

NC 0021048 X



**NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
FACULTY OF FINE ART  
DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING**

**POWER AND GENDER**

**BY**

**ANNE SLOCKET**

**Submitted to the  
Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complementary Studies**

**in Candidacy for the  
Degree of: B.A. Fine Art (Painting) 1996**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Joan Fowler, my tutor, for her encouragement and advice in the development of my thesis.





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
List of Plates	1
List of Tables	2
Introduction	3
Chapter One Gender Roles	6
Chapter Two Women and Work	11
Chapter Three Reproductive Labour	21
Chapter Four Representing the Female Body	26
Conclusion	34
Plates	37
Tables	50
Bibliography	53



## LIST OF PLATES

### Plate 1

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled* (We won't play nature to your culture) 1983.

### Plate 2

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled* (We construct chorus of missing persons) 1983.

### Plate 3

Advertisement for the exhibition 'Convincing illusions' in the Louis K. Meisel Gallery, 1987.

### Plate 4

Allen Jones, *Desire me*, 1968.

### Plate 5

Allen Jones, *Chair*, 1970.

### Plate 6

Judy Chicago, *Red Flag*, 1971

### Plate 7

Orlan, *Cruciform*, 1990.

### Plate 8

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Lisa Lyon*, 1980.

### Plate 9

Jo Spence (in collaboration with Tim Sheard)  
*Exiled*, from *Narratives of Dis-ease*, 1990.

### Plate 10

Jo Spence (in collaboration with Tim Sheard)  
*Carcinoma Excision. Part 1.*  
*Narratives of Dis-ease*, 1990.

### Plate 11

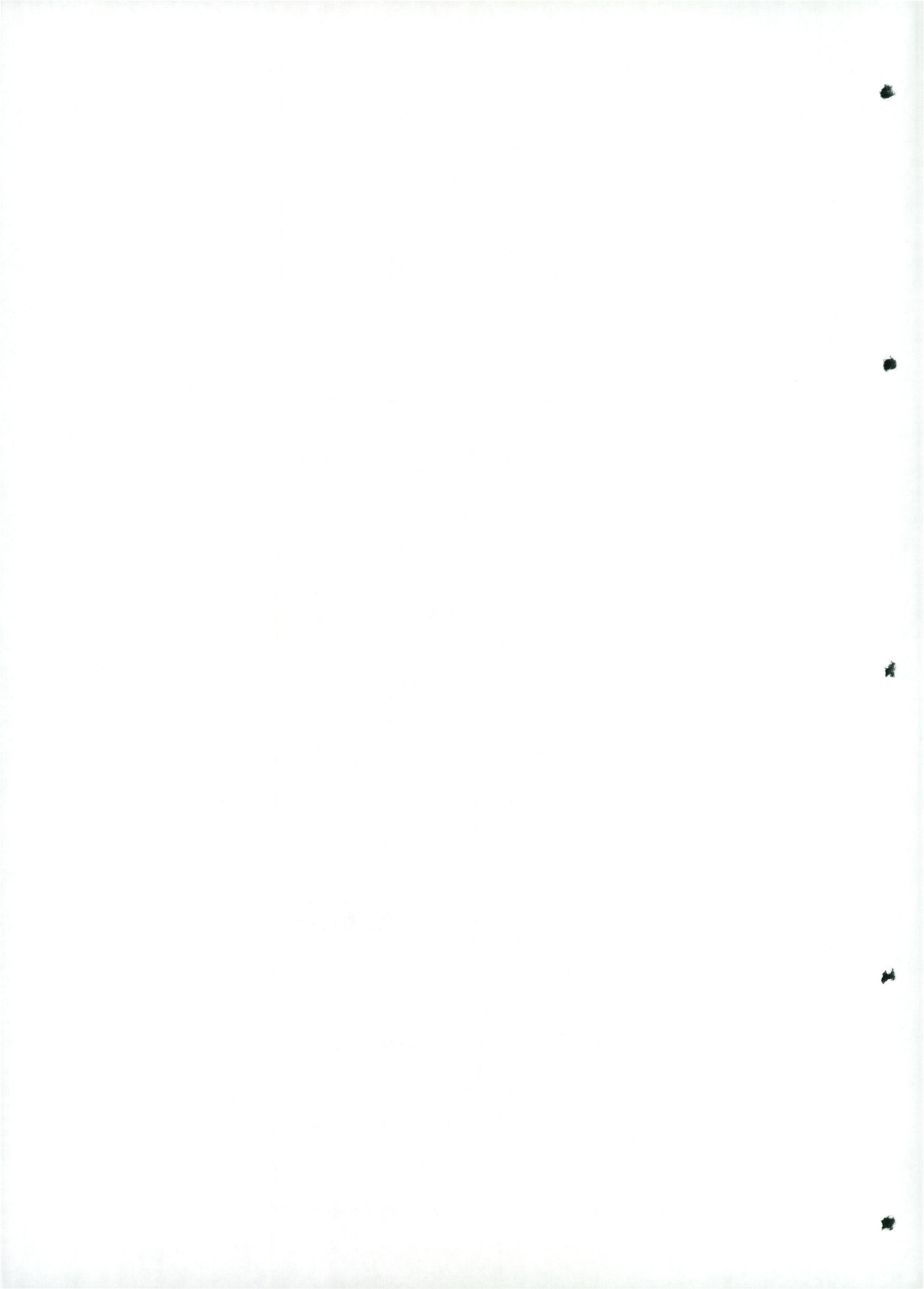
Lynda Benglis, Photograph of the Artist,  
*Artform*, 1974.

### Plate 12

Hannah Wilke, S.O.S. - *Starification Object Series*, 1974.

### Plate 13

Hannah Wilke, S.O.S. - *Starification Object Series*, 1974.



## LIST OF TABLES

### **Table 1**

Three estimates of Irish unemployment (26 counties), 1983 - 1993.

### **Table 2**

Women in the labour force 1971 - 1991.

### **Table 3**

Wives' and Husbands' views about how housework and child-care should be shared.



## INTRODUCTION

How do we see ourselves and present ourselves as women and men in society? Gender roles, or gender positions, are arrived at in the social context through many different influences, e.g. childhood, class divisions and by visual representations. When we walk down the street we may come across many visual images and texts. Turn on the radio and we will hear many suggestions on how we should look and live our lives. Television, films, celebrities and fashion all combine to influence us in how we should look, act and present ourselves as women and men. Women have tended to be more aware of their appearance mainly because they are targeted by the media and fashion more than men. Men on the other hand are judged more by their possessions. What eventually evolves is that we all present a facade to the world which is based on what we think society expects of us. By adopting identities we hope to live a 'normal' life without too much interference from other members of society or from those in authority. Whether one considers identity as being open to free choice is open to question.

One cannot examine gender roles or positions without also looking at gender relations. Gender divisions are present in all social institutions such as the home, workplace, schools, etc. In her book *'Man-made Language'*, 1980, Dale Spender argues that even the very language we speak is man-made. This is a very important point because it is through our introduction into language that we gain our understanding of society. The primary emphasis must, therefore, be on society and on the values it affirms. In Western culture the white, male, middle class view is taken as the norm and women and other minority groups have to fit into this patriarchal ideology. In fact on a broader plane, anthropological studies of men and women throughout the world have shown that - although different societies have very different views about what qualities are masculine, such qualities are generally more highly valued than those thought to be feminine, (Archer, 1993).

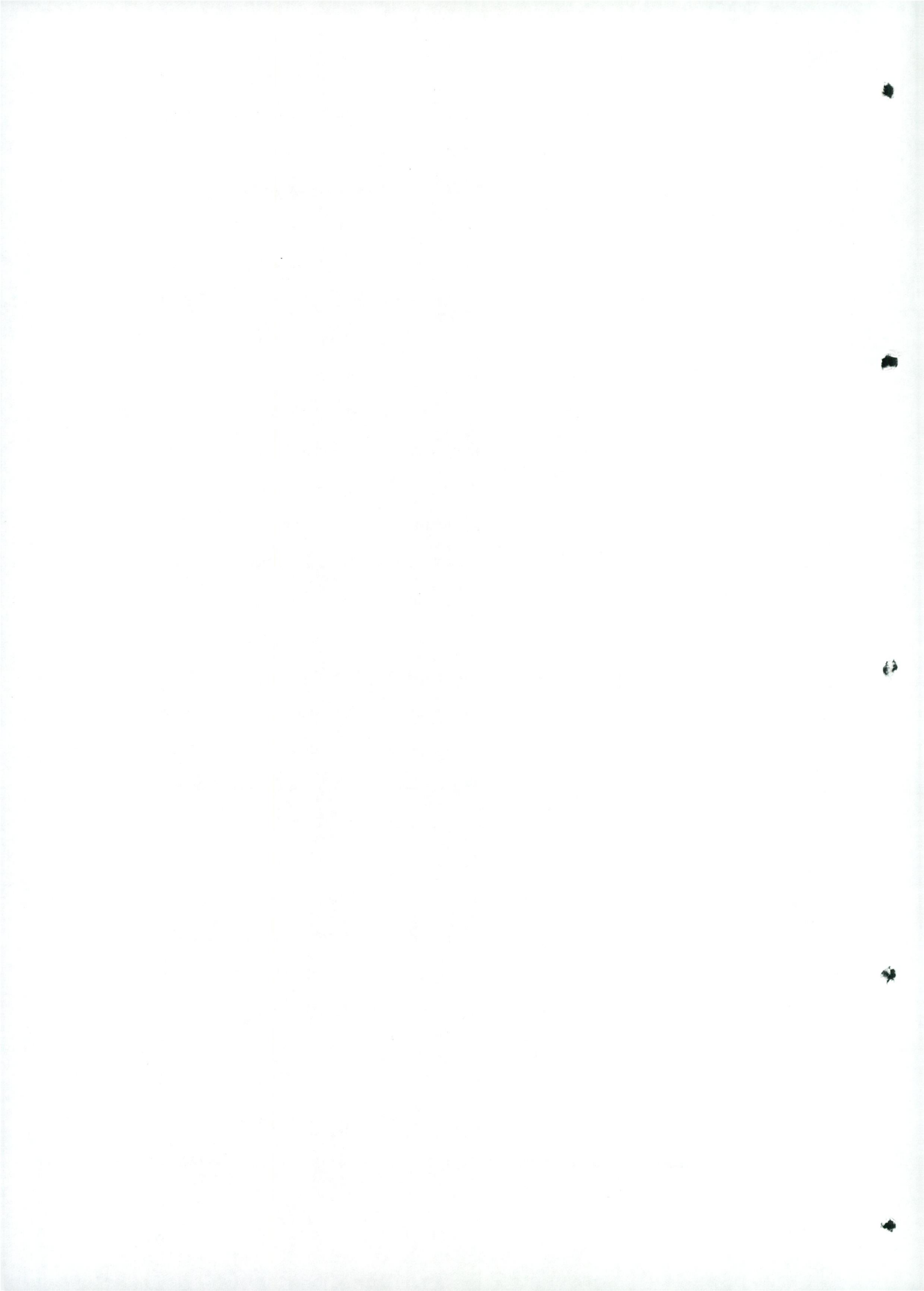




What qualities are we talking about and how did it come about that certain qualities are considered more valuable than others? It is the case that women's lives and experiences have been marginalised as have women's needs and desires, mainly because women's work in all areas is valued or judged mainly within the context of patriarchal culture and its norms. Betty Friedan described what she termed 'the problem with no name' - the dissatisfaction that seemed to fill her and the women she studied, who were all comfortable, educated and middle class. In 1968 she published *'The Feminine Mystique'* in which she examined the post war psychological forces in the United States which had succeeded in persuading women that their only place was in the home - when this life was clearly unsatisfying. Many women today still find themselves constantly battling for recognition within a patriarchal dominated society. According to a UN Report, 1980, women constitute half of the world's population, perform nearly two-thirds of its work hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property. These are amazing statistics and clearly they show how great the inequalities are that exist between women and men world-wide.

It is the purpose of this thesis to take a look at some aspects of woman's position within society socially, culturally and economically and the inequalities which exist therein between women and men. I have concentrated mainly on women's position in Western society and I would not feel comfortable or qualified to speak for black, Asian or third-world women's experiences, etc. Even within my own area there are significant differences on the basis of class position, age, sexuality and what part of Ireland in which women live. I recognise that women in general have many similar problems such as fertility control, power inequality within patriarchal societies, child care, health, etc., but the solutions are as varied as the women themselves. What women can do is to continue to fight for improvements within their own areas and show solidarity for other women while recognising that difference is present within each community.

Teresa de Lauretis argues that a modified essentialism is the very basis on which feminist thinking differs from non-feminist thinking, (de Lauretis, 1989, pp. 5-6), and it is this very



recognition that holds many women together. Women, in general, do not want to be like men, but want to be recognised for their worth as women. This ideology must not be used against women either excluding them from areas such as politics for example, on the grounds that women are better nurturers than political thinkers. In such an area as politics women's very good communicative skills could be of great value.

In their introduction to 'Imagining Woman' Bonner and Goodman have stated that:

The most obvious example of gendered language usage influenced by a male-dominated culture is the common English use of masculine pronouns as 'generic' ..... The use of 'generic' pronouns is only one example of the patriarchal marginalisation and suppression of women's voices. (Bonner and Goodman (eds.), 1992 pp. 8-9)

By generic pronouns they mean the use of the pronoun he, or his and him, to refer to any unspecified person whether male or female. Also they have commented on the fact that the ordering of binary couples such as man and woman, male and female, his and hers, are also another examples of male dominated language. In their writing, along with many other feminists, they have reversed this ordering of words and used the format s/he for she and he. In my thesis I have also reversed the order of men and women to women and men and I have used s/he. I feel it is very important to shift this kind of gendered power in every way possible and since text is such a powerful medium why not begin here?





## CHAPTER ONE

Chapter one concentrates on how as women and men we are allocated our various positions and how we are expected to stay within what society deems our normative gender roles. Looking at different areas of cultural activity, television, film, art, literature, etc., can tell us a great deal about the part that gender has to play in cultural representation. Gender is a crucial divide between women and men for it involves a relationship of power. Feminist scholarship has shown that female sexuality is based on what men deem desirable and necessary in a woman/women. The focus deepens to show that within our culture the ideology of the Binary System with its emphasis on male superiority, on men as the active doers and on women as passive 'other' has served men well in keeping them in a position of power. The Chapter ends by posing the question, that if women are constantly defined in relation to masculinity and male behaviour, where, what, who are women?

As we live our lives we are all defined, named, ordered and categorised. These ordered positions change and shift as we change in our lives from being young to being old, single to married, employed to unemployed etc. So how does this ordering happen and in such a way that for the most part we accept our allotted places and gender roles, in which masculine qualities are privileged over feminine? It is society in general which influences our behaviour - instilling within us notions of gender difference. We are constantly bombarded with visual images and texts which, according to one's sex, inform us how we should look, how we should spend our money, and how we should behave. Some of these effects we can control. A good recent example was the refusal of women to be bullied by the fashion gurus into wearing high heels and miniskirts again.

Children are less in control once they enter into the social via language, school, etc. There is little to prevent them from being sucked into the hegemonic gender ideals. This is not to deny that the mother, father, grandparents, etc. may have already introduced gendering before the

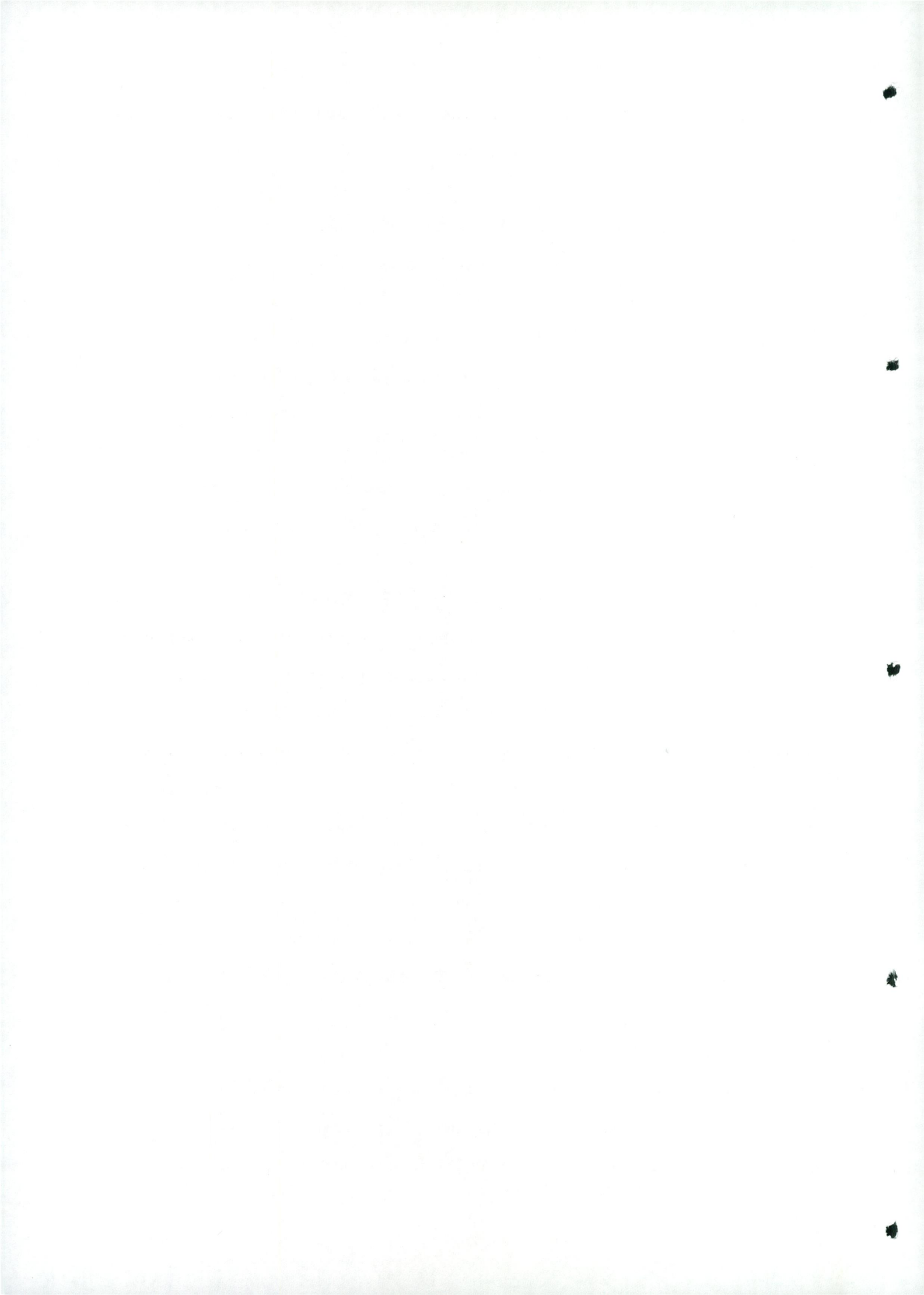


child's entry into wider social circles. Indeed studies have shown that the interaction between adults and infants show differences in the treatment of boys and girls even when parents believe their reactions to both are the same. By the time they start school, children have a clear understanding of gender differences. This understanding of gender is greatly influenced by books and television. Although there are a few exceptions, analysis of television programmes designed for children conform to the findings about children's books. Studies of the most frequently watched cartoons show that nearly all the leading characters are male, all the major action roles are played by males with females relegated to passive and supporting roles. Commercials advertising Barbie dolls for girls and action toys for boys which position women and men in very gendered stereotyped roles, appear at regular intervals throughout these programmes. In this way, girls acquire 'learned helplessness' and low expectations. Children often get upset if their gender is mistaken, socialisation is deeply ingrained and challenges to it can be upsetting, (Oakley, 1972).

In order to cope with everyday social life we must develop some understanding of the structure of our society, our social position within it, its rules, social divisions and hierarchies and the way that other people will interpret social situations in which we are involved. Emile Durkheim, 1938, showed that explanations of social behaviour were to be found within the nature of society itself. Uniformities in the behaviour of individuals, together with constant variations in behaviour between societies, can be seen as products of the structure of societies rather than of the specific natures of their members. It is the society of which a person is a member, together with the social groupings within that society to which s/he is attached, which determines her/his behaviour. Her religious and moral values, the type of house she lives in, the way it is furnished, the clothes s/he wears are all products of the influence of society.

Society influences and controls its members through their acceptance of its social rules (norms), and their conformance to pre-ordained social positions or roles and, of course, by their willingness to act as expected in these positions. People are generally unaware of the extent to which their actions are socially controlled. In conforming to social rules and acting





out their roles in society they believe they are exercising freedom of choice. It may be when one pushes against these rules or fall outside the norms - perhaps through unemployment or gender position - that one realises how regulating and narrow these rules are. Role expectations are expectations of behaviours towards other people, but they come from the norms of society rather than from the opinions and desires of the individual. While people are born into society and the roles into which they must fit are before them, it is also true that social structures are initially created and continually changed by people's actions. Protest and other forms of social movement may bring about changes in social norms (e.g. campaigns for abortion, law reform and homosexual law reform) and changes in social roles (e.g. campaigns to change the role of women in society).

The power to control people in this way is to select what they see and hear - media such as television, newspapers, advertising and art are highly visual examples. Though culturally constructed these representations are constantly posed as natural or as facts so we take them on board almost unknowingly. Often scientific imagery is presented as 'the truth' and we assume this information to be universal and accept it unquestioningly. Max Weber, 1947, showed that the ability of groups to maintain their power depended on their success in persuading those subject to it that they had authority, in other words that their exercise of power was legitimate.

We will find it helpful to look at Foucault's definition of power:

By power I do not mean 'power' as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power I do not mean either, a mode of subjugation which in contrast to violence has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination extended by one group over another. These are only the terminal forms power takes. It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations, imminent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation, as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations which isolate them from one another, and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallisation is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (Foucault, 1977, pp. 92-3)

Power then is not simply restrictive and negative but instead flows through a network of disciplinary codes and institutions. Norms and standards are replicated and spread through



schools, medicine, laws, prisons, religion, art, and in their circulation and reinforcement they determine social relations, therefore one finds oneself in various subject/object positions.

So, if we are all positioned in our various gender roles and positions through the regulation of society, there must be something else going on, an undercurrent as it were that favours men over women. To explore this further it is imperative to look at an ideology which has existed for many centuries and has at its roots a strong Christian-Judaeo tradition. It is an ideology which contains such a huge western masculine investment that it is still very much in evidence today despite the efforts of many feminists to eradicate it - the Binary System. The Adam/Eve dichotomy, which has been handed down through history, positions women in a secondary or supplementary role in Western philosophy and religion. Eve was created from Adam's rib to be his mate, to conceal his lack, she is almost a necessary 'evil'. She is the one with whom the snake makes contact and who, in turn, seduces the 'innocent' Adam, so therefore, she has a threatening image. The mother of mankind is also the destroyer of mankind for it is through her that sin is introduced and that man must die to be born again (this time without the interference of a woman). There are many more binary couples in which, if man is seen as culture, reason and mind, woman is seen as nature, emotion and body. In these binary couples, woman is always given the subordinate, weaker role. There is no question of one complementing the other or being on equal terms with the other. As Beverly Thiele points out "One can either be subject or object, either rational or emotional, never both .... The fussy middle ground between male and female, nature and culture, public and private, is lost to view". (Thiele, 1992, p. 31)

We can thus understand how the ideology of the binary system works in securing power for men and how masculine qualities have been valued over feminine. This core way of thinking is linked to many other areas such as education, law and medicine, and is used to position women's work, art, etc., in an inferior way to men's. This patriarchal ideology miraculously lessened temporarily during World Wars 1 and 2, when women took over many jobs which were considered suitable for men only. Men were reinstated on their return from the wars.





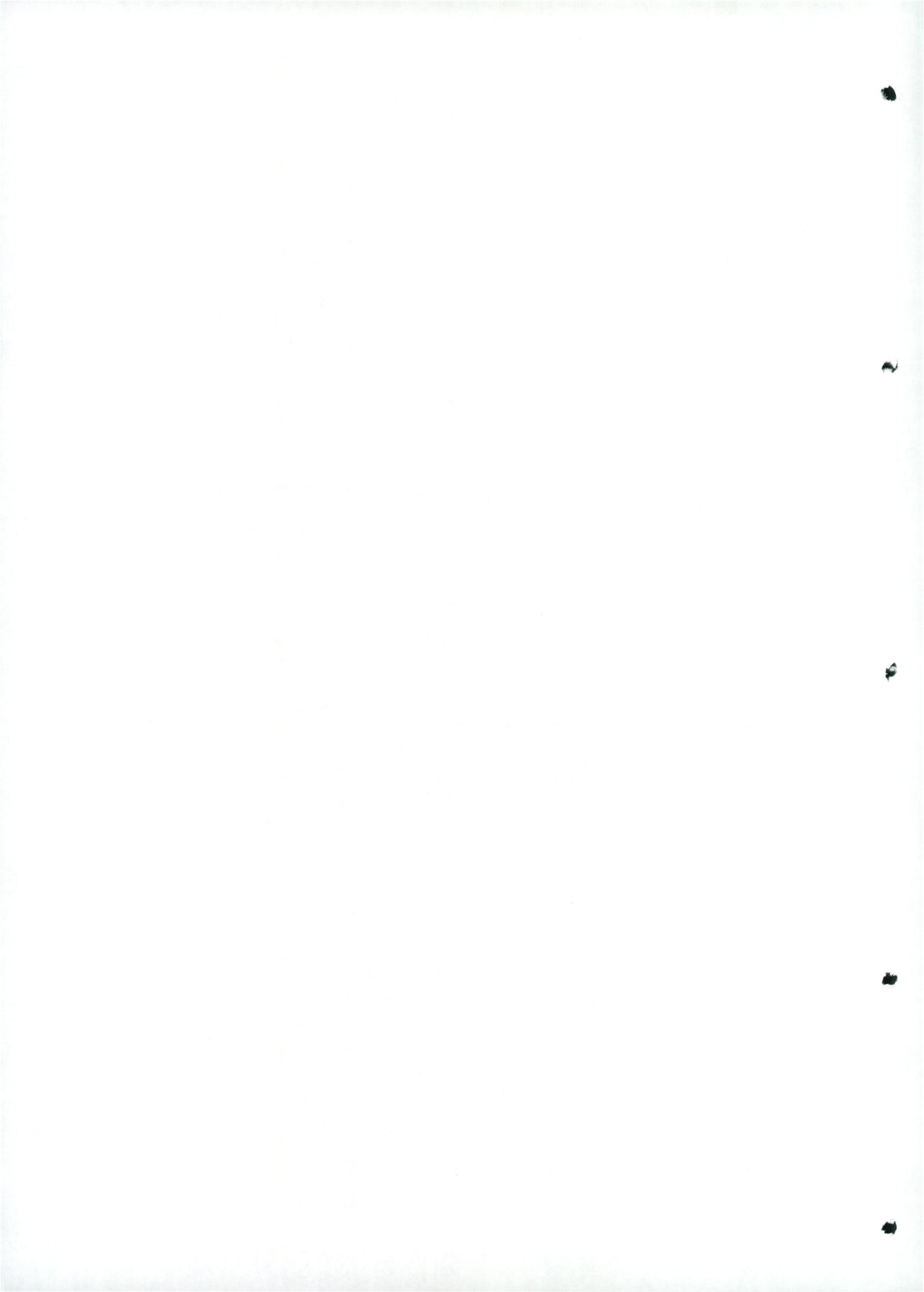
However, this only goes to show how fluid and contradictory the system is. This is important because women can make a stand against it. Barbara Kruger's "We won't play nature to your culture" (Plate 1) is a visual example which calls into question this 'binary' ideology. The ideology can be changed and has been changed but rarely have women benefited from those changes. An example would be women demanding equal pay for equal work. Changes did occur initially but over the years it has been discovered that jobs were given different titles depending on whether it was a woman or a man, doing the work. And, as will be discussed in greater depth in the Chapter on Women and Work, jobs done by men are considered more skilled than those done by women. So, while women will be allowed into new areas, this will be accommodated only as long as the old value systems are maintained. This underlines the importance of deconstructing the existing male-dominated value ideologies where meaning is only achieved through binary oppositions. Men, masculinity and male behaviour are what women are judged in relation to.

Hélène Cixous has analysed this kind of "patriarchal binary thought" and sees in it "a kind of death" for women. She claims:

For one of the terms to acquire meaning it must destroy the other. The 'couple' cannot be left intact. It becomes a general battlefield where the struggle for signifying supremacy is forever re-enacted. In the end, victory is always equated with activity and defeat with passivity, under patriarchy, the male is always the victor. (Moi, 1985, p.105)

Nancy Jay also makes this point when she writes that binary couples cannot be seen as being different but equal as in A/B but that the equation goes A/not A, (Jay, 1981, p.44).

So, if we recall the hidden male /female opposition within the binary system and we write male/not male, where does that equation leave women? If women exist only to give presence to men where, what, who are women? (See Plate 2, Barbara Krugers (We construct a chorus of missing persons) 1983)



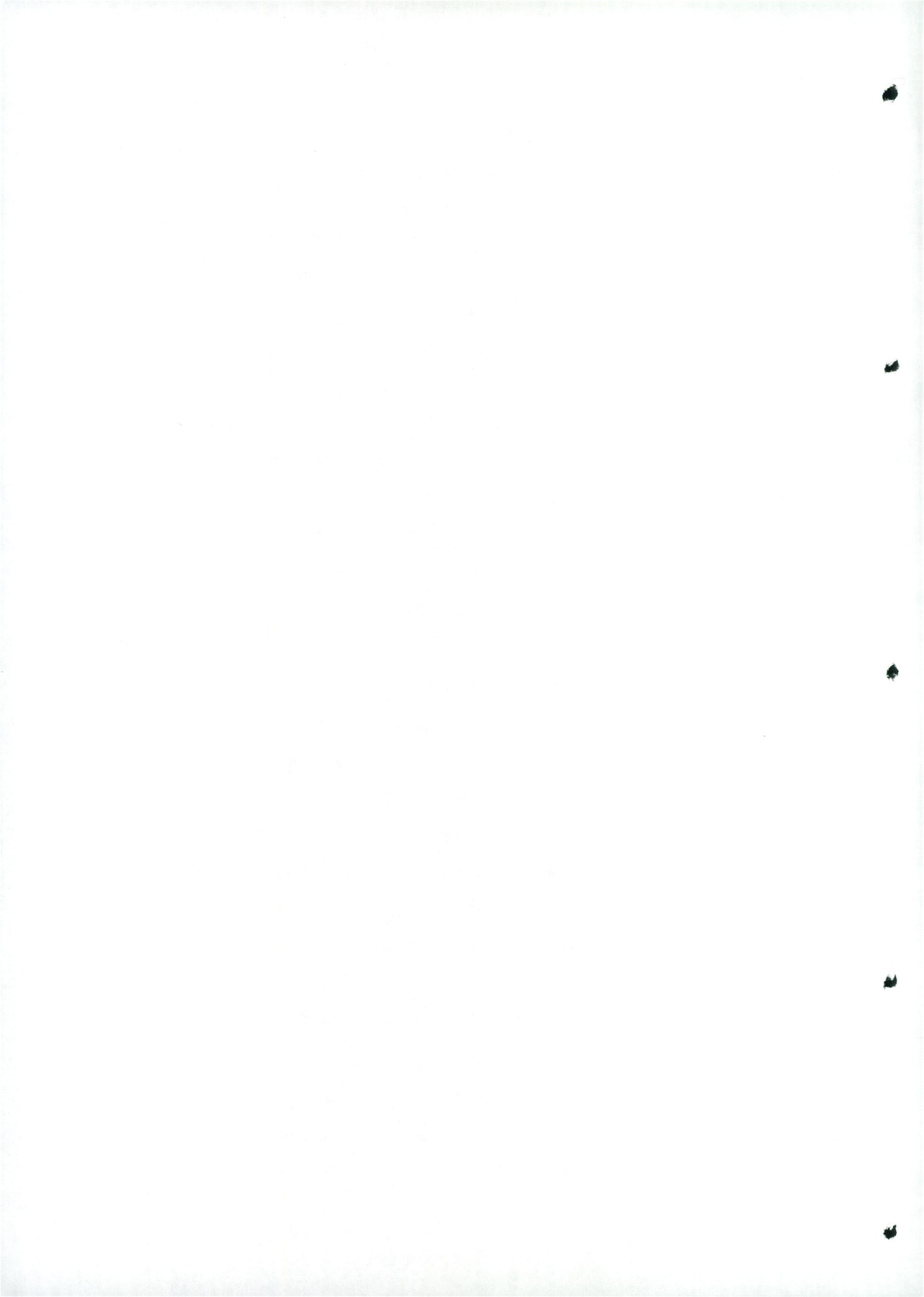
## CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Two looks at women and work. Paid work is one access to money and probably the only one for many women. Generally women earn less than men and this occurs for a variety of reasons, usually gender related. Women and men are still segregated into jobs which are considered suitable for women and men, with men's jobs having higher 'skilled' status and women's jobs mainly considered 'unskilled'. Even with new technology constantly changing job content, and breaking down gender divisions of labour, jobs continue to be redefined in favour of men to give them continued status and earning power. Often the classification of women's jobs as unskilled and men's jobs as skilled bears little relation to the amount of training or the ability required for them. Skills generally associated with men are given a higher status than those associated with women and, as we discuss in Chapter 2, men have a vested interest in maintaining the sexual division of labour.

A recognition of the importance of housework and 'labours of love' is essential if the position of women is to improve within society. Inequalities at work are linked to inequalities at home. This occurs in a number of ways, for example, women having the burden of most of the housework and child care, poor child care provision, lack of emotional support, low status associated with housework and caring roles. Women taking time out from work to have children are faced with poor promotion prospects or have to seek different employment on returning to the workforce. Many women are in part-time employment due to family ties and this comes with poor pay and other disadvantages such as no holiday pay.

Even within areas such as nursing and catering, men hold an disproportionate number of managerial positions. So it is not just a matter of asserting that housework is work or that women's skills are as important as men's skills but of deconstructing the ideologies that continue to deny women such a status. Without money one is powerless and, through this chapter on work, we can see a clear connection between gender and power.





Women are workers in all societies but almost everywhere their role is limited to those activities which are regarded as 'women's work'. Work of various forms constitutes a large part of most people's worth, but it is also important to look at how society in general views the work in which one is employed. Work is generally represented as an area in which men are dominant both in numbers and in power. The household and family are seen as the responsibility of the woman, the feminine domain. To tackle the issue of women's work we must ask the question "What is women's work?". Often the phrase was used in a derogatory way to make men feel less masculine if they partook in such activities associated with women, especially household chores and caring for children. Thus it served also to downgrade the work in which most women were involved. While I feel that the term 'women's work' should be almost redundant in western society, its presence is still certainly there but in a more insidious way.

A significant feature of recent social change in the West has been the rapidly growing number of women workers. Women have demanded the right to compete in the work market on equal terms with men, and each time they enter an all-male field the move is hailed as a breakthrough for women's liberty. Many of the old taboos about work division and sexual roles are breaking down because they are no longer relevant in an advanced industrial society. While this may be true, it is also true that almost every society regards certain activities as 'men's work' and others as 'women's work'. The most basic division of labour occurs not for social reasons but for biological reasons - only women can bear children, and so work connected with young children and the immediate household has traditionally been women's exclusive preserve.

The actual division of labour varies widely in different societies. In some countries a certain job is considered men's work while in another country the same work is considered a woman's occupation. However, one thing that doesn't change from country to country is that work done by women is always considered to be less important than men's work. Women everywhere are less valued than men.

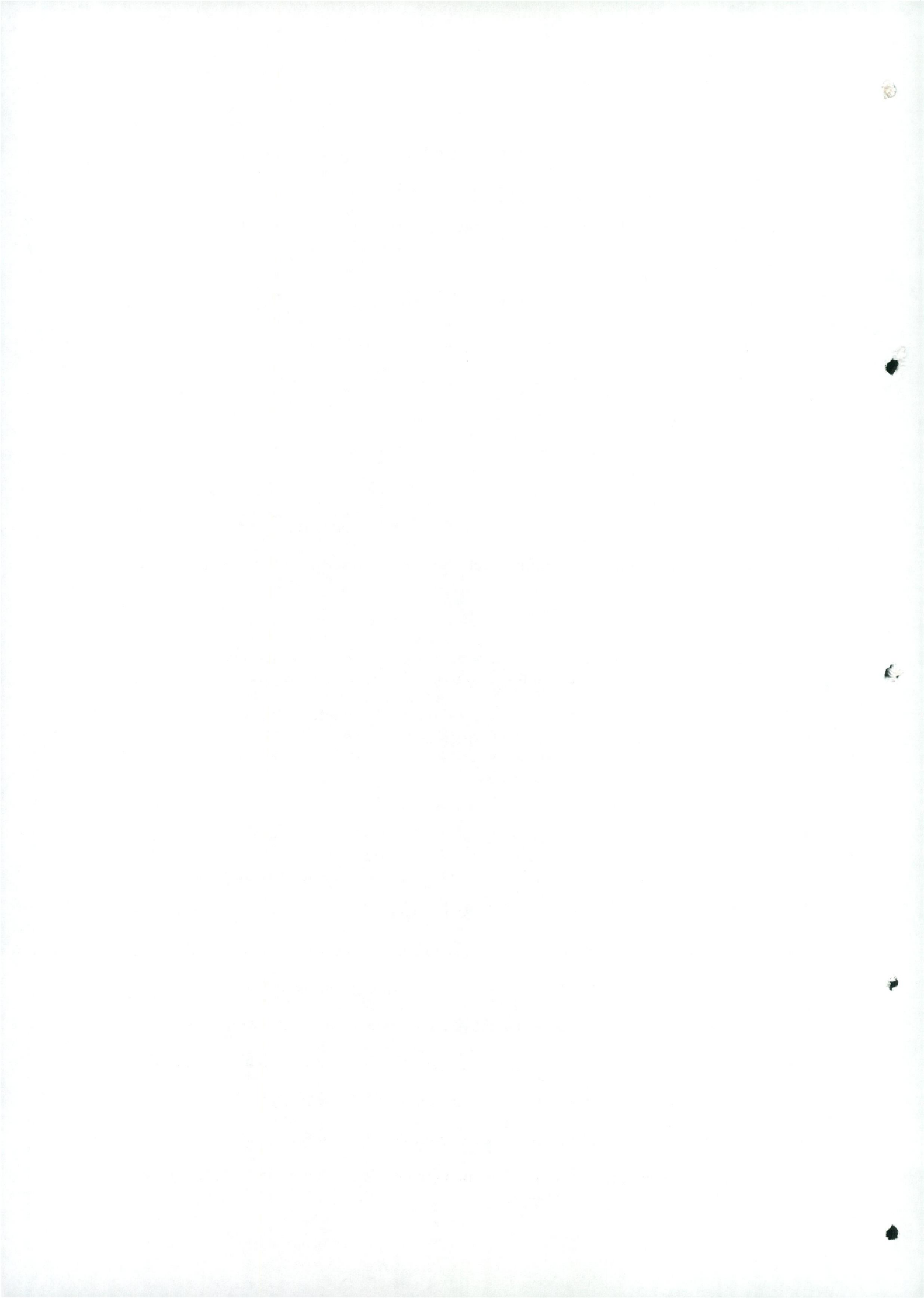


The argument is often made that women are paid less than men because they have less skill and fewer qualifications than men. The reason given for this is that this occurs as a consequence of the decision made by women to devote more time to caring for the family in the home. Women constantly find themselves crossing over boundaries between jobs. As they move in and out of paid employment they may span a wide variety of occupations. Women who give up their full-time job to have children and later return to part-time work are more than likely to have to take a step down the occupational ladder. Downward mobility is one of the facts of life for women. But isn't this a definite privileging of men's experience over women's? It trivialises women's many acquired skills during the years they spend in the home.

Human capital theory, i.e. you are paid according to the skill you have acquired, has been subject to extensive criticism particularly in relation to its analysis of gender variations in paid work.

Treiman and Hartmann's (1981) authoritative study of the wages gap between men and women for the U.S. National Research Council included a survey of empirical evidence for the human capital explanation by leading econometricians. They found that in only two studies did worker characteristics account for more than one-fifth of the gap between women's and men's earnings and in these instances they amounted to less than half the difference. (Walby, 1990, p.31)

This is a very interesting finding because it contradicts the economic and sociological accepted views that women's lower wages are the result of their lesser skills and labour market experience. So this leaves us with the argument that the main source of wage differentials is job segregation by sex. In other words women and men with the same job skills will be paid according to their sex rather than their skills. So it also follows that skills that are associated with women are seen as less valuable than those associated with men. If a woman does acquire skills normally associated with men, e.g. welding, fire fighting or a high managerial position, she may still find herself on the outside looking in. These jobs are not neutral but come loaded with masculine affinities, more like a men's club, as it were. Women have to fit into a world where they are made to feel they don't fully belong. This is a Catch 22 situation





for a woman, because if she is competent at her work, she is seen by her male colleagues as unfeminine and may also be resented by other women. If she is not competent she will be derided by her male colleagues, but in another sense, will fit into their idea of what a woman should be. Brownmiller identified this problem. She writes:

... the fear of not being feminine enough in style or in spirit has been used as a sledge hammer against the collective and individual aspirations of women since failure in femininity carried the charge of mannish or neutered, making biological gender subject to on-going proof. The great paradox of femininity, as I see it, is that a judicious concession here and there has been known to work wonders as protective coloration in a man's world and as a means of survival, but total surrender has stopped women point blank from major forms of achievement. However, femininity is used and if one fact should be clear it is that femininity is used - all approaches towards what men have defined as proper masculine pursuits are set up with road block and detours that say "For femininity, turn here" or "For Femininity, turn back" and the lonesome traveller who wishes to ignore the signs still proceeds at her own risk. (Brownmiller, 1986, p.182)

Male workers have a vested interest in maintaining the sexual division of labour, in maintaining a sense of themselves as superior to women. They have traditionally done this by calling their work 'skilled' and women's 'unskilled' and making women feel like outcasts if they cross over gender barriers. Employers stand to gain from this gendering of occupations and men choose to ignore the fact that women are being used as cheap labour. Naomi Wolf writes:

Western economies are absolutely dependent now on the continued under payment of women. An ideology that makes women feel 'worthless' was urgently needed to counteract the way feminism had begun to make women feel more. (Wolf, 1990, p.18)

This obviously causes an unequal power balance between women and men workers. Women's experiences continue to go unreported or are marginalized. To succeed in the workplace, women need such supports as, childcare facilities and supportive partners who will share the burden of household tasks. Although part-time work may suit women with young children and other domestic ties, it comes with a second rate status. Generally, part-time workers are lower paid, have poor promotion chances, if any, and practically no rights to paid holidays, redundancy pay or pension and maternity entitlements. In fact Walby, 1986, has argued that part-time work can be seen as an increasingly significant form of gender segregation. In their research on part-time work Veronica Beechey and Tessa Perkins have



also identified the labour process as a site of gender construction. In trying to account for the fact that certain jobs were part-time they discovered that it was only in relation to women that jobs were being organised on a part-time basis. On the other hand when men were employed it seems flexibility could be employed to maintain their status as full time workers, (Beechey, Perkins, 1987, pp. 163-4).

The fact that women are physically weaker than men is often used to explain why they should not do certain jobs. But this has not prevented the employment of women in all forms of manual work in the past or present. In the industrial West, women worked down the coalmines until the mid 19th century and in many countries women still perform the heaviest tasks.

The First World War brought great changes to women workers. With the outbreak of war women were seen as a vast pool of untapped labour vital to the war economy and many of the old ideas and taboos about women's place had to be swept aside. Women took over many jobs which had previously been all male, and jealously guarded as such. When the war ended women workers faced new problems. Many jobs were handed back to men, but new ones were opening up for women. During the Second World War women again contributed vital work and once again left their jobs when the war ended. But, unlike the First World War, the Second World War was followed by a time of prosperity. The late 1940s and the 1950s marked a rapid increase in the birth rate due to a higher standard of welfare all round. It was an era which focused on family life and time-saving household appliances. Advertising and the media promoted motherhood and domesticity. Post-war psychology succeeded in persuading women that their place was in the home.

This was also the case in Ireland. Fr. E. J. Cahill, the main adviser to Eamon De Valera, believed women should not compete with men for jobs and that married men should get a family wage. This was the ideology of the Trades Union Movement which was opposed by the Irish Woman's Workers Union in particular. The power of law and religion combined to





prohibit a woman from seeking out work that was stamped as male. An appeal to her feminine nature was employed to assign her ambitions and keep her content.

In a Marxist account of the family, Humphries (1977) argues that women's relative absence from the labour market is a result of the successful struggle of the working class for a family wage against the opposition of capital. In common with other Marxist writers on this topic she considers that women's employment is critically structured by the relationship between capital and labour. However, she considers women's place as full-time homemakers and hence marginal position in paid employment, to be principally a victory for the working class, rather than a disadvantage for women. Humphries' ideology may work for women who want to stay at home and look after children, but what about women who do not want to do this and are bullied into leaving their jobs? There is no guarantee that a man receiving a family wage will support a wife and children. Although married women's participation in paid work has increased in Ireland since the 1960s, it still remains low by international standards, (Pyle, 1990). As a result, inequality of economic power between wife and husband is common in Irish households. Also many women will marry for financial security because of low pay and bad job prospects and many women will remain in unhappy marriages for financial reasons.

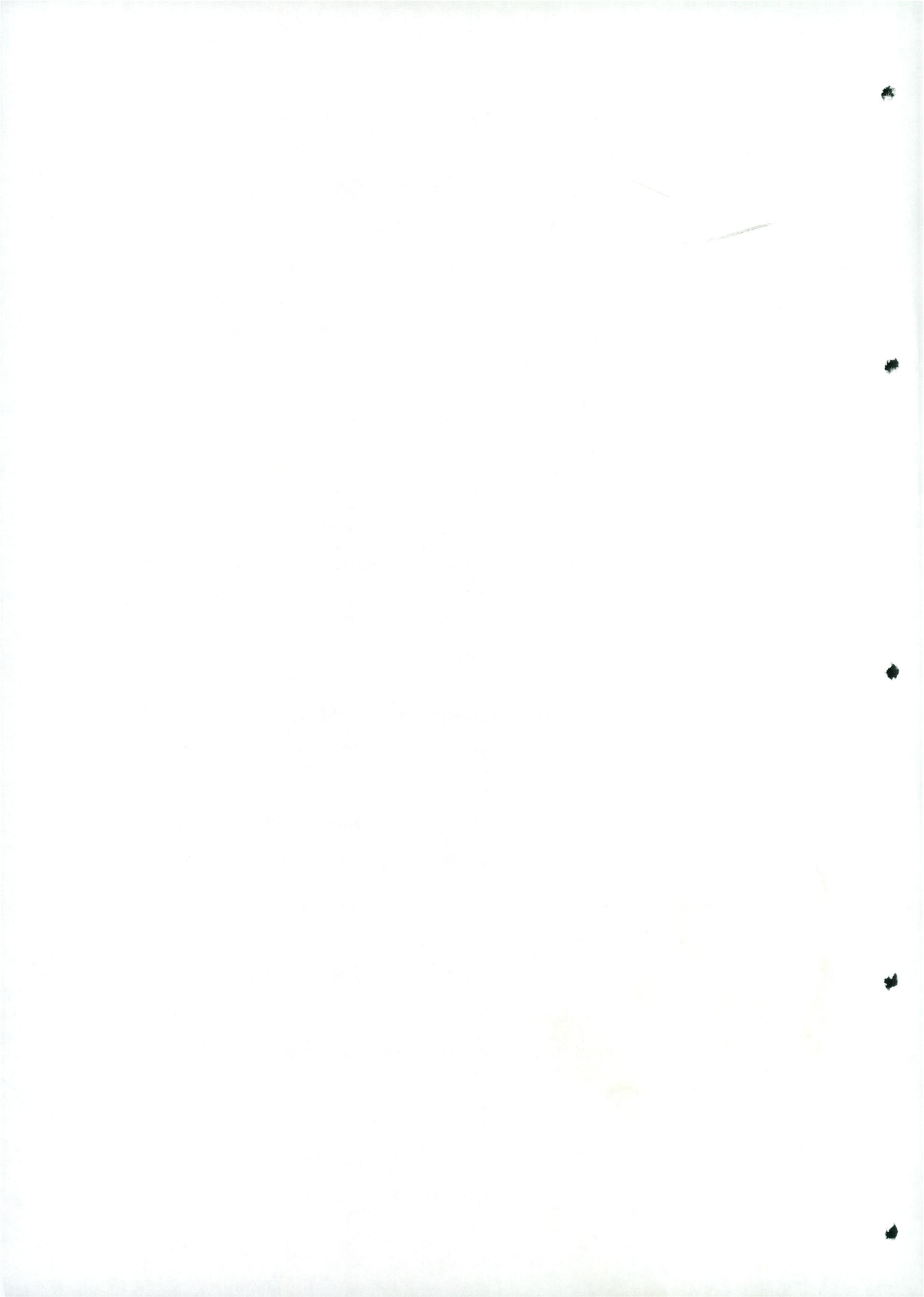
There is no victory in this way of thinking for women for it leaves many women powerless with little or no control over their lives. Money is power for it enables one to make choices - to get married or not, to buy a car to be able to travel to a better job, to obtain good child care, to join clubs and make connections with others, etc. Without power one is at the mercy of others making decisions which they think will benefit women but which eventually feeds back into a patriarchal system.

A woman who chooses to stay at home and look after her children should be paid for doing so or the family wage should be paid in both the mother's and father's names. In this way women's work will be recognised by the state and not taken for granted. Single men generally earn more than single women because of the unfair value systems that exist in the workplace.



This gives them an advantage over single women and women who are the sole breadwinners in a household. It enables them to buy bigger and better cars, houses, etc. than women which places them in more powerful positions. It is important for women to respect the wishes of other women who choose to stay at home to look after their children. As a woman who made this decision I was constantly asked by my single friends when was I going to get a job. This is disheartening for, bad as it is not to be recognised by men for your work, it is doubly so when other women do not value your work as a mother.

That work equals formal paid employment continues to be the dominant ideology among political, social and economic theorists in most industrial societies. This has the effect of promoting paid employment as the only significant form of work. Since much of women's work remains unpaid, and generally takes place in the home, the majority of adult women (53%) in the Republic of Ireland are home workers and therefore mostly unpaid. Only 0.5% of men are in the same situation i.e. home workers, (Lynch, McLaughlin, 1995). Outside the formal market this ideology promotes the obscurity and low value that is attached to women's work. It also has the effect of focusing on the male income earner rather than the complete household as the basic economic unit. Unemployment rates in Ireland have risen since the 1970s. Between 1980 and 1985 unemployment rates doubled from about 10% to 20% making unemployment a major crisis. By 1993 the numbers on the live register reached record highs of nearly 300,000 before falling slightly in 1994, (O'Hearn, 1995). For women, poverty plus the presence of an inactive partner within the household heightened the stress associated with domestic work and child care. Women were faced with a daily economic struggle of attempting to satisfy internal family needs on a limited budget. (See Table 1). Although there has been a rise in male unemployment and a rise in married women's employment, recent surveys indicate that changes to domestic division of labour have been nominal. Women often work a double-day by combining paid employment with housework and child care, (Leonard, 1995) (See Tables 2 and 3).





Psychological theories which stress the importance of the mother/child dyad in early childhood have reinforced the idea that this area is naturally the duty of the mother. Guilt often forces women to shoulder the double burden which limits them to compete on equal terms in their jobs.

As work is generally represented as an area in which men dominate, very little attention has been paid to the contribution made mainly by women by various forms of caring and 'love labour'. In an effort to distinguish love labour from emotional labour, i.e. any labour that involves emotion or domestic labour such as cooking and cleaning, Lynch and McLaughlin have described it thus:

Love labour therefore only refers to that emotional work which has as its principal goal the development of solitary bonds in and of themselves. It refers not only to a set of tasks but to a set of perspectives and orientations integrated with tasks. It is a feeling and a way of regarding another while relating to that person. It denotes not just the activity of thinking about people or having them on one's mind, although this may be part of it. It also refers to the very real activities of looking out for and looking after, the other; and that includes the management of the tensions and conflict which are an integral part of solitary relations. (Lynch McLoughlin, 1995, p. 259)

Because this type of labour cannot be categorised it has generally been ignored by sociologists, economists etc. Although it would be incorrect to exclude all men from giving love labour it is men who benefit mostly from it because women are the main nurturers and carers in society. Many men have gained enormously in work and socially by having a loving, supportive partner. The ideology of masculinity, i.e. learning to be tough, to stay in control, not to show emotions, puts men in a difficult position when trying to show love or express feelings in relationships with women. The whole 'male' role value system is antithetical to the role a person needs for a loving, caring, empathetic relationship, a relationship where one person should not dominate the other. However, in society in general a man not dominating a relationship is looked upon as unmasculine, the stereotypical hen-pecked husband/partner. In fact male violence both within and outside the family has been seen as a defence against the weakened social legitimacy of patriarchal dominance, (Wilson, 1983).



Violence towards women can be seen as a gender issue and a product of the social construction of masculinity. Some feminists would argue that men benefit from the existence of such a culture of violence because it means that women live in a constant state of intimidation and fear. The result is that women will change their behaviour in order to reduce the possibility of attack. They will be kept in their place objectified and subject to male power.

Walby sees sexual harassments as acting both to control women within work and to exclude women from certain types of work.

A survey in Leeds found that 96% of women in non-traditional areas of employment had experienced forms of sexual harassment at work" (Leeds, 1983). The most publicised recent event of this order was in the London Fire Brigade in the mid-1980s when women testing their new rights of entry under the equal opportunities legislation, were subject to gross physical and sexual attacks to discourage them. Sexual harassment is not, however, confined to women working in traditionally male areas of work, although it is reported less often in the surveys. The same Leeds survey cited above found that 48% of women in traditional spheres of employment for women had experienced sexual harassment. Indeed Stanker (1988) thinks the difference in reporting rates may be due to women in traditional areas having less power to make complaints, (Walby, 1991, p.52).

This chapter has sought to challenge the ways in which women's work, both paid and unpaid tends to be marginalised within society. The issues dealt with reflect the difficulty of drawing a dividing line between economic work and work that is considered non-economic, i.e. housework, reproductive work and love labour. The household cannot be seen in a 'private' way but interacts with and has an effect on public life. At the moment it is the nuclear family which is favoured with a heterosexual partnership at its head. The nuclear household is seen not only as a place where one expects emotional and caring support but also includes the reproduction of human beings. Children are expected to be fed, nurtured and to be able to take their place in society as socialised individuals and future wage labourers. These tasks, as we have seen, are generally allocated to the woman. Equally as Faith Robertson Elliot argues:

Studies of family law and of social policies have convincingly shown that state intervention in family life is extensive and intrusive. It is extensive in that a wide range of family activities are subject to governmental regulation. It is intrusive in that it operates through the dissemination of family ideals as well as through formal legal and economic measures. (Elliot, 1992, p. 106)





In an Equal Opportunities Commission report published in England in 1986, Robin Simpson estimated "that the overall annual cost of child care provision which would enable women to compete equally with men in the labour market was approximately two billion pounds. This figure represented less than the then current married man's tax allowance (approximately £2.6 billion). As a similar situation exists in Ireland with married men's tax allowance and very much less child care provision we can see how this illustrates the gendered politics of resource allocation. It also shows how government policies structure the gender division of labour and women's position within the family. In an effort to redress this problem I suggested that the family wage be paid in both the Mother's and Father's names as this would have the effect of focusing on the importance of women's work as part of the household's income. Gender inequality both within the family and in paid work has been considered, domestic ties mean that women enter the labour market at a disadvantage and their weak market situation further holds them in dependency. Both the family and the labour market can be targeted as sites of male control over women, sometimes with violence being use in some situations to continue this control e.g. sexual harassment in the workplace and domestic violence.





## CHAPTER THREE

How should we conceptualise the unpaid labour of women in caring roles in the domestic sphere? As we have discussed, it is considered generally by society as a 'natural' phenomenon that women should be the carers in society. It is also the case that these caring roles are seen as 'love labour' or reproductive labour and not as 'waged labour'. The family is privileged over all other institutions by both women and men as the place where emotional and sexual needs can be expressed and met. But, as discussed in the Chapter on 'Women and Work', the home is very much a place of work for women. What needs to be discussed is how and why the domain of the private or domestic sphere came to be exclusively associated with the labour of women and why women are still drawn into or attracted to this unpaid labour and its inherent low status position.

Anna Yeatman puts forward the argument that the domestic domain is a necessary aspect of modern social life but that the nuclear family is only one of the many historic family forms in which it can be accommodated. At the moment it is the nuclear family which is favoured by the state and society in general with a heterosexual partnership at its head. In 1961, 1.6 per cent of births in Ireland occurred outside of marriage. By 1981 this proportion had increased to 5.4 per cent, while by 1991 it had jumped dramatically to 16.6 per cent. More significantly, 32.5 per cent of first births in 1991 occurred outside marriage, compared to 15.8 per cent in 1981. This situation has become increasingly normalised within the new pattern of family life. While the nuclear family has lost its appeal for many women, having children and caring for them has not. In fact these women may find themselves worse off than a woman within the usual heterosexual partnership both financially and emotionally. Nearly two thirds of lone parent families live in poverty and most are dependant on social security benefits as their main source of income.



Ann Oakley has made the point that a child's emotional and psychological needs can be provided for by a secure long term relationship with any adult, it doesn't have to be particularly the biological mother of the child or particularly a woman.

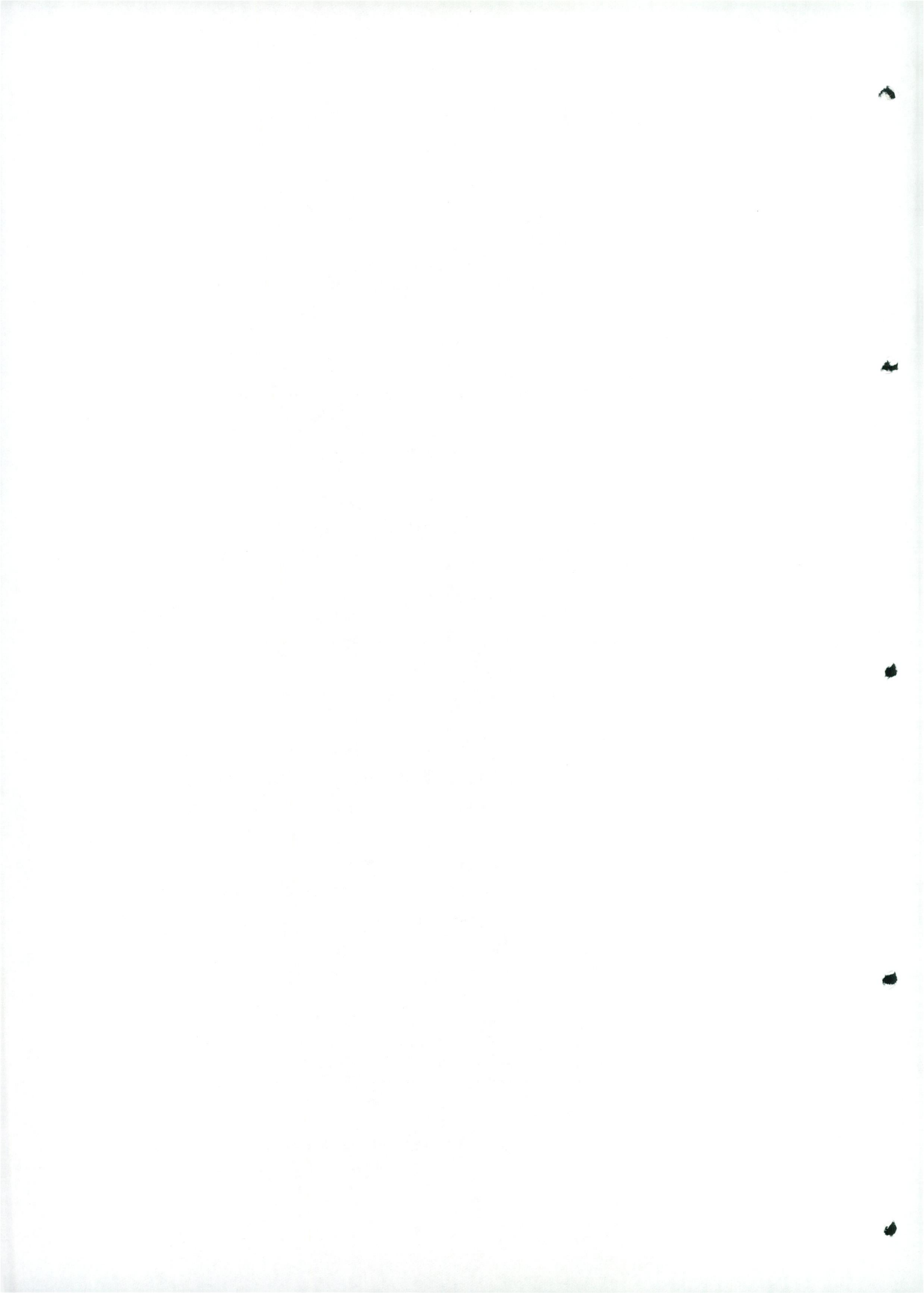
Infants do need not only good physical care but warm and intimate relationships with others, they need a certain minimum of continuity in the people caring for them, and they need both verbal and non-verbal stimulation. But no researcher has ever found that they must have these needs satisfied by mothers rather than fathers, by females rather than males, or indeed by adults rather than older siblings. Of course a culture that develops tenderness and sympathy only in women may have considerable need for the mother-child tie. So accordingly as girls are encouraged to play with dolls and other 'home making' games, this leads to their rehearsal of the motherhood role. Mothers are certainly role-models for their daughters and as fathers are absent from the home, due mainly to the economic structure of our society, it is women who are concerned mostly with child care. (Oakley, 1972, p.194)

Whether a woman remains at home to look after children or returns to work, society backed up with psychological and medical data generally considers that it is only women who can naturally mother and that the biological mother of a child is the best person to nurture that child.

Ann Oakley considers the construction of motherhood as bound up within culture and society only and considers Freudian psychology as doing little to explain this situation. Juliet Mitchell's construction of motherhood, by contrast, is through analysis of the unconscious and of sexual identity, following Freud and Lacan. Juliet Mitchell uses psychoanalytic theory to explain the tenacity of gender identity and women's desire to mother. The work of Jacques Lacan (1901-81) has influenced the work of Mitchell to a great extent. Lacan, who re-read Freud, placed major emphasis on the importance of language and the symbolic order in bringing the individuated subject into being. For Lacan, as for Freud, this can only take place at a psychic level. It relates to what Lacan terms the Imaginary, when the child believes itself to be part of the mother and perceives no separation between itself and the rest of the world. The Oedipal crisis, the entry of the individual into the system of sexual difference, occurs at the same time as the individual's entry into the Symbolic Order, which is linked to the acquisition of language, the opening up of the unconscious. According to Mitchell, one of the consequences of the way girls enter into the language and sexual systems of difference is one,

...in which she learns that the subjugation to the law of the father entails her becoming the representative of 'nature' and 'sexuality', a chaos of spontaneous, intuitive, creativity ... woman becomes, in the nineteenth century designation 'the sex'. Hers is the sphere of reproduction. (Mitchell, 1974, p.405)

We need to go back to Freud's theories on infantile sexuality to understand fully what Mitchell is talking about. As the primary nurturer of the child, she becomes the love object of the child.



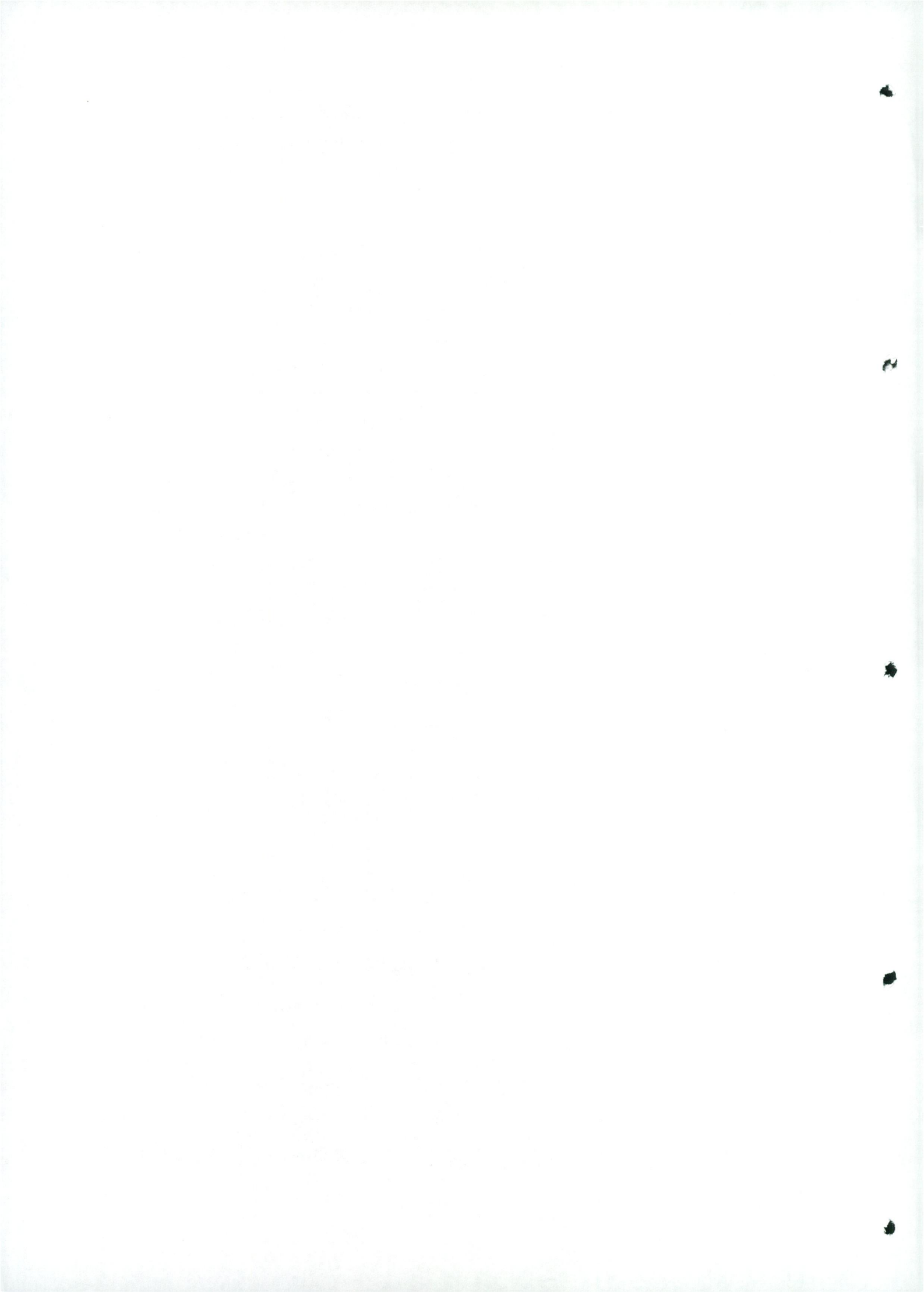


At first the child cannot distinguish itself as separate from the mother, but through the mother's absences, she realises that she exists independently. In order to please this omnipotent being (the mother), the child, (both female and male), wants to give her what it feels she most desires: the child wants to give the mother a baby or to have the mother's baby. In this way the child, still sexually undifferentiated, hopes to continue its possessive relationship with the mother. Freud called this fantasy the Oedipus Complex. Freud believed that the child cannot resolve its sexual identity until the Oedipus Complex is broken: "Whereas in boys the Oedipus complex is destroyed by the castration complex, in girls it is made possible and led up to by the castration complex ... it inhibits and limits masculinity, and encourages femininity" (Freud, 1977, p.341) Castration fear only works when its threatened result is somewhere in evidence. The mother comes to be regarded as already castrated because the boy assumes that all subjects were one like himself. From this he deduces that the mother must have lost her penis and blames the father as the one who has committed this act of castration. As he realises the possibility of his own castration, he ceases his rivalry with the father for the mother and submits to him. "...The complex is not simply repressed it is literally smashed into pieces by the shock of threatened castration. ...the Oedipus Complex exists no longer, even in the unconscious: the super-ego has become its heir" (Freud, 1977, p.341). The Oedipus complex in the girl is understood as the realisation of what the boy has been threatened with - castration - has already taken place in the girl. Because of this the girl is reluctantly forced to recognise that she lacks value (the phallus) she is allocated the passive and dependent position which women are made occupy within patriarchy.

As Freud writes:

She gives up her wish for a penis and puts in place a wish for a child; and with that purpose in view she takes her father as a love-object. Her mother becomes the object of her jealousy. The girl has turned into a little woman. (Freud, 1977, p.340)

These, according to Freud, are the unconscious origins of sexual difference. Because the Oedipus Complex is not completely smashed for the girl as it is for the boy "... it may be slowly abandoned or dealt with by repression" (Freud, 1977, p.342). In this way, her sense of autonomy is radically diminished in that her desires become dependant on meeting the expectations of someone other than herself. Juliet Mitchell sees this predicament as causing what she terms the "inferiorised psychology of woman" (Mitchell, 1974, p.353). According to Mitchell, in bowing to the patriarchal law of the power of the father, women have to deny the unconscious desire for the primary love of the mother. This has the effect of both women and



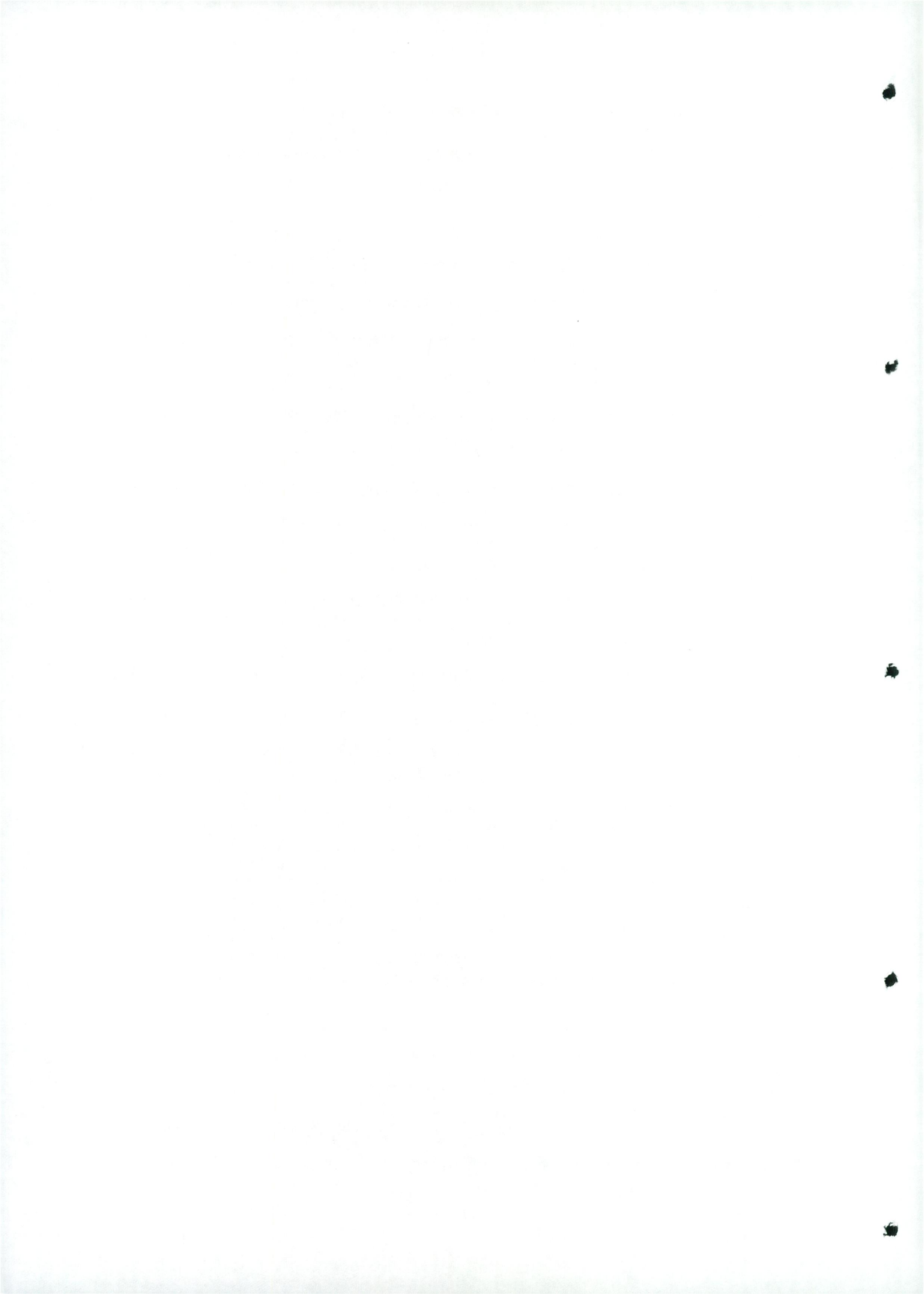
men to hold women in disregard albeit unconsciously. Their unconscious desire for the child, means that women are trapped because they will always be drawn towards the family and motherhood.

For Mitchell then, there is a basic unconscious structure to femininity which is the desire for a child/phallus. But according to Freud, and of special interest to feminists, was the fact that there could be no clear-cut separation between the identity of the heterosexual and the homosexual or between masculinity and femininity. This was even more apparent in girls because "the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus Complex is lacking" (Freud, 1977, p.337 and p.342). Mitchell does not elaborate on why the heterosexual resolution of the Oedipus Complex is more prevalent in our society. Clearly, then, other factors must come to influence the individual's position with regard to heterosexuality.

Rosalind Coward argues by contrast to Mitchell, that desire comes from culture and that these desires have the power to shape our deepest and innermost sense of selfhood. According to Coward, motherhood is not the only source of identity and pleasure offered to women but one of a range of activities including the body, the home, food, servicing men who are held up as offering women feminine gratification. Coward describes female desire as it is put to women:

...Everywhere women are offered pleasure, pleasure for losing weight, pleasure for preparing beautiful meals, pleasure if we acquire something new - a new body, a new house, a new outfit, a new relationship, a new baby ... What is problematic about this is that women get trapped in a desire for perfection which is all about servicing others and about downgrading the value of women's labour ... Women's deepest sense of ourselves is provided by our sense of what we want, what we desire, what we really yearn for. And this, our most crucial sense of ourselves, our desire and our pleasure, has been caught up and mobilised, has been made central in discourses which constantly sustain male power and privilege, female subordination. (Coward, 1992, pp. 116-118)

We can understand why it is sexual difference and not some other factor which is the main reason for locating cultural patterns of desire. As we have seen everything practically centres around sexual identity - dress, occupation, social standing etc. So how can we account for Mitchell's position with regard to the unconscious and sexual identity? That desire is not just a





mechanism of social control has to be taken into account. We can, as Coward admits, refuse the desires put to us by society, but sometimes we cannot rationally account for individuals resisting dominant cultural patterns of desire.

Despite the growing hostility by society towards unmarried mothers and the fact that women have greater control over their fertility than ever before, many women feel unfulfilled if they have not had children. It is a complex situation and it seems that both the unconscious formations of sexuality and the social structuring of desire have a part to play in women's desire to mother. The important thing is that we recognise gender construction, human reproduction, the gendered divisions of labour, and the construction of family life, to be socially constructed and not 'natural phenomena'. Once this is realised then it is a question of intervention and deconstruction of present attitudes which undermine women's position within society. Only then can we move forward to more equal relationships between women and men which would include equal recognition for the skills and differences associated with women and men.





## CHAPTER FOUR

The last chapter examines the ways in which women are represented in the arts and the media. It is an exploration into how some women and men artists have chosen to represent the female body. The representation of the female nude has been the prerogative of man. Throughout the long history of the nude we can come to understand the visual ideology of the men who have made these particular images and of the institutions and art galleries who have selected particular images to be considered as valued art objects.

In these images we see women portrayed in many different ways - the virgin, the whore, the mother, the sex object and often with misogynist undertones. The advertisement for the exhibition 'Convincing Illusions' in the Lovis and Meisel Gallery (Plate 3 ) gives us a clear example of the control men have in the art world. The gallery owner or curator sits with his arms folded and engages us with a super confident look. He is surrounded by the art objects he has chosen to exhibit in his gallery. Included in the objects is a life size sculpture of a female nude. She stands in sharp contrast to the gallery owner, her eyes are downcast, her pose submissive, with her hands hiding her sex. It is not difficult to make the master/slave, active/passive, artist/object connection. As John Berger writes, 1972, women and men have an unequal power in looking. "Men look at women, women watch themselves being looked at" (Berger, 1972, p. 47). So women take up the object position, the object of art, leaving men to be the active doers, the creators of the image.

In this context we begin to understand the huge task that lies before feminist artists, writers, critics etc. to disrupt these images and to create new images for women. To give back to women the full right of the gaze and not be placed in the position as one who stands back and observes her 'constructed' femininity. We have looked at how women and men are positioned in society and how women have an inferior position because masculine qualities are more highly valued than feminine. We have also looked at psychoanalysis in an effort to



understand the construction of human sexuality and the unconscious in order to give us a further insight into what patriarchal culture demands of women and femininity. We have found that women's earning power is considerably less than men's, and fails women in their efforts to improve their position within society. Now I want to look at the ways women are represented visually in society, focusing mainly on the media and fine art. These representations tell women how to look, how to behave and show how women are seen and treated by others. It is through such visual images that we can begin to understand the issues of control that are inherent within them. It is really a discussion about power, about who has it and why. Feminist criticism in film and literature has tried to characterise the ways in which gender roles are culturally constituted in an effort to subvert this imbalance of power based on gender within a patriarchal society. Fundamental to this analysis is the recognition that the formation of feminine and masculine characteristics are determined not biologically, but by social and psychological relations as previously discussed. Critical approaches to representation can provide a way of analysing and deconstructing their negative and oppressive effects, but they must also create new languages and images which will give women 'full right to the gaze' (King, 1992, p.139).

To understand the priorities and prejudices of a culture, there is no better guide than to explore the various ways in which it has chosen to represent the body. The representation of the female nude has long been the prerogative of men. Our sense of what women are has been shaped and reshaped by artists of successive generations. Not only have male artists studied the nude for centuries, but they have justified their enjoyment of the nude as a genre by appealing to abstract conceptions of ideal form, beauty and truth, when really it was an expression of their own sexuality. Power's relation to knowledge is never separable because within each society there is a 'regime of truth' with its own particular method of producing truth, (Foucault, 1980).

Beauty in our culture has always been associated with art; it has been defined by a tradition reaching back to platonic ideals of order and measure. A beautiful woman, or the idea of her,



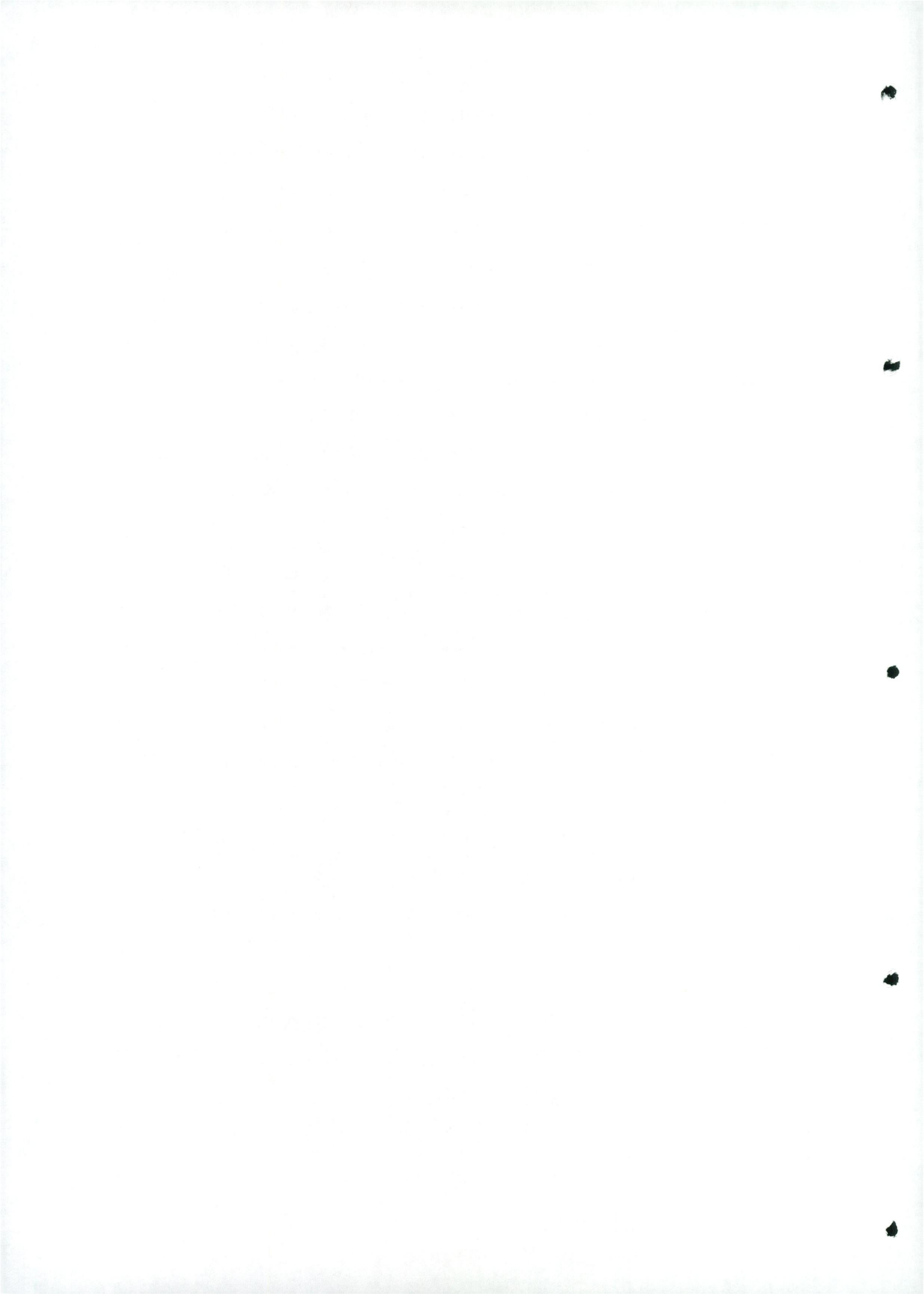


could only be represented as a higher ordered stereotypical list of parts. That this ordering and controlling of the female body is in some way connected with violence is a disturbing connection, but one which seems to arise again and again. It seems that the masculine quest to create beauty in art is driven by contradictory needs, to mend, to control, to remember and also dismember, to dissect and to mend, to control and devour. An artist who is forced by a patriarchal society to give up his feminine side and is encouraged to look upon woman as an inferior 'castrated' sex, will create fetishist objects in which the woman's body itself, as in the case of Allen Jones's work, (Plates 4 and 5) replaces the penis she is supposed to have once had, and subsequently lost. Wholeness of the body does not belong to the woman - she is dissected and objectified and our attention is shifted from the object to the very act of creation itself. Man's desire to create the perfect woman as an imaginary companion stems from the childhood loss of the 'ideal self' when childhood ends:

...though Freud does not talk of the object as a loss, as Lacan does, he is absolutely clear that it's psychological significance arises from the absence, or as he put it in his essay on "Femininity" from the fact that it could never satisfy ... the child's avidity for it's earliest nourishment is altogether insatiable .... it never gets over the pain of losing the mother's breast. (Mitchell, 1984, p 277)

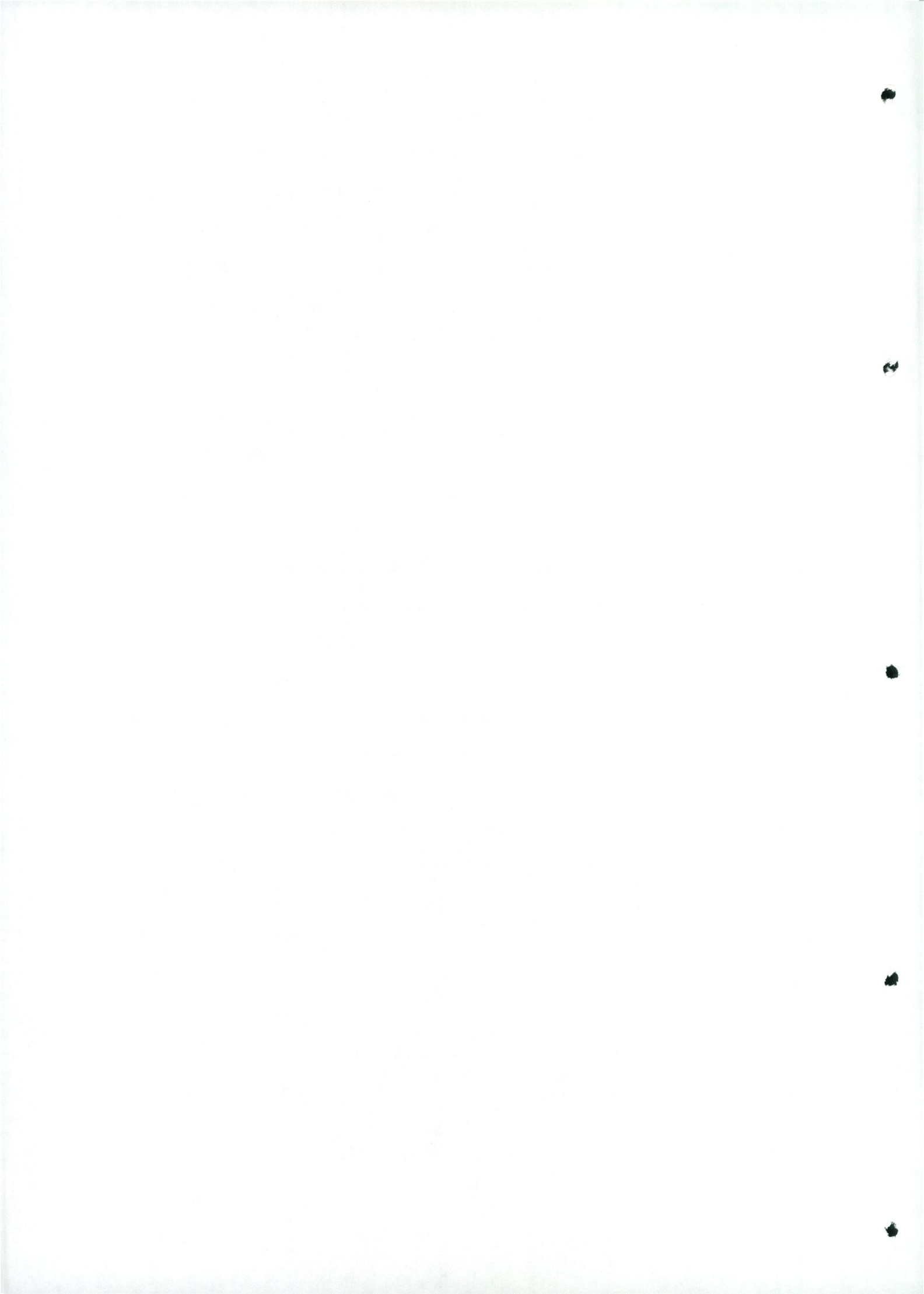
So here we have a possible situation of men's need both to resurrect and perhaps to punish the lost mother who is fantasised as having punished the little boy when she drove him away from her. It is the fear of the loss of masculinity and self which is why it is particularly the male child who confronts the trauma of separation and who retains the fear of re-incorporation with the mother. The 'familiar coupling' of the 'virgin/whore' seems to stem from this psychic process and can give us an insight into the sometimes lightly concealed violent fantasies men often show towards women.

As we have seen the tradition of the female nude concentrates and emphasises the exterior of the body and the completeness of it's surfaces. In contrast and in opposition to this, some women's body art exposes the interior, the 'terrifying secret' (Nead 1992) that is hidden within it's idealised surface. Works such as Judy Chicago's *Red Flag* (1971 - Plate 6) showing the removal of a bloody tampon, deliberately push the boundaries of artistic licence to the limits by



challenging the aesthetic ideal of the sealed and finished female body. Orlan's performances, during which she undergoes surgery, are engaging both with the containment of the female body through the attainment of an ideal surface, while at the same time exposing the 'terrifying' interior (Plate 7). The problem with work such as this is that although it is de-constructive in that it succeeds in questioning the basis of existing aesthetic norms and values, it does not extend the possibilities of those codes to offer alternative and progressive representations of female identity.

In some cases also what might seem as a type of liberation for women is in fact another reinforcement of the cultural dictates of woman as a sealed and contained body. Lynda Nead, in her book *The Female Nude* (1992) cites such an example in the case of bodybuilder Lisa Lyon (Plate 8) who sees herself as a sculptor whose raw material is her own body. A year after Lyon won the first World Women's Body building Championships in 1979, she posed for a series of pictures for photographer Robert Mapplethorpe which were published in a book called *Lady: Lisa Lyon*. Some women might see in body building a way for women to develop their masculinity and strength and to produce an alternative to the usual body image associated with women. It could be seen, as Nead puts it " ...to blur the conventional definitions of general identity", (Nead, 1992, p. 8). But if we examine the popular notions of fitness that are presented to women we find it has little to do with actual body strength. Instead, it is presented to women as the latest, approved method of resisting those destroyers of feminine beauty: ageing and being overweight. In popular magazines, women are not presented with images of physical strength such as Lyons, but with models who are almost anorexic and lift weights no bigger than 'oversized cuff-links'. But the emphasis on hardness and containment of the body is the same. In our modern consumer society, social control of women has increased due to the constant bombardment of images of perfect bodies. Women are constantly made to feel inferior by what is termed the cult of the perfect body. Men are allowed to retain a naturalness in appearance, such as grey hair, baldness, double chins, etc., whereas for women the tyranny of the perfect body holds sway.





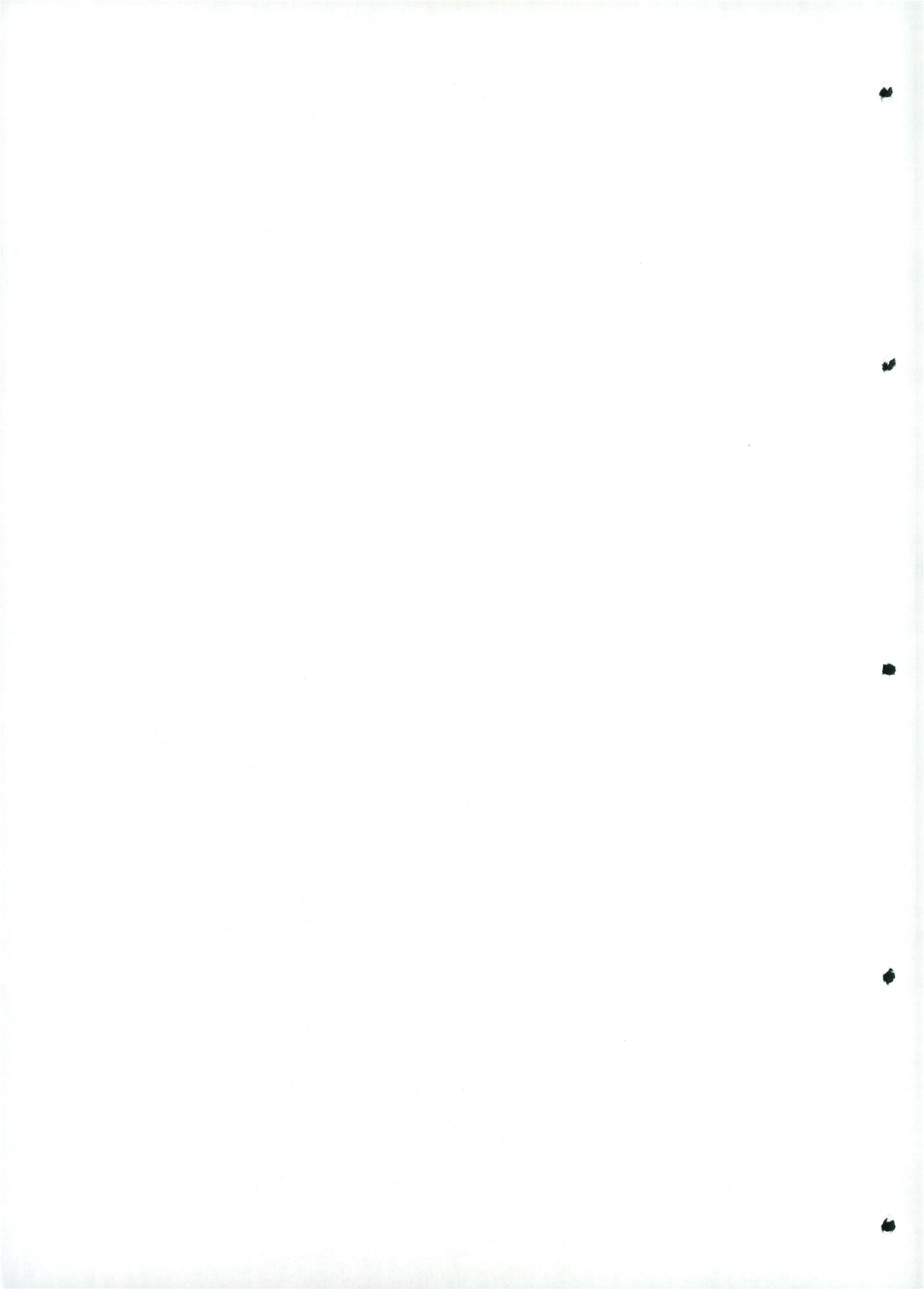
Concerning the issues of control and deconstruction, I want to look at the work of Jo Spence (1934 - 1992). Up to the late 1970s Jo Spence was one of many agit prop documentarists who used photography to explore social issues. In 1979, after she exhibited in '*Beyond The Family Album*', Spence made a radical departure from documentary photography and began to re-examine her own past.

I began to think of how I had been represented by others ... This was the starting point on a project on 'my history' which I began by tentatively examining photographs of myself and ended up by taking control over how I wanted to be photographed. Thus, I changed my role from being behind the camera to being in front of it and became at the same time on active rather than a passive subject. (William, 1992, p. 20)

But Spence's art does not stop at identifying gender power relationships - it is also concerned with reclaiming control of the female body through photo-therapy. Photo-therapy informed the major works of the last ten years of Spence's life and offers women and men a way to come to terms with bodily and sexual identity. This isn't to promote photo-therapy as a cure for anything - it would probably be more correct to call it a sophisticated tool for diagnosing the complex interplay between what we have internalised from our entry into language/culture.

In a recent collaborative work entitled '*Narratives of Disease*' Spence makes visible through her work the unhealthy, ageing female body (Plates 9 and 10) using her own body as the subject/object she re-enacts her feelings and experiences since being diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. Maladies and medicine loomed large in pre-modern culture and in all such representations the ailing body occupies centre stage providing a supple visual language for representing personal disaster, public morality and the wider debates of politics. Spence's work successfully engages with all of these issues and because she is using her own body, that of an ageing, scarred woman, the work avoids the trap of becoming re-appropriated by the dominant patriarchal culture and read against the grain of their intended meaning. A case in point is the exhibition advertisement by Lynda Benglis (Plate 11) in *Artforum*, 1974, featuring herself naked and gesticulating with a rubber dildo. Benglis, with her tanned, oiled, lithe body, is too close to that which she wanted to parody - the pin-up and the macho. When we consider that most images of women in advertising are posed in such a way as to be objects





of men's desire, it follows that men see themselves in the powerful position of spectators of these desirable objects. We can understand the difficulty in attempting to take the female body away from existing systems of male dominated advertising and usual representations of women.

Hannah Wilke, with her work S.O.S. Starification Object Series 1975, comes up against the same kind of problem. An artist based in New York, she adopts a related strategy of body art in creating an art work that has as its aim "that women allow their feelings and fantasies to emerge so that this could lead to a new type of art". Often her poses take on the characteristics of a centrefold, her eyes directed to the assumed male viewer. Wilke places vulval shaped pieces of chewing gum on her body which take on the appearance of scars. (Plates 12 and 13). She also changes words slightly - e.g. scarification becomes starification. It seems her work ends up by reinforcing what it really should subvert. In using her own body as the content of her art - that of a young, beautiful woman - she fails to challenge conventional notions of female sexuality. Also the combination of scarring and erotic poses could validate the myth that women want to be beaten, raped etc. The notion put forward by John Berger that:

Men survey women before treating them. Consequently, how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated .... If a woman throws a glass on the floor this is an example of how she treats her own emotion of anger and so of how she would wish it to be treated by others. If a man does the same his action is only read as an expression of his anger. (Berger, 1972, pp. 46 and 47)

only goes to reinforce the idea that women cannot do what they like with their bodies without first considering how the consequences of those actions/images will be read in a wider social context. When one realises that one of the major causes of death among women is through domestic violence, this type of body art does nothing for the betterment of women's position in society.

The female body comes with a history and feminist artists have to be careful that their images of women are not reappropriated back into the male art world, becoming the object for the male gaze. Many changes have to be made both within the art world and in the wider community



with regard to how women are represented. It is a constant struggle as we seem to be faced with endless images both in the media and the art world of men's ideal woman, images that women are constantly trying to imitate often with disastrous results as in the case of anorexia. The mature female body seems to frighten many men, and women are made to feel disgust for the mature female body. It is up to women to reclaim their sexuality and to promote their sexually mature bodies as good and natural and not something to be controlled by men.

If we want to develop a feminist artistic practice which works to produce social change, it is of vital importance to understand representation as a political issue. It is also imperative to have an understanding, psychoanalytical or otherwise, of women's subordination within patriarchal forms of representation. It is important therefore to avoid imagery which encourages the spectator to read the body as an anonymous available object to be degraded and exploited.

Lucy Lippard emphasises the point when she writes:

A woman using her own face and body has a right to do with them what she will, but it is a subtle abyss that separates men's use of women for sexual titillation from women's use of women to expose that insult. (Lippard, 1976, p. 125)

There are inevitable risks involved in the representation of the female body and these risks have to be taken, but as we have already seen, the female body does not come to us as a neutral sign.

Any body politics must speak about the body and, for feminists to reclaim the female body means to challenge the boundaries of gender and identity as set up within a dominant patriarchal society.

Trying to establish a visibility of the female body on one's own terms, as we have seen, is an enormous struggle but, having achieved it, it is also a bigger struggle not to be swallowed up into the patriarchal dominated art world. A case in point is the work of Cindy Sherman. Sherman is up there with the 'male stars' of the contemporary art world, and risks people/institutions wanting to own her work or her name alone and not caring too much about the content. As Lippard points out in her book *'From the Centre'*,





.... there are women emerging all over the world now who have realised through experience how unsatisfying success can be in an alien framework. They are the ones who will make a feminist art reflecting a different set of values. Precisely which values these will be can be worked out only in relation to a new community, not to the present art world, which can be called a community only at times of severe stress or crisis, when the competition at its core is temporarily submerged. (Lippard, 1976, p. 10)

Performance art is very popular with feminist artists for the fact that it is not confined to the 'art gallery' but can be taken outside to a wider audience. This is one way of preventing the work from being sucked back into the sterile world of the gallery system. With the invention of new technologies and the emergence of new communities there will be more spaces for feminist voices and images to be heard and seen. The important thing is that feminist work continues to challenge, and continues to open up new possibilities for women everywhere.



## CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have focused on the inequalities which exist between women and men. This is most obvious in relation to women's position in the workforce where they are denied access to higher paid jobs and subjected to a devaluing of their skills based on sex discrimination.

Behind this obvious inequality there is the ideology of patriarchy that works both politically and economically to keep women in their place. There are many agents that ensure women have less power than men and one of the most active is the way in which women are visually represented in the media, art, etc.

The two main issues dealt with are sexual equality and sexual difference. By sexual equality I do not mean a denial of sexual difference. I mean instead equality as an equal right and opportunity. Sexual difference is not just about possessing different genitals because, as we have seen, to be a woman or a man determines how one behaves, dresses and has a major impact on occupation. For women the desire to have children and to mother is strongly influenced by society which deems it as a natural course of action (Coward, Oakley).

Unconsciously, women may be predisposed to identify with cultural definitions, of maternal desire (Mitchell). It may be the case that both the unconscious formation of sexuality and the social structuring of desire combine to steer women into mothering. It is this very role of reproduction that has proved to be a major factor in the continuation of patriarchal power. The fact that women bear children and are mainly the ones responsible for caring for them affects their employment and earning power. Even if a woman does not have children she will be affected as there are extensive differences bound up with the general roles of the sexes and with the opportunities she can expect to have. (A woman will also be expected to be caring and receptive in her workplace and in society in general). That women bear children will never change - it is a biological fact - but what can change is how children are looked after - as in the provision of affordable child care and a higher status given to caring roles. Women do not want to be androgenous beings but equally they want to escape the sexual stereotyping that



exists today. Difference is still important, for to be a woman is not to be a man. This brings us back to the fact that because people occupy different positions within society should be irrelevant to the way they are treated within that society. In *'The History of Sexuality'*, 1977, Foucault examines the way in which the subject, in an attempt to come to terms with the dominant power structures in her/his society, attempts to create a meaningful identity for himself. According to Foucault, identity is not fixed, gender identity, for example, is continually shifting and so makes it possible for society's fixing of femininity and masculinity to be destabilised and challenged. Within the ideological structure of patriarchal culture, heterosexual masculinity is structured as the 'norm'. In comparison, or to emphasise this position femininity, homosexuality and other sexual roles are deemed inadequate and/or abnormal.

As we have seen equal rights to employment does not give women equal jobs, equal promotion opportunities or equal pay, nor has women's work in the home or the reproduction of children been recognised to its full value. The fight must continue in these areas and women in positions of authority must help other women up the ladder. I do not mean to advocate that a woman be given a position because of her sex, but it must be realised that because a woman has not as many years paid work experience as a man, perhaps due to taking time off to look after children, she is no less qualified for a promotion. In fact it could be the opposite. Due to a patriarchal dominated culture, women do not start at the same starting line as men so an extra effort must be made by state institutions, companies, etc. to allow women into higher positions.

Women who have made it to the top should take responsibility in how they are seen to represent and promote women.

In professions such as nursing and teaching, where the majority of workers are women, we still have the situation where there is a disproportionate number of men at the top. This phallocentrism has to stop for, if we cannot control it in areas where women are in the





majority, what hope have we elsewhere? Women must be seen to support each other and feel less that they have to compete with each other for men's approval. When in the past women have looked for and achieved some form of equality with men there has always been a backlash and the old system of patriarchal dominance re-instated in some other guise. As women seek more power they will encounter serious conflict in the future. Not only will women have to continue to fight for their rights but they will also have to anticipate what form the next backlash is going to take so that the appropriate action can be taken to counteract it. Women's differences from each other - class or racial - should not be an issue of struggle between them as it seems to be at the moment.

Women need each other's support at all levels. We all have something to offer so let us move forward to a new and more liberated life.



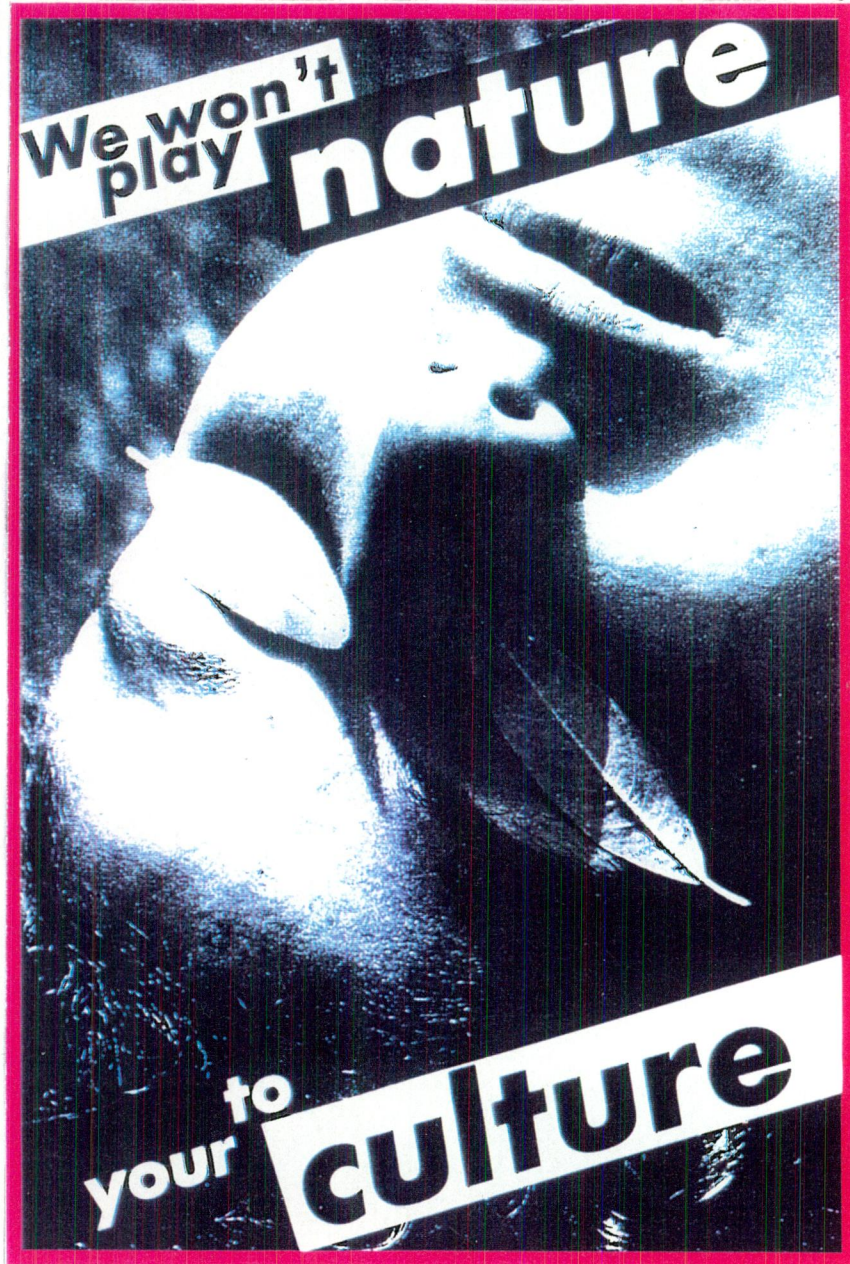


Plate 1

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled* (We won't play nature to your culture) 1983.





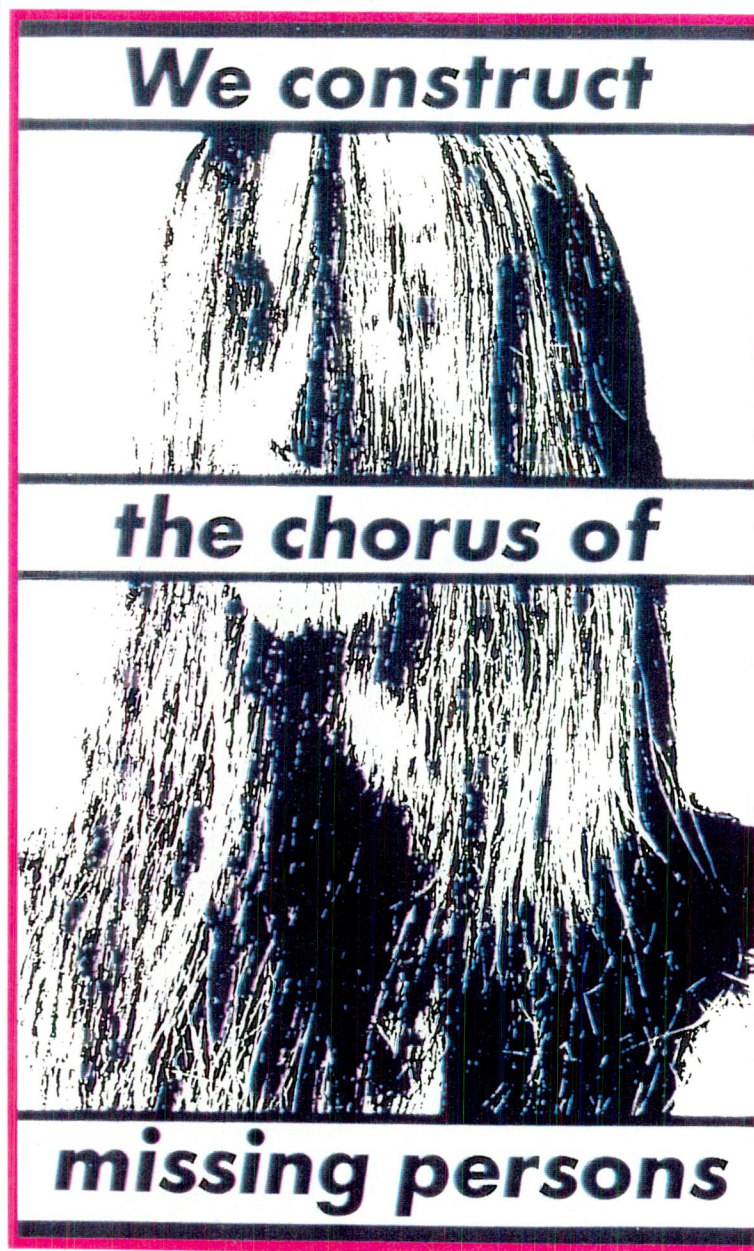


Plate 2

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled* (We construct chorus of missing persons) 1983.



# CONVINCING ILLUSIONS



"Flowers" by Oshita, "Hefty 2-Ply" by Jud Nelson, "Julie" by De Andrea, "Chair" by Allan Adams, "Satchel" by Marilyn Levine, "Crate" by Renonciat, Desk by Dakota Jackson, Paintings by George Green & Steven Posen, Aaron Miller by Rod and Lois

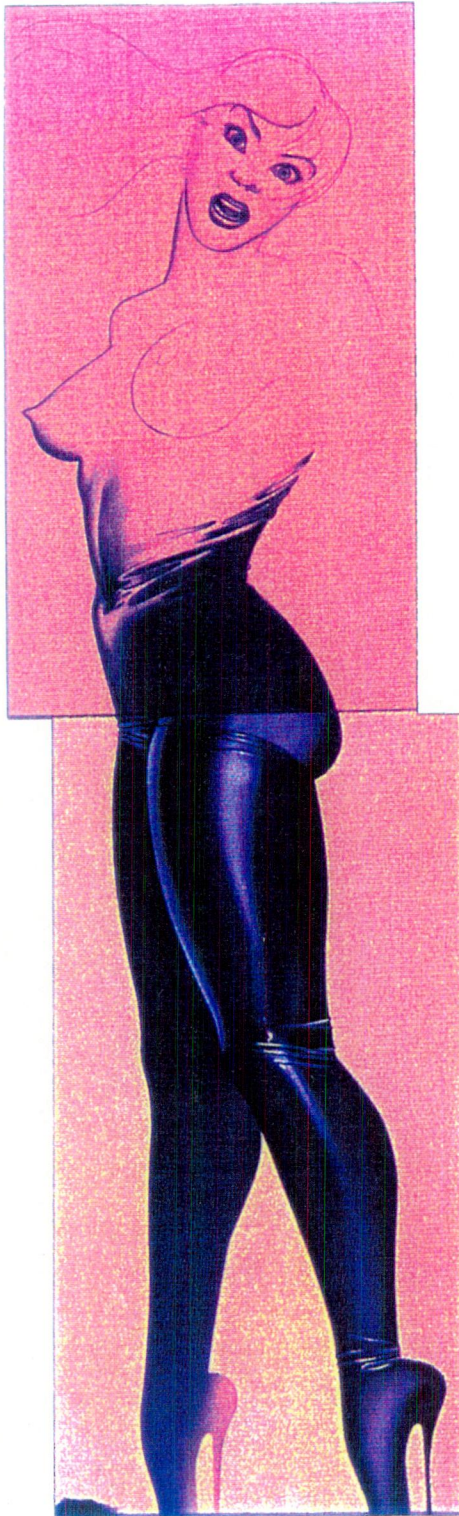
LOUIS K. MEISEL *gallery*

## Plate 3

Advertisement for the exhibition 'Convincing illusions' in the Louis K. Meisel Gallery, 1987.







**Plate 4**  
Allen Jones, *Desire me*, 1968.

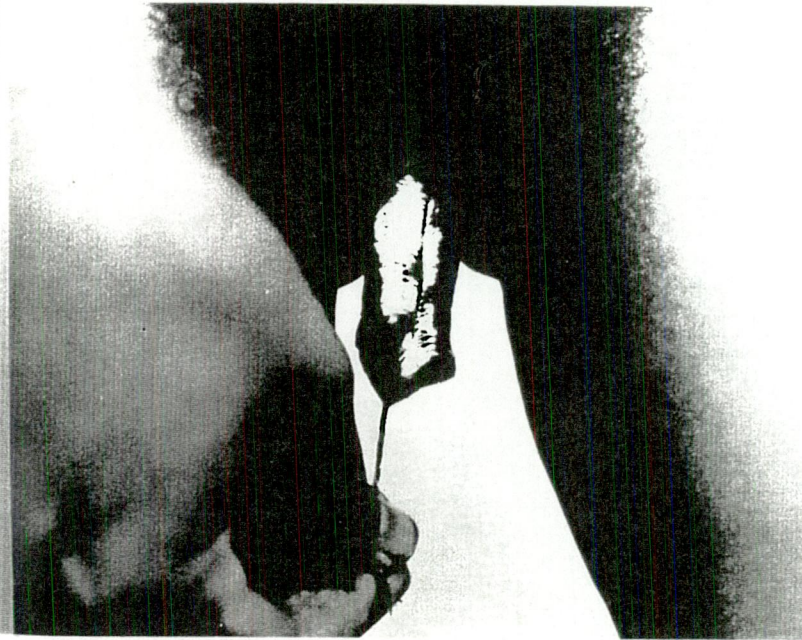






**Plate 5**  
Allen Jones, *Chair*, 1970.

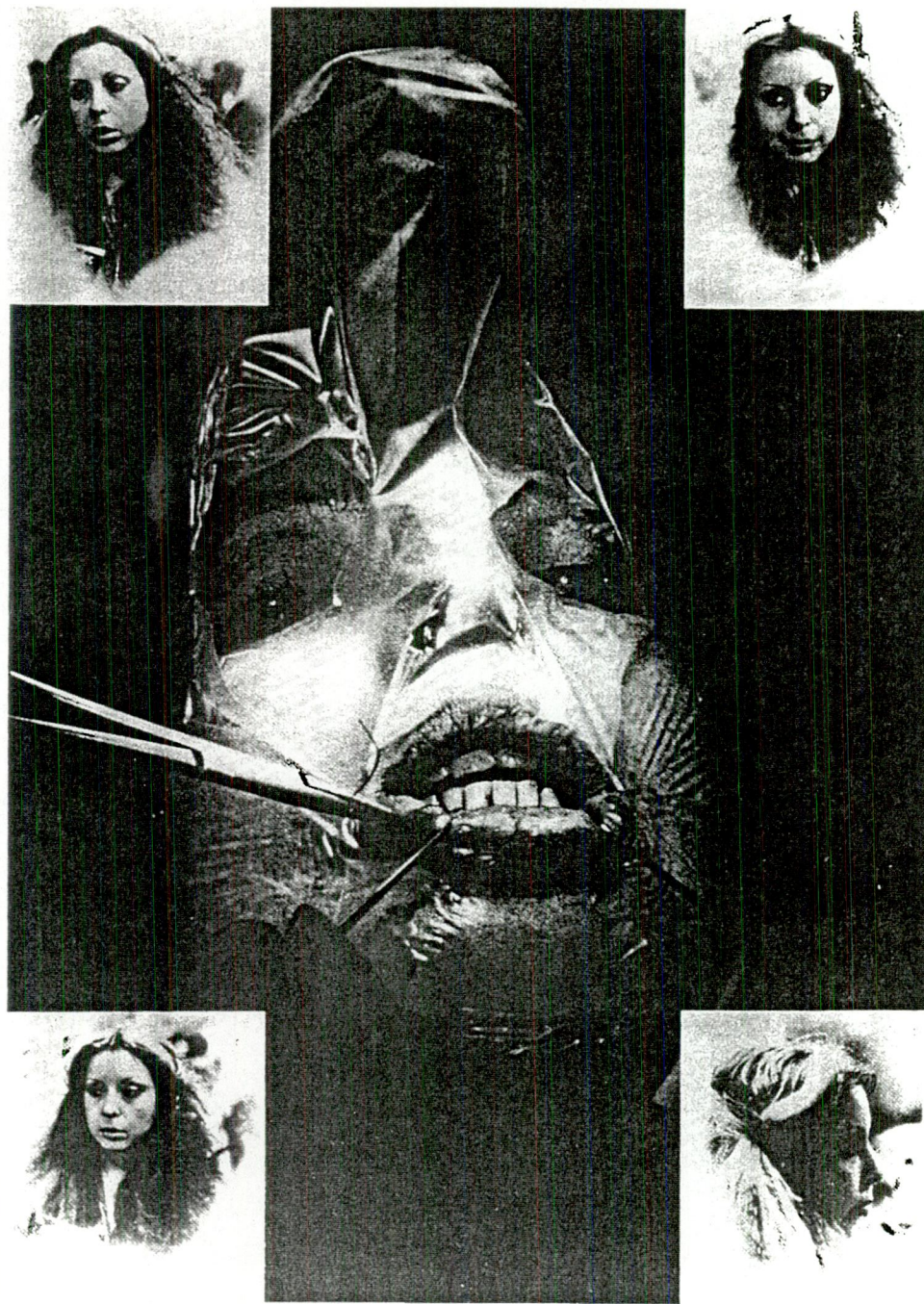




**Plate 6**  
Judy Chicago, *Red Flag*, 1971



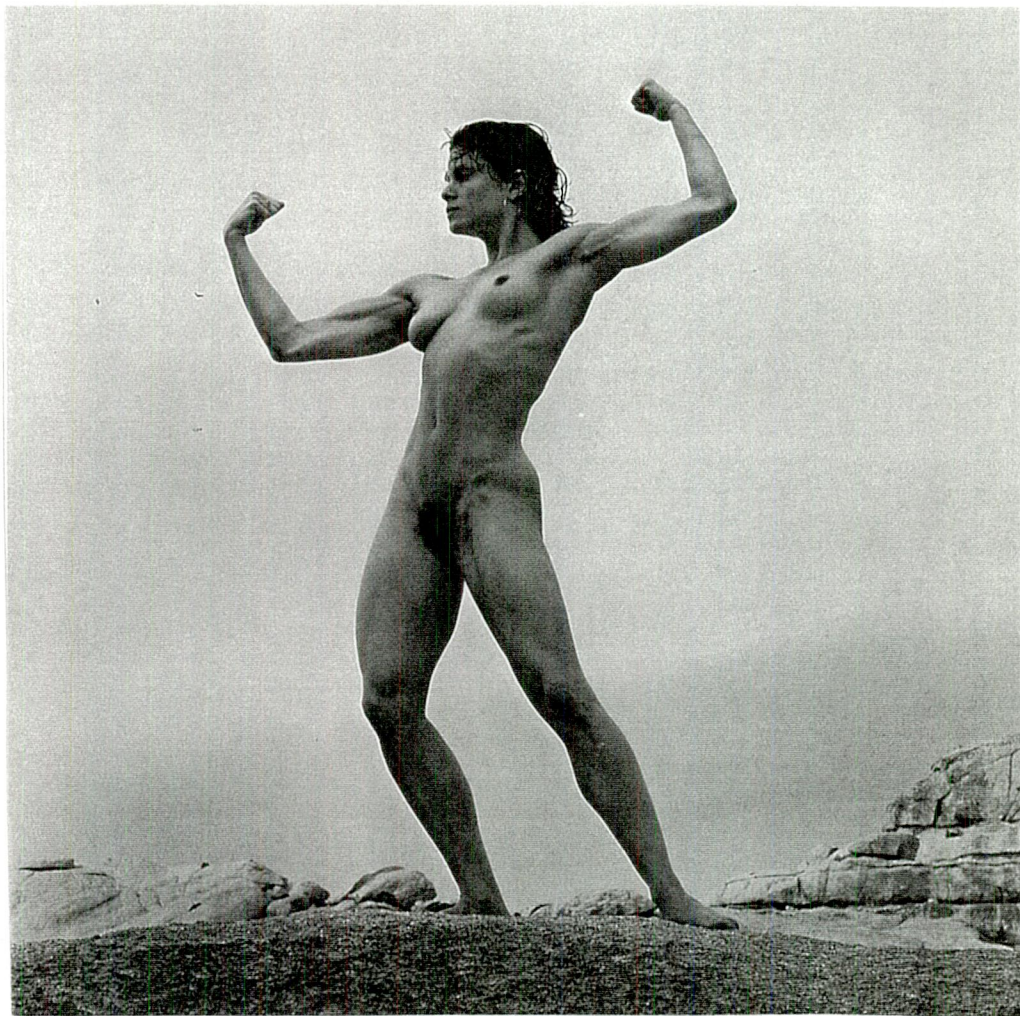




**Plate 7**  
Orlan, *Cruciform*, 1990.







**Plate 8**  
Robert Mapplethorpe, *Lisa Lyon*, 1980.





**Plate 9**

Jo Spence (in collaboration with Tim Sheard)  
*Exiled*, from *Narratives of Dis-ease*, 1990.







**Plate 10**  
Jo Spence (in collaboration with Tim Sheard)  
*Carcinoma Excision. Part 1.*  
*Narratives of Dis-ease, 1990.*







**Plate 11**  
Lynda Benglis, Photograph of the Artist,  
*Artforum*, 1974.







**Plate 12**

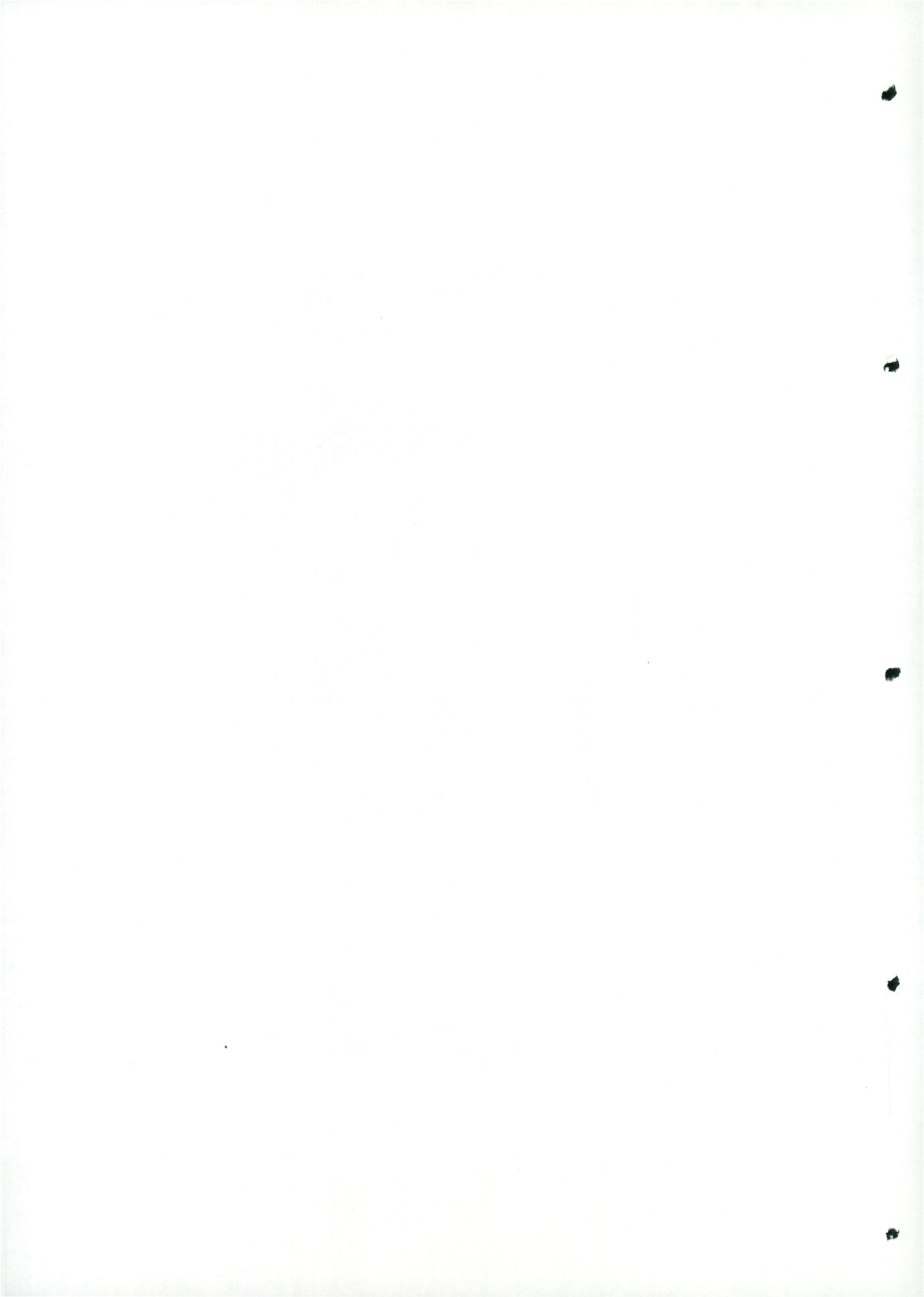
Hannah Wilke, S.O.S. - *Starification Object Series*, 1974.

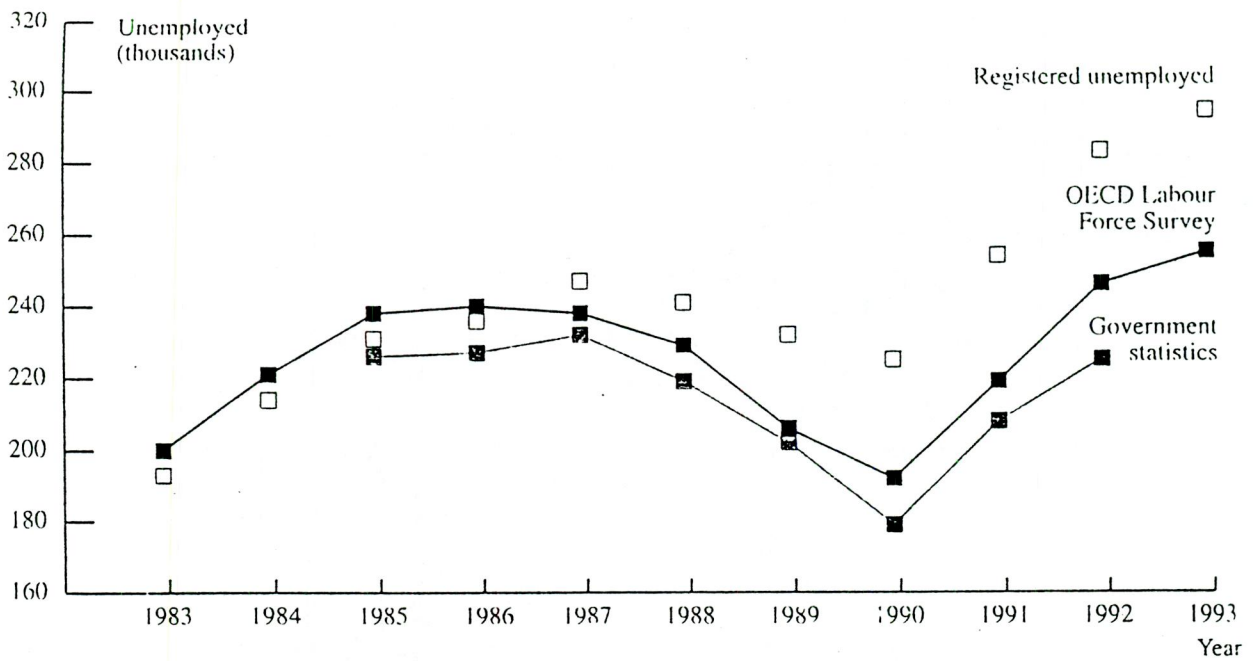




S.O.S. —Starification Object Series, 1974.

**Plate 13**  
Hannah Wilke, S.O.S. - *Starification Object Series*, 1974.





Sources: Central Statistics Office, OECD, Department of Finance (1993).

**Table 1**  
Three estimates of Irish unemployment (26 counties), 1983 - 1993.





	1971	1981	1987	1989	1991
Women as % of total labour force	25.7	29.1	30.9	30.7	32.1
Married women as % of female labour	13.6	30.2	39.6	41.5	44.4
Women as % of employed labour force	26.3	29.4	32.4	32.3	35.5
Women as % of unemployed	18.2	25.2	23.8	22.2	25.0

*Source:* NESC 1991, p. 32 and Labour Force Survey 1991

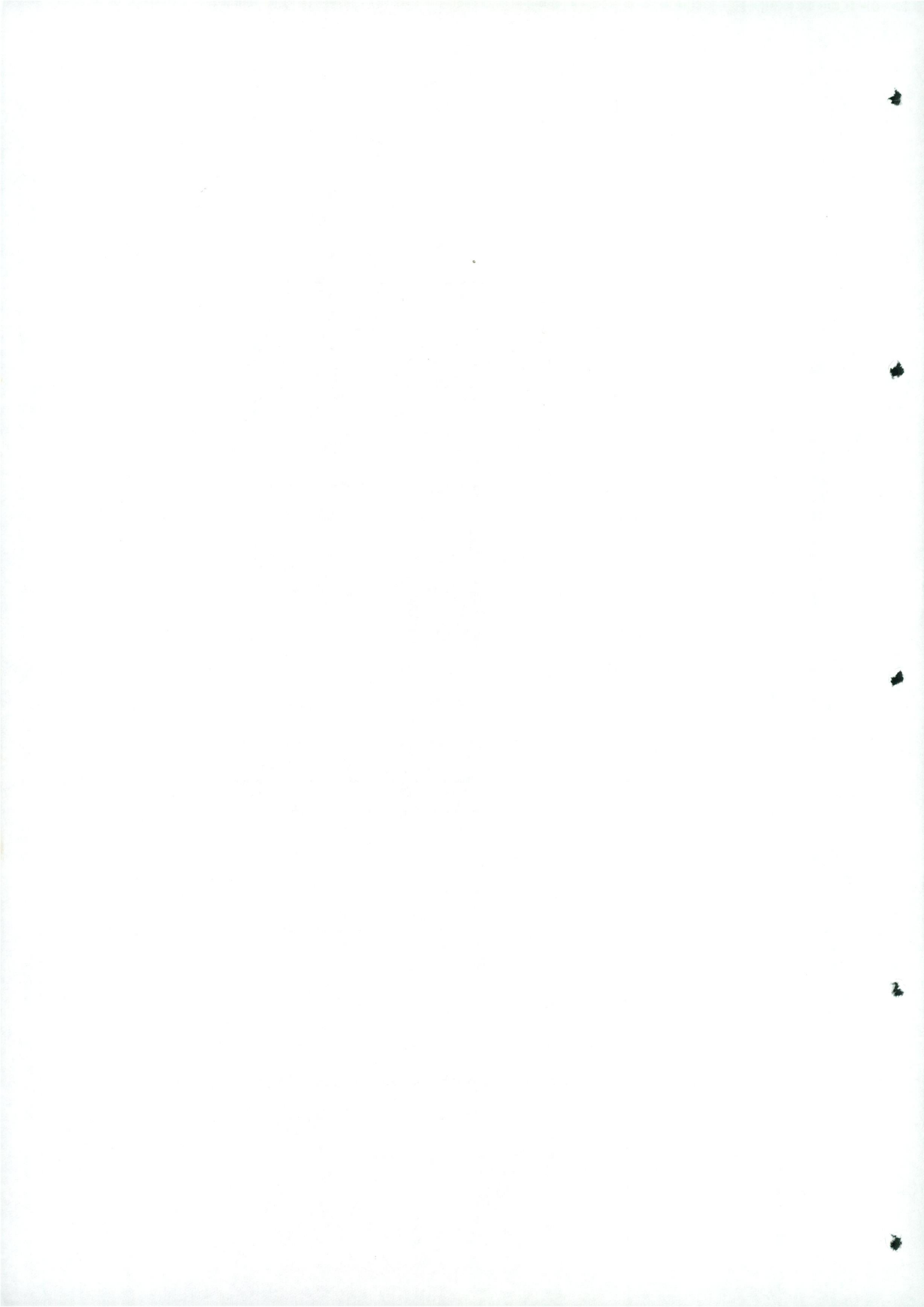
**Table 2**  
Women in the labour force 1971 - 1991.



<i>Views about share of housework</i>	Wife's work status					
	Employed full-time		Employed part-time		Not in employment	
	wife's view %	husband's view %	wife's view %	husband's view %	wife's view %	husband's view %
wife does all	13	9	26	15	32	22
wife does most	41	46	51	61	49	58
shared equally	44	43	23	24	17	19
husband does most	2	2	0	0	1	0
husband does all	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Views about share of childcare</i>						
wife does all	5	2	8	5	11	6
wife does most	24	24	36	44	48	64
shared equally	67	72	55	51	41	30
husband does most	4	2	1	0	0	0
husband does all	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Feelings about husband's contribution to housework</i>						
too much	4	4	2	3	3	2
about right	74	76	75	78	80	76
not enough	21	20	23	19	17	22

Source: adapted from Martin and Roberts, 1984, (based on a survey of 4000 women, 712 husbands), Tables 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9; pp.101 and 102

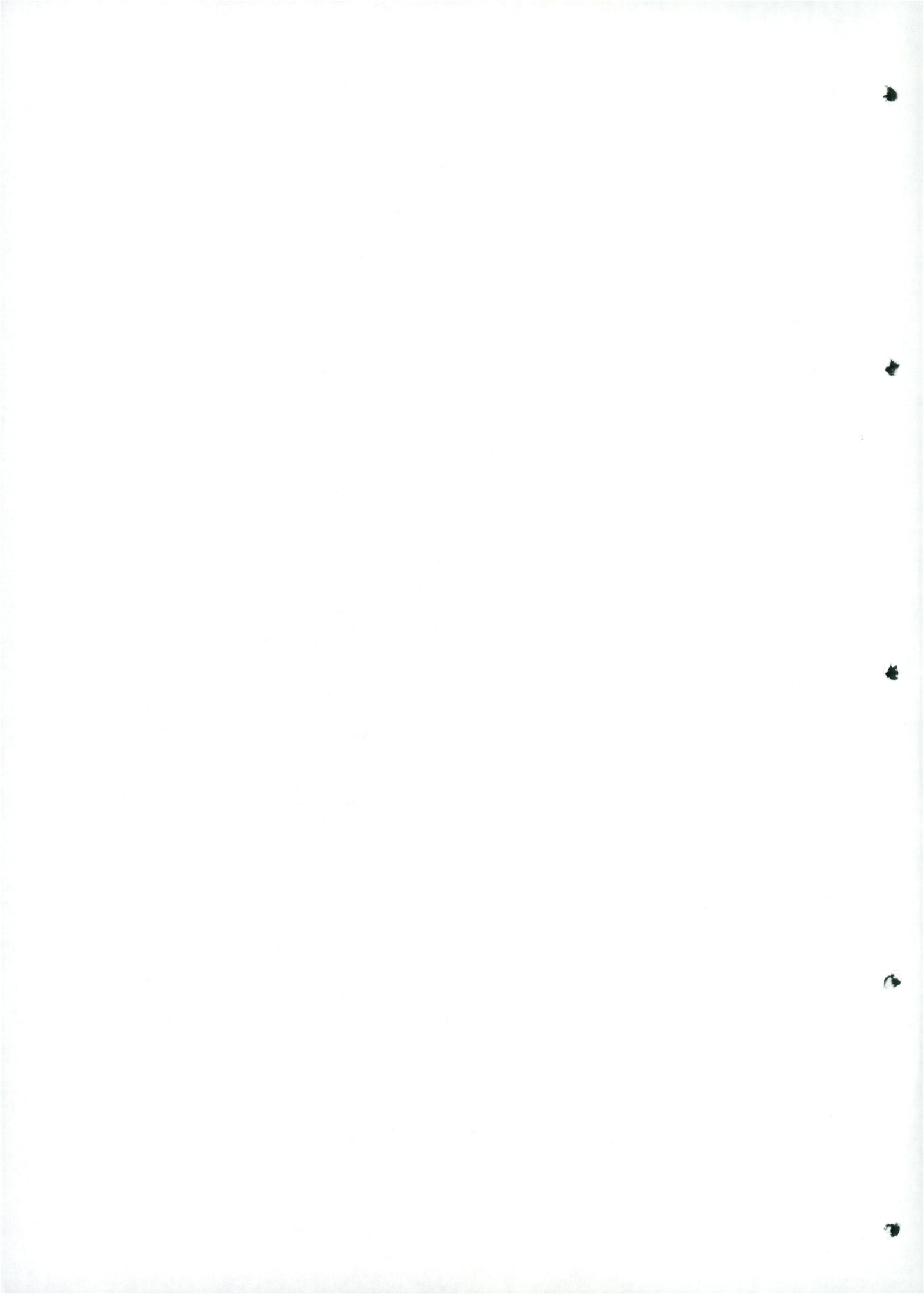
**Table 3**  
Wives' and Husbands' views about how housework and child-care should be shared.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ARCHER, John, Male Violence, London, Routledge, 1993.
- BEECHEY, V., PERKINS, T., A Matter of Hours: Women Part-time Work and the Labour Market, Cambridge, Polity, 1987.
- BERGER, John, Ways of Seeing, London, B.B.C., Penguin, 1972
- BERNHEIMER, Charles; KAHANE, Claire (Ed) In Dora's Case : Freud, Feminism and Hysteria, London, Virago, 1985.
- BETTERTON, Rosemary, New Images for Old, The Iconography of the Body in Betterton, R., (Ed.),
- BETTERTON, Rosemary, Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media, London, New York, Pandora, 1987.
- BOCOCK, Robert, THOMPSON, Kenneth, Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity, Cambridge, Polity, 1992.
- BONNER, F; GOODMAN, L; ALLEN, R; JANES, L; KING, C (Ed) Imagining Women's Cultural Representations and Gender, London, Polity/Open University, 1992..
- BONNER, F., GOODMAN, L., Introduction: "On Imagining Women", in Bonner F., Goodman, L., Allen, R., Jones, L., King, C., (Eds.), Imagining Women: Cultural Representations and Gender, Cambridge, Polity/OV, 1992.
- BROUDE, Norma, GERRARD, Mary D., The Power of Feminism Art Emergence: Impact and Triumph of the American Feminist Art Movement, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1994.
- BROWNMILLER, Susan Femininity, London, Paladin, 1986.
- BUTLER, Judith, Gender Trouble; Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, New York, London, Routledge, 1990.
- CALLAGHAN, Karen A., Ideals of Feminine Beauty; Philosophical, Social and Cultural Dimensions, Greenwood, London, 1994.
- CLANCY, P; DRUDY, S; LYNCH, K; O'DOWD, L (ed) Sociological Perspectives, Dublin, Irish Society, Institute of Public Administration, 1995.
- CLARK, Kenneth, The Nude; A Study of Ideal Art, London, John Murray, 1956.

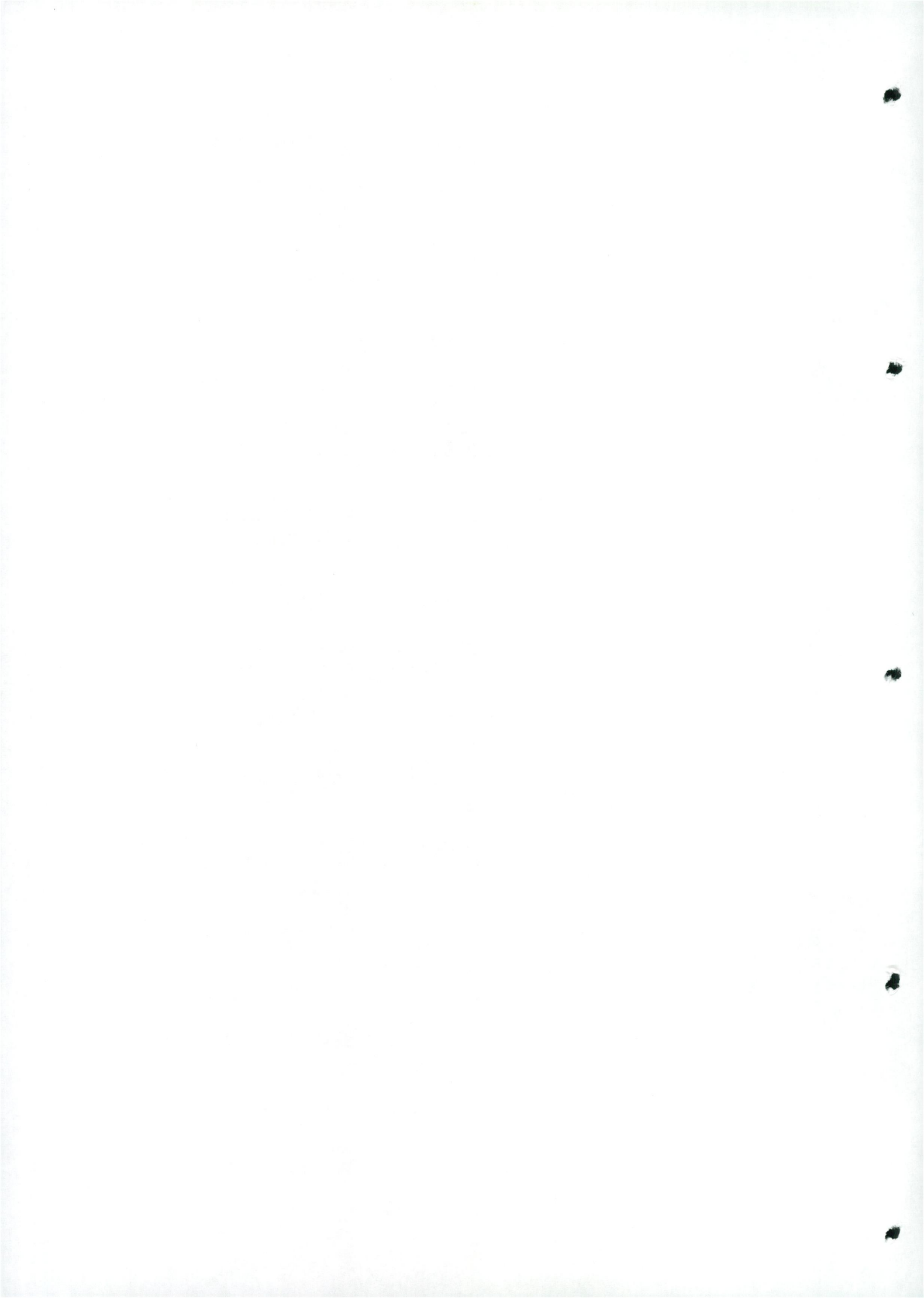


- COOPER, Davina Power in Struggle, Feminism, Sexuality and the State, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1995.
- COWARD, R., Female Desire and Sexual Identity, in Diaz-Diocaretz, M., Zavala I., (Eds.), Womens Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, J. Benjamins, 1985.
- DAVIS, Kathy Reshaping The Female Body : The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery, New York, London, Routledge, 1994.
- De BEAUVOIR, Simone, The Second Sex, London, David Campbell, 1993.
- DIAMOND, Irene, QUINBY, LEE, Feminism and Foucault, Reflections on Resistance, Boston, North Eastern VP, 1988.
- DOANE, Mary Anne, Femme Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis, London, Routledge, 1991.
- DONALD, James (Ed.), Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory: Thresholds, London, Macmillan/ICA, 1991.
- DUKHEIM, E., The Rules of Sociological Method, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1938.
- ELLIOT, R. F., "The Family: Private Arena or Adjunct of the State?", in Bocock B., Thompson K., (Eds.), Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity, Cambridge, Polity, 1992.
- EASTHOPE, Anthony, What a Man's Gotta Do: The Masculine Myth in Popular Culture, London, Grafton Books, 1986.
- FOUCAULT, Michael, The History of Sexuality, Vol.1 An Introduction, New York, Pantheon, 1978.
- FOUCAULT, M.ichael, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, Brighton, Sussex, Harvester, 1980.
- FREUD, Sigmund On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works, Harmondsworth, New York, Penguin, 1925/1977.
- FRIEDAN, Betty  
DAVIES, K; DICKLEY, J;  
STRATFORD, T (Ed) The Feminine Mystique, London, Penguin, 1968,  
Out Of Focus, Writings On Women and the Media  
London, The Womens Press, 1987.
- GABLIK, Suzi, "You Don't Have to Have a Penis to be a Genius", Women's Art Magazine, Sept./Oct., 1994, pp. 6-10.
- GROSZ, Elizabeth Volatile Bodies, Towards A Corporeal Feminism, Bloomington/Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994.



- GROSZ, Elizabeth Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction, London, New York, Routledge, 1990.
- GROVER, Jan Zita, Photo Therapy: Shame and the Minefields of Memory, After Image, Vol. 18 No.1, Summer, 1990, pp. 14-18.
- GRUB, Nancy (ed) Making Their Mark, Women Artists Move Into The Mainstream 1970-1985, New York, Abeville 1989.
- HALL, Stuart, GIEBEN, Bram, (Eds), Formations of Modernity, Cambridge, Polity, 1992.
- HEVEY, David, Jo Spence, Creative Camera, June/July 1991, pp. 42-45.
- HITE, Shere, The Hite Reports: Sexuality, Love and Emotion: Women as Revolutionary Agents of Change, Great Britian, Hodder/Stoughton, 1993.
- HOPKINSON, Amanda Putting Pain in the Picture : Women, Health and Representation at Camerwork, Creative Camera, August/September 1991, pp. 48-49.
- HORNEY, Karen Feminine Psychology, New York, London, Norton, 1967
- JARDINE, Alice, Configurations of Women and Modernity, Ithaca & London, Cornell University of Chicago, 1938.
- JAY, Nancy, "Gender and Dichotomy", Feminist Studies, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1981, pp. 38-56.
- KAPLAN, E. Ann Women and Film : Both Sides Of The Camera, New York, Methuen, 1983.
- KING, Catherine, "The Politics of Representation: A Democracy of the Gaze", in Bonner F., Goodman L., Allen R., Jones L., King C., (Eds.), Imagining Women: Cultural Representations and Gender, Cambridge, Polity/OV, 1992.
- LEONARD, Madeleine, Women and Informal Economic Activity in Belfast, in Clancy, Drudy, Lynch, O'Dowd, Eds., Sociological Perspectives - Irish Society, Ireland, Institute of Public Administration, 1995.
- LIPPARD, Lucy, From the Centre, Feminist Essays and Woman's Art, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1976.
- KELLY, Mary Post-Partum Document, London, Routledge, Kegan-Paul, 1983.





- McCLINTOCK, Anne, The Return of Female Fetishism and the Fiction of the Phallus, New Formations No. 19, Spring, 1993, pp. 11-21.
- MITCHELL Juliet, Rose, Jacqueline (Ed.), Jacques Lacan and the Ecolé Freudienne, Feminine Sexuality, London, MacMillan, 1982.
- MITCHELL, Juliet Psychoanalysis and Feminism : A Radical Re-Assessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis, London, Penguin, 1974.
- MITCHELL, Juliet The Longest Revolution; Essays in Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis, London, Virago, 1984.
- MOI, Toril Sexual, Textual Politics, Feminist Literary Theory, London/New York, Routledge, 1985.
- MOORE, Henrietta L A Passion For Difference : Essays in Anthropology and Gender, Cambridge, Polity, 1994.
- MORGAN, David H. J. Discovering Men, Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities, London/New York, Routledge, 1992.
- MULVEY, Laura Visual and Other Pleasures, London, Macmillan, 1989.
- MULVEY, Laura "You don't know what is happening, do you, Mr. Jones?", in Parker R., Pollock G., (Eds.), Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985, London, Pandora, 1987.
- NEAD, Lynda, Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality, New York, London, Routledge, 1992.
- NEALE, Steve Masculinity as Spectacle, Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema, Screen 24:6, November-December 1983, pp. 4-16.
- NOCHLIN, Linda, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth Century Art", in Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays, London, Thames & Hudson, 1991.
- O'HEARN, Denis, "Global Restructuring and the Irish Political Economy", in Clancy P., Lynch K., Drudy S., O'Down L., (Eds.), Sociological Perspectives: Irish Society, Dublin Institute of Public Administration, 1995.
- OLIVER, Kelly, Ed. Ethics, Politics and Difference in Julia Kristeva's Writing, New York, London, Routledge, 1993.
- OWENS, Craig, Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture, Oxford, University of California Press, 1992.



- OWENS, Craig, The Discourses of Others: "Feminists and Postmodernism". The Anti-Aesthetic Essays in Postmodern Culture, Hal Foster (Ed.), Seattle, Bay, 1983.
- PARKER, Rosika, Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985, London, Pandora, 1987.
- POLLOCK, Griselda, Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art, London, Routledge, 1988.
- POLLOCK, Griselda, "Whats wrong with 'Images of Women'?" in Parker, R., Pollock G., (Eds), Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985, London, Pandora, 1987.
- PYLE, Jean Larson, The State of Women in the Economy: Lessons from Sex Discrimination in the Republic of Ireland, Albany, New York State University of New York Press, 1990.
- ROBINSON, Hilary, (Ed) Visibly Female: Feminism and Art Today, London, Camden, 1987.
- ROSE, Barbara Is It Art?, Orlan and the Transgressive Act, Art in America, February 1993, pp. 82-87 + 125.
- SARUP, Madan Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism : An Introductory Guide, New York, London, Toronto, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- SAUNDERS, Gill The Nude: A New Perspective, London, The Herbert Press, 1989
- SHOWALTER, Elaine, The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980, London, Virago, 1987.
- SPENCE, Jo, Putting Myself in the Picture: A Political, Personal and Photographic Autobiography, London, Camden, 1986.
- SPENDER, D., Man-Made Language, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.
- TAMBLYN, Christine, No More Nice Girls: Recent Transgressive Feminist Art, Art Journal Vol. 50, Summer 1991.
- THIELE, Beverly, "Vanishing Acts in Social and Political Thought: Tricks of the Trade", in McDowell L., Pringle R., (Eds.), Defining Women: Social Institutions and Gender Divisions, Cambridge, Polity/OV, 1992.
- TUCKER, Maria Women Artists Today, Revolution or Regression? New York, Abbeville 1989.





- WALBY, Sylvia Theorizing Patriarchy, Oxford UK, Cambridge USA, Blackwell, 1990.
- WALBY, Sylvia Patriarchy at Work, Cambridge, Polity, 1986.
- WARNER, Marina Monuments and Maidens, The Allegory of the Female Form, London, Picador, 1987.
- WEBER, M., The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation, T. Parsons Ed., Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1947.
- WEEKS, Jeffrey, Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity, London, Rivers Oram, 1991.
- Sexuality and Its Discontents, Meanings, Myths and Modern Sexualities, London, New York, Routledge, 1985.
- WHITFORD, Margaret, "Woman With Attitude", Women's Art Magazine, September/October 1994, pp. 15-17.
- WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art, New York, Witney Museum, 1993.
- WILLIAMS, Val, A Memory of Jo Spence, Creative Camera, August/September pp. 50-51.
- WILLIAMSON, Judith, "Images of Women", Screen 24 Nov.-Dec. 1983, P. 102-106.
- WILSON, Elizabeth (with Angela Weir) Hidden Agendas: Theory, Politics and Experience in the Women's Movement, London, Tavistock, 1986.
- WILSON, E, What is to be done about Violence against Women?, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1983.
- WOLF, Naomi, The Beauty Myth; How Images of Beauty are used against Women, London, Vintage, 1991.
- WOLFF, Janet, Feminine Sentences; Essays on Women and Culture, Cambridge, Polity, 1990.

