

THE WITCH: HEROINE OR ANTI-HEROINE

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ABSTRACT

The image of the witch has always been an important one in the minds of men. The conception, which was an integral part of human belief, later lost all its power and became the symbol of the out-group and was in the process of time solely associated with women. The witch became responsible for all the negative miracles and the wrongs that befell man. Still later the power invested in the ideation was questioned and philosophers as well as men of religion decided that none could be as powerful as God and therefore the power of the witch was only imaginary. These changes were reflected in the literature of men. Women were first presented as forceful figures who could lead men to their destruction. Later this power was taken from them and they were depicted as peripheral figures whose sole function should be to please men. Ultimately women came to see themselves as secondary and lacking male figures whose aim should be to emulate men and prove their merit. It was later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that women started searching for a different image for themselves. This image was the witch figure which had always been the symbol of power whether positive or negative. In the nineteenth century Mary Shelley created the monster Frankenstein in her capacity of witch. Charlotte Bronte explored the image but remained ambivalent in her choice between elf and goblin. In the twentieth century Elizabeth Bowen took a step further in this direction by seeing the connection between the conception of woman and her affiliation with the witch figure. Jean Rhys further examined men's fear of this powerful figure and Fay Weldon took it to its culmination by advocating women to assume once more the role of the powerful witch figure.



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ÖZET

Cadı/büyücü imgesi her zaman için katalarda önemli bir yer tutmuştur. İnanç sisteminin bütünsel bir parçası olan bu kavram zamanla tüm gücünü yitirdi ve erkeklerce karışık grupta bir sembolî haline getirilerek bir süre sonra yalnızca kadımlarla ilgili olarak düşünülmeğe başlandı. Cadı/büyücü her türlü olumsuz mucizenin ve insanlığın başına gelen her belanın sorumlusu sayıldı. Daha da sonra bu imgeye yakıştıran güç sorulandı ve din adamları kadar filozoflar da kimsenin Tanrı kadar güçlü olamayacağına karar verip cadı/büyücüye atfedilen gücün hayali olduğuna sonucuna vardılar. Bu değişimler erkeklerin yaptığı edebiyata yansımıştır. Önceleri kadımlar, erkekleri mahvedebilecek güçte kişilikler olarak temsil edilmişlerdir. Daha sonraları bu güç onların elinden alınmış, tek işlevleri erkeklere zevk vermek olan marjinal tipler haline gelmişlerdir. Bu tavır sonucu olarak, zamanla kadımlar da kendilerini ikincil, erkekten eksik ve değerlerini ortaya koyabilmek için erkekleri taklit etmeğe amacını gütmek zorunda olan varlıklar olarak görmeğe başlamışlardır. Kadımlar, ancak ondokuzuncu ve yirminci yüzyıllara gelindiğinde kendilerine farkı bir imaj aramaya koyulmuşlardır. Bu imaj, öteden beri bir güç imgesi (ister olumlu, ister olumsuz olsun) olarak görülen cadı/büyücü görünüşüydü. Ondokuzuncu yüzyılda Mary Shelley, bir büyücü olarak, canavar Frankenstein'i yarattı. Charlotte Brontë de bu imgeyi araştırdı ama peri kızı ile şeytan kadın arasında kesin bir seçim yapmaktan kaçındı. Yirminci yüzyılda Elizabeth Bowen bu doğrultuda bir adım daha ileri giderek erkeklerin bu güçlü kişilik karşısında duydukları korkuyu işledi. Fay Weldon olayı doruk noktasına götürerek kadımların yeniden herkesten güçlü büyücü kimliğine sahip olmalarını gerektiğini vurguladı.

INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to note that in the paradigms for naming men and women those terms used for women have consistently undergone derogation. This is especially evident in the nomenclature of power positions. The term "queen" has come down to our day having the alternative meaning of homosexual, whereas "king" has retained all its power with derivatives such as "kingly" or phrases such as "fit for a king". The same might be observed in the "master" and "mistress" model where "master" has kept its positive connotations in quite a wide range of activities. For example people would still like to "master a skill" or to be "masterful", while "mistress" brings to mind "a kept woman" rather than the head of a household. And of course the term "witch" in the wizard/wise man - witch/crone cluster has suffered the same denigration. To be a wizard or a wise man retains if not all, some of the power associated with it at its inception. Whereas witch and crone are terms one would hardly want to be associated with. In fact the term witchcraft which is used for the practices of both the witch and the wizard has etymologically become associated solely with women.

Webster's Dictionary defines the word witch as: "**Witch**, witch n.pl. [O.E. *wicca*, masc. *wicce*, fem.: cf. O.E. *witega*, *witga*, O.H.G. *wizago*, prophet (all akin to O.E. *witan*, know, E. *wit*, v.) also E. *wiseacre*.] A woman who professes or is supposed to practice magic; sorceress; an ugly or malignant old woman; a hag; a bewitching or fascinating woman or girl."

Encyclopedia Britannica gives the definition of witchcraft in the following manner: "Witchcraft is the human exercise of alleged supernatural powers for antisocial, evil purposes (so-called black magic). A female held to have such powers may be called a witch or a sorceress, the male counterpart being named wizard, sorcerer, or warlock. Belief in witchcraft survives in modern

technologically developed cultures and remains a potent factor in most primitive societies."

The two definitions establish the fact that witchcraft is deemed to be a dark and mysterious practice and its proponents, again relying on the definitions, are either old, ugly, malignant, or fascinating and young women and girls. The fact that the first acolytes of this discipline were not solely women but were also men who were revered for their knowledge seems to have been lost in time. The word as it stands now is just one of the myriad examples of a derogation that has occurred over time in connection with an expression this is used for the feminine gender.

Witchcraft evokes the many wishes that are contradictory in human nature: the ability to see what the ordinary man cannot see; the ability to do evil or good in this way; ugly old women who do evil; young women who will enchant or fascinate. It also brings to mind miracles of a negative nature. Yet, witchcraft is man's first step toward making abstractions and formulating a religion, towards ritual, respect and above all introspection.

Witchcraft, an ancient and universal craft is a result of perhaps the first intellectualizing of man. It is his first assay at trying to control his surroundings and his deep seated fears in the face of the natural order that surpasses his will. It is also his first search for the things outside his normal life. The Greek philosophers put forth theories as to the power of gods and their ability to change their forms and shapes. They investigate the ability of man to leave his body and enter other shapes, and they invest their gods and goddesses with such abilities. The goddesses that inhabited the Greek pantheon emerged as the most feared and revered deities because they symbolized the powers of fertility and reproduction. Secret cults grew up around them and practiced their rituals which were ominous. The Romans carried on this tradition of the goddess who symbolized fertility and procreation. Rituals concerning the goddess were reminiscent of the Greek tradition; they too were secret and frightening. As a natural outcome the literature of these periods also concerned itself with women invested with the powers of the other world, in other words potent witches.

Monotheism was at first the alternate religion which had to establish itself in this world of ritual and belief in the miracles of witches. The Old Testament

condemned witchcraft and its practitioners; all miracles aside from those performed by those that were present in the book were now considered negative miracles. The wizard gradually faded out of the belief system controlled by a male God, and the powerful witch slowly came to represent the out-group. She became the symbol of the evil powers that disturbed the male-dominant, virtuous in-group. The practices of witchcraft, however, continued and coexisted with the new religion. It was not until new theories concerning demonology were expounded that all the attributes of previous deities: their abilities to fly, to change shape, to take or give certain powers to mankind, were ascribed to witches.

During the Middle Ages when religion had taken a strong hold on the Western World, all malignance became associated with the figure of the witch. Witchcraft was seen as the source of all the misfortune man faced because now it was considered to be the doings of a group of people who were pledged to the service of Satan. It was much easier now to attack this group and disparage it. The Middle Ages also came to associate Eve and Satan and attributed the fall of Adam from grace to the shortcomings of Eve. This association made it possible to figure women more often as witches because they were now seen as the sex with the propensities for evil. Lists were drawn up and books were written elucidating the connection between women, witches, and evil. This anti-feminist attitude was reflected in the literature which was filled with images of powerful women, or crones who would lead man to his destruction.

The Renaissance brought new ideas and forms of thinking, but people were not easily drawn away from the conditioning of the Middle Ages. Literature still portrayed the woman as Eve, the temptress who was responsible for the fall of man. Witches were burned at the stake, but towards the end of the sixteenth century certain theologians and men of letters started questioning the power of the witch in face of God, who was considered omnipotent. This attitude too filtered into the literature of the times. Slowly moving away from the figure of a temptress, a potent woman, writers started portraying female characters who lacked both character and strength. The seventeenth century was even more undecided about whether there was or ever had been such a powerful female figure. By this time men of letters had started treating the female character as something totally secondary and acceptable only inasmuch as she catered to the whims of their male characters. Women

themselves, troubled by this loss in image and power, either wrote in accordance with the accepted typology of women or tried to construct a self image which would enable them to be if marginal, at least a person.

By the eighteenth century all belief in witches and their powers seems to have declined, leading to further denigration of the witch figure and correspondingly women characters in the literature of men. The only alternative left for women seems to have been to try and get a foothold in the world of men through education and the attainment of certain civil rights and liberties.

In the nineteenth century, we encounter the demise of the witch figure. Literature by men still presented women as abject figures who existed solely for the comfort the male half of the population. Those who observed the dictates of the male-dominant society were depicted as angels; those who did not were called sluts. Women, who were troubled by this choice of either being a tramp/slut or the angel of the hearth, tried to forge new images for themselves. Among them some turned to the witch image that had presented the woman not as weak but as eminently powerful, with the will and ability to control.

The twentieth century is the era when women come forth much more forcefully and in greater numbers in this search of an identity. Women scholars challenged the so-called scientific theories built on the assumption of the inferior nature of the female sex. They studied power relations from different perspectives than those of patriarchal societies and tried to show how power was conceived differently by women but this in no way indicated that women were less powerful as persons. Feminist writers started to reflect this search for identity and the conception of power as defined by the woman in their literature. As they tried to forge a new image for themselves they reverted to the witch figure which enabled them to display their power and magnificence.

The change in the definition of witch and witchcraft, in other words the definition we have today has had a set of influences on the standing of women who were attributed powers associated with these concepts. First it has granted men a moral standing pushing women to the periphery, to the role of the upholder of evil. It helped men consign those properties of human

nature which they deemed despicable, to the female gender. Thus women emerged as beings that were responsible not only for the wrongs in the world but also for the trespasses of men in general. According to some feminist scholars and to many woman writers of the twentieth century, the reason for this was the reproductive powers of women which remained a mystery to men for centuries. In order to curb this power and keep it under control, men armed with a totally male religion set up a paradigm for women which was reflected in their philosophy and of course their life-style which was in turn depicted in their literature. The goddess now appeared in their religion either as Eve the temptress or Mary the immaculate. As Tom Robbins indicates in his book *skinny legs and all*, this was the male ploy to topple the great goddess and life-giver:

Who was Astarte? She was a goddess; rather, she was *the* Goddess, the Great Mother, the Light of the World, the most ancient and widely revered divinity in human history. Shrines to her date back to the Neolithic Period, and there was not one Indo-European culture that failed to remove with its kiss the mud from her sidereal slippers. In comparison "God," as we moderns call Yahweh (often misspelled "Jehovah"), was a Yahny-come-lately who could never approach her enormous popularity. She was the mother of God, as indeed she was mother of all. As beloved as she was for her life-giving and nurturing qualities, the only activities of hers acceptable to the patriarchs, she was mistress over destruction as well as creation, representing, according to one scholar, "the abyss that is the source and the end, the ground of all being. ..."

Because the Goddess was changeable and playful, because she looked upon natural chaos as lovingly as she did natural order, because her warm feminine intuition was often at odds with cool masculine reason, because the uterine magic of her daughters had since the dawn of consciousness overshadowed the penis power of her sons, resentful priests of a tribe of nomadic Hebrews led a coup against her some four thousand years ago - and most of what we know as Western civilization is the result. Life still begins in the womb, cocky erections still collapse and lie useless when woman's superior sexuality is finished with them, but men control the divine channels now, and while the control may be largely an illusion, their laws, institutions, and elaborate weaponry exist primarily to maintain it. (p. 49-50).

CHAPTER I

WITCHCRAFT IN THE ANCIENT WORLD AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Pliny, the Roman historian living in the first century B.C. gives us the best justification for man's need for magic. He claims in his *Historia Naturalis* that occultism is deception but that it is universally believed because it satisfies three imperative needs of humanity. First, it is believed to have healing powers and to be a kind of effective magic; secondly, he claims that by the allure and fascinating hopes of the future which it holds out it accommodates man's craving for immortality and the supernatural; and, thirdly by means of astrology, it purports to fathom what is to come and as a result it is greedily subscribed to by those who wish to know their destiny and the luck which the years may bring. Although Pliny seems skeptical as far as the actual effectiveness of magic is concerned, he cannot keep from offering charms and magic recipes himself in *Historia Naturalis*. In the work there is much mention of frogs' intestines, dead toad ashes, etc.

The bases of witchcraft have very likely been the beliefs of lycanthropy, and metempsychosis. These two trains of thought were probably the most primeval of man's endeavors to explain the universe and to put it into a comprehensible framework that would elucidate the happenings as well as the intrinsic powers of nature which he had no control over.

Lycanthropy and Magic

Lycanthropy is the psychiatric state in which the person believes he is a wolf or some other non human animal (*lykos* "wolf" + *anthropos* "man"). This idea seems to be much older than the recorded civilizations and to have existed throughout the world. Here a person is deemed to take the form of the most dangerous beast of prey of the region: the wolf or bear in Europe and northern Asia; the hyena or leopard in Africa; and, the tiger in India, China,

Japan and elsewhere in Asia. There are other animals mentioned as well. This belief that a human being can turn into an animal is both a superstition and a psychiatric disorder which are linked with the conviction in animal guardian spirits, vampires, totemism, and because of the unknown factor it involves, with witches and werewolves.

Stories of men turning into beasts go back to antiquity. In parts of ancient Greece, werewolf myths, which no doubt stemmed from prehistoric times, became linked with the Olympian religion. In Arcadia, a region which was pervaded by wolves, there was a cult of the Wolf-Zeus. According to legend, there was a mythical king of Arcadia called Lycaon. Mt. Lycaeus was the scene of the yearly gathering at which the priests were said to prepare a sacrificial feast that included meat mixed with human parts. In the *Republic*, Plato explained that a man was sacrificed and his entrails were put in along with the meat of more usual victims, and anyone who tasted that meat became a wolf (*lykos*). (*Republic, VII.*) Authors after Plato add that the man who was thus transformed belonged to a particular clan, and remained a wolf for nine years (a sacred number), after which he might become a man once more if in the interval he had not eaten any human flesh.

To be able to explain this cruel and strange ceremony, the following story is put forth: Lycaon, in the early days, was an impious and cruel king. Having the occasion to entertain Zeus, he, or his sons put human flesh before the god. Others even say that the flesh was that of Lycaon's son Myctimus. The god was not deceived, and in his wrath he caused the deluge which in Deucalion's time devastated the earth. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses, i*, 209-243). The story somehow leaves the impression that behind the figure of Lycaon there is concealed some other ancient local god, which was later identified with Zeus.

The stories and religious ceremonies which were threaded with aboriginal beliefs and curious practices of ancient superstition later formed the bases of primitive magic. Man in nature learned that sacrifice might procure the good things that might come about, things that might satisfy what was later known as his soul. The ritual of sacrifice, even in its crudest form was accompanied by ancillary rites which had as an end the aim to discover the will of the gods and to placate them. As a logical consequence there appeared a class of people who were believed to mediate and to discover the expression of that

will thereby gaining the indulgence of the god in favor of man. This class of people was at first priests who lived in communion with the god, and consequently shared in his sanctity. They were said to be protected and inspired by him. The priests themselves were not vagrants; they lived in locations which were later to hold mysterious power over people. Before long, the priests themselves became famous as oracles and the shrines of the gods where they lived became centers of pilgrimage. As time went by, the priests took care that their dwellings were established in places which could attract travellers for their beauty, grandeur, terror or loneliness. The priests who owned or rather who took charge of these sanctuaries were real sorcerers. They delivered oracles; they chanted incantations; they directed and advised; they healed and dispensed lethal poisons; they tamed wild beasts and they charmed serpents. Pliny reports that there is a certain tribe of men, whom he calls Ophiogenes, who could heal the bites of serpents by stroking the place and drawing out the venom from the bodies of those who had been wounded. (*Historia Naturalis*, IV, 6). They could also control winds and avert hail-storms, as well as bring in dark clouds and menacing rain. (Seneca, *Quoestiones Naturalis*, IV, 6).

The most renowned of these priests' powers was their lycanthropic ability, that is their capability to turn human beings into brute animals. This ability was regarded as the natural outcome of being a magician, that is a person well-versed in the laws of ceremony, the order of the sacred ritual and holy ordinances of the gods. (Apuleius, *de Magia* (XXV)). This legendary power of metamorphosis is an offshoot of the belief of lycanthropy (men wearing animal masks which represent the totem of the tribe have been found among the paleolithic drawings) as well as the fact that the priests ritually wore animal disguises when they engaged in worship. Often the god himself was adored under an animal form. This ritualistic disguise is perhaps the underlying reason for the innumerable myths of the Greek pantheon which tell how Zeus enjoyed his trysts with Europa as a bull, with Leda as a swan, with Asteria as an eagle, and with Deois as a speckled serpent. And again, how Poseidon seduced Arne in the guise of a bull, and later Theophane as a ram.

Metempsychosis and Witchcraft

Another connection between humans and animals is of course metempsychosis, which stems from the primitive idea of the passage of the soul, or vital essence into a particular form. It is bound up with the conception of an objective soul and often with ideas as to the plurality of souls in a single individual, one of which is separable and able to go in and out through the mouth or nostrils. This conception of a separable soul is clearly based on the phenomena of dreams taken to be actual experiences undergone during sleep and postulating some sort of embodiment able to roam while the body sleeps. This soul must be small enough to leave by the mouth and therefore, it can appear as small animals such as: weasels, snakes or insects in various parts of the world.

This belief in a separable soul living as an insect or in another form must obviously influence beliefs in the eschatology of the soul. Accordingly it is believed that for example the soul passes into an insect after the body is deceased. Furthermore if the soul can leave a person and re-enter him during sleep, it should be able to enter and be reborn in another person. Thus we can conclude that reincarnation of the soul is not necessarily confined to animal forms. There are stories of trees that grow up from the graves of lovers and twine themselves together such as those on the graves of Tristan and Iseult. There are also stories of the human soul reappearing in a flower which again grows over a grave. In the case the belief that flowers may spring from drops of blood, as in the example of Ajax, it may be concluded that the soul is possibly regarded as located in the blood itself.

The idea of transmigration, as it is historically associated with magicians, has been influenced and inevitably confused by ancient religious beliefs concerning the possible existence of a soul in an abode external to the human body. In traditional witchcraft this vital principle of existence was believed to depend on a soul kept in an animal in the forest, or in an egg below the sea which has to be secured by killing the magician, quite like the form of behavior practiced in totemism and lycanthropy. Beliefs in the reincarnation of the soul in predatory forms such as tigers, sharks or alligators have perhaps also risen in connection with these ideas.

Metempsychosis and Orphism

The ideas of metempsychosis and metempsychosis, which are at least as old as the Archaic period (6th century B.C.), appear first in the Orphic writings. In Orphism these ideas are combined with an elaborate theory of the origin of mankind and with a doctrine of something like original sin. Man sprang from the soot from the burning bodies of the Titans slain by Zeus with his thunderbolts after they had murdered and eaten his son Zagreus. As a consequence man has in him a small divine element (Zagreus) and a large wicked Titanic one, which it is his first duty to eliminate in order to rise to divine status. His soul survives bodily death and in some versions of the doctrine it is rewarded or punished in another world; and, later reincarnated in a human or animal body, so continuing in what some documents call the "wheel" or "circle" (cyclos); but it has hopes of ultimate release.

Plato was the most important of the followers of this doctrine of the separable soul. He was obviously influenced by the Orphic or Orphico-Pythagorean views and reinterpreted them after his own fashion, notably in the great myths of the *Republic*, of the *Phaedo*, and of the *Phaedrus* and of course the *Meno*. The soul, according to Plato, is immortal; the number of souls is fixed; and, reincarnation occurs regularly. Under these circumstances, the aim of the philosopher is to purify and free the divine element in the soul and thus to return it to his proper home in the company of the gods. (*Phaedrus*). Although nothing of this kind was accepted by Aristotle, and it is inconsistent with both Epicurean and orthodox Stoic views of the soul, the Platonic doctrine with various modifications and elaborations was taken up by other later schools of thought. These theories of reincarnation, the cycle of the soul and the ability of man to change into animal form naturally led to necromancy and the practice of witchcraft related to it.

Necromancy and Witchcraft

Hecate

There is no doubt that the prime instigator of necromancy in Greek myth was the mysterious Thracian goddess of necromancy and witchcraft, Hecate. Her name may be an epithet denoting "the far-off one," "the one who stands aloof." She was one of the early goddesses to be accepted into Greek religion and is probably derived from the Carians in southwest Asia Minor. She is not mentioned in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, but in Hesiod she is the daughter of the nymph Asteria. Hesiod represents her as having power over heaven, earth, and sea; hence, she bestows wealth and all the blessings of daily life. Hecate is the chief goddess presiding over magic and spells and she is occasionally referred to as the mother of the enchantress Circe. Her name as a result is very common in charms. She is closely connected with the grain goddess Demeter. She is also the one who with the sun god Helios witnessed the abduction of Demeter's daughter Persephone to the underworld, and torch in hand assisted the search for her. On moonlit nights, Hecate was seen at cross-roads accompanied by ghosts and hell-hounds. There on the last day of each month, eggs and fish were offered to her as well as black puppies, and black she-lambs. In the early times she is represented in single form holding burning torches; later she becomes triple-formed with three bodies standing back to back - according to one myth - so that she could look all ways at once from the cross-roads.

Her character is obscure probably because there is no mention of her in the Homeric epics; she has no legend or genealogy. This has led to a mysterious and secret cult of awful power. Her connection with Artemis and Iphigenia appears in Hesiod. Her mysteries are said to have been established around the fifth century B.C., and she was especially honored in Aegina. Summers claims that her cult was amalgamated with the occult rituals of the Cabiri in Samothrace, and that in certain parts of Caria she seems to have had eunuches as her priests. This practice seems certainly connected with the Corybantes of Cybele. The hound was the animal sacred to Hecate, and black dogs often preceded the coming of the divinity. (Summers; 27).

Her affiliation with Artemis seems to stem from the fact that they were both moon goddesses, and there was an affinity in terms of the torches, the night wanderings and the hounds. Euripides speaks of Hecate as the "Queen of the phantom-world"; and, she is depicted together with Persephone, Demeter and Hermes, in other words with gods whose rites were associated with mystery and orgies. Sexual debauchery in short has been present in witchcraft throughout the ages. Horror, fear, and darkness rapidly accumulated around Hecate. In certain places she was adored as the "nameless one" and later as the "all-terrible." Her statue of triple form is said to have stood at the cross-roads, which is a haunted point, and where according to Plato people may throw the corpse of the murderer after execution to be the prey of daws and crows. (Laws 873). Pillars called Hecate also stood at doorways especially in Athens. When Hecate stood at a doorway it was to keep the evil spirits away. According to one myth the triple form of the goddess' statue symbolized the queen of the three worlds: Selene in heaven, Artemis on earth, and Persephone in hell. Her rites were monstrous but respected and revered; her followers were feared and placated; her prayers were blasphemous; and her sacrifices were terrible. Hers was almost the cult of hell. (Summers; 8).

In order to wreak vengeance, Hecate sent specters and ghostly phantoms which filled men's hearts with fear and drove them to madness and despair. These specters and phantoms were the silent watchers of the night. Others were Empusas or monstrous hobgoblins with the feet of donkeys who might take on a thousand forms to frighten travellers who were out too late. The Cercopis was a poltergeist who haunted cross-ways; and then there was the Mormo who was a foul ghoul. Hecate is thought to have told one of her worshippers to carve a well-planed wood according to certain mystic formulae. The statue is to be smeared with a paste made up of lizards, myrrh, storax and incense grains which must be compounded when the new moon first comes out, and the worshipper is to pray to the deity.

Circe

As mentioned earlier, witchcraft practiced by a woman who has the power of transforming men into beasts is recorded as early as in Homer's Odyssey. Circe, the famous sorceress, the daughter of Helios and the ocean nymph

Perse, who is also at times said to be the daughter of Hecate herself, transforms Odysseus' men into swine. Circe symbolizes seduction and is the archetype of the woman who is enchanting or bewitching. She was able by means of drugs and incantations to change human beings into the forms of wolves or lions, and she surrounded her palace with these beings. Odysseus visits her island Aiaie, with his companions, whom she changes into swine. The hero, protected by the herb moly which he has received from Hermes, compels her to restore them to their original shape. He lives with her for a year. Then, when he decides to leave, she instructs him as to how he can sail to the House of Hades to learn his fate from the soothsayer Tiresias.

Upon Odysseus' return, Circe again gives him instructions as to how to avoid the dangers of the journey back home. The journey to Hades is reminiscent of medieval and latter day witchcraft. While the ritual preceding Tiresias' divination is connected with the necromancy attributed to Hecate herself.

Medea

Another of the great sorceresses of classical times was the legendary Medea, the enchantress who helped Jason the leader of the Argonauts obtain the Golden Fleece from their father, King Aetes of Colchis. She is not mentioned in Homer, but Hesiod knows her as Jason's wife. The earliest mention of her is in Pindar's fourth Pythian ode. Medea married Jason who used her magical powers and advice to perform the labors set him by Aetes in order to bear the fleece. Pindar refers to Medea's "immortal mouth" thus implying the fact that she is a goddess and gives her the gift of prophecy. Euripides' tragedy ***Medea*** takes up the story at a later stage: Jason and Medea after escaping from Colchis, and being driven out of Iolcos because of the vengeance taken by Medea on Pelias (who had sent Jason to fetch the fleece), are living in Corinth. It is here that Jason determines to desert her for the daughter of King Creon of Corinth. In revenge Medea murders Creon, his daughter and her own two sons by Jason, and departs in a chariot sent by Helios, Aestes' father, to take refuge with King Aegues of Athens.

Diodorus calls Medea Hecate's own daughter. (*Historia Naturalis*, XXV, 5). Medea is less complex than Circe whose sister she is at times reported to be. She is the archetype of the tragic female. In a soliloquy in Euripides' *Medea* she says of women's nature and powers: "You have knowledge and wisdom. ...Besides nature has made a woman absolutely incapable of doing good and particularly skillful in doing evil." (*Medea*, lines 401-409). In the same soliloquy she admits her reverence for Hecate above all other gods and speaks of her as her helper. This short speech shows us a woman, albeit a particular type of woman with a violently sensual and frustrated nature who is bent on doing evil and in possession of recondite knowledge, a vassal or dependent of the feminine goddess associated with terror and the night. This is the basis of a system: the 'logos' of maleficent magic or witchcraft. But, Medea like Circe is the protagonist of events in these texts and, therefore, her powers are looked on with a sort of awe. The awe for the secret female who can destroy at will and in some cases perhaps has perfect right to do so.

Witchcraft in Ancient Greece

The Greeks believed that supernatural powers were the heritage of certain families and that these powers descended from generation to generation. Perhaps because of Hecate the Thessalian women were believed to be more skilled than most in sorcery and enchantments. They could brew a love potion or a poison just as efficiently, and with their litanies and charms they could draw the moon itself from the skies. Pliny writes that Menander in his comedy *Thessala* staged a sabbath scene in which the enchantress compelled the moon to obey her. (*Historia Naturalis*, XXX, ii.).

Theocritus in *Pharmaceutria* conveys a vivid and realistic account of Greek sorcery. Simaetha, the proud Syracusan lady who has been abandoned by her lover Delphis and as a result been driven to madness, resorts to magical rites to win him back. She stands at midnight on the deserted shore, the wind drops and all is still. Then suddenly a fire blazes and the woman twirls her charmed wheel in its light while chanting to bring Delphis back to her. A laurel bough which symbolizes his limbs is burned in the fire. Pure wax is

melted which symbolically stands for his strength which then literally fades away. Then Delphis' mantle is burned and various ointments are sent to his house where they are smeared on his doors. In the meanwhile Simaetha stands alone facing the moon and telling the story of her love. The characters and elements used and the rites rehearsed in this scene are all reminiscent of modern witchcraft: a woman seeking revenge or retribution, the moon, love spells and potions and of course the integral wax effigy.

In addition to the priest-sorcerers there grew up another class of wizards who held an inferior place in public estimation. These were the 'goetes' whose name was derived from the wild shrieks and howls - Seneca's *barbaricus ululatus* - with which they chanted their incantations. This group was feared almost as much as they were disliked, because although the public thought of them as imposters it was believed that they had malevolent powers and were armed with ill intentions. (Summers; 15). In fact what had originally started out as a religious ritual slowly started changing its nature and taking on the bias which it still retains in the popular mind - the witch myth which is recognized as an opposition of moral values. These lower class wizards were believed to concoct philters and poisons, and to barter their craft for money. These 'goetes' were to become the witches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that is the hags who were burned at the stake by Bodin and De Lancre. The priests hated their tradition and more than once laws were passed to check their activities. (Plato, Laws XI).

Witchcraft in Ancient Rome

From Greece witchcraft penetrated Rome in about the third century B.C., and together with it came oriental magic, which had also been influential in Greece. Before this, there had of course been the indigenous traditions such as the mysterious cults and the mythology of the Etruscans who had their own "Shrouded Gods," the book of Tages, and the schools of Lucumones. (Summers; 17). Among these, Tages was considered a supernatural being, who as Cicero writes, appeared suddenly in the field of a Tuscan ploughman and taught him and all the people of Etruria the art of haruspices.

(Divination, II, xxiii, 50). Haruspices is the art of divination attained by men from the entrails of animals, a practice which was the basis of the sacrifice of black sheep and other animals and later human sacrifice.

There were other festivals where the deities who were feared the most were appeased. Foremost among these was the veneration paid to the Lemures, who were malignant spirits, their high festival being held on the ninth, eleventh and thirteenth of May to assuage the ghosts of those who had died. (Otffried; 253).

All these rites were associated and mixed with magical observances. St. Augustine writes that according to Plotinus men's souls are *daemons* and become *lares* (benevolent spirits) if their merits are good, *lemures* or goblins if they are evil; and, *manes* if they are uncertain. In short the human soul generally became a *lemur* once it left the body. One of the Lemures dwelled in the house to look after his posterity and was called a *Lar*. Those that had no fixed residence were punished by becoming wanderers or exiles; these were usually called *Larvae*. The good feared them because they were fearful, but the bad could be punished by them. To drive away the *Larvae* or ghouls and goblins it was sometimes necessary to offer sacrifice with a complicated ceremonial of expiation and exorcism. (Dionysus Halikarnassus, Antiquitates Romanae, V, 54).

Mana or Manuana

The ancient Italian goddess Mana or Manuana was queen of the Manes and the Summanes. She was a witch goddess who was sometimes identified with Hecate. Her worship was secret and mysterious and like Hecate, she too was offered young puppies as sacrifice. There was yet another figure that was more terrifying than her and this was Summanus, who hurled loud thunderbolts and sent red lightning through the midnight sky. Summanus was, was however, a god and held the upper hand in terror beside a woman. He was no doubt one of the most feared of the gods. His cult was conducted

with such secrecy and the rituals were so secretly guarded that there is hardly anything written about the practices concerning his worship.

Numa

According to Livy, the kings of Rome remained under the influence of the Etruscans and their mode of divination gained hold upon the populace. Among the accounts of the period the most famous is perhaps that of Numa Pompilius and the nymph Egeria. The two are said to have met in the grove of the Camena near the Porta Capena. Here Numa is said to have practiced hydromancy - divination by water - associated with Egeria, the nymph of a sacred stream. Hydromancy itself is believed to be of Persian origin. Later still it was claimed that hydromancy was actually a kind of necromancy since the diviner is supposedly communing with the dead. Numa has later been considered a wizard because he could practice hydromancy. Later tales relate that certain scrolls were found near the dead king's grave and were quickly burned after they had been shown to the senate since they boded evil. Later Christian exegeses of the event claim that this was actually a communion with the Devil and his bestial desires. All this points to the fact that a tradition of magic took hold in the very early days of the Roman Empire and was handed down as a tradition to later generations.

Measures taken against Witchcraft in Ancient Rome

Malevolent spirits were punished by death according to the Law of the Twelve Tables, which was drawn up by the Dumvirs in the fifth century B.C. Severe statutes are said to have been passed especially against those who injured crops or spread illness among sheep and cattle. (Summers; 20). In 139 B.C., the praetor Cornelius Scipio Hispalus issued an edict that all Chaldeans, or astrologers, should leave Rome within ten days. (Livy, IV, 50; XXV, i; XXXIX, 16). But this does not seem to have been of much avail as they all came back as soon as the alarm was over. And, indeed during times of political

discord all manner of diviners, soothsayers, seers and occultists are said to have proliferated in the streets of Rome.

Witches in Roman Chronicles and Literature

The witches described by the Roman writers were sometimes mysterious and stately women, and sometimes foul and filthy hags; but, no matter what their appearance was, they all seem to have had an equal propensity for evil. Virgil's Libyan sorceress is one of the stately kind as well as Ovid's Colchian Medea. Both are full of dignity, yet look on the awful secrets with unmoved hearts and eyes. Lucan's Erichtho on the other hand is a ghastly figure who reeks of death and corruption. She prowls among the tombs of the criminals who have long been executed and gathers their rotting extremities. Tibullus is another of the witches of this era who could evoke the hosts of the dead with her magic runes. Ovid's Dipsas, who was as able to conduct charms as Circe was, was a drunken crone. (*Amores*, I, vii, 5).

Horace gives us an excellent picture of witches and their practices in the midnight scene of incantation of Canidia and Sagana before the statue of Priapus (*Sermonum*, I, 8). The two witches with their pale horrible faces dig up the ground while uttering their hoarse cries. They find and tear to pieces a black lamb and eat it raw while its warm blood pours down. One sends her prayers quite felicitously to Hecate while the other invokes Tisiphone. All the while a wax figure is melting in the fire before them.

Petronius' *Satyricon* also contains accounts of witches and werewolves. In one of the episodes Niceros wanting to visit his mistress Melissa, persuades a soldier to accompany him on the lonely road to her house. The silver moon is of course shining. His companion suddenly strips and rushes to the bushes from where a wolf emerges and leaps into the woods. When Niceros reaches his mistress' house, she tells him that the sheep on her farm have been attacked by a wolf and that the wolf has been wounded and frightened away by one of her servants. Niceros returns to his home the next day to find his companion is being treated for a wound himself. Petronius uses the word

"Uersipellis", which actually means one who can change his skin, with reference to this soldier.

Apuleius **Metamorphoses** is perhaps the best source in terms of the history of classical witchcraft. Apuleius, taking the old story of Lucian, foregrounded the occult element which for him had infinite possibilities. The scene of the book is the home of magic, Thessaly. Lucius arrives and is the guest of a usurer named Milo whose wife Pamphile is a notorious witch (II, 5). He is warned against her enchantments. At a dinner he hears further accounts of witches in the environs. During his stay at Milo's house, Lucius begs the serving maid Fotis to let him see her mistress change herself into a bird. He is able to see Pamphile anoint herself from head to foot in order to fly like a bird. Lucius himself convinces Fotis to allow him to try the same experiment but unfortunately he uses the wrong unguent and is turned into an ass. Because of his great work, Apuleius was regarded as a sorcerer himself and is mentioned as such by St. Augustine as he discusses the **Metamorphoses**. Another of the great Roman writers to have gained the reputation of magician is Virgil. The **Aeneid** was used to discover the secrets of the future by "Sortis Vergilianae" or the mode of divination which requires that one open a book at random to find some omen or message. Homer, Virgil and the **Bible** have been used for such practices throughout the ages.

From time to time occultism or "malefici" (those practicing black magic) as well as "mathematici" (those practicing white magic) were banned. However, even the Caesars themselves are known to have dabbled in magic because the game of power needs the help of the supernatural and the knowledge of what might come together with perhaps the potency to circumvent what is not desirable. (Summers; 50). Augustus is known to have had his in-house occultist so to speak. Tiberius' mother, Livia, is also said to have consulted a famous Chaldean to determine the future of her son. Tiberius himself is said to have forbidden anyone to consult a magician without being accompanied by another person, and to have later banished all astrologers from Rome though keeping his own astrologer by his side. (Seutonius, **Tiberius**, LXIII). Claudius after him did not repeal the laws but rather reinforced them. Then later during the time of Nero, Roman occults of every kind proliferated. Nero is said to have butchered half the aristocracy of Rome because of the

astrologer Babilus, who announced that the appearance of a blazing comet was an omen which could only be expiated by noble blood. Later Caesars seem to have kept their own astrologers and either given them a high place or banished them from the city; but, irrespective of their practices superstition seems to have remained intact with the practice of their omens, love potions, amulets and so on.

In the time of Hadrian, the occult took on a terrible and darker shade. Neither banishment nor realism could curb man's curiosity and fascination. Rumors of human sacrifice for the purpose of divination were prevalent. Hadrian was greatly influenced by the abstract creeds of the East, and he wished neo-Hellenism to truly mold the religion of the Alexandrian Platonists and though he strictly forbid human sacrifice, emperors who succeeded him are said to have practiced it.

Under the Roman emperors there were two great influences at work each of which had an important influence on the magic practiced during the time. One of these was the Mithra rites and neo-Platonism while the other was Christianity with its rituals. Neo-Platonism was a system of idealistic and spiritual theosophy which infused with oriental religious conceptions tried to restore Greek thought and Hellenic ideas and ideals. The neo-Platonists had a new mythology: the Supreme Being, God, the One, the Absolute, the Infinity exceeds all categories of human thought; beneath him there are a multitude of lesser supernatural powers who can and do concern themselves with the affairs of men and with whom men can establish a connection. Some of these were confused with Manes, Lares and Genii, they at times watch over man, protect and deliver him from trouble; at other times or in different versions they tempt man to all kinds of wickedness. Thus the neo-Platonists conceived a new hierarchy of demons who were in reality pagan gods and were categorized according to how they had been traditionally regarded together with their rituals, attributes, and qualities. The ancient formulae of divination were studied and perpetuated and sacrifices were offered to the infernal powers, while necromancy was also practiced and recommended.

The central myth of Mithraism, which is to be considered together with neo-Platonism since they are both pagan religions, was Mithra the savior of men who was in some sense identified with the sun. The pivotal dogma was his struggle with the bull which Mithra pursued, overcame, dragged to his cave and sacrificed by plunging a steel into its throat. This was said to be symbolic of man's life of labor and effort on earth. The ritual connected with the religion understandably had this sacrifice at its basis. In later developments the ritual of the killing of the bull was to give way, especially during the time of Julian, to immortality and the sacrifice of youths, and the sacrifice of their blood to the various fiends. (Summers; 53). In this religion special stress was put on fraternity which had its own secret bonds and passwords. The rituals were carried out in utmost secrecy. No women were allowed into the sect. It was a brotherhood in the purest sense at least in terms of sex. Neo-Platonism combined with some of these rituals tried to combat Christianity thus leading to the alliance of heresy and mystery which of course came hand in hand with witchcraft itself. So although in later years paganism and magic were to be forbidden, witchcraft had already taken root in the new religion.

A brief look at the development of witchcraft in what is considered the western world, is enough to show us that what had started off as an honorable calling because it was the only way to reach the powers that be, slowly became a repugnant practice in the eyes of the world. Witchcraft which had been central to any society was slowly pushed to the periphery, and like any movement that has such a strong hold on the emotions of humankind it did not die out. It continued to live and teem on the fringes of a world that now looked on Jesus of Nazareth, the outcome of an immaculate conception, for its salvation. The once central figure of the witch now came to clearly embody those characteristics which monotheistic societies especially disapprove.

In this new paradigm the values of the witch came to directly negate the values of society because the witches were attributed many kinds of vices including those that were considered unnatural or especially horrible. Vices, appetites and passions which are present in every man and if ungoverned would destroy any moral law, were now attributed to the witch. The witch

myth as it stands until our day then recognizes an opposition of moral values; an opposition of good and bad, right and wrong, proper and improper, sinful and righteous. The witch according to the Christian scriptures is therefore always on the wrong side of the moral line - a figure of sin incarnate. This is actually the opposition of vital nature, the opposition between in-group and out-group, between allies and foes. The witch is the person who with the power invested in him or her has turned traitor to the group. All this is what makes the witch a sinner and a criminal. Monotheism has insinuated the art of sorcery on women as we shall see in the Bible, and as a natural outcome in the annals of the Inquisition, and in the laws of the Church that were to follow. By the end of the fifth century then, the road from wisdom to becoming a member of the "other" or out-group had been set.

The Early Years of Christianity

Evil has been and will probably remain an element which man has wrestled with even when he has claimed a single deity whom he construed to be all forgiving and all loving. This is perhaps why we find allusions to sorcery and witchcraft even in the scriptures that deny supernatural powers to other than those chosen by God.

There seems to be little literature about witchcraft in the western world between the advent of Christianity and the Middle Ages aside from of course the mention of such practices in the Bible itself. The Old Testament verifies the existence of such practices. Hutchison, in his Historical Essay on Witchcraft, suggests that these allusions which appear in the King James' 'Authorized Version' "hath received some phrases that savour the vulgar Notions more than the old Translation did." (Hutchison; 225). The allusions to witchcraft could be listed as follows:

Exod., xxii, 18, "Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live." (It should be noted that the injunction is feminine; men-magicians or wizards are not mentioned).

v. 27 - "A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall surely be put to death; ye shall stone them; they shall be responsible for their own death."

xix, 26 - "Ye shall not practice augury or divination."

v. 31 - "Turn ye not to those who are mediums or wizards seek them not out to be defiled with them: I am Jehovah your God."

xx, 6 - "Against the person who turns to those who are mediums or wizards to practise apostasy with them I will indeed set my face, and will cut him off from among his people."

v. 20 - "But a prophet who shall presume to deliver a message in my name, which I have not commanded him to deliver, or shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."

Christianity, however, continued to coexist with beliefs in demons and good spirits. The myth of Lamia seems to have been a carry over from Medea and to have been perpetrated during classical times. She was reportedly the beautiful queen of Libya. Her cruelty caused her beauty to change to the semblance of a wild beast. She lost her children and her jealousy of more fortunate mothers led her to seize their children and put them to death.

Plutarch alludes to the fable that Lamia slept at home blind, placing her eyes in a vase, but when she went out she resumed her eyes and could see (Plutarch, *De Curiositate*, c.2). She is mentioned both in the Hebrew scriptures and as a result the Vulgate: "And demons and monsters shall meet and the hairy ones shall cry out one to another, there hath the lamia lain down and found rest for herself."(Isaiah, xxxiv, 14). The idea of the lamia seems to have been popular during the times of Pope Gregory I, since in his commentary on Job (*Magna Moralia*) he twice refers to her as a symbol, once of heresy and then again of hypocrisy (Howland; 110). Here the lamia is associated with the owl and sorcery, for the owl can be hatched as a bird or created by incantations. The feathers of the owl (striges) also have magical powers. These superstitions were all inherited by the medieval Christian Church although with some objection; belief in the lamia was something to be eradicated. Sorcery in short lived side by side with the Christian belief, well documented in the Old Testament, as something that very much existed yet also as something to be evaded.

By the time of Constantine, during the first quarter of the fourth century (319-20), new laws had already been passed in Rome to stop witchcraft once and for all. And although citizens were allowed to practice paganism they had to do so at their own homes and at their own expense. They would be burned at the stake if they attempted to carry out their rituals in the houses of others. In the second half of the fourth century, all astrology, sacrifices by night, all Chaldean diviners and all black science was banned by Constantine (377-61). The law was repealed by Julian (361-63) and all that had been forbidden proliferated in the empire once more. Later rulers seem to have vacillated

between allowing paganism and enforcing laws against witchcraft and sorcery depending on whether they saw it as a threat to their power or not. All this however, came to an end in the latter half of the fifth century with the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Witchcraft per se seemed to have been eradicated with the fall of paganism, but continued to live in the heart of the people.

Witchcraft in England in the Early Years

Indeed the world of Christianity and sorcery seem to have coexisted until the times of the Inquisition when steps were taken to eradicate it. There is little mention however of the situation on the British Isles concerning this period in history. No doubt the beliefs brought on by Christianity prevailed here too. According to Summers Strabo, the geographer of the first century, writes that near Britain Kore and Demeter are worshipped with rites similar to the orgies of Samothrace, the chief seat of worship of the Cabiri whose occult ritual was closely related to Hecate. (Summers; 65).

The first recorded mention of witchcraft in England seems to have appeared in the *Liber Poenitentialis* of St. Theodore, the seventh Archbishop of Canterbury. The said work is the earliest collection of ecclesiastical disciplinary laws for England. The thirty-seventh book of this work is assigned to idolatry and sacrilege. Here those who pay divine honors to certain Angels, evil-doers, soothsayers, poisoners, charmers and diviners, that is to those who take their vows to other than the Holy Church as well as those who go about dressed as a stag or a bull-calf on the Kalends of January, and those astrologers who can raise storms with their craft are pointed out as idolators destined to be severely punished. Anyone who consults soothsayers or other diviners who divine by birds for example is also required to do a penance of three years and to fast on bread and water for a year of this period. If Clerics or layman associated with the Church make philtres or exercise the art of seer or charmer, they will also be expelled from the Church. The sexually abandoned nature of the Feast of Fools and the Feast of Asses celebrated before the new year together with other festivals of the nature were forbidden again and again to little avail. It must be noted that although these festivals were primarily celebrated by men, women too were included in the edicts as having played a role in the

enactment of these "unseemly" observances. Furthermore, directly in connection with women we have mention of punishment for abortion. Women who divine or use devilish evocations as well as women who place their son or daughter upon the house-top or in the oven in order to ensure health, women who tie the ligatura for casting a spell on a man to cure frigidity or ensure virility (to tie a man to his wife sexually forever or to make it impossible for him to cohabit with any other woman) were also to be severely punished.

Ecgberht, Archbishop of York, aside from condemning men dressed as animals paying tribute to the dark forces and laying down sentences for them, also mentions women. If any woman practices any magic arts or spells, and works evil charms, she is to fast for twelve months, or for three canonical fasts. The atrociousness of her offence has to be computed by those concerned, and if she should kill anyone with her evil charms then she must fast for seven years (Summers; 71). So we see that in England at least from the fifth century onwards there was a serious battle against what appeared to be communion with the "other powers".

Edicts against witches continued in the 10th century when in the Laws of Edward and Guthrun we find mention that witches or diviners and notorious adulteresses should be banished from the land and the people cleansed. Such laws aimed to put an end to what was considered heathenism. Necromancy, divination, and enchantments, which obviously continued to have a hold on the public, were forbidden by one and all. Yet, during the Anglo-Saxon days witchcraft does not seem to have reached the sophistication that we observe later. The movement seems to have gained impetus later in the eleventh century with the appearance of the Gnostic heretics and their supposed belief in Satanism.

Witchcraft and Demonology

Before the eleventh century there is no mention of witches changing form or forming a compact with the Devil whether implicit or otherwise although their activities were even then connected with the darker power. There is no allusion to nocturnal meetings of Devil worshippers or to orgies which took place at the aftermath. In fact there seems to be no elaborate and systematic

theological explanation of the relationship of humans with demons. In short there is no real Demonology during this period in time. Although Demonology was not codified as it was to be in later years, there is some mention of the relationship of man with the demon in St. Augustine's *De Ciuitate Dei* (Summers; 78). The nocturnal meetings themselves are mentioned in a decree of a General Council of Ancyra, and are later taken up by canonists. A Benedictine abbot writes that "certain abandoned women turning aside to follow Satan, being seduced by the illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and openly profess that in the dead of night they ride upon certain beasts with the pagan goddess Diana and a countless horde of women, and in these silent hours they fly over vast tracts of country and obey her as their mistress, while on other nights they are summoned to pay her homage. (*Patres Latini, CXXXII, 352*).

John of Salisbury also mentions the existence of a popular belief in a witch-queen named Herodias, who gathered sorcerers at night and after they had feasted, sacrificed babies to ghouls and ghosts and later held a Sabbath of debauchery. (Lea; 201). There is further mention of Herodias, or Diana or Habundia, queen of the Sabbath and her good-women in *Le Roman de la Rose*.

The decrees of the Council of Alexandria also mention 'certain wicked crones' who ride abroad at night with Diana or Herodias, and pass over vast distances. They obey the commands of the said heathen goddesses and are able to change people into other shapes. The decrees condemn all such activities as the connivance of the Devil and maintain that if anyone should believe in them, he should be designated a heretic (Summers; 76-77).

Though it was against the laws to perform charms that brought on sickness and death, or that were concerned with sexual matters; other charms and magic which enabled the crops to grow or the cows to be healed seemed to be acceptable. As far as the claims that charms and magic were the tricks of the devil to entice the common man to his side was concerned, St. Augustine and the like decided that wonders brought about by charmers were actually made to happen by divine permission and nothing else. It was actually the Lord trying man.

CHAPTER II

WITCHCRAFT IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Attitude of the Medieval Church

The fact seems to be that as the Christian Church gained dominion from the end of what is now considered paganism till what we now call the Medieval period what is termed witchcraft was condoned as the ancillary religion which was practiced by one and all. It was only after the Church became sure of its ascendancy, did there start in Europe especially, a consternation about snuffing out what came to be regarded as a threat to the power of the institution. Another reason given for this change in attitude is political. It is claimed that at this time that the Black Death scourged Europe reducing the numbers of the working classes or serfs, and that as great political upheaval was very much in the air, risings such as the Peasants' Revolt resulting both from the Black Death and the impoverishment of the people were suppressed with difficulty. The common man was against the scholarly books that held sway on them and the Church struck back in anger.

Furthermore a fantasy that there existed a category of human beings pledged to the service of Satan was established in the minds of the public. This sect or group of people, which had existed alongside the institutionalized religion and which had patched up for its shortcomings, was now said to worship Satan in secret rituals, and even to wage relentless war against Christendom and against individual Christians on Satan's behalf. During the Medieval period this group which had hitherto been known as individual witches or sorcerers and sorceresses, became attached to certain heretical sects, and this helped to intensify and legitimate the persecution.

At the heart of this Medieval fantasy of the witch there is Satan himself. Lethbridge claims that Tana (Diana) the "Queen of Witches All" fell in love with Lucifer the Sun; as a result we had the marriage of the sun and the moon to ensure a perfect balance of nature and fertility. As pointed out in the

previous chapter, rituals held at full moon are almost universal, since Diana or Artemis or Isis or Ashtoreth seem to have reigned supreme in almost all parts of the world. They also ensure fertility together with their consorts. (Lethbridge; 78).

The existence of Satan as primal evil on the other hand, appears to be a source of major concern since the early years of Christianity. In fact from the time that God was claimed to be all-powerful and all-good, it seemed quite difficult to account for the existence of evil in the world. Though Satan was frequently associated with evil and with Adam and Eve, no documentation exists until much later which for example claims that the serpent in the garden of Eden is Satan and Eve easily comes under his influence. When and where the complicated demonology that is observed in the records of the Middle Ages actually started seems to be a matter of investigation but it does not appear to have any real basis in the religion itself.

The fathers of early Christianity thought that the pagan deities were demons and those who worshipped them were really serving the purpose of Satan. This approach continued and if a Christian so much as criticized new practices or beliefs after they had received the official sanction of the Church, he was considered to have acted under the influence of Satan. Slowly but surely the magical practices which had been judged according to intention in the early days (divination and foretelling of future events were not considered a crime for example, while harmful sorcery was punishable by law) became unpalatable. This is because the Fathers were convinced that magicians and sorcerers could indeed do supernatural things and that this power was given to them by the pagan gods. Any practice of magic - even beneficent magic - was therefore, considered a form of demon worship and a grave religious transgression, irrespective of whether or not it was a civil crime. It was these teachings of the early Church that prepared the way for the great 'demonization' of human beings that was to take place, many centuries later in Western Europe.

Heretical sects began to spread along the trade routes around 1100. The followers of these sects proliferated in the developing urban civilizations of northern Italy, France and the Rhine valley. The authorities reacted sharply to this new development. In their eyes it was after all organized dissent and nothing more. The earlier easygoing pragmatism that embraced milder

practices of paganism and incorporated it into religion was no longer seen. The Church became intolerant and rigid in matters of faith and heretics were not only defamed, they were even burned at the stake in the context of this struggle against heresy. For the first time in Western Europe groups of people came to be described as Satan worshippers.

In 1022 a number of canons of the cathedral at Orleans were found guilty of heresy and burned. Their heresy consisted in: not accepting the body and blood of Christ as really present in the Eucharist; they also denied that baptism with water had any supernatural effectiveness. Furthermore they regarded it as meaningless to appeal to the intercession of saints. Instead, they themselves claimed to receive the holy spirit through the laying-on of hands, and they also talked of a certain 'heavenly food'. This mention of heavenly food brought about various illusory tales of how they came together at night carrying lights and invoking the devil with particular formulae, who then appeared in the guise of an animal. The ritual was of course followed with fornication and incest, and the children born of these revels were then burned and their ashes were treasured as holy relics. These ashes had a diabolical effect on anyone who tasted them; the individual was irrevocably bound to the sect (Cohn; 9).

What had been a universal belief: that witches could perform maleficent sorcery; and that they could fly through the night - came to be interpreted also as Satan-worship by the Inquisition. And with this step was created the stereotype of the witch as a man or woman who has voluntarily entered into Satan's service, and who has in turn received the power to harm human beings, their property, their health or their lives. They also created the fantasy of the witches' Sabbath: what some chroniclers had imputed to heretics - that they attended secret nocturnal assemblies, presided over by Satan, where sexual orgies were performed and babies roasted and eaten - was now officially arraigned to witches; with the addition that they flew to these meetings on an animal or broomstick. In this way the inquisitors built up a fantasy of a mysterious sect, endowed with supernatural powers, which at Satan's bidding was waging war on Christians and Christendom. Despite this hearsay, though witches did exist individually, there was no organized sect or body of individuals who worshiped Satan and who had an organization. By torturing individuals and making them confess to these unfeasible events the preconditions for the great witch-hunt was set. The

people who were tortured in the end not only confessed to attending one of these sabbaths where orgies were carried on and young children were roasted and eaten, but also denounced others who had attended the said meetings with them.

Genderization of Witchcraft

The witch hunt and documents and writings that illustrated the true nature of the witch continued to proliferate. As the witches that were discovered started proving to be more women than men, probably because it was easier in most societies to blame women, a need was felt to find a scientific argument for the phenomenon. Clerics sat down to make lists of people who were most likely to become witches. The demonologists found an easy explanation of the greater propensity of women to become witches in the weakness and depravity of the sex, which was the favorite object of monkish objurgation. The saintly Archbishop Antonino of Florence (1389 - 1459) quotes an alphabet of definitions of women:

Avidum Animal	Greedy Animal
Bestial baratrum	Savage Inferno
Concupiscencia carnis	Lustful flesh
Damnosum duellum	Ruinous war
Aestuans austus	Seething waves
Falsa fides	False honor
Garrulum guttur	Garrulous throat
Herinis (Erinnys) armata	Armed rampion
Invidiosus ignis	Exciting fire
Calumniarum chaos	Columnar chaos
Lepida lues	Charming pestilence
Monstruosum mendacium	Monstrous flasehood
Naufragi nutrix	Nourisher of wrecks
Opifex odii	Artisan of hatred
Prima peccatrix	Primal sinner
Quietis quassatio	Disrupter of rest
Ruina regnorum	Ruin of kingdoms
Silva supeerbiae	Forest of arrogance
Truculenta tyrannis	Truculence of tyrants
Vanitas vanitatum	Vanity of vanities, Monster of monsters
Xantia xersis	
Ymago idolorum	Image of idols
Zelus zelotypus	Covetous zealot
(Lea; 308).	

He goes on to elaborate on each individual failing in Summa, P.III, tit.i, c.25-T.III; 33). Many of these attributes are of course applicable to the oriental conception of the inferiority and evil character of women, as expressed in the Old Testament and which was taken on in the Authorized Version from the Vulgate which was considered the Word of God of the Middle Ages:

"(Give me) any plague but the plague of the heart; and any wickedness but the wickedness of a woman.

"There is no head above the head of a serpent; and there is no wrath above the wrath of an enemy (*woman* in Vulgate).

"All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman; let the portion of a sinner fall upon her.

"Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die."(Ecclus. xxv, 13,15,19,24).

The virtue of virgins dedicated to God is admitted by St.Bernard, but he also claims that to preserve this virtue they must shun the company of secular women. Alexander of Hales attributes the reason for the greater number of sorcerers being women to the fact that the devil infused his diabolical doctrine into the woman for he knew that she had less discretion, and from her it came to the man. Consequently Alexander transfuses his fallacious doctrine of sorcery more frequently into women than into men (Summa, P.II, q. clxvi, member. 6-T. II; 403).

In the latter days of the Inquisition and even a hundred years after its practices had taken hold of the Western world, theories concerning witches and witchcraft continued to proliferate: two Inquisitors wrote the Malleus Maleficarum. This is perhaps the most interesting of the documents related to witchcraft, witches, and why it was mostly women who became witches. The said work became the handbook of the later days of the Inquisition and held sway as late as the seventeenth century. It was regarded as the 'encyclopedia' of witch-beliefs and was constantly cited in support of those beliefs by Catholics and Protestants up to the eighteenth century. The book was broadcast all over Europe, serving as a confutation to sceptics and a justification for the ongoing pitiless persecution. In short the ideas it propagated fastened on European jurisprudence for nearly three centuries and fulfilled the duty of combating the devil and saving mankind from his clutches.

Malleus Maleficarum and Women

The *Malleus Maleficarum* was written by two Dominican Inquisitors Heinrich (Institoris) Kramer and Jacobus Sprenger. Its first edition probably appeared in 1486, however, thirteen more editions are reported to have been distributed between 1487 and 1520 and another sixteen editions between 1574 and 1669. It commences with an elaborate argument to prove that disbelief in witchcraft is heresy and goes on to claim that the *Malleus* does not indulge in the monkish abuse of women. In fact it proclaims that there are three things that are supremely good or bad - a tongue, a priest, and a woman. It quotes the savage abuse of women in the Old Testament, and points out that Christianity has changed this misconception. The malediction of Eve has been removed by the benediction of Mary in the New Testament. The reason why there are more female than male witches is because women are more credulous, they are more talkative, so they spread among other women what they know and because they lack bodily strength, they use sorcery when trying to revenge themselves. The fact that woman is bodily and mentally weaker causes her to renounce her faith more readily. This is the foundation of witchcraft. Quarrels between unmarried women and their lovers is one of the most prevalent reasons for women becoming witches. Inordinate in their affections and passions, they are constantly seeking vengeance, whether through sorcery or otherwise. They are ungovernable and follow their impulses without consideration. If we examine the history of nations, we find that nearly all the kingdoms of the world have been destroyed through women so it is no wonder that the world suffers from their wickedness.

The three leading vices of women are "Infidelitas, Ambitio, et Luxuria," and those who are most given to these vices become witches; and of the three the last greatly predominates. It is this which leads them to innumerable amatory sorceries to obtain the love of men. From this the daily threats of the extermination of the faith comes, for they so influence the minds of the powerful that the latter is unable to permit any harm to be done to them, and thus the evil daily increases (Q. vi).

According to the second part of the *Malleus*, there are three kinds of witches (*maleficae*) - those who can injure but not cure, those who by a peculiar pact with the demon can cure but not injure, and those who can both injure and cure. Among those who can both injure and cure there is one supreme kind

who can perpetrate all the *maleficia* which the other witches can only partially do. It is these who, against the instincts of men and beasts are accustomed to devour the infants of their own race. They are supreme in working *maleficia* and are given to innumerable other injuries. They send hail and lightning and evil winds; they procure sterility in men and beasts; the infants whom they do not devour they offer to the demon or kill otherwise (but unbaptized infants whom they devour are revived again, provided God permits it); they make children walking near the water fall into it, in their parents' sight; they cause horses to go mad under their riders; they can go from place to place through the air bodily or in imagination; they can change the minds of judges in their favor; they can cause taciturnity under torture in themselves or others; they can bring great fear onto the minds and bodies of those who arrest them; they can predict the future by the responses of the demons, in so far as natural causes enable them to foresee; they can see the absent as though present; they can change the minds of men to inordinate love or hatred; they can send lightning to kill men and cattle; they can make men impotent and women barren; with a touch they can kill the unborn child; with a look they can bewitch and kill; they dedicate their infants to the demon and do all the evil which all other *maleficae* do, when God permits; they have carnal congress with demons (Q.i, c.2). Institoris claims to have seen the witches flying with his own eyes and readily illustrates his point with his experiences.

When speaking of incubi the *Malleus* claims it is possible to doubt whether the witches took their origin from it. However, the book goes on to explain that anyone who has read history will know that *malefici* have always existed to the injury of men, cattle, and harvests and so have incubi and succubi. The canons and the holy doctors have told this for hundreds of years, with the difference that in former times it was believed that incubi infested women against their will. According to the *Malleus* on the other hand, on the evidence of the witches themselves it is now known that it is not as it was formerly believed against their will, but of their own volition that women submit to evil. (Q. i, c. 4).

Chapters Q. i, c.5, 6, and 7 are devoted to sexual potency and the effects of witchcraft with respect to it. Here we learn how men are rendered impotent and sometimes even how their members removed; how men and women are transformed into beasts; how witch midwives in various ways kill the unborn

child, and, when they do not do this offer them to demons; how they can inspire love or hatred between a man and a woman; how they can procure abortions; how they kill; how they deprive men of reason; the minute details involved in the various modes in which men are rendered impotent and women barren. Again in c. 13 the *Malleus* claims that it is very often found that girls of eight or ten years are able to excite tempests and hailstorms, which they could only do through their having been dedicated to the devil. The rest of the work seems to be dedicated to remedies against witchcraft.

Voices did rise against this powerful treatise about witches and in 1487 we see Joseph Hansen, an archivist of Koln, pointing out in *Zauberwahn* how the *Malleus Maleficarum* attributes witchcraft chiefly to women and justifies this by exaggerating the customary monkish abuse of the sex (Lea; 337). Hansen claimed that this was consistent with the then widespread abuse of women by theologians and preachers and was one of the factors in extending the witchcraft craze, which men rarely suffered from and which they were ready to ascribe to the other sex. The condition of women during this period in fact, did lead them to resort to sorcery in order to retain the affection of their husbands, to protect themselves from their husband's brutality as well as to prevent their desertion by their lovers.

The voices that rose in opposition were weak however, and the witch hunt continued well into the seventeenth century with women mostly bearing the brunt of this discrimination. Crones and young women under duress confessed to having committed the grave crimes attributed to them, and to implicate others in their vicinity. Whether this was their way of taking their revenge on a hostile environment or whether they truly believed they were invested with the powers attributed to them is a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless a large number of women young and old lost their lives in this avid hunt for witches.

Cohn claims that the myth of Satan and his human servants has played an extraordinary part in European history. This story shows at least one thing: that one and the same myth can be made to serve a variety of purposes and can fulfill a variety of functions. The medieval sects were real groups and real opponents of the Church; the clergy who applied the myth to them were attacking potential rivals. (Cohn; 15). The Templars who were prosecuted also formed a real group and desired to serve the Church. When the King of

France accused them of worshipping Satan, he was motivated simply by financial need or greed. The so called witches on the other hand were not a real group; this is a case where the myth created in the imagination of the persecutors and populace a dangerous organization which in reality did not exist at all. (Brown; 34).

The Case of the British Isles up to the end of the Middle Ages.

The situation was rather different on the British Isles where no doubt the lore of the witch was embraced but where fewer witches were condemned than in the rest of Europe. This may be because the myth of the Satanic set of witches with the Sabbath as its core never obtained official sanction or juridical expression in England. This is possibly because while the continental magistrates could elaborate and distort what they found to fit their own demonological preconceptions by using torture, the English magistrates could not since they were not allowed to use torture. Accordingly, on the Continent an obscure woman forced by torture could give the names of the town major and councillors as well as their families as being among those whom she had seen at the sabbath. The English woman was not forced to give any names. thus, the English witches were almost all married women or widows and of low social status.

In England during the Tudor and Stuart eras, the term witchcraft was loosely applied to all kinds of magical activity or ritual operations that worked by occult methods. Village diviners who foretold the future or tracked down lost property as well as 'wise women' who healed the sick by charms or prayers were all termed 'witches'. During this period contemporary scientists whose operations confused the ignorant were also sometimes considered witches; the label was liberally attached to the ritual operations of the Catholic Church; theologians distrusted any claims to supernatural activity which their own religion did not authorize. In short witchcraft during these times came to mean the engagement (or rather unspoken engagement) of some supernatural means of doing harm to other people in a way that was generally disapproved of by the mass of society. Therefore a witch could be "a person of either sex (but in belief and practice more often female) who could mysteriously injure or kill other people" (Thomas; 48). She was considered therefore a crone who was unacceptable to society because of

her supernatural powers. In short the witch became more often a she as well as the "other".

This said definition and understanding, however, was that of the layman; English theologians associated witchcraft not with malevolent magic as such, but like their continental colleagues with a heretical belief - Devil-worship. According to them the witch owed any power she might possess to the pact she had made with Satan; and her primary offence was not injuring other people. but heresy. Hence whether or not she injured other people she deserved to die for her disloyalty to God, and around this notion was built the extensive concept of Devil-worship, which involved the nocturnal sabbath at which the witches gathered to do homage to their master and to copulate with him. The compound of these two approaches to witches culminated in the definition of a sexually depraved woman with ominous powers who was peripheral to society.

The Role of Magic and Witchcraft in Old and Medieval English

Literature.

Magic is prevalent throughout the literature written during this long period in history. Though literary works as such are few when compared to the output today, the various quests which were written of in medieval times always included an element of magic. ***Caedmon's Hymn.*** includes this element: when Caedmon is visited in his dream by someone who orders him to sing and he is able to do so after, having been invested with the talent by this nocturnal visitor. Though Caedmon's songs are of a religious nature, magic is blended to serve so to speak religion. ***Beowulf,*** written in the Germanic rather than the Christian tradition, contains all the elements of the Germanic social structure: bravery above all, a will for battle, absolute loyalty to the chief, no taste for peace, and, value given to horses, arms, armor, jewellery and collars. Though we are not presented with female witches in the epic, Grendel's mother, 'monstrous among womenkind', who inhabits the 'dread waters' and 'chilling streams' might bring to mind the image of the female crone. There is however, no mention of women's prophetic powers, while the element of magic is there. Hygelac takes with him the magic necklace of the fire dwarfs on his last raid, and Beowulf is reminded of the magic necklace

when he is given a splendid neck-ring by Hrothgar. In *The Dream of the Rood*, a deeply religious poem in accord with its time, we are again introduced to the supernatural. Although the supernatural is not blended with sorcery or witchcraft, we see, for example, the bejewelled cross in the prelude of the poem, change its appearance to the unadorned Cross of Christ's Passion. Throughout the poem we find the poet treading the fine line between miracle and magic in his use of imagery.

Of the later writers Chaucer is no doubt the most famous, and the one who comes to the fore with a versatile style and a sophisticated outlook. In his famous *The Canterbury Tales*, there are a number of tales which contain strange occurrences and elements of magic interspersed with religion. One of the examples of this is of course *The Prioress's Tale*. Here a little Christian boy continues to sing *O Alma Redemptoris* despite the fact that he has been murdered and his head has been severed by the Jews. We learn that this is due to the fact that the "sweetest mother of Christ" has put a grain under his tongue to make him sing until the time he is properly buried. What comes to the fore in terms of magic or witchcraft is of course the Wife of Bath's Tale. The Wife herself:

Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,
For she koude of the art the olde daunce." (*Canterbury Tales*,
General Prologue, 475-476))

Her story begins with a plea for a feminist outlook, and she then weaves a tale of fiery love and "maistry". In the prologue The Wife absolves herself of any religious compunction regarding her many husbands by giving various examples of people who have had more than one spouse - Solomon with his thousand wives is perhaps the most striking of her examples. Her allusions to sexuality are vibrant. She solemnly declares that the uses of the genitals are self-evident, and that there is only one way in which a husband can pay his wife his debt:

That man shal yelde to his wyf hire dette?
Now wherwith sholde hge make his paiement,
If he ne used his sely instrument?
Thanne were they maad upon a creature
To purge uryne and eek for engendrure.
(*The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, 130-134).

Here Chaucer seems to be depicting an image of the witch of his times: a middle-aged crone with a sexual bent and obviously a sexual charm with men; how else we are made to wonder, could she have lured so many husbands? She herself explains her allure in the following manner:

In wyfhod I wol use myn insturment
 As frely as my Makere hath it sent.
 If I be daugerous, God yeve me sorwe!
 Myn housbonde shal it have bothe eve and morwe,
 Whan that hym list come forth and paye his bette.? An
 housbonde I wol have, and wol nat lette,
 Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
 Upon his flessh, whil I that I am his wyf.
 I have the power durynge al my lyf
 Upon his propre body, and noght he.
 Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me;
 And bad oure hounundes for to love us weel,
 Al this sentence me liketh every deel- (*The Wife of Bath's
 Prologue*, 149-162).

Her tale is another example of the power of women, and crones, in general. There is the magical and the sexual closely interwoven to enslave the man. Her fifth husband reads from a book which contains numerous stories of women who with their sensual allure have caused the downfall of many a stalwart man: Eve whose wickedness brought all mankind to sorrow and distress; Samson's mistress who cropped his locks and left him infirm; Clytemnestra whose lechery caused her husband's downfall; and, many others.

The Wife of Bath's tale starts with mention of fairies and magic. The elf queen no longer haunts the woods because she has been replaced by the man of religion, who walks from town to town making it "safe" for women to go up and down because:

In every bussh or under every tree
 Ther is noon oother incubus but he,
 And he ne wel doon hem but dishonour.
 (*The Wife of Bath's Tale*; 879-881).

The wife again has craftily interwoven licentiousness with religion and men. Her tale is one of magic with a strangely feminist slant. In her tale a young knight rapes a maiden and is condemned to death; the queen of the realm, Guinevere, however, promises that he will be spared if he can find out what

women desire most. After long wanderings the knight meets a crone who gives him the secret of what it is that women most desire:

Wommen desires to have sovereynetee
 As el over hir housbond as hir love,
 And for to been in maistrie hym above.
 (**The Wife of Bath's Tale**.lines 1038-1040).

In return for this information the knight has to marry the crone. The crone herself has a lesson to teach her irresponsible and naive husband - what it entails to be a gentleman and what the role of a wife is in a gentleman's life. Finally, the husband is given two choices: either he keeps her the way she is old and ugly, but loyal and humble; or she can become young and beautiful but spendthrift and fickle. The young knight leaves the decision to his wife. Seeing that she has gained mastery over her husband, she instantly changes into a beautiful, charming, young, as well as faithful and loving wife. Consequently they lead a happy life ever after. The wife of course has a moral at the end. She wishes all women meek young husbands who submit to the authority of their wives during the day and are fresh in bed at night. As far as men are concerned, she damns those who are niggardly with their money and who will not give into their wives' authority. Her view of the world is a sexual bliss under the auspices of the woman who has magical powers to change and charm men, willing them to see her as they would want to. We are left wondering whether it is the magic spell cast by the witch woman, or whether it is the alter ego of the man that is being talked about.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is another piece of fine medieval English literature which contains elements of the magical as well as a sorceress, Morgan le Fay. The magic at the beginning is unabashed: totally dressed in green, blessed with a head of green hair, the Green Knight appears at the court of King Arthur and has his own head chopped off by Sir Gawain, one of Arthur's knights. While his blood is still spurting, he mounts his steed and rides off after having made Gawain accept to take a similar blow a year from that day at the Green Chapel, his own domain. Gawain's is a difficult journey not simply because the woods he goes through are wild, dangerous and lonesome but also because once he arrives in Sir Bertilack's Castle which is in the vicinity of the Green Chapel a few days before the allotted day he is tested over and over again both spiritually and sexually. Gawain has to walk the fine line between loyalty to his host and friend Bertilock and the attractions of his wife who insists on trying to bewitch him into a sexual liaison

with her. She of course supplies Gawain with the green belt which reminds one of the ligatura - used as a charm for sexual attraction - however, her girdle is said to have the power to protect Gawain from losing his life when his head is cut off. So this time his loyalty and belief in God's utmost mercy and justice are tested against his desire to live or his fear of death. Consequently Bertilack's wife plays the role of both the witch who tries to keep Gawain from being faithful to his host, and a temptress who like the Devil tries to break man's bond with and faith in God. Eve, Delilah, Batsheba are some of the names that the Lady can be associated with. At the end of the story, however, Gawain emerges from his trials as an upright man; he passes this test of virtue and faith with only a minute scar. Moral recognition and right action are ascendant. We are made to wonder if the "other" is actually a woman or once again the alter ego of the man who symbolizes this aspect of himself as a woman, the ultimate in temptation, the road to the downfall of the honest man.

The Vision of Will Concerning Piers Plowman is a religious allegory which continues to contain elements of magic in the form of dreams and visions. The Holy Church is symbolized by a woman who tells Piers to follow the straight and narrow path of abstinence. Interestingly enough however, in this long narrative poem the figure of temptation is again a female figure: Lady Meed. So the two idealized and supernatural identities attributed to women as Virgin Mary and Eve the accomplice of Satan, once again show up in this religious allegory.

In Sir Thomas Malory's **Morte Darthur** the round table stands for all that is meant by the medieval concept of "goodness", "virtue", "gentillesse" and ideal knighthood. The reason for its downfall is the shortcomings of man in general and the disloyalty of his best friend and companion in particular. Arthur the good king and the symbol of order is killed by the forces of disorder. Lancelot his best knight has a hand in his downfall both because he is late in coming to the rescue of Arthur, and because he sets a very bad example to the other knights of the round table by having an affair with the King's wife Guinevere. Lancelot, the most courteous, the truest of friends and of lovers, the handsomest, the humblest and gentlest company with men and women, and the fiercest to his deadly enemy, is desperately in love with Guinevere. It is because of this love that he betrays the code of loyalty and honesty he has sworn to his liege. In short the fall of Lancelot, Arthur and the round table is

caused by Guinevere's feminine charms which enable her to exercise her power over Lancelot and Arthur. Since according to Malory, the round table symbolized all that is good and virtuous, i.e. a kind of Eden, Guinevere as the descendent of Eve hence the associate of Satan becomes directly responsible for the second loss of Eden and the Fall of Man.

CHAPTER III

SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT IN RENAISSANCE SOCIETY AND LITERATURE

The Case of England.

Though geographically England is cut off from the continent, English people no doubt were still highly influenced by the political and intellectual movements taking place in Europe. Furthermore in the British Isles, religious friction continued and women were still greatly discriminated against though the scholars became far more informed about a multitude of things concerning geography, science, and ideas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Humanism introduced a new perspective to learning and scholarship: Greek and Latin authors were rediscovered and there was a move away from rigid scholasticism towards questioning and reevaluation. Despite all these changes however, Elizabeth was still called the "virgin" Queen, and men of letters did not change their opinions about the standing of women. Indeed laws condemning witchcraft still dominated the legal scene. People still believed in the existence of witches and the power they obtained as a consequence of their pact with the devil. In fact during the reign of Elizabeth new laws and regulations were passed concerning witchcraft. In the new bill definite and severe penalties were enacted, but none of these regulations and penalties imply the ungodly nature of witchcraft. For all practical purposes the new bill came to regard witchcraft no longer as a sin against the Church and God but as a secular crime. For example we read again that those who "shall use, practise, or exercise any Witchcraft, Enchantment, Charme or Scorerie, whereby any person shall happen to be killed or destroyed...their Concellors and Aidours...shall suffer paynes of Deathe as a Felon or Felons." (Summers; 112). It was further stated that those by whose acts any person was wasted, consumed, or lamed, should suffer for the first offence one year's imprisonment and should be placed in the pillory four times. The death penalty was envisioned for the second offence. Those who by Witchcraft presumed to discover treasure or to find

stolen property or to provoke any person to unlawful love should suffer a year's imprisonment and be pilloried at each quarter (Summers; 113).

Persecution of witches, during Elizabeth's reign, continued and proliferated. Witch trials seem to have reached a peak between 1580 and 1680. Numbers show that more than 90% of those suspected of or tried and punished for witchcraft were women who were widows over 40 years of age. They were charged with imparting their knowledge to children (Macfarlane; 85). What seems to have happened during this era is that communities which had not been able to cope with the changes in values and lifestyles felt the necessity to blame their individual tensions and breach of obligation to society, and their personal misfortunes, their illnesses, and of course their sexual offenses on some power outside themselves; that is the power of witches and witchcraft.

While with one part of their intellect the Renaissance men of the Elizabethan era opened up to knowledge and to a different view on life, within the other part of their minds they retained the image of the weak medieval woman consorting with the devil to empower herself. This image was also perpetuated by the literature and treatises appearing in other parts of Europe during this time. So, although the age was one of excitement and discovery, the image of the "other," that is the woman, did not change. She was still defined as being conniving, weak and prone to evil when faced with the temptations of the flesh. This made the conceptualization of a strong monarch difficult within the context of womanhood, and this is perhaps why Elizabeth herself was called a "virgin," a term in accordance with St. Bernard's vision of virgins. In this manner she could be dissociated from her weak sisters.

Witchcraft and Women in the Literature of Men

In Spenser's masterpiece *The Faerie Queen*, the author cleverly describes the Faerie Queen as a figure of enchantment, one who possesses virtue which is very hard to attain. She is however, surrounded by wicked "Enchantresses" whom she has to overcome. Spenser's Faerie Queen in fact is a split personality: firstly she is a political entity, Gloriana, an exemplary hero/heroine closely associated with Phoebe or Cynthia (Diana). In that

capacity she stands for the ideal all men would like to live up to. She is also Belphoebe, a flesh and blood woman. In his *A Letter of the Authors*, Spenser tries to explain his vision and his interpolation of the knight Aurther into the text. He seems to be treading the fine line between the two aspects of his Faerie Queene, Gloriana and the honor and awe that is her due and Belphoebe the real woman and the love he feels for her. He carefully endows Gloriana/Belphoebe with all the virtues that seem difficult to come by as a woman during this age. He explains that the text itself took form as he continued to write taking his images from the images and beliefs about the women of his times. In this work, there are infants whose parents have been slayn by an Enchantresse called Arcasia. Spenser explains that in *The Faerie Queen*: "... by occasion hereof, many other adventures are intermedled, but rather as Accidents, then intendments. As the love of Britomart, the overthrow of Mainell, and the misery of Florinell, the vertuousnes of Belphoebe, the lasciviousnes of Hellenora, and many the like." (*A Letter of the Authors*). He seems eager to retain the image of the lascivious woman but underlines the virtuous character of Belphoebe. On the other hand, Spenser does not refrain from portraying female figures as among the causes of the evil and havoc present in the world. Duessa, the witch, is one such figure who embodies all the evil and treachery one must desist. She as the Whore Babylon wears the triple crown of the papacy and tricks Red Cross into drinking from the fountain - the corrupt Gospel. The depiction of her unveiling allows Spenser to expound the myth of Duessa symbolizing the Renaissance conception of the witch that he has internalized as a man:

Her craftie head was altogether bald,
 And as in hate of honorable eld,
 Was overgrowne with scurfe and filthy scald;
 Her teeth out of her rotten gummes were feld,
 And her sowre breath abhominably smeld;
 Her dried duges, like bladders lacking wind,
 Hong downe, and filthy matter from them wled;
 Her wrizled skin as rough, as maple rind,
 So scabby was, that would have loathd all womankind.

Her neather parts, the shame of all her kind,
 My chaster Muse for shame doth blush to write;
 But at her rompe she growing had behind
 A foxes taile, with dong all fowly dight;
 And eke her feete most monstrous were in sight;
 For one of them was like an Eagles claw,
 With griping talaunts armd to greedy fight,

The other like a Beares uneven paw:
 More ugly shape yet never living creature saw.
 (*The Faerie Queene*; l.viii, 47-48).

In short we see that the accession of the 'virgin' Queen has in no way changed the basic image of woman as a whole - she still remains the wicked Eve who has made it possible for man to be banished from the paradise that was his.

During the same period, we find Christopher Marlowe writing his own dramatic versions of the many temptations presented to us by Satan. His heroes give way to these temptations and lead a life that illustrates the absence of obedience to divine law. *Doctor Faustus* is the tale of a man's aspiration to knowledge. Knowledge was forbidden by ecclesiastical law almost entirely in the middle ages and to a great extent in the later centuries since the Church claimed that knowledge which did not contribute to the salvation of the soul was illicit. The time honored combination of a beautiful woman and Lucifer help Faustus damn himself. The way of his self-destruction is paved by Mephistophilis and Helen. He seals his bargain with Lucifer using the last words of Christ on the cross. Helen appears in all her glory and is more dangerous as a result:

No marvel though the angry Greeks pursued
 With ten years war the rape of such a queen,
 Whose heavenly beauty paseth all compare.
 (*Doctor Faustus*. (Scene XVII; lines 28-30).

With the appearance of Helen, Faustus is warned with words of magic:

O gentle Faustus, leave this damned art,
 This magic, that will charm thy soul to hell,
 And quite; bereave thee of salvation.
 (*Doctor Faustus*, Scene XVII; lines 36-40).

In short though Marlowe questions, in *Doctor Faustus*, the claims of the Church over knowledge, he seems to comply readily with the myth of his times about women, associating Helen with the Devil and implying that she too has a hand in the downfall of man whether it is a downfall to be coveted or not. At the end of the play, we are left to wonder whether what has been ascribed to this deadly combination of woman and devil is not that which really lies in the soul of the 'pure' but substantially weak male figure.

The reknowned witches of this period are of course the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Supported by the quasi-witch figure Lady Macbeth, they prepare the downfall of Macbeth. Like most of the plots of his plays, Shakespeare has also taken the plot of *Macbeth* from Holinshed's *Chronicles* which contains accounts of witchcraft. In the *Chronicles* it is reported that King Duffus the seventy-eighth King of Scotland (A.D. 968) was afflicted with an unheard of disease during his travails to settle the country. His physicians could find no cure for his illness, and then it was discovered that a whole coven of devil-worshippers were taking the life of Duffus, who would expire in a few days. That night a company of hags were discovered roasting the King's image made of wax upon a long spit over a slow fire while reciting certain mysterious words and basting the figure with a certain poisonous brew. They explained to their discoverers that as the wax melted the body of the King would decay, while their muttered spells would deprive him of the natural refreshment of sleep. The figure was then stamped to dust; the witches were burned at Forres, and King Duffus recovered both his health and his strength. Holinshed reports this event in his *Chronicles* in the following words: "iij. women in straunge and ferly apparell, resembling creatures of an elder worlde...the weird sisters as ye would say y Goddesses of destinie, or els some Nimphes or Feiries." (Summers; 204). Shakespeare retains the idea of the weird sisters and adds a different, contemporary witch figure of his own: Lady Macbeth.

The play opens with the three witches who make an appointment to meet Macbeth: "When the battle's lost and won" and of course "That will be ere the set of sun." and as is expected of them, they will "Hover through the fog and filthy air." (*Macbeth*; I.i. 2-3; 11;). The theme of witches foreboding evil, making appointments, and then flying off are all very much in accord with the witch image of the times. When the witches meet again in scene III and make their famous predictions about Macbeth's future stating that he will be Thane of Cawdor as well as King despite the fact that the throne will be left to the offspring of Banquo. Amidst all this fortune-telling Shakespeare also gives us a detailed description of the witches or rather crones:

What are these
 So wither'd and so wild in the'r attire,
 That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
 And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
 That man may question? You seem to understand me.
 By each at once her choppy finger laying
 Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,

And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so. (**Macbeth**, Act I, Sc.III. lines 39-48).

Shakespeare seems to opt for the ugly crone perhaps because of the evil that is to befall Macbeth or rather because of the scourge with which Macbeth is to afflict his immediate environment. Though not wholly responsible, the seed of evil seems to have been sown by these women of unearthly powers to be later taken up by another woman, his wife. His wife is probably the covert witch in his life. She is the one who lets him give way to his most secret and savage desires for power and slaughter. She is the attractive woman who helps him in his achievement of his terrible ends, and of course in the process, of his downfall.

In his portrayal of the three crones but not of Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare uses all the prejudices and pseudo-beliefs associated with witches and witchcraft. They are, as has been mentioned earlier, extremely ugly. They can fly through the air, and by using their powers they can brew potions. In **Act IV** we see them sitting around the cauldron and preparing their concoction:

In the poison'd entrails throw,
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty one
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.
... Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble
...Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Silver'd in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab.
Make the gruel thick and slab:
Add thereto a tiger's cauldron,
For the ingredients of our cauldron.
(**Macbeth**, Act IV, Sc. I, lines 5-35).

At the end of these undertakings Hecate herself appears to give her minions a hand in their venture. Whether Macbeth is an exemplary noble who falls due to the ventures of the three witches is not clear; but, what is clear of course is that he does come under the influence of his strong wife and together with her paves the way to his own downfall. In obeying Lady Macbeth whether he is catering to her whims or whether he is complying with the voice of his own ego is once again a matter of interpretation. All in all however, one might easily say that no matter what the underlying motive is his destruction is incited by the devious female figures around him. These figures seem to gather within them all the satanic and heinous traits that were attributable to the witch woman of the period.

Witchcraft and Women in the Literature of Women

Until about the early seventeenth century, when men were busy perpetuating the myth of the weak woman prone to all sorts of worldly sins, or the woman as the witch who with her magic and lure causes the downfall of men, women themselves seem to have written very little about themselves and about their reactions to these images. Indeed, during this period women wrote on a private basis, and what they wrote was not offered to the public, consequently little of women's writing from this era has been preserved. In the writings of the few women whose work has been preserved however, it is possible to see the internalization of the dominant male point of view. Julian of Norwich, Mary Kempe, Queen Elizabeth I, and a few other aristocratic ladies who not only write themselves but are also the patrons of eminent writers and poets, seem to comply with the established image of women the male dominated world. Amelia Lanier seems to be the only exception among women writers to speak up for women.

In her ***A Book of Showings***, Julian of Norwich for example tries to elevate the image of women by portraying Jesus as a kind of an all-mother figure. Consequently the traditional image of the weak licentious woman is transformed into an all-forgiving, all-loving, nurturing, procreative "Mother God" in her book. She explains:

I understand three ways of contemplating motherhood in God. The first is the foundation of our nature's creation; the second is his taking of our nature, where the motherhood of grace begins;

the third is the motherhood at work. And in that, by the same grace, everything is penetrated, in length and in breadth, in height and in depth without end; and it is all one love. (*A Book of Showings*; Chapt. 59).

Another of the writers of this period is Margery Kempe who writes of her travails to attain celibacy and to pursue her vocation as a preacher. In her book titled *The Book of Margery Kempe* she dwells on how hard it is to remain celibate, and how she has been tempted to lechery by a certain man: "In the second year of her temptation, it so fell that a man whom she loved well, said unto her on St. Margaret's Eve before evensong that for anything, he would lie by her and have his lust of his body, and she should not withstand him, for if he did not have his will that time, he said he would anyhow have it another time; she should not choose." The man does not enter into a sexual relation with her after having given her all the signals that he would and Kempe's interpretation of the episode is: "She went away all shamed and confused in herself at seeing his stability and her own instability." (from *The Book of Margery Kempe*). Margery Kempe definitely sees the male figure as superior, ultimately as one who does what is ethical as has been the case in this instance of "lechery." She finds fault with herself and accuses herself of all that goes amiss. Being a woman her sexual attraction causes temptation in others and in herself and disturbs the social order.

Other "men of letters" of the period, as Gilbert and Gubar call them, are: Queen Elizabeth I, Mary Sidney Herbert, and Amelia Lanier. It is worth noting that even Elizabeth who is unquestionably politically and rhetorically the most powerful figure of the times sees within herself a sexual propensity and weakness as is befitting a woman and feels the need to restrain them:

I grieve and dare not show my discontent,
I love and yet am forced to seem to hate,
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant,
I seem stark mute but inwardly do prate.
I am not, I freeze and yet am burned,
Since for myself another self I turned.
...Some gentler passion slide into my mind,

For I am soft and made of melting snow;
... (from *On Monsieur's Departure*).

Even the mighty monarch feels that she is soft as melting snow and must not show it. Mary Sidney Herbert however seems to have a different view of her sovereign:

Kings on a Queen enforced their states to lay,
 Mainlands for empire waiting on an isle;
 Men drawn by worth a woman to obey;
 One moving all, herself unmoved the while;
 Truth's restitution, vanity exile,
 Wealth sprung of want, war held without annoy,
 Let subject be of some inspired style,
 Till then the object of her subjects' joy.
 (from *To the Thrice-Sacred Elizabeth*).

Seeing that here is a woman whom men have to obey in the arena of power, one wonders if Elizabeth would have been termed a witch had she been a mere aristocrat.

Amelia Lanier, another member of the circle who was close to the court however, evidence a very different, almost feminist outlook in her writings. She takes up the myth of Eve and writes in vindication of the rights of "Our Mother Eve". She claims that Eve acted in simple goodness, whereas men were more culpable because they led Christ to the cross:

No subtle serpent's falsehood did betray him;
 If he would eat it, who had power to stay him?...
 "Not Eve, whose fault was only too much love,
 Which made her give this present to her dear,
 That what she taste he likewise might prove,
 Whereby his knowledge might become more clear;
 He never sought her weakness to reprove
 With those sharp words which he of God did hear;
 Yet men will boast of knowledge which he took
 From Eve's fair hand, as from a learned book.
 "If any evil did in her remain,
 Being made of him, he was the ground of all.
 If one of many worlds could lay a stain
 Upon our sex, and work so great a fall
 To wretched man by Satan's subtle train, What
 will so foul a fault amongst you all?
 Her weakness did the serpent's word obey,
 But in malice God's dear son betray.
 (from *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*).

In her works, Amelia Lanier refuses to accept the archetypal image of the weak woman working hand in hand with Satan. To her men are as much to blame for the presence of any human failings and evil as are women. In other words, according to Lanier it is not only the witch who conspires with Satan, as the patriarchal society would have it but men themselves are also directly implicated in their fall.

The Decline in the Belief in Witchcraft

Despite the fact that Martin Luther and Jean Calvin shattered the unity of the Roman Catholic Church with their teachings during the sixteenth century, they still professed a belief in witchcraft in their works. Martin Luther claims in his writings and correspondence that he himself has been affected by the evil and harmful actions of witches. Although he has total faith in the omnipotence of Christ over the Devil and his legions, he sees the power of witches as awesome. "I should have no compassion on these witches; I would burn all of them." (Luther; 591). In the same manner Calvin brought the remarkable logic and rigor of his mind, and the total commitment of his soul not only to the Protestant Reformation but also to his treatment of demonology. The concept of the role and power of Satan is the pivotal point of the pact between Devil and witch. By elaborating the scriptural bases of demonological belief Calvin insured that the Reformation would not tamper with Church dogma in these matters. He frequently referred his readers to a passage of the New Testament, ***Ephesians*** vi:11-12, which summed up their sense of the predicament: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world." (Calvin; Book I, 172).

In the field of political theory, the influential Jean Bodin, who ranked as one of Europe's leading political theorists, and who was known as a learned humane scholar and statesman and one of the earliest defenders of toleration in a century of religious hatreds and bloodshed, also took a traditional view of witchcraft. He was an implacable enemy of all who would question the justice and legitimacy of the witch-hunt-and-execution. In ***De la Denonomanie des Sorciers*** he clearly states that: "Those too who let the witches escape, or who do not punish them with the utmost rigor, may rest assured that they will be abandoned by God to the mercy of the witches. And the country which shall tolerate this will be scourged with pestilences, famines, and wars; and those which shall take vengeance on the witches will be blessed by him and will make his anger to cease. Therefore it is that one accused of being a witch ought never to be fully acquitted and set free unless the calumny of the accuser is clearer than the sun, inasmuch as the proof of such crimes is so

obscure and so difficult that not one witch in a million would be accused or punished if the procedure were governed by the ordinary rules." (Bodin; 5).

Regardless of these powerful proponents of witchcraft and its punishments, however, around the end of the sixteenth century voices were heard against the condemnation of witches. In fact even some scepticism is expressed in the writings of a number of prominent men against the practices concerning them. Among these voices the most important is no doubt that of Montaigne, a philosopher whose ideas were influential throughout the Western World. Montaigne seems to treat witchcraft with his customary *que sais-je*. He does not totally deny it but he does think that it is easier for men to lie or deceive themselves than that such marvels be true. After having an opportunity to examine and converse with a dozen witches on trial and reading their confessions, he concludes that he would prescribe hellbore for them rather than hemlock, and postulates that to roast a person alive is to ascribe too much weight to one's conjectures. (*Essais*, I, iii, c.ii.).

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, even in Italy and other European strongholds where witchcraft had been considered one of the main evils to be fought against, opinions were put forth concerning the validity of such power bestowed on the human race as a whole and on women in particular. Gentile Alberico, for example writes that it is not unjust for old women who are Strigae and who divine the future with incantations, to be punished. But, if they have done something, the question is twofold. Firstly, if they deny God and renounce Christ and enslave themselves to the devil, should they not receive the highest punishment? The second case is also twofold, for the *maleficae* may work on others what is called *fascinum*, or kill infants with other poisons, or they are *maleficae* to themselves, as those who are said to go to certain nocturnal assemblages where they have intercourse with men and demons. Those who bring death should be put to death, but this has to be proved because of the element of fascination. Even if the said witches through illusion mix the impossible in their confessions, such as passing through cracks to kill children they should be punished for the other things that they confess; they should also be punished if they admit to an allegiance to the devil by whom they have been deceived because this should be considered consummated apostasy. If all this arises from some mental disease then these women should be removed from the tribunal to a hospital. (Alberico; 54-59). Consequently Alberico points out for the first time the possibly

involuntary applications of witchcraft and questions the mental state of those who practice it.

Campanello Tommaso was another of the philosophers who teetered between belief in the power of and the fascination felt for the ordinary witch. He also voiced however, his reservations as to how this could hold true in face of what he considered the 'fact of the divine power of working miracles' which had been bestowed on the Apostles by Christ. His mysticism which tended on pantheism led him to ascribe great powers to natural magic when exercised with reverence to the Creator, elevating the adept to the supernatural and participation with higher beings. He claimed as a result that diabolical magic was a fraud, as were practices with the aid of demons who pretended to do what they had no power to do. Its practitioners, with the aid of demons, did what seemed wonderful to the unintelligent, but what was in reality only what jugglers did at fairs (Tommaso; 260-263)

Towards the end of the seventeenth century the eminent philosopher Spinoza expresses views concerning witches and witchcraft in much the same manner as those who wrote a decade or two before him. In his correspondence in 1674 with a friend, Spinoza argues the existence of spirits, and wholly denies their existence or the necessity of any intermediate beings between God and man, and he rejects as old wives' fables, unworthy of investigation, the stories of their appearance and doings. (Epp.; 60). He also assumes the non-existence of demons when he argues that Christ was only condescending to the popular superstitions when he assumed their existence. (Spinoza; 47).

Skepticism Towards Witchcraft in England

The accession of the Tudor James to the throne of England seems to have accelerated the prosecution of witches and the condemnation of witchcraft. The King James's version of the Bible apparently brought no respite from the images of the Old Testament. In fact during his reign James himself seems to have given additional impetus to the witch trials and unlike Queen Elizabeth has added a sacreligious connotation to the concept of witchcraft and witches. As the author of *Daemonologie* (which appeared in 1597) where he

states that he has written "against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, whereof the one called Scot an Englishman is not ashamed in publick print to deny, that there can be such a thing as Witch-craft: and so mainteines the old error of the Sadducees, in denying spirits. The other called Vviervs, a German Phisition, sets out a publick apologie for al these craftes-folkes, whereby procuring for their impunitie, he plainly bewrayes himselfe to haue bene one of that profession." The authority of this book was accepted because of the sovereignty of the author and new laws were passed concerning witchcraft. While the Elizabethan statute, for example, made only killing by witchcraft a capital offence, the new bill made all who practiced conjuration of any evil and wicked spirit, or: "shall consult, covenant with, entertaine, employe, feede, or rewarde any evil and wicked Spirit to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, or woman, or child out of his, her, or their graue, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone, or any part of any dead person to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, enchantment, charm, or sorcerie, whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in his or her body, or any part thereof, every such offender is a felon without benefit of Clergy". (quoted in Summers; 130). It is obvious that under the said circumstances many witches were put to death since a witch would never use her powers only once but a multitude of times. As a consequence people who suffered some misfortune as well as those who disliked a person then blamed subsequent misfortunes on her. Since pamphlets of the times point to the fact that most if not all witches who were persecuted were female, it is quite justifiable to refer to witches as women. In fact out of the recorded cases of witches executed during King James's reign very few were men.(Summers; 134).

While the monarch was voicing such harsh opinions against witchcraft, Reginald Scot, a scholar from Kent whom the King condemned in his ***Daemonologie***, started carrying out his important research on witchcraft. Scot was of the conviction that most of the accusations and professed deeds related to witches were based on the biased and unlikely opinions of the masses and could in no way be true. Most of the cases, he asserted, could be explained by everyday causes sprinkled with the imagination and fascination of the rural people. In his ***Discoverie of Witchcraft***, which came out of the press in 1574, he explained his views quite clearly: "All wisemen understand that witches miraculous enterprises, being contrarie to nature,

probabilitie and reason, are void of truth or possibilitie. All protestants perceive, that popish charmes, conjuratins, creations, and benedictions are not effectual, but toies and divises onelie to keepe the people blind, and to enrich the cleargie. All christians see, that to confesse witches can doo as they saie, were to attribute to a creature the power of the Creator. All children well brought up conceive and spie, or at the least are taught, that juglers miracles doo consist of legierdemaine and confederacie. The verie heathen people are driven to confesse, that there can be no such conference betweene a spiritual divell and a corporall witch, as is supposed. For no doubt, all the heathen would then have everie one his familiar divell; for they would make no conscience to acquaint themselves with a divell that are not acquainted with God." (Scot; 337-338).

Scot's approach and opinions in no way stopped the witch-hunt in England, but it reflected to some extent the opinions and inclinations of those who started questioning its reality. Men of letters were skeptical about not only the power of witches as such but also the punishment meted out to them. George Glifford, in his **A Discourse of the Subtill Practices of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers**, seeks to combat what he calls two opposite errors: - "some believing that Witches could do great Wonders, ascribing such power unto Devils as belongeth only to God...others that all Witchcraft spoken of, even in the Holy Scriptures, is no more but either mere Cosenage or poisoning." (Lea; 1308). As a result, while he strictly accepts all that he finds in Scripture, he cannot find there the modern superstitions concerning witches. Still another, Geo Gifford, expresses his opinion in much the same manner: "All the Devils in hell are so chained up and brideled by this high providence that they cannot plucke the wing from one poore little Wrenn without special leave given them from the ruler of the whole earth. And yet the Witches are made beleve that at their rewquest, and to pleasure them by fulfilling their wrath, their spirits do lame and kill both men and beasts. And then to spread this opinion among the people, these subtill spirits bewray them and will have them openly confesse that they have done such great things, which all the Divels at any man's request could never do." (Lea; 1309).

The main trouble for these thinkers was of course to explain away the passages of the Bible and the Hebrew legislation which show the profound faith of the Jews in the power of the practitioners of magic. Most reformers were as a result exposed to the reproach of atheism and Sadducism.

Individuals such as Sir Robert Filmer, taking the Calvinist Perkins' definitions as his basis for example, argues that the witch is only an accessory before the Fact and that the Devil is the principal: "Now the difficulty will be how the *accessory* can be *duly and lawfully convicted and attained*, according as our Statute requires, unless the Devil, who is the Principal, can be first convicted or at least outlawed; which cannot be because the Devil can never be lawfully summoned according to the Rules of our Common Law." (Filmer; 321). Filmer's as well as others' comments show them to be, if not disbelievers in witchcraft, at least among those not sharing popular superstitions on the subject, and desirous of diminishing persecution. Though witches continued to be hounded with allegations of being bodily transformed into cats or hares, and having the demon suck them and have carnal intercourse with them, scholars were moving away from belief in the absolute powers of the witch be it sexual or phenomenal. During the later years of his reign, King James himself is reported to have receded from the views he had put forward in his *Daemonologie*. It is reported that in his succeeding years the King would have gone so far as to deny any such engagement if it had not been necessary to gratify the Church and the State. (Summers; 132).

Interestingly enough despite the research and publications of Reginald Scot, in Scotland, this movement away from belief in witches as people possessing supernatural powers does not seem to take hold. In fact many many Scottish scholars criticize the new tendency of the English. Though there had not been any instances of witch-burning in Scotland before the Reformation (except for one political case), with the advent of the Reformation, the Scriptures were searched and the Levitical laws were enforced. In 1685 George Sinclar, a mathematician teaching philosophy and mathematics at the University of Glasgow, states in *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* that his object in writing is to oppose the rising tide of incredulity, which is a form of atheism. He claims that religion is being assailed by infidelity, and if this infidelity prevails then one must bid farewell to religion, faith and hope of life to come. Sinclair also asserts that although the transformations of witches into cats and hares are ridiculous: "Men and Women have been wronged by the touch of a Witches hand, by the breath and kiss of their mouth, as is well known of late. By their looks...as when a Witch sendeth forth from her heart thorow her eyes venemous and poysonful Spirits as Rayes, which lighting upon man will kill him." (Sinclar; Preface). So one must not be tolerant towards witches and witchcraft.

In England the famous philosopher and scientist Sir Francis Bacon, writing a few decades before Sinclair, however, takes a very different stance. Whatever his official opinion concerning the enforcement of the law was, as a philosopher he was less credulous and required objective proof before he believed in the existence of witches and witchcraft. "For the witches themselves are imaginative and believe oft-times they do that which they do not: and people are credulous in that point and ready to impute accidents and natural operations to witchcraft. It is worthy the observing, that both in ancient and late times. as in the Thessalian witches and the meetings of witches that have been recorded by so many late confessions, the great wonders which they tell, of carrying in the air, transforming themselves into other bodies, etc., are still reported to be wrought, not by incantations or ceremonies, but by ointments and anointing themselves all over. This may justly move a man to think that these fables are the effects of imagination: for it is certain that ointments do all, if they be laid on anything thick, by stopping the pores shut in the vapours and send them to the head extremely." writes Bacon in *Sylva Sylvarum*. (Bacon; 125). But Bacon was not yet ready to reject witchcraft wholly as "fables". In studying the power of imagination upon other bodies and its relation to witchcraft, he writes: "as if a witch by imagination should hurt any afar off, it cannot be naturally; but by imagination should hurt any spirit of some that cometh to the witch; and from that party upon the imagination of another; and so upon another; till it come to one that hath resort to the party intended; and so by him to the party intended himself...the experiments of witchcraft are no clear proofs (of the power of imagination) for that they may be by the tacit operation of malign spirits." (Bacon; 131).

Hobbes moved even further away from the idea of witchcraft and witches by arguing away the existence of spirits - whether angels or demons. He first considered them images of the brain, and explained that both the Gentiles and the Jews had conceived the imagery of the brain to be real things, independent of fancy and out of them framed good and evil angels and demons respectively. However, when faced with the scriptures in which good and evil angels are named, he modifies his view somewhat and his conclusion which he presents in the *Leviathan* is: "Considering therefore the

signification of the word Angel in the Old Testament, and the nature of Dreams and Visions that happen to men by the ordinary way of Nature; I was inclined to this opinion, that Angels were nothing but supernatural apparitions of the Fancy, raised by the speciall and extraordinary operation of God, thereby to make his presence and commandments known to mankind and chiefly to his own people. But the many places of the New Testament, and our Saviour's own words, and in such texts wherein there is no suspicion of corruption of the Scripture, have extorted from my feeble Reason an acknowledgment and belief that there be also Angels substantiall and permanent." (Hobbes; 211-14). In short according to him the angels of the Old Testament are passing visions sent by God. Those, both good and evil, of the New Testament on the other hand are corporeal permanent bodies and not spirits. Hobbes takes no stock of demons. He explains his views about Satan saying: "The Enemy has been here in the Night of our Natural Ignorance and sown the tares of Spritual Errors. . . .Secondly by introducing the Daemonology of the Heathen Poets, that is to say their fabulous Doctrine concerning Demons, which are but Idols or Phantasmes of the brain, without any real nature of their own, distinct from humane fancy; such as are dead men's Ghosts and Fairies and other matter of old Wives' tales." (Hobbes; 334). Briefly Hobbes sees witchcraft and its powers as nothing more than old wives' tales.

John Locke, one of the most influential thinkers of the late 17th century, does not seem to have expressed in definite terms his opinions on witchcraft, but he might not have felt himself called upon to do so. He does however, plainly put forth his attitude towards spirits from which one can plainly deduce his conviction on the subject: "But between us and the great God we can have no certain knowledge of the existence of any Spirits but by revelation; much less have we distinct *Ideas* of their different Natures, Conditions, States, Powers and several Constitutions wherein they agree or differ from one another and from us. And therefore in what concerns their different Species and Properties we are under an absolute ignorance." (Locke; 279).

Although the hunt for witches which had begun with the Act 33 of Henry VIII and which had stated that: "It shall be Felony to practice or cause to be practiced Conjuraton, Enchantment, Witchcraft or Sorcery, to get money or to

consume any person in his body, members or goods, or to provoke any person to unlawful love, etc." (Statutes at Large, II.), was repealed soon after by Edward VI, it continued to have a hold on mainly the female population in the British Isles throughout the seventeenth century. The "celebrated witch-act" of 1604 which stated that: "An Act against conjuration, witchcraft and healing with evil and wicked spirits. Penalty for practising of invocation or conjuration - Conjuration or Invocation whereby any person is killed or lamed - Declaring by witchcraft where anything is hidden - Procuring of unlawful love - Second offense felony - No forfeiture of dower or inheritance - Trial of a Peer of the realm." (Statutes at Large, III, p.9) was not repealed until the reign of George II, that is in about the middle of the eighteenth century. Consequently trials and accusations continued though in time they lost some of their impetus.

Women's Loss of Status as Reflected in the Literature of Men

These political and philosophical views of witchcraft were of course reflected in the literature of the times. Belief in women's magical and sexual powers started declining through the course of the seventeenth century. Interestingly enough as women were presented less with accusations of witchcraft, they slowly began to lose the only leverage they had in the face of the aggressive male, who was divesting her of her mysterious capacities and powers, while taking on himself the prerogative of sexual prowess. This weakening of the female was a process which neutralized women in the world and in the annals of literature. The allure of the potent, lascivious witch who celebrated life and sexuality with Satanic underworld powers and tempted men left its place to the downtrodden wench on the one side and the upholder of middle class morals on the other. Now men held all the power. Since all that Satan could achieve was what God allowed, then what did man created in the image of God have to fear from the accomplices of the Devil, the witches. Sexuality became not something to be mistrusted but something to be taken as a passing pleasure. The partnership of the sexes was reversed, with the childbearing woman trying to hang on to her body, and the predatory man trying to convince her into a relationship. He had no fears left as to his alterego, which now would stray from the straight and narrow path only as

much as God himself should wish it. Satan was not omnipotent and neither was woman, but the male God was. Men were no longer frightened of what calamities sexuality would bring on them, because now they were the predators whose lust had to be appeased. Women could no longer cause their downfall; it was they who posed a threat to the serene, beautiful, ignorant women and young girls.

Songs, plays and other literature became filled with calls for merry sex, and harkening to the fact that the beauty of a woman was a passing element and should be made use of accordingly. In *To Celia* for example Ben Jonson writes:

Come, my Celia, let us prove,
While we may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours forever;
He, at length our good will sever.
(*Song: To Celia*)

Here Jonson points to the changes which time will bring as something that concerns all men and women alike. But the great majority of writers associate the passing time with the diminishing beauty, and sexual attraction of a woman. Women were worthy of being seduced only when they were young. Men no longer had to fear the old crone for she had lost her power as would the young woman once she grew old:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying...
Then be not coy, but se your time,
And while ye may, fo marry:
For having lost but once your rime,
You may forever tarry.
(Robert Herrick; *To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time*)

This is Herrick's message to virgins in 1648. They must take note of time if they are to enjoy sex and the attentions of men. When they grow old they will not be able to find a mate. Here we see the big difference in attitude from medieval times. As opposed to our Wife of Bath who was totally in control of the situation only a few hundred years ago when her sisters were to be feared

and found attractive because of their mysterious connections and attractions, we now have passive, naive young virgins who will lose all their sexual attraction and significance in the eyes of the controlling men when they grow old.

During the same era Richard Crashaw took as his subjects saintly women. His poetry however, was still filled with sexual imagery and undertones. Crashaw had a vision of angelic penetration. In one of his meditation poems the Holy spirit enters both his 'weeping Magdelene' and Saint Teresa of Avila. We read:

Such the maiden gem
By the purpling vine put on,
Peeps from her parent stem
And blushes at the bridegroom sun.
This watery blossom of thy eye,
Ripe, will make the richer wine.

...
But can these fair floods be
Friends with the bosom fires that fill thee?
Can so great flames agree
Eternal tears should thus distill thee?
Oh floods, oh fires! oh suns, oh showers!
Mixed and made friends by Love's sweet powers.

'Twas his well-pointed dart
That digged these wells and dressed this vine,
And taught the wounded heart
The way into these weeping eyes.
Vain loves avaunt! bold hands forbear!
The lamb hath dipped his white foot here.
(from *The Weeper*, 1646, 1648, 1652)

Here Magdelene with a winged bleeding heart is made to resemble a flaming fountain, a weeping fire. Her tears of repentance as well as her act of washing the feet of Christ are presented in almost a heady sexual encounter, where the woman full of sorrow figures as the conquered partner. This image of the weak repentant woman is diametrically opposed to the image of the demonic witch who holds man in her power, an image which had lasted for hundreds of years. The woman now has no more power than that allowed to her by Christ, the male representative of the male God.

Leave her that; and thou shalt leave her
 Not one loose shaft, but love's whole quiver.
 For in love's field was never found
 A nobler weapon than a wound.
 Love's passives are his activest part,
 The wounded is the wounding heart.
 O heart! the equal poise of love's both parts,
 Big like with wounds and darts,
 Live in these conquering leaves; live all the same
 And walk through all tongues on triumphant flame:
 Live here, great heart, and love and die and kill,
 And bleed and wound, and yield and conquer still.
 (from *The Flaming Heart*, 1648).

The bacchanalia of yore is now this religious experience where the female figure gives her all, to be totally absorbed into the male dominion which though might wound, will wound in a triumphant manner since it leads its victim to absolution and the conquering of the flesh which was once its whole dominion and its power.

John Milton in his *Paradise Lost*, also presented Lucifer and Eve from a different point of view. In the thirteenth century, Dante had presented Satan as capable of doing the utmost evil and with no fear of what would ensue:

Let that come when it comes; all hope is lost
 Of my reception into grace: what worse?
 For where no hope is left, is left no fear:
 If there be worse the expectation more
 Of worse torments me than the feeling can.
 I would be at the worst: worst is my part,
 My harbour and my ultimate repose;
 The end I would attain, my final good." -
 (*Paradiso*, Bk.3)

Milton's Satan is more wary as his power is limited by God.

The Devil entered; and his brutal sense,
 In heart or head, possessing, soon inspired
 With act intelligential; but his sleep
 disturbed not, waiting close th' approach of morn.
 (*Paradise Lost*, Bk.9)

He enters the serpent to seize the opportunity to upset the idyllic existence of his adversary's creatures. Satan's stand is only made possible because of his disguise:

The infernal serpent; he it was whose guile,
 Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
 The mother of mankind, ...
 (*Paradise Lost*, Bk.1)

Satan is able to deceive Eve only because God points out that life holds man responsible for the foreknown, but not forordained Fall:

...he had of me
 All he could have: I made him just and right,
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
 (*Paradise Lost*, Bk.3)

In other words Milton's Satan does not have free rein as did that of Dante. He will act out his evil only to the extent that God will allow him. He is no longer the power who swayed the kingdom of the Church and the might of the powerful. Milton adds to Satan's weakness with his various descriptions of Eve who has been dethroned from her position of domination of the uncontrollable, fallible and dangerous alterego of the male. Eve turns into the simpering, male wish-fulfilling symbol of the ignorant, dominated woman that we see in the literature and society of the next hundred years:

Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
 For contemplation he and valour formed,
 For softness she and sweet attractive grace;

...
 She as a veil down to the slender waist
 Her unadorned golden tresses wore
 Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved
 As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
 Subjection, but required by gentle sway,
 And by her yielded, by him best received,
 Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
 And sweet reluctant amorous delay.

...
 To whom thus Eve replied, 'O thou for whom
 And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh,
 And without whom am to no end, my guide
 And head, what thou has said is just right.

...
 Of conjugal attraction unreproved,
 And meek surrender, half embracing leaned
 On our first father; half her swelling breast
 Naked met his under the flowing gold
 Of her loose tresses hid. He in delight
 Both of her beauty and submissive charms
 Smiled with superior love,...

...
 God is thy law, thou mine; to know no more
 Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.
 (*Paradise Lost*, Bk.4)

With these various descriptions of Eve, Milton sets the new parameters for the ideal woman. She is beautiful, coy, submissive, has no ulterior motives, is very much secondary to man; her only wish is to please her 'master' for whom she was created. Her sexual attitude is totally circumscribed by his wish. She will charm so long as she is required to charm, and will take no step further in this direction: that is to say she is sexually at the beck and call of the male. She is there to yield and not to pursue, in other words she has no will other than that of the male. She will only desire as much as he desires, therefore if his wish for knowledge is limited so will hers be. Satan no longer sees her as his playmate and consort, but as a female figure that can easily be fooled with flattery and lies. All she needs is to be told that her beauty should be admired as a 'goddess among gods/ By angels numerous.'

Plays written during this era which preceded the Restoration period reflect the general attitude of the times. They concentrated on male characters and women were interspersed within the plot only to bring men to the fore. The images of women depicted in these works were very much in line with that of Milton's sugary Eve. In Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed With Kindness* for example, the heroine, Anne, who is ardently wooed by her husband's closest friend, Master Wendoll, is all blushes and shame while Wendoll's admiration is said to ensue from the fact that she is chaste and wise. Anne is of course weak:

Anne. ...
 My fault, I fear, will in my brow be writ.
 Women that fall, not quite bereft of grace,
 Have their offences noted on their face.
 I blush and am ashamed. O, Master Wendoll,

Pray God I be not born to curse your tongue,
 That had enchanted me! This maze I am in
 I fear will prove the labyrinth of sin.
 (***A Woman Killed With Kindness***; Act II, Scene III)

As it is apparent in this quotation, it is no longer the woman who bewitches man and leads him to sin but man who tries to trap the naive, feeble woman. In ***The Fox***, Ben Jonson draws a similar picture of the virile male and helpless female who might easily be enchanted with gifts and complements. Jonson's hero Volpone, in his unrelenting pursuit of Celia, talks about the relations between men and women in a tone very similar to Heywood's Master Wendoll. Celia is the martyr for all practical purposes and the adamant suitor Volpone, the male figure, is bent on a sexual relationship which the vulnerable Celia, though wary, might at any moment succumb to because of the weaknesses of her sex. Jonson, in his famous song about love and virtue, almost echoes Herrick and has Volpone announce to Celia that chastity is "the beggar's virtue" and that if she is wise she should listen to his advice. In reponse to this Celia claims that she would rather be dead than betray her husband.

In Beaumont and Fletcher's ***The Maid's Tragedy***, the message is again the same:

To bed, to bed! Come, Hymen, lead the bride,
 And lay her by her husband's side;
 Bring in the virgins every one,
 That grieve to lie alone;"

The Maid's Tragedy, Act I, Scene II)

This play too is interspersed with images of women whose only concern to preserve their virtue in the face of predatory men. The enduring message being "why don't you comply with our desires while you still are attractive? No one will want you when you are no longer young and attractive". Indeed the underlying message in all these works is that "You are the "other" and that your relation with the world can only be established through us."

CHAPTER IV

THE RESTORATION AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Literature by Men during the Restoration Period and the Eighteenth Century

By the middle of the seventeenth century, that is during the Restoration Period in English history, theatres became centers for culture and art. The plays that were written and performed during this time therefore are important in reflecting the socio-cultural mood of the time which pointed to the daring and Machiavellian stance of the aristocracy (this had until then been constricted by the rule of the roundheads) with its upper-class humour and view of life. The plays of this period seem to display predominantly an attitude towards women similar to that observed in the literature of the early seventeenth century. That is she is presented as the attractive yet weak and dependent "other." Poetry also hardly portrays women as major figures. In fact, they are only mentioned in transitory passages which figure them more as pretty, conquerable entities rather than living and breathing beings. In *Alexander's Feast*, for example, Dryden's attitude towards the woman is quite telling:

The lovely Thais, by his side,
Sat like a blooming Eastern bride
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave.
None but the brave deserves the fair.
(*Alexander's Feast*, lines 9-15).

Plays of the period as a whole are, of course, more complex. In them women come to figure as pieces of the complicated background which predominantly serves as a foil for the astute wiles and diversions of the male characters. Most of the women characters are young and titillating. Now,

however, there also appears the figure of the old crone who upholds the sexual norms and mores of the era. She is in fact to go on appearing in literature, especially in drama as the dowager or the advocate of all that is right in the social situation. In other words, she is no longer the weaver of spells or strigae that endow men with virility or impotence but rather a figure that is there to check all the folly involved in the eternal pursuit of the sexes which has now shifted in favor of the male character. He must be appeased in his quest for amorous pleasure. The old woman is also a figure to be ridiculed inasmuch as she has lost all her sexual charm.

William Congreve's *The Way of the World* deals with all that is en vogue at the time both in terms of character and plot. The many complicated dalliances and the totally superficial characters whose only mission is to enter into relationships with the various married or unmarried women around them is very well portrayed in this play. One of the pivotal characters in the play is of course Lady Wishfort, the first of the dowager figures of the plays that are to be written and staged in English literature till the turn of this century.

At the beginning of the play we are made to understand that although Lady Wishfort is involved in all the sexual innuendos that are taking place around her, as the plot unravels we see that due to her age and standing she does not get involved in the trysts that take place.

Mirabell. "...Nay, I got a friend to put her into a lampoon and compliment her with the imputation of an affair with a young fellow, which I carried so far that I told her the malicious town took notice that she was grown fat of a sudden; and when she lay in of a dropsy, persuaded her she was reported to be in labour. The devil's in't if an old woman is to be flattered further, unless a man should endeavour downright personally to debauch her; and that my virtue forbade me...(*The Way of the World*; Act I.).

In short Lady Wishfort has lost all in the eyes of the men around her. She is no longer desirable and therefore is the butt of jokes. The only aim of all women seems to be to remain young, attractive and forever ready to please the appetites of the male:

Mrs. Marwood. "True, 'tis an unhappy circumstance of life that love should ever die before us; and that man so often should outlive the lover. But say what you will, 'tis better to be left than never to have been loved. To pass our youth in dull indifference, to refuse the sweets of life because they once must leave us, is preposterous as to wish to have been born old because we one day must be old. For my part, my youth may wear and waste, but it shall never rust in my possession." (*The Way of the World*, Act II.)

It is obvious from the attitude of Mrs. Marwood that the paradigm of the female figure, in literature and in the real world, is one whose only aim is to appear pleasing to men and to assuage their desires. Though the women of the Restoration would like to come together with her sisters as Mrs. Fainall explains in order to create some kind of solidarity, she will not be able to because she has lost her power:

Mrs. Fainall. "...if we will be happy, we must find the means in ourselves, and among ourselves. Men are ever in extremes, either doting or averse. While they are lovers, if they have fire and sense, their jealousies are unsupportable; and when they cease to love (we ought to think at least), they loathe; they look upon us with horror and distaste; they meet us like the ghosts of what we were, and as such fly from us." (*The Way of the World*, Act II.)

Her only chance of having anything to do with the world is through men, and the only way to do this seems to be to primp and dress to attract the attention of the once powerless but now predatory male figure. Women have deftly been pushed out of the world at large to sit at home and scheme and design so as to appear favorable in the eyes of men. She is no longer the powerful, evil goddess who held the key to knowledge both carnal and intellectual, who had to be wooed and whose wrath had to be allayed, but a somewhat ridiculous figure who would be moved by sex. She should not dare get old or lose her attractions however, because then she would lose the attention of her master and hence lose her hold on social life as such. Without a man, a woman would not be able to integrate in or communicate with society. It is interesting to note that this image of the woman as the lesser being was to

remain firmly entrenched in the literature of most male writers until the twentieth century.

The political and philosophical attitude of the Restoration towards the witch does not seem to be any different from that of the previous century. Those that were not directly associated with the Church seem to have relegated the theme to its proper place in their minds - for them it neither did nor could exist because miracles are the prerogative of God and those that are his acolytes. Satan and especially women could definitely not perform miracles even if they were negative in nature. The will of mankind had now been firmly circumscribed by God and by philosophers. In short though there was still some talk about whether or not one should give up the fantasy altogether, the topic no longer seems to be of interest to the mainstream philosophers and politicians. In the meanwhile literature of the Restoration period stops representing women as the witch and starts portraying them as the "other," that is an entity which is very much peripheral to society and which hardly deserves any attention.

Literature of Women by Women

The latter part of the seventeenth century was a new age of female creativity. Though men might make them out to be peripheral, they themselves do not seem to want to succumb to an extraneous role. Examples of their writings show that they quite aptly take up the aristocratic devil-may-care attitude towards sexuality from a woman's point of view as well as foreshadow the 'sneer' of Misters Swift and Pope. Their ascerbic wit is no less biting than these masters who would follow them some years later.

Writing in the middle of the seventeenth century, Ann Bradstreet tries to recapture at least some of the lost respect and receive some acknowledgement for her abilities as a woman.

5

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
 Who says my hand a needle better fits;
 A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
 For such despite they cast on female wits,
 If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
 They'll say it's stolen or else it was by chance.

7

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are,
 Men have precency and still excel.
 It is but vain unjustly to wage ar;
 Men can do best, and women know it well.
 Preeminence in all and each is yours;
 Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.
 (*The Prologue*; lines 25-42).

Though she is ready to admit the ascendancy of the male, yet she still wishes to receive some acknowledgement for the abilities of women. In another of her poems she takes in hand Queen Elizabeth to prove that women can be of worth, no matter what men are inclined to believe of them:

Who was so good, so just, so learn'd, so wise,
 From all the kings on earth she won the prize,
 Nor say I more than duly is her due,
 Millions will testify that this is true,
 She hath wiped of th' aspersion of her sex,
 That women wisdom lack to play the rex.
 Spain's monarch says not so, nor yet his host,
 She taught them better manners, to their cost.

She's arguement enough to make you mute.
 Since first the Sun did run his ne'er run race,
 And earth had, once a year, a new old face,
 Since time was time, and unmanly man,
 Come show me such a phoenix if you can."
 (*In Honour of That High and Mighty Princess Queen
 Elizabeth of Happy Memory*, lines 30-45)

The aristocratic Margaret Cavendish, a contemporary of Bradstreet, seems to write in the same vein. She tries to show the worth of women while tongue in cheek she pays lip service to the superiority of men. She does not want to accept inferior position as given and seems to wish to draw other women's attention to the fact that certain things should be done to take them out of the situation they have been put in. Her *Female Orations* gives us some idea of her approach. She writes:

Ladies, gentlewomen, and other inferior women, but not less worthy; I have been industrious to assemble you together, and wish I were so fortunate to persuade you to make frequent assemblies, associations, and combinations amongst our sex, that we may unite in prudent counsels, to make ourselves as free, happy, and famous as men; whereas now we live and die as if we were produced from beasts, rather than from men; for men are happy, and we women are miserable; they possess all the ease, rest, pleasure, wealth, power, and fame; whereas women are restless with labour, easeless with pain, melancholy for want of pleasure, helpless for want of power, and die in oblivion for want of fame. Nevertheless, men are so unconscionable and cruel against us that they endeavour to bar us of all sorts of liberty, and will not suffer us freely to associate amongst our own sex; but would fain bury us in their houses or beds, as in a grave. The truth is, we live like bats or owls, labour like beasts, and die like worms....we may murmur and rail against men, yet they regard not what we say. In short, our words to men are empty sounds; our sighs, as puffs of winds; and our tears, as fruitless showers; and our power is so inconsiderable, that men laugh at our weakness. (from *Female Orations*, I, II).

Margaret Cavendish is careful however, to give men their due:

...but we have no reason to speak against men, who are our admirers and lovers; they are our protectors, defenders, and maintainers; they admire our beauties, and love our persons; they protect us from injuries, defend us from dangers, are industrious for our subsistence, and provide for our children... Wherefore, let us love men, praise men, and pray for men; for without men, we should be the most miserable creatures that Nature hath made or could make. (from *Female Orations*, III).

Her advice to her sisters is to imitate men as she sees this to be the only recourse out of the situation women have been put in:

Wherefore my advice is, we should imitate men; so will our bodies and minds appear more masculine, and our power will increase by our action...Wherefore, since all terrestrial imitations ought to ascend to the better and not to descend to the worse, women ought to imitate men, as being a degree in nature more perfect than they themselves; and all masculine women ought to be as much praised as effeminate men to be dispraised; for the one advances to perfection, the other sinks to imperfection; that so by our industry, we may come, at least to equal men, both in perfection and power. (from *Female Orations*, IV, VI).

As can be seen in these passages, Cavendish seems to have internalized all the prejudices against women current in the age she lives yet she believes that if women act and behave more like men then they can become more human and consequently assume some value. At this point in history there seems to be no way out for women as women.

Jane Lead, a mystic autobiographer contemporary with Cavendish, on the other hand, takes a braver view of the world than her fellow sisters. She presents herself as a magical female who is trying to redeem both men and women:

...Behold, I am God's eternal Virgin Wisdom, whom thou hast been inquiring after; I am to unseal the treasures of God's deep wisdom unto thee, and will be as Rebecca was unto Jacob, a true natural mother, for out of my womb thou shalt be brought forth after the manner of a spirit, conceived and born again; thou shalt know by a new motion of life, stirring and giving a restlessness, till wisdom be born within the inward parts of the soul... (from *A Fountain of Gardens, The First Vision*).

Lead seems to offer an alternate world where women retain their magical powers, though here her magical powers are not those of destruction as they were thought to be, but those of creation and salvation.

Aphra Behn, another woman writer of the seventeenth century is far more secular. She writes about her own desires as a woman during a time when men were free to write of their licentious thoughts but women were not. Behn is even more satiric than Cavendish in expressing her views about the condition woman finds herself in. In fact Behn is the only writer of her generation not to take into consideration the boundaries drawn around her as a woman. She does not seem to pay much attention to decorum imposed strictly on her sex, but freely expresses her opinions on sexuality and on her own libidinal drives. In *The Willing Mistress* she explains in detail how she is sexually aroused:

A thousand amorous tricks, to pass
 The heat of the day.
 A many kisses did he give
 And I returned the same,
 Which made me willing to receive
 That which I dare not name.

His charming eyes no aid required
 To tell their softening tale;
 'Twas easy to prevail.
 He did but kiss and clasp me round,
 Whilst those his thoughts expressed:
 And laid me gently on the ground;
 Ah who can guess the rest?
 (*The Willing Mistress*, lines 11-24).

In a world of potent men, Aphra Behn even had the temerity to write of sexual impotence in men:

The willing garments by he laid,
 And heaven all opened to his view.
 Mad to possess, himself he threw
 On the defenceless lovely maid.
 But oh what envying god conspires
 To snatch his power, yet leave him the desire!

...
 Excess of love his love betrayed:
 In vain her toils, in vain commands: The insensible fell
 Weeping in his hand.
 (from *The Disappointment*)

The works of seventeenth century women are important in setting the tone for the beginnings of feminist theory and women's struggle for social rights and equalities.

The State of Witchcraft and Women in the Eighteenth Century

While in the eighteenth century philosophy starts concerning itself with other moral concerns, we see that certain Churchmen still addressed the issues of witchcraft and the power and the evil nature of the witch. Their theories and

assumptions however, are strictly canonical in nature. By this time almost all institutions of society seem to be unconcerned about the elusive power and attraction of evil - especially that part of evil and power which was personified by women and their conspiracy with Satan.

In 1700, Z.B. Van Espen, the leading canon lawyer of his time, reaffirms the skeptical attitude of the Restoration philosophers with respect to the magical powers of witches. He writes: "Sometimes the devil with his deceits can so move persons, especially women, or disturb their fancies, that they really believe themselves to have I know not what commerce with the demon, and when interrogated even confess and depose outside of court with a certain certitude, as appears to them, that wonderful things have happened to them and that they have dealt with the demon, all without foundation...And it will appear that often women are deceived who believe and assert as indubitable that by the help of the demon they have been carried to a certain assembly of witches and have talked and done wonderful things with the demon. But it is very likely (*admodum versimile*) that these carryings to assemblies of witches are mere illusions of the demon and vehement imaginations of the women, and no faith is to be placed in them unless their truth is proved by certain arguments." (Espen; 57).

As all religious institutions the Church proper on the other hand, seems to remain adamant for yet a few more decades in its convictions concerning the powers of Satan and his conspirators the witches, as well as the fascination of evil exerted by them on common man. Even rationalism does not appear to be able to totally wipe out the misgivings of the cleric concerning evil powers and their association with the weaker female figure. These misgivings circumscribed by religious doctrine naturally added to the detriment of women who by this time had lost all their hold on the real world of politics and action anyway. In fact the Protestant ethic states outright that witchcraft is a figment of the Catholic mind. Christian Thomasius, one of the leading Protestants of the century, for example writes: "In a word, I hold that the witch-process is worthless, that the bodily horned devil with his pitch-ladle and his mother is a pure invention of the papist priests, of whom he is grand arcanum to frighten people into paying money for soulmasses and inviegle them into giving rich properties and foundations for convents or other pious

causes and cast superstition on the innocent who say *Papa quid facis* as though they were sorcerers." (Thomasius; 448). - In England also Francis Hutchinson in his *Historical Essay on Witchcraft* published in 1718, points to the fact that witchcraft is in itself illogical (quoted in Summers; 166).

Finally in 1736, a new Act was passed in England under George II which assumed that there was no such thing as a witch or sorcerer. The Act still called for the punishment of those persons who *pretended* to exercise "any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, or conjuration." But in order to prevent any pretences to such arts or powers, the law required the pretenders to be imprisoned for a year, and to be set in the pillory at every quarter. (Summers; 167). But, though the powers that be made statements like this, people in the rural areas seem to have gone on believing in the power of Satan and women - perhaps because of their close association with nature or because they were not as prepared to do away with the female power which they so readily observed around them. However, as late as 1751 and still later in 1785, two women were persecuted for being witches. The first was Mother Osborne, a poor woman who was put to the pond test, and was unfortunate enough to float. She was later beaten to death by her neighbours. The second was another poor woman named Sarah Bradshaw, who was also thrown in the pond, who unfortunately sank to the bottom and drowned. (Summers; 166-170).

Women in the Literature of Men

While these arguments and some random persecutions were going on in eighteenth century England, the literary world turned from the irresponsible approach it had displayed towards women's issues during the Restoration to a more serious yet equally demeaning consideration of them. Neither in the satirical poetry nor in the novels of men of this age are women depicted in a respectable or an admirable light. Satire casts her as the archetype of the painted parasite which had become the image of the upper-class woman, while the novels of the time present her as a rather curious, vulnerable,

helpless entity in need of retaining her virginity, in the world of the powerful male whose right it was to exploit her.

In *Phyliss, Or The Progress of Love*, Swift throws stones at the image of the hypocrite femme fatale that the literature of the time itself had created:

Desponding Phyliss was endued
 With every talent of a prude:
 She trembled when a man drew near;
 Salute her, and she turned her ear:
 If o'er against her you were placed,
 She durst not look above your waist:
 She'd rather take you to her bed,
 Than let you see her dress her head;

...

In church, secure behind her fan,
 She durst behold the monster, man:
 There practiced how to place her head,
 And bit her lips to make them red;
 Or on the mat devoutly kneeling,
 Would lift her eyes up to the ceiling,
 And heave her bosom unaware,
 For neighbouring beaux to see it bare.
 (*Phyliss Or the Progress of Love*)

Here we have what turns out to be an errant daughter who simpers her way through a courtship with a suitor from her own class only to jilt him and run off with the butler, John.

The overall message conveyed in the literature of the period is that women are fickle and not to be taken seriously. They act in accordance with what they think are the social mores, but at heart they are all faithless, flighty, tramps. As it is evident in the following lines again by Swift. All is show with them, and they do not even live up to what seems to their superficial attractions:

'Come tell us, has she played the whore?'
 'O Peter, would it were no more?'
 'Why, plague confound her sandy locks!
 Say, has the small or greater pox
 Sunk done her nose, or seamed her face?
 Be easy, 'tis a common case.'

'O Peter! beauty's but a varnish,
Which time and accidents will tarnish:
But Celia has contrived to blast
Those beauties that might ever last.

...
The secret thou shalt ne'er impart,
Not to the nymph that keeps thy heart;
(How would her virgin soul bemoan
A crime to all her sex unknown!)
Nor whisper to the tattling reeds
The blackest of all female deeds;

...
'Nor wonder how I lost my wits;
Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shifts?'
(From *Cassinus and Peter*)

The attitude of this master of satire was shared by his contemporaries throughout the age. Now that what was once considered feminine charm was proven to be only a farce kept up by the female sex who was of dubious morality, it was natural to push women even lower down the social scale. Thus women not only lost all their power over men but were seen as objects of ridicule for all they did to please the male. They went on their ways unaware of reality, and limited by their 'faulty' or rather 'non-existent' intellect, carrying out the chore of pleasing men to the best of their paltry abilities.

The master creator of this demeaning image of women was of course Alexander Pope, who in *The Rape of the Lock*, went even further in derogating women. In *The Rape of The Lock*, his heroi-comical poem, he tells us about the exploits of Belinda, the heroine who like her peers is a flighty young woman deeply concerned with trivia. Pope describes Belinda in the following manner:

Thy eyes first opened on a billet-doux;
Wounds, charms and ardours were no sooner read,
But all the vision vanished from they head.
And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,
With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.
A heavenly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
The inferior priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred rites of pride.
(*The Rape of the Lock*, Canto I)

She is a typical upper class woman whose mind can only take in the contents of a billet-doux, and whose only concern is to adore her own image at the alter of what one might call her manufactured beauty. Her feeble-mindedness is emphasized again and again:

Her lively looks a spritely mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends,

Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
(The Rape of the Lock, Canto II)

With a mind as erratic as the looks she casts right and left, the only thing Belinda seems to be good for is to adorn various drawing-rooms. Her mores might rouse her to anger at such a petty incident as the loss of her locks, which are important both because of her self-adoration and because she is unable to distinguish the significant from the trivia. And in another poem entitled *To a Lady*, Pope goes so far as to say:

'Most women have no characters at all.'
Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
And best distinguished by black, brown or fair.
(To a Lady, lines 2-4)

Not only is the woman devoid of character according to Pope, the poet laureate of the period, but she is also too malleable to retain any lasting mark and consequently only distinguishable by her coloring. In *To a Lady*, we are told that she does not really seem to fathom anything: neither pleasure nor joy:

Virtue she finds too painful an endeavour,
Content to dwell in decencies for ever.
So very reasonable, so unmoved,
As never yet to love, or be loved.
She, while her lover pants upon her breast,
Can mark the figures on an Indian chest;
And when she sees her friend in deep despair,
Observes how much a chintz exceeds mohair.
(To a Lady, lines 163-170)

The extent of her mental and emotional capacity as well as her interests in life are made obvious by these lines, which strangely show that she is not even so very interested in sex, as the writers themselves would have it. This is perhaps because of the conviction that potency, virility, desire in sex are the prerogatives of the male. The difference in attitude of between men and women towards life and love is also clearly drawn by Pope in the following lines:

In men, we various ruling passions find;
 In women, two almost divide the kind;
 Those, only fixed, they first or last obey,
 The love of pleasure, and the love of sway.
 That, Nature gives; and where the lesson taught
 Is but to please, can pleasure seem a fault?
 Experience, this; by man's oppression curst,
 They seek the second not to lose the first.
 Men, some to business, some to pleasure take;
 But every woman is at heart a rake;
 Men, some to quiet, some to public strife;
 But every lady would be queen for life.
 (*To a Lady*, lines 207-218).

In short the characteristics attributed to women by Alexander Pope, the most influential poet of the period, are: love of luxury, her own beauty and pleasure. Furthermore, she has a mind that is not really good for much else than to appease her 'rakish' nature. His list is somehow reminiscent of the medieval lists citing the reasons why women were prone to becoming witches. Only now, the woman is no longer hated and feared because of these characteristics ascribed to her but she is ridiculed and not taken seriously.

As satire gave way to sentimentality in the latter part of the eighteenth century, women, especially middle class women, were chided for wishing to act like men and not confining themselves and their interests to the home. This demeaning attitude, often male, is beautifully depicted in the two most popular novels of the time: Richardson's *Clarissa*, and *Pamela*. Both novels,

written in the form of correspondence between the two heroines are tragic or quasi-tragic tales of helpless females at the mercy of their predatory partners.

Pamela or Virtue Rewarded, is the first example of what may be called the modern English novel of character. Briefly the novel is about the plight of a young maid-servant, Pamela Andrews, whose mistress has just died when the story opens. She is pursued by the lady's son Mr. B., who wishes to take dishonorable advantage of her position, because he is enamoured of her. Here the helpless but astute Pamela is able to defend her virtue, and ultimately marries her master because of her exemplary behavior.

Pamela herself is actually a split character when looked at carefully. This ambivalence springs from the fact that on the surface she seems to be the prudish heroine, carrying out the dictates of society in relation to the behavior assigned to her sex; however, deep down she might be suspected of being a coquette who possesses the characteristics of her sex in all she says and does, or for that matter in this context, all she writes. The more she seems to reject sexuality, the more she seems to be obsessed by it. Her prudence is calculating and she is in reality unable to achieve any kind of real humility whether it be social, moral, or spiritual. But the fact that in the end she is able to marry her temptor makes her socially acceptable. The second volume of *Pamela* is mostly or rather wholly concerned with the social blessing bestowed on Pamela, and long discussions on the duties and proper behavior of a wife. Here Richardson is careful to demonstrate, in the person of Pamela, the values and duties to be upheld by a commendable woman. Such a woman has to be endowed with obedience, humility, piety, a capacity for love, forgiveness and gratitude. It is in fact difficult to reconcile the astute and turbulent Pamela of the first volume with the acquiescent character of the second volume. Here Richardson's aim seems to put forward the picture of meek wife full of gratitude without any regard for character consistency other than maybe the pressure of a male-dominant society put on her in bringing about this change.

In Richardson's later novel *Clarissa*, the distresses that may attend the misconduct of both parents and children in relation to marriage, the said distresses are portrayed along with sexual rules and the principles that make up the structure of the late eighteenth century male domain. This novel is also written in the form of a series of letters. Here, however, the correspondents are two women and two men: Clarissa and her friend Miss Howe, and Lovelace and his friend John Belford. Clarissa is introduced to us as a young lady endowed with all the attributes fitting a person of her station. She is a young lady of good family, of great delicacy, and she is mistress of all the accomplishments natural and acquired that adorn her sex. Lovelace, the errant predator, is an attractive and versatile, but an unscrupulous man of fashion. In this novel Richardson seems to have moved away from the ambivalence prevalent in *Pamela*. Clarissa seems to be genuinely prudent and well-meaning, a true upholder of public morality. She does not, on the other hand, accede to the century's rule of submission to masculine oppressiveness but rather prefers to die than accept the conventional compromise of a marriage with Lovelace.

What seems to emerge from a brief examination of these texts is that woman is a slut at heart with a fascination for sexual encounter though sex is the domain of man. Since she is so concerned with sexual experience, she does all she can to attract attention on herself. Once she has reached her goal she is expected to operate within the confines of what modes of action have been set for her by male-dominant society. There is also a quality of the fool in her with respect to her shallowness, inasmuch as intellectually she is not expected to develop over and above the ordained limits. If she acts in accordance with male expectations, she can realize her ends as did Pamela. If she, on the other hand, decides to react to public expectation, then she might have to take on the tragic consequence with which Clarissa was faced. And, no matter how prim and proper, or accomplished and principled she seems, she is after all a secondary being, a weaker man of sorts who deserves little respect if any.

A statute passed in 1770 reflects this misogynist outlook of the era: "all women of whatever, age, rank, profession, or degree, whether virgin maid or widow, that shall from and after such Act impose upon, seduce, and betray

into matrimony any of His Majesty's subjects by means of scent, paints, cosmetics, washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, or bolstered hips, shall incur the penalty of the law now in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours, and the marriage upon conviction shall stand null and void." The once mighty witch, who had filled hearts with apprehension no matter what her life was, had now been reduced to the outward trappings of a harlot whose only aim was to catch a mate of some sort. She was no longer to be feared due to her Satanic powers, she could easily be oppressed, ostracized and punished because her charms no longer worked.

Women in the Writings of Women

Faced with being designated a common tramp and/or a fantasy of superficial morality at the mercy of men, women turned to seek alternate routes to regain at least the semblance of human dignity. Totally suppressing their sexuality so as not to draw the attention of their oppressors on themselves, they strove to get a foothold in education to prove if not to society at large, at least to themselves that they were above the picture of ridicule that had been fastened on them.

Anne Finch, for example is one of those women who has internalized the discourse concerning women of her era. Her opinion about what women should be or should aspire to be is much like that of Margaret Cavendish of the previous century. And though, or probably because she writes in the first decade of the eighteenth century, she seems to have a keen sense of the alleged "fall" of women. She wishes to return to an age when women had not yet "fallen" but had excelled men much like the biblical heroines:

A woman here leads fainting Israel on,
 She fights, she wins, she triumphs with a song,
 Devout, majestic, for the subject fit,
 And far above her arms exalts her wit,
 Then to the peaceful, shady palm withdraws,
 And rules the rescued nation with her laws.
 How are we fallen, fallen by mistaken rules?

And education's more than nature's fools,
 Debarred from all improvements of the mind,
 And to be dull, expected and designed;
 And if some one would soar above the rest,
 With warmer fancy and ambition pressed,
 So strong th' opposing faction still appears.
 (From *The Introduction*)

Finch wishes to enlighten women who are 'expected and designed' to be 'dull' through education.

This wish for education in order to better the conditions and images created for women is present in Mary Astell's writings as well. She asks:

For since God has given women as well as men intelligent souls, why should they be forbidden to improve them? Since he has not denied us the faculty of thinking, why should we not (at least in gratitude to him) employ our thoughts on himself their noblest object, and not unworthily bestow them on trifles and gaities and secular affaires?...What is it but the want of an ingenious education, that renders the generality of feminine conversations so insipid and foolish and thier solitude so insupportable. (From *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*).

Lady Montagu seems to hold a similar view concerning women and education. In a letter to the Countess of Bute, her daughter, she writes of her granddaughter: "...I am particularly pleased to hear she is a good arithmetician; it is the best proof of understanding: the knowledge of numbers is one of the chief distinctions between us and the brutes." And though she is for the education of women, she agrees that the role of men and women are totally different in the society: "Those women are ridiculous, not because they have learning but because they have it not....At the same time I recommend books, I neither exclude work nor drawing....I think it as scandalous for a woman not to know how to use a needle, as for a man not to know how to use a sword."(as quoted in Gilbert & Gubar; 119-121).

Despite the fact that women write of what should be done in order to emerge from the abject position they have been pushed into, until the coming onto the scene of Mary Wollstonecraft it is not possible to talk about a feminist

consciousness or the emergence of a movement which might be called a feminist movement. Wollestonecraft embraces the liberal political outlook which tries to define rationality in terms of its moral or prudential aspects, and stresses the value of self-fulfillment. She fights against what she terms to be the wrongs inflicted on women by the society and she claims that women's manners have actually been corrupted by a culture that acclaims feminine inferiority. The culture regards vanity, triviality, duplicity and selfishness as characteristics peculiar to the female because such a description of women suits the male society. Wollestonecraft emphasizes the necessity of individual autonomy in comprehending the rational principles of morality. Therefore rights to freedom, education and action are paramount for this ideology. As a consequence She urges women to fight for their rights.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollestonecraft writes to inspire the married, bourgeois women who were the butt of most satires, into a fully human mode of existence. She sees the middle class woman as having sacrificed health, liberty, and virtue for whatever prestige, power, and pleasure a husband can provide. She claims that because these women were not allowed outdoors they lacked healthy bodies, and because they were not permitted to make their own decisions they could not develop their rational faculties which in turn drove them to indulging themselves and gratifying others, and as a result they seemed to lack virtue. Wollestonecraft argued that if men had been confined as women, they too would seem to be solely pleasure seeking. The reason why women were termed self-indulgent, narcissistic, and over-emotional was social. (Wollestonecraft; 23). Though she did not speak of the socially constructed nature of gender, she claimed that in order for a woman to liberate herself from the oppressive roles of emotional cripple, petty shrew, and narcissistic sex object, a woman had to obey the commands of reason and execute her wifely and motherly duties faithfully. What she wanted in short was personhood, and she believed that this could be attained through equal education. Education would enable a woman to act autonomously and give her the right to assume responsibility for her own development and growth. (Wollestonecraft; 153).

In short the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seem to have set the parameters of womanhood from the point of view of male-dominant societies.

During these centuries woman is seen as a lesser, intellectually inferior, vain, trivial "other". Women themselves can think of no other way than entering the world of men as inferior beings who are allowed to gratuitously participate in some of the intellectual activity that goes on around them, and so are given the chance to prove to their superiors that they too can at least think and learn. Women were not able to totally deny all the insults heaped on them concerning their superficiality. They seemed only to be concerned with proving themselves a worthy extension of the great male. This they thought of doing within the limits of morality set down for them by the male society. That is by denying their difference, their sexuality, and somehow concentrating on their similarities with men.

CHAPTER V

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: A TENTATIVE SEARCH FOR THE WITCH

In terms of the world of witchcraft as a phenomenon which appears in the teachings of both Catholic and Protestant churchmen, the nineteenth century is the time when the final controversies regarding the subject were voiced. They were primarily religious, as was observed in the eighteenth century. The secular world of thought seems to have lost all interest in it. As in the previous century most theologians apparently continue to dwell on the power of God and therefore relegate Satan and his doings within a certain spectrum. In 1862 Johann Joseph von Gobres writes: "Christ after conquering Satan, precipitated him to the bottom of the abyss and rolled over him the rock on which he built his Church. There the apostate angel twists himself in the convulsions of impotent fury and sometimes, shaking the weight under which he groans, he produces the violent shocks which agitate the spiritual world. But it is all in vain, for he has lost his former formidable power....Still neither man nor demon has lost the free-will he had before redemption; Christ only broke the bonds which tied the former to the latter, so the demons can now only rule us with our own consent. If God permits him sometimes to visit us and make us feel his power, it is for our own good and he can never injure us against our consent." (Gobres; 17).

Yet, there remained still others who believed in the power of the kingdom of evil and, therefore, witches. August Vilmar, another theologian of the mid-nineteenth century claims that men who surrender themselves to the Evil One can work false miracles. This is the darker province of sorcery, to which we must ascribe full reality. "We can thus formulate or describe the tendency of this infernal power: all belongs to sorcery, which tends 1) to obtain power over the self-determination of men (over their spirits) without God's word and

without prayer; 2) to excite the forces of Nature; 3) to know the far-off and the future; 4) to inflict material injury without material means....The limits to which, at the end of the fifteenth century, the propensity of many women, especially old ones, to injure others, extended, is incalculable and would be wholly beyond belief if there were not the most impartial and trustworthy testimony."(Villmar; 391-2). The cessation of witch persecution he attributes to the indifferentism which pervaded the lower order after 1660. Much in line with Villmar's opinions the rural areas tended to continue to believe in the witch and her powers. Peasants perpetuated rituals to keep away the evil spirits from their livestock and their homes.

In the cities, on the other hand, men seem to be wrapped up in their own soul searching activities, trying to put a changing world into some sort of perspective so that they can remain moral and traditional, and at the same time cope with the innovations of their age. Although in the latter part of the century there is a Queen on the throne, she too does not seem to give any credit to women as women or to condone any sort of dalliance between the sexes. This was an age of contradictions and dilemma. Sex outside the confines of the conjugal bedroom was frowned on, yet men started writing spates of pornography presenting themselves as excessively virile and licentious figures whose lust had to be satisfied by women who were to be angels, virgins and tramps at the same time.

Women as Man's Imagined Ideal in the Literature of Men

The literary figures of the age wrote of the pride of intellect and the deepest yearnings of the human heart. They presented in their works more often than not mythological and/or symbolic characters. The women they depicted were once again more like the female figures portrayed in ancient literatures. They did not seem to be living, breathing creatures (unless the character stood for a specific woman) but embodiments of ancient beliefs. Thus, women once more regained some of the magical charm and splendid powers they had lost since the decline in the belief in witchcraft. In short the images of women rendered in the nineteenth century literature of men were only conceptual,

but they at least put an end to her extraneous representation as superficial weakling undeserving of any respect.

William Blake, one of the great mystics and Romantic poets of the time, takes as nature's final form a mythological triple Whore, which is made up of secrecy, illusive beauty, and necessity. Here, the female figure emerges as all-knowing as she had been heretofore. In the ***Mental Traveller***, Blake combines pagan lore with the Christian and voices the myth of the witch even though it is done obliquely:

I traveled thro' a Land of Men
A Land of Men & Women too
And heard & saw such dreadful things
As cold Earth wanderers never knew

...

And if the Babe is born a Boy
He's given to a Woman Old
Who nails him down upon a rock
Catches his shrieks in cups of gold

She binds iron thorns around his head
She pierces both his hands & feet
She cuts his heart out at his side
To make it feel both cold & heat.
(***The Mental Traveller***, lines 5-16)

In Blake's poem ***The Crystal Cabinet*** we again encounter the magical woman:

The Maiden caught me in the Wild
Where I was dancing merrily
She put me into her Cabinet
And Locked me up with a golden Key

This Cabinet is formed of Gold
And Pearl & Crystal shining bright
And within it opens into a World
And a little lovely Moony Night
(***The Crystal Cabinet***, lines 1-8)

Here the imagery is strongly erotic. The woman locks the man up in her most secret parts and presents to him the wonder that is herself. In Blake's poetry the woman is once more endowed with the key to knowledge and the world, more like she was once when she was feared and condemned as a witch. Blake uses carnal imagery associated with women in his other works as well. For example in the *Four Zoas* we read:

The joy of woman is the Death of her most best beloved
 Who dies for Love of her
 In torments of fierce jealousy & pangs of adoration.
 (From *The Four Zoas*, lines 63-65)

Another of the poets of this era who refers to the magical powers of women is of course Coleridge. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, death is associated with such an image; in fact there seems to be a strain of sorcery throughout the poem:

About, about, in reel and rout
 The death-fires danced at night;
 The water, like a witch's oils,
 burnt green, and blue and white.
 (*The Ancient Mariner*, lines 126-30)

And finally the witch figure appears as the dispenser of life and death:

And is that Woman all her crew?
 Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
 Is DEATH that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, *her* looks were free,
 Her locks were yellow as gold:
 Her skin was as white as leprosy
 The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
 Who thicks man's blood with cold.
 (*The Ancient Mariner*, lines 190-6)

And the "horned Moon" shines above overseeing the work of his cohort with the free looks as opposed to her sisters in the real world. In the poem *Christabel* too, Coleridge's heroine, Christabel, is charmed by the witch Geraldine. Geraldine, the symbol of evil, provokes the downfall of Sir Leoline and his house after she has taken under control the unsuspecting Christabel with the tribute of the natural forces that have been at her beck and call since eternity:

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
 O Geraldine! since arms of thine
 Have been the lovely lady's prison.
 O Geraldine! one hour was thine--
 Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,
 The night-birds all that hour were still.
 But now they are jubilant anew,
 From cliff and tower, tu--whoo! tu--whoo!
 Tu--whoo! tu--whoo! from wood and fell!
 (*The Conclusion to Part I*; lines 302-10)

Geraldine is not only identified with the owl but also with the serpent who symbolizes the evil powers in the world:

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy;
 And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
 Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,

...
 (*Part II*; lines 583-5)

John Keats is another of the nineteenth century poets who uses the witch figure on a symbolic level and consigns magic powers once again to the female figure. In *Lamia*, he takes as his heroine one of the most powerful witch figures; the poem carries her name. Throughout the poem the images and descriptions Keats uses represent almost tangibly the strange beauty of the power of evil and its fascination which dwells in nature:

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
 Vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue;
 Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
 Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd
 And full of silver moons that, as she breathed,
 Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
 Their lusters with the gloomier tapestries--

So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
 She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
 Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
 Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
 Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:
 Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
 She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
 And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
 But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
 As Prosperine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
 Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
 Came, as though bubbling honey for Love's sake,
 (*Lamia*, lines 47-64)

It should be noted here however, that though Keats uses the witch image to its full and relates a love affair much to the taste of the ancients who believed in the powers of evil that could be forged by love, the poem itself does not attribute the power to the female. The witch remains a contributing element for the creation of the supernatural, gothic atmosphere. Throughout the poem, Keats does not dwell on the nature of woman but on the nature of the world, the times, and carnal love.

Later in the nineteenth century, aside from the figure of the mythical witch there appeared the Victorian ideal of the angel of the "sphere." The "sphere" here denoting the house. This sphere demanded an angelic woman, the good mother, the angel in the house. The feminine ideal was proposed and endorsed by one and sundry. Men were troubled by what the industrial revolution had brought about, and they were seeking salvation in an identity which was made up of all the Christian values they thought they had lost, their ideal woman, a figment of their imagination. John Ruskin aptly draws this prototype for us in *Of Queens' Gardens*. He readily asserts that "the great function is Praise: she enters into no contest but infallibly judges the crown of contest"...she is the regal lady "whose intellect is not for invention or creation" but she is the entity who "rules" man's home so that it is "the place of Peace." Women themselves seem not to have contested this "sphere" but their need for an equal opportunity in the world of ideas seems to have been taken up by John Stuart Mill and his wife Harriet Taylor.

John Stewart Mill writing together with Harriet Taylor Mill approximately a hundred years after Wollestonecraft, showed much the same inclination in championing rationality which was conceived of as being both autonomous decision-making, and self-fulfillment. They went further than Wollestonecraft in claiming that if we were to give women the right to maximize what they called 'aggregate utility', they would also have to be invested with the right to pursue whatever they desired, provided of course that this did not hinder or obstruct others' rights.

The difference between their writings was that Harriet Taylor had a much more feminist approach to the equality of the sexes than did John Stuart Mill. In her essay *Enfranchisement of Women*, Taylor argues that sexual inequality is not the result of nature's laws but of society's customs and traditions. She believes that this would become apparent if women were given: education in primary and high-schools, universities, medical, legal, and theological instructions; partnership in the labors and gains, and remunerations of productive industry; and a coequal share in the formation and administration of laws - municipal, state, and national - through legislative assemblies, courts and executive officers. (Mill & Mill; 81). The main difference between the two Mills seems to be the fact that though Mill himself stressed education and coequal share in his essays, Taylor frequently stressed partnership. This is probably because Mill believed that even if women were given equal opportunities in the spheres of economic and civil liberties, they would still opt for marriage, and motherhood over other occupations. He also seems to have believed that women were altogether lesser in capacity than men therefore, the difference between the approaches of the two writers was more basic than it appeared at first sight. John Stuart Mill claimed that the equal education and rights that he was championing would benefit the male population since they would thus become much more enjoyable company. Moreover like Wollestonecraft before him, Mill was aware that the 'virtues' exalted in women were in fact socially imposed negative character traits which hampered women's progress towards personhood. Universal suffrage would be an excellent way to introduce women to the larger picture outside her home, for in this way women would be able to realize the importance of the larger picture and to assume the responsibilities of moral citizens, making it apparent to them that although charity began at home it did not end there. (Mill; 86). John Stuart Mill's project

for women entailed giving them more rights in a world of change yet adhering to the principal that the woman's rightful place is within the "sphere."

So now women were regarded as both the symbolic witch of the ancients as well as the quasi-person/angel of the home. This dual representation was particularly evident in the poetry and essays of the writers of this era. Victorian poet, dramatist and essayist Mathew Arnold refers to the mythical female figure in his writings. He does not mention the woman's plight, however, in a male dominated society. In fact in the *Strayed Reveller*, he even seems to strip the most powerful mythical witch of her magical powers. Here the witch Circe of Homer's *Odyssey* seems to operate within a different paradigm. Her young reveler spends time with her only provisionally and is not duly charmed by her. On the contrary he continues his search for reality which in this case represents Arnold's own gropings for the truth.

Another of the Victorian writers to deal with the ideal picture of what men expected women to procure for them in terms of comfort was Thomas Carlyle. He presents us with the image of a person lacking such comfort in his essay ***Past and Present***:

But the poor Black Woman and her daughter who stood aghast at him, whose earthly wealth and funded capital consisted of one small calabash of rice, there lived a heart richer than the *Laissez-faire*: they, with a royal munificence, boiled their rice for him; they sang all night to him, spinning assiduous on their cotton distaffs, as he lay to sleep: 'Let us pity the poor white man; no mother has he to fetch him milk, no sister to grind his corn!' (from ***Past and Present***, Democracy).

Though Carlyle is here criticising another aspect of the social 'disorder' that he observes in his quickly industrializing society, he astutely inserts his angelic, altruistic female figure into the picture he draws.

Among the leading Victorian poets, Tennyson also depicts an idealized picture of woman in his poems. Like his peers, he wants to see woman as

the angel of the home, as a being not interested in anything other than the home, complying with the strict morality of the times. She has to have a partner in order to have a place in the social order, but she must not deviate from the straight and narrow path that has been set down for her. If she does then there is no redemption for her and she will be cast aside even by the man who might have been her salvation as in the *Lady of Shalott*. The lady herself is a fairy in the eyes of those around her, she is in no manner given the overwhelming qualities of the witch:

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
 A magic web with colours gay,
 She has heard a whisper say,
 A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot.
 She knows not what the curse may be,
 And so she weaveth steadily,
 And little other care hadth she,
 The Lady of Shalott.
 (*The Lady of Shalott*, lines 37-45)

So Tennyson's fairy sits in her bower observing the world from afar and spinning her web. Like her Victorian sisters she is not allowed to involve herself with the goings on in Camelot. She must dream her dreams and live her life of passive observation although she is allowed to weave the web of magic, which is consigned to her tower, the home. When the Lady does look down she is assaulted by the world of Camelot - she has ventured too far into a domain that by no means is intended for her and so has wrought her own destruction. Sir Lancelot can only look down on her in pity:

But Lancelot mused a little space;
 He said, 'She has a lovely face;
 God in his mercy lend her grace,
 The Lady of Shalott.'
 (*The Lady of Shalott*, lines 168-171)

The Victorian woman is safest in her home and sphere, she should not try to venture into domains that are not really her concern.

Women's Literature in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century is also a time when women were at their most prolific in terms of the range of things they wrote. Among the poets Elizabeth Barrett Browning, one of the foremost poets uses the image of the witch with magical powers though somewhat differently from that of her male contemporaries. In ***A True Dream***, magic contributes to the togetherness of body and soul. This is particularly interesting because we are made to see in this poem that the serpents she/persona uses to practice her magic art inflict her soul with anxiety and restlessness. She first charms forth three serpents and then is left to carry the burden of their slimy reality until she is saved by a male shrouded death figure. In other words, she first casts her spell to make them appear, but is then unable to divest herself of them:

I had not an evil end in view,
Though I trod the evil way;
And why I practiced the magic art,
My dream it did not say.

I unsealed the vial mystical,
I outpoured the liquid thing,
And while the smoke came wreathing out,
I stood unshuddering.
(***A True Dream***, lines 1-8)

Her deliverer is, ironically, the male death figure that asks her for her whole being. Elizabeth Barrett does not however, believe in the male as savior no matter under what guise. In her poem ***To George Sand A Recognition***, for example, she calls to George Sand to stand up to her rights as a woman not as a man. She points out that womanhood cannot and should not be denied the struggle to shrug off the shackles imposed on womanhood:

True genius, but true woman! dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds' and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain demand! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn, -

Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
 Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
 Disproving thy man's name: the while before
 Thy world thou burnest in poet-fire,
 We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
 Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
 Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
 Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire!
 (*To George Sand, A Recognition*)

Browning sees what the power of woman is, and wishes it were possible to express it without the help of man. Frightened by what the unearthly powers of the witch might bring, she turns to an asexual equality which might be the deliverance of women.

Many women novelists appear during the nineteenth century. Of these some write in line with the male discourse that they have internalized. They, in short, write of the angel, the keeper of the home. Others such as Jane Austen write within the parameters of the novel of manners which was en vogue at the time. They see through the flimsy argument that looks on women as some sort of security blanket and satirize the predicament of the single woman whose aim under the standing circumstances was to secure a husband so as to procure a place within the social order.

George Elliot, as her pseudonym implies, tries and seeks to approach life like a man and on a par with him. Her characters are a product of the dual forces of will and circumstance. She remains faithful to the social norms of the era, its sentimental treatment of family life, and its moralizing tendency which require the exposure of meanness. Eliot focuses on the female character but not on women's issues. Mary Shelley, who does not, at least superficially, seem to have been much concerned with the plight of women, does in her own manner involve herself with their predicament. She says of herself: "At every risk I have befriended and supported victims to the social system." (Gubar; 260). In her novel *Frankenstein* she delves into the mystery of procreation which has always been both so fascinating and horrifying for man.

Among the nineteenth century women novelists, only two emerge as writers who seem not to have taken into account this world of social settings or internal versus external conflict as the center of interest in their works. Emily and Charlotte Bronte seem to have turned entirely into themselves to search their own feelings at a time when it was not considered proper for women to entertain, much less to acknowledge a possibility of such introspection. Emily Bronte wrote of the world that she herself encountered and felt; she showed no apparent concern with how the world should be, but rather how the world was from her own inner being. Her characters in *Wuthering Heights* are full of the splendor of feeling and passion, they are products of natural growth rather than of reason and form. Emily gave both her male and female characters an exceptional power to live and destroy; but, her novel focuses mainly on Heathcliff and not Catherine Earnshaw. It was Emily's sister Charlotte who actually complemented her feelings with her probings into other possibilities in delineating a woman of her age. Her masterpiece *Jane Eyre* turned out to be a cry for the liberty of her woman's soul and identity despite the male authoritarian pressure that had frozen it into a pretty pattern for the admiration of the world at large.

When we study the novels of the era therefore, we see that the two women novelists who search for the underlying mystery that should give them the vitality they merited as the "other" are Mary Shelley and Charlotte Bronte rather than Emily and Charlotte Bronte. Mary Shelley and Charlotte Bronte used different styles and took up different approaches; nevertheless, they both seem to be aware of the fact that there was more underlying the debasement that appeared to be the woman's station in life and the role attributed to her in her "sphere" than the male-dominant discourse was willing to admit.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

In *Frankenstein*, a novel published in 1818, Mary Shelley, while touching once more on the aspiration to knowledge which had so absorbed the writers of the previous centuries, displays the dilemma of the nineteenth century

woman. As a witch/woman she creates Frankenstein, the monster. Through Mr. Frankenstein we see how the writer uses the forbidden knowledge of procreation so that Mr. Frankenstein, much like a woman, both gives birth to a new being and brings about evil and destruction. Consequently the knowledge is damned and therefore it must remain hidden. Like the witch sabbaths of old, the incident of bringing to life is surrounded by violent storms and other natural phenomena. The knowledge and its conception literally come to life, but then they must be subdued. This is aptly done in the cold, frozen regions where Frankenstein, the monstrous conception, must hide himself. The author seems ambivalent about whether the power should be exposed or whether it should remain repressed in the subconscious of the two sexes.

In her novel, Shelley presents us with two narrators, one Walton, who is in search of a soul mate to confide his most intimate wishes, and the other Mr. Frankenstein, the man who has discovered the mystery of procreation, by creating a monster or 'daemon' in the image of man. The novel starts out with Walton's quest for a partner who will understand and lead him on the road to discovery. We are made to understand presently that the person he is looking for to share his hidden wishes and ideas with does appear. The two Frankenstein's are spotted one after another from a distance, traversing the ice surrounding the Pole-bound vessel of Walton, whose one ambition is to discover the mystery of life. He tells Mr. Frankenstein:

...the burning ardour of my soul, ..., with all the fervour that warmed me, how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprize. One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought, for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race.
(p. 27)

Much like Faust, Mr. Frankenstein also initially aspires to comprehend what is forbidden to mankind:

It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn: and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my enquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense the physical secrets of the world. (p. 36).

He realizes, however, that this knowledge is buried in the wisdom of those he calls the "ancient teachers", since the modern masters claim that the "elixir of life is a chimera". He explains to Walton:

'But these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows.'(p. 46).

In short the knowledge and powers of the ancients are reminiscent of the powers of the witch which also entails the power to 'command the thunders of heaven', 'mimic the earthquake' and even to procreate. Here Shelley touches on the mystery that man has been trying to conquer since the beginning of time: the wish of the male to create a being like himself; the wish to take into his hand the power that has been given to women.

Mr. Frankenstein is aware that creation is closely linked to death and explains: "To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death." (p. 49). Finally going through all the toils of giving birth, our mad scientist delivers his creation, which he must relegate to the ices of oblivion:

'The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of ice, which I only do not fear, are dwelling to me, and the only one that man does not grudge. These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder to me than your fellow beings. If the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction.' (p. 96).

Here Shelley shifts her focus from the creator man, endowed with the power of the witch, to the conception which has emerged and which must be hidden away, since it is so frightening. The knowledge and its ideation must be concealed so as not to disrupt the social order set by men themselves. Much like a witch, Shelley finds herself to have endowed Mr. Frankenstein with the miraculous ability to create another living, breathing creature; an ability that had been the province of only women. This was the frightening and mysterious domain that had always troubled the male, forcing him to subdue the "other" who was invested with the prerogative.

The writer then shifts her viewpoint once more to display the sexual politics of her time and its underlying reasons. We are told at the beginning of the novel that our hero or rather anti-hero Mr. Frankenstein comes from a background that is soundly nineteenth century in makeup. His rich middle-aged father has taken as his wife a picture of feminine comeliness and virtue: a young woman of exceptional beauty, who will embellish his home and show off his wealth. The other woman whom he chooses as his mate, Elizabeth, is also the picture of loving, angelic beauty that she is destined to be. She is described as the pillar of strength in the home:

She indeed veiled her grief and strove to act the comforter to us all. She looked steadily on life and assumed its duties with courage and zeal. She devoted herself to those whom she had been taught to call her uncle and cousins. Never, was she so enchanting as at this time, when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget. (p. 42).

And, it is the existence of such angels who guard hearth and home so to speak that drives the monster Frankenstein to commit heinous crimes. He too wants a glowing partner. So we see Frankenstein turn to his creator Mr. Frankenstein, much like any man turns to the woman who has created him and is the "other" for him, and say:

'Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey! (p. 162).

Through the vehicle of this tale of horror, Mary Shelley explores the hatred and fear that the woman's powers seem to have instilled in the hearts of men who have gone so far as to identify her as a witch and a conspirator of the Devil in their desire to subjugate her to their wills. Endowing Mr. Frankenstein, a man, with the power given to women, she demonstrates the agony of the knowledge of procreation and death. Once Mr. Frankenstein loses his absolute maleness in the process of delivery and starts leading a hermaphroditic existence, he finds himself in the oppressed and degraded condition of the woman. Frankenstein, the monster, verbalizes his demands on "her" very clearly: "You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!" Shelley, the witch creator, realizes that she must bury her knowledge under the ice so that she can continue to adorn the imaginations of those who will pattern her as a powerless nonentity.

Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre

Like Mary Shelley, Charlotte Bronte also tries to break through the ice that covers the recess of her inner knowledge. *Jane Eyre*, is ostensibly the story of the infatuation of a forty year-old man of means to a nineteen-year-old governess who is in his employment. The fact that the novel endorses the love, and later the marriage of a man of affluence and some influence to a young woman (girl) who has nothing to her name other than her 'womanly graces' and 'genteel upbringing', has endeared this work to later women writers who have chosen the very same schema to write for the lower middle class women of their day. In fact the apparent message of this novel has had such wide acceptance that not only women, but male novelists also have written about the 'powerful, indulgent man,' and 'young woman who needs to be protected from the world.' Though in all these stories there is a certain friction and conflict before the ultimate reconciliation is reached and marriage

is realized, the couples are almost always relegated to the never-never land of living happily ever after.

Although when looked at from this superficial perspective *Jane Eyre* appears to be a romantic pacifier, it is actually about the schizoid emergence of the nineteenth century middle-class woman from the depths of the house into a partially realistic world, which she might share to a very limited extent with men. It is also however, and indeed to a greater extent Bronte's search for the underlying power of her sex that has been denied her because it has become taboo. She tries to show that woman is not an entity only secondary to man and existing to assuage his whims and fantasies, but a magnificent being who is different and dynamic, an individual who has to be reckoned with rather than suppressed.

Bronte presents Jane, a rather plain, waif-like heroine, from two angles. First that she is the woman who cries out for some social acceptance and rights to lead a life beyond the confines of the male-dominant social order. The middle class orphan Jane tries to escape from the house of her uncle, later from Lowood Institute, then from Rochester's house, and finally from the house of St. John Rivers. Secondly, she is forever looking forward to a situation that will let her breathe, change her lifestyle, and enable her to become a person herself.

Jane repudiates the role of the angel of the house which in her world is exemplified by Mrs. Reed. For her Mrs. Reed is a monster who coddles her son John and is somewhat pleasant to her Eliza and Georgiana who are respectively headstrong and selfish; and spoiled, spiteful, and insolent. Georgiana is indulged because of her beauty. "Her beauty, her pink cheeks, and her golden curls, seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault." (p. 18). Ugly Jane is to suffer her trespasses not only for her looks but also because of her unbending spirit:

I could not answer the ceaseless inward question - why I thus suffered; now at the distance of - I will not say how many years - I saw it clearly. They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathise with one amongst them; a

heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in propensities; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest, or adding to their pleasure; a noxious thing cherishing the germs of indignation at their treatment, of contempt at their judgement. (p. 19).

The characteristics of Jane which Mrs. Reed most hates are her ugliness, and her spirit which refuses to bow to the requirements and ways of the household and the supremacy of John. She does escape the house only to find herself in another institution which has been founded primarily to subdue the female sex. She, who had been turned away physically and psychologically from the Reeds' home because Mrs. Reed refused to see Jane unless she evidenced: "...a more social and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner - something lighter, franker, more natural as it were -... ." (p. 9) finds herself in a situation which is no different in Lowood Institute.

Lowood Institute represents the endeavour of society as a whole to stifle any wish for freedom or vanity of the female sex. It is the place where Jane's stone heart is to be changed into a flesh heart says Mr. Brocklehurst, the director of this foundation which will curb any deviances from the norms set for women by the society. Mr. Brocklehurst explains his mission and the aims of Lowood:

Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood; I, therefore, direct that special care shall be bestowed on its cultivation amongst them. I have studied how best to mortify in them in the worldly sentiment of pride....I have a Master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world: my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh, to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with the braided hair and costly apparel; each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which vanity itself might have woven;... (p. 40; 73)

Mr. Brocklehurst and Master John are not the only male figures who wish to subjugate Jane and turn her into an "acceptable" woman. St. John Rivers also wishes to do the same. He does not approve of Jane because she is impassioned, and although he will look after her as a lost soul he will not

accept her as a free being. Despite the fact that the status quo requires it so, Jane will not marry him for his approach to her is fundamentally no different from either that of Brocklehurst or that of Master John. They all actually seek to enslave her:

I was so fully aware that only serious moods and occupations were acceptable, that in his presence every effort to sustain or follow any other became vain: I fell under a freezing spell. When he said "go" I went; "come," I came; "do this," I did it, but I did not love my servitude: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me. (p. 440).

Though she wishes ardently to be free, Jane is aware that any alliance with any institution will require her to subdue her selfhood. In all her gropings for freedom she is aware of the reasons underlying the discipline imposed on women. Their "otherness" had to be done away with and they had to learn to serve men absolutely.

School-rules, school-duties, school habits and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies: such was what I knew of existence. And now I felt that it was not enough. I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication. For change, stimulus. That petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space. "Then," I cried, half desperate, "grant me at least a new servitude! A new servitude! There is something in that," I soliloquised (mentally, be it understood; I did not talk aloud). It is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly, but no more than sounds for me, and so hollow and fleeting that it is mere waste of time to listen to them. But Servitude! That must be matter of fact. Any one may serve. I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. Can I not get so much of my own will? Is not the thing feasible! Yes - yes- the end is not so difficult, if I had only a brain active enough to ferret out the means of attaining it. (pp. 97-8).

This is not the only time she cries out for freedom. In fact she is much more articulate about what she wishes once she has entered Rochester's service:

Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions beside political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are suppose to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, and laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (pp. 125-6).

What Jane wants is to enter the power domain of the male, or as she sees it, the other half of the population. She wants at least to be considered a person with equal rights to education. One who can free herself from the attributes of tranquility, domesticity and stagnation that have been set as the destiny of womankind.

Intertwined with Jane's wish for freedom and equality in the sphere of power is her wish to come to terms with her suppressed physical self. This physical self is as much of a threat to her being as her obstinate wish for justice and fairness. At the beginning of the novel Jane tells us about a passage she is interested in in the bird book she likes to look at whenever she has the time. It is mysterious and melancholy, cold and undiscovered:

Where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls,
Boils round the naked, melancholy isles
Of farthest Thule; and the Atlantic surge
Pours in among the stormy Hebrides. (p. 10).

She wonders about the meaning of these lines, and daydreams. The passage brings to her mind those regions of herself that she has been forbidden to enter as a girl-child:

...the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space, that reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields

of ice, the accumulation of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the pole and concentrate the multiplied rigours of extreme cold...Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray; to the broken boat stranded on a desolate coast; to the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking...I cannot tell what sentiment haunted the quite solitary churchyard, with its inscribed headstone; its gate, its two trees, its low horizon, girdled by a broken wall, and its newly risen crescent, attesting to the hour of eventide... (pp. 10-11d).

Her physical self has been buried under the ice of centuries as she says, like a broken boat; the woman in her is stranded on a desolate coast and the moon, the symbol of Diana is ghastly, looking down on the wreck which had once been her kingdom and prerogative. In short the magic, or rather the miracle of woman is dead leaving only a headstone. Jane feels the loneliness and the bleakness of that shadowy region, its grandeur as well as its seclusion. She realizes the force of the secret that has been kept from her. Master John scolds her for reading this book which stirs such feelings and images in her mind and heart. At the end of their confrontation Jane is banished to the red room. Red here for both passion and death; death since this is the room where her uncle died. Jane is terrified by the red room where she has been imprisoned because she acted like a "mad cat". She is later released after she has uttered a terrible scream, a chilling scream that brings the members of the household to the door, a scream that also foreshadows Bertha's screams emanating from her prison in Rochester's house. Jane is let out of the room "on condition of perfect submission and stillness" (p. 21). From then on Jane realizes that the taboo is so strong that she cannot even verbalize those feelings which trouble her so much. Her desire for freedom angers the male and they must be put into more "acceptable" terms if they are to be expressed at all. One wonders if these are the only stipulations for emerging from the icy kingdom or servitude. Can Jane or Bertha/Antoinette, who has lost all identity, be liberated if she submits totally and is perfectly still. Is their freedom now that they know what underlies the glaciers going to be a more exacting mission?

Jane encounters Bertha, Rochester's wife and her alter ego, in Thronfield Hall. Both women are imprisoned on different occasions in rooms with hangings that will muffle their voices: the red room with its hangings around the bed, Bertha's prison with its tapestries. Jane recognizes Bertha's laugh for what it is as soon as she hears it issuing from the top of the house:

It was a curious laugh - distinct, formal, mirthless. I stopped. The sound ceased, only for an instant. It began again, louder...the laugh was tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I have ever heard;...(p. 122).

And it is the echo of this very sound that activates the feelings which she cannot totally account for in herself, originating in one room and then encompassing her whole being:

...to let my heart be heaved by the exultant movement, which, while it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life; and, best of all, to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended - a tale my imagination created and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence. (p. 125).

The surge in her feelings, the fire underlying the ice is the aspect of her being that troubles Jane almost as much as her wish for freedom and equality in education. On the other hand, she seems aware of the danger and hopelessness of this second quest as the tragic laugh of Bertha, her alter ego, echoes in the Hall:

...the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha! which, when first heard, had thrilled me; I heard, too, her eccentric murmurs: stranger than her laugh. There were days when she was quite silent; but there were others when I could not account for the sounds she made. (p. 126).

She herself cannot find pardon even among other females when she dares venture into those regions that have been forbidden to her:

...for I never forgot the, to me, frightful episode of the the red-room; in detailing which, my excitement was sure, in some degree to break bounds; for nothing could soften in my recollection the spasm of agony which clutched at my heart when Mrs.Reed spurned my wild supplication for pardon, and locked me a second time in the dark and haunted chamber. (p. 81).

Jane encounters Bertha first when the latter tries to burn Rochester very suitably in his bed. Jane becomes aware of her closeness and of the unearthly quality underlying the laugh:

This was a demonic laugh - low, suppressed, and deep - uttered, as it seemed, at the very keyhole of my chamber door. The head of my bed was near the door, and I thought at first that the goblin-laughter stood at my bedside... (p. 168).

The goblin with the demonic laugh is actually at Jane's bedside; she has fallen in love with Rochester and is teetering at the edge of becoming a woman which could entail other characteristics that seem to be more readily associated with the underworld of demons and spirits. She is becoming acquainted with Bertha the goblin which underlies the "elf" in her. She glimpses that part of herself that has lain under the ice of many centuries. It is after this incident that Jane truly realizes she is in love with Rochester - the frozen waters despite everything are beginning to thaw:

I regained my couch, but never thought of sleep. Till morning dawned I tossed on a bouyant but unquiet sea, where billows of trouble rolled under surges of joy. I thought sometimes I saw beyond its wild waters a shore, sweet as the hills of Beulah; and now and then a freshening gale, watered by hope, bore my spirit triumphantly towards the bourne; but I could not reach it even in fancy - a countering breeze blew off land, and continually drove me back. Sense would resist delirium; judgement would warn passion. Too feverish to rest, I rose as soon as day dawned. (p. 172).

She comprehends that her socialization process forbids her to abandon herself to her passions; the dictates of man have prevailed once more. The messages are legion, and emphatic.

Rochester, fittingly dressed as a gypsy fortune teller - perhaps to appeal to her senses - reminds her:

The forehead declares, 'Reason' sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feeling burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things; but judgement shall still have the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision. Strong wind, earthquake-shock, and the fire may pass by; but I shall follow the guiding of that still small voice which interprets the dictates of the conscience. (p. 226).

Invested with the clairvoyance of the second sex, and therefore able to touch on the underlying currents, Rochester the male has reinforced the message. The order is reason, and therefore reason and not the passions is sacrosanct. That which is not rational belongs to the heathen and the passionate 'other'; that is the unacceptable witch.

The men in the novel seem in no manner ready to confront passion that is not their own. A woman's passion and power can only breed evil and drive them to extremes that might end in their losing their control over the female sex. This is illustrated again and again throughout the novel. Master John readily hits Jane who has dared to show passionate conduct. St. John Rivers does not want to associate with Rosamund who touches feelings he is not ready to face in himself, and he will therefore, punish her by having nothing to do with her and by deciding to marry Jane, who observes:

I comprehended how he should despise himself for the feverish influence it exercised over him; how he should wish to stifle and destroy it; how he should mistrust its ever conducting permanently to his happiness or hers. (p. 435).

Rochester has a similar attitude towards carnality in women. He tells Jane of his escapades in Europe and his many mistresses. He readily absolves himself of the crime of marrying Bertha, as he claims it natural for any man to come under foreign influences and commit capital errors if he is not in his own country but in a remote land. His abhorance for Bertha stems from the fact that she found happiness in things that were not supposed to bring happiness to a woman: "...happiness in pleasure - I mean in heedless, sensual pleasure - such as dulls intellect and blights feeling." (p. 244). He says of his wife:

...her character ripened and developed with frightful rapidity; her vices sprang up fast and rank; they were so strong, only cruelty could check them, and I would not use cruelty. What a pigmy intellect she had, and what giant propensities! How fearful were the curses those propensities entailed on me! Bertha Mason, the true daughter of an infamous mother, dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste. (p. 342).

So because her 'propensities' are so great and he cannot cope with them, he brings her back to England to lock her up in the attic of his home because he cannot be cruel to her! According to him, imprisoning a woman is not cruelty; a woman's place is firmly set in the home in any case. The colder climate of England seems to symbolize here a chastity of a kind, a closeness to the icy fields of Jane's subconscious. Rochester's fear of the havoc a woman might cause once she is liberated and lets her nature take rein are expressed in the following manner:

I could find no refreshment anywhere. Mosquitoes came buzzing in and hummed sullenly round the room; the sea, which I could hear from thence, rumbled dull like an earthquake - black clouds were casting up over it; the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot cannon-ball - she threw her last bloody glance over a world quivering with the ferment of tempest. (p. 343).

This free woman is terrifying, suffocating, and dangerously associated with the red moon. To quench these feelings of terror a more temperate climate is necessary, and the mores and morals of England are more conducive to this wish. And, Rochester feels that it is his male prerogative to lock Bertha up "in that third-story room, of whose inner cabinet she has now for ten years made a wild beast's den - a goblin's cell." (p. 345).

What Rochester wants, and what the whole of society seems to want, is a little elf-lamb as opposed to the goblin-wolf who will overwhelm him and Jane too if he is not careful: "I should have been a careless shepherd if I had left a lamb - my pet lamb - so near a wolf's den, unguarded; you were safe." (p. 242). Jane appears to be duely put in her place; all she wishes she says is: "I like to serve you, sir, and obey you in all that is right." Rochester's answer is that of a man who has accomplished his task. He has cast himself in the role of the shepherd Christ figure: "Precisely, I see you do. I see genuine contentment in your gait and mien, your eye and face, when you are helping me and pleasing me - working for me, and with me, in, as you characteristically say, *'all that is right.'*" (p. 243).

The standards that seem to meet Rochester's requirements are apparently somewhere between the staid young woman of his day and the goblin he has relegated to the attic:

She comes from the other world - from the abode of people who are dead; and tells me so when she meets me alone here in the gloaming! If I dared, I'd touch you, to see if you are substance or shadow, you elf! but I'd soon offer to take hold of a blue *ignis fatuus* light in a marsh...Tell me now, fairy as you are - can't you give me a charm or a philter, or something of that sort, to make me a handsome man? (p. 274-75).

Although Bronte insinuates the witch image into the wishes of her hero, she does not seem to have the courage to substantiate it for fear that it might be turned away as Bertha had.

The emergence of the goblin, a creature of warmer regions and boiling seas, disrupts Jane's and Rochester's plans for marriage. Jane's subconscious, which had started thawing at the prospect of a relationship with a man of her choice, is frozen over once more now that she is faced with the reality:

Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent expectant woman - almost a bride - once a cold solitary girl again: her life was pale; her prospects were desolate. A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses; on hayfield and cornfield lay a frozen shroud;... (p. 330).

Jane who was about to take a tentative step to unearth what lay beneath the frozen landscape of her subconscious has to retract.

Jane, who leaves Rochester on this note of frozen sensuality, goes in search of other freedoms. If not freedom of the flesh then she at least deserves freedom of the mind and soul. She cannot, however, attain freedom from the servitude designated to women either. At the end of the novel, Brontë solves the dilemma and Jane is faced with: "...a real blacksmith, brown, broad-shouldered; blind and lame into the bargain." (p. 489). The frozen ice of Jane's subconscious desires melts into cool spring waters, the couple demurely live together and have children. Jane is loved by an emasculated man; therefore, she need not fear the boiling waters emerging; there will be no cries from the upper rooms which Bertha has burned to the ground. As for the freedom of mind and soul she has been searching for, she seems ready to give it up in favor of the strong arms of Rochester, who will only become stronger with her help. The nineteenth century couple make do with these illusory solutions and are therefore allowed to 'live happily ever after.' The teeming feelings are there but they are reflected from the viewpoint of an only partially conscious witch; there will be no trouble in this patriarchal heaven at least for a while. The battle between the elf and the whore/goblin/witch has been won by the elf at least theoretically for the time being.

Both Bronte and Shelley show an awareness of the power, the passions and the agony which are peculiar to the female sex. The characteristics that men have been careful to repress for centuries so as to retain the patriarchy that they had constructed with such pains. Though both authors acknowledge this power invested in women, they do not seem prepared to motivate women to embrace the liberty and the status that should be theirs. There is apparently some compunction in their attitude when faced with an ultimate choice. They, as nineteenth century women, do not dare to (or are too conditioned to) liberate themselves from the shackles of patriarchal norms and institutions. So both Shelley and Bronte end up by finding temporary solutions to their problems. In other words they question the established norms, recognize the nature and existence of the witch in woman, but they do not offer real solutions to set her free,

CHAPTER VI

THE EMERGENCE OF THE WITCH IN TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE

Feminism in the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century was a time of strife and change. The world was a place of war and philosophy. Technology, new discoveries in science, and the quickly changing social fabric resulted not so much in a loss of belief in witchcraft and magic, but rather in a loss of Christian faith. People were searching for a new myth as a reference point for their existence. Frazer with his *Golden Bough* found a meeting point between the primitive and civilized by underscoring the fact that under skeptical, rational thinking there remained some mythical underpinnings which affected our conduct. This turning away from God and search for a myth is perhaps what brought about the search for the witch who had been used as a scapegoat since the advent of monotheism.

Freud, who had an immense impact on the intelligensia throughout the century, was also concerned with the myths underlying the actions of mankind, as in fact was Jung who posited that we shared a primordial body of archetypes. Though the two psychiatrists did not agree on the myths as such, their theories converged at the point that we as human beings behave in accordance with universal patterns. As an outcome the myth of Oedipus for example became a universal explanation for certain aspects of human behavior. It is strange though, that while considering the ancient myths, none of them seems to have deliberated on the function of the once powerful witch figures within these myths even though these female figures had had such a significant impact on mankind throughout history. In fact Freud seems to have considered women as ambivalent figures with deep seated neuroses, entities who are lacking a penis and therefore condemned to be secondary in function, since the world revolved around the glorious male and his sexual power.

In the political scene, women continued to fight with growing impetus for their rights as legal entities. Their cause was promoted by the various political and economic doctrines of the era. The liberals, much like their predecessors Wollestoncraft and later Mill and Taylor, pushed for equal rights both political and educational. Later liberalist feminists showed themselves to be advocates of sexual equality in terms of gender justice at large. They wished to liberate women from oppressive gender roles which had till then kept women in lesser echelons of society by deeming them competent in only certain roles and not in others. In fact well into the second half of the twentieth century liberal feminists prescribed androgyny which they claimed would eliminate all inequalities. Androgyny would liberate not only women but also men since it would set the individual free from the confines of the appropriate. (Heilbrun; x-xi).

The Marxist feminists diverged from the liberals in the belief that what makes us human is what we produce or our means of subsistence. Man is man because of what he does specifically to meet his basic needs in productive activities. It is these productive activities carried out collectively on the part of men and women which shape their characters. Production and reproduction account for the story of social life, in other words history. Furthermore Marxists believe that social existence determines consciousness and because woman is given a subordinate role with respect to man both in the work-place and at home, she has an inferior image of herself. Class consciousness would be one way to join women who share the roles of wives, mothers, sisters, etc. When they become aware that these roles do not come about as a natural outcome of love but are in fact professional roles which entail work, they will be able to develop class consciousness accordingly. The theme of alienation, an integral part of Marxism, also figures in Marxist feminist theory. Women's alienation is disturbing because she can only experience herself while fulfilling other people's needs. Therefore one of their primary aims is to create a world where women will experience themselves as whole persons, an integral part of the world we live in. Their main goal then should be "to identify the operation of gender relations as and where they may be distinct from, or connected with, the processes of production and reproduction understood by historical materialism." (Barrett; 9).

De Beauvoire, the prominent feminist existentialist philosopher publishing in the first half of the twentieth century, is also interested in investigating the place of woman in the public sphere and her relations with man. Her analysis goes beyond the realm of the social in including an introspective aspect to her exegesis. She does not only consider social standing but also the psychological reasons intrinsic to the situation. In *The Second Sex* she asserts that man has named himself the Self and woman the Other. Therefore, if the Other is a threat to the Self, then woman is a threat to man; and, if man wishes to remain free, he must subordinate woman to himself. (De Beauvoire; xxxiii). In order to control women, men fabricated myths expelling them to the sphere of Otherness or the realm of the immanence of the body. These myths demonstrated that the inexplicable could be justified and the complex could be simplified. All in all men's ultimate aim was to obtain from women everything that men lacked and to pressure them into believing that they were mutable, chameleon like beings. Male authors presented women variously according to their own specifically acquired self-image. What they had in common however, was that they all wished her to forget, deny, or in some way negate herself in order to fit the role that had been written for her in order to serve her man. The overall concept was that woman had a duty and that was to sacrifice herself. (De Beauvoire; 280). In addition to idealizing woman who sacrifices herself, men's myths about women show a fundamental ambivalence about her nature. She is connected to nature as a whole and consequently displays innocence and guilt, life and death. She also reminds him of his own perishable self, and is so required to perfume and powder herself so that her animal crudity is hidden from him in his flight from carnality and mortality which are embodied in her. Woman herself cannot sneer at this image that has been insinuated on her because it is man who holds the power over her and may use her for his own purposes no matter what cost she must pay. What makes the myth of woman even more horrific is the fact that in most cases she has internalized this image and thinks that it is an accurate reflection of what it entails to be a woman. (De Beauvoire; 181-182).

Simon De Beauvoire, as an existentialist, refers to Freudian theory which had such an impact on society's perspective concerning the motives underlying certain behavior patterns. She seems to admit the validity of Freud's theory that sexuality is the ultimate explanation for why things are as they are. But, she also claims that woman's 'otherness' could not be explained simply as a

castration complex, neither could this very complex be the basis for her subservient and inferior social status. Women, she contended did not desire the penis per se, but were interested in the material and psychological privileges that society accorded to it. (De Beauvoire; 55).

Other feminist scholars of the century dwell not so much on the production aspects of the problem or on its place within specific political ideologies, but rather on the deepseated sexual oppression of women that has occurred throughout history. They concentrate on how men have tried to control women's bodies, and how female sexuality has been constructed in the world specifically to serve men's needs.(Jagger & Ruthenberg; 136). Of these feminists Shulamith Firestone claimed that the patriarchy was a systematic subordination of women based on sex characteristics in other words the difference in their role with respect to reproduction. The oppressing male/oppressed female structure paradigm could only be destroyed she claimed through an androgynous culture. (Firestone; 1). Firestone was also against Freud's theory in so far as it emphasized the penis as a focus of women's desire rather than as a symbol of the power that women lack. She pointed out that in the family there is a hierarchy of power where physically, economically and emotionally a child is completely dependent on, and at the mercy of his/her parents and especially of the father. (Firestone; 48-49).

Still other feminists believed that men are jealous of women's reproductive functions. For example Margaret O'Brian concludes that the patriarchal system is actually man's wish to compensate and counteract the alienation of his reproductive consciousness. Man's alienation from this process is due to the fact that there is a spatial and temporal continuity between the ovum and the resulting child, taking place within the woman's body. Furthermore it is women who perform the fundamental labor of reproduction; and, last but not least a woman's connection to a particular child is known at the moment of birth, whereas the connection of the man is always uncertain - he can never really know whether a child is genetically connected to him. It is because of this precarious relationship that men try to control women's bodies: in order to control those of their children. (O'Brien; 52).

Adrienne Rich is another of the feminists who argues that men are jealous of women's reproductive powers. This jealousy stems from their realization that all human life is born of women. (Rich; 11). In order to keep this primal force

under control, patriarchy has tried all within its power to restrict the power of the mother. The power of the mother, Rich claims, is primal and frightening to the man who feels that if women can give life she may also be able to withdraw life. Man has done all in his power, including taking over the birth process as doctors who have replaced midwives to gain control over women. (Rich; 39).

Again in connection with the sexual image of women, Kate Millet terms the neo-Freudians as a reactionary group. Her claim is that although in the beginning Freud might have seemed progressive, interpretations of his premises concerning sexuality have been used to sanction traditional sex roles, and to validate temperamental differences between the sexes. (Millet; 178). Marilyn French, one of the earliest feminists, likewise believed that sexism was the root of all oppression, and that if it was possible to rationalize the domination of men over women, then it was possible to justify any and all forms of domination. Sexism in short was an evil on a par with any other "ism". She analyzes the origins of patriarchy and reaches the conclusion that society at the beginning must have been matricentric since it was the mother who had been the center of survival, and bonding. But in line with the analysis of Engels, French claims that as population increases and nature no longer appears to be the prolific provider, humanity in its will to survive and subjugate nature separates and alienates itself from this source both psychologically and physically. Man desires to control nature and also woman because of her productive role which is so similar to that of nature itself. And with the will of man to dominate the monolith woman/nature, patriarchy, or rank system of the power-over is born. (French; 66-69). French also asserts that the feminine pleasure principal is the balm and the predominant trait that will weld together the society of the future. Thus there will no longer be power-over, but power-to in this androgynous society that bonds the feminine and the feminine/masculine traits. (French; 505).

Mary Daly, in her book *Beyond God the Father*, presents God as the paradigm for all patriarchies. In monotheistic myth. God dwells in a place that is beyond the reach of men, thus setting up the I-it/subject-object/self-other relationship. In this paradigm, it is the woman who has the reproductive powers and is therefore associated with or given the role of nature thus being relegated to the status of it/object/other. Daly, therefore, wishes to replace this archaic God with what she terms Be-ing, an immanent god within the

universe as opposed to one outside it. This immanent god will then think in Buber's terms of: I-thou not I-it. As it stands society is living in an I-it mode where man is the "I" and woman is the "it" making it possible for men to define women as the second sex. Women, in short, may become personas if and only if they are able to reject the values and morals of the patriarchy. Again in her book *Pure Lust*, Daly insists that the woman can only be freed if she remolds her personal characteristics in accordance with her free, passionate, pure spirit. Once the real woman of pure passion, what she calls the "positive spinster" is released no man or patriarchal morality will be able to suppress or restrain her.

Feminists who were concerned with the feelings of sexual inferiority that were insinuated on women attacked Freud much like De Beauvoire had previously done. Karen Horney argued that women's feelings of deficiency did not stem from penis envy, an aspect of biological determinism as Freud claimed, but from cultural norms and values. That is cultural determinism was paramount in the development of a woman's gender identity. In other words woman's feelings of inferiority did not spring from the recognition of her "castration", but rather from her social subordination. The traditional Freudian theory which leads women to believe that they are in effect incomplete was refuted on the basis that the theory itself was based on sexuality, the very dimension that is, and was used to keep women out of the public sphere. Women under these circumstances is symbolically castrated in that they have been denied the power that the penis represents. Patriarchal society creates women as feminine; in other words as passive, masochistic and narcissistic entities and then claims that this characterizes their true selves. Women who seek equality then and hope to internalize masculinity. In short like de Beauvoire, Horney states that women do not want to be men, because they envy his penis but rather they want to be men because men control society. (Horney; 54-70).

The way women conceive of themselves as subordinate is a subject that is also taken up by Dorothy Dinnerstein, another feminist scholar. Dinnerstein maintains that gender roles which are cultural constructs have influenced the way women and men envision themselves and each other. According to this picture, women are the treacherous, seductive and impenetrable representatives of the dark and magic underwater world which lures voyagers to their doom as the "treacherous mermaid". It is a place from which life

comes and in which men cannot live. On the other hand, men are the fearsome minotaurs with gigantic and eternally infantile lust. (Dinnerstein; 5).

Freud's premise that men had a well-developed sense of justice and morality in comparison to women was also challenged. Carol Gilligan, for example, argued that men and women had different conceptions of morality which were equally valid. The origins of these different moralities lay in the fact that separation and autonomy were important in men's lives and therefore they focused around the issues of justice, fairness, rules and rights, whereas the importance of family and friends in women's lives led them to emphasize people's wants, needs, interests and aspirations. Gilligan claims that the systematic of traditional, philosophical and psychological literature on moral development has disregarded this bias and consequently hindered the recognition of women's conception of morality as a valid one, indeed has found it to be deficient. (Gilligan; 2-23).

Another feminist scholar to attack Freudian theory was Juliet Mitchell. Exploring the apparent failings of Freud's followers, she claimed that it revealed how social beings emerged from simply biological ones. She went on to assert that psychosexual development was a process of the social interpretation of biology, not the inevitable manifestation of biological destiny. (Mitchell 71; 164). Mitchell was also of the opinion that the Oedipus complex should be discarded since it was essentially constant within patriarchal society, (which according to her was the only kind of society), therefore, no matter where a woman lives, how rich or poor, whether black or white, whether beautiful or ugly, she will have approximately the same status so long as attitudes toward women do not change, and so long as female and male psychology are dominated by the phallic symbol. (Mitchell 74; 370).

In short, feminist scholars tried to point out from psychological and sociological points of view the political nature of sexism. They challenged the so called scientific theories which assigned an inferior nature to women. Their arguments were on the one hand taken up and used in the protest movements of the feminist activists, and on the other hand they inspired the women of letters to explore in their works the image of the angelic, ideal woman and its anti-thesis the Satanic woman, the witch figure created by the paternalistic norms of male-dominant societies.

Women as Witches in Twentieth Century Literature

In the twentieth century, women began to address their issues far more directly and pignantly than did their sisters of the nineteenth century. With a growing awareness of the reasons underlying their plight, they tried to challenge the weak, emotional, irrational and irresponsible image imposed on them and started to search for their own identity. They tried to forge their own image. In the process, the image that emerged as the most powerful was of course that of the witch since it brought with it both sexual and social liberation.

The witch image emerges in literature towards the mid-twentieth century. The figure of the witch does not involve itself with the rights and equalities so grossly distributed by the patriarchal society. It does not demand equal pay for equal work, but rather the freedom to exploit the inner qualities of women; the real and existent qualities - those that had been pertinent to the witch who had been pushed to the peripheries of society since her inception. It was a search for the real paradigm of women away from the slut/whore, and affectionate/understanding/mother/sister wife dichotomies. In essence the first writers, Rhys and Bowen seem to be the forerunners of the feminists theoreticians in their approach to the image of woman as one possessing a power which frightens men and therefore has been oppressed by them. It was, however, the writers who named this being "the witch"; the feminist scholars of later years chose to use terminology that seemed more acceptable.

Elizabeth Bowen's The Demon Lover

One of the first authors of the twentieth century who has explored the sociological and psychological forces working on woman's ego is Elizabeth Bowen. Bowen seems to be fully aware of the agony that may result when a woman seeks to be independent. It would require the forging of a new and powerful self in her mind. So in *The Demon Lover*, a short story, Bowen presents us with Mrs. Drover, who goes through such a process. At the beginning of the story, we see that like all women Mrs. Drover is framed by her surrounding, that is her marital environment. She feels the void that this

has created. While observing the familiar streets after a shower, she senses her loneliness:

In her once familiar street, as in an unused channel, an unfamiliar queerness had silted up; a cat wove itself in and out of railings, but no human eye watched Mrs. Drover's return. (p. 1622)

Both the house and the streets remind Mrs. Drover of the unaccomplished realization of her inner self. What is more there is no one, 'no human eye' to share it with her. She looks at herself in the mirror and realizes that the desolation of her surroundings is perhaps the result of her own ineptitude to blend herself into the setting of her life: "Mrs. Drover's most normal expression was one of controlled worry, but of assent." She, in short assents to what she is subjected to but continues to worry. She remembers the lover she had in her youth and this upsets the immense void she experiences in and around her. It seems to challenge the precariously balanced but bleak existence that till then had been upheld to suit the norms of her surrounding:

The hollowness of the house this evening cancelled years on years of voices, habits and steps. Through the shut windows she only heard rain fall on the roofs around. To rally herself, she said she was in a mood - and, for two or three seconds shutting her eyes, told herself that she had imagined the letter. But she opened them - there it lay on the bed. (p. 1623).

The appearance of an unexpected letter which has somehow mysteriously penetrated her house, or rather her well-defined life forces her to recollect that episode in her life which had had such a hold on her. Her meeting and relationship with the lover was an incident that did not sit well with her socially well-defined identity. Furthermore, she and her lover did not harmonize in a manner that was acceptable:

He was never kind to me, not really. I don't remember him kind at all. Mother said he never considered me. He was set on me, that was what it was - not love. Not meaning a person well. What did he do, to make me promise like that? I can't remember. -But she found that she could.

She remembered with such dreadful acuteness that the twenty-five years since then dissolved like smoke and she instinctively looked for the weal left by the button on the palm of her hand. She remembered not only all that he said and did but the complete suspension of her existence during that August week. I was not myself - they all told me so at the time. She remembered - but with one white burning blank as where acid

has dropped on a photograph: *under no condition* could she remember his face. (p. 1626).

This seems to be the one occasion in Mrs. Drover's life that forced her to contact her inner self. It was frightening no doubt because it was one that broke through the boundaries that she and her milieu had carefully been brought up to function within. Her existence during this affair was precarious and though the attraction was so strong she felt vulnerable and obligated to those that were observing her from their oblivious positions of non-commitment.

The feelings aroused in her by this letter and its author are in direct opposition to the life that she has led, sheltered by her husband, her mother and her sister. This life which has amounted to the death of her inner energy. Such an annihilation of the self was what was naturally expected of her as the understanding, loving mother/sister/wife:

Now the prosaic woman, looking about her, was more perplexed than she knew by everything that she saw, by traces of her long former habit of life - the yellow smoke-stain up the white marble mantelpiece, the ring left by the vase on the top of the escritoire; the bruise in the wallpaper where, on the door being thrown open widely, the china handle had always hit the wall. The piano having gone away to be stored, had left what looked like claw-marks on its part of the parquet. Though not much dust had seeped in, each object wore a film of another kind; and, the only ventilation being the chimney, the whole drawing room smelled of the cold hearth. (p. 1622).

Mrs. Drover is dispassionate about what she has lived until then. She realizes that it is that other part of her existence which she had glimpsed that excites and horrifies her. This is the witch-like aspect of her self that she has been taught to suppress and forgo. But as the witch, the consort of Satan, in her awakens she is not able to keep her teeming inner being within the walls that have been built around her. Her rendezvous with her demon lover is therefore inevitable. It does not involve feeling; it is a reality which must at last be faced:

"You're going away such a long way."

"Not so far as you think."

"I don't understand?"

"You don't have to," he said, "sooner or later. You won't forget that. You need do nothing but wait."

...Looking in through the window at her mother and sister, who did not for the moment perceive her, she already felt that

unnatural promise drive down between her and the rest of all human kind. No other way of having given herself could have made her feel so apart, lost and foresworn. She could not have plighted a more sinister troth. (p. 1624).

No matter what, now that the troth has been plighted as Bowen says, it will have to be realized. So Mrs. Drover's demon lover, whom she has anticipated and dreaded and who stands for that which brings her to a realization of her real self and her needs, comes to drive her to her destination. This destination is actually the woman's real and impending position in society. There is no escape and no turning back from it. Consequently, according to Bowen, women who have been awakened to the realities of their own nature and the oppression of the paternalistic society will have to reclaim their identity as women or witches. They will have to assert the rights of their nature though this may cause them to be ostracized from the male-dominant society again like witches. The task is abhorrent from the perspective of society in general and its realization frustrating and lonely for the woman; nevertheless, according to Bowen it has to be accomplished.

Jean Rhys' The Wide Sargasso Sea

In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys takes a more daring step and picks up the thread of Charlotte Bronte's story, *Jane Eyre*, to study the dynamics of men women relationships in a male-dominant society as well as to show how a woman's makeup and expectations are different from those of a man's. Rhys does this by concentrating mainly on the subjective attributes of a woman and exploiting them further to reach the inner being and conflict that entail womanhood. The twentieth century version of Bronte's story focuses not on Jane but on Bertha the goblin. Rhys narrates that period of Antoinette's life before she is relegated to the attic. And in *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Bertha/Antoinette emerges as the truly tragic heroine.

The novel is the tale of the woman who has come forth into the open to live her god-given sexuality and identity not as a weak, lacking copy of man, but as an individual who is ready to try and wield her magical powers and her heretofore forbidden femaleness. Rhys is quick to show the tragedy of this one sided conviction. Rochester is not prepared to give up the supremacy of the male ego. It is a relentless battle between a socially accepted power

base, and the newly emerging, once powerful, but presently "other" being. Rhys seems to assert that woman is still confronted with the schizoid world that has been her lot once she lost the power that was invested in her sex.

The Sargasso Sea, full of fantastic weeds which were at one time the terror of sailors, is the locus where Rochester is drawn to find out the mysteries of which he has been aware but has safely pushed to the back of his mind. The danger now is imminent and suffocating, the compelling non-power of the weeds is what has been the termination of other men. The warm, clear waters are attractive but treacherous and need adroitness; Rochester, just like his forerunners, chooses to evade the issue by taking Antoinette to England and righteously locking her up in his attic. He places her within a framework which is in the tradition that has been meticulously and painstakingly drawn out for him and where he is able to function. Rochester is not the Christ figure he wishes to cast for himself as he did for Jane. Through her female instincts, Antoinette senses his abhorrent goal to destroy her. How and why she is driven to him, despite his animosity towards her, is described in detail. We read:

...so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. This must happen. Now we have reached the forest. We are under the tall dark trees and there is a wind. 'Here?' He turns and looks at me, his face black with hatred, and when I see this I begin to cry. He smiles slyly. 'Not here, not yet.' he says and I follow him, weeping. Now I do not try to hold up my dress, it trails in the dirt, my beautiful dress. We are no longer in the forest but in an enclosed garden surrounded by a stone wall and the trees are different trees. I do not know them. There are steps leading upwards. It is too dark to see the wall or the steps, but I know they are there and I think, 'It will be when I go up these steps. At the top.' I stumble over my dress and cannot get up. ...'I dreamed I was in Hell.' (pp. 50-51).

The male Christ figure of the nineteenth century has now come out into the open as the willful oppressor, the keeper of Hell.

Antoinette, Rhys' heroine, has nothing to do with the cold and desolate cemeteries that Bronte's Jane is associated with. Neither is she acquainted with the deserted wet streets surrounding Elizabeth Bowen's Mrs. Drover. She is a product of the luxuriant nature of the West Indies. Her subconscious

unlike theirs is opulent but not exuberant. She tries to recollect the beauty of what she had imagined, seen and experienced in her childhood. Unlike Jane she does not read and fantasize about life and nature:

Our garden was large and beautiful as the garden in the Bible - the tree of life grew here. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. Underneath the tree ferns, tall as forest trees ferns, the light was green. Orchids flourished out of reach or for some reason not to be touched. One was snaky looking, another like an octopus with long thin brown tentacles bare of leaves hanging from a twisted root. Twice a year the octopus orchid flowered - then not an inch of tentacle showed. It was a bell-shaped mass of white, mauve, deep purples, wonderful to see. The scent was very sweet and strong. I never went near it. (pp. 16-17).

One can feel the warmth and beauty of this garden that is like the garden of Eden before the Fall; yet, although like Eden it houses the tree of life, 'it has gone wild' and there are things there that Antoinette cannot hazard.

Rochester himself finds this nature abounding around him threatening and alien just as his West Indian wife. He would have things simpler, cooler and more in the manner which he has been brought up to believe is good and true:

What an extreme green....Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger. Her pleading expression annoys me. I have not bought her, she has bought me....I have sold my soul or you have sold it, and after all is it such a bad bargain? The girl is thought to be beautiful, she is beautiful. And yet ... (p. 59).

He cannot feel at ease in this alien richness with his alien wife who belongs to the abundance surrounding them. He echoes his apprehension again and again. There is the bathing pool for example, which he visits with Antoinette in her paradise, which makes him feel undecided about the place, and about her:

It was a beautiful place - wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it kept its secret. I'd find myself thinking. 'What I see is nothing - I want - what it *hides* - that is not nothing.' (p. 73).

So Rochester goes on looking for the rest of the mystery which his alien wife possesses while at the same time he longs for the familiar 'nights' and 'darkness' of England:

Every evening we saw the sun go down from the thatched shelter she called the *ajoupa*, the summer house. We watched the sky and the distant sea on fire - all colours were in that fire and the huge clouds fringed and shot with flame. But I soon tired of the display. I was waiting for the scent of the flowers by the river - they opened when darkness came and it came quickly. Not night or darkness as I knew it but night with blazing stars, an alien moon - night full of strange noises. Still night, not day. (p. 74).

The wonders of this garden which has been opened up to Rochester are not only extraneous but also perilous, because it is here with Antoinette that he experiences the many aspects of life:

'Die then. Sleep. It is all that I can give you.'...wonder if she ever guessed how near she came to dying. In her way, not in mine. It was not a safe game to play - in that place. Desire, Hatred, Life, Death came very close in the darkness. Better not know how close. Better not think, never for a moment. Not close. The same ... 'You are safe,' I'd say to her and to myself. 'Shut your eyes. Rest.' (p. 74).

Her freedom in this secret place turns out to be catching; he also feels liberated. So for a time both of them are frightened and elated by the prospect of the real experience that has been offered to them:

'Die then! Die!' I watched her die many times. In my way, not in hers. In sunlight, in shadow, by moonlight, by candle light. In the long afternoons when the house was empty. Only the sun was there to keep us company. We shut him out. And why not? Very soon she was as eager for what's called loving as I was - more lost and drowned afterwards.

She said, 'Here I can do as I like,' not I, and then I said it too. It seemed right in that lonely place, 'Here I can do as I like.' (p. 77).

When they are ready to face life, death, hatred and desire as each offers itself to them, then they will be free. But the male figure who has always looked on hatred and desire as weaknesses of the woman is not ready to free himself or her.

Rochester is afraid of his freedom and the discovery of the secret that he thinks he is so close to:

How old was I when I learned to hide what I felt? A very small boy. Six, five, even earlier. It was necessary, I was told, and that view I have always accepted. If these mountains challenge me, or Baptiste's face, or Antoinette's eyes, they are mistaken, melodramatic, unreal (England must be quite unreal and like a dream she said). (p. 85).

He cannot discover the truth about himself and about life because he is held back by his upbringing. Therefore he concludes that all he perceives is 'unreal' and a 'dream':

How can one discover the truth I thought and that thought led me nowhere. No one would tell me the truth. Not my father nor Richard Mason, certainly not the girl I had married. (p. 86).

He is lost in the wild, rich nature surrounding him which are as alien to him as the feelings his wife stirs within him. Those feelings he will not allow himself to feel:

I was lost and afraid among these enemy trees, so certain of danger that when I heard footsteps and a shout I did not answer. (p. 87).

As Jane is lost in Rochester's house and sphere, so the modern Rochester is lost in the domain of his wife, who is the only person that can save him from his cool and 'unreal' world and from the man-made reality and ideals that he has been taught to accept as true. Trampling the orchid that his wife dared not disturb in her secret garden, Rochester decides that he will use his male power to escape from the vitality which he cannot comprehend and which he is so powerless to exploit. He will return to his native land where the hatreds and desires of this luxuriant world so dear to his wife do not seem to exist. His secret garden, England, houses the only reality he knows. It is however, only an illusion for Antoinette:

'Is it true,' she said 'that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up.'

'Well,' I answered annoyed, 'that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream.'

'But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?'

'And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?'

'More easily,' she said. 'much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a dream.'

'No this is unreal and like a dream,' I thought. (p. 67).

So the natural reality of the West Indies is set against the artificial reality of London, England. Throughout *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette whose garden houses the tree of life is compared and contrasted with Rochester whose garden is able to survive only by imprisoning and annihilating his wife and the real, natural life that she stands for. Antoinette aptly visualizes the country, the house and even the room that she will be confined to. As though by chance she dwells on the various names and considers Chelmsford, Essex, those parts of England which were the most avid in burning witches:

England, rosy pink in the geography book map, but on the page opposite the words are closely crowded heavy looking....Character of Inhabitants, Names, Essex, Chelmsford on the Chelmer....After summer the trees are bare, then winter and snow. White feathers falling? Torn pieces of paper falling? They say frost makes flower patterns on the window panes. I must know more than I know already. For I know that house where I will be cold and not belonging, the bed I shall lie in has red curtains and I have slept there many times before, long ago. How long ago? In that bed I will dream the end of my dream. (p. 92).

So Antoinette dreams of this cold, strange land that is dear to the man in her life and that is going to be the end of her, her devastation. She has not seen it but it rests somewhere within her.

Christophine, Antoinette's mother figure (a witch for everyone else) is skeptical about the reality of this cold land of existence:

'England.' said Christophine, who was watching me. 'You think there is such a place?'

'How can you ask that? You know there is.'

'I never see that damn place, how I know?'

'You do not believe that there is a country called England?'

She blinked and answered quickly. 'I don't say I don't believe, I say I don't know. I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it. Besides I ask myself is this place like they tell us? Some say one thing, some different, I hear it cold to freeze your bones and they thief your money, clever like the devil...Why you want to go this cold thief place? If there is this place at all, I never see it, that is one thing for sure.' (p. 93).

But Antoinette is to go to England, because in this struggle for power and search for truth nourished by physical passion, Rochester is losing his control. He prefers to listen to the lies he considers truth:

But I hear too that the girl is beautiful like her mother was beautiful, and you bewitch with her. She is in your blood and bones. By night and by day. But, you, an honourable man, know well that for marriage more is needed than all this. Which does not last. (p. 81).

This reasoning underscores the misgivings of the young groom. His reaction is now supported by others; he has at last found the excuse he has been looking for, his destruction of his wife and her secret garden must be complete. She must be removed to the realm of his own alter ego. Trampling the orchid that lies on his way he tramples and annihilates in his mind his wife. No other vengeance will bring back the time that he considers he has lost in the mysteries of her femininity.

Antoinette turns to the advice of her surrogate mother, Christophine, to counteract this destructive energy. The advice she receives is that she should revert to the only real magic women have in the wicked world of men in which they have been circumscribed for ages:

'Get up, girl, and dress yourself. Women must have spunks to live in this wicked world.' (p. 84).

'When man don't love you, more you try, more he hate you, man like that. If you love them they treat you bad, if you don't love them they after you night and day bothering your soul case out..A man don't treat you good, pick up your skirt and walk out...and if he see you fat and happy he want you back. Men like that.' (p. 91).

Christophine touches on the dilemma of men; they are disturbed by the flourishing garden, they want to destroy it and yet when they realize that it is in fact indestructible they are drawn to it. As for 'magic', its power and effectiveness are very limited and transitory:: "Even if I can make him come to your bed, I cannot make him love you. Afterward he hate you." (p. 93). Women must find strength in themselves to stand up for their rights and develop identities as women. Man wallows in sexual attraction, yet he is not ready to face the reality of its existence, especially if it is to be realized through sharing it with one whom he considers weak and ungodly and seeks

to exploit. He tries to drag her to his cold patriarchal realm the garden which he himself has created and in which he feels secure and powerful.

Rochester takes Antoinette to his England. She is then no longer Antoinette but Bertha for him. By giving her a new name, he tries to impose a new identity on her. It is obvious that he can only accept his own configuration of her, as Bertha she is to become an aspect of his own being. The fact however, is that Antoinette is not amenable to this change. She has been alienated from her own self, but she is able to recognize this existence that has been inflicted on her by the patriarchal tradition:

It was then I saw her - the ghost. The woman with streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her. (p. 154).

Bertha, the goblin/whore figure who has been put in the gilt frame in the room with the red hangings, is a captive longing for the red dress that she so loved. But she also finds in herself the power to exuberantly destroy her prison and hopefully her prisoner. Bertha/Antoinette sets Rochester's house on fire. The fire is her way of cleansing the world from oppression and freeing herself from the frame into which she has been put:

I laughed when I saw the lovely colour spreading so fast, but I did not stay to watch it...As I ran or perhaps floated or flew I called help me Christophine help me and looking behind me I saw that I had been helped. There was a wall of fire protecting me but it was too hot, it scorched me and I went away from it. (p. 154).

The cost of escape into freedom is steep, but Antoinette pays it willingly with the help of her witch mother, Christophine. She will no longer have to pose in the gilt frame. The witch woman Christophine, who at this point is also identified with Antoinette, will not allow others to burn her. Antoinette will burn them and herself of her own volition rather than be confined to such an existence.

In short *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, the story of Antoinette Cosway, is presented to us as the story of the awakening of the twentieth century woman to the realities of her superficial and oppressed existence to reclaim her 'witch identity' that had till then been presented to her as the sinful, satanic "other". So her wish for freedom does not only include the freedom from

oppression and the freedom to be or to become what she wishes but also the freedom to discover herself. For years she has tried to internalize the social role that was imposed on her: to be modest, to keep busy with embroidery, but her embroidery still reveals her passions:

We are cross-stitching silk roses on a pale background. We can colour the roses as we choose and mine are green, blue, and purple. Underneath, I will write my name in fire red, Antoinette Mason nee Cosway, Mont Cavalry Convent, Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1839. (p. 44).

According to Jean Rhys, the twentieth century woman feels she has a right to happiness; there is no feeling for servitude in her, she sees through the social tricks:

...you cautiously soaped yourself under the chemise, a trick to be learned, dressing with modesty another trick....I find it very comforting to know exactly what must be done. All the same, I did not pray so often after that and soon, hardly at all. I felt bolder, happier, more free. But not so safe. (p. 48).

Antoinette like Jane is made to feel alien and peripheral by the English. She is the white cockroach looking for a standing for herself:

...a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (p. 85).

Unlike Jane, however, Antoinette is aware of what man in his maleness has rejected, that is the reality of life and nature because he has always been afraid of them both. The conversation between Antoinette and Rochester taking place in the West Indies where he feels peripheral is very revealing:

'I feel very much a stranger here,' I said. 'I feel that this place is my enemy and on your side.'

'You are quite mistaken,' she said, 'It is not for you and not for me. It has nothing to do with either of us. That is why you are afraid of it, because it is something else, I found that out long ago when I was a child. I loved it because I had nothing else to love, but it is as indifferent as this God you call on so often.' (p. 107).

In *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, the battle for an illusory versus actual reality brings to the foreground the question of power and supremacy. Man's constructed, safe, "cool" world can be achieved only through the annihilation of the energy of the woman who is different and therefore makes man vulnerable. But this in no way eradicates the reality of the different, powerful and dangerous woman presented by men as the witch. Rhys describes the significance of the fire set by the supposed witch-like figure Antoinette/Bertah to the society and to the woman:

The house was burning, the yellowed sky was like sunset and I knew that the golden ferns and the silver ferns, the orchids, the ginger lilies and the roses...the jasmine and the honeysuckle...When they had finished, there would be nothing left but blackened walls and mounting stone. That was always left. That could not be stolen. (p. 38).

Irrespective of man's effort the witch in the woman will emerge and will have her way; there is no stopping her. No matter how many witches are burned at the stake, the truth of the walls of life force will always remain. Thus, in *The Wide Sargasso Sea* we see that the frightening journey of introspection begins for the twentieth century woman. It entails a search for the truth about womanhood which cannot be delineated by men.

Fay Weldon's The Life and Loves of a She-Devil

Writing almost thirty years later, Fay Weldon seems to have overcome the anguish that had beset both Rhys and Bowen in their search for their true nature. In her book *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, Weldon takes the witch's revenge openly and joyously to its logical, appalling and wonderful conclusion. With the sweep of her iconoclastic pen-stroke she creates Ruth the ugly, perfect wife/mother who taking up arms against the status quo, once and for all breaks all fetters and frameworks that have cast her in the role that she has not vouched for but which has been thrust on her. This is the role she as a woman has been trying to fit into for the last few centuries.

Ruth, like her predecessors Jane and Antoinette, has been sent to an institution to learn the manners and mores that are her lot:

Her school had been a convent, run by nuns of the more superstitious, less intellectual kind; it concentrated on teaching

the female and household graces,...The training encouraged stoicism, and not selfish emotions, nor attention seeking. (p. 27).

All three women, though separated by approximately a century, vouch for the same toning down of feelings and setting of customs in the shadow of the monotheist institution. They are made to believe that it is the will of God as it were that requires them to turn themselves into pale shadows of what they really are and want to be: "Everyone has a value. There is a place for everyone in God's wonderful creation." (p. 27). is the admonition of the nuns. But, as Mary Fisher, her husband's mistress and her adversary says, in this world she will get nothing because she has been brought up to expect nothing. Ruth, on the other hand, is discontented and while looking over her well-tended garden she realizes that:

Outside the world turns: tides surge up the cliffs ... and fall again. In Australia great gum trees weep their bark away; in Calcutta a myriad flickers of human energy ignite and flare and die; in California the surfers weld their souls with foam and flutter off into eternity; in the great cities of the world groups of dissidents form their gaunt nexi of discontent and send the roots of change through the black soil of our earthly existence. And I am fixed here and now... (p. 7).

The here and now of her existence is very obvious. The life that has been meticulously drawn out and inculcated into her offers her a heaven of swept corners and nothing else:

I might as well walk, I say, since there is so little else to do, once you have swept the corners and polished the surfaces in this place, which was planned as paradise. How wonderful, I say, and they believe me, to stroll through heaven. (p. 8).

Yet she is aware of the implications of this manmade heaven. "A man cannot be expected to be faithful to a wonderful mother and a good wife - such concepts lack the compulsion of the erotic." (p. 9). she claims, although she has carefully mowed the grass of her subconscious, to suit the requirements of the world at large. She is aware of what this painstakingly built world proposes: an existence built on the lies of what seems the irrevocable order:

How otherwise but by lies do they live, do they keep their self-esteem? Sometimes, of course, not even lies can protect them. They are found hanging in the garage, or cold and overdosed in the marital bed. Love has killed them, murderous in its own death throes, flailing and biting and poisonous. (p. 10).

She observes among her neighbors, many women who share her plight.

The litany of the Good Wife, which she recites to herself only goes to show how lacking she is even at the things she is supposed be best in:

I must pretend to be happy when I am not; for everyone's sake.

I must make no adverse comment on the manner of my existence; for everyone's sake.

I must be grateful for the roof over my head and the food on my table, and spend my days showing it, by cleaning and cooking and jumping up and down from my chair; for everyone's sake.

I must make my husband's parents like me, and my parents like him; for everyone's sake.

I must consent to the principle that those who earn most outside the home deserve most inside the home; for everyone's sake.

I must build up my husband's sexual confidence, I must not express any sexual interest in other men, in private or in public.

I must ignore his way of diminishing me, by publicly praising women younger, prettier and more successful than me, and sleeping with them in private, if he can; for everyone's sake.

I must render him moral support in all his undertakings, however immoral they may be, for the marriage's sake.

I must pretend in all matters to be less than him.

I must love him through wealth and poverty, through good times and bad, and not swerve in my loyalty to him, for everyone's sake. (p. 24-25).

The twentieth century woman has at last realized the coldly cunning framework that has been built to diminish her and show her to be lacking in

all qualities that seem to be of any significance. Moreover, she has had to give up her real identity in order to conform to the suppression of the world that has been built for her. This is a cold-blooded evaluation of the status quo. Weldon sees the stark reality without the agony of her predecessors. She seems ready to turn away to strike out on her own, not in the manner that has been set down, but in a manner that is closer to her nature.

Ruth, our heroine, is liberated by her husband's realization that she cannot live up to the dire stipulations of womanhood. His ideal woman has become Mary Fisher, the male fantasy of sexual attractions. She is the pearly toothed perpetuator of male oriented love stories in which women are vulnerable and lusty. Ruth has been straying from the litany of the good wife and therefore needs to be ostracized from the meager warmth he affords her. He claims:

I see you at last as you really are. You are a third-rate person. You are a bad mother, a worse wife and a dreadful cook. In fact I don't think you are a woman at all. I think that what you are is a she-devil. (p. 42).

And not surprisingly instead of feeling the shame of having been faced with such an accusation which she has been carefully educated, trained and convinced never to face, she at last feels liberated:

But this is wonderful! This is exhilarating! If you are a she-devil the mind clears at once. The spirits rise. There is no shame, no guilt, no dreary striving to be good. There is only, in the end, what you *want*. And I can take what I want, I am a she-devil! (p. 43).

The formula presented for so many centuries is evident: if you are not a good mother, wife, and cook you are a third rate person: a slut, a whore, a witch, or in this case a she-devil. But the late twentieth century woman is ready to take up the challenge and take recourse to her true identity not as a third rate being trying to please men, but as a liberated woman trying to please overall herself. Ruth understands the depth of her need to become herself:

Peel away the wife, the mother, find the woman, and there the she-devil is. (p. 44).

But the process of peeling away is not so easy:

It takes a little time to become wholly she-devil. One feels positively exhausted at first, I can tell you. The roots of self-

reproach and good behaviour tangle deep in the living flesh: you can't ease them out gently; they have to be torn out, and they bring flesh with them. (p. 50).

Ruth takes her energy, as did Antoinette, from her garden. Unlike Antoinette though, there is no part of the garden of her alter ego that she is not prepared to approach and experience. Her nature is the only thing that is true to her and that she must be true to:

In the end I sucked energy out of the earth. I went into the garden and turned the soil with a fork and power moved into my toes and up my stubborn calves and rested in my she-devil loins, an urge and an irritation. (p. 50).

Ruth's son is not ready to give up his male prerogative either; he wants as much as he has always been made to expect. But the emergence of the she-devil/witch will have to end his anticipation of total subservience:

I have given you everything I have to give, remember that. And all I ever had was scraps and leavings. (p. 58).

And this is Ruth's final word. She now is ready to embark on her painful journey to gain power, revenge, and love. Carver the senile epileptic is the first to realize the strength of this new being:

He was mouthing away at her source, he understood; he was burying his head in flesh, and it was scented not with the natural juices of creation but with existence itself. He was not strong enough for it. He was made for the old world not for the new. (p. 53).

This half man realizes suddenly what has been troubling man for centuries, leading him to this battle for supremacy over an entity he rightfully had no control over.

Ruth takes the road to becoming, at least outwardly, the ideal that man has created aesthetically: pearly toothed, slight, lisping, a curly haired male erotic creation. Briefly a physical entity that has nothing whatever to do with her own appearance or her true nature; a being in fact that has nothing to do with reality, but one that will be acceptable to lovers and husbands alike. She in short takes her revenge on the male population by becoming a caricature of what they have always dreamt of. Weldon gives in detail the strength of the

she-devil, and the arduous task of becoming what men have always wanted her to be.

As the she-devil, Ruth discharges an attraction which is difficult to pinpoint. Even the Dobermans at Mary Fisher's house are aware of the fact that she is something special: "She exuded some new scent: of triumph, freedom, and fear, all mixed. They found it heady." (p. 74). It is a difficult path because it means taking up arms against the whole context of her existence, and Ruth is very well aware of this. When asked what a woman has to do her answer is to the point:

She laughed and said she was taking up arms against God Himself. Lucifer had tried and failed, but he was male. She thought she might do better, being female. (p. 82).

But there are hardships in wanting to change this long trodden path. It is neither an easy nor a short journey that is awaiting her:

But I need a little time. Soon I will mend but now I hurt. The she-devil is wounded: she has slunk back into her lair: the ogre motherhood paces outside with heavy feet...I must think of this grief as a physical pain. I must remember that just as a broken leg heals with time so with this psychic injury. There will be no disfiguring scar tissue: this is an inner wound, not an outer one...I twist and squirm with guilt and pain, even knowing that the quieter I stay the quicker I will heal, slip the old skin, and slither off renewed into the world. (p. 76-77).

But even if Ruth remained quiet the journey is a formidable one, because it does not get any support or recognition as it stands. Bobbo her husband does not recognize Ruth in this process of renewal:

Ruth thought that after all that was not strange: they now inhabited different worlds. Hers was unknown to him: those on the right side of everything take care to know as little as possible about those on the wrong side. The poor, exploited and oppressed, however, love to know about their masters, to gaze at their faces in the paper, to marvel at their love affairs, to discover their foibles. (p. 116).

He is trying forever to perpetuate the myth that is his own making as a man. Mary Fisher has attracted him as a woman of her own creation, but his underlying aim is to mold her in the image that he feels is his due. Her attractions are those physical attributes in her that conform to the norms of man-dictated beauty. Her added appeal is that she is not a

housewife/mother/sister, but a woman who inhabits a lighthouse surrounded by her own paraphernalia. She belongs to the grayish realm of quasi-slut/whore and therefore he must change and remodel her:

'This place is magnificent,' said Bobbo. 'It would be a shame to turn it into something ordinary. You must be careful Mary, not to turn into a suburban housewife!'...But that of course was what part of him yearned for her to be, and worked for her to be. To stop work, to cease earning, to wash up... (p. 101).

Unlike the heroines of previous years, Ruth faces her travail with vigor and determination. No matter how difficult it will be for her to regain her essence, the task must be accomplished:

I cast off the chains that bound me down, of habit, custom and sexual aspiration; home, family, friends - all the objects of natural affection. Not until then could I be free, and could I begin...A she-devil has no memory of the past - she is born afresh every morning. She deals with the feelings of today, not yesterday, and she is free...A she-devil is supremely happy: she is inoculated against the pain of memory. At the moment of her transfiguration, from woman to non-woman, she performs the act herself. She thrusts the long, sharp needle of recollection through the living flesh into the heart, burning it out. The pain is wild and fierce for a time, but presently there's none. (pp. 159-160).

Once she has accomplished her disentanglement from the trap in which she has been caught, the pain is over. Then she is free to remodel herself after her own liking:

I am a she-devil. I wouldn't be surprised if I wasn't the second coming, this time in female form; what the world has been waiting for. Perhaps as Jesus did in his day for men, so I do now, for women. He offered the stony path to heaven: I offer the motorway to hell. I bring suffering and self-knowledge (the two go together) for others and salvation for myself. Each woman for herself, I cry. If I'm nailed to the cross of my own convenience I'll put up with it. I just want my own way, and by Satan I'll have it. (p. 164).

The twentieth century woman has at last realized that the witch is her primal image. This is the image that men call sinister, Satanic, because they attribute everything that is good and Godly to themselves. In the role of the witch, the Satanic, rebellious 'other', the woman is as powerful and potent as the man. But the price has to be paid and the title has to be won. There is no doubt that it will be a lonely and painful quest, yet it is the only answer to

becoming a woman, and as a woman being on a par with man. This search for womanhood or the she-devil in the woman is no longer a tragic search, for now the woman is aware that she will have to mobilize her forces to achieve her magnificence alone. Thus, as Fay Weldon explicitly displays in *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, the witch is no longer an anti-heroine to be punished and annihilated but a heroine who sets an example for twentieth century women.

CONCLUSION

Starting out as one of the most feared and revered figures of the pantheon who demanded absolute obeisance, the female figure was later to lose this power. Religious belief feared her as the goddess Hecate. She appeared in literature as Circe and Medea, figures of power who bent men to their wills. From this position of the heroine, she later became the Lamia, the anti-heroine who was to be ostracized and killed. The Old Testament also gave a place to her as a figure to be feared and annihilated. The medieval mind chose Eve as its victim. She was endowed with the power to consort with Satan. In this capacity she figured in the literature of men as the beautiful Helen who led Doctor Faustus to his individual hell, or as the ambitious Lady Macbeth who relegated her husband to the inferno of his own political aspirations. Her sexual prowess was well-known. She figured as the Wife of Bath who could manipulate men in the way she wanted.

Later this witch woman lost all her powers, or rather her powers paled in face of the omnipotent God of man. Now man had the upper hand. Women were exiled to the peripheries of society. Literature pictured her as Celia or Belinda, a minor entity who had a mind and a heart as erratic as her character. Later men of letters tried to draw her into a choice between being an undependable slut or the angel of the hearth and home. The Lady of Shallot sat in her bower but she was not allowed into Camelot. That was the sphere of men. She should weave and dream within the confines of the house. If she was presented in her old splendour, it was only to symbolize the terrors that awaited men. She was the Lamia, Geraldine or the Death figure of **The Ancient Mariner** but had life only in men's imagination.

Women of the last two centuries took the splendid witch figure and examined it. Their first probings were tentative. They seemed to be frightened to unearth this figure that could give life and destroy at the same time. Mary Shelley, as the creator of the monstrous Frankenstein her capacity of witch,

did not take her examination to its ultimate conclusion. Charlotte Bronte explored the image further but remained ambivalent when faced with the choice between the elf Jane and the goblin Bertha.

It was the twentieth century women scholars and writers who delved more deeply into the social construct that was woman. They questioned the image that had been fabricated for them and set out to forge a realistic image for themselves. Elizabeth Bowen took a step in this direction by seeing the connection between the conception of the woman and her affiliation with the Satanic powers. She exposed the frightful task that had to be undertaken but did not venture further. Jean Rhys went a step further to expose the will of the patriarchy to annihilate this being, the woman, once she became aware of who and what she was. Fay Weldon, of course, carried this quest to its culmination. Women would have to embrace their primal image to assert themselves: a formidable and painful task which required women to go back and assume once again the role of the powerful heroine, the witch.

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