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The Monstrous and Grotesque Images of The Feminine in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*

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ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, 16 ve 17 yy. İngiliz Edebiyatı yazarlarından Edmund Spenser'ın **The Faerie Queene** (Book 1) ve John Milton'ın **Paradise Lost** adlı eserlerindeki **grotesk** kadın vücudu temsillerinin, Rus dil felsefecisi, kültür ve edebiyat kuramcısı Mikhail Bakhtin'in grotesk kavram tanımını göz önüne alarak incelemektir. Çalışmada ortaya çıkan sonuç, grotesk ya da **canavar** gibi gösterilen kadın temsillerinin, erkek egemen ideolojinin yaratmış olduğu düzenden sapmaları sonucu bu tanımlamalara tabi tutulmalarıdır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, incelenen eserlerdeki kadınların **karnavalımsı** bir kural tanımazlıkla, varolan erkek egemen düzenin bütünlüğünü ve kurallarını sarsmakta oldukları da görülmektedir. Diğer bir taraftan kadının yılan ile özdeşleştirilmesi de ele alınmıştır. Spenser ve Milton'daki Errour ve Sin karakterleri yarı-kadın ve yarı-yılan şeklinde biçimlendirilirken, Duessa ve Eve yılan sembolleri ile temsil edilmektedirler. Bu bize erkek egemen düzenden sapan kadının erkek gözünde ve tabii ki erkek imgeleminde üstlendiği değerlendirmeye işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca, yılan kılığına bürünüp insanoğlunun Cennet'ten atılmasına neden olan erkek cinsiyetindeki Şeytan da bu simge çerçevesinde incelendiğinde, konumuza farklı bir ışık tutmaktadır: tarih öncesi dönemlere ait Ana Tanrıça'nın ve onun temsil ettiği sembollerin erkek güçler tarafından yok edilmesi.

Psikanalizin kurucusu Sigmund Freud ve ondan sonra gelen ve onun izinde yürüyen Jacques Lacan kadını (**yok)sun** olarak tanımlamışlardır. Bu çalışmada, feminist kuramın, kadının neden eksik olarak tanımlandığı incelenirken, diğer taraftan bu tanımlamanın altında yatan gerçekler Hélène Cixous ve Luce Irigaray'ın belli başlı eserleri incelenerek ele alınmaktadır. Julia Kristeva'ya ise "grotesk" ve canavarımsı-kadın kavramlarına, kendi "abject" kavramı tanımlaması ışığında bu iki ifade arasındaki benzerlikler göz önüne alınarak yer verilmiştir.

ABSTRACT

This study purports to trace the grotesque mode of representing the female body and bodily life in Edmund Spenser's Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost,* and aims to demonstrate from a Bakhtinian perspective how the **grotesque** concept of the female body functions as a major way of representing the "abnormal" and the **"monstrous-feminine"** in terms of how these females deviate from the norm established by patriarchal male ideology. In this respect, the symbol of the serpent is also taken into consideration because two figures in these works, Errour and Sin, are half-woman, half-serpent. Duessa and Eve, on the other hand, through their actions cause the downfall of **men**. In doing so, they are also depicted as serpentine not only in terms of their author's representations of them with the symbols peculiar to the serpent but also in terms of their deeds. Furthermore, Satan, who is male, and, who takes the form of the serpent to cause the Fall of mankind through Adam and Eve sheds further light in dealing with the monstrous-feminine from a different angle: the destruction of the Great Goddess by patriarchal forces.

Drawing on the Lacanian rereading of Freud, feminist theory has concentrated on the representation of woman as "lack" and "absence." And it is this aspect of feminist theory that has been examined in this thesis specifically in the works of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray as well as of Julia Kristeva whose notions of the "abject" and the "maternal" have been of great significance for my appreciation of the grotesque and the monstrous-feminine.

FOREWORD

This study involves a close analysis of Edmund Spenser's Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, focusing on the monstrous-feminine and the grotesque representations of the female figures in these two works of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The specific claim I elucidate is that the women are portrayed as grotesque or monstrous by these authors in these particular works because they do not conform to the norm established by patriarchy and in doing so, they pose a constant threat to the patriarchal male order.

This thesis falls into a six-part structure. After a brief introduction to what the present study aims to examine, I move to Chapter I which serves as a theoretical frame and here all the thematic points that will be explored at length are touched on as I analyze how the gender of woman is constructed. Chapter II is predicated upon Bakhtin's notion of the carnival in its relation to the grotesque image of the body. Beginning with a discussion of the carnival and its main aspects, I move on to present that, although Bakhtin argues that the "bodily element" of carnival and grotesque realism concerns bodies in general and not bodies as distinguished by gender, the grotesque images can closely be associated with the feminine, particularly with those females who deviate from the norm established by the patriarchal male ideology. Chapters III to VI are devoted to a closer analysis of the individual works as well as of the ages in which Spenser produced *The Faerie Queene* and Milton *Paradise Lost*. Finally, the conclusion provides a consideration of the general insights derived from the discussion of each work.

It is a pleasure to thank to all the members of the English Language and Literature Department for their warm support and belief in me. I am particularly grateful for constructive and helpful suggestions from Prof. Esra Melikoğlu, whose trenchant criticisms drew my attention to many points of value I should otherwise have missed. She provided me with invaluable intellectual stimulus and new insights. My acknowledgement also goes to Assoc. Prof. Murat Seçkin for his motivation and encouragement during the long gestation of this thesis. His contribution to my thesis is nonspecific but immeasurable. Gratitude is due also to Prof. Ayşe Dilek Erbora for supplying me with endless support and warmth. Special thanks are due to Prof.

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INTRODUCTION

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
Though women all above:
But to the girdle do the Gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiend's: there's *hell*, there's *darkness*,
There is the sulphurous *pit*—burning, scalding,
Stench, consumption ...

(Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act IV, Scene vi, 123-128, [my italics])

The dispossessed King Lear proclaims the lines above which explicitly describe the monstrosities of his two daughters, Goneril and Regan in sexual terms. This issue emerges unmistakably in Lear's passionate denunciations of his daughters and seems even to extend beyond that to include all women in general. The viciousness of his two daughters is marked by **monstrous** female ambition and **grotesque** erotic energy and this is projected by their father upon their sexuality, that is, their femininity. Locating hell in a woman's sexuality, seeing in women's sexual organs the devil's home and the source of all hypocrisy introduces a powerfully disturbing sense of how much Lear's ego, that "hard" masculine shell he has encased himself in, rests on a fear of what he cannot understand. In these lines, we have the reflection of the old-aged theme of the struggle between the sexes and the male fear of the power of the female to challenge and overcome his dominating sense of himself from a position of total male control. This is projected as the potential of women for cruelty, deception and destruction. What the story of Goneril and Regan, moreover, suggests is that in patriarchal culture angry revolt against male domination is claimed to be daemonic; and strength and determination in women as well as their lust for power, it is believed, can be developed only at a cost, and their eventual failure is at once inevitable, a punishment, and a warning.

This quotation taken from William Shakespeare's *King Lear* may throw light upon what this study sets out to do. I attempt to reach an understanding of how and why the female body is represented in the images or symbols that can be called grotesque or the monstrous-feminine. First of all, it is important to note that the use of the phrase the "monstrous-feminine" evinces that, as with all other stereotypes of

the feminine, from virgin to whore for instance, the woman is defined in terms of her sexuality. This further points to the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity.

In this study, I intend to explore the representation of woman in Edmund Spenser's Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*[1] and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and to argue that woman is represented as grotesque or monstrous because she actually speaks to us about the male's fears of his inability to control his own physical existence, his own birth and death (Beauvoir, 1977: 137). Accordingly, the feminine has become a site of male projection in that she comes to represent for man the place of mystery, of not knowing, Freud's "dark continent", the site of silence but also of the terrifying void that "castrates" the living man's sense of wholeness and stability.

"Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (**Ibid**., p. 16) declares Simone de Beauvoir in the "Introduction" to her famous book *The Second Sex*. Patriarchal society defines a rigid norm and creates "monsters" and the associated term "grotesques" for the women who do not fit the pattern because woman as the "other" is defined in relation to man, in order to reassert his masculinity. This male-oriented order relegates the qualities of "assertiveness," "aggressiveness," and "activity" to the arena of the male. However, all these characteristics of a male life are perceived as "monstrous" or "grotesque" in women precisely because they are "unfeminine" and therefore unsuited to those constructions of submission and silence in which women have been consigned. The idea underlying this is that women's potential to subvert the male-dominated order and accordingly assert their autonomy is assumed to be a constant threat to men. Therefore women must be coerced and silenced in a patriarchal order where they will have no autonomy.

[1] The reason why I have chosen Book 1 of **The Faerie Queene** is that it demonstrates my main objective which is to discuss why the female figure is represented as the monstrous-feminine or grotesque and why this representation is pitted against the angelic female type. Furthermore, on a physical level, the representatives of the monstrous female, Errour and Duessa with their physiognomy, appropriate Bakhtin's conception of the non-classical, "grotesque" (or simply, the material) body form. Una and the women of the House of Holiness, on the other hand, who can be considered to be the emblems of the "angel in the house", are presented within the confines of the patriarchal male constructions of femininity.

Thus, in this particular study, the body of the nonconformist female who stands for a fearful and threatening form of sexuality, will be discussed as "grotesque" and it will be pitted against those other representatives of the female who are assumed to be the ideal in the sense that they are meek, chaste and unopinionated and they are delineated as sexless because it is not their bodies but their purely spiritual aspects that are foregrounded. This, as a matter of fact, points to how the woman made of flesh and blood is reduced to a beautiful abstraction and fixed into an image that imprisons her personality. This type of female figures are seen to be conforming to patriarchal authority, while the representatives of the grotesque body subvert it, thereby asserting their own autonomy which constitutes a constant threat for the male-dominated order.

The images of woman that represent her as the "other" define her in relation to her sexuality, specifically the **abject** nature of her maternal and reproductive functions which come to demonstrate a disgusting body. The representation of the monstrous-feminine in patriarchal culture, moreover, has an impact on psychoanalytically based theories of **sexual difference**. On the one hand, those images that define woman as monstrous in relation to her reproductive functions work to reinforce the phallocentric notion that female sexuality is abject. Menstruation and childbirth, for instance, are seen as the two events in woman's life which play an important role in placing her on the side of the abject. It is the reproductive function of the woman's body which aligns her with nature and it is also this body that threatens the integrity of the patriarchal symbolic order which regards the male perspective as the universal reality by which women can be assessed (Creed, 1993: 49-50).

Spenser's and Milton's presentations of the female characters who can be encoded as emblems of monstrous-feminine sexuality affilitate them with post-modern discussions of woman. Hence they will be discussed in their relation to Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and the maternal sexuality along with Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque. In the first place, two monstrous portrayals of maternal sexuality in Spenser's Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are Errour and Sin who are also identified as grotesque due to their motherhood which is shown as shocking, terrifying, horrific and abject. As such they are marked as

deviant and perverse, and they are a sign of otherness, the uncontrollable unknown. Secondly, Duessa is delineated as grotesque not only through the symbols used to describe her physical appearance but also through her nonconformist attitudes. In this respect, in the figure of Duessa we come to realise that the notion of the monstrous-feminine challenges the view that femininity, by definition, constitutes passivity. Duessa is a witch and the witch, of course, is a female monster in male discourse. She is represented as an old, ugly crone who is capable of monstrous acts. Eve and Satan, on the other hand, who are closely related to the serpent which, for Milton, has negative implications, become monstrous and grotesque creatures and cause the downfall of humanity. They are the destructive, evil, terrifying, and deviant "other" whose actions are carried out with great ferocity and skill. As such, all these characters appear to be carnival figures because they function as a force disruptive of order, of clear oppositions and stable identities (Bronfen, 1992: 189), and they threaten the order and safety established by the patriarchal authority. It should be pointed out that carnival, which marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, norms and prohibitions, celebrates a sense of liberation from the framework of the prevailing order. It is a temporary time of release and comfort from the totalizing seriousness of the boundaries that are implicated in the official culture. In this sense, we can argue that as carnival figures, while Errour and Duessa are eradicated in order for the male order to be reconfirmed and secured, Satan and Eve, on the other hand, as the representatives of threatening and disruptive elements, lead to ultimate chaos and destruction that are left to endure.

Feminist theory, grouped under the term "New French Feminism" and including the works of Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva, explores in particular the representation of woman as negativity, absence and lack. Men of letters and religious men have striven to show the subordinate position of woman since the ancient times and they have delighted in showing up her weaknesses. The early leaders of the Christian Church – to whom the female was clearly an instrument of the devil – set the pace for the condemnation of women. The Christian tradition, moreover, had tended to condense "the flesh" (insofar as it represented or incorporated pleasure) as the female body and to surround its attractiveness with the idea of anxiety and prohibition. Years later the so-called phallocentric system of

which two important representatives are Freud and Lacan will equate the phallus with male authority and this will lead to the assumption that femininity is lack. In respect to this idea, both Irigaray and Cixous will argue that woman's relegation to the place of lack is the result of culture's notion of gender which has been incorporated into language and representation, and that the naming of woman as lack affects the subject position she adopts in the symbolic order which according to Irigaray, signifies

> the order of discourse and meaning, the order into which all human beings have to insert themselves and which therefore precedes and exceeds individual subjectivity; it is what enables the subject to break out the imaginary mother-child unity and become a social being.
>
> (in Whitford, 1991: 90)

From Kristeva's perspective, on the other hand, the symbolic, with its classical outlook, supersedes the grotesquely oriented semiotic in every individual. Kristeva emphasises the threat of the abject to the symbolic in its most significant aspect – the prohibition placed on the maternal body. According to Kristeva, the child exists at first in the maternal semiotic realm, characterized by the bodily rhythms and pulsions which will later form the basis of language and grammar. The child then enters the symbolic realm which is the paternal site of language, law, and gender difference. The semiotic, however, does not fade away but continues to affect the symbolic from within, in the form of linguistic and bodily lapses. The mother educates the child in the ways of the symbolic, through social codes of cleanliness, bodily boundaries, how and what to eat, and so on. This educative role is suggestive of the fact that the maternal must be discarded together with the unacceptable practises the mother has taught the child to reject. In Kristeva's own terminology, "Abjection dread" is the feeling that protects one from the "temptation" to return to the maternal semiotic. Abjection, she states, preserves the "immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (Kristeva, 1982: 63, 10). This maternal "semiotic," Tania Modleski claims, continues to haunt the subject in adult life in the form of everything that is "subversive of male symbolic systems and masculine notions of identity and order", that poses the threat of "the annihilation, of swallowing up" (Modleski, 1989: 45) of the personality and identity that the mother initially poses to the child. According to

Terry Eagleton, "[The semiotic] is opposed to all fixed, transcendental significations; and [...] the ideologies of modern male-dominated class-society rely on such fixed signs for their power (God, father, state, order, property, and so on)" (Eagleton, 1983: 188-189).

Since Bakhtin's use of the word "grotesque" is related to his study of Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in its close associations with the concept of the carnival, it will be important to look briefly at what Bakhtin means by carnival and the characteristics that go with it, such as laughter. A full examination of this theory is outside the scope of my study; I propose to draw mainly on Bakhtin's discussion of the carnival in relation to his notion of the grotesque. It is worth noting that insofar that carnival permits a celebration of the grotesque we can see that the bodies of those monstrous figures in Spenser and Milton represent a kind of inversion of an established order and the destruction of hierarchy through the liberation of carnival, which temporarily reverses the established order of things. Ken Hirschkop pays attention to the fact that everything authoritative, rigid or serious is subverted, loosened and mocked in the festivities associated with carnival. People are released from all the obligations and laws of normal existence and are able to reveal themselves with a stark and unlimited freedom (Hirschkop, 1999: 275).

Unlike the seriousness of authority that is based upon a dichotomy between subject and object, between male and female, and expects women to conform to the confines of the conventional gender roles and act accordingly, the carnival spirit, which is marked by a "temporary suspension of all hierarchical distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitons of usual life," (Bakhtin, 1984: 15) turns things upside down and, most importantly, reverses the upper strata with the lower parts of the body that violate and threaten our sense of cleanliness and propriety, because these parts are private parts and belong to the sexual organs and the functions related to them. In this respect, we can see that the monstrous females in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* nullify the male-oriented society controlled by a number of rules which is established by patriarchal male authority. In doing so, these monstrous females do what Bakhtin would call a carnivalesque uncrowning and debasing of the official culture which, as Bakhtin expresses in *Rabelais and His World*, is "founded on the principle of an immovable and

unchanging hierarchy in which the higher and the lower never merge" (Bakhtin, **op. cit**., p. 166). The politic of the carnival, according to Bakhtin, then, embraces a world turned "inside out" or "upside down", in which violence, excess and a focus on the grotesque body help the marginalized and suppressed to ridicule and overthrow oppressive regimes, in this instance, patriarchy.

Rabelais and His World deals with an aesthetic which celebrates the anarchic, body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture, and tries to mobilize them against the seriousness of official culture. The study, moreover, traces different attitudes to life manifesting themselves in the kind of celebrations which took place in popular culture and were expressed most evidently in the life of carnival with its feasting, games-playing and symbolic inversions. The temporary rejection of the normal order of things; and the manifestations of the festive spirit – drinking, gluttony, playing tricks, all the activities connected with popular feasts – are demonstrated in carnival celebrations. These alternative feasts were important to the people as holiday times, and as times associated with change and renewal:

> The feast (every feast) is an important primary form of human culture. It cannot be explained merely by the practical conditions of the community's work, and it would be even more superficial to attribute it to the physiological demand for periodic rest. The feast had always an essential, meaningful philosophical content. No rest period or breathing spell can be rendered festive per se; something must be added from the spiritual and ideological dimension. They must be sanctioned not by the world of practical conditions but by the highest aims of human existence, that is, by the world of ideals. Without this sanction there can be no festivity.
>
> (Bakhtin, 1984: 8-9)

According to Bakhtin, the specific type of imagery inherent in grotesque realism in its link to the material bodily principle in all its forms and manifestations is the grotesque concept of the body which can be regarded as the representation of the female body with its specific emphasis on the lack of clear limits or boundaries since the grotesque body, for Bakhtin, "outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits" (**Ibid**., p. 26). Hence the formulation of the grotesque body as continuous process is foregrounded.

Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*, emphasises the socially subversive nature of the grotesque, which calls into question conventional notions of identity. The grotesque body celebrated by Bakhtin, which appears in artistic forms and

periods beyond Rabelais and the sixteenth-century, is a body in which becoming rather than completion is evident, a body whose openness to the world is symbolized by "the consuming maws, pregnant stomachs and evident phalluses" (Bakhtin, **op**. **cit**., p. 25) that make it up.

Within the scope of this study, moreover, what is also aimed at is to indicate how the negative characterizations of woman or the feminine, that is, the female monster or the grotesque female fashioned by these two particular authors, Spenser and Milton, from Errour and Duessa to Sin whose physical mal-formation is placed against Eve's moral de-formity, are all illustrative of how woman has, as a matter of fact, been made to project onto her all of man's ambivalent feelings about his own inability to control his own life including birth and death. The mother's gift of birth is also the gift of death. Women, be they mothers or lovers, function as the reflections of man's mortal state, as the fixed image of human destiny. Psychologically, then, woman must be regarded as perpetually confronting men with the threat of non-existence, and men avoid this terror either by reversing the natural course (women are really born from men) or by denying their sexual yearning for the comfort of oblivion (women are seducers) (Bronfen, 1992: 217).

As the "other," moreover, woman has incarnated men's ambivalence not only toward female sexuality but toward their own (male) physicality. To put it in another way, woman exists in order to verify man's place in language and other symbolic structures that constitute our cultural consciousness. As a cultural construct, woman gains her meaning and value only in her oppositional relation to man. The male dread of the female is actually his own fear of the mystery of life which is always infested by the destructive aspects of age and death that he projects onto woman. Woman becomes an embodiment of the extremes of mysterious otherness which is confronted with fear and loathing by the patriarchal structure of society. To be able to cope with the mysterious processes of nature, such as birth and death, which manifest themselves within his own body, man projects these life-death-nature finiteness onto woman. Woman, de Beauvoir finds, "is the life that is necessary to [man's] existence but that condemns him to the finite and to death" (Beavouir, 1977: 14). Both femininity and death inspire the fear of an ultimate loss of control, of a disruption of boundaries between self and "other," of a dissolution of an ordered and

hierarchical world. The "other" functions as a force disruptive of the security of clear oppositions and stable identities. Thus, a hierarchical coherence based on binary oppositions should be preserved. Consequently, the stereotype of the "other" is constructed in order to exteriorise anxiety. This anxiety is produced out of the difference of self and "other," of the masculine and the feminine and of a tension between the security of control and a fear of its loss which is projected upon the site of the body. As Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price state,

> As the devalued processes of reproduction make clear, the body has a propensity to leak, to overflow the proper distinctions between self and "other," to contaminate and engulf. Thus women themselves are, in the conventional masculinist imagination, not simply inferior beings whose civil and social subordination is both inevitable and justified, but objects of fear and repulsion. Coincident with its marginalisation, the devalued body is capable of generating deep ontological anxiety.
>
> (Shildrick and Price, 1999: 3)

The problematics analyzed above become contextualized in fictional texts. I will trace their relevance in Spenser and Milton who created literary works that reflect, as Georg Lukács points out, "the particular and real alternatives of [their times]" (Lukács, 1982: 11). Writers are both representatives and commentators of their age, their community. Edmund Spenser is the poet who embodies the aspirations and dreams of the Elizabethan age, the age when the Renaissance reached its peak. John Milton is one of the representatives of Seventeenth-century England. Although Spenser and Milton come from two different ages, politically and culturally speaking, they cannot help committing themselves to the same stereotypical images of women which are innate and instinctive as far as men are concerned: there is an obvious element in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* which is the emphasis on (perhaps even the obsession with) female sexuality.

The composition of *The Faerie Queene* extends over a period of some fifteen years, i. e., from 1579 to 1594; and it very closely associates itself with the social, political and historical situation of England at this time. The opening of Book 1 of the poem carries nationalistic tones that eulogise Queen Elizabeth I, whom Spenser calls "O Goddesse heauenly bright, / Mirrour of grace and Maiestie diuine, / Great

lady of the greatest Isle" and, perhaps more honestly, "O dearest dred" (*FQ*, Book 1, proem 4). It is a poem of patriotic inspiration in its celebration of the Queen, in its foundation on a national legend (that of Arthur), in its showing, among many other things, the glorious descent of Elizabeth, imagined in the Faerie Queene. The poem, which bases itself on the romance tradition, is of great national significance in the sense that it embodies the aspirations of the English nation during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. In *The Faerie Queene* Spenser exhibits his pride in his country and in his queen through a host of devices and allusions. The poem tells of the virtues of holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice, and courtesy in the form of allegory, giving to each virtue a special knight or protector, and presenting Gloriana (The Faerie Queene herself) the glory which comes from the possession of virtue. Gloriana is also Queen Elizabeth, to whom Spenser addresses himself.

The age which produced John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, on the other hand, was deeply characterized by political antagonisms and religious controversies. In this age, the religious beliefs were themselves often closely interconnected with the world of politics and state power. As Sir Francis Bacon observed, "Matters of religion and the church ... in these times are become so intermixed with considerations of estate" (Hill, 1986: 17). The Stuart monarchy and Church of England were disrupted by political conflicts, ideologies, and religious currents which culminated in the Civil War and Interregnum. Several crises occurred during the whole period of Stuart rule from 1603 to 1688. Ultimately, the Parliament achieved its final victory in 1688 with the Glorious Revolution.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* can be seen as the epic of English Puritanism, coming at a time when it seemed that the project to create an English theocracy and abolish the monarchy under the guidance of Cromwell whom Milton supported had failed. In his poetic examination of the reasons for this failure, Milton chose for his theme an analysis of the whole purpose of human life in relation to "eternal providence" (*PL*, Book 1, 25). His inspiration is the spirit of God, truth itself, in contrast with the "empty dream" (*PL*, Book 7, 39) of the muses of previous epic poets. While Arthur epitomises the ideal British monarch and this reinforces our evaluation of Spenser's royalism, Milton, on the other hand, in representing the ultimate failure of the

patriarch in Adam, expresses his own disillusionment in patriarchal powers, but chooses to project woman as the root and cause of Adam's failure.

CHAPTER I

Woman and Gender

> The cultural topos or image ... presupposes and confirms that Woman is constructed as "other" than man; as that which is not the centre of a social or representational system. Hers is a position of non-coherence, of the void or an empty space between signifiers precisely because she is constructed as the vanishing point and the condition of western culture's fictions of itself; as the object and foundation of representation; as the telos and origin of man's desire to represent his culture; as the object and sign of his exchange with life and death, of his socio-economic exchanges and of his creativity.
>
> (Bronfen, 1992: 403)

> The "very act of constituting another is ultimately a refusal to recognize something about the self."
>
> (Polan, 1984: 203)[2]

It is a well-known fact that in patriarchal discourse the nature and social role of the female are conceptualised and defined in relation to a norm which is specifically male. Accordingly, the female – half of humankind – has been trapped in a system of masculine representations which have been constructed by the male through the application of male parameters, expectations and designs: woman should exist in a man's world on his terms and should be known through the mediation of male language. This male privilege originates from what Toril Moi calls "patriarchal thought [which] models its criteria for what counts as 'positive' values on the central assumption of the Phallus and the Logos as transcendental signifiers of Western culture" (Moi, 1985: 66-67). Accordingly, as the possessor of meaning, or the logos, the male has created a symbolic world in which the notion of gender is based upon an asymmetrical, dichotomous system of thought, associating the male with the rational and the transcendent and the female with the irrational and the immanent. These associations, assigned to the male and the female respectively, dominate social, political, and cultural life and relegate woman to immanence and to the position of being man's "other." Hence, patriarchy impedes women's struggle to

[2] Barbara Creed (1993: 37) quotes from Dana B. Polan, "Eros and syphilization: the contemporary horror film", in Barry Keith Grant, ed., **Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film**, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1984.

achieve autonomous subjectivity, since an identification with the transcendental justifies man's idea that his being endowed with reason gives him the right to control both nature and woman.

Western cultural discourses construct the self as masculine, and they ascribe to femininity a position of otherness. Masculinity is characterized as the norm, the point of fixity against which women are defined as the "other." As other, woman also comes to represent the margins or extremes of the norm – the extremely good, pure and helpless, or the extremely dangerous, chaotic and seductive. And the lack or excess that is located in the "other" functions as an exterioration of the self in respect to gender. As such, "stereotyped lines of sex category [masculine and feminine] are originated as a result of" what Kate Millett argues in her *Sexual Politics*,

> the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, "virtue," docility and ineffectuality in the female.
>
> (Millett, 1999: 26)

In her own way, Simone de Beauvoir anticipates Millett's attitude towards the construction of gender, when she says

> [Woman] is simply what man decrees; thus she is called "the sex," by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex—absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the **"other**."
>
> (Beauvoir, 1977: 83)

De Beauvoir's work distinguishes between sex and gender, and sees an interaction between natural and social functions: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman; ... it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature ... Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an 'other'" (**Ibid.**, p. 88). Hence it is the systems of interpretation in relation to biology, psychology, reproduction, economics, etc. which constitute the (male) presence of that "someone else".

Through male-constructed images of femininity, women, on the one hand, have been seen as monstrous, vile, degraded creatures, secondcomers, and emblems of filthy materiality (dangerous, chaotic and seductive), on the other hand, they have also been defined as spiritual beings and angels (good, pure and helpless). While the subdued, meek and passive woman is put on a pedestal and praised, the passionate and subversive woman is vilified and thrown into the pit. The depiction of the female character as inherently dangerous, "other" or threatening manifests itself explicitly in the figure of the **femme fatale**[3] whose sexuality has the terrifying power to entrap and destroy men. The obsession with the female "other" expressed through fear and loathing of female sexuality is represented symbolically through images of engulfing slime, darkness and fluidity. As Elisabeth Bronfen persuasively argues "... reason, distinctions, mind, scientific thought are regarded as masculine and feeling, fluidity, nature, the domain of scientific inquiry as feminine" (Bronfen, 1992: 66). If we take the feminine form as the allegory of nature, we can equate nature as the mother whose functions are to comfort, nurture and provide. Nevertheless, nature also embodies unruly disorder and an uncontrollable wilderness that threaten the universe. In this equation with nature, earth, body, woman was constructed as "other" to culture, as object of curiosity to be explored, dissected, conquered, domesticated and, if necessary, eliminated (**Ibid**., p. 66). As related to this argument, Joseph Campbell, in his study of primitive mythology, draws attention to the analogy between woman and nature when he says "The fear of woman and the mystery of her motherhood have been for the male no less impressive imprinting forces than the fears and mysteries of the world of nature itself" (Campbell, 1972: 59-60). Under patriarchy men have learnt to fear women and their power to create life and to see them as consumers of their sexual energies. Patriarchy devalues femininity and creates a dichotomy between feminine sexuality and motherhood.

[3] The term arose due to the World War I male traumatic experiences. The **femme fatale** is a figure associated with post-war times, since, during the war, women experienced a sense of liberation. They replaced the males, who fought, and thus, gained a new confidence, which the male perceived as a threat to his power.

In the conjunction between woman, nature and body[4], we perceive the association of sexual lust and uncontrollable passion with the feminine, hence the aspects of corruption and disembodiment inherent in human existence. From this connection two diverse feminine types emerge: the temptress Eve and the healing Virgin Mary. In other words, the dichotomy between good and bad women become symbolized by the Mary and Eve polarization. Woman comes to represent either the good, pure and helpless (the Virgin Mary), or the dangerous, chaotic and seductive: the fatal demon woman (Eve) who represents an excessive presence of the dangers of the body. This indicates how Western culture uses stereotypes about the essence of woman which in turn shows the paradoxical status of femininity in Western representational discourse. Christianity also balances its ambivalence toward women, its contempt and idealization, in the figures of Mary and Eve. However, it should be pointed out that in the Judaeo-Christian tradition of mythic images, women had none of the variety models that existed in Greece in the figures of Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite, as well as Demeter, Persephone, Hera and Hestia, goddess of hearth and home. Instead, as either Mary or Eve, the reality of woman was wholly imagined in sexual or relational terms as mother, wife, virgin or whore which are the three principal patriarchal definitions of women.

Mary is a Christian icon of female virtue due to her virginity, because as a virgin, she represents the ideal of femininity that expresses no sensuality by subordinating her body to male authority. For the purpose of privileging the maternal over the feminine, patriarchal Christian systems of representation have constructed Mary as the virgin mother, the mother who scarcely knows her own desire and exists only in relation to her perfect product, Christ. For Julia Kristeva "This resorption of femininity within the Maternal" is specific to many civilizations, yet "Christianity, in its own fashion, brings it to its peak" (Kristeva, 1987: 236). The Virgin is the de-sexualized mother of masculine mythology and her sexuality simply does not exist beyond her reproductive potential. Hence in Adrienne Rich's words,

[4] Woman was seen as a body undisciplined by mind, as a creature ruled by her internal, and particularly her sexual, organs—disturbing force of nature. Claude Thomasset argues that "In medieval French the word **nature** sometimes referred to the genitals, especially, in certain dialects, the female genitals" (Thomasset, 1992: 44).

"The divisions of labour and allocations of power in patriarchy demand not merely a suffering Mother, but one divested of sexuality: The Virgin Mary, **virgo intacta**, perfectly chaste" (Rich, 1997: 183).

As it can be seen clearly, Mary lives the impossible dilemma of femininity under patriarchy. She is appropriated as a vessel for divine productivity, and is represented as both virtuous and asexual. The birth of Jesus Christ is a result of an immaculate conception where the paternal genealogy is based upon the Word of the Father. In this Christian myth the Virgin Mary is reduced to a mere vessel that bears the father's son, since she has been told of her conception and the ensuing birth by a messenger of the holy Father. Accordingly, she has no power over her own body and her sexuality; and her body's reproductive function places her under the control of the patriarch who can use her according to his own wish. The contradictory logics of production and (sexual) reproduction are contained within her mute and silenced body and her only proof of physicality lies in the iconic representations of her milk and tears, symbols beyond language.[5] The Virgin has no language in which to voice her own desire, a desire which Christianity, in any case, denies. For Marina Warner "it is this very cult of the Virgin's 'femininity', expressed by her sweetness, submissiveness, and passivity that permits her to survive, a goddess in a patriarchal society" (Warner, 1985: 191).

In the figuration of the Virgin Mary, however, a mistranslation can be discerned because her figure is actually modeled on ancient, pre-patriarchal representations of woman she being a derivation of the ancient Mother Goddess. As related to this argument, Julia Kristeva in her essay entitled "Stabat Mater" states persuasively that

> It would seem that the "virgin" attribute for Mary is a translation error, the translator having substituted for the Semitic term that indicates the sociolegal status of a young unmarried woman the Greek word *parthenos*, which on the other hand specifies a physiological and psychological condition: virginity. One might read into this the Indo-European fascination with the virgin daughter as guardian of paternal power; one might also detect an ambivalent conspiracy, through excessive spiritualization, of the mother-goddess and the underlying matriarchy with which Greek culture and Jewish monotheism kept struggling. The fact

[5] Kristeva declares, "Under a full, blue gown, the maternal, virginal body allowed only the breast to show, while the face, with the stiffness of Byzantine icons gradually softened, was covered with tears. Milk and tears became the privileged signs of the **Mater Dolorosa** who invaded the West beginning with the eleventh century, reaching the peak of its influx in the fourteenth" (**Ibid**., p. 249).

> remains that western Christianity has organized that "translation error," projected its own fantasies into it, and produced one of the most powerful imaginary constructs known in the history of civilizations.
>
> (Kristeva, 1987: 236-237)

In the quotation above, Kristeva explains how Mary came to be representated as an icon to be worshipped in Western civilizations through centuries. In view of Kristeva's arguments concerning the mistranslation of a word and its consequent metamorphosis into devotion to a woman by patriarchal male ideology, it should be stated that as the feminine ideal, the development of the image of the Virgin Mary into a cult which came into being later, from the second century after the birth of Christ, (Bowker, 2004: 319) is a typical male construct along with the affirmation of her immaculate conception. Both undoubtedly serve to reduce women to the roles of wife and mother which closely tie them to the male.

The early history of the Virgin Mary does not appear in the Gospels, but in the apocryphal *Book of James*. She is, moreover, an almost invisible figure in the scriptural accounts of the life of Christ and the biblical authority for Mary's virginity is equivocal. It is not mentioned by Mark or John, and the evidence in Luke is contradictory. Matthew says that Mary conceived through the agency of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1: 18-20), but then goes on to claim this as fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 7: 14,[6] "The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he shall be called Emmanuel," a name which means 'God is with us'" (Matt. 1: 23-24). There seems to be a potential confusion as far as the use of the word "virgin" is concerned. The text of Isaiah used by Matthew would have been the Greek translation, in which, as I have noted above, the Hebrew word **'Almah'**, meaning a young woman eligible for marriage, was rendered by the Greek **parthenos**, a term with much stronger implications of physical virginity. On such a fragile foundation was constructed the monolith of the Virgin Birth by patriarchal male society.

Significantly enough, the fact that Mary retained her virginity after the birth of Christ was strenuously argued by the early Church. In 451, however, she was officially designated **Aeiparthenos**, "Ever-virgin" confirming her virginity at every stage from conception, childbirth to **post partum**, a ruling that became a dogma in 649 (Norris, 1998: 233). In relation to the four major dogmas concerning the Virgin

Mary which belong to Church history rather than to the New Testament, Jacques Dalarun argues that "Of the four major dogmas concerning her—Mother of God, Virgin Birth, Immaculate Conception, and Assumption—the last two did not become official Church doctrine until 1854 and 1950, respectively" (Dalarun, 2000: 25).

Furthermore, in stark contrast to Eve, Mary is a figure of triumph over the death of sin and decay introduced by the former. St. Jerome, one of the church fathers who lived and wrote in the first two centuries after Christ's birth, refers to the figures of Mary and Eve in order to contrast the notions of life and death. He remarks, "In the old days ... Eve continually bore children in travail. But now that a virgin has conceived in the womb a child, upon whose shoulders is government, a mighty God, Father of the age to come, the fetters of the old curse are broken. Death came through Eve but life came through Mary."[7] Accordingly, Mary represents the promise of eternal life because she is almost "bodiless" in her mythic construction and her body is missing from the start. She is associated with the soul which is, by implication, endowed with immortality. The body, however, is disobedient, subversive, intent upon pleasure, self-indulgent, and hence ever in danger of falling into chaos. Eve's eating the apple has resulted in the ultimate knowledge of mortality and of the transient nature of human existence. As Mary Condren explains in her study of religious female images:

> Women have been identified with Eve, the symbol of evil, and can only attain sanctity by identifying with the Virgin Mary, the opposite of Eve. But this is an impossible task since we are told that Mary herself "was conceived without sin" and when she gave birth to Jesus remained a virgin. To reach full sanctity then, women have to renounce their sexuality, symbol of their role as temptress and the means by which they drag men from their lofty heights. [...] Sex and spirituality have become polar opposites in Christian teaching.
>
> (Condren, 1989: 5)

Thus, the idealization of the asexual yet productive Virgin counters the threat of aggressive sexuality embodied in Eve. The message here seems to be that the woman is sanctioned only in her role as passive and silenced mother. Her desire is wholly contained within her maternal role and serves only the glory of devout and sacred reproduction. Most important of all, the Mary and Eve polarization is

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[6] "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: A young woman is with child, and she will bear a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7: 14).

[7] Pamela Norris cites St. Jerome from **Select Letters of St. Jerome**, Trans. by., F. A. Wright, M.A., London and New York, 1933, pp. 89, 91.

indicative of the mere splitting of a genuine and complete female with a soul and a body into the images imposed by males on the female. She is thus shaped according to the pattern of male desires and wishes. Indeed, the man reduces the complex personality of the woman to what he himself desires to see in her. Yet, the woman is a mystery to man, a complete being with an independent life of her own. She has individuality and is thus a human being beyond his control. However, man emerges as the only source of authority, as it is his privilege to determine how and within what narrow confines woman should act and appear. Here the dismembering of the female comes to the foreground. The male acts as fate controlling the lives, the fortunes of everyone. This splitting is the destruction of female wholeness in order to prevent the female from becoming a threat to the male-oriented society.

The history of Western philosophy presents a set of binary oppositions, such as culture/nature, the rational/the emotional, the body/the soul, activity/passivity, each of which reinforces the fundamental opposition between male and female. These binary oppositions are foregrounded in the patriarchal value system: each opposition can be considered as a hierarchy where the "feminine" side is always apprehended as the negative, powerless instance. Western thought has for centuries been caught up in this series of hierarchical binary oppositions that are ultimately related to the fundamental "couple" of male/female which derives its justification from the "phallus" as the transcendental signifier, the origin from which all meaning is derived. And this finds its reflection in a hierarchical model of relationship between the sexes. The couple of man and woman becomes a battlefield where the struggle for signifying supremacy is forever re-enacted, for meaning only gets constituted in a movement in which one of the terms of the couple is destroyed in favour of the other (Cixous, 1996: 64). In the end, victory is equated with activity and defeat with passivity; under patriarchy, the male is always the victor. In general terms, we often find that philosophical norms like reason and objectivity are defined in contrast to matter, the irrational or whatever Plato or Aristotle, for instance, ultimately associates with women and the feminine. Furthermore, dialectical relation of these terms is dependent on power and exclusion for their existence. In this hierarchical distribution, the male is privileged and the feminine is subordinated to the masculine order. The other/woman only appears in the negative side, as the

construct of man. The result is that "she" has become non-existent, "unthinkable" (**Ibid**.). Furthermore, Cixous argues that this oppositional practice has become endemic to the extent that it appears "eternal-natural" (**Ibid**.). The hierarchical organisation of binary oppositions that find their ultimate expression in the male/female dichotomy is constitutive of oppression and violence at large.[8] Cixous here alludes to the very origin of women's oppression as the prerequisite of phallocracy. Although her work predates Irigaray's, Cixous seems to provide a response to Irigaray's assertion that all women undergo "the same oppression, the same exploitation of their body, the same denial of their desire" (Irigaray, 1993: 119) and her call for the recognition of sexual difference as the main source of oppression and therefore the starting point of any feminist politics:

> I think the most important thing to do is to expose the exploitation common to all women and to find the struggles that are appropriate for each woman, right where she is, depending upon her nationality her job, her social class, her sexual experience, that is, upon the form of oppression that is for her the most immediately unbearable.
>
> (**Ibid**., pp. 166-167)

In addition to what Cixous and Irigaray point out concerning the way Western thought has for centuries conceptualized the world through hierarchical binary oppositions, the anthropologist Sherry Ortner puts an emphasis on the division of the cultural world into gendered dichotomies—male(culture), female (nature); male (public), female (private/domestic); male (creativity), female (procreativity). In order to explicate this dichotomy she asserts that,

> woman's body seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life; the male, in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally, 'artificially,' through the medium of technology and symbols. In so doing, he creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendental objects, while the woman creates only perishables—human beings.
>
> (Ortner, 1974: 75)

[8] Helen Cixous's 1975 essay "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays" is one of the earliest feminist discussions on the relation of the interpretation of "Woman" as the opposite of "Man" to the violence and exploitation enacted upon the "Other" in general. She has argued that sexual discrimination is the outcome of the privileging of the term "man" over "woman" in all the symbolic systems and is based on an inequality between the two sexes, manifested in philosophical and political thought as well as literary, artistic and cultural representations.

Camille Paglia in her *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, on the other hand, draws our attention to how Western culture has been founded on an endless war between timeless, inherent, and universal masculine and feminine forces which can be found in two sources: the animus and anima that characterize the psychological archetypes explored by C. G. Jung, and the dichotomy between male Apollonian aspiration towards art and female Dionysian aspect of primeval nature discussed by Nietzsche. Espoused to these everlasting principles, Paglia asserts: "Woman is the primeval fabricator, the real First Mover" (Paglia, 1990: 12). "Reason and logic", insists Paglia, "are the anxiety-inspired domain of Apollo, premiere god of sky-cult. The Apollonian is harsh and phobic, coldly cutting itself off from nature by its superhuman purity" (**Ibid**.). Apollo's great opponent is Dionysus and the "Dionysian", by contrast, "is liquid nature, a miasmic swamp whose prototype is the still pond of the womb" (**Ibid**.). This dichotomy between the Apollonian and the Dionysian leads to another binary opposition where the male is identified with Apollo, who stands for rationality, and the female with Dionysus, who stands for desire. The rational is read as that which can transcend the particular into the universal; masculine rationality is capable of this while feminine intuition and emotion remain fixed to the body and the particular. Thus, masculine thought and imagination become the neutral, transcendent "one" to notions of feminine intuition as "other".

Western religion and philosophy attest to the politically relevant character of patriarchal convictions about women. As the world of religion and philosophy belongs to the males, the ideas which shape culture in regard to the female are also of male design. There is no doubt that the discursive and representational systems of religion, like those of philosophy, are parts of the domain of representation on which patriarchy is erected. For Luce Irigaray, religion is a "dimension of social organization" (in Whitford, 1991: 140). She argues that at a social level the phenomenon of religion is inescapable:

> To exclude or suppress the phenomenon of religion seems impossible. It re-emerges in different, often degenerate forms: sectarianism, theoretical or political dogmatism, religiosity .... So it is important to rethink it, particularly in its structures, its categories, its initiations, its rules, and its utopias, all of which have been *male* for centuries. Not forgetting that these are often nowadays called science and technology.
>
> (**Ibid**., pp. 140-141, [my italics])

The discourse of religion, as shown above, is very powerful. Significantly enough, the Bible begins with the "word" of God thereby placing the abstract word upon the material world. In order to establish a close link between man and the transcendental, the Bible begins with the act of male creation, relegating female reproductivity to a secondary/inferior position and delineating woman as a malleable creature who has to be tamed and controlled by man.

Western philosophy exhibited a vein similar to that of the Old Testament and other patriarchal religions and modes of thinking. Religious and philosophical texts such as the Bible and Plato's and Aristotle's works have been influential supporters of the patriarchal order because of their laying emphasis on the dichotomy of body and soul or of the rational and irrational by which man associates himself with the abstract and rational, and woman is linked with the material and the chaotic. Although Plato supports a polytheistic religion, his ideas about women do not much differ from those of the Bible, since he reflects the same patriarchal preconceptions which conceive of women as mere vessels whose function is to give birth to the children of the patriarch.

Plato disdained the visible world as an unreliable illusion full of shadows of Divine Forms. For him the ultimate universal substance was considered to be mind, with the physical world a manifestation of some higher and pre-existent ideal reality. According to Plato, the body keeps us away from real knowledge; it rivets us in a world of material things which is far removed from the world of reality; and it tempts us away from the virtuous life. Only the soul can truly know, for only the soul can ascend to the real world; the world of the Forms or Ideas (Spelman, 1999: 34) is accessible not through the senses but only through philosophic discussion and thought, based on mathematical reasoning. The Platonic influence excluded the feminine from the processes of mind and actions of mind and knowing became the province of the masculine. Similarly, according to Helen Haste, the Aristotelian

influence presupposed a dichotomy and a hierarchy which equated the masculine with rationality and femininity with irrationality, and imposed a model of governance of one by the other (Haste, 1994: 75). Plato's and Aristotle's misogynist prescriptions denied women the processes of generating knowledge, and rendered them non-representable.

In Western culture the notion that femaleness is a deformity or obscenity can be traced back at least as far as Aristotle who exerted a great influence on late medieval social and political thought and teaching (Freeland, 1994: 145-46). Like Plato, Aristotle too believes that the soul is associated with rationality. Aristotle, moreover, thinks that the "biological inferiority" of woman is reflected in her inferiority in the rational capacities as well. The rational capacities of woman are seen as weaker than those of man. Being less rational, woman is less able than man to make moral judgements (Lerner, 1986: 68-69). In addition to this, Aristotle in *The Generation of Animals*[9] also asserted that woman is a "deformity of nature": "we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity, though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature" (Aristotle, 1943: 461).

The arguments of these philosophers from the pre-Christain era concerning the nature of woman and her sexuality find their support in Christian theology as well. Defining woman's essential nature, the Christian theologian Tertullian, argued that she is a "temple built over a sewer" (as quoted by Simone de Beauvoir, 1977: 199). That pre-Christian definition, together with the Bible's condemnation of Eve, informed the work of such medieval thinkers as Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, both of whom believed that women were physically and spiritually inferior to men. This idea is symbolised in the story of the Creation and Fall which is highly unfavourable to women. In the story of the Fall, woman and, more specifically, female sexuality became the symbol of human weakness and the source of evil. To begin with, God, who is a male, asserts man's primacy over woman, who is created after man and from one of his ribs, in order to give "an help meet for him" (Genesis 2: 20). For two thousand years, these religious tenets have been cited as proof of divine sanction for the subordination of women. As such, they have had a powerful

impact on defining values and practices in regard to gender relations. Saint Thomas Aquinas also proclaimed that form is masculine and matter feminine: the superior, godlike male intellect impresses its form upon the inert, female matter.

A distrust and hatred of female sexuality was endemic in early modern Europe which has been supported by centuries-old patristic influence upon Christian doctrine. The history of Western men's attitudes to women is a history of woman-hatred, often with terrifying consequences. During the European witch-hunts, thousands of women were tortured and murdered when woman-as-Eve was transformed into woman-as-witch. Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge call attention to the fact that "fear of female sexuality was only one of the elements that turned 'witchcraft' into a demoniac heresy and a heinous crime from the late fourteenth to the end of the seventeenth century" (Davis and Farge, 1994: 438). Two Dominican monks, Heinreich Kramer and James Sprenger, published a witch-hunting manual in 1486, the *Malleus Maleficarum,*[10] proclaiming that "all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable" (in Creed, 1993: 74-75)
and these women were accused of copulating with the devil, devouring new-born babies of women. The reasons why women are inclined to witchcraft all relate to the classical and phallocentric definition of woman as the "other", the weaker. The major reason given for woman's "otherness" is her carnal nature. Since the sexuality of woman is not easy to be grasped, being an unknown entity, woman comes to represent a subject position banished to outer darkness by the castrating power of phallocentrism, or what Derrida terms as "phallogocentrism," which illustrates the domination exercised by patriarchal discourse.

Diana Fuss argues that Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One* exposes exactly how, in the Western philosophical tradition descending from Aristotle, "woman" has remained an enduring "site of contradiction":

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[9] One of the zoological works of the Greek philosopher, whose works set the course of Western science for centuries.
[10] Heinreich Kramer and James Sprenger, **Malleus Maleficarum**, 1529,
(Internet) http://www.MalleusMaleficarumorg/p1q06.doc, November 19th, 2001.

> on the one hand, woman is asserted to have an essence which defines her as woman [designated through qualities such as weakness, passivity, receptivity, and emotion] and yet, on the other hand, woman is relegated to the status of matter and can have no access to essence (the most she can do is to facilitate man's actualizing of his inner potential).
>
> (Fuss, 1989: 72)

In line with this argument, Hélène Cixous in the "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays" comments that

> [Woman] does not exist, she can not-be; but there has to be something of her. He keeps, then, of the woman on whom he is no longer dependent, only this space, always virginal, as matter to be subjected to the desire he wishes to impart. And if we consult literary history, it is the same story. It all comes back to man – to *his* torment, his desire to be (at) the origin. Back to the father. There is an intrinsic connection between the philosophical and the literary (to the extent that it conveys meaning, literature is under the command of the philosophical) and the phallocentric. Philosophy is constructed on the premise of woman's abasement. Subordination of the feminine to the masculine order, which gives the appearance of being the condition for the machinery's functioning.
>
> (Cixous, 1996:65)

As it is clear from Irigaray's and Cixous's arguments, a sense of negativity is attributed to the female sex as the "other" of man. Signifying that which eludes the order of the self, because it is lacking or excessive, the "other" is used to control the ambivalent and to create boundaries. In order to deal with the instabilities arising from the divison between self and non-self by preserving an illusion of control and order, the stereotypes of the "other" is seen as a solution. However, this act of imagining woman as the "other" throughout history has resulted in women's being denied subjectivity. In this claim, we can echo Virginia Woolf's statement in *A Room of One's Own* that women serve "as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (Woolf, 1942: 87); or what Jacques Lacan claims woman is man's "symptom" (Lacan, 1982: 48) because he projects his lack on her, and by virtue of this projection both "articulates and disavows it" (**Ibid**.). For Lacan to argue that "Woman doesn't exist" is to say that "[the feminine] is defined purely against the [signifier] man" (**Ibid**., p. 49) and to point to the fact that such definition is always imaginary, in the same manner that her function is to support the fantasy of self-realisation and wholeness to be gained in relation to an "other." Woman has a negative or no fixed place in the symbolic order because she points out the lack fundamental to human existence. The

logic of masculinity takes itself as the universal point of reference, yet its assumed superiority is dependent on the existence of the "other."

The idea of otherness, on the other hand, that relegates women to immanence and to a position of inferiority turns them into mere objects on which men project their fantasy of a sex-less and meek creature. Women are made to fit into the constructed images of femininity in male-dominated symbolic structures. If the woman refuses to fit the image which is a site on which men project their own fantasies of a docile and silent woman which springs from their own imagination, she is severely punished for threatening this male illusion of a unified, coherent subjectivity, because woman as a construct, as a fiction exists only to affirm man's place in the Symbolic. Hence the woman becomes victimized by a male-oriented ideology.

In this respect, it can be stated that a male-oriented ideology created the myth of the "weaker" sex which is further enhanced by the Judeo-Christian teaching that emphasises the God-given inferiority and sinfulness of the daughters of Eve. The patriarchal myth of woman embodied in the image of Eve the temptress, who is created by a male deity and formed from the rib of Adam, later to cause the fall of "man" from grace and innocence, underpins Western culture for centuries. The equation of sinfulness with sexuality became one of the cornerstones of Christian teaching. St. Paul is one of the churchmen who made definitive distinctions between men and women's respective value in the eyes of God. According to him,

> A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin.
>
> (1 Tim. 2: 11-14)

St. Paul draws his authority from the tale of the rib, with its idea of woman as the secondary creation. This quotation is indicative of the attitudes of the early Christian priesthood to woman, and it is this kind of passages that have been quoted in the past (and present) to keep women in their place and to rationalize man's superior status in society and patronizing attitude towards the female sex.

What those philosophers and theologians from the third and fourth centuries B.C. had to say about women and what they are like constituted the basis for trends of thought that followed. Sigmund Freud, another representative of masculine philosophy, for example, came to support the privileged status of the patriarchal order in Western culture in the nineteenth century. The notion of masculinity was shattered when Freud published his studies which revealed that the image of man as a rational being is a mere fiction. Nevertheless, in spite of questioning the structure that gives men and women a different position within the framework of the social system, Freud considered this structure as naturally given and shared many of the prejudices expressed against women. In doing so, he perpetuated the patriarchal view: his theory of femininity submits to the misogynist rules of Western philosophical tradition. While the Freudian description of the female genitals is in terms of a "castrated" condition, the penis, the token of the male's superior status in patriarchal societies, on the other hand, is given the most significant place in the hierarchical structure of society, the subject both of endless **boasting** and endless **anxiety**.

Freud chose the myth of Perseus[11] and Medusa in order to illustrate his theory that woman is castrated. In his essay "Medusa's Head,"[12] Freud associates Medusa with castration (decapitation) and analyses the ambiguity of the image: the snakes on her head stand for a denial of the castration she represents (for Freud, the head with its hair of writhing snakes is a symbol of the castrated female genitals), and the idea of being turned into stone signifies both castration and arousal. Freud says,

> We have not often attempted to interpret individual mythological themes, but an interpretation suggests itself easily in the case of the horrifying decapitated head of the Medusa ... a representation of woman as a being who frightens and repels because she is castrated ... [it] takes the place of a representation of the female genitals, or rather ... it isolates their horrifying effects from their pleasure-giving ones.
>
> (pp. 273-274)

[11] Robert Graves calls attention to an interesting point as far as Perseus's name is concerned. He says "Perseus's name should properly be spelled *Pterseus*, which means "the destroyer" (Graves, 1992: 17).

[12] Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head", in **Standard Edition**, vol. 18, pp. 273-274. (**The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, 24 vols, trans by, James Strachey, London: Hogarth, 1953-1966.)

Medusa in Greek mythology was the most famous of the monstrous Gorgon sisters. According to *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the name "Gorgon" comes from the adjective "gorgos", which means "terrible, fearful, fierce" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, 1959: 531). In *The Great Mother*, Erich Neumann claims that the Gorgons symbolize the mother goddess in her "devouring aspect as earth, night, and underworld" (Neumann, 1972: 169). Her genitals or "womb-gullet" are "represented by the terrible face with its gnashing teeth" (**Ibid**.). Neumann goes on to argue that The Great Mother is the chief image from which split off surrogate subforms of female horrors, like Gorgon and Fury (**Ibid**., p. 168). **The vagina dentata** exemplifies the sexual anxiety of these myths. In the North American Indian version, says Neumann, "A meat-eating fish inhabits the vagina of the Terrible Mother; the hero is the man who overcomes the Terrible Mother, breaks the teeth out of her vagina, and so makes her into a woman" (**Ibid**.).

Female genitalia represent, in Freud's view, an aspect of the feminine as site of danger: "the terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration which is linked to the sight of something" (Freud, **op cit**., p. 273), namely the absence of the penis. With her head of writhing snakes, huge mouth, lolling tongue and boar's tusks, the myth of Medusa can also be regarded as the myth of woman as castrator which is implicated in the threatening aspect of the female genital that is symbolized by the **vagina dentata** or toothed vagina. The myth concerning the woman as castrator clearly points to male fears and phantasies about the female genitals as a trap, a black hole which threatens to swallow them up and cut them into pieces (Campbell, 1972: 73). Erich Neumann alludes to the terrible goddess of Melanesia who was known as "Le-hev-hev" and was feared by the Malekulan men. Her name meant "That which draws us to It so that It may devour us" (Neumann, 1972: 174).

It is not by accident that Freud linked the sight of the Medusa to the horrifying sight of the mother's genitals, because the concept of the monstrous-feminine, as constructed within/by a patriarchal ideology, is linked to the problem of **sexual difference**, a difference which is grounded in the idea of monstrosity and which invokes castration anxiety in the male spectator. Medusa has a head of a multitude of snakes which is regarded by Freud as a "multiplication of penis symbols" (Freud, **op. cit**., p. 273). Freud points to one ambivalence when he says

that the sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with horror (which he reads as a trope for erection) even as its spectacle translates into a scene of consolation: "he is stiff in possession of a penis and the stiffening reassures him of the fact" (**Ibid**.). Yet, Elizabeth Bronfen interpretes the myth of Medusa from a different perspective asserting that "This mythic figure frightens and reassures, in that she functions as both a site of lack and what covers the lack" (Bronfen, 1992: 70). Thus, this spectacle of "sexual" lack enables the viewer to isolate his own otherness by translating it on to a sexually different body.

Freud in his description of woman's sexual development in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality"[13] (1905), especially in the third of these essays, refers to anatomy and declares that "anatomy is destiny" (Freud, 1991: 429) and in the name of that anatomical destiny, women are seen as less favoured by nature from the point of view of the libido; which according to Freud, is defined as [...] "regularly and lawfully of a masculine nature whether in the man or in the woman" (**Ibid**.). This idea, relative to the primacy of the penis and to the necessarily masculine character of the libido, presides over the problematics of castration as developed by Freud. For Freud the genesis of this stance stems from the masculine oedipal crisis. A boy's struggle to free himself from his mother and become masculine gives rise to "the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser" (**Ibid**., p. 407).

The Freudian explanation of the early establishment of masculinity and femininity is reinterpreted by Nancy Chodorow in her work *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and Sociology of Gender* in terms of the process by which gender is created out of the fact that women do the mothering of children:

> Masculinity becomes an issue as a direct result of a boy's experience of himself in his family—as a result of his being parented by a woman. For children of both genders, mothers represent regression and lack of autonomy. A boy associates these issues with his gender identification as well. Dependence on his mother, attachment to her, and identification with her represent that which is not masculine; a boy must reject dependence and deny attachment and identification. Masculine gender role training becomes much more rigid than feminine. A boy represses those qualities he takes to be feminine inside himself, and rejects and devalues women and whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world.
>
> (Chodorow, 1978: 181)

[13] In "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) Freud asserts that the hypothesis of a single identical genital apparatus—the male organ—is fundamental in order to account for the infantile sexual organization of both sexes.

Chodorow's argument is that the relationship to the mother differs in systematic ways for boys and girls, beginning in the earliest periods. Boys associate their fears of powerlessness with women. In order to find their identity, boys develop themselves as other-than-the-mother; they identify with the father and turn away from emotional expression toward action in the world. By the way in which their selfhood is defined against the nurturant mother, boys are prepared for participation in the public sphere.

In his analysis of the subject of feminine sexuality, Freud came to the conclusion of a "natural" anatomical determination of sexual difference which supports phallocentrism's position of power. The anatomical difference between the sexes[14] is founded upon the idea of having/not having the phallus whose symbolic significance is linked by the undeniable visibility of the penis as the only mark of significant difference between the little boy and the girl, thus a symbol and source of power which is specified by Lacan as the "privileged signifier"[15] (Lacan, 1982: 82), an idea which manifests itself in the subordination of the feminine to the masculine order. In Lacanian theory, the relation each sex has to the phallus determines the position each occupies as a masculine or feminine subject. Thus, it is woman's "lack" which produces the penis as the mark of human fullness and the phallus as symbolic presence: "[b]ecause the penis and the phallus are (albeit illusory) identified, women are regarded as castrated" (Grosz, 1990: 116). The phallus, then, attains its meaning and significance only in its relation to its opposite, that is, its

[14] The difference between the sexes ultimately goes back to early childhood, dividing up functions and sexual roles: "maleness combines [the factors of] subject, activity, and possession of the penis; femaleness takes over [those of] object and passivity" and the castrated genital organ (Freud, 1991: 394).

[15] Lacan's essay "The Signification of the Phallus" emphasises that the phallus "is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier" (Lacan, 1977: 285). In this context, it is worth noting that the Saussurian theory of the arbitrary link between signifier and signified, together with the notion of language as a system of differences, enabled Lacan to argue that the subject is the subject of the signifier. Because the signifier is always separated from the signified and has a real autonomy, no signifier ever comes to rest, finally, on any signified. The realm of the signifier is the realm of the Symbolic order – the order of signs, symbols, significations, representations, and images of all kinds. In this order the individual is formed as subject. From this, Lacan demonstrates that the penis has a symbolic status, a status that he associates with the phallus. The penis is real, but it is the (symbolic) phallus which is a signifier; in fact, the phallus, because of its role in signifying what is missing (or lacking), becomes the signifier of signification. See Jacques Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus", **Écrits: A Selection**, Trans. by., Alan Sheridan, London: Routledge, 1995. pp. 281-291.

absence, the hole, and represents the moment when the Law or the Name-of-the-Father prohibits the Desire for the fusion with the mother. In other words, women must be constructed as "not having" or "lacking" in order for men to be regarded as having the phallus which, now, signifies the object of the women's desire as well. As such, the discourse of psychoanalysis in its Freudian, Lacanian, or even post-Lacanian formulations maintains the phallocentric assumptions underlying the formation of sexual identity.[16]

From the points of view mentioned above and the feminist readings they produce, it can be inferred that the "fatality" of the feminine situation is a result of an anatomical "defectiveness." It is worth noting here how men – theologists, philosophers and scientists – in relation to biology, psychology, reproduction discriminate against women and place her in a subordinate position. In all these male preconceptions about femininity, "going back through the masculine imaginary" (Irigaray, 1993: 164), it is possible to see the male-dominated ways of seeing the woman in Western philosophy from Plato and Aristotle onwards.

All the arguments upheld by the male representatives of the fields of religion and philosophy about the nature of women form "an ideological system" (Klapisch-Zuber, 1992: 3) in favour of the male-dominated culture that situates women as the inferior term of the binary opposition man/woman and construct woman as the other of man. However, while Freud conceives of the significance of the phallus which condemns and confines women to the place of lack as naturally given, for Irigaray this is merely the result of Western culture's privileging of the sight over all the other senses, which, in fact, aims at putting woman to a secondary position: providing the phallus with the notions of universality and abstraction and giving woman the notions of the particular and the material. For Irigaray, Freud "fails to investigate the historical factors governing the data with which he is dealing" (Irigaray, **op. cit**., p. 70). Woman's relegation to the place of lack is the result of culture's notion of gender which has been incorporated into language and representation which are notably male-constructs. In fact, "Female sexuality has always been conceptualised on the basis of masculine parameters," (**Ibid**., p. 23) proclaims Irigaray.

[16] For further discussion on the Symbolic and the Law of the Father, see Elizabeth Grosz, **Jacques**

The condition of language which is one of the most influential tools that define patriarchy's privileged status—as Irigaray considers the situation in relation to Lacan's symbolic order—is fundamentally masculine and patriarchal; it speaks the imaginary of men and is organised according to the law of the symbolic order which subtends it. The Symbolic as the domain of law is founded on the Name-of-the-Father and the God of Christianity is the exemplar of the masculine imaginary. This realm is governed by the "Law of the Father" and is thought to subordinate or repress the pre-symbolic realm of the "Imaginary", associated with desire and the figure of the Mother. While men can readily invoke the symbolic order in representing themselves to others in the social world, women, by contrast, are in a condition of, what Irigaray calls **déréliction** (in Whitford, 1991: 77-78, 81), that is to say, of not being able to represent themselves, because women are abandoned outside the symbolic order which is foreign to them. Accordingly, women cannot have an identity of their own. Irigaray goes on to explain what she means by "déréliction" when she says

> Whereas the fundamental ontological category for men is *habiter* (dwelling), whether in a literal or figurative sense: men live in "grottoes, huts, women, towns, language, concepts, theories, etc.", women's ontological status in this culture is *déréliction*, the state of abandonment, described significantly in the same terms (*un fusionnel*) as the psychological term for "merging" or failure to differentiate and separate.
>
> (in Whitford, **Ibid**., p. 81)

As Irigaray states explicitly in the argument above, theory, language, women constitute a house or home for men. However, women themselves are "homeless" in the symbolic order. Women – at least from a traditional perspective – must be attached to a man in order to have a social persona; a woman, thus, does not have her own identity because to be a "sex which is not one" (i.e. which is not whole because it is lacking – not unified in itself, but dependent) – is to be excluded from the fullness of being: it is to be left precisely in a condition of "déréliction".

In her work *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray begins with an analysis of Freud's psychoanalytic works then chronologically moves back to various male philosophers until she reaches Plato's works. Expressing her critique of these male texts, she displays their philosophical preconceptions which are all based on the

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Lacan: A Feminist Introduction, London, Routledge, 1990, pp. 50-80.

exclusion of the woman/mother. In "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," Irigaray points out that man's fear of the generative power and energy of woman and his desire to be sole creator of his own life lead man to relegate woman as lack or absence:

> By denying the mother her generative power and by wanting to be the sole creator, the Father, according to our culture, superimposes upon the archaic world of the flesh a universe of language ... and symbols which cannot take root in it except as in the form of that which makes a *hole* in the bellies of women and in the site of their identity.
>
> (in Whitford, 1995: 41, [my italics])

Irigaray's argument is that the equation of the phallus with male authority leads to the fact that femininity signifies lack. Thus woman is consigned to the place of lack in spite of her ability to produce and is loaded with all of the connotations of fear and and loathing around biological processes of reproduction. Irigaray takes this issue to point to how in the male visual system of representation and desire, women's sexual organs, "represent the horror of having *nothing* to see" (Irigaray, 1993: 26, [my italics]). Western systems of representation put the notion of seeing on a pedestal: what can be seen (presence) is superior to what cannot be seen (absence) and guarantees Being, hence the privilege of the penis which is elevated to the status of a Phallus:

> [...] One really ought not to forget what "castration", or the knowledge of/about castration owes to the look, in Freud's case at any rate. The look at stake/in play [*en jeu*] as always... But the little girl, the woman - would have nothing to show. She would expose, exhibit the possibility of a *nothing to be seen*."
>
> (Irigaray, 1992: 53)

Irigaray expounds her judgement when she says "Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having no thing. No being and no truth" (**Ibid**., p. 48) As a result, in Irigaray's words, "within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject" (Irigaray, 1993: 78).

In order to illustrate this argument in more detail, an interesting conversation between Shakespeare's Hamlet and Ophelia in the "Mousetrap" scene is worth mentioning. In comparison to Hamlet, Ophelia is certainly a creature of lack. "I think nothing, my lord," she tells him, and her sentence is cruelly twisted by Hamlet when he says:

> Hamlet: That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
> Ophelia: What is, my lord?
> Hamlet: *Nothing.*
>
> (Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* Act III, Scene ii, 117-119)

In this conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia, the emphasis is placed upon what is predominantly feminine and the female body. This conversation carries, moreover, specific messages about femininity and sexuality, especially as one of the examples for the verbal images of women (Showalter, 1985: 32).[17] The footnote to this in the Arden edition of *Hamlet* (1997: 295) tells that in Elizabethan slang, "nothing" was a term for the female genitalia. To Hamlet, then, "nothing" is what lies between maids' legs.

In her seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", published in 1975, Laura Mulvey, a feminist film theorist, who traces the roles of males and females in films as well as the operation of the male gaze in traditional narrative cinema, declares that in patriarchal society,

> pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed as the passive object, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness.*
>
> (Mulvey, 1998: 585)

Derived from the theories of Lacan, Mulvey's theory has had a significant impact on feminist literary criticism because it provides a model of the way representations of women, literary as well as cinematic, have been structured by "the unconscious of patriarchal society" (**Ibid**.). In Mulvey's view, the female object of the gaze, because she lacks a penis, is associated with the primordial fear of castration. She is constructed as a fetishized object-to-be-looked-at as a reminder of man's castration complex, and it is through this constructed image of femininity that the spectator's gaze is controlled (**Ibid**., p. 587) and the male unconscious has to

[17] These ideas are inspired from my reading of Elaine Showalter's essay "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism" in **A Practical Reader in Contemporary Literary Theory**. Eds. Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson, England: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996, pp. 30-41.

cope with this anxiety by either demystifying, devaluating, punishing or saving the guilty object, or fetishising her so that this image becomes reassuring rather than dangerous. Drawing on the image of woman as castrated which is a product of man's fear and fascination with female sexuality and which provides the patriarchal symbolic with a sense of stability, Barbara Creed argues that, "the paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world" (Creed, 1993: 152). This involves the Lacanian notion of the gaze with the aim of seeking the possibility of reversing the structure of the gaze which positions the male as the owner of the gaze, the subject who does the looking, and the female as the one who is being looked at, the object of the male gaze. One way of doing that, it follows, is to go back to the pre-Oedipal stage where the subjectivity is not yet constructed as such and the child's dyadic relationship with the mother does not allow for a subject/object distinction. Thus the woman as object to be looked at is created for the scopophilic (men are oriented to sight and they are scopophilic) and narcissistic pleasure of the spectator's gaze that is traditionally inscribed as male. As opposed to the solid, unified subject of the Symbolic order of which the transcendental signifier is the Phallus, subjectivity in the pre-linguistic phase is best conceived of in terms of fluidity and cohabitation.

Errour, Duessa and Sin represent everything denied by patriarchal order, everything that the gaze of the beholder fears to see and comprehend: that is the mystery of the female body, female sexuality, or in Freud's view "the dark continent."[18] The bodies of Errour, Duessa and Sin, especially the parts of their bodies related to their sexuality, are described in such a manner that feelings of disgust and revulsion are aroused in the reader because they are revealed as the emblems of filthy materiality and deformity meant to be quenched in the sense that they evoke the male dread of women.

Drawing on Irigaray's and Mulvey's theory of the male gaze and male castration anxiety, we can argue that these male constructs of the so-called monstrous or grotesque female figures represent male castration anxieties as well as the horror

of female maternal sexuality and female reproductive capacity which culminate in the patriarchal fear of that female power. In conjunction with the verbal representations of the bodies of the females which can be defined as horrible and disgusting, the sight of the female body is disruptive of the phallomorphic logic of representation that privileges the visible and therefore defines woman as "hole" in complicity with the perception of woman as not-man, as an incomplete human being in comparison to man. Thus, these monstrous or grotesque females frighten the beholders, in that their bodies function as a site of lack for the patriarchal male discourse. As such, they signify the male fear of castration which ultimately produces and delineates the monstrous or the grotesque. In male discourse then, the bodies of these female figures, specifically, the genitals of their bodies, evoke a sense of repugnance and fear because female genitalia, as we have seen in Freud's interpretation of the myth of Medusa, represent an aspect of the feminine as a dangerous site.

The bodies of these so-called monstrous and grotesque female figures in Spenser and Milton also draw attention to a significant dichotomy between the soul and the body which is one of the bases of Christian ideology. In relation to the soul/body opposition, it can be argued that the soul, in traditional Christian terminology, usually embodies all that is good and godly in man, while the body is continually given the role of weakness, vulnerability, and corruptibility of the flesh. The flesh will decay, but the soul will forever survive. As an outcome of the story of the Fall, it was, moreover, held by patriarchal Christian religion that, women, through whom death, suffering, and toil came into the world, were creatures dominated by their sexuality. As such, women (particularly their bodies, the sites of their dangerous, secret and disruptive sexuality) should be controlled and punished by men. The physical form of Errour in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and of Sin in *Paradise Lost* are suggestive of the Judeo-Christian representations of evil. Zailig Pollock states that "It is a tradition which represents the Satanic evil of Pride as a dragon-like monster and suggests the deceitful, tempting quality of his evil by

[18] In "Femininity," (1933) Freud tells of female sexuality as a "riddle" which psychology too is unable to solve (Freud, 1991: 415).

linking the dragon to a seductive woman"[19] (Pollock, 1981: 270). Hence in encompassing both the serpent and the woman, Errour and Sin are evocative of man's disobedience as well as of their own feminine sexuality.

As far as the patriarchal Christian religion is concerned, the association between the serpent and woman can be traced back to the story of the Fall which came into being as a result of Satan's, in the form of a **serpent**, temptation of Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. Satan's disobedience and his consequent rebellion to God is in close parallel with Eve's listening to the voice of Satan instead of following God's command and hence her seduction which results in Adam's and ultimately mankind's fall from grace. Therefore, Woman as the eternal Eve (or Evil) has to be subdued. In denominating woman and serpent as evildoers, Judaic writers overturned a powerful earlier tradition which had associated the woman and the serpent with wisdom,[20] and fertility. The snake[21] which offers the apple to Eve in Genesis, causing the fall of humanity, is actually the central symbol of the female religion, once revered before the patriarchal dominance overcame the gylanic cultures. After Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, God drives a wedge between the serpent and the woman with a curse putting everlasting enmity between them and their offspring. While Adam's curse is to toil in the "sweat of [his] brow," (Genesis, 3: 19) namely the labour the male associates with civilization, the punishment inflicted upon the woman and the serpent alienates the woman from her long-time ally, the serpent. Moreover, if the snake is the symbol of the fertility Goddess, this condition is also essential to the establishment of monothesim which exemplifies "the historic moment of the death of the Mother Goddess and her replacement by God the Father and the metaphorical Mother under patriarchy" (Lerner, 1986: 198).

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[19] St. George fighting the dragon is a particularly English paradigm of this tradition.

[20] It is interesting that some ancient languages conceptualise the word for **wisdom** as being feminine, as in the Hebrew word **Hokma** and the Greek **sophia**, as well as myths such as those surrounding the Roman goddess, Pallas Athena, the daughter of Metis who was the goddess of wisdom.

[21] An old synonym for snake is serpent which comes from Old French, and ultimately from present participle of *serpere-* , "to creep" (*Webster's Dictionary*, p. 2074). In modern usage this usually refers to a mythic or symbolic snake. Yet, with the story of the Fall, a divine serpent representing the female creative nature from pre-Judaic polytheistic traditions was pitted against the created order of a male oriented divinity. As such, the fertility of the goddess was transformed and negativised.

Many goddesses were associated with the snake or serpent in Neolithic societies, including Crete and Anatolia. For instance, Inanna/Ishtar in Sumeria, Isis/Hathor in Egypt, Athena and Hera in Greece were snake goddesses shown with the snake, whose life-giving forces they wielded: a snake tail around the body of the goddess or sometimes it is her shape below the waist, as with Melusina, representing the sexuality and the regenerative power of women. Early Mediterranean statues and reliefs depict fecund goddesses with great nourishing breasts, generous hips and bellies ripe with pregnancy, often with serpents entwined sensuously about their bodies (Markale, 1999: 99). Appalled by this pagan tradition, the authors of Genesis converted the sensual, fertile goddess into a shameful sinner. The nakedness of the goddess was covered and her sexuality was punished with pain and oppression: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3: 16) proclaims God to Eve, as a result of her disobedience and rebellion. By God's command, then, the free and open sexuality of the fertility Goddess was to be forbidden to woman. The only way her sexuality was to find expression was in motherhood defined within the boundaries of patriarchal dominance. Fallen Eve was to take hope and courage from her redemptive role as a mother, but there were two conditions which defined and limited her choices, both of them imposed on her by God. She is to be severed from the snake, and she is to be ruled by her husband, which is the law of patriarchy. Hence we see all the symbolic elements significantly transformed, once the locus of power has shifted from female to male.

To illustrate this new position of the reversal of powers between the sexes, Michelangelo's portions of Sistine Chapel ceiling should be taken into consideration: they depict the story of the Creation of Man and Woman and the story of the Fall. A serpent with female head and torso confronts Adam in a fresco called *The Fall and Expulsion From Paradise* (Fig. 1). The power to give life is now represented by the bearded patriarchal God, the Father. The tree is the tree of the forbidden fruit. The tempter is the snake, long associated with the goddess. It is a feminine serpent with the head and bust of a woman. The powerful images of Michelangelo more clearly represent the metaphors for gender held in the Judeo-Christian tradition. That the human part of the serpent is female is clear from the exposed left breast and from her

long blonde hair which streams back from her head. The human features continue down as far as the knee. The impression is that her two legs become snake-like limbs just above the knee. The upper part of her snake legs are wrapped around the tree. Her right arm grasps the tree trunk for support as she stretches out her left arm to meet Eve's upraised left hand (the significance of the left hand used in transaction by both Eve and the serpent should not be overlooked). By identifying Eve as a temptress, she was seen as playing the same role as the evil serpent who had tempted her, thus linking the two.

Furthermore, if we trace the etymology of the word "Eve" we notice that it is actually derived from the Hebrew word "Hawwah," which means life *or* snake – thus associating her with the concept that all life originated in a primeval serpent. Adam names his wife Eve, Hawwah, which he defines as "mother of all living". The etymology of this term can also be linked with Aramaic **hiwyā** and Arabic **hayyatun**, both of which mean "serpent" (Norris, 1998: 318). It should also be highlighted that the serpent's life-giving qualities (its positive associations) provide it with a womb symbolism as well, probably due to its ability to shed its skin[22] and to rejuvenate itself. Kenneth Lapatin asserts that "Their seasonal shedding of skin has caused them to be associated with rebirth as well as with menstruation and thus fertility" (Lapatin, 2003: 80). The possible analogy between menstruation/biological cycles and the snake's shedding its skin is replete with rich suggestions – e.g., related to cyclical time.

The cyclical nature of the shedding of the skin by the snake, and the change in form that results from it are analogous to changes that occur in the cycle of the moon. Robert Graves in *The White Goddess* states the link between the symbols of menstruation and the Moon Mother in Goddess-worshipping societies where women's monthly cycle had status and was observed to be of the same duration as the Moon's cycle and the Moon Mother was believed to bleed also. Thus the moon is generally held to have been the first object of nature-worship, and the moon, to

[22] Michael Sims in his work entitled **Adam's Navel: A Natural and Cultural History of the Human Form** argues that

> "[b]ecause snakes shed their skins as they grow, many primitive cultures incorporated real and symbolic skin into rituals accompanying initiations and other milestones in life. Any

whose phases the menstrual cycle corresponds, is anciently associated with women. Robert Graves draws attention to this relationship when he says: "twenty-eight is a true lunar month not only in the astronomical sense ... but in the mystic sense that the Moon, being a woman, has a woman's normal menstrual period ("menstruation is connected with the word "moon") of twenty-eight days" (Graves, 1966: 66).

The portrayals of the three types of women which can be seen as the three socially accepted roles assigned to women by patriarchal society, namely the virgin, the wife, and the mother, can also be regarded as the three aspects of the Moon Goddess worshipped in ancient Egypt. In *The White Goddess*, Graves points to the fact that due to her different aspects, the Moon Goddess was portrayed as the Triple Goddess:

> the Triple Goddess ... was a personification of primitive woman—woman the creatress and destructress. As the New Moon or Spring she was girl; as the Full Moon or Summer she was woman; as the Old Moon or Winter she was hag.
>
> (Graves, 1966: 386)

The Three women, each corresponding to the three stages in the lives of women, namely, Virgin, Mother, Crone, illustrates the cyclical regeneration of nature. The female presence, which was reflected in cyclic aspects of nature, i.e., that birth is followed by death, death by reincarnation; that tides ebb and flow, winter alternates summer, the full moon with the dark of the moon, etc., was overwritten with the emergence of sun-worship, which presented the sun as the ultimate source of life and suggested a disconnection from the plurality implied by the cyclic aspects of nature. The significance of pre-patriarchal belief systems, which posited lunar deities as related to the Virgin-Mother-Goddess and accepted the female presence in every part of cosmos were erased (Rich, 1997: 107). Adrienne Rich first traces the origins of sun-worship in Egypt and explains the dynamics which resulted in this change of belief-systems. Then she analyses the influence of the Hellenic sun-god Apollo, who assimilated the attractive aspects of the Great Mother, and became the spokesman of father-right (**Ibid**., pp. 124-125). This assimilation, which indicates the control of the natural forces symbolized by the Great Mother, also points to a

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> emblem of rebirth becomes a symbol of eternal renewal, and therefore skin is associated with resurrection and immortality" (Sims, 2004: 14).

splittting in her holistic nature. As a result of this splitting, the significance of the worship of the moon, which embodied respect for natural law in its acknowledgement of the female presence, was eradicated. Accordingly, sun-worship became the central belief-system that cast its authority and control on female subjects, whose potentials as female bodies were celebrated in the context of pre-patriarchal belief-systems. Thus, patriarchy emerged as an ideology constructing its own knowledge by feeding on the processes that discarded the female body, and exposed it to its own authority and control. The Jungian psychologist, M. Esther Harding in her analysis of the traditional symbols of femininity, comments on the significance of the worships of the moon and the sun as such:

> The worship of the moon is the worship of the creative and fecund powers of nature ... But the worship of the sun is the worship of that which overcomes nature, which orders her chaotic fullness and harnesses her powers to the fulfilling of man's ends. The masculine principle, or Logos, thus came to be revered in the person of the Sun God, and the godlike qualities inherent in man, his capacity to achieve and to order.
>
> (Harding, 1971: 31)

For Harding, then, the worship of the moon expresses respect for the wisdom of instinct and natural law, and sun-worship is focused on the idea of the control of natural forces.

Thus, all positive implications, such as fertility, rebirth, that established an affinity between the serpent and the woman and which early Goddess-worshipping cultures saw as sacred and powerful for the generation of the whole group, became filthy, dangerous and evil under patriarchal domination. The long-lost tradition of matrilinearity that offered women subject positions through an identification with their mothers and other women as well as the female deities cannot, however, be ignored. Men in patriarchal societies exhibit fear of the sexual, mental and spiritual abilities of fully mature woman. Or as Kristeva asserts "fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing" (Kristeva, 1982: 77). The Mother Goddess was thus relegated to a history that was simultaneously erased.

The social history of woman is the story of varying forms of suppression and domination of her in the Apollonian patriarchal social order which is justified and maintained by various means. In order to control and relegate women to the place of men's "other," patriarchal society has produced images of femininity which are particularly prominent among the means of the suppression of women. An independent female, sexually liberated, asserting her own integrity, and her own right to determine her own existence challenges the male's interests and advantages, for such a female constitutes a threat to the male. Accordingly, patriarchal society, through suppression, has created an "ideal" feminine character who does not challenge domination, but through her enforced weaknesses, justifies and reinforces it. Thus, it has forced the female to assume this "ideal" character, and has denied her integrity and desires outside the structure of society. This "ideal" character has been produced through destroying the wholeness, autonomy and self-sufficiency of the female, because as Patricia J. Mills points out "a complete female with her spiritual and physical sides, with both womb and vagina, is all-powerful and uncontrollable" (Mills, 1987: 182). The "ideal" woman or the "Angel in the House" is assumed to be a passive, docile and above all **selfless** creature. Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert in *The Madwoman in the Attic*: *The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* comment that:

> To be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. A life that has no story [...] is really a life of death, a death-in-life. The ideal of "contemplative purity" evokes, finally, both heaven and the grave.
>
> (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 25)

But behind the angel lurks the monster "an antithetical mirror image of an angel" (**Ibid**., p. 28) : the opposite of the male idealization of women is the male fear of femininity. In other words, from a male point of view women who reject the submissive silences of domesticity which expect them to be good mothers and wives and to be docile and unopinionated outside their limited spheres, have been seen as monstrous and dangerous like serpent-Lamias, Gorgons, Circe, Medea, Hecate and the Sirens in whose representations we have patriarchal definitions of female

sexuality.[23] The monster woman is the woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has constructed for her. She also embodies intransigent female autonomy. As related to the idea of female autonomy we should expound on the story of Lilith, the mythic first wife of Adam who is central in *Paradise Lost*. Like Adam, she was created from dust. Because she considered herself equal, Lilith refused to lie beneath her husband. When Adam tried to force her into submission, she became angry and, speaking the Ineffable Name, that is, a sign of usurping the literary authority implied by the act of naming, ran away to the edge of the Red Sea. Her rebellion against male domination, which is described as daemonic, results in her punishment as an outcast and a child-murderer.

Lilith, however, is characterised not only by her rebellion against her husband, Adam, but at the same time by her disrespect to God whose name she utters. As such, the symbolic order on which male authority bases itself, and that posits God as the original representative of the same order, is challenged and disrupted by Lilith. The price that she has to pay for her rebellion against authority is terrible: she is locked into a vengeance (child-killing) which can only bring her more suffering because she kills her own children. Gilbert and Gubar point to the figure of Lilith as such,

> What her history suggests is that in patriarchal culture, female speech and female "presumption" – that is, angry revolt against male domination – are inextricably linked and inevitably daemonic. Excluded from the human community [...] the figure of Lilith represents the price women have been told they must pay for attempting to define themselves. [...] And even the nature of her one-woman revolution emphasizes her helplessness and her isolation, for her protest takes the form of a refusal and a departure, a flight of escape rather than an active rebellion like, say, Satan's.
>
> (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 35)

[23] I am concentrating here in mythical representations of the witch and will therefore not dwell on contemporary examples of the witch, such as Shakespeare's portrayal of the type in *Macbeth*.

Lilith also signifies the representation of the female monster because of the rebellion that she has been marked by. In this sense, she can be associated with the Greek Lamia,[24] who was characterized by her reputation for child-snatching and her dangerous sexual powers, through which she lured virile young men, enjoyed their bodies and then drank their blood and consumed their flesh like an early version of the vampire. Lamia/Lilith is disobedient and like Eve, and indeed like all women who are willful, she is deemed to be a constant threat to the divinely ordered state of affairs defined by men. She represents the deeper, darker fears men have of women and female sexuality.

While Lilith is "according to Hebrew mythology, both the first woman *and* the first monster" (Gilbert and Gubar, **op. cit**., p. 35), she is yet absent in the Bible, a male text, as the representation of female rebellion poses a threat to the male system and its authority. Unlike Lilith, however, Eve has a " place" in the Bible. According to the story of Genesis, Eve is drawn from one of Adam's ribs and given to Adam as a "help meet" (Genesis 2: 20) because God had said in Genesis 2: 18 that it was not good for man to be alone. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton also supports the idea of Eve's having an inferior status when he mentions her place in the human and heavenly hierarchy that is defined early in the poem as secondary to Adam's: "he for God only, she for God in him" (*PL*, Book 4, 299). Before Eve is created, Adam complains bitterly of his loneliness, with only the animals as his companions (*PL*, Book 8, 383-391). Yet, when Eve is fashioned to fulfill Adam's need for "fellowship," (**Ibid**., 389) far from being his equal in "rational delight," (**Ibid**., 391) she defers to him as her "author and disposer" (*PL*, Book 4, 635), whose will she claims to obey in everything. Mary Wollstonecraft calls attention to the fact that the

[24] The Greek myth of Lamia is as follows:
Lamia, the queen of Libya, causes Hera's jealousy by becoming Zeus's lover. The mother of many children, Hera determines to destroy every child she bears. Hence she hides herself in a deep cavern, her grief and anguish making her ugly in body as well as in soul. In her misery, Lamia withdraws to the rocks and caves of the sea-coast, where she preys on other women's children, eating them and sucking their blood, as does Lilith. Like Lilith, Adam's assertive and disquieting first wife, Lamia becomes an outcast. Hera continues to torment her with insomnia. Yet, Zeus allows her the gift of sleep by removing her eyes and placing them in a basket. All her loveliness gone, she is made gross and evil (Graves, **The Greek Myths**, 205-206). Stories about Lamia were present in Greek mythology and culture before the story of Lilith.

prevailing opinion, that woman was created for man, may have taken its rise from "Moses's poetical story."[25] She argues with reference to *Paradise Lost* that

> ... man, from the remotest antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subjugate his companion, and his invention to show that she ought to have her neck bent under the yoke, because the whole creation was only created for his convenience or pleasure.
>
> (Wollstonecraft, 1996: 25-26)

While Milton portrays Eve as eager for experience and autonomy, she is also marked by her pseudo-submissive, fawning nature which enables her to persuade Adam. Lilith rebels against God and Adam and flies away to the edge of the Red Sea to reside with demons. In doing so, she prefers punishment to patriarchal dominance and does not return to Adam in spite of being threatened by God's angelic emissaries. Although Eve crosses the boundaries dictated by men after the Fall, however, she becomes a more dutiful and obedient wife to Adam. While she is redeemed in the figure of the Virgin Mary, the second Eve, Lilith, on the other hand, remains accursed forever.

After discussing some female characters from literature who can be put in the category of monstrous women, Gilbert and Gubar, in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, examine a group of such "terrible sorceress-goddesses as the Sphinx, Hecate, Medusa, Circe, Kali, Delilah, and Salome, whose charms reflect male ambivalence about female charms and all of whom possess duplicitous arts that enable them both to seduce and to steal male generative energy" (Gilbert and Gubar, **op. cit**., p. 34). Spenser's Duessa belongs to that gallery of classical female figures who are invested with archaic female power, the secret of deadly charms which paralyze men. She lies below acceptable femininity, embodies the feminine body as dangerous, "other" to man; a cunning and malignant being, a monster, a wild beast. These women, moreover, are the ones whose actions and passions cannot be controlled by the phallic probings of masculine thought and accordingly, in patriarchal culture, their rebellion—that is their angry revolt against male domination—is believed to be "monstrous." By virtue of Duessa's disappearance, at the end of Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, aggressive impulses are repressed and

[25] The account of the creation in the Old Testament book of Genesis, which was attributed to Moses.

because she is a dangerous woman, her destruction reestablishes an order that was momentarily suspended due to her presence. Her end is evocative of the desires that should be suppressed and of the unstructured, aggressive drives that must be controlled and restrained for the prevailing culture to exist.

Furthermore, as a witch she is also an abject figure because she is represented within patriarchal discourse as an implacable enemy of the symbolic order because she sets out to unsettle the boundaries between the rational and irrational, symbolic and imaginary. Duessa is dangerous and wily, she is capable of wreaking destruction upon people by using her evil powers. She also stands for the powerful sexuality of the **femme fatale**: the seductive woman who lures **men** into dangerous or compromising situations. By turning Fidebulio into a tree and similarly, by taking the Red Cross Knight under her own control, she steals the vitality from her male lovers and deprives men of their powers. Duessa, moreover, embodies the cunning of the serpent—at least when that cunning is put in action on her own behalf. She draws men astray and she comes to represent an unstoppable force overriding male notions of the "proper" feminine attributes. Assertiveness and activity which are accepted to be the typical characteristics of a male life of "significant action" are "monstrous" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 28) in women. Here we should recall Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, and her vision of the literary woman's situation that she expresses in her poem called "The Introduction." Finch is against the notion that literature is not the business of a woman's life, a life which remains deeply implicated in reductive and trivializing constructions of femininity, and that the pen is considered to be a male "tool," and thus unsuitable for women. As Finch puts it in her poem, the woman who attempts the pen is thought to be not only an intrusive and "presumptuous creature" (line 11), she is also unredeemable: no matter what she does she cannot overcome the "fault" (line 12) of her assumption since she has grotesquely transgressed boundaries defined by Nature:

> They tell us, we mistake our sex and way;
> *Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play*
> *Are the accomplishments we should desire*;
> *To write, or read, or think, or to enquire*
> *Would cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time*,
> And interrupt the conquests of our prime;
> Whilst the dull manage, of a servile house

Is held by some, our outmost art, and use.[26]

(Finch, "The Introduction," [my italics])

This passage implies that writing, reading and thinking are by definition the activities that intimately associated with the male domain. Therefore, these activities are claimed to be both alien and detrimental to "female" characteristics. The male-oriented society which is intent upon keeping woman in her place expects her to refrain from endeavouring to attempt the "pen" which is deemed to be the prerogative of men. Inalterably female in a culture where creativity is defined purely in male terms, women "exist only to be acted on men, both as literary and sensual objects" (Gilbert and Gubar, **op. cit**., p. 8).

Like Errour and Sin, Duessa is delineated as monstrous, hence "awe-inspiring" and her body is de-formed below the waist; an important physical characteristics which evinces that the monstrous-feminine is almost always represented in close relation to her sexuality. When she does penance at the time of the new moon by bathing with herbs traditionally used by witches, her "neather parts" are revealed as "misshapen, monstrous" (*The Faerie Queene*, Book 1, 2, 41). In this context, it is important to note the story of Melusina from French legend which takes us to the great goddess who was worshipped, adored and feared, as mother and first cause, as the mystery and power of life and death. Melusina was one of the representatives of the snake-women. Once worshipped, she was a creative and powerful goddess of culture and civilization, agriculture and infrastructure, like Atargatis and Semiramis. According to the legend, she was spied on by her husband and felt disgraced when her snake form was revealed. So she left him losing her immortality. Jean Markale describes her as such:

> Because she is the serpent-woman, **la vouivre**, feminine, Melusina, the goddess of the serpents of the Near East and of Crete, who uncoils herself in slow reptilian movements and who is finally nothing other than the spiral of involution and of evolution, the perfect symbol of the eternal respiration of the divine. From this serpent-shaped spiral bursts light, the light of the sun that spreads in curving waves over the earth, everywhere embracing it and giving it life.
>
> (Markale, 1999: 182)

[26] Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, "The Introduction", **The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women,** eds, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, W. W. Norton&Company: New York London, 1985, pp. 100-102.

The fairy Melusina is one of the manifestations of the snaky-tailed woman whose legend was recorded by Jean d'Arras in the fifteenth century. She was the daughter of the king of Albania and the mysterious fairy Pressina, whose legacy to her daughter was the curse of transformation: one day a week she would metamorphose into a creature half-human, half-serpent. And if any lover should happen to see her in demi-reptile form, she would be forced to leave her humanity forever. One day she meets the young lord Raimondin near a spring of the natural waters with which she becomes associated and marries him on condition that they would never meet on a Saturday. Yet, he breaks the taboo: while his wife is taking her weekly bath, he peeks at her and sees her snaky-tail. Despite his pleadings, Melusina is obliged to flee, throwing herself out of a window.

Melusina was a Celtic fertility goddess, linked with the natural freshwater sources[27] that enrich the soil and bring about an abundant harvest and, as mother of many children, "the guarantor of human fecundity, Eve in her benign telluric aspect" (Norris, 1998: 325). However, like Eve's identification with her Tempter, Melusina's serpent's tail connected her with the subterranean world of female sexual secrets. Eve's associaton with the serpent manifested itself in reptilian monsters as well as snaky seductresses: the images of the female in her most repulsive and alluring forms, and having in common the troubling notion of menacing sensuality. In this respect, it can be stated that besides Eve, the female ancestresses of Melusina are snake-haired Medusa, witchy Scylla, the sirens and the clever Sphinx. These are the monstrous women who are punished for their supernatural powers by isolation and even death. As a matter of fact, what Melusina and her serpentine precursors exemplify is a horrified male fascination with female sexuality, the slithery tail suggestive of a sensuality that threatens to engulf and drown as it allures. The form of the snake which Melusina adopts is the demonized form of the evil snake as seen in the later forms of the story of Lamia or Lilith.

As I have pointed out earlier, the fact that the female is portrayed as grotesque or monstrous is closely linked with her sexuality. Moreover, the association of

[27] Coming from the primal aquatic and ophidian creative forces as seen in early cultures, the story of Atargatis who was the goddess of divine waters and the sacred fish, and her daughter Semiramis brings us directly to Melusina.

woman with the witch figure also attests to the seemingly uncontrollable nature of femininity, and not surprisingly, the image functions as a locus of male disgust with, and fear of, sexuality and reproduction. Xavière Gauthier in "Why Witches?" describes this situation in the following way:

> The *Malleus Maleficarum*, the indictment against witchcraft, said: "All witchcraft comes from the carnal desire which is insatiable in women." And even Freud-the-Father had the intelligence to recognize that a girl's sensuality is otherwise greater than a boy's since her upbringing is devoted to repressing it with such vigor. She represses her sensuality and therefore her sexual curiosity, and her desire to know, to think.
>
> (Gauthier, 1981: 201-201)

Significantly, Duessa deceives and ensnares men by assuming the shape of Una, the beautiful and angelic heroine of Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, or of the other good-looking damsels. This transformation, however, requires that she should **de-form** herself into the masculine construct of perfect feminine beauty. Thus, her external bodily perfection shelters the aggressive desire to wreak destruction.

The comparison of Duessa to a witch is counterbalanced with Una who stands at the other extreme of the witch/fairy polarity. Una's passivity and submission are symbolised by her good fairy quality. The sharp contrast between the two images of woman derives from the perceived split of femininity in the male unconscious into the two polarities of passionate and sexless females. The fact that Una is not described in bodily images is shown to be an aspect of the established picture of femininity within the confines of male norms. Yet, this picture is threatened by the "anomaly" represented by the witch image while at the same time revealing both positions as constructs of femininity in the dualistic system of representation. Xavière Gauthier sums up the interdependence of the two opposite images in the following excerpt:

> In traditional pictures the witch is not only disturbing, but old, ugly and wicked. Which summons up the opposite image in fairy tales; the good fairy, young and beautiful...I understand the temptation to prefer to identify with the wicked witch. But that is a trap. Why must we choose between these two extremes that are mutually dependent? Why let ourselves be locked into a choice of *opposites that are two sides of the same coin,* which is the exclusion of women: idealized/scorned, sanctified/satanized, worshipped/martyred, burdened with every virtue/with every vice? Why do we have to be relegated to Heaven or Hell?
>
> (Gauthier, 1981: 201-202, [my italics])

The figure of Duessa represents the kind of woman who is the epitome of everything undesirable and unwelcome in a female. She embodies the so-called unpredictable, dangerous female psyche lurking in each woman.[28] As a "woman" and "witch" she represents the "other" **par excellence**. Within the framework of patriarchal definitions of female sexuality, then, some women have been traditionally defined as angels and superior spiritual beings, while others have been seen as horrifying, degraded creatures, and symbols of filthy materiality and thus, as monsters.

The Webster's Dictionary defines a "monster" as "compounded from elements of two or more animal forms" or as an "animal of huge size" (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1966: 1465). Significantly, in terms of linking these forms with art and representation, a "grotesque" is defined as a "decorative painting or sculpture in which portions of human and animal forms are fantastically interwoven with foliage and flowers" (*Webster's*[29], 1002). Moreover, if we reflect on the etymology of the word itself we see that "monster" stems from the Latin word "monstrare" which means "to show," "to describe and explain by help of specimens or by experiment." The theme of teaching or guiding is thus implicit in the etymology, with the English word "demonstrate" turning out to have a connection with "monster" in that the Latin "demonstratum" is a past participle of "demonstrate", which means "to point out, indicate, show or prove." "Demonstrate" is defined further by the appeal to rational knowledge: "To show or make evident by reasoning." Experiments, specimens and reasoning connote the natural sciences and these are indeed made manifest by other definitional associations such as "monstrous" as "deviating from the natural order."

[28] When Lacan remembers Freud's unanswered question: "What does Woman want?", he argues that the question must remain open because the female is "fluid", and fluidity is "unstable" (Selden and **et**. **al**., 1997: 141). In his answer, there is a danger of slipping back into a phallocentric system which relegates women to the margin, dismissing them as unstable, unpredictable and fickle. In relation to this argument Irigaray states that man needs to represent woman as a "container ... he needs to believe that the container belongs to him. The fear is of the 'open container', ... Or his fear is of the *fluid*, that which flows, is mobile, which is not a solid ground/earth or mirror for the subject" (in Whitford, 1995: 28). Irigaray's argument is that projecting woman as receptacle is an all-consuming fantasy– the fantasy of woman reduced to a contained and immobilised volume. It is a fantasy, however, that co-exits with the masculine fear of the excessive possibilities of this volume, i.e. the open container or the over flowing fluid ("Volume-Fluidity" in **Speculum of the Other Woman**, pp. 227-240).

Hence a monster is something to be shown, pointed at, and exhibited in order to be a counterpart for the so-called "normative." Monstrosity further refers to something inhuman, unnatural, abnormal, and freakish (Cavanagh, 1994: 43). We also know that those who do terrifying, evil deeds are designated as monsters. In this respect, perhaps the most common form of monster to appear in myth and legend has been the "serpent" in a variety of different guises, from the talking snake in the Garden of Eden to the winged serpent or the dragon slain by St. George. In *The Faerie Queene*, it is revealed late in the narrative that the name of the hero is George. He is, then, recognized as the St. George of dragon-slaying fame, the patron saint of England.

The monster signifies the boundary between the human and the non-human. The function of the monstrous is to bring about an encounter between the symbolic order and that which threatens its stability, and that which crosses or threatens to cross the "boundary" is abject. In other words, the border is constructed between what Kristeva refers to as "the clean and proper body" and the abject body, or the body which has lost its form and integrity. Thus a close connection between the monstrous, the grotesque and the abject can be glimpsed. In Kristeva's view, woman's body, because of its maternal functions, is closer to nature and consequently is more likely to signify the abject (Kristeva, 1982: 102). The bodies of the monstrous-feminine, such as Spenser's Errour and Milton's Sin, represent a fearful and threatening form of sexuality, and the monstrous depictions of these female figures are intimately associated with Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and the maternal: that is the mothering and reproductive functions of the woman. Duessa and Eve are also the representations of woman as a terrifying and disruptive force that threaten the order and safety established by the patriarchal system. Satan, on the other hand, is the embodiment of a threatening and dangerous element which leads to ultimate chaos and destruction.

The question concerning the relationship between monstrosity and evil becomes evident when it is considered in terms of the history of the female of the species. Rosi Braidotti puts it in "Mothers, Monsters and Machines" as such: "Since the nineteenth century, following the classification system of monstrosity by

[29]All the definitions of the word "monster" and the related items are taken from **Webster's**

Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, bodily mal-formations have been defined in terms of excess, lack, or displacement of organs" (Braidotti, 1994: 77-78). As both Rosi Braidotti and Mary Russo have detailed in their work on monsters and grotesques respectively, the history of these concepts is inextricably linked to the philosophical and historical development of the natural sciences, particularly biology and medicine (Russo, 1995: 75). In biology, the word monster came to be used to describe an organism that is grossly abnormal or de-formed. The identification of certain animal forms as deviant was imperative to the activities of rational scientific discourses which sought to describe the norm. The definition of "nature" through science is a cultural project which cannot be separated from the societies it sustains. "Monsters" and "freaks of nature" provided science with the notion of the "other" by which to define "healthy", "normal" animals, and, most significantly, of course, "normal" human specimens. So-called monsters and freaks were identified, used for experiments, explained and controlled through forms of knowledge which normalised "correct" or "proper" bodies. To see clearly was to know; these monsters were specimens to be seen (inside and outside) in order to be understood and kept distanced from "normal" humans. We often find monsters having hybrid form, as a result of mixing species, sexes, or other attributes. Thus we have griffins, centaurs, or satyrs.

The fact that natural sciences defined monsters in this way suggests the link to the construction of the category of woman in traditional Western knowledge systems operating through binary division of the"self" and the "other". Woman has been connected to the monster, the grotesque and the freak through biology, rationalism and aesthetics at least since Aristotle attempted to describe the development of the (male) foetus and argued that the development of female forms was deviant. Monsters are all about maternity: "a misshapen birth, an abortion" (*Webster's Dictionary*, 1966: 1465), the result of bestiality or a woman's union with a demon "the product of some trauma delivered to a pregnant woman" (Braidotti, **op. cit**., p. 85). Maternity itself is monstrous as it confounds carefully produced boundaries between the mother and child and indeed life and death. Mary Russo

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Dictionary, p. 1002. Therefore they are not shown in separate quotations.

comments that “the pregnant woman is a shape-shifter whose body itself defies limits and borders throughout the period of gestation” (Russo, 1995: 54).

Barbara Creed, writing about the “monstrous feminine” that is “what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject” (Creed, 1993: 1) portrays two forms of the phenomenon, one connected with maternity and the other with the **vagina dentata**, or the castrating woman. Creed’s argument is that the whole notion of the monster is created through gender difference and female sexuality. Similarly, Irigaray claims that whatever the subject cannot dominate, or overlook and perceive from his transcendental elevation, threatens the subject with castration (Irigaray, 1992: 138). The inside of the mother’s body, the womb, the cavern, is considered to be a dangerous place whose dangers are presented by the fantasy of the vagina dentata. The womb is fantasised by men to be a devouring mouth, with voracious teeth, which entails a sense of disgust and a haunting fear of castration. In this sense, it is easy to see that in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* the monsters Errour and Sin function as the exteriorised figurations of this fear. What is evil, perverse, destructive and dangerous in terms of mothering and reproductive functions are objectified and projected onto these figures.

In myth, this fantasy is illustrated in the story of Uranus, castrated by his son Cronos who was hiding in his mother’s body, Gaea, waiting for his father to penetrate her. Fearful of the children that Gaea, the Earth, would bear him, Uranus, the Sky, tried to force her children back into her womb, but Gaea tricked him. She armed her son, Cronos, with a flint sickle and when Uranus entered Gaea, Cronos – hiding in the earth – castrated his father, grasping his genitals with the left hand which as Robert Graves argues has ever since been “the hand of ill-omen” (Graves, 1992: 37), and afterwards throwing them, and the sickle too, into the sea. Now Cronos in his turn fears that he will be overthrown by the sons his wife Rhea bears and so he swallows each of them. But Rhea hides her son Zeus in a cave protected by the earth-goddess. When he grows up, Zeus overthrows his father and ascends to power. To prevent his own overthrow, he swallows his wife, Metis, the goddess of wisdom, thus keeping her from bringing forth a son (Hamilton, 1969: 64-65). As such Zeus gains the power of procreativity that belongs to his wife and he himself gives birth to Athena, who springs full-growth from his head. We should note here

not only the takeover of the male god but his assumption of the power of procreativity. The struggle of the male to control and usurp the reproductive function is the main motif in this myth. The birth of Athena, the eternal virgin, from the head of Zeus, after he has swallowed his powerful wife Metis, finalizes the efforts of the sky-gods to control the sexuality and fertility of the earth-goddesses. Hera, on the other hand, is much more reminiscent of Eve, in that she pursues her subversive activities in a manner that overlaps with male strategies.

This story starting with the castration of Uranus and ending with Zeus's survival and his giving birth to his daughter, Athena, moreover, sheds further light upon the primitive fantasies underlying the male view of sexuality as chaos, night, and annihilation. The castration phobias of the transcendental subject are linked to the symbolic split which assigns women to the carnal, excluding them from the spiritual and relegating them to the place of the repulsive being (Creed, 1993: 43-45). The symbolic division which is a hierarchical binary opposition allocates the material, corporeal, sensible, "natural" to the feminine, and the spiritual, ideal, intelligible, and transcendental to the masculine. Because of this split, woman, as the body, represents sexuality and is thus cut off from the ideal or spiritual. Arguing the birth of Judaism as one of the earliest forms of patriarchal society, Julia Kristeva, in her essay "About Chinese Women," analyses the foundations of patriarchal society which rely upon gender division and thereby exclude women from the symbolic order:

> Monotheistic unity is sustained by a radical separation of the sexes. Indeed, it is this very separation which is its prerequisite. For without this gap between the sexes, ... it would have been impossible, in the symbolic realm, to isolate the principle of One Law – the One, Sublimating, Transcendent Guarantor of the ideal interests of the community.
>
> (in Moi, 1986: 141)

As Kristeva points out patriarchal society's symbolic structure calls forth a distinct gender division.

The importance of this symbolic downgrading of the mother is further illustrated in Aeschylus's *The Furies*, the last play in his *Oresteia* triology. Kate Millett is one of the critics to interpret this play as the last defense of Mother-Goddess power against patriarchy (Millett, 1999: 111-115). Another critic is Luce Irigaray who, in her essay, "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother", puts forward

the idea that Western culture is founded not on parricide (as Freud claimed), but on matricide. Irigaray argues that Western culture rests on the murder of the mother which remains unacknowledged:

> When Freud describes and theorizes, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, the murder of the father as founding the primal horde, he forgets a more archaic murder, that of the mother, necessitated by the establishment of a certain order in the polis.
>
> (in Whitford, 1995: 36)

In addition to Millett and Irigaray whose reinterpretations of the story of Clytemnestra read the myth as a story of the establishment of patriarchy through the sacrifice of the mother and her daughters, J. J. Bachofen, Swiss historian of "gynecocracy," considers this myth as evidence of how early society expounded biological events in terms one might call sexual-political. For Bachofen, Aeschylus made use of the Furies in order to present a confrontation between patriarchal or paternal authority and what appear to be the defeated claims of an earlier order, one which was based upon maternal claims and was in Bachofen's view matriarchal. Bachofen held the idea that the nations (Greek, Roman, Hebrew) went through an age of "gynecocracy," the reign of the Mother, before arriving at a patriarchy. His work, called *Das Mutterrecht*, was the first formulation of the matriarchal theory of origins. His idea is that there was a matriarchal era, a gynecocratic society, that gave birth to mythical effects that have a powerfully subversive import with regard to the family and the male power. He envisioned a prehistoric civilization based on the female, both as mother and head of family, and as deity—the Great Goddess who appears throughout early mythology, as Rhea, Isis, Ishtar, Astarte, Cybele, Demeter, Diana of Ephesus, and by many other names: the eternal giver of life and the embodiment of the natural order, including death. In *Das Mutterrecht*, which revolves around the ancient Egyptian mythology, Bachofen tries to show that the myth of Isis and Osiris refers to a period which was characterized by a matriarchal rule. Stella Georgoudi comments that

> Bachofen's theoretical edifice rested on two related but profoundly antagonistic principles: a feminine principle, in Egypt embodied in the goddess Isis, the supreme "other" and none other than the fertile Earth itself; and a masculine principle, crystallized in Osiris, brother and husband of Isis and identified with the Nile, the male and fecundating power of the waters.
>
> (Georgoudi, 2000: 450)

Because “the rule of God – Father and his possession of the archaic powers of mother-earth require it” (in Whitford, 1995: 37), Orestes kills his mother inspired by the oracle of Apollo, the son of Zeus: God the father. The Furies, representing mother-right, claim vengence on Orestes for the crime of matricide. Thus they take the case to the court believing that justice will be on their side. However, patriarchal justice is on the side of Orestes and his newly-would-be-established order. Apollo declares that Orestes’s murder of his mother was a just act because it avenged the death of his father Agamemnon; and in the following lines, he utters Greek patriarchy’s a rather politicized version of biology:

> The mother is not the parent of the child
> Which is called hers. She is the nurse who tends the growth
> Of young seed planted by its true parent, the male.
> So, if Fate spares the child, she keeps it, as one might
> Keep for some friend a growing plant. And of this truth,
> That father without mother may beget, we have
> Present, as proof, the daughter of Olympian Zeus:
> One never nursed in the dark cradle of the womb;
> Yet such a being no god will beget again.
>
> (Aeschylus, “The Eumenides,” 466 B.C. pp. 169-170)

It should be noted that Apollo’s description of Athena’s birth does not much differ from Christianity’s view of femininity which idealises The Virgin Mary, because both females are typically male constructs. Moreover, the above lines are examples of centuries-old assumptions regarding the notion of female/male productivity/creativity in the social world of humankind. Apparently throughout centuries, there has not been much change in terms of female otherness in the social structure of humankind.

Through Athena’s deciding vote, Orestes is not only acquitted but reinvested with his patrimony. Zeus and the patriarchy cast out the old fertility goddessess. And the Furies lament helplessly:

> The old is trampled by the new!
> Curse on you younger gods who override
> The ancient laws ...
>
> (**Ibid**., p. 173)

Here in Aeschylus’s dramatization of the myth we are allowed to see patriarchy confront matriarchy, confound it through the knowledge of paternity, and

come off triumphant. In this tale, the male myth of creation based on the erasure of the primordial (m)other is illustrated. As Rosi Braidotti asserts:

> The distinguishing feature of phallocracy is precisely the fact that it negates, denies, and willfully obliterates the feminine, appropriating entirely the process of making meaning. Instead of recognizing the embodied, sexed, and corporeal nature of the living beings, phallocratic thinking replaces the maternal origin with the highly abstract notion of man being at the origin himself. This is a cerebral reappropriation of origin by man, which condemns the feminine to a subsidiary position of necessarily silenced "other."
>
> (Braidotti, "Foreword" 1995: xvii)

In Aeschylus's triology, *The Oresteia*, victory is given by Athena to the male argument, put by Apollo, that the mother is no parent to her child. The victory of the male principle of intellect brings to an end the reign of the sensual female Furies and asserts patriarchy over matriarchy. Thus, patriarchy in a way covers its tracks by attributing the justification of matricide to a woman. The man's desire to be at the origin of life is hinted in the following lines expressed by Hélène Cixous in "Sorties":

> Intention: desire, authority – examine them and you are led right back ... to the father.... Ultimately the world of "being" can function while precluding the mother. No need for a mother, as long as there is some motherliness: and it is the father, then, who acts the part, who is the mother.
>
> (Cixous, 1996: 64)

As a consequence of the patriarchy's predisposition for the maintenance of the established order and the entrenched notion that the essential existence is male, man prefers to see woman as the maternal-feminine rather than as simply woman, because of what woman represents for him: castration and death. Therefore, what men aim to do is to confine woman within a theoretical system which is aimed at domesticating, immobilizing the woman in order to keep her under his control and in his possession.

Women are denied the right to construct their own images of femaleness, and instead they are expected to conform to the standards imposed upon them by patriarchy. Accordingly, women are excluded from the world of knowledge, which means an exclusion from the sources of power in both economic and social fields. Centuries-old male thinking and writing that reflect the segmentation of reality through the invention of hierarchical opposition have been a crucial determinant in women's mode of defining themselves: woman should exist in man's world on his terms and should be known through the mediation of male language.

CHAPTER II

Bakhtin: Carnival and the Grotesque Body

> "[...] we saw how cosmic fear and the images of world catastrophes and eschatological theories, cultivated in official philosophies, found their comic equivalents. The **carnivalesque** disasters and parodical prophesies freed man from fear, brought the world closer to him, lightened the burden of time, and turned it into a sequence of gay transformations and renewals."
>
> (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 1984: 394)

> "One of the fundamental tendencies of the **grotesque image of the body** is to show two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated, and born. This is the pregnant and begetting body, or at least a body ready for conception and fertilization, the stress being laid on the phallus or the genital organs. From one body a new body always emerges in some form or other."
>
> (**Ibid**., p. 26)

The Russian ideologue and literary critic Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*[30] – his doctoral dissertation, which he wrote in the 1930s but could not publish until 1965 because of the political situation in Russia under the Stalinist regime[31] – argues that the bourgeois conception of the grotesque gave rise to the splitting of the mental/bodily, spiritual/material principles of being, which were once united in the ambivalent images of medieval figures (*RW*, p. 22). The sharp division of the upper and lower strata of the body finds its best expression in the classical concept of the body which refers to the upper strata, and the grotesque "female body" which is associated with the lower strata.[32] For Bakhtin the zone of the genital organs which

[30] Future references to this book will be identified as *RW*.

[31] Bakhtin experienced the horrors of the totalitarian regimes, especially that of Stalin, and the two world wars that had devastating consequences. This explains why Bakhtin considers the grotesque and the classical from a socio-political perspective in order to criticize the mechanisims of power that he himself had witnessed. In order to do so, he distinguishes the grotesque from its opposite, the classical, in terms of class rather than gender. It is the writer of this particular thesis, however, who uses the grotesque and the classical in relation to gender because of their particular definitions given by Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, moreover, the literary genre of "grotesque realism" includes parody and any other form of discourse which "bring[s] down to earth" (*RW*, p. 20) anything ineffable or authoritarian, a task achieved principally through mockery. As such, the concept of grotesque realism functions as a major way of defying authority (Danow, 1995: 25).

[32] Bakhtin suggests that the "bodily element" of carnival and grotesque realism is concerned with bodies in general and not with bodies as distinguished by gender (Vice, 1997: 155-156). However, if we make a binary opposition between what Bakhtin terms "upward" and "downward" in grotesque realism we notice that they look like strictly gender-related ones. "Downward" is earth and earth and the reproductive body are associated with the feminine; "upward" is heaven and heaven and the rational body are associated with the masculine. Bakhtin concludes, "Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving" (*RW*, p. 21).

he calls “the material bodily lower stratum” (*RW*, p. 21) is the fertilizing and generating area and they are closely associated with “birth, fertility, renewal, welfare” which is preserved in the images of urine and excrement (*RW*, p. 148). In Bakhtin’s discussion, these genital organs and their functions of female sexuality are not linked to fear and revulsion experienced by males towards the feminine and reproduction. Peter Stallybrass in his essay called “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed” has taken this divison and adapted it to the divisions of the Renaissance women. The Renaissance was a time of social and cultural tensions surrounding women’s bodies. “The assumption that [a] woman’s body, unlike the [man’s] is naturally grotesque indicates how these tensions ran” (Stallybrass, 1986: 126). The grotesque symbolizes those parts of the body that are open to the outside world; the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose; yet classical representation stresses the head as the seat of reason, transcending the merely bodily. Thus while the grotesque representation of the body is related to the female, the classical, on the other hand, is associated with the male who represents the domain of rationality.

The bodies of the grotesque figures, namely the monster Errour and the witch Duessa in Spenser’s Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and Satan and Sin in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, demonstrate a typical carnivalistic gesture of turning things “upside down,” a continuous reversal of the spiritual and the material (the upper and the lower) levels, which is an essential quality of grotesque realism with its putting particular significance on the grotesque body. This turning things “upside down” is what actually happens during carnival when hierarchy is not only suspended but inverted. It is a space-time governed by what Bakhtin terms the “grotesque body” – the aspects of corporeal existence like eating, drinking, fornicating which the mind ignores or otherwise represses.

Before discussing the image of the grotesque body in detail, it is necessary to expound on the idea of carnival and its characteristics that are closely associated with the grotesque. In both *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin tries to introduce his notion of carnival. In the first place, he discusses earlier critiques of a particular writer’s work. Secondly, he uses his own theory to demonstrate, as he says, what each writer is about. In the case of Rabelais,

Bakhtin stresses the forgotten tradition of "popular humour", and, as far as Dostoevsky is concerned, Bakhtin discerns polyphony's roots in a similar, although more distant carnival past. Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* becomes Bakhtin's main point of reference to the historical phenomenon of carnival. During the medieval period (and through subsequent centuries), the custom of carnival allowed "time out" from normal rules and proprieties: "Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (*RW*, p. 10). Such liberation, according to Bakhtin, was conceptual as well as behavioural: Bakhtin, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*,[33] says

> All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with insignificant, the wise with the stupid.
>
> (Bakhtin, 1984: 123)

In the light of this quotation it can be stated that Bakhtin perceives carnival as a joyful state of flux and transgression, change and relativity. His approach to carnival is one of anti-hegemonic and anti-authoritarian. Such views were, of course, not allowed under the increasingly hegemonic and increasingly authoritarian societies. However, in medieval (and sometimes later) communities, carnival time was a brief period of permitted popular anarchy, when institutional hierarchies were overturned and official doctrines subjected to laughter. Carnival became a site where alternative voices are liberated against a dominant ideological system. In *Paradise Lost*, when Eve returns to Adam after she eats the forbidden fruit, she makes her apology for being late in a rush of words "with countenance blithe" (*PL*, Book 9, 886). She changes as soon as she eats the apple, bowing to the tree in drunken worship, "heightened as with wine" (**Ibid**., 793), and spilling out her story to Adam. Eve's "distemper", (887) or disturbance (even intoxication), is visible as a warm

[33] This particular book first appeared in 1929. Bakhtin incorporated many of his later ideas on carnival into the much-expanded 1963 version of this book – which is the version available in English translation.

glow on her cheek, and not only qualifies her "blithe" (886) manner, but is also sharply counterbalanced, through the emphatic placing of the word "glowed" (887).

After Adam eats the forbidden fruit he, too, becomes intoxicated "as with new wine" (1008) and he and Eve are both aroused sexually: in lust they burn not in love because they have sinned. Hence the idea of their being intoxicated, a situation which constitutes an outlet for their suppressed feelings, gives rise to the subversion and loosening of all the barriers that "[their] great Forbidder" (815) had set up for them. In this sense, Bakhtin's concept of the carnival should be emphasised. The couple's eating of the forbidden fruit serves as a force disruptive of order and of clear oppositions established by God, the patriarch. Adam and Eve are released from all the inhibitions and are now able to reveal themselves with a stark and unlimited freedom which is reflected on their speech and manners towards each other.

If we look at the etymology of the word "carnival" we see that it originally means a "time of merrymaking before Lent." The derivation of the word is traceable to "the medieval Latin **carnem levare** or **carnelevarium** in the sense of 'to take away meat' or 'to remove meat,'" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Vol. 4, 1959: 894) a conception which coincides with the fact that in the Christian context, carnival is the final festivity before the commencement of forty-days of Lent during which abstinence from meat is observed. So, as an event, carnival is the time which is not connected to the ordinary flow of events, a time when unusual freedom and license prevail, in momentary contrast to the rules and constraints of daily conduct. However, this license is frequently given by the authority, which, thus, seeks to create an "acceptable" outlet for rebellious energy. Bakhtin argues that "the official feasts of the Middle Ages, whether ecclesiastic, feudal, or sponsored by the state, did not lead the people out of the existing world order and created no second life. On the contrary, they sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it" (Bakhtin, 1984: 9).

The art works of the carnival use grotesque distortions of "classical" perfection, that is, body parts which vary wildly in size and refuse to be squeezed into harmonious proportions (Lechte, 1994: 10-11). Heads, noses, mouths, feet, genitals and especially bellies are grossly exaggerated. The classical harmony of a perfect, symmetrical face is made unclassical and asymmetrical because grotesque

realism is a concept for a range of art not governed by the demands of classical proportion (**Ibid**., p. 12). Therefore, the classical standards of beauty (or Apollonian Order) are destroyed. Allon Whites and Peter Stallybrass in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, argue that Bakhtin was struck by the compelling difference between the human body as represented in popular festivity and the body as represented in classical statuary in the Renaissance (Whites and Stallybrass, 1986: 87). The concept of the body in grotesque realism is in contradiction with the literary and artistic canon of antiquity, which formed the basis of Renaissance aesthetics. During the classic period the grotesque did not die but was expelled from the sphere of official art to live in certain "low" nonclassic areas. The Renaissance saw the body in quite a different light from the Middle Ages. From the point of view of this canon, the body was first of all a completed, finished product. Furthermore, it was isolated from all other bodies. The ever unfinished nature of the body was hidden: conception, pregnancy, childbirth, death were almost never shown. The emphasis was placed on the completed, self-sufficient individuality of the given body. Hence from these tendencies of the classic canon, the body of the grotesque realism was hideous and formless. As an example of the representation of the classical body which is Apollonian in essence, Michelangelo's *David* can be noted here. According to Camille Paglia, this Renaissance statue is "an apotheosis of the male body as Apollonian perfection" (Paglia, 1990: 158). Michelangelo chose to depict a male nude like Donatello's *David*,[34] but Michaelangelo conceived of his own *David*, which portrays the biblical David at the moment that he decides to do battle with Goliath, as a public expression of Florentine civic ideals and he employed classical style in order to depict a confident young man at the peak of physical fitness, thereby representing the Florentine republic's own "fortitude" in resisiting tyrants and upholding ideals of civic justice.

In relation to the distinction of the classical and grotesque conceptions of the body, another binary opposition emerges: Apollonian and Dionysian. Apollonian and Dionysian are terms used by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* to designate the

[34] Donatello had an immense impact on Renaissance art and his statue of **David** which demonstrates the triumphant David standing over the head of the slain Goliath, which he tramples underfoot, was the first truly free-standing nude sculpture in the Christian era.

two central principles in Greek culture. Nietzsche believed that both forces were present in Greek tragedy, and that the true tragedy could only be produced by the tension between them. The Apollonian, which corresponds to Schopenhauer's **principium individuationis** ("principle of individuation"), is the basis of all analytic distinctions. According to *Webster's Dictionary*, Apollonian is what is "Harmonious, measured, ordered, or balanced in character of an irrational or nomothetic nature fundamentally temperate, restrained, or meditative contrasted with dionysian [which signifies what is] unbounded, lawless, or irrational in nature" (p. 101 and p. 636). Everything that is part of the unique individuality of man or thing is Apollonian in character; all types of form or structure are Apollonian, since form serves to define or individualize that which is formed; thus, sculpture is the most Apollonian of the arts, since it relies entirely on form for its effect. Rational thought is also Apollonian since it is structured and makes classifications.

The Dionysian, which corresponds roughly to Schopenhauer's conception of **Will**, is directly opposed to the Apollonian. Drunkenness and madness are two instances of the Dionysian because they break down a man's individual character; all forms of enthusiasm and ecstasy are Dionysian, for in such states man gives up his individuality and submerges himself in a greater whole: music is the most Dionysian of the arts, since it appeals directly to man's instinctive, chaotic emotions and not to his formally reasoning mind. For Camille Paglia while "Apollo is the integrity and unity of western personality, a firm-outlined shape of sculptural definitiveness" (Paglia, 1990: 73), "Dionysus is energy, ecstasy, hysteria, promiscuity, emotionalism" (**Ibid**., p. 96).

Bakhtin's study of Rabelais's tale of physical excess in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*[35] depicts these exaggerations as positive values to the world of the accentuate "abundant" behaviour such as Dionysian drinking and sexual frolic. For Bakhtin even the most vulgar and disgusting images, which he refers to as parts or products of the "lower bodily stratum" have positive connotations for the peasant world: though, for instance, manure is waste and offensive to an Apollonian sense of order and cleanliness, it also assures the renewal and regeneration by which nature provides her abundance. This tradition of curious and fantastic "distortions" in art denotes not only the disordered values in the Christian context but also the regenerating positive values of the peasant world. As it can be noted, this is a world of both decay and rebirth, of "carnivalesque" reversal, license, excess and pleasurable abundance, a world covertly evading prevalent rationalist restrictions.

For Bakhtin, Rabelais was "the least understood and appreciated" of all European writers because from Robert Stam's perspective,

> most scholars failed to comprehend the link of the work with popular culture and popular festivities such as carnival, and did not discern the literary modes associated with carnival – that is, parody and grotesque realism.
>
> (Stam, 1989: 85)

Robert Stam in his *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* argues that the traces of Bakhtin's carnival concept can be found in the Dionysian festivities of the Greeks, but it reached its peak in the High Middle Ages. In that period, for Bakhtin, carnival played a symbolic role in the life of the community that inhabited a dual realm of existence: one official, characterised by the authority of the church, and one unofficial, signified by reversal, parody, and laughter. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*: *Theory and History of Literature*, Bakhtin is keen to point out that the carnivalization of literature

[35] Bakhtin's **Rabelais and His World** reads Rabelais's text **Gargantua and Pantagruel** as an attempt to demolish the stifling orthodoxies inherited from the Middle Ages. According to Bakhtin, Rabelais's assault on the high seriousness of medieval scholasticism uses an exaggerated treatment of the human body as an occasion for humour and parody. Bakhtin says, "Laughter degrades and materializes; it deflates the empty pretensions of the spiritual and the transcendental and brings them down to earth" (Bakhtin, 1984: 20).

> proved remarkably productive as a means for capturing in art the developing relationships under capitalism, at a time when previous forms of life, moral principles and beliefs were being turned into "rotten cords" and the previously concealed, ambivalent, and unfinalized nature of man and human *thought* was being nakedly exposed.
>
> (Bakhtin, 1984: 166-167)

Significantly, carnival meant more than a temporary break from productive labour. It, in fact, represented an alternative universe characterized by the undermining of all norms. Stam relates that, "carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from conventional rules and restrictions" (Stam, **op. cit**., p. 85). During carnival, all that is socially marginalized and excluded including "the mad, the scandalous, the aleatory," assumes centre-stage in a liberatory celebration of otherness" (**Ibid**., p. 88).

Carnival reflects values which ruling-class ideology tends to ignore or patronise. An essential feature is the reversal of all hierarchies and conventional attitudes. Everything which asserts authority, everything fixed, rigid or serious, is treated with insulting and violent abuse. This popular and libertarian social phenomenon has a great influence on the literature of various periods, but becomes especially dominant in the Renaissance. Michael D. Bristol in his *Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* summarizes the subversive mode of carnival as follows:

> By bringing privileged symbols and officially authorized concepts into a crudely familiar relationship with common everyday experience, Carnival achieves a transformation downward or "uncrowning" of de jure relations of dependency, expropriation and social discipline.
>
> (Bristol, 1985: 96)

People enjoy a temporary period of fun when they are released from all the obligations and laws of normal existence and are able to reveal themselves with an unlimited freedom. To see the importance of the individual in the carnival we have to look to "the rogue, clown, and fool" (Hirschkop, 1999: 284). Able to move between worlds, the Fool, a popular festive element, demonstrates the power of the individual to transcend societal norms by transferring anything that is regarded as absolute, stable or mythical into the gay level of popular festive degradation and it also signifies the symbolic destruction of authority and a resistance to the mechanisms of power. Popular-festive culture is therefore a world "[in which]

everyone is a clown and fool, ... where there is no distinction between art and life" (**Ibid**.). Hence, the Fool is the representative of this utopian ideal personified in the individual.

The idea of ambivalence is connected with the most important aspect of carnival which is laughter. Carnival laughter cannot be associated with the specific forms it takes in modern consciousness. It is not simply ironical or satirical. Carnival laughter has no object. It is ambivalent. Ambivalence is the key to the structure of carnival. The idea of carnival is as Julia Kristeva[36] has indicated, not the true or false logic of science and seriousness, but the logic of ambivalence, where the actor is also the spectator, destruction gives rise to creativity, and death is equivalent to rebirth (Kristeva, 1980: 78-80). Festive laughter enjoys a symbolic victory over death and all that oppresses or restricts. Laughter provides the victims of power with a strong tool for resistance, which negates the solemn nature of authority. Because the festival laughter of carnival is directed against those who laugh, the people in it are both subjects and objects of laughter. This laughter is general, has a philosophical basis, and embraces death as well as life. Bakhtin made the official seriousness and festive laughter not competing principles within a social world, but two worlds, in which medieval humanity could dwell simultaneously:

> All of these ritual-spectacular forms, organized on the principle of *laughter*, were distinguished extraordinarily sharply—one could say, in principle—from *serious* official (ecclesiastical and feudal-state) cultic forms and ceremonies. They provided a completely different, emphatically unofficial, extra-ecclesiastical and extra-state aspect of the world, of the person, and of human relations; it is as if they constructed a *second world* and a *second life* beyond everything official, in which all medieval people participated to a greater or lesser degree, in which they *lived* for definite periods. This is a special kind of *double-worldness*, without taking account of which neither the cultural consciousness of the Middle Ages, nor the culture of the Renaissance can be correctly understood.
>
> (*RW*, p. 83)

Bakhtin remarks, however, that with the modern era, laughter has been reduced to one of the "low genres" (*RW*, p. 18). Carnival itself, on the other hand, embraces lowness. "The essential principle of grotesque realism", Bakhtin writes,

[36] Kristeva first came into prominence in the late 1960s as the interpreter of the work of the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin. In this regard, she stressed Bakhtin's theory of the "dialogical" novel, as well as his notion of "carnival". For further information see Kristeva's **Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art**, especially the chapter entitled "Word, Dialogue, and Novel."

"is degradation" (*RW*, p. 19), but, he is also insistent that this degradation is not merely a negative process. On the contrary, Bakhtin stresses the ambivalance of carnival imagery. The degradation represented in carnival – the reminders that we are all creatures of flesh and thus of food and faeces also – is at the same time an affirmation, for even "excrement is gay matter" (*RW*, p. 26), linked to regeneration and renewal. Degradation, debasement, the body and all its functions – but particularly defecation, urination, and copulation – are part of the ambivalent carnival experience. The body, then, is part of this ambivalance. It is not closed in and private, but open to the world. Likewise, the proximity between the womb and the tomb is not repressed, but, like reproduction, is celebrated, as "lowness" in general is celebrated.

The main point around which Bakhtin organises his argument in *Rabelais and His World*, is the material bodily principle with its relation to the concept of grotesque realism (*RW*, p. 18) in which the bodily element is truly positive, because, unlike the spiritual or mental element, it is not bereft of content. The spiritual, the ideal, on the other hand is just an abstraction. Within this framework it can be argued that references especially to the genitals of the female figures, such as Errour and Duessa in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and Sin in *Paradise Lost*, are all grotesque in their nature, bearing "a deeply positive character" (*RW*, p. 62). Yet, in the case of Spenser and Milton, female sexuality is displayed as being transferred solely to the lower stratum of the body in order to convey negative implications because of the uneasiness and disgust female sexuality is imbued with in patriarchal society. The females who evoke a sense of monstrosity and thereby threaten hegemonic patriarchal ideology, represent the carnival spirit in that they subvert everything that is regarded as stable and orderly into the level of degradation which is made manifest through the references reflecting the downward movement and involving the recurrent themes of the grotesque: excrement and sexual organs which pertain to the lower bodily stratum for Bakhtin.

According to Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, the word "grotesque" derives from Italian *grotte* 'caves', whose adjective is **grottesco**; the noun being **la grottesca**. In French we find **crotesque** in the sixteenth century being used for the first time; and this form was used in English until it was replaced by **grotesque** in the

seventeenth century (Cuddon, 1977: 295-296). Its correct technical sense has little to do with its normal usage. It denotes a kind of decorative ornament consisting of medallions, sphinxes, foliage, rocks and pebbles. The term then came to be applied to paintings which depicted the intermingling of human, animal and vegetable themes and forms. The extension of the word to a literary context occurred in France in the sixteenth century. Rabelais, one of the fathers of the Renaissance, uses it apropos parts of the body (Bakhtin uses Rabelais as his grotesque exemplar). But it does not seem to have been used in a literary context until the eighteenth century, the period of the age of reason and Neo-classicism, when it was employed to denote the ridiculous, bizarre, extravagant, freakish and unnatural; in short, deviations from the desirable norms of harmony, balance and proportion.

The aesthetic focus of grotesque realism revolves around the grotesque body and it is the central aesthetic concept of Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*, talks about Rabelais and and Rabelais's book *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, in relation to his depiction of the human body in its grotesque and fantastic aspect. In this manner, the human body is "brought down to earth and made more material,"[37] p. 173) . In relation to the notion of the grotesque body, Bakhtin argues that the terms "upward" and "downward" in grotesque realism do not have simply relative meanings (*RW*, p. 21), but one might add, what look like gender-related ones. "Downward" is earth, "an element that devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb) and [is] at the same time an element of birth, or renascence (the maternal breast)"; in its bodily aspect, "the lower part is the genital organs, the belly, and the buttocks". "Upward" is heaven; "the upper part" of the body "is the face or the head" (*RW*, p. 21).

The association of the grotesque with the feminine finds its support in the following explanations. As I pointed out earlier, etymologically the word grotesque can be linked to the grotto-esque or cave-like. There is also a further identification of the grotto with the womb, and with woman-as-mother. A cave, according to Freud, is a "female place, a womb-shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and

[37] For more information, see **The Dialogic Imagination Four Essays**, especially the chapter entitled "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" where "The Rabelaisian Chronotope" is of great importance (167-206).

often sacred" (Freud, "Femininity", p. 413). Thus, the associations of the female with the hidden, dark, earthly, material, and immanent. From Mary Russo's point of view, on the other hand, as bodily metaphor, "the grotesque cave tends to look like the cavernous anatomical female body" (Russo, 1995: 1). Furthermore, if grotesque images are associated with the changes of time and a contact with the reproductive and generating power of the earth and of the body: and "copulation, pregnancy, birth, growth, old age, disintegration, dismemberment" (*RW*, p. 25), then they seem to be closer to the feminine than to the masculine.

Bakhtin gives an example of the grotesque body from terracotta figurines from Kerch. These are valued by Bakhtin because as figures of birth within death they are in process. In his example of the famous Kerch terracota collection, Bakhtin tells of the figurines of "laughing" and "senile pregnant hags". As opposed to the point of view of "classic" aesthetics, that is the aesthetics of the ready-made and the completed, these grotesque female representations are "ambivalent", representing " a death that gives birth" (*RW*, p. 25):

> There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags. They combine a senile, decaying, and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life, conceived but as yet unformed. Life is shown in its two-fold contradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness. And such is precisely the grotesque concept of the body.
>
> (**Ibid**., pp. 25-26)

Taking these female figures as the representatives of the "positive and negative poles of becoming (death-birth)" (*RW*, p. 148), Bakhtin here offers an evaluation of death, the feminine, and degradation in general; that is, he reverses the negative connotations of excessive femininity and in this way, the woman becomes the "incarnation of this stratum that degrades and regenerates simultaneously" (*RW*, p. 240):

> She is ambivalent. She debases, brings down to earth, lends a bodily substance to things and destroys; but first of all, she is the principle that gives birth. She is the womb.
>
> (**Ibid**.)

We can consider Bakhtin's analytic method from another perspective. If the grotesque body is the area upon which gender as well as social hierarchies can be symbolically inverted, it is right to point out that the body as Bakhtin describes it is

predominantly gendered as female. One of the fundamental tendencies of the grotesque image of the body, in Bakhtin's own words, is " [...] to show two bodies in one; the one giving birth and dying; the other conceived, generated, and born. [...] The body stands on the threshold of the grave and the crib" (*RW*, p. 26).

As opposed to the seriousness of authority that bases its essence on the definition of a subject/object dichotomy and on an opposition between male/female, and expects women to comply with the traditional gender roles and cultural expectations, the carnival spirit, which is characterised by a "temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life," (*RW*, p. 15) turns things upside down and, most important of all, reverses the upper strata with the lower parts of the body that transgress and threaten our sense of cleanliness and propriety because those lower parts are the sexual organs and their functions. In the light of this argument, it can be inferred that the so-called monstrous females of Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* negate the solemn nature of male-oriented society controlled by a set of rules which are established in favour of the male and authority. These women, moreover, perform the function of what Bakhtin would call a carnivalesque uncrowning and debasing of the official culture. Arguing that the grotesque representations of the female body find their place in both Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*, this study explores the ways in which the elements and features of the female body cause disgust and fear from a male point of view since they constitute the projections of male anxiety and ambivalence about female sexuality. Furthermore, the bodies of these females are also labelled as dirty, inappropriate, or "abject" in Julia Kristeva's terms. Against the male fantasy of the idealized female body, the abject, however, re-introduces everything about female bodily functions which shatter the frozen and aestheticized female image.

Unlike Bakhtin's evaluation of the "grotesque," the term is also used to mean what is ugly, what makes us wince or look away—closer to its dictionary definition of "hideous," "monstrous," "de-formed," "gnarled." In a larger sense, as Lynda Nead suggests in her *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* in connection with the representations of the female body in art, all portrayals of the female nude

are attempts by male artists and critics to try to "understand" the irrationality and chaos of the body—particularly the female body:

> It begins to speak of a deep-seated fear and disgust of the female body and of femininity within patriarchal culture and of a construction of masculinity around the related fear of the contamination and dissolution of the male ego.
>
> (Nead, 1992: 17-18)

In thinking about the "grotesque" body, one can extend the argument above and say that the fear of the hideous body, of the ugly body, is kept at bay by depictions of an ideal female figure because the grotesque image of the female body is undisciplined and out of control; it should be excluded from the proper, from what is incompatible with everything that is desirable and welcome in a female.

The essential principal of carnival is implanted in the grotesque body, which is demonstrated by events and activities – eating, defecation, birth, death, sex – in which the boundaries between bodies, and between bodies and the world, are displaced. Furthermore, the question of difference between the classical and the grotesque becomes relevant at the point of how these two concepts are defined by Bakhtin in regard to what he calls the "lower bodily stratum". The bodily principle does not refer to a single body, but has a cosmic character, and possesses the power to represent all that there is; the total of human existence. Bakhtin draws attention to the collective nature of the grotesque body when he says it is

> the collective ancestral body of all the *people* ... something universal ... representing all the *people* ... The material principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the *people*.
>
> (*RW*, p. 19, [my italics])

The grotesque body is, then, conceived of by Bakhtin first and foremost as a social body: it is not separated from the rest of the world;

> It is not a **closed**, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose.
>
> (*RW*, p. 26)

Most of all, it is identified with the "lower bodily stratum" (*RW,* p. 20) and associated with degradation, filth, death, and rebirth. Here it should be argued that the fact that the grotesque body is not "closed" alerts us to Kristeva's discussion of the leaking of woman's body which, because of its reproductive functions, signifies the abject. The female body, for Kristeva, is intimately related to polluting objects such as excrement, which threatens identity from the outside and as menstruation, which threatens it from within. Images of blood, vomit, milk, etc., threaten a subject in relation to the symbolic and these bodily wastes also stand for a split between two orders: the maternal authority and the law of the father. Furthermore, the arguments that the grotesque body is not a "closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits" also allude to Irigaray's conceptualisation of woman's "plural" sexuality (Irigaray, 1985: 28), which marks her as "never being simply one," appearing instead as "a sort of expanding universe to which no limits could be fixed" (**Ibid**., p. 31).

Interestingly enough, although Spenser and Milton lived in different ages, their approach to women does not differ much from each other. The way these two authors represent the female body relates to their own and their age's general outlook on women and female sexuality, and to the deep-seated ideological structures which inevitably place women at a disadvantage in relation to men. Patriarchy is one such structure which has been very influential in justifying Western political institutions. Kate Millett[38] argues that "patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male," (Millett, 1999: 24) and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women. Talking about logocentrism and phallocentrism, the French feminist Hélène Cixous assumes that "subordination of the feminine to the masculine order is the condition for the functioning of the masculine," the patriarchal system of society and its effects on practically every field of our lives. She then asks: "What would become of

[38] Kate Millett's **Sexual Politics** remains as an influential book of its period because it marks the moment when second-wave feminism becomes a highly self-aware and activist movement. Her analysis in this book comes up to the conclusion that ideological indoctrination as much as economic inequality is the reason of women's oppression. This argument is important in that it opened up second-wave thinking about reproduction, sexuality, and representation.

logocentrism, of the great philosophical systems, of world order in general if the rock upon which they founded their church were to crumble?" (Cixous, 1996: 64).

A slightly different way to look at the grotesque is that of Julia Kristeva's "abjection". Kristeva's essay on Bakhtin's intertextuality and dialogism, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", is dated 1966, a year after *Rabelais and His World* was published. In this essay, Kristeva does not talk about carnival in depth, but seems to assume that her view of its "underlying unconscious" structure of "sexuality and death" (*Desire*, 1980: 78) is shared by Bakhtin. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,*[39] Kristeva mentions Rabelais and carnival briefly, but her concept of abjection could be seen as a psychoanalytically modeled development of Bakhtin's grotesque (*Powers*, 1982: 138, 205). Kristeva offers a different way of considering the same phenomena Bakhtin discusses and her theory, rather than contradicting Bakhtin's theory, can be seen as an extension of his. While for Bakhtin the lower strata of the body, food, and death have positive connotations, Kristeva tries to explain why the phenomena associated with each of these might seem to us "coarse and cynical" (*Powers*, p. 2), disgusting, or obscene. Mary Russo suggests that Kristeva concentrates on the idea of abjection in terms of the psyche, and her concept of abjection stems from a combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis with the Bakhtinian grotesque (Russo, 1995: 10). Assimilating Kristeva's insights into her own evaluation, Judith Butler, on the other hand, relates the concept of the "abject" to the way in which conventionality defines itself by creating what we can term an excluded "other." For Butler "the 'abject' designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'other'" (Butler, 1990: 133).

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* Julia Kristeva maintains the idea that disgust for the "dirty" and "slimy" female body and sexuality stems from a deep-rooted fear of being cast back into the "abyss" of the "desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject inside of the maternal body" (*Powers*, p. 54) from which the child must separate itself in order to enter the

[39] Julia Kristeva's works, **Desire in Language** and **Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection**, will be referred as *Powers* and *Desire* in parantheses with the page numbers hereafter.

Symbolic.[40] Her notion of the abject signifies a boundary-constituting taboo for the purposes of constructing a discrete subject through exclusion. That is to say, on the level of our individual psychosexual development, the abject marks the moment when we separate ourselves from the mother, when we begin to recognise a boundary between "me" and other, between "me" and "(m)other." The abject is, then, what the subject's consciousness has to expel or disregard in order to create the proper separation between subject and object.

Kristeva's distinction between the "semiotic" and the "symbolic" corresponds to Lacan's distinction between the "imaginary" and the "symbolic". It is important in that what she calls "semiotic" is related to the pre-Oedipal phase that the child finds himself/herself in. The child experiences a kind of language in this phase but it is not yet ordered. For this "semiotic" material to become "symbolic" it must be stabilised, and this calls for the repression of the flowing and rhythmic drives. These drives are pre-Oedipal and they are associated with the body of the mother; the womb and the mother's breast are the first places of pre-Oedipal experience. The "semiotic" is thus inevitably based upon the female body, which is directly associated with the psychosomatic drives which disrupt the unitary meaning and logocentric (and therefore phallogocentric) discourse, while the "symbolic" is linked with the Law of the Father which censors and represses in order that discourse may come into being. The paternal law creates the possibility of meaningful language and, hence, meaningful experience, through the repression of primary libidinal drives, including the dependency of the child on the maternal body. Thus, the symbolic becomes possible by renouncing the primary relationship to the maternal body. Kristeva's semiotic is what has "the potential to disrupt, subvert, and displace the paternal law" (Butler, 1990: 80). Woman is therefore considered as the "other"

[40] This refers to Lacan's theory of the psyche. "The Symbolic" is the dimension of language, law, and the father; in contrast, "the Imaginary" is a technical term in Lacan's psychoanalytical theory to indicate a narcissistic state which is typical of early childhood. This narcissism influences all adulthood in which external reality is taken to be simply a mirror. Here the individual has no difficulty in identifying himself with his idealised self-image. At the point of Oedipal crisis and the acquisition of language, this "imaginary" union is ruptured. The child, at this stage, has to acknowledge itself as merely one signifier in an alien set of relations which gives its allocated position. This set of relations, in Lacanian terms, is called the "symbolic order". Here the position of the subject is defined by its difference from the others, and since the desired object is removed from the scene (or it is simply absent) what we experience is "lack" of "desire".

which threatens to disrupt the rational order of discourse represented by the patriarchal ideology.

Kristeva calls the pre-symbolic state the maternal **chora**. It is here that the infant experiences an identification with the mother and during which drives are not yet regulated by the social order. This chora is connected to the maternal body, to the feminine in general, and to what remains mysterious and unintelligible and it is brought into being with the entry of the subject into the symbolic order and the various forms of repression that this entails. Specifically, this entry involves the repression of maternal authority and the period of training when the mother controls the body of the infant. From Kristeva's perspective, "If language, like culture, sets up a separation and, starting with discrete elements, concatenates an order, it does so precisely by repressing maternal authority and the corporeal mapping that abuts them" (*Powers*, p. 72).

The mother should be rejected because she comes to represent the period of the semiotic which the paternal symbolic constructs as "abject". The abject is that which must be expelled or excluded in the construction of the "clean and proper self" (*Powers*, p. 102). According to Kristeva, "the danger of filth represents for the subject the risk to which the very symbolic order is permanently exposed, to the extent that it is a device of discriminations, of differences" (**Ibid**., p. 69). As the social order sustains itself through a dualist view whereby the subject defines itself by means of the establishment of a border between acceptable and unacceptable objects, filth, images of blood, vomit, etc., all signs of bodily excretions for Kristeva, represents "the frailty of the symbolic order," (**Ibid**.) because it reminds the individual of its own corporeality. These images of bodily wastes which are central to our culturally/socially constructed notions of the horrific, threaten a subject that is already constituted, in relation to the symbolic, as "whole and proper". Thus, they fill the subject with disgust and loathing. However, on the other hand, they also indicate a time, that is what Kristeva terms as the maternal chora, when bodily wastes, while set apart from the body, were not seen as objects of embarrassment and shame. Feeling compelled to sublimate its instincts, the human subject attributes notions of corporeality with all their negative connotations to women, (in Kristeva's view, woman is specifically related to polluting objects which fall into two

categories: excremental and menstrual) while all positively regarded attributes which are linked to the abstract are associated with the male. The abject is placed on the side of the feminine: it exists in opposition to the paternal symbolic, which is governed by rules and laws.

Awareness of his links to nature reminds man of his mortality and of the fragility of the symbolic order. In order for the body to enter the symbolic order, he must reject or repress all forms of behaviour, speech and modes of being regarded unacceptable and unclean: "The body must bear no trace of its debt to nature: it must be clean and proper in order to be fully symbolic" declares Kristeva (*Powers*, p. 102). Woman's body, specifically her reproductive functions, however, place her on the side of nature rather than the symbolic order. In light of this view, one can say that female bodily functions in particular are "abjected" by a patriarchal social order because the abject covers all the bodily functions or aspects of the body that are deemed impure or inappropriate for public display or discussion. In this sense the abject has to do with "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (**Ibid**., p. 4). The fact that God created Adam and Eve through the power of the Word without the need of the female and that Eve's creation out of the sleeping Adam's side without any blood can be considered to be indicative of this.

The construction of the "not-me" as the abject, establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first "contours of the subject" (*Powers*, p. 3). Kristeva claims that food loathing is "perhaps the most elementary and archaic form of abjection" (*Powers*, p. 2). Food, however, only becomes abject if it signifies a border "between two distinct entities or territories" (*Powers*, p. 4). She describes how, for her, the skin on the top of milk, which is offered to her by her father and mother, is a "sign of their desire", a sign separating her world from their world, a sign which she does not want. Kristeva writes:

> *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself.
>
> (*Powers*, p. 3)

Bakhtin argues that, from the point of view of the classical, the womb, itself a metaphorical cave (grotto), is seen as "the earthly element of terror", while the grotesque sees in it simply "new life" (*RW*, p.21). According to this view, the classical has historically superseded the grotesque. Kristeva states that "[w]e are envious of the renascent mirth of Rabelais who gives himself up, trustfully, to the pleasures of a palate where mankind becomes intoxicated, thinking it has found guiltless flesh, mother, and body" (*Powers*, p. 205). Kristeva starts to argue that the womb (the maternal function, woman's social and maternal role as reproducer of children) and the maternal are regarded as terrifying, and tries to explain why it is so. This attitude is also indicative of the fear and revulsion experienced by men towards the feminine and the process of reproduction. For instance, two monstrous mother figures in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* are Errour and Sin. They are both associated with the processes of breeding, eating, spewing, feeding, and redevouring which are all viewed as destructive and terrifying. Vomit, blood, slime – all of these abject forms of excrement are part of these mothers' weaponry. As far as the idea of the abject is concerned, the feminine, particularly the maternal, is constructed as unclean specifically in relation to childbirth. The creations of each mother, which come out of their mothers' bodies and reenter it, however, are her excretions. And since all her excretions are both her food and her weaponry, each mother "represents with her brood a self-enclosed system, cannibalistic and solipsistic: the creativity of the world made flesh is annihilating" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 33).

Moreover, the opposition between mind and body in Christian doctrine took its root from the "sin of Eve", which became the inherent sinfulness of the flesh, in particular all those bodily organs that had to do with excretion of waste matter, sexual intercourse and birth. Marina Warner, in her book on the Virgin Mary, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, comments:

> In the faeces and urine – Augustine's phrase – of childbirth, the closeness of woman to all that is vile, lowly, corruptible, and material was epitomized; in the 'curse' of menstruation, she lay closer to the beasts; the lure of her beauty was nothing but an aspect of the death brought about by her seduction of Adam in the garden. St John Chrysostom warned: "The whole of her bodily beauty is nothing less than phlegm, blood, bile, rheum, and the fluid of digested food."
>
> (Warner, 1985: 88)

Woman's maternal function is constructed as abject because her ability to give birth links her directly to the "animal world and to the great cycle of birth, decay and death" (Creed, 1993: 47). Milton's Sin gives birth to Hell Hounds and she is endlessly devoured by her parasitic progeny who emerge from and return to her womb, where they bark and howl unseen. Their sounds are reminiscent of the fact that to bear young is to be animal, a thing of flesh, while their suckling presages the exhaustion that leads to death, partner of birth. Death is indeed their sibling as well as the father who has raped his mother, Sin, in order to bring this pain into being, just like Eve who also brings death into the world. Eve's eating the forbidden fruit ends up in "eating Death" (*Paradise Lost*, Book 9, 792).

Both Spenser and Milton reinforce the misogynistic horror of the female/maternal body when they project it onto Errour, Duessa and Sin. In their depictions, the authors accentuate excessive and obsessive sexuality that deviates from and challenges social norms exploring the darker areas of the psyche. For example, the adjectives that the onlookers are given to use while describing "[Duessa's] proper hew" (*FQ*, Book 1, 2, 40) are really disgusting and repulsive. Later she is also shown to be unspeakably foul and ugly when stripped of her finery (Book 1, 8, 46): a sense of loathing pervades the stanzas which portray her: she stinks of her smell, "her sowre breath abhominably smeld" (Book 1, 8, 47). She is deprived of all the characteristics and aspects of a "normative" woman: she is wrinkled, thin, bald, stunted, toothless; a physically corrupt female. Spenser equates her breast, traditionally considered as a source of life to "bladders" with "filthy matter" (**Ibid**.). He, further, refers to her in terms of waste and dirt as a "dirty little sow", a "slag", a "slut". Similarly, Milton's Sin is "Woman to the waist, and fair, / But [ending] foul in many a scaly fold / Volumnious and vast, a Serpent arm'd / With mortal sting" (*Paradise Lost*, Book 2, 650-653). That is the discourse which associates femininity with the abject: in other words, the woman is the epitome of the dirty, devouring body against which man can construct himself as a clean, pure reason. Unlike man's body, the female body is frequently depicted within patriarchal cultural discourse as fluid and unstable because the female body is penetrable, changes shape, swells, gives birth, contracts, and bleeds. Woman's body reminds man of his "debt to nature" and as such threatens to collapse the boundary between

human and animal, civilized and uncivilized; and it is this boundary that should be preserved in order for the patriarchal male authority to prevail.

CHAPTER III

Spenser in Context

> Once upon a time a pair of fair-haired twins named **Renaissance and Reformation**, persecuted and abused, turned against their wicked but doddering stepmother, the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. . . . Of course, our history books never came to such a simple and undignified way of putting the matter; they could not quite begin like a fairy tale. But, except for Roman Catholics, most Americans who have had to learn some European history have come out with the notion that the movements we call the Protestant Reformation and the Renaissance were somehow the same in inspiration and purpose. One was directed towards religious freedom, the other towards artistic freedom, and both together worked for moral freedom, and, of course, for what became in the nineteenth century democracy. Both worked to *emancipate* ordinary men and women from restraints that custom and superstition had combined to lay upon them in the Middle Ages.
>
> (Brinton, *The Shaping of Modern Thought*, 1963: 24)

The age in which Spenser wrote *The Faerie Queene* witnessed two major movements that were to have important impacts over England: the Renaissance and the Reformation. Spenser was writing his poem when the identity of England as a nation was being formed and as discourses expressing anxieties regarding class, gender and race differences were simultaneously emerging. The religious movement, the Reformation, which in different ways was also having an impact over the entire European continent, emerged as a reaction against the doctrines and the hegemony of the Catholic Church and as an opposition to the all-powerful status it had held within the continent for over a thousand years. For Western Europe, the Reformation resulted in the division of the Church into Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. England, under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, separated itself from the Catholic Church and established its own religious institution, the Church of England. When Henry VIII replaced papal authority by his own, by the Act of Supremacy in 1534, it became obvious that the royal crown was now to control both the political and religious affairs of the country. Although the Reformation implied an improvement in religious terms, the causes were also intimately associated with the political and social changes that were taking place in England and Europe as a whole. In the Mid-fifteenth century, as a

consequence of the War of the Roses,[1] England moved from the old feudal aristocratic social structure to a more centralised state, a pivotal transition which came to mean that the sovereign now held more power and became the ultimate authority that controlled the two most important institutions in the country – church and state. This gave rise to the idea of national consciousness. The second movement which was influential during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the Renaissance. While the Reformation brought a new vision of religion to Europe, the Renaissance, on the other hand, conveyed a new critical spirit in humanity's approach to the aesthetics. In England, as well as in the rest of Europe, the movement coincided with the Reformation, further enlarging the impact of the latter. The New Learning – the revival and extension of classical studies by the humanists – was disseminated easily with the invention of the printing press. With the Reformation, the individual's responsibility for finding salvation by reading or interpreting the Scripture for himself was emphasised. With the breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church by such leaders as Martin Luther and John Calvin, Western Europe was split between Catholic and Protestant countries. The Reformation and the Renaissance were somehow the same in inspiration and purpose. They were both directed to a sense of freedom in religion and life in general. Both went hand in hand to liberate ordinary men and women from restraints that custom and superstition had combined to lay upon them in the Middle Ages (Brinton, 1963: 24).

Humanism, a European phenomenon, was a more worldly and thus more secular philosophy. The humanists of the Renaissance period tried to get rid of the authority of the medieval Church and to assert the idea of individualism. At its best, humanism helped to civilize man and to make him realize his potential powers and gifts. As Michael Brinton points out "the [humanists] believed that man is the measure of all things, and that each man is a measure for himself" (**Ibid**., p. 25). Humanistic attitudes regarded man as the crown of creation; a point of view expressed by Hamlet (in these

[1] Before Elizabeth came to the throne, the country was divided by the fifteenth-century War of the Roses which set the great houses of York and Lancaster against each other in a war for the throne. As a consequence, England suffered under a bloody thirty-year period of civil war. However, the country began to be unified by two Tudor rulers. Elizabeth completed the transformation of what had been a fragmented feudal society into a centralized nation-state dominated by a single royal court.

sentences Hamlet generalizes the godlike characteristics of man which are attributed to Old Hamlet at various points in the play):

> ... What a piece of work is man. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty. In form and moving how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god. The beauty of the world. The paragon of animals.
>
> (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene ii, 303-307)

The age was also marked by the discovery of new lands and new routes which provided men with the sense that in the physical world, as in the world of ideas, the boundaries of the known were being enlarged. The influence of the new geographical discoveries on men's imaginations is one of the most obvious points to be noted. Spenser can speak for that when, justifying in the proem to Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene* his setting the scene in "that happy land of Faery," he observes:[2]

> But let that man with better sence advize,
> That of the world least part to us is red:
> And dayly how through hardy enterprize,
> Many great Regions are discoveréd,
> Which to late age were never mentionéd.
> Who ever heard of th'Indian *Peru*?
> Or who in venturous vessell measuréd
> The *Amazons* huge river now found trew?
> Or fruitfullest *Virginia* who did ever vew?
>
> ...
>
> Yet all these were, when no man did them know
> Yet have from wisest ages hidden beene:
> And later times things more unknowne shall show ....
> (Book 2, proem 2, 3)

[2] In these stanzas, Spenser is actually supporting the idea that it is only the white-man who has an identity as compared to the "other" and that due to the efforts and strivings of the white man, the lands of the "other" have newly been "discovered" and have consequently acquired a meaning and significance. The underlying principle here is the formation of English national identity during the time that England had just begun its efforts to establish colonies abroad. And this English identity is based upon anxieties about class, race, and gender difference experienced by the English and Spenser during the late sixteenth century.

Following the voyages of Columbus (1492) and Vasco de Gama (1498), European sailors explored new continents and new oceans; and colonies were established in strange, newly discovered territories. In 1492 Columbus, acting on the belief in the old Greek idea that the world is a globe, sailed west to find a new commercial route to the East. He was frustrated by the unexpected barrier of a new continent. The succeeding explorations of this new continent put England at the centre of the chief trade routes, and helped establish commercial prosperity. Thus, the patriotism and nationalism of the Elizabethan England further expressed itself in the imperial aspirations of the age. Imperialism showed itself as a means for the enhancement of England's glory, as well as of its prosperity and the welfare of its people.

The late sixteenth century witnessed the first English attempts at establishing colonies on American soil. These newly colonised lands provided people with the ideas of opportunity and unlimited possibility. Behind these endeavours, of course, was the sustaining ideal of empire-building. In the Elizabethan period imperialism was a dream of territorial expansion to be translated into fact in that very day. This vision incorporated various economic, political, strategic and psychological factors into a national mission. The Queen presided over an enormous national expansion and the beginnings of an overseas empire. Imperialism implied first and foremost national enlargement and economic prosperity, but it also had in view the altruistic purpose of converting the Indians to Christianity and thereby to civilisation. The initial Elizabethan efforts at empire-building in the New World were private ventures on a rather modest scale, to which the Queen contributed little more than royal patents. Nevertheless, these early attempts stirred a nation-wide excitement and drew an enthusiastic response from many writers of the age. For instance, Spenser dedicated *The Faerie Queene* to Elizabeth I, "Queene of England Fraunce and Ireland and of Virginia" ("Dedication to Queen Elizabeth," in Payley, 1970: 38).

The newly discovered lands meant new resources and wealth for the European explorers for enriching themselves and the aristocratic, and later industrial elite of their

countries. Yet explorations did not merely take place in the form of simple business enterprises. The Europeans also brought with them social, political, and religious objectives, all of which were formulated according to their own cultural codes, ready to be displayed in the newly discovered lands and to the people living there. Carrying with them an image of their own identity which was an outcome of these cultural codes, was essential for the European colonisers. With the help of this "shield," European explorers hoped to abate the sense of the alienation and protect themselves from the unfamiliar aspects of this new environment.

The indigenous populations of the new lands bore cultural differences and a way of life that constituted a source of curiosity and often disdain for the European. For the coloniser, these differences were generally deemed to be a threat that might stand as an obstacle to their ultimate intentions of claiming possession over the natives' land that the European had "discovered". The most effective solution to this problem was either to negate or suppress the diversity of these new lands and its populations by dominating them with Western social, political, religious, economic and cultural models that the Europeans considered superior to what had existed prior to their arrival. The ultimate outcome of this conception was colonialism, where, from Ellis Cashmore's perspective,

> the conquering powers regarded the colonised peoples as totally unrelated to themselves. Their assumption was that the colonised were so different in their physical appearance and culture that they shared nothing: they were **Others.**
>
> (Cashmore, 1996: 80)

And according to Ellis Cashmore, the "others" in cultural as well as in postcolonial studies are defined in various ways. Within these studies "The main axes of difference are the 'Big Three' of race, class, and gender. Representations of racial (ethnic, national) others often overlap with those of women and lower class people" (**Ibid**., p. 263).

Like the colonised who are made to subjugate themselves to the coloniser, the beholder of power, the women as the "Others" are also put under the same authority. The actual purpose of the coloniser is to exploit the natural resources of these lands

under the name of the so-called "paternal mission" they entitled themselves to. And their justification for this exploitation was that they were there to bring "order" and "civilise" the uneducated, ignorant heathens. This was their mission or what Rudyard Kipling came to define in the late nineteenth century as the "white man's burden." With the exploration and "discovery" of new lands at the end of the fifteenth century, Europeans acknowledged the existence of other "places" where men could live. This realisation led to a further conception, which came to perceive Europe as being the "Old World" and the newly discovered lands as the "New World." These new lands, and above all, the newly discovered islands, became a source of inspiration for writers. Elizabethan writers in their role as public guides also promoted imperialism as a heroic and patriotic ideal in the conviction that it was in the best economic and political interests of England to plant colonies across the ocean (Campbell, 1989: xix-xxvi).

The Renaissance, moreover, was a period of enormous change and upheaval, in which a relatively unified and stable medieval world-view gave way to what would become the Enlightenment. It was a period which also saw a reconstruction of identity, a reconstruction called by Stephen Greenblatt "Renaissance self-fashioning." Women, too, were engaged in this "self-fashioning" enterprise—but with a difference. Less free to begin the inquiry from "scratch," they engaged in the process under the jealous eye of a patriarchal society, which saw them as passive members—valued above all, as Suzanne W. Hull has noted, "for three traditional virtues: chastity, obedience, and silence" (Hull, 1996: 76). While these three primary virtues engulfed women, men, on the other hand, were expected to lead active lives and practice active virtues, such as courage, justice, and fortitude (**Ibid**.). Drawing on the equation of sexual impropriety with female immorality in general, Lawrence Stone, on the other hand, argues that for most of the Early Modern English society, "the 'double standard' of sexual behaviour prevailed" (Stone, 1990: 315). For Stone, an explanation for the prevalence of the double standard lies in the emphasis in secular society especially on honour. Early Modern English society stressed honour but had very different conceptions of what constituted male and female honour (**Ibid**., pp. 316-317). Male honour depended on the

integrity of one's word and courage, sexual **chastity**, on the other hand, was the central requirement and the sole determinant of female honour.

The sixteenth-century witnessed a renaissance of learning in England and the spread of humanism. Humanists supported education for both men and women in part so that virtue could be encouraged. The humanistic revival bred the noble concept of the cultivated Renaissance **gentleman** expressed in Baldassare Castiglone's *Il Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*). Castiglione, writing in an Italy dominated by princely courts, taught how to attain the elegant and seemingly undemanding qualities necessary for acting like a "true gentleman." He popularized the ideal of the "Renaissance man": one who is accomplished in many different pursuits and is also brave, witty, and "courteous," meaning civilised and learned. Yet, he said nothing about women's role in "hearth and home," but stressed instead the ways in which court ladies could be "gracious entertainers" (Castiglione, 1967: 85). As it is obvious, this courtesy book was primarily concerned with masculine social identity and political activity, which calls attention to a sex-gender system which is embedded in the social order and contributes to the systematic organization of hierarchies within it.

Castiglione's instructive text[3] was to encourage the acquisition of virtue by means of learning. Some humanists were concerned about the notion that virtue was not gendered but was found equally in both men and women. These writers argued for a single model of virtue to be applied to both men and women. However, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* for instance, the gendered role of women is broadly illustrated by the poet's approach to "virtue," which is the allegorical subject of his poem. The word "virtue" derives from the Latin term **virtus** for "manliness" or "valour" (*Webster's*

[3] Italian scholarship and culture had much to do with the humanist conception of many-sided excellence and to illustrate this they produced the so-called "courtesy books" which embodied a philosophy of the art of living especially with **virtù** (it presents the ideal of the completely rounded or "universal" man, developed in all his faculties and skills, physical, intellectual, and artistic). Books of good manners are not English in origin; it is Italy, the seat of the most ancient civilization of Europe, which has continued in its old place, where the chief works on this subject have appeared. Of these three were translated into English, and became the standard works on the subject. They did not introduce a new practice into England, for the practice of good manners was here before; but they in a manner fixed it. Chief of these is **The Courtier**, by Baldassare Castiglione, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, and published by him in 1561 (Spingarn, 1954: 103-105).

Dictionary, 1961: 2556)[4] and according to the same dictionary "virtue" also refers to the aspects of chastity and purity, especially the chastity of a woman (**Ibid**.). The usage of the word includes references to concepts such as moral goodness of character and behaviour, but this initial significance bears witness to the unacknowledged use of the word in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* where the poet, in the Letter to Raleigh, speaks of his desire to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (Spenser, 1970: 39). So "virtue" is generally assigned from the male subject position even when a female monarch may be the primary reader addressed. The poem is designed to teach **gentlemen** the kind of virtue drawn from "manliness." Female characters are excluded from the manly realm of virtue and female virtue is honoured much more in theory than in practice. Thus the poem's presentation of virtue actually accentuates gender rather than behaviour. Since "virtue's" root in "manliness" is apparent in the entirety of *The Faerie Queene*, women, on the other hand, aspire instead to "their" virtue—chastity. As related to the dichotomy between the masculine traits and those of the feminine, Castiglione, on the other hand, makes a distinction between the delicacy and tenderness of women and the energetic virility of men:

> I hold that a woman should in no way resemble a man in her ways, manners, words, gestures and bearing. Thus just as it is very fitting that a man should display a certain robust and sturdy **manliness**, so it is well for a woman to have a certain soft and delicate tenderness with an air of **feminine sweetness** in her every movement.
>
> (Castiglione, 1967: 211)

Unlike the presentation of the ideal of the completely rounded or "universal" man, developed in all his faculties and skills, the Renaissance notion of woman depends on the ancient perception and definition of "**femina: imperfectior mare** (woman: inferior male)", or in vulgate texts equivalent to the words **mulier** (wife) and **femina** (woman) (MacLean, 1980: 92).

[4] Warner Berthoff is correct when he points out that "'Virtue' is feminine in gender in Latin and the Romance languages" [and that] individual virtues are often given female allegorical forms" (as quoted by Shelia T. Cavanagh, 1994: 175). Nevertheless, **The Faerie Queene** separates the concept of virtue from the possibility of female realization.

Although humanism did much to enhance the dignity of man, the idea of female inferiority continued its long history. Literacy and schooling increased significantly at all levels in the early modern period. However, women were affected by this advantage to a lesser degree than men. Since Protestantism with its stress on the primacy of Scripture and the priesthood of all believers, called on women as well as men to undertake serious Bible study, it encouraged primary schooling for both sexes and thus enhanced female as well as male literacy. But Protestant male leaders still insisted that women were naturally inferior to men and thus should always defer to men in arguments. As Calvin himself said, "let the woman be satisfied with her state of subjection and not take it ill that she is made inferior to the more distinguished sex" (as quoted by Coffin and **et. al**., 2002: 516). Women's instruction was primarily to make them good domestic servants or household managers, dutiful wives, committed mothers, and believing Christians, but nothing more. Among the men, for example, there was a strong fear of woman's intellectual education. As Ian MacLean states "nothing must be allowed in the training of her mind that would encourage or enable her to compete on even ground with men" (MacLean, **op. cit**., p. 45). Aristotle declared that "the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities", and centuries later, St. Thomas Aquinas still considered women as defective:

> As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence, an "incidental" being.
>
> (Aquinas, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 2001: 244)

The early leaders of the Christian Church – to whom the female was clearly an instrument of the devil – set the ground for the condemnation of women. Tertullian, a well-known church leader in the early third century, had the following to say to women believing that man had been created a pure being in the image of God and that he had been defiled by woman:

> You are the devil's gateway ... you are the first deserter of the divine law; you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert – that is, death – even the Son of God had to die.
>
> (as quoted by Dalarun, 2000: 20)

Medieval Christian societies were patriarchal and they were largely hierarchical and conformist, hence femininity had low status and was seen as a deviance from the norm of masculinity. Medieval romantic literature demanded that women be passive, subservient, sweet, kind, generous and pure. It asserted that women need men to protect them. The man was likely to be described as master, while the woman highlighted his masculinity by being weak and dependent. The division of masculine and feminine characteristics was sharply made. Nevertheless, medieval and authoritarian males denigrated the very attributes they needed in women to make them feel masculine. They expressed their irritation at the dependency of women and described them as fickle, flighty and burdensome.

The Wife of Bath, a female figure from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, provides us with a bold and vivacious answer to the classical and medieval misogynistic inscriptions which consider women as the bane of Adam, the root of all evil, the source of temptation, or at the opposite pole, as idealised and virginal objects of worship. The Wife speaks out against the misogynistic teachings of the Church Fathers, asking,

> Who peyntede the leoun, tel me who?
> By god, if wommen hadde writen stories,
> As clerkes han with-inne hir oratories,
> They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse
> Than all the mark of Adam my redresse.[5]
> (lines, 692-696)

There was much of this kind of dichotomised thinking and contradiction in medieval attitudes to women. Medieval literature exhibited an ambivalent underlying disrespect for, and resentment against, women, often hidden behind excessive pseudo-

[5] **Chaucer: Complete Works**, pp. 573-574.

admiration. On the one hand, its heroines are the essence of sweetness and purity as in the following description of Constance in "The Man of Law's Tale" by Chaucer:

> In hir is heigh beautee, with-oute pryde,
> Yowthe, with-oute grenehede or folye;
> To alle hir werkes vertu is hir gryde,
> Humblesse hath slayn in hir al tirannye.
> She is mirour of alle curteisye;
> Hir herte is verray chambre of holiness,
> Hir hand, ministre of fredom for almesse.
> (**Ibid**., p. 478)

On the other hand and also from "The Man of Law's Tale":

> O Satan, envious sin thilke day
> That thou were chased from our heritage,
> Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!
> Thou madest Eva bringe us in servage.
> Thou wolt fordoon this cristen mariage.
> Thyn instrument so, weylawey the whyle!
> Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt begyle.
>
> (**Ibid**., p. 480)

The first description of woman from Chaucer bears characteristics which can be linked to those of the Virgin Mary and the second woman's to those of Eve. There was Mary as well as Eve to provide images of medieval womanhood. Mary was not only praiseworthy for her holiness, but for her embodiment of ideal feminine traits. Her primary virtues centred on her freedom from sexuality since she was conceived by divine intervention and she conceived Jesus immaculately. Jacques Dalarun argues that the idea of the Immaculate Conception was "to convince the companions of the Immaculate Lamb that they had been right to renounce the flesh and cut themselves off from woman, that morally hideous creature whose superficial beauty was in fact the deadliest of traps" (Dalarun, 2000: 20). The "good" feminine was thus divorced from sexuality, although not from motherhood. While people were praying to the Virgin Mary for salvation, they were condemning Eve for the Fall of Man. The Eve/Mary dualism allowed and even encouraged conflicting attitudes towards medieval women: on the one hand, women held a high position in the system of Christian redemption, yet, on

the other hand, they were responsible for the wretched, sinful, corrupt state of fallen humanity. This dualistic religious attitude towards women offers us some insight into the curious mixture of love and religion, sex and purity we find in the courtly love poetry and stories of the Middle Ages. This black and white thinking resulted in moral contradictions in belief and behaviour in many aspects of society. Moreover, this sense of ambiguity can be discerned as far as the representations of women in paintings during the Renaissance are concerned. Although the Renaissance was marked by the rediscovery of the nude and an improvement of physical beauty, "[it also] inherited from the Middle Ages a basic mistrust of the body, in particular, of the female body" (Grieco, 1994: 46). Jean Cousin the Elder's "*Eva prima Pandora*" (Fig. 3) from the sixteenth-century which is sometimes said to be "the first Renaissance nude," (Borin, 1994: 194) unites both Pandora and Eve in a single figure. Pandora is from ancient Greek mythology and Eve from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In bringing the two women together and fusing them in one single figure, the artist tries to show that in both traditions woman is the source of all evil. Hesiod, in the seventh century B.C. gives the account of the creation and deeds of the first woman, Pandora, in his *Works and Days* which rivals the Genesis account of Eve and the Fall in its scapegoating of the female sex. The Pandora myth with which we might identify Eve and her story is one of two important Western archetypes which condemn the female through her sexuality and explain her position as her well-deserved punishment for the primal sin under whose unfortunate consequences the race yet labours. Pandora was created by Zeus as a punishment for the human race because Prometheus had brought them the gift of fire, which he had stolen from the gods. Hence Zeus, like God, inflicts punishment on the human race through woman. Moreover, the implication of her name "Pandora", which stands for the one who dispenses all the gifts (because all the Olympians gave something to her at the moment of her creation), links the figure of Pandora to a fertility goddess[6]

[6] Adrienne Rich who traces the descent of Pandora argues that the Hellenic figure of Pandora springs from the Cretan Earth-Mother. She is then converted from the All-Giver to merely a beautiful girl dowered with gifts by all the Olympians and then sent as a temptress to man (Rich, 1997: 122).

overthrown by patriarchal religion which could consolidate its position and uphold and validate its structure by the creation of a male God or gods.

In this painting, an idealised female body which is a male construct is displayed with a skull, an apple branch, Pandora's vase, and a serpent, an ancient symbol of the Goddess, entwines her left arm in the way one sees in images of Isis. The perfect female nude is thus accompanied by a number of negative images taken from mythology, and the Bible, all on the theme of the **femme fatale**. The suggestive nakedness of the woman with one hand on the skull of death and the other on the urn of all ills is clearly intended to bring sexuality to mind as the cause of both. Woman's sexuality and beauty, ephemeral and false, made her a source of death. The theme of Eve is medieval; for Françoise Borin the theme of Pandora, "forgotten in the Middle Ages, was rediscovered and enjoyed a great popularity in the sixteenth century" (Borin, **op. cit**.). The message is clear: female flesh symbolises death, but also represents beauty and art, pleasing to the eye and intellect, embodying a dichotomy between evil and good that was invented by man and has been used against women since the stories of Eve and Pandora were first narrated.

In the sixteenth-century, moreover, the idea of female inferiority continued its previous long history, although humanism did much to enhance the dignity of the human being. The sixteenth-century English society was deeply patriarchal in its structure and attitudes. Male primogeniture governed most property arrangements as well as the laws of succession to the crown. In theory, at least, women were not expected to assert any independent authority but were considered subservient to male relatives whether fathers, brothers or husbands. The Scottish Calvinist preacher John Knox denounced female monarchy as an abomination in his *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, a work written in 1558 to contest Catholic Mary I's right to be queen. Yet, in spite of patriarchal attitudes, female rule was not something new in the sixteenth century. Not only had women inherited the thrones of Scotland and England before Elizabeth's accession, but more importantly they had also been selected to act as

regents in Spain, Scotland, the Netherlands and France during the absences of their monarchs.[7]

Women in England continued to be defined as either **femes sole** (unmarried or widowed women) or **femes covert** ("covered" or married women) during the Renaissance (Davies, 1986: 5). Because marriage was a woman's principal goal and the role of wife her primary role, she must always define herself in relation to men. It was an age which regarded femaleness itself as an essentially debased and secondary condition, and believed that women were physically and spiritually inferior to men (a predominant idea since the Middle Ages) and that women's independence must be stripped off to conform to a man's/husband's power. Elizabeth I, for instance, had to negotiate to acquire the prerogatives of sovereignty in an important field, namely, politics which is considered to be the masculine sphere **par excellence**.

The age in which Edmund Spenser wrote *The Faerie Queene* was characterised by the presence of a powerful and successful queen on the throne. Linda Gregerson argues that

> The powers ascribed to male and female were asymmetrical in sixteenth-century law, in sixteenth-century physiology, in sixteenth-century social life; when a female prince inherited the throne of England, she constituted both a practical and a representational crisis.
>
> (Gregerson, 2001: 180)

For a culture that evaluated order in terms of corresponding hierarchies, with the masculine God/king/father/head at the top of the universe/kingdom/family/body, the presence of Elizabeth I on the throne for forty-five years created in Maureen Quilligan's words, "the problem of monstrosity" (Quilligan, 1987: 170). This idea of "monstrosity", of course, springs from the combination of unconventional sexuality and sovereign power embodied in the Virgin Queen. I have argued how women come to be associated with the images of the monstrous-feminine or grotesque as a consequence of their trespassing into the realms of male authority, hence their non-conformity to the order

[7] See Carole Levin, **The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power**, 1994, pp. 116-117.

established by men which regards the male perspective as the universal reality and male norms as "normal adjustment", by which women can be assessed. I have also stated that the fear of women accounts for male constructs about the reflections of monstrous-feminine or grotesque. It was specifically Elizabeth's ability as a woman to exercise power successfully in a man's world. As such, she was seen to transgress gender norms entailed by her participation in the male arena of authority and power.

As with all other stereotypes of the feminine, Queen Elizabeth was defined in terms of her sexuality and her gender played a significant role in the construction of her "monstrosity." She was not only a monarch but a woman who deviated from the patriarchally prescribed female role and became a threat to men. For instance, she abandoned the womanly stereotype of motherliness and as a consequence, became a "monster" within the constraints of a patriarchal world. Although Spenser dedicates *The Faerie Queene*[8] to Elizabeth and places her at the centre of the poem, the inclusion of several tyrannical "mayden Queene's" (Book 1, 4, 8), such as Lucifera, Malecasta, or Radigund, suggests a more muted critique of female rule and of Elizabeth's stubborn refusal to marry. Underlying this fact is, of course, the age-old theme of men's fear of castration which ultimately produces and delineates the "monstrous" as well as men's fear of the unmarried, and therefore unsubdued, placeless, female. Natalie Zemon Davis in "Women in Politics" emphasises the problems Elizabeth faced as a female ruler in the patriarchal sixteenth century:

> [...] When Elizabeth acceded to the throne in 1558, she had to face [...] the usual suspicions about female rule—that women would be subject to male favorites and would be changeable and irrational.
>
> (Davis, 1994: 170)

[8] All the references from Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* are from **The Faerie Queene**, edited by P. C. Bayley London: Oxford University Press, 1970. References to the rest of the poem are from **The Faerie Queen**, edited by Tom Griffith, **Wordsworth Classics of World Literature**, Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999.

Thus Elizabeth had to attempt to circumvent these problems in order to accommodate to authority. And Elizabeth maintained power at least in part through careful representations of herself which she either created for herself or allowed her subjects to confer upon her in order to render "the anomaly of a female ruler" (Gregerson, 2001: 181) less threatening. Her tactics—or what we might call her propaganda machine—were multiple: she was a secularised Virgin Mother to the nation. She was a Queen of Shepherds, a Cynthia or Diana, the unreachable object of male desire and worship. Moreover, when needed, she seemed a manly figure able to give courage to her soldiers; as an unmarried Queen, she could also claim to be mistress, wife, and mother to the people of England and to her courtiers. These stratagems were undoubtedly necessary in transforming a 25-year-old woman into a strong and invincible ruler. Furthermore, they point to the consciously constructed public identity of an exceptional woman through patriarchal sexual ideology. Being a mistress, wife, mother and an object of courtly love to the people of her country are clearly feminine roles. But alongside such womanly identifications, which she certainly did nothing to discourage, the Queen possessed a set of symbolic male identities which appear most frequently in her speeches and public pronouncements. Queen Elizabeth presented herself to the nation as both man and woman, as queen and king, mother and firstborn son. Especially in years of particular crisis and at the end of her reign, we can observe her building the myth of her own androgyny in order to alleviate the political anxieties aroused by her presence as a woman on the throne, by her perennial refusal to marry and beget children or even to name a successor. The concept of androgyny can be regarded as a sense of unity, wholeness, and harmony in which conventional gender polarities and male dominance are transcended.

Elizabeth I was careful to create an elaborate "cult" of symbolism that emphasised respect for her person and for the monarchy. In doing so, she secured her position by creating a glorious public image that overwhelmed religious differences and appealed directly to English patriotism (Frye, 1993: 43). During her long reign she had to deal with many problems of policy, domestic and foreign. She had to struggle against

many difficulties as a woman in the first place and as the monarch in the second. Moreover, she was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, and Pope Clement VII, as the representative of the ultimate patriarch, God, had stigmatised her as illegitimate because the Pope objected to her father's remarriage. As compared to her Catholic rival, Mary Stuart, the representation of queenship exemplified by Elizabeth I was more difficult than that of her half-sister, Mary Tudor, because Mary, Queen of Scots, revealed herself with more certainty as a "queen" having lived that state "virtually from birth" (Hopkins, 2002: 12). As the monarch of England who had resumed her father's title as supreme head of the church, Elizabeth was able to withstand both the Catholic and the growing Puritan oppositions and she had to deal with the threat beset by Catholic Spain and France. As it can clearly be seen such manifestations of her representations under various headings appear to be an indispensible strategy.

Because Elizabeth I was a female monarch exercising political power which was naturally deemed to be a male attribute, it was important that she emphasise the positive elements of her gender, while also incorporating selected elements of masculine power. That was really a paradoxical situation. As the following lines evince clearly, Elizabeth's childhood[9] was indicative of how clever an English ruler she would be. Roger Ascham, a famous humanist teacher, who taught her when she was twelve years old, wrote to a friend about Elizabeth I:

> Her mind has no *womanly* weakness and her perseverance is equal to that of a *man* and her memory long keeps what it quickly picks up. She talks French and Italian as well as she does English and has often talked to me readily and well in Latin, moderately in Greek. When she writes in Greek and Latin nothing is more beautiful than her handwriting. She delights as much in music as she is skilful in it. In adornment she is elegant rather than showy.
>
> (as quoted in Schama, 2003: 280-281, [my italics])

The Queen demonstrated herself to be a diligent figure in many fields and she was a woman who had a strong memory and was persevering.

[9] The Queen was also an immensely productive and gifted writer who received an extensive humanist education of the kind usually reserved to the males of the aristocracy. From the age of eleven, she produced a flow of letters, speeches, prayers, and poems in various languages.

Elizabeth I felt the necessity to fashion herself as a brave "king" because she knew that a woman who is present as a ruling queen would certainly not be expected to encourage much faith and confidence in her people and she wanted to distance herself from a femininity that could threaten her authority. In her accession speech, Elizabeth I declared that although she was "but one Body naturally considered," she was now also by God's "permission a Body Politic to govern"[10] (in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 2000: 52). She developed a style of female self-mastery that maintained her royal authority within the structure of sixteenth-century hierarchical thought. Marie Axton notes that "by 1561," it was

> necessary to endow the queen with two bodies: **a body natural and a body politic** ... The body politic was supposed to be contained within the natural body of the Queen ... The Queen's natural body was subject to infancy, infirmity, error and old age; her body politic, created out of a combination of faith, ingenuity and practical expediency, was held to be unerring and immortal.
>
> (Axton, 1977: 12)

In other words, the Queen naturally had the body of a "frail" woman but was also endowed with a "princely male body" carrying the strength and masculine spirit of the best of her male forebears (**Ibid**., p. 38). Leah S. Marcus points to her "cloth[ing] herself in the 'disguise' of male identity in order to further her goals" (Marcus, 1986: 137). She was in a unique position in that her two bodies allowed her to be praised on two points—for behaving in a masculine manner in her public body and for following feminine norms suitable for her private body. However, she had no objection to the term *queen* and used it herself throughout her reign. But much more habitually, she referred to herself as *prince*. According to Leah S. Marcus,

[10] Like the earlier Tudors, Elizabeth relied heavily on the medieval concept of the "king's two bodies," by which the monarch was defined as composed of a mortal "body natural" and an immortal "body politic." The private body of the king was the one that was subject to the destruction of time and eventually gave way to a successor. It is in this ritual of succession that one can best grasp the public body of the sovereign which contains the authority of the state and as such it never dies: hence "The King is dead. Long Live the King." See Marie Axton, **The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and The Elizabethan Succession**, London: Royal Historical Society, 1977, especially Chapters 2 and 3 and p. 38.

> The word's most basic sixteenth-century meaning was ruler, especially male ruler; it was also applied to the eldest son of a reigning monarch. The equivalent female term was *princess*. But although Queen Elizabeth was frequently called "princess" in the early years of her reign and used the word of herself, with the passing of time that feminine epithet tended to disappear in favor of the more masculine *prince*.
>
> (**Ibid**., pp. 139-140)

By subjecting her body natural to her body politic, the Queen also invented something quite new in the history of the monarchy: to borrow Simon Schama's words "the androgynous virgin prince" (Schama, 2003: 279). In doing so, she created a gender style which was necessary for her to be able to assert her right to the throne as a powerful and unconquerable ruler.

Living in a society, in which both tradition and religion proclaimed the natural inferiority of women and aware of her position as a "weak" monarch and of the necessity of working within monarchical tradition, Elizabeth I augments it by fashioning a courageous image, a personal image created by herself, most famously by appearing at Tilbury before the Spanish invasion. In her famous Armada[11] speech before the troops massed at Tilbury in 1588, Elizabeth offered herself as a model of kingly courage. Putting her femininity to effective rhetorical use, we can say how the Queen defined herself officially as both a man and a woman, placing an increasing emphasis on the former identification as her reign progressed:

> ... I know I have the body but of **a weak and feeble woman**; but I **have the heart and stomach of a king**, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; ..."
>
> (in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 2000: 326)

[11] See Fig. 2. The defeat of the Spansih Armada is also reflected in a famous painting known as **The "Armada" Portrait** which was made by an unknown artist. In the painting, the body of the Queen functions as a symbol of imperial England and its politics. The defeat of the Spanish Armada was the pivotal event of the latter half of Elizabeth's reign and a great triumph for the English. In the portrait, next to her arm is an imperial crown, and her right hand rests upon globe – specifically her fingers are on the Americas. By 1588 the colonial project had been established as the foundation of the British Empire in the New World. The crown and globe tell us that Elizabeth is mistress of land and sea.

Elizabeth's being a strong and invincible ruler has been manifested in this speech which further demonstrates her valour in leading her troops against the Spanish Armada. The "Elizabethan Settlement" had established the Church of England as Protestant and the expansion of the empire under the Protestant Elizabeth inevitably caused conflict with Catholic Spain and allowed her the triumph over the Spanish Armada. The whole of the Queen's speech, moreover, indicates how she rejoices in an England which is superior to all other nations – particularly to Spain, enjoying the sanction and blessings of a God ever watchful over the fortunes of that country. On this martial occasion, her costume gave visual embodiment to her verbal appeal. She carried a truncheon as "she rode between the ranks and wore upon her breast a 'silver cuirass'—appropriate covering for the heart and stomach of a king" (Marcus, 1999: 138).

The Armada victory celebrates the public's jubilant and patriotic mood which became the symbol of England's vigour and glory as epitomised in the person of the Queen who successfully defied the Spanish King. Patriotism reached its peak with the Armada victory which, moreover, prompted the growing sense of national self-awareness and the love of one's country. Expressions of love of the country are best illustrated in Shakespeare's *Richard II* : "This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, / This other Eden, demi-paradise ..." (Act II, Scene i, 41-42) and in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, "Deare Countrey, O how dearely deare/ Ought thy remembraunce, and perpetuall band/ Be ..." (Book 2, 10, 69).

To put it in another way, the defeat of the Spanish Armada united all Englishmen in a magnificent national enthusiasm, which found its presentations in some literary texts of the period[12] as well. The long wars with France, and the establishment of the Church of England (The events that brought about great changes in English social and economic life had occurred in the reigns of Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, and of his son Edward VI) had done their work in weakening the universal Christian ideal of the Middle Ages and in fostering a national consciousness. In light of these changes, Frank Kermode declares that

> It is traditional to say that the "English Reformation" took place from 1529 to 1559 – the latter is the date of the Elizabethan Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy, and the former the date when Henry, failing to obtain the Pope's consent to his divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, made himself supreme head of the Church in the Pope's place.
>
> (Kermode, 2004: 10)

Elizabeth's Armada speech, on the other hand, demonstrates how the Queen rejects her womanhood in favour of her representation as the monarch of England, because women are almost always associated with the idea of frailty and sensuousness which are two perilous characteristics as far as a monarch is concerned. Sensuous attraction should be avoided as the story of the Fall demonstrated because it meant weakness. Inalterably in a patriarchal society which denies its females any form of activity and assertiveness, Queen Elizabeth I (although she derived her power from her rank), like almost every woman of her country must have experienced the gender-conflicts which she clearly expresses when she speaks of her two selves, one female, the other male – that is the one mostly emphasised in order to avoid any impression of a soft female appearance and thus female frailty. "Frailty thy name is woman" (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene ii, 146) exclaims Hamlet in relation to his mother, Gertrude, who as "queen" and "female" is held responsible for corrupting the world. This sentence uttered by Hamlet

[12] During the Renaissance period the function of the poetry (the idea that poetry has a didactic function was influenced by Plato) was further extended by the belief that the poet had a special role as a kind of "celebrant" of nationalism. Elizabethan patriotism, already a force in the process of being enhanced by the success of the Armada victory, was an important factor inciting writers to turn to public themes and personalities. Patriotism means a strong sense of national greatness and gives rise to utterances in a public and heroic mode – in expressions of love of country, in the celebration of national heroes, and of national history and/or destiny.

serves as the key to Gertrude's position, for according to Hamlet, Gertrude has helped to transform "the royal bed of Denmark" from "a celestial bed" into "a couch for luxury and damned incest" (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene v, 83-84).

Elizabeth ascended the throne of England as a woman, which would normally mean that she occupied an inferior position to almost every male. Accordingly, she had to know how to construct her power in a patriarchal society. However, she also ascended the throne as the sovereign, which meant she held the most superior position in the realm. Elizabeth I, the embodiment of imperial England and its politics, was well aware of her **dual** nature as woman and sovereign. One of her own poems entitled "On Monsieur's Departure" is worth noting to understand how the Queen sees within herself a sexual propensity and weakness as 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 hate,
> I do, yet dare not say I ever meant,
> I seem stark *mute* but inwardly do prate.
> I am and not, I freeze and yet am burned,
> Since from myself another self I turned.
>
> (in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 2000: 302-303, [my italics])

The lines quoted above show a fragmented self which only knows how to define herself in negative terms, by "what-she-is-not". In doing so, Elizabeth I, as a matter of fact, is echoing how the patriarchal male system excludes the voice of woman by means of silencing her because it expects woman to behave according to its own criteria. Man can assert his dominating sense of himself from a position of total male control. For instance, being **mute** is what is generally expected of a woman, even if that woman is a monarch. Two of the ideal female attributes in the patriarchal male discourse can be defined as silence and submission. The voice of woman should be excluded from the male domain and the exclusion of woman's voice can be understood as a question of silencing.

"On Monsieur's Departure" reveals the emotions of a queen tortured by the role her country expects her to play against her own body's and heart's demands and it is illustrative of the problem of Elizabeth's public/masculine and private/female bodies. Thus the Queen's personality revolves around double selves. Her inability to define herself leads her to an act of self-negation. She cannot express her own personal feelings and hence cannot perceive herself as a stable and fixed subject, a situation which finds its expression in most of her speeches to the Parliament over her right to remain a virgin[13] and to refuse to name a successor. In one of the Parliamentary petitions demanding that she marry, The Queen, in a dignified and authoritative manner, says:

> I am already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you. And this makes me wonder that you forget, yourselves, the pledge of this alliance which I have made with my kingdom in express and solemn terms.
>
> (in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 2000: 59)

And as related to her not having any children, hence no heir to the throne, she continues:

> And reproach me so no more, that I have no children: for every one of you, and as many as are English, are my children and kinsfolks, of whom, so long as I am not deprived and God shall preserve me, you cannot charge me, without offence, to be destitute.
>
> (**Ibid**.)

[13] The division between Elizabeth's private and public bodies meant that only to a limited extent could she be considered useful as a model of virtue for other women. The only typically feminine virtue that Elizabeth openly embraced throughout her reign was **chastity**. This virtue was so interwoven with her role as England's virgin queen that it should not necessarily be considered a private virtue of Elizabeth. Her virginity was of national interest and any suggestion that she was not chaste was an attack on not only her honour and her ability to rule but also on the nation (Hopkins, 2002: 35). As far as her virginity is concerned, moreover, she can be linked with the figure of Diana (also called Artemis or Cynthia, from her birthplace, Mount Cynthus in Delos), the moon goddess, for like Diana, she did not yield her body and mind to the male and thereby preserved her wholeness, autonomy, and self-sufficiency. Her association with the goddess Diana serves as a criticism of the patriarchy's usurpation of the female body, because the virginity of this mythical figure establishes a contradiction to the concept of virginity as it is perceived in the patriarchal Christian context, which ultimately leads to the subordination of the female body to the male. Whether married or not, autonomy over her body is denied to the woman who is provided with the alternative roles of virgin and wife. Like Diana, Elizabeth's virginity is self-imposed and significantly does not refer to the female body with the aim of turning it into a vessel for the offspring of the male.

These passages adapt the theory of the king's two bodies to a rhetorical formula which Elizabeth I was to use successfully throughout her reign. She concedes to male discomfort at being commanded by a woman through her open acknowledgement of her weakness.

Furthermore, the fact that the Queen seems to have recoiled from the very idea of marrying and accordingly producing an heir at once is manifest in her two speeches. Her refusal to comply with the urgent promptings of Parliament and Council was a continual source of anxiety[14] until she passed the age of childbearing, still unmarried. Thereafter, marriage would serve no purpose, and there was no point in continuing the desperate threats and admonitions. To find a solution to this problem, Frank Kermode argues

> Her advisers then made the best of a bad job and ensured that she was celebrated as the Virgin Queen, Gloriana, married only to her realm. An elaborate propagandist mythology was devised to suggest that her virginity was an entirely admirable and desirable state. **Edmund Spenser** was the great poet of this myth, but many others joined in.
>
> (Kermode, 2004: 21)

"As a virgin queen, Elizabeth I was anomalous, unprecedented in England" (Marcus, 1986: 138) remarks Leah S. Marcus. Her virginity freed her from most of the recognised categories of female experience, allowing her to preserve her independence while simultaneously exercising the emotional power behind the images of wife and mother through fictionalised versions of herself. The title "Virgin Queen" gave her the freedom to serve her entire country, not only a single man, because as "Virgin Queen she [...] could claim to be mistress, wife, and mother" (Davis, 1994: 171) of no one but England. In doing so, she also declined to be bound to patriarchal law which defines woman particularly within the narrow confines of the roles of "wife" and "mother." Elizabeth's private body was that of a woman and as such, she normally would have been expected to obey the men in her life. Traditionally speaking, the men that she would be supposed to comply with in her life would have included her father or other male guardian in her younger years and her husband thereafter. Elizabeth, however,

avoided the entanglements of matrimony throughout her life and thus was not subjected to the authority of a male – a husband. In many ways, this allowed her public body to dominate more conveniently. In Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene* the female figure, Britomart, is a woman in the male world of action and aggression. She is a Diana-figure complicated by her "allowable human desire" (Davies, 1986: 32) for Arthegall and by her predicted fertility as a mother of kings. Although one could counter that this reminder that her assigned role in English history is to yield to patriarchal power and provide legitimate male heirs does offer Elizabeth a problematic message, Davies believes that Spenser's Britomart/Elizabeth draws "the 'female' element of the nation into a fuller equivalence with the 'male'" (**Ibid**.).

In England, as queen, Elizabeth was the strongest female role model who embodied in her character important virtues. Yet she could not manage to act outside gender-prescribed roles imposed upon her not only because she was the Queen of England but most importantly she was a "woman" experiencing inevitably the boundaries of gender which were clearly defined by the sixteenth-century patriarchal society. And her speech at Tilbury is a manifestation of how she has internalised patriarchal authority in spite of the fact that she is the monarch, the head of England and her people. Thus as a female like the other women of her time she is totally restricted by the patriarchal structure of which she is a part and a structure that dominates her life. At this point came the strategies created and practised by the Queen in order to enable her to exercise her regal power. Elizabeth's personal self was effaced in order that her public, overtly constructed self – that is a male identity – could be used in order to solidify her power, increase her popularity, and manipulate her court and parliament. Accordingly, she could represent herself publicly as mother, as object of courtly love, even as prince or king.

[14] Elizabeth's failure to fulfill her female "nature" by becoming a wife and producing heirs reflects Elizabethan anxieties as she came to the age of fifty about what would happen to her heirless kingdom after her death.

CHAPTER IV

The Faerie Queene, Book 1

> "To the most high, mightie and magnificent empresse renowmed for pietie, vertue, and all gratious government Elizabeth by the grace of God Queene of England Fraunce and Ireland and of Virginia, defendour of the faith, &c. Her Most humble servaunt Edmund Spenser doth in all Humilitie Dedicate, present and Consecrate these his labours to live the eternitie of her fame."
>
> "*The Faerie Queene*, Dedication to Queen Elizabeth I"

A significant theme running through *The Faerie Queene* is the exaltation of Elizabeth I, in her various roles as the monarch and the virgin queen, and the leader of the Armada battle, as a national hero/ine whose primary goal was construed to be the enhancement of England's greatness.[1] Spenser's project in the poem is national, his monumental contribution to a court culture that conceptualized the female sovereign as a Petrarchan lady, respectfully and hopelessly adored by her subject-suitors. Spenser dedicates his proem to Elizabeth, places her at the centre of the text as the elusive Faerie Queene, and refracts her into other characters who allegorize her virtues. Although Spenser's *Faerie Queene* carries certain epic elements, it is significant, however, that, he cannot compose an epic for her, but has to confine himself and the Queen within the framework of a romance. Nevertheless, under one form or another, Queen Elizabeth is almost omnipresent throughout the poem: Gloriana, Belpheobe, Britomart, Mercilla—each represents Queen Elizabeth. "In that Fairy Queen," writes Spenser in his Letter to Raleigh,

> I mean glory in my general intention but in my particular, I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queen, and her kingdom in Fairy land. And yet in some places else I do otherwise shadow her. For, considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful Lady, this latter part

[1] Public themes were well-suited to the temper of the Renaissance theory of literature, with its ethical and utilitarian tendency, based as it was on honourable classical antecedents (Spingarn, 1954: 261-265). Any literate Elizabethan was well acquainted with the aims of literature expressed in Sir Philip Sidney's **Defense of Poesy** – namely, that poetry was a moral exercise which contained not only an element of delight but, more importantly, an element of instruction. And the purpose of instruction was best served by means of exemplary figures. Hence, in an age which put so much emphasis on individualism and personal achievement, Elizabethan writers often resorted to the creation of heroes to serve as uplifting models to their readers.

> in some places I do express in Belphoebe, fashioning her name according to your own excellent conceipt of Cynthia, Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana.
>
> (in Bayley, 1970: 40-41)

Book 1 follows closely the conventional pattern of the medieval romance, presenting a quest which after many dangers and adventures for the knight-hero culminates in some great contest or combat. The quest is that of the Red Cross Knight to free Una's parents and their land from the oppression of a great dragon. Book 1 tells the story of the Red Cross Knight's and Una's joint venture: their setting out together, their separation – brought about through treacherous enemies and lack of trust on the part of the hero – their reunion, and their final success.

Spenser builds into the very structure of the poem layers of allegorical meanings. What is called the allegory of the poem is in fact a weave of several allegories with literary symbolisms of several kinds. A look at the treatment of the Faerie Queene can show how Spenser builds multiple readings that qualify the celebration of queen and nation. Those multiple readings, in turn, point to how the conceptualization of a strong monarch within the context of womanhood created problems for the poet. Accordingly, she is presented as a split personality under the use of allegory. "The Letter to Raleigh" identifies her both with Glory itself – the elusive glory that the poet and characters seek is echoed in her name – and specifically with "the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene." Spenser thus bases the structure of his poem upon the courtly convention of tribute. He invokes Elizabeth in the ending of the proem to Book 3, saying that she may see herself either in Gloriana or in Belphoebe (Book 3, proem 5) and it was court fashion to address the Virgin Queen under such symbolic names as Gloriana, Diana, Cynthia:

> But let that same delitious Poet lend
> A little leave unto a rusticke Muse
> To sing his mistresse prayse, and let him mend,
> If ought amis her liking may abuse:
> Ne let his fairest *Cynthia* refuse,
> In mirrours more then one her selfe to see,
> But either *Gloriana* let her chuse,
> Or in *Belphoebe* fashioned to bee:
> In th'one her rule, in th'other her rare chastitee.
>
> (**Ibid**.)

Spenser's aim, then, appears to transcend hopes of patronage and personal gain through literary compliment. Imbued with the Renaissance conception of the role of the poet,[2] Spenser desired to publish the fame of this Lady whose actions had helped strengthen English pride and confidence and served to make England a successful contender against Spain.

In Book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser traces Elizabeth's lineage through the prophecy of Merlin. Elizabeth is "... descended farre / From mightie kings and conquerors in warre ..." (Book 2, 10, 4). The few female rulers he lists, including Guendolene and Bonduca, are also especially noted for their valour (Book 2, 10, 54). Moreover, in Book 3, "Of Chastity", Spenser continues his contextualisation of Elizabeth by refiguring women as the Golden Age's most valiant sex:

> ... by the record of antique times I find,
> That women wont in warres to beare most sway,
> And to all great exploits them selves inclind:
> Of which they still the girlond bore away,
> Till envious Men fearing their rules decay,
> Gan coyne streight lawes to curb their liberty...
> (Book 3, 2, 2)

Therefore, by refashioning history and Elizabeth's personal and political heritage, Spenser creates the possibility of a warmongering Queen. Once this possibility opens, he tells Elizabeth: 'Be thou faire *Britomart*' (Book 3, 2, 3). Britomart is

[2] Sidney's defence of poetry (by which he means all imaginative literature, whether in verse or prose) is based upon sixteenth-century literary criticism in its focus on didactic and ethical issues. For example, while comparing poetry to philosophy and history, Sidney defends poetry on the basis of its superiority as a teacher of virtuous action. Poetry, with its dramatic illustrations of ideal virtue, can show the good, thereby inspiring readers to imitate it in their own lives, which is the idealising strain in Renaissance literary thinking. Theoretically, this idealising strain can be related to Renaissance Platonism, with its dreams of a higher world and ideal forms. Of course, Renaissance Platonism inverted (where it did not simply misinterpret) Plato's opinions on the subject of poetry: allowing the poet access to the ideal and focusing upon the positive rather than the negative potential of role-models.

Spenser's cross-dressing female knight, especially noted for her valour. She gives her life's philosophy thus:

> All my delight on deedes of armes is set,
> To hunt out perils and adventures hard,
> By sea, by land, where so they may be met,
> Onely for honour and for high regard,
> Without respect of richesse or reward, ...
>
> (Book 3, 2, 7)

Thus, the female is reconstructed as a pseudo-male to make her acceptable within the context of *The Faerie Queene*, and this is symptomatic of the problems that Spenser faced while constructing a representation of a female monarchy. Furthermore, his ambiguous attitude towards idealized/anxiety-provoking female authority can be clearly seen in his inability to describe Gloriana as a female body. As body, Gloriana is conspicuous by her absence: as Spenser himself points out in the quotations I have made above, she exists in the form of names which are in themselves symbols, thus incorporating her into the male symbolic. In Bakhtinian terms, not only her lower stratum, but even her upper stratum is veiled from the male gaze. Kristeva's abject has been annihilated in Gloriana. In that sense, Una works as a reflection for her.

There should have been twelve books, but Spenser completed only six of them. He explained his "grand design" in an introductory letter addressed to his friend, Sir Walter Raleigh. Each book was to deal with the adventures of a single knight of the Faerie Queene's court, and each knight was to represent a single virtue (holiness, temperance, chastity, justice, etc.). The whole was to be united by the character of Prince Arthur[3] (that is, Arthur before he became king). Prince Arthur who seeks Gloriana appears in each book. He represents magnanimity or great-heartedness, the supreme virtue which binds together all the others. Arthur had been fully incorporated into Tudor monarchical propaganda by the late sixteenth century. Spenser imagines him on a quest for the Faerie Queene, whom he has seen in a dream vision:

[3] It is interesting that Prince Arthur is going to evolve into King Arthur, whose kingdom will be destroyed by the schism caused by his unfaithful wife.

From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,
To seeke her out with labour, and long tyne,
And neuer vow to rest, till her I find,
Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind.

(Book 1, 9, 15)

Though each adventure has its individual hero, the recurring appearances of Arthur serve as a unifying element for the poem as a whole. Richard Harland, in his *Literary Theory from Plato to Barthes*, argues that the poem revolves around the separate adventures of the knights. As such, it seems to lack Aristotelian unity of action. However, the poem still possessed "an unity of another sort ... resulting from the respect which a number of related actions have to one common purpose", and this "unity of design" grew naturally out of Spenser's subject-matter and the whole chivalric way of thinking (Harland, 1999: 53). Another character contributing to the unity of the poem is Gloriana, the Faerie Queene. Elizabeth is first the Faerie Queene, Glory, for which gentlemen should strive (here we can see the revival of courtly love, she playing the part of the lady and her knights owing her service). It is from her court and at her bidding that each of the heroes sets out on his particular adventure:

Upon a great adventure he was bound,
That greatest Gloriana to him gave,
That greatest Glorious Queene of *Faerie* lond,
To winne him worship, and her grace to have,
Which of all earthly things he most did crave;

(Book 1, 1, 3)

One of Spenser's primary concerns in *The Faerie Queene* is with the creation or "fashioning" of a gentleman through the medieval-styled adventure narrative. The hero of Book 1, the Red Cross Knight, personifies the virtue of holiness which the book is intended to celebrate. It must be remembered that throughout medieval and Renaissance literature, books were written on the "Christian warrior," signifying that every good Christian was to "gird on the armor of Christ" (Heale, 1999: 23) in the fight against sin. For Spenser then the term suggests righteousness.

Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*[4] is related to the education of a gentleman who undergoes a series of adventures in the form of a quest which is pre-eminently concerned with the Red Cross Knight (how his manliness is constructed or performed). It is only after bitter trials, encounters with deceit, ugliness, and violence that the Red Cross Knight attains his reward in honour, friendship, and love. Beset and tested by falsehood (Errour, Archimago, Duessa), pride (Lucifera, Orgoglio), sensuality (Duessa), and despondency (Despair), the Red Cross Knight rises to a glorious victory.

It is significant that throughout Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, the Red Cross Knight is depicted as a youthful and inexperienced knight, who must prove himself (Book 1, 1, 3). The only physical attribute we know of the Red Cross Knight is his youthfulness which is indicative of relative innocence. Like Gloriana's, his body does not seem to exist. As physical presence, we are only given his outer garments, particularly his armour. The interior of that armour appears to be empty, presenting us with a lack. This lack is only dissimulated by a string of moral attributes which form the backbone of the male system of order. However, the Red Cross Knight does not exist as a body. This similarity between the central male character of Book 1, the epitome of excellence that Una is, and Gloriana herself is indicative of the ambiguity and anxiety underlying the text in issues concerning the sexuality of idealised characters. He is aspiring to holiness; however, his virtue is untried, and he is prone to make serious mistakes before he achieves perfection. He is introduced as one who has never born arms: "Yet armes till that time did he never wield" (Book 1, 1, 1). The Knight is a newly baptized Christian, wearing for the first time the armour of Christ. The knight has a red cross[5] on a silver shield; the lady is leading a lamb, reminding the reader of Christ in the Bible. This is linked to St. George and his battle with the dragon to save the "damsel in distress." This trope is particularly

[4] In the Tudor period there developed the conception of a "gentleman", a civilized "all-rounder" or "universal man" (sometimes called "Renaissance man"). Spenser's **Faerie Queene** presents both the medieval and the Renaissance conceptions of knightly and chivalrous conduct. In this sense, the poem can be considered to be an example of the courtesy book.

[5] St. George's emblem is a red cross on a white ground (Christ wore it in the battle in heaven, as shown in illuminated manuscripts of Revelation, is also called "Right faithful true," which is the title of Christ in Revelation (19:11). The red and white symbolize the two aspects of the risen body, flesh and blood, bread and wine, and in Spenser they have a historical connection with the union of red and white roses in reigning head of the church and in the Tudor dynasty.

topical for my thesis. The fact that St George has to defeat the dragon (etymologically the word "dragon" signifies the serpent) and slay it with the phallus that his sword represents is a metaphor for the destruction of a matriarchal structure represented by the Mother Goddess and her symbiosis with the serpent. The damsel in distress has to be separated from the serpent and assimilated into the male order.

The Red Cross Knight has taken upon himself the quest, which to the medieval mind is the essential duty of all Christian men, to seek out and fight Satan. He is accompanied by Truth (Una).[6] The name "Una" signifies oneness and integrity, completely disassociating this idealised female figure from the chaotic nature of the female body, particularly the maternal, which comprises diversities and abjections such as menstruation and childbirth. Her oneness further disassociates her from the transformations inherent in the nature of femininity. The fact that she represents Truth reduces it to One, denies the relativity and ambiguity of reality, thereby creating an orderly, dependable, and secure "Truth" which complies with the requirements of the male order. Her lack of body further distances her from femaleness creating a distinct dichotomy between this emblem of idealised femininity and Duessa, whose name indicates multiplicity and lack of unity. Una, furthermore, is "the woman clothed with the sun" (Revelation 12:1) and Spenser frequently speaks of her "sunshyny face" (Book 1, 12, 23). The association between a femininity which conforms to male norms and the sun represented by Apollo is suggestive of how the female, connected to Dionysus, is forced into acquiescence to male symbolisms.

Una helps the Red Cross Knight by warning and counsel, but he is not impervious to the assaults of Falseness and Duplicity (Archimago and Duessa)[7], is separated from Una and succumbs, under the power of deception and subtle contrivings of Falseness, to a series of temptations: Sloth, which leads in the direction of lechery with Duessa, and which enfeebles him so that he falls an easy

[6] The contrasting figures of Una and Duessa invoke interpretation of the Woman Clothed with the Sun, the apocalyptic figure who flees into the wilderness under attack from the demonic dragon (Rev. 12), and the Whore of Baylon (Rev. 17). In the light of this argument we can say that Duessa, the licentious **femme fatale**, is reminiscent of the scriptual Whore of Babylon. In Revelations 17 it is written: "I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, ... having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls."

victim to Pride (Orgoglio); and then to Despair. But instructed in faith and holiness he is regenerated and comes to the land of Eden to fight the Devil. In the three days' struggle he is twice saved and renewed through the grace of God by the water of life and the balm of the tree of life, and is eventually betrothed to Truth.

Intrinsically linked to the "education" and dissemination of spiritual knowledge of the Red Cross Knight are the primary roles that **the women** play in Book 1. As Spenser explains in his Letter to Raleigh, "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (in Bayley, 1970: 39). While restoring the Knight to a "healthy" mental and physical state, Una and the women of the House of Holiness, fulfill the traditional roles assigned to them according to the patriarchal definitions of femininity. In doing so, they conform to the prescribed models of the ideal woman as obedient, meek and chaste and do not pose a threat to the male symbolic order. In many respects, these women accord with Laura Mulvey's contention that the male power is affirmed through the reduction of the woman to a passive, submissive object (Mulvey, 1998: pp. 586-587). The female must acquiesce in her role as helpmeet for the male, an idea which goes back to the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis, and never aspire to that of a competitor to the male. C. S. Lewis, on the other hand, who elaborates on the courtly love conventions in his *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, claims that "Functioning as muse or mistress, the blessed damsel was really no more than object, albeit an object of worship" (Lewis, 1936: 34). Highly stylized and abstract, in courtly love, the poet's or knight's service to the lady was often merely lip-service, even in literary works that praised her powers. For the most part, then, the woman herself granted no subjectivity, nor was she portrayed as engaging in the kinds of heroic deeds that redeemed her lover.

In the House of Holiness Spenser presents the recovery and regeneration of the Red Cross Knight in the traditional pattern of redemption from sin. Healing purification after sin is achieved through Penance, Remorse, Repentance and by the grace of heavenly Mercy. Most of the characters in this episode are given "Latin names" which are easy to recognize: Fidelia (Faith), Speranza (Hope), and Charissa (Charity). The chief theological virtues, such as, faith, hope, and charity, appear in

Canto 10 as allegorical statues with symbolic attributes. The Latin names of these female figures signify the concepts that are implicated in the institutionalised religion. As such, the function of these names is to confine women to the roles defined within the framework of male discourse which offers women no valid representations other than the ones created by men. Spenser's placement of the spiritual teachings offered by the women in the House of Holiness in a domestic rather than ecclesiastical setting indicates a gendered subtlety to his religious allegory. These female figures insistently declare their iconographical affiliations and generally display few distinguished characteristics apart from those connected with their allegorical "meanings." Fidelia, Speranza, and Charissa primarily serve to reinforce the picture of holiness being presented to the Red Cross Knight when Una brings him to the House of Holiness. These women act as speaking emblems, who give succor to "wretched soules" (Book 1, 10, 3) via biblical representations. Their sharply limited characterizations illustrate the process through which iconic women become de-sexed and disempowered. In this context, it can be argued that Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque as well as Kristeva's abject which base themselves on the idea of the body, particularly the female body, have been obliterated in the women of the House of Holiness because these women are all there to represent abstract virtues and being didactic significance rather than being women of flesh and blood. Hence, for the most part, they themselves are granted no subjectivity, and in this manner, they are incorporated into the male symbolic.

The Knight's youth is again stressed at the House of Holiness in contrast with the antiquity of Caelia and the "aged syre" who opens the gate (Book 1, 10, 5), the male given the guardianship of the Freudian interior. This image of youth in need of education is part of Spenser's creation of a suitable role for his "educating" women. Fidelia and the other women in the House of Holiness do not offer aid and education to the established, older figures such as Arthur and Artegall, nor do they attempt to cross the gender boundary to offer a martial education. These ideal portrayals of women must aquiesce in their invisible and passive roles. They are the driving force who should activate the male's power, but must not be active on their behalf. As their sole *raison d'être* lies in this act of helping the male, once they have fulfilled their mission, they must vanish out of the text. Dympna Callaghan while elaborating

the construction of women in the sixteenth-century, especially in tragedies, through absence, silence, and utterance, remarks that

> woman is marked by a very fundamental absence in the patriarchal scheme: lack both of a phallus and phallic power, a deficiency upon which all absences [the absence, silence together with the death of women] are predicated. The injunction to be silent is a crucial mechanism whereby this asymmetrical distribution of power between the sexes can be maintained.
>
> (Callaghan, 1989: 75)

Thus these women are used as objects for the Knight's transformation from an immature man into an experienced one. They are described and they act according to the accepted norms of female attributes as reserved for them by patriarchy. Una and the women of the House of Holiness demonstrate the appropriate silence, docility and obedient behaviour, the pivotal aspects of the ideal femininity that are generally expected of women in the patriarchal male ideology. As such, they are represented in male's approving and acknowledging attitude. Nevertheless, the representations of woman in those abstract qualities kill her into an image, an art object, and consequently she becomes robbed of both her flesh or sexuality. This indicates that the woman who is reduced to an image is easier to control than the real woman of flesh and blood.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the "ideal of contemplative purity" is always feminine while "the ideal of significant action is masculine" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 21). In Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* we see how Spenser's creations of the ideal females such as Una and the women of the House of Holiness give advice and consolation to the knight in order to save and make him develop into maturity. The idea of the ideal feminine is the patriarchally approved brand of femininity which advocates the qualities of obedience, submission, weakness and inferiority for women. And all these qualities manifest themselves in Una and the women of the House of Holiness. The opposite image of the ideal is the monstrous feminine which finds a body in the female figures of the monster Errour and the witch Duessa whose wiles threaten the destruction of the Knight. While a life of feminine submission, of "contemplative purity," is a life of silence, a life of female rebellion, of "significant action," on the other hand, is a life that must be silenced for the preservation of the patriarchal male order. Errour and Duessa are

both examples of woman as evil, destructive and deviant "other." They are portrayed as figures who threaten the order and safety established by the patriarchal system. As such, the representations of woman as terrifying and disruptive force are constructed to

> [serve] rhetorically to dynamise a social order, while her death marks the end of this period of change. Over her dead body, cultural norms are reconfirmed or secured ... because a sacrifice of the dangerous woman re-establishes an order that was momentarily suspended due to her presence.
>
> (Bronfen, 1992: 181)

The destruction of Errour and Duessa can therefore be read as the destruction of a threatening, disruptive element which, if left to endure, would lead to ultimate chaos. All that is evil, perverse and destructive is externalised and projected on the monstrous or grotesque women so that these negative qualities can be given a substantial body which can be hunted down and destroyed by the males in the poem: the Red Cross Knight and Prince Arthur. Errour is killed by the Red Cross Knight. Duessa goes off to "wander wayes unknowne," (Book 1, 8, 49) to reappear in her old state in Book 4; and again in Book 5, the same in name, but with quite a different set of qualities—and curiously transformed almost into a figure of pathos in Book 5.

Spenser's Una and the women in the House of Holiness restore the Red Cross Knight to a "healthy" mental and physical state with their counsels. By doing so, they also enable him to strip off what the patriarchal male ideology would think womanish and unmanly. In other words, the feminine and therefore shameful attitudes of the male should be purged. As far as the Red Cross Knight is concerned, the idea of passivity which can be conceptualised as feminine should be translated into a heroic male behaviour. When the Knight is tempted and hence deviates from the pursuit of chivalric honour into languid indolence and passivity and when he is too weakened to do battle or nearly falls victim to his enemies, for instance, the villain Despair, Una conducts him to the House of Holiness for a period of recuperation.

As she makes her slow way across the plain in the poem's first scene, leading her white lamb with the Red Cross Knight at her side, Una awakens archetypal images of the Virgin Mary on the road to Bethlehem and to Christ as the Lamb of

God. She is thus emblematic of "the precious, untainted feminine forever in need of protection" (Yarnall, 1994: 128):

> A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
> Upon a lowly *Asse* more white then snow,
> Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
> Under a *vele*, that wimpled was full low,
> And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
> As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
> And heavie sat upon her palfrey slow:
> Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
> And by her in line a *milke white lambe* she lad.
> (Book 1, 1, 4, [my italics])

The fact that Una rides an ass which is more white than snow alludes to her humility and her innocence. Thus Una adheres to the desired ideal of femininity, yet a de-personalised ideal that allows for no feminine characteristics. Una's whiteness is covered by a "blacke stole" and she is veiled. As such, she looks like a nun which is one of the ideal roles of the feminine prescribed by patriarchy. Her veil indicates how woman is perceived, namely, as a body in the first place, and an object of male desire. In this sense, she becomes the symbol of a strict gender division where the female body is subjected to the male gaze. That her face is covered with a veil, moreover, symbolizes the nonrepresentation of specifically female aspects, for this nonrepresentation entails the female exclusion from the public sphere and assures her silence. The covering of the face with a veil negates the idea of female attraction and seductiveness. Her appearance creates an image of saintly otherworldliness and thus removes the threat of too alluring a female body. Sara F. Matthews Grieco asserts that "White was the color associated with purity, chastity, and femininity. It was the color of the "female" heavenly body, the moon, as distinct from the more vibrant hues of the "masculine" sun" (Grieco, 1994: 62). In this respect, Una can also be associated with the virgin goddess, Diana, in that, the state of being a virgin is one of the principal patriarchal definitions of women which carries the underlying principle of the appropriation of the female body by the male. It is interesting that Una opens her face during her betrothal to the Knight who attains her as his reward after his bitter trials.

On their way to the dwelling of Una and her parents, the knight follows the instructions uttered by her in order to fight courageously. Upon seeing his being strangled by Errour's vile tail, Una provides directions saying "'Now now Sir knight, shew what ye bee, / Add faith unto your force, and be not faint: / Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee'" (Book 1, 1, 19). All these sentences that belong specifically to the world of male discourse are given a voice through a woman because she is in accord with the prescriptions of the feminine virtues defined by the patriarchal male order. At one point Errour winds her coils around the Red Cross Knight's body in a way that makes literal the archetypal threat of the female to the male: engulfment. But he manages to free himself and decapitate her, whereupon she spews forth "a streame of cole black bloud" (Book 1, 1, 20). This image of "black blood" is emblematic of the menstrual blood which can be pitted against Una's whiteness. As I have stated before, the female body is considered to be a site of disorder and corruption in male discourse. That is the reason why Una is described as an almost bodiless figure: she is one of the representatives of the idealized female within the patriarchal constructions reserved for women. Patriarchy is intent upon excluding all that tends to distort its integrity. With Una's encouragement and guidance, the Red Cross Knight who is almost overcome by the vile monster Errour's stench, is able to free himself from her "endlesse traine" (Book 1, 1, 18). Or when in the cave of Despair, the Red Cross Knight raises the dagger to kill himself because he is so moved by Despair's speech that he will be released from his miseries, Una again intercedes. She chides him for his unmanly behaviour and reminds him of the grace of heavenly mercy. At her good words, the Knight regains his senses and hastily departs.

Despite these ideal females there also exists a sense of anxiety stemming from the **sexualized**[8] female body. Nancy Chodorow draws attention to the masculine contempt for and devaluation of women which reflect men's dread of the female. According to Chodorow, in order to assert masculine superiority and ward off the dread and disgust they feel towards women, men create negative representations of femininity by externalizing and objectifying women: "It is not ...

[8] There are of course sinister or villainous male figures in the poem. However, the evil of those characters is never so specifically associated with sexuality.

that I dread her; it is that she herself is malignant, capable of any crime, a beast of prey, a vampire, a witch, insatiable in her desires ... the very personification of what is sinister."[9] One way to cope with female sexuality was by rigid social hierarchies and rules controlling women, such as the Jews and Greeks and Romans imposed; another was by inventing stories in which its fearful aspects could be contained or exorcized. The monstrously productive woman and the alluring temptress are two of the fantasies through which societies have come to terms with the threatening feminine for literally thousands of years. Both are expressed through the image of woman as a dangerous reptile.

Spenser's intention of fashioning an English gentleman or noble person, in effect a member of the ruling class and ideally one who embodies Englishness is fraught with anxieties posed by the "Other." The representations of the Queen (Gloriana, Belphoebe, Britomartis, etc.) and the "true" feminine is in stark contrast with the monstrous agency of the sexualized female body. The sources of anxiety inspired by the figure of the monstrous female is based upon the activity of her sexually accessible and transgressive female body. Spenser tends to indulge in extraordinary physical description for characters of blatant evil – notably Duessa. While he emphasises the radiance, beauty, and gloriousness of the good female characters, he uses evocative words and images in describing bad female characters to alert us, as it were, to their deceitful appearance of goodness or superficial attractiveness (Cavanagh, 1994: 54-56). Symbols of filthy materiality, committed only to their own private ends, these women are accidents of nature, deformities meant to repel, but in their very freakishness they possess unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts. Duessa and one of her confederates—Lucifera, Queen of the House of Pride, are even more dangerous than the monster Errour because they can create false appearances to hide their wicked natures. As such, they bear a resemblance to Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Duessa is de-formed below the waist. Her "neather parts" are revealed as "misshapen, monstrous" (Book 1, 2, 34). Similarly, Lucifera lives in what seems to be a lovely mansion, a cunningly constructed House

[9] Nancy Chodorow in her **The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender** (p. 183) cites Karen Horney, "The Dread of Women," **International Journal of Psycho-Analysis**, 1932, p. 13.

of Pride whose weak foundation and ruinous rear quarters are carefully concealed. Both women use their arts of deception to entrap and destroy men, and the secret, shameful ugliness of both is closely associated with their hidden genitals—that is, their sexuality. Duessa's body, particularly the parts of her body that indicate her femininity, reveals the loathsomeness hiding behind her beauty. A withered bosom, misplaced nipples, multiple breasts (a cynical disfigurment of ancient fertility goddess depictions): the witch's body is a perversion or parody of the maternal. Naked she is shown to be a filthy, wrinkled, scabby, and wholly loathsome hag. In the account of the exposure of Duessa, Spenser has created concentrated disgust. Spenser's portrayal of her is emotive, repulsive and employs the sense of touch and smell as well as of sight. Here comes Duessa's description:

> Such as she was, their eyes might her behold,
> That her misshaped parts did them appall,
> A loathly, wrinckled *hag*, ill favoured, old,
> Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told.
>
> 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 dugs, like bladders lacking wind,
> Hong downe, and filthy matter from them weld;
> Her wrizled skin as rough, as maple rind,
> So scabby was, that would have loathd all womankind.
>
> (Book 1, 8, 46-47, [my italics])

In the first place, the idea of the disgusting and frightening sight of the female body alludes to one of the notions in traditional Christian terminology where the body is given the idea of fallibility, proneness to sin and general disobedience of moral rules. Derived from Eve, woman serves as the symbol of evil, sin, deception and destruction which finds one of its embodiments in the dangerous sexuality of the witch. Eve's association with death and decay is based on her equation with the human body and sexuality. Rather than signifying the source of fertility, woman's body is seen as polluted, an agent and carrier of death. Since woman is used as an allegory for that inevitable de-composition of flesh which man fears yet must accept, the beauty of woman is considered to be a mask for decay and ugliness, and "the

sexual relation with her as a form of death rather than of conception" (Bronfen, 1992: 67).

In the second place, the corrupting and disgusting sight of the female body makes us recall Luce Irigaray's evaluation of the sight which is put on a pedestal in Western systems of representation. The age-old equation of the phallus with male authority accentuates the assumption that femininity stands for lack. Since woman has no penis, her sexual organs in the male visual system of representation and desire "represent the horror of having *nothing* to see" (Irigaray, 1993: 26, [my italics]). Her body indicates the concepts of "absence", "lack" or "hole" in the patriarchal male discourse. The argument that woman is lack and Spenser's depiction of Duessa in monstrous or grotesque images call attention to male castration anxieties. Freud associated man's fear of woman to his infantile belief that the mother is castrated. "Probably no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital" (Freud, 1988: 393). On the other hand, the male's horrified fascination with the female sexual organs was explained by Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann as a fear of returning to the preconscious chaos of the womb[10] in terms that evoke the repellent symbolism of the ancient storytellers:

> For the ego and the male, the female is synonymous with the unconscious and the nonego, hence with darkness, nothingness, the void, the bottomless pit ... *Mother, womb, the pit, and hell are all identical* ... every female ... threatens the ego with the danger of self-noughting, of self-loss – in other words, with death and castration.
>
> (Neumann, 1973: 157-158, [my italics])

With their disruptive anatomy and humours, their carnal lusts, and their Eve-like deceptiveness, women are inevitably more tempted by the devil than men. In the portrait of the disguised seductress Duessa, femaleness itself is described as an intrinsically debased and secondary condition. Spenser portrays Duessa so carefully and subtly that we can never forget that she is the evil emblem of Deceit. Instead of the description of ideal beauty embodied in Una, for instance, Spenser uses a detailed description to undermine the falsely beautiful hag because she does what the patriarch fears most: **disrupt** and **de-form** his patriarchal power. Shelia T.

[10] The Red Cross Knight battles with a serpent-woman, Errour. He enters the "darksome hole," (Book 1, 1, 14) the womb, he sees an ugly monster, half-woman, half-serpent whose massive tail fills her den. Here she feeds her offspring, each as ugly as herself. "Mother, womb, the pit, and hell" – Neumann's definition of the female finds its expression in Spenser's Errour. He first fights with the monster Errour and asserts his masculine image in his own as well as society's eyes.

Cavanagh cites from Gabriele Schwab who notes that the category of witches has the ability to represent both "the male fear of seductive women on the one hand, and of strong, independent women on the other" (Cavanagh, 1994: 46).[11] Duessa is described as a cunning serpent and she exercises that cunning in her own behalf. Thus assertiveness, aggressiveness—the characteristics that are always associated with a male life of "significant action"—are "monstrous" in women because they are "unfeminine" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 28). In male-dominated discourse women are seen as either wife or mother. Accordingly, when women attempt to undertake the roles assigned to men they are deemed as either monstrous or grotesque.

In Duessa, we also notice that women's external presentation hides internal reality, which male characters continually attempt to uncover, albeit with marginal success. Her power resides in her ability to mask her viciousness behind a convincing show of young, female beauty. Duessa successfully deludes the Knight into believing in her virtue, until she is stripped of her finery. As such, she belongs to that group of classical female figures that are invested with archaic female power, the secret of deadly charms which paralyze men. This power of Duessa links her to the heroine of John Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci"[12] in the sense that like Duessa, she also destroys men - kings, princes, warriors, all men of power - who are seen in the brief dream the knight has before awakening to his loneliness. The poem tells the story of a knight who, when the poem opens, is "alone and palely loitering" (2) and the knight explains why he is in such a situation. In his answer, the reader learns how he came to his state of anguish. The cause, as the title indicates, is a woman. He is seduced by "a fairy's child," (14) who sings elfin songs and feeds him on wild honey and manna and then abandons him to a longing that will wear out his life. The woman has no name and in this sense, La Belle Dame can be interpreted as a version of the figure of Lilith. Keats makes this connection himself in his another poem *Lamia* where he describes Lamia/Lilith as "the cruel lady, without any show /

[11] Shelia T. Cavanagh quotes Gabriele Schwab, "Seduced by Witches: Nathaniel Hawthorne's **The Scarlet Letter** in the Context of New England Witchcraft Fictions," **Seduction and Theory: Readings of Gender, Representation, and Rhetoric**, Ed. Dainne Hunter, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989, (173) 170-91.

[12] John Keats "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and *Lamia*, **The Norton Anthology of English Literature**, Edited by M. H. Abrams and **et**. **al**., Vol. 2, fifth edition, New York, London: W. W.

Of sorrow," (*Lamia*, lines 290-291) a phrase almost identical to the translation of this poem's title "The Beautiful Lady Without Pity."

The scene runs in parallel with the state the knight finds himself in. He is in a state of pale weakness but nature is also dying Since a knight is generally held to be a symbol of power and courage, the reader is alerted that something or someone quite powerful must be at work here. That powerful someone turns out to be "La Belle Dame." After meeting with the knight, she allows him to temporarily make her his object of affection. Quite coyly, she returns this affection with her looks of love and "sweet moan" (19, 20). However, the consequences for the knight are disastrous. Caught in the snare of her beauty and wiles, the knight is blinded to everything other than La Belle Dame who lulls him into a sleep from which he will soon awake to find that she is gone, forever (32). Completely devastated by the loss of his "love," the knight is left to wander the "cold hill's side," alone, for the rest of his life (44). Written centuries after *The Faerie Queene*, the poem illustrates how the love of a woman as quintessentially "perfect" and beautiful as Lilith/Lamia, or the mysterious **femme fatale** known as "La Belle Dame" can lead to one's destruction and death.

Costumed as the beautiful and attractive Fidessa or the angelic Una, Duessa launches her attack on the males and enslaves them. Beauty is one of the attributes of femininity which is determined by patriarchal authority. If a woman loses her beauty which is one of her assets together with youth and purity, she ceases being an object of male desire: she becomes "sexless." As long as she remains beautiful, the males Duessa meets are easily deceived and have a relationship with her. However, when her original physical appearance (she is an old ugly hag) is revealed to the males, she becomes an object of disgust and fear because her transformation from a beautiful young woman into an old hag is symbolic of the passage from a reproductive positive phase into sterility and loss of femininity, a condition exemplified in the fairy tale of "Snow White" where the wicked queen continually looks into the mirror in order to reassure herself of her unchanging beauty. Nevertheless, she is informed by the mirror of the ravages of time and of the fact that a younger woman has now replaced her, thereby changing her from a narcissistic

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Norton&Company, 1986, pp. 815-817 and pp. 826-844. In parantheses, the line numbers of the poem are given.

queen to a destructive witch. Duessa is the image of the evil and destructive woman in male discourse. In Spenser's words hers is a "forged beauty" (Book 1, 2, 36) and later, a "borrowed beautie" (Book 1, 2, 39). Duessa hides her true self to be an approved female of patriarchy.

Duessa's transformation from an old hag into a beautiful young woman, moreover, reminds one of the witch Chaucer's Wife of Bath presents us with in her tale. The tale relates how a knight who is required, in order to avoid execution, to answer correctly within twelvemonth the question, what do women love most, is told the right answer—"sovereignty"—by a foul old witch on condition that he marries her:

> Wommen desyren to have *sovereyntee*
> As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
> And for to been in *maistrie* him above.[13]
>
> (182-184, [my italics])

The knight reluctantly complies and is rewarded for giving up his authority to her when she transforms herself into a beautiful young woman. The threat of the witch lurks behind the story and the portrayal of the witch that bases itself on the defects of women is opposed to all of the expectations of the ideology of the male-oriented society which is intent upon keeping woman in her place through submission and docility. The fact that the witch takes the form of an innocent, passive woman—hence gaining a chance to secure a place in society—can be considered to be the signifier for the desired one by patriarchal institutions. The powerful, self-assertive woman, however, comes to represent the threatening otherness of the body, of nature, of sexuality.

As a matter of fact, Duessa's ability to assume different shapes which is a satanic activity in essence points to her creation which is primarily considered to be a male attribute in a culture where creativity is defined purely in male terms. It is not for Duessa and for women in general, to strive to cross the boundaries dictated by patriarchy. Moreover, to be a witch is to establish a patriarchally defined link between creativity and monstrosity. In her very freakishness Duessa possesses unhealthy energy, powerful and dangerous art. With these characteristics, she comes

[13] **Chaucer: Complete Works**, Edited by Walter W. Skeat, London: Oxford University Press, 1976. p. 578.

to stand for the male fear of women and, specifically, male scorn of female autonomy and creativity. Xavière Gauthier comments on the abilities of the witch and the ultimate fear the witch incarnates in men:

> Why witches? *Because witches sing* [...]. In reality, they croon lullabies, they howl, they grasp, they babble, they shout, they sigh. [...]
>
> Why witches? *Because witches are alive.* Because they are in direct contact with the life of their own bodies and bodies of others, with the life force itself. [...]
>
> Why witches? *Because witches are rapturous* [...]. Their pleasure is so violent, so transgressive, so open, so fatal, that men have not yet recovered.
>
> (Gauthier, 1981: 199)

In male discourse, women who resist being forced into the submissive silences of domesticity have almost always been seen as monstrous and grotesque objects—Gorgons, Sirens, Scyllas, serpent-Lamias. According to Kristeva, the association of woman with the demonic, the witch, is due to the repression of a female sexuality that cannot reach articulation in the symbolic register of language. As Kristeva remarks,

> A woman is trapped within the frontiers of her body and even of her species, and consequently always feels *exiled* both by the general clichés that make up a common consensus and by the very powers of generalization intrinsic to language. This female exile in relation to the General and to Meaning is such that a woman is always singular, to the point where she comes to represent the singularity of the singular – the fragmentation, the drive, the unnameable. This is why philosophy has always placed her on the side of that singularity – the fragmentation prior to name or to meaning which one calls the Daemon – **she is demonic, a witch.**
>
> (in Moi, 1986: 296)

Indeed, the relationship between Duessa and the men such as the Red Cross Knight and Fraudubio,[14] takes the form of the battle between the sexes for power.

[14] In Book 1, Canto 2, the Red Cross Knight takes shelter in the shade of two trees and wants to weave a garland for the damsel Fidessa. To do so, he breaks a branch from one of the trees. Out of the broken branch spurts blood. The tree groans, and then speaks in a human voice. The speaker, Fraudubio, tells his story—how as a young knight traveling with his beloved, Fraelissa, he fought and defeated another knight and won that knight's lady as a prize. The lady, Duessa, a witch disguised as a fair damsel, first turned Fraelissa into a tree to end their rivalry for Fraudubio's affections. Spenser shows the devilish inventiveness of Duessa, who makes the beautiful Fraelissa appear foul to Fraudubio in order to gain him herself. But on a special day when witches have to do penance, Fraudubio spies Duessa in her true form as she is bathing in a stream, and she appears a loathsome hag. Before Fraudubio can escape from her she smears him with oinments and changes him into a tree. The Red Cross Knight fails to realize that his fair-seeming companion is that witch. At the revelation of Fraudubio, Duessa pretends to be overcome and faints. When Red Cross has revived her with kisses, they leave the bewitched trees.

They become castrated by her attitudes towards them and their manhood is being injured: she **de-constructs** the patriarch, strips him naked, in order to show that he is actually an insecure and anxiety-ridden male. The power positions are reversed and it is now woman who plays the inquisitor and executioner, while the male is reduced to an immobilized, ineffectual person who can only murmur and seeks to efface to this overpowering woman.

Besides the male dread of castration which ultimately results in his producing and portraying the monstrous female (here in the figure of Duessa), Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* introduces another female, namely Errour whose body represents a fearful and threatening form of sexuality. Because she is a mother she signifies the horror of female maternal sexuality and female reproductive capacity which culminates in the patriarchal fear of that female source of life and energy. Errour is half woman, half serpent, in Spenser's own words, "most lothsome, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine" (Book 1, 1, 14). A similar description presents the monster Echidna, mother of the Blatant Beast (Book 6, 6, 12), who exemplifies the recurrent combination of the female and maternal with the monstrous:

> Echidna is a Monster direfull dred,
> Whom Gods doe hate, and heauens abhor to see;
> So hideous is her shape, so huge her hed,
> That euen the hellish fiends affrighted bee
> At sight therof, and from her presence flee:
> Yet did her face and former parts professe
> A faire young Mayden, full of comely glee;
> But all her hinder parts did plaine expresse
> A monstrous Dragon, ful of fearefull vglinesse.
> (Book 6, 6, 10)

The avatar of Errour is Sin in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "Woman to the waist, and fair,/ But ended foul in many a scaly fold / Voluminous and vast, A Serpent arm'd / With mortal sting" (*Paradise Lost*, Book 2, 650-653). Unlike Errour, Sin's face and her female body are beautiful, but her nether parts are similarly "foul", "voluminous and vast". Sin's babies are a pack of barking hell hounds, who retreat back into her womb when anything disturbs them. Errour, on the other hand, breeds in a dark den where her young suck on her poisonous dugs or creep back into her mouth at the sight of hated light. Errour and Sin whose bodies give birth to monsters can be connected to Lilith and the Greek Lamia in the sense that these are the women

who combine sexuality with prodigious motherhood. Therefore, they come to represent the images of woman who are enchantresses and dangerous.

In Duessa we have seen how female non-conformist attitude is associated by society with what its ideology condemns as evil and undesirable. This is indicative of the dehumanization of the rebellious woman and the attack on her dignity and individuality which is punished with severe disapproval expressed in an abusive language with a pack of monstrous and grotesque images related to her femininity. In Errour and Sin, on the other hand, the primary source of generative and procreative powers of the female are represented as monstrous or abject because the image functions as the reason of male abhorrence for, and dread of, sexuality and reproduction. The reproductive functions of woman link her to the animal world and to the great cycle of birth, decay and death. Because of her associations with natural events such as sex, birth and death women are also seen as grotesque. Man is aware of his links to nature which, in return, reminds man of his mortality and of the precariousness of the symbolic order. And in order for the body to represent the symbolic order "[it] must bear no trace of its debt to nature: it must be clean and proper in order to be fully symbolic" (Kristeva, 1982: 102). The abject threatens life; it must be "radically excluded" (**Ibid**., p. 2) from the place of the living subject to guarantee that the subject take up his/her proper place in relation to the symbolic order which is threatened by woman's reproductive functions that place her on the side of nature. In this way woman is linked to the abject through her body. In Kristeva's view, woman is related to polluting objects which in turn give woman a special relationship to the abject. Blood, bodily wastes, decay and death and corporeal alteration are all the forms of abjection which are also central to the production of the monstrous-feminine because they also point to our culturally/socially constructed notions of the terrifying.

In Spenser's depiction of Una, Duessa, Errour, we can see the emphasis on women's role as examples of chastity and sexuality in general. Una is one version of Elizabeth. They are marked by the Neoplatonic concept of "inward" beauty as opposed to that which is merely "external". We have in those women either the centrality or the total alienation of female sexuality. According to the patriarchal male discourse, to be female is to be defined entirely in relation to the role of

"spiritual" helpmate, a role that does take its shape and meaning from a sexuality of which she is not the subject but the object. In Duessa, what Spenser aims to demonstrate is that sexuality is a dangerous thing because he delineates her to show in bodily images how women can be dangerous and chaotic, and he regards the feminine principle as a dangerous force to be tamed or subdued.

Spenser establishes chastity as the basis of the feminine, and woman's capacity for procreation as its most material manifestation. In general terms Spenser's female characters are praised for fulfilling the roles of supportive partner or chaste virgin and in the House of Holiness where all of the inhabitants are female, Spenser commends and celebrates women in terms of their potential marital and motherly gifts. While healing the Red Cross Knight physically and spiritually these women represent self-restraint, temperance and controlled behaviour. By these characteristics in his mind which he attributes to women, Spenser creates a role for the sixteenth-century woman as an active and significant person in directing others towards moderation and self-regulation. Moreover, these women are also engaged in their self-regulation, which is indicative of the role Elizabeth chose for herself. In taking on the title of Supreme Governor, rather than Head of the English Church, she sought to navigate a middle course between the conservatives, moderates and radicals. Therefore, Spenser's insistence on the governing and guiding role of his women both reflects Elizabeth's chosen role as Supreme Governor of the English Church, and provides a site from which the poet is able to support and praise that choice.

Similar to Una, the women of the House of Holiness contribute to the spiritual growth of the Red Cross Knight. They are all defined by their names and empowered by the poet in their respective roles. Caelia (Heavenly Grace) is introduced as a "matrone grave and hore," who governs her house of holiness, "Renowned throughout the world for sacred lore" (Book 1, 10, 3). This representative of wisdom and good governance is established as a potential image for the queen herself. Spenser is careful in drawing attention to the parallels between the Queen, who idealised herself as the mother of her nation and Church, and the venerable mother who guides and oversees the most holy setting in the poem:

There was an auntient house not farre away,
Renowned throughout the world for sacred lore,
And pure unspotted life: so well they say
It governd was, and guided evermore,
Through wisdome of a matrone grave and hore;
Whose only joy was to relieve the needes
Of wretched soules, and helpe the helpless pore:
All night she spent in bidding of her bedes,
And all the day in doing good and godly deedes.

(**Ibid**.)

Unlike Errour and Duessa, the women of the House of Holiness are not presented by their physical aspects. Their characterizations are given within the confines of their roles as succouring "wretched soules" (Book 1, 10, 3). Although both Fidelia and Speranza are described as betrothed, they remain perpetual virgins, with the allegory suggesting that their marriage may not be solemnized on earth: "Though spousd, yet wanting wedlocks solemnize" (Book 1, 10, 4). Instead, they are caught betwen desire and fulfillment, in a state of deferred sexuality. Shelia T. Cavanagh states that "Within this sexual no-man and no-woman's land, they are removed from the sexual realm, since they are chastely promised, though not wed" (Cavanagh, 1994: 32). Hence, their presence is less likely to pose a sexual threat to the knight who visits them seeking enlightenment. Or when Charissa drags herself from childbed to greet the visitors, we perceive that she embodies a fertility which is distanced from sexuality. Although "her necke and breasts were euer open bare" (Book 1, 10, 30), this scene merely facilitates her nurturing: "That ay thereof her babes might sucke their fill" (**Ibid**.), thereby deflecting improper responses to her "wondrous beauty." Her sexuality does not exist beyond her reproductive potential and Spenser foregrounds Charissa's maternal aspect: the image of the woman devoid of sexual desire, the de-sexualized mother of masculine mythology.

Spenser introduces Fidelia as the eldest and therefore most senior of three spiritual sisters before ascribing to her images traditionally associated with the sun and Christ:

Of which the eldest, that Fidelia hight,
Like sunny beames threw from her Christall face,
That could have dazd the rash beholders sight,
And round about her head did shine like heavens light.

(Book 1, 10, 12)

The poet not only indicates her lightness and brightness with the adjective "Christall," but also his capitalisation of the word alludes to Christ himself, both in name and in nature. The analogy drawn between Fidelia and Christ illustrates how the female is defined within the confines of patriarchal male discourse which offers women no valid representations other than the ones constructed by men and all these representations tie the female to the male. Spenser then continues the creation of Fidelia as Faith and her connection with the sun / son of God in the use of words such as "sunny beames," "dazd" and "shine," and in the development of her physical radiance—she is perceived to be spreading beams from her face. The description of her halo denotes both the sun and Christ. Fidelia has a particular role to play for the Red Cross Knight. She takes him to her schoolroom and instructs him in "her sacred Booke" (Book 1, 10, 19) namely the Scripture, and "celestiall discipline"(Book 1, 10, 18). In the following lines, the poet is praising Fidelia's skill as heavenly, divine, celestial, and thus spiritual:

> She graunted, and that knight so much agraste,
> That she him taught celestiall discipline,
> And opened his dull eyes, that light mote in them shine.
>
> ...
>
> And that sacred Booke, with bloud ywrit,
> That none could read, except she did them teach,
> She unto him disclosed every whit,
> And heavenly documents thereout did preach,
> That weaker wit of man could never reach,
> Of God, of grace, of justice, of free will,
> That wonder was to hear her goodly speach:
> For she was able with her words to kill,
> And raise againe to life the hart, that she did thrill.
>
> (Book 1, 10, 18-19)

Spenser associates this female figure with the gift of grace when he states that she "agraste" the Red Cross Knight, or favoured him with grace. From this point onwards grace is the theme of the episode and faith and grace are inextricably linked. Spenser's vocabulary emphasises the spiritual nature of the "lesson": "heavenly learning," "words divine," "agraste," and "celestiall discipline."

Una too is depicted as a symbolic representative of the sun with all its christian echoes. In the episode in which she removes the black veil which has

hidden her brightness since her introduction to the narrative, Spenser compares her to the "morning starre" of the East, the "dawning day" and the "long wishèd light" (Book 1, 12, 21), the sun imagery conveying a sense of her brightness, nobility and divinity. Her heavenly nature, previously indicated by her whiteness, is now labelled a "heavenly beautie" by Spenser (Book 1, 12, 23). In the next stanza the poet continues his association of Una with the sun, drawing the reader's attention to the connection between the images of her brightness and her heavenly nature:

> The blazing brightness of her beauties beame,
> And glorious light of her sunshyny face
> To tell, were as to strive against the streame.
> My ragged rimes are all too rude and bace,
> Her heavenly lineaments for to enchace.
> Ne wonder; for her own deare loved knight,
> All were she dayly with himselfe in place,
> Did wonder much at her celestiall sight:
> Oft he had seene her faire, but never so faire dight.
>
> (Book 1, 12, 23)

The first line focuses the reader's sight upon Una's brightness, while the final word reintroduces the motifs of sunshine and light, which are enhanced in the next line, and contrasted with the words "rude and bace." The poet then completes this description in the mention of Una's "dayly" presence with the knight. Finally, with the description of her "heavenly lineaments" Spenser combines the elements of praise of lineage and physical features.

The knight passes now into the care of Charissa, with whom his spiritual education includes the virtue of charity or Christian love (Book 1, 10, 33). Spenser continues the imagery of schooling in his description of Una's request that Charissa "schoole her knight" in "her vertuous rules" (Book 1, 10, 32), an echo of the request made to Fidelia (Book 1, 10, 18). Charissa delights in her task and Spenser begins the stanza with an alliterative play upon "joyous" and "just" which lightens the atmosphere after the sober and tense portrayal of the knight's penance. Indeed, "joyous" is the theme adjective for Charissa, who rejoices in her children (Book 1, 10, 31), themselves a "happie brood" (which are in stark contrast to Errour's monstrous offspring that live in a dark den) (Book 1, 10, 32), and exhibits friendship and cheerfulness to her guests:

She was right joyous of her just request,
And taking by the hand that Faeries sonne,
Gan him instruct in every good behest,
Of love, and righteousnesse, and well to donne
And wrath, and hatred warely to shonne,
That drew on men Gods hatred, and his wrath,
And many soules in dolours had fordonne:
In which when him she well instructed hath,
From thence to heaven she teacheth him the ready path.

(Book 1, 10, 33)

Charissa teaches Christian love and charity, as her name suggests. Spenser is careful to distinguish between this love and the lustful nature of earthly love, emphasizing the chaste nature of Charissa and stating openly her loathing of "Cupids wanton snare" (Book 1, 10, 30). As the representative of such love she is the antithesis of the hatred and wrath she warns the knight against. Spenser stresses her message by juxtaposing the opposing virtues and vices in the stanza. His particular listing of "love" and "righteousnesse" and "well to donne" indicates their relative importance, while his addition of wrath and hatred to the end of the list provides a shocking contrast which is relieved by the qualifying phrase "warely to shonne" at the end of the line. Wrath and hatred as vices are themselves then juxtaposed with the divine hatred and wrath they incur. Finally, the poet contrasts Charissa's joy with the "dolours" or sorrows of those who do not heed her lessons.

The Red Cross Knight's spiritual education is then continued under the instructions of Mercie:

During which time, in every good behest
And godly worke of Almes and charitee
She him instructed with great industree;
Shortly therein so perfect he became,
That from the first unto the last degree,
His mortall life he learned had to frame
In holy righteousnesse, without rebuke or blame.

(Book 1, 10, 45)

In contrast to the purely intellectual education provided by Fidelia, both Charissa and Mercie teach the knight how to express his faith through good works. As teachers of active displays of faith, both Charissa and Mercie are described as having a more physical contact with the Red Cross Knight than Fidelia. Both characters take him by the hand to lead him on the path to righteousness (Book 1, 10, 33, 35). Their

education of the knight is also portrayed as a physical journey. They walk with him towards the mountain of the hermit Contemplation.

Following Mercie's lesson about the value of inward faith and salvation the knight is described as "perfect," (Book 1, 10, 45). Spenser then qualifies this statement with the comment that the Red Cross Knight's life is now "without rebuke or blame," summarizing the result of the education he has received in the House of Holiness and making a direct statement of the knight's role as model for emulation. The two descriptions of the knight as both righteous and without blame enhances his worth. The description of him as righteous echoes his earlier lessons in "righteousnesse" from Charissa (Book 1, 10, 33), as well as Spenser's introduction of Mercie as the character who will teach him how to save his "righteous soule" (Book 1, 10, 34). The poet uses the infinitive "to frame" in the previous line in connection with the knight's blameless life, indicating his development of this character as a demonstrative or pictorial representative of virtue. The words "frame" and "blame" draw the two ideas together, while the placement of "blame" as the ultimate word in the stanza indicates its importance as the theme of the stanza.

At the conclusion of his spiritual education in the House of Holiness, the Red Cross Knight is taken to meet an aged holy man namely Contemplation. He reinforces the lessons given to the knight and provides him with a view of the reward available to all who are saved—the New Jerusalem (Book 1, 10, 55-58). Contemplation leads him up to a mountain and grants him a distant vision of the New Jerusalem, telling him that he will one day enter it as St. George, the patron saint of England:

> Then seeke this path, that I to thee presage,
> Which after all to heaven shall thee send;
> Then peaceably thy painefull pilgrimage
> To yonder same *Jerusalem* do bend,
> Where is for thee ordaind a blessed end:
> For thou emongst those Saints, whom thou doest see,
> Shalt be a Saint, and thine owne nations frend
> And Patrone: thou Saint *George* shalt called bee,
> Saint *George* of mery England, the signe of victoree.
>
> (Book 1, 10, 61)

All those virtues, understanding, and a vision of future glory are all woven into the scheme of the knight's regeneration. The Knight's confrontation with Contemplation

is of primal significance for his final step into a physical and mental restoration. Una and the women of the House of Holiness prepare the Knight to the ultimate lesson which is given to the authority of Contemplation who, unlike the representatives of the other lessons given to the Knight, is a male. For Aristotle the notion of contemplation is the highest of all the virtues. Aristotle beleives that women are associated with the passive matter and it is men who endow matter with form. Thus women are excluded from the ability of leading a contemplative life (Aristotle, 1989: 263). In his portrayal of Contemplation, Spenser alludes to the temptation of Christ by Satan in the wilderness which is narrated in Luke: 4, 1-13 and Matthew: 4, 1-13 in the New Testament. In these biblical narratives, Satan first suggests that Christ should prove his divine character by turning stones around him into bread. Christ, seeing through his guile, sternly replies. Satan then tells him to throw himself down the temple because if he is the Son of God, he will be protected by God's angels. Lastly, he takes Christ to a high mountain and shows him the kingdoms of the world which he offers to Christ if Christ falls down and does him homage. Christ refuses to do so saying that man should worship God alone. The third of these trials which echoes the encounter between The Red Cross Knight and Contempation on a high mountain can be regarded as the mirror image of the biblical story with a difference that reflects itself in the annihilation of Satan and the reversal of his action in Spenser's treatment of the original story.

In his descriptions of educating women in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser seeks to create a role for women in the spiritual healing of a knight. To do so he draws upon imagery from both the religious and chivalric traditions. He also attempts to commend the role chosen by Elizabeth as Supreme Governor of the Church by giving power to his female educators as governors of themselves and spiritual guides to those around them. Their "wise handling and faire governance," restore the knight to wholeness and "a better will," giving him the power to pursue his task as the saviour of Una and her parents.

Yet upon closer examination one finds that Spenser seems to be struggling to depict the "complex reality of woman" (Berger, 1998: 92). The poet does not simply "idealize women or the feminine viewpoint" as he could easily do by means of characters like Una, but instead he attempts to "revise and complicate the traditional

male view"(**Ibid**.) of women. He endeavours to show various female characters, in both powerful and weak roles, and also to emphasise the importance of women in his society. Despite his intentions to give a fair presentation, however, it is still obvious that Spenser was influenced by a society with a culture "whose images of woman and love, and whose institutions affecting women and love, were products of the male imagination" (**Ibid**., p. 91). As related to this view, it can be stated that the poet reveals his anxieties about women and their power.

While the female-shaped monster Errour and the witch Duessa take men to destruction and cause them to lose their strength, Una and the women of the House of Holiness who are represented as pure and extremely vulnerable creatures play an important role in enabling the Knight to gain his power back and thereby reassuring his strength and primacy. Duessa is displayed as even more dangerous than Errour because she is able to devise false appearances to hide her evil nature. As such, she reminds us of Satan in *Paradise Lost* who is at one point seen as a "squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve", where he is attempting to influence her unconscious and raise "distempered, discontented thoughts, / Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires / Blown up with high conceits engendering pride" (*Paradise Lost*, Book 4, 800, 807-809). For the seduction of Eve, Satan also takes the form of the serpent. On the other hand, if the sorceress Circe turns men into swine, Duessa uses her female powers to turn men into dependent and ineffectual creatures thereby making them lose their masculine power and primacy. This is suggestive of how the power positions of man and woman are inverted. The same can be said for Eve and Satan who both undermine the hierarchy established by God the Father. Una and the women of the House of Holiness comply with the dimensions culturally conceived as desirable in a woman and they gain appreciation by confirming to the cultural formations that are shown to turn them into passive and inferior beings. They, infact, are destined to the role of the Virgin Mother who restores suffering men to life. In doing so, they pose no threat to the male ego. With their passivity they become the male object of desire because they represent an apt mirror where men can see their ideal image of masculinity reflected back to them (Una, for example, endures her suffering patiently and forgives the Knight's disloyalty). This underscores the fact that the woman who complies with the male constructs of femininity will never

endanger male power and authority. When the Book ends the Red Cross Knight is restored to his role as the knight in shining armour who comes to the rescue of the "damsel in distress."

In Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, in order to show the threat of female self-assertiveness and non-conformity, the poet tries to delineate his "awe-inspiring" female characters by bringing them down to the level of the body in a series of what Bakhtin years later would call carnivalesque debasements. In their representations which are fundamentally based on their physical appearance, both Errour's and Duessa's bodies can be called grotesque. The heroines such as Una and the women of the House of Holiness, on the other hand, are pitted against the monster Errour and the sinister witch, the dissembling seductress, appropriately named Duessa, whose superficially beautiful appearance cracks open in order to reveal the horror of "her nether parts, the shame of all her kind" as well as, "at her rompe," a "foxes taile, with dong all fowly dight" (Book 1, 8, 48). The carnivalesque display of the bodies of those women (Errour and Duessa), moreover, reminds us quite clearly of the immense appeal of the abject which is constructed by the paternal symbolic as a rebellion of filthy, lustful, carnal, female flesh which should be rejected because it comes to represent our socially formed ideas of the horrific. The sense of horror emerges from the fact that woman has broken with her proper feminine role – she has "made a spectacle of herself" – put her **unsocialized** body on display. And to make matters worse, they have done all of this before **the eyes of the males**.

CHAPTER V

The Stuarts

> From 1649 to 1660 England was a republic. In some ways this was a revolutionary period indeed. Other kings had been brutally murdered, but none had previously been **legally murdered**. Monarchy was abolished, along with the House of Lords and the Anglican Church.
>
> (Morrill, 1988: 372-373)

Although John Morrill expresses the argument above from a twentieth-century perspective, his use of the two contradictory words together – the King's being "**legally murdered**" – calls attention to how the execution of Charles I in 1649, has not been digested yet in English history because the cult of the Stuart monarchy was supported by a hierarchical order which configured the king's absolute authority in patriarchal terms. In this light, it should be emphasized that while a sense of obligation of obedience to the absolute king as the father of his people was deliberately required, the English people, however, tried their monarch – who was the sovereign of not only the English but also the Irish and the Scots – for his failures, found him guilty and killed him. In doing so, they committed not only an act of regicide but also an act of national patricide: the father of his people had been publicly murdered.

Lawrence Stone, on the other hand, in his *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, while dwelling upon the idea of the reinforcement of patriarchy in the seventeenth-century, establishes an analogy between the subordination of the family to its head and that of subjects to the sovereign. In order to buttress his argument, Stone gives an example from a speech delivered by James I in 1609. Due to Henry VIII's Protestant Reformation, which objected to papal authority, the king of England had assumed the supreme headship of the English Church and thus governed both state and church: this was true for the Stuart kings James I and his son Charles I whose absolutist power was reinforced by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. As

James I put it, "No bishops, no king, no nobility" (Stone, 1990: 109).[1] The King proclaims the logic of absolute monarchy when he informs his subjects that "The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth", one of his arguments being that "Kings are compared to fathers in families: for a King is truly **parens patriae**, the politic father of his people" (**Ibid**., pp. 109-110), just as Adam himself had been both the first father and first king to whom God had granted an unlimited monarchy. His son, Charles I, also fully agreed, observing that in the kingdom, "religion is the only firm foundation of all power" (Hill and Dell, 1969: 178, 173).

The absolutist assumption behind Stuart power was further reinforced by the affinity between God and the king who takes over the function of God on earth. According to James I again, "Kings are justly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of Divine power upon earth ... if you will consider the Attributes of God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a King" (as quoted by Loewenstein, 49). From James I's perspective, then, regal power comes directly and solely from God: the king was thus an anointed, semi-divine figure who ruled by divine right. David Loewenstein, in his essay "Politics and Religion", claims that James I's views about the relationship between God and the King were also supported by numerous biblical texts like 1 Samuel 8:9-20[2] or Psalm 72:1.[3] Great power was concentrated in this patriarchal head of the state, an authority to be obeyed and never to be resisted actively by his subjects. With the execution of Charles I, however, the monarchical order, with its authoritarian hierarchy and patriarchal values, was shattered. On the other hand, the fact that the king is the representative of God on earth was challenged. Regicide was more than judicial murder: it was a combination of every blasphemy, heresy and sacrilege against a man who was the King, the father of English people, and the representative of God.

It can be seen that not only James I but also his son Charles I magnified royal power so that the king was above the restraint of human law and Parliament, limited

[1] Lawrence Stone quotes from G. J. Schochet's "James I" in **Patriarchalism in Political Thought**, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975, p. 529.
[2] 1 Samuel 8:9-20: "The people refused to listen to Samuel; 'No,' they said, 'we will have a king over us; then we shall be like other nations, with a king to govern us, to lead us out to war and fight our battles.'"
[3] Psalms 72:1 says, "O God, endow the king with thy own justice, / and give thy righteousness to a king's son."

only by the laws of God: he alone in the kingdom possessed political power (Sommerville, 1986: 35-36). It is mainly because of this struggle between the monarchy and Parliament that England witnessed a civil war in the 1640s. As Derek Hirst argues persuasively,

> The history of England in Stuart times is the story of a struggle between the Kings and the Parliaments of the period. In the middle of the century this struggle developed into open warfare, and a King was beheaded, but the contest had begun many years before the actual outbreak of war, and it did not end even when Charles I was executed. There were many issues upon which the King and Parliament quarreled, but the real cause of the struggle is not to be found merely by considering these points. It was a struggle for supremacy.
>
> (Hirst, 1986: 165)

As God's representative on earth, the Stuart monarch thus had power over Parliament – which he could summon as he wished – and over the ecclesiastical order. Unfortunately, what those Stuart kings ignored was that, however absolute the king might be in the abstract, in the actual situation in which he found himself, he had to accept that he could only make law and raise taxation in Parliament, and that every one of his actions as king was subject to judicial review. His prerogative, derived though it was from God, was enforceable only under the law. Given the patriarchal emphasis on obedience to political authority in the earlier seventeenth century, it seemed highly unlikely that before 1640 a man by the name of Oliver Cromwell who claimed to be in tune with the will of God, might emerge and would altogether disregard the "ancient rights" of kings and be courageous enough, in Marvell's words, to "cast the kingdoms old / Into another mould" (lines 38, 35-36).[4]

Taking into consideration the fact that England around 1600 was caught up in a trend toward the growth of centralized royal authority characteristic of all Western Europe, Joseph Rykwert interpretes the act of King killing as an event after which enduring barriers were erected against royal absolutism; and in his evaluation of the event it is easy to discern that not only in England but also in Europe royal absolutism proved to be unstable:

[4] Andrew Marvell, "A Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland", **The Oxford Anthology of English Literature**, Vol. 1, Eds. Kermode and **et. al**., New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 1162-1165.

> [Charles I] became the first European king to be deposed and beheaded by his subjects, an event which showed that the foundation of the whole edifice of monarchical legitimacy and dynastic territoriality, on which political power in Europe rested and which was being exported to the New World in the sixteenth century, was already very rickety.
>
> (Rykwert 1992: 4)

The dynamics that led to the ultimate regicide and the ascension to power of Oliver Cromwell were diverse, and the process that was to lead to the execution began earlier, with the succession of the Stuart dynasty. Not just theory was at stake, for the specific policies of the new Stuart king antagonized large numbers of his subjects. For instance, James I insisted on supplementing his income modes of money raising that had never been sanctioned by Parliament; when the leaders of that body objected, he tore up their protests and dissolved their sessions. He, moreover, interfered with the freedom of business by granting monopolies and lucrative privileges to favoured companies. Worst of all, for most patriotic Englishmen, James I quickly put an end to the long war with Spain and refused thereafter to become involved in any foreign military entanglements. It should not be ignored that his pacificism was justifiable financially since it spared the crown enormous debts. However, James was hated particularly for his peace policy because it made him seem far too friendly with England's traditional enemy Spain, and because his peace policy also meant leaving the problem-stricken Protestants of Holland and Germany in the lurch.

The people who hated James I's pacific foreign policy most were a group destined to play the greatest role in overthrowing the Stuarts, namely, the Puritans who were often associated with Calvinist doctrine. Extreme Calvinist Protestants, the Puritans believed that Elizabeth I's religious compromises had not broken fully enough with the forms and doctrines of Roman Catholicism. Called Puritans from their desire to "purify" the English church of all traces of Catholic ritual and observance, they opposed the English "episcopal system" of church government by bishops. Nevertheless, James I was as committed to retaining episcopalianism as the Puritans were intent on abolishing it because he thought royally appointed bishops as one of the pillars of a strong monarchy. Because the Puritans were a powerful influence in the House of Commons and many Puritans were also prosperous merchants who opposed James's monopolistic policies and money-raising

expediencies, throughout his reign James was in disagreement with an extremely powerful group of his subjects for a combination of religious, constitutional, and economic reasons.

The Puritans wanted many reforms in the Church of England. What was more, they thought they might be able to get what they wanted, for James I had been King of Scotland before he came to rule England, and Scotland's church was more Puritan than the Church of England. They therefore presented a petition to the King, asking him to introduce changes in the Church of England. James agreed to meet them at Hampton Court in 1604 to hear arguments on the points raised by the Petition. The Petition called for relaxation of ecclesiastical rules in favour of Nonconformist (i.e. Puritan) views. The discussion was entirely about how to make the episcopal national Church more effectively evangelical. Nevertheless, at Hampton Court, the claims of the Nonconformists were rejected almost without exception. Not only were the rules governing the clergy not changed, new laws were passed which enforced those regulations even more strictly. Many of the clergy resigned their livings rather than toe the line. Some Puritans, discouraged, left the country, going either to Holland or America to find freedom to worship as they pleased. Others stayed in England, continuing to hold their own meetings, and some got themselves into Parliament to try to alter the laws governing the Church. One good result of the meeting was the publication of the Authorized Version of the Bible in 1611. In the light of the idea of the Puritans leaving their country, John Morrill remarks,

> For most of those who went, the search for employment and a better life was almost certainly the principal cause of their departure. For a clear minority, however, freedom from religious persecution and the expectation that they could establish churches to worship God in their preferred fashion took precedence.
>
> (Morrill, 1988: 337)

While the sixteenth century had seen England become a noted haven for religious refugees, in the seventeenth century Europe and America received religious refugees from England.

James's religious policies evoked not only the opposition of the Protestants but also that of the Catholics. The year after the conference, the Puritans were forgotten in all the excitement and horror of the Gunpowder Plot. When the Catholics understood that the King would favour them no more than the Puritans,

they started plotting to get rid of him. The Gunpowder Plot began because the Catholics, who had supported James's claim to the English throne, expected some help from him in return. They got none. Two of the Catholics, Thomas Percy and Robert Catesby, decided to destroy the King and Parliament by blowing them up at the State Opening. By May 1604 three others, including Guy Fawkes, had been brought into the scheme. The Catholic conspirators placed kegs of gunpowder in the cellars of the Parliament Buildings on the night of November 4, 1605. Guy Fawkes was deputed to stay with the gunpowder and ignite it at the opportune moment. However, word of the conspiracy leaked out, and royal officials captured Fawkes with the gunpowder. Fawkes, and several other of the conspirators, were put to death. The only result of the plot was to make the Catholics even more unpopular. Parliament passed very strict laws against them.

It might have been expected that James himself would never forgive the Catholics for attempting to blow him up, but he tried his best to see that they were not treated too badly. This was partly because he planned that his son Charles should marry a Spanish princess. His daughter, Elizabeth, had married a Protestant prince from Germany, and he believed it would be a good thing if his son married someone of the Catholic faith. In this way, he felt he might be able to do something to bring the two religions closer together. At all events, James did his best to make a good impression on the Spanish. He had Sir Walter Raleigh executed on a charge of high treason because the Spanish hated him, and tried to make things easier for English Catholics. His efforts did him little good. The English Parliament had no use for James's schemes. They wanted his son to marry a Protestant, and would have been glad to see England at war with Spain. To tell him how to conduct his foreign policy was sheer impertinence as far as James was concerned. Since he believed in the Divine Right of Kings he thought that his power as King had been granted to him by God and that his wishes had therefore the same force as those of God Himself. The Commons should concentrate on obeying his commands instead of advising him. The Puritan merchants in the Commons could not agree. If they believed that a Catholic royal marriage threatened the Protestant religion, then they thought they had the right – or even the duty – to protest. Thus, when James complained of their

conduct, they defied him. To end the argument, James dissolved Parliament. Meanwhile the negotiations for the marriage went on.

James's chief minister at this time was a young man named George Villiers. James had made him Duke of Buckingham and given him unlimited power. He led the first negotiations for the marriage between the Prince of Wales ("Baby Charles" as the King called his son) and the daughter of Philip III. When these negotiations broke down, Buckingham, in spite of James's protests, demanded that England should go to war with Spain at once. After all, Spain was England's traditional enemy. At last, James gave way and called Parliament to grant money for the war. The House of Commons were only too pleased to grant supplies because for years they had been trying to make James see that a war with Spain and a Protestant marriage were the best policies. Accordingly, supplies were voted and war was declared. A few months later James died, leaving Buckingham and Charles to carry on the policy they had forced him to adopt.

King James I was the author of a number of books on varied subjects, the Divine Right of Kings being his favourite topic, which he expounded on frequently, but he also wrote about witchcraft, one of his favourite subjects (widely believed in at the time) and a prophetic pamphlet on the perils of tobacco smoking. His anxiety and fear on the subject of witches could be symptomatic of his attitude to women and power in the hands of women.

The House of Commons were pleased to be at war with Spain, but did not trust the King or Buckingham. They therefore wanted some control over the conduct of the war. On the other hand, Charles,[5] like James, believed that he had a God-given right to act as he wanted without consulting anybody. In fact, Charles left the organization of the war to Buckingham who wanted to show both the English and the Spanish that England was a great naval power. He thus prepared an expedition to the great Spanish port of Cadiz, which he hoped to capture. The expedition would then return to England, bringing huge sums of ransom money, covering him and the country with glory. However, since many of the men were unfit, and the ships were

[5] James was succeeded on the thrones of England and Scotland by his second son, Charles I. As the second son, Charles became Duke of York, and the death of his popular elder brother Henry, Prince of Wales, thrust Charles into the limelight. At the age of twelve, he was now heir to the throne.

old and unseaworthy, everything went wrong. The English were short of food, water, arms and ammunition. What was worse, the commander, Lord Wimbledon, was not really up to the task. This expedition was a great failure for the English and many people thought that Buckingham was to blame for it. Charles called Parliament to grant him supplies to carry on the war. He thought that the money would be granted because the Commons had always been in favour of the war. However, the Commons gave nothing and Charles dissolved Parliament as a result of a torrent of complaints, all directed at Buckingham who was now preparing for another expedition, this time to France. The King forced merchants and gentry to lend him money. Those who refused were either imprisoned or had soldiers billeted on them. With the funds thus raised, Buckingham fitted out his expedition which was another failure. This second failure was a terrible blow for Charles to bear, for he had relied on the expedition to win the House of Commons over to his side. Charles managed to get some money from them, but only after he had agreed to the Petition of Rights, by which he promised not to levy any taxes in future without the consent of the House of Commons, not to imprison people without giving a reason, and not to billet soldiers on people in peacetime.

However, after Buckingham was assassinated by a private enemy in 1628, the expedition was abandoned. Charles dissolved Parliament and ruled England without Parliament for about eleven years. This situation made his opponents, especially the Puritans, even more angry. But from A. J. Patrick's point of view, as far as Charles was concerned, those were the best years of his reign because

> He was happily married, and had a growing family to which he was devoted. He loved good painting, encouraged famous artists to come to England and even knighted two of them, Sir Anthony Van Dyck, the portrait painter, and Sir Peter Paul Rubens, both from the Netherlands. Soon he had built up a fine collection of paintings. Moreover Charles, although small and slow-thinking, was also very dignified and well-mannered, and quickly made his court one of the best conducted in Europe. Here he could feel secure and happy.
>
> (Patrick, 1975: 22)

To replace Buckingham, Charles now had faithful and efficient ministers: Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, and William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. Strafford spent much of his time in Ireland, which he ruled with a rod of iron. He advised the King on how to govern England without a Parliament, and Charles found

that by reviving old laws and taxes which had been long forgotten, and by using the Court of Star Chamber set up by the Tudors to enforce them, he could manage to acquire enough money to keep going. His extending of a tax known as Ship Money became a bone of contention as this tax was previously levied only in the country's defence. This, of course, created a lot of unrest amongst the merchants and landowners who had to pay these taxes. Yet they could do nothing as long as Charles did not call a Parliament.

As I have stated before, like his father James I, Charles I believed that church and state should be modelled on the divinely ordered hierarchy, a belief which also manifested itself in his alliance with Willam Laud, the powerful Archbishop of Canterbury who promoted religious ceremonialism under Charles.

In the earlier years of the seventeenth-century, Protestant England was marked by the tensions of two conflicting religious movements within the English Church: Calvinism and Laudianism. Laud became Bishop of London in 1628 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Supported by Charles I, he in effect ruled the Church of England until he was impeached by the Long Parliament in 1640. Indeed, the policies of Charles I and Laud were intertwined: “the church and state are so nearly united and knit together”, Laud observed, “that ... they may be accounted but as one” (Hill and Dell, pp. 171-172). Laud’s principle innovation was his new emphasis on the role of ceremony and ritual in religious practice. He placed emphasis on the holiness of church buildings, on the sanctity of the altar, on confession to the priest, on set forms of prayer (as opposed to preaching), on the belief that salvation came through the church and the sacraments. Laud went further and tried to make the Scottish Church accept the same organization as the Anglican Church, and introduced the new prayer book, which eventuated in the rebellion of the Scots against England. As such, Laud became the main challenge to Calvinist theology which was by and large the orthodox creed of English Protestantism which stressed absolute divine sovereignty and power and the notion of divine predestination whereby elevation to Heaven or reprobation to Hell depends on the will of God. While Laud emphasized the correct performance of church ceremonies, the protestant belief stressed the importance of the individual conscience and the individual response to the Holy Scriptures. Under Laud, priests were elevated to a

position of privilege and power. Given the new emphasis Laud placed on ceremonies and ritualized worship, as well as on the authoritarian hierarchy of the church, his policies generated fear and horror among many Protestant Englishmen who believed that he was subverting religious liberties and assuming an absolute and unlimited power.

Milton was born into this cauldron of tensions and divisions that characterized English society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a state which began with Henry VIII's break from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534 and which would reach its apocalyptic climax in the Civil War of the 1640s. Milton not only observed these events, he was a participant in them. He served the republican cause as its most eminent pamphleteer and polemicist during the Civil War years and he would become Latin Secretary for the Cromwellian government. Every good Christian believer, Milton observed in one of his anti-prelatical tracts, is "more sacred than any dedicated altar or element."[6] Taking the ideas about Laud and his religious principles into consideration, Milton's poem "Lycidas" (1637) which involves religious and political criticism can be interpreted as an an anti-clerical anti-Laudian work. To make the political dimension of the poem more explicit, Milton added a telling headnote to the poem when he published his 1645 *Poems*: "by occasion" his prophetic poem "foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy then, in their height" (Milton, in *The English Poems of John Milton*, 1968: 34) – as if to anticipate the English Revolution itself. The untimely death of one of the nation's young model pastors and poets, Edward King, made Milton produce this poem. By attributing the name Lycidas to him, Milton associates the roles of a piper and a shepherd with those of poet and priest – thereby presenting Lycidas-King as both – because the title and name of Lycidas are imbued with a number of literary resonances; he is a piper in the world of Theocritus, and a shepherd in Virgil's *Eclogues*. In doing so, the poet expresses his disillusionment with the corrupt Anglican clergy during the 1630s, the years of Laud's authoritarian power when the bishops were exalted. Referring to the clergy's "Blind mouths" (line 119),

[6] From Milton's "Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England: And the Cause That Hitherto Have Hindred it," **The Prose of John Milton**, J. Max Patrick, Ed. New York: New York Univeristy Press, 1968, p. 48.

suggesting their rapacity and gluttony, Milton scornfully puns on the etymology of bishop (one who sees) and pastor (one who feeds).[7] Likewise, in view of Milton's punning on these two words, Richard Bradford argues that "[T]he higher clergy of the Laudian church [...] deserved neither the title of the bishop, since they had blinded themselves to Christian truth, nor the generic term pastor since they were greedy and corrupt" (Bradford, 2001: 77). The inexplicable death of Lycidas seems even more unjust when the present clergy are such bad shepherds, their sermons nothing more than fashionable and superficial exercises ("lean and flashy songs", line 123), the work of bad artists (they grate on "scrannel pipes of wretched straw", line 124) who cannot feed or satisfy their Christian flock. However, Milton warns that the

> ... two handed-engine at the door,
> Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.
>
> (lines 130-131)

The image of the "two handed engine" builds up the climactic vision of judgement which anticipates the Protestant reaction to Catholic religion, a sharp diagnosis of the religious and political tensions that, as G. M. Trevelyan underlines below, in less than a decade would lead to the Civil War:

> The Civil Wars of Charles and Cromwell were not, like the Wars of the Roses, a struggle for power between two groups of aristocratic families, watched with disgusted indifference by the majority of the population, particularly by the townsfolk. In 1642 town and country alike rushed to arms. Yet it was not a war of town against country, though to some extent it became a struggle for London and its appendages against the rural north and west. Least of all was it a war between rich and poor. It was a war of ideas in Church and State.
>
> (Trevelyan, 1977: 255)

In "Lycidas", Milton's criticisms, as far as the religious men are concerned, are also suggestive of a biblical text like Ezekiel 34:1-2, giving biblical pastoral a radical Protestant inflection:

> "These were the words of the Lord to me: Prophesy, man, against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them, You shepherds, these are the words of the Lord GOD: How I hate the shepherds of Israel who care only for themselves! Should not the shepherd care for the sheep? You consume the milk, wear the wool, and slaughter the fat beasts, but you do not feed the sheep."
>
> (Ezekiel 34:1-2)

[7] **The Oxford Anthology of English Literature**, Vol. 1 (p. 1255) gives the above explanations in the footnote to Milton's usage of the words, "bishop" and "pastor" in "Lycidas".

Furthermore, “two handed engine” is reminiscent of the “two-handed sword” of the warrior-angel Michael which “smites” Satan and his rebel forces in *Paradise Lost*’s apocalyptic battle in heaven for the territory of God (*PL*, Book 6, 250-251). The impact of Laud as a desruptive force can thus be seen in “Lycidas”.

Meanwhile, Charles I became ever more hated by most of his subjects, above all the Puritans, not just because of his constitutional and financial policies but also because he and his unpopular archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, seemed to be pursuing a course in religion that came much closer to Catholicism than Calvinism. It was in Scotland, however, not England, that the storm suddenly broke. Like his father, Charles believed in the dictum “no bishop, no king” and hence decided to introduce church government through bishops into Presbyterian Scotland. The result was an armed rebellion by the Scots, and the first steps toward Civil War in England. To obtain the funds necessary to put down the Scots, Charles had no other choice but to convene Parliament and soon found himself the target of many resentments. Knowing well that the King was helpless without money, the leaders of the House of Commons determined to take England’s government into their hands. Accordingly, they not only executed the King’s first minister, the Earl of Strafford, but they abolished ship money and the prerogative courts that ever since the reign of Henry VIII had served as instruments of arbitrary rule. Most significant, they passed a law forbidding the crown to dissolve Parliament and requiring the gathering of sessions at least once every three years. After some indecision, Charles replied to these acts by marching with his guard into the House of Commons and attempting to arrest five of its leaders. All of them escaped, but an open conflict between crown and Parliament could no longer be avoided. Both parties collected troops and prepared for a war. The situation became so threatening that the King and his family had to flee from London. Charles sent Henrietta Maria, his French Roman Catholic wife, and his younger children to her native France for greater safety. These events initiated the English Civil War, a conflict at once political and religious, which lasted from 1642 to 1649.

The English Civil War polarized society largely along class lines. Parliament drew most of its support from the middle classes, while the King was supported by the nobility and the clergy. Parliamentary troops were known as Roundheads because of their severe hairstyle. The King's army were known as Cavaliers, from the French word for "knight", or "horseman". The Puritans tended to support Parliament. Charles had shown by his support of Laud that his policy was completely opposed to theirs. They were joined by the merchants and industrialists, which meant that Parliament could draw on their wealth, and controlled most of the large towns. Of course, Charles had supporters too. The Church of England, grateful for his support against the Puritans, stood firm by his side. So did the Catholics, who feared what might become of them if the Puritans gained control. Many of the landowners, feeling their position threatened by the House of Commons, also threw in their lot with Charles. This was a great advantage to him, for they had huge fortunes, which they put at the King's disposal. This enabled him to put an army in the field by the autumn of 1642.

Meanwhile, Parliament too had been recruiting. They had control of the navy, for Charles had seldom paid the sailors. Now, the wealth of the merchants enabled them to equip an army, which was mainly drawn from the south and the east. Charles, on the other hand, obtained most of his support in the north and west where there were fewer towns and the landowners were strongest. The sides thus seemed to be evenly balanced, and the struggle promised to be a long one.

In the early years of the war, the King had had the better of it. This was because he had the better army. In particular, his cavalry, commanded by his nephew Prince Rupert, consisted of gentry, who had always been used to hunting, and were thus skilled horsemen. Prince Rupert, moreover, served in Europe during the Thirty Years War and had brought back with him new ideas about cavalry fighting. On the other side, Colonel Cromwell had the makings of a fine fighting force. They were Puritan, steady yeomen and townsmen who wanted to fight against the King because they thought his policies were wicked; who were, like Cromwell himself, convinced they were fighting on God's side. They were trained to charge as Rupert's men did, and proved so steady when attacked that Rupert himself called them "Ironsides".

The first battle in which the Ironsides proved themselves was the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644 where Rupert was defeated and the north of England was lost to the King. Then Parliament decided to set up a whole "New Model Army", organized in the same way. They were to be paid regularly, properly equipped, and very strictly disciplined. Their commander was Sir Thomas Fairfax and the second in command was General Cromwell. Soon, Parliament had an army of 20,000 men consisting of volunteers and conscripts. After the Battle of Naseby which was the last major battle of the Civil War in 1646, The King and his army were defeated. Meanwhile, a quarrel developed within the parliamentary party. The majority of its members, who had allied with the Presbyterian Scots, were ready to restore Charles to the throne as a limited monarch under an arrangement whereby a uniform Calvinistic Presbyterian faith would be imposed on both Scotland and England as the state religion. However, a radical minority of Puritans, commonly known as Independents, distrusted Charles and insisted on religious toleration for themselves and all other non-Presbyterian Protestants. Charles, however, refused to renounce his absolutist beliefs, declined every proposal by Parliament and the army for reform. He preferred to try to play them against each other through intrigue and deception. For instance, he signed a secret treaty which got the Scots to rise in revolt, but that threat was stopped. The members believed that the King had betrayed them and had plunged the country into war once more. Therefore only the execution of the King could prevent the kingdom from descending into anarchy; and Charles was tried for treason in 1649, before a Parliament whose authority he refused to acknowledge. The judges who were chosen to try the King merely wanted to show the country how great a criminal he was before they executed him. It did not turn out as they expected. First, some of the judges refused to have anything to do with the trial. For example, Fairfax retired to his estates in Yorkshire rather than become involved. This was a bad start, but more importantly, the whole trial was dominated by the King. He pointed out that the court set up to try him was completely illegal, and refused to put his case to it. When ordered to answer the charge, he replied as follows:

> "For me to acknowledge a new court, that I never heard before, I that am your King, that should be an example to all the people of England, indeed I do not know how to do it. I do acknowledge to God that I owe to Him and to my people to defend as much as in me lies the ancient laws of the kingdom: therefore until that I may know that this is not against the fundamental laws of the kingdom, by your favour I can put in no particular charge."
>
> (Patrick, 1975: 40)

The judges had brought the King to trial to show to everybody how he had made war on the liberty of the people. Here he was claiming that he was defending the people's liberty against them. The King was pronounced guilty and sentenced to death by beheading. His death warrant was signed by fifty-nine judges. On January 1649, Charles was taken to the scaffold specially built outside his palace of Whitehall and he was there beheaded. A short time later the hereditary House of Lords was abolished, and England became a commonwealth.

With the execution of the King, the world of royal power, absolutism, and hierarchy was now overturned. Indeed, pleading "ancient rights" could no longer protect the king's authority or his person; the revolution had challenged the king's assertion that he was answerable only to God. The function of imprinting masculinity from father to son in each of these cases was sabotaged by the fact that the governing patriarch was a failure, a situation which also challenged the idea of manliness. Moreover, the hostility of one part against the other which sprang from a sense of struggle for power and rivalry amongst males gave rise to the disruption of the patriarchal male order. The failures which reinforce the anxieties about the problematic nature of masculinity may be construed in several ways: as a manifestation of castration anxiety reflected particularly in the act of beheading (It can be interpreted as a demonstration of Oedipal conflict, the contest between father and son becomes a contestation of masculinity. The overthrowing of the old patriarch by the young man in order to ascend to power), as a symbol of male loss of control, or more broadly as an emblem of the crisis of masculinity. All these undeniably contributed to a great anxiety and disillusionment on the part of Milton and the people of England.

Andrew Marvell's poem, "A Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," while celebrating Cromwell, also acknowledges the disturbing resonances of the act of regicide. The sentences cited below highlight the demeanour of Charles at his execution (lines 57-64, [my italics]):

> He nothing common did, or mean,
> Upon that *memorable scene*,
> But with his keener eye
> The axe's edge did try;
> Nor called the gods with vulgar spite
> To vindicate his *helpless right*;
> But bowed his comely head
> Down, as upon a bed.

The scene of Charles I's execution is evocative of a historical moment when the claim to royal power by divine right was rendered "helpless". Even the sacred person of the Sovereign who was answerable for his actions only to God, was not inviolate against forces calculated to upset every value and assumption.

Two weeks after Charles was beheaded Milton published a pamphlet called *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649)[8] in defence of this unprecedented revolutionary act. This pamphlet revolves around Milton's thesis that kings owe their power to the people, whom they are supposed to represent; when they overstep their power and become tyrannical, it becomes incumbent upon the people to remove them. The trial of Charles I in 1649 and the protest it raised provoked this philosophical argument from Milton to justify the action against the King and thus expose what he considered false reason on the part of the opposition. He hoped by this pamphlet to prepare his countrymen to achieve true happiness in a theocracy under the Puritan government. Moreover, in the pamphlet, he also attacks the Presbyterian party of the Commons whom he treats as hypocrites. They who had campaigned against the Royalist party at the beginning of the war now denounced those who had decided to prosecute the King. Adam's transgression had caused confusion and disarray and it is only now that fallen man can claim to be returning to a state which at least corresponds with his prelapsarian condition. None among mankind can claim authority by right; governance shall be determined by a collective

[8] In **The Prose of John Milton**, J. Max Patrick, Ed. New York: New York Univeristy Press, 1968, pp. 347-381.

sense of justice and reason (*The Tenure*, p.352). In short, Milton is citing the Old Testament as justification for the overthrow, indeed the execution, of a monarch who stood against man's attempt to make the best of his postlapsarian condition. He seems in this work to be suggesting that in England, in 1649, fallen man was at last becoming aware of how a diminished but honourable counterpart of his prelapsarian state might be established in terms of a new political consensus. The people of England had punished the King because he stood between them and their realization of the best that could be hoped for in man's attempts to create some counterpart to the world lost after the Fall. The Cromwellian, republican commonwealth, was imminent. By the time *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667 this project had failed and at the end of the poem the foreseen prospects for Adam's lineage are informed with far less optimism than can be found in *The Tenure*. In his another prose work, *The Defensio Anglicano*, Milton proclaims, "After so glorious a deed, you ought to think, you ought to do nothing that is mean and petty, nothing but what is great and sublime"(in *The Prose Of John Milton*, p. 428). Milton's "you ought" is addressed to the collective consciousness of the nation; he believed that his readers could accept his own perception of the execution as a "glorious" and "sublime" step towards the implementation of religous and political freedom.

After the death of Charles, further rebellions in favour of the future Charles II arose in Ireland and Scotland. Cromwell dealt with Ireland first, and Scotland next, and finally he defeated the younger Charles at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. The next eleven years saw the rule of the Commonwealth. But founding a republic was far easier than maintaining one, and the new form of government, officially called a Commonwealth, did not last long. In the first place, Cromwell instituted a system of government placing each region under the supervision of a senior military commander. These "Major Generals" were responsible for security but also interfered in every aspect of local government. Technically the Rump Parliament[9] continued as the legislative body, but Cromwell, with the army at his command, possessed the real power and soon became annoyed by the attempts of the legislators

[9] From 1649 to 1653, England was governed by the Rump Parliament, that fragment of the Long Parliament which accepted the Regicide and which assumed unto itself all legislative and executive power.

to perpetuate themselves in office and to profit by seizing the wealth of their opponents. Accordingly, Cromwell marched a detachment of troops into the Rump Parliament and ordered the members to disperse. Thereby the Commonwealth stopped to exist and was soon followed by the "Protectorate," a virtual dictatorship established under a constitution called the *Instrument of Government* drafted by officers of the army. Under two paper constitutions, the *Instrument of Government* and the *Humble Petition and Advice,* Cromwell as head of the executive had to rule with, and through, a Council of State. He also had to meet Parliament regularly. At first a Parliament exercised limited authority in making laws and levying taxes, but in 1655 Cromwell dismissed its members. Thereafter the government became a disguised autocracy, with Cromwell now wielding a sovereignty more absolute than any Stuart monarch ever dreamed of claiming. John Morrill alerts us to the way Cromwell ruled England:

> Cromwell saw himself in a position very similar to that of Moses leading the Israelites to the Promised Land. The English People had been in bondage in the Land of Egypt (Stuart monarchy); they had fled and crossed the Red Sea (Regicide); they were now struggling across the Desert (current misfortunes), guided by the Pillar of Fire (Divine Providence manifested in the army's great victories, renewed from 1656 on in a successful war against Spain).
>
> (Morrill, 1988: 375)

From the sentences cited above, it can be seen that Cromwell acted with the notion that he was fulfilling God's will. He was an orthodox Calvinist in his belief in the duty of God's elect to make all men love and honour Him, and in his belief that God's providence showed His people the way forward. But because he believed that he had such a task to perform, he had a fatal disregard for civil and legal liberties. To achieve the future promised by God, Cromwell governed arbitrarily. He imprisoned men without trial. When Parliament failed to make him a sufficient financial provision, he taxed by decree. The results of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate confirmed in the English a hatred of military rule and the severe Puritanism associated with it. Hence the great paradox. Cromwell the king-killer, the reluctant head of state, was asked by his second Parliament to become King Oliver (**Ibid**., p. 377). He was offered the Crown. Ironically he was offered it to limit his power, to bind him with the rule of law. Since such limitations were not

suitable to the task he believed he was entrusted to realize, since God's Will did not direct him to restore the office that He had set aside, he declined the throne. It is significant to point out that Cromwell rebelled against the monarch with the purpose of creating and establishing a new order with rules and regulations imposed upon it by himself. However, as it can be discerned, the new order is in many ways similar to that of the established one he is at odds with. The governing of the country by an ineffectual male who is overthrown by another male recreates itself in the order established by Cromwell who turns out to be another deficient patriarch. This situation contributes to the anxiety, instability and unrest resulting from the failure of masculinity. Moreover, it can be argued that the picture of Satan and his defeated compatriots offered in Books 1 and 2 of *Paradise Lost* is a political allegory. Milton expected us to find parallels between the denizens of hell and another more recent group of failed rebels: by 1667, when *Paradise Lost* was published, the Cromwellian experiment in republican government was a recent memory.

The years between 1649 and 1660 were strange ones for Englishmen. After all, there was no king, no proper Parliament, and no Church of England. Cromwell and his supporters introduced changes which altered many aspects of English life. To begin with, many of the Englishman's traditional amusements were banned. Bull-baiting was forbidden, the cockpits were closed, and the bear-pits empty. Theatres were closed. Even the maypoles were pulled down, and all religious festivals were abolished (Patrick, 1975: 45-46). Since the Puritans believed that Sunday belonged to God, they passed laws to make sure that everybody devoted their time on that day to religion and to nothing else. All games and recreations of any sort were banned. Cromwell's rule banned Catholicism and the *Book of Common Prayer*.

For more than a year after Cromwell died in 1658 there was chaos. To begin with, his son Richard became Lord Protector in his place but he soon retired. Then the Parliament which Cromwell had turned out in 1653 was brought back, but this only made matters worse than ever, with the army leaders quarrelling with each other and with the Parliament. There seemed no way to get a government which would work, and which everybody would accept. The deadlock was broken by General George Monck, who commanded the army which Cromwell had sent to look after

Scotland. He seized power and called for elections for a new Parliament, which met in 1660 and offered to restore the monarchy if Charles I's exiled son, Charles II, would agree to concessions for religious toleration and a general amnesty (these were the items of *The Declaration of Breda* that Charles had issued before he came to England). Charles was not as hard-headed as his father, and he agreed to the proposals. Given the choice between a Puritan military dictatorship and the old royalist regime, when the occasion arose England opted for the latter. In view of Charles II's being called back to England by the people of England, it can be argued that people wanted to have an absolute ruler who would bring order and stability to the country on economic, political and social levels. It is therefore very surprising that the English people who had beheaded the King of England eleven years ago were trying to make the King establish monarchy once again because the lack of security and order as an outcome of the uproar in the country had resulted in ultimate chaos and destruction.

Charles returned to London on a wave of popular support to be crowned Charles II (1660-85). The diarist John Evelyn described the scene of the King's entrance into London as such:

> He came with a triumph of over twenty thousand horse and foot brandishing their swords and shouting with unexpressible joy. The ways were strewn with flowers, the bells were ringing, the streets were hung with tapestry, and the fountains were running wine. The Mayor, Aldermen and all the Companies, in their chains of gold, liveries, and banners, were present; also the lords and nobles. Everybody was clad in cloth of silver, gold and velvet; the windows and balconies were all set with ladies, trumpets and music, and myriads of people flocked the streets as far as Rochester, so that they took seven hours to pass through the city. I stood in the Strand and beheld it and blessed God. And all this was done without one drop of blood shed and by that very army that had rebelled against him. [...] It was the Lord's doing, for such a restoration was never mentioned in any history, ancient or modern, since the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity.
>
> (as quoted by Christopher Falkus, 1972: 69)

England was a monarchy once again.

Charles II came to the throne, after all, at a most critical moment for the monarchy, dispossessed for the last eleven years, and found himself ruling over an England which had been divided not only by the Civil War but also by the establishment of a republican regime. Politically, the Restoration of 1660 restored King, Parliament, and law in place of the military dictatorship represented by Oliver

Cromwell and his followers. Ecclesiastically, it restored the bishops and Prayer Book and the Anglican attitude to religion, in place of Puritanism.

First of all, Charles, with the help of his minister, the Earl of Clarendon, paid off the army and disbanded it – which relieved everybody. Then Parliament re-established the Church of England, with all its old power and authority. In addition, all other forms of worship were forbidden. Neither Charles, who had great sympathy with the Catholics, nor Clarendon liked this after what had been promised at Breda, but they decided to let Parliament have their way. After Clarendon was sent into exile because Charles had wished, the King took over the direction of the government himself, helped by five advisers, one of whom was Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury.

Gradually Charles's policies started to change. He wanted to increase his power and grant freedom of worship. His foreign policy ultimately concentrated on receiving heavy subsidies from the French King Louis XIV in order to render himself independent of his own Parliament. His sister was married to Louis's brother. Using her as his representative, Charles began negotiations, and signed a treaty by which he promised to go to war against Holland and declare himself a Catholic. In return Louis promised him the help of French troops in case of trouble. Charles declared war on Holland, and, without consulting Parliament he issued *The Declaration of Indulgence* which granted freedom of worship to everybody. The result was a storm of protest because the Queen and King's brother were both Catholics and *The Declaration of Indulgence* and the war against Holland made people uneasy. Parliament refused to grant the King any money until he withdrew his declaration. What was more, they passed a Test Act, which said that only members of the Church of England could hold any government posts – including commissions in the army and navy. Charles's policy had failed. He had, moreover, offended Shaftesbury, who had not been told all the King's plans. He was working against Charles, building up a party in Parliament to oppose him, and organizing political clubs in the country. Charles got a new minister, Lord Danby, to do the same for him, and soon there were two parties in Parliament. The one, organized by Danby to support Charles, was called the Court Party. Its opponents, claiming that all supporters of the court must be Catholic sympathizers, called them Tories, after a gang of wild

Irish rebels. Shaftesbury's party was called the Country Party, to show that they got their support not from the court, but from the country at large. Their opponents called them Whigs, after a group of wild republicans in Scotland. Shaftesbury, supported by the Puritans, who were dissapointed that the Church of England had been given back its old power, had the majority of the Commons on his side.Charles, on the other hand, could rely on the Lords. Thus, under Charles II the seeds of a cabinet style of government were sown.

What the Restoration meant to the English people can only be measured against the austerities of the regime that had preceded it. The Restoration was notable for a relaxation of the strict Puritan morality of the previous decades. Theatre, sports, and dancing were revived. Charles's court was notable for its revelry and licentiousness. While Charles was enjoying his new court, he was less than successful internationally. The English fought a losing naval war with the Dutch, and England's presence on the high seas had never been so low.

The situation on dry land was not very propitious either. In 1665 the Great Plague hit London, decimating the population. The following year the Great Fire burned 450 acres and left large parts of the capital in ruins. One of the "positive" consequences of the London Fire was that Old St. Paul's Cathedral, which had been badly in need of renovation, was damaged beyond repair. Within days of the fire, the architect Christopher Wren presented the king with a plan for a new cathedral. With some alterations this became the magnificent church that stands today.

In 1678 an unsavory character named Titus Oates alleged a Catholic plot to murder Charles and establish Catholicism. In the wake of the Popish Plot Catholics were excluded from Parliament, some were arrested, and some were killed. This was only one of a series of real or alleged Catholic plots against the King.

On the judicial front, the Habeas Corpus Act (1679) made justice officials responsible for the welfare of prisoners in their care, provided for a speedy trial, and ensured that a person could not be tried twice for the same crime.

A convinced upholder of the principles of monarchy, Charles II found himself unable to take steps to leave behind him the legitimate heir who might have saved England from the troubles so obviously inherent in the rule of his brother James II.

And it was one of his illegitimate sons, the Duke of Monmouth, who attempted to seize James's throne in the months after his death.

CHAPTER VI

PARADISE LOST

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walked without a mate:
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one
To live in paradise alone.
(Andrew Marvell, "The Garden")

In those lines, Marvell, one of Milton's contemporaries, reflects how Eve, the first of her sex and epitome of all who came after her, is generally considered to be the main cause of mankind's fall from God's grace. The garden Marvell depicts in the subsequent lines of the poem excludes not only society in general but women in particular; the couplet which ends the stanza above, "Two paradises 'twere in one / To live in paradise alone," is a witty (and misogynistic) twist on the image of the paradise of Adam and Eve. Eden, the poet says, would be so much greater without the distracting presence of Eve. The inference is that Adam was perfectly happy by himself in the Garden until Eve came along and with her appearance his troubles begin.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*: *The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* argue that, "From Eve, Minerva, Sophia, and Galatea onward, after all, patriarchal misogyny defines women as created by, from, and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 12). Eve destroys our first ancestor, who was also husband and father to the first woman. To begin with, there is man's primacy over woman, who is created after man and from one of his ribs, in order to give him, a "partner". Genesis says: "... the Lord God put the man into a trance, and while he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed the flesh over the place. The Lord God then built up the rib, which he had taken

out of the man, into a woman" (Genesis 2: 21-24). Perhaps the most important element in the story of Genesis is that Eve, after being seduced by the serpent, persuades Adam to join her in disobedience to God's will. For this she bears the brunt of God's curse: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shall bring forth children; and thy desire shall be thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis: 3: 16). On being banished from Eden woman receives her name from man (another sign of domination). She is called Eve, because she was the "mother of all who live" (Genesis 3: 20). Traditionally, she was seen as bearing a greater share than Adam of the blame for the Fall. The serpent was identified with the Devil, Eve with the temptress. Tertullian addressed himself to all women: "Dost thou not know that thou, too, art Eve? Even today God's judgement applies to all thy sex, hence thy sin must also subsist. Thou art the Devil's portal; thou hast consented to eat of his tree, and thou wast the first to renounce the law of God" (quoted in Dalarun, 2000, p. 20).

"All through his life Milton felt that he was, in a sense, a man chosen by God to write *the* great English poem," says C. M. Bowra in his *From Virgil to Milton* (Bowra, 1963: 194). Milton considered the Arthurian stories as a possible subject, and at times he thought of writing the poem in dramatic form. He finally settled on the subject of the Fall of Man, with the war between God and the rebel angels as its cause and background. His decision to write in blank verse was a considerable innovation at the time, since as Patrick J. Cook, in his *Milton, Spenser and the Epic Tradition* says, "all the previous English epics or attempted epics had been in rhymed verse" (Cook, 1999: 136). Milton (in the "Note on the Versification of *Paradise Lost*", 1668) spoke of rhyme in long poems as "the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre". Milton in Book 2 of "The Reason of Church Government"(1642), stated his intention of writing a great poem in English as such: "that what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I in my proportion, with this over and above of being a Christian, might do for mine" (In *The Prose of John Milton*, 1968: 108).

Besides his intention of writing something which would bring glory to his own country, Milton had a religious and philosophical purpose which was, as he stated, "to justify the ways of God to men" (*Paradise Lost*, Book 1, 26). The story of *Paradise Lost*, taken partly from the Bible and partly from old Jewish myths and legends, describes what Christians know as the Fall of Man. That is to say, the disobedience of Adam and Eve, which caused them to be driven out of the carefree Garden of Eden, and which brought suffering and death into the world. *Paradise Lost*[1] is an epic myth of origins, centring around the archetypal male and female defined by Milton.

E. M. Tillyard in *The English Epic and Its Background* defines the epic as "narrative verse with a heroic subject belonging to the heroic age, at whatever date or in whatever part of the world that age manifested itself" (Tillyard, 1954: 1). Then he calls attention to an important characteristic of this kind of poetry which is its "choric" nature (**Ibid**., p. 5). By this he means that epic poetry is in a sense public poetry, generally nationalistic and tribal. The poet is not only writing to express his own thoughts and feelings, but the thoughts and feelings of some large group or community. Thus Dante in the *Divina Commedia* was the mouthpiece for the whole of medieval Christianity, and Milton for English and European Protestantism in his own time.

Basically, there are two kinds of epic: primary – also known as oral or primitive; and secondary – also known as literary. The primary epics were produced by a literary artist from historical and legendary materials which had developed in the oral traditions

[1] Fourteen years after Milton's death, this verse of Dryden's was published in an illustrated edition of **Paradise Lost** (as quoted by C. M. Bowra, **From Virgil to Milton**, p. 109):

> Three poets, in distant ages born,
> Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
> The first in loftiness of thought surpassed,
> The next in majesty, in both the last:
> The force of Nature, could no farther go;
> To make a third, she joined the former two.

The poets which Dryden refers to were the names associated with the epic – Homer, Virgil, and Milton. Here Dryden praises these three poets and his use of the concepts such as "loftiness" and "majesty" suggest some of the qualities associated with epic verse. The importance of the epic is its essence, since it is a form of large-scale verse which aims to identify some enduring significance and nobility in human action.

of his nation during a period of expansion and warfare. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of the Greek Homer, and the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* are examples of this group. The "literary" or "secondary" epics were created by sophisticated craftsmen in deliberate imitation of the traditional form. To this kind can be ascribed Virgil's Latin poem *The Aeneid* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Literary epics are highly conventional poems which commonly share the features, derived ultimately from the traditional epics of Homer: the hero is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance. In the *Iliad* he is the Greek warrior Achilles, in *Paradise Lost* Adam epitomises the entire human race. The setting of the poem is great in scale, and may be world-wide, or even larger. The scope of *Paradise Lost* is cosmic, for it takes place on earth, in heaven, and in hell. The action is concerned with superhuman deeds in battle, such as Achilles's feats in the Trojan War, or a long and difficult journey accomplished, such as the wanderings of Odysseus on his way back to his homeland. *Paradise Lost* includes the war in heaven, the journey of Satan through chaos to discover the newly created world, and his attempts to outwit God by corrupting mankind. Satan's success, however, is ultimately frustrated by the sacrificial endeavour of Christ. In these great actions the gods and other supernatural beings take an interest or an active part—the Olympian gods in Homer, and God, Christ, and the angels in *Paradise Lost*. In the neoclassic age these supernatural agents were called "machinery", in the sense that they were part of the literary devices of the epic. An epic poem is a ceremonial performance, and is narrated in a ceremonial style which is deliberately distanced from ordinary speech. Thus we have Milton's "grand style"—his Latinate diction and stylised syntax as well as his wide-ranging allusions and his imitation of Homer's epic similes and epithets.

There are also commonly used conventions in the structure and in the choice of episodes of the epic narrative. For instance, the narrator begins by stating his "argument", or theme. He invokes a muse or guiding spirit to inspire him in his great undertaking, then addresses to the muse the epic question, the answer to which opens the narrative proper (*Paradise Lost*, Book 1, 1-49). This narrative starts in **medias res**, that

is, “in the middle of the things,” at a critical point in the action. *Paradise Lost* opens with the fallen angels in hell, gathering their forces and determining on revenge. Not until Books 5-7 does the angel Raphael relate to Adam the events in heaven which led to this situation; while in Books 11-12, after the fall, Michael foretells Adam future events up to Christ’s second coming. Therefore Milton’s epic, although its action is based on the temptation and fall of man, encompasses all time from the creation to the end of the world. There are also catalogues of some of the principal characters, introduced in formal detail, as in Milton’s description of the procession of fallen angels in Book 1 of *Paradise Lost*. These characters are often given speeches which reveal their diverse temperaments; an example is the debate in Pandemonium, Book 2.

Particular authors should certainly be evaluated with an eye for the critical opinions they profess. In other words, they should be placed within their own contexts, and interpreted in terms of the conventions or trends they commit themselves to. Therefore Milton, a strong believer in the Puritan movement, and his *Paradise Lost*, cannot be evaluated outside the atmosphere of the period of which they both were the products. Hence Milton’s *Paradise Lost* can be seen as the epic of English Puritanism, coming at a time when it was understood that the project to create an English theocracy under the rule of Cromwell had failed. In his poetic examination of the reasons for this failure, Milton chose for his theme not a celebration of secular values, as manifest in the foundation of Rome, for example, but an analysis of the whole purpose of human life in relation to “eternal providence” (Book 1, 25). Milton compares his task with that of Homer and Virgil – to their disadvantage:

> ...Sad task, yet argument
> Not less but more heroic than the wrath
> Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued
> Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage
> Of Turnus for Lavinia disespoused.
>
> (Book 9, 13-17)

Milton rejects Homeric heroism as well as the empty descriptions of the heroic in "battles feigned", selecting a "higher argument" which deals with the "better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom" (Book 9, 29-32, 42). The subject may attract "fit audience, ... though few", but the inspiration he claims is the spirit of God, truth itself, in contrast with the "empty dream" of the muses of previous epic poets (Book 7, 31, 39). At the very beginning of the poem, in a traditional and conventional manner, Milton expresses his intention and makes clear the magnitude of his task:

> Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the World, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing, Heavenly Muse ...
> I thence
> Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
> That with no middle flight intends to soar
> Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
> Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

The opening of Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* calls attention to the fact that the climax of the story is imminent. The muse is not directly addressed in this fourth and last invocation, but the narrative voice begins for the only time with a negative (No more of talk where God or Angel Guest / With Man, as with his friend, familiar used / To sit indulgent, and with him partake / Rural repast, permitting him the while / Venial discourse unblamed. Book 9, 1-5), describing the end of close relationship between man and "God or angel guest", and continuing sadly, "I now must change / Those notes to tragic" (Book 9, 1, 5, 6). The pastoral of Paradise is now to change the genre to tragedy, all within the framework of the epic. The opening of the poem, with its linking of the idea of "taste" and a world of woe, has already been echoed in Book 8 in God's command to Adam (lines 327-333). Here it is repeated with a significant shift:

> … on the part of heaven
> Now alienated, distance and *dis*taste,
> Anger and just rebuke, and judgement given,
> That brought into this world a world of woe.
> (Book 9, 8-11, [my italics])

The fatal tasting action of the human pair in their choice of the fruit of the tree of knowledge has become the "distaste" of heaven.

But although the theme of man's Fall is tragic, it is actually, argues Milton, *more* heroic than the traditional heroism of epic and romance, such as Achilles's pursuit of Hector in the *Iliad*, or the deeds of legendary knights in fictional battles. This is because *Paradise Lost* principally celebrates "the better fortitude / Of patience and heroic martyrdom" which has hitherto remained "unsung" (Book 9, 33). While a supporter of Cromwell in 1652, the year in which he became blind and in which his first wife and only son died, Milton had written a sonnet "To the Lord General Cromwell" (in *The English Poems of John Milton*, 1968: 83) praising him as "our chief of men" yet warning that "Peace hath her victories / No less renowned than War" (lines 1 and 10-11). Now, ten years later, following the collapse of all his aspirations for the English people, and much personal tragedy, how much more was Milton aware, in the changed circumstances of a re-established monarchy, of the need for patience and heroic endurance (Shawcross, 1989: 5-10). Battles seemed trivial compared with the immense individual struggle necessary for all as a result of the story Milton was telling. His story has a "higher argument" which can elevate the name of epic, and visitations from his nocturnal muse.

To start with, Milton was a man of his time, The Early Modern Period and he was one of the representatives of the Puritan thought especially on the "inadequacy" and "secondariness" of women and he therefore demanded divorce only when the "unfitness" lay with the wife, not the husband. In Book 7, (line 529), Raphael tells Adam that God "Male ... created thee, but thy consort female for race"—"*race* here is the first usage in English of the word to mean reproduction or breeding", says C. M. Bowra in *From Virgil to Milton* (Bowra, 1963: 202).

One of the most frequently cited Bible passages the Puritans used to justify their views on women, and especially on educating women, is this one:

> A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin.
>
> (1 Timothy: 2: 11-15)

For Milton and the Puritans, then, a woman's obedience to men—to her father, her guardian, or her husband—was a model of the Christian's obedience to God. It was a moral and religious duty as well as a political and economic reality. Lawrence Stone in his work, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, argues that

> In 1528 Luther himself boasted of bringing order, discipline and obedience to the family, as well as to society as a whole. 'Among us', he wrote, there was now knowledge of the Scriptures and also of 'marriage, civil obedience, the duties of father and mother, father and son, master and servant'.
>
> (Stone, 1979: 111)

Here the emphasis on patriarchy can clearly be seen.

Women who disobeyed—who tried to exert self-governance, like for example, Chaucer's the Wife of Bath's *maistrie*—were seen as sinners, as rebels against the established divine moral order. When a wife disobeyed her husband—that is, tried to exercise *sovereintee*—she attacked everything that Puritans believed Christian men should stand for. Milton who expounded Puritanism in his prose work, reflects this attitude in his pamphlets on divorce.[2] For him the subordination of a wife to her husband is of great significance and this is summed up in his description of sex-typed obligations: "He for God only, she for God in him" (*Paradise Lost*, Book 4, line 295). Milton further expresses his arguments in the following extract from *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1644):

[2] Theological matters concerned Milton, and his unfortunate first marriage led to his works on divorce, in which he cites the Bible as the authority for abolishing the existing marriage-laws and he defends the practice of divorce, even for simple incompatibility.

> Who can be ignorant that woman was created for man, and not man for woman; and that a husband may be injur'd as insufferably in marriage as a wife. What an injury is it after wedlock not to be belov'd, what to be slighted, what to be contended with in point of house-rule who shall be the head, not for any parity of wisdome (for that were something reasonable) but out of *a female pride.*[3]
>
> (p. 153)

This stubbornness and self-absorption, in Milton's view, is partially due to the weakness of a woman's mind. She is by nature, as Milton believes and states explicitly in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, lazy, unfit for study, and unsuited to understand the subtleties of masculine philosophical conversation; her husband or father tells her what she should know, and if she is obedient and biddable, she should believe him (**Ibid**., pp. 155-156). Milton argues that "Who knows not that the bashful muteness of a virgin may oft-times hide all the unliveliness and natural sloth which is really unfit for conversation" (**Ibid**.).

From these remarks we understand that women are not only excluded from male discussion over philosophical topics (which imply the "superiority" of male intellect as compared to women's) but in addition they have been subject to (and subjects of) male authority. Eve is made to be submissive to male authority, both God's and Adam's. It takes the Fall to make her realize that she cannot ignore men's superiority and should not try to act alone. "… but Eve, / Not so repulsed, with tears that ceased not flowing / And tresses all disordered, at his feet / Fell humble, and, embracing them, besought / His peace, and thus proceeded in her plaint" (Book 10, 909-913). She spends most of the last three books of the poem in submissive positions—either on her knees or prone (asleep). In Book 12, when Michael announces the promise of the coming of the Saviour, Adam is grateful—but Eve is asleep (594). Thus, once again her chance to hear divine wisdom passes her by—she must depend on her husband to interpret it for her. Although Adam and Eve have both sinned against the Divine Providence, woman's guilt seems to be greater, not only because she sinned first, but because she uses her female wiles to get the male to sin as well. Man's sin is less than woman's because she ate the

[3] From **The Prose of John Milton**, pp. 125-207, [my italics].

apple for power and greed, while he ate it for love of her. This is a major flaw where Adam is concerned because he forgets his sovereignty and his allegiance to God.

Moreover, in the four central books of *Paradise Lost* (Books 5-8), it is Adam who eagerly accepts instruction from Raphael and questions him about divine purpose, while Eve wanders about in the Garden picking fruit and flowers and serving lunch. As it is clear, she fulfills the traditional roles assigned to women according to the patriarchal definitions of femininity. She conforms to the prescribed models of the ideal woman as submissive and unopinionated. As such, she accords with Laura Mulvey's argument that the power of the male is asserted through the reduction of the female to a passive and obedient object (Mulvey, 1998: 586). The housewifely Eve, "on hospitable thoughts intent," serves Adam and his angelic guest an Edenic cold collation of fruits and nuts, berries and "dulcet creams". Since they are at this point innocent of sin, both are naked and unconscious of it (Book 5, 443-48). She blithely announces that she will wait for Adam to tell her what she needs to know—at once a model of obedience but also evidence for Milton's argument that a "woman's brain does not naturally seek intellectual stimulation but avoids it" (in *Divorce*, p. 148). Raphael warns Adam of Satan's plot to corrupt humanity in Book 8. Yet, Eve is not present because God does not want her to be there.

Milton also argues that women's physical attractiveness to men is dangerous, because it makes men forget their natural superiority to women and want to surrender to them. When Adam expresses that his feelings towards Eve include passion, Raphael sternly rebukes him:

> Accuse not Nature, she hath done her part;
> Do thou but thine; and be not diffident
> Of Wisdom; she deserts thee not, if thou
> Dismiss not her, when most thou needest her nigh,
> By attributing overmuch to things
> Less excellent, as thou thyself perceivest.
> For, what admirest thou, what transports thee so,
> An outside? fair, no doubt, and worthy well
> Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love;
> Not thy subjection: Weigh with her thyself;
> Then value: Oft-times nothing profits more
> Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right

Well managed; of that skill the more thou knowest,
The more she will acknowledge thee her head,
And to realities yield all her shows.

(Book 8, 561-575)

While Raphael praises Adam's capacity to love, he warns Adam to control his passion: Adam should love, cherish, and honour Eve, but should not allow her to rule him. However, because of his love for Eve, Adam chooses to eat the apple. Not understanding how Eve's will is bent from the fact that Satan enters into her dream, Adam acquiesces to Eve's desire to work alone. Eve attributes Adam's caution neither to "tender love" (Book 9, 357) nor to suspicion of Satan's wiles but to mistrust of her. Feeling that compelled obedience will only alienate Eve more ("Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more" (Book 9, 372), Adam reluctantly consents to their separation. His excessive fondness for Eve, rooted in the bliss of conjugal love, impairs his judgement. Adam's devotion proves irrational, as Eve's narcissism engenders the desire to be worshipped as a Goddess. Eve chooses to induce Adam to eat because she is resolved that Adam shall share her fate and that she is envious of the possibility of the another woman. After their sin, their ardour, once based on mutual respect, turns to carnal lust. They seek to cover their nakedness; then fall to variance and accusation of one another.

Above all, Milton argues, women are stubborn and they refuse to be governed by men, showing their ignorance, their sinfulness, and their general unworthiness. "The wife, where danger or dishonour lurks, / Safest and seemliest by her husband stays, / Who guards her, or with her the worst endures" (Book 9, 268-270). The debate on working separately in Book 9, where we see Eve being politely but stubbornly unwilling to respond to Adam's guidance (the line about "sweet austere composure" (Book 9, 272) is very significant), shows this weakness that Milton considered was common to all women. The adjectives in this speech—for instance, "domestic Adam" and "reply with accent sweet renewed"—are wonderful examples of a polite but bloody fight over women's attempt to claim free will and self-governance. In the debate in Book 9, moreover, Eve's insistence on working alone, her refusal to be governed by Adam's

"reasonableness," is an emblem of that stubbornness that Milton argues in The *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and it is this idea of stubbornness that leads her directly into temptation:

> Custom. . . rests not in her unaccomplishment, until by secret inclination,she accorporate her selfe with error, who being a blind and Serpentine body without a head, willingly accepts what he wants, and supplies what her incompleteness went seeking.
>
> (*The Doctrine*, p. 164)

Thus, in Milton's view, the Fall of Man is brought about by woman—by her envy, stubbornness, vanity, willing ignorance, and refusal to accept the reasonable guidance of men. The Fall takes place in Book 9 ("Forth-reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat; / Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,/ Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe / That all was lost" (Book 9, 781-784); and it clearly is initiated by women. We should note that when Satan tempts Eve, he tempts her not with wealth or flattery, but with equality of status: "Thou, therefore, also taste, that *equal* lot / May join us, *equal* joy, as *equal* love (Book 9, 881-882, [my italics]). He offers her knowledge—in other words, the intellectual status of a man—and she, in her ignorance, believes that such is possible under Milton's divine order. The differences between the sexes are clearly stressed in the following lines uttered by Satan who watches Adam and Eve in the Garden:

> … : though both
> Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
> For contemplation he and valour formed,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
> He for God only, she for God in him.
>
> (Book 4, 295-299)

The derivate nature of Eve posits an ontological distinction and inferiority in her from the beginning. Thus Paul, the earliest constructive Christian theologian, can claim:

> "A man has no need to cover his head, because man is the image of God, and the mirror of his glory, whereas woman reflects the glory of man. For man did not originally spring from woman, but woman was made out of man; and therefore it is woman's duty to have a sign of authority on her head, out of regard for the angels."
>
> (1 Corinthians: 7-10)

Almost as an afterthought, upon the failure of all other creatures to satisfy the needs of the male human being, God created the female with the purpose of being Adam's companion. Second in the order of creation, her purpose was to serve Adam; lacking in wisdom her actions in the garden resulted in the fall of all humankind. These Christian theologians, through their explications of the "first" woman, contributed enormously to the construction of both "Eve" and "womanhood" for all subsequent generations of Christians. Eve connects "woman" to that which is secondary and evil, derivative and weak, as that which led to the "fall" of all humanity.

Eve's actions cause Adam to cry out, in the most bitter rebuke in the poem, against God's reasons for creating woman in the first place (Book 10, 888-895):

> O! why did God,
> Creator wise, that peopled highest Heaven
> With Spirits masculine, create at last
> This novelty on earth, this fair defect
> Of nature, and not fill the world at once
> With Men, as Angels, without feminine;
> Or find some other way to generate
> Mankind?

Adam's lines above which convey misogynistic expressions attest to the sordid truth that throughout the history of epics, misogyny has been a recurring theme, even an epic tradition. In the *Odyssey* there is the story of Clytemnestra, the "evil" woman in male discourse, who kills her husband, Agamemnon, after he returns from the Trojan War, so that she can live with her lover. Agamemnon utters the following lines in Homer's *Odyssey* ((Book Twenty-four, 157-169, [my italics]):

> O fortunate Odysseus, master mariner
> And soldier, blessed son of old Laertes!
> The girl you brought home made a valiant wife!
> True to her husband's honor and her own,
> Penelope, Ikaros' faithful daughter!
> The very gods themselves will sing her story
> for men on earth—mistress of her own heart,
> Penelope!

> Tyndareus' daughter waited, too—how differently!
> Clytemnestra, the adultress,
> waited to stab her lord and king. That song
> will be forever *hateful*. A *bad name*
> she gave to *womankind*, even the best.

For Agamemnon, who is one of the representatives of the patriarchal male order, his wife Clytemnestra is a woman by whose sin the fame of woman kind—even the chasest—is blemished. In the epic the *Iliad* which predates the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, Helen causes the deaths of thousands of Greeks when she abandons her husband and flees to Troy with her lover. Where Clytemnestra is responsible for the death of one man and Helen for the deaths of several thousands, Milton's Eve is claimed to be responsible for the death of every human being who will ever be born. Helen has an affair with Paris and Clytemnestra with Aegisthus. Eve is seduced by the devil himself. Milton represents the woman as the root of all sin and destruction and in league with the devil, which is, of course, a typical misogynistic outlook. Since his work is a Christian epic Milton is following the biblical story of the garden of Eden.

The idea of woman's being a source of sin and destruction goes back to Genesis, and more precisely to two episodes on which many theologians had commented: the creation of Eve and the Fall. God created Eve from Adam, and in the minds of many theologians this fact justified woman's submission to man. Jean-Michel Sallmann remarks that "Indeed, the account of Eve's creation from Adam's rib, **a curved bone**, indicated that the mind of woman was inevitably twisted and perverse" (Sallmann, 1994: 47). The Fall proved that this was the case: Satan tempted Eve, and Eve seduced Adam and led him into sin. Woman was directly responsible for the fall of man. Accordingly, the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum* who wrote a document in the church's drive against witchcraft, attributed female carnality to Eve, "the first temptress", who was also responsible for the widespread female tendency to seduce and lie. These moral defects were due to an initial flaw in her creation: "It should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man" (in Creed, 1993: 76).

Significantly, the fact that the bone is curved and that Eve is made of it, points to the grotesque concept of the female body, which, as I have stated earlier in reference to Bakhtin's use of the term, signifies the rebellious, non-conformist female figure in male discourse which considers the female body to be a site of disorder and corruption. Eve's creation from the twisted bone refers us to the chaotic nature of the female body, particularly the maternal, which involves diversities and, to borrow Kristeva's term, abjections, such as menstruation and childbirth. It is also interesting to point out that if Eve is formed from one of Adam's ribs while he is unconscious, and if this rib is closer to the heart of Adam, it can be argued that man and woman are confirmed as akin to the point of becoming one, as Adam says referring to Eve "flesh of my flesh" (Genesis, 2: 23). This further alludes to Eve's being Adam's alter ego. The twisted shape of the bone, moreover, is suggestive of the shape of the snake, the curling, sinewy body of the snake, thus the erotic entanglement of Eve and the serpent implying bodily incorporation. This idea is expressed by Gilbert and Gubar when they say, "The woman is imprisoned in the coil of serpentine images that misogynistic myths and traditions constructed for them" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 214). Satan describes Adam and Eve in Book 4 where their hair is also mentioned. Adam's hair is "manly hung / Clustering", like bunches of grapes. Eve's longer hair in "wanton ringlets," like the *ancillary* "tendrils" (Book 4, 302-306) is meant to imply her [s]ubjection (308). However, most important of all, Eve's golden tresses waving in wanton, wandering ringlets suggest a sinister potential. The portrayal of woman as devouring, serpentine, and all-powerful is conveyed through the motif of embracing yet ensnaring hair in order to demonstrate masculine neurosis (the fear of being engulfed by the female). Men create negative representations of femininity by either externalising or objectifying women in order to be able to assert their superiority and overcome the fear and contempt they feel towards women.

Eve's being told "to thine husband's will / Thine shall submit (Book 10, 195-196) is an epitome of the male approach to women not only in the Christian society of the seventeenth-century but also in the societies dating from pre-Christian times.

Furthermore, it is not only in *Paradise Lost* that Milton appears as a misogynist. His *Samson Agonistes* is a dramatic poem where Milton generally follows the biblical account, with a number of changes. The myth, the story, of Samson is located principally in the Old Testament, specifically Judges 12-16. In the Bible Delilah is Samson's mistress. Milton makes her his wife in order to establish a relationship between the story of Samson and Delilah and that of Adam and Eve. Samson was betrayed and so was Adam. While he subtitled the poem as "A Dramatic Poem" Milton took great care to explain that he did not intend the play for stage: it is a play for reading rather than acting. This indicates how Milton in his puritanical way thought that stage had been immoral. The Puritans closed the theatres after the abolition of monarchy. Patristic condemnation of the theatre, typified in tracts from the third-century Tertullian's to those of Renaissance Puritans, build on a Platonic condemnation of mimesis as the making of counterfeit copies of true originals. Actors in paint and costume contaminate their true God-given identities: "Whatever is *born*," writes Tertullian, "is the work of God. Whatever is *plastered on* is the devil's work" (quoted in Hull, 1996: 46). In this context, it can be argued that the nature of theatrical representation, like the "nature" of Satan and woman (Eve), is to ensnare, deceive, and seduce.

In *Samson Agonistes* Delilah is frequently compared with a snake (line 763) or a viper (lines 997-1000), which is the disguise used by Satan during his tempting of Eve: Delilah is the tempter of Samson. Milton continues this tradition, that is, the amalgam of the woman and the serpent, in *Paradise Lost* in his portrayal of Eve especially in Book 9. However, he sets the scene for our intended condemnation and dislike of Eve much earlier. In order to do this, Milton brings Satan and Sin together in Book 2 for the purpose of creating an allegory that juxtaposes the actions and characteristics of Sin with those of Eve. This allegory develops Milton's espousal of misogyny and takes this epic "tradition" to a yet unattempted level.

Towards the end of Book 2 in *Paradise Lost*, Satan meets two horrifying creatures guarding the gates of hell who turn out to be his forgotten children, Sin and

Death.[4] The relationship between Satan, Sin and Death provides a parody of the heavenly Trinity of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.[5] Sin, who holds the key to hell, explains how she was seduced by Satan and how Death was conceived as an outcome of their union. Then Death "in embraces forcible and foul" (line 793) raped Sin and this act resulted in the birth, as she describes them, of

> These yelling monsters that with ceaseless cry
> Surround me, as thou saw'st, hourly conceived
> And hourly born, with sorrow infinite
> To me, for, when they list, into the womb
> That bred them they return, and howl, and gnaw
> My bowels, their repast, then, bursting forth
> Afresh, with conscious terrors vex me round,
> That rest or intermission none I find.
>
> (Book 2, 795-802)

Thus is vividly dramatised the infiniteness of guilt or fear which attends sin. Just as, in the human story of Adam and Eve, the fruit of the forbidden tree "brought death into the world, and all our woe", so here in the story of Satan, Sin's "fatal key" becomes the "sad instrument of all our woe", which eventually will allow Death into the world (Book 1, 3; Book 2, 872). At this fateful moment there is thunder as the gates open, just as there will be at the moment of Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit (Book 2, 882; Book 9, 1002). God is, we remember, known as the Thunderer (Book 1, 93; Book 2, 28).

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[4] Satan's taunt that the "hell-born" should not "contend with spirits of heaven" is countered by the returned taunt by Death that Satan is "hell-doomed" and should watch his language (Book 2, 687, 697). An impressive epic simile of two black clouds meeting over the Caspian emphasises their threatening confrontation, which is interrupted by Sin, who addresses Satan as *her* father, and refers to Death as *his* son and then as *her* son (Book 2, 727-730):

> O Father, what intends thy hand,
> Against thy only son? What fury, O Son,
> Possesses thee to bend that mortal dart
> Against thy father's head?
>
> (Book 2, 727-730)

[5] The Satanic family, consisting of the unholy trinity of Satan, Sin, and Death is dysfunctional: as Sin makes it clear, Death would devour even "his parent" except that he knows "His end with [hers] involv'd" (Book 2, 805-807). Taking the perverted form of the "Holy Trinity" into consideration, we should bear in mind that Satan attempts to kill his only son Death when they first meet at the gates of hell. This establishes a contrast with the circumstance that will surround God sacrificing His only Son to the salvation of mankind.

Satan has obviously forgotten Sin, so she reminds him of the circumstances of her birth. It was at the assembly of seraphim called to plot against God, where she sprang out of his head, causing him at the time "miserable pain" (Book 2, 752). However, with her "attractive graces", she soon became a secret lover of her father's, and eventually, after the war in heaven and her appointment to her present post, she gave birth to their bastard, Death. Eve is made from Adam's rib, hence she is a secondary creation. Sin, Satan's "Daughter," on the other hand, is burst from the fallen angel's brain. Sin's birth links her to the classical legend of the birth of the goddess Athena: she sprang fully armed from the head of Zeus, and thus had no mother. Yet, Sin's birth from Satan's brain is a grotesque subversion of the mythical story.

Similar to Spenser's Errour in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, Sin, half woman, half serpent, ("Woman to the waist, and fair, / But Foul in many a scaly fold / Voluminous and vast, a Serpent arm'd / With mortal sting" (Book 10, 890-893)), is a monstrous representation of female sexuality, particularly the maternal, which is demonstrated as shocking, horrifying and abject. As such, like Errour, she is marked as deviant and perverse. Encoded as an emblem of lust, Errour and Sin and their parasitic offspring evoke the uncontrollable nature of femininity, and the image functions as a locus of male abhorrence with, and dread of, sexuality and reproduction.

What Satan and Death have in common is their desire for Sin. While Satan is her actual father and rapes her, Death, their son, also rapes her. This makes her a victim at the hands of males and the rape indicates the possession of the female body by patriarchy. Sin with her passivity becomes their object of desire because she represents an apt mirror for the men where they can see their ideal image of masculinity reflected back to them. In Book 9, Milton describes Satan's temptation of Eve, the sin that follows, and the consequences of that sin. Eve's sin also results in the mortality of mankind. Satan's incestuous affair with Sin results in a horrible child, Death, just as death is the fruit of the sin of Adam and Eve. "Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste / Brought death into the world and all our woe," (Book 1, 1-3) Sin is female like Eve, she is serpentine as Satan is and as Adam

tells Eve *she* is. Like Eve, Sin is also disobedient because it is at Satan's behest that she disobeys God's commandments and opens the gates of hell to unleash the first cause of evil in the world. Sin also wants to be "as Gods," to reign in a "new world of light and bliss" (Book 2, 867). Her allegiance to Satan ("Thou art my Father, thou my Author, thou / My being gav'st me; whom should I obey / But thee, whom follow?" (Book 2, 864-866) is similar to Eve's speech to Adam ("But now lead on ... with thee to go, / Is to stay here; without thee here to stay, / Is to go hence unwilling; thou to mee / Art all things under Heav'n ..." (Book 12, 614-618). Sin and Eve have similar encounters with Satan that end in similar results. Both women are seduced by Satan, both have pain in childbirth, and both bring about (D)death. With the use of this allegory Milton prepares the reader's mind for an association of femininity with evil and ugliness. Also, when one reads of Eve in Book 9, the effect is infinitely multiplied since Eve is now not just one woman making one mistake, but she stands as the representative of the whole concept of (S)sin. Furthermore, as the first woman, her embodiment of sin is indisputably passed on to all forthcoming wo/men.

The association of female sexuality with monstrosity alludes to Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque body and Kristeva's theory of the abject. The female who does not conform to the roles reserved for her by the patriarchal male culture is defined in her relation to her sexuality, specifically the abject nature of her maternal and reproductive functions which come to be associated with a sense of monstrosity. Furthermore, the representation of woman as monstrous or grotesque in relation to her maternal sexuality works to reinforce the phallocentric notion that female sexuality is abject.

Milton creates the body of Sin as an allegory for the way in which women accomplish their sin, by being seductively beautiful and dangerously serpent-like in their alliance with Satan. Sin is described as "seemed woman to the waist and fair, / But ended in many a scaly fold" (Book 2, 650-651). Sin's appearance is reminiscent of Eve in the way that Eve similarly appears beautiful but deep down is evil portrayed by Milton. Eve demonstrates her true nature when she answers Satan's seduction and tempts Adam to join her in sin and because of her apparent beauty, Adam yields to her

saying he is “fondly overcome with female charm” (Book 9, 999). After God punishes Adam and Eve, Adam acknowledges Eve’s betrayal and says, “Is this the love, is this the recompense / Of mine to thee, ingrateful Eve?” (Book 9, 1163-1164). Even though Adam has free choice when he sins, it is Eve whom Milton represents as sinful, implying that women are culpable for all sin.

Milton begins *Paradise Lost* by allowing Satan to tell the story of his fall from heaven and his reasons for rebelling against God. Eve is not afforded the same chance. She and all women are condemned from the beginning of *Paradise Lost* when in Book 2 Milton presents Sin and her feminine hideousness as an allegory for the story of Eve that follows. Eve is depicted as a female figure who is easily seduced and she is in league with Satan. From Eve to all women, the blame for death and man’s trials are transferred. And God punishes all women implying that they are all “Eves” plotting behind men’s backs, causing trouble, and never realising that their actions have dire consequences for all of mankind. Thus the woman is punished by God first by painful childbearing and then by an unequal status as compared to man, “You shall be eager for your husband, / and he shall be your master” (Genesis 3: 16). Displaying women in this light is not something new to Milton. This convention has long been presented by writers especially epic writers throughout the centuries. Milton’s “adventurous song ... intends to soar / Above the Aonian mount” (Book 1, 15) and as far as misogyny is concerned he certainly does so.

John Carey argues that Milton’s Satan is a comic spirit, one without the capacity “to understand anything” (Carey, 1997: 132). Helen Gardner, on the other hand, views Satan’s characterisation as essentially tragic (Gardner, 1965: 62). Milton’s Satan through “pride and worse ambition”, as he himself states, is thrown from heaven, warring against “Heaven’s matchless King” (Book 4, 40-41). He thinks he may repent and obtain by act of grace his former state; however, God knows that “soon unsay / What feigned submission swore” (Book 4, 93-96). In Book 3, God, sitting on his throne, sees Satan flying towards this World, then newly created; shows him to the Son, who sits at his right hand; foretells the success of Satan in perverting mankind; clears his

own justice and wisdom from all accusation, having created Man free and able enough to have withstood his Tempter. God concerning man and man's Fall, tells to his Son "Ingrate, he had of me / All he could have; I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (Book 3, 97-99). Yet God declares his purpose of grace towards man, in regard he fell not of his own malice, as did Satan, but by him seduced:

> The first sort by their suggestion fell,
> Self-tempered, self-depraved; Man falls, deceived
> By the other first: Man, therefore, shall find grace,
> The other, none.
>
> (Book 3, 128-131)

Unlike C. S. Lewis's interpretation of Satan as a comic character and Helen Gardner's evaluation of him as a tragic figure, Milton portrays Satan as a monster full of pride and fully aware of the options which confront him. He deliberately chooses the path of maximum perversity. Milton's Satan who is gigantic of size "... in bulk as huge / As whom the Fables name of monstrous size, / Titanian, or Earth-born" (Book 1, 196-198) is a rebel who impregnates his own daughter, Sin. The portrait of Satan refers us to the definition of the grotesque which involves what is ugly, what makes us wince or look away. As opposed to the classical, the grotesque representation of the body in art signifies the body in its non-idealised form. As I have stated before, gigantic figures, deformed and hideous bodies are all hallmarks of the grotesque. Milton's depiction of Satan and the adjectives Milton applies to describe him, such as "gigantic size," "monstrous size" and "Titanian" function to demonstrate Satan as monstrous, ugly and grotesque thereby evoking a sense of horror and disgust.

Furthermore, the grotesque and horrific representation of Satan finds its counterpart in the description of hell that Satan visits on his way to discover the newly created world. In Book 2 Satan summons a council which debates whether another battle for the recovery of heaven shall be hazarded, but decides to examine the report that a new world, with new creatures in it, has been created. Satan undertakes the search alone. His flight through hell brings him to the gates, which he finds guarded by two figures, a female called Sin and a male called Death. In this book, hell is described. It

has a geography like the earth, with rivers and mountains, but it is a place "Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds, / Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things, / Abominable, unutterable, and worse" (Book 2, 624-626) hell has the worst of nature: Milton emphasises the awful, inescapable smells of hell, the raging "perpetual storms," the rivers with their "ways of torrent fire." By drawing hell in this complex of adjectives, Milton also attempts to say that these events are nature perverted which were caused by the creation of hell and evil after Satan's fall because Satan and his legions which he drew to his side by the command of God were driven out of heaven. They all inspire the fear of a dissolution of an ordered and hierarchical world. Moreover, in traditional Western philosophy the body has always been established as the negative representation of the mind/body dichotomy, and implicitly defined as dangerous and chaotic. These negative characteristics of the body have found their equations with the female and nature. In Milton's description of hell which reflects a sense of fear and disgust through the images of darkness and chaos, we can perceive the analogy drawn between nature and woman. This analogy which links sexual lust and uncontrollable passion with the feminine, hence the aspects of corruption and disembodiment inherent in human existence, also indicates how men come to enforce negative body images on women thereby constituting a masculine way of fashioning the female body.

Satan and Eve are depicted as monstrous and grotesque creatures. They are both the destructive, evil, terrifying, and deviant "other" whose actions cause the downfall of humanity. In order to show that Eve is a disruptive force, Milton portrays in her the flaws he believes are inherent in all women—the weaknesses that lead them to sin and cause the downfall of the men seduced by their beauty. Milton's conviction that women are narcissistic, obsessed by their own beauty is illustrated in Eve's gazing on herself in the water. The fascination of Eve in her own beauty can be traced back to the myth of

Narcissus[6] which presents some important points that should be underlined as far as *Paradise Lost* is concerned. The scene in the poem where Eve is first confronted by her "image" is highly evocative of the response of the mythical character. The reflection of her image in the pool is noteworthy in that it refers us to the elements of narcissism which is a part of her character. Like Narcissus, it is the impact of first seeing her own image that begins the change in Eve:

> … . I thither went
> With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
> On the green bank, to look into the clear
> Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.
> As I bent down to look, just opposite,
> A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
> Bending to look on me. I started back,
> It started back; but pleased I soon returned,
> Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
> Of sympathy and love; there I had fixed
> Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire,
> Had not a voice thus warned me: "What thou seest,
> What there thou seest, fair creature, is thyself:
>
> (Book 4, 456-468)

According to Freud, the early phase of the development of the ego, during which its sexual instincts find auto-erotic satisfaction is called "narcissism." Freud goes on to say that "It follows that the preliminary stage of the scopophilic instinct, in which the subject's own body is the object of the scopophilia, must be classed under narcissism, and that we must decribe it as a narcissistic formation." (Freud, "On Narcissism", p. 46). From Freud's perspective, one of the distinguishing traits as far as the "feminine" is concerned is narcissism. He also associates the idea of narcissism with the effect of penis-envy because for him, since women do not possess a penis, "they are bound to

[6] Narcissus was a beautiful lad, who was admired by the girls he met. All the lovelorn ladies loved him. However he, a scorner of love, would have none of them. One of those maidens he wounded prayed a prayer and it was answered by the gods: "May he who loves not others love himself." As Narcissus bent over a clear pool for a drink and saw there his own reflection, on the moment he fell in love with it. "Now I know," he cried, "what others have suffered from me, for I burn with love of *my own self*—yet how can I reach that loveliness I see mirrored in the water? But I cannot leave it. Only death can set me free." And so it happened. He pined away, leaning perpetually over the pool, fixed in one long gaze and became the flower which bears his name (Hamilton, 1969: 87-88).

value their charms more highly as a late compensation for their original sexual inferiority" (Freud, "Femininity" p. 414).

Eve's gazing on herself in the water with a sense of self-absorption is considered as a female threat by the patriarchal male discourse. When Eve is brooding over her own image, she is, in fact, as Irigaray points out, discovering her sexual identity, "the singularity of [her] desires, of [her] auto-erotism, of [her] narcissism" (in Whitford, 1995: 44). However, giving up her love for her desires is uprooting her from her identity, her subjectivity. Men fear this because they want to have women as "the servants of the phallic cult, objects to be used by and exchanged between men, rival objects on the market, the situation in which we have always been placed" (**Ibid**., p. 45). That is why Eve is interrupted by the voice of the ultimate patriarch God. Accordingly, her triumph is marred because her reflection in the pool gives evidence enough that she does somehow exist. Yet, the fact that her gaze is conditioned by that of the patriarch attests to the sordid truth that the woman should be thrown into the state of traditional invisibility.

Milton shows us that narcissism is an innate quality of woman, a trait that exists in her at the very moment of her creation, and he attributes the main cause of the fall of man to the self-love that Eve is prey to. In doing so, Milton makes an analogy between Satan and Eve in terms of their being victims of pride. Satan appears in the form of a "pleasing" and "lovely" serpent. Thus he represents his appeal to Eve's fondness for the beautiful. Furthermore, his speech to tempt Eve is based on his understanding of the high importance she gives to her beauty. The only things in her that Adam finds irresistible are her beauty and purity:

> … and I saw the Shape
> Still glorious before whom awake I stood,
> Who, stooping, opened my left side, and took
> From thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm,
> And life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound,
> But suddenly with flesh filled up and healed.
> The rib he formed and fashioned with his hands;
> Under his forming hands a creature grew,
> Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair
> That what seemed fair in all the world seemed now

Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained,
And in her looks, which from that time infused
Sweetness into my heart unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspired
The spirit of love and amorous delight.

(Book 8, 463-477)

This description provides the reader with an impression of absolute purity and perfection, emphasised by the way the words are put in the passage.

After Eve eats the fruit of the forbidden tree, she acquires the ultimate knowledge of mortality and of the transient nature of human existence. What Eve advocates for Adam is that he should partake of the fruit which has been forbidden by God and therefore achieve transcendental knowledge. It is not, however, for man to strive to emulate God and assume to take part in creation. When the individual forces the limits imposed upon him, the result is chaos. She falls. And Adam is meant to do so by his own free will. What Adam and Eve experience is a kind of inversion of an order founded by God, an act which points to Bakhtin's notion of the carnival. Everything authoritative, rigid or serious is subverted during carnival time which is marked by a brief period of permitted anarchy. This period offers an acceptable outlet for rebellious energy and people feel released from all obligations and laws of order. However, this freedom from the prevailing truth and the established order is temporary and after the Fall, Adam and Eve undergo a transformation. This situation is symbolically depicted by the roses in the garland he has made for her which wither and die when Eve goes to Adam after she eats the fruit. Moreover, the sensuality of their coupling is pitted against the innocent lovemaking of Book 4: their lovemaking before the Fall is characterised in bucolic terms: there is a "cool Zephyr", the meal is vegetarian, and Adam and Eve are linked in "happy nuptial league" (Book 4, 329-39). Nevertheless, shame and lasciviousness attend postlapsarian sex and distinguish it from the "Love unlibidinous"—innocent sexuality—of Eden before the Fall. After their first sexual intercourse following the Fall the bodily change is reflected in both Adam and Eve. Here it is specifically related to the dominion of sensuality:

Their inward state of mind, calm region once
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:
For understanding ruled not, and the will
Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
To sensual appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sovereign reason claimed
Superior sway.
(Book 9, 1125-1131)

It is also after the Fall that Adam and Eve first feel their nakedness to be shameful and that they cover themselves with fig leaves: "O how unlike / To that first naked glory," the poet says (Book 9, 1114-1115). This shame in their bodies ironically fulfills Satan's promise to Eve that her eyes will be opened; but instead of the knowledge to which Eve aspires, the shameful knowledge of fallen sexuality results.

It is also worth noting that when Eve eats the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, her decision to tell Adam of her disobedience turns on two suppositions: if her transgression is kept secret from God, Eve's augmented knowledge might increase Adam's love for her, and perhaps cause her to be more equal or even superior to Adam. We are told that Eve was created comparable to Adam as his helper. She refers to Adam as her "Author and Disposer" (Book 4, 635). Furthermore, she says that while God is Adam's law, Adam is her law. Apparently, Eve is annoyed under this arrangement, as she wraps up her evaluation of not telling Adam of her sin with, "for inferior who is free?" However, her death is assured if God has seen her wrongdoing. In this case, God may provide Adam with another woman, rendering Eve extinct. Eve finds this alternative unbearable because Adam might father children with a "new Eve". Eve's consideration of each alternative points to her narcissism and her need to be loved, even worshipped. Milton's Eve, like Narcissus, is infatuated with herself. Created in Adam's image, Eve draws Adam's love, his narcissism projected onto Eve. Inexperienced with women's wiles, uxorious Adam falls.

Having created Adam in his own image, God commanded Adam not to eat the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil:

... of the tree whose operation brings
Knowledge of good and ill, which I have set,
The pledge of thy obedience and thy faith,
Amid the garden by the Tree of Life,

Remember what I warn thee: shun to taste,
And shun the bitter consequence, for know,
The day thou eat'st thereof, my sole command
Transgressed, inevitably thou shalt die,
From that day mortal, and this happy state
Shalt lose, expelled from hence into a world
Of woe and sorrow.

(Book 8, 323-333)

After God created Eve from Adam's rib, Milton's Adam warns Eve that the result of eating the forbidden fruit will be the knowledge of death. From the Bible and Milton's text it is obvious that Eve learns all this only directly from Adam. It is significant that God sends Raphael to "converse with Adam," to warn him of the fall of Satan and his companions, and thus to alert Adam to the danger emanating from Satan. Two strong angels are appointed to Adam's bower in order to prevent the evil Spirit from doing some harm to Adam and Eve sleeping: there they find him at the ear of Eve, tempting her in a dream. Eve tells Adam about the dream. God sends the archangel Raphael to warn them against disobedience. He also gives them a long account of Satan's rebellion and the war in heaven, explaining how God then decided to make a new World with human beings in it. Adam asks him about the structure of the universe, which Raphael explains in length. Eve leaves the scene while the two men discuss astronomy, her "reason" not suitable for this subject matter, and she only overhears Raphael's final warning about Satan. Eve must be removed from the scene, or remain silent, in order for the men to talk. Woman's victimisation in a patriarchal culture thus also involves loss of her voice. Her absences from the scene likewise reinforce the impression that her secondary status is determined by her gender. Information is power: Eve's status as Adam's "weaker" is made clear:

... he who envies now thy state,
Who now is plotting how he may seduce
Thee also from obedience, that, with him
Bereaved of happiness, thou may'st partake
His punishment, eternal misery,
Which would be all his solace and revenge,
As a despite done against the Most High,
Thee once to gain companion of his woe.
But listen not to his temptations; warn

Thy *weaker*,[7] let it profit thee to have heard,
By terrible example, the reward
Of disobedience; firm they might have stood,
Yet fell; remember, and fear to transgress.

(Book VI, 900-912, [my italics])

Milton delineates Eve's actions in such a manner that we, as readers, can discern some further similarities that link Eve with Satan. The encounter between Eve and Satan underscores the relationship between external temptation and inner character. She is ready to grasp for power at the slightest suggestion; thus she fulfills her destiny by running headlong to meet it. As Stanley Fish has pointed out Eve's temptation speech to Adam in Book 9 is a "tissue of Satanic echoes," with its central idea "Look on me. / Do not believe," an exact echo of anti-religious idea inserted in Satan's earlier temptation speech to her (Fish, 1967: 249-253). Also Adam falls out of his love for Eve. Eve falls exactly for the same reason that Satan does: because she wants to be "as Gods," and because, like him, she is secretly dissatisfied with her place as well as preoccupied with questions of "equality." After her fall, Eve considers the possibility of keeping the fruit to herself "so to add what wants / In Female Sex, the more to draw [Adam's] Love, / And render me more equal" (Book 9, 821-823). Similar to Satan who loses his place as an angel and becomes a dreadful serpent, Eve is also reduced from an angelic being to a monstrous and serpentine creature: Adam yells at her "Out of my sight, thou Serpent, that name best / Befits thee with him leagu'd, thyself as false / And hateful; nothing wants, but that thy shape, / Like his, and colour Serpentine may show / Thy inward fraud" (Book 10, 867-871).

In *Paradise Lost* the fall into Original Sin is a fall out of patriarchal hierarchies. Eve's tasting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge in Book 9 asserts human will above divine will, the feminine above the masculine, appetite above reason. In a way her act gives her the power to alter the order of Creation. Milton presents femininity as a threat, the ability of a woman to subvert the hierarchy that places God above man, and man

[7] According to Peter, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, Eve is "the weaker vessel." (1 Peter, 3:7)

above woman. When the serpent begins speaking, he addresses her "Sovran Mistress," and calls her, "Queen of this Universe" ... "Empress of this fair world." He appeals to the woman who marvels at her image in the pool (as I have discussed in her nativity scene in book 4), who is aware of the effect her beauty has on Adam. The Satanic serpent persuades Eve to eat the apple not because it is delicious but because it has brought a "Strange alteration" in him, thereby giving him "Reason" and "Speech" (Book 9, 599-600). Satan goes on to make promises to Eve by saying that if this "sacred, wise, and wisdom-giving Plant," has made him those changes, the fruit will surely make Eve, a human being, "as Gods," in speech as well as in other powers (Book 9, 599-600 and 679). "Intent now wholly on her taste," she regards "naught else," for "such delight till then ... In fruit she never tasted ... Greedily she engorged without restraint," until at last she is "heightened as with wine, jocund and boon" (Book 9, 786-793). Eve gets intoxicated after eating the apple thereby enjoying herself physically. However, Eve's true goal is intellectual divinity, being equal or superior to Adam (and God), acquiring self-assertion. She actually enjoys the taste of power as an assertive female. After Adam and Eve taste the forbidden fruit, they both change. It is as if they have been intoxicated with wine, a situation which provides an outlet for their repressed feelings and results in the loosening of all the obstacles that God had established. In this context, Bakhtin's idea of the carnival comes to the foreground. The pair's eating of the fruit functions as a force which is disruptive of order and of all the hierarchies set up by God, the patriarch.

Eve's fall results in the pain of birth, "death's necessary opposite and mirror image" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 197) while Adam's punishment after his fall is not as severe as Eve's. As he remarks "On me the curse aslope / Glanc'd on the ground: with labour I must earn / My bread; what harm? Idleness has been worse ..." (Book 10, 1053-1055). They are forced to toil and procreate—two "labours" that seem to define the human condition. They commit a sin against God which results in expulsion and suffering. But it also results in knowledge—specifically, in knowledge of what it means to be human.

After Eve falls, she is condemned to the anguish of maternity by God. However, Sin is the reader's only model of maternity in the poem, and this model is not the most encouraging. Birthing innumerable hell-hounds in a dreadful cycle, Sin is endlessly devoured by her children, who continually emerge from and return to her womb, where they bark and howl unseen. While Eve's most common epithet is the "First Mother" or the "Mother Of Mankind" none of these images is indicative of active motherhood, if one of the primary conditions of motherhood is most likely that one will have had to have borne a child; and Eve has no children at any point in the poem. Eve's punishment for her sin is agonised maternity.

Adam rebels only against God, Eve against God and Adam because Adam is what God is to His realm: absolute master, as her docile speech in Book IV indicates: "My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st / Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains, / God is thy Law, thou mine: to know no more / Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise" (Book 4, 635-638). Milton's Eve is apparently submissive, except for one moment of disastrous rebellion in which she listens to the wrong voice. She is also domestic. Eve is created "in outward show / Elaborate, and inward less exact" (Book 8, 538-539). It is this stereotype of feminine evil – beautiful on the outside/corrupt within – that is so popular within patriarchal discourses about woman's evil nature. She is mostly excluded from God's sight and, at crucial moments in the history of Eden, drugged and silenced by divinely ordained sleep. However, the dream that she has (reported in Book 5) seems to reveal her true feelings: an escape from the garden and its oppressions like Satan who rebelled against God's power. Eve says, "Up to the Clouds ... I flew, and underneath beheld / The Earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide / And various ..." (Book 5, 86-89).

It is Eve, after all, who anguishes helpless and alone, while Adam is talking with superior beings. If Eve wants to learn anything she has to eavesdrop because she is excluded from occasions where she might acquire knowledge. It is Eve in whom the satanic quality of envy rises, causing her to eat the apple in the hope of adding "what wants / In female sex" (Book 9, 821-822). It is Eve, moreover, to whom deathly

isolation is threatened should Adam reject her. Eve's body like her mind is said by Milton resembles "less / His image who made both, and less expressing / The character of that dominion given / O'er other creatures ..." (Book 8, 543-546).

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, begin their essay, "Milton's Bogey" with a number of claims that can be considered to accentuate how the female principle is treated by Milton in *Paradise Lost*. They comment that

> In a patriarchal Christian context the pagan goddess Wisdom may, Milton suggests, become the loathsome demoness Sin, for the intelligence of heaven is made up exclusively of "Spirits Masculine," and the woman, like her dark double, Sin, is a "fair defect / Of Nature" (Book 10, 890-893) ... for sensitive female readers brought up in the bosom of a "masculinist", patristic, neo-Manichean church, the latent as well as the manifest content of such a powerful work as *Paradise Lost* was (and is) bruisingly real. To such women the unholy trinity of Satan, Sin and Eve, diabolically mimicking the holy trinity of God, Christ, and Adam, must have seemed even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to illustrate the historical dispossession and degradation of the female principle.
>
> (pp. 198-199)

An enormous number of claims are made here. First, Milton is operating within a "'masculinist' patristic" framework, cultural and religious. In his representation of Eve he dramatises and reinforces the intrinsic perception of woman as, in various ways, allied to the more dangerous and degenerate human tendencies. Consequently, *Paradise Lost* has functioned for women readers and, significantly, for women writers as a dominant, even threatening, cultural monolith. Gilbert and Gubar also argue that the poem remained largely unchallenged in its literary presentation of the archetypes of male and female characteristics up to the beginning of the twentieth century. Women writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (they emphasise the work of the Brontës and Virginia Woolf), found themselves dealing not only with non-literary social codes of gender stereotyping but also with a literary text which claims to describe, indeed verify, the origins of these socio-cultural abstracts. Thus according to Gilbert and Gubar, women both as literary subjects and as readers of literature were continually shadowed by the presence of Eve, the archetype of naiveté, gullibility, vulnerability and dangerously unsophisticated instinct.

CONCLUSION

"A woman in the shape of a **monster**
a monster in the shape of a **woman**
the skies are full of them"

Adrienne Rich, "Planetarium"

"Man is delighted by this very complexity of woman: a wonderful servant who is capable of dazzling him – and not too expensive. Is she **angel** or **demon**? The uncertainty makes her a Sphinx."

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

The two quotations above illustrate the ambivalent position of the female in the patriarchal male culture: on the one hand, she is represented in negative terms, as fickle and prone to sin; yet her function is to define man and she, moreover, serves as the limit or boundary at which difference is drawn and confirmed. Femininity is culturally constructed as an image of contradiction, and positioned as the symptom at which man-made culture's repressions of what they fear emerge, a condition that results from the fact that femininity at its core is subversive to the whole male order. Since the male has set himself as the human norm, the subject and referent to which the female is "other" or alien, whatever its origin, the function of the male's sexual dis-like is to provide a means of control over a subordinate group and a rationale which justifies the inferior status of those in a lower order, "elucidating" the oppression of their lives. Femininity is also embedded in representations as the material through which, the hero, society, culture and their representations are constituted. Woman, moreover, functions as a sign not only of the essence of femininity but also of the "other" in whose mirror or image, masculine identity and creativity finds its definition.

In traditional Western philosophy the body has always been established as the negative side of the mind/body opposition, and implicitly defined as dangerous, unruly and in need of control. These negative traits of the body have found their equations with the female, matter, passion, nature, sensitivity, and immanence. Furthermore, because of the supremacy of reason in philosophical thinking and the

exclusion of the body from all considerations of the ways knowledge itself is produced, the role the white, male body has played in the production of a certain kind of knowledge, on which the whole of Western civilization sits, has largely been ignored. Given the equation of mind with maleness and body with femaleness, women have been denied the status of knowing subjects and their subordination has been justified by an odd combination of biological and philosophical grounds. The justification of women's inferior social position is realised by containing them within a constructed concept of the female body which is frail, unreliable, unpredictable, and open to uncontrollable intrusions, in contrast to the male body which is accepted as the norm. The old Latin saying "*Tota mulier in utero*" ("Women is nothing but a womb) is indicative of how woman's body has come to be her destiny, and if a woman's body is her destiny then all attempts to question attributed sex-roles will fly in the face of the natural order. It is the identification of the womb with the female body (reproduction) that limits the woman's subjectivity. That is to say, the woman is accepted as all biology and sex and the lack of all other (hu)man aspects. As argued by Simone de Beauvoir "there is an absolute human type, the masculine" (1977: p. 6) and since woman possesses ovaries, a uterus, these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity thereby circumscribing her within the limits of her own nature. Therefore the female body is represented as the victim of a "natural inequality" which is used to account for the social and cultural inequalities they are subjected to. Similarly, the reproduction role of women is used against them in order to relegate them vulnerable, in need of protection and confinement within the domestic scene.

The object of this study has been to explore the female body from the point of view of Mikhail Bakhtin who according to Tzvetan Todorov is one of the greatest theoreticians of literature of the twentieth century (Todorov: 1984: ix). This study has included some of the categories of French feminist thought about the "feminine" and female sexuality. Moreover, I have found it useful to bring together Bakhtin's discussion of the features and functions of the grotesque body with Kristeva's psychoanalytic view of the same phenomena, which she calls "the abject." The grotesque and monstrous-feminine view have been applied in order to trace the ways in which the feminine, in the representations of some female characters, such as the

monster Errour and the witch Duessa in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Sin, Satan's daughter, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is conveyed as a threat. Of course, Eve, "the mother of all who live" (Genesis 3:20) was also analysed since she is believed to be the basic source of human tragedy as a result of her tasting of the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil and giving it to Adam, the first man, who falls because of his love for Eve. As the counterparts of these "monstrous" female characters in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene*, Una and the women of the House of Holiness were put under scrutiny. These "positive" female figures are exemplars rather than women made of flesh and blood. However, in *Paradise Lost*, it was not possible to find a foil for Sin and Eve who are represented by Milton in absolutely negative terms. The monstrous/grotesque female creations by these authors have hideous appearances. Their bodies are zones of repulsion; the reaction they evoke is fear and loathing. In doing so, Spenser and Milton direct us to look upon female images which we have been told to turn away from because they are considered to be traditionally evil. Una and the women of the House of Holiness, on the other hand, insistently declare their iconographical affiliations and generally display few distinguished characteristics apart from those connected with their allegorical "meanings." Since these particular women are portrayed as almost bodiless they pose no threat to the patriarchal male order.

Like their predecessors from pre and post Christian eras, both Spenser and Milton enforce negative body images on women thereby constituting a masculine way of fashioning the female body. To represent the figure of woman, or to imply an identification of woman with the grotesque body is indicative of the body mediated by the symbolic order on which male authority bases itself. The images applied to describe Errour, Duessa, Sin and Eve function to stigmatize as monstrous, de-formed or ab-normal thereby being unable to fit within the limits of the "normal". The heroes of the poem are balanced by sinister or villainous male figures, but the evil of those male characters is not associated with sexuality. By contrast, women such as Errour and Duessa, Sin and Eve are marked by female ambition or erotic energy which makes them to be defined within the confines of monstrous and grotesque images constructed by their patriarchal male creators.

Throughout this study, I have tried to show that the concept of the "grotesque" is a crucial part of the very way the body, particularly the female body, is conceived of and represented. I have cited the difference between the grotesque and the classical in terms of the human body mainly to emphasize that two types of the body are manifest poles for Bakhtin, particularly in social terms. While contrasting the grotesque and the classic canon the purpose has been to denote their basic differences; the superiority of the one over the other has not been not asserted. Yet, the concept of the grotesque has been, of course, foremost in my study, since it determines the images of the female body that have been discussed. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin does not make an explicit distinction between the grotesque body alluding to the feminine or the classical to the masculine. In the context of this study, however, the term the "grotesque" body has been used in its relation to the female body which deviates from the norm and my main interest has lied in the grotesque body which is associated with the feminine because of its features drawn by Bakhtin. In the representation of the body in art and literature, the "classical" body always exists in a dialectical way with the "grotesque" body. The images of the grotesque body are precisely those which are abjected from the bodily canons of classical aesthetics because they are linked with degradation, filth, death, and rebirth. The classical body is transcendent and monumental, closed, static and self-contained; it is also identified with rationalism. The grotesque body, on the other hand, is open, protruding, irregular, multiple, and changing; it is identified with the carnivalesque.

Femininity, as far as Errour, Sin and Duessa are concerned, is constructed to represent the "inexpressible, inscrutable, unmanagable, horrible" (Bronfen, 1992: 255). They are representations of Woman as evil and destructive. These female figures are also personifications of that otherness which can be defined as agents of destruction and the embodiments of pure and unadulterated violence. All that is evil, perverse, destructive and dangerous about female sexuality in the minds of these male writers, Spenser and Milton, are projected onto these women so that these negative qualities can be given a tangible body which can be hunted down, punished and destroyed. As such, what is controlled is otherness as constant volatility, as sexual difference, and as evil's presence in life in the form of the negative qualities and aspects associated with these females. Woman is seen as something deficient,

lacking or threatening to the system which is the precondition of the so-called patriarchal life. Also worthy of discussion is the way in which a precise boundary appears to be established and affirmed over the site/sight of the monstrous female body, between such opposing concepts as the self and "other" and good and evil. In each case, all that is negative is displaced on the body of the female "other."

The notion that women are an innately disruptive, carnivalesque force in society is grounded in a similar perception of the female body as inherently grotesque. As in Bakhtin, this idea is related to the female reproductive capacity. (Charissa, for instance, also stands for the grotesque female body to the extent that with her conspicuous fertility she represents the carnival principles of growth, regeneration, and new life. However, since she is an ideal image of the feminine which is a male construct and which is demonstrated in her conformity and submission to the male order, she does not constitute a threat to men). Duessa, on the other hand, is posited in contradistinction to the passive image that represents the idea of femininity as defined by men. She violates the sexual and social norms of the established order by resisting her subordination and is punished. Her innate appetites and impulses override the tenets of accepted social manners. In the depictions of Errour and Sin, on the other hand, we are presented with the image of the fecund female and her yelping, parasitic progeny that elicit the seemingly uncontrollable nature of femininity, engendering male fear of the reproductive function of the female. This leads ultimately to the representation of the female as monstrous or grotesque.

The spell of the Cult of True Womanhood advocates the ideals of motherhood and chastity as the essence of femininity. These inscribed roles for women are best manifested in the portrayals of Una and the women of the House of Holiness, in particular, who play the roles of nurturer/mother to the man. This is illustrative of how patriarchy rests upon the appropriation of the female body by subordinating woman's fertility to male discourse. And the fact that Errour and Sin are half beast, half woman is indicative of the grotesque body: an impossible, liminal bodily condition in which the normal forms of identity are suspended. Eve's traversing of male territory in a Faustian search for knowledge situates her on the side of the "unnatural"; her suggested affinity with Satan is, likewise, indicative of the

transgression of the "natural". The way the female subject is configured in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* exposes the oppressive structures in Western systems of representation in which as Irigaray claims "the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject" (in Whitford, 1993: 78).

Women are denied the right to create their own images of femaleness, instead they are expected to conform to the patriarchal standards imposed upon them. Irigaray has been concerned to find a figure able to exemplify the feminine imaginary because the God of Christianity, as the epitome of masculine imaginary, excludes women's experience as a point of reference. The feminine god would be one to give form to multiplicity, difference, becoming, flows, rhythms – that is to the body. In other words, to those things which cannot receive a viable image within a patriarchal religious experience. "A **feminine** god", Irigaray claims in her work *Divine Women*, "is yet to come" (1986: p. 8) and the "yet to come" of the feminine god is the god of becoming – the god of fluidity and transient boundaries, of the amorphous elements of fire, air, earth and water. Julia Kristeva, on the other hand, in her essay "About Chinese Women" argues that, in order to bring about change, woman has to subvert the symbolic structure:

> But how can we do this? By listening; by recognizing the unspoken in all discourse, however Revolutionary, by emhasizing at each point whatever remains unsatisfied, repressed, new, eccentric, incomprehensible, that which disturbs the mutual understanding of the established powers.
>
> (in Moi, 1986: 156)

That is what Eve embarked on at the beginning of history. She challenged the male symbolic. She tried to become like God, but instead found herself trapped within her biological destiny, unable to get out. Her story has been read against rather than for women. For over two thousand years, the patriarchal male society has plundered her story in an attempt to discover and pin down the nature of Woman. In Eve's many faces we can see a record of the male imagination at work, wrestling with the female "other." The fruit in the Garden came to represent in the Christian tradition the power of sexual desire, and it was woman herself who became the forbidden fruit, the tempting object that must be resisted. The Genesis story enshrines the myth of feminine evil as a justification of female oppression. In a

culture which equated sexual abstinence with morality, women were blamed for male straying: it was their fault if men were drawn to sexual sin. What was denied women was any articulation of their own sexuality and their own desire. Eve had excellent reasons for eating the forbidden fruit: it looked good and was nourishing, and it promised her the priceless gift of wisdom. As such, she took and ate. In doing so, she was punished. Perhaps what is most important is Eve's recognition of the need to challenge the boundaries, to make the imaginative leap, however difficult, unpredictable and even dangerous, into a new phase of existence.

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Fig. 4. William Blake, *Satan, Sin and Death,* 1808

Fig. 3. Jean Cousin the Elder, *Eva Prima Pandora*, 1550

Fig. 2. Elizabeth I---*The Armada* Portrait, 1588

Fig. 1. Michelangelo, *The Fall and Expulsion From Paradise*, Sistine Chapel

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