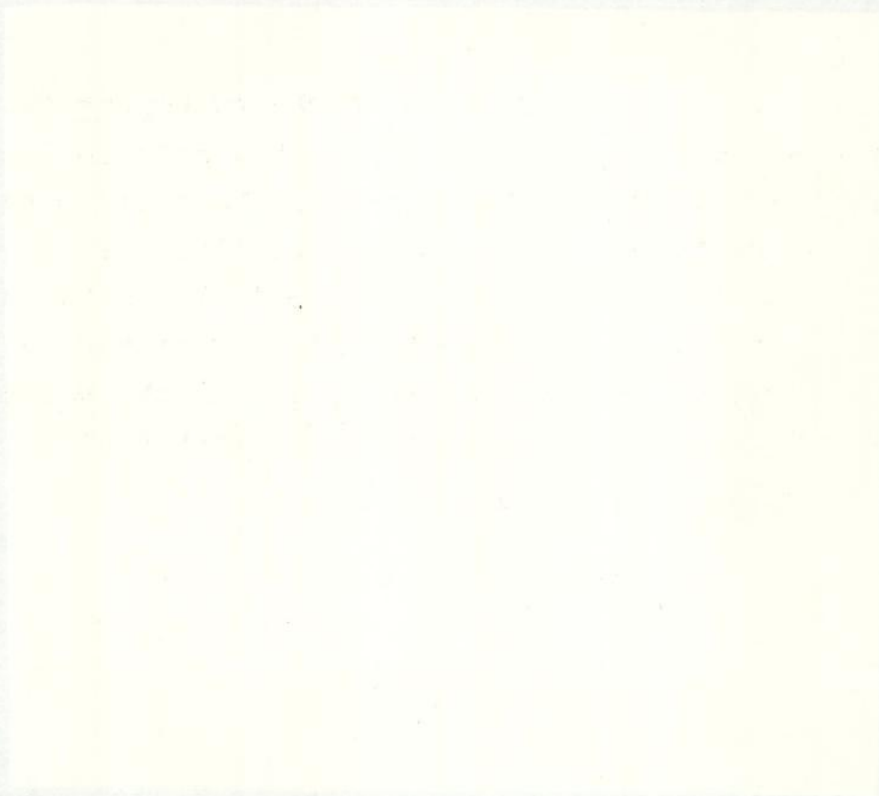




Fig. 7



Fig. 8



caused the fallen woman to stop and reflect on her childhood and lost innocence something similar to what is happening in Found. According to a writer reviewing the painting in 1862 the woman remembers her mother and their country cottage surrounded by fields with a river nearby.

I would agree with Nead that such a reading of the picture would confirm the conflict between city and country life again as the girl's innocence is to be found in the countryside and her degradation belongs to the city. In my opinion such a message as the country representing all that is good and the city representing evil, is propaganda as this irrational romanticism ignores the reality of country living where penury and lack of work forced many young women to head to the city. This romanticism of the countryside was also found in literature such as Charles Dickens novel "David Copperfield" where there is a prostitute who is going to commit suicide by jumping into the river, the following extract shows her feelings of empathy with the river Thames "Oh the river... I know its like me...It comes from country places...it creeps through the dismal streets defiled and miserable..." (Casteras, 1987, p132).

Holman Hunt was inspired to paint The Awakening Conscience (Fig.9), his worldly counterpart to his spiritual subject The Light of the World after reading about old Pegotty's search for Emily who had become a prostitute in the novel "David Copperfield". He wanted to illustrate the power of God's love to change a person's life. Hunt had intended The Awakening Conscience and The Light of the World to be hung side by side in the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1854 so that their full spiritual meaning would be apparent. Unfortunately they were hung in separate rooms. In The Awakening Conscience (Fig.9) a kept woman and her lover are seated singing at a piano, when the girl jumps up with a startled expression on her face. This is supposed to symbolise her spiritual awakening as she realises her position in life could be a lot better.

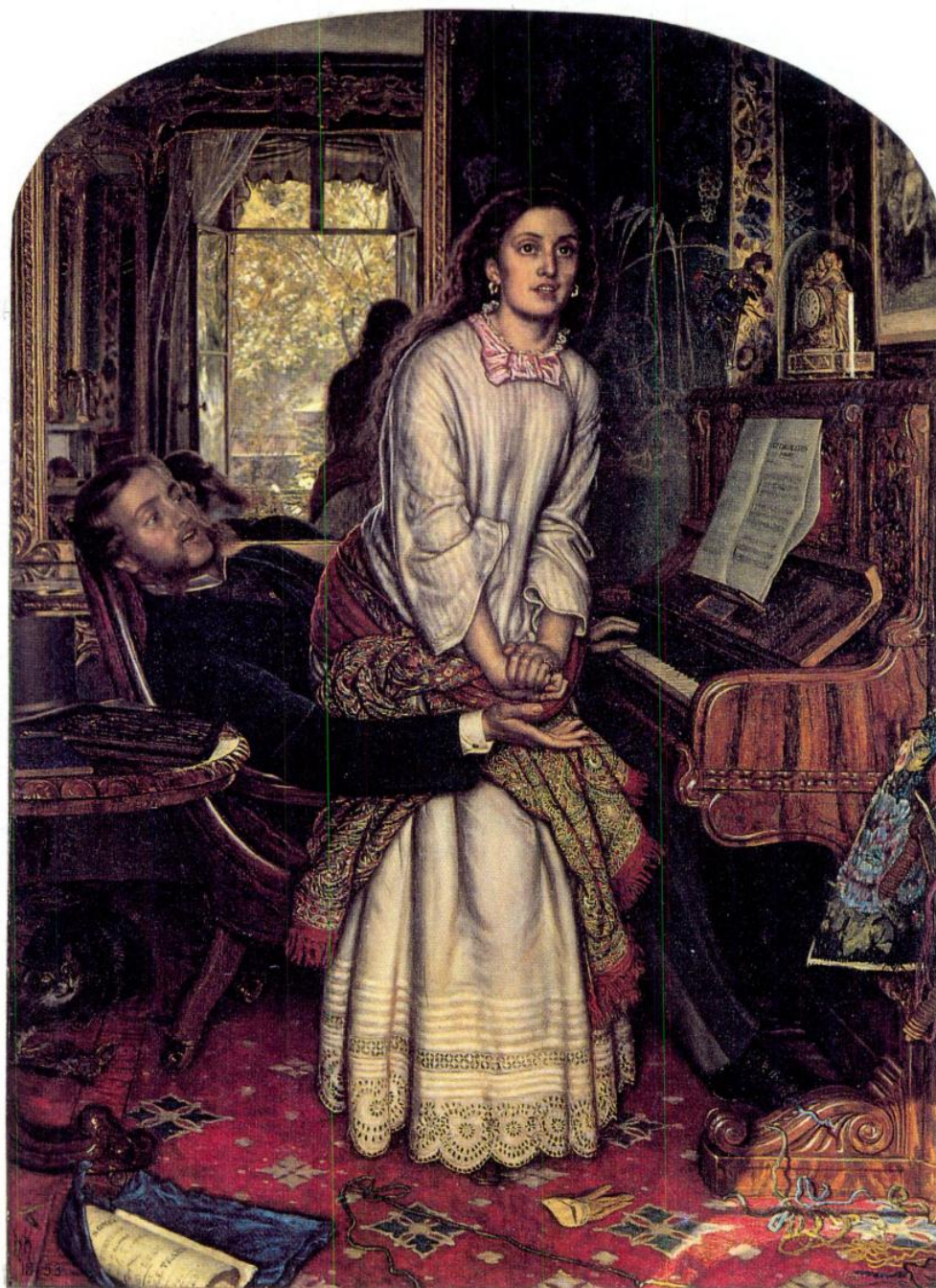


Fig 9 W..H. Hunt The Awakening Conscience 1853-4



Her spiritual awakening illustrates the meaning behind the passage from Revelations on Which the Light of the World is based. This translates that if a person is in need of spiritual guidance God will come to him.

In addition to the bridge, river and wall, there is much animal and flower imagery. In one of the drawings for Found (Fig.7) there are two fluttering sparrows beside a phallic bollard on the kerb. In Christian iconography birds frequently mean lowliness, as they were among the least acclaimed of God's creatures. In Found and The Awakening Conscience (Fig.9) they could refer to the fallen woman's low position in society. In Rosetti's drawing (Fig.7) the sparrows carry bits of straw from the cart, but unlike the drover and his ex-fiancee, they will go off and mate and build a nest. In The Awakening Conscience (Fig.9) beneath the table crouches a cat with his victim an escaped bird from a gilded cage. The cat releases the bird at the same time his mistress experiences her spiritual awakening. Hunt later wrote about the painting that he wanted the mistress to contemplate "breaking away from her gilded cage with a startled holy resolve".² I think that Hunt has achieved his objective especially when looking at the symbolism between the cat and bird, the lover and his mistress. In seventeenth century Dutch art, the fleeing bird frequently symbolised surrendered virginity. The cat was also a symbol of the sensual, and often cruel love. Cats were also thought to be the lustful companions of whores. In early art cats were regarded as being dangerous to play with, so that being trifled with by a cat implied sexual danger and even pregnancy. So the mistress in The Awakening Conscience is in danger from her seducer, whose selfishness and sexual appetite have captured her. The bird imagery is repeated again in The Awakening Conscience (Fig.9) as part of the wallpaper pattern. The birds are eating ripe corn, suggesting sexual connotations.

Footnote: ² Casteras, 1987, p142



There are birds for sale in I am Starving (Fig.5). Mayhew mentions how birds, birds nests and wild flowers were collected in the countryside and then brought to the city to sell. So here you have more imagery from the countryside ending up in the harsh city. According to the author the birds are a metaphor for the plight of starving children (Treuherz, 1987, p30)..

In Found (Fig.3) there is a white calf tied up with net in the drovers cart on its way to the market. I feel that the calf represents innocence and purity. However its arrival in the city means its death, this is symbolic of the young country girl whose purity and innocence was tainted by her coming to the city also. The rat is the most important image in The Gate of Memory (Fig.4). The rat represents the slums, city pollution and operates as an indication of the woman's moral and sexual identity. I referred to the prostitute's association with diseases earlier on in the previous chapter.

The use of the flower as symbolic of lost virtue is found in I am Starving (Fig.5) where the sorrowful prostitute fiddles with a withering flower which is representative of her faded innocence. In Found (Fig.7) the destructive force of urban life is depicted on the withered posy about to fall into the drain. In the drover's hat a sprig of jasmine, often connected to the Virgin Mary, also implies separation, this probably indicated the prostitutes unlikely reunion with her ex-fiance and return to purity in the countryside. The pink rose sprigged pattern of the prostitute's dress could also be a metaphor for her defloration, and also reminiscent of the flowers from her country childhood. There are more references to defloration and loss of virtue in The Awakening Conscience" (Fig.9) with the embroidery of the rose which the mistress has pricked with a needle. This could also represent the heartache she feels concerning her present position.

The decoration on the frame of the painting (Fig.10) is also symbolic as there are marigolds which are emblems of sorrow and chiming bells which signify warning. However there is the possibility of redemption with the positioning of the star above the woman's head which represents salvation.

The stereotypical image of a prostitute in contemporary times has as many connotations as that of the prostitute in Victorian times. The image of today's prostitute wearing a skimpy sexy dress with fish-net tights corresponds with William Tait's description of such women as wearing "satins and silks with the most superb trimmings of lace and ribbons and the bonnets are generally decorated with long expensive feathers" (Nead, 1984, p175).

Rossetti's Found (Fig.3) is unlike the other Pre-Raphaelite paintings depicting the fallen woman. In Found the woman looks forlorn in her bedraggled finery. Her painted face has become coarsened due to the hardship she has experienced and she has dark circles underneath her eyes probably as a result of her nocturnal street walking. She has turned away as she is so ashamed at being recognised by somebody from her past. The drover looks at his ex-fiancee with sadness. Rossetti wanted to depict this subject in a "showy but seedyish"³ way as in his earlier sketches (Figs.7, 8 & 11) the prostitute had neatly arranged hair and a simple bonnet. However in the oil painting (Fig.3 & 12) she has bright red untidy hair and gold earrings and her bonnet is more decorative as it has a big blue feather and green satin ribbons. The alterations Rossetti made to the prostitute's clothes as he worked on Found show the basic elements which create the seedy stereotype of the prostitute. When looking at the finished drawing (Fig.8) and the oil painting it is obvious that the black shawl was changed to a pale blue patterned mantle with tatty fringing. The plain white dress was changed to a rose pattern with a pinkish tinge and gathering has been added to the sleeves and neck, making it more fussy and ostentatious (Fig.3).



Fig.11

D.G. Rossetti Study for Found

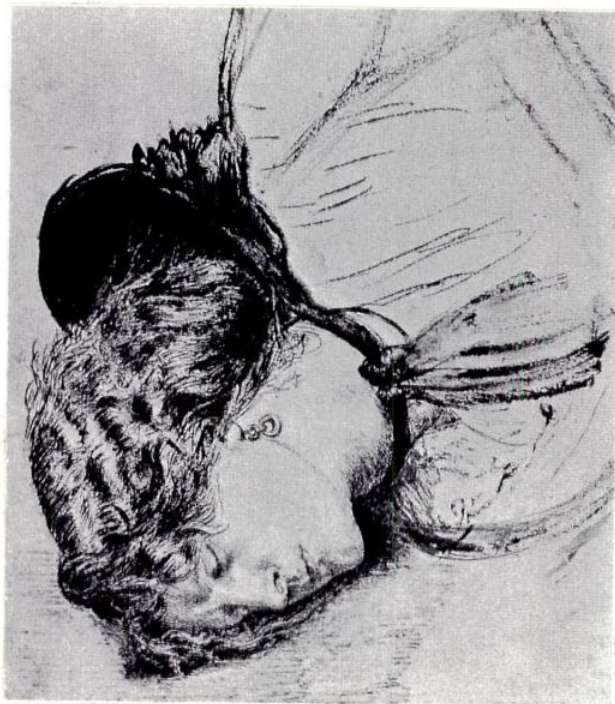


Fig.12

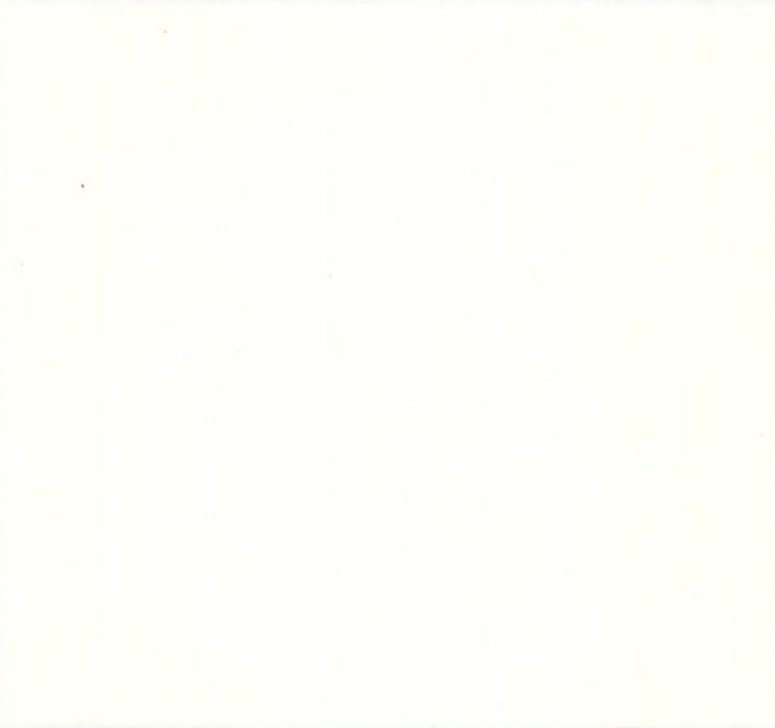
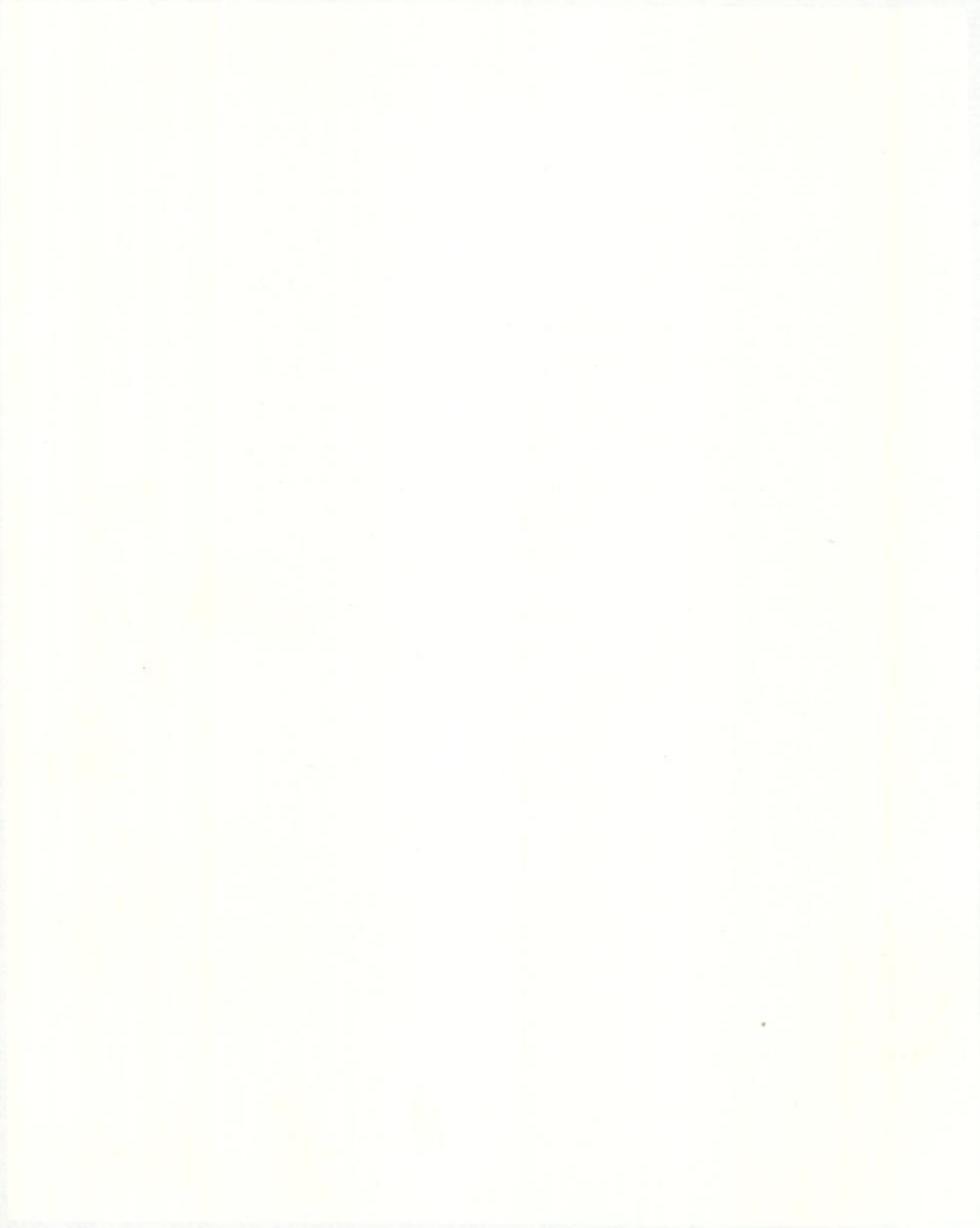




Fig.10 W.H. Hunt The Awakening Conscience



The appearance of the prostitute in bedraggled finery was not unintentional as her attire symbolised the unnaturalness and corruption of city life and presents a sharp contrast to the simplicity and honesty of the "country" person. This notion is suggested further by the contrast between the rustic garments of the drover and the gaudy appearance of the prostitute. His gaiters and pale smock symbolise rural tradition and the goodness of country living.

The Victorian interior had an important role to play in narrative painting. The rooms may appear cluttered, however they tell us a lot about the occupant. These clues such as books, objets d'art, pets etc add extra meaning to the painting such as in The Awakening Conscience (Fig.9). Hunt uses objects to expand on the moral symbolism of his painting. Ruskin said of the painting in "The Times" on 5th May 1854 "there is not a single object in all that room, common, modern, vulgar.. but it becomes tragic, if rightly read".⁴ The interior for The Awakening Conscience was an actual maison de convenance in Woodbine Villa in St. John's Wood, London.

Spencer Stanhopes Thoughts of the Past 1859 (Fig.6) is unlike the interior of the maison de convenance, everything is worn, the net curtains are ripped, the window panes are cracked and the wooden veneer on the dresser drawer is damaged. The depressing atmosphere in the room is contrasted to the hustle and bustle out on the river.

In The Awakening Conscience the woman is a kept mistress and the gentleman has furnished it lavishly more for his own convenience than for hers, and also it would indicate his position in society. It is also quite possible that he would entertain his friends there. In Thoughts of the Past the prostitute is more interested in spending money on her appearance as she has to solicit openly on the streets and therefore she cannot afford to furnish her room with more than the basics and unlike the kept mistress her clients would only be stopping for a short time. It also reflects her lowly position.

On the carpet in The Awakening Conscience lies unread new books including one entitled "The Origins and Progress of the Art of Writing" which possibly refers to Hunt's attempt to educate and reform the model Annie Miller, a prostitute herself, in his own "Pygmalian" experiment. On the wall over the piano is a print from the bible of a "Woman taken in Adultery". There are also references to chastity in the painting in the form of the French clock (loaned by Augustus Egg, an older painter who encouraged Hunt). "Chastity is the only weapon by which the human predators can be foiled, and the French clock depicts this virtue binding Cupid" (Tate Gallery, 1984, p121).

In both paintings the women are in their nightgowns and their hair is worn down which is associated with prostitution. The mistress in The Awakening Conscience (Fig.9) has a ring on every finger except her wedding finger "her provocative state of undress" (Tate Gallery, 1984, p121). The model in Thoughts of the Past, Fanny Cornforth like Annie Miller is a prostitute who posed for Rossetti's Found (Fig.3).

In Thoughts of the Past a man's walking stick is discarded on the floor, and there is a dropped glove which also figures in The Awakening Conscience, these imply that the man is not an honourable gentleman. There are references to lost youth in Thoughts of the Past in the shape of the primrose posy. The wilting violets suggest faithfulness. There are other references to the woman's profession in the gaudy jewellery and money on her dresser. The flower sprigged curtains reminiscent of the prostitute's patterned dress in Found (Fig.3) which symbolised her deflowering/loss of virtue.

The Pre-Raphaelites were admirable in their attempts to paint such a thorny issue as prostitution, especially Holman Hunt depicting the kept woman.



However Hunt was unfortunate that The Light of the World and The Awakening Conscience were hung in separate rooms, as this could have aided the public in their comprehension of the painting. As it was only the critic Ruskin who fully understood the work.

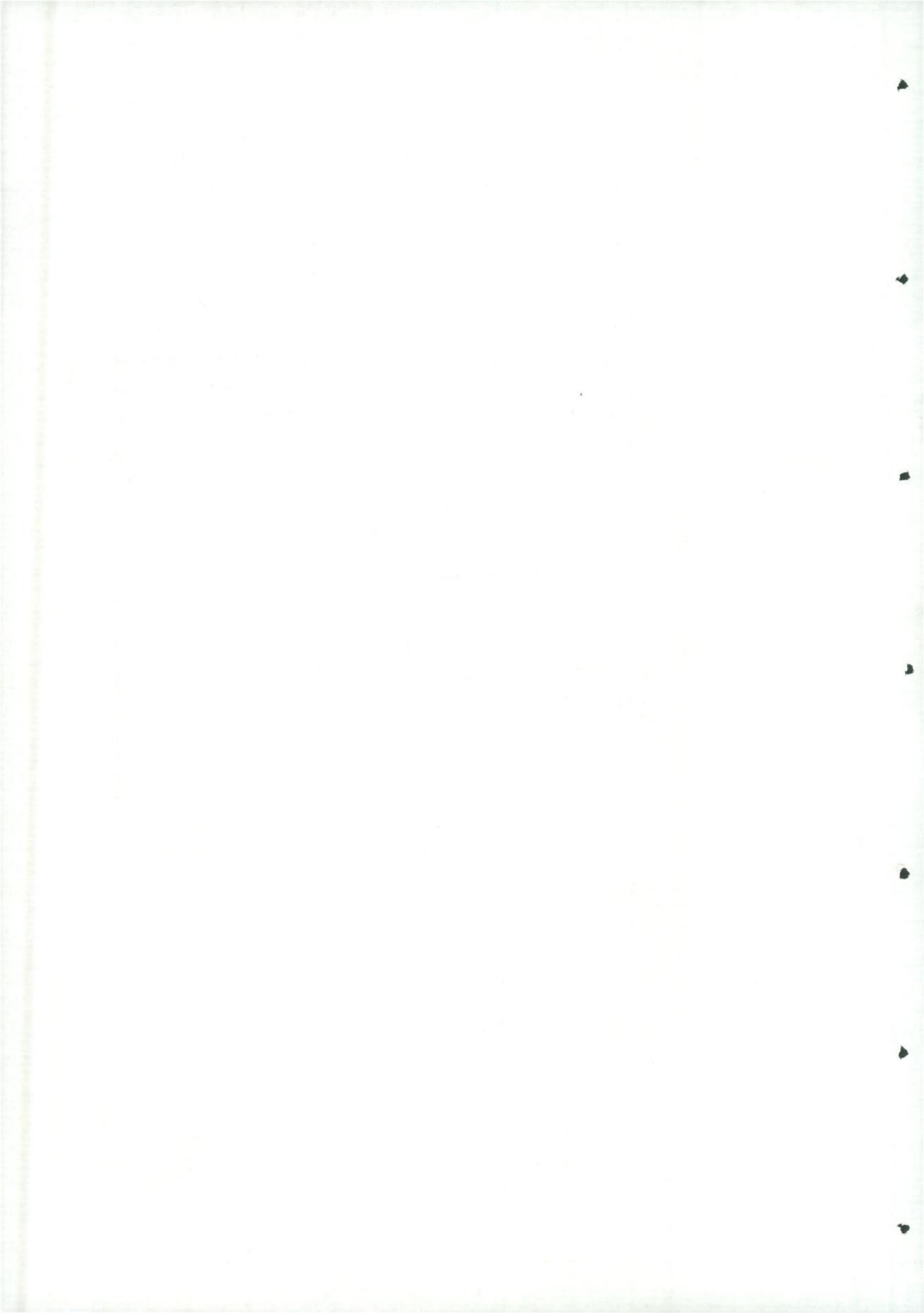
For me personally I feel that the full impact of The Awakening Conscience has been lost with the re-painting of the woman's face as Hunt's patron, Sir Thomas Fairbairn, whom the painting had been commissioned for, found her expression too harrowing to live with. Her expression does not convey adequately the revelation of such an awakening.

The Pre-Raphaelites use of repeated symbols when depicting the prostitute were necessary as they wished to create an instantly recognisable victim of vice whose plight would arouse pity in the hearts of the public, when viewing their paintings. Some critics praised their endeavours along with other Victorian artists for depicting such scenes "...we must rejoice that some deep teaching is on these (Academy) walls often more elequent than the same truth, perhaps would be in a book" (Nead, 1988, p1).

However there were also the negative views about the disgrace of depicting a subject such as a "woman at her lowest degradation"... this critic also complained that painters "... have kept the excitement (about prostitution at fever pitch" (Nead, 1988, p1).

Pre-Raphaelite pictures were painted to be read like a novel in the rectangle. They contained selected items which when read correctly provided clues to the story which is evident in The Awakening Conscience (Fig 9).

Hunt's The Awakening Conscience demanded public participation when exhibited. Hunt's painting could only be appreciated if you were familiar with the content of the song that awakens her conscience and were also able to read



all the clues in the interior. Obviously the critic in the Morning Chronicle was not impressed by The Awakening Conscience "failing to express its meaning either through composition or through details" (Harding, 1977, p343). John Ruskin gave the most detailed account of The Awakening Conscience. He thought its meaning could not be more explicit. But the general public found the sheer amount of symbolism too hard to comprehend. There I feel Oscar Wilde might have advised Ruskin : "You must not find symbols in everything you see. It makes life impossible" (Redman, 1959, p65).

Footnote: ³ Nead, 1984, p34
⁴ Marsh, 1987, p77

CHAPTER 3

COURTSHIP

The Victorian public were fond of courtship scenes as is evident by the number of such paintings that appeared on the Royal Academy walls especially from the 1880s up to the end of the century. Courtship played an important role in Victorian life. There were many books and magazines written on the subject such as how men and women should conduct themselves when courting, "discretion was" the key word. A woman flirting was considered shocking by Victorian standards. Furthermore, if she was caught trifling with a man's effections she was considered loose. In Stages of Cruelty, (Fig.13) Madox Brown illustrates such conduct between a courting couple.

The discussion in a previous chapter on prostitution examined the importance symbols play in Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Recurrent images figure a lot in paintings of courtship which bestow more meaning to the pictures.

Mostly courtship scenes take place in either a garden or rural setting. This is the case in most of the paintings I have selected for discussion. In courtship manuals the garden setting compares the woman to a flower in bloom ready for plucking. Plants appear a lot in courtship paintings as would be expected from such garden scenes. Many are painted not just for their aesthetic quality but for the meanings they convey. I shall discuss this with regard to specific paintings later in the chapter.

Ideally in Victorian courtship scenes a chaperon should be present. However this is not always the case as is apparent in the paintings discussed in this chapter. The chaperon is usually an older woman, there is the old maid in Mulready's The Widow (chapter 4) looking disapprovingly at the intimate behaviour between the widow and her seducer.





Fig.13 F.M. Brown STAGES OF CRUELTY 1856-90





Fig.14 J.E. Millais A Huguenot 1851



When the human chaperon is not present an architectural form such as a wall, fence or tree replaces the chaperon. The "courting wall" as it became known figures in many paintings of courtship such as Millais's A Huguenot 1851 (Fig.14) became the standard Pre-Raphaelite arrangement for courtship scenes such as Hughes's The Long Engagement (Fig.15). Generally the wall serves as a reminder of restraint between the two sexes and was also indicative of the barriers that Victorians constructed against strangers or sexual advances. Another image found in many paintings such as The Long Engagement, is the dog which has appeared in The Betrothal of Arnolfini (Fig.16) by Jan Van Eyck 1434, where the dog symbolises marital fidelity, and some people feel it also suggests sexual desire which is important in marriage.

Long engagements were another feature of Victorian times. John Ruskin suggested seven years as an ideal period for an engagement, but magazines on courtship did not approve of such long periods. Parents would only give a marriage the go-ahead if the husband-to-be had a sufficient income to maintain the standard of living his wife had been accustomed to, and also be able to provide adequately for a family. In Arthur Hughes's The Long Engagement the cleric's low income prevents him from marrying his loved one, which is very distressing for the couple as is evident from the expressions on their faces. Scenes of courtship one would imagine to be happy occasions, but that does not appear to be the case in many of the paintings discussed here such as April Love (Fig.17) where the young girl is crying. In Mulready's The Sonnet (Fig.18) the young couple are happy, and there is a sense of warmth about the painting evoked through its colour.

Millais's A Huguenot on St. Batholemew's Day, Refusing to Shield Himself from Danger by Wearing the Roman Catholic Badge illustrates a scene from Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera "Les Huguenots". The young catholic woman, Valentine, attempts to save her lovers life by tying a white cloth onto his arm¹ but he declines her gesture.

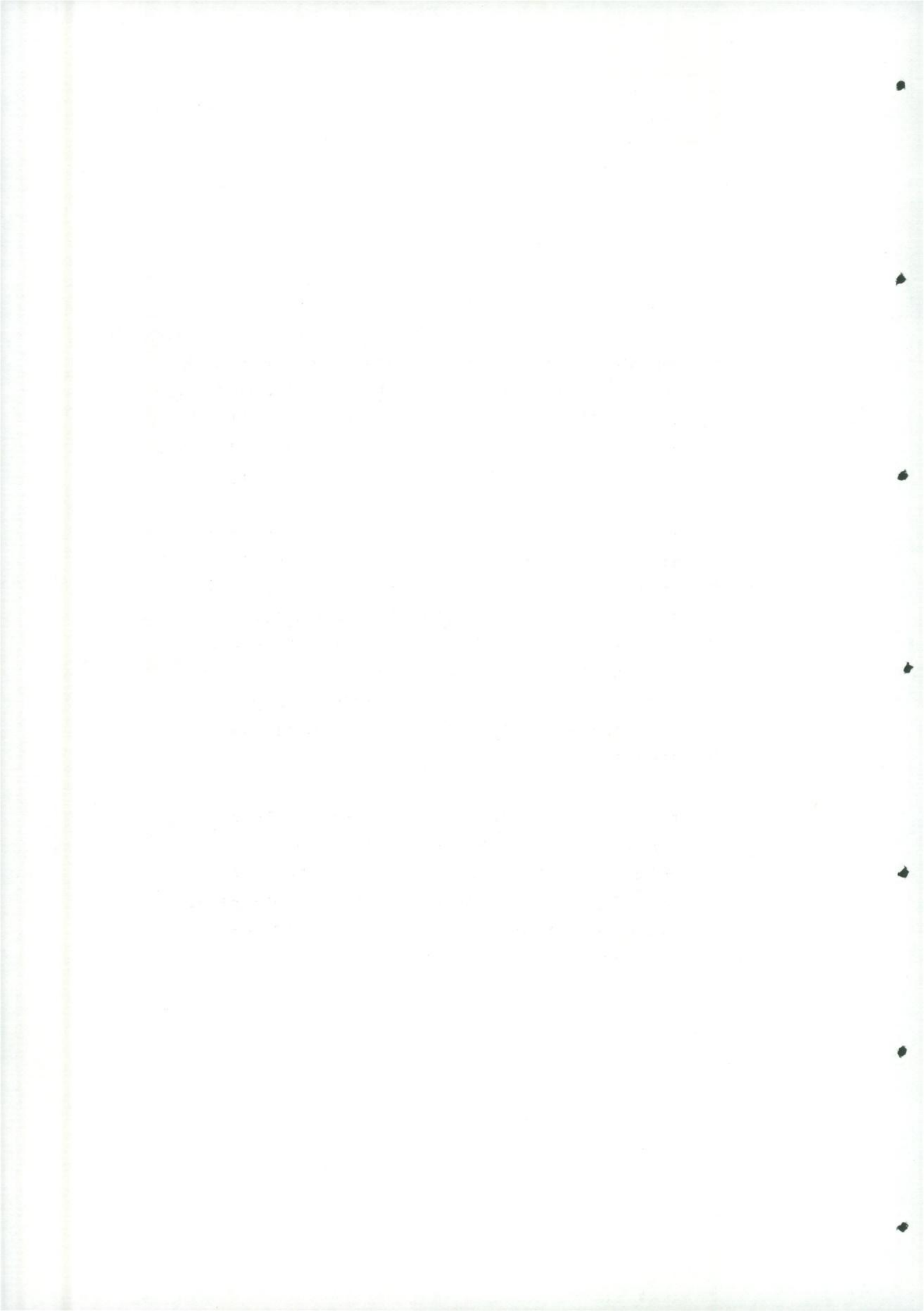


Fig.15 A. Hughes The Long Engagement 1854-9





Fig.16 Jan Van Eyck The Betrothal of Arnolfini 1434



Although the painting is a period piece it is important because the young couple are shown standing beside the "courting wall". If one is to take into account the history behind the lovers, the wall protects the couple from their enemies and also allows their love to blossom. In Ruskin's analysis of A Huguenot he believed that there was a similarity between Valentine embracing Raul and the ivy clinging to the brick wall. Casteras takes this a step further by suggesting that their inevitable tragic fate is as indestructable as the stone wall. It could also symbolise the obstacles between the Catholic and Protestant religion. Raul's continued loyalty to his faith, despite the tragic consequences, is similar to the wall which is unyielding to pressure (Casteras, 1987, p 81).

There are plants and flowers in A Huguenot which are included for their symbolic meaning as well as aesthetic quality. The ivy represents friendship, the canterbury bell fidelity. Seemingly the nasturtiums were included before the subject of the painting was decided on. However they could denote patriotism which possibly refers to the Huguenots loyalty to his religion. The frame surrounding the painting is composed of tolling bells which are symbolic warnings of the forthcoming tragedy.

Therefore if all this analysis is correct the garden wall is more than just an obstacle to climb over as Millais's friend Holman Hunt had suggested but instead it adds more meaning and depth to the young couples tragic plight. However I do not think Millais's wall could possibly contain so much symbolism. He had originally intended illustrating lines from a Tennyson poem "Two lovers whispering by a garden wall", however Hunt felt this was too trivial a subject. Therefore Millais held onto his wall but changed the subject. Millais was not a scholar and according to his son read very little about art (Wood, 1981, p76). In his diary Millais is more concerned with painting the wall than its symbolic meaning.



In Millais painting Effie Deans 1877 (Fig.19) and Madox Brown's Stages of Cruelty (Fig.13) the wall separates the couples. Effie Deans is based on a scene from Sir Walter Scott's novel "The Heart of Midlothian" and tells the story of the seduction of a young country heroine. Marriage does not lie in store for Effie as the couple are not holding hands. Her dog stares up at her affectionately symbolising fidelity in a relationship. In christian terms the reference is also there in the form of a sheep-dog guarding and guiding the flocks, and in my opinion symbolising Effie's need for "spiritual guidance". Unkept hair symbolised a loose woman as shown in chapter 2 and in Effie Deans her removal of her snood (hair-net) represents her loss of virtue. The wall in this painting stands for the class barrier between the couple and also suggests a physical barrier, if she had remained on her side of the wall her virtue would have been protected.

Both Arthur Hughes's paintings April Love (Fig.17) and The Long Engagement (Fig.15) illustrate the sadness that often accompanies love. The Long Engagement (1854-1859) was accompanied by a quotation from Chaucer's "Troilus and Cruseyde": "For how myght ever sweetness have be known to hym, that never tastyd bitterness?" (Tate, 1984, p171). It illustrates the plight of Victorian couples who had to endure lengthy engagements often for financial reasons as would appear to be the case in this painting as the fiance is a cleric and therefore on a low income. Amy in addition with the quotation is trying to console her fiance by suggesting that their unhappiness due to their long engagement will only strengthen their love more. Hughes, the artist, had personal experience of a long engagement as he had to wait five years before he could marry Miss Tryphena Foord in 1855. The painting April Love is also accompanied by a literary quotation from one of Tennyson's songs which describes the anxiety a couple feel about the transience of their love "Love that hath us in the net/can he pass and we forget?" (Tate, 1984, p137).





Fig.17 A. Hughes April Love 1855





Fig. 19 J.E. Millais Effie Deans 1877



Both paintings take place in claustrophobic garden settings, probably a summer house in the case of April Love. There are references to life and growth around both groups of couples. The wall emblem (Fig.15) is a tree. It is evident that the couple have been engaged for some time as there is ivy growing over the woman's name "Amy" carved out on the tree. Also wrinkles are beginning to appear on both their faces. It would appear that the couples romance in April Love will not survive a long duration as the title implies, and this has the woman in tears. There are emblems (Fig.15) which imply that marriage is inevitable such as the couple holding hands, the presence of the dog and ivy and moss growing on the tree denote marital fidelity. There is ivy (fig.17) but it is withering near the ground which suggests all is not well in their relationship. There are also rose petals lying on the ground symbolising the instability of their love.

The courting wall (Fig.13) separates the woman from her suitor who stares up at her beseechingly as he holds her hand, but the young woman deliberately ignores him. In this scene the suitor has adopted the more subservient role usually allotted to women in these kind of scenes. She is teasing her suitor cruelly, which would have been considered improper conduct, and not very wise if she is looking for a proposal of marriage. In the foreground of the painting is a little girl perhaps the young woman's sister as they look alike. The young woman's cruel conduct towards her suitor is reflected in the little girl's treatment of her dog whom she is beating with a spray of love-lies-a-bleeding; a flower which implies fickleness and cruelty. This painting is unusual as it does not romanticise courtship, instead it shows human cruelty and lasciviousness. Brown as did Mulready with his painting The Widow found this a difficult painting to sell.

Mulready's The Sonnet (Fig.18) and Hunt's The Hireling Shepherd are more than just pretty pictures of flirtation in the countryside as they have underlying messages concerning the time they were painted.



Fig.18 William Mulready The Sonnet 1836



Mulready painted The Sonnet in 1836 and it may have provided a source of inspiration for Hunt's the Hireling Shepherd 1851 (Fig.20). Unlike The Hireling Shepherd, The Sonnet takes place in a green pasture with no evidence of animals. Mulready's scene of courtship belongs to late English and French eighteenth century paintings. The couple (Fig.18) are innocent and bashful a complete contrast to the pair (Fig.20) whose pose and actions are very sexual, this could be due to the thirteen year gap between the two. Unlike the other courtship paintings I have discussed there is no courting wall which provides the couples with romantic freedom and in the case of (Fig.20) a lack of sexual restrictions.

In Fig. 18 the young girl is reading the sonnet of her optimistic yet embarrassed lover. Unlike the youth in (Fig.20) who has his arm around the girl in the pretence of showing her a dead moth's head which Hunt explained as an emblem of superstition. The youth (Fig.18) is nervously fidgeting with his shoe laces and though his head is bowed he is able undetected to see her expression in the stream, while she tries to conceal her mirth and embarrassment at his letter.

The shepherdess (Fig.20) reclining languidly, is shown with a ruddy complexion and buxom figure and her hair is hanging loosely which states obvious sexuality as she stares nonchalantly out of the picture. The girl (Fig.18) belongs to respectable scenes of courtship as her dignified pose, her groomed hair and dress would indicate.

The Hireling Shepherd was accompanied by a quotation from King Lear suggesting that the sleeping shepherd takes care of his flock as they are in the field of corn. So the sheep symbolically represent Christ's flock in need of spiritual guidance. However in a letter, Hunt expressed his fear of forcing the moral meanings of the painting, in case it would reduce its sensual qualities.





Fig 20 W.H. Hunt The Shepherd 1851



I think there are sexual connotations in The Hireling Shepherd as his lack of vigilance over his rambling flock could symbolise uncontrolled sexuality resulting in chaos, which would indicate that the shepherdess is in need of protection. The white lamb on her lap could be seen to represent innocence and purity, which is in danger as it is eating a green apple. This could refer to the temptation in the Garden of Eden.

The Sonnet is a romanticised and misleading representation of the rural couple as illiteracy was very high at the time. In 1845 33 per cent of the male population and 49 per cent of the female population were reported to be illiterate in Great Britain. Therefore it is highly improbable that the country youth could compose a sonnet and that his sweetheart being able to read it even more unlikely.

The most obvious similarity between The Sonnet and The Hireling Shepherd is the detailed rendering of organic objects and the brilliance of colour. Mulready's use of colour and attention to detail was to inspire many of the Pre-Raphaelites. Like Mulready the Pre-Raphaelites painted onto a white background.

Unlike the other courtship paintings in the chapter, The Sonnet and The Hireling Shepherd are really free from the constraints of the chaperon or courting wall. Their flirtation belongs to the freedom of wide open spaces and green pastures. Fortunately for them they do not have to meet secretly in a secluded spot in the garden like other courting couples in this chapter. Perhaps that is why they are a lot happier than the courting couples as they have no secrets to hide. Pre-Raphaelite courting couples appear very sad. None of the women appear at all excited at the fact that they have escaped their chaperon for a short time to secretly meet their loved ones. However they do not realize that they are being watched over by the "courting wall".



All the Pre-Raphaelite couples are united in one thing, their sadness in love which does not depict a positive image of courtship in Victorian times. It is interesting to note the difference between the appearance of the respectable young women in this chapter and the prostitute in the last chapter. Respectability is symbolically conveyed by a neat tidy appearance suggesting modesty unlike the showy, gaudy prostitute. Wearing hair down during the daytime and in public suggests a fallen woman. Numerous guide books were published about courtship etiquette, especially advising against the unsupervised meeting between the sexes.

In Chapter 4 on Marriage and Widowhood the courting wall is dispensed with as the wedding day approaches so there is no need for symbols referring to protection of virtue.

FOOTNOTE:

¹In 1572, French catholics led by the Duke of Guise slaughtered thousands of Huguenots (Protestants) in Paris. The Duke of Guise ordered all Catholics to wear a white band, to identify themselves (Tate, 1984, p98).

CHAPTER 4

MARRIAGE AND WIDOWHOOD

Throughout my thesis I have wanted my chapters to read as a natural progression from the preceding one. Therefore I commenced with prostitution which illustrated illicit relationships between men and women. The following chapter shows the more acceptable encounters between the opposite sex in courtship. That would lead onto my final chapter which shows the uniting of a couple in marriage and then inevitably for some women, widowhood.

As was obvious in my previous chapter, the Pre-Raphaelites were addicted to painting courting couples so I assumed that they would wish to see their sad courtships such as The Long Engagement (Fig.15) conclude in marriage and therefore lead onto my chapter on Marriage and Widowhood. However Millais was the only Pre-Raphaelite to paint scenes of marriage related topics. The pre-Raphaelites were preoccupied with painting women at their lowest level in society, a prostitute, but they were not interested in depicting her enemy "the angel in the house". Throughout Chapter 3 the Pre-Raphaelites aroused feelings of pathos for most of their courting couples whose relationships were under strain through long engagements, unrequited love etc. Perhaps the Pre-Raphaelites felt that all the passion, turmoil and heartache people feel when they are in love ceases in marriage. Their lack of interest in depicting marital scenes is also reflected in their own lives and in general Victorian feelings at the time.

In the 1850s the gentry delayed marriage until the would-be husband had a suitable income to maintain a family. This delay was a recognised factor in encouraging prostitution as there were lots of unmarried men who wanted sexual gratification.



Fig.21 J.E. Millais Retribution 1854



Many well educated young men were reluctant to marry as their income would be reduced considerably with the high cost of keeping a wife and family so they preferred to remain bachelors. Such Victorian attitudes towards marriage were also shared by the Pre-Raphaelites who came from the lower end of the middle classes and without inherited wealth. They realised the expense and responsibilities that marriage presented as a husband.

Hunt thought Annie Miller (his model in The Awakening Conscience) would make an ideal wife as she came from a lowly background and therefore would not put financial strain on him. Millais's courtship was not an easy one as he fell in love with John Ruskin's wife Effie. The couple eventually married after the Ruskin's marriage was annulled because it had never been consummated. After marrying the quality of his work decreased as he had a family to support and could not spend as long on paintings as he had once done. This would confirm the belief the Pre-Raphaelites had about marriage dissipating your talents. Marriage may dissipate an artist's talent but for a woman it diminished her role in society. Any property she might own became her husband's when married. If she earned money it also belonged to her husband. The novelist Elizabeth Gaskell's husband received all the money from the sale of her novels. So essentially when a woman married she became her husband's property. A wife had to cohabit with her husband even if he beat her or committed adultery. This suppression of women is even more ironic when the monarch on the throne was Queen Victoria who was empowered with full and equal rights. However she did fuel the cult of the widow which I shall be discussing later.

Millais mostly used illustrations to explore marriage subjects as some of them would have been too radical to paint such as Retribution (Fig.21) depicting adultery. My selection of Millais's illustrations includes The Ghost Appearing at the Wedding (Fig 22), Married for Money (Fig 23) and Married for Rank, all from the period 1853-1854.



Fig. 22 J.E. Millais The Ghost Appearing at the Wedding 1853-4





Fig 23 J.E. Millais Married for Money 1853



My discussion shall begin with Millais's 1871 Yes or No ? (Fig.25). First part in a triology of paintings which show a lady contemplating an offer of marriage. The title echoes her indecisive state of mind about how to acknowledge the letter of proposal on her desk. A suitor could make a proposal by letter or in person but it had to be made directly to the parents who then decided whether to accept or refuse the proposal. Somehow the young woman has intercepted the letter and makes her own choice whether to accept or not. Her unsureness could be due to the small miniature portrait she is holding in her hand. The image could be of her would-be suitor or perhaps another sweetheart which makes her selection ever more difficult and explains her serious expression. Anyway you would not begrudge her such contemplation over an offer of marriage, when it meant such supression of women in Victorian times. This painting was followed by the 1875 No in which as the title implies her answer is "no". However partly due to public demand Millais painted a Yes in 1877 to pacify the public with a happy conclusion. Notably in this painting the suitor appears for the first time dressed in a travelling coat with a case by his side and asks if his fiancée will wait for him. The symbolism in the painting such as the couple's clasped hands which also appeared in many courtship scenes, Chapter 3 suggests marital intentions, the rose in the young woman's hair signifies love, so the public could expect a marriage.

The wedding ceremony appears in Married for Money (Fig 23) and Ghost Appearing at the Wedding (Fig 22) both from 1853. The young woman in (Fig 23) watches the wedding, unseen from the balcony. She is simply dressed in black and is watching the wedding ceremony of a former sweetheart who has rejected her love in favour of a woman with money as the title Married for Money implies. Not an unusual occurrence in Victorian times, money was important to both men and women. Women were carefully chaperoned to make sure they did not "marry down" for the sake of love. The Woman's former

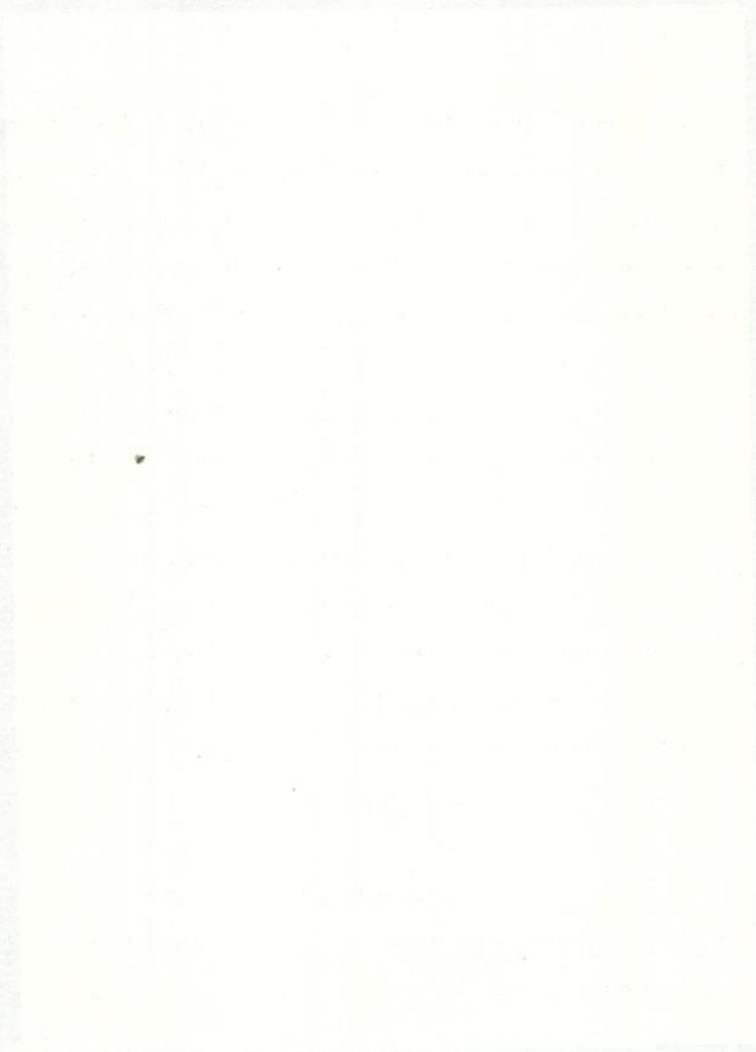


Fig.25 J.E. Millais Yes or No? 1871





Fig 24 J.E. Millais Marriage for Rank 1853



sweetheart's new wife obviously has a better dowry than she could have given him. The wedding has taken a dramatic twist in The Ghost Appearing at the Wedding (Fig 22). The bride has fallen back in terror crying "I don't, I don't" at the sight of her dead husband, who has come back to question her loyalty to his memory. This would tie in with the whole cult of widowhood in Victorian times and questions the wife's length of time spent mourning her dead husband. Some women like Queen Victoria mourned the death of their husbands for the rest of their lives.

Married for Rank (Fig 24) like Married for Money (Fig 23) illustrates the Victorian preoccupation for marrying up in the world. However in this illustration there is a beautiful young woman with her husband, who is considerably older than her and he is wearing the Order of the Garter. The woman holds out her hand to show her former sweetheart, a young officer that she is married much to his dismay. The picture was once titled "Married for Money" which would be apt as the husband is of a higher rank than the officer and he would have a better income. This picture also illustrates the delay in marrying on the part of the husband, as Victorian men liked to enjoy their bachelor years as long as possible before undertaking the responsibilities and financial pressures of a wife and family.

Adultery is another theme which Millais deals with in a moralistic way showing the nemesis which results from it. Retribution 1854 (Fig 21) a mother with two children arrives at the home of her husband's mistress and confronts them both. The mistress stares incredulously at the husband after she sees his wife's wedding ring. She had no idea he was married. The husband is an obvious knave with his ill-bred pose on the chaise longue. It is he who should be on his knees begging forgiveness and not his wife who wants him to see sense as he has a family to support.

Perhaps the husband will see how irresponsible he has been and mend his ways as according to Casteras "the cross-patterned carpet represents salvation (Casteras, 1987, p31).

At the same time that Millais was doing his 1853-4 drawings, Hunt and Rossetti were painting their fallen women. Millais does touch on the kept woman in Retribution so maybe like Hunt's The Awakening Conscience her redemption is suggested by the cross-patterned carpet.

Victorian marriages were generally "not made in heaven" but arranged by their parents without their consent. They were a business deal in fact as G.R. Drysdale wrote in 1854 "a great proportion of the marriages we see around us did not take place from love at all, but from some interested motive, such as wealth, social position or other advantages" (C. Wood, 1976, p79). This unromantic attitude to marriage may have been the reason the Pre-Raphaelites preferred to depict courtship scenes as Victorian marriages were so contrived.

Marriage provided women with three roles, that of wife, mother and widow. The Victorians invented the white wedding and the cult of widowhood. Mourning was mainly a female occupation. Victorian ritual stated that the widow had to wear crape for at least a year after her husband's death. After that she went into half mourning, so she could only wear dresses of grey or black for another six months. In Richard Redgraves painting of 1846, he shows a delighted widow casting her black clothes aside in Throwing off her Weeds. Queen Victoria helped fuel the cult of widowhood even more after Prince Albert died in 1861 by remaining in mourning for ten years and preferring to dress in black for the remainder of her life.

The widow in Victorian paintings is idealised nearly in the same way as the the prostitute. Her appearance was important in generating pathos for her plight so she was generally painted as a pretty woman. The exception to the rule would be Mulready's Widow (fig 26) who is rather plain looking.

Widows on the whole seem to have been badly provided for by their deceased husbands. George Smith's Into the Cold World 1876 shows a widow and young son being evicted from their home, it is all the more poignant as it is Christmas time. Other paintings of that time generally show the widow and her family in some need of financial assistance.

Mulready's The Widow was revolutionary for its time as it did not adhere to any of the above principles. The Widow was painted thirty eight years before Prince Albert's death which introduced the cult of the widow. The Widow of 1823 I think would have still managed to shock the Victorian in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In my discussion of Mulready's The Widow I shall be looking at its unique composition and content compared to what is usually associated with the depiction of widows such as Millais's romanticised widow - The Widow's Mite (Fig 27). Fortunately this was not the case in William Mulready's The Widow painted in 1823 when he was thirty seven years old. The widow is not destitute by any means, she has a home and her business looks thriving.

J.E. Millais was probably influenced to paint a widow when one of his models Miss Silver arrived in widow's weeds looking for work as she was penniless so he painted her in The Widow's Mite in 1870 when he was forty one years old. Leighton thought Millais 's painting was the best female head he had ever painted. Millais's widow is making a small contribution to the Hospital for Consumption which was not far from his house in Cromwell Place South. She is the typical Victorian lady performing acts of charity, so there

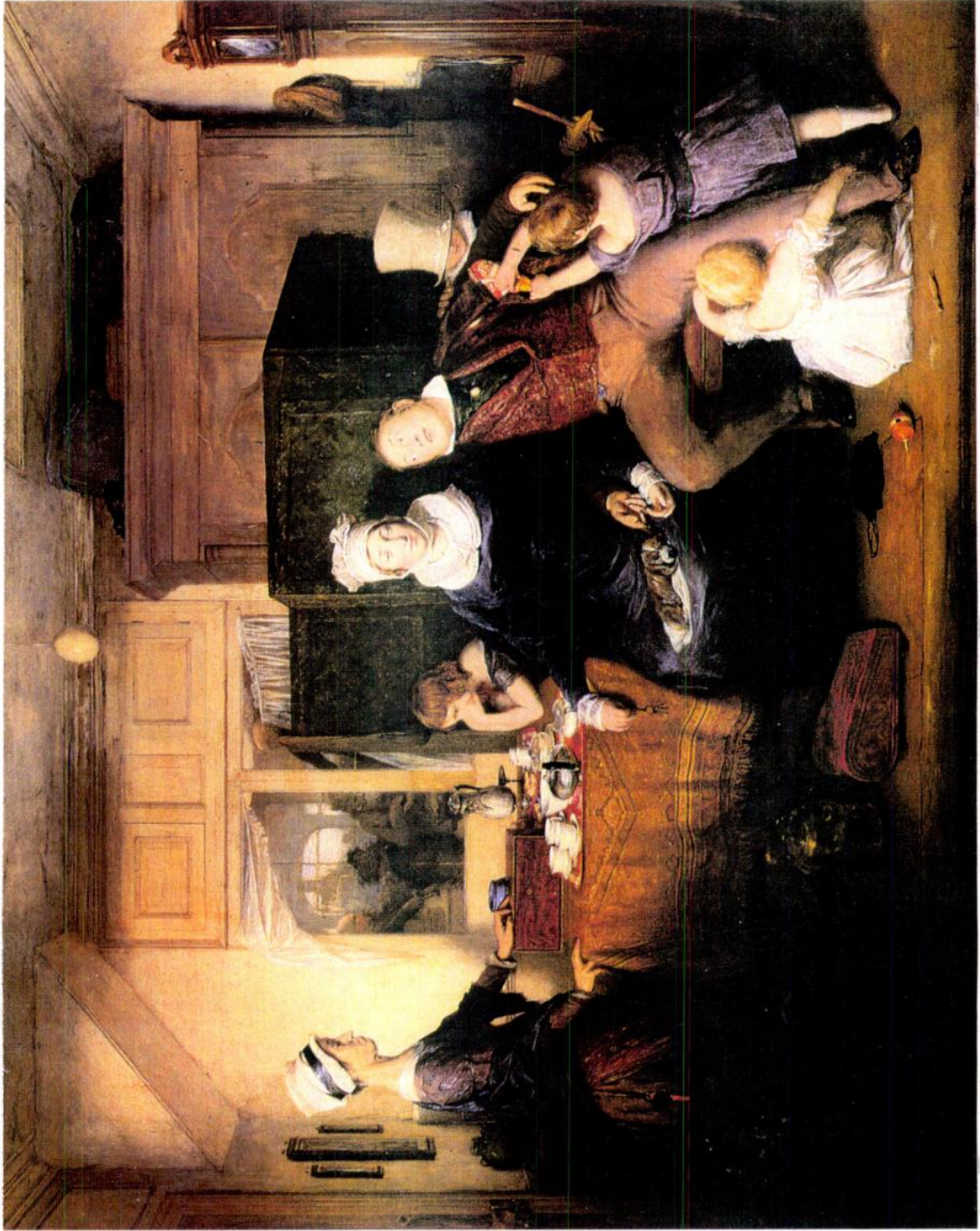


Fig. 26 W. Mulready The Widow 1823



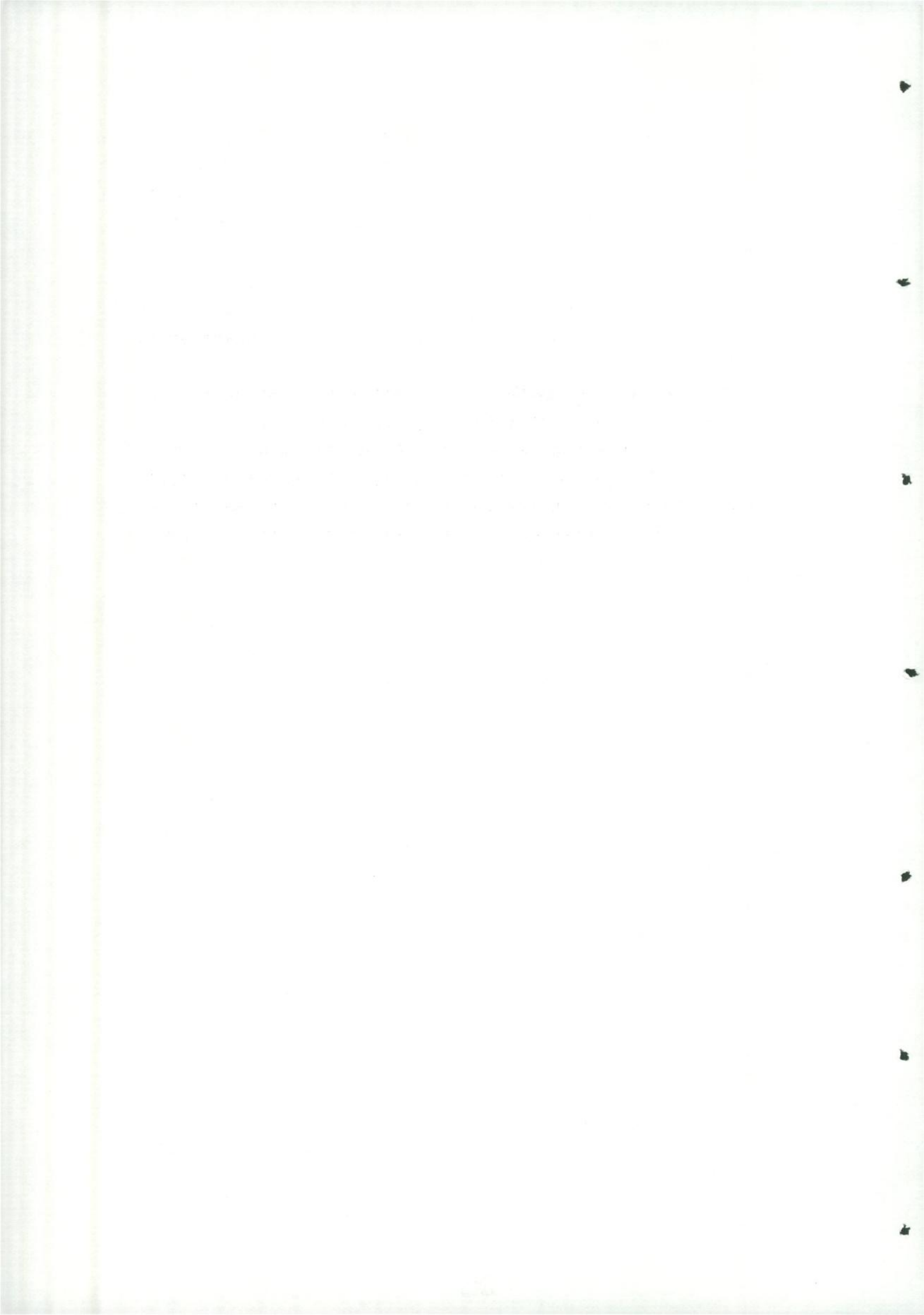


Fig 27 J.E. Millais The Widow's Mite 1870



is some irony in this picture as this woman was in need of charity herself. Millais romanticized his widow, he has not addressed her reason for poverty at all and we wonder what shall befall her when the painting is completed and Millais no longer needs a model. ^{Mulready} Millais unlike other Victorian artists does not idealize the image of the widow and her orphaned children. The Widow was accompanied by the following words "Thus mourned the Dame of Ephesus her love" (Pointon, 1977, p348). After the death of her husband, Dame Ephesus remained by her husband's tomb only to be seduced by a soldier in the cemetery. The location in The Widow is not a graveyard but a parlour at tea-time. Unlike the typical Victorian depiction of a widow, the dame is rather plain. She is wearing a tight fitted black dress which shows off her buxom figure. Her seducer lounges beside her, his shirt collar unfastened and he fondles the ear of the dog lying on her lap. In the dame's right hand is a key ring containing 4 keys probably connected to her business. The three children play roughly with the seducer. The older daughter is obviously unhappy with the scene and sits brooding at the table. The old maid stares disapprovingly at the dame and her seducer, her hand is resting on top of a box which possibly contains documents connected to the diseased husband's business, who is no longer being mourned. At the back of the room there is an indication of their thriving business and through another window a street scene is discernible. There is a large egg hanging from the centre of the ceiling which could be an indication that evil is about to be hatched.

Many critics at the time found The Widow offensive as it touched on the association between money and sex. The dame is behaving very selfishly as she is giving very little thought to her children. She does not reprimand them for playing so roughly instead her mind is occupied by sexual pleasures.



However not all critics condemned the painting. Frederick George Stephens in "Athenaeum" of 1886 "The widow is a complete Pre-Raphaelite picture, painted before even the most stringent Pre-Raphaelite brother began to think out his principles" (Heleniak, 1980, p203).

The Widow received luke-warm reviews and was slow to sell, so he was discouraged from depicting contemporary scenes.

Like marriage, widowhood was another form of oppression for Victorian women. They became prisoners to their husband's memory as they had to wear black and for many they became symbols of sorrow and bereavement. The painters of the time depicted them as being vulnerable members of society, much to be pitied which would have appealed to the morbid Victorians.

CONCLUSION

My main objective for tackling this topic was to prove that the Pre-Raphaelites not only painted women as femme fatales in mystical settings, they as a collected group, depicted aspects of womanhood that challenged Victorian society. Their paintings of women at their lowest degradation may appear romantic, but by their use of symbolism strove to illustrate the plight of the prostitute and to a certain extent explain the reason for her degradation. They did not reprimand the man/seducer in these paintings but that failing is part of their Victorian outlook.

The lovers depicted in their courtship paintings were generally melancholy figures due to the sexual frustration of long engagements which was part of Victorian society. The absence of marital scenes in their work is obvious, and I cannot say for sure why that is. However marriage especially for women was a difficult union which greatly restricted their freedom. Perhaps they viewed Victorian marriage with some scepticism.

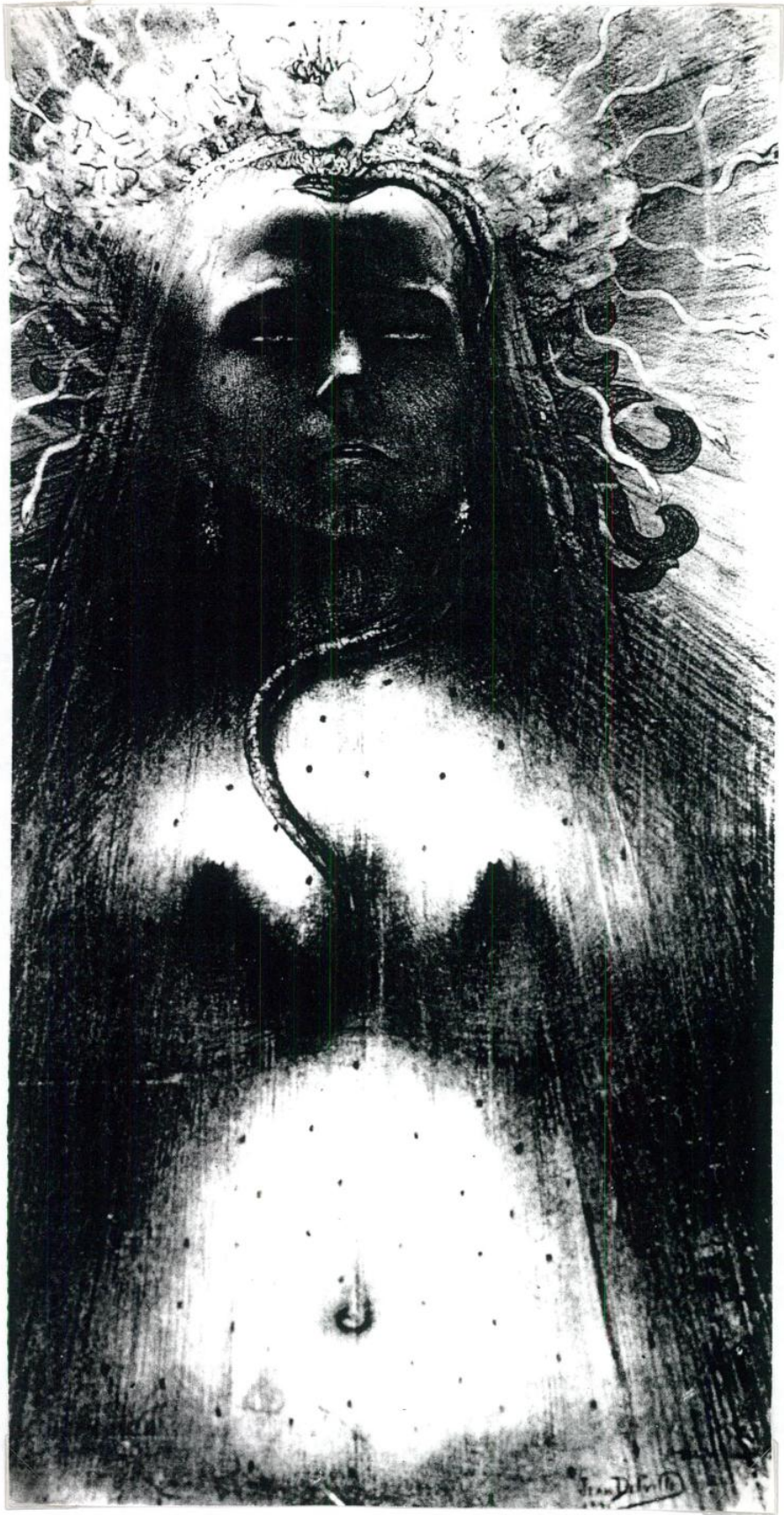
The Pre-Raphaelites belonged to a school of painting that believed the artist was also a story-teller and therefore their paintings contained numerous objects with symbolic meaning. This was not fully appreciated by Victorian society. My inclusion of Mulready with the Pre-Raphaelites was deliberate as he was painting in their style before the formation, and in some ways made their artistic path easier.

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National College of Art & Design

Fine Art Painting

The Representation of Women in the Symbolist and Surrealist Movements.

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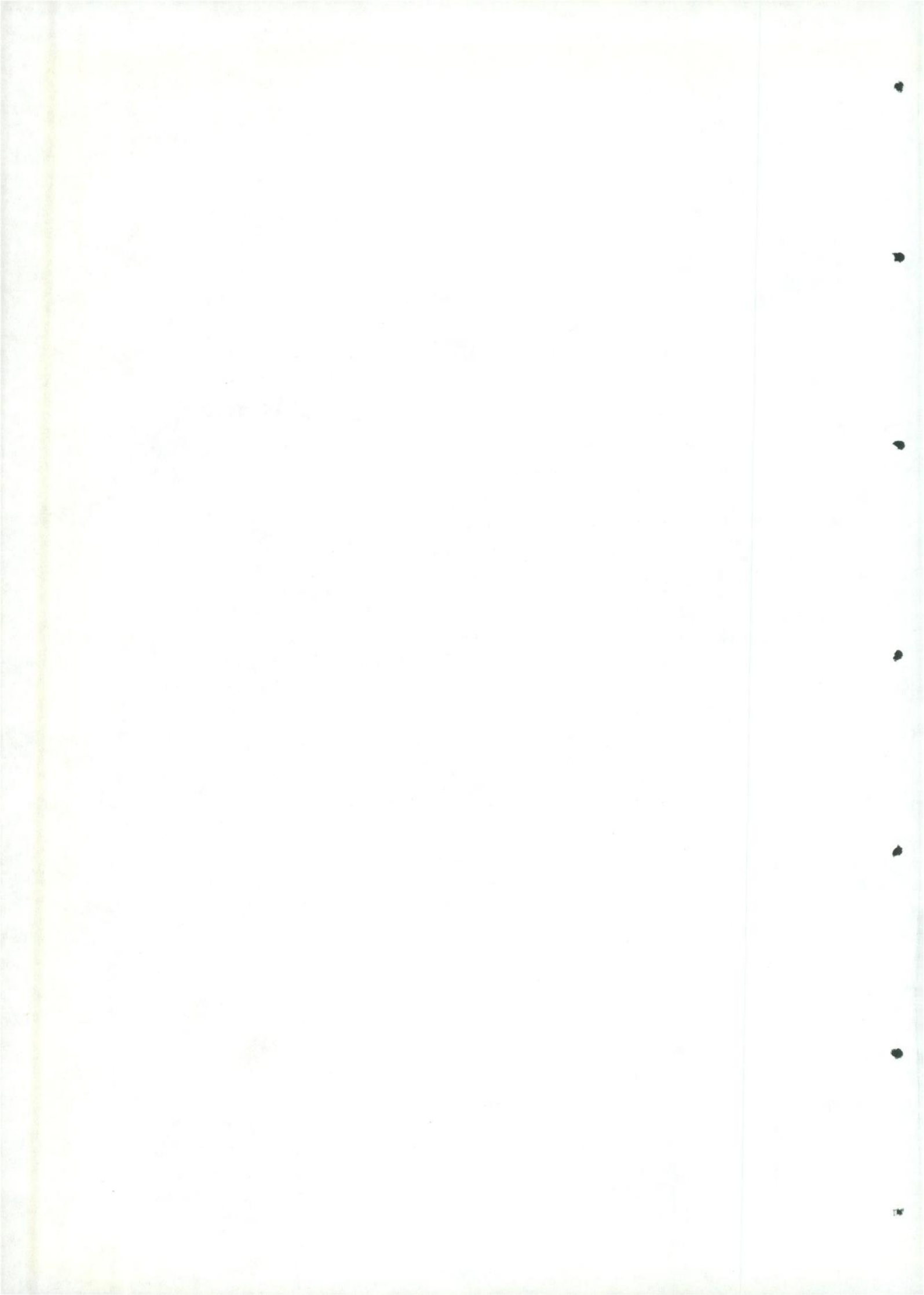
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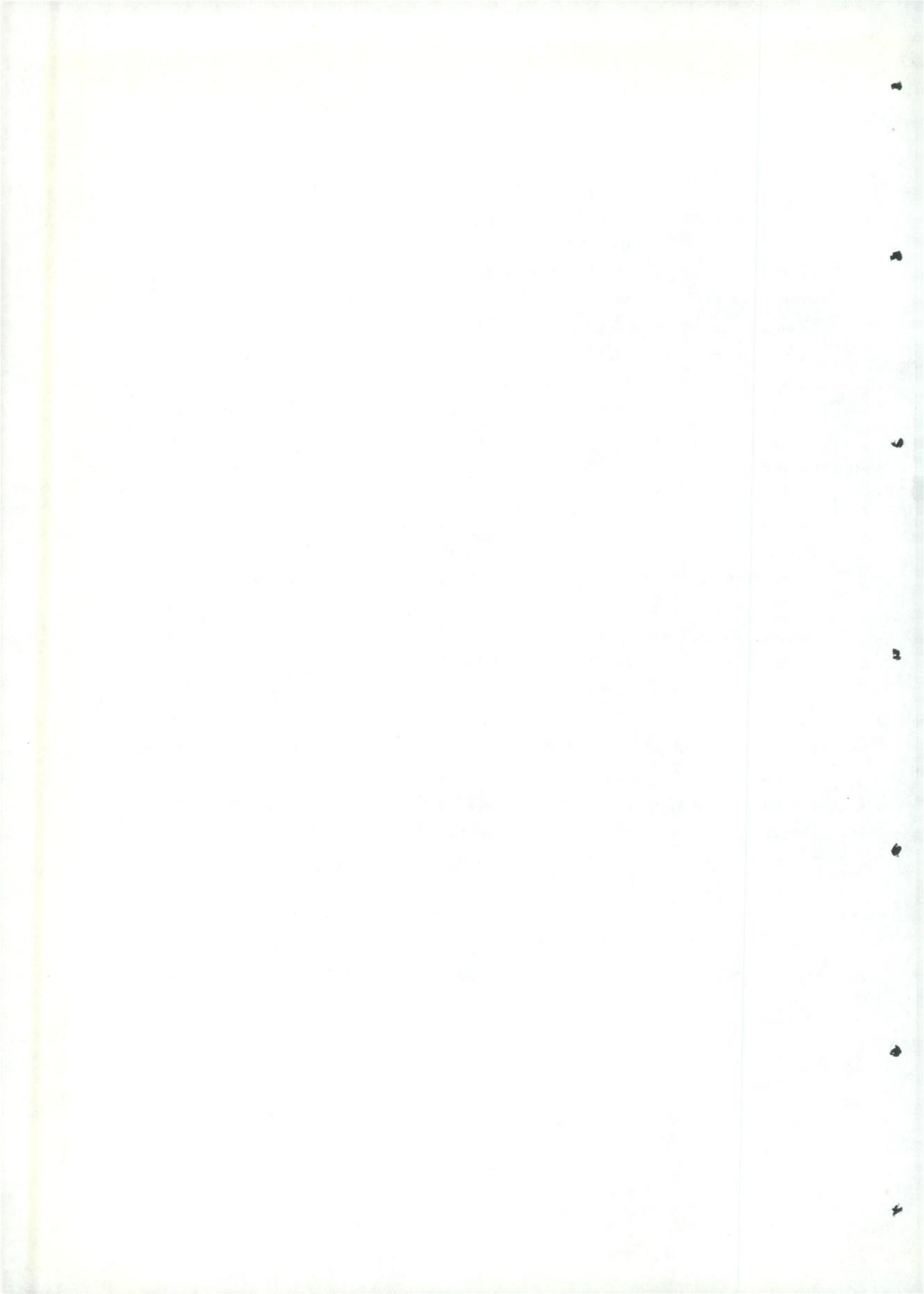


Introduction

The representation of "woman" in Surrealism is commonly perceived to be an extension of the negative representation of woman in Symbolism. As the first Art Movement that demanded an attitude of mind, rather than a style of Painting from it's participants, Symbolism was an obvious precursor to Surrealism. The hostility with which each Movement regarded it's contemporary society is further cause for comparison. It is, however, the manner in which the adherents of each Movement responded to the unacceptability of those societies, which provides the evidence of difference in the intention behind their representations of "woman".

An examination of the response provided by each movement, to the social upheaval and reforms they experienced, illustrates the innovation exercised by the Surrealists in their renderings of "woman" and their celebration of all that is considered to be "female" or "feminine" in Western Society. Conversely, the Symbolists, threatened by the negation of traditional gender roles depicted "woman" in stereotypes that conformed to Christian patriarchal expectations.

Only representations of "woman" by male members of the Movements are considered, as there is no evidence of female artists partaking in the Symbolist Movement. It must be acknowledged that Surrealism had large number of female participants and encouraged creativity in the women who were involved with the group in whatever capacity.

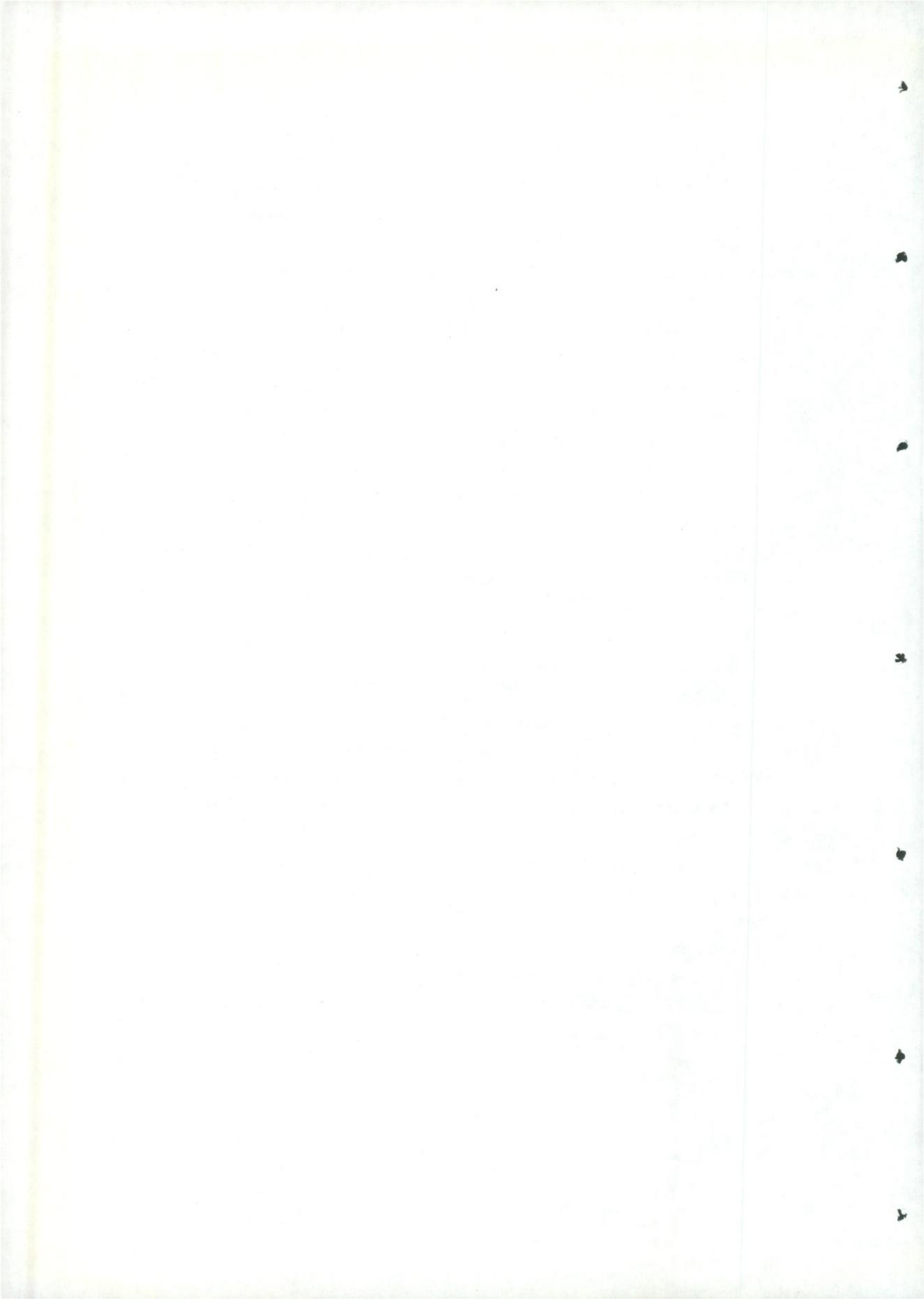


Chapter 1

The study of the nude female figure formed the basis for academic art training and representation from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Traditionally in western society and culture, a marginal role has been ascribed to women artists in the history of painting and sculpture, a role that affirmed the female image as an object of male contemplation in a history of art that could be traced through "Old Masters" and "Masterpieces"

From the early 1970's feminist artists, critics and historians began to question the assumption which lay behind the masculine claim for the universal values of a history of heroic art, which was produced by men and appeared to systematically exclude women's productions from its mainstream, while affirming the image of woman as one of possession and consumption. The examination of woman's roles as "artist" and "art object" raises questions about the relationship between gender, culture and creativity.

Theoretical analysis of feminist issues is divided and undecided in relation to gender differences. Historically, widely held cultural assumptions about women, subsumed women's interests under those of men and structured women's access to education and public life according to beliefs about what is "natural". It has been revealed that women and their productions have been presented in a negative relationship to creativity and High Culture. The binary oppositions of western thought: man\woman, nature\culture, analytic\intuitive have been shown to be replicated within art history and used to reinforce sexual difference as a basis for aesthetic valuations. Qualities associated with femininity, such as "decorative", "precious", "sentimental" etc. have provided a set of negative characteristics against which to measure "High Art". The historical and critical evaluation of woman's art has proved to be inseparable from ideologies which define her place in western culture generally.

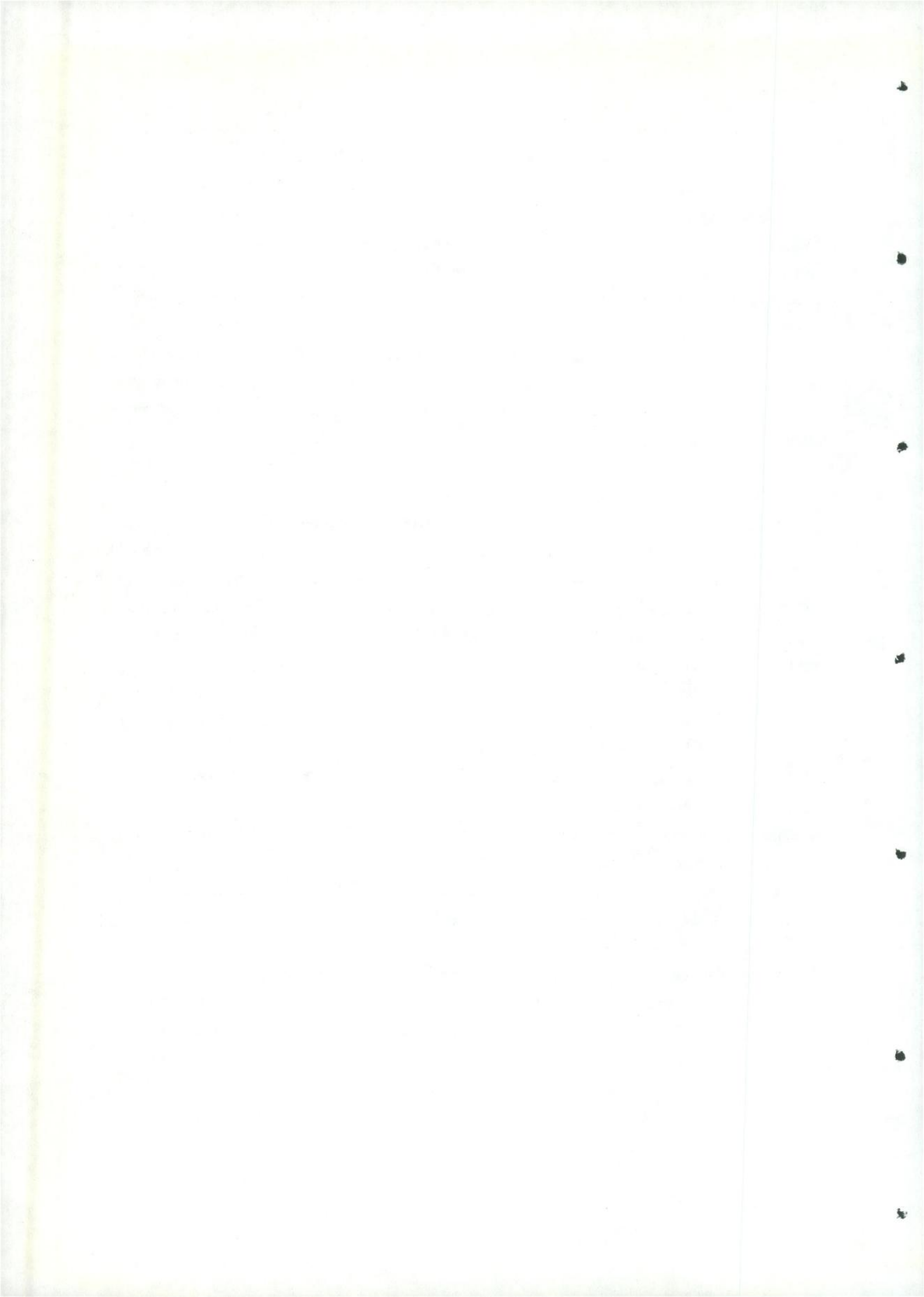


Not surprisingly (with historical evidence illustrating the way in which gender "difference" has been utilised as a means of incapacitating woman) one strain of feminist ideology rejects any notion of an inherent difference in gender, maintaining that there is no biologically determined set of emotional and psychological characteristics which are "essentially" masculine or feminine.

This theory emphasises that as any "real" nature of male or female cannot be determined we are left only with representations of gender. Conversely, a belief in a female nature, or feminine "essence" which could be revealed by stripping away layers of patriarchal culture and conditioning, dominated American feminist investigations during the early 1970's.

As it is no longer acceptable to expect woman, submerged by the demands of patriarchal culture, to confine her activities to the domestic rather than the public sphere, the question arises as to whether the creative process and its results be viewed as genderless, or should female artists lay claim to essential gender differences that might be linked to the production of a certain type of imagery?

The inadequacies of theories based on the ideological and political conviction that women were more unified by the fact of being female than divided by race, class and history have been exposed. Many feminist scholars turned to structuralism, psychoanalysis and semiotics for theoretical models. As a result of these and other theoretical developments, analysis has been shifted away from the categories "art" and "artist" to broader issues concerning ideologies of gender, sexuality and power. Within feminism itself there are now multiple approaches to issues related to women and art. Some feminists are committed to the identification of the ways in which femininity is shown in representation, others have replaced the search for an unchanging feminine "essence" with an analysis of gender as a socially constructed set of beliefs about masculinity and femininity. Still others have concentrated on psychoanalytic explanations which view femininity as the consequence of processes of sexual differentiation.



Within diverse feminist theory, female representation by, male artists, is generally perceived as a means of enforcing negative female stereotypes, historically created within a patriarchal system; one way that patriarchal power is structured being men's control over the image of woman that is seen.

When looking at the issue of representation, it is necessary to consider the notion of intention, or, intention over accomplishment, (a concept alien to western society), wherein, the metaphorical destination or arrival point is considered of more importance than the journey. The rejection of this philosophy is born from the imperialist belief that who or what you have conquered, not that which you have actualised within, is of primary importance.

Separatism or exclusianism has been a factor in the feminist reaction to patriarchy in the Movement towards the emancipation of women. In separatism, feminism, while emulating areas of male oppression, actually serves to reinforce the older patriarchal hierarchy. Imitating those who have wounded you can be an automatic but subconscious defence; to the degree that you become like your oppressor, you institute an illusive security. However, only reintegration and the establishment of a new criteria can reconcile the polarisation of the genders. For this reason, it is necessary to attempt to gain some insight into the production, and the attitude behind the production, of such representations of woman, by male artists, before passing judgement on them. Artistic intention, while just one of many overlapping strands - ideological, economic, social, political - that make up a work of art, can be seen nonetheless as clearly integral to the piece. The generalisation and condemnation of much female representation and objectification, with disregard to intention, coupled with a denial of the necessity to acknowledge the more "subversive" elements of female sexuality, is potentially more damaging to feminist theory than the most offensive objectification has the power to be.



The construction of difference, the creation of some "space" of rage, destruction or sexual "perversion", that man can choose to inhabit, which remains alien and inaccessible to woman, perpetrates the roles of female victim and male victimiser. The acknowledgment of emotion (regardless of how "inappropriate" to the female gender, society decrees that emotion to be) the "presence" or strength in anger, is essential to the maintenance of extreme emotion necessary to resist victimisation.

A feminist denial of the more active, negative or destructive (not self destructive) elements of female sexuality is as repressive as the Victorian cult of "true womanhood" which in presenting woman as morally and spiritually superior to man succeeded in oppressing her with the myth of true "feminine goodness". The feminist indignation poured on eroticised, dismembered objectifications of women, by male artists, is a denial of the need to objectify that which is desired, to consume that which provokes extreme passion and it's illustration of the ancient association between love and sacrifice.

Ultimately this denial is an indication of the success with which women are conditioned by the projection of sexual stereotypes. These stereotypes, created to support the family structure, are necessary to ensure the continuation of capitalism and patriarchy. This conditioning, can result in a deep rooted fear of the emergence of seductive, devouring, uncontrollable "femininity" (the evil sister to "morally and spiritually superior woman" - who together are an example of the polarised image of woman perpetuated through western history and form the basis of the whore\virgin dichotomy.)

The recognition of the necessity to consider the notion of intention behind female representations by male artists, is indicative of the perception of an essential difference in some such representations based on the different ideology or intentions of the artist concerned. This difference is perceived regardless of any aesthetic similarities in such imagery.



The representations of "woman" as presented by the art Movements of Symbolism and Surrealism are illustrative of the way in which such representations can be likened, despite fundamental differences in each group's philosophy and patterns of development - any relationship between the two, on investigation, can be seen to be based on external or superficial similarities.

Through an examination of the socio\economic climate out of which each of these artistic Movements grew, the objectives, aims and ideals behind them and the political and intellectual atmosphere prevalent in society during the birth and life of each Movement, it becomes obvious that they are less similar than is immediately apparent. The notion that the representation of "woman" within Surrealism is just an extension of Symbolist imagery, a form of objectification serving only to reinforce negative female stereotypes, becomes redundant.

Chapter 2

Public eroticism is first seen in the work of Ingres, a predecessor of Symbolism and of influence to the Symbolist Movement. His paintings conformed to the notion of High Art, through historical reference in his subject matter, but such reference was frequently accompanied by the female nude or nudes, providing a means of deriving erotic satisfaction from respected High Art.

In a 20th Century context this academic art of the 19th Century appears stagnant and of less value than the evolving Impressionist Movement. However High Art as influenced by Ingres was the popular art of the time with Impressionism provoking savage hostility - by negating the value of the past, Impressionism was seen as devaluing the status of art. (It has been suggested that Impressionism, while taking science and not culture as it's criterion, was not indifferent to the threats imposed by the dramatic changes in society. The expression of the bourgeois family, the subject matter of much Impressionist art, being a defence against the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the age). Academic art, with it's celebration of the ideals of the past, with reference to the history of culture, was the forerunner to Symbolism.

Symbolist art as emerged from such High Art influences, expressed a determination to separate the work of art from it's historical context and consequently from any link with real time. While claiming to be "above" contemporary life, this art Movement was a product of it.

19th Century reform movements were part of a growing middle class response to the widespread social and economic changes that followed the Industrial revolution. Aristocratic and mercantile capitalism evolved into industrial capitalism, the middle class emerging as the dominant social and political force.

A middle class ideal of femininity evolved. It was believed that the differences between the sexes were almost entirely innate, and those that were environmental in origin, were necessary. Anatomy, physiology and Biblical authority were repeatedly invoked to prove that the ideals of modest and pure womanhood were based on sound physiological principles. Education was believed to decrease femininity. Middle class women were removed from all productive labour, excepting childbirth, and gender was organised around an ideology of separate spheres for men and women. There were no means by which women could make an active contribution to society.

The middle class ideal of femininity stigmatised many groups of women as deviant - those who remained unmarried, those who worked, immigrants and social radicals. (Chillingly similar ideals were legally imposed on German Christian women, prior to the persecution of Jews in 1933, with the outlawing of birth control and the compulsory sterilisation of women suffering "feble-mindedness", blindness, deafness or alcoholism. The Marriage Health Law of 1935 denied the right to marry to those with infectious or hereditary diseases i.e. mongolism or manic depression, and German citizenship was denied to single women).

Towards the end of the 19th Century, the feminine ideal (increasingly recognised as unattainable by large number of women) was being challenged. The powerlessness that middle class women and working class men and women experienced in the face of the institutionalised authority of middle and upper class men resulted in ever increasing social dissatisfaction. Economic realities and the deplorable conditions under which women in the new industries were working intensified the demand for reform by middle class women. There was an ever increasing gulf between the social ideology which criticised female competitiveness and public visibility, and the rejection of the ideologies of class and gender, coupled with the demand for the renegotiation of the terms of feminine dependency.

Aspects of feminine sexuality were constructed around male protection and approval and domestic and family pleasures. Women who rejected the feminine ideals of the time risked being labelled sexual deviants. The theme of women's labour intersects with that of female sexuality. Middle class women were given primary responsibility for managing the home but their lives were tightly restricted in other ways. The stability of the Victorian middle class household rested in part on the existence of prostitutes; domesticated middle class femininity was secured through constant contrast with the perils of unregulated sexuality. The purity and morality of middle class women was defined in opposition to the immorality of the prostitute. The control over the bodies of women and animals was articulated around identification with nature\culture, sexuality and dominance.

The Pre Raphaelite preoccupation with virginity and prostitution preceded the polarised image of woman as represented in Symbolist art. Artistic representation functioned in the construction of female sexuality.

The status of women changed dramatically at the end of the 19th Century with the birth of reforms that challenged the legal subordination of one sex to the other. This changing role of woman in society resulted in the emergence of the "New Woman" in popular literary imagination in the 1890's. Flaunting convention, the new woman was free to drink, smoke, read and lead an athletic life, challenging contemporary female stereotypes. The notion of clothes indicating class and occupation shifted to a preoccupation with clothes as a means of creating identity, the issue of the reformation of women's dress becoming an aspect of wider feminist concerns.

The undermining of traditional gender roles in society, which followed the social changes experienced throughout Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution, was not welcomed by all members of society. One of the myths of patriarchy is that those who oppress do not suffer. This is related to the social denial of a male fear of woman. Culturally man is constructed as a threat to woman; all woman's fear is projected on to man as objects of threat, not as those who inhabit a space of fear, and fear is the instinctive reaction to that which threatens one's position.

"I consider women writers, lawyers and politicians as monsters" declared Renoir "the woman artist is merely ridiculous, but I am in favour of the female singer and dancer". (7, pg 216). Renoir's division of women by class and occupation, his acceptance of those (non threatening) working class women who function for the entertainment of man, conversely, his attack of professional women - usurpers of male authority and destroyers of domestic harmony - illustrates male fear, experienced with the negation of traditional gender roles.

Abraham Kardiner has suggested that the sudden change in the organisation of work and the distribution of roles within a culture, may trigger an increase in the incidence of mental collapse, crimes, magical practise and the incidence of homosexuality.

Kardener, a social anthropologist, believes that as all members of society are taught from infancy to assume the attitudes and activities suitable to their age and sex, the sudden negation of previously correct behaviour and roles, and their replacement with new rules and social demands, can result in mental collapse. Crimes or magical practise can appear to present an escape or solution. The foundation of a man's identity and even virility can be found in the definition of his social role, providing a model for his relationship with the opposite sex - a relationship based on etiquette and the distribution of roles, derived from a set of explicitly acknowledged myths. The sudden loss of the validity of the familiar structure of society, serves to undermine the rules governing relations between the sexes and the assurance of traditional roles. Man reduced to a state of social powerlessness, can find woman's attractiveness threatening due to an inability to gauge the appropriate social response. Such attraction can be perceived as an almost confrontational threat to man's (social) impotence, in the face of society's denial of that which man has been conditioned to believe in as the appropriate reaction to such (sexual) attraction.

(It has been suggested that feminist movements are also manifestations of this fundamental disarray - often being interpreted as asking not that society be reasonable and just, but that it decides exactly what its expectations are of each gender. Thus while striving for solutions through legislative action, the fundamental and unformulated question ultimately concerns the symbolic code that actively shapes every society.)

Symbolism was born from a fear of change which arose from the restructuring of late 19th Century society. The facelessness of the new power structures and the corresponding anonymity of the new oppressors, resulted in some members of society believing that the negation of traditional gender roles was almost wholly responsible for the unacceptable nature of contemporary life. The resultant male insecurity experienced by some, due to the undermining or loss of a sense of identity that accompanied the dismissal of the assumed traditional roles, is evident in those individuals who constituted the Symbolist Movement.

Collectively adopting a philosophy of retreat, they idealised a former safer age when gender roles were clearly mapped. The failure to conceive the possibility of revolutionary change within contemporary society is indicative of the disempowerment they experienced in the face of the said social change. The Symbolists chose to assume a passive or escapist means of dealing with this new society they deemed unacceptable.

Drug experimentation (usually involving laudanum or hashish), the use of magic practise as a means of provoking visual images, and the creation of an elitist platform in the form of the Salon de la Rose + Croix, are all indicative of the Symbolist reactionary and escapist attempts to deal with the unacceptability of contemporary society. Resisting oppression consists of more than a reaction against one's oppressors, but the envisioning of new habits of being and alternative ways of existence. True resistance must begin with the confrontation of pain in self and others, and the desire to change it. The use of escapism to deal with the unacceptable within society is often facilitated by the very society found to be unacceptable. A culture of domination must, by necessity, be a culture of addiction.

The mechanism of the drug war in relation to the mechanism of capitalism in 20th Century society, illustrates the utilisation of addiction by the Establishment as a means of pacifying the oppressed, by creating an illusory sense of empowerment.

The formation of the Rose + Croix as a defence against the threat of contemporary society can be paralleled with a pattern of behaviour visible among some marginalised groups in 20th century society. Protesting certain forms of domination e.g. the notion of inclusion\exclusion, these communities progress to invent their own platform wherein the same practises determine the choice of inclusion. This pattern is a result of individual and collective insecurity, (the emotional condition of the disempowered) experiencing an inability to affirm in a non-exclusionary way.

(The practise of identity i.e. gender, race, class, based bonding, and the the construction of communities in social identification or "sameness", must be rejected in favour of the drawing together of society with a focus, not on the external, but by a commonality of feeling, before a non-polarised society can be achieved)

The passive and escapist means employed by the Symbolists in reaction to their discontent are indicative of a deep rooted insecurity in the collective identity of the group. The separate and diverse thought patterns exhibited within Symbolism, and the variety of styles and lines of development that can be identified as part of the Movement, suggest a group bonded in their alienation from society (a society perceived to be threatening), and an escapist use of drugs and occult practise, rather than bonding within a strong ideological stance.

All change is a form of loss and all loss precipitates pain, the experience of pain being a prerequisite of emotional and spiritual growth. The powerlessness experienced by the Symbolists thus necessitating a retreat into an idealised past, and the denial of their social reality through escapism, indicate individuals both emotionally and spiritually retarded, and an intellect incapable of innovation only the re-iteration of traditional stereo types and symbols.



Illustration 1.

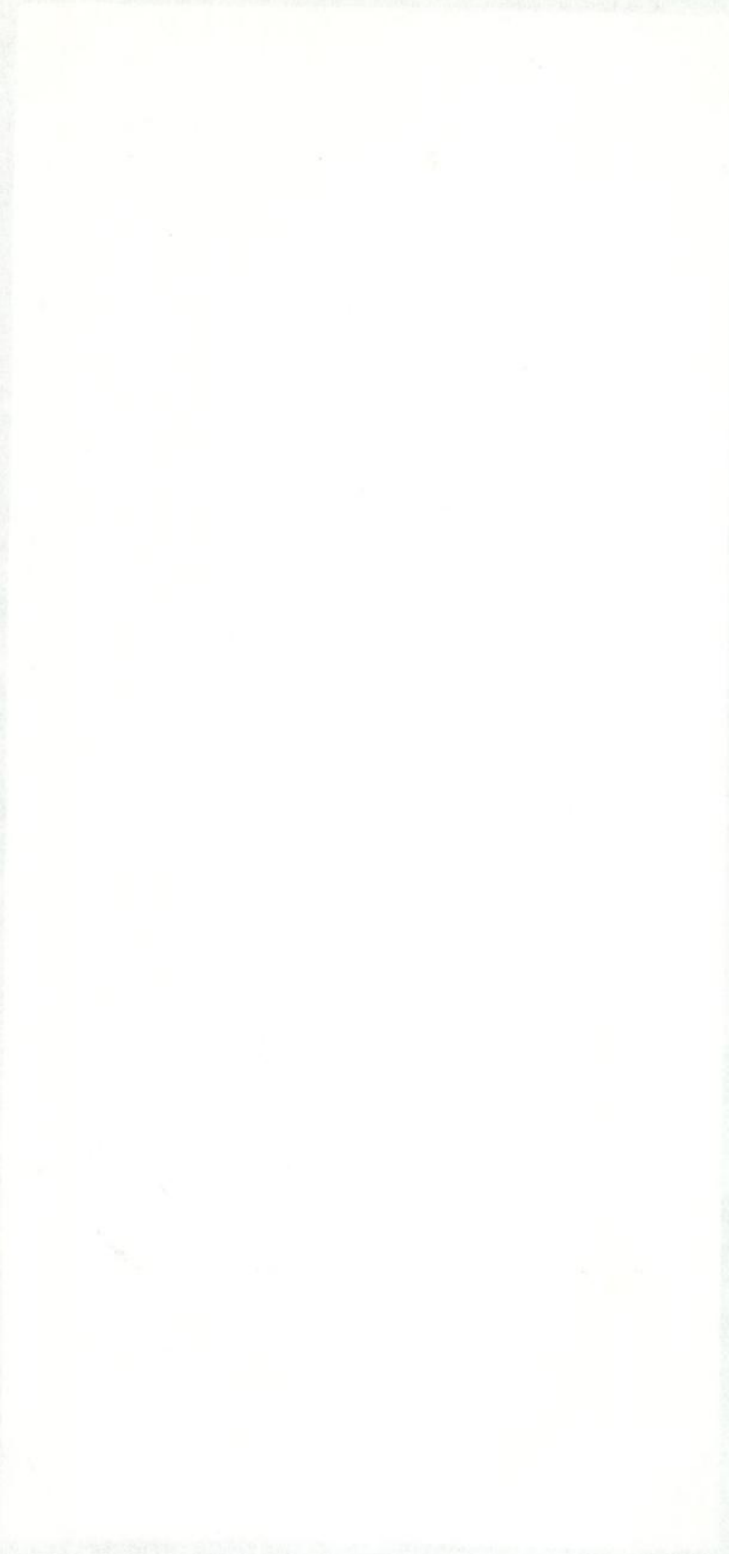




Illustration 2.



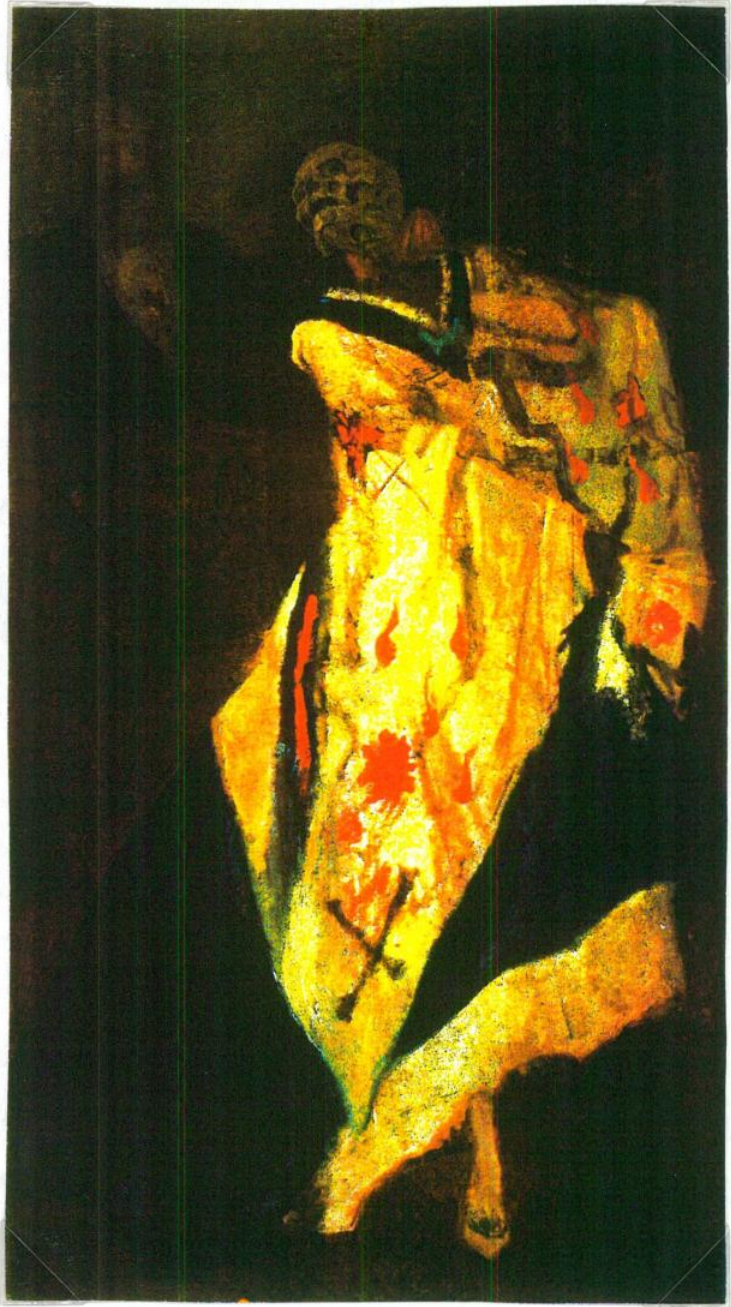


Illustration 3.



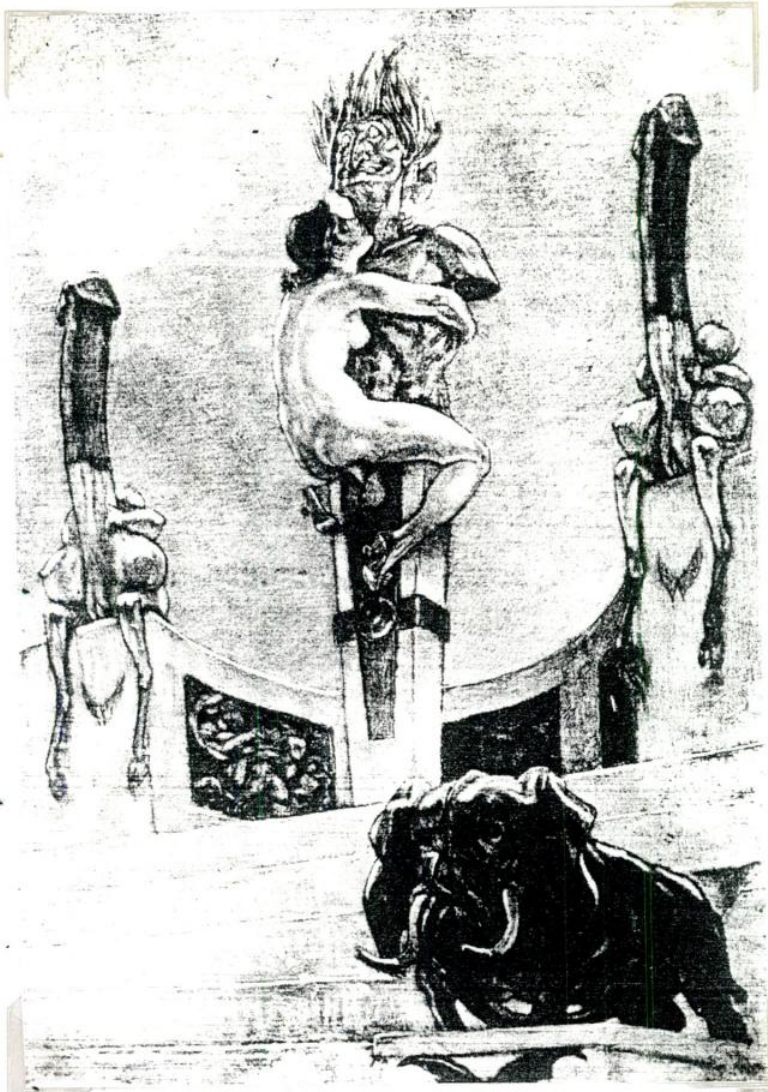
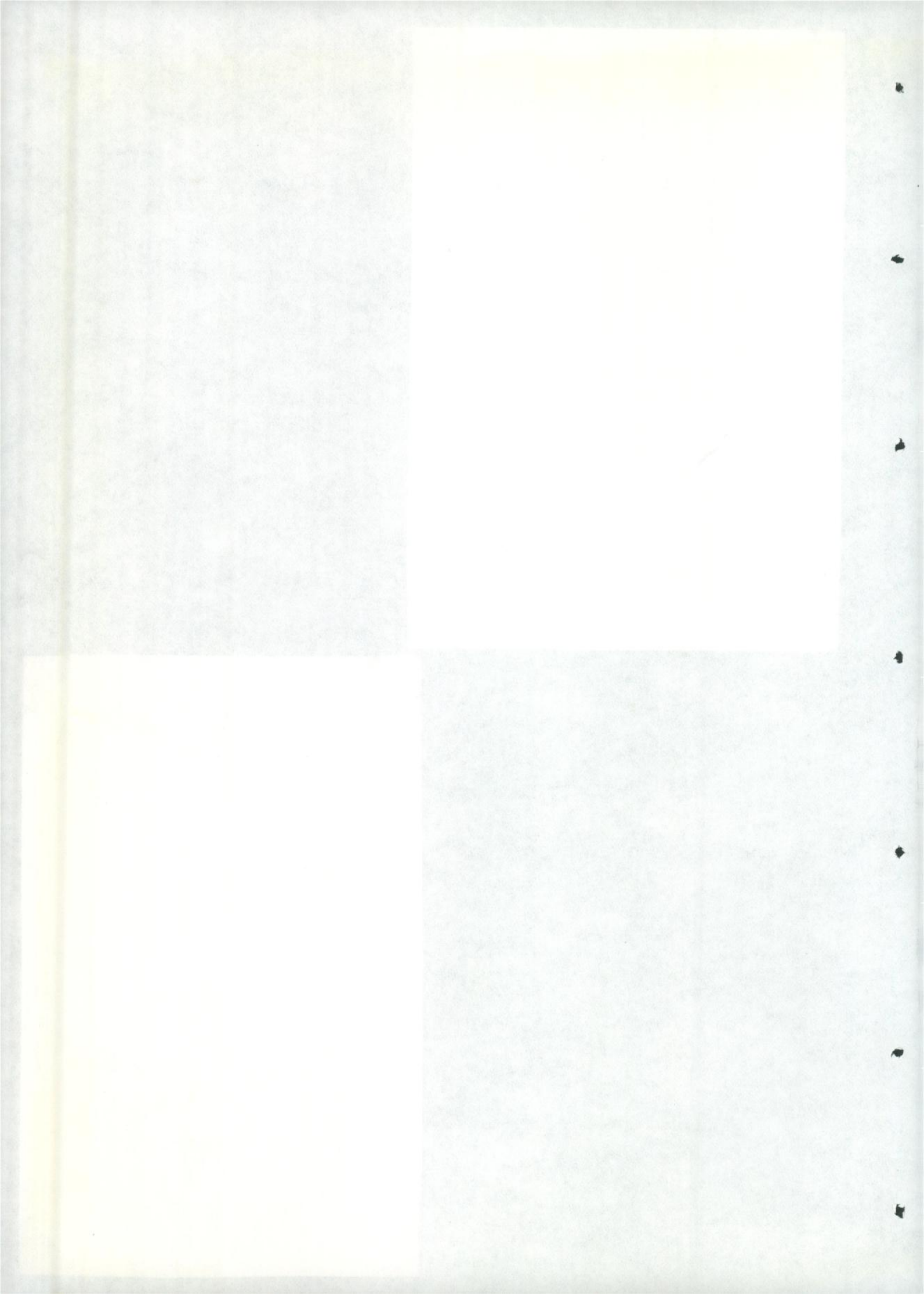


Illustration 4.





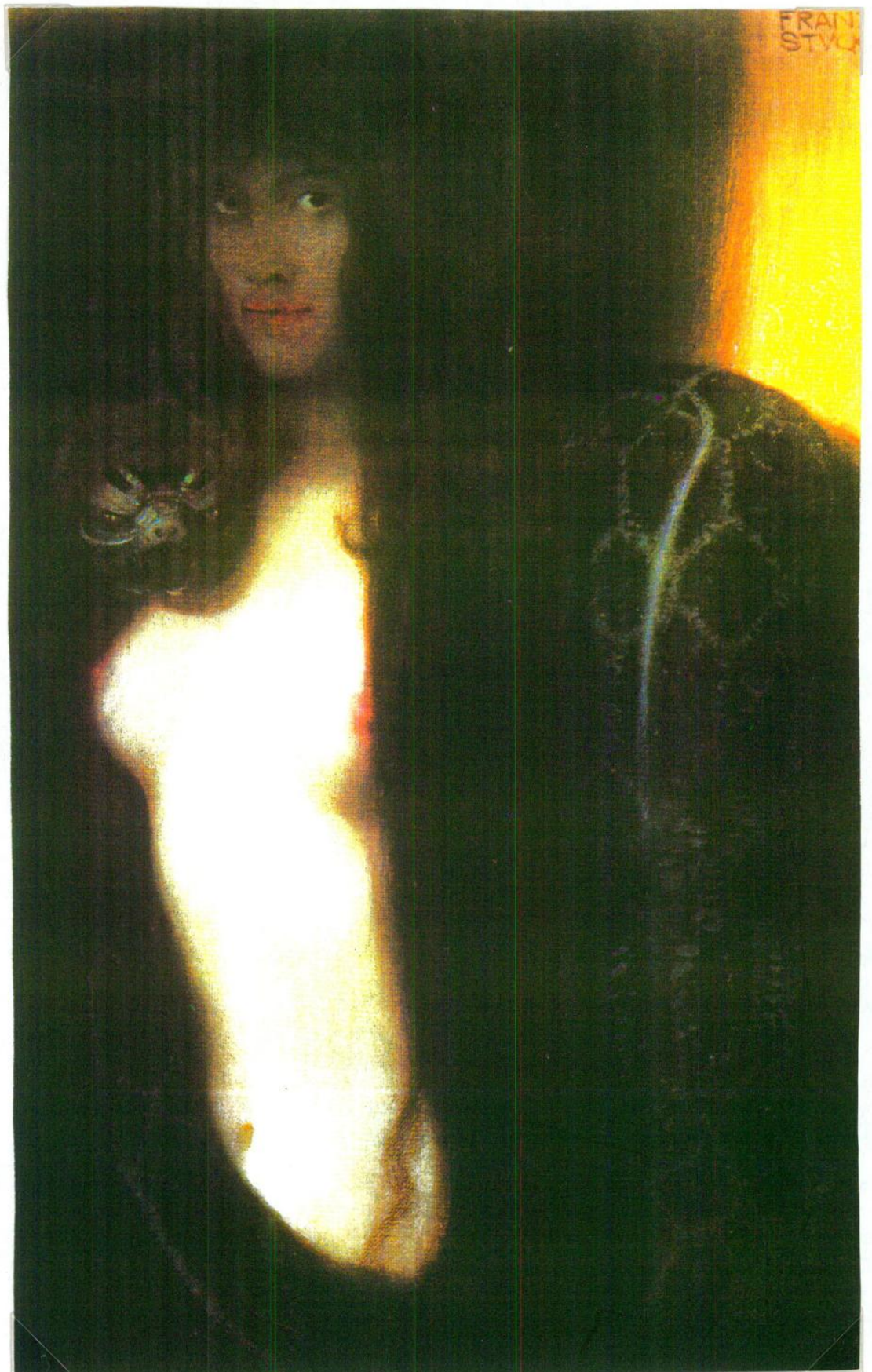


Illustration 5.



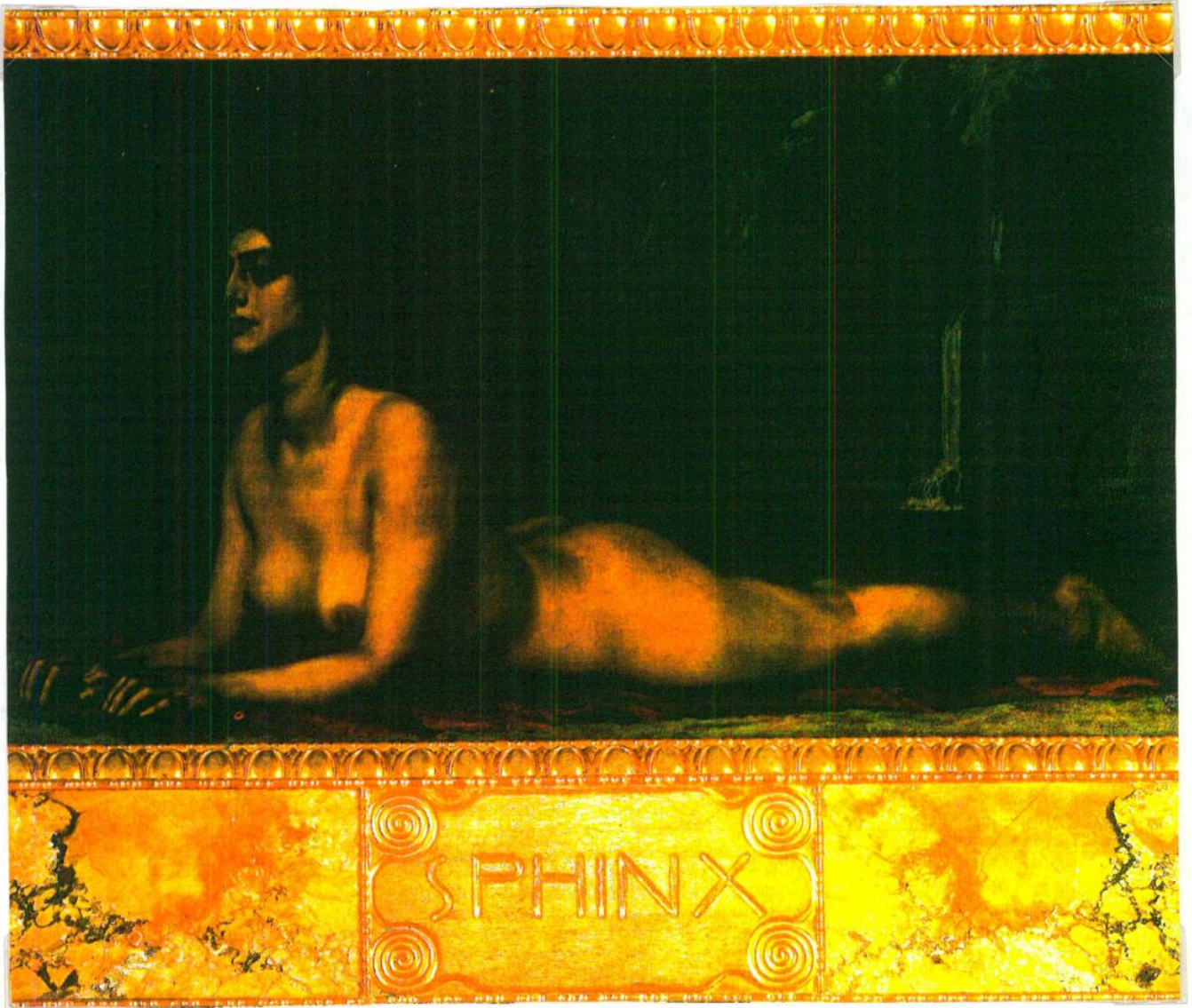


Illustration 6.





Illustration 7.



Illustration 8.



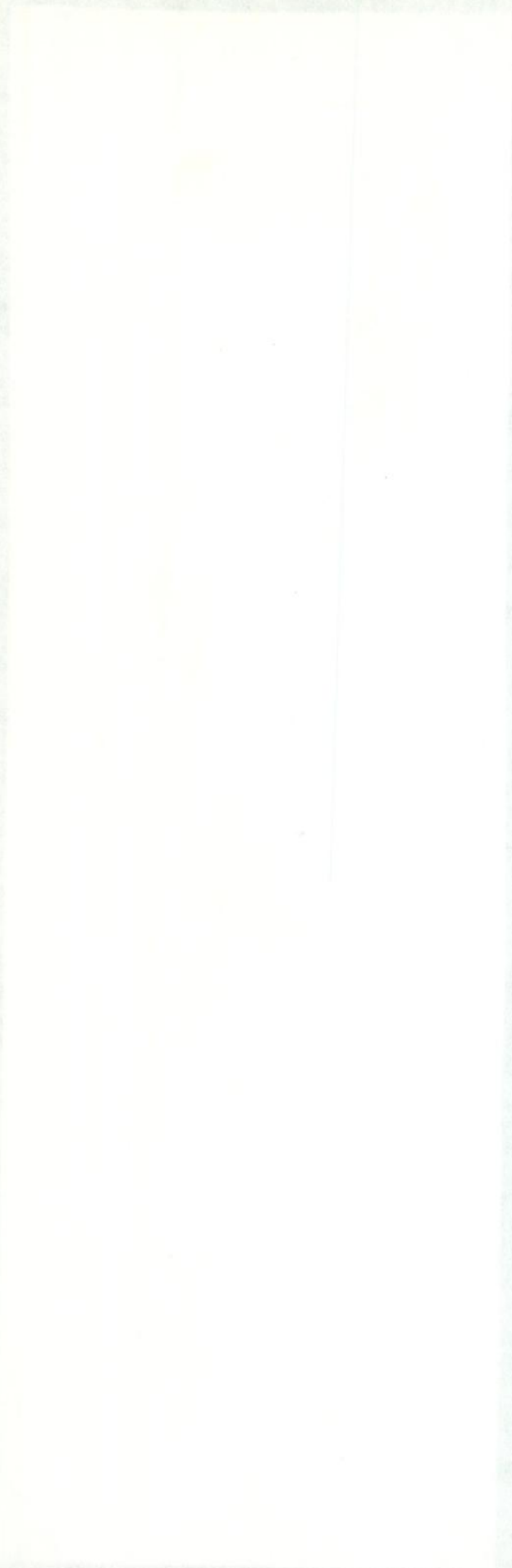




Illustration 9.

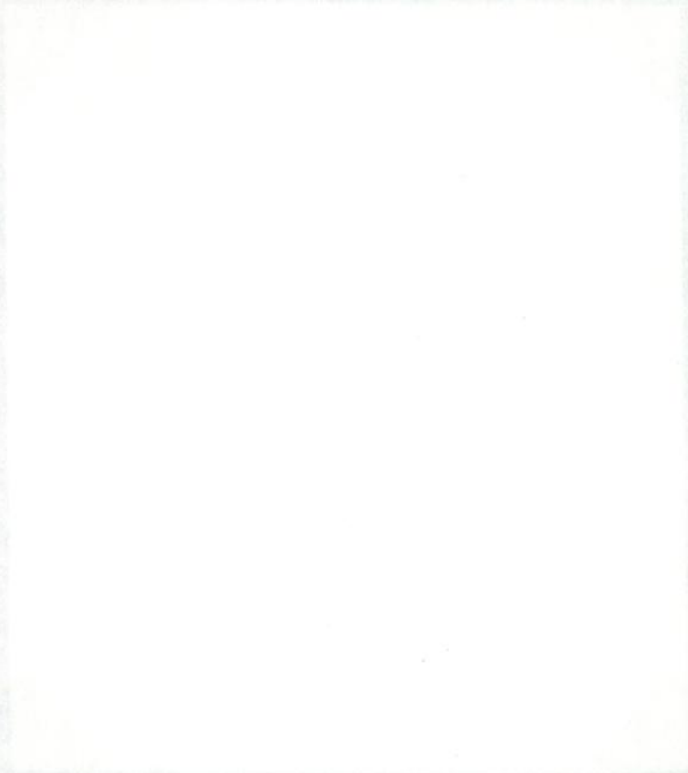




Illustration 16



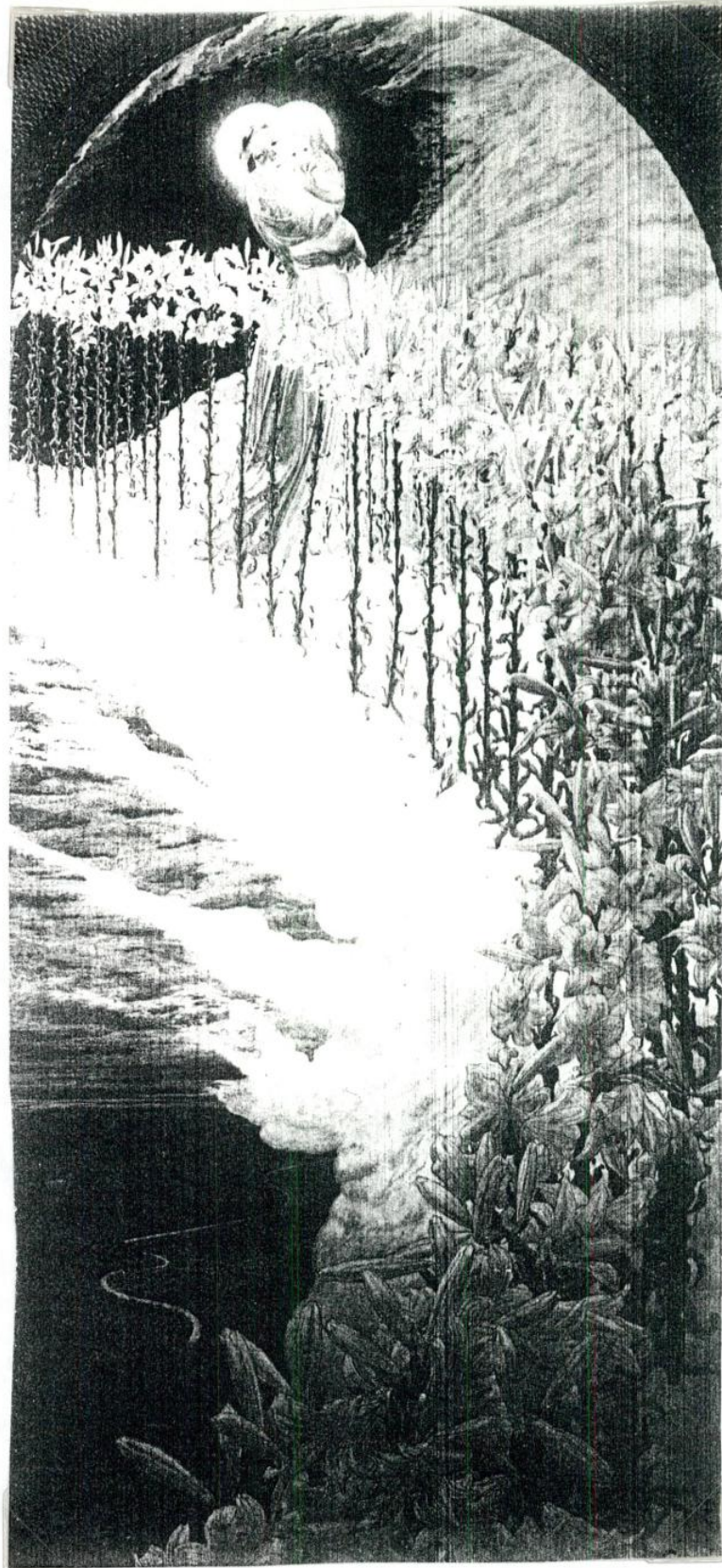


Illustration 1).





Illustration 12





Illustration 13



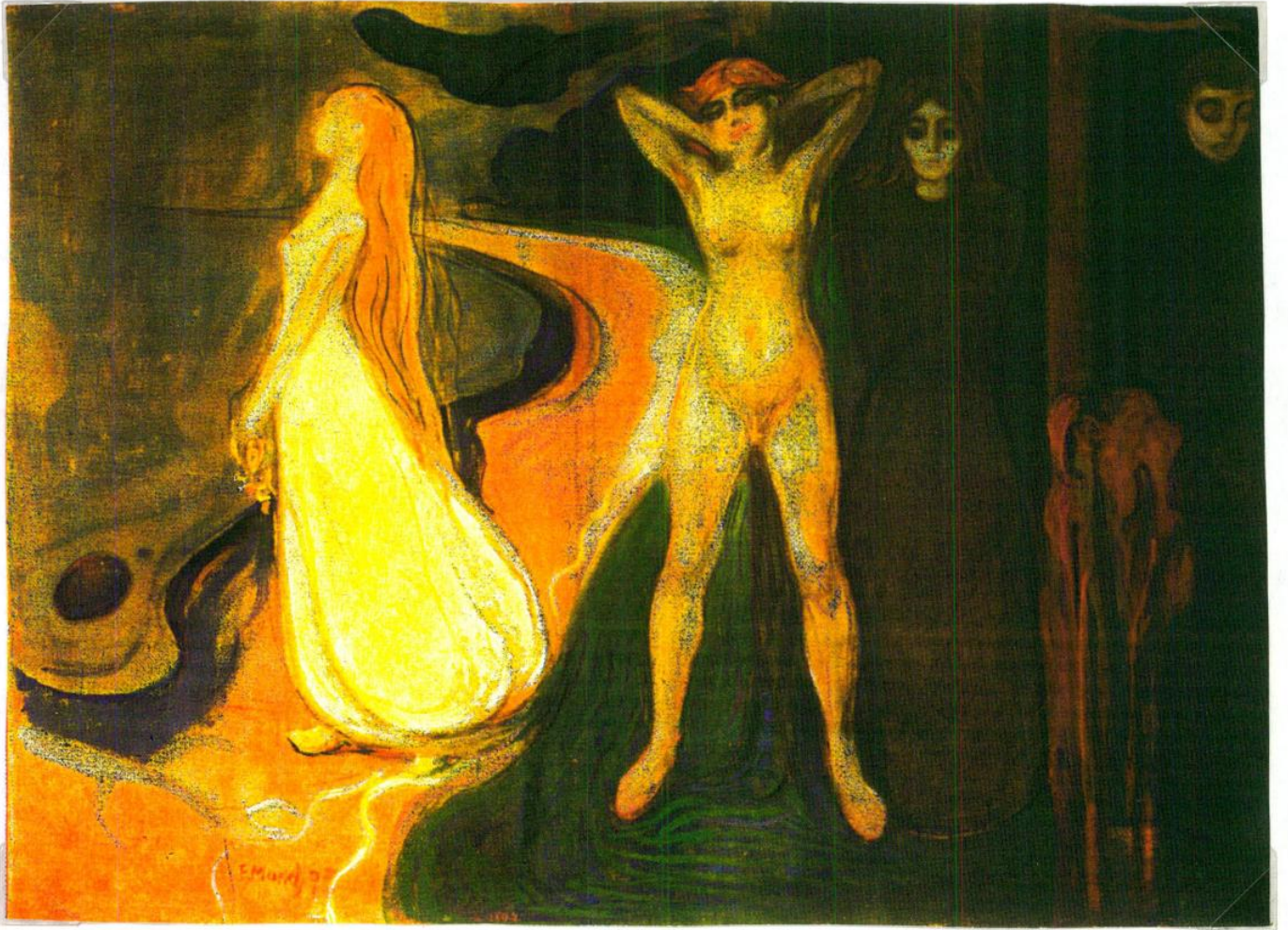
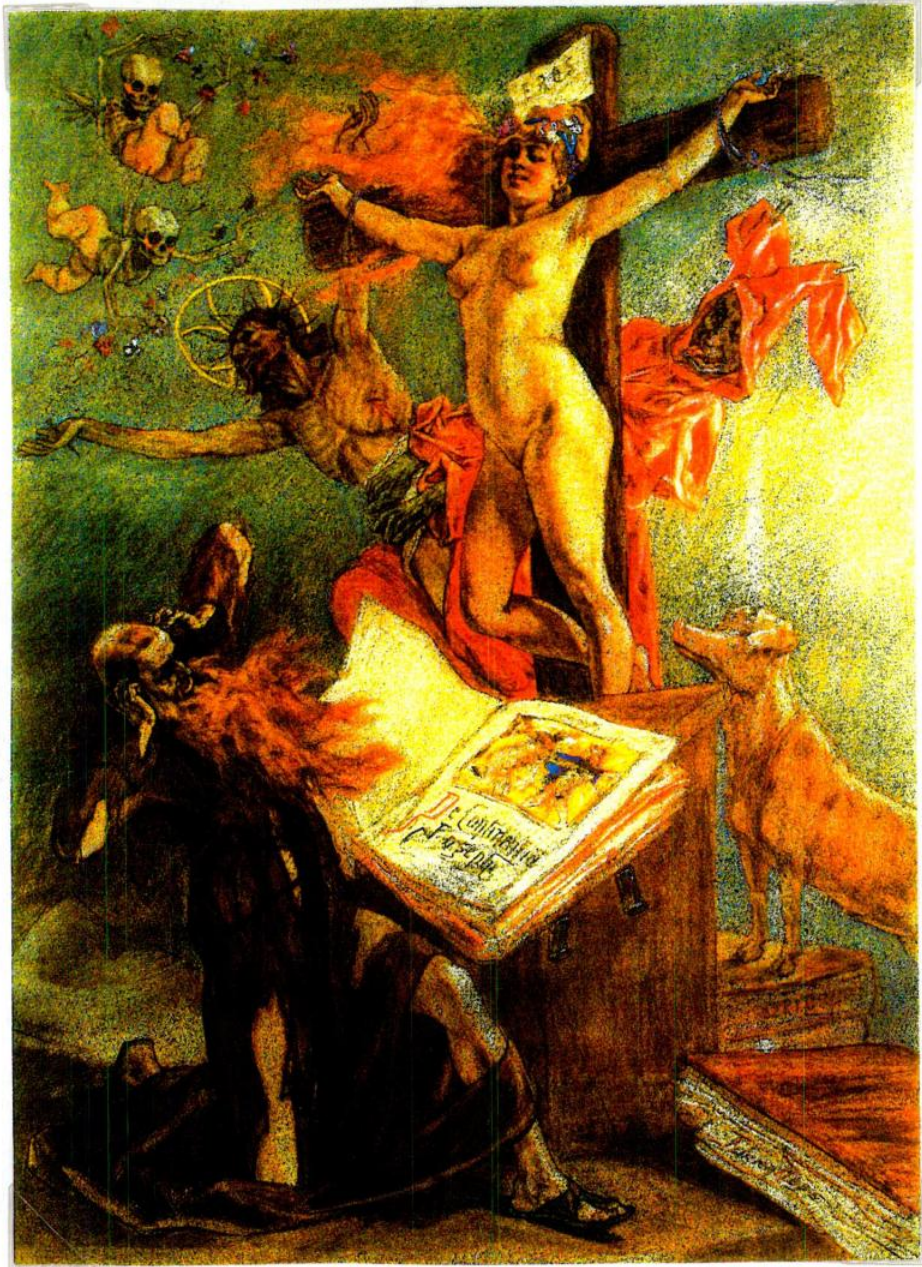


Illustration 14.





Illustration



HERBOL
VIRTUS
LUMBIS
(Augustus)
Rops

Chapter 3

The Symbolist image of woman parallels the polarised image of woman in Christian culture, the whore\virgin dichotomy. The Satanist elements employed in a Symbolist context, were not free of Christian influence. The concentration on sexual behaviour as the root of virtue has resulted in particularly inconsistent attitudes in relation to women and sex within Christian society. This strong polarisation goes beyond Christian influence. The great historical mutations that marked both the end of the 19th Century and the end of antiquity, produced strangely similar fantasies of woman as a perverse and fatal creature. Such views, often thought to have been fashioned by Christianity, can be seen upon closer study, to be a Christian reflection on their own terms, of the opinions held by many members of Roman society, Christian and Pagan.

There are other than Christian explanations for the ambivalent puritan fantasies that surfaced during the latter part of the 19th Century. The romantic spirit evident in such forerunners of Symbolism as Fuseli, Goya and Blake, and the visionary irrationalism they portrayed, was a reaction to social circumstances of a different order.

The French Revolution presented itself as a triumph of reason and led to the Goddess of Reason, in the person of an attractive female, being publicly installed on the altars of desecrated churches, in an irrational and symbolic gesture, intended as a provocation and an act of propaganda. This coincided with a counter trend, leading to the acknowledgement, by Freud, in the name of scientific rationalism, of the irrational powers of the subconscious. Dreams become a focus of interest at the end of the 18th Century, with numerous visionary works being an expression of this - paintings representing the objective power of the inner world. The Symbolist fascination with the separateness of good and evil, and the instincts of life and death, was to be paralleled in Freud's theory of the duality of the two ruling, but rival, drives of Eros and Thanatos, in the unconscious.

The figure of woman as evil and destructive in Symbolist art was weighted against the image of woman as a medium for the expression of an extreme form of idealism. Christian legend and the Bible, in offering a multitude of themes and subjects which deal with the irrational, served as a natural source of inspiration for Symbolist art, whether serving to fuel the imagination or treated in accordance with the traditional conventions and dogmas of the Church.

The portrayal of woman as a disturbing, bewitching or dangerous presence is apparent in the work of Gustave Moreau, (1826 - 1898) an early Symbolist Painter whose influence can be seen in the choice of subject matter of many other Symbolist artists. Essentially "High Art" subject matter; Jacob wrestling with the Angels, David meditating and endlessly Salome, who became, both for Moreau and such writers as Mallarme and Huysmans, the central symbol for the age. The contradictory nature of Salome, both evil and innocent, exotic and sensual, alluring but dangerous, exemplified the Symbolist view of woman.

Salome Dancing (1875) or the so-called Tattooed Salome are typical of Moreau's eroticism and that implicit in the subject itself. The naked body appears to be caught in a web which serves only to emphasise it's sensuality. The lotus motif symbolises sensual pleasure. This rendering of woman as the embodiment of earthly temptation (Salome, the Sphinx, Delilah), is Moreau's expression of the preoccupation of the period.

This tradition, extending back to Baudelaire and Verlaine, and carried on by the Symbolist poets, was found in such different painters as Gauguin, Beardsley, Khnopff, and Munch, all of whom were part of the Symbolist tendency. Moreau's work remains paradoxical, his subjects of an obvious or repressed eroticism, the figures of nubile young girls, never quite fitting into the almost abstract background.

The same fascination with the occult, erotic and Satanic explains the popularity of Felicien Rops, (1833 - 1898) described by Huysman as "celebrating that spiritualism of sensuality which is Satanism - the supernatural of perversity beyond evil" (13, pg 154). Rops, born in Belgium in 1833, adopted the familiar paraphernalia of the Symbolist repertoire, woman's alliance with the devil and her subsequent power over man. He continually illustrated the more erotic elements of Satanism, making many illustrations of unconventional sexual practises which explicitly attacked the sexual mores of the Catholic Church. One print shows St. Theresa masturbating in front of a Bible and phallus, suggesting that mystical ecstasy is an onanistic substitute for sexual ecstasy. Another print, entitled The God of the Mother Superior, shows a nun inserting a disembodied penis into herself, suggesting graphically that God is the phallic principle on an abstract level. Rop's sexual obsession is of the period, as is his diabolism, e.g. his series of etchings titled Les Sataniques (1884), which take the notion of religious blasphemy to it's limits. Rop's drawings, tightly controlled and biting, are like an ironical presentation of the complete Symbolist repertoire. The third print in Les Sataniques series depicts the devil crucified in parody of Christ, with a prominent erection and a woman below with an ambiguous ecstatic expression, who may be dying or in orgasm. Christianity and it's allocation of blame for original sin on woman, has always taken a negative view of female sexuality. Therefore Rop's print, which ostensibly is a Satanic work of art, simply reflect a traditional Christian attitude taken to it's limits, woman crucified with the devil by virtue of her pleasure.

During this period, forms of highly aesthetic Catholicism and Satanism were popular artistic fashions rather than serious ideological stance, Satanism being a reaction against society, especially the taboos of sex, death and religion.

In another work, an oil painting titled Death at the Ball, Rops portrays a richly attired skeleton, striking the seductive pose of the dancing girl, and apparently flirting with a figure who can just be made out in the darkness. Rops often associated the idea of death with the female sex. His Satanic denunciatory vision, not so much edifying as conniving at lechery, earned the artist a notoriety that scandal and loose living confirmed. Rops success resulted from this form of cultivated Satanism, his representation of woman, in the opinion of Huysman, being "not contemporary woman...but the essential and timeless woman, the naked and malignant beast, the handmaiden of darkness, the absolute bondswoman of the devil". (10, pg 66).

Today Rop's work is more likely to be seen as prurient eroticism, than having any moral significance. But during his lifetime Rops was seen as the artist who revealed Satan's hold on mankind in an era that held a definite belief in the devil. Freud himself in Delirium and Dreams in Jenses Gradive (1907), an essay treating the problem of death and immortality, cites one of Rop's engravings to illustrate the process of repression. Rops expressed with force the situation of the "fin de siecle male", convinced of his superiority over the weaker sex, but filled with anxieties about women and struggling to repress the libido that drove him towards venal sex and exposed him to the frightening diseases which were often the consequence. From Baudelaire to Gauguin stretches the list of victims of the "mas syphilitica" which Rops depicts as a disease-wasted woman brandishing the scythe.

Franz Von Stuck (1860 - 1928), produced endless depictions on the Symbolist theme of woman as destructive and evil. Considered Germany's foremost draughtsman and regarded as an Avant-Garde artist as a result of the role he played in the Munich Secession, Von Stuck taught and influenced such painters as Klee and Kandinsky. The group's programme was based on symbols, above all the richest of unconscious archetypes, the snake - described by Gaston Bachelard as the "animal subject of the verb to entwine" (10, pg 103) - provocative, seductive and Satanic.

Von Stuck continually repeated images that produced facile effects; seductive but deadly sphinxes (which had none of Moreau's restraint), sin and vice represented as nude women, shown from the waist up or sprawling full length, perversely entwining with disproportionately large examples of snakes, that have nothing to do with Biblical Symbolism, but can be interpreted as little more than bizarre sexual objects. Under the moral pretext of admonishing his contemporaries, Von Stuck offered them the spectacle of his own fantasies.

The kiss of the Sphinx (the sphinx being the specific symbol of evil in Symbolist painting), is an example of the artist's use of mythological subject as a vehicle for the depiction of human passion. In order that these erotic scenes would not be instantly seen as such, he set them in a legendary background. The painting Sensuality, a provocative nude, is typical of Von Stuck's portrayal of woman's physical presence underlined by the obviousness of the sexual Symbolism. His subject is brilliantly picked out of shadows, out of which materialises a giant snake, rising up between the subject's thighs and across her stomach, it's hissing face held next to hers, the snake and woman merging into one creation. This statement of woman's association with the devil invites comparison with Rops.

Von Stuck's mythological and allegorical figures, many embodying the concept of sin, represent an ornamental Symbolism that is often equivocal in feeling. His use of the femme fatale and the snake offer subject matter which provoke interpretation as Biblical, a version of Eve and the Serpent clearly depicting the bi-polar representation of woman in Symbolist art.

Both extremes of this representation of woman can be found in the work of Fernand Khnopff (1858 - 1921) the most international of the Belgian painters, and influenced by Delacroix, Moreau and Burne-Jones. Khnopff considered art a median between the visible and the invisible. In many of his paintings, isolation is seen as the necessary condition of purity. This yearning for a world of higher things is contained almost entirely in his iconography and very little in the expressive forms of his compositions. Great care is taken to ensure that one does not mistake the meaning of his untouchable women.

Though worked realistically, the subject is represented as being very other-worldly, a symbol of the ideal of abstract beauty, for which Khnopff believed man longed, despite his inability to perceive it. This virginal character, often found in Symbolism, is the opposite of the Movement's other representation of woman as the embodiment of evil.

Khnopff's characteristic style appears in Une Sphynge, the first of a series which depict the ideally evil woman, the enigmatic temptress with the seductive ironic smile. This image of man's baser side, seen as a woman, both appealing and domineering, whose animal nature associates her with snakes and leopards, Khnopff repeats in a variety of guises. True to the obsessive symbols of his time, Khnopff's portrayal of the other type of woman is equally remote and inaccessible; she is the strong-willed, self-assured, idealised embodiment of all that is pure and good, as in the painting A Portrait of the Artist's Sister, where the figure is shown as being indifferent and remote. Khnopff's sister often modelled for his paintings, dressed in a suitably chaste fashion and often carrying a lily as an attribute of the pure ideal she represented.

Khnopff's sphinxes stem from Moreau. He used this subject for several paintings, a later version was described by critics at the time as being an "interesting symbol of the struggle between the desire for earthly domination and the desire for voluptuous abandon" (10, pg 185). This description achieves the same tone of expression as most of the works by Khnopff, whose paintings, for the most part, represent the most cliched and banal of images. It is in Art, a painting produced in 1896, also known as Caress or The Sphinx, that one can see the ambiguity of title and image that are typical of the disturbed quality of Khnopff's evocation of woman. The painting depicts two figures, one a youth armed with a caduceus, but nonetheless ambiguous, and the other a woman with the body of an animal. Sensual pleasure and the dominance of mind are the terms of this duality, causing one to consider what the artist's experience of femininity had been.

In Otto Greiner's (1869 - 1916) painting The Devil Presenting Woman to the People, the artist offers an ably-executed but trite expression of the familiar Symbolist theme of woman as an instrument of the devil.

The scene is allegorical, bringing to mind a number of myths, the story of Pandora or of Helen of Troy, depicting woman as the sower of discord. Greiner's picture expresses no more than the basest of puritanical platitudes, however the female subject of the painting states her case without a trace of ambiguity. While the female subject of Von Stuck's painting Sin is a woman of mature sensuality, disturbing only because of the dark reptile who accompanies her, Greiner's woman is portrayed as an unattractive harridan. This work makes manifest, more blatantly than the work of a more original artist could, a certain latent view of woman that has been seen, perhaps less obviously, in numerous Symbolist paintings.

Greiner's painting bears comparison with the work of another Symbolist, Jean Delville (1867 -1953) in particular his work Satan's Treasure or The Treasure of Satan (1895). This artist's work is often determinatively erotic, Satan's Treasure being an expression of this. The painting portrays a group of women in the throes of demonic possession, the power of the devil, as portrayed by Greiner, lying in his seductiveness. This painter's work is typical of the most extreme elements of the Rose + Croix.

While Satanism and perversity attracted painters like Delville, Roman Catholicism was of equal attraction to painters like Carlos Schwabe (1866 - 1926), who produced images of woman corresponding to the Catholic ideal, as in The Virgin of the Lilies. Symbolism was mainly a product of that part of the industrial world with a Catholic tradition. The Movement can be seen to be as much a reaction to the taboos and constraints of Catholic culture and society as a development of the symbolic heritage of Catholic religious art in a new and frustrating cultural situation. Symbolism did emerge in Protestant countries, probably owing much to the interaction between artists travelling in Europe. In Norway, Edward Munch (1863 - 1944) emerged as part of the Protestant fringe of Symbolism.

Norway then was austere and taciturn, the cautious quasi-ritualistic middle class imposed a rigid code of conduct on all its members, but this highly visible sense of decorum, deeply imbedded in custom, was no more than the outward social manifestation of a more fundamental reality; the Protestant dialectic of individual responsibility and salvation.

Munch was obsessed by the experience of failure, the central theme of his work. Unlike Symbolist works elsewhere, his paintings never touched on the subject of myth, restricting itself to the fundamental issue of the relationship between the sexes. He used his spasmodic line of distress to record the femme fatale, magnified by her refusal to procreate. There are three versions of the Madonna, but these are far from being as innocent as the 1894 version was interpreted to be by the Polish poet Stanislas Przybyszewski, who suggested " it caught the moment when the mystery of eternal conception fills the woman's face with glorious ecstasy."

(10, pg 98)

This image of the Madonna is in fact surrounded by spermatozoa and foetuses, which could be seen to signify the sterility inherent in the trap which woman sets for man. Munch viewed the relationship between men and women as anguished and destructive. Woman is the vampire who sucks men's blood - The Vampire (1894), she is the source of guilt and remorse - Ashes (1894), anguished passion - Jealousy (1896), suffering - Separation (1896), and haunting obsession - Man's Brain (1897).

Paintings that express a more positive relationship between the sexes are rare. Among these are The Kiss (1895) and Dance of Life (1899), but these merely deal with the preliminaries of love. The final outcome, as represented by Munch, is always the same; man emptied of his substance and strength as a result of encounters with woman.

In Munch's work, one is forced to consider the function of the repeated representation of hair, long, rich, flowing, fluid, dark waves whose erotic blackness probably derives from some Satanic mythology. This representation of hair can be seen as a fetish object and is one of the most striking features of Symbolist art. Flowing hair was a device also much used by the Pre-Raphaelites to indicate feminine mystery. This representation of hair contains something of woman's ideal essence, a symbol of a spirit both pure and dangerous. The hair of the enigmatic women painted by Khnopff helped to establish the sensuous attraction and cruel self-absorption that both accompany and contradict the purity of the ideal image.

As Symbolist woman has a double nature, so too her hair can be a symbol which fulfils both functions. The depiction of hair can be the sign of her benign aspect (symbol of man's aspirations), so also it can be used to express her malevolent aspect. The depiction of hair has to be considered in relation to the basic male fear, from a sexual point of view, of castration, or more specifically, the castrating female. This fear and the power it has to render the subject impotent, is implicit in the story of Samson who "loses his strength". The fear of castration is expressed through symbolic displacement, so the head not the sexual organ, is cut off. The persistent repetition with which Salome is depicted in Symbolist paintings, and the continual representation of woman "empowered" with luxuriant heads of hair, can be seen as further evidence of the female threat experienced by the male Symbolists. Woman's hair, through representation and design, becomes the symbolic force which, for good or ill, woman exercises over the will and psyche of man.

The polarised image of woman that emerges in Symbolist art is a representation of woman based in the most extreme of stereotypes. These stereotypes were created and utilised by a Christian patriarchal society as a means of retaining social control. Beyond merely identifying men as victimisers, the need for the recognition that man can be just as crippled by society's manipulations as woman, is evident in the Symbolist reaction to the changes within their contemporary society.

The need to affirm the male role through the representation of traditional female stereotypes and glorification of the past, is illustrative of the collective sense of social impotence experienced by the group, and the reactionary form their protest took. The inability to institute, or attempt to institute, change, deepened the sense of powerlessness experienced by the Symbolists. The celebration of woman in the form of the Christian moral ideal, would seem inevitable in the face of the threat of the "New Woman" as experienced by this group of men. Equally, the opposite extreme - the myth of woman as the instrument of the devil - was the perfect means with which to justify the escapist measures by which the Symbolists protested against society. The creation of woman with irresistible power, exorcised these men of all blame for their excursions into immoral or antisocial behaviour. Reduced to the role of victim, the Symbolists could not be held responsible for their reactions against society, in the face of temptation.

It can be unquestioningly stated that the polarised image of woman depicted by the Symbolists, illustrates a state of powerlessness, resulting in a reaction towards society from within, as opposed to an attempt to institute change by means of action against the structure of the said society.

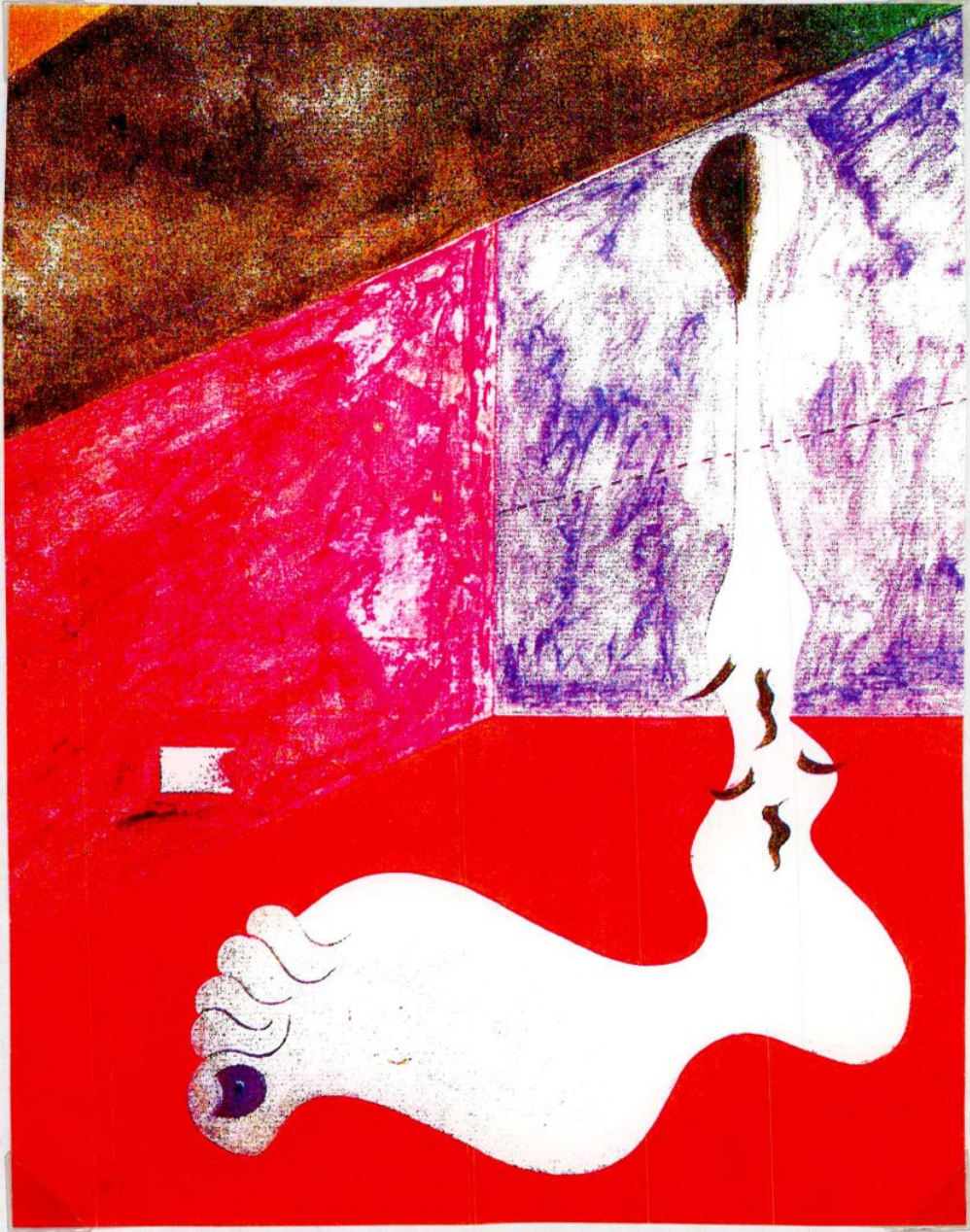


Illustration 15





Illustration 16.



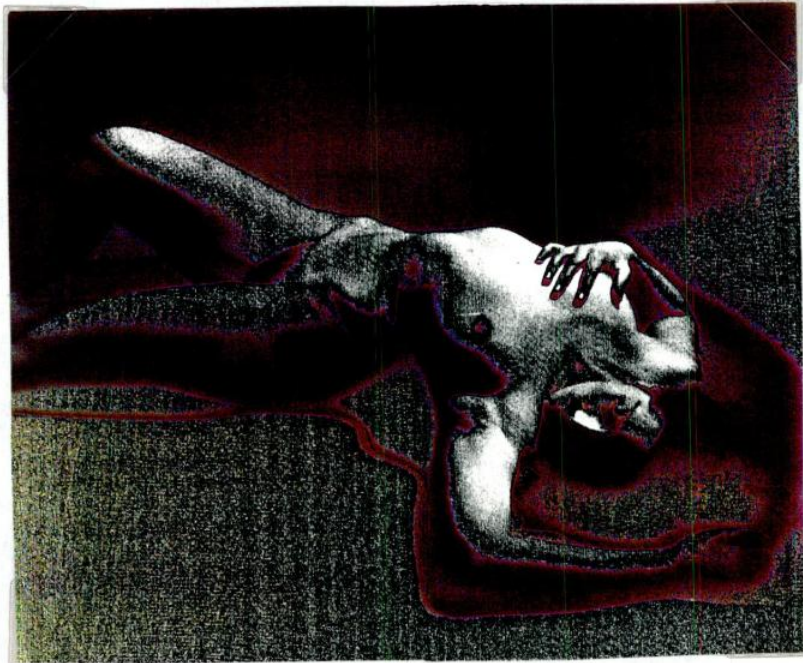


Illustration 17



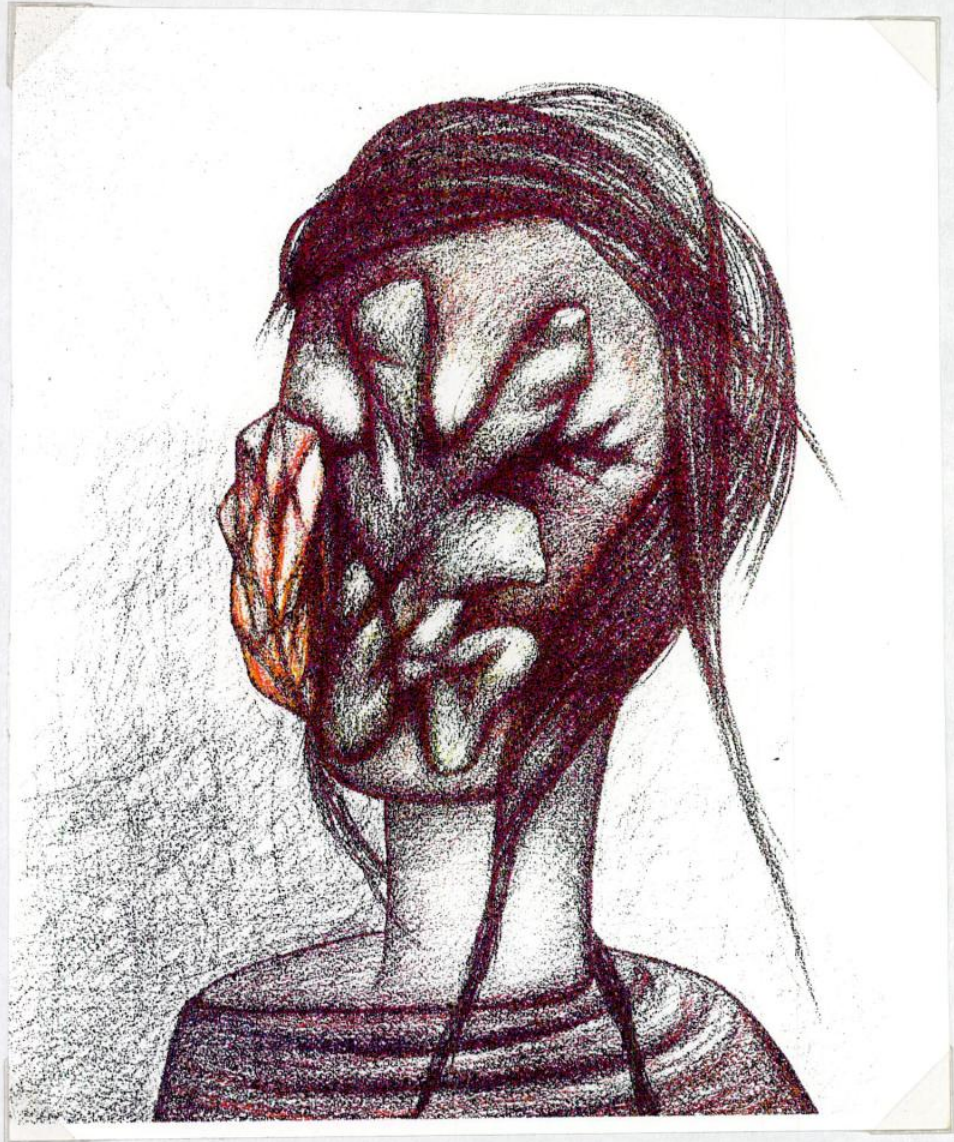


Illustration 13.





Illustration 19



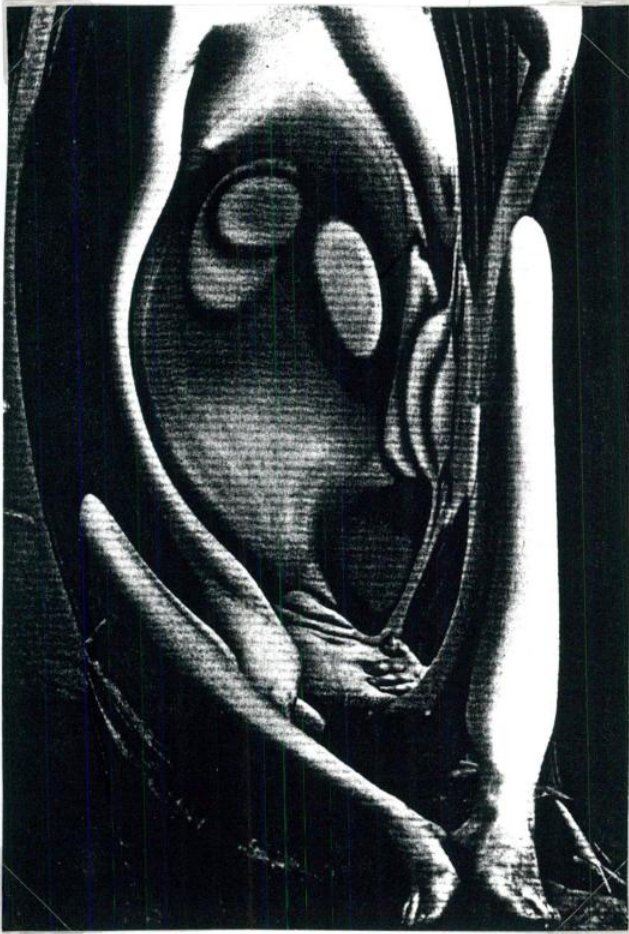
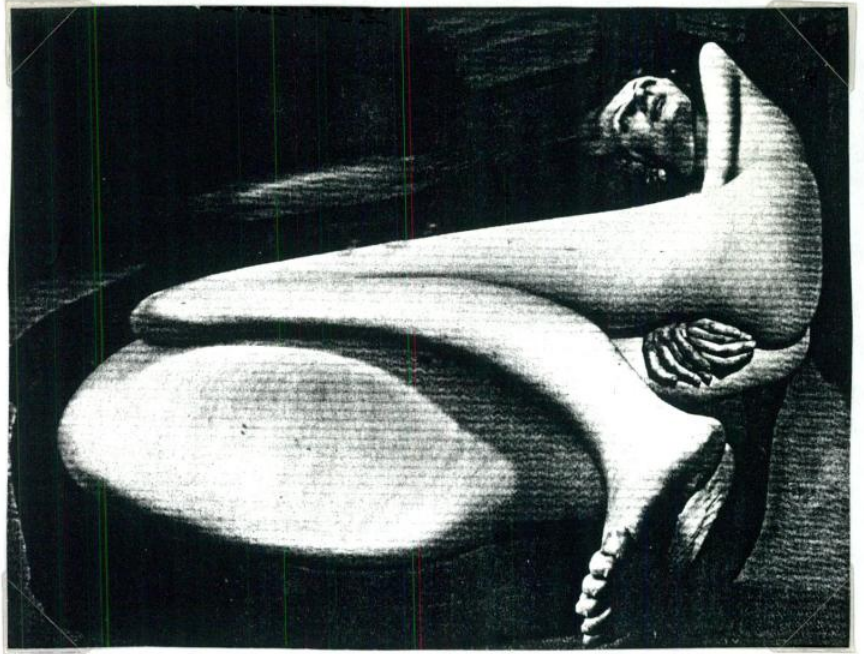


Illustration 20





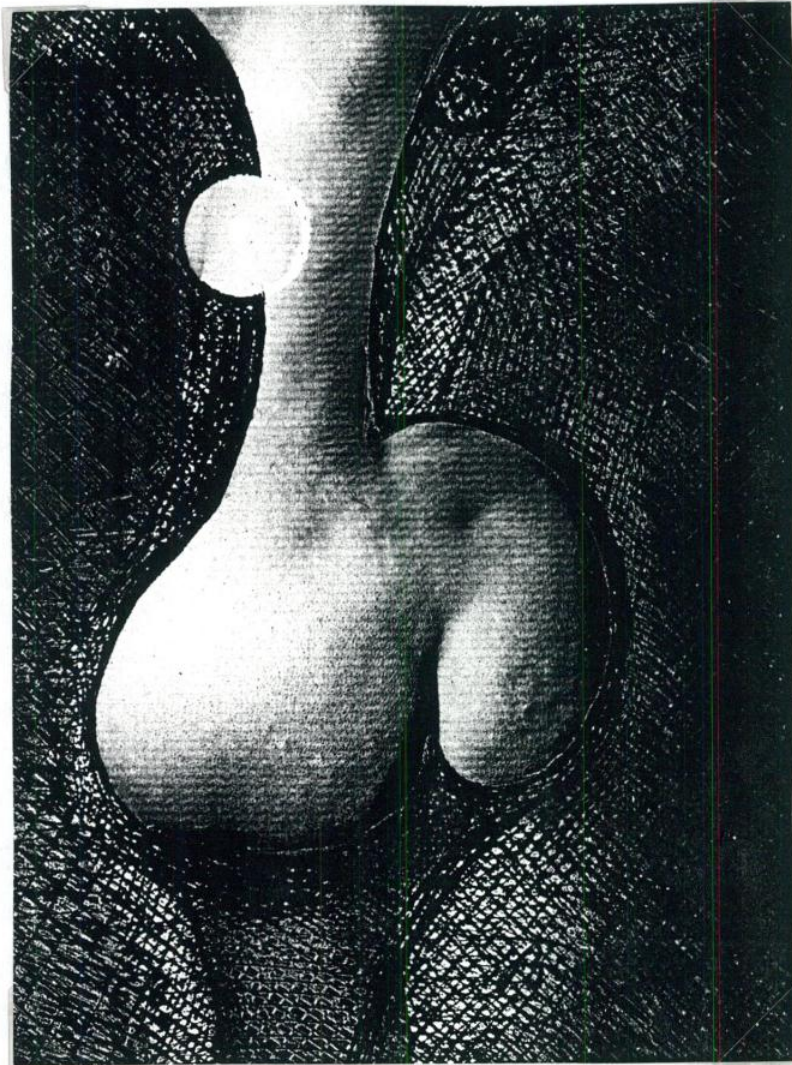


Illustration 21



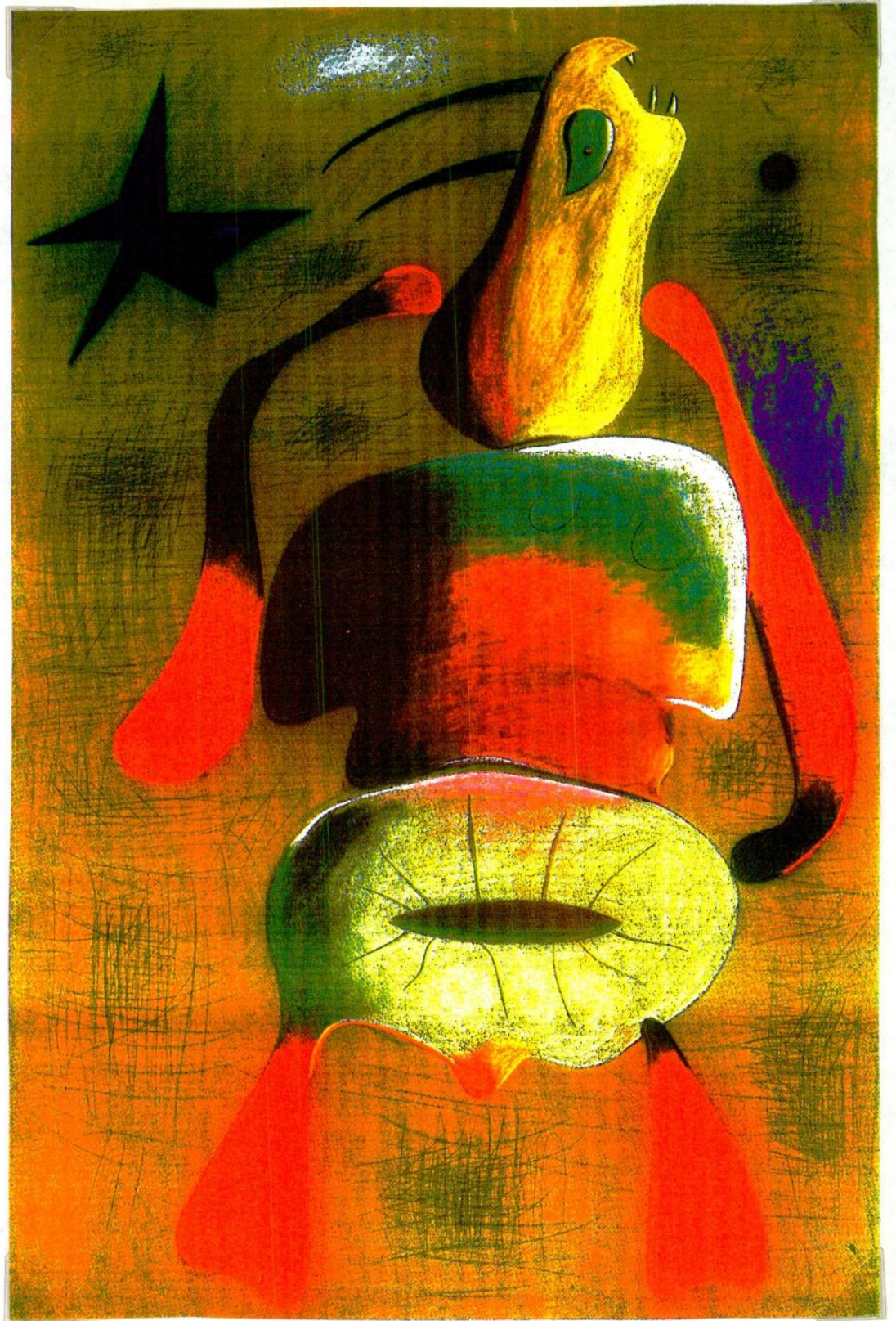


Illustration 22



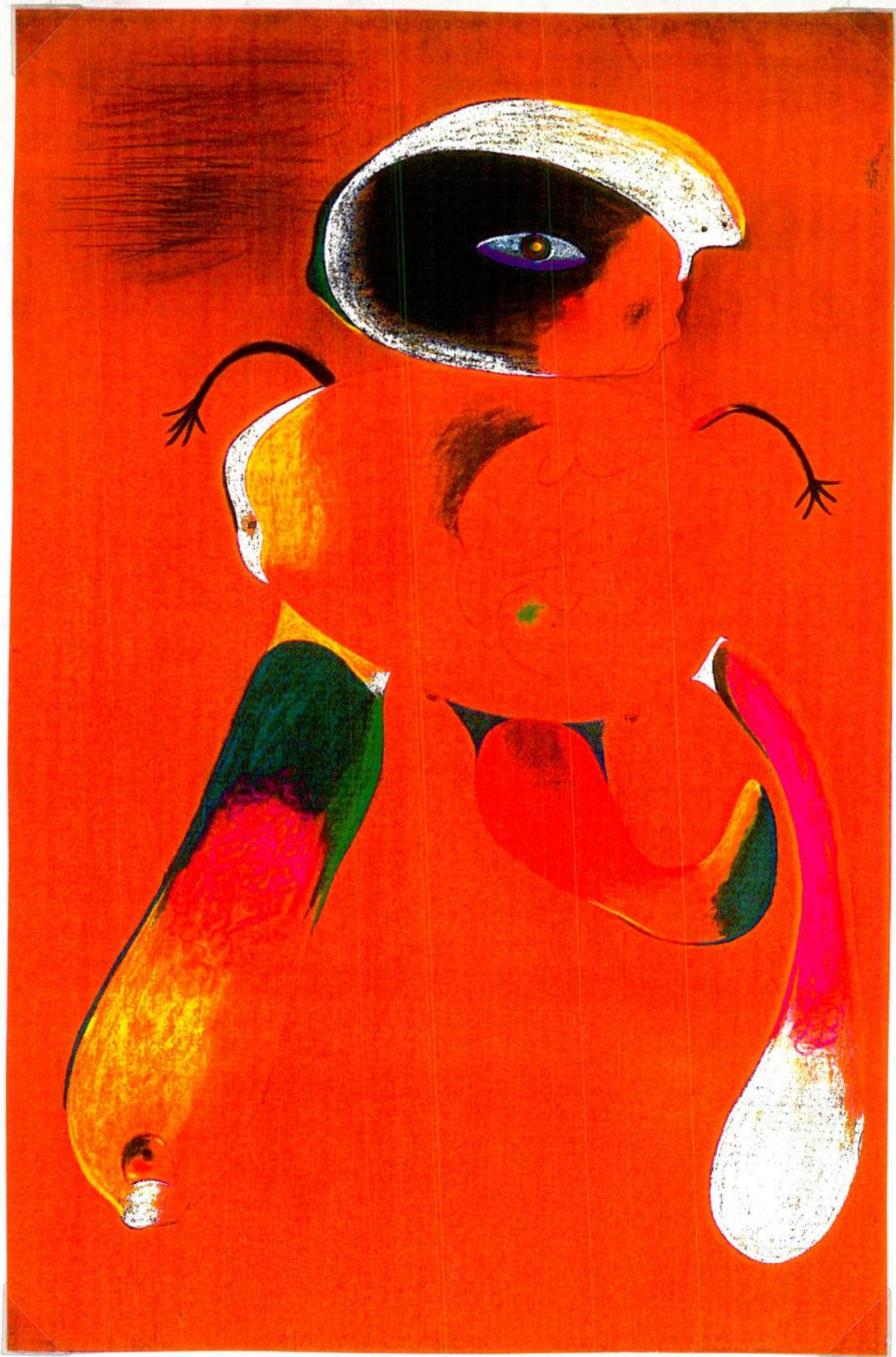


Illustration 23



Chapter 4

Feminist art historians have concerned themselves with the extent to which major paintings and sculptures associated with the development of Modernism, wrest their formal and stylistic innovations from an erotically based assault on the female form. The subject of the nude in art brings together discourses of representation, morality and female sexuality. The presentation of the nude female body as a site of male viewing pleasure, and the difficulty of distinguishing between overtly sexualised (i.e. voyeurism and fetishism) and other forms of looking, has prompted a significant body of feminist literature on issues of spectatorship.

No artistic Movement, since the 19th Century Symbolist Movement, celebrated the idea of woman and her creativity as passionately as did the Surrealist Movement during the 1920's and 1930's. Andre Breton's romantic vision of perfect union, with the loved woman as the source for an art of convulsive disorientation that would resolve polarised states of experience and awareness into a new revolutionary surreality, was formulated in response to a culture shaken by war.

Breton advanced his image of the spontaneous instinctive woman in a social context in which women were demanding the right to work and vote. In 1920 a law was passed forbidding the mere advocacy of abortion or birth control in an attempt to re-populate war ravaged France. By the time the first Surrealist Manifesto appeared in 1921, Breton had dedicated himself to the liberation of woman from Bourgeois considerations and conventions.

During the 1930's women artists came to Surrealism in large numbers, attracted by the Movements anti-academic stance and it's sanctioning of an art in which a personal reality dominates. However, Surrealism has been constantly attacked for it's representation of woman.

The suggestion that Surrealism draws on polarised female stereotypes, presenting a negative image of woman and female sexuality, comparable to representations of "woman" in Symbolism, is a notion based in the refusal to consider the intention behind a work of art. An analysis of such a representation, focusing purely on content, suggests that exploitation resides in the representation of "woman", and female sexuality perse, rather than it's contextualisation and the condition of it's production and consumption.

To understand female representation in Surrealism, it is necessary to understand the objectives of the Movement. Like Symbolism, it emerged at a time of social upheaval and shifting of gender roles within society. Unlike the Symbolists, the Surrealists, in perceiving western society as hypocritical, barbaric and inhumane, adopted a radical political stance. The principles of Surrealism were never dogmas, rather concepts for living. Taking a stand against all forms of conventionalism or constraint in every field of human activity, the Surrealists ever-renewed their denunciation of all threats against human freedom.

There is a perfect union between the spiritual quest for awareness, enlightenment and self realisation, and the struggle of oppressed people to change their circumstances and resist. The Surrealists, their celebration of that which is intuitive as opposed to intellectual, believed in the need to formulate a new means of communication, and in the possibility of retraining the mind and transforming one's perception. They understood that in changing oneself and the way one lives their life is a personal act of resistance (not reaction) against a society deemed unsatisfactory.

In resistance to this society which they perceived to be grossly inhumane, the early Surrealists explored the sources of creative impulse, putting their faith in artistic creativity as a means of confronting complex social issues and irregularities. The originality of Surrealism, and that which distinguished it from all preceding art Movements, was it's determination to minimise the fragmentation of consciousness, thus arriving at a totality of the human being.

As an art Movement, Surrealism admired only the non-conformist, irrational and perverse aspects of western culture, while attempting to go beyond all moral and aesthetic preoccupations. Members of the Movement abandoned the production of art and literature in the conventional sense of that which beautifies, embellishes and edifies, concerning themselves with work as an experiment, inquiry or challenge. In it's dual and indomitable opposition to the spirituality of the Christian Church, Surrealism rehabilitated superstition and magic.

Rejecting contemporary society, the Surrealists sought to explore the possibility of a whole new way of being. Andre Breton, the founder of Surrealism, began to understand the opposition between the forces of love and destruction Breton believed that only after the revolutionary transformation of society would man be liberated from the need to purchase the surrender of woman, through money or social pressure, and woman free to select a partner for love alone, a notion grounded in a belief in total equality.

Surrealism bore witness to the need for change in it's rejection, not just of contemporary society, but it's treatment of women. Breton was committed to an ideal of sexual and spiritual liberation, encouraging creative activity among the women associated with the group, and seeking the liberation of all women from domesticity. There was a conscious bid by the Surrealist group to resolve the conflict between the 19th Century image of woman, as passive, dependent and defined through her relationship to an active male presence, and a contemporary demand for female autonomy and independence. The Surrealist revolt against aesthetics in the pursuit of total freedom of expression and inspiration, required not only the rejection of traditional imagery but the rejection of traditional gender roles and western society's perception of the different genders.

By challenging the production of sexual stereotypes (by the innovation apparent in the Surrealist representations of woman), the Surrealists recognised that the production of sexual stereotypes works to insidiously maintain social order, by producing a multiplicity of female sexualities e.g. - the production of the ideology of romance - the "nervous woman" - the "frigid wife" - the "insatiable nymphomaniac", etc.

Certain forms of sexuality obviously condone the family structure, e.g. heterosexual relations and marriage, and others are outlawed from it, e.g. pornography, prostitution and lesbianism. Even within marriage, social conditioning and regulation influence the type of sex allowed, the age of the participants etc. This public\private dichotomy, far from challenging social order, work to secure and legitimise the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The proposal that sexuality be subject to social censorship when it threatens to disrupt social order, invests sexual practises with a potentially revolutionary power. While female objectification is invested with the power to subvert accepted gender relations it may have the opposite effect. Lying outside the accepted, it implicitly acknowledges and accepts the social privileges of the family, reproduction and heterosexual union, basking in a deviant role. Caught in this binary model of acceptability\unacceptability, negative female representation can work to restrict the expression of sexuality. (The evidence of this can be seen in the polarised representation of woman in Symbolist art, illustrative of the Christian belief in the immorality and danger inherent in unrepressed female sexuality.)

The Surrealists, understanding gender control to be a means of social control, rejected contemporary sexual convention, and attempted the liberation of love and sexuality, recognising it as a means of repression within the Christian patriarchal order. The Movement's investigation of the Marquis de Sade, is cited as evidence of the innate violence in the Surrealist "assaults" on the female form. This notion is based in a superficial assessment of Sade's writing. Angela Carter (5, pg 20 - 22) suggests that the Marquis de Sade's documentation of nightmarish sexual exploits are fundamentally concerned with the nexus of power, sex and class, under bourgeois relations. The caricature of these relations in the most oppressive and violent form of pornographic literature, is capable of offering a critique of accepted social relations, where oppressive power relations are continually disguised and denied by reference to the nature, order, romance, desire, etc.

When considering the influence of Sade in relation to the disfiguration of the female body, it must be acknowledged that evidence of this influence can also be found in representations of the male figure. This disfiguration was influenced by other, external factors, of a social, not sexual nature, whose mark is apparent on much Surrealist imagery.

The Surrealists were drawn to Sade in the search for an all-consuming passion and the demand for a free sexuality, detached from all social restraint. The abuse heaped upon the bodies of Sade's victims, thus rendering them objects in the destruction and re-creation of their bodies, became the supposed theoretical basis of the Surrealist object. However Sade was practically unique in his time for claiming rights of free sexuality for women. By creating "Juliette" and other women as beings of power and dominance in his imaginary worlds, and in his rejection of the stereotypes of his day, which viewed woman as the inarticulate victim of an uncontrolled sensibility, Sade questioned the gender roles created to control the power structures of his contemporary society.

This erotic violence (that Sade viewed as essential to corporeal metamorphosis), finds expression in Surrealist images of the female and male body, and also the genderless figure which emerged in Surrealist art. It must be remembered that Surrealism focused exclusive attention on the internal realm, not suggesting an escapist retreat from the actualities of daily experience, rather professing a destruction of a certain concept of "reality" and a collapse of traditional divisions and definitions. Surrealism was concerned literally with experiences, not with theories, and still less with phantasms.

The objectified representations of the human form that emerged from the Surrealist consciousness, bear witness to the belief in the need to acknowledge what is, before it is possible to negotiate what can be. (It has more recently been recognised what role playing, as a means of acknowledging that which causes fear, can mean in terms of power.

Ritualised role playing in terms of "confronting a dragon" show that, in the "confrontation" of that dragon, it loses its power. Ritualised role playing in eroticism and sexuality, can be empowering, despite a moralistic tendency to see it only in terms of a disempowering re-enactment of patriarchy's sexual politics.

In actuality, it is the denial of that which causes fear or shame, that enslaves the individual to the status quo. It is both cathartic and transformative to state and accept that which is a personal and internal "truth", (the statement of "truth" in a society based on lies, being in itself a radical act.)

The Surrealist mode of representing the human body with such extraordinary anatomical disfigurements and deformations, while often taken as evidence of the sadistic, was in some part due to the large population of physically maimed and mutilated casualties of World War One and the ensuing political conflicts. While the Surrealist disfigurements do not mirror actual war mutilations, they do bear witness to anatomical deformation and disorder.

In compositions such as Joan Miro's (1893 - 1983) The Statue, Man Ray's Primacy of Matter over Thought, Salvador Dali's (1904 - 1989) The Persistence of Memory and Frantisek Janausek's (1890 - 1940) Head, the figures' bodily forms are tumescent, misshapen, dematerialised and devoid of structural form. The bodies appear in a decomposed mode, more humanoid than human, barely identifiable as representations of living forms. The invasion of death into the world of the living, contributed to the representation of the human body as utterly violated, a predominant image in Surrealist figuration.

Surrealist body deformations ravage anatomical norms and refute the notion of the body as an organic integral whole, the paragon of classical beauty. The idea of perfection has no place in this realm. Conformity has been totally disenfranchised. The degraded features and distended flesh of these figures collapses the usual boundaries that separate humans from other species, while denying the hierarchical designs that place humans above other creatures.

Surrealist figures, although highly eroticised, with grotesque phallic protuberances and seductively rotting flesh, appear lifeless or devoid of sexual specificity. Although Surrealist figures can be viewed as deformed, they must also be considered unformed or formless. The unformed or formless state not only embraces the unstructured misshapen appearance of Man Ray's or Miro's figures, but also accepts the idea of reduction to an undifferentiated lowly form.

The human body, not just the female body, and its parts are debased and de-idealised to the point at which particular aspects are no longer evident, and exalted status is no longer privileged.

The head, for example, is often denied facial features or is shown with such extremely distorted features, that it appears to lack all intellectual capability. Despite this treatment being awarded to both male and female figurations, it is cited as an example of the Surrealist negation of female intellectual capabilities. The Surrealist quest for an escape from reason, and the desire to achieve a state of consciousness stripped of all logical device, in part, contributes to the disordered representation of the human body.

This uncertainty of identity merges with a displacement of function and value, allowing for a purge of all established definitions and a receptivity to unfamiliar possibilities. While Surrealist transformation entails movement into the unknown and unknowable, it also denotes a state of unrest - degeneration struggling with regeneration, disintegration with survival.

The prime aspect of Surrealist transformation includes the experience of passion, the expulsion of suppressed instincts and the confounding of self and other. Breton exalted convulsive beauty "Convulsive beauty will be veiled, erotic, fixed, explosive, magic, circumstantial, or it will not be" (27, pg 33). For Breton, a convulsive representation encompasses the arousal of physical (ecstatic and sexual) sensation, excited by unexpected associations and dislocations, the process of formation and destruction, or the dissimilarity between the desired and the discovered, the absent and the present.

The transformed bodies in Pablo Picasso's (1881 - 1973) Standing Women, Andre Kertesz's (1894 - 1985) The Distortion Series, and Brassai's (1899 - 1984) Woman - Amphora, illuminate the conception of metamorphosis and Bretan's concept of convulsive beauty. In these works, bulging torsos and stretched appendages capture the movement and stasis of anatomical forms. Human identity slides into the bestial and inanimate as the body explodes with erotic energy.

Transgressing all limits, the body at this extreme and in this excess, conjoins and confounds male and female; breasts double as phallic extrusions, legs and arms swell into displaced womb and penis configurations and the female body trunk permutates into male sex organs. The uniqueness of and difference between male and female collapses.

Surrealist figurations that emphasise transformation heighten the idea of change in the shaping and identity of the body. In many Surrealist compositions, the transformed, deformed and unformed also bear the prospect of the formative. In Miro's Statue, an unstructured, misshapen and debased being appears as a primordial figure. Supported by an oversized foot and beholden to a featureless head, the figure maintains a vertical (human) posture. Lacking conventional sexual organs or any male\female differentiation, it is yet alive with sexual energy, with fleshy curves and exaggerated pubic hairs, arousing attention to the erogenous zone. Miro's figure articulates the union of sensuality and intellectually, baseness and spirituality.

While many Surrealist figurations show excessive development, these figures often carry embryonic heads, or no heads at all, displacing emphasis from the intellectual to the sensual realm. Without any or with reduced heads, these figures offer no evidence of superior human status. Rather than declassifying the human figure, it devalues thinking itself. These paintings signify a refusal to accept limits and a rejection of the notion of the superiority of humans, and human gender differentiations. Decapitation in a Surrealist context, is depicted regardless of gender and is a means of representing the necessity for the abolition of the duality between body and soul, matter and spirit.

Masking the face and denying the mind is a means of objectifying the body, male and female, not as a means of degradation, but as a means of releasing the animal within and retrieving a sensitivity to the unknown and unknowable. It is also a reference to the Surrealist celebration of the primitive. The representation of the human head or body in an unnatural condition is a powerful means of asserting the de-idealisation of the human form and nature.

Dream and surrender to the dark forces of the unconscious, are a fundamental part of the Surrealist ideology, which inevitably led to an examination and the utilisation of the occult tradition. As the Surrealists celebrated primitive art, preferring the more bizarre and obscure forms of ethnic creativity, so too their interest in the occult centred on primitive magical practise, exploring more reservedly the traditional European sources.

Surrealism multiple visions of woman converge in it's identification of her with the mysterious forces and regenerative powers of nature. Primitive magic or occultism traditionally celebrates the role of woman empowered by her ability, (an irrational ability), to access her intuition and ensuing mysticism. The abhorrence with which some feminists regard the notion of woman as irrational, intuitive and mystical must be acknowledged.

"In this most mythic re-definition of myself, that of occult priestess, I am indeed allowed to speak, but only of things that male society does not take seriously. I can hint at dreams, I can even personify the imagination, but that is only because I am not rational enough to cope with reality" - Angela Carter (5, pg 5).

While acknowledging this attitude, it's accusations can only be considered within the context of the ideology to which it is being applied. The celebration of woman, as a mythical creature, by the Surrealist group cannot be considered in the same context as the allocation of the same role, to woman by western society. The obvious reason being that such values as those attributed to "mystical women" by western patriarchal society, are held to be of no value within that society.

The qualities of intuition and irrationalism, being identified with the female of the species have, as a result, become devalued because of this association with the politically and economically powerless. The same values were not just celebrated by men within the Surrealist Movement, but actively pursued by them. The Movement's celebration of the feminine was part of the basic foundation of the Surrealist theory. Breton stressed the need for a return to the "feminine" values, such as emotion and intuition, as a solution to humanity's problems, caused by a surplus of "masculine" values such as reason and ideology.

According to Breton, for man to create he must seek access to the inner divine and more fecund realm of being, from which all creativity emanates. He defined the artist as the only one who can affect a synthesis between the male (external rational) and female (internal intuitive) polarities, since he alone has access to both states of being and can thus bring about a Surrealist reconciliation of opposites.

"The time will come when the ideas of woman will be asserted at the expense of those of man, the failure of which is already, today, tumultuously evident. Specifically it rests with the artist to make visible everything that is part of the feminine, as opposed to the masculine system of thought employed in the world, it is the artist who must rely exclusively on the woman's power to exalt, or, better still, to jealously appropriate to himself everything that distinguishes woman from man with respect to their styles of appreciation and volition" (9, pg 100).

The necessity, when examining any image of representation, to consider its contextualisation, must be applied when considering the Surrealist representation of woman as sorceress or celestial creature, a representation which is often the basis for an attack on the male Surrealists. This image of woman must be taken in the context of an art movement that celebrated the irrational and intuitive values, appropriated by society to be feminine. The Surrealist celebration of magical practise appears far sighted in a late 20th Century context when so much "New Science" almost confirms older occult postulations, the newest physics, astronomy or "superstring" theories sounding almost like cabalistic notions.

The Surrealist saw value in primitive cultures and the workings of occult practise and irrational thought processes in these societies.

(Traditionally Capitalist and Technological society have attempted to destroy cultures that believe in the forces of destiny, forces other than "worldly" ones moving in peoples' lives, as such beliefs would infer that people cannot be confined to that which is worldly (gender, race, etc). Technological society oppresses and denies the knowledge of such "other worldly" forces in an attempt to contain people within the stereotypes and identities created for them, for the advancement of patriarchal technological consumerist western society)

Chapter 5

When considering the issue of the representation of woman in art, the representation of man in art, objectification, negative\positive stereotypes or any of the multitude of issues which feminists are now addressing, it is necessary always to consider the "whole", the issue as it stands in relation to society as a "whole".

In his Nobel Prize speech, The Dalai Lama asked "How can we expect people who are Hungry to be concerned about the absence of war?". He continued with the insistence that peace has to mean more than just the absence of conflict - it has to be about the reconstruction of society, to enable the world population to learn how to be self- actualised human beings, fully alive.

Western capitalist society does not allow for such a notion. This society necessitates the class system, racism, ageism and sexism. The unequal distribution of power and wealth, within the western world and within the whole world, is evidence of a culture of domination. Consumerism survives on the exploitation of the greater portion of the world's population. It necessitates escapism and addiction, materialism necessitates militarism. Exploitation can only be prevented by the recognition of the "other". Recognition allows a negotiation that disrupts the possibility of domination. To have a non-dominating world context, it is necessary to create a culture of interaction. Resistance to the possibility of domination has to be learned. The machinery of capitalism insists on values of speed and efficiency; reflection and reconsideration are the tools necessary to resist this culture of domination.

It is impossible to oppose racism, ageism or sexism and not consider materialism. The possibility of re-integration necessitates the rejection of denial and the application of whole world not 1st world consciousness.

By simply reacting to what is in society, ensures the continuance of the pendulum swing evident through art social history. Patriarchal power continues to affirm the use of violence as a means to subordinate and subjugate women.

The resurgence of an anti-feminist backlash exposes the extent to which anti-feminism is pushed as an appropriate response to a feminist movement that is perceived as anti-male.

At its inception, Surrealism was intended to be a new way of thinking, of feeling and of living. It recognised a need to be intuitive as opposed to intellectual and believed in the necessity of formulating a new means of communication, perceiving western society as having evolved to be rational, ideological, hypocritical, barbaric and inhumane. Having condemned all formal procedure in western art, the Surrealists placed importance on the unusual, and the need to surpass the real, either by the introduction of the dream or by abandoning themselves to the interior model.

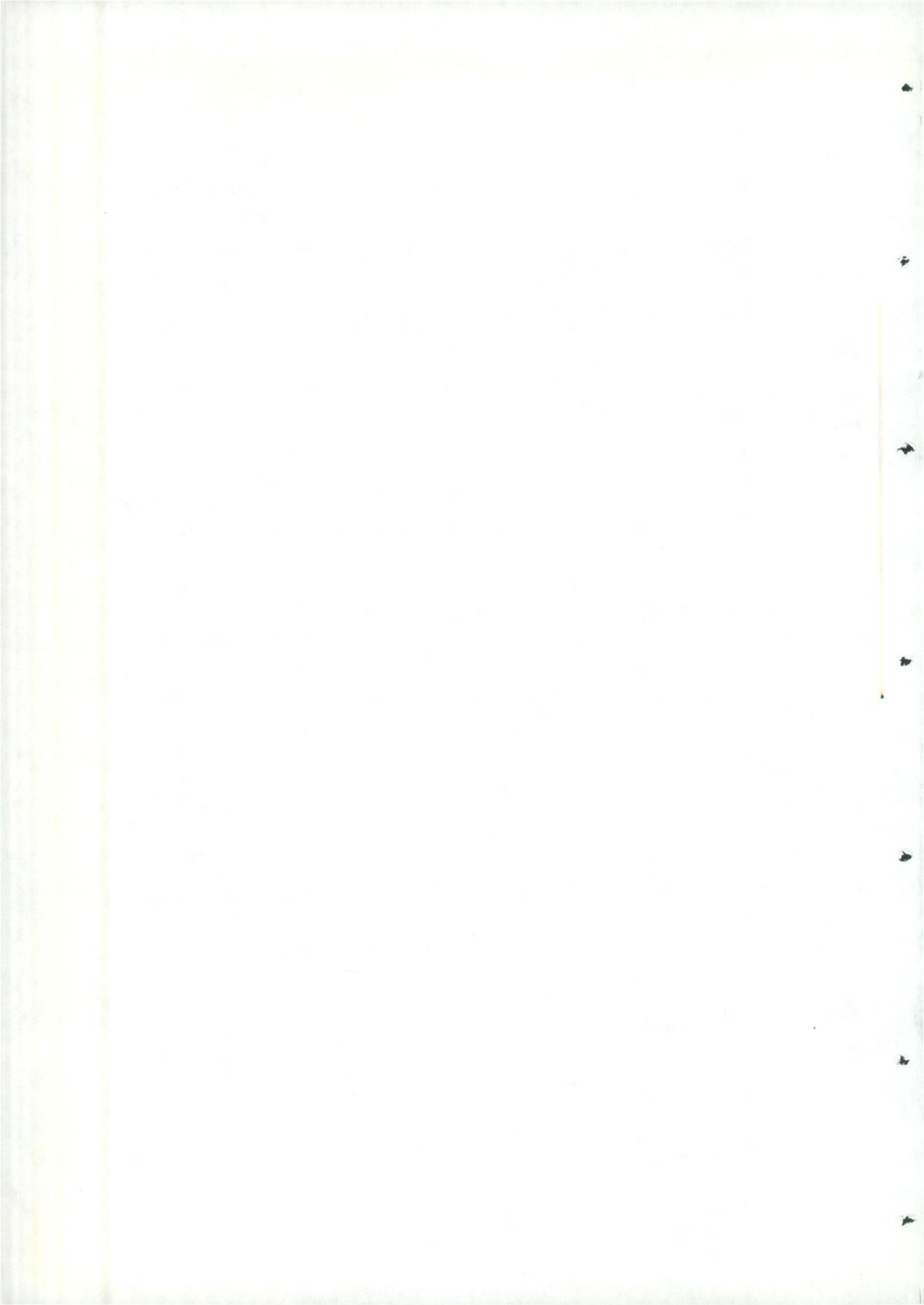
The Symbolists believed that art should concern itself with ideas rather than everyday life, ideas that had a basis in the human imagination - the function of art being, not to define the obvious, but to evoke the indefinable. They held, however, a great respect for tradition and the past, not denying all value to the logical system.

Both these artistic Movements rejected their contemporary society and its values, due to the harshness of the period from which they evolved. However the participants of each Movement chose to take vastly different paths when protesting the inadequacies and injustices of the said societies. Rejecting any notion of revolutionary change, the Symbolists sought inspiration and refuge in the past, turning back to a romanticised and idealised age, they celebrated exotic myths and legends in an escapist negation of reality. The polarised image of woman presented by the Symbolists corresponded to patriarchal notions of the feminine in an historical context.

The Surrealists rejected western society in a contemporary and historical context. They rejected those characteristics considered masculine, and of value, and pursued that which was considered feminine. The basis of Surrealist ideology was re-integration as confirmed by occult theory. In this context they created their representations of "woman", "man" and the genderless or Androgyne figure.

The violent assault on the human form was the de-construction, necessary before reconstruction, a process they attempted with the human consciousness as well as with bodily configurations.

The rejection of stereotypes is accepted, but the creation of cultural types in reaction to stereotypes is just as limiting; it is necessary to create that which can fulfil the "absences" in artistic imagery. More than the creation of merely positive images in 20th century culture is the necessity for challenging images, as those produced by the Surrealist unquestionably were. The function of art is to do so much more than represent that which is - it is duty bound to attempt the representation of that which is possible.



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