THE CRONE:  
EMERGING VOICE IN A FEMININE SYMBOLIC DISCOURSE

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We accept this thesis as conforming  
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Vancouver, Canada
Date Oct, 13, 1994
ABSTRACT

The Crone: 
Emerging Voice in a Feminine Symbolic Discourse

This dissertation explores portrayals of old women in samples drawn predominantly from French and American literature, using myth, folklore, psychological and feminist theories to examine, compare and contrast depictions of this figure through close textual analysis. I have examined treatments of old women in literary texts by Boethius, Jean de Meung, and Perrault as well as those in texts by women writers, including Sand, Colette, de Beauvoir, Jewett, Cather, Porter, Wharton, Flagg, Meigs and Silko. By analyzing the portrayal of old women's roles in a variety of works written in different periods in these two cultures, I hope to illuminate, to some small degree, ways in which the Old Woman figure is emerging as a powerful dimension of woman's voice at a time when the growing number of elderly people coincides with women's increasing access to "voice." An examination of images of the Old Woman/Crone may reveal the articulation of an alternative symbolic discourse that permits women's voices to be "heard."

The typical mythological and literary roles for old women may be loosely categorized as: deity, hag, elder, matriarch, grandmother or (abject) old woman. The texts selected provide good examples of the various "crone" roles, from deity to abject old woman, as well as the opportunity to consider this figure's treatment in both patriarchal and women-centered literary works at various periods of time.

Theory, whether psychological or feminist, is treated textually and considered to have a "point of view" which must be determined when applying theory to texts. My discussion of old women in contemporary
French literature revolves around the disagreement between Kristeva, Cixous or Irigaray, who deploy Freudian or Lacanian concepts in the search for an understanding of the feminine, and de Beauvoir. Michel Foucault and the American psychologist, Carol Gilligan, provide alternative theories. Analysis of the folktale, "Little Red Riding Hood," runs as a leitmotiv throughout -- from its early French folk origins to a "new Age" version circulated recently on an Internet bulletin board -- since this cautionary tale of the girl, the wolf, and the grandmother has lent itself to creative interpretation from Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian, feminist, and other perspectives.

I conclude that demographic factors and multiculturalism are contributing to a contemporary "emergence," in Foucault's sense, of the voices and images of older women. This current "emergence" may contribute to an alternative view of conventional literature and history, one which values women's experience and demonstrates a feminine discourse that is different from that of the patriarchal symbolic order.
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Acknowledgments

To my mother, "Little Camilla," and my grandmother, Camilla Shaw Puleston, both Southern ladies in the finest sense—from "the fifth Camilla."

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I am also thankful to my daughters, Mary Conklin Masland and Molly Allison Masland, for their encouragement and enthusiasm, and to my friend and colleague, Jean Rahn, who offered to take me to dinner to celebrate. Most of all, I am grateful to Steve Mayo for his unfailing affection.
INTRODUCTION

Irigaray thinks that the only way in which the status of women could be altered fundamentally is by the creation of a powerful female symbolic to represent the other term of sexual difference. What is at stake is the ethical, ontological and social status of women.  
Margaret Whitford  
_Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine_ (22)

Nearly two decades ago, I became interested in the archetype of the "wise old woman," a figure which parallels the "wise old man" archetype and, in Jungian thought, functions as a "guide" to certain aspects of the "self." A fascinating, mysterious figure, resonant with hidden meanings and potential discoveries, I thought.

That long-ago interest has sparked this study and, although my point of view is no longer confined to a Jungian perspective, I have found the Crone or old woman archetype, as defined through discursivity, more ancient and more varied than I had supposed. The Old Woman or mythological Crone, often denigrated as fearsome and repulsive in Western culture and its fictions, has also played a positive, though frequently ambiguous, role in literary discourse. In this study I will consider portrayals of old women in samples from French and American literature, using myth, folklore, psychological and feminist theories to examine, compare and contrast depictions of this figure through close textual analysis. By analyzing the Old Woman figure in a variety of works written in different periods in these two cultures, I hope to illuminate, to some small degree, ways in which the Old Woman figure is emerging as a powerful dimension of woman's voice at a time when the growing number of elderly people coincides with women's increasing access to
"voice." An examination of the Crone's images may reveal the articulation of an alternative symbolic discourse that permits woman's voice to be "heard."

In developing this study, I have brought to bear not only the research which I have undertaken as part of my doctoral studies at the University of British Columbia and those interests which I had many years ago while studying for a master's degree in comparative literature at the University of California at Riverside, but also the research, study, discussion and writing I have done in the intervening years in mythological, archetypal, and folklore studies, especially pertaining to women. Additionally, many years spent as a professional journalist and public relations executive have taught me, as no study could, the power of images, as well as the means by which they are constructed and "emerge."

Methodology

Typical mythological and literary roles for the old woman may be loosely categorized as: deity, hag, elder, matriarch, grandmother or (abject) old woman (see figure 1). I have used this typology both in selecting texts to be used and in analyzing the literary examples.¹

Since the images of the old woman, whether benevolent grandmother or curse-bringing hag, are discursively formed, I have also examined the "crone" character from a variety of interpretative perspectives ranging along a continuum from Biblical (the extreme patristic pole) to matrifocal Goddess mythology (the extreme matristic pole). Both the literary texts examined and the various interpretive theories used fall along this continuum (see figure 2). Thus theory, whether Freudian or feminist, is treated textually and considered to have
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Transcendent Quality</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Symbols &amp; Attributes</th>
<th>Age/Season</th>
<th>Sexuality</th>
<th>Typical Action or Role</th>
<th>Relation to Life</th>
<th>Relation to New Life or Renewal</th>
<th>Relation to Life-Death Life Cycle</th>
<th>Negative Aspects</th>
<th>Relation to Borders and Boundaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hag</td>
<td>Witch, Crazed, Ugly, Positive Aspect, Fairy godmother</td>
<td>Magical powers: communication with demons and spirits, flying, spells, curses, shape-shifter</td>
<td>Inspires fear</td>
<td>Healer, poisoner through herbs and potions. Evil curses Symbols: cauldron, cat, broomstick</td>
<td>Older middle age</td>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>Friends age, Post-reproductive</td>
<td>Renewal, often through radical break with past patterns/roles</td>
<td>Approaches comprehensive connectivity to nature. Active in politics, social welfare, environmental issues</td>
<td>Midwife to reform or renewal movements at individual or collective level</td>
<td>Bridge between power and human</td>
<td>Non-nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Guide, Wise Woman, Leader, Reformer, Spokeswoman, Counselor</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Understanding Channeled anger impels reform</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Middle to old age, Sexual</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Sexual or sexual Androgynous characteristics</td>
<td>Controls all aspects of her life and influence others. Others can be, or have been, dependent on her</td>
<td>Experiences death &amp; rebirth in her life history, survival. Controls her own death</td>
<td>Experience death &amp; rebirth as legacies or inheritance</td>
<td>&quot;Phallic mother&quot; Enabling Controlling Catriating</td>
<td>Changes boundaries to be more inclusive or beneficial to disempowerment, including women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriarch</td>
<td>Family leader, Head of extended family, provider roles</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Control of self and others, either for positive or negative ends</td>
<td>Survival</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Sexual or sexual Androgynous characteristics</td>
<td>Controls all aspects of her life and influence others. Others can be, or have been, dependent on her</td>
<td>Experiences death &amp; rebirth in her life history, survival. Controls her own death</td>
<td>Generativity, often expressed as legacy or inheritance</td>
<td>&quot;Phallic mother&quot; Enabling Controlling Catriating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>Has grandchildren, Generativity, Tradition</td>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>Empathy, Nurture, Generosity</td>
<td>Symbols: kitchen, visits, food - baking, cooking, recipes, Quilts, Rocking-chair</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Middle to old age</td>
<td>Sexual or sexual Androgynous characteristics</td>
<td>Controls all aspects of her life and influence others. Others can be, or have been, dependent on her</td>
<td>Experiences death &amp; rebirth in her life history, survival. Controls her own death</td>
<td>Generativity, often expressed as legacy or inheritance</td>
<td>&quot;Phallic mother&quot; Enabling Controlling Catriating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Woman</td>
<td>Abject</td>
<td>Abjection</td>
<td>Injustice, horror, revolution</td>
<td>Powerless, No control over self or others, Incontinence</td>
<td>Symbols: nursing home &quot;bag lady&quot;</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Old age</td>
<td>Close to death</td>
<td>Loss of control</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Sacrifice Death Releases resources for new life</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**Figure 2. — Texts Arranged in a Continuum of Focus From Patristic to Matristic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patristic</th>
<th>Matristic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Old Testament</td>
<td>• Paula Gunn Allen: <em>Spider Woman's Granddaughters; The Sacred Hoop</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sophocles: <em>Oedipus Rex</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Jean de Meung: <em>Roman de la Rose</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sigmund Freud: <em>Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis</em></td>
<td>• Sarah Orne Jewett: <em>Country of the Pointed Firs</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Jacques Lacan: <em>Ecrits</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Boethius: <em>De consolatione philosophiae</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simone de Beauvoir: <em>Le Deuxième Sexe; La Vieillesse</em></td>
<td>• George Sand: <em>La Petite Fadette</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edith Wharton: <em>A Mother's Recompense</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Carl Jung: <em>Man and His Symbols</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Little Red Riding Hood&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Joseph Campbell: <em>The Masks of God</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(face both ways)
a "point of view" which must be considered when applying theory to texts. Analysis of the folktale "Little Red Riding Hood" runs as a leitmotiv throughout — from its early French folk origins to a "New Age" version circulated recently on an Internet electronic bulletin board — since this cautionary tale of the girl, the wolf, and the grandmother has lent itself to creative interpretation from Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian, feminist, and other perspectives. The literary texts are considered chronologically.

Selection of Texts

The texts selected provide good examples of the various "crone" roles, from deity to old woman, as well as the opportunity to consider this figure's treatment in both patriarchal and women-centered literary works at various periods of time. While making no claims to be all-inclusive, the selections are indicative of typical literary treatments of this figure.

The use of French and American texts offers rich possibilities for cultural comparisons and contrasts. From the twelfth-century emergence of "courtly love" and the beginning of "La Querelle des femmes" to the present day, French feminist movements "se distinguaient des autres féminismes et ... ils reflétaient la situation, les aspirations et les frustrations de la communauté nationale, telles qu'elles se perpétuaient de siècle en siècle" (Sarde, 15). Among the unique characteristics which have marked the discursive formation of "the feminine" in France through the centuries are "l'amour courtois," the tradition of the salons, women's practice of birth control, "la grande vénalité," the "love triangle," and valorization of "différence" in contemporary feminist movements (16). French intellectual society within the salon tradition has tended to be a "société mixte," in which men and women engage in debate and
"l'amour." In French works, the ancient Crone aspects of the mother
goddess which are associated with death have not been forgotten, and
her aging body often becomes the symbol for all that lack of desirability
and proximity to death entails. Discussion of these themes is found in Le
Roman de la Rose, the two novels by Colette which I will examine, and
Simone de Beauvoir's treatment of the aging woman.

My discussion of old women in contemporary French literature will
revolve around the debate represented by the disagreement between
Kristeva, Cixous or Irigaray, who deploy Freudian or Lacanian concepts in
their search for an understanding of the feminine, and de Beauvoir.

Molded herself by existentialism, de Beauvoir remarks about Irigaray:

I've found very interesting things in Irigaray, but I find her too ready to adopt the Freudian notion of the inferiority of women ... Although I admire Freud on a great many points, I find that in the case of women, as he said himself, there's a dark continent; he understood nothing of what women want. Anyone who wants to work on women has to break completely with Freud ... But all of them, even Irigaray, they've always begun with Freud's postulates ... Freud puts woman in an inferior position, which really astonishes me on the part of the feminists. (Wenzel 12)

Whether influenced by Freud, Sartre, Lacan or Derrida, French feminists
have tended to formulate their theories and analysis of the position of
women in response or opposition to philosophical, psychological or
existentialist discourse, all of which privilege the male.

In American texts by women the fictional figure of the
grandmother, matriarch, or elder woman frequently symbolizes a
yearning for community and connection, wisdom and power. This desire
is characteristic of both late nineteenth-century literature of the
"women's sphere" and the current "revival" of interest in the elder
woman as a transmitter of wisdom, ceremony and tradition or — more
simply — as a dignified "survivor." The texts by Jewett, Flagg, Silko and Meigs revolve in different ways around this theme. Those by Cather, Porter and Wharton focus on the rejection of the aging woman, whether because her "wisdom" becomes irrelevant as social patterns change or because she is non-conformist. The Cather, Porter and Wharton selections reflect, in various ways, the twentieth-century tension between "mother" and "daughter," as American women writers abandoned the "domestic sphere" to battle for acceptance in a male-dominated tradition and in schools of literary criticism.

A major point of divergence between American and French feminists in the past two decades has centered on the acceptance by French women of the construction of "différence," while American feminists, such as Friedan, have tended to downplay theories based on the "eternal feminine" mystique, preferring to struggle for legal and social parity. While French theorists Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous have proposed an écriture féminine or a parler femme which would subvert the language patterns and syntax in which patriarchal privilege and bias are encoded, the American psychologist Carol Gilligan has focused on women's tendency to construct the "self" through relationships rather than through individuation. Gilligan suggests a feminine "ethics of care" that would include care of "self" (individuation and valuing of oneself) as well as others. The American fascination with models for the (re)formation of "self" is reflected in the wave of interest in new or diverse models for the "crone" figure. Thus, the comparison of French and American texts offers an opportunity to study how the "crone" construct is both "different" and the "same" in the two cultures, a comparison which
not only explores the archetype and cultural differences but also illuminates the process of image construction itself.

**Silencing and "Emergence"**

The cross-cultural study of the crone archetype, which sheds some light on the process and politics of image construction, also raises the question of "silencing" and "emergence." Why does an archetype — or its literary representations — vanish "off-stage"? Why do archetypal figures re-emerge, perhaps cast in new roles? Although these questions are difficult to answer with any precision, they hover at the edges of this study, linked with Foucault's theory of "emergence" and the revival of interest in the Crone archetype, at least in America.

The silencing of the elderly in modern French and American societies, which both value perpetual youth, was extensively studied by de Beauvoir in *La Vieillesse* (1970). She observes that, "Pour la société, la vieillesse apparaît comme une sorte de secret honteux dont il est indécent de parler ... L'Amérique a rayé de son vocabulaire le mot mort: on parle de cher disparu, de même elle évite toute référence au grand âge. Dans la France d'aujourd'hui," she adds, "c'est aussi un sujet interdit" (1). Indeed, the old woman's most common fate is the abject silence of invisibility as, mumbling incoherently, she is simply shuffled off the literary stage because she is no longer a figure of interest. The audience does not care to hear her speak because they have no interest in what she might have to say; writers do not include her in their plots for the same reason. Because any image, including that of the Crone, is collectively created, it loses power and voice through indifference towards the topic on the part of audience and writers. At other times, there may be either spontaneous interest or "propagandized attention"
paid to the figure. For example, a large cohort in a particular age-bracket may focus social attention upon certain roles or types. Or an image may be "pumped up" to promote certain power interests or create a scapegoat.

Several factors seem to be influencing what appears to be an "emergence" of the Crone's image after a long period of relative silence. The Crone figure, as a vestige of a pre-patriarchal ideology in which power was attributed to the feminine or matriarchal line, provides a challenge to the patriarchal symbolic order, since this figure has continued to co-exist alongside and within that order. Also, the peoples of colonial and indigenous cultures, which together with women comprise the voices of multiplicity, are challenging the hegemony of Western patriarchal constructs, including its symbolic order. In his essay "Nietzsche, la généalogie, et l'histoire," Foucault suggests a view of history which is different from the univocality of patriarchal historical discourse: a theory of "emergence" that invites the voices of "the other," including women, to be heard. Another factor is an increase in the elderly population, especially older women in good health who want new patterns, ideas and models for aging. Older writers are also interested in exploring the aging experience, thus forming, with their readers, a "marketplace" of interest. Taking all these factors into account, the current "emergence" of the Old Woman's voice, then, may contribute to an alternative view of conventional history and literature, one which values women's experience and demonstrates a feminine authority which is different from that of the patriarchal symbolic order. At the same time, the univocality of "woman's voice" is, itself, a questionable premise. As women from diverse cultural, sociological and theoretical backgrounds gain access to "voice," it seems increasingly apparent that the genealogy
of plurality and multiplicity will characterize new constructions of the "wise old woman/crone" archetype.
NOTES

There is frequently some overlap in "Crone" roles or movement from one role to another. A grandmother may reveal herself to be a "hag" or "witch" for example. At the point of death, a matriarch may become an old woman. These movements and overlaps often provide much of a story's characterization and plot interest.
PART I.

The Crone's Condemnation by "The Law of the Father"

Man enjoys the great advantage of having a god endorse the code he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority over women it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being. For the Jews, Mohammedans and Christians among others, man is master by divine right; the fear of God will therefore repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female.

Simone de Beauvoir

The Second Sex

Epigraph to M. Stone, When God Was A Woman
CHAPTER 1
The Origin of the Crone: The Crone as Origin

Il y a un principe bon qui
a créé l'ordre, la lumière et
l'homme et un principe mauvais
qui a créé le chaos, les ténèbres et la femme.

Pythagore

Epigraph to Le Deuxième Sexe

The Cultural Importance of Deity Myths

In ancient times, before the ascendancy of the "sky gods" and philosophies which promoted ideas of duality and transcendence over death, "the birth-giving Virgin and death-dealing Crone were part of one another, death and life together were like the new seed within the withered fruit" (Walker 29). In the pre-classical, classical and Judeo-Christian mythologies which underlie the major European cultures, an ancient pre-patriarchal earth-related mother-goddess figure appears to have been supplanted by a paternal "sky" god, who assumed her powers and became the sole creator of the world. Although archeological discoveries and analyses of ancient texts support the wide-spread existence of a pre-patriarchal Great Mother Goddess, not everyone agrees about the nature of the Goddess or the situation of women in a such a society. "L'histoire nous a montré que les hommes ont toujours détenu tous les pouvoirs concrets," Simone de Beauvoir maintains in Le Deuxième Sexe (231). "Ishtar, Astarté, Cybèle étaient cruelles, capricieuses, luxurieuses: elles étaient puissantes; source de mort autant que de vie, en enfantant les hommes elles faisaient d'eux leurs esclaves," she asserts (276). American scholars such as Campbell, Stone, Eisler, Gadon, Dexter, Orenstein, Weigle, et al have proposed to various degrees a more
idealized, peaceful, productive and complementary social structure under the aegis of the Goddess.

I begin this study of the Crone with a look at the conflicting mythologies of Mother or Father as the supreme creator deity because, as Marta Weigle has noted, "ultimately ... it is probably culture's myth about the origin of human beings that has the most far-reaching effect on its views and treatment of women, for myth 'ratifies' existing social order" (viii). Creation myths or narratives, which attempt to explain the origins of the cosmos, humans, animals, plants and customs, also structure and validate our contemporary natural and social order. Anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski contend that "myth as it exists ... in its living primitive form, is not merely a story told but a reality lived" (1948:100). For Merlin Stone, "myths present ideas that guide perception, conditioning us to think and even perceive in a particular way ... Often they portray the actions of people who are rewarded or punished for their behavior, and we are encouraged to view these as examples to emulate or avoid" (4). Myths, then, have consequences in everyday reality since they ratify and endorse certain social customs, beliefs, and actions. Thus, the "victory" of the sky gods over the mother goddess in her Virgin, Mother, and Crone phases has had consequences not only for the lives of women and men of the European cultures but also in the cultural artifacts produced, including literature. Indeed, the dynamic tension, or struggle, between the great "Mother" and "Father" cosmological myths and the socio-political structures which they engender underlies the literature and ideologies which I will be discussing.
The historically and culturally constructed images of the ancient Mother Goddess myth continue not only to influence literature but also to provide topics for heated contemporary debate — especially among feminists. On the one hand, theorizing the restoration of the Mother Goddess as either a cosmological or an earth-centered primary principle presents the possibility of different paradigms, knowledge and value structures. Conversely, mythologizing the Mother has historically ensnared women in nurture and reproductivity. The mechanisms by which the "eternal feminine" argument reduces women's status and opportunities can be seen in Pope Paul VI's 1972 statement affirming that "true women's liberation" does not lie in "formalistic or materialistic equality with the other sex, but in the recognition of that specific thing in the feminine personality: the vocation of the woman to become a mother" (Daly 3). To see motherly nurturing, reproductive or caretaking roles as the essential core of women's identities and meaning, rather than as stages or choices, is to maintain the fictions that keep women economically, physically and spiritually subordinated to patriarchal hegemony. Because the Great Mother is assumed to have once been mythologically revered as the source and meaning of all life and life's activities, the patriarchy's submersion of women, reduced to reproductive elements in a social and theological economy which operated to male benefit, has incited reexamination of the ancient archetype. However, it must be remembered that these current interpretations belong to the late twentieth-century cultural milieu.
The Earth Mother

The figure of the Crone, as the death-and-regeneration phase of the Great Mother, extends back to the earliest pre-Indo-European roots of Western culture (Fraser, Gimbutas, Campbell, Dexter, Gadon, Orenstein, Walker). In Paleolithic times (c. 35,000 to 9,000 BCE), small icons or statues of female figures which emphasize the parts of the female body associated with reproduction have been found at dwelling sites throughout Eurasia from the Pyrenees in Western Europe to central Siberia (Gadon 6). These statues, sometimes painted with red ochre, represent a female with large breasts and hips and rounded stomach: perhaps a woman in late pregnancy, perhaps symbolizing the power of life, analogous to the earth as the source of all living things. It is hypothesized that these early peoples viewed the female as the source of fertility and creation, through observing the natural processes by which life is born and nourished through the mother's body. By analogy, the earth was imagined as the great womb from which life emerged and was nourished. Gadon notes that the word "ritual" comes from rtü, Sanskrit for menses, the Latin word for "month," underscoring the ritual importance of women's monthly bleeding, and adds that the "blood from the womb that nourished the unborn child was believed to have mana, magical power" (2). These early Paleolithic Age statues convey a generalized female image whose power lay in its symbolic meaning as the embodiment of the source of life. The key symbols which to this day carry the underlying meaning of the goddess religion were already articulated in Ice Age art and ritual: the Earth Mother; the cave that is her womb; the sacred triangle, representing the vulva, out of which new life emerges; the
blood-like red ochre paint; and the horned bovine (bison, bull, buffalo) that represents the male principle.

In the contemporary matrifocal re-presentation of early pre-history, the value of complementarity is privileged. In Ice Age art, male and female symbols complement each other, and both sexes were depicted as necessary for the renewal of life, according to Gadon (20). Based upon their analyses of pictorial evidence found in the caves of southwestern France and the nearby Spanish Pyrenees, Eisler, Gadon, and Dexter posit that during the time of the great Paleolithic mammoth-hunting culture, a sense of cosmic partnership, of the complementarity of the two elements of the universal life force prevailed, rather than domination or confrontation between opposing principles.

The Queen of Heaven and Earth

The period of the great Paleolithic hunting culture, which stretched from western Europe to northwest Africa, ended as the ice and glaciers retreated [c. 30,000 to 15,000 BCE]. In the Paleolithic culture, the earth had been imagined as sacred mother, source of all life. In Neolithic times, with the shift from hunting and gathering societies to agrarian cultures accomplished essentially by 8,000 BCE (Campbell 1964:22), conceptualization of the Mother/Crone figure shifted from the magical shamanism of the hunting cultures to the elaborate priestly rituals of complex planting societies. Agrarian beliefs and values ordered the relationships of humans to the land and animals. The period marked the development and dispersal of agricultural techniques and the arts of writing, mathematics, monumental architecture, systematic astronomical observation, temple
worship and government. The bountiful goddess Earth — womb, mother and nourisher of life, receiver of the dead for rebirth — evolved into a metaphysical symbol: the "personification of the power of Space, Time, and Matter, within whose bounds all beings arise and die: the substance of their bodies, configurator of their lives and thoughts, and receiver of their dead" (Campbell 7).

In The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, Gimbutas demonstrates that the cultures of the Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic periods (from 26,000 to 3000 BCE) were matrifocal, worshipping a creatress Goddess as both the source of all life, fertility and creation and as the Goddess of Death and Regeneration, the symbol of all renewal and becoming. When agriculture replaced hunting, women came to control both the new food supply and the wealth it generated, according to authorities such as British archaeologist James Mellaart. A "Mediterranean culture complex," based upon the myths and rites of the Great Goddess and her husband/son consort, stretched from northern India to western Europe (Campbell 64). The Goddess was seen as both benign (cow) and terrible (lioness). She was associated with growth, nourishment and death, and vegetation, symbolized by the cosmic tree of life (and death). Her son and consort, whose totemic animal was the bull and whose sign was the trident, was linked to lunar changes in the vestige of a tradition of ritual regicide. Campbell sees the Near East as the center of this great system, with the period of diffusion preceding the rise of the great Bronze Age Sumero-Egyptian kingly states. The motive for its expansion and diffusion was commercial: the exploitation of raw materials and trade. In India, he notes, the late Neolithic trading style of civilization gradually declined,
while a vigorous commercial expansion centered in Crete reached as far as the British Isles by 2000 to 1405 BCE (1948: 64-65).

The late Neolithic period was characterized by a widespread and remarkably homogeneous system of religious ideas, based upon the many-titled Mother Goddess, who was regarded as immortal, changeless and omnipotent (Stone 23). The Queen of Heaven, Lady of the High Place, Celestial Ruler, Lady of the Universe, Sovereign of the Heavens, Lioness of the Sacred Assembly, Magna Mater all were titles referring in different places to the Great Goddess. She appeared throughout the range of Neolithic culture, centered in the Near East, diffusing eastward and westward to Anatolia, Syria, northern Iraq, Iran, Mesopotamia, and extending into India, Crete, pre-Homeric Greece, southern Europe, and Ireland. She was known by many names: the Sumerian Inanna, Egyptian Isis, Hathor, Nut, Astarte, Istar, Anath, Aphrodite, Demeter, Minerva, Ceres, Dana or Bridgit in Ireland, Danu in India. The Roman Catholic Virgin Mary, Mother of God, though a faint, desexualized echo of the powerful Goddess, is rooted in this tradition, as evidenced by her parthenogenic pregnancy and her son who is born at winter solstice and dies young at the spring equinox. Early Christianity was born and evolved in a world in which the power of the Goddess was still to be reckoned with. Throughout the Roman Empire, Isis, Artemis, Cybele, and Demeter were widely worshipped and influenced development of the cult of the Virgin.

While many of the Jungian-influenced mythologists, especially in the United States, have tended to portray the Goddess-worshipping cultures in positive terms, Simone de Beauvoir and Julia Kristeva among the French feminists have emphasized the cruelty, engulfing
qualities, and megalomania of the Great Mother. De Beauvoir sees in the Virgin Mary the subordination of the mother to the son, in her view necessary to restrain the cruelty of the all-powerful mother and allow the development of an individualized consciousness. Thus, "des deux antiques visages de la maternité, l'homme d'aujourd'hui ne veut connaître que la face souriante" (de Beauvoir 276). De Beauvoir "a vu trop rapidement une défaite féminine" (309) in her analysis of Mary's kneeling before her son, according to Kristeva in "Stabat Mater," who, nonetheless, sees in that act the "stifling" of the Mother's lust for power. In the myth of virgin birth, Kristeva ponders the re-emergence through spiritualization of the ancient parthenogenic mother-goddess and the underlying matriarchy with which Greek culture and Jewish monotheism kept struggling: "Tout Dieu et jusqu'à celui du Verbe, repose sur une Déesse-mère" (315).

Characteristic of the Goddess-worshipping cultures — Minoan Crete, Myceneae, Egypt, Sumer, early Babylonia, and other groups living in the Mediterranean culture complex — was a social structure based upon "mother-right," in which the mother's lineage was the basis of kinship and inheritance. Women customarily transacted business, bought and sold land, inherited property, could divorce and retain their property after divorce or death of the husband, and acted as scribes, priestesses, judges and magistrates, warriors, heads of clans, and rulers (Stone, Chapter 3).

Ancient motifs and symbols connected to the pre-European mythos of the Great Goddess in the European and Near East Neolithic include the life-and-death-bringing bird-woman and snake-woman goddesses of rebirth, regeneration, and prophecy. The bird and snake
motifs of these ancient pre-Indo-European goddesses often transferred to later Crone phase representations of the major surviving Neolithic goddesses, which acquired the characteristic Indo-European tri-partite Virgin-Matron-Crone (youth-maturity-old age) personifications. In the mythology of Old Europe, the bird and snake goddesses, goddesses of air and water, are the cosmic creators, bringing moisture and rain, understood as mother's milk, the divine food for all life. The vulture, symbol of the Egyptian Goddess Nekhebt, was referred to as the compassionate purifier, who cleaned the rotting flesh of the dead from the bones, which were then retrieved for burial.7 Winged woman/bird hybrids such as the sphinx became known in Classical times as harpies, furies and sirens.

Throughout the Mediterranean cultures, the female Snake Goddess was identified with the qualities of regeneration, prophecy and wisdom. Ishtar of Babylon, known as the Prophetess, carried a staff around which coiled two snakes. The Babylonian Tiamat, Mother of All, was described in myth as a dragon or a serpent. On Crete, snakes appear in the worship of the female deity more repeatedly than anywhere else in the Mediterranean area. Cretan artifacts portray the Goddess or Her priestesses holding snakes in their hands or with them coiled about their bodies, revealing them to be an integral part of the religious rites (Stone 200). In Greece, the temple at Delphi, renowned in Classical times as the sacred place of the Delphic oracle, was built upon an earlier Mycenaean temple to the Serpent Goddess, who revealed divine insights and prophecies to the priestesses who served her. The priestess who uttered the prophecies sat upon a stool around which was coiled the snake, Python. In
perhaps a mythic reenactment of cultural change, Apollo slew this serpent to take over the temple. In later times, the deposed Goddess came to be represented as a serpent, dragon, or sea monster which the hero was required to slay as part of his testing and ordeal.

The Cretan symbol of the double axe signifies the dual aspects of life and death, pointing, as Campbell describes, on one hand toward the sacrifice, which is death; on the other, toward the tree, the Tree of Life. The Goddess, in whom death and life reside, was herself the mythic Garden of Paradise, "wherein Death and Life — the Two Queens — were one" (Campbell 72). Other motifs and symbols connected with the Goddess include the circle, a symbol of the Goddess as the original, ultimate Creatress, as well as the wheel of birth, death and rebirth. She is also signified by the egg, the butterfly, caves, labyrinths, seeds, rivers, water, webs, vessels such as cauldrons, horns, and the cow.

I have examined the attributes, names, symbols and culture of the Mother Goddess in some detail because these reappear as literary themes throughout the centuries. Indeed, her shadowy form underlies the assumptions of pastoral, whether by Virgil or Willa Cather. She is a staple of Romantic British and American poetry. She is frequently found in American Southern fiction and provides the nexus of values in "domestic literature" of the women's sphere. In contemporary texts by women, she can be discerned in her shamanic Crone form in the Hispanic tale, "La Loba"; as the regenerating Crone in Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe; or as the serpent goddess in Dacia Maraini's Lettere a Marina. Both Colette in Sido and George Sand in La Petite Fadette invokes images of the European agrarian Great Mother. Julia Kristeva draws upon images from the Mother/Crone-as-
Origin tradition in her conceptualization of the *chora* and the semiotic, as, in fact, does Freud in his concept of the id and Jacques Lacan in his theory of the Symbolic and Imaginary orders. Kristeva's portrait of the Mother in "Stabat Mother" draws upon imagery of the sorrowing Virgin as well as the abjected Mother. In France, "La Querelle des femmes," a centuries-long dialogue whose most recent episode was the argument between Lacanians and the "French Feminists", reflects the ancient conflict between Goddess and God mythologies.

**Sky Gods and the Patriarchal Order**

The religion and cosmology of the Great Mother were supplanted and systematically suppressed by patriarchal warrior tribesmen whose invasions and incursions took place toward the close of the Bronze Age and, even more decisively, at the beginning of the Iron Age (c. 1250 BCE in the Levant) (Campbell 1964:7). Two geographic areas served as source lands for the waves of insurgent warriors. Semites from the Syro-Arabian deserts, nomads who herded sheep, goats and later mastered the camel, and whose traditions have been transmitted through the Old and New Testaments, settled in the mid-East. From the plains of south Russia and the Pontic steppe, horse-riding, semi-nomadic cattle herders invaded Europe. In her essay, "Goddess-Oriented Old Europe," Gimbutas describes the rapidly developing urban culture of Old Europe, whose growth was "interrupted and eventually stopped by ... steadily increasing infiltration" of the horse-riding "Kurgan" pastoralists (Spretnak, ed. 1982:29).

Only on islands such as Crete, Thera and Malta did the traditions and symbols of Old Europe survive for almost two more millennia. Elsewhere, the Bronze Age culture that followed was an amalgam of
the Old European substratum and the culture of the invading Indo-European pastoralists, whose series of repeated incursions were concentrated into three major thrusts: c. 4400-4300 BCE; c. 3400-3200 BCE; and c. 3000-2900 BCE (30). The new people were herdsmen and shepherds with a patrilinear, patriarchal social structure. Although of lesser culture, they considered themselves a superior people, an attitude which, Stone concludes, "seems to have been based primarily upon their ability to conquer the more culturally developed earlier settlers" (64). A warrior people, the Indo-Europeans were in continual conflict not only with the people whose lands they invaded but among themselves as well. The pattern that surfaces in each area in which they make an appearance is that of a group of aggressive warriors, accompanied by a priestly caste of high standing, who initially invade, conquer and then rule the indigenous population (64). Their heroes were horsemen and warriors. Their gods, associated with the wrath and energy of fire, were storm and sky gods carrying weapons and riding horses or chariots. Their sky-oriented symbols included the sun, stars, planets, thunder, lightning, fire and weapons: arrows, daggers, and spears.

The Indo-European male deity is usually powerfully associated with light, especially with the sun. These northern peoples brought with them the concept of duality, which postulates light as good and darkness as evil. The concept of binary paired opposites existing in a hierarchical order, or state of tension, one of which is "good," the other, "bad," replaced the earlier feminine intuition of the Oneness of being, in which all things have their birth within the Earth's womb.
The Indo-European pattern of conquest is reflected in myths which exhibit motifs suggesting a consistent policy of replacing the old Goddess with new Indo-European gods. Such consistency could indicate the importance the invaders placed upon religious mythology as a controlling tactic to usurp, appropriate, and concentrate economic and political power in their hands — a tactic which re-emerges periodically in subsequent political take-overs. That a caste of "philosopher-kings" who were myth-shapers and rule-makers occupied the highest positions of power in Indo-European society underscores this point.

In what Campbell terms the "priestly device of mythological defamation" (1964:80), the Indo-Europeans characterized the ancient female Mother deities as monster serpents or dragons, associated with darkness and evil, meanwhile elevating their own hero-gods to domination over the universe. Myths of battles between the new male heroic god and the old goddess, as serpent or dragon, record the overrunning of the ancient Goddess culture: the battle between Indra, Lord of the Mountains, and the Goddess Danu in India; Marduk's slaying of his great-great-great grandmother Tiamat, portrayed as a monstrous serpent, in Babylon; struggles between Zeus and the serpent Typhon (son of the Goddess Gaia) or Apollo and the Python (also a son of Gaia) in Greece; and the conquest of the Leviathan (a representation of the ancient serpent goddess Lot) by the Hebrew god Yahweh, recorded in the Old Testament. In each case, the myth suggests the demonizing of the ancient Mother Goddess in order to legitimate the conquerors' appropriation of economic and political power.
In these myths, matricide becomes the means to power, as the hero establishes his right to kingship by slaying the ancient Mother Goddess deity — a reversal of the earlier pattern in which the "year king" ruled as the chosen consort of the Goddess. Patrilineal descent replaces mother-right. By slaying Tiamat, the Babylonian Marduk claims kingship and announces the institution of a despotic political order, the future model for kings and tyrants:

But O Lord of the destiny of the great gods, if I am to be your avenger, to slay Tiamat and keep you alive, convene the assembly and proclaim my lot supreme, namely, that not you but I shall henceforth fix the destinies of the gods by utterances and that whatever I create shall remain without change. (Campbell 1964:81)

Royal marriage to a close female relative — a sister, step-mother, or mother — accorded power as consort to the queen for the male in matrilineal societies, although the sons of such a union could not inherit the throne. According to Sir James G. Frazer, the custom of brother and sister [or mother and son] marriage in royal houses signals a "transition from female to male descent of the crown" (Frazer 4:194). In his research on the wide-spread myths of the "dying god," he suggests that the legend of Laius, king of Thebes, who exposed his infant son, Oedipus, with the expectation that the son would die, is a "reminiscence" of a time when royal fathers plotted to kill sons who might overthrow them by force. Oedipus, who afterwards killed his father and occupied his father's throne, married the widowed queen, his mother, in order to secure his ascension to the kingship (193). In the legend, the danger to the son comes from father-son rivalry, while the son's marriage to the mother confers the authority to rule. Again
reflecting a time of transition between matriarchal and patriarchal
orders, Sophocles attributes the blight and sterility which affected
Thebes under Oedipus' reign to the sin of incest as well as to parricide
(2:115).

With the institution of patriarchal inheritance and right to
political power as the Sun King's anointed one, patterns familiar to
contemporary students of psychology and politics emerged:
domination by the father as supreme god or tyrant; rivalry between
sons; tension between the father's fear of patricide and the elder son's
fear of being sacrificed; the rebellious younger son; the abjected
mother; the Oedipal myth and its consequences.

The northern invaders brought with them a caste system and
the master-slave concept of domination. Marduk, for example, creates
man to serve the gods through work, thus relieving the divine ones
from having to labor. Men furnish the gods with food through sacrifice,
providing an earthly role model for the accumulation of labor by the
ruling class. In the Indo-European caste system, lawgiver-priests held
highest status. The warriors also enjoyed high esteem, followed by
nurturers, composed of farmers, herdsmen, artisans and women. Members of the third caste nurtured the priest-judges and warriors as
servants and caretakers.

Everywhere the Indo-Europeans settled, they brought a
diminution in the rights and social position of women. Dexter cites the
evidence of *suttee* cremations in India, indicating not only the
importance of males but also the expendability of female lives. With
the institution of patrilineal ownership and inheritance, women were
deprived not only of their property, but of the *right* to own property
in their own name. Women belonged to their fathers before marriage and to their husbands afterwards, remaining minors all their lives. Under patrimony, male children were preferred to female ones. Losing the right to rule or control property or conduct business, women became economic commodities to be bought or traded. They were marriage pawns in exchanges by which ambitious men sought to gain advantage from alliance with a woman's father. Likewise, a woman's father might gain by alliance with her suitor. Luce Irigaray (echoing Lacan) terms this system of exchange, using a woman as a token for bartered advantages which accrue to males, a "hommo-sexual" economy (168). If a girl was unmarried and raped, Indo-European law demanded that she marry her rapist. Stone sums up the changes:

The major changes in the laws concerning women affected their right to engage in economic activities, what they might or might not inherit, what they in turn were allowed to pass on to their children, the attitude toward rape, abortion, infidelity on the part of the ... wife and, among the Hebrews only, the penalty of death — for women — for the loss of virginity before marriage. (60)

Since these laws primarily affected the economic and sexual activities of women, it is likely that they were aimed at the matrilineal descent customs, as Stone concludes. The very fact that so many of the laws concerned women suggests that both the economic and sexual positions of women were continually changing from the time of the first attested northern invasions (about 2300 BC) until the laws of the Hebrews, which were probably written down between 1250 and 1000 BC (60). Shifts in the religio-mythological pattern appear to reflect changes in socio-economic and political conditions for women.
Assimilation of earlier goddesses by proto-Indo-Europeans is common especially in Europe and Asia Minor, and many of them do retain some of their autonomy and potency. Indo-Europeans themselves possessed only a few, rather weak, indigenous goddesses related to nature. Although the ancient Bronze Age goddesses were subordinated to male sky gods such as Zeus, many of them (Athena, Artemis, Diana, Hera, and Aphrodite) retained great power.

However, among the Hebrews, whose migratory, martial and patriarchal social structures resemble those of the Indo-Europeans, the ancient goddesses were not accorded divine status and, indeed, often became symbols of evil. The Biblical Garden of Eden myth recapitulates themes from Near East goddess mythologies: the garden, the tree of knowledge, the snake as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge, and the sacred marriage (hieros gamos) to renew fertility. However, instead of the Sumerian Inanna and her shepherd consort Dumuzi, the Babylonian Ishtar and her consort Tammuz, or the Greek Aphrodite and Adonis, the Hebrews posited Adam and Eve. The Garden of Eden myth is a particularly pervasive example of the power of Campbell's "mythological defamation" (1964:80). Here, Eve is associated with the most powerful attributes of the Goddess religion — the garden, serpent, wisdom, and sexual knowledge — symbolized by the fruit of a fig tree, most closely associated with the asherim, or temple of Ashtoreth (Astarte), the Goddess as she was known in Canaan, the land occupied by the Hebrews. In the Eden myth the Goddess's powers are demonized. Eve is portrayed as the evil one, whose sexuality and friendship with the serpent (wisdom) brings about the couple's disobedience and God's curse. Her powers as source
of universal life are stripped away. Not only is Eve no longer the
cosmic Creatress, but the Father God, who appropriates her attributes,
Attempts to banish her from the divine realm altogether, by forming
her from Adam's rib and metaphorically making her a derivative of
"man." Portrayed as the active sexual temptress, she is assigned all the
guilt for the "fall" of man into "sin." In the Mother Goddess religions,
the goddess's consort was a "year god," or "rising/dying god," who had
to die annually or after a certain number of years, so that he could be
reborn again, just as were the crops. In a curse reminiscent of the
archaic "death curse,"¹⁰ ritually pronounced by an old woman upon
the "year/king" at sacrifice, Eve is punished by expulsion from
"paradise," agony in childbirth and subservience to her husband. As
patriarchy eroded women's rights and independence, women were
economically forced to accept a husband who ruled the household.
Stone points out that,

A consciousness of the relationship of the veneration of the
Goddess to the matrilineal descent of name, property and the
rights to the throne is vital in understanding the suppression of
the Goddess religion ... it was probably the underlying reason for
the resentment of the worship of the Goddess (and all that it
represented) by the patriarchal invaders who arrived from the
north. (60-61)

The Crone

Having described the mythological conflict between the Mother
and Father as Origin, or Creator(ress), I will now turn to the specific
qualities attributed to the Crone as deity (see figure 1).¹¹ The Great
Goddess, or Great Mother, had three aspects: Virgin, Mother, and
Crone, corresponding to the new, full, and waning moon, or to the
creating, preserving, and destroying aspects of nature (Walker 23-24).
In her mythic or archetypal representations, the Crone embodies powers connected figuratively and metaphorically to the energies and powers of the waning moon. This period represents a cyclically recurring phase of gradual withdrawal, reflection and rest to prepare for the coming of new life. As destroyer, the Crone is associated with death, and her "death-curse" was considered all-powerful. Using Dexter's descriptive theory of the female's embodiment of certain "universal" energies, the Virgin represents potential or stored energy; the Mother, the energy of reproduction, fruiting, giving and nourishing; and the Crone, the energy of quiet, darkness and rest to prepare for the regeneration of life (1990: Chapt. 13).

The Crone image derives from the early intuition of the earth mother receiving back into herself the dead plants, animals, and humans, out of which new life would come. Life and death were seen as different aspects of a whole, with earth as a womb taking back into itself the dead and bringing forth new life. The vision of a life-death-life cycle, maintained through endless rounds of reincarnation, prevailed. Life was simultaneously ever-new, ever-continuous. Through her important function of eliminating the old, the useless, and those who had performed their role in life, the Crone goddess prepared the way for perpetual renewal and regeneration.

The mythologies which developed after the invasions of the Indo-European tribes often depict those goddesses who "were frozen in their aged state, who even potentially would not energize the men of their society," as "frightful hags, women who were to be avoided at all costs" (Dexter 178). The faces of these old women goddesses were often veiled, since humans only beheld their faces at death. From this
belief, as well as from vestiges of her earlier Neolithic powers as prophetess, associated with the all-seeing "eye," came the fear of the Crone's "evil eye," which was thought to cause death. For this reason, the crone's curse was feared and all-powerful. Not even the gods could escape Nemesis.

A few goddesses survived to continue the ancient traditions, until they, too, were suppressed through the spread of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religions. Although they suffered a loss of power, they somehow escaped total assimilation into Indo-European societies for several millennia. As Dexter comments, "many autonomous goddesses were transmuted to witches by the Greeks, Romans, and other Indo-Europeans and often removed to far-away islands or stuck underwater ... lurking just at the periphery of men's consciousness. ... More commonly, the goddess in her death aspect was viewed not as goddess, but as 'witch.' Her role as 'wise woman' was forgotten" (182).

The Titaness, Hecate, a goddess of herbal magic, was one of the ancient group of deities preceding the Olympic pantheon who retained much of her old luster and was respected as a powerful force. Like the ancient Goddess of Regeneration, she was regarded as a life-giver and nurturer as well as death-bringer, able to give and take life at will. Her name is thought to be derived from that of the Egyptian goddess Heqit (Hekat), rooted in the word *heq*, meaning intelligence (Walker 50). Among the Egyptians Heqit was considered to be the Grandmother, the one who bore the flail, the symbol of authority. She was the source of *hekau*, the "words of power" which commanded and decided all things, including the forces of creation and destruction (Walker 50). Later, the Christians re-named the Greek Hecate the
Queen of the Witches, and her multifaceted qualities were subordinated to her characterization as the goddess of the underworld and death, associated with night, ghosts and sorcery. In a negative sense, she retained tremendous power as a witch well into the seventeenth or eighteenth century in Europe and New England.

Because of their mysterious relationship to the Goddess-as-Crone, the old tribal clan grandmothers were a repository of magical wisdom, knowledge, and herbal lore, who also had the special ability to invoke the curse of death. Moreover, because they no longer experienced monthly bleeding, they were thought to be storing their "wise blood," making them respected as a source of wisdom and insight about life. Among the Celtic peoples of Brittany, the old "wise women" were credited with the ability to heal, to predict the future, to transform into different shapes, and to control the weather. Humanly speaking, the crone is a woman past her reproductive years, in the "autumn" or "winter" of life depending on her age. She may be a guide, or elder, possessing wisdom, understanding of the continuity of life, and the independence of thought and action which comes with cessation of husband- and child-related responsibilities. She may be a matriarch, charged with both providing and nurturing responsibilities, or a grandmother, transmitting a sense of rooted generativity and tradition to the young. Frequently, especially in extreme old age, she is simply the abject old woman. In patriarchal Indo-European societies, the old woman was least respected. The antithesis of the virgin, who stored energy, or of the matron, who transmitted it, the old woman was frequently portrayed as a barren creature who was said to deplete the energies of others to supplement her own declining
resources. Even when serving as herbalists, dispensers of wise advice, or soothsayers, old women in European-based societies have tended to live in poverty at the periphery of the social group.

Throughout the millennia, there has been a radical change in how women, both divine and earthly, have been viewed by their societies, from the shamanic cultures of the Upper Paleolithic hunting period to the goddess-centered cultures of the long Neolithic period, from the assimilated societies made up of male-centered, patriarchal Indo-Europeans and the people they conquered to modern cultures, many of which include no feminine personification within the divine at all.

The Crone, too, has made a millennia-long journey. Contained within her mythology is the mystery of death and rebirth, the mystic, the snake goddess as seeress and the embodiment of wisdom, the wise, compassionate guide. Because she is no longer connected with the reproductive economy, she has an independence and autonomy quite different from the status of the virgin or matron. She can be sexually irreverent, even lewd or obscene. In a matrilineal society, she can be a force for social continuity and a source of ancestral energy for younger generations, since she possesses memory and represents the most experienced of her lineage. Patriarchal cultures have sought both to suppress her boundary-transgressing autonomy and to exploit her powers and resources. She has been often regarded as the hideous monster, the ugly old witch, the hag, a demonic force, one who depletes energy or fails to energize males; barren, sterile, one whose "evil eye" brings death and misfortune. "Infirmé, laide, vieille, la femme fait horreur" (de Beauvoir 260). Although her womb-cauldron,
source and destiny of all creation, has become a witch's pot, full of curses, spells, and evil potions, it is anything but a "passive" receptacle. According to Erich Neumann, the magical cauldron or pot was always in the hands of the female mana figures or priestesses, whose significant and essential social power was the transforming power of the cauldron, the power to understand life forces and rhythms, rather than power or domination over others (Spretnak, ed. 1982: 37).

I have begun with this discussion of the Great Goddess as Origin, in order to establish the characteristics, symbols, rites and sacred powers attributed to the Crone aspect of this ancient mythological cosmology. In the next two chapters, I will examine some constructions in patriarchal discourse of the extended symbolic idea represented by the Crone archetype, bearing in mind the contemporary understanding of a relationship between treatment of a "value-charged" literary symbol and cultural values.
NOTES


2 Charlene Spretnak elaborates on this concept: "Paleolithic statues celebrate the mysteries of the female: Woman's body bled painlessly in rhythm with the moon, and her body miraculously made people, then provided food for the young by making milk. ... In time these energies became embodied in the sacred presence of the Great Goddess, the encompassing matrix of female power. On her surface she produced food, into her womb she received the dead. Rituals in her honor took place in womb-like caves, often with vulva-like entrances and long, slippery corridors; both the cave entrances and grave sites were often painted with blood-like red ochre. ... As society evolved, so did the powers of the Goddess. She was revered as the source of life, death and rebirth; as the giver of the arts, divine wisdom, and just law; and as the protector of peace and the nurturer of growth. She was all forces, active and passive, creative and destructive, fierce and gentle (19-20).

3 See especially Gadon's discussion of the work of French pre-historian André Leroi-Gourhan and Alexander Marshak's *Roots of Civilization,* in her chapter "The Ice Age: The Earth As Mother."

4 Dexter refers to the "sedentary agriculturists who raised predominantly cattle and pigs" throughout southeastern and east central Europe during the Neolithic Age from about 6500 BCE to about 3500 BCE (4). These peoples worshipped variously named goddesses representing aspects of the life-and-death bringing Great Mother.

5 In *Catal Hüyük: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia,* Mellaart comments that "as the only source of life she [woman] became associated with the processes of agriculture, with the taming and nourishing of domesticated animals, with the ideas of increase, abundance and fertility. Hence a religion which aimed at exactly that same conservation of life in all its forms, its propagation and the mysteries of its rite connected with life and death, birth and resurrection, were evidently part of her sphere rather than that of man. It seems extremely likely that the cult of the goddess was administered mainly by women, even if the presence of male priests was by no means excluded" (202).


7 The custom is still practiced among the Zoroastrians of Iran and the Parsees of India.

8 In Plato's *Republic* there is a reflection of this caste system in his description of the three orders of the Republic: The Guardians, Warriors, and Nurturing or Productive classes. In the "Allegory of Metals" there is an interweaving of the older Neolithic with the new Indo-European cultures. In the allegory, all people are made in the womb of the earth and therefore everyone is brother to the other as "sons of earth" and should think of the land (earth) as their nurse. However,
"the god who fashioned you mixed gold in the composition of those among you who are fit to rule ... and he put silver in the Auxiliaries, and iron and brass in the farmers and craftsmen" (III.415).

9 Stone theorizes that the tree mentioned in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve was a *ficus sicomorus*, or sycamore fig, sometimes denoted as the black mulberry. With reddish clumps of grape-like fruit, the tree was sacred to the Goddess Hathor in Egypt. (Stone 175, 214-218).

10 In *The Crone: Woman of Age, Wisdom and Power*, Barbara G. Walker recounts that representatives of all three aspects of the Mother Goddess were required to attend the sacred drama when the son/gods died to beget themselves for another rebirth. The Crone, or her representative, laid a solemn curse upon the dying god just before his sacrifice in order to seal his sacred fate by dooming him so that no guilt would accrue to those who actually committed the act of killing him. Through her curse, the sacrificial god was anathematized and was already "dead" to the world once the Crone had pronounced his fate (25-26).

11 Crone phase goddesses have been known by various names. Hecate rules the underworld in the Greek Hebe-Hera-Hecate triad. Atrophos is the old woman who cuts the thread of life in the Clotho-Lachesis-Atrophos Greek trinity of the Moirai, or Fates. Cerridwen is the Crone phase of the Celtic Mother Goddess Bridgit. Like Hecate, the Indic Nirrti was associated with the death which follows old age. The Celtic crow-goddess, Badb, and bird-goddess, Morrigan (also known as Morgan la Fay or Fate) could bring death in battle as well as victory. Closely related to the Crone phase of the goddesses were witches such as the Slavic Baba Yaga, an old woman similar to the "Hansel and Gretel" witch who lived in the woods and devoured any mortals who strayed too close to her. Baba Yaga rode in a mortar, propelled by a pestle, and swept away her traces with a broom (Dexter 182).

CHAPTER 2
The Father's "Nom": The Crone in Patriarchal Discourse

The Public and Private Spheres
In this chapter I will examine some depictions of the Crone in patristic and, later, patriarchal literature, following the great period of synthesis of Pagan literature and philosophy with Christian theology and doctrine, a process which essentially culminated in the third century under the aegis of Augustine.1 Once Christianity was firmly established throughout Europe, and the Church doctrines and dogmas codified, literary portrayal of the Crone was largely governed by patristic theological and philosophical constructs. Lacan termed this constellation of constructs the "Law of the Father," a point summed up by his pun on "nom" and "non": the Father both exercises propriety (property) through naming and forbids and restricts by imposing rules.

The period in question spans nearly 2500 years and encompasses virtually all that we call "Western civilization." Its philosophers, theologians, authors, poets, artists, musicians, scholars, scientists and statesmen were men whose thoughts, creations, and actions shaped the course of human life throughout Europe, the mid-East, Asia, and the "new" American and Australian continents. Its foundations rest upon the works of Homer, Plato, Aristotle and the Bible. Throughout this long period, scholars and poets wrote about philosophic ideals of Truth, God, Beauty, Goodness, Just Government, the Summum Bonum, and Love.

During this time, the voices of women were seldom directly heard or publicly acknowledged. The pervasive patriarchal social construct of dual, separate spheres of influence — one public, the other private — resulted in the literary construction of an idealized "eternal feminine" as object of
the male gaze and critique, while silencing and relegating women to the "domestic sphere".\textsuperscript{2} In the binary opposites characteristic of patriarchal thought, Beauty is equated with good, light, positive qualities and is even a sign of spiritual closeness to God. Ugliness is evil, corrupt and associated with the dark female earth's chthonic forces.

In a construct based upon the duality of paired opposites, the Crone has occupied an unstable, frequently abject, position. Her domain, which includes old age and death, transgresses boundaries and converges upon the universal in human experience, rather than polarized difference. Through her relation to healing, dying and death, she has retained vestiges of her ancient powers. However, as Western attitudes towards death changed from acceptance to resistance, and as an emerging capitalist economy based upon the production of surplus devalued non-productive members, the Crone was marginalized on the periphery of social consciousness. As the witch persecutions of the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries attest, her attributes came to be re-assigned to the demonic nether-world, illustrating again the process of "mythic defamation," Campbell's term for the means by which one symbolic system gains ascendancy over another through the undermining, subversion and suppression of its mythic images. In the "Name of the Father" discourse, the Crone frequently is depicted as abject, loathsome, associated with evil and the underworld: mysterious and frightening.

My analysis of the Crone's shifting position in patriarchal discourse begins with Boethius' De consolatione philosophiae, an example from late Antiquity, in which the Crone archetype, manifested as the topos of the young/old woman, retains much of her goddess power and numinosity, although re-directed towards patriarchal ends.
I will then turn to the issue of the old woman's sexuality and body as presented in French works from different periods. The issues of "La Querelle des femmes" and the old woman's sexuality (body) had emerged in French literature by the late thirteenth century, with Jean de Meung's *Le Roman de la Rose*, and continue to this day. Perrault's seventeenth-century literary version of the French folk tale, "Le Petit Chaperon rouge," provides a methodological example of my analysis of the literary works in light of various, and frequently conflicting, theoretical interpretations, noting how the various theories themselves reinforce or question patriarchal or matriarchal positions. Discussion of these works will provide a framework for later comparison of the old woman and related issues in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French and American literatures.

**Mediator and Guide: The Crone as Sapientia**

In the literature of early Christianity, the ancient *topos* of a woman who is at once old and young was retained in the synthesis of older Pagan mythology and philosophy with the doctrines of the young religion. A common *topos* of late Antiquity, the figure of the old/young woman appears in early Christian dream literature: sometimes as the "Church," who ages yet becomes young again, or often as a symbol of wisdom. Although Ernst Curtius attributes this figure (along with the *puer senex*, the "old man/boy child" figure who also appears in early Christian literature) solely to the realm of psychological archetypes, she is a literary manifestation of the archaic "wise Crone." Curtius cites other examples from Antiquity of the old/young woman who supernaturally ages and becomes young again: the Dea Roma, Goddess of Rome, "grown gray and decrepit," who in the presence of Jupiter is
encouraged and rejuvenated; the Goddess Natura, described as at once aged and youthfully beautiful (104); and the Goddess Fortuna, who brings and takes away luck. Here is the old lunar deity, waxing and waning, ever moving toward death, only to reappear full of youth.5

One of the most well-known examples of this topos appears in Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiæ* (524), an allegorical dream vision. The figure of Lady Philosophy "appears" to Boethius to guide, through Socratic dialogue, his moral and philosophical interrogation of the *Summum Bonum*, the supreme good. Written while Boethius, a Roman patrician and former Consul, was imprisoned (and subsequently executed) under a perjured charge of treason against Theodoric, the Ostrogoth king and governor of Rome, the *Consolation* became one of the most popular books from the time of its writing until the late Renaissance.6

The vision of Lady Philosophy appears to a middle-aged Boethius, who has tragically fallen from his former wealth and prominence. Boethius' description of her size and general appearance follows the conventions of the "Queen of Heaven" trope of the ancient Pagan world, discussed in the previous chapter. She is a "woman of majestic countenance whose flashing eyes seemed wise beyond the ordinary wisdom of men" (Boethius 4). Her coloring and vigor suggest youthfulness, yet "she seemed so old that she could not be thought of as belonging to our age" (4). Sometimes she appears to be of ordinary stature but, raising herself to her full height, "she penetrated heaven itself, beyond the vision of human eyes" (4). The fabric of her robe, woven with delicate threads and meticulous workmanship into an
everlasting fabric, becomes a metaphor for philosophy itself. Her
clothes, he continues,

had been darkened in color somewhat by neglect and the passage
of time, as happens to pictures exposed to smoke. At the lower
edge of her robe was woven a Greek II, at the top the letter θ,7
and between them were seen clearly marked stages, like had been
torn, however, by the hands of violent men, who had ripped away
what they could. In her right hand, the woman held certain books;
in her left hand, a scepter. (4)

In the Jungian realm of psychological archetypes, Lady
Philosophy can be regarded as an expression of Boethius' anima: a
guide or mediator. When speaking of anima figures, it is important to
be aware that these represent aspects of "the feminine" in the
masculine psyche; they are images of the "feminine as Imaginary
Other." Maria Louise von Franz has described the four stages of anima
development in the masculine psyche, personified in ascending order
by Eve, Helen, Mary and Sapientia. Eve symbolizes "purely instinctual
and biological relations." Helen represents a "romantic and aesthetic
level that is, however, still characterized by sexual elements."
Embodying the third level, the Virgin Mary is a "figure who raises love
(eros) to the heights of spiritual devotion." The highest type is
symbolized by Sapientia, "wisdom transcending even the most holy and
the most pure" (Jung, ed. 1964:185).

It is useful to bear in mind that Jungian analysis of archetypes
does not necessarily escape the essentializing elements of mythological
thinking, and it often perpetuates the sociological assumptions and
boundaries embodied in mythological figures. Although Jungian theory
strives for a complementary balance between "masculine" and
"feminine," unlike Freudian theory which privileges the Father, this is
frequently achieved by stereotyped, reductionist interpretations of "masculine/feminine" or animus/anima oppositions which advocate "feminine" qualities for women's role as "anima." Beguiling though anima images may be, it is not necessarily beneficial for women to identify with them, since the anima role fixes the female in a male "object-of-desire" or "male-validated" position. At the same time, Jung's exploration of psychological archetypes, or what he termed the "symbolic language or images," used by all religions and produced by the individual unconsciously and spontaneously in dreams (1964:21), exposes for analysis the archetypal symbol-producing capacity of the individual and collective culture. The tension between writers, theorists and critics who work with mythological/archetypal symbol systems and those who seek to deconstruct these systems as essentializing, metaphysical and phallically univocal informs much of the present study.

Although she may be interpreted in contemporary terms as an "anima" figure, the personification of Lady Philosophy was a literary convention in late Antiquity. A rhetorical device deployed in a dialogical debate on topical philosophical issues, her message is firmly rooted in Classical patriarchal thought, especially that of Plato and Socrates. Her robe indicates the unity of philosophy, encompassing the theoretical and the practical application to life, as well as a hierarchy of orders. Her robe has been torn by reason's enemies who have fought over her principles and tried to suppress reason's wisdom, which represents "the [hierarchical] norm of the heavenly order" (Boethius, 10). Proceeding along neo-Platonic lines, which include valorization of spirit, principle, ideals and transcendence, her teachings lead her
pupil's mind away from the strife and injustice of earthly fate and fortunes to a contemplation of lasting truths and values, to a reevaluation of his life and its principles, based not upon the outcome of his unjust sentencing and loss of possessions, reputation and life, but upon an analysis of values which transcend the corporeal. She encourages a contemplation of the unity of all things in God, expressed as divine intelligence, and an acceptance of death which puts an end to both good and bad fortune. Earthly life is relegated to Fortune's mutable realm, while the transcendent godhead provides immutable happiness. However, while Lady Philosophy points to the transcendent Godhead as the Alpha and Omega of happiness, it is, in fact, her psychological immanence and wisdom which comforts, nourishes, and provides solace. The distant God, who is never immanent, remains aloof and silent, while Lady Philosophy consoles and guides her companion in confronting his mortality.

Judging from the description of her garments and symbols it is possible that Lady Philosophy is, to a certain extent, also a literary reincarnation of the goddess Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and the Crone phase of the triple Mother goddess. The "certain books" which she holds in her right hand indicate learning and wisdom, and perhaps are even titles of importance to the dreamer's philosophic outlook. The scepter in her left hand indicates authority to rule. According to J. Cirlot's Dictionary of Symbols, the book is related to the symbolism of weaving, a woman's art and one at which Lady Philosophy, a 'weaver" of meaning, excelled, since she has woven her clothing herself "into an everlasting fabric." Her clothing has darkened through age and neglect, suggesting a deity who has been neglected for
some period of time. That the darkening may also be related to smoke, and that her robe has been torn by violent men who ripped away what they could, also points not only to desecration by lesser philosophers, but possibly to her overthrow by violence: the sack of Rome. Not only was Minerva the Roman goddess of wisdom, she was also the patroness of artisans, including weavers. Moreover, she was one of the three imperial deities of Rome, together with Jupiter and Juno. The scepter which she bears in her left hand may symbolize imperial power as well as spiritual authority. In Lady Philosophy, Boethius, born about a quarter-of-a-century after the fall of Rome in 454 and (falsely) accused of treason by the Ostrogoth king Theodoric, may have invoked the ancient Roman goddess as comforter and nurturer in his dark hours. Or perhaps it is more accurate to view both Lady Philosophy and Minerva as manifestations of Sapientia, the guide and mediator, who echoes ancient Crone goddesses in her wisdom and preparation for death.

Respect for the Crone phase of the Great Goddess declined, as patriarchy shifted the emphasis from the lunar, mutable world of the Old Goddess to the unchanging, immortal realm of an eternal Father God, in whose likeness Man is made. While the image of Mary, Mother of God, — a desexualized echo of the Great Goddess — has, in particular periods, exercised tremendous creative and nurturing power, her role as consoler and wisdom-giver at the time of old age and death has diminished, as Christian doctrine extolled the desirability of life in "Heaven," relegated earthly life to a "vale of tears," and promoted a spiritual immortality over physical incarnation. Mary is portrayed as ever young, ever serenely beautiful: the Virgin and young Mother.
Following the Reformation, Mary disappeared from Protestant theology as an active force. She has remained a (frequently saccharine) example of the "eternal feminine" for the Catholic church, as theological mystification of humanly created myths and symbols continues to reinforce the social, political and power desires of the ruling class.9

**Beyond Desire: The Loathsome Crone**

Because the human old woman (see figure 1) is both past reproductive age (and consequently not an object of desire) and often possesses a certain independence of mind, she has been viewed as non-feminine, masculinized in comparison to the patriarchal idealized vision of passive, submissive, desirable femininity. Temperamentally cranky, demanding, calculating, manipulative and selfish, as she struggled to preserve some of her former stature, the elderly woman was frequently considered expendable because of her non-productivity, dependence and vulnerability. Especially in an emerging capitalist economy, old age is seen as a barren period, a negative drain upon a reproductive economy based upon the creation of surplus. The old woman consumes food, care and resources without possibility of gain. The vulnerability of old age requires that she be protected, although her productive value does not usually justify the effort. Nearing death, her body intrudes as a reminder of decay and mortality. As Mary Daly has averred, "All human beings are threatened by non-being" (23), and the old woman's body brings these issues of social invisibility, non-being and death into high relief. Moreover, just as youthful feminine beauty was seen as a sign of idealized spiritual grace, so the old woman's body was often regarded as a sign for the forces of evil and the influence of Hell.10
The metaphor of the Crone as Death and its accompanying symbolism has been dangerous for old women, in that it has permitted the persecution of witches and hags, who function individually or collectively as social scapegoats. During the "witch burning" period, the "abjection" (casting out) and sacrifice of these "loathsome crones" was thought to cleanse and purge the social group of evil and demons. Through this action, the old women assume aspects of the ritual function of the ancient year-king, whose periodic sacrifice renewed the land. Recalcitrant old women, reminders of bodily decay and superfluity, were frequent targets for fear and persecution, in the process of which their goods and estate could be "managed" or appropriated.

An examination of the figures of Vieillesse (Old Age) and La Vieille (The Duenna) in the late thirteenth-century medieval allegorical poem, *Le Roman de la Rose* (1280) yields insight into some of the ambivalent attitudes with which the old woman has been regarded, as she moves into that life-stage at furthest remove from being the object of male desire.

One of the most influential works of the Middle Ages, *Le Roman de la Rose*, an allegorical dream-vision poem, was begun by Guillaume de Lorris around 1237 to celebrate *l'amour courtois*. Influenced by Ovid, Chrétien de Troyes, Andreas (André le Chapelain) Capellanus's *De arte honeste amandi* (*The Art of Courtly Love*) and the tradition of allegorical dream-visions, de Lorris' fragment recounts the dream of L'Amant, who comes to the Garden of Mirth and, wounded by Eros' arrows, discovers the Rose, which he desires for his own pleasure. Jean de Meung continued the unfinished work, extending it by more than
17,500 lines into a scholastic satire, targeting not only the idealized conventions of courtly love but also women, marriage and topical theological issues.

In de Lorris' portion of Le Roman, Vieillesse is painted on the outside of the Garden wall, indicating the external circumstances of life, as opposed to the inner instinctual and psychological forces inside the Garden. She is linked with the figure of Temps (Time) a masculine entity who imperceptibly robs the living, and represents the end of life. Shrunken and helpless, she is waning to nothingness, a theme which is repeated throughout. "Que reste-t-il de la beauté sur ce corps tant desséché?", L'Amant rhetorically inquires (Vertut 20).12 With her wrinkled skin, yellowed or missing teeth, withered cheeks and lameness, Vieillesse is Ugly, the opposite of Beauty. As a personification of death, to which all arrive eventually, she constitutes an exhortation to live well and fully while young, providing impetus and rationale for L'Amant's pursuit of his lusty desires.

In Jean de Meung's continuation of the poem, images of the hunt and rape predominate, as L'Amant stalks his "Rosebud," the young maiden whom he seeks to deflower. With the collaboration of La Vieille as well as other psychological ploys, such as Bel Accueil (Fair Welcome), which attract her to L'Amant, the Rose is not only plucked but impregnated. A barrage of coy metaphors follows as Genius (intellect) exhorts him to do his duty by energetically sowing his "seed," using his "plow," "pen," and "hammer" upon the passive "furrow," "page," or "anvil." Since L'Amant's avowed motive is the pleasure of seduction rather than the responsibilities of marriage, the Rose will presumably be left to fend for herself and her little budlet as best she may. De
Meung's satire foregrounds a "Name of the Father" social code based, as Kristeva claims, upon symbolic exchange and the exchange of women (1982:61). In this patriarchal agrarian economy, men reproduce their lineage by "sowing their seed" upon women, who are the passive "field." "Land" which is not plowed remains barren, or economically unproductive; thus a woman who refuses motherhood is not fulfilling her reproductive role and risks superfluity.

De Meung's La Vieille presents the economics of seduction as seen from the perspective of the aging object-of-desire, underscoring the importance which patriarchal society has placed upon feminine beauty as a condition for being an object of desire and valued exchange commodity. The portrait of La Vieille, drawn with a certain cynical irony, illustrates certain recurrent French attitudes towards an old woman's sexuality. A procuress now that her desirability has passed, La Vieille aids L'Amant, not only from hope of gain but also because of stirrings of her own sexuality and memories. The connection between beauty and wealth is the text of her advice to the young woman. Rather than being either very good or very bad, she is worldly and venial, obliging enough when it suits her own self-interest or when mildly threatened.

In a discourse which is intended as a satirical portrait of the ironies underlying courtly love's idealizations, the hag with the wrinkled, "worn-out" face reflects upon the economic situation of the object-of-desire. Recalling her youthful years as a great beauty, she gives the young maiden worldly advice, based upon the authority of experience. She becomes a teacher, instructing the young woman how to play the game of love so as to avoid an impoverished old age,
maneuvering in an economy in which women, as objects of desire, have only their youth and beauty with which to gain security or wealth.

Lors elle le doit serrer dans ses bras en le baisant, pour mieux l'affoler. Mais je le répète, qu'elle ne pense qu'à l'argent. (Mary 235)

Femme est plus chère tenue quand plus cher elle s'est vendue! (Vertut ed., 160)

Virginal beauty is a woman's only commodity. La Vieille advises women to manage this asset well, using it while young to improve or secure their financial position. She exposes women's vulnerability in a social arena in which they may achieve economic security and stability only by attracting and holding males, culminating either in marriage or a well-established alliance. While her discourse is intended to be a satire on the calculated stratagems of women who pretend love in order to obtain financial reward, her complaint reveals the harsh realities of women's economic position in the patriarchal order. The "game of love" still operates to the advantage of the male lover; the Rose, like La Vieille, loses. As La Vieille's discourse reveals, women in the patriarchal order give up their freedom, independence and self-respect in a master-servant marriage relationship, but they risk destitution, scorn and stigma if they avoid marriage.

Although La Vieille is assigned the task of protecting the "stored wealth" of the virginal "Rosebud," she covertly aligns herself with the seductive lover, pandering to his sexual drive. Accepting "beaux anneaux d'or" (Vertut 152) with promises of "parures et robes d'orfrois" (153), La Vieille agrees to help L'Amant gain access to Bel Accueil and eventually to the Rose. The ambiguity of her position requires that to earn her keep she must guard the "wealth," which the
young virgin represents, by preventing sexual encounters. At the same time, she still desires to participate vicariously in the life force, of which sexuality is a part. An ironic contrast is made between society's assumption that her sexual feelings have declined in old age, while, in reality, she can still respond to the thrill of partaking in a sexual affair, benefits by the lover's gifts, and cherishes her own memories of being a sought-after young belle.

Her latent sexuality is depicted by de Meung as ludicrous, lewd and revolting in a "vile old hag." While the virginal object-of-desire's latent sexuality is alluring, the old woman's sexual interest, at a time when she can be neither an object of male desire nor subject of her own desires, renders her abject: loathsome and "radicalement un exclu" in Kristeva's terms (1980:9). In patriarchy, the crone's sexuality is "la mort infestant la vie," in that it disturbs "une identité, un système, un ordre." With its appetite and proximity to death, it does not respect "les limites, les places, les règles" (12).

The same ambivalence toward La Vieille's sexuality — the Gallic cynicism and ridicule which accompanies an old woman's interest — continues to characterize French attitudes, especially those of the bourgeoisie. "Aging and dying ... are taboo topics within phallocentric discourse," writes Elaine Marks in an essay, "Transgressing the (In)cont(in)ent Boundaries: The Body in Decline," about Simone de Beauvoir's discussion of old age and sexual function in her autobiographical works (187). In de Beauvoir's musings, sexuality presents both an opportunity for rejuvenation and the disgusting and ridiculous spectacle of "les vieilles peaux" ("old skins") responding to sexual urges and instincts (Marks 185).
The satirical and misogynist elements of *Le Roman de la Rose* summoned one of the most determined pens of the day to the defense of women. "Mais je say bien que il est propre a ceulx qui veulent malicieusement vivre," Christine de Pisan observed tartly in her famous critique of *Le Roman* contained in a letter to Master Pierre Col, dated October 2, 1302. Europe's earliest known professional woman writer, Pisan fired the first recorded retaliatory shot in a continuing battle in French letters, known as "La Querelle des femmes."

Using a number of *exempla*, or examples of heroines and virtuous ladies drawn for the most part from Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*, Christine de Pisan challenges the historical discourse of her time, writing a history of women to refute misogynist charges of feminine weakness and vice and to show women's virtuousness. In *La Cité des Dames* (1304-5), she questions "quelles pouvaient être les causes et les raisons qui poussaient tant d'hommes, clercs et autres, à médire des femmes et à vitupérer leur conduite soit en paroles, soit dans leurs traités et leurs écrits ... Philosophes, poètes et moralistes ... tous semblent parler d'une même voix pour conclure que la femme est foncièrement mauvaise et portée au vice" (36). Adopting Boethius' and Augustine's allegorical dream-vision convention of the goddess-like guide, she describes "trois dames couronnées [Dame Raison, Dame Droiture, and Dame Justice] de très haute dignité" and "de naissance divine" (41) who appear before her. "La splendeur qui émanait de leurs visages rejaillissait sur moi, illuminant toute la pièce" (38). While Boethius' Lady Philosophy consoled with messages drawn from neo-Platonic philosophy, Dame Raison provides solace to Christine (and her women readers) by re-interpreting women's "true" nature, using the
rhetorical device of antiphrasis "de tourner à ton avantage leurs écrits là où ils blâment les femmes" (39). Using the authoritative, allegorical style of patristic discourse, including rhetorical devices and invocation of Classical authorities, Christine critiques her fourteenth-century French courtly society for not valuing women equally with men. Her criticisms are surprisingly contemporary: women's lack of access to education; society's preference for male babies; the "double standard" of courtly love; blaming the female rape victim; violence in marriage; and women's dire economic position which keeps them dependent and impoverished. Obliquely countering de Meung's insinuations about the sexually-driven older woman, she tells the story of Queen Blanche, mother of St. Louis, in La Cité des Dames. The good, virtuous queen, "qui n'était pourtant plus dans la fleur de sa jeunesse" (231), was loved passionately by the much younger comte de Champagne, whose affection lasted all of his life, despite the impossibility of his ever winning her love. Moreover, Pisan claims to know many older women "qui ont été plus sollicitées ... depuis que leur grande beauté et leur jeunesse s'en sont allées que dans l'épanouissement de leur jeune âge" (232). Expressing astonishment and concern, the women wonder if inadvertently they have encouraged these men but, Christine suggests, "c'est leur vertu éminente qui les faisait aimer" (232). Her advice to older women who might be chaperons of young ladies, given in Le Livre du Trésor de la Cité des Dames, urges them to quickly make excuses to leave court to avoid harm should their young charges spurn their counsel and willfully seem to encourage a lover (95-96). Christine energetically devoted much of her long and illustrious career to issues of "La Querelle," writing against the grain of accepted historical
discourse and using rhetoric to undermine the patriarchal logic which maintained female inferiority and suffering.

**Fairy-tale Grandmothers**

As early as the late seventeenth century\(^2\) in the court of Louis XIV of France, the *conte de fée* became a popular literary form among the sophisticated, worldly *précieuses* and *précieux* of Parisian salons.\(^1\) The *conte de fée* was related to the fable, also popular in the seventeenth century, and to the Latin *fabulae*. Charles Perrault's use of the fairy tale was part of the bitter quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns, in which classicists ridiculed the use of vernacular sources. The *conte de fée*, however, was more commonly composed by aristocratic women of the court (Warner 5). In 1695, Perrault's *Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye* appeared, containing classics such as "Cendrillon" ("Cinderella"); "Le Petit Chaperon rouge" ("Little Red Riding Hood"); "La Belle au bois dormant" ("Sleeping Beauty"); "Le Petit Poucet" ("Little Tom Thumb"); and "Le Chat botté" ("Puss in Boots"), told by "Mother Goose," a nursery mask for the Crone. Like other *contes de fées* these were intended as amusing tales to illustrate the courtly values of the *homme civilisé*, for a rising class of *hauts bourgeois gentilhommes*.\(^2\)

Perrault's tale "Cendrillon" demonstrates the more typical "folk" fairy tale ending, in which a person of low birth moves into high position. Abused by her stepmother and stepsisters, who are jealous of her beauty and gracious nature, Cinderella endures a pitiful situation. In the phallic sexual code, however, the attractive, agreeable Cinderella will be more desirable than the two ugly, quarrelsome daughters and thus able to marry well. The jealous old hag (evil), symbolized by the cruel stepmother, competes with the wise, helpful fairy godmother
(good), who provides the necessary material attributes of class — gown, coach, and footmen — to indicate Cinderella's worthiness. Psychologically, the two old women can be seen as dual aspects of the old woman figure: the stepmother represents meanness and jealousy, while the beneficent godmother supports the girl's innate virtues by producing or procuring the necessary wealth, or female inheritance, to merit the prince's affection.

In Perrault's "Le Petit Chaperon rouge" ("Little Red Riding Hood"), which has numerous variants in the popular tradition, the grandmother is killed and therefore unable to help her beloved granddaughter. Although the overt moral and dramatic interest lies in the action between the little girl and the wolf, there is, in the oral French folk tale, "Conte de la Mère Grand" (the conte traditionnel researched by Paul Delarue from which Perrault made his adaptation) a curious communion ritual involving the grandmother. The daughter is sent by her mother to take some bread and milk to her grandmother. Meeting the wolf along the way, she artlessly tells him her destination. He races off, arrives at the grandmother's house, kills the old woman, and sets aside some of her flesh and a bottle of her blood. When Red Riding Hood arrives, the wolf, before attempting to seduce her, suggests she eat some of the meat and drink some wine. The helpful cat, the old woman's "familiar," chastises the little girl for eating her grandmother's flesh and blood. Thus warned, Red Riding Hood becomes frightened and alert. She begs to go outside to relieve herself before coming to bed. Tying a cord to her ankle, the wolf reluctantly agrees; she quickly attaches the cord to a tree outside escapes (Loury 33).
In the Perrault version, references to grandmother's flesh and blood as meat and wine have been eliminated. Wearing a red hood, the little girl ignores her mother's warnings as she goes through the forest to take the gifts to the grandmother. When she meets the wolf, she tells him where she is going. He runs ahead, kills the grandmother, takes her place, and eats the girl. Perrault appends a moral warning to young girls about the dangers of seducers. Zipes concludes that the little peasant girl of the folk tale is "forthright, brave, and shrewd. She knows how to use her wits to escape preying beasts." In contrast, Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood is "spoiled, gullible, and helpless" ... the tale's moral "simply warns children to be more alert and to beware of strangers" (9).

The Grimm Brothers' recounting added a second episode, which introduces the male hero as protector. After the wolf has eaten the grandmother and little girl, a woodcutter intervenes and saves both by cutting open the wolf's stomach. Having learned that the wolf is dangerous, Little Red Cap and her granny sew stones into the wolf's stomach, and the wolf dies. In the Grimm tale, she is reprieved by the male rescuer: a woodcutter, hunter or gamekeeper. In this version, Little Red Cap is even more "the naïve, helpless, pretty little girl who must be punished for her transgression, which is spelled out even more clearly as disobedience and indulgence in sensual pleasures," as Zipes underscores in his analysis (16). Without the protection of the male heroic figure and her grandmother, "she is lost and unable to cope with foreign or strange elements in her surroundings" (16). Both Perrault, writing from the aristocratic or haute bourgeoise perspective of the homme civilisé, and the Grimms' enforcement of middle-class codes,
create a helpless, spoiled little girl who is, in Zipes' words, a "projection of male phantasy in a literary discourse considered to be civilized and aimed at curbing the natural [sexual] inclinations of children" [especially girls] (13).

In Perrault's tale, the little girl is a victim of the seducer, who triumphs. The perils of the forest are emphasized, highlighting the conflict between the female's innocent play and worldly dangers. "Dans le code de la sexualité, pour Perrault, la Forêt c'est le Monde," Lilyane Moury asserts, "... mais surtout les salons mondains, la vie mondaine et ses manifestations, où se produisent les rencontres entre innocentes jeunes filles et mâles sans scrupules (76-77). In other words, the forest symbolizes the world of seduction in which the "game" of love is played. Hers is the sin of ignorance, but in the natural (courtly) world she is made a victim nonetheless.

As has been discussed by Bruno Bettelheim and others, the little girl's red hood, the color of emotion, passion, and blood, signals her impending sexual initiation as well as the onset of menstruation and her biological readiness to leave girlhood. At the beginning of the story, she leaves the exclusively feminine world of her affectionate mother and grandmother and meets the wolf, who does not love her, but desires to devour her. What is "killed" is the little girl as self-contained maiden.

She has lost the advantage of any help or advice which might have been provided by her grandmother, who made the red hood indicating a continuity between the two. In the French bourgeois phallic code which replaced l'amour courtois, the blossoming of the young girl's own desire must be strictly controlled, a process in which
the old woman/grandmother figure's role might be ambiguous — as exemplified by De Meung's La Vieille. In what Michel Foucault has termed the "pedagogization of children's sex," the story's message, which focuses on the wolf-girl relationship, reminds adult readers that a young girl's sexual maturation must be carefully managed in order to preserve her value.

From a woman's perspective, there are other issues of crucial importance, which revolve around the young girl and the grandmother. Although Moury considers the grandmother's death merely a precursor of the girl's fate, I think more is at stake. Not only has the young girl lost a powerful source of cathected, or psychic, energy, she has also lost her connection to her own generativity and matrilineal bonds. For Little Red Riding Hood, the death of her grandmother can be interpreted as the death of the little girl's independence and autonomy; henceforth she will be dominated by her identity as a sexual object of desire. At adolescence, the young woman begins to be identified in terms of the men around her. Her opportunities are defined by her relationships to men. In the patriarchal world, entry into the arena of desire often spells the end of the girl's self-awareness; it is the period in which she learns to make her desirability to men the central focus of her life and the measure of her worth. The risks of losing her "autonomy of desire," her ability to know and act upon her desire, represented by the seducer's killing of the grandmother, are as dangerous to her psychological well-being as her seduction is to her social worthiness.

In contrast to Perrault's moral tale, the strange communion in the conte traditionnel, in which the mother's gifts of nurturing bread and
milk are set aside by the wolf for the meat and wine of erotic love is an ancient element in the hero's (or heroine's) journey. The meat and wine, however, are, in truth, the flesh and blood of the girl's grandmother, who is the sacrificial victim. This communion, paradoxically, represents the sacrifice of the old woman for new life, the identification between the old woman and young girl as the "same," and the sacrifice of the id, as ego consciousness begins to develop. The result of the grandmother's sacrifice is that the girl "wakes up" to the danger of annihilation which she faces and, using her wits to deceive the wolf, contrives her escape. The oral folk tale, then, presents elements which retain some of the Crone's ancient life-renewing functions — elements which have been excised from the Perrault and Grimm versions.

Interpretation of this folk tale has been fruitful from many twentieth-century perspectives. Further discussion of "Little Red Riding Hood," including Hélène Cixous's reading of the grandmother in "Le Sexe ou la tête," will emerge again in Chapters 5 and 6.

The Death-bringing Crone

While Boethius and Christine de Pisan evoked the archetypal powers of Sapientia as comforter and guide in times of despair and death, the Crone goddess's most sacred role is that of destroyer, freeing up energy for new life. Inspiring fear and a certain respect, Atropos is the enemy who cuts the thread of life, which Clotho and Lachesis spin. Atropos, the death-bringing Crone, is a constant reminder and rationale for enjoying youth and life's pleasures to the fullest while one may. As Hecate, the Crone has been associated with sorcery, evil, and the chthonic underworld, a relationship which has permitted Catholic and
Protestant inquisitors to torture and burn hundreds of thousands of "superfluous" old women as sacrificial scapegoats, suppressing "heresy," enabling the confiscation and appropriation of their goods, and curtailing their means of livelihood as healers.

Both De Meung's La Vieille and Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother operate in the private sphere, the domain of erotic love, where male and female meet for sexual energizing and barter. In Le Roman de la Rose and Perrault's fairy tale, the old woman, or grandmother, is associated with guarding the young girl's valuable virginity, a task about which, from various motives, she is ambivalent. The old bawd's sexuality, connected as it is with her undesirable body, is presented as comic and repugnant, her affirmation of eros greedy and self-serving. The bourgeois grandmother is merely ineffectual and, significantly, is killed off.

Yet as the elderly converge with death, the Crone's body may become the universal body. Elaine Marks makes the insightful comment that,

> at the end, sexual difference fades and [that] the body that remains is the unrestrained, uncontrolled body of the old woman. It is precisely the body that Western culture ... [has] labored assiduously to hide. (199)

If the feminization of institutionalized old age includes not only females but also aging males (who lose their "masculine" potency and become more "feminine"), then human destiny leads to the Crone's body. Implied in Marks's observation is the perception that, as all human life emerges from the mother, so it merges into thingness/(no)thingness in the body of the Crone. The (no)thingness of the Crone's body results in abjection, as described by Julia Kristeva and
illustrated in the negation of the Crone by Freud and Jacques Lacan. With negation and abjection come loss of voice, discussed in the next chapter.
NOTES

1 Augustine's theology was devoted to the formation of Christian doctrine and, to a certain extent, to the integration into Christian doctrine of those teachings of Pagan moral philosophy which were congruent.

2 In the construct of "masculine" and "feminine" domains, and their respective qualities, there has been much debate about whether these are complementary or hierarchical. Indeed, a major difference between Freud and Jung's analyses of the psyche or unconscious revolves around the issue of Jung's anima-animus complementarity and Freud's polarized hierarchy, dominated by the father. The American mythologist, Joseph Campbell, follows Jungian thinking in according complementarity to his interpretations of mythological thinking, while Simone de Beauvoir has tacitly accepted the hierarchical position as the substratum of "Le Deuxième Sexe."

3 Theologically the young/old woman is both the "bride of Christ" and the "Mother Church."


5 As the Crone, the old woman carries within her archetype rejuvenation and new beginnings, as well as the reminder of mortality. Indeed, mythic archetypes themselves demonstrate this oscillation between aging and rejuvenation, becoming at times merely worn-out clichés, or seeming to disappear altogether, only to re-emerge again with new vigor, new life, in a different epoch.

6 In The Discarded Image, C.S. Lewis writes that, "Though the De Consolatione was certainly written" after Boethius' fall, "I do not think it was written in a dungeon nor in daily expectation of the executioner. ... When he wrote the book he may have known that his life was in some danger. I do not think he despaired of it. Indeed he complains at the outset that death cruelly neglects wretches who would gladly die" (77). Nevertheless, Boethius was imprisoned at Pavia and executed in 524, the same year that the Consolation was written. Richard Green, editor and translator of the Consolation, maintains that Boethius wrote his work while in prison (Boethius ix) and describes Boethius' use of the prison metaphor, making his literal imprisonment a metaphor for the imprisonment of the soul in the body (xxiii).

7 Μ and θ are the first letters of the Greek words for the two divisions of philosophy: theoretical and practical (Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. with introduction and notes by Richard Green, 4).

8 Boethius was charged with treason for desiring the freedom of Rome and protecting the Roman Senate.
The twentieth-century theologian Paul Tillich claims that "revelation through the Virgin Mary has come to an end, ceasing to create a revelatory situation, at least for Protestants" (Daly 90). In an effort to stamp out attempts by women to envision a divine role for the feminine or to participate more fully in the Catholic church hierarchy, Pope John Paul II has recently urged two visiting American bishops to combat a "bitter, ideological" feminism, which, he said, has led to "forms of nature worship and the celebration of myths and symbols" usurping traditional celebrations of the Christian faith. At the same time, he has reiterated his firm opposition to the ordination of women as priests.

European Christian theology's name for the dark underworld derives from the Germanic goddess, Hel, who ruled the underworld (Dexter, 99).

A scholastic at the University of Paris, de Meung also translated Boethius' De consolatione philosophiae into French.

What remained of youthful beauty in that shriveled body?" Robbins translates this as "Her beauty gone/ Ugly had she become" (9).

She claps him tight and gives him many a kiss.
But, if she'll heed my counsel, she will pay
Attention to no thing except her price."(Robbins 285)

The thing that's dearest bought is dearest held;
But what men get for nothing they despise. (Robbins 286)

That women of this time were often very economically dependent — as they have been throughout patriarchal history — is corroborated by Christine de Pisan (1365-1430?), who wrote ballads mourning the early death of her beloved husband and her own resulting precarious financial and social situation. Widowed in 1390 at twenty-five, de Pisan was left with three children, her widowed mother, and a niece to support. Although her father and husband had been well-favored at court, her father's pensions had been cut following the death of Charles V. To support her dependents, she became the first professional woman writer in Europe.

Christine de Pisan's ballad, "Seulette sui," written around 1390 shortly after the death of her husband, alludes to the social and economic plight of a widow.

... these gems, this fan
These buttons which he [the Lover] sends you as a gift;
Not to make mention of the ornament
Which he will give you soon. (Robbins 255)

"Anyone who follows the advice in this book is going to lead a spiteful life"
(transl. mine).

20. As part of a second, Germanic, wave of interest in folk stories, major collections of folk tales, taken from oral popular tales but rewritten as literary stories for a middle-class audience, appeared in the nineteenth century. Among those are the well-known collections by the Grimm brothers, Andrew Lang, and Hans Christian Andersen.

21. Writers such as Charles Perrault, Mme d'Aulnoy, Mme Leprince de Beaumont ("Beauty and the Beast"), Mlle Bernard, and Mlle Lhéritier excelled in this form, often adapting orally transmitted folk tales — stories from the popular tradition told to children by their nurses and maids — to suit a more polished courtly audience, with the aim of amusing and educating at the same time.

22. The homme civilisé was the former homme courtois, whose polite manners and style of speech were altered to include bourgeois qualities of honesty, diligence, responsibility, and asceticism" (Zipes 11-12).

23. In The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context, Jack Zipes has collected and analyzed 31 French, British, American, German, Italian, French-Canadian, and Chinese versions of the tale, beginning with Charles Perrault's 1697 version and finishing with a 1979 Chinese variant, "Chiang Mi" or "Goldflower and the Bear."

24. In discussing the origins of the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale, Zipes cites research by Marianne Rumpf on European warning tales of the Middle Ages, stories which involved hostile forces — an ogre, ogress, man-eater, wild person, werewolf, or wolf — threatening unprotected children. "The social function of the story was to show how dangerous it could be for children to talk with strangers in the woods or for strangers to enter the home" (Zipes 2). Rumpf points out that superstitious tales about werewolves flourished more in France during early Christianity and the Middle Ages than in any other European country. She further maintains that wherever oral versions of the LRRH tale were found later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they were primarily found in those regions where werewolf trials were most common in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Doctoral dissertation: Rotkäppchen: Eine vergleichende Märchenuntersuchung [University of Göttingen, 1951], 76-84). She and Marc Soriano (Les Contes de Perrault: Culture savante et traditions populaires [Paris: Gallimard, 1968]) conclude that Perrault's literary tale of 1697 was probably derived from werewolf stories circulating in Touraine, where his mother grew up. Paul Delarue's oral version of LRRH was recorded in Nièvre, about 1885 (Zipes 4-5); see "Conte de la mère grande," in Delarue, Le Conte populaire français, 373-74. See also Zipes (5-6) and Lilyane Mourey, Grimm et Perrault: histoire, structure, mise en texte des contes (Paris: Archives des lettres modernes, 1978, 31-32) for text and analysis of "Conte de la mère grande," including a comparison of story elements in the two tales. Many of the oral folk tale elements were omitted or refined by Perrault.


Chapter 3
The Father's "Non": Negation and Denial of the Crone in Psychological Discourse

The Phallocentric Bias of Psychological Discourse

The discourse of psychoanalysis continues to reinforce patriarchal values, shifting the locus of discussion from theological ("Law of the Father") and philosophical discourses to the inner structure of the psyche. In psychoanalytical discourse, it is no longer an external god or a systematically constructed belief system which privileges the "masculine" and subjugates the "feminine," but the very functioning of the individual psyche, in its conscious, preconscious, and unconscious dimensions. Weighing the possibilities of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis for feminism, Elizabeth Grosz comments that "... while providing arguably the most sophisticated and convincing account of subjectivity, psychoanalysis itself is nevertheless phallocentric in its perspectives, methods and assumptions" (3).

Describing women's fascination with psychoanalysis¹ and Freud's and Lacan's corresponding fascination with women, Grosz writes that "women's fascination with psychoanalysis has enabled psychoanalysis to be used to help provide an explanation, or the beginnings of one, of women's social and psychical positions within patriarchal cultures" (7). But, she adds, psychoanalysis is also based upon unspoken masculine perspectives and interests. The assumption of women's "castration" and passivity is one of its fundamental principles. Existing in an historical context of misogyny, psychoanalysis articulates how and why women are culturally constructed by negative definitions. It argues the necessity for feminine repression. When Jacques Lacan appropriates the entire realm of symbolic expression to the "masculine" domain, the "feminine" is
silenced, theoretically without the means of expressing herself in rational language. One might call it a kind of castration of the tongue. Instead of language which communicates thoughts and meaning, feminine utterances become incomprehensible croakings. Deprived of speech, forbidden to act as subject, and relegated to the nether world of "imaginary" passions, the feminine is repressed and denigrated.

The Freudian Crone: The Id and I

In Freud's conceptualization of the id, Eros and death, qualities embodied by the Maiden and the Crone, intertwine; the tension between the two creates the id's energy, which fuels the psyche. Here (although it is misleading to speak of the id as though it were a locus or a point), the binary structure of contradictory opposites does not obtain, time and space are not linear, and memories do not dim (Freud 1933a:104).

"The id is ... a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement," according to Freud in his analysis of the structure of the unconsciousness. "We suppose that it is somewhat in direct contact with somatic processes, and takes over from them instinctual needs and gives them mental expression, but we cannot say in what substratum this contact is made," he continues. The two basic instincts of Eros (love, connectedness) and death (separation, destruction), which exist in dynamic tension, "fill it [the id] with energy, but it has no instinctual needs in accordance with the pleasure principle. The laws of logic — above all, the law of contradiction — do not hold for processes in the id" (104).

In this description of the id, I want to call attention not only to Freud's concept of the id itself, but to the metaphor of the cauldron to which the id is compared, and its relation to the Crone's characteristics. Freud links the cauldron with chaos, two images which arouse fear, or
aversion, in rational discourse. Chaos is that state of primal confusion defined by Webster's dictionary as a "confused mass, of formless matter and infinite space, supposed to have existed before the ordered universe." Because of its formlessness and lack of order, it is antithetical to the rational mind, which classifies, sorts for "Same", and acts as a "sieve," retaining and ordering that which fits into its grid system and allowing to fall through the spaces (into the abyss or unconscious) that which does not. Chaos is linked mythologically with the chthonic feminine forces of evil, the mother-of-all-things, Tiamat, the "darkness upon the face of the deep ... the face of the waters" (Gen. 1: 2); the formlessness before the Father God's orderly creation by the "Word" (Logos).

One of the oldest symbols of the Crone as tri-partite Mother Goddess, the cauldron is the symbol of the Mother's creative forces, the cosmic vessel, or "soup," out of which all things are born. Barbara Walker claims that the female symbol of the cauldron was "usually described as the source of life, wisdom, inspiration, understanding, and magic" (100). It has been likened to the "ubiquitous 'pot of blood' in the hand of Triple Kali" (India's Kali Ma, the Terrible Mother in her Destroyer Crone phase) representing her primordial uterine Ocean of Blood that provided the original life energy for the creation"(100). It is the cauldron/cup, filled with blood-as-wine, the primordial energy of life.

Freud's description of the id implies that it is, in a sense, vessel-like, filled by the instincts with life/death energy. It is linked with pleasure (Eros, womb creation), rather than reason (Logos, the word as creator). Freud's concept of the id invokes these ancient symbols of a primordial feminine creative power, an invocation which his description of the characteristics of the id does not dispel:
Contradictory impulses exist side by side without neutralizing each other or drawing apart ... There is nothing in the id which can be compared to negation, and we are astonished to find in it an exception to the philosophers' assertion that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. In the id there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time, no recognition of the passage of time, and (a thing which is very remarkable and awaits adequate attention in philosophic thought) no alteration of mental processes by the passage of time ... Conative impulses which have never got beyond the id, and even impressions which have been pushed down into the id by repression, are virtually immortal and are preserved for whole decades as though they had only recently occurred ... Naturally, the id knows no values, no good and evil, no morality. (104-105)

Ascribed to the id are processes which seem remarkably similar to images of the feminine "Other," as described in the masculine symbolic order. I retained Freud's references to philosophic discourse in the passage quoted above in order to highlight the contrast between the description of id processes and the norms of philosophic discourse, which Luce Irigaray identifies as the backbone of patriarchal discourse: "c'est bien le discours philosophique ... en tant qu'il fait la loi à tout autre, qu'il constitue le discours des discours" (72). I am not inferring that Freud's id is simply a description of the masculine concept of the "feminine," but I am suggesting that the "feminine" construct has been endowed by masculine imagery with some of the id's characteristics.

On the other hand, the ego, which Freud describes as that portion of the id which is modified by exposure to external forces of the outside world, functions according to the "reality principle," interpolating "between desire and action, the procrastinating factors of thought" (106). It is endowed with normative "masculine" characteristics, especially reasoning, logic, and the ability to assess external forces objectively. "In
popular language," he writes, "we may say that the ego stands for reason and circumspection, while the id stands for the untamed passions" (107) and operates according to the "pleasure principle."

Indeed, the ego/id begins in an undifferentiated state, analogous to the infant's connection with the mother, and commences to differentiate with experience of the external world, signaling the child's separation from the mother. We can begin to discern shadowy outlines of the ancient hero's myth, in which the heroic sage must experience death and rebirth by "dying" to his former life, especially to his maternal beginnings, and being reborn again with greater knowledge or wisdom. We can also distinguish, both in the heroic myth and in psychoanalytic theory, a process by which the masculine ego's separation from "the mother" in favor of movement towards the external world of "the father" normalizes suppression of the feminine as a necessary condition of autonomy.

The superego, or severe "parent," maintains "certain norms of behaviors, without regard to any difficulties coming from the id or the external world" (109). It is the enforcing agent of the "Law of the Father," causing the ego, which is the mediating agent between the id's desires, the external world's realities, and the superego's behavioral standards, to feel shame, guilt or fear when its dictates are not lived up to. The superego penetrates into the id. "As heir to the Oedipus complex it has, after all intimate connections with the id," Freud notes, adding that the differentiation between the ego and the superego may be "the most insecure and from the phylogenetic point of view the most recent" (110-111). Since the severe superego and the instinctual, passionate id have the ability to interconnect, it is possible to envision the threat that this union can pose to the ego's strength and independence; indeed, perhaps
the myth of the hero's journey, to a certain extent, mirrors the "heroic" ego's quest to master and balance these forces. It is also possible to envision a kind of connection or relationship between the superego's harsh enforcement of the "Law of the Father" and the repressed "feminine," found in the id, a relationship that, to some extent, might circumvent the ego. In any case, the ego and superego, roughly similar to "adult" and "parent," are masculine domains, while the id is the locus of the "feminine," in which are contained the mother and female child. Although not explicitly mentioned in Freud's theory, the Crone, or woman past reproductive capacity, can be seen to be a repressed construct linking id and superego, no longer erotic or nurturing yet representing a superego "parent" figure through her connection with "the law of death."

**Oedipus' Emerging Masculine Ego**

Through Freud's use of the Oedipal myth to dramatize the masculine ego's individuation, the repression of the feminine by controlling her libidinal drive is posited as essential for the development of both the individual and of civilization. Freud's Oedipal conflict presents the family drama from the perspective of the masculine imaginary. The family triad, consisting of the father, mother and child, becomes the model upon which the psychoanalytic structure is based. In this model, the father must emerge as the dominant figure, interposing himself between the original unity of mother and child. The child takes for his infantile "object-choice" his mother. "The first choice of object in mankind," Freud writes, "is regularly an incestuous one, directed to the mother and sister of men" (1916:293). He cites mythological incestuous marriage practices of the gods and historical practices of early civilizations such as the Egyptians and Incas. "Incest with the mother" is
one of Oedipus' crimes, he avers, and "patricide the other" (294): culture
and civilization are built around the avoidance of the former through
ritualized exchange of women and guilt for the latter which assures the
rule of the father. As the small child begins the process of "weaning" from
the mother, the father interposes himself between the child and mother
to deflect the son's erotic attraction for his mother, instituting the "Law of
the Father," and guiding his son into maturity. In Freud's unsystematic
treatments of the pre-Oedipal mother, as Madelon Sprengnether
comments, she "emerges as a figure of subversion, a threat to masculine
identity as well as to patriarchal culture" (5).

In the family setting, men and women learn the socially
constructed characteristics of "masculinity" and "femininity," carrying
these with them into the wider social context. Although Freud
hypothesizes that male and female infants are similar in their libidinal
energy and the strength of their drives, the female, from the beginning,
must undergo severe repression, in order to achieve that state of
passivity, timidity and receptivity that properly characterizes the
"feminine" (1933(b):581). Freud describes women and mothers as
submissive and self-sacrificing, thus re-stating Jehovah's curse upon
Eve.4 Women who wish to engage in "male" projects are thought to be
suffering from "penis envy," or desire for the father's sexual organ,
regarded by the female child as more potent than the mother's lack of
such an organ. The male, on the other hand, continues to be encouraged
to know and act upon his desires. Eva Figes claims that men in power
have created "woman" in order to ensure that power and that in a
patriarchal society, male dominance must be maintained at all cost
"because the person who dominates cannot conceive of any alternative
but to be dominated in turn" (Nye 97). In the patriarchal social context, the symbols of the Mother Goddess are turned upside down, and what was once thought to be the source of all life, death, being and creation is now construed as a lack.\textsuperscript{5}

In the patriarchal construction of motherhood, the "good-enough mother"\textsuperscript{6} is a cipher. Freudian feminine repression becomes self-abnegation, as the sacrificial mother submerges herself solely in the interests of the child. According to developmental psychologist D.W. Winnicott, "the essence of good mothering is the mother's non-existence. She echoes and reflects the design of the child; nothing intrudes between his [sic] wishes and hers" (Nye 131). As he grows older, she retreats, allowing him to move into the world of the father where he gains access to independence. He then participates in the patriarchal drama of father/son rivalry, guilt, and the exchange of women upon which the social community rests. Imprisoned in the private sphere of nurture and caretaking, women can not actively participate in this drama.

Freud believed that from puberty onward, "the human individual must devote himself to the great task of freeing himself from the parents; and only after this detachment is accomplished can he cease to be a child and become a member of the social community" (1916:295). The son, symbolically represented by Oedipus, must free himself from his libidinal attachment to his mother in favor of an "external love object in reality" and either reconcile himself with his father, if there has been antagonism, or free himself from the father's domination, if he has become too subservient. We may discern in the mother/wife and dying husband/father the outlines of that archaic marriage between the Goddess and her "year-king," the rising-dying god who must be sacrificed
and replaced to ensure renewal of the land and people. At the same time, we see reflected, in the metaphor of the family, the psychological journey of the masculine ego, which must both disengage itself from submersion in the id and prevent its domination by the superego, in order to become an autonomous individual acting in the "real" world.

It is tempting to speculate that the great drama being enacted long ago in the works of the early Greeks, such as Plato's cave allegory and Sophocles' *Oedipus*, indicated the emergence and development of a particular conception of a masculine ego as separate from nature and others, autonomous, and self-actualizing. At the same time, there seems to have been a corresponding movement to repress and define the feminine, including the development of the binary system of paired symbolic opposites in which the masculine quality is positive, active, and stalwart, while the feminine opposite is negative, passive, and timid. Whether this "ego development" is cultural — the result of the Indo-European cultural patterns (discussed in Chapter 1), which promoted the male as separate and dominant — or evolutionary, whether the masculine ego is biologically determined or socially constructed is still open to question. However, both arguments have been contextually shaped, especially by the mythological patterns by which different cultural groups succeed each other and gain ascendancy.

Remarking that "we cannot fail to be struck by the similarity between the process of civilization and the libidinal development of the individual," (1930:34) Freud moves beyond the family triad to describe the beginnings of civilization — from a patriarchal perspective. In Freud's account, "primal man" discovers that he can improve his lot by "working," (36) and especially by banding together cooperatively with other men to
achieve greater tasks. His theory reinscribes, perhaps unconsciously, Jehovah's curse upon Adam after the latter's adventures in the Garden in which he is condemned to toil and till the fields because he listened to his wife and ate the "fruit" (Gen. 2:17, 23). Even earlier, Freud asserts, in man's ape-like prehistory, he had adopted the habit of forming families (36), spurred on by his discovery that it was convenient for the satisfaction of his sexual urges to have women around. "When this happened, the male acquired a motive for keeping the female or, speaking more generally, his sexual objects, near him; while the female, who did not want to be separated from her helpless young, was obliged, in their interests, to remain with the stronger male" (36). Thus the bases for family unity are: 1) women as available sexual objects for gratification; 2) the mother's sense of responsibility for her children, which causes her to stay with the male for their protection; 3) helpers for work. The father's will and power are unrestricted until the sons discover that, by banding together, they can overpower him. This description is characterized by elements which the invading Indo-European warriors brought with them as they flowed down into eastern Europe and the Near East and overran the Neolithic Mother Goddess cultures, described in Chapter 1. In short, in his model of the family, of women as sexual objects, of the familial basis for culture and civilization, Freud recapitulates the Judeo-Christian model of the divine Father God who is parent, lawgiver, and source of being, a model which itself is an outgrowth of the more ancient conquest of the Mother Goddess cultures by those of the "sky-gods." The patriarchal model cannot posit the feminine as acting subject, but merely as object-of-desire. Freud can only ask, "what do women want?" because in his model, in order to suppress
the Great Mother, establish the rule of God the Father, and foster the masculine ego in its heroic quest for autonomy and dominance, women's voice must not be heard.

"As Freud grows older," writes Sprengnether, "he associates women not only with the beginning of life but also with its end, so that the figure of the mother fuses with that of death. In his concept of the death instinct, which aims to return the living entity to its inorganic origin," she continues, "he equates the body of the mother with the ultimate undoing of masculine striving and achievement" (5). This equation is not unique to Freud but is an integral element of patriarchal myth. As de Beauvoir describes, "La vieille femme, la laide ne sont pas seulement des objets sans attraits; elles suscitent une haine mêlée de peur. En elles se retrouve la figure inquiétante de la Mère tandis que les charmes de l'Épouse sont évanouis" (1949:260). Here we can discern the shadowy figure of the ugly Crone, the aspect of the Mother who reabsorbs all creation into herself at the end of life. Psychoanalysis' phallic masculinity, described by Sprengnether as "the cornerstone of patriarchal culture" (5), rests upon lack and loss, epitomized by separation from the mother and lack of reproductive ability, reinforced by the ancient fear of engulfment back into the mother's body through death.

**The Imaginary Mother's Lack of Lack**

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan interpreted Freud's Oedipal theory of human psycho-sexual development in linguistic terms. In the Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic or linguistic systems, there are two major relationships of the male ego to the Mother hypothesized, both of which contribute to the Mother's rejection and abjection. The first, already discussed at length, is the oedipal need of the male child to
separate from union with the mother in order to develop an autonomous ego and establish his adult masculinity as modeled by the father. The second, alluded to in my previous discussion of the pre-historic Great Mother mythology and patriarchal suppression of the Crone, is the masculine perception of "lack" and the accompanying wish to appropriate to himself the "magical" reproductive and creative powers of the feminine. In *Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male*, Bettelheim asserts that

We are hardly in need of proof that men stand in awe of the procreative power of women, that they wish to participate in it, and that both emotions are found readily in Western society — on the whole, men, by virtue of the very patriarchal dominance which puts them on top, must repress the extent of their longing for the simplicities and indisputable potentialities of being a women, whereas women are much freer to express their envy of the male's equipment and roles. (10-11)

Discussing his study of pre-literate societies' initiation rites, he concludes: "I became more and more impressed with ... the premise that one sex feels envy in regard to the sexual organs and functions of the other" [italics his] (19). Rites of male circumcision and subincision are cited as examples of male rituals which imitate the young girl's menstrual bleeding, an outward sign of the feminine reproductive ability. Male envy of the female reproductive capacity is less discussed and more repressed in Western society than female envy of the powers conferred by the male organ, according to Bettelheim, because

It seems that in any society, envy of the dominant sex is the more easily observed. In societies where men play the more important role, the envy of males and with it of the penis is more readily admitted, more openly expressed and more easily recognized; the consensus is that it is desirable to be a man. This drives
underground men's envy of women since it is contrary to professed
mores and therefore looked upon as unnatural and immoral. (56)

Although Lacan overtly privileges the male, underlying his thesis of
the phallic signifier as "lack" is an implied usurpation of the feminine,
characterized by "lack of lack," i.e., whole and complete. This ambiguity, it
seems to me, contributes to the confusion, amongst French feminists in
particular, regarding the Lacanian stance. Indeed, in some respects Lacan
resembles the Promethean seducer (or Little Red Riding Hood's wolf) who
would steal the creative feminine for himself; his characterization by
Irigaray, Cixous, Gallop and Clément as "seductive" in no way dispels this
image.7

In the Lacanian system, built upon the play of "lack," the physical
male organ is denied the importance given it by Freud. The Phallus is an
empty signifier, a symbol of the power, privilege and other attributes
which possession of the real organ conferred upon the mythical (dead)
Father, whose castrated sons can only aspire to phallic power. According
to Lacan, the phallus is the transcendental signifier, reinforcing the "Law
of the Father,"8 in the symbolic order which governs significance,
language and meaning. The pre-oedipal mother is supposed to possess an
imaginary phallus. Lacan arbitrarily, or at least oppositionally, locates the
realm of the mother in the "Imaginary," a domain of non-verbal unity
between mother and child corresponding to Freud's pre-Oedipal stage.
Her access to language, symbol and meaning is precluded by her
exclusion from the "Symbolic" order, which belongs to the father (lest she
remain a "phallic mother").9 In the opposition of "Symbolic" and
"Imaginary" orders can be discerned the pervasive construction of
public/private spheres, inscribed in the linguistic realm as the Father's
"Word" and the Mother's silence. Lacan postulates that in order to leave the orbit of maternal desire, the child must come to see the mother as "castrated," i.e., lacking the phalus, or signifier of desire, although it may be more accurate to observe that denigration of the mother appears to be ritually required by the patriarchal code for acceptance into the male sphere of privilege. Reproducing Freud's Oedipal pattern, Lacan's father comes between the mother and her desire (child) and the child and his desire (mother), interposing the strictures of culture, society and language. The child's acquisition of language is accompanied by a sense of loss and characterized by a never-to-be-fulfilled desire to return to the realm of pre-Oedipal plenitude. If awareness of gender for the male child is characterized by "lack" — the envious realization that he lacks his mother's organs of reproduction — it also establishes that his phallic organ has "presence" and confers social privileges associated with the Symbolic order of the Father.

Thus, as the child moves into adulthood, acquiring selfhood and power through the fulfillment of desires, both psychoanalytic and linguistic discourses, in accordance with philosophical, theological and historical discourse, establish masculine hegemony at an all-encompassing transcendental level. In the closed "logical" system of each discourse's structure, the feminine is reduced to "no-thing," the "other," who is powerless to speak her desire. Without a phalus, without a name of her own, she has no identity except through a man. Feminine repression takes place not only at the philosophical, theological and historical levels, but now is internalized and concretized within scientific description of human development itself. Feminine repression is now "required" as an innate psychological necessity within the development of
each human being and, by extension, "required" for the development of culture and civilization. In addition, Lacanian theory embeds repression of the feminine in the deepest signification levels of language. Andrea Nye, for example, concludes that, "If patriarchy is a symbolic universe, then no one better than Lacan expressed its surreal qualities ... the mirrors, the intricate games, the convoluted turnings of always failed relations, where no one ever manages to reach anyone else. No one better described the horror of it" (141).

The concentration of psychoanalysis upon the Mother and Father, the nuclear family structure, and a binary construct of gender roles tends to exclude or minimize other structures and possibilities. Freudian psychological and Lacanian symbolic constructs reinscribe the Judeo-Christian Jehovah's suppression of Eve, defined by her sexuality and reproduction. In *Le Deuxième Sexe*, de Beauvoir, whose brilliant analysis of the position of women as "l'Autre" in patriarchal societies is somewhat complicated by her acquiescence in existentialism's phallic bias, states that, "C'est par la maternité que la femme accomplit intégralement son destin physiologique" (290). Lacan emphasizes the crucial role of reproduction in the determination not only of biological sexual roles but also of social roles:

L'existence, grâce à la division sexuelle, repose sur la copulation, accentuée en deux pôles que la tradition séculaire s'efforce de caractériser comme le pôle mâle et le pôle femelle. C'est que là gît le ressort de la reproduction. Depuis toujours, autour de cette réalité fondamentale, se sont groupées, harmonisées, d'autres caractéristiques, plus ou moins liées à la finalité de la reproduction. (1964:138)\(^\text{12}\)

A key word is "finality" of reproduction. Just as de Beauvoir indicated that it was nearly impossible for a mother to lead an "authentic" life of
independence and self-actualization at the highest levels (the birthright of males), observing that "dans le moment même où la femme achève de réaliser son destin féminin, elle est encore dépendante" (1949:2, 317), so Lacan emphasizes the "finality" of the reproductive roles and their inscription in the language of the unconscious (1981:152). As de Beauvoir has described, women's reproductive creativity merely produces existence, the repetitive passing on of genetic material in the production of yet another biological replication of the species. The "modern" view of feminine biological creativity is stripped of its ancient association with higher mathematical, literary and cultural activity. By locating the higher, more abstract, aspects of creativity within Logos, the Word as Name of the Father, symbolic creativity has been appropriated by the masculine, relegating the voiceless feminine to the level of instinctual animal procreation. Logos, the masculine Symbolic, replaces the creativity of the Crone's cauldron and the Cosmic Womb. Thus all avenues of escape are cut off, and the Lacanian Mother remains enshrined in her Madonna-and-child silence in the realm of the Imaginary.

Grandma and the Wolf: Usurpation of the Creative Feminine

In the preceding chapter, I discussed Perrault's fairy tale, "Le Petit Chaperon rouge," primarily from the young girl's perspective of impending separation from the mother through sexual maturation, signaled by onset of menstruation, which is symbolized by the little red hood. At this time, the young girl moves into the masculine symbolic world as "object-of-desire." The dangers and ambiguities for the female, who both separates and does not separate from the mother and who risks the loss of her budding autonomy through sexual possession by the male, were part of this discussion. The grandmother's relation to the girl was
also considered. I would like now to re-examine this tale in light of Lacan's theory of "lack" and the male's attempt to preempt the creative feminine.

In the Symbolic Order, the woman past child-bearing age becomes invisible, non-existent, or a threatening "phallic mother" who is masculinized because she no longer reproduces. Like de Meung's La Vieille in *Le Roman de la Rose*, the grandmother in Perrault's version of "Le Petit Chaperon rouge" is connected with the wolf, the seducer. Although her alliance is not voluntary, her consumption by the wolf, who then impersonates her in order to trap the maiden object-of-his-desire, indicates that the wolf, or seducer, is able to ingest the kindly, loving, caring aspects of the grandmother and then crudely imitate these traits in order to seduce and devour the granddaughter. In Perrault's version, the wolf emerges triumphant. There are none of the redemptive possibilities for the little girl and grandmother found in the later Brothers Grimm's tale, in which the pair is rescued by the heroic woodcutter, and the little girl, with her grandmother, cleverly contrives the wolf's fitting end by sewing stones into his stomach. In the Brothers Grimm's version, the "impostor mother" wolf is killed by the young girl and the grandmother for his temerity in trying to usurp the feminine reproductive mystery for his own ends. However, Mary O'Brien points out that in the Grimm version, after the wolf eats the grandmother, her emergence from his belly represents a reversal of the old Crone's power as giver of life. She is both saved and reborn though a male principle, parallel to the Biblical Eve's creation by a Father God from Adam's rib. Bruno Bettelheim, in his well-known essay on "Little Red Riding Hood" in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) comments that the Perrault version is
"devoid of escape, recovery, and consolation; it is not — and was not intended by Perrault to be — a fairy tale," he continues, "but a cautionary story which deliberately threatens the child with its anxiety-producing ending (167). The purpose of Perrault's re-telling of this story was to appear to enforce chaste behavior upon his young female auditors through fear of ruination and annihilation by the seducer from which there would be no recovery, while simultaneously, in his second "moralité," making fun of this moral stance for the snickering amusement of courtly wolves.

In Perrault's version, the wolf is allowed to devour the feminine in its daughter and crone aspects and, by engulfing them in his belly, impersonate the pregnant aspects of the mother. Thus, the wolf takes into himself the power of all three aspects of the feminine: maiden, mother, and crone — a victory which stands triumphant, although gained through trickery and impersonation. The feminine is silenced inside the wolf's belly in a role reversal that attempts to compensate for masculine "lack."

Although the seducer, or false lover, is not able to break the bond of continuity between grandmother and granddaughter, he is able to take advantage of that bond to overcome the old woman's power to protect the granddaughter. Indeed, the grandmother is portrayed as the decoy or instrument through which the seducer ravishes the young maiden, much in the same spirit as the role of de Meung's La Vieille, who helps L'Amant gain access to the Rose. Removed from the orbit of desire, the old woman participates in the sexual game by helping the seducer obtain the object of his desire and facilitating the maiden's sexual initiation.
Both de Meung and Perrault wrote for a courtly, worldly French audience, and their approaches have some elements in common: acceptance of the "dangerous game" of seduction as a principal feature of male/female sexual relations; the presentation of feminine desire for pleasure (Red Riding Hood's gambols in the woods) as fatal to the young woman, while male desire triumphs; and the negation of feminine generational bonds and wisdom, which only serve to undo both women and aid the seducer in appropriating the mother's reproductive powers to himself. Generalizing to make a point, I would say that the French version of the Red Riding Hood tale and its second moral message emphasize the seductive aspect of the phallic code (the wolf) which seeks to appropriate feminine creativity and economic value for itself, while the more paternal Germanic version argues a feminine need for a heroic protector against male violence — in effect, one of the most direct means of repression. Freudian theory reinforces the codes of patriarchal repression of the feminine both by rationalizing its necessity (for individuation and the development of civilization) and by postulating its inevitability (interiorizing the locus of repression in the *a priori* domain of the psyche — the biologically-determined, post-Nietzschean equivalent of "God's will"). Deploying Freud's oedipal triad, Lacan attempts to suppress the "mother" by confining her to the "Imaginary" realm, symbolically cutting off her tongue and thus depriving her of "voice," the ability to speak "her desire," and access to "man's" linguistic symbol- and meaning-making powers.

**The Crone's Abjection: The Horrible Power**

The Crone's repression and the characterization of old women as ugly witches, loathsome hags, or invisible cast-offs can be viewed in
light of Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject, analyzed in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: un essai sur l'abjection* as that which society casts out, excludes or repels. While her analysis of the process of abjection in the patriarchal symbolic system is a useful one, at the same time one must be cognizant of her position vis-à-vis Lacan and Freud. As Grosz comments, Kristeva, while critical of details of Lacan's position, ultimately falls "victim to his seductive display," actively affirming, "not the excessive, self-deconstructive, *jouissant* Lacan, Lacan the 'floozie' as Gallop calls him, but Lacan the Lawgiver" (185). Like Lacan, Kristeva affirms that the Father's Law, or oedipal triad, is one of the necessary conditions for the establishment of a culture. Both agree with Freud that the child must be separated from maternal dependency, which threatens to suffocate or annihilate its independence, and that because of "his purely cultural or significatory role in paternity" (185), the father (or the Father's Name) should perform this task. Both affirm the universality or cultural necessity of the Father's Law and some oedipal-like structure for a stable culture.

Unlike Lacan in his problematizing of women's *jouissance*, Kristeva views the repression of *maternal* desire (desire for/of the mother) as a requirement for normal adult functioning. For Kristeva, the child must come to realize the mother is not complete in herself (boundless, omnipresent and omnipotent) and needs something beyond herself. With this recognition of "lack," "he" comes to regard her as "abject," unworthy, marginalized and even repellent. Repulsed by the mother's abjection, the child moves away from the maternal semiotic toward the father's symbolic world and a "normalized," though alienated, adulthood. The child's separation evolves not through paternal
domination (Freud) or through silencing of the mother (Lacan) but by seeing the mother as repulsive and excluding her. In *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, Kristeva examines the reasons for expulsion and exclusion from the social order, a phenomenon related to the need to repress the maternal, which belongs to the realm of the semiotic *chora*, in order to move into the symbolic world. The abject's life, she proposes, is based not on desire (*désir*), but upon exclusion (*exclusion*); it relates not to the ego, the "I" which relates subjectively to the external world as object and consciously controls the instinctive impulses, but to the superego, which appears as "parent" and controls at an unconscious level the instinctive, impulsive energies dominated by the pleasure principle. It is a "*dialectique de la négativité*" whose focal points are want, rather than desire; fear and hatred rather than love" (1980: Chapter 1).

Abjection, then, alludes to that fusion of superego and id mentioned earlier. "A chaque moi son objet, à chaque surmoi son abject," claims Kristeva (10). She attributes the creation of the abject to the superego as "Father," citing the Father's desire that brutish suffering be endured by the abject's ego. In the abyss of the rejected maternal resides the abject, which celebrates a fusional return to the maternal body through the rites of birth and death. "Il faut une adhésion inébranlable à l'Interdit, à la Loi, pour que cet entre-deux pervers de l'abjection soit cadré et écarté. Religion, Morale, Droit" (23). Connected with the sacred, it is the impure, the taboo, the sinful which must be redeemed through suffering, repression, and purification. Abjection is what "perturbe une identité, un système, un ordre. Ce qui ne respecte pas les limites, les places, les règles" (12). De Beauvoir pinpoints the
stark connection of the abjected mother with death: "Du jour où il naît, l'homme commence à mourir: c'est la vérité qu'incarne la Mère" (267).

In her essay, "Le Sexe ou la tête," Hélène Cixous sees Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother as allied with the wolf in repressing the little girl's jouissance. In her analysis, the grandmother is presented as an "abject," corrupting the little girl's knowledge of her own feminine desire and its expression. The grandmother, who takes the place of the "Great Mother," ("il y a des grands hommes mais il n'y a pas de grandes femmes"), is wicked, because, Cixous insists, "les grands-mères, c'est toujours méchant: c'est la mauvaise mère qui n'en finit pas de rattraper la fille, au cas où la fille voudrait par hasard vivre ou jouir" (6). The grandmother, for Cixous, represents jealousy — "cette espèce de jalousie, de la femme qui ne peut pas lâcher sa fille" (6). Out of the bad mother's desire to keep the daughter for herself, which we might even interpret as the mother's desire that the daughter should suffer the same abjection and inability to fulfill her own desire, to "travel through her own forest," the mother enjoins her daughter to hasten along the same little path to grandmother's house that she may have once trod. This path leads to "bed," where, Cixous asserts, women are always found in the masculine symbolic — sleeping their lives away moving from bed to bed, from dream to dream. The Wolf is the grandmother, Cixous claims, and "Nous savons que nous sommes toujours quelque part attendues dans un grand lit par un grand-méchant Loup" (6-7).

Le grand-méchant Loup représente, avec ses grandes dents, ses grands yeux et ses airs de grand-mère, le grand Surmoi théorétique qui menace tous les petits chaperons rouges féminins qui essayent d'aller explorer leur forêt, sans la permission de l'analyste. Donc, entre deux maisons, entre deux lits, on la voit
allongée, toujours prise dans sa chaîne de métaphores, celles qui organisent la culture ... toujours lune pour le soleil masculin, nature pour la culture, concavité pour la convexité masculine, matière pour la forme ... immobilité inertie pour l'avance et le progrès, terre sur laquelle va s'appuyer la marche masculine, réceptacle ... Evidemment l'homme debout, actif, producteur ... et d'ailleurs c'est ainsi que ça se passe dans l'Histoire." (7)¹⁸

In Cixous's abjected grandmother's stomach, the little girl finds death — death to all her own potential, autonomy and freedom. The grandmother kills the little girl's spirit in the name of life, as represented by masculine desire. As Wolf, she devours the little girl's subjectivity. The generational bond brings not wisdom but entrapment in "the Same," which is to say entrapment in the masculine Symbolic, the Phallic signifying code in which little girls must learn to play their roles of passive, repressed femininity, roles which Grandmother, as Superego, enforces.

In Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant," the same themes obtain. While the "good fairies" confer upon the infant daughter all the qualities and graces which will make her "desirable" in the masculine Symbolic, the "bad fairy's" gift is that of sexual maturation, symbolized by the pricking of the princess' finger with a spindle. The "bad fairy's curse," that the princess will die from her wound, is mitigated by the last "good" fairy, who, suspecting evil, has hidden behind a curtain. Instead of dying, the princess will fall asleep for a hundred years until Prince Charming arrives to awaken her "with a kiss." The "bad," or abjected fairy is motivated by her isolation, her marginalization from life. Uninvited to the christening, lacking the golden casket in which the other fairies find their eating utensils, she becomes spiteful. In Perrault's polite courtly version, her rejected status is an "oversight," because she has lived in seclusion for
more than half a century (has been repressed from consciousness for a long time). Her curse — that the princess shall die through sexual maturation — is reminiscent of the Biblical curse upon Eve for her sexual knowledge and identifies her as a phallic mother, in league with the patriarchal Symbolic. Through the working out of this curse, Sleeping Beauty becomes initiated into the world of the Phallus, into, as Cixous says, knowledge that "elle manque du Manque ... le manque du Phallus" (8). Prince Charming, says Cixous, teaches woman to be aware of lack, to be aware of absence, aware of death. "Il va lui apprendre la Loi du Père. Quelque chose de l'ordre du 'sans moi, sans moi-le-Père-Absolu' (le Père est toujours d'autant plus absolu qu'il est improbable, qu'il est incertain ...), 'sans moi: tu n'existerais pas, c'est moi qui te l'apprends'" (8).19 And, she continues, "on peut dire que l'homme est au travail de façon très active pour produire 'sa femme,' ... le moment où l'homme peut enfin dire 'sa' femme, 'ma' femme. C'est le moment où il a appris à faire sentir la Mort à la femme" (8-9). It is this moment when Prince Charming claims the princess as "his," assuring "her" death, which the abjected old woman brings about in phallic discourse — whether grandmother, "bad" fairy, fairy godmother, Duenna, or mysterious old woman high up in a remote attic room. The death which the Crone brings the daughter is not a physical death, with accompanying reabsorption back into the earth's body, but a metaphorical death (which can become mental and physical) brought about by her sexual entrance into the masculine Symbolic order as an object of male desire and relegation to a dream-like sleep, always already in bed.

Among the many points on which Cixous differs from Kristeva is her perception of the Grandmother's alliance with the Wolf in reinforcing
the Law of the Father's prohibitions. The corruption, the abjection of the old woman would seem to include, for Cixous, the co-option of her ancient powers by the masculine Symbolic, which places her, whether "good" or "bad" mother, in the position of bringing about the young girl's submission to the culturally constructed "feminine" role of passivity, inferiority, and inactivity. For Kristeva, the "abject" is represented by the maternal desire to possess and retain the child in its orbit, rather than releasing her into the father's Symbolic realm. For Kristeva, it would seem that danger lurks not in Prince Charming's initiation, which "awakes" the Princess from *lethe*, the boundless sleep of maternal desire, but in the prolonged union of mother, daughter, and grandmother. The "evil fairy" represents the repressed, abject mother, who wishes to devour the child, preferring its death to adulthood through sexual maturation; the "good fairy" mitigates this death sentence, enabling the Princess to enter the adult world governed by the "Law of the Father" (Symbolic code) after a "long sleep." The Prince's intimation of mother's "lack" will propel the Princess into adulthood.

**The Well-Wrought Trap**

Although fairy-tale witches are now treated as personifications of psychological forces and desires, the ability of patriarchal culture to project mythologically and symbolically its fear, resentments and loathings upon the personage of the old woman has had notable historic consequences. In a theological "cleansing," an estimated 100,000 to 9 million people, predominantly older women, were executed as witches throughout Europe and in New England during the two-and-a-half centuries after Pope Innocent VII declared witchcraft a heresy punishable by the Inquisition and the *Malleus Malificarum (Hammer of*
Witches) was published in 1484 (Gadon 212; Walker 109; Weigle 186). The widespread torture and persecution of old, poor, eccentric or independent-minded women as witches served to enforce conformity to masculine images of desirability (the "Law of the Father") and punish independence based upon a sense of feminine power. Images of old women as ugly, reprehensible and undesirable were re-enforced by literary portrayals such as Jean de Meung's La Vieille. Economically speaking, the suppression of old, dissident, or independent women, who often eked out a meager living gathering and selling medicinal herbs or assisting as midwives, served not only to eliminate great numbers of dependent, "useless" people, but also to consolidate the profitable occupation of medicine under the control of men. Walker and Weigle, among others, point to the economic shifts which took place under the theological "Law of the Father" guise of the Inquisition. As Kristeva has noted, the creation of the abject is related to intense suffering of the abject's ego, imposed by the Father as Superego; in the Inquisition and "burning times," one sees the underlying economic and power advantages to be gained by the Father's theological injunction of "suffering for sin." Masked by religious zeal and mythological imagery, a significant concentration of wealth took place during nearly three hundred years of persecution, repression and witch-hunting, at the end of which women, who were seldom amply endowed with means for an independent living, found their prospects for living independently of the patriarchy even more circumscribed by the threat of punishment as well as poverty. As Walker writes,

It was precisely ... independent, property-owning wives who were defined as witches by the Inquisition at the outset of persecution,
which apparently succeeded in destroying the last vestiges of matriarchal tradition and law, leaving Europe's women exposed to a type of marriage that amounted to sexual and economic enslavement ... Husbands were allowed to acquire not only the wife but also her property, as dowry. (121)

It was the medieval metamorphosis of the wisewoman into the witch that not only transformed her cauldron from a sacred symbol of regeneration into a vessel of poisons and changed the word Crone from a compliment to an insult, but also established the stereotype of the malevolent old womanhood that still haunts elder women today. (122)

What were mythological, cultural stereotypes have become enshrined in Freud's Oedipal family and Lacan's linguistic Symbolic order. The Father's Word has become a well-wrought trap in which each element reinforces the other, creating a seamless structure of logic that operates to repress or exclude that which does not uphold patriarchal privilege. In this section, various aspects of the Crone archetype have been examined from the perspective of European — primarily French — patriarchal discourse. In the next two sections, I will be considering the roles of grandmothers or older women in examples of French and American women's writing of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to compare how various women writers have themselves constructed the figure of the old woman.
This fascination perhaps has its roots in women's search for self, since society, in general, reflects back to them so little that is individual and freedom-giving. Although it is tempting to attribute this fascination to narcissism—a psychological mirror—I propose that it stems from a fundamental effort to construct a more varied "self" that is not based upon the few basic stereotypes available for women in modeling their lives.

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3. "Philosophic discourse, in so far as it lays down the law for all the others, is the discourse of discourses." This Sex Which is Not One, translated by Catherine Porter, with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1985), 74.

4. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen.2:16).

5. In The Reproduction of Mothering, Nancy Chodorow counters Freud's (mythological) invocation of mother-son incest and reverses his assumption of female inferiority, arguing that it is the male child who must struggle to establish an identity based on his difference from the mother. The male child alienates himself not to escape the mother's sexual designs but to establish against "her positive identity a precarious maleness" (187-8). More secure in her early identity with her mother, the female's problems arise at the Oedipal stage when she encounters the negative valuation of femaleness by males "who are desperately attempting to establish something non-female." Chodorow concludes that only after the male, in reaction to his insecurity has instituted rigid divisions between male and female and has devalued all that is feminine, including mothering, female genitals and female symbols, does Freud's "penis envy" become comprehensible.


7. Shaman, magician, and guru are words used to characterize Lacan by his former student and fellow psychoanalyst, Catherine Clément, in her portrait, Vies et légendes de Jacques Lacan (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1981), published in the United States as The Lives and Legend of Jacques Lacan, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). She also compares him to a sorcerer, a martyr, a clown, a Phoenix; an avatar of the ancient archetype of the rising/dying god; to Christ who suffers on the Cross, is crucified and rises again. He is, she writes, the Christian son to Freud's Jewish father image (Chapter 1).

8. The "Law of the Father" connotes the transcendental authority of God, the Father. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God cannot be represented by iconographic images (idols) but only by language. God reveals Himself through the Word (Logos), privileging the Book, in which the Word of God is inscribed. The
Book, then, becomes the repository for the authority and codification of God's Word.

9 The infant has no sense of "self" as separate from "other," perceiving himself [sic] and his mother as one. At about one year, the child goes through what Lacan termed the "mirror stage," in which he begins to perceive himself as separate from his external environment. In the pre-linguistic state, the infant has no awareness of the gap between desire and its fulfillment, between himself and the mother; this stage is characterized as the realm of the Imaginary, corresponding to Freud's pre-Oedipal stage. "Desire for the Mother" is characteristic of the Imaginary. Passage through the "mirror stage" marks entry into the symbolic order of language, governed by the "Law of the Father" or the phallus as transcendental signifier and ultimate symbol of meaning and significance. In the Imaginary, the infant has not experienced repression of its desire for the mother and delayed gratification of its desires. The child's movement into the Symbolic order, through the acquisition of language, signals awareness of the "gap" between self and other and of differences in gender.

10 Sprengnether suggests that the ego's subjectivity may be understood as an "elegiac construct," mourning and memorializing the loss of the mother/infant relationship (9).

11 If the act of signifying is defined as the process of creating "signs" as metaphors, replacements, and substitutions for man's original desire, which is desire for union with the Mother, then the Mother, since she has never "left" herself, would have no desire.

12 "Existence, thanks to sexual division, rests upon copulation, accentuated in two poles that time-honoured tradition has tried to characterize as the male pole and the female pole. This is because the mainspring of reproduction is to be found there. Around this fundamental reality, there have always been grouped, harmonized, other characteristics, more or less bound up with the finality of reproduction." The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller and translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), 150.

13 See Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.

14 Kristeva defines the term chora, taken from Plato's Timeus, as a womb-like receptacle containing the semiotic pulsions of energy which break forth into the symbolic as disruptions, silences, dissidence. The chora represents the semiotic, pre-Oedipal period of mother-child unity. Its language is a pre-verbal "babble," and it is characterized by an unstable identity in which the child is sometimes "me," sometimes the mother. The semiotic is archaic, but expresses itself in creativity, especially through the language of poetry, with its linguistic distortions and rhythmic pulsions.

Abjection is what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules." (1982:4)

Grandmothers are always wicked: she is the bad mother who always shuts the daughter in whenever the daughter might by chance want to live or take pleasure." "Castration or Decapitation?," translated by Annette Kuhn, Signs 7:11, 1981, 43.

The Big Bad Wolf represents, with his big teeth, his big eyes, and his grandmother's looks, that great Superego that threatens all the little female red riding hoods who try to go out and explore their forest without the psychoanalyst's permission. So, between the two houses, between two beds, she is laid, ever caught in her chain of metaphors, metaphors that organize culture — ever her moon to the masculine sun, nature to culture, concavity to masculine convexity, matter to form, immobility/inertia to the march of progress, terrain trod by the masculine footstep, vessel ... While man is obviously the active, the upright, the productive ... and besides, that's how it happens in History" (1981:44)

He will teach her the Law of the Father. Something of the order of: 'Without me, without me — the Absolute — Father (the father is always that much more absolute the more he is improbable, dubious) — without me you wouldn't exist, I'll show you.'" (44) And, she continues, "it might be said that man works very actively to produce 'his woman'.... the moment when man can finally say 'his' woman, 'my' woman. It is that moment when he has taught her to be aware of Death." (1981: 44)
PART II

THE CRONE'S SURVIVAL
In Texts by Women

Goddesses never die. They slip in and out of the world's cities, in and out of our dreams, century after century, answering to different names, dressed differently, perhaps even disguised, perhaps idle and unemployed, their official altars abandoned, their temples feared or simply forgotten.

Phyllis Chesler
Women and Madness
Chapter 4

Nineteenth-century Grandmatriarchy: The Grandmother's Role in Maternal Discourse

Despite her frequently negative portrayal, as discussed in Part I, the Crone, as a mythological and generational image, has survived in literature, folk tales and stories, lending herself to various interpretations depending upon the times and the writer. In Part II, my focus will be on the depiction of the old woman — or grandmother — by several women writers, to contrast the depiction of this figure in literature by women with its portrayal in literature by men about women. I will continue my previously established method of close textual analysis in order to discern the roles and characteristics assigned to this character. To represent nineteenth-century developments — a time when the number of published women authors multiplied — I have chosen texts by the French novelist George Sand, and the American regionalist Sarah Orne Jewett. Each provides a strongly focused example of the "matriarchal" voice from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth-centuries. A "maternal discourse" was frequently deployed during this period, as women writers used the Romantic pastoral and/or regionalist "local color" fictional techniques in novels or "sketches" that presented women, including older women, as subjects in their world. Both writers use the matriarch figure to model examples of feminine autonomy, independence and power as well as the limitations and restrictions imposed upon them by the social environment. Sand's matriarch retains more classical European affiliations with the "hag," however, while Jewett's "spiritual grandmother" is an elder guide.
Maternal Discourse

The maternal discourse of many nineteenth-century women writers presages some aspects of late twentieth-century efforts by French and American feminists to isolate and describe an *écriture féminine* or style of writing that foregrounds such "markers" as emotivity, interwoven web-structures, imagery of fluids and permeability, nurturing, metaphors of women's bodies, and recognition of female "desire."¹ Such discourse identifies, explicitly or implicitly, the mother's body as locus and source of generativity, as well as efforts to re-imag(in)e women, in the words of Shirley Neuman in her introduction to *Relmag(in)ing Women*, "outside representations within patriarchal social organizations, discourses, ideologies, and the (male) Imaginary" (3). In maternal discourse, the Grandmother figures prominently as a numinous agent.

In this chapter I will examine depictions of the grandmother/old matriarch figure through close readings of Sand's *La Petite Fadette* (1851) and Sarah Orne Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) in order to discover some of its attributes and analyze its role in "maternal" discourse. In her essay, "The 'Language of Blood': Towards a Maternal Sublime," Patricia Yaeger has theorized a "maternal sublime," based upon the abject, defiled body of the birthing mother, which can be recognized as "one of the primary building blocks of the male sublime" (Neuman, ed. 101). Both Sand and Jewett can be seen as imagining a maternal discourse which situates itself apart from a masculine heroic discourse of militarism² and social upheaval, in the case of Sand, and questions the values of industrialization, development, and urbanization through the establishment of a "women's society," in
the case of Jewett. At the same time, both are enabled in their projects by participation in the nineteenth-century tendency to valorize the mother and sentimental discourse, a trend benefiting the hegemony of a middle-class society

**An Ideology of Home and Hearth**

The nineteenth-century idealization of the mother was partly the result of two centuries of evolving focus upon the bourgeois family unit as the locus of security and social value in both France and the United States, and partly a re-articulation of the dual private/public spheres construct which characterizes patriarchal societies. In nineteenth-century America, Calvinist values were being supplanted by the secular trend toward democracy, mercantilism and Romanticism, currents which tended to replace subjugation and obedience to authority with egalitarianism, confidence and a determination to "get ahead." The middle-class found the domesticated family's emphasis on self-control in keeping with the capitalist goals. As Lois Banner claims in *In Full Flower: Aging Women, Power and Sexuality.*

"Fears of working-class sexuality, in addition to a new focus on the mother-child bond and on love as the cornerstone of marriage, accelerated [these] trends ... Broad destabilizing social forces — the advent of industrialization, the many political revolutions — further advanced the new family and gender definitions. By the early nineteenth century, the domesticated, patriarchal family became a haven of security. The sentimentalized, domestic woman was its linchpin. (235)"

Thus "Mother" held sway in the home, while "Father" was the capitalist businessman and undisputed ruler of the public sphere.

In France, the idealization and veneration of the mother takes its example from the Virgin Mary, whose sanctified image embodies the
As a result of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century trend towards a bourgeois domesticity in both Europe and the United States, attitudes towards the elderly shifted. In France, the mother-in-law figure was derided and ridiculed, while elderly women could benefit from an association with the humble saintliness of the Virgin Mary or the best of the "sages-femmes" in the "white-witch" tradition. De Beauvoir describes this type, often associated in Catholic Europe with elderly nuns: "Derrière la Mère sanctifiée se presse la cohorte des magiciennes blanches qui mettent au service de l'homme les sucs des herbes et les radiations astrales: grands-mères, vieilles femmes aux yeux pleins de bonté ... soeurs de charité, infirmières aux mains merveilleuses" (280). In the United States during the nineteenth century, the old woman was replaced as female villain by the younger unmarried woman, who represented a threat to monogamous conjugality. Aging women came to be seen as potential providers of a new family spirituality, the result of a privileging of sentimentalized, domesticated bourgeois culture.

The nineteenth-century American liberal clergy, whose congregations and influence increasingly were composed of middle-class women and elderly men, sentimentally valorized maternal influence and guidance, as Ann Douglas argues in *The Feminization of American*
Culture. While ministers aligned themselves with the "maternal" values of sensitivity, emotion, gentleness and dignity, so women, especially literary women, assimilated ministerial functions. Douglas describes the "fantasized feminine assumption of clerical office" (107):

There were countless sentimental tales of maidens effortlessly and unsuspectingly performing ministerial feats in the natural course of their domestic duties; just doing what came naturally as a capable and devout young girl apparently involved saving souls as a kind of unintended although by no means unwished-for by-product. (106)

From these developments, the "home" emerged as an idealized, spiritualized domain, presided over by generations of women — a locale which has come to be known as "women's sphere."

Michel Foucault's theory of "genealogy," which seeks to "record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality," seeking them "dans ce qui passe pour n'avoir point d'histoire — les sentiments, l'amour, la conscience, les instincts" (146), describes the subject matter of "women's sphere," the domain of so many nineteenth-century women writers. In writing about relationships, the "home" (whether place or state of mind), and women-as-subjects, nineteenth-century women used writing both to escape from the confines of the socially decreed "women's sphere" and to articulate meaning for their own and other women's lives. The areas of influence incorporated in "women's sphere" included motherhood, domesticity, child-rearing, spiritual life and education. From the perspective of the "region" known as "women's sphere," women writers could conduct a critique of a hierarchical social ordering which devalued "others" — the poor, humble, country people, foreigners, the aged, minorities and the handicapped — while at the
same time describing the bonds, rituals, traditions, values and sacraments which forged an enduring female community.

Although there were various depictions, both positive and negative, of the aging unmarried woman (spinster or "Old Maid") and of the aging woman with a younger lover (especially in Continental "éducation sentimentale" novels), the grandmother became the quintessential expression of the old woman archetype in sentimental literature. The figure of the old woman as grandmother, as depicted in nineteenth-century maternal discourse, signified generational continuity and bonding in the community of women. Old women's wisdom, which might include information about sacred rituals (especially connected to healing), psychological insights, domestic lore, community history, and shrewd economic stratagems, provided examples of strength for feminine survival and influence.

Banner identifies three categories of stereotypical fictional grandmothers, which can be seen as paralleling the idealized "Mother" of nineteenth-century fiction and theology: the "cipher," the "domestic grandmother," and the "reform grandmother." The "cipher"... "dotes on grandchildren and exists in a haze of sentiment and handiwork" (254). Since this type is inactive, she is most vividly depicted as a visual icon of the type seen in Norman Rockwell's illustrations or advertisements. Associated with the rocking chair, her calm innocence and lack of sexuality echoes the placid serenity and contentment the idealized mother was supposed to provide. The "domestic grandmother" is portrayed as a bustling housewife, often caring for grandchildren. Her strength and vitality reinforce the idea of the post-menopausal woman as vigorous and energetic, expending upon the needs of others her
apparently still-boundless forces, reflective of the infinite procreative energies of the Mother. This type is exemplified by Johnny's grandmother in Willa Cather's *My Antonía* or by the biographical account *Grandmother Brown's One Hundred Years (1827-1927)*, as told to Helen Connor Brown. The "reform grandmother" is socially active and "involved" after menopause. Elizabeth Cady Stanton provides one of a number of historical examples, while in a less dramatic manner the women of Helen Hoover Santmeyers' ... *And Ladies of the Club* illustrate the "clubwoman." Asexual and indomitable, she is associated with reform movements or issues of wider social concern and has accumulated both influence and wisdom.

All three types are subsumed in the figure of the spiritualized grandmother, reflecting a view of aging as an ethical experience which enriches women and makes them "spiritually beautiful." This notion of the spiritualized beauty of old age, according to which the glow of inner spirit illumines the outer countenance, counters earlier centuries' view that the physical decay of old age is loathsome and expresses a reversal of the classical emphasis on external, physical appearance.

Underscoring the role of women as educators, the "wise old woman" character, whether grandmother or older woman, functions as a guide or teacher for a younger woman (often the narrator) who attains a new level of maturity or understanding. Under the tutelage of an older woman — storyteller, artist or healer — and through her return to the community of women, the young woman is able to regroup her forces, assess her strengths, and choose new paths. The guide function is particularly pronounced in the *Bildungsroman* or the autobiographical "confession," in which the heroine or narrator confronts and resolves a
major life problem or attains a broader, more inclusive, though often unconventional, outlook. In American literature, some examples of this function include the relationship between Mrs. Todd and the young narrator in Country of the Pointed Firs or between Ninny Threadgoode and Evelyn in Green Fried Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe. One of the best examples exists in Italian literature, outside the scope of this study. In Sibella Aleramo's La Donna (1906), the older editor friend encourages the young narrator's writing and provides a vision of a different way in which to exercise her talents, devote herself to humanity and earn a living, thus enabling the abused woman to leave her destructive marriage.

This relationship — and, indeed, the idealization of the grandmother — is probably less common in French literature, in which the classical attitudes towards the ugliness and decay of old age still obtain and where women tend to relate, not to a sorority of other women, but to men. As Michèle Sarde asserts, "... l'espace français est une aire intersexuelle où l'amour, la haine, l'intérêt, le pouvoir et les discours sur tous ces thèmes passent et repassent dans la proximité des corps" (78-9). "Comment une femme peut-elle vivre sans le regard de l'homme, avide spectateur de sa vie et de sa personne," demanded Colette (14). In France, the old woman's association with death and chaos has not been forgotten. "Dans la plupart des représentations populaires, la Mort est femme" de Beauvoir reminds us, and "la Femme-Mère ... est le chaos d'où tout est issu et où tout doit un jour retourner; elle est le Néant" (241). Nonetheless, in a complex fashion Mère Fadette plays the role of teacher for her granddaughter in George Sand's La Petite Fadette.
The comparison of these two French and American works illustrates the use of common themes, topoi, and values of domesticity with culturally persistent differences. Jewett's fiction shows the greater emphasis put upon spirituality and ethical values in nineteenth-century American literature, especially by women, while Sand's retains some of the classical Gallic representation of the ambiguous "hag."

The Idealization of Generativity: George Sand's *La Petite Fadette*

As pastoral romance, the imagery, plot and character portrayal in George Sand's *La Petite Fadette* emphasize the agrarian perception of the earth as a fecund mother's body through whose cycles all life is connected. The roles of maiden, mother and crone echo the seasons of the agricultural cycle and the natural rhythms which govern human and vegetative procreativity. The bounty of the soil, wisely husbanded and managed by small farmers such as Père Barbeau, provides the basis for prosperity and continuity to all. His wife, Mère Barbeau, mirrors the land and animals in her vitality and fecundity. Against a backdrop of bucolic peace and plenitude, the romance's heroine learns both to fit herself to the pulse and needs of the farming community into which she marries (becoming "feminized") and to transcend the maternal cycle through her own autonomy and individuality. In his paper, "Growing Up Female: George Sand's View in *La Petite Fadette"* (1982), Michael Danahy sees her task to be the establishment of self esteem in "the absence, in a patriarchal society, of female role models, especially the domestic maternal one" (57). As I see it, Sand has imagined that Fadette's task is to integrate into the community and into her own sense of self-worth the rejected model of the autonomous female, a role which
has, to some extent, been modeled for her by her grandmother and mother, although at the price of social ostracism and personal denigration.

In the ideal world of romance, the mating or union of male and female constitutes the universal life-giving force. Marriage signifies not only a personal union but also family and community renewal. Sand uses the conventional "boy-meets-girl" romantic plot, coupled with fairy/folk-tale elements and a pastoral setting, to depict a young heroine who acquires the power, influence and independence to become a family leader. Janice Radway argues in Reading the Romance that in such novels "the fairy-tale union of the hero and heroine is in reality the symbolic fulfillment of a woman's desire to realize her most basic female self in relation with another" (155). Regardless of whether one accepts the premise of a "basic female self" invested in relationships, Radway argues that what the romance heroine desires in this imaginary relationship is both the "autonomy and sense of difference guaranteed by connection with someone experienced as 'other' and the erasure of boundaries and loss of singular consciousness achieved through union with an individual indistinguishable from the self" (155). As heroine, Fadette both embodies the autonomous power of her mother and grandmother and seeks maternal nourishment, denied in her childhood, through acceptance by the romantic hero and his community (including his mother).

Sand focuses her attention on the matriarchal elements of pastoral myth, not only weaving in the maiden, mother and crone themes but also delineating the making of an autonomous matriarch, as distinguished from a mother-figure. She also depicts the social and
developmental forces that complicate and compromise feminine autonomy.

The book's opening scene is strongly maternal, as Mère Barbeau, assisted by the old midwife, Mère Sagette, sublimely fulfills her generative function by giving birth to legendary twins: Landry and Sylvinet. Although Mère Barbeau is not young and has already borne three children, she is filled with nurturing energy and vigorous enough to nurse both infants herself until they are ready for weaning. Images of milk, nursing and full breasts indicate a fruitful mother's body able to give and support life almost effortlessly without depleting herself.

Carrying out the crone's role as midwife, Mère Sagette, as her name suggests, advises the parents wisely concerning the twins' rearing, providing psychologically sound insights that would encourage their autonomous development. Although the midwife's predictions are reminiscent of the old fairy's curse in "Sleeping Beauty" and constitute an example of the fairy/folk-tale elements which Sand employs, her comments are not a curse, expressing superstitious malevolence or willful spite, but shrewd prophecies, based upon the old woman's experience and powers of psychological observation. It is one of several instances in which accumulated scientific or psychological knowledge (rationality), rather than magical powers (intuition), is presented as the basis for Sand's old women's wisdom.

While the three old wise women in La Petite Fadette represent various aspects of the old woman archetype, their common forte is healing through botanical medicines and counseling. The book opens with Mère Sagette delivering the Barbeau twins and closes with Père Barbeau seeking medical advice regarding Sylvinet's melancholy from
"la baigneuse de Clavières," ... "la femme la plus savante du canton après la Sagette, qui était morte, et la mère Fadet, qui commençait à tomber en enfance" (232). As psychological counselor, this old woman "qui avait un grand jugement sur toutes les maladies du corps et de l'esprit" (232) completes the advice regarding the twins which Mère Sagette had given many years ago at their birth, predicting that Sylvinet will transfer his suffocatingly passionate affection from his twin to a woman, who will, in turn, become the central focus of his life. That this woman is Fadette, his twin's wife, dooms him to a life of unmarried exile in the army, where he surprisingly enjoys a most successful career.

Mère Fadet, Fanchon Fadette's grandmother, provides the most complete portrait of the old woman and her matriarchal role, both actual and symbolic, in the development of the young heroine, represented by her granddaughter. As David Powell remarks in his study, *George Sand*, Sand's message "usually involves self-discovery, self-awareness, and self-esteem" (135). The Sandian hero (or heroine) is a "solitary figure, one who is either forced to face life alone or who has chosen to grapple with some intimate problem by [her]self" ... becoming "strong as a result of finding a source of power and perseverance within" (135). The most experienced of her lineage, the old matriarch, Mère Fadet, teaches more than just survival to her granddaughter, who demonstrates economic self-reliance as well as inner determination and strength.

As herbalist and "medicine woman," Mère Fadet lives apart from the villagers in a little cottage. Excluded socially, she is valued throughout the countryside for her curative abilities and so, despite her reclusiveness and eccentricity, remains a part of the village web of
relationships. She is "one of those women branded witches who used to exercise rudimentary medical skills, including veterinary and chiropractic cures, for a livelihood throughout pre-industrial, pre-urban Europe" (Danahy, 52). As a quasi-witch figure, her abode outside the village indicates that she exists away from the community center, at the edge of consciousness. Witches represented the power of autonomy, which the grandmother continues to uphold, although at the community's periphery. The secrets of her cures are based not on witchcraft, however, but upon her knowledge of herbs, a skill which she teaches to Fadette, so that she, too, may earn her living independently. Gathering, concocting and dispensing herbal cures becomes a family business, with its secrets passed down from grandmother to granddaughter. As Fadette explains to Landry, "J'aurais renfermé mon amusement dans la connaissance des secrets que m'enseigne ma grand-mère pour la guérison du corps humain" (142). Defending herself against Landry's critical evaluation of her peculiar upbringing and supposed supernatural powers, Fadette rebuts his accusations of witchcraft, insisting that her grandmother's knowledge is based upon rational scientific observation and experimentation. Indeed, Fadette, with her curious, exploratory mind, begins to surpass her grandmother in devising botanical cures. In this respect, Sand undermines traditional romantic conventions which hold that the male is rational and scientific, the woman, emotional and intuitive. Although she pretends to be more of a witch than she is, as a defense against the villagers' animosity, Fadette has the ability to discover new cures and solve problems by approaching them judiciously and analytically, an ability which eventually enables her to command power and respect.
While the grandmother provides what might be termed "phallic" knowledge and skills, she is lacking in maternal nurturing ability. Fadette's mother is absent, having abandoned husband and children to become an army camp follower. In this matriarchal family, the women are independent, uncaring about popular opinion, outspoken, and assume the freedom to lead their lives as they please. The grandmother does not teach conventional femininity, social restrictions or conformity, but instead leaves Fadette free to roam, explore, and discover. In this, the old woman both empowers her granddaughter and leaves her vulnerable to community rejection, just as she both teaches Fadette to be independent and deprives her of affection and nurture. Explaining to Fadette her "défauts," the reasons she is outcast from the village, Landry assumes the role of "social voice" in a critique which establishes him as the male mentor teaching her the social norms of constructed "femininity." Her "faults" are that she is too boy-like and has not acquired "feminine" characteristics: agreeableness in voice, manner of speaking, grooming and dress. She is too independent and fearless, qualities which are, says Landry, "un avantage de nature pour un homme ... mais pour une femme trop est trop ..." (137). She is inquisitive, uncovers others' secrets and reveals them harshly. People fear and reject her. To be independent, athletic, unrestrained, fearless and "noticed" are male, not female, attributes (136-38). As a female, she is severely penalized by public opinion for qualities that are thought admirable in a boy. Yet these traits have been imparted to her through her matriarchal lineage, as part of the heritage of skills and attitudes needed to live independently. These qualities, which include an acceptance of abrasiveness, non-conformity and discordance as well as
the ability to be economically self-sufficient, contribute to the formation of a matriarchal survivor, although Fadette's lack of nurturance leaves her vulnerable to the need for communal relationship and belonging.

Mary Nyquist's analysis of the male mentor as romantic hero in "Romance in the Forbidden Zone," underscores the nurturing, maternal quality of this lover, an attribute which is attractive to the heroine because the "actual mothers are most often either dead or absent, or else ineffectual" (Nyquist in Neuman, ed. 163). In popular romance, Nyquist adds, "the heroine is usually without almost any other significant social relationships ... [and] her vulnerability is increased when she is forced to negotiate a totally unfamiliar environment, one in which the hero is entirely ... at home" (163). It is his knowledge of "unarticulated needs — originally, in our culture, a maternal knowledge," she concludes, that eroticizes the hero's mentorship, making him irresistibly attractive" (163). In *La Petite Fadette*, Sand's evocation of the maternal is ambivalent, especially in light of Nyquist's analysis of the maternally nurturing lover who, by appearing to supply the missing mother's love, acts as mentor to instruct the heroine in her eventual submission, "symbolically, to the phallus" (165).

Although Sand is capable of an almost boundless idealization of the mother archetype, her sentimentalization of the old crone is less overt. Mère Fadet is no plump, indulgent fairy godmother presiding over an orderly little cottage in the woods. Indeed, in her inability to nurture, she is revealed as a phallic mother. Her care of the two children verges on neglect. The children are uncouth and poorly dressed in old, patched rags, because of her stinginess and refusal to buy them clothing. This grandmother disparages Fadette simply because the old
woman loves to complain. As the grandmother ages, she comes to depend upon Fadette to gather the herbs and keep the flock of animals thriving, so that they produce good wool and milk for cheese, all of which yield income. Eventually she becomes deaf and feeble, reaching that stage of old age which resembles infancy. The dependencies are reversed, as Fadette assumes responsibility for her grandmother's care. Old age is re-presented with its irascibility, its decay, its complaints, and its ugliness.

In death, however, the old crone becomes an agent for the empowerment of new life. Years of penury and hoarding the gleanings from her herbal medicine sales and consultations have resulted in the accumulation of a treasure of money hidden in a hole in the cellar. As Mère Fadet says to her granddaughter, "si je vous prive un peu à présent, c'est pour que vous en trouviez davantage un jour" (245). The inheritance, which represents another form of generational continuity whereby one generation passes on its legacy to another, enables Fadette to be on an equal footing with the Barbeaus, so that her marriage to Landry carries no taint of financial exploitation or gain. Unlike the fairy-tale marriage of conventional romance, their union is portrayed as one of mutuality rather than of dependence, fulfilling Sand's vision of an ideal marriage of equality, in which each spouse continues to gain new understanding and perspective from the other.

In writing a romance which foregrounded, however ambiguously, the maternal values and struggles of the "women's sphere," Sand attempted to present a feminized socio-political ideal which would stand in contrast to mid-nineteenth-century capitalism and its attendant sufferings, especially those of workers, women and outcasts.
Strongly influenced by socialist and Romantic thought, Sand incorporated her views about social injustice and reform, crossing or mixing of social ranks, religion and art into most of her novels, frequently expounding them with a generous dose of moral didacticism. Her feminism is equivocal. Although holding herself aloof from the radical feminist issues of her time, rejecting universal suffrage until women's educational opportunities were improved, and upholding the institution of marriage as an ideal (despite her own negative experience), she nevertheless encouraged women to know and live their desires, campaigned for mutuality and equality in relationships, and created outspoken heroines (Powell 89-91). "Sand opened the possibility for women to write fiction that diverged from the male-dominated genre," Powell asserts. He adds, "Hers is a female discourse that discusses the problems of women in society, in the home, in love, as well as women subjugated by men" (90).

The maternal pastoral vision, with its inclusive simplicity and eternal rhythms, appealed to the sentiments, evoked nostalgia in the face of growing industrialization and labor unrest, and provided spiritual comfort in the face of social dislocation. Fadette, one of her "bergeries" (Sand 4), is intended to be an alternative social vision to the political turmoil in France following the "February" Revolution and class war in the streets of Paris in June, 1848, which reflected the socialist aspirations and discontent of masses of unemployed workingmen. Referring to these "convulsions sociales," Sand contrasts the strength with which "un génie orageux et puissant comme celui de Dante" would have written during such tumultuous times "avec ses larmes, avec sa bile, avec ses nerfs, un poème terrible, un drame tout plein de tortures
et de gémissements" with the "plus faible et plus sensible"
consciousness of the nineteenth-century artist (2-3). Sand's contrast of
masculine "toughness" and rigor with feminine "sensitivity" was a
familiar nineteenth-century theme in Europe and America, as the
spheres of art and religion underwent what Ann Douglas has termed the
"complex phenomenon" of sentimentalization. Its complexity consists,
at least in part, in its ambiguity. Sentimentalism, Douglas claims,
"asserts that the values a society's activity denies are precisely the ones
it cherishes; it attempts to deal with the phenomenon of cultural
bifurcation by the manipulation of nostalgia" (12). Sand herself focused
on this ambiguity between action and imagination, between the
historical and the ideal, in her musings upon the role of the artist. For
her, the artist of these times is only a reflection of his or her generation.
He or she "éprouve le besoin impérieux de détourner la vue et de
distraire l'imagination, en se reportant vers un idéal de calme,
d'innocence et de rêverie" (Sand 3). Consequently, as she is reported to
have remarked to Balzac, "while he portrayed men as they were, she
painted them as they ought to be" (Powell 136). The writer's mission
(that is to say, *her* mission) in troubled, violent times is to present an
alternative (feminine) vision — "de célébrer la douceur, la confiance,
l'amitié ... les moeurs pures, les sentiments tendres et l'équité primitive"
(Sand 3). Escape from the reality of violent political upheaval into the
idealized realm of the nostalgic pastoral imagination offers the
possibility of foregrounding an alternative feminine scale of values, one
which is "healthier" and more wholesome: "mieux vaut une douce
chanson, un son de pipeau rustique, un conte pour endormir les petits
enfants sans frayeur et sans souffrance ..." (3). In Sand's remarks, there
is an emphasis on an escape into the mother/child world of the feminine imaginary, characterized by dreams, innocence, and a static "idéal de calme." Sand's maternal pastoral vision can be seen to be fueled by "lack," in the Lacanian sense of separation from the primal mother-child unity, with a corresponding effort to return to an all-embracing idealized community which stands in place of the "mother."

Nonetheless, beneath the pastoral sentimentalism and idealism (which recapitulate, in the maternal imaginary, Foucault's "same," albeit in a cyclical rather than linear pattern), *La Petite Fadette* portrays three generations of autonomous, rebellious women who do not conform to the norms of their society. The pragmatic impediment to feminine self-sufficiency and self-expression is economic dependence, an issue which Sand addresses. Fadette's grandmother possesses skills that enable her to establish her cottage business in herbal medicines and potions, skills which she passes on to her granddaughter. Sand posits that the grandmother, by dint of crushing frugality and a lifetime of practicing her trade, is able to save a private fortune in cash equal to that of Père Barbeau's prosperous farm, underscoring the pattern of equality and mutuality between male and female activities which I have already noted in the relationship between Fadette and Landry. Thus, despite the sentimental idealism and pastoral escapism inherent in Sand's evocation of the feminine imaginary, she has attempted to portray an active, independent heroine who is capable of influencing the world around her, speaking her desire (to "dance with Landry"), and controlling — even altering — her destiny in order to move from a position of isolation into inclusion into the community. Fadette is a heroine who is willing to risk, as Foucault puts it, "the chance of confrontations" (Foucault 159) in
order to gain full-status admission into the community. It is significant, from the point of view of women's "voice," that Fadette's major life problems center around lack of relationship, maternal affection, and a sense of self-worth, although it is equally significant that her separation from her mother, a long period of relative isolation, and individual development provide her with the power and self-confidence to insist upon entry on an equal footing. Fadette also leaves behind her self-conserving, hostile, survival mode for a more flexible self-assertiveness that permits rather than forbids relationships. Subversively encoded in the conventional romantic plot is information about economic survival, feminine self-confidence and self-reliance, and the value of generational relationships for those who do not have access to society's conventional routes to power and inclusion.

Sand's own biographical history can be seen mirrored in the story of Fadette, which to some degree may be interpreted as a fictional attempt to resolve conflicts and tensions within the author herself. The parallels between George Sand's early childhood and Fadette's are marked. Like Fadette's absent mother, Sand's mother, Sophie Dupin, had been a camp follower, meeting her husband-to-be, Maurice, while pursuing an affair with a quartermaster. Although Aurore, like Fadette, adored her mother, she too saw her parent with decreasing frequency over the years, while her grandmother guided her education and provided a home. "Increasingly she felt like an orphan," Cate claims,

... with no father to guide her, a grandmother in her dotage, a tutor who had virtually turned over to her the administration of the Nohant estate, and an absent mother whose rare letters were full of reproach. (77)
How to grow up as a female with no happy, successful feminine role models to emulate may have been Aurore's dilemma as well as Fadette's.

Like Fadette, Aurore lived a somewhat isolated but free existence, riding through the countryside dressed in man's clothes, which she discovered to be far more convenient than women's. Under the tutelage of Stéphane Ajasson de Grandsagne, her friend and neighbor at Nohant and rumored father of her first child, she studied anatomy and medicine, shot and hunted "like a man" (Gate 74), and did as she pleased. Like Fadette, her eccentric habits shocked the country folk, who whispered that she practiced black magic and was "in league with the powers of darkness" (74). Later she took up "apothecary" studies, writing that,

I also practice medicine, surgery, pharmacy ... I mend broken noses, patch up fingers, I make potions and juleps for colds, I prepare poultries and even administer enemas. All this consumes my time and uses up my garden flowers, and I spend the day making syrups, jams and liqueurs." (Cate 131)

Her own interest and studies in the healing sciences became the basis for the fictional Mère Fadet and her granddaughter's herbal remedies and for the portrayal of their healing skills.

One of the most striking parallels, of course, is the roles of the actual and fictional grandmothers in leaving estates which free their granddaughters from economic want. The legacy of Nohant, with its attendant income, provided Sand with both a sense of home and some degree of financial security, especially following her legal separation from Casimir Dudevant in 1836. Nohant, her home since earliest childhood, also supplied her with a profound sense of place and
region. As my observation about these parallels between Sand's life and her fictional depiction of Fadette's relationship to her grandmother and mother illustrate, there is frequently a marked relationship in women's writing between their own circumstances and experiences and their fictional characters, even when the fiction is not overtly autobiographical. While this serves to ground the fiction in women's experience, writers such as Sand used their experience not only to represent alternative resolutions to their own inner conflicts, but more importantly to explore the values, struggles and heroines of the "women's sphere."

The Spiritualization of Generativity: Sarah Orne Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*

Nineteenth-century American women regionalists commonly wrote about "women's sphere," enshrining domestic life and, by extension of the concept of "home," the "genealogical" (in Foucault's sense) details of the life and characters of a town, or region. As Marjorie Pryse has noted in her essay, "'Distilling Essences': Regionalism and 'Women's Culture'," the concept of separate spheres of influence for men and women creates hierarchies of importance, with women's "regions" being a subordinate part of a whole that is controlled by men. At the same time, nineteenth-century women regionalists transformed "women's spheres" into "women's culture," constructing a "critique of the subordinate positions created for, then occupied by, rural, elderly, poor, female, unmarried or unconventionally married, often untutored persons" (Pryse 8). The literature of the "women's sphere" conveyed the message of feminine bonding and community.
The community of women is central to the writings of Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909), whose female realism is marked by what Josephine Donovan has called "the yearning ... for a transcending community and a sense of loss at its lack." By the late nineteenth-century New England was in economic decline, its seafaring and whaling days past, and its young men heading for the West, or to the urban factories, or dead in the Civil War. Lois Banner's research supports the conclusion that many women of the post-Civil War period either rejected marriage in favor of spinsterhood, or as widows chose not to remarry, preferring to conserve their autonomy (257-58). For these women, female-linked kin networks "provided support to individuals in difficult times" (257). The community of women, "strengthened by the power of grace," became for Jewett the locus of transcendence and hope, one which she believed could be, in Pennell's words, a "force equal to the challenge of the decline wrought by economic failure" (193). Jewett's imaginary landscape is dominated by what Ann Douglas has termed "the laws of scarcity," by which "the wherewithal of life has somehow been withheld" (1972:16). Elaine Showalter observes in Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing that "as women's culture declined after the Civil War ... the local colorists mourned its demise by investing its traditional images with mythic significance" (68). In Country of the Pointed Firs, the women of Dunnet Landing affirm the domestic values and rituals that provide nourishment and spiritual sustenance against a backdrop of declining economic resources and an austere climate. Showalter mentions "the quest for the goddess that influenced ... the stories of Jewett" (1993:125). At the center of the web of women's community is Mrs. Blackett,
the figure of the spiritualized grandmother, who provides for the narrator (and hence the reader) a model for the well-lived life.

For Jewett, the process of living is perceived as a metaphor and vehicle for the soul's journey. Through stories and visits which reveal their "spiritual biographies," the women of Jewett's community assess their own characters and those of others for their ability to nourish and sustain life. The "lessons" taught by living are weighed and evaluated. As Marilyn Sewell remarks in *Cries of the Spirit: A Celebration of Women's Spirituality,*

In women's writing there is little of the cultural dichotomy between sacred and profane. Again and again the writing suggests we may profoundly experience the sacred in the ordinary tasks and pleasures of living if we would but be open to these events as spirit-filled. Traditional religious themes are transformed in light of down-to-earth human realities. (1)

Jewett infuses the simple down-to-earth world of Dunnet's Landing with an intuition of the sacred, creating a spiritualized maternal discourse which is offered as a healing balm for the wounds of patriarchal theology. Willa Cather described Jewett's vision as one which sees the sacred in the most humble person, as in the "gray primness" of a marsh rosemary. Like George Sand's farmers of La Cosse, the values of Dunnet Landing's inhabitants are set forth in contradistinction to the urban world, a phallic world in which the ego is separated from the mother-as-nature in order to realize itself. In the daily life of her remote Maine seacoast village, Jewett details the rituals, sacred moments and values of a feminine spiritual life which stands both in relation to and as a critique of the harsher Calvinist theology of New England's Puritan ancestors. In her essay, "Jewett and Swedenborg," Josephine Donovan persuasively discusses the influence of
Swedenborg's ideas upon Jewett's aesthetic and spiritual sensibility, noting its "cheerful, more optimistic appeal" and its perception of "the transcendent incarnate in the physical," which is the core of Jewett's "imaginative realism." Rather than the "inscrutable Calvinist deity, a deus absconditus, Swedenborgians saw the divine as manifest in daily life, a familiar presence. People were not pawns in the hands of any angry god but were free to shape their own destinies" (Donovan 732). It was a doctrine of love (736), of choice, and of the value of everyday reality and simple rural people. The closeness of the spirit world to everyday reality is revealed through the "spiritual language" of nature (740). It was also a feminized spirituality, characterized by immanence, relationship, and union of the sacred and the mundane.

Mrs. Blackett is, to use Melissa McFarland Pennell's descriptive term, a "salvific" woman, as is her daughter, Mrs. Almira Todd. Together they exemplify the maternal values of "spirit" which best endure in adversity. Mrs. Todd is a Gaia, an archetypal Earth Mother. Like Mère Fadet, she gathers herbs and makes medicines and potions to earn her living. Unlike Mère Fadet, Mrs. Todd is sociable and extroverted; her house and garden, filled with herbs — a "rustic pharmacopoeia" (Jewett, 14) — lie within the village, rather than beyond its borders. In Jewett's iconography, the growing of a garden is the mark of a salvific woman and is connected with ancient women's religions: the odors of Mrs. Todd's garden might have once belonged to "sacred and mystic rites" inculcating "some occult knowledge," although this once majestic religion has, like Dunnet's Landing, fallen from its days of glory, and its sacred rites have devolved into mundane "humble compounds" (14). She possesses the gift of healing and works in cooperation with the village
doctor in prescribing and caring for the sick. Reminiscent of the ancient Celtic goddesses of Avalon, Mrs. Blackett dwells with her son on one of the outer islands in the harbor. Her island home, separated from the mainland by water and yet accessible by boat, is a symbol, a mark of her spiritual gifts and insight. She dwells at the border, the boundary between the visible and non-visible worlds. The narrator first sees Green Island illuminated by a "gleam of golden sunshine" in a clouded late-afternoon sky, making it seem like "a sudden revelation of the world beyond this which some believe so near" (33). This vision of Mrs. Blackett's island home contrasts theologically with Captain Littlepage's story of a supposed North Pole island peopled with hostile, fog-like wraiths, whose spirits stand between this world and the next. The spiritual realm exemplified by Mrs. Blackett is more accessible, though no less divine, than Captain Littlepage's metaphysical frozen island purgatory.

As a mark of her special grace, Mrs. Blackett is portrayed as a young/old woman, agile and girlish at 86. The narrator describes her as a "delightful little person," with "an affectionate air of expectation like a child on a holiday" (39). She is blessed with the quality which Harriet Beecher Stowe termed "faculty." "Faculty not only signifies a woman's achievements in the domestic sphere," according to Pennell, "but also serves as a sign that the completion of domestic tasks, the putting into order of her outward life, confirms the presence of order and control in her inner life as well" (194). Although she has seen "all the troubles folks can see" (Jewett 46), Mrs. Blackett has not only endured but has been able to cheerfully nurture others, signs of vitality and the loving spirit which are hallmarks of the salvific woman. Other characteristic
qualities include an intuitive, empathic understanding; self-sufficiency; the capacity of "doin' for others" (65); and a desire for solitude as well as companionship. Essential traits are the ability to "read" and respond to nature and its messages (as does Mrs. Todd who keeps her "eye on the sun and the moss that grows one side o' the tree trunks" (131) to navigate a seldom-trod path); an adventurous spirit; and above all, the "gift of self-forgetfulness" (46) — the highest grace — which understands how to make others feel at ease. The voices of age and experience are valued by the community for their ability to interpret spiritual biographies, discerning the "signs of God's involvement in a particular life" (Pennell 194).

"Belonging" is the central value in this sacred community of women, just as the "visitation," "telling one's story," shared meals and gardening are its primary rites. The kitchen as the focal point for domesticity is the favored meeting room for the exchange of stories and sharing of food that signifies bonding. "Come right out into the old kitchen; I shan't make any stranger of you" (42), Mrs. Blackett says to the narrator upon her first visit. "Belonging" results from a quality of spirit manifested in numerous small details and signs. During the process of the narrator's initiation into the community, guided by Mrs. Todd, she demonstrates in numerous ways her election to the sisterhood: she digs potatoes at Green Island; Mrs. Blackett invites her to sit in her "old quilted rockin'- chair" (not only a piece of furniture indicating her grandmotherly status but also a throne, with "the prettiest view in the house" (42); shy William is unusually sociable; other normally reticent people "warm up" to her and confide their life stories; she becomes adept at herb-gathering, concocting syrups and
cordials, making feather-light doughnuts, and "helping out." Learning to observe details, act in accord with natural phenomena, and see correspondences between natural events, flora and fauna and human beings, all increase her perceptiveness in reading "spiritual biographies" and understanding the "inner meaning" of a life. Linked in a spiritual daughter-mother-crone relationship, the narrator is guided by the motherly Mrs. Todd into a sorority over which Mrs. Blackett gently presides as exemplar.

As the "epitome of the values and worth of the domestic and female sphere" (Pennell 202), Mrs. Blackett is honored at the midsummer sacred festival known as the Bowden Family Reunion. "Mother's always the queen" (89), says Almira Todd. All who "belong" to the Bowden Family by birth or marriage converge upon the old family homestead for a picnic celebrating "the family," connecting generation to generation in a great chain of life and community:

... we were no more a New England family celebrating its own existence and simple progress; we carried the tokens and inheritance of all such households from which this had descended, and were only the latest of our line. (90)

Affirming her spiritual kinship, the narrator states that she "felt like an adopted Bowden in this happy moment" (89). Befitting her position as the acknowledged spiritual matriarch, Mrs. Blackett, "serene and mindful of privilege and responsibility" (95), walks at the head of the procession with the ministers to the picnic grove. At the center of the feast is a large gingerbread replica of the Bowden homestead, shared in sacred communion by each guest as a "pledge and token of loyalty" (96) to generativity and the family bond.
Various character portraits compare and contrast the lives of other queenly older women. Mrs. Susan Fosdick excels in that "highest of vocations," the ritual of visitation, seeming "to make a royal progress from house to house ... after the fashion of Queen Elizabeth." Mrs. Todd styles her "the best hand in the world to make a visit" (53). In contrast to the spiritualized grandmother, Mrs. Fosdick represents the adventurous, active grandmother who has experienced the world through "seafarin'," the cornerstone of Dunnet Landing's economic golden age. Her knowledge is experiential rather than intuitive: she has been the mother of a large family and voyaged to the East Indies with her parents, thereby learning to appreciate "difference," a trait valued by women's community because it allows understanding of "peculiarity," a clue to the mysteries of the soul's journey. She is a link with the "old folks," venerated ancestors of the past. Together she and Mrs. Todd recount the long-dead Joanna's biography, the story of a woman who immolated herself on deserted Shell-Heap Island after being jilted by her lover, holding to the theological view that she "wasn't fit to live with anybody" and refusing the comfort of the women's community. To stubbornly reject the gift of life (the mother's gift) is a tragedy mourned by the whole village, especially by these two old women whose values enhance their powers of endurance.

The biography of Mrs. Abby Martin, the Queen's Twin, is a testimony to the power of the imagination to sustain in impoverished circumstances. Fancying herself Queen Victoria's "twin" because of their common birthdate, Mrs. Martin has survived the isolation and disappointment of their infertile inland farm, with none of "her kind" to talk with. Mother of a number of children who have moved away and
not "a great hand to go about visitin'" (135), Mrs. Martin has built her life around Queen Victoria, collecting pictures and treasuring the memory of her one sea voyage to London where she viewed the royal personage driving out of Buckingham Palace. Her identification with her royal birth mate has ennobled her life as a domestic "slave" in "poor, strugglin' circumstances" (138), meager even by Dunnet Landing's simple standards. Her preoccupation with the Queen provides an imagined companion for her solitary old age. Indeed, Mrs. Martin exemplifies a regal "beauty in age" (139), as she waits expectantly at the door to greet her guests hospitably. Upon leaving several hours later, Mrs. Todd exhibits her great powers of understanding by remarking, "it ain't as if we left her all alone" (146).

Mrs. Thankful Hight, with the "features of a warlike Roman emperor" (122), exemplifies the domineering matriarch, whose grumpy disposition and self-centered behavior ensure support from her "dutiful daughter." Since the narrator has by now learned to read beneath the superficial appearance of things, she can use her inner vision to attribute Mrs. Hight's behavior to a "natural resentment" of the paralytic stroke which has rendered her nearly helpless. Upon her eventual death, however, her middle-aged daughter, Esther, who has been a successful shepherdess and support to her mother, will marry William and move to Green Island. Esther, the "dutiful daughter" whose sign is the lamb carried in her arms, may, in time, succeed Mrs. Blackett as the spiritualized elder of Green Island, the community's divine well-spring.

In The Feminization of American Culture, Ann Douglas has rather negatively critiqued the sentimentality and effeminization of
nineteenth-century New England's ministers in her analysis of "the vitiation of New England Calvinism" (18). She quotes Henry James, Sr. in his judgment regarding the decline of American Protestantism: "religion in the old virile sense has disappeared, and been replaced by a feeble Unitarian sentimentality." 17 This "feeble sentimentality" prefers love to damnation, freedom to repression, and idealized feminine virtue and domesticity to the epic struggles of sinful man. In sentimental literature of the late 1800's, the heroine, in Douglas' words, is "typically ... an amateur minister, handily outdoing her established clerical competitors" (157). 18 Some of these qualities apply in Jewett's feminized Dunnet Landing: the sublime is reduced to the peculiar; "greatness" resides in the past, while the women's community enshrines endurance and survival; benevolence and a loving heart count for more than theological passion. Sin as the great rebellion against God, ("what Douglas calls "the essential Calvinist truth which Melville understood so well: that sin itself is the sublime, and that only its enormity puts men on speaking terms with God." [245]), is not committed by the citizens of Dunnet Landing, except by Joanna, who has a thorough understanding of the Puritan mind. Her sacrifice and self-immolation, which the Calvinist might regard as sublime, is seen to be a tragically unnecessary gesture by Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Fosdick, interpreters of the feminine divine order. Captain Littlepage's nightmarish visions, which faintly recall those of Melville's Captain Ahab or Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, are not evidence of the grand struggle to be human in the face of God but rather of his peculiarities, although Mrs. Todd concedes that "Some o' them tales hangs together toler'ble well" (Jewett 33).
Other critics have viewed the post-Civil War local colorists more positively. Judith Fetterley maintains that sentimentalism may be "a code word for female subject and woman's point of view, and particularly for the expression of women's feelings" (25). Arguing for serious critical evaluation of the texts of the nineteenth-century women's literary tradition, Susan K. Harris sees in these novels "subversive and disruptive elements ... which establish an area of female independence, competence, emotional complexity and intellectual acumen" (1991:50). Harris suggests that the genre described as "sentimental," "women's," or "domestic" might instead be styled "exploratory," because "it explores ... extensions beyond the realm of approved female behavior" (1990:20). She contends that beneath the conventional coverplots of nineteenth-century women's novels, there is a subversive discourse, or underplot, "which suggest[s], at the very least, that women can learn how to achieve physical, emotional, and financial independence" (21).

It is important to realize that the values which Mrs. Blackett evokes as transcendent were those of New England's founding families, the English and Scotch families of pre-Revolutionary times whose Calvinist values laid the foundations for the sea-faring and farming economies of the prosperous eighteenth century. These families provided the ministers, soldiers, merchants, sea captains, and scholars who formed New England's culture and wealth. The great New England clans formed an interlocking network of marriages, business partnerships and community ties which gave a good measure of security to those who "belonged." Hence the overweening importance of passing the "belonging" test, whose criteria for women are outlined in
Jewett's works, for "belonging" to one of the great family clans, whether by birth, marriage, or "adoption," gave entry to precisely that web of connections that would form a comforting safety-net in times of trouble. At the same time, the late nineteenth-century, and certainly the twentieth, were characterized by waves of new immigrants. The old New England families were becoming mythologized, static icons in which the concept of "family" was reified into a secular religion. "Belonging" meant ancestral descent from the "old" families, as distinct from the new immigrant peoples, and set its elect apart from the masses. In this sense, too, Jewett's fiction represents a "region," not in distinction from the patriarchal culture but from the waves of newcomers swarming into the urban tenements.

**Transcendence Through Generativity**

As both Sand and Jewett demonstrate, the nineteenth-century grandmother often stood for transcendence over limitation and lack, providing an alternative vision that would enable younger women to survive and endure. In the case of Sand's Mère Fadet, the grandmother helps to make possible her granddaughter's success in overcoming exclusion to become a respected member of her husband's family and her community. For Jewett, the spiritualized grandmother furnishes an imminent vision of the sacred in the everyday. Female generativity and continuity promise the power of endurance, coupled with the hope of transcendence.

At the same time, the endings of these novels might seem to belie the grandmother's message of power and transcendence of lack. Fadette's entry into the community of LaCosse comes at the price of her socialization into the construct of "femininity," although she does retain
a degree of wifely independence and stature. William's wedding to Esther represents the betrothal of people well past child-bearing years. This is no Barbeau family, exulting in their son's marriage and the fertility which it promises. The marriage between William and Esther will be a "spiritual marriage," barren of children. Dunnet Landing is in decay and filled with old people. The marriage between 60-year-olds who have put off matrimony to fulfill other filial duties is a sentimental triumph of enduring love but will produce no future generations.

These endings, however, also represent the narrator's return from the pastoral, maternal word of the imaginary to social realities. As Harris has pointed out in 19th-Century American Women's Novels, it is the "novels' middles" which contain "their potential for ideological disruption." The middle portions of these texts, she contends, "establish an area of female independence, competence, emotional complexity, and intellectual acumen that sets the stage, whether the author intended it or not, for other women to 'read' a far different message than the one the novels overtly profess" (21). Nineteenth-century women writers such as Sand and Jewett used the "region" of the "women's sphere" to explore a pastoral, maternal discourse in which the myth of the great mother depicted, not patriarchal messages of incest and taboo, but rather the autonomous connection of self-reliant females in relationship with nature, self and "other."

The nineteenth-century saw the zenith, in terms of valorization, of maternal discourse and the grandmother. In the twentieth-century, with the advent of the "New Woman" and the "Persephone" daughter, images of discordance creep into women's portrayal of the grandmother. In France, the rejection of the mother and a general revulsion with
regard to the aging woman's body intensify, as revealed by Simone de Beauvoir. As we shall see in the next chapter, in 1932 Willa Cather, the creator of Johnny's benevolent grandmother, who mediates Eve's garden in *My Antonia* (1918), wrote "Old Mrs. Harris," producing a story about the discontinuity which results when grandmothers no longer have useful survival information to impart to their grandchildren.
NOTES

1 Non-conforming syntax, neologisms, and the etymological reclamation of words are also characteristic of an écriture féminine.

2 In La Petite Fadette, Sylvinet's passion for his twin brother is so suffocatingly intense that it cannot be contained within the domestic sphere of family and community since it interferes with other relationships. The author's solution is to send him off to the military, thereby isolating and removing him from the community and diverting his passion into more impersonal channels. The military theme is repeated in the case of Fadette's mother, who "joins the military" as a camp-follower, also isolating and removing herself from the village community. Sylvinet's removal represents an advantage for Fadette, since his passion for Landry was transferred into an impossible love for her. Her mother's defection, however, represented a grave loss.

3 In the idealization of the mother and assimilation of the mother's qualities, the nineteenth-century liberal American minister, as characterized by Douglas, presents a civilized, genteel reminder of Bettelheim's "symbolic wound", or the attempt by males to appropriate the mother's powers through religious ritual.


5 According to Michael Danahy, "this novel is easily trivialized as a variant of the Cinderella story" (49).

6 The nineteenth-century New England writer and intellectual, Margaret Fuller, was similarly penalized for not concealing her intelligence and refusing to use "feminine wiles," or defer to men. George Sand was one of Fuller's models. See Lois W. Banner, In Full Flower: Aging Women, Power and Sexuality (New York: Vintage Books, 1992) Chapter 7.

7 According to R. R. Palmer, by June, 1848 "there were probably almost 200,000 essentially idle but able-bodied men in a city [Paris] of about a million people." Following three days of street warfare in Paris behind the barricades (June 24-26), "militant workers were confirmed in a hatred and loathing of the bourgeois class, in a belief that capitalism existed in the last analysis by the callous shooting of laboring men in the streets. People above the laboring class were thrown into a panic ... The very ground of civilized living seemed to have quaked." A History of the Modern World, second edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 472, 474.

Her admission is not unambiguous or without price, however, since it is contingent upon her at least partial acceptance of a new set of rules: that of "feminine" behavior, which Landry teaches her. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Foucault saw the ideas, beliefs, "facts" and events of history as the result of the appropriation of a certain system of rules by a more powerful group, usually accompanied by the subordination of others. In *La Petite Fadette*, Fadette listens to Landry's critical account of her tomboyishness and moderates her freedom-loving behavior. Landry, his family, and the villagers enlarge their perspective by coming to value Fadette's qualities, especially as they perceive benefits to themselves by so doing. Sand consistently paints an "emergence" of the values of mutuality rather than domination of either sex over the other.

She was born Aurore Dupin on July 1, 1804 to Maurice Dupin, of aristocratic heritage, and Sophie-Victoire Delaborde, daughter of a Parisian tavern-keeper and bird-seller. Their marriage took place a month before her birth. The circumstances of her early childhood are well-known: the tension between Sophie and her aristocratic mother-in-law, Mme. Dupin de Francueil (Aurore de Saxe), over what was considered an inappropriate marriage; the early death of Maurice Dupin, resulting in Aurore's upbringing by her grandmother in Paris and Nohant; long separations from her mother relieved only by occasional visits which gradually became less frequent; and lonely years at Nohant with her sick grandmother. Her grandmother let her roam the countryside freely, and Aurore, according to Curtis Cate's biography, "helped milk the cows and goats, danced wild country dances in the stubble, devoured wild apples, pears, and berries" with her friends, the children of Nohant's tenant farmers. Throughout her childhood, whether at Nohant or later at the Couvent des Anglaises in Paris, the young girl suffered desperately in her perpetual search for parental affection. As Cate comments, "Her father was dead, her grandmother too old, while her mother, on whom her filial passion had so long been focused, was growing increasingly remote, not to say estranged" (62).

The countryside and farmers of the Berrichon "Vallée Noire" provide the material for her five romans champêtres including *La Petite Fadette*; Berrichon customs, folk beliefs, and superstitions, including a belief in sorcery, are woven into the fabric of these novels. Sand's study of Berrichon legends, published as *Promenades autour d'un village*, provides an analysis of "how Christianity had to join with the age-old pagan rituals and traditions to gather the people to the new religion" (Powell 58). In *Fadette*, the peasants of La Cosse have perpetuated ancient pre-Christian agricultural beliefs, rituals and festivals centered around the archetype of the Great Mother, which continue to function comfortably alongside Christianity and scientific rationalism. Thus Aurore Dupin de Francueil's legacy provided not only financial stability and a home for her granddaughter but also a deeply felt sense of place and region for George Sand, the author, who ploughed her rich emotional inheritance, together with her longing for her missing mother, back into her novels.


15 Swedenborg emphasized that "one has the choice to make oneself good or not; unlike Calvinist doctrine, Swedenborg’s holds that no one is born damned [and that] one has the choice of turning adversity into a blessing" (Donovan 1993), 736.

16 The parallel in iconography to Jesus, the "dutiful son" who is a "shepherd" and the "Lamb of God" is unmistakable.


18 In *19th-Century American Women's Novels*, Susan K. Harris describes Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* as "spanning the gap between pre- and postfeminist critics." Douglas, Harris cautions, "brings with her many of the values implicit in the earlier [critical] works [on nineteenth-century women's texts] ... Douglas interprets them through her vision of the deterioration of the Puritan ethic, the spread of sentimentality, and the pernicious effects of women's complicity in the development of a consumer economy" (7). She upholds the literary values of New England Calvinism, which, she contends, display "mastery," "control," "history," and "uncompromised detail," as the intellectual standard. Women's novels are judged sentimental, debilitating to masculine intellectual vigor, and, together with the "sentimental" nineteenth-century theology, contribute to the "feminization" (degradation) of American culture.
Chapter 5

The Displaced Grandmother and the Daughter's Seduction

Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.
And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime-tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.

Amy Lowell
"Patterns"

Both in France and the United States, the twentieth century has been marked by a radical break with patterns of the late nineteenth century, a split indelibly demarcated by World War I. Willa Cather would later remember that "the world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts" (Demouy 105). Profoundly affected by the general social upheaval, women writers in both countries felt it necessary to repudiate their foremothers and the concept of "family" (as the locus of female exploitation) in order to gain access to male-dominated institutions. Widespread acceptance of the Freudian Oedipal complex theory is reflected in the work of these women writers in both countries and reinforces their efforts to escape the maternal sphere for masculine-defined "art."

The nature of French and American women's struggles, reflecting the differences in the two cultures, were not necessarily parallel and frequently seemed contradictory. France, with its centuries-old tradition of "l'amour courtois" and the glittering salons of "les précieuses," possesses a tradition of "collaboration des sexes" rather than "la division du travail" common in Protestant Anglo-Saxon countries (Sarde 484). In
French society from the aristocracy to the working class there exists a tradition of this "mixité ou de collaboration des sexes, déjà intérieorisée dans les esprits et les mentalités" (484). French culture is heterosocial; American, especially New England, society was homosocial (until the 1960's), characterized by separation of the sexes.

While sexuality in American Victorian literature of the "women's sphere" was muted in favor of idealized romance, love relations, including the "desire" of the older woman, were frequently and frankly explored in literary texts by twentieth-century "daughters," women writers whose struggles to win acceptance into male-dominated literary circles increased their alienation from domesticity and their involvement in hitherto taboo topics. The aging woman's body and sexuality are explored in works by Cather and Edith Wharton, while Ellen Weatherall's death, in Katherine Ann Porter's story, "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," signifies the death of the religious and social patterns from which nineteenth-century femininity and maternity were constructed. Still, Puritan, Anglo-Saxon codes in America limited feminine sexual exploration, especially extra-marital affairs.

In France, women writers were typically neither as confined to the "kitchen" as their American colleagues nor required to be reticent about "l'amour" and "le désir." To the contrary, a tradition of "la parole femme" extending back to the "l'amour courtois" of Aliénor d'Aquitaine, Marie de Champagne and the troubadours has associated women's empowerment with their sexuality. "Le jeu d'amour," Michèle Sarde argues in Regard sur les Françaises, gave certain women a freedom and power which "l'histoire ne pouvait ni l'effacer ni [le] clamer" (92). In France, the "feminine voice" is inextricably associated with feminine
desirability, sexuality, and seduction, especially before or outside of marriage. The greater sexual freedom and openness has made the "love triangle," "la belle dame sans merci," and the courtesan or demi-mondaine common literary themes. The myth of "l'éternel féminin" and "le jeu d'amour" has historically been a central literary topic for French men and women writers, although one might observe that French women's literary confinement to the arena of "l'amour" and "le désir"—"toujours déjà au lit"—parallels in some respects American women's enclosure within the home and "domestic" concerns. Because of the privilege which desirability confers, the issues of old age focus most intensely for French women upon the aging body and loss of sexual attractiveness.

Rejecting the myth of the mysterious and seductive feminine "other," American women activists and suffragettes struggled instead for political and social rights, winning the vote in 1919, a right which French women did not gain until 1946 (477). While women of both countries fought for acceptance and recognition, American women writers were struggling to shed the image of "scribbling women," to gain admission to literary circles and a canon ruled by male intelligentsia, writers and critics. In France, the long-standing importance of women as writers, intellectuals or salon hostesses was a "fait accompli," a part of the national culture. French women preferred to battle "avec les hommes plutôt que contre eux" (475). As Sarde comments, "Toujours le féminisme français apparaît comme en retard ... sur les autres féminismes" and yet in another way, "nulle femme au monde n'était ... plus émancipée que la Française" (476).
These cultural contrasts, as well as cross-fertilizations, appear in the texts considered in this chapter. The American woman's separation from the maternal sphere and its traditional values, embodied in a grandmother or matriarch, is recorded in the stories by Cather and Porter. Beauty, the aging woman's body and women's sexuality are presented from French perspectives in texts by Colette, de Beauvoir and Cixous and from an American point of view in those by Wharton and Cather.

The Daughters' Struggle for Access to the "Word"

The end of the nineteenth century was a "symbolic moment of rupture with the mother for American women writers" (Ammons 123). With the turn of the century came the advent of the "New Woman" and a concomitant disavowal of the matriarchal values which constituted the basis for valorizing generativity. By the early twentieth century, middle-class women, the women most influenced by the values of domesticity, were college-educated, ambitious, and career-oriented. Struggling for professional recognition, many women writers chose not to marry, or if they did marry, to leave the relationship if it proved self-destructive. For the twentieth-century woman artist, motherhood represented a choice. Many did not feel it was "either possible or desirable to combine the traditional middle-class role of wife and mother with the role of artist" (9), and, unlike the earlier generation of fiction writers, they chose the role of artist.

The ambition to create "high art" becomes the "defining feature of this period" (Ammons 122), and the bohemian woman artist (painter, writer, musician, singer, actress, sculptor, dancer) appears in both France and the United States as a heroine and protagonist. A notable
literary example is Renée, the heroine of Colette's *La Vagabonde* (1906), who rejects the confinement and values of a bourgeois marriage for the freedom and adventure of a music-hall career. "Serious women writers of this period," Ammons remarks, "... display as a group a fundamental, shared, and yet highly diverse conception of themselves as 'artists' — as makers, in the modern high-culture, western definition of elite art ..., of original forms" (87). As Ann Douglas noted, feminine sentimental writing had become "lowbrow," suitable for greeting card verse (87). The locus of literary women's struggle became access to "the Word," represented by male-validated "literature," and necessitated movement out of the "private" world of feminine creativity into the "public" arena, defined and controlled by men. In choosing art over domesticity and maternity, modern women artists were left stranded emotionally between two worlds. In Showalter's words, "they are members neither of their mother's world nor of that of the privileged white male artist" (1993:121).

It is particularly ironic that American literary women faced such a struggle for acceptance in academe and by critics, since literacy, reading, teaching and culture have been traditionally associated with women in North America and considered "effeminate" in contrast to "pioneer" men-of-action and "captains of industry." The establishment and maintenance of artistic and literary "culture" has been part of the responsibility of the "women's sphere" in concert with artists, critics and reviewers who have been viewed as less than manly by "real men," charged with the task of developing and industrializing a nation and making money. Thus those arbiters of the literary canon who refused to admit women writers were themselves often considered "effeminate"
by other men. In contrast, intellectualism and aesthetic concerns are accepted as "masculine" in France.

In rejecting their mothers, many twentieth-century women writers remain their fathers' daughters. If this chapter reads like a reflection of the Father's "Non," it is, in part, because women, in their struggle to gain full acceptance as artists, authors and intellectuals, needed to do so in patriarchal terms, since men controlled the public sphere of art. In an Oedipal sense, for the daughter to break away from the private, intimate, reproductive pattern of the feminine "Same," she was forced to leave her mother and align herself with her father to gain his access to the "public" or "symbolic" stage. Moreover, approval and praise from the "Father" were seductive for the daughter, as Jane Gallop among others has acknowledged. The role of father's daughter was one in which daughter-women could be subtly both seducers and seduced.

The rejection of the mother has meant that many of the feminist arguments of the 1950's and 1970's, including those of Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray (Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un) and Hélène Cixous (Le Sexe ou la tête), have been made from the daughter's perspective. For these "daughters," who have not "un-powered" the maternal position by embracing it themselves, the mother tends to remain a figure of the superego — a figure whom they regard with a mixture of fear, rebellion, disgust, and impudence. In short, she is the phallic mother, of whom there seems to be no agreed-upon definition. Initially, for Freud, she is the mother as perceived by the pre-oedipal child: all-powerful and complete in herself. She may also be construed as simply an older postmenopausal woman, a crone past childbearing and childrearing age, who escapes femininity.

Several female psychoanalysts, including Irigaray and Kristeva, have
shared the male view of the phallic mother as the engulfing, devouring
mother. Irigaray speaks as a daughter, according to Jane Gallop, in pleading
for separation from the mother, who is suffocating her and threatening her
with reabsorption, which is death. In "Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre,"
Irigaray's daughterly discourse, the mother remains "phallic," i.e., omniscient
and omnipotent (Gallop 114). Here we see the theme of reabsorption, which
in earlier times was attributed to the crone who reabsorbed all life back into
her womb to be reborn again, attributed to the birth mother, in the
psychological sense of "fusion." Furthermore, Irigaray's and Gallop's
description of the "phallic mother" as omniscient and omnipotent places her
in the realm of the god-like superego and equates her with the "Non" of the
Father. As I noted in Chapter 3, it seems quite possible to theorize an alliance
between the id (which Freud likens to a chaos, a cauldron) and the
regulatory superego, or parent — a tension which poses a threat to the
emerging ego. I postulated that the Crone, or woman past reproductive
capacity, can be seen to be a repressed construct linking id and superego, no
longer erotic or nurturing, yet representing a superego "parent" figure
through her connection with "the law of death" (80). In the daughters'
interpretation, the Crone-like "phallic mother" retains her "larger-than-life"
superego qualities, but threatens her emergent female children with
reabsorption into herself: an ego death.

The tri-partite maid-mother-crone figure seems to have collapsed into
a mother-daughter struggle, one which Gallop characterizes as "the
daughter's paralysis," adding that since boundaries between daughter and
mother are unstable and permeable, "absorption is precisely a process which
undermines boundary distinctions" (114). Gallop suggests that the "phallic
mother" is more dangerous than the father because she is less obviously
phallic. If the phallus "can only play its role when veiled," as Lacan suggests, then the phallic mother is more phallic precisely by being less obvious (118). Kristeva, Gallop concludes, can speak as the Mother, because she is one, and so sees the child as separate. However, Kristeva, too, regards the Mother's positioning within the Imaginary as necessary. The Kristevan phallic mother is one who seeks to appropriate symbolic language for herself. Nonetheless, Kristeva argues, a woman needs language — the paternal, symbolic order— to protect herself from her lack of distinction from the mother. The rules of grammar, the "symbolic order of language," permit distinction and boundaries, so that separation from the Mother is possible: "the breakdown of these differences is mortally threatening" (Gallop 115). Here Kristeva has agreed with Lacan's pre-emption of symbolic language as the controlling metaphor of psychological and social development and as belonging exclusively to the "realm of the father." In Kristevan thought, mother-daughter, or for that matter mother-son, psychological separation and boundary maintenance can be achieved only through acquisition of a paternally-controlled language. Thus for some women psychoanalysts, access to the "Word" has become not only desirable, but necessary as a defense against an engulfing "phallic mother," who, like Red Riding Hood's wolf, lurks with an insatiable appetite to devour her children. Furthermore, Kristeva appears to agree with Freud and Lacan that access to the male symbolic order requires the mother's abjection; the daughter must separate from the mother to enter the symbolic order. Telescoping the mother-crone images into one figure, the Freudian-derived theory postulates a mother-daughter battle, in which the daughter must break free of the engulfing or abject Mother to win the Father's favor, aspire to his world and access to the "Word." However, because daughters are female and potential mothers also,
their battle against their mothers becomes a battle against themselves, a dilemma to which I will return later in this chapter.

The century began, however, with women's intoxication with new-found freedoms, coupled with a growing awareness of the woman as an individual with rights and opportunities as well as responsibilities. Between 1890 and 1920, "a resurgence in feminist activism and a liberal political climate led to an explosive phase in women's writing ... an enabling relationship between politics and art" (Showalter 1993:121). In America, Showalter asserts, "women's writing and women's rights have always been strongly connected" (112), while Ammons concludes that American "women artists as a group do not thrive when feminist political activism is in decline or nonexistent" (vii).

Thanks in large part to the activism of forceful middle-aged women leaders and social reformers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century — Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Frances Willard, Mary Baker Eddy, Mary Lyons, Jane Addams, Julia Lathrop, Lillian Wald, and others — American women of the early twentieth century enjoyed new freedoms, educational opportunities, and the ability to be self-supporting through work outside the home. The progressive "New Woman" era spanned the 1890's to the early 1920's. It was the age of the "club woman," recalled in Helen Hooven Santmyer's ... And Ladies of the Club (1982). Women, especially older women past the childrearing phase of the life-cycle, undertook reform or philanthropic work, founded literary clubs, marched in protests and campaigned for the right to vote. The automobile, train and steamship provided an exhilarating new mobility, which further empowered the "emancipated woman."
Actuarial tables and census data proved that if women could survive childbirth, they would live longer than men (Banner 280). As clustering births (bearing children earlier in marriage rather than protracting childbirth throughout the reproductive years) became common practice, most mothers in their mid-thirties had their children in school, freeing them from constant child care. The mid-forties, rather than the mid-thirties, came to be seen as the beginning of "middle-age." The opinion-shaping experts' views on menopause continued to be ambivalent: some authorities regarded it as "the dangerous age," a time of imbalance, hysteria, even madness; others saw it as a "second youth," a period of increased freedom from childbearing and domestic chores to achieve personal or social goals.

The 1920's saw the unexpected disintegration of the American women's movement after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Following World War I, the "millenial change" which separated nineteenth-century writers from the twentieth century, the womanly ideal in the United States shifted from the plump matron to the flapper. Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, the quintessential Southern "belle," and her husband, F. Scott Fitzgerald, became symbols of the frenetic "post-war Jazz Age." But Zelda's international fame was based on her beauty, charm, and "wild" eccentricity, while she craved to be recognized as a writer. She details her anguish and frustration in her haunting autobiography, Save Me the Waltz. Women of the post-World War I "lost generation" (as expatriate male artists of this period styled themselves) experienced discontinuity and disruption as well as increasing distress, since male critics and artists refused to include women in the top ranks of art. "Within the academic [and critical]
institutions of American literature, women were increasingly marginalized" and "frustration, fragmentation and silencing ... plagued women poets and novelists generally during the 1920's and 1930's" (Showalter 1991:125,120). In France, women's movements accomplished little following the First World War, partly because the women themselves were divided along socio-economic and religious lines, partly because of the heterosocial nature of French society, partly because the intellectual and "salonnière" tradition produced more philosophers than activists (Sarde 475) and partly, no doubt, because of the intense shock of the war itself.

The Displaced Grandmother

Showalter suggests, in her essay on "American Gynocriticism," that in the twentieth century Persephone has represented the figure of the "woman writer who dwells in the underworld among the supernatural fruit of letters and books." Eating the "pomegranate seed" represented an "exile from the Mother Country" and an initiation into a masculine world of art, experience, language and literary tradition that separated her from her mother and from her American female literary precursors. "Persephone experience," Showalter concludes, "disrupts the flow of continuity from generation to generation; older women have nothing to share that is of interest to these daughters" (124).

In "Old Mrs. Harris" (1932), Cather suggests that success for modern young women lies in breaking with the homemaking patterns of their mothers and grandmothers to follow the path of education and careers. Cather's literary stance toward the maternal is ambivalent. In My Antonia (1918), the archaic, primal Mother is exalted in an elegiac roman du terroir. In "Old Mrs. Harris," the culture of the by-gone South
(America's trope for the maternal pastoral) is shown to be pathetically, even tragically, inadequate in the face of modern industrialization and commercialism. The old patterns no longer suffice for women's survival in modern technological society.

Old Mrs. Harris represents the values of the ante-bellum South, a complex hierarchical society built upon a network of kinship and obligations, "where there were plenty of landless people glad to render service to the more fortunate," tenuously transplanted to Skyline, Colorado, a "snappy little Western democracy" (Cather 1932:113). The South's hierarchical structure and class distinctions reveal its society to be maternal only in its basis in the reproductivity of the land, mirrored as the exploited, or sacrificial, mother. Very explicitly, Cather sets forth the idealized code of institutionalized motherhood governing the rhythm of a middle-class woman's life, a code Cather will conclude by undermining and, in part, rejecting: "Young girls, in the South, were supposed to be carefree and foolish"; when the young "belle" marries and begins to have children, "everything must give way to that ... because having children was hard on a woman, and it was the most important thing in the world." The older women, widowed and past child-bearing age, lived in the background, "managed the household economies and directed the help" (110). For these older women, especially those who owned their own homes, as did Mrs. Harris, there was always extra help and company. Although the young married couple entertained in the parlor, and the old women "spent most of their lives in the kitchen and pantries and back dining-room ... there they ordered life to their own taste, entertained their friends, dispensed charity, and heard the troubles of the poor" (111). Class privilege
permitted older women of the "aristocracy" to continue to give parties, drive out in carriages, and "go North" in the summer as they aged, while a middle-class or country widow with married daughters considered herself an old woman, "wore full-gathered black dresses and a black bonnet, and became a housekeeper" (111).

Keeping up "appearances," by maintaining class markers that signify respectability is all-important: Mrs. Harris "could go on a good way ... if they always had a cool, pleasant parlour, with Victoria properly dressed to receive visitors" (114). As Wasserman comments, keeping Victoria a "belle" and the properly treated mistress of the house, is "the last mark of distinction [Mrs. Harris] can preserve" (57), to indicate that the family has not fallen into such poverty that one can no longer keep up appearances. "Appearances" concern the "right way" to do things, those details which signify "who one is," subtly delineating one's place in the complex unspoken network of privilege, service and obligations. In Skyline, "appearances," an elaborately wrought illusion presented to the world at large by all members of the Templeton household, do not count. The Westerners, representative of the new values of individualism and materialism, are critical, and, at various times, all three adult Templetons silently wish themselves back in their now-mythologized world of Tennessee, where Hillary can be a gentleman, Victoria an admired "belle," and Mrs. Harris a reigning matriarch, owner of her own home and center of a community web.

A comparison of the similarities and crucial dissimilarities between Grandmother Harris and Mrs. Blackett illustrates some of the shifts in the portrayal of the grandmother in the dislocation following the dissolution of the domestic sphere. Both women serve as living
wellsprings of maternal values and powers, especially those of
generativity, insight, and healing. Both operate in the background,
leaving the more active public life to their daughters, yet both are
sources of profound intuitive understanding of moral actions and
arbiters of who "belongs" to their spiritual kinship. The values which
these two women incarnate are those of dying worlds, ways of life
which have passed into mythical time. Technological change rendered
the Yankee sea-captain and the Southern gentleman obsolete, and by
the close of the nineteenth century ante-bellum Southern culture was
becoming as much a memory as the small New England maritime
village. More importantly, both locales are settings for maternal values
enthroned by sentimental fiction, the "traditional femininity" which
twentieth-century women writers like Cather found inimicable to art.

While Mrs. Blackett is cast as a spiritual grandmother, old Mrs.
Harris is sacrificial, abject. The sacrificial, indeed, almost cannibalistic,
aspect of feminine old age is pronounced as Grandmother Harris is
devoured and consumed by her family, who use her assets and labor to
maintain themselves in the new "snappy little democracy," where
money has replaced land ownership as the medium for wealth. In
contrast to Mrs. Blackett, who is able to remain in tune with the old
ways of Dunnet Landing, Mrs. Harris has been removed from the
security of her own "comfortable, rambling" (82) Tennessee home and
community with "plenty of helpers" (110) to a raw Colorado Plains
town, in the name of "progress," that is, her son-in-law's desire to
"better himself" (112). In the circumstances of this new life, she is
deprived of her economic independence by this son-in-law who has
appropriated the proceeds from the sale of her house to "invest." She no
longer has access to or use of her funds, as she discovers when she asks Hillary for her money to give to Vickie for college; "... invested," she thought, "that was a word men always held over women ... and it always meant they could have none of their own money" (138). In the Templetons' small rented house, she and her "things" are required to be invisible (84): she is not to receive visitors alone (76) or gifts (81); her quarters are a little cluttered passageway off the kitchen with no privacy and a hard, slatted lounge for a bed; she has no "proper place to wash" and keeps her comb in her pocket (156).

If the key to Mrs. Blackett's eminence is her profound understanding of nature and the familial community of spirit as transcendent, the cornerstone of Mrs. Harris's sacrificial nobility is the dignity of humble, unselfish service to the welfare of others. Mrs. Harris's creed is based upon caring for others at the expense of self, a "feminine" value that functions when everyone in the community is extending care to each other in a web of understood relationships and obligations. Her happiness and well-being come in conjunction with, not at the expense of, those of others. Her lot is irrevocably tied to the "family fortunes — any comfort for herself aside from that of the family, was inconceivable to her" (115). Skyline prefers the values of self and individuation, however, and Mrs. Harris's fostering of the family welfare at the expense of her own appears pitiful, since it is not reciprocal. "To be pitied was the deepest hurt anybody could know," she mourns (83). Indeed, the fact that adhering to what was most noble in her moral code contributes to her abjection is one of the ironies of her situation.
In *In A Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan argues that female gender identity is defined by attachment and threatened by separation; while men tend to have difficulty with relationships, women tend to have trouble with individuation (8). Without Grandmother Harris's network of participating community, these feminine differences become a code of behavior that "appears" to give women power, whether as a capricious "belle" or managing household doyenne, while in reality binding them firmly to their roles as sex object, mother and invisible caretaker. Both women feel themselves unable to control the circumstances of their lives. Mrs. Harris must respond to the needs of others. Women, especially old women, she believes, "couldn't say when or where they would stop" since they "were tied to the chariot of young life, and had to go where it went, because they were needed" (83). Mrs. Harris's perception of "having to go because she is "needed," obscures the fact that she must live with her daughter's family, since her own home has been sold, and that she is perceived more as a burden and servant. Anne Scott in *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930* notes that idealization of the mother's role in Southern society concealed the darker side of maternity: "only in private could women give voice to the misery of endless pregnancies, with attendant illness, and the dreadful fear of childbirth, a fear based on fact" (30). Finding herself pregnant with her sixth child, Victoria sobs that "she is sick of dragging this chain of life that never let her rest and periodically knotted and overpowered her" (148).

While Cather exposes the underside of the matriarchal pastoral — women's enchainment to the reproductive process of on-going life and the tendency of men to remain boys — she also pays tribute to the
fading values of selfless love, humble dignity and noble service to others which Mrs. Harris embodies, through the character of Mrs. Rosen, the cultured Jewish matron whose perceptions and judgments are drawn from a wider, more cultivated experience than the limited perspective of Skyline's other residents. Mrs. Rosen finds Mrs. Harris "impressive" and noble in her "absence of self-consciousness, vanity, preoccupation" (70). She enjoys visiting the Templetons because "one felt a pleasantness in the human relationships," an absence of struggle, exactness or competition (95). The children cluster around their grandmother while she reads aloud in the evening, or when they are sick. Grandmother Harris's power is that of unselfish love, a Christ-like spiritual power which Cather underscores as Mandy, the hired girl, symbolically washes the old woman's feet, "one of the oldest rites of compassion" (80).

Nevertheless, both Grandmother Harris and her granddaughter understand that the patterns must be broken. Despite the indifference of Vickie's parents to her desire for an education, Mrs. Harris asks the Rosens to ensure that Vickie has the necessary funds to supplement her scholarship. Virtually the old woman's last act, the guarantee of an education permits Vickie to undertake an individuation which will break the maternal pattern and lead Mrs. Harris's grand-daughter, for a while at least, far away from the maternal traditions of the old South.

Death of the Matriarch

Dismantling the domestic sphere and its maternal discourse freed the woman writer to pursue her art and tackle themes and perspectives which previously had been reserved for the masculine purview of "literature." In "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" (1929), Katherine Ann
Porter portrays the strong old matriarch of maternal discourse, but also exposes as hoaxes the religious and romantic beliefs upon which traditional women tried to construct their lives. Ellen Weatherall's dying hours, in which she sums up and evaluates her life, provide occasion for Porter to examine the conflicts between femininity and individual freedom and to question the tenets of the "Old Order," which for the Texas-born writer, as for Cather, were the mores of ante-bellum southern Society, especially the idealized maternity of nineteenth-century women's fiction. As in Cather's "Old Mrs. Harris," Ellen's death represents the summing up and end of the old maternal patterns.

Porter uses a melange of dreams, memories, speech and semi-conscious thought to portray the essential conflicts of Granny Weatherall's life and describe the forging of a matriarch. Independence and strength for Ellen Weatherall come by living through the problems presented by a woman's life cycle. In her early life, traditional feminine values, symbolized by the young Ellen's Spanish comb and her painted fan, promised happiness through romantic love and the "belle's" marriage to her "beau," represented by George, the faithless bridegroom who fails to appear on her wedding day. Instead she married John, whose role is to provide her with a mature feminine identity as wife and mother. John proved a good husband, giving her children and a house anyway — "Better than I hoped for even" (86). Left a widow with several children to raise after John's death, she learns to provide a living for them:

She had fenced in a hundred acres once, digging the post holes herself and clamping the wires with just a negro boy to help. That changed a woman ... Digging post holes changed a woman. (83)
The role of widowed mother teaches her about power: she is responsible for everything, nurtures her children, and creates her own and others' order. She controls chaos, suggested by the night-time fog rising, by lighting the lamps for the children. Nursing the sick, she presides over life and death, hardly ever losing one of her patients. Through life's processes, she has moved from a feminine, powerless, dependent beauty, through the maternal power of birthing and nurturing life, to an androgynous Crone power in which she provides everything and creates her own order. At each stage, she has evolved, finally acquiring a presence that makes John seem like a child now, although "she used to think of him as a man." He would not recognize her, either, she knows, because he would be seeking her former feminine self, the young woman with the "Spanish comb in her hair" (83).

Although Ellen Weatherall's story is based upon that of Porter's paternal grandmother, Ellen is in many respects the archetypal female who experiences her vulnerability and sense of being "danced and rattled ... in the everlasting hand of God" (85). She becomes a matriarch by meeting the needs of others. Through her, Porter explores themes of birth and death, individuality and motherhood, order and chaos.

"Over and over ... Porter's women must discover that love is usually attended by death, and that independence is almost always lonely," Jane Demouy comments. Porter's women struggle with the tension between a desire to be feminine, in traditional terms, and a desire, not to be alone, but to be free (206). The emerging feminine persona, who rejects subjugation, accepts independence, and gains power thereby, struggles with the persistent values of traditional
femininity which still hold sway in her unconscious. For Porter, the struggle was "in the blood," in the puzzle of being female, which she experienced as duality: a woman could have love or work but not both.

A nurturer of life, Granny Weatherall represses death, which wells up in her subconsciousness as "black smoke" and fog. Yet her perspective has been shaped by two profound symbolic deaths whose memories intermingle in the last few hours before her physical death. These two "deaths" have marked her transit from maiden to mother, and from mother to old woman, seeming to corroborate Simone de Beauvoir's observation in "De la maturité à la vieillesse" (Le Deuxième Sexe) that "les passages d'un stade à un autre sont d'une dangereuse brutalité; ils se trahissent par des crises beaucoup plus décisives que chez le mâle: puberté, initiation sexuelle, ménopause" (399). The third death will mark her departure from life.

The first death occurred on that long-ago wedding day — "such a green day with no threats in it" (84) — when George jilted her. On her deathbed, Granny ponders what she had lost that day, since "she was given back everything he took away and more" (86). There was something ... but agony wells up in her, "a monstrous frightening shape with cutting edges" (86), an image akin to both childbirth and a symbolic death, a feeling of falling through space in which all physical limits have disappeared, which she experienced that terrible day. Demouy regards Ellen's loss as three-fold. Through George's betrayal, she has suffered the loss of identity, of sexual passion, and most significantly, of "the ability to believe" (49). It is the loss of her faith in romantic love, the end of her youthful trust, that is the worst. "The something not given back is her elemental faith that 'God's in His
Heaven, all's right with the world.' ... Never again can she put faith in any order that she has not created herself" (49).

Her second "death" takes place at age 60 and marks the end of motherhood's power, a phase represented by the ghost of Hapsy, her favorite child who died in childbirth. Mrs. Weatherall has prepared to die, made a will and visited relatives, but only suffers a fever and is soon well. Her children now see her as "Granny" and humor her whims as if she were a child. She tries to retain her former power by giving advice and dreams of "moving back to her own house, where nobody could remind her every minute that she was old" (82).

Christian and mythological images of death well up in Ellen's dreams and memories. She dreams of a man driving a cart. She climbs into the cart, but cannot see the driver's face, the face of death: "It's not time!" she exclaims. Everything exists in life, and she is not ready to leave. Death is like a jilting bridegroom: there is nothing there, she discovers. Death is absence despite life's rituals and hopes. Her Catholicism had promised that she would "see people," again, like John and her favorite child, Hapsy, but death, she discovers, is just the lamp going out. At death, Jesus, who according to the Church waits to help the faithful into heaven, like George, is not there. Again she is betrayed: there is no substance behind the promises of the priest and the Church's ceremonies. Jesus becomes the jilting lover, and again there is no sign from God. "I'll never forgive it," she vows, in full rebellion.

Birth and death are intertwined in the archetypal mother/crone. Granny Weatherall experiences the pains of dying as memories of childbirth and calls out to John, "my time has come" (86). In the infancy of old age, death comes full circle as a womblike darkness. Curled in a
fetal position, she watches as the point of blue light, which represents Cornelia's blue-shaded bed-side lamp but also the "lamp" of life and order which the matriarch has kept lit against chaos, begins to fade and grow dim. In death, the light gradually goes out, and darkness returns. At this last moment, realizing her final betrayal by the heavenly bridegroom, Ellen assumes control, chooses death, and blows out the light.

Aging Beauties and Mother/Daughter Rivalries

When women — or at least women writers — remain psychologically their fathers' daughters, no matter how old they become chronologically, development through the maternal cycle of maid, mother and crone is truncated. The crone no longer represents experiential wisdom; her postmenopausal body no longer symbolizes the regenerative possibilities of "wise blood"; her womb-cauldron is forgotten. While twentieth-century daughters may have regarded their mothers as abject or controlling, they rendered their domestic grandmothers repressive or invisible. She is the one who wants to spoil Little Red Riding Hood's fun, Cixous insists in "Le Sexe ou la tête?". The grandmother, she argues, stands in the place of the Great Mother and represents "cette espèce de jalousie, de la femme qui ne peut pas lâcher sa fille" (6). One of the prevailing modern issues between the maiden and the crone in women's fiction — and a much older theme in France — is that of sexuality and aging beauty, whether it is the daughter's horror of the aging female body (which presages the young woman's passage into "lack" of desirability) or the older woman's erotic attraction to and for younger men.
"Reading the body," or a culture's notions of beauty and ugliness, can reveal through metaphor its concepts and valuation of the feminine and of feminine old age. At the turn of the century, matronly figures were considered beautiful. Plumpness, with large hips, bosoms and "weightiness of form" was preferred, in keeping with the "valorization of maternity and containment of sexuality within marriage," according to Banner. "Through weight, older women signified their contented participation in the community of married, maternal women" (281). The psychological and cultural valorization of the father's daughter, which coincided with a pervasive use of youthful feminine sexuality by mass media advertising following the end of World War I, enshrined the boyish figure of the adolescent girl as the norm of feminine attractiveness. Earlier notions of women's superior morality, which had underlain views of vital aging and positive evaluation of aging women were undermined. By the 1920's, according to Banner, thinness and dieting were "in"; Rubenesque figures and matronly appearance were out of fashion (284).

In her story, "An Old Beauty" (written in 1936 but not published until 1948, after her death), Willa Cather uses the figure of an aged woman to mourn the passing of the "old order" as well as to reflect on the aging feminine body as a ruined temple of beauty. Lady Gabrielle Longstreet's slender willowy figure and self-absorption indicate her psychological state as the daughter who never grows up. In contrast to Porter's Granny Weatherall, who acquires knowledge, opinions and strength through meeting maternal challenges, Cather's Lady Longstreet remains the faded celebrity socialite, a hetaira perfectly suited, in her emptiness and passivity, to reflect the projections of male desire.
Recalling "La Belle au bois dormant," she is described as "unawakened," and her admirers, who are called "Great Protectors," seem more fatherly or avuncular than lovers. In many respects, Gabrielle Longstreet is viriginal, narcissistic and, in her advancing years, "old maidish." An anachronism steeped in the Edwardian manners and dress of her youth, she cannot bridge the social changes following the War; in death she appears relieved of the necessity of existing.

**Modern Jocastas**

In France, the theme of romantic or sexual relations between an older woman and younger man, or the *éducation sentimentale* in which the courtesan or demi-mondaine initiates the young man into the mysteries of love, linked erotic love with maternal affection. In *Chéri* and *La Fin de Chéri*, published in 1920 and 1926 respectively, Colette portrays an aging woman's love affair with a handsome young man 24 years younger, exploring the relationship's psychological consequences. Both novels revolve around the theme of the "pure' and incurable love of a young man for an older woman" (Marks 126). Colette maintains a dual perspective on the character of Léonie Vallon, or Léa, who, in her forties, is nearing the end of her career as a richly kept courtesan. From the perspective of her young son-lover, she represents the devouring mother, with fatal results. From her own perspective, as well as that of her peers and "cronies," she has made a successful, even contented, passage into middle-age, discovering the pleasure that comes from no longer having to sustain romantic illusions. Colette has summarized the situation between Léa and Chéri as follows:

> I simply wanted to say that when a middle-aged woman has a liaison with a very young man, she runs less of a risk than he of
remaining ineffaceably marked by it. No matter what he does, through all the liaisons that will follow, he will be unable not to evoke the memory of his old mistress. (Quoted in Marks 127)12

In Chéri, Colette focuses upon the issue of the aging body; the story ends as Léa realizes the impossibility of continuing their affair and sends Chéri back to his wife. In La Fin de Chéri, Chéri cannot accept Léa's transformation into a gray-haired, asexual, middle-aged woman and is fatally entrapped in the memory of her maternal sensuality.

A group of aging women, "les vieilles parasites" (69) of the demi-monde gather regularly for cards and brandy at Charlotte Peloux's large home on the outskirts of Paris, squabbling, gossiping and growing older. The process of aging, together with its bravery, its fear, its boredom and its regrets, for these women whose life has revolved exclusively around beauty and love, is perceptively delineated through these old cronies: Baroness de la Berche, Mme Aldonza, Marie Laure, and Old Lili, the comic, wrinkled septuagenarian married to the vapid young Prince Ceste (a name which plays upon "incest"), in a grotesque alliance that parodies the affair between Léa and Chéri. The relationship between these women is summed up in Colette's description of Léa's and Charlotte's friendship:

Vingt années, un passé fait de ternes soirées semblables, le manque de relations, cette défiance aussi, et cette veulerie qui isolent vers la fin de leur vie les femmes qui n'ont aimé que d'amour, tenaient l'une devant l'autre, encore un soir, en attendant un autre soir, ces deux femmes, une à l'autre suspectes. (Chéri 75)

From Léa's perspective as an aging courtesan, as well as those of her circle, her existence is taken up with diversions to stave off boredom and loneliness, worries about wrinkles which reduce the likelihood of a
"Dors ... dors" she repeats to him over and over, like a hypnotic chant, and as he sleeps he seems to her like the "nourisson méchant" to which she had never given birth. The next morning, he pretends to be asleep until she rises and leaves the room, after which he opens the window, exclaiming "On étouffe" (145). She fusses over him as he drinks his chocolat until finally he says mournfully, "Avec toi, Nounoune, il y a des chances pour que j'aie douze ans pendant un demi-siècle" (146). Abandoning her joyous plans for their life together, she angrily realizes the impossibility of continuing the liaison; the parallel between them and Old Lili's marriage to Prince Ceste is cruelly apparent. She painfully urges him to "chercher ta jeunesse" and return to his wife, who "souffrira comme une amoureuse et non pas comme une maman dévoyée," where he will be a master and not a "gigolo capricieux" (151). The child, concludes Colette, cannot attain adulthood within the mother's womb.

The ending of their relationship strikes a deep blow to Léa, however, since not only does she lose Chéri, but it signals her death as a desirable mistress, as a woman. "The difference between Léa and Lili," according to Marks, is that for Léa, love-making must cease when beauty fades" (134). Chéri's departure coincides with the end of Léa's sexual life, and the arrival of her "autumnal years" (138).

Their last meeting takes place five years later, after the war in which Chéri has served as a soldier. Still seeking his Nounoune, an older Chéri pays Léa a surprise visit in her new living quarters. To his shock, he discovers Léa colossally fat, with short, vigorous gray hair, a reddened complexion, and most disconcertingly asexual. She has abandoned her corset and wears all-purpose, rather masculine, tailored
blouse-and-skirt "uniforms." Years earlier, as a courtesan, she seldom laughed, but smiled often — un "sourire profond et confiant" (Chéri 66). Now an aging woman nearing sixty, she frequently bursts into long peals of deep, silvery laughter. She has entered the elder woman phase of life, relaxed, comfortable with herself and her life. "J'aime bien mon passé," she tells Chéri calmly. "J'aime bien mon présent. Je n'ai pas honte de ce que j'ai eu, je n'ai pas de chagrin de ce que je n'ai plus" (La Fin 188). A survivor, Léa is, as Marks has noted, "one of the most solid members of the 'Colette-Sido' clan" (129), the "stoical, wise" characters who embody a sturdy maternal love. Through acceptance of her old age, Léa has become a "whole woman, "the kind of older woman to whom Simone de Beauvoir grants grudging approval in Le Deuxième Sexe:

> Du jour où la femme consent à vieillir, sa situation change. Jusqu'alors, elle était une femme encore jeune, acharnée à lutter contre un mal qui mystérieusement l'enlaidissait et la déformait; elle devient un être différent, asexué mais achevé: une femme âgée. (408)³

In Colette's novels, the aging woman, whether mistress (Léa) or mother (Sido) is celebrated. Léa has renounced Chéri because she recognizes that the éducation sentimentale relationship should not be a permanent one but one which, in theory, prepares the young man for his own marriage and adulthood. In a sense, Léa becomes a Jocasta, gently pushing her young son-lover away. However, the author's aim, as mentioned earlier in this section, was to explore the dynamics of a love affair between an older mistress and a very young man, showing that the middle-aged mistress was likely to suffer less than the young, impressionable lover. So, although Léa renounces other lovers (after Chéri there could be no others), she continues to live actively, with
friends and interests. Chéri's sense of self remains fused with a Nounoune who no longer exists. Frozen forever as a young gigolo in his early twenties, he cannot live outside the world Léa created for him and commits suicide, devoured by an eroticized maternal love. In the French culture, the feminine ambiance is seen as very powerful, almost more so than the male: "La Française [est] ... la mère des arts aussi bien que des armes, la pièce maîtresse dans le grand jeu du savoir-vivre français, le mythe de la France éternelle" (Sarde 43). Colette has contrasted the vigor and resilience of the middle-aged woman with the fragility of the young man-child.

In American literature, feminine sexuality outside the bounds of marriage and sexual relations between an older woman and younger man are usually represented as having shameful, negative consequences for the woman rather than for the man. In Edith Wharton's novel, *A Mother's Recompense* (1925), Kate Clephane pays dearly for her sexual freedom in a plot that sets mother against daughter in competition for masculine affection.

Finding marriage stifling, Kate has left her husband and three-year-old daughter to live a gay bohemian life in Europe and escape from "reality and durability" (5). At the story's opening nearly two decades later, she is forty-four years old, alone with her maid in a rundown hotel on the French Riviera, isolated from family, with few friends. Aging, she dreams vainly about her last tenuous affair well over three years ago with Chris, a much younger man. In spite of the hurt of his disinterest, he represents her sexual "awakening." A telegram of invitation from her now-grown daughter, Anne, summons her back to New York where she is welcomed home lavishly as Anne's
mother. The unscrupulous Chris has met Anne through family
connections. Chris and Anne, who knows nothing of her mother's affair
with him in Europe years earlier, announce their engagement. Kate's
dilemma is to say nothing and live with her lie, or confess the truth,
wounding her daughter and revealing her own sexuality. Anne and
Chris marry, and Kate flees to Europe after confessing the truth to Fred
Lander, an old family friend who wishes to marry her. In atonement for
her failed maternity and her sexuality, she resumes a shallow,
meaningless life at the Riviera resort, with France as her symbolic
"home." She refuses to marry Fred, although she acknowledges that
conventional opinion would consider that his love and offer of marriage,
despite knowing "everything," constitute the "best thing that had ever
happened to her" (341). Thus Kate, who in some respects resembles
Jewett's Joanna, chooses an isolated old age among boring, expatriate
drifters. With her need for self-punishment, she will ensure that the
despicable Chris will remain the only man she has ever loved; she will
also have maintained her freedom and independence. Kate's penance
does double duty, satisfying both the moralist and the feminist: it
assures her interiorization of moral shame and guilt, without the
possibility of self-forgiveness, and preserves her freedom from
marriage. It also portends a lonely, alienated old age. To merit inclusion
in the canon of "literature-as-art," rather than "women's fiction," women
like Kate or Hester Prynne who transgressed sexually have to suffer and
"pay the moral price" even if, in the secular, tolerant twentieth century,
it is self-imposed. The implication is that women of aristocratic
pretensions, whether social or canonic, were required to evince more
"shame" for their sensuality than women of socially lower classes, the
demi-monde, or "women's" romance. The Mother's Recompense examines the mother's and daughter's sexual rivalry for love of the same man, a theme which plays out the Freudian psychoanalytic theory of rivalry for the husband's or father's love but which can just as easily, although less respectably (perhaps because of the Great Mother implications seen in modern Jocasta-Oedipus dramas), be competition for the son as lover.

Writers of Wharton's transitional generation left behind the homosocial women's culture and literature of the nineteenth century in favor of modern heterosexual fiction. Often characterized by unhappy endings, this new fiction struggled to portray issues and topics, such as the "career woman," feminine sexuality, and erotic relationships, which had been forbidden material a generation earlier. The burst of advertising which accompanied the post-war culture of the 1920's and the expansion of American business exploited sexuality and portrayed youthful beauty as the ideal. For the American writer, modernism's focus on the body of the aging beauty deposes the spiritual grandmother and the women's community in favor of exploring women's erotic relationships with men. For the French writer, this material was already an important theme in traditional French culture; it remained for these writers to explore the feminine body and women's erotic relationships in terms of psychoanalytic and existentialist thought. In Colette's fiction, it was often the young male who was fragile and susceptible in the face of the powerful maternal eroticism of the older mistress. In American fiction, the woman had to "suffer" for her erotic adventures, and doubly so if she was a "mother." By the 1950's, American experts such as Karl Menninger, Hélène Deutsch, and Karen
Horney had concluded that "cross-age relationships between aging women and younger men were pathological" (Banner 302).

The Persephones' Journey to the Underworld

Discontinuity, dislocation, alienation were themes expressed by literary elderly women and their fictional characters as the solidarity of the women's culture continued to break down. The greatest discontinuity and dislocation might be said to be women's alienation from their own gender. "Being an artist, historically, meant being a man (and a privileged, white, erudite one to boot)," Ammons comments. "Ironically being a successful, serious woman writer often meant saying that one was not a woman writer or writer of color — that gender or gender and race (even as one wrote almost obsessively about nothing else) did not operate as part of the definition of who one was. Then as now," she concludes, both the "benefits and the cost of this denial were considerable" (11). "Hating one's mother was the enlightenment of the pre-feminist 1950's and 1960's," Showalter notes in Sister's Choice, "but since the daughter shares the maternal body, the dead mother continues to haunt her" (138). The daughter's estrangement from her mother and grandmother, culminating in the 1950's and 1960's, was a painful journey, ultimately resulting in alienation from her own identity, a difficult impasse. Only since the feminist movements of the 1970's has recognition of this impossible separation undergirded more recent attempts at synthesis and reunion with the mother while maintaining the gains made in the patriarchal world.

In Le Deuxième Sexe, published in France in 1949, de Beauvoir speaks of menopause as "l'âge dangereux ... caractérisé par certains troubles organiques" (399). Drawing heavily on the work of the
Freudian Hélène Deutsch, de Beauvoir gives example after example of post-menopausal women indulging in eccentric behavior, such as affairs with younger men or women, or trying vainly to make a fresh start in life again. At this "dangerous" age, the time of "la définitive mutilation" (400), she maintains that, "La frontière de l'imaginaire et du réel est encore plus indécise [dans cette période] que pendant la puberté" (404).

As Banner confirms, the "medicalization of menopause" as a disease strengthened and promulgated the negative view that menopause was a time of instability, of mental and physical breakdown, an idea which served both to increase ambitious women's disassociation from their mothers and to define older women as beset with medical problems. In the post-World War II period, women's entry into the work force, professions and higher education threatened men who sought to regain control of these areas as part of the male public sphere. Medicalization of menopause, reinforced by Freudian psychology and confirmed by "expert opinion," provided another means "to keep powerful [middle-aged] women at home, medicated and sedated if necessary, and contained, however rebelliously, within the women's sphere" (Banner 287). Achieving women were considered "masculine," a term that would keep a generation of women "in their place" (287). It would also heighten the sense of displacement and confusion for women artists and writers, who would need to leave their mothers in a search for "masculinity" in order to gain access to a subject position and a "voice."

The psychological concept of an autonomous, self-sufficient, independent "self," a concept which had evolved by mid-century into the "authentic being" of existentialists Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir and Abraham Maslow's and Betty Friedan's "self-actualized"
person, came to overshadow maternal values of caring and community, which became characterized as "dependent" or "inauthentic." The "caring mother," of whom D.W. Winnicott's "good-enough mother" is a variant, came to be regarded as a dangerous model by aspiring female writers and, by society in general, as a pathetic creature, malevolent or mad in her frustrated desire for phallic power. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, the influence of Freudian psychology in deposing the mother and maternal values was profound. Women have found, however, that attempting to disavow their mothers alienates them from themselves, a disassociation which is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain.

In this chapter, various twentieth-century attitudes toward aging women in America and France have been examined through analysis of women's texts. Literary texts which were considered "important" were written frequently by women who chose to remain "daughters," choosing "art" over motherhood. The texts by Cather and Porter signify the death of the religious and social patterns from which nineteenth-century femininity and maternity were constructed. The themes of the texts by Cather, Wharton, Colette, and de Beauvoir focused particularly on the aging woman's sexuality, body, and desire. Frequently women's old age was depicted as a lonely, isolating, even "diseased" time, in contrast to the freshness, appeal and desirability of youth. Colette, on the other hand, celebrates the older woman, while questioning the psychological impact of her eroticised maternal love on the young boy. Motherhood came to be discredited, especially through Freudian-derived notions such as "mother fixation" and American "momism," which gained momentum after the end of World War II. The
marginalization of older women, especially through medicalization and institutionalization for "nervous breakdowns," peaked in the 1950's.

In the next chapter, I will explore more recent efforts on the part of women theorists to re-open avenues of communication with their (grand)mothers, whether through Irigaray's notion of "connected autonomy" or Carole Gilligan's synthesis of "masculine" and "feminine" modes in an "ethics of care." These theories also represent quite distinct efforts to enable woman-as-subject to speak and be heard in spite of patriarchal discourse. Michel Foucault's concept of "genealogy" suggests the possibility for the various voices of "the other," including those of women, to emerge and be "heard."
NOTES

1 See The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982).

2 The "daughter" un-powers (demystifies) the Mother by "empowering" herself through motherhood. Until the daughter herself becomes a parent, the mother often remains identified with the Mother figure of the super-ego. With the daughter's movement into the parenting stage of life, she and her mother become more like peers, both able to understand and see issues from a mother's perspective.


4 Primary narcissism involves an original lack of separation from the phallic mother in her pre-oedipal omnipotence and contains a death-drive aspect in its desire to return to the womb-tomb, to regain a sense of oneness with all.


8 "The hills were full of solitary old women, who were glad to come to Miz' Harris's, for good food and a warm bed and the little present that either Mrs. Harris or Victoria slipped into their carpet-sack when they went away" (110-111).

9 In Philosophy and Feminist Thinking, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), Jean Grimshaw convincingly argues against the assignment of "feminine" and "masculine" traits in a transhistorical, philosophical sense, maintaining that the value of various qualities differs from society to society, group to group, and over time. I think it fair to say that in the ante-bellum code of which Mrs. Harris is an exponent, women were expected to give the appearance of being self-denying and self-sacrificing unless they possessed the means for economic independence. See Anne Goodwyn Jones. Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936 for a discussion of Southern codes for women.

The fertility rate of southern women consistently exceeded that of women in New England and the Middle Atlantic states. Childbirth and diseases of reproductive organs accounted for 10 percent of the southern female deaths in the 1860 census (Ann Goodwyn Jones, 1981:26).


De Beauvoir's personal attitudes toward aging were characterized by anxiety and worry about her own appearance. In this passage, her description of the older woman who "accepts" the loss of her youthful appearance and ceases to fight the "ugliness" of old age is off-set by her collaboration with male opinion in assigning asexuality and deformity to old women. Older men are not assumed to be sexually undesirable until they reach advanced old age, at which time the masculine body becomes more "feminized." As Elaine Marks has noted, in de Beauvoir's texts old bodies of either gender are always feminine or feminized bodies (Wenzel, ed., 194). Other French texts demonstrate, however, that the aging woman, herself, is not necessarily categorically "done" with sexuality and content to be a non-player in the game of love, as de Meung's La Vieille and Red Riding Hood's grandmother have shown.

Philip Wylie's A Generation of Vipers attacked "momism" and singled out older, menopausal women for special vituperation as their desires become their "caprices." "Never before has a great nation of brave and dreaming men absentmindedly created a huge class of idle, middle-aged women. [Their] caprices are of menopausal nature at best: hot flashes, infantilism, weeping, sentimentality, peculiar appetite, and all the ragged reticule, of tricks, wooings, wiles, subordinated fornications." (New York: Rinehart, 1942) 186-87.
PART III.

The Crone's Revival

They say she lives among the rotten granite slopes in Tarahumara Indian territory. They say she is buried outside Phoenix near a well. She is said to have been seen traveling south to Monte Alban in a burnt-out car with the back window shot out. She is said to stand by the highway near El Paso, or ride shotgun with truckers to Morelia, Mexico, or that she has been sighted walking to market above Oaxaca with strangely formed boughs of firewood on her back. She is called by many names: La Huesera, Bone Woman; La Trapera, the Gatherer; and La Loba, Wolf Woman.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés

Women Who Run With the Wolves
CHAPTER 6
The Re-Construction of Grandmother's Voice

Je me suis raconté, raconté, raconté
Je me suis raconté des histoires.
Edith Piaf
"Des Histoires"1

Can she speak? Does she have a voice? If she could speak, what would she say? The battle over what constitutes "woman's voice," or a feminine discourse (if, indeed, there is such an entity) has been heated among and between French and American feminists. Within the context of French culture and language, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous have attempted to identify patterns for language usage, syntax, imagery and themes which constitute a vehicle for woman's voice as speaking/acting subject-of-her-desires, in reference or reaction to Freudian and Lacanian conceptual models of a psychological or linguistic/symbolic order. American Carol Gilligan has researched the psychology of women's moral development, articulating through case histories its difference from normative male standards and calling for the need to establish a feminine paradigm for the "ethics of care" which would parallel the masculine one of "ethics of self."

Among the many critics of these efforts have been the strong voices of "constructionist" feminists, who reject any attempt to define "woman" or valorize the "goddess" or "feminine," as essentializing and ultimately "ghetto-izing. "The French insistence upon the problems of language, an "écriture féminine," the (sexual) body, and feminine jouissance (Marguerite Duras, Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, to name a few) seems to them too abstract and intellectual; it over-estimates the importance of "word games." The French valorization of feminine
"différence" has been criticized by those feminists, notably Americans, who support empirical constructions of equality which minimize or, in a legal sense, erase differences of rights, roles and privileges based upon gender. In France, the power of reproductive motherhood still has profound meaning, and the "féminisme de la non-différence" has been termed "gynocide," or "la destruction de ce qui en chacun de nous est femme" (Sarde 526). In America, on the other hand, the emphasis has been upon a democratic liberalism, and even those women scholars, such as Gloria Fenman Orenstein or Merlin Stone, who have focused on "reviving" the Goddess myth (together with ecofeminism and the Earth-as-Mother) have done so not from the perspective of a conservative "eternal feminine" but as a radical counter to the Judeo-Christian alliance with capitalism and a "phallic" economy. Some critics, such as American Carolyn Burke, have advanced the distinction that the French concentrate more on feminine repression, while the Americans focus on feminine oppression.² Perhaps most fundamentally, French intellectuals tend to prefer abstract theory, while more pragmatic Americans value "facts" and "histories," surveying groups and individuals for models and examples. Thus the French theories of an écriteur féminine and the American concept of a feminine "ethics of care," examined in this chapter (see figure 3), represent quite distinct efforts to enable women-as-subjects to speak in spite of patriarchal discourse. Michel Foucault's theory of "genealogy" and "emergence" offers an alternative construct which may open the way for emerging women's voices to be "heard."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Cixous</th>
<th>Irigaray</th>
<th>Gilligan</th>
<th>Foucault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td><em>&quot;l'écriture féminine&quot;</em></td>
<td><em>&quot;parler femme&quot;</em></td>
<td><em>&quot;ethics of care&quot;</em></td>
<td><em>&quot;généalogie&quot;</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Feminine libidinal economy. &quot;Writing the body&quot; restores body's ability to be heard; reunites with &quot;mother,&quot; who is creative and nurturing. Ecstatic, mystic. Disruptive of borders and boundaries. Resists classifications of psycho-analytic discourse.</td>
<td>&quot;Lips&quot; (facial, genital) metaphor indicates women's autonomous connection. &quot;Mechanics of fluids:&quot; flowing, permeable boundaries, privileges touching and multiplicity. Non-logical, non-linear.</td>
<td>Examines differences in the formation of moral values in men and women. Women's moral ethics stress the contextual rather than abstract or absolute. Women stress relationship, connectedness, continuity, responsibility and care for others; value avoidance of hurt and exploitation. &quot;Selfishness&quot; seen as &quot;bad.&quot; Men learn an &quot;ethics of self&quot; which teaches individual achievement, rule-setting, team play. Different values reflected in language.</td>
<td>Process of &quot;archéologie&quot; pays attention to detail, singularity of events, place, time, love, &amp; sentiments to disrupt the momentum of &quot;Same&quot; and listen to &quot;différence.&quot; Rejects logic, absolutes, ideal forms.&quot;Emergence&quot; studies the inequity of forces which form social values and institutions. The body seen as a surface reflecting experience. Subjects &amp; objects contextually formed. No &quot;essential&quot; human nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired outcome</td>
<td>&quot;Claiming their bodies&quot; empowers women; restores their ability to experience themselves as subject; reconnects to the semiotic &quot;mother&quot;</td>
<td>Touching and connection replace the masculine &quot;gaze.&quot; Construction of a female imaginary to articulate woman-as-speaking subject.</td>
<td>By practicing an &quot;ethics of care&quot; which includes &quot;care for self&quot; as well as care for others, women can abandon self-sacrifice, self-abnegation.</td>
<td>Expose the process by which the power to create &quot;truth,&quot; &quot;knowledge&quot; through discourse establishes social norms and institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social benefit</td>
<td>Dynamic tension between feminine and masculine writing is creative; undoes the work of death.</td>
<td>Creation of a metalanguage: thinking and speaking &quot;woman-as-subject&quot; to bring about a paradigm shift.</td>
<td>Women benefit from learning to include &quot;self&quot; in their care; men benefit from learning &quot;ethics of care.&quot;</td>
<td>Recovering the voices of &quot;généalogie&quot; restores health, is recuperative, &quot;life-giving.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Irigaray's and Cixous's Feminine Imaginary

Luce Irigaray, a former student and colleague of Jacques Lacan, and Hélène Cixous have taken up the on-going project of articulating a parler femme or an écriture féminine which would serve to articulate the feminine imaginary. Both Irigaray's theory of women's discourse and Cixous's feminine libidinal economy seek to overturn the hegemony of philosophical and psychological discourse, in which women are objects ("l'Autre"), and to identify a woman's style in which she speaks her desire as subject.

In Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un, Irigaray presents a theory of women's discourse or parler femme which counters patriarchal discourse and privileges motifs of touch (the tactile, including her "lips" metaphor), a non-logical, non-linear syntax, and images of fluidity, based upon an "economy of fluids." Touching and multiplicity are characteristic of these "lips," replacing the speculative gaze of the masculine imaginary. These lips (facial and genital) are two, touching each other, never completely separated, closed and open, neither ever excluding the other, motifs of self-touching and proximity (Irigaray, 1977: 208). Further, the female imaginary, according to Irigaray, privileges a mechanics of fluids — "continu, compressible, dilatable, visqueux, conductible, diffusible" (1977:109) — while the masculine imaginary of Western culture prefers solids — "propriété, production, ordre, forme, unité, visibilité ... érection" (85).³

Irigaray describes some of the distinguishing attributes of a "woman's style," or parler femme:

Ce "style", ou "écriture", de la femme met plutôt feu aux mots fétiches, aux termes propres, aux formes bien construites. Ce
"style" ne privilège pas le regard mais rend toute figure à sa naissance, aussi tactile. La simultanéité serait son propre ... Toujours fluide ... ces frottements entre deux infiniment voisins qui font dynamique. Son "style" résiste à, et fait exploser, toute forme, figure, idée, concept, solidement établis. Ce qui n'est pas dire que son style n'est rien, comme le laisse croire une discursivité qui ne peut le penser. Mais son "style" ne peut se soutenir comme thèse, ne peut faire l'objet d'une position.

Et même les motifs du "se toucher", de la "proximité" isolés comme tels ou réduits en énoncés, pourraient effectivement passer pour une tentative d'approprier le féminin au discours. (76)4

Characteristics of Irigaray's parler femme, then, include the two lips as a symbol of a female imaginary based upon touch, an autonomous connectedness (not two, not one), an "economy of fluids"; and a syntax which does not necessarily privilege linearity, logic or fact.

Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un has elicited a mixed response among feminists, notably the controversy over Irigaray's perceived essentialist bias and whether or not this essentialism is regressive and counter-productive. Toril Moi approves of Irigaray's critique of philosophical discourse as the "discourse of discourses" (the one which lays down the law for all the others), but focuses on the dilemma which Irigaray's effort to produce a positive theory of femininity poses: "To define woman is necessarily to essentialize her" (Moi 1985:139). Irigaray, according to Moi, is aware of this trap and may, perhaps, seek to undo patriarchal discourse by excessively miming it, as the hysteric mimes the patriarchal masculine.5 Moi draws upon Irigaray's work on feminine mystics:

If the mystic's abject surrender becomes the moment of her liberation, Irigaray's undermining of patriarchy through the overmiming of its discourses may be the one way out of the straitjacket of phallocentrism. (140)
But "hysterical miming" and "abject surrender" are unattractive tools for undermining patriarchal discourse, and Moi damns with faint praise. Speculating on Irigaray's theories of a woman's language, Moi is sharply critical of its effectiveness and wary of its potential for "babble," a tale told by an idiot.

Andrea Nye sees Irigaray's version of an écriture de la femme as an "excess" or "derangement" of the male logic in which women are "always a lack or an inverted reproduction of a masculine subject" (1989:191). Indeed, the language which Irigaray describes has much in common with the mystical language of ecstasy and union. Nye views this language as the "rediscovered underside of male logic." As such, she writes,

... it continues to be a language of the oppressed, a language without authority, a language which makes no assertions, a language which cries and communicates but cannot establish or prescribe. (211)

"It is not necessary," she adds, "to revert to the powerless speech of dreamers and hysterics" (216).

Both Julia Kristeva and Cixous place themselves in a different relationship to the question of "babble." Described by Jane Gallop, Kristeva's notion of the "semiotic" posits:

...a more archaic dimension of language, pre-discursive, pre-verbal, which has to do with rhythm, tone, colour, with all that which does not simply serve for representation. The semiotic is a more immediate expression of the drives and is linked to the bodily contact with the mother before the paternal order of language comes to separate subject from mother. Although it can be examined clearly in the sounds produced by pre-linguistic infants, the semiotic is always traversing language, always a bodily presence disruptive to the sublimated symbolic order. The semiotic is given freer play in works of 'art': it is the poetic
dimension of language...[For Kristeva] the semiotic is the locus of force, revolution and art. (124)

Kristeva's maternal, pre-Oedipal "semiotic" and Lacan's "imaginary" are not synonymous, although both are defined in contradistinction to the paternal "symbolic." The [Lacanian] imaginary is conservative and comforting, tends toward closure, and is disrupted by the symbolic. The [Kristevan] semiotic is revolutionary, breaks closure, and disrupts the symbolic (124). The danger in Kristeva's theory, Gallop points out, is that the "semiotic" collapses into the "imaginary" — "in other words, that the potential disruption of the maternal becomes the alibi for what actually functions as a comforting representation" (124-25). Retaining the conflict between the conservative and disruptive maternal voices preserves the ambiguity of the mother, keeping her "both double and foreign" (125), while the pulsating sounds of the maternal semiotic drive creativity.

Cixous's feminine libidinal economy and urgings to "write the body" recall Kristeva's identification of the semiotic as able to disrupt and subvert patriarchal discourse and the symbolic order. In "Le Rire de la Méduse," which is both a description of an écriture féminine and an exhortation for women to write, Cixous describes women's imaginary in similar terms to Kristeva's "semiotic": "L'imaginaire des femmes est inépuisable, comme la musique, la peinture, l'écriture: leurs coulées de fantasmes sont inouïes" (39). Writing the body reconnects the woman to her body and restores the body's ability to be heard: "L'écriture est pour toi, tu es pour toi, ton corps est à toi, prends-le" (40). It is also disruptive of order and boundaries. Writing "through the body" brings Cixous immediately into contact with the metaphorical mother, not a
suffocating mother, but instead a mother who is \textit{both} semiotic and comforting: "[la mère] te touchant ... te pousse depuis son sein à venir au langage, qui lance ta force; c'est le rythme qui te rit ... Dans la femme il y a toujours plus ou moins de la mère qui répare et alimente, et résiste à la séparation ..." (44).\textsuperscript{8} Urging resistance to the categories and classifications of psychoanalytic discourse which inhibit and reduce creativity, Cixous envisions a feminine writing that is not anti-essentialist, does not minimize differentiation, and yet is "bisexuelle," exploring the interface between "same" and "other," undoing the work of death. This feminine writing exists in dynamic tension with "masculine writing," not fixed in struggle and exclusion, but "dynamisés à l'infini par un incessant échangeement de l'un entre [sic] l'autre sujet différent" (46).\textsuperscript{9}

Two American theorists recently have attempted to reconcile the limitations inherent in an "either/or" construction of the essentialist/constructionist debate. Diana Fuss questions whether essentialism has received a "bad rap," commenting that "few other words in the vocabulary of contemporary critical theory are so persistently maligned ... so predictably summoned as a term of infallible critique."\textsuperscript{10} She argues that the "question we should be asking is not 'is this text essentialist (and therefore 'bad)?' but rather, 'if this text is essentialist, what motivates its deployment?'"(xi). Examining essentialist and constructionist arguments, she demonstrates that the two are interrelated rather than mutually exclusive. There is not one essentialism but many essentialisms, each constructed historically and culturally; conversely, underlying each historical construct of difference is some form of collective concept embodied in the construct's sign.
Irigaray's essentialism, argues Fuss, is a tool used in the search for a female imaginary, to be read within "a larger constructionist project re-creating, re-metaphorizing the body" (57). Although critics such as Elaine Showalter believe that invoking the female body, even metaphorically, "risks a return to the ... phallic and ovarian theories of art" (1982:17), or to "anatomy is destiny" traps, Fuss sees Irigaray's *parler femme* as an effort to establish a locus from which the "speaking woman" can be heard.

Margaret Whitford also sees at issue the construction of a female imaginary, in which woman is not silenced, the object of masculine desire or the pre-verbal mother. Instead, a female imaginary would articulate the desire of a woman-as-speaking-subject. Irigaray uses the tools of (Freudian) psychoanalysis, according to Whitford, to "dismantle the defenses of the Western cultural unconscious," (masculine) and help the female imaginary find a voice. Irigaray attempts to "theorize the conditions for a female subject which could not be simply incorporated back into the male imaginary as its 'other' (the 'feminine' of the male philosophers)" (33). Irigaray's famous "lips," described in "Quand nos lèvres se parlent," are seen by Whitford and Fuss as a symbolization of a female imaginary articulated outside of a phallic economy based upon the exchange of women as objects.

Feminists continue to debate the issues of essentialism, socially constructed gender roles, the appropriateness and content of a "feminine" language. Is Irigaray's *parler femme* merely the underside of the patriarchal mirror, advocating the abrogation of logic and all the attributes of "male" discourse in the name of an essentialist feminine language which can only resemble the speech of a madwoman? Or if, as
Fuss and Whitford suggest, her use of essentialist tools is a deliberate, highly skilled use of psychoanalytic methods to subvert and expose the "phantasies that haunt philosophical discourse" (Whitford, 34), is it necessary to portray a woman's language as irrational incoherence, implying, as Whitford describes it, a "regression to the pre-Oedipal relation to the body of the mother" (38)?

Irigaray claims that women need a metalanguage of their own in order to begin thinking and speaking woman-as-subject. For Irigaray, Whitford writes, "woman-as-subject in language and in the symbolic is the condition of the coming-to-be of woman-as-subject in the social" (43). Arguing that Irigaray's parler femme, with its emphasis on fluidity, multiplicity and contiguity, is less a descriptive program than a psychological strategy for bringing about change (a paradigm shift), Whitford claims, in the passage used as an epigraph for the introduction to this study, that:

Irigaray thinks that the only way in which the status of women could be altered fundamentally is by the creation of a powerful female symbolic to represent the other term of sexual difference. What is at stake is the ethical, ontological, and social status of women. (22)

Viewed as Whitford suggests, the reading of women's writings for glimpses of Irigaray's parler femme continues the work of exploring the feminine unconscious for articulations of a female symbolic. Her project contributes to the greater task of establishing terms and a framework for identifying and interpreting the symbols of a feminine construct which would not be simply "the other" of the masculine imaginary but is, indeed, woman's own voice.
More important than the resolution of the essentialism vs. constructionist impasse, however, is the recognition that the univocality of "woman's voice" is a questionable premise. As women from diverse cultural, sociological and theoretical backgrounds gain access to voice, it seems increasingly apparent that a "genealogy" of plurality and multiplicity characterizes emerging "women's voices." The perspective of multivocality, which characterizes contemporary constructions of the "crone" figure, especially in the United States, underlies the theoretical analysis of these last three chapters.

**Carol Gilligan's "Different Voice"

The question of women's voices and their relationship to normative psychological theories of male and female development was explored by Carol Gilligan in the early 1980's. In her study of the differences in development of identity, moral judgment, and conflict resolution between men and women, she describes the "disparity between women's experience and the representation of human development, noted throughout the psychological literature" (1-2). Her elaboration of a feminine "ethics of care," based upon relationship and connectedness, is an effort to identify a moral stance, detectable in women's discourse, which is constructed upon norms different from those privileged in male psychological discourse. Although articulated within the framework of psychological discourse, Gilligan's "ethics of care" suggests the possibility of a feminine discourse which values interconnectedness, relationship, continuity, and the avoidance of hurt and exploitation.

Freud's description of the child's development, characterized by separation from the mother and passage through the Oedipal stage into
adulthood, was based upon the male child's experience. Female children, Gilligan observes, do not undergo such a radical separation from the mother, but instead remain connected even as they progress into autonomy — an image that recalls, in a Freudian framework, Irigaray's "autonomous connectedness," symbolized by her body metaphor of the "lips." Gilligan argues that from infancy, the male and female follow different paths of development, especially where the articulation of separation and connection is concerned. Built upon separation from the mother, male development is told as a narrative of failed relationships with success measured by the degree of individuation. A preference for abstract systems of logic, hierarchical order, a separated ego, self-worth assessed through competitive ideals of perfection, and images of violence characterize development of the normative male individual. Team games in which aggression is managed by rule-setting, establishing boundaries, and maintaining separation, enable relatively large groups of males to interact. In various research studies, men tended to perceive danger of entrapment, betrayal, and deceit in intimate situations of relationship and safety in isolation. Women typically perceived danger in isolation, including the isolation of success or achievement, and safety in intimate relationships. Gilligan observed that the norms of female development, with its continuance of relationships and connection to others, appear problematic when measured against male-validated psychological norms. Dana Jack writes in *Silencing the Self: Women and Depression* that,

Regardless of theoretical perspective, observers find a female morality attuned to relationships and affection, and a male morality based on abstract principles expressed in laws and rules
...While most theorists, including Piaget and Kohlberg, consider with Freud that a relationally oriented morality is less mature, less 'independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men,' the feminist critique has clarified the bias of such evaluations. (90)

While men develop systems of justice based upon "rights," women tend to develop what Gilligan terms an "ethics of care," based upon a network of relationships. Assessment of self worth is derived through particular activities of care and responsibility for others. Moral judgment is contextual ("it depends upon the situation") rather than abstract and absolute. For women, adult development involves learning to include oneself in the network of connection. Care for oneself means learning to leave behind self-sacrifice and self-abnegation, a concept which some women find difficult to follow, since sacrifice is held to be the mark of a "good" person.

In her research with a number of groups of women and men (including a longitudinal study of 29 women beginning at a time when they were considering abortion), Gilligan finds three major periods in female development: survival, with an emphasis on self survival; goodness, representing a movement into responsibility and care for others, which may also bring into conflict judgments about being "selfish" and "giving;" and finally an "ethics of care," encompassing both self and others in a perception of the interdependence of self and other. In the female fantasy of "caring," life is seen as a web in which connection, though entailing separateness, is still maintained or restored. Women's development, Gilligan finds, stresses continuity and "change in configuration" of relationships (48) rather than replacement and separation. Nets and webs of relationship, for women, are perceived
as safe rather than entrapping. Throughout their development, women's moral judgments revolve around the avoidance of hurt and exploitation (an imbalance or inequality between care for self and care for others), and a search for nonviolent solutions to conflict.

Gilligan found that as female adolescents move into the level of responsibility and care for others, they may experience silencing, either from concern about hurting others or from a fear of not being heard. Gilligan compares the disappearance of the female self in adolescence to the Persephone myth (51). We can also see the adolescent stage of suppression reflected in "Little Red Riding Hood," interpreting the tale from Gilligan's perspective of female responsibility for care. Just as Little Red Riding Hood begins to inherit the duties of caring for others from her mother, she is "silenced" by the wolf, who consumes her selfhood. Her moments of attempted "care for self," represented by her solitary play in the forest (which her mother has forbidden) lead to her undoing. Besides warning against wolfish seducers, the tale's covert message prepares little girls for the self-abnegation of institutionalized motherhood.

Silencing the "mother," or women in the responsible care-taker phase of development, is connected with the exploitation of inequality through self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. In this phase, the balance between care for self and for others is upset. The Mother's "fault" is that she is endlessly giving even though she hurts herself in so doing. For Winnicott's "good-enough" mother, it can be difficult, given the values of this stage, to know what is "enough." But conflict between "rights" (which carry a judgment of "selfishness") and "responsibility" (which can result in self-abnegation) continues to be a dilemma for women of
all ages. Gilligan's interviews with women college students in the 1970's, revealed the "enormous power of the judgment of selfishness in women's thought" (132).

For the "crone," the postmenopausal woman in mid-life, the quality of her life and her problems involve both her ability to care for self and her connection to life through people, according to Gilligan. The feminine dilemma, to be both separate and connected, reasserts itself during this time of transition, and it is often marked initially by feelings of loss of youth and reproductive creativity, or changes in family relationships, as children move into their own adulthood. Familiar patterns of connectedness may dissolve, requiring new negotiations of "self" and other. Mid-life brings issues of separation and dissolution of relationships. "If mid-life brings an end to relationships, to the sense of connection on which she relies, as well as to the activities of care through which she judges her worth," writes Gilligan, "then the mourning that accompanies all life transitions can give way to the melancholia of self-deprecation and despair" (171). The opportunity for the exercise of voice, perhaps truly for the first time, may initially lead to the discovery, in the words of Janice Joplin, that "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose." However, when women assume the right to pursue their own interests and abilities, mid-life and beyond can provide a chance for the exercise of an "ethics of care" combining the language of "rights," including the self, with the language of "responsibility," which dissolves hierarchical ordering into a web-like image of relationships based on equality and reciprocity.

Gilligan's description of a feminine ethics of care, based upon an autonomous connectedness, upon relationships rather than separation,
has affinities with Irigaray's "lips," separate yet connected, always touching each other, and with her mechanics of fluids, flowing and viscous rather than solid, whose movement and shape is always a factor of both internal and external forces. Like Irigaray, Gilligan listens for the voices of women, the separate nuances and meanings encoded within the common language. Women, she finds, are not only silenced, but it is difficult to hear what they say even when they speak:

As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. (173)

Women's voices are among Michel Foucault's unheard voices, the faint scratchings, wisps and fragments of narrative which appear upon his palimpsest of "genealogy."

**Foucault and the Philosophies of Emergence and Difference**

French philosopher and physician Michel Foucault articulated his theories of "archeology" and "genealogy" in the late 1960's and early 1970's, against a background of deep disillusionment within the European intellectual tradition. While a thorough discussion of Foucault's thought is beyond the scope of this work, his notion of "genealogy," which examines the interrelationship of truth/knowledge, power, and the subject, questioning the notion of an a priori "human essence" or "nature," is useful in discussing multivocality from the French intellectual perspective. Foucault links the power to create "truth" or "knowledge" to discourse (including myths) and discursive formation to social practices, such as the development of institutions,
moral codes, and economic and political relationships. He uses the term "archeology" to describe the project of uncovering "une description pure des événements discursifs" (Foucault 1969: 39-40), or a history of the discursive events which establish the "practical conditions of existence" (Mahon 114). Although Foucault's discussion of the discursive formation of the concepts of "mental illness" and the medicalization of the body is relevant to this century's conceptualization of menopause as disease and the frequency of middle-aged women's confinement in mental institutions, (as well as to greatly reduced childbirth mortality rates), I want to focus here on "genealogy's" notions of "difference" and "emergence" and their relevance to women's discourse.

Influenced by a tradition of anti-Platonism, extending from Hegel through Nietzsche (Mahon ix), Foucault's interpretation of "genealogy," expressed in *L'Archeologie du savoir* (1969) and his essay "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire" (1971), rejects the tendency to reduce all phenomena and thought to the "same," disregarding that which does not conform. He suggests a different view of events, one which does not perceive history (histoire globale) as the logical, lofty search for "truth." Instead, he proposes "généalogie," which is "grise, méticuleuse et patiemment documentaire." (1971:145). Genealogy (histoire générale), he claims,

... travaille sur des parchemins embrouillés, grattés, plusieurs fois récrits ... De là, pour la généalogie, une indispensable retenue: repérer la singularité des événements, hors de toute finalité monotone; les guetter là où on les attend le moins et dans ce qui passe pour n'avoir point d'histoire — les sentiments, l'amour, la conscience, les instincts; saisir leur retour, non point pour tracer la courbe lente d'une évolution, mais pour retrouver les différentes scènes où ils ont joué des rôles différents ... ." (145)
Whereas history depicts a logical progression of events and the "inevitable progress of the will to truth," "genealogy" uncovers the "inequity of forces" which forms the substratum for the emergence of values and institutions (Bouchard, ed. 22). Rather than viewing history as the repetition of forms and principles connected linearly through similarity or cause-and-effect, genealogy holds that events are singular and discrete. The concept of genealogy presents, then, an opportunity to interfere with the agglutination of "same" into "truth," to interpose the voices of "the other," excluded because they were not "the same," so that they, too, may be heard speaking their relative truths.

In genealogy's opposition to the accumulation of "same" moments, it stands in opposition to the processes of logical, analytical thought, which seeks to find "origins" by tracing things back to their source or resolving knowledge into its original principles, which become "truth." Logical thought prefers to identify and find meaning in those things which appear to be the "same"; it seeks to find permanent truths, while Foucault called for a "philosophy of difference." In rejecting the accumulation over time of "same," rarefied into "truth," Foucault also rejects the notion of transcendental, universal, essential or absolute "truth." While history creates a linear, univocal version of Truth, genealogy reveals a palimpsest with many versions of stories scratched over each other. Thus what is called "truth," whether moral or religious, is always relative and contextually developed; there is no transcendental "origin," either supernatural or collective. Subjects (and objects) are contextually constructed; there is no essential being. The imperatives of history have been deconstructed and shown to be the result of human interaction (mostly personal conflict) over time. Like
French and American women theorists, Foucault, then, seeks to break those patterns which work against life and health, especially those encoded in discourse and the authority of institutions.

In his discussion of Nietzsche's rejection of the pursuit of origins (Ursprung), or an original unifying basis which gives rise to a diversity of phenomena or thought, Foucault rejects the search for "ideal forms," for metaphysical truths which humans seek to imitate, or for dictates of an "essential" human nature (a rejection that would include an "essential feminine"). At the root of every ideal are various human emotions: passion, conflict, power, greed. Each is born out of a particular context. He concludes that "ce qu'on trouve, au commencement historique des choses, ce n'est pas l'identité encore préservée de leur origine, — c'est la discorde des autres choses, c'est le disparate" (1971:148). 18 In other words, creation — the beginning of things — arises not from reduction to the "same," but from disparity, or difference. Through the meticulous study of what has been omitted, neglected, or devalued, as well as the false starts, scratchings, and discontinuities, we arrive at a clearer picture of the functions of history, "truth" and "ideals"— what they have served to conceal, what discontinuities and disjunctures they erase.

He understands history, not as "successive configurations of an identical mean," but rather as a result of "substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests and systematic reversals" (Bouchard, ed. 151). Chance, a "profusion of entangled events" (155) or the "scene where forces are risked in the chance of confrontations" (159), is the operative force, rather than order, plan and design. History is dynamically political; it is not the "slow, repetitious exposure of meaning hidden in
an origin" (151). The ideas, beliefs, "facts," and events of history have resulted from the dominance or appropriation of a certain system of rules by a more powerful group usually accompanied by the subordination of others, in a process which Foucault terms "emergence."

The voice of history is a mask, concealing

"the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which itself has no essential meaning (italics mine) in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules ...". (151-52)¹⁹

Foucault's re-characterization of the qualities of "effective" history, or genealogy, lends itself to the expression of "difference," because it focuses upon that which has tended to be excluded or devalued in traditional historical discourse. He describes his view of history using images drawn from the body and from medicine. Historical study is analogous to medicine in that it should serve to diagnose, identify poisons and antidotes, and aid recuperation rather than support philosophical discourse. Its purpose is to "trouver le meilleur antidote" (1969:157).

In his attempts to destabilize the legacy of the Enlightenment's univocal subject, Foucault discards ideals, imperatives, unities, and certainties, but, in a certain sense, retains an emphasis upon the individual: a late twentieth-century vision of the decentered, underground, ironic individual. In surveying the exhaustion and decadence of Europe, Foucault's call for a "philosophy of difference" opens the door for the voice of "l'Autre," including women's voice.

Certainly some aspects of genealogical methodology lend themselves to a study of women's voices in writing: attention to
singularity of events; particularities of place and time; and to that which is expressed through sentiments, love, conscience and instincts. Most important, the decentering of the univocal voice of history permits other voices, other stories to be heard and allows for relative, rather than absolute "truths." No longer is there one subject, one voice, one "truth," but many subjects, many voices, each with their own truths. In the next chapter, the "Grandmother's 'Oui'" of the title indicates the generally affirming stance of these contemporary theorists who have attempted to create a "space" for the voices of "others," excluded and silenced by the "Non' of the Father."
NOTES


3.Translated by Catherine Porter as: "... continuous, compressible, dilatable, viscous, conductible, diffusible" — while the masculine imaginary of Western prefers solids — "property, production, order, form, unity, visibility ... erection." *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985) 86.

4.Translated by Catherine Porter as: "This 'style' or 'writing' of women tends to put the torch to fetish words, proper terms, well-constructed terms. This 'style' does not privilege sight, instead, it takes each figure back to its source, which is among other things tactile ... Simultaneity is its 'proper' aspect ... It is always fluid ... those rubbings between two infinitely near neighbors that create a dynamics ... Its 'style' resists and explodes every firmly established form, figure, idea or concept. Which does not mean that it lacks style, as we might be led to believe by a discursivity that cannot conceive of it. But its "style" cannot be upheld as a thesis, cannot be the object of a position.

Even the motifs of 'self-touching,' of "proximity," isolated as such or reduced to utterances, could effectively pass for an attempt to appropriate the feminine to discourse" (79).

5.imitating in an exaggerated way the role assigned to the feminine in patriarchal discourse which posits the masculine as speaking subject (the 'I' who articulates his desires). The woman deliberately assumes the feminine styles and posture assigned to her within this discourse in order to uncover the mechanisms by which it exploits her (Irigaray, translated by Porter 220).

6.Translated by Annette Kuhn as: "Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible" (*Signs*, 246).

7.Translated by Annette Kuhn as: "Writing is for you, you are for you, your body is yours, take it" (*Signs*, 246).

8.Translated by Annette Kuhn as: "It is the mother who touches you ... fills your breast with an urge to come to language and launches your forces; the rhythm that laughs you ... In women there is always more or less of the mother who makes everything all right, who nourishes, and who stands up against separation" (*Signs*, 252).

9.Translated by Annette Kuhn as: "... but infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another" (*Signs*, 254)


3. The American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton once told a reporter to "put it down in capital letters: SELF-DEVELOPMENT IS A HIGHER DUTY THAN SELF-SACRIFICE. The thing which most retards and militates against women's self-development is self-sacrifice" (quoted in Gilligan 109).

Developments within European philosophical discussion in the second half of the twentieth century have, ironically, opened the way for alternative voices to be heard, at the very moment when a vast unity of the sciences and humanities through interlocking underlying structural principles was envisioned. The disintegration of European empires, the devastation of massive wars, the collapse of German idealism into the genocide of the Third Reich have engendered, at least in intellectual circles, a profound distrust of "origins," of all-encompassing principles and the mesmerizing mirage of "divine truths," "absolute principles," and "moral imperatives" cleverly constructed to favor the lives and economic prosperity of some groups over others. Nietzsche's much celebrated "death of God" has contributed to the decline of an exclusively patriarchal monopoly on discourse, philosophic or otherwise.

At the same time, developments within science, especially those within quantum mechanics, high-energy particle physics, and the Einsteinian theories of relativity (one might say that physics has become the theology of the twentieth century) have overturned accepted beliefs about the relationship between the observer and the observed (subject and object). Concepts such as wave/particle duality, frame-of-reference, relative truths, the uncertainty principle, chaos theory and the behavior of subatomic particles have destabilized our empirical basis for establishing truth and certainty and shown the intricate, tangled complexity and unpredictability of matter.


5. This culminated in the nervous breakdowns, electric shock treatments and hysterectomies of the 1950's as discussed in chapter 5 and at greater length by Lois Banner.

6. Donald F. Bouchard translates this passage as: "... operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times ... it must record the singularity of events outside of any
monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history — in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977) 139-140.

18Bouchard translates this as: "What is found at the historical beginning of things, is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity" (1977:142).

19 Foucault's texts reads: "Les différentes émergences qu'on peut repérer ne sont pas les figures successives d'une même signification; ce sont autant d'effets de substitutions, de remplacements et de déplacements, de conquêtes déguisées, de retournements systématiques. Si interpréter, c'était mettre lentement en lumière une signification enfouie dans l'origine seule la métaphysique pourrait interpréter le devenir de l'humanité. Mais si interpréter, c'est s'emparer, par violence ou subreption, d'un système de règles qui n'a pas en soi de signification essentielle, et lui imposer une direction, le ployer à une volonté nouvelle, le faire entrer dans un autre jeu et le soumettre à des règles secondes, alors le devenir de l'humanité est une série d'interprétations" (1971:158).

20 At the same time, this open door appears rather as a by-product of Foucault's focus upon a consideration of the present-day appropriate stance of the traditional male philosopher-historian vis-à-vis power, truth, ideals, knowledge and the individual subject.
CHAPTER 7
The Grandmother's "Oui": An Emerging Voice in
a Discourse of Multiplicity

There is an Old Woman who lives in a hidden place that everyone knows but few have ever seen. As in the fairy tales of Eastern Europe, she seems to wait for lost or wandering people and seekers to come to her place.

She is circumspect, often hairy, always fat, and especially wishes to evade most company. She is both a crower and a cackler, generally having more animal sounds than human ones ... She is called by many names: *La Huesera* Bone Woman; *La Trapera* The Gatherer; and *La Loba*, Wolf Woman.

The symbol of the Old Woman is one of the most widespread archetypal personifications in the world. Others are the Great Mother and Father, the Divine Child, the Trickster, and Sorceress(er), the Maiden and Youth, the Heroine-Warrior, and the Fool(ess). Yet, *La Loba* is vastly different in essence and effect, for she is the feeder root to an entire instinctual system.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés
*Women Who Run With Wolves*

**The Crone in an Emerging Symbolic Discourse**

In the previous chapters, I have discussed portrayals of old or post-menopausal women from the matriarchal and patriarchal perspectives as well as from the vantage point of those modern women writers who have abandoned the traditional patterns of women's culture to reclaim forbidden territory for themselves and others. As I stressed in the first chapter, women's interpretations of archetypal material as well as their conceptions about social norms and role possibilities, vary according to the societies, regions and times in which they were formed. In this century, many women authors have used writing as a rebellious act to separate themselves from the conventions of institutionalized femininity or as a tool for self-formation. In so doing, they have utilized the figure of the old woman/grandmother not only to articulate and critique the patterns and values of women's lives but also, it seems to me, to explore the consequences of life choices. As Susan K. Harris comments, "there exists ... a community of expression
and interpretation actively involved in examining women's nature and possibilities — a women's community in continuous discourse about itself. Within this context, women's novels function as a means of testing women's possibilities for alternative modes of being ... " (1990:19).

If old age is the culmination of the way one has led one's life, then many of today's women writers are in the process of examining and extending the range of women's possible life choices and reflecting upon the gains and losses, the fulfillment and regrets attendant upon each choice. The figure of the old woman offers a fictional opportunity for these reflections as well as an avenue for exploring a powerful, archaic feminine mythological image — subject matter which has also increasingly found its way into the popular culture of cinema and journalism.

The project that women writers of this century have been engaged in is one of emergence, the "scene where forces are risked in the chance of confrontations," as Foucault describes the process of genealogical history (159). Foucault's concept (discussed in the previous chapter) holds that a group's ideas, beliefs, cultural patterns and even its perception of "facts" are a result of the dominance or appropriation of a certain system of rules, espoused by a more powerful group and usually accompanied by the subordination of others. Women writers frequently have used their work to explore and expose the system of rules by which their lives have been bounded.

Although at times women writers themselves have partly or completely endorsed patriarchal models and ideals for female roles, nevertheless, women's battle for access to "the Word" has represented the emergence of the feminine voice. As I have suggested earlier, Lacan
well knew the transcendental shaping, rule-making power of "word" when he made his bid to appropriate the entire realm of the symbolic order under the phallic "Law of the Father," repeating the silencing of women's voice by restating its Freudian confinement to the pre-verbal babble of the maternal imaginary.

The successful struggles of American female writers and poets such as Dickinson, Cather, Porter, Wharton, Teasdale, Wylie, Millay, Amy Lowell, Moore, Plath, Sarton, Sexton, Mansfield, Welty, and others to gain critical acceptance of their work as "literature" rather than "women's writing" — at no small cost to their lives, to which the suicide rate attests — has precipitated an "emergence," a bending of the will and shaping of new rules, that has given women access to "voice" and "the word." The "emergence" of women's voice in the United States in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which I have examined in light of Foucault's genealogical history, owes a great deal to a connection between the "enabling power of political activism and the production of art," according to scholars such as Ammons, Showalter and Banner (Ammons, vii) This "emergence" has been given extra impetus by the numbers of women scholars, critics, and artists who have contributed to the growing corpus of work exploring women's participation in culture and the articulation of what I am hypothesizing as an alternative feminine symbolic order.

French women writers and intellectuals have been less obliged to struggle for critical acceptance and male audience. The tradition of feminine intellectual and artistic influence in France extends back more than eight centuries to Aliénor of Aquitaine and includes Christine de Pisan, Marguerite de Navarre, les précieuses, Georges Sand, Mme de
Staël, Colette, Simone de Beauvoir and dozens more. For de Beauvoir, Irigaray, and Cixous, as for their forebears, the conundrum of women's lives has revolved around acceptance, accommodation or rejection of the myth of the "eternal feminine" or "l'Autre" personified by Michèle Sarde as "la Française." Eve and mother, seductive, mysterious, nurturing and child-like, "Elle porte ... son profil de madone qu'entraîne ... une longue chevelure de sirène" (Sarde 11). Both goddess and creature, the patterned image of "la Française" (exemplified by the prototypical "Française," film star Catherine Deneuve) has been both blessing and bane, conferring enviable privileges and exacting a price which de Beauvoir detailed in *Le Deuxième Sexe*, by examining the painful divergences between the myth and reality of French women's roles and lives. Contemporary French women intellectuals have focused upon "abstract" problems of an "écriture féminine" or feminine discourse, exploration and valorization of the body, and feminine jouissance. French women have tended to accentuate and valorize the "otherness" ("différence") of femininity, while Americans have minimized these differences to win equal rights and acceptance. However, in France, women such as Edith Badinter, in *L'un est l'autre*, and Michèle Sarde are calling for the end of "otherness," suggesting that the time of "différence" is over. The patriarchal system is dying or already dead, Badinter claims. Technology has anulled many of the advantages of physical strength to males, and women have gained control over their reproductive processes, prompting a merging of sexual identities and a realignment of roles. She contends that men and women now share a kind of psychological bisexuality that in itself quenches passionate desire, which feeds on complementarity and
longing for the forbidden, unattainable object (204). Today's "multiplicity" calls for a shift from passion to tenderness, from desire for possession and submission to affectionate relationships based upon the model of companionate friendship (207). In social roles and images she sees a movement from complementarity to an egalitarian, democratic model, which includes liberté, égalité, and fraternité for both genders. By invoking the values of the French Revolution, which Badinter points out was "the most decisive of all revolutions in the Western world" (116), she not only brings male and female into a closer rapport and alignment, but she also brings the French and American women (who are products of a great "New World" experiment with these same democratic values) perhaps into a closer understanding.

The Sociological Case for the Emerging Crone

The emergence of the Crone gains further impetus from current demographic data. The number and proportion of persons over 65 in the United States and France has been steadily increasing since 1900. The number of people 75 years and older has been increasing at a faster rate than the population between the ages of 65 to 74, and the number of people 85 and older has grown even more quickly. By 2000, the population of the 75 to 84 group in the United States will increase by 57 percent, and the 85 and older group will double in size. In France, in 1991, men and women over 65 comprised slightly more than nine percent of the total population.

The proportion of older men and women in the elderly population has changed equally as dramatically since 1930, when the composition was nearly half and half, as it had been since the turn of the century. Beth Hess reports in Growing Old in America that while gains in life
expectancy are recorded for both sexes, from 1930 on those for women have been greater (19). In 1970, in the United States there were 72.1 males for every 100 females aged 65 or over (19). By 1991, in the over-65 cohort, there were 67 males for every 100 females in the United States and 65 males for every 100 females in France.3

To interpret these statistics in another way, even though both men and women statistically have substantially longer life expectancies than three generations ago, the numbers of women over 65 continue to outstrip the numbers of men of that age by an increasing margin. In 1900, in the United States, a white male had an average life expectancy at birth of 48.2 years and a female 51.1, only a three-year differential. By 1969, the comparable figures were 67.0 and 75.1, a full seven years (19). In 1980, the average life expectancy in the United States was 71.6 years for males and 76.3 years for females; in France, it was 70.2 years for males and 78.5 for females.4 While the gap has narrowed significantly in the United States to 4.7 years, French women live an average of eight years longer than males.

What this means is that elderly people will in all probability make up an increasingly large segment of both populations, and a majority of them will be women. In sociological terms, a new life-stage is emerging, a period of joint survival for the married pair or of extended singleness for widows or divorced women, which was not a common experience for members of preceding generations. New social and psychological problems are appearing, involving integration of the expectation of longer life into society, societal determination of appropriate norms and behaviors, and development of supportive social structures for the elderly (Hess, 20). One can expect these sociological realities to be
reflected in literature, which may be assumed increasingly to address questions related to these issues. Since a majority of these elderly will be women, many of whom will be single persons, and since women writers traditionally have addressed problems of women's "everyday living," it is not surprising to find a growing body of literature, films and articles pertaining to elderly women and therefore related to the Crone.

Patricia Aburdene predicts in *Megatrends for Women* that,

As mature writers and artists validate their own journey ... this *rite de passage* will be increasingly celebrated in film, literature and the arts. (260)

Indeed, the popular film culture of the past few years has reflected this trend with a number of productions focusing on an elderly woman (or older women) as a major character: *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), *The Cemetery Club* (1993), and *The Company of Strangers*, produced in 1990 for television by the Canadian National Film Board, are North American examples. *Tatie Danielle* (1991), *La Vieux qui marchait dans la mer* (1991), *La Maison*, *Le Chat* and *La Veuve Couderc* (1971) illustrate a similar phenomenon in France.

The Grass-Roots Crone

For aging female "baby-boomers," who have valorized fitness, health and activity, Margaret Mead's "zestful" energetic, independent postmenopausal life-style will, no doubt, be the ideal for which to strive. At the same time, the major issue for the elderly is the "continuum of loss." As Biegel, Shore and Gordon conclude in *Building Support Networks for the Elderly*, "... over time aging persons begin to experience substantial losses in body functioning, sensory functioning, mental functioning, family and peer group support, income, self-image,
self-esteem, control and power" (19). In *Growing Old in America*, Beth Hess writes that in our culture, which esteems mastery and control, we shrink from signs of physical deterioration in ourselves and avoid those "who already carry such stigmata. ... Our attitudes toward the old are thus compounded of fear and anxiety" in a culture that emphasizes "the here and now" (20). It was with a similar keen apprehension of the losses of aging that Simone de Beauvoir commented in *La Vieillesse*

Ceux qui échappent à la misère et à la gêne ont à ménager un corps qui est devenu fragile, fatigable, souvent infirme ou perclus de douleurs. Les plaisirs immédiats leur sont interdits ou avarement mesurés: l'amour, la table, l'alcool, le tabac, le sport, la marche. (473)

... l'immense majorité des hommes [men and women] accueillent la vieillesse dans la tristesse ou la révolte. Elle inspire plus de répugnance que la mort même. (565)

By the time *La Vieillesse* was published in 1970, de Beauvoir had become somewhat more optimistic about aging. While she continued to detail the ravages and discomforts of old age, she was able to conclude that "La vieillesse n'est pas une conclusion nécessaire de l'existence humaine" (565). She discovered that the group of six hundred or so then-living French centenarians, mostly Breton women, experienced a good deal of satisfaction and humor in living, finding they possess "un caractère indépendant, égal et même gai, un vif sens de l'humor et le goût des relations sociales" (573).

With the reasonable expectation of at least two or three decades of active living beyond the child-raising, career-building years, growing numbers of women in the United States now hold "croning celebrations" on or about their fiftieth birthday. In a pamphlet, "The Croning
Celebration"5, Jacquelyn Gentry and Faye Seifert describe this celebration as a "public ritual — a 'rite of passage' ... a public pronouncement of reclaiming the revered status of the crone in society" (6). From Bethesda, Maryland, to Kansas City, to Seattle, organizations like "Crone" are springing up. Seattle's "Crone" was founded in 1987 to "combat ageism; foster connections between older women; and restore the idea of the 'crone' to its ancient and rightful meaning as a respected, wise and experienced elder. And, given the traditional life stages of a woman — maiden, mother and crone — to cherish the last as potentially the most fulfilling."6 In these celebrations and groups can be seen, perhaps, vestiges of the "consciousness-raising" groups of the 1970's, grass-roots meetings that fueled the explosion of interest in women's issues, history, and political activism of that decade.7 The increasing number of older women who are experiencing the "invisibility" of older women in American society, the desire to develop strong support networks for women of the white middle class who do not have extended families that revere the older woman, and the need to discuss and plan for growth, loss, possible disability and death, with women of similar needs and backgrounds, fuels the proliferation of these organizations.8

Contemporary Cinematic Crones

Several examples of recent films (mentioned above) depicting the Crone or problems of advancing age in both the United States and France indicate the popular interest in this topic. While all the films discussed in this section focus on various aspects of aging, La Vieille qui marchait dans la mer and Tatie Danielle among the French films and Fried Green Tomatoes among the American ones best depict the
mysterious, enigmatic qualities of the powerful Crone, so provocatively described by Estés and Walker.

In France, two films, released in the 1970's, based on novels by Georges Simenon, already exemplified the voices of Foucault's genealogical "Other." In both, Simone Signoret plays an older woman who essentially falls into the "old woman-as-victim" category of the Crone archetype. Unempowered even by motherhood, these women are marginalized, silenced and die. They are not the subjects of their own lives, but rather are victims of others' enmity, greed or neglect. The plot of *La Veuve Couderc* revolves around the attachment between an older widow and a young fugitive, who helps her work her small farm in exchange for shelter. The widow has been raped as a young servant-girl by her father-in-law and his son; she marries the drunkard son, who dies. The doltish father-in-law continues to own the farm and to live with her. She works hard to keep the farm going, but she is an outcast among the villagers, unwanted by her in-laws, and has no future. Her brother- and sister-in-law scheme to sell the farm to get money for themselves. The barges and pleasure boats plying the canal which separates the farm from her in-laws' house are artifacts from a world of blue-collar industry and bourgeois life that she can never hope to access. The canal drawbridge, controlled by the in-laws who are the bridge-keepers, emphasizes the tenuousness with which the widow is connected to family and the village. Despite all these obstacles, she is portrayed as strong and determined to make a life for herself. Starved for companionship and affection, she enters into a sexual relationship with Jean, the young doctor-turned-fugitive, who is also sleeping with the in-laws' daughter, an unwed teen-age mother. "Elle est jeune," the
widow says bitterly when she discovers the betrayal. Betrayal continues as the in-laws notify "the authorities" that the widow is sheltering the fugitive. "Authority" in the form of police, army, and retired military cavalry officers descend upon the little farmhouse, in which the widow and Jean support each other and prepare to fight. After a massive manhunt, Jean and the widow are shot in a gun-battle, and the in-laws presumably get what remains of the farm. Both the widow Couderc and Jean represent the voices of "the oppressed Other" — those who are ignored, dispossessed, and silenced by the "Establishment," or institutionalized authority.

In _Le Cam_, Signoret plays the part of Clemence, an aging wife whose marriage has turned to hatred. Isolated, dependent, and alcoholic, she is starved for affection or a kind word. Her husband, Julien, lavishes all his affection and attention upon a cat, which Clemence finally kills out of jealousy. Instead of a dignified burial, the cat's body is taken off by the trash collectors in the garbage, a symbolic indication of the couple's own state of mind. This film focuses upon the losses and depression of old age. The couple's marriage, which might have been a comfort, becomes an abusive torture for both. Withholding affection and refusing to speak to his wife become Julien's weapons against his own melancholia. Clemence, once a beautiful young acrobat and a star performer adored by the crowds, has retired after an injurious fall, becoming more and more house-bound and dependent upon her husband. In her older years, she is rejected by him, and they both become emotionally abusive. The loss of love and relationship, however, appears at first to be more devastating for her. She vacillates between anger and despairing loneliness, while Julien consoles himself
with his mistress. Death comes suddenly to Clémence — as it did to the cat. When she suffers a heart attack, there are no good-byes, no chances for reconciliation. Julien, who could not live with her, also cannot live without her. Ingesting a handful of sleeping pills, he dies also. In both these films, the women, who possess strength, determination, and qualities which should have led them to success, are victimized by societal institutions (marriage, property, social structures) which treat them as disposable cast-offs.

The unforgettable aging aunt in *Tatie Danielle* and Lady M., the Crone-like con-artist in *La Vieille qui marchait dans la mer*, are cut of entirely different cloth. Both powerful women, they belong to the "Hag" category of the Crone archetype, sometimes on the side of death, sometimes on the side of life, always in control. In both comedies, the French commentary upon the aging female body and the cultural connection to the classical mythological Crone-witch archetype lend a dark humor and perspective.

In *Tatie Danielle*, elderly Auntie Danielle Billard (Tsilla Chelton) cleverly manipulates the symptomology of aging to methodically torment and dominate those around her. Claiming to be a "lonely old woman at a madwoman's mercy," she takes malicious glee in tyrannizing her equally aged, dotty housekeeper, trampling her flowers, demanding to be waited on hand and foot, and luring the poor thing to her ignominious fatal fall while cleaning a chandelier. The housekeeper, Odile, is the self-sacrificing, "good-enough," old woman who plants flowers, enjoys her web of relationships with neighbors, and cannot hold her own against her mistress.
Tatie Danielle goes to live with her grand-nephew, his wife and two boys, pretending to be "just an old woman whom nobody wants," while tormenting them with her selfish demands. She refuses to be the sugar-coated, "cipher" "grannie" for whom they had hoped. The French horror of the incontinent aging (feminine) body, so memorably evoked by Simone de Beauvoir in her famous passage from *Cérémonies des adieux* in which she describes the wet stain left upon a chair by an aging Jean-Paul Sartre, is parodied by Tatie Danielle, when she surreptitiously pours a cup of tea on the seat of her armchair to simulate incontinence, embarrassing her relatives at their dinner party.

Her "incontinence" also signifies her refusal to be bounded by the bourgeois code of feminine agreeableness, modeled to perfection by Jean-Pierre's wife, Catherine. Angry at being abandoned by her "sitter," Sandrine, hired to care for "auntie" while the family takes a much-need vacation in Greece, Danielle throws a mad-woman's tantrum, destroying the apartment and setting it ablaze. Immediately she is the delighted center of a storm of media attention, headlined as the abandoned, dear old lady, while her family is vilified for their "neglect." Her removal to a nursing home, where the old are "warehoused" to await death, plunges her into the angry depression of an unwanted old woman.

However, she reconfirms her membership in the "hag" clan, closely associated with the Crone goddess and the life-death-life cycle, in her escape from the nursing home and rejuvenation through her association with the young woman, Sandrine. In the closing scenes, Tatie Danielle transforms from a *méchante* "hag" to a sprightly fairy godmother, as Sandrine helps her escape from the nursing home, and together they travel to the Alps. Renewed through her life-giving relationship with the
young woman (whom she helps financially), the strong-willed Danielle moves from anger, rebellion and depression to a "zestful" old age. Sandrine photographs, and "Auntie" is the happy subject, lifting her glass of wine in a toast to adventure against a backdrop of snow-covered mountain peaks.

While *Tatie Danielle* focuses on rebellion against aging and bodily decline, *La Vieille qui marchait dans la mer*, based on a novel by San Antonio, centers around the sexual desires of an aging woman. An accomplished con-artist and swindler, Lady M. (Jeanne Moreau) is a powerful trickster "hag-Crone" in the tradition of the ancient death goddess.

"Je suis une vieille salope," she announces to her mirror. Dressed in a gown and picture hat, she walks into the ocean and pounds her cane three times in a thundering summons that pulls the handsome beach-boy, Lambert, from the arms of his latest affair to come running to her side. Standing in the sea like an ancient death-Crone, her cane becomes the staff of power calling the "chosen one" to sacrifice. Emphasizing her power, she, Delilah-like, cuts off his pony-tail. "Mon complice?" she offers, and Lambert accepts, to the consternation of her "vieux compagnon," Pompilius.

The *ménage à trois* sets off on a series of "adventures," blackmailing a man having an extra-marital "fling" in Guadeloupe and copping the diamond diadem of an Indian maharajah at a birthday party on the Côte d'Azur. The "merveilleuse sorcière" becomes more and more sexually attracted to Lambert, while Pompilius struggles to maintain his status. She becomes bolder, suggesting that Lambert sleep in her bed without sexual relations. She attempts to control his roving sexuality,
telling him to "keep his pants zipped," and, failing that, installs a hidden camera in his bedroom. With Pompilius, she watches him make love to a young woman on closed-circuit TV. She is a "voyeur" to the youthful sexuality from which the undesirability of her aging body and "visage détruit" precludes her participation — all the more enraging because of her former beauty. Her silver grape-leaf earrings fashioned with dangling bunches of fruit mark her association with a Bacchanalian, pagan sensuality. Watching the young couple disgusts and stimulates Pompilius, who departs with curlers in his hair only to return and jump into the tub with her. Temporarily, the older couple "recover their youth."

It is the function of the death crone to dispose of the aging consort-king to make way for the new, youthful one, and so Lady M. frames Pompilius. He hangs himself after the diamond diadem which Lambert has stolen is discovered in the fireplace by investigators. Together, she and Lambert, who is now fully captured, return together as compagnons to Paris. She is termed a fée, a sorcière; the sound of her falling cane signals another victim. Is she the death Crone, eternally rejuvenating herself by dooming another young man to be her consort? A Jocasta, or a Léa, who tricks her son out of living and life-giving relationships with young women? Or is she a woman who suffers because she is aging and is no longer desirable to desirable men. With age, she must "contrive herself," being alternately cruel and kind, angry and amusing, powerful and vulnerable, always mysterious, unpredictable, profound. Otherwise, she just might vanish, unnoticed and unsung, into the sea, into the fluid dimension of the female imaginary.
While French literature and films frequently are attuned to the classical Goddess mythological themes of ancient, agrarian Europe, American writers and films tend to downplay the fearsome side of the Crone’s role in sacred rites of death and rebirth. In *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *The Cemetery Club*, and *A Company of Strangers*, the aging women’s roles revolve around healing, stories, relationship, and community. The notion of the healing power of an elder wise woman’s stories is not confined to ethnic or folklore traditions. Writers such as Carolyn Heilbrun in *Writing a Woman’s Life* and Carol Gilligan affirm the importance of story as a model or inspiration for women’s lives and the need for new stories which do not recapitulate old patterns.

In Fannie Flagg’s novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* (1988), and subsequent film, an old nursing home resident’s recreation of her sister-in-law’s unconventional life-story gives inspiration to Evelyn, a stereotypical “Southern lady” in mid-life crisis. “I may be sitting here at the Rose Terrace Nursing Home, but in my mind I’m over at the Whistle Stop Cafe having a plate of fried green tomatoes,” is how Mrs. Cleo Threadgoode, a.k.a. “Ninny,” sets the stage for the story-within-a-story that forms the work’s structure.

Ninny Threadgoode (in the film version, "Lily, "played by Jessica Tandy), an aging widow from one of Whistle Stop, Alabama’s leading families in the 1920’s, befriends Evelyn, overweight, "nice," pleasant, obliging, and depressed, who visits the home routinely with her husband to see his cantankerous mother. The mother-in-law’s bad-tempered refusal to talk to her son’s wife gives Evelyn and Ninny ample time to exchange life stories.
Ninny reminiscences about her tomboy sister-in-law, Idgie Threadgoode, and her friend, Ruth, who ran a little cafe back in Whistle Stop during the Depression. Idgie's and Ruth's story is a "genealogical" one about dispensing love, care, and good food during hard times and resisting institutional oppression. Institutionalized racism and domination of women, enforced by violence, terrorism, and the Ku Klux Klan, threaten Idgie, Ruth and Ruth's little boy, when Ruth's ex-husband Frank Bennett crosses over from Georgia to take back his "property." Frank never returns to Valdosta, and his truck is found years later in the river. Meanwhile, Idgie and Ruth, Sipsey, Onzell, and Big George go on serving the best barbecue in Alabama at the Whistle Stop Cafe.

Over candy bars and weekly tales of Idgie, the "Alabama bee charmer," Mrs. Threadgoode and Evelyn form a friendship, with Evelyn learning an "ethics of care" that includes care of "self." Gradually, Evelyn's depression recedes as she tries exercise, assertiveness, "hormones," and a job selling Mary Kay cosmetics, which rewards her with success, her own income, and a pink Cadillac. "Mrs. Threadgoode made her feel young" and brought her back to life from thoughts of suicide, Evelyn confesses (Flagg, 359). Like Cather and Porter, Flagg probes the culture of the South: feminine in its warmth, humor, sense of community and intergenerational continuity; masculinist in its strongly patterned ideals of "womanhood" (closer to the French "Elle" than any other American region); and terrifying in its simmering repressiveness which stands ready to explode if the conventions are broken. However, unlike Cather's "Old Mrs. Harris" and Porter's "Granny Weatherall", current fictional and cinematic old wisewomen, in both France and America, tend to tell stories with a positive, transformative ending.
Since the values of the post-1960's decades tend to be democratic ones (in contrast to the smouldering passions of complementarity and violent repression of women and minorities symbolized by Idgie's Alabama of the 1930's), today's elders advise their younger female audience to be financially independent, adventuresome, and caring of self as well as others.

When older women talk among themselves in a fictional representation, it frequently includes thoughts about coping with loss and death, either the death or physical incapacitation of a loved one or their own deaths. In The Cemetery Club, three middle-aged, Jewish widows struggle to cope with the deaths of their husbands, modeling various strategies for accepting death and their own aging. Doris (Olympia Dukakis) is the traditional wife, whose life stops with her husband's death. Unable to make a satisfying new life for herself, she remains connected to her husband, visiting his grave frequently to "talk" with him about her loneliness. Soon after his death, she dies of a heart attack. Lucille (Diane Ladd) is a combination of bravado and revenge, masking loss and lack of care. Her excesses are a form of self-abuse, reflecting the emotional pain she suffered because of her husband's infidelities and a desire to somehow "get back" at him. Esther (Ellen Burstyn) provides the "best" model. A child-wife, Esther describes the "sleeping beauty" quality of her marriage at a young age to a successful businessman who lavished care on her for nearly four decades, until one day "he was dead." She feels loss, pain and bewilderment but is determined to go on living. She learns new skills, independence, and shakily tries a "new relationship," becoming empowered through her loss. The three women remain linked in
friendship and connectedness as they each struggle to define their futures and accept their pasts in their own ways.

The theme of older women forming new communities of friendship and aid is also a central one in *The Company of Strangers*. Mary Meigs, one of "the company of eclectic seniors," wrote a companion book, *In the Company of Strangers* (1991), which takes the reader backstage into the lives of the eight other, mostly elderly, women of the film's cast and the three younger women who were director, associate producer, and writer. Both the film and book are gentle meditations on aging, time, memory, life, friendship and death.

If women's myths are to be found in the mundane, in the area of "genealogy" — in Foucault's singular events, without history, in unpromising places, in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts — then this "semi-documentary" film creates a magical space in which a group of elderly women and their bus driver emerge from the matrix of their ordinary lives to enter an imaginary realm of connectedness and meaning. With the skilled precision of a neurosurgeon, Meigs runs her scalpel cleanly along the interface of real life and myth, noting where and how the two fuse and merge, the process, and the effect of the process.

The film plot is simple: a bus carrying seven elderly women from ethnically and socio-economically diverse backgrounds to a Golden Age retreat breaks down while making an unscheduled detour to find the rural childhood summer home of one of the women. The breakdown provides the several days of isolation needed for the group of strangers to become friends, to devise practical solutions for coping together, and to begin to confide in one another. The old, abandoned house and
surrounding landscape of lake and rolling, wooded hills becomes a pastoral metaphor for old age, memory, life and death as well as a "mother space," in which necessities are provided. As Meigs observes, the mist from which the bus emerges at the beginning of the film "symbolizes the absence of explanation ... the mist cuts us off from reasons, and lifts to show us, who have stepped out of time and logic into a magic space where old women have room to exist" (10). In short, the mist symbolizes the creation of a mythic space, set apart from the "everyday" world, in which elderly women can be heard.

Meigs also delicately explores the effect of becoming/being myth upon the individual's sense of self. She examines the construction of the many "selves" which make up an individual's fluid, somewhat amorphous identity: the interdiscursivity between film, text, and the women themselves; the multiple discourses which perceive the same event differently. She sensitively identifies facets of the myriad self: the "pattern face" (the mask by which people recognize us, and we recognize others); the "shadow selves" (seen in childhood pictures where we can see the lives we did not lead as well as the ones we did); the mirror image (which shows the passage of time); the inner image (by which we keep ourselves young); our "ideal or semi-selves" (the myth of our "ideal" selves in which we are and receive what we truly desire); the old self; the everyday "real" self; the fictional self of the film. The film's world presents the "myth of our ideal selves" in which "we are the center of attention," unlike real life where old people are often invisible or an obstacle (77). Like a fairy-tale, the film protects against time: "We are filming a holiday from growing old ... in the real world we move along the conveyor belt of old age like luggage at the airport"
She describes the emergence of the "focused" self as a result of participating in the filming process; the focused self aligns aspects of the everyday, individual self with the film images to create yet another self.

Meigs interweaves linear and circular time, the women's self-images and film images, portraits of their past and present lives, and the film-makers' vision into a storytelling about elderly women and their powers — a story which extracts them from the human mass and gives them voice. Connected now through bonds of friendship in their real lives, they share in and are transformed by their participation in the creation of the film's myth. As Meigs concludes, "The special power of our film is to make people happy" (12).

It is interesting to compare the two French films released in the early 1970's with more recent ones, especially those directed by, or with screenplays written by, women. In Le Chat and La Veuve Couderc, older women are portrayed as sympathetic victims, "spunky" but overwhelmed by social forces, in a manner similar to Foucault's view of the voices of "l'Autre" in genealogical history. While portraying the "invisible" or silenced "Other" as abject and victimized was characteristic of that decade and represented, perhaps, a necessary stage in increasing awareness ("consciousness-raising," it was termed), happily representations of older women have changed dramatically in recent years. As more women from all socio-economic groups enjoy a longer, healthier life-span, forming a larger and more culturally varied audience (and consumer market), and as more women assume directing and screen-writing roles in the increasingly diversified film-making industry, more varied and more positive roles for old women are presented on-screen and in fictional and non-fictional books. Kathleen
Woodward notes in *Aging and Its Discontents* that "it will be easier to change meanings associated with aging in the middle years as they extend into vigorous and healthy years of late life than the meanings associated with the years of very advanced or frail old age" (194). Yet, as Woodward concludes, "at the same time as the material conditions of aging are undergoing change, so too our culture is producing new representations of aging" (194).
NOTES


5(Bethesda, Maryland: The Feminist Institute Clearinghouse, 1988).


7The "Crone" groups have their parallels in the women's literary club movement a century ago, a development which reflected the growing education and social activism of late nineteenth-century women.

8Gelernter, op. cit, L4.

9While well-bred young women are frequently enjoined to be "nice," this word has a dubious ancestry. Although Webster's New World Dictionary definitions of the word "nice" include "having high standards of conduct; agreeable; pleasant; delightful; attractive; pretty; kind; thoughtful; considerate; modest; well-mannered; reserved; in good taste"; and "a generalized term of approval," the word is derived from Old French nice, niche, nisce, meaning "stupid, foolish" and from the Latin nescius (n e, not + scire, to know), ignorant, not knowing.

10"Merveilleuse" can also connote a "femme éléegante et excentrique," according to the Larousse de Poche.
CHAPTER 8
The Crone's "Ouië": Grandmother's Stories

This is the way Aunt Susie told the story.
She had certain phrases, certain distinctive words
she used in her telling.
I write when I still hear
her voice as she tells the story.

Leslie Marmon Silko
Storyteller

The grandmother's "oui," or affirmation, also includes the
obligation to "listen" ("ouië") to the stories of others. Through the
exchange of stories, both telling and listening, a community that accepts
"difference," and multiplicity can perhaps develop at a time when
emerging voices include those of postcolonialist societies, non-Western
immigrant groups, and native cultures as well as those of women, who
continue to use their stories to forge connection, solve life problems, and
explore new territory.

In the late twentieth-century, post-modernism marks the attempt
to reject values established by the Enlightenment project and, later,
industrialization. The central position of the individual is being re-
examined, and the emphasis upon the unified subject has been
discredited. The abandonment of the attempt to establish European
criteria for "art" and "literature" as a universal standard has released
many voices from the confines of anthropologically interesting folkways
into the main-stream of literary consideration, including access to
publishers, reviewers, and serious critical and academic attention.
Simultaneously, there is an attempt, on the part of many contemporary
North American ethnic and feminine writers, who use the voices of
marginalized peoples, to reject alienation and fragmentation by re-
creating a kind of generativity that reconnects to place and genealogy as a source of healing.

The "spiritual grandmother," disavowed during the decades in which women authors fled the domestic sphere of 'the mothers" to struggle for acceptance in the male-dominated canons of "art," is being reinvoked, although to underscore rather different values. In this project of recovery (in Foucault's sense of re-discovery and of healing), Grandmother's stories are a pathway for connection which bridges a post-industrial yearning for re-connective belonging and traditional cultures. Grandmother's stories are valued because they help let "you" know "who you are," ground and root "you" in an identity, tell "you" what people "you" belong to and orient "you" to the place where "you" live. But — over and above its "useful," recuperative function — storytelling gives pleasure. "... All I have is a story," Trinh Minh-ha claims. "Story passed on from generation to generation, named Joy. Told for the joy it gives the storyteller and the listener. Joy inherent in the process of storytelling" (119). Grandmother's stories, then, not only heal, identify, connect to tradition, break stereotypes, or suggest new possibilities, they are also a source of pleasure and happiness to both teller and listener. This insight underlies Mary Meig's conclusion that the purpose — or effect — of the old women's stories in The Company of Strangers is to "make people happy." Joy and humor — often wry, frequently penetrating or unexpected — underlie the "new" grandmothers' stories, whose message is, in Meig's words, "be kind to yourselves as old women and to each other" (73). Even de Beauvoir observed that studies of (mostly) female French centenarians revealed that they "... manifestent des entusiasmes juveniles, ont leur dadas, un
sens aigu de l'humour ... ils sont optimistes et n'expriment pas la moindre crainte de la mort" (1970:574).

**Grandmother's Stories: A Community of Belonging**

The grandmother's function of creating a community, its rules for belonging, and arbitrating its membership through story, described in detail in Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs* (Chapter 4), has resurfaced in the emerging literature of marginalized and immigrant groups in the United States. In Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*, one role of the grandmothers is to keep and pass down the traditions and to tell the stories that make up one's identity. Marmon Silko's grandmother A'mooh teaches her to make red chili "the old way" (34) and tells her not only the traditional and mythical stories but also stories about her family. Marmon Silko learned many of the Laguna Pueblo stories from her Grandmother Lillie and her Aunt Susie Marmon. Aunt Susie went away to the "Indian School" in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, studied history, and taught school, but was "still one of the last generation to pass down an entire culture, an entire history, and an entire vision of the world which depended upon memory and retelling by subsequent generations" (6).

In the stories which Marmon Silko recounts from her grandmothers and Aunt Susie, she includes the explanatory phrases and asides which the elders used to connect the old words of the stories with the language and context of the current listener. Her aunt was born as the old culture was suffering incursions by the Europeans. The oral transmission of stories was interrupted by the children being taken away from their culture and sent to residential schools to learn European ways. The result was suppression and loss of their Native
language, customs, ceremonies, and rituals, so that Aunt Susie had to provide information and interpretation of parts of the stories in her own words in order to pass down meaning to the younger generations. In "Aunt Susie had certain phrases," Marmon Silko fondly describes her relative's storytelling style, which combines personal, idiosyncratic elements with a traditional tale. In her story "asides," Aunt Susie explains that "yashtoah" is the hardened crust on corn meal mush; that Pueblo people always called "upstairs" because long ago their homes were two or three stories high with an entrance at the top; and that there used to be a trail down the east side of Acoma (mesa). Here she is transmitting not only the pleasurable, traditional story itself — why Acoma has beautiful butterflies made from the clothing of a little girl who drowned herself because her mother didn't want to make yashtoah for her — but information about the language, food utensils, trails and customs of the past.

In discussion of an oral tradition, the question of how much creative latitude a storyteller is allowed in retelling a particular story often arises. Marmon Silko addresses this, commenting:

... sometimes what we call 'memory' and what we call 'imagination' are not so easily distinguished. ...I know Aunt Susie and Aunt Alice would tell me stories they had told me before but with changes in details or descriptions. The story was the important thing and little changes here and there were really part of the story. There were even stories about the different versions of stories and how they imagined these differing versions came to be. (227)

Referring to tribal stories, Paula Gunn-Allen remarks that:

The stories are woven of elements that illuminate the ritual
tradition of the storyteller's people, make pertinent points to some listener who is about to make a mistake or who has some difficulty to resolve, and hold the listeners' attention so that they can experience a sense of belonging to a sturdy and strong tradition. (1989:1)

Storytelling becomes a medium for what Paula Gunn-Allen, Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker or Clarissa Pinkola Estés might term ceremonial healing: the restoration and revitalization of marginalized peoples.

**Old Women's Stories and the Power of Healing**

It is, however, not only marginalized ethnic groups who are rediscovering the healing power of stories. "Stories are medicine," Clarissa Pinkola Estés claims in *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* (1992), a work combining archetypal folktales of the (old) wild woman with a post-Jungian psychological interpretation, which has been a bestseller among middle-class American women for two years. "They [stories] have such power; they do not require that we do, be, act anything — we need only listen" (15). "Stories connect us to the universe of medicine — of paranormal or sacred power" (3), Paula Gunn-Allen notes in *Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook*, her collection of women's ritual stories, drawn from the oral traditions of Native America. "It will take a long time, but the story must be told. There must not be any lies," says the old man in "Storyteller," the title story in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (26). "Each story is at once a fragment and a whole; a whole within a whole. And the same story has always been changing, for things which do not shift and grow cannot continue to circulate," Trinh T. Minh-ha writes in "Grandma's Story"
As these comments, drawn from a variety of ethnic and social backgrounds, demonstrate, storytelling has become a vital medium for the contemporary act of reviving and breathing new life into the Old Woman/Grandmother archetype, a process in which collective myths and ancient traditions are retold and reinterpreted to continue the ritual of healing.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés' re-telling of "La Loba," the old bone woman's story, illustrates this act of revivification as well as one of the most distinguishing qualities of the contemporary crone archetype: its overt connection with the instinctual, intuitive psyche. A post-Jungian analyst, folklorist, and cantadora storyteller of Mexican-Spanish ancestry, adopted into a Hungarian family, Estés collected variants of "La Loba" in Texas, Mexico, and the Pueblos of the Southwest. The stories told by Estés in *Women Who Run With Wolves* are told from a positive feminine perspective rather than from society's often negative view of women's psyches and roles. These tales, like Spretnak's reinterpretations of the Greek Goddess myths or Barbara Walker's important archetypal study, *The Crone*, are all contemporary efforts to revitalize feminine creativity, in what feminists of the 1970's might have termed "subversive" or "transgressive" terms: the rehabilitation of the old woman/young woman archetype as one of power, energy, and resourcefulness stemming from qualities which can be tapped through the psyche. The "wild" element of the Crone archetype is redefined. "The word 'wild' here is not used in its modern pejorative sense, meaning out of control," writes Estés, "but in its original sense, which means to live a natural life, one in which the criatura, creature, has innate integrity and healthy boundaries" (8). Remembering that one of the characteristics of
the "old woman" category in my "Crone" typology is loss of boundaries (see figure 1), the restorative aspect of Estés "story" of the old wolf woman can be seen.

A final comparison between the story of "La Loba" and the tale of "Little Red Riding Hood," which has been examined from several perspectives in previous chapters, is useful here. Both are similar in that their plots and moral messages revolve around the same symbolic characters: the old woman (grandmother), the young woman (granddaughter), and the wolf, in a life-threatening situation. "La Loba," however, is told from a woman's point of view, while the Perrault, Grimm and subsequent versions reinforce what Jack Zipes in The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood has termed a "neurotic male projection ... founded on a male social conception of women and sexuality" (42). In the predominant versions of "Little Red Riding Hood," both the girl and the grandmother are victims: in Zipes' words, the little girl is "pretty, spoiled, gullible and helpless" (9), while the grandmother is equally helpless and silent. Both presumably collude with the wolf in their rape and death (in their victimization). As Zipes has outlined, Perrault's and the Grimms' versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" are "part of the literary socialization process [which reinforces] socially accepted ways of viewing women, sexuality, and nature" (53), a process which supported aristocratic and later bourgeois values of regulated, "civilized" behavior, rational order, and technological production. These cautionary tales foreground the actions of the little girl, the wolf and their dire consequences.

While Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother is presented as a passive figure, an object who is acted upon, "La Loba," the old wild
woman, is active with an important, sacred task to fulfill. She collects bones — the lost, scattered remnants of medicinal stories. She has many bones in her desert cave, but her specialty is wolves, a despised and feared animal, commonly a symbol of sexuality, especially forceful or seductive male sexuality. Estés, however, resuscitates an ancient wolf image: that of the "wolf as mother." Mythical nurse to Romulus and Remus, the wolf-mother was the symbol of ancient Rome. Reclaiming the wolf as a powerful female image of protection, nurture and creative energy, Estés undermines cultural stereotypes of fragile feminine helplessness in the face of male sexuality, arguing that it is precisely women's separation from their strength and vitality, an alienation promoted by cultural images of the "feminine," which produces lethargy, passivity and loss of self-confidence and esteem.

A healthy woman is much like a wolf: robust, chock-full, strong life-force, life-giving, territorially aware, inventive, loyal, roving. Yet, separation from the wildish nature causes a woman's personality to become meager, thin, ghostly, spectral. We are not meant to be puny with frail hair and inability to leap up, inability to chase, to birth, to create a life. When women's lives are in stasis, ennui, it is always time for the wildish woman to emerge; it is time for the creating function of the psyche to flood the delta. (12)

As a revival of an aspect of the Crone archetype, "La Loba" is far closer in flavor to the medieval French peasant oral tradition which provided the elements for Perrault's tale, although the French tale only hints at the grandmother's transformative power in its mixed pagan-Christian allusions to her sacrificed flesh and blood. In Paul Delarue's text, "The Story of Grandmother," a version of oral tales circulating among the peasantry in those regions of France [the Loire, Nièvre,
Forez, Velay, and the Alps] where werewolf-witch trials to suppress lingering pagan traditions were most common in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the little girl outwits the wolf and saves herself without intervention from a woodcutter, hunter or forester. Grandmother's cat (cats were thought to be a witch's "familiar") warns the girl of her danger. Estés comments that through the "civilizing" process by which Perrault, Grimm and others altered traditional stories to fit bourgeois norms, "many women's teaching tales about sex, love, money, marriage, birthing, death and transformation were lost" (16). In "La Loba," the old woman's song empowers the redefined wolf-mother/laughing girl to realize her essential connection with her "wildish nature."

This intuitive knowing of the values and ways of "wildish nature" indicates another aspect of the current revival of the Crone archetype: her deep connection to the environment, especially the wilderness and its preservation. Today, nature is regarded by some as an endangered species, an inversion of centuries' old struggle in Western civilization to dominate, control and regulate natural processes and creatures. The Crone's wisdom and grandmother's voice are being invoked not only by psychologists and storytellers but also by ecofeminists in alliance with conservationists to prevent destruction of the "wild" through urban growth and toxic pollution.

The multiplicity of ethnic voices has contributed not only to reinstatement of "the grandmother" as an important storyteller but also to an increase of her powers. In nineteenth-century American domestic literature, the grandmother was confined to enlivening a nostalgic, status quo generativity with a sense of spiritual harmony and morality
based upon caring. In contemporary Native, Hispanic, African American, Asian and Jewish literatures, the old woman archetype acquires far more depth and power, through her role in preserving a sense of tradition and identity while suggesting pathways of survival and adaptation in the face of intense cultural change. Her keen sense of humor and insight, often ironic or paradoxical, also helps the people of her community.

Some of these cultures retain a closer relationship to the ancient concept of the mother-as-creatress than do the European or Anglo-American ones. In *Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook*, Paula Gunn Allen describes Xmucané, Grandmother of the Light, the Mayan goddess who creates human beings out of both corn and light. Thinking Woman, or Grandmother Spider, is "the Great Goddess of the Keres Indians, of whom my tribe, the Laguna Pueblo Tribe, is one," she continues. Grandmother Spider, who appears in the ceremonial life of the Zuñi, Hopi, Navajo as well as Pueblo peoples, "thought the earth, the sky, the galaxy, and all that is into being, and as she thinks, so are we" (1991:28).

Grandmother Spider and Xmucané, Grandmother of the Light, are examples of the supernatural, magical grandmothers whose thought creates life, new beings and forms. Grandmother Spider, the overarching divinity of the Keres, is the "force or magical or spiritual power that enables whatever happens to happen," Gunn Allen writes in *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* (211). In the Native American stories, there are also examples of grandmothers who are bridges between the supernatural world and the human, not unlike the Greek myths. Gunn Allen's "A Hot Time" recounts how, like Prometheus, Grandmother
Spider, incarnated as a tiny, aged black spider, brought fire and light to her people. She adds, this story is "a commentary on the supposed infirmities of old age" (1991: xv). In "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman," collected by Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict from the Cochiti Pueblos in the 1920's, Grandmother Spider helps the husband find and rescue his wife, who has been abducted by the Evil Kachina, an abductor and seducer who takes women away from their villages to serve him in his home far to the east; he kills those who fail to serve him well. The presence of the grandmother-as-bridge is indicative of the intertwining of sacred and everyday realities in tribal ritual and ceremonial life. In a third type, the grandmother who is a wise woman can pass down sacred information and teachings to grandchildren, who in turn will teach their grandchildren. The example of Pretty Shield, an elderly Crow woman interviewed by ethnologist Frank Linderman in the late 1920's, illustrates the manner in which sacred information is passed on. Pretty Shield had learned the ways of the chickadee from her grandmother, who in turn learned from her grandmother, Seven-stars. The chickadee was Seven-stars' medicine, Gunn Allen relates. The chickadee came to Seven-stars after she had purified herself and told the woman "her future and the importance of every creature tending to its own work everyday." Pretty Shield's grandmother told her the story "to educate Pretty Shield to the way of the nonphysical world, and to help her in her own future role as wise woman" (Gunn Allen, 1991: 4).

In the work of reclaiming a non-Western identity, the African or Asian storyteller, according to Trinh T. Minh-ha, must work at "un-learning the dominant language of 'civilized' missionaries; [she also] has to learn how to un-write and write anew."
And she often does so by re-establishing the contact with her foremothers, so that living tradition can never congeal into fixed forms, so that life keeps on nurturing life, so that what is understood as the Past continues to provide the link for the Present and the Future." (148-149)

In Laguna thought, as presented by Silko, life is story. Ritually telling the story itself makes the future reality, not only for an individual but for a tribe or people. "Marmon Silko as a storyteller never loses sight of the difference between truth and fact," Trinh Minh-ha comments.

Her naming retains the accuracy and magic of our grandmothers' storytelling without ever confining it to the realm of factual naming. It is accurate because it is at once extremely flexible and rigid. ... It is accurate because it partakes in the setting into motion of forces that lie dormant in us. (148)

**Breaking the Mold**

The notion of the healing power of an old wisewoman's stories is not confined to ethnic or folklore traditions. Writers such as Carolyn Heilbrun in *Writing a Woman's Life* and Carol Gilligan in *In A Different Voice* affirm the importance of story as a model or inspiration for women's lives and the need for new stories which do not recapitulate old patterns. In Flagg's *Fried Green Tomatoes At The Whistle Stop Cafe*, Ninny Threadgoode's re-telling of Idgie Threadgoode's unconventional life story and her own wisdom help Evelyn break out of the lethargy which her interiorized conformity to the patriarchal repression of her social environment has produced. *Fried Green Tomatoes* is a very serious story told in an amusing, light-hearted, style. The episode of Frank Bennett's killing is pivotal, because he represents the threat of domestic violence and repression, supported by the institutionalized
structures of the society, which results in the interiorization of passivity and inactivity. The story of Idgie includes "genealogical" information for surviving — even thriving — with love, warmth, friendship and humor in the face of a patriarchally controlled society, maintained through violence and fear. Frank's killing is mysteriously achieved by a coalition of the oppressed, led by the "black" nurse, Sipsey, acting instinctively in the "name of life" to prevent him from abducting Ruth's baby son.

While story is a critical element in the grandmother's revival as an image in the United States, this does not seem to be as marked in France. Instead, Tatie Danielle, the querulous aging woman who refuses to conform to bourgeois expectations and to grow old "gracefully," underscores the French perspective on aging. As I have pointed out, the theme of the aging, incontinent female body, undesirable, struggling to maintain autocratic control over those unfortunates around her, and incapable of zestful living, haunts the French literary imagination: the shrew, the panderer, the hag, the witch, the shriveled crone in black rags. She is the opposite of "la Française," Michèle Sarde's term for the trope of feminine desirability. Yet the demographics of age, which as discussed earlier demonstrate a numerically increasingly cohort of persons over 65, the majority of whom are women, are gradually bringing about cinematic portrayals of powerful older women who refuse to accept senility. Even de Beauvoir, who displayed an unusual sensitivity to and aversion for the bodily processes of decay and death, mentioned in *La Vieillesse* the example of George Bernard Shaw, "qui avait eu grand-peur de la mort et du gâtisme entre 50 et 60 ans .... [II] déclara qu'après 60 ans il avait commencé 'sa seconde enfance': il éprouvait un délicieux sentiment de liberté, d'aventure,
d'irresponsabilité" (1970:512). She was even moved to comment that "... il est vrai que de manière générale la vieillesse a certains avantages" (513).

As a final word on "breaking the mold," I would like to return to the "Little Red Riding Hood" tale and its subversion. Jack Zipes, who emphasizes the influence of this story and "Sleeping Beauty" in maintaining bourgeois codes of female sexual repression, comments that "the period from 1919 to 1945 generated ... cracks in the traditional cultural pattern inscribed in the plot of the fairy tale" (31). This period corresponds to the period of discontinuity, discussed in Chapter 5, in which women were striving to escape conventional middle-class patterns which denied them voice and access to privilege (other than through birth or marriage to a privileged male). Variants from this period turned the tale upside down. Charles Guyot's "The Granddaughter of Red Riding Hood" (1922), as described by Zipes, "transformed the point of the tale from one that preaches the control of appetites to one that questions the need to control desire, preference, and expectations" (32). Other versions, such as Milt Gross's Yiddish American version of "Sturry from Rad Ridink Hoot" (1925) comments upon the bourgeois sexual code from an immigrant's point of view: "the seriousness of the tale is parodied, making the stringent sexual code appears ridiculous" (32). After World War II, the tale continued to be parodied or adapted in both Europe and America. Zipes sums up the three major currents in the radical "Little Red Riding Hood" tales between 1950 to 1980. First, many narratives portray Little Red Riding Hood coming into her own, developing a sense of independence with help from males. Second, some tales and poems seek to rehabilitate the wolf. Third, some stories are
unusual aesthetic experiments, debunking traditional narrative forms and seeking to free their audience so that they can question the conventional cultural patterns (39).

With these three trends in mind, I would like to conclude with a discussion of the "New Age" grandmother, described in a contemporary version of Little Red Riding Hood which was disseminated a few months ago on an Internet electronic bulletin board. "Little Red Riding Hood - A Politically Correct Fairy Tale" (1993), by Jim Garner, humorously portrays a grandmother who prefers baskets of fresh fruit and mineral water, and who is not sick "but rather in full physical and mental health and [is] fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult." After the wolf has followed the time-honored path to Grandma's house, devoured her ("an entirely valid course of action for a carnivore such as himself"), and hopped into her bed, Red Riding Hood arrives, saying "Grandma, I have brought you some fat-free, sodium-free snacks to salute you in your role of a wise and nurturing matriarch." As the wolf leaps up to eat Little Red Riding Hood, the "woodchopper-person" (or "'log-fuel technician', as he preferred to be called") rushes in to save the two women. "Sexist! Speciesist! How dare you assume that womyn and wolves can't solve their own problems without a man's help," cries the independent Red Riding Hood. "Grandma" jumps from the Wolf's mouth at hearing these words, snatches the "woodchopper person's" axe and beheads him. Grandma, Red Riding Hood, and the Wolf decide to "set up an alternative household based on mutual respect and cooperation." Perrault's and the Grimm brothers' moral code is mocked and subverted by the "New Age" tale's motto: "Souvent le Vice réussit à s'approprier la récompense de la Vertu."
Whether she is "La Loba," the wild woman, a "New Age" self-sufficient grandmother, an adventuresome "Tatie Danielle," or a rejuvenated Southern woman, contemporary images of the grandmother figure suggest "breaking the mold," overturning stereotypes and cultural assumptions in order presumably to achieve a more "zestful" old age, one which values connection, relationship and generativity as well as independence and activity. These images, which convey an almost Garden-of-Eden-like optimism and certainty that "zest" is within reach of every woman, suggest the need for a certain amount of skepticism. Inevitably, everyone must face dying, and for many people, there will be a discrepancy between their experience of their own body and social representations of an energetic old age. At the same time, the prevalence and accessibility of affirmation (the "oui" and "ouïe"), of positive images and roles for the "grandmother" or "crone" figure underscores the contemporary emergence of "women's voices" and may represent more than a new feminine representation in the masculine symbolic — the beginning of a discourse in which women-as-subjects create their own roles, images, and representations.

There are even indications that complementarity of roles, or the "battle of the sexes" which theories of the phallic symbolic order or a "feminine discourse" imply, is moderating in favor of the egalitarian relationships of mutuality which Badinter describes. In any case, the figure of the crone has traditionally been associated with masculinization (loss of reproductivity) just as the aging male has been viewed as "feminized" when his body approaches that state of frailty, decrepitude and incontinence which is characteristic of extreme old age. Woodward notes that Jungian psychoanalysis "envisions the
reconciliation of opposites in old age" (10), largely figured in gendered
terms. Jungian psychoanalysis "gives us the figures of the wise old man
and the wise old woman ... unthinkable in Freudian psychoanalysis"
which foregrounds instead the "figure of heroic stoicism, always male,
produced in response to the vicissitudes of the body in old age" (10).
She argues that Freudian psychoanalysis (and by extension those
theories which derive from Freudian thought) is "complicit with our
culture's repression of aging" (192), but that "other psychoanalytic
traditions and practices question the dominant discourse of Freudian
psychoanalysis" (193). The discourse of today's wise crones, whose
stories come from many cultural traditions, may present a counter-
position to the fear-driven stereotypes of the aging body, intimately
associated with the older woman, so that the very real human hopes,
losses and fears associated with aging can be discussed openly. In her
(and his) androgyny, the figures of the old wisewoman (and old wise
man) may offer the possibility of a dialogue of mutuality, whether it be
between genders or between generations.

* * * * *
NOTES

1 In *Storyteller*, Leslie Marmon Silko has re-told Simon J. Ortiz' version of this tale in her poem "Skeleton Fixer." In the Silko-Ortiz version, Old Man Badger is the Old Skeleton Fixer, and the bones he resuscitates become Old Coyote Woman, another incarnation of the Wild Woman archetype. In Estés version, "La Loba" is an old woman, who assembles bones to revivify the wolf, which transforms into a laughing woman. Silko, Ortiz, and Gunn Allen are all have roots in the Laguna Pueblo.


3 Zipes, 7.


6 Recalling the socio-economic advantages which accrued to certain powerful groups as the result of the witchcraft persecution, one might question exactly who "benefits" from the so-called "health," "vigor," and collective independence of the elderly — through form of reduced institutionalized health benefits and care for this growing population cohort, for example.
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Aging and Aging in Literature


Literary, Psychoanalytical, and Feminist Theory


Myth and Folklore; Religion and Spirituality


