The Madwoman in the Attic

THE WOMAN WRITER AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERARY IMAGINATION

SANDRA M. GILBERT
and SUSAN GUBAR

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This book is as much for Edward, Elliot, and Roger, as it is for Kathy, Molly, Sandra, Simone, Susan, and Susanna.

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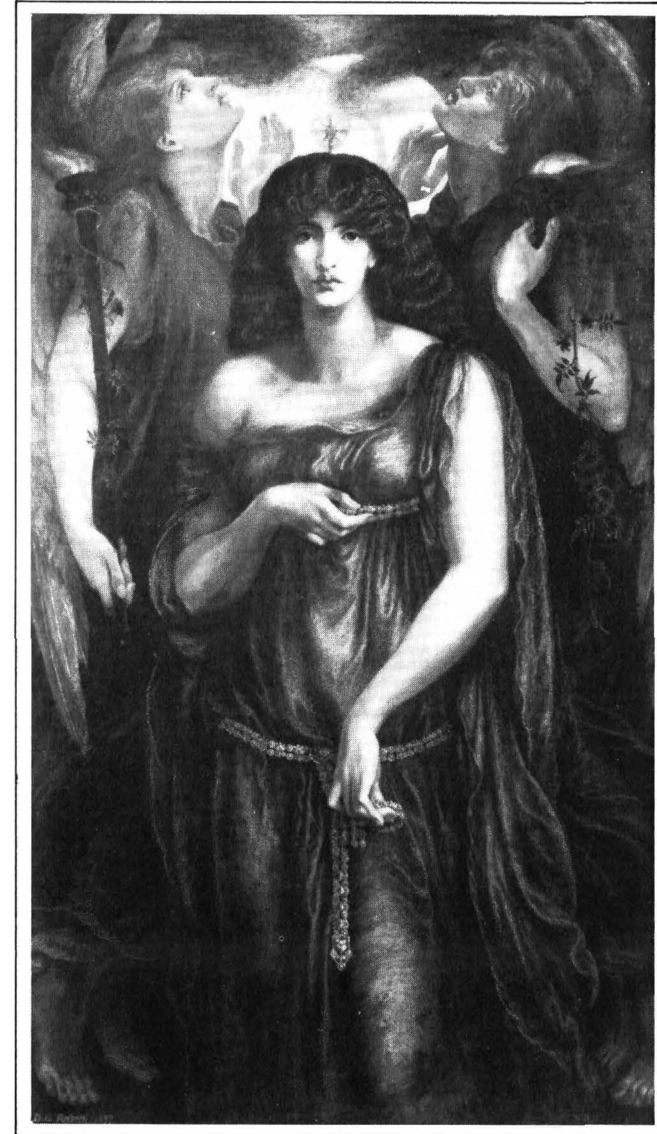
I
Toward a Feminist Poetics



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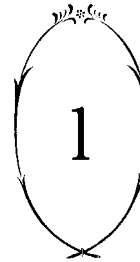


The Queen's Looking Glass: Female Creativity, Male Images of Women, and the Metaphor of Literary Paternity

> And the lady of the house was seen only as she appeared in each room, according to the nature of the lord of the room. None saw the whole of her, none but herself. For the light which she was was both her mirror and her body. None could tell the whole of her, none but herself.
>
> —Laura Riding

> Alas! A woman that attempts the pen
> Such an intruder on the rights of men,
> Such a presumptuous Creature is esteem'd
> The fault can by no vertue be redeem'd.
>
> —Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea

> As to all that nonsense Henry and Larry talked about, the necessity of "I am God" in order to create (I suppose they mean "I am God, I am not a woman"). . . . this "I am God," which makes creation an act of solitude and pride, this image of God alone making sky, earth, sea, it is this image which has confused woman.
>
> —Anaïs Nin

Is a pen a metaphorical penis? Gerard Manley Hopkins seems to have thought so. In a letter to his friend R. W. Dixon in 1886 he confided a crucial feature of his theory of poetry. The artist's "most essential quality," he declared, is "masterly execution, which is a kind of male gift, and especially marks off men from women, the begetting of one's thought on paper, on verse, or whatever the matter is." In addition, he noted that "on better consideration it strikes me that the mastery I speak of is not so much in the mind as a puberty in the life of that quality. The male quality is the creative gift."[1]

Male sexuality, in other words, is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet's pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis.

Eccentric and obscure though he was, Hopkins was articulating a concept central to that Victorian culture of which he was in this case a representative male citizen. But of course the patriarchal notion that the writer "fathers" his text just as God fathered the world is and has been all-pervasive in Western literary civilization, so much so that, as Edward Said has shown, the metaphor is built into the very word, *author*, with which writer, deity, and *pater familias* are identified. Said's miniature meditation on the word *authority* is worth quoting in full because it summarizes so much that is relevant here:

> *Authority* suggests to me a constellation of linked meanings: not only, as the OED tells us, "a power to enforce obedience," or "a derived or delegated power," or "a power to influence action," or "a power to inspire belief," or "a person whose opinion is accepted"; not only those, but a connection as well with *author*—that is, a person who originates or gives existence to something, a begetter, beginner, father, or ancestor, a person also who sets forth written statements. There is still another cluster of meanings: *author* is tied to the past participle *auctus* of the verb *augere*; therefore *auctor*, according to Eric Partridge, is literally an increaser and thus a founder. *Auctoritas* is production, invention, cause, in addition to meaning a right of possession. Finally, it means continuance, or a causing to continue. Taken together these meanings are all grounded in the following notions: (1) that of the power of an individual to initiate, institute, establish—in short, to begin; (2) that this power and its product are an increase over what had been there previously; (3) that the individual wielding this power controls its issue and what is derived therefrom; (4) that authority maintains the continuity of its course.[2]

In conclusion, Said, who is discussing "The Novel as Beginning Intention," remarks that "All four of these [last] abstractions can be used to describe the way in which narrative fiction asserts itself psychologically and aesthetically through the technical efforts of the novelist." But they can also, of course, be used to describe both the author and the authority of any literary text, a point Hopkins's sexual/aesthetic theory seems to have been designed to elaborate. Indeed, Said himself later observes that a convention of most literary texts is "that the unity or integrity of the text is maintained by a series of genealogical connections: author—text, beginning-middle-end, text—meaning, reader—interpretation, and so on. *Underneath all these is the imagery of succession, of paternity, or hierarchy*" (italics ours).[3]

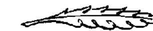
There is a sense in which the very notion of paternity is itself, as Stephen Dedalus puts it in *Ulysses*, a "legal fiction,"[4] a story requiring imagination if not faith. A man cannot verify his fatherhood by either sense or reason, after all; that his child is *his* is in a sense a tale he tells himself to explain the infant's existence. Obviously, the anxiety implicit in such storytelling urgently needs not only the reassurances of male superiority that patriarchal misogyny implies, but also such compensatory fictions of the Word as those embodied in the genealogical imagery Said describes. Thus it is possible to trace the history of this compensatory, sometimes frankly stated and sometimes submerged imagery that elaborates upon what Stephen Dedalus calls the "mystical estate" of paternity[5] through the works of many literary theoreticians besides Hopkins and Said. Defining poetry as a mirror held up to nature, the mimetic aesthetic that begins with Aristotle and descends through Sidney, Shakespeare, and Johnson implies that the poet, like a lesser God, has made or engendered an alternative, mirror-universe in which he actually seems to enclose or trap shadows of reality. Similarly, Coleridge's Romantic concept of the human "imagination or esemplastic power" is of a virile, generative force which echoes "the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM," while Ruskin's phallic-sounding "Penetrative Imagination" is a "possession-taking faculty" and a "piercing . . . mind's tongue" that seizes, cuts down, and gets at the root of experience in order "to throw up what new shoots it will."[6] In all these aesthetics the poet, like God the Father, is a paternalistic ruler of the fictive world he has created. Shelley called him a "legislator." Keats noted, speaking of writers, that "the antients [*sic*] were Emperors of vast Provinces" though "each of the moderns" is merely an "Elector of Hanover."[7]

In medieval philosophy, the network of connections among sexual, literary, and theological metaphors is equally complex: God the

Father both engenders the cosmos and, as Ernst Robert Curtius notes, writes the Book of Nature: both tropes describe a single act of creation.[8] In addition, the Heavenly Author's ultimate eschatological power is made manifest when, as the *Liber Scriptus* of the traditional requiem mass indicates, He writes the Book of Judgment. More recently, male artists like the Earl of Rochester in the seventeenth century and Auguste Renoir in the nineteenth, have frankly defined aesthetics based on male sexual delight. "I . . . never Rhym'd, but for my Pintle's [penis's] sake," declares Rochester's witty Timon,[9] and (according to the painter Bridget Riley) Renoir "is supposed to have said that he painted his paintings with his prick."[10] Clearly, both these artists believe, with Norman O. Brown, that "the penis is the head of the body," and they might both agree, too, with John Irwin's suggestion that the relationship "of the masculine self with the feminine-masculine work is also an autoerotic act . . . a kind of creative onanism in which through the use of the phallic pen on the 'pure space' of the virgin page . . . the self is continually spent and wasted. . . ."[11] No doubt it is for all these reasons, moreover, that poets have traditionally used a vocabulary derived from the patriarchal "family romance" to describe their relations with each other. As Harold Bloom has pointed out, "from the sons of Homer to the sons of Ben Jonson, poetic influence [has] been described as a filial relationship," a relationship of "*sonship*." The fierce struggle at the heart of literary history, says Bloom, is a "battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads."[12]

Though many of these writers use the metaphor of literary paternity in different ways and for different purposes, all seem overwhelmingly to agree that a literary text is not only speech quite literally embodied, but also power mysteriously made manifest, made flesh. In patriarchal Western culture, therefore, the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. More, his pen's power, like his penis's power, is not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim, as, in Said's paraphrase of Partridge, "an increaser and thus a founder." In this respect, the pen is truly mightier than its phallic counterpart the sword, and in patriarchy more resonantly sexual. Not only does the writer respond to his muse's quasi-sexual excitation with an outpouring of the aesthetic energy Hopkins called "the fine delight that fathers thought"—a delight poured seminally from pen to page—but as the author of an enduring text the writer engages the attention of the future in exactly the same way that a king (or father) "owns" the homage of the present. No sword-wielding general could rule so long or possess so vast a kingdom.

Finally, that such a notion of "ownership" or possession is embedded in the metaphor of paternity leads to yet another implication of this complex metaphor. For if the author/father is owner of his text and of his reader's attention, he is also, of course, owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes, and events—those brain children—he has both incarnated in black and white and "bound" in cloth or leather. Thus, because he is an *author*, a "man of letters" is simultaneously, like his divine counterpart, a father, a master or ruler, and an owner: the spiritual type of a patriarch, as we understand that term in Western society.



Where does such an implicitly or explicitly patriarchal theory of literature leave literary women? If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts? The question may seem frivolous, but as our epigraph from Anaïs Nin indicates, both the patriarchal etiology that defines a solitary Father God as the only creator of all things, and the male metaphors of literary creation that depend upon such an etiology, have long "confused" literary women, readers and writers alike. For what if such a proudly masculine cosmic Author is the sole legitimate model for all earthly authors? Or worse, what if the male generative power is not just the only legitimate power but the only power there is? That literary theoreticians from Aristotle to Hopkins seemed to believe this was so no doubt prevented many women from ever "attempting the pen"—to use Anne Finch's phrase—and caused enormous anxiety in generations of those women who were "presumptuous" enough to dare such an attempt. Jane Austen's Anne Elliot understates the case when she decorously observes, toward the end of *Persuasion*, that "men have had every advantage of us in telling their story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their

hands" (II, chap. 11).[13] For, as Anne Finch's complaint suggests, the pen has been defined as not just accidentally but essentially a male "tool," and therefore not only inappropriate but actually alien to women. Lacking Austen's demure irony, Finch's passionate protest goes almost as far toward the center of the metaphor of literary paternity as Hopkins's letter to Canon Dixon. Not only is "a woman that attempts the pen" an intrusive and "presumptuous Creature," she is absolutely unredeemable: no virtue can outweigh the "fault" of her presumption because she has grotesquely crossed boundaries dictated by Nature:

> They tell us, we mistake our sex and way;
> Good breeding, fassion, dancing, dressing, play
> Are the accomplishments we shou'd desire;
> To write, or read, or think, or to enquire
> Wou'd cloud our beauty, and exaust our time,
> And interrupt the conquests of our prime;
> Whilst the dull mannage, of a servile house
> Is held by some, our outmost art and use.[14]

Because they are by definition male activities, this passage implies, writing, reading, and thinking are not only alien but also inimical to "female" characteristics. One hundred years later, in a famous letter to Charlotte Brontë, Robert Southey rephrased the same notion: "Literature is not the business of a woman's life, and it cannot be."[15] It cannot be, the metaphor of literary paternity implies, because it is physiologically as well as sociologically impossible. If male sexuality is integrally associated with the assertive presence of literary power, female sexuality is associated with the absence of such power, with the idea—expressed by the nineteenth-century thinker Otto Weininger—that "woman has no share in ontological reality." As we shall see, a further implication of the paternity/creativity metaphor is the notion (implicit both in Weininger and in Southey's letter) that women exist only to be acted on by men, both as literary and as sensual objects. Again one of Anne Finch's poems explores the assumptions submerged in so many literary theories. Addressing three male poets, she exclaims:

> Happy you three! happy the Race of Men!
> Born to inform or to correct the Pen
> To proffitts pleasures freedom and command

> Whilst we beside you but as Cyphers stand
> T' increase your Numbers and to swell th' account
> Of your delights which from our charms amount
> And sadly are by this distinction taught
> That since the Fall (by our seducement wrought)
> Our is the greater losse as ours the greater fault.[16]

Since Eve's daughters have fallen so much lower than Adam's sons, this passage says, *all* females are "Cyphers"—nullities, vacancies—existing merely and punningly to increase male "Numbers" (either poems or persons) by pleasuring either men's bodies or their minds, their penises or their pens.

In that case, however, devoid of what Richard Chase once called "the masculine *élan*," and implicitly rejecting even the slavish consolations of her "femininity," a literary woman is doubly a "Cypher," for she is really a "eunuch," to use the striking figure Germaine Greer applied to all women in patriarchal society. Thus Anthony Burgess recently declared that Jane Austen's novels fail because her writing "lacks a strong male thrust," and William Gass lamented that literary women "lack that blood congested genital drive which energizes every great style."[17] The assumptions that underlie their statements were articulated more than a century ago by the nineteenth-century editor-critic Rufus Griswold. Introducing an anthology entitled *The Female Poets of America*, Griswold outlined a theory of literary sex roles which builds upon, and clarifies, these grim implications of the metaphor of literary paternity.

> It is less easy to be assured of the genuineness of literary ability in women than in men. The moral nature of women, in its finest and richest development, partakes of some of the qualities of genius; it assumes, at least, the similitude of that which in men is the characteristic or accompaniment of the highest grade of mental inspiration. We are in danger, therefore, of mistaking for the efflorescent energy of creative intelligence, that which is only the exuberance of personal "feelings unemployed." . . . The most exquisite susceptibility of the spirit, and the capacity to mirror in dazzling variety the effects which circumstances or surrounding minds work upon it, may be accompanied by *no power to originate, nor even, in any proper sense, to reproduce.* [Italics ours][18]

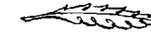
Since Griswold has actually compiled a collection of poems by women, he plainly does not believe that all women lack reproductive or generative literary power all the time. His gender-definitions imply, however, that when such creative energy appears in a woman it may be anomalous, freakish, because as a "male" characteristic it is essentially "unfeminine."

The converse of these explicit and implicit definitions of "femininity" may also be true for those who develop literary theories based upon the "mystical estate" of fatherhood: if a woman lacks generative literary power, then a man who loses or abuses such power becomes like a eunuch—or like a woman. When the imprisoned Marquis de Sade was denied "any use of pencil, ink, pen, and paper," declares Roland Barthes, he was figuratively emasculated, for "the scriptural sperm" could flow no longer, and "without exercise, without a pen, Sade [become] *bloated*, [became] a eunuch." Similarly, when Hopkins wanted to explain to R. W. Dixon the aesthetic consequences of a *lack* of male mastery, he seized upon an explanation which developed the implicit parallel between women and eunuchs, declaring that "if the life" is not "conveyed into the work and . . . displayed there . . . the product is one of those *hens' eggs* that are good to eat and look just like live ones but never hatch" (italics ours).[19] And when, late in his life, he tried to define his own sense of sterility, his thickening writer's block, he described himself (in the sonnet "The Fine Delight That Fathers Thought") both as a eunuch and *as a woman*, specifically a woman deserted by male power: "the widow of an insight lost," surviving in a diminished "winter world" that entirely lacks "the roll, the rise, the carol, the creation" of male generative power, whose "strong / Spur" is phallically "live and lancing like the blow pipe flame." And once again some lines from one of Anne Finch's plaintive protests against male literary hegemony seem to support Hopkins's image of the powerless and sterile woman artist. Remarking in the conclusion of her "Introduction" to her *Poems* that women are "to be dull / Expected and dessigned" she does not repudiate such expectations, but on the contrary admonishes herself, with bitter irony, to *be* dull:

> Be caution'd then my Muse, and still retir'd;
> Nor be dispis'd, aiming to be admir'd;

> Conscious of wants, still with contracted wing,
> To some few friends, and to thy sorrows sing;
> For groves of Lawrell, thou wert never meant;
> Be dark enough thy shades, and be thou there content.[20]

Cut off from generative energy, in a dark and wintry world, Finch seems to be defining herself here not only as a "Cypher" but as "the widow of an insight lost."



Finch's despairing (if ironic) acceptance of male expectations and designs summarizes in a single episode the coercive power not only of cultural constraints but of the literary texts which incarnate them. For it is as much from literature as from "life" that literate women learn they are "to be dull / Expected and dessigned." As Leo Bersani puts it, written "language doesn't merely describe identity but actually produces moral and perhaps even physical identity. . . . We have to allow for a kind of dissolution or at least elasticity of being induced by an immersion in literature."[21] A century and a half earlier, Jane Austen had Anne Elliot's interlocutor, Captain Harville, make a related point in *Persuasion*. Arguing women's inconstancy over Anne's heated objections, he notes that "all histories are against you—all stories, prose, and verse. . . . I could bring you fifty quotations in a moment on my side the argument, and I do not think I ever opened a book in my life which had not something to say upon woman's inconstancy" (II, chap. 11). To this Anne responds, as we have seen, that the pen has been in male hands. In the context of Harville's speech, her remark implies that women have not only been excluded from authorship but in addition they have been subjust to (and subjects of) male authority. With Chaucer's astute Wife of Bath, therefore, Anne might demand, "Who peynted the leoun, tel me who?" And, like the Wife's, her own answer to her own rhetorical question would emphasize our culture's historical confusion of literary authorship with patriarchal authority:

> By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
> As clerkes han withinne hir oratories,
> They wolde han writen of men more wikednesse
> Than all the mark of Adam may redresse.

In other words, what Bersani, Austen, and Chaucer all imply is that, precisely because a writer "fathers" his text, his literary creations (as we pointed out earlier) are his possession, his property. Having defined them in language and thus generated them, he owns them, controls them, and encloses them on the printed page. Describing his earliest sense of vocation as a writer, Jean-Paul Sartre recalled in *Les Mots* his childhood belief that "to write was to engrave new beings upon [the infinite Tables of the Word] or . . . to catch living things in the trap of phrases."[22] Naive as such a notion may seem on the face of it, it is not "wholly an illusion, for it is his [Sartre's] truth," as one commentator observes[23]—and indeed it is every writer's "truth," a truth which has traditionally led male authors to assume patriarchal rights of ownership over the female "characters" they engrave upon "the infinite Tables of the Word."

Male authors have also, of course, generated male characters over whom they would seem to have had similar rights of ownership. But further implicit in the metaphor of literary paternity is the idea that each man, arriving at what Hopkins called the "puberty" of his creative gift, has the ability, even perhaps the obligation, to talk back to other men by generating alternative fictions of his own. Lacking the pen/penis which would enable them similarly to refute one fiction by another, women in patriarchal societies have historically been reduced to *mere* properties, to characters and images imprisoned in male texts because generated solely, as Anne Elliot and Anne Finch observe, by male expectations and designs.

Like the metaphor of literary paternity itself, this corollary notion that the chief creature man has generated is woman has a long and complex history. From Eve, Minerva, Sophia, and Galatea onward, after all, patriarchal mythology defines women as created by, from, and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity. For Blake the eternal female was at her best an Emanation of the male creative principle. For Shelley she was an epi-psyche, a soul out of the poet's soul, whose inception paralleled on a spiritual plane the solider births of Eve and Minerva. Throughout the history of Western culture, moreover, male-engendered female figures as superficially disparate as Milton's Sin, Swift's Chloe, and Yeats's Crazy Jane have incarnated men's ambivalence not only toward female sexuality but toward their own (male) physicality. At the same time, male

texts, continually elaborating the metaphor of literary paternity, have continually proclaimed that, in Honoré de Balzac's ambiguous words, "woman's virtue is man's greatest invention."[24] A characteristically condensed and oracular comment by Norman O. Brown perfectly summarizes the assumptions on which all such texts are based:

> Poetry, the creative act, the act of life, the archetypal sexual act. Sexuality is poetry. The lady is our creation, or Pygmalion's statue. The lady is the poem; [Petrarch's] Laura is, really, poetry.[25]

No doubt this complex of metaphors and etiologies simply reflects not just the fiercely patriarchal structure of Western society but also the underpinning of misogyny upon which that severe patriarchy has stood. The roots of "authority" tell us, after all, that if woman is man's property then he must have authored her, just as surely as they tell us that if he authored her she must be his property. As a creation "penned" by man, moreover, woman has been "penned up" or "penned in." As a sort of "sentence" man has spoken, she has herself been "sentenced": fated, jailed, for he has both "indited" her and "indicted" her. As a thought he has "framed," she has been both "framed" (enclosed) in his texts, glyphs, graphics, and "framed up" (found guilty, found wanting) in his cosmologies. For as Humpty Dumpty tells Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*, the "master" of words, utterances, phrases, literary properties, "can manage the whole lot of them!"[26] The etymology and etiology of masculine authority are, it seems, almost necessarily identical. However, for women who felt themselves to be more than, in every sense, the properties of literary texts, the problem posed by such authority was neither metaphysical nor philological, but (as the pain expressed by Anne Finch and Anne Elliot indicates) psychological. Since both patriarchy and its texts subordinate and imprison women, before women can even attempt that pen which is so rigorously kept from them they must escape just those male texts which, defining them as "Cyphers," deny them the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority that has imprisoned them and kept them from attempting the pen.

The vicious circularity of this problem helps explain the curious passivity with which Finch responded (or pretended to respond) to

male expectations and designs, and it helps explain, too, the centuries-long silence of so many women who must have had talents comparable to Finch's. A final paradox of the metaphor of literary paternity is the fact that in the same way an author both generates and imprisons his fictive creatures, he silences them by depriving them of autonomy (that is, of the power of independent speech) even as he gives them life. He silences them and, as Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" suggests, he stills them, or—embedding them in the marble of his art—kills them. As Albert Gelpi neatly puts it, "the artist kills experience into art, for temporal experience can only escape death by dying into the 'immortality' of artistic form. The fixity of 'life' in art and the fluidity of 'life' in nature are incompatible."[27] The pen, therefore, is not only mightier than the sword, it is also *like* the sword in its power—its need, even—to kill. And this last attribute of the pen once again seems to be associatively linked with its metaphorical maleness. Simone de Beauvoir has commented that the human male's "transcendence" of nature is symbolized by his ability to hunt and kill, just as the human female's identification with nature, her role as a symbol of immanence, is expressed by her central involvement in that life-giving but involuntary birth process which perpetuates the species. Thus, superiority—or authority—"has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills."[28] In D. H. Lawrence's words, "the Lords of Life are the Masters of Death"—and therefore, patriarchal poetics implies, they are the masters of art.[29]

Commentators on female subordination from Freud and Horney to de Beauvoir, Wolfgang Lederer, and most recently, Dorothy Dinnerstein, have of course explored other aspects of the relationship between the sexes that also lead men to want figuratively to "kill" women. What Horney called male "dread" of the female is a phenomenon to which Lederer has devoted a long and scholarly book.[30] Elaborating on de Beauvoir's assertion that as mother of life "woman's first lie, her first treason [seems to be] that of life itself—life which, though clothed in the most attractive forms, is always infested by the ferments of age and death," Lederer remarks upon woman's own tendency to "kill" *herself* into art in order "to appeal to man":

> From the Paleolithic on, we have evidence that woman, through careful coiffure, through adornment and makeup, tried to stress the eternal type rather than the mortal self. Such makeup, in Africa or Japan, may reach the, to us, somewhat estranging degree of a lifeless mask—and yet that is precisely the purpose of it: where nothing is lifelike, nothing speaks of death.[31]

For yet another reason, then, it is no wonder that women have historically hesitated to attempt the pen. Authored by a male God and by a godlike male, killed into a "perfect" image of herself, the woman writer's self-contemplation may be said to have begun with a searching glance into the mirror of the male-inscribed literary text. There she would see at first only those eternal lineaments fixed on her like a mask to conceal her dreadful and bloody link to nature. But looking long enough, looking hard enough, she would see—like the speaker of Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's "The Other Side of the Mirror"—an enraged prisoner: herself. The poem describing this vision is central to the feminist poetics we are trying to construct:

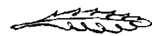
> I sat before my glass one day,
>   And conjured up a vision bare,
> Unlike the aspects glad and gay,
>   That erst were found reflected there—
> The vision of a woman, wild
>   With more than womanly despair.
>
> Her hair stood back on either side
>   A face bereft of loveliness.
> It had no envy now to hide
>   What once no man on earth could guess.
> It formed the thorny aureole
>   Of hard unsanctified distress.
>
> Her lips were open—not a sound
>   Came through the parted lines of red.
> Whate'er it was, the hideous wound
>   In silence and in secret bled.
> No sigh relieved her speechless woe,
>   She had no voice to speak her dread.
>
> And in her lurid eyes there shone
>   The dying flame of life's desire,
> Made mad because its hope was gone,

And kindled at the leaping fire
Of jealousy, and fierce revenge,
And strength that could not change nor tire.

Shade of a shadow in the glass,
O set the crystal surface free!
Pass—as the fairer visions pass—
Nor ever more return, to be
The ghost of a distracted hour,
That heard me whisper, 'I am she!'[32]

What this poem suggests is that, although the woman who is the prisoner of the mirror/text's images has "no voice to speak her dread," although "no sigh" interrupts "her speechless woe," she has an invincible sense of her own autonomy, her own interiority; she has a sense, to paraphrase Chaucer's Wife of Bath, of the authority of her own experience.[33] The power of metaphor, says Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's poem, can only extend so far. Finally, no human creature can be completely silenced by a text or by an image. Just as stories notoriously have a habit of "getting away" from their authors, human beings since Eden have had a habit of defying authority, both divine and literary.[34]

Once more the debate in which Austen's Anne Elliot and her Captain Harville engage is relevant here, for it is surely no accident that the question these two characters are discussing is woman's "inconstancy"—her refusal, that is, to be fixed or "killed" by an author/owner, her stubborn insistence on her own way. That male authors berate her for this refusal even while they themselves generate female characters who (as we shall see) perversely display "monstrous" autonomy is one of the ironies of literary art. From a female perspective, however, such "inconstancy" can only be encouraging, for—implying duplicity—it suggests that women themselves have the power to create themselves as characters, even perhaps the power to reach toward the woman trapped on the other side of the mirror/text and help her to climb out.



Before the woman writer can journey through the looking glass toward literary autonomy, however, she must come to terms with

the images on the surface of the glass, with, that is, those mythic masks male artists have fastened over her human face both to lessen their dread of her "inconstancy" and—by identifying her with the "eternal types" they have themselves invented—to possess her more thoroughly. Specifically, as we will try to show here, a woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of "angel" and "monster" which male authors have generated for her. Before we women can write, declared Virginia Woolf, we must "kill" the "angel in the house."[35] In other words, women must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been "killed" into art. And similarly, all women writers must kill the angel's necessary opposite and double, the "monster" in the house, whose Medusa-face also kills female creativity. For us as feminist critics, however, the Woolfian act of "killing" both angels and monsters must here begin with an understanding of the nature and origin of these images. At this point in our construction of a feminist poetics, then, we really must dissect in order to murder. And we must particularly do this in order to understand literature by women because, as we shall show, the images of "angel" and "monster" have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men that they have also pervaded women's writing to such an extent that few women have definitively "killed" either figure. Rather, the female imagination has perceived itself, as it were, through a glass darkly: until quite recently the woman writer has had (if only unconsciously) to define herself as a mysterious creature who resides behind the angel or monster or angel/monster image that lives on what Mary Elizabeth Coleridge called "the crystal surface."

For all literary artists, of course, self-definition necessarily precedes self-assertion: the creative "I AM" cannot be uttered if the "I" knows not what it is. But for the female artist the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself. From Anne Finch's Ardelia, who struggles to escape the male designs in which she feels herself enmeshed, to Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus," who tells "Herr Doktor . . . Herr Enemy" that "I am your opus, / I am your valuable,"[36] the woman writer acknowledges with pain, confusion, and anger that what she sees in the mirror is usually a male construct, the "pure gold baby" of male brains, a glittering and wholly artificial

child. With Christina Rossetti, moreover, she realizes that the male artist often "feeds" upon his female subject's face "not as she is but as she fills his dreams."[37] Finally, as "A Woman's Poem" of 1859 simply puts it, the woman writer insists that "You [men] make the worlds wherein you move. . . . Our world (alas you make that too!)" —and in its narrow confines, "shut in four blank walls . . . we act our parts."[38]

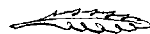
Though the highly stylized women's roles to which this last poem alludes are all ultimately variations upon the roles of angel and monster, they seem on the surface quite varied, because so many masks, reflecting such an elaborate typology, have been invented for women. A crucial passage from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* suggests both the mystifying deathliness and the mysterious variety female artists perceive in male imagery of women. Contemplating a portrait of her mother which, significantly, was made after its subject was dead (so that it is a kind of death mask, an image of a woman metaphorically killed into art) the young Aurora broods on the work's iconography. Noting that her mother's chambermaid had insisted upon having her dead mistress painted in "the red stiff silk" of her court dress rather than in an "English-fashioned shroud," she remarks that the effect of this unlikely costume was "very strange." As the child stared at the painting, her mother's "swan-like supernatural white life" seemed to mingle with "whatever I last read, or heard, or dreamed," and thus in its charismatic beauty, her mother's image became

by turns
Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite;
A dauntless Muse who eyes a dreadful Fate;
A loving Psyche who loses sight of Love;
A still Medusa with mild milky brows,
All curdled and all clothed upon with snakes
Whose slime falls fast as sweat will; or anon
Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed with swords
Where the Babe sucked; or Lamia in her first
Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk and blinked,
And shuddering wriggled down to the unclean;
Or my own mother, leaving her last smile
In her last kiss upon the baby-mouth
My father pushed down on the bed for that;
Or my dead mother, without smile or kiss,
Buried at Florence.[39]

The female forms Aurora sees in her dead mother's picture are extreme, melodramatic, gothic—"Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite"—specifically, as she tells us, because her reading merges with her seeing. What this implies, however, is not only that she herself is fated to inhabit male-defined masks and costumes, as her mother did, but that male-defined masks and costumes inevitably inhabit *her*, altering her vision. Aurora's self-development as a poet is the central concern of Barrett Browning's *Bildungsroman* in verse, but if she is to be a poet she must deconstruct the dead self that is a male "opus" and discover a living, "inconstant" self. She must, in other words, replace the "copy" with the "individuality," as Barrett Browning once said she thought she herself had done in her mature art.[40] Significantly, however, the "copy" selves depicted in Aurora's mother's portrait ultimately represent, once again, the moral extremes of angel ("angel," "fairy," and perhaps "sprite") and monster ("ghost," "witch," "fiend").

In her brilliant and influential analysis of the question "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" the anthropologist Sherry Ortner notes that in every society "the psychic mode associated with women seems to stand at both the bottom and the top of the scale of human modes of relating." Attempting to account for this "symbolic ambiguity," Ortner explains "both the subversive feminine symbols (witches, evil eye, menstrual pollution, castrating mothers) and the feminine symbols of transcendence (mother goddesses, merciful dispensers of salvation, female symbols of justice)" by pointing out that women "can appear from certain points of view to stand both under and over (but really simply outside of) the sphere of culture's hegemony."[41] That is, precisely because a woman is denied the autonomy—the subjectivity—that the pen represents, she is not only excluded from culture (whose emblem might well be the pen) but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious and intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing. As "Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy,

witch, and sprite," she mediates between the male artist and the Unknown, simultaneously teaching him purity and instructing him in degradation. But what of her own artistic growth? Because that growth has for so long been radically qualified by the angel- and monster-imagery the literary woman sees in the looking glass of the male-authored text, some understanding of such imagery is an essential preliminary to any study of literature by women. As Joan Didion recently noted, "writing is an aggression" precisely because it is "an imposition . . . an invasion of someone else's most private space."[42] Like Leo Bersani's observation that an "elasticity of being [is] induced by an immersion in literature," her remark has special significance in this connection. A thorough study of those male constructs which have invaded the "most private space" of countless literate women would require hundreds of pages—indeed, a number of excellent books have been devoted to the subject[43]—but we will attempt here a brief review of the fundamental extremes of angel and monster, in order to demonstrate the severity of the male text's "imposition" upon women.



The ideal woman that male authors dream of generating is always an angel, as Norman O. Brown's comment about Laura/poetry suggested. At the same time, from Virginia Woolf's point of view, the "angel in the house" is the most pernicious image male authors have ever imposed upon literary women. Where and how did this ambiguous image originate, particularly the trivialized Victorian angel in the house that so disturbed Woolf? In the Middle Ages, of course, mankind's great teacher of purity was the Virgin Mary, a mother goddess who perfectly fitted the female role Ortner defines as "merciful dispenser of salvation." For the more secular nineteenth century, however, the eternal type of female purity was represented not by a madonna in heaven but by an angel in the house. Nevertheless, there is a clear line of literary descent from divine Virgin to domestic angel, passing through (among many others) Dante, Milton, and Goethe.

Like most Renaissance neo-Platonists, Dante claimed to know God and His Virgin handmaid by knowing the Virgin's virgin attendant,

Beatrice. Similarly, Milton, despite his undeniable misogyny (which we shall examine later), speaks of having been granted a vision of "my late espoused saint," who

> Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.
> Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight,
> Love sweetness goodness, in her person shined
> So clear, as in no face with more delight.

In death, in other words, Milton's human wife has taken on both the celestial brightness of Mary and (since she has been "washed from spot of childbed taint") the virginal purity of Beatrice. In fact, if she could be resurrected in the flesh she might now be an angel in the house, interpreting heaven's luminous mysteries to her wondering husband.

The famous vision of the "Eternal Feminine" (*Das Ewig-Weibliche*) with which Goethe's *Faust* concludes presents women from penitent prostitutes to angelic virgins in just this role of interpreters or intermediaries between the divine Father and his human sons. The German of *Faust's* "Chorus Mysticus" is extraordinarily difficult to translate in verse, but Hans Eichner's English paraphrase easily suggests the ways in which Goethe's image of female intercessors seems almost to be a revision of Milton's "late espoused saint": "All that is transitory is merely symbolical; here (that is to say, in the scene before you) the inaccessible is (symbolically) portrayed and the inexpressible is (symbolically) made manifest. The eternal feminine (i.e. the eternal principle symbolized by woman) draws us to higher spheres." Meditating on the exact nature of this eternal feminine, moreover, Eichner comments that for Goethe the "ideal of contemplative purity" is always feminine while "the ideal of significant action is masculine."[44] Once again, therefore, it is just because women are defined as wholly passive, completely void of generative power (like "Cyphers") that they become numinous to male artists. For in the metaphysical emptiness their "purity" signifies they are, of course, *self-less*, with all the moral and psychological implications that word suggests.

Elaborating further on Goethe's eternal feminine, Eichner gives an example of the culmination of Goethe's "chain of representatives

of the 'noblest femininity'": Makarie, in the late novel *Wilhelm Meister's Travels.* His description of her usefully summarizes the philosophical background of the angel in the house:

> She . . . leads a life of almost pure contemplation. . . . in considerable isolation on a country estate . . . a life without external events—a life whose story cannot be told as there is no story. Her existence is not useless. On the contrary . . . she shines like a beacon in a dark world, like a motionless lighthouse by which others, the travellers whose lives do have a story, can set their course. When those involved in feeling and action turn to her in their need, they are never dismissed without advice and consolation. She is an ideal, a model of selflessness and of purity of heart.[45]

She has no story of her own but gives "advice and consolation" to others, listens, smiles, sympathizes: such characteristics show that Makarie is not only the descendent of Western culture's cloistered virgins but also the direct ancestress of Coventry Patmore's angel in the house, the eponymous heroine of what may have been the middle nineteenth century's most popular book of poems.

Dedicated to "the memory of her by whom and for whom I became a poet," Patmore's *The Angel in the House* is a verse-sequence which hymns the praises and narrates the courtship and marriage of Honoria, one of the three daughters of a country Dean, a girl whose unselfish grace, gentleness, simplicity, and nobility reveal that she is not only a pattern Victorian lady but almost literally an angel on earth. Certainly her spirituality interprets the divine for her poet-husband, so that

> No happier post than this I ask,
> To live her laureate all my life.
> On wings of love uplifted free,
> And by her gentleness made great,
> I'll teach how noble man should be
> To match with such a lovely mate.[46]

Honoria's essential virtue, in other words, is that her virtue makes her *man* "great." In and of herself, she is neither great nor extraordinary. Indeed, Patmore adduces many details to stress the almost pathetic

ordinariness of her life: she picks violets, loses her gloves, feeds her birds, waters her rose plot, and journeys to London on a train with her father the Dean, carrying in her lap a volume of Petrarch borrowed from her lover but entirely ignorant that the book is, as he tells us, "worth its weight in gold." In short, like Goethe's Makarie, Honoria has no story except a sort of anti-story of selfless innocence based on the notion that "Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure."[47]

Significantly, when the young poet-lover first visits the Deanery where his Honoria awaits him like Sleeping Beauty or Snow White, one of her sisters asks him if, since leaving Cambridge, he has "outgrown" Kant and Goethe. But if his paean of praise to the *Ewig-Weibliche* in rural England suggests that he has not, at any rate, outgrown the latter of these, that is because for Victorian men of letters Goethe represented not collegiate immaturity but moral maturity. After all, the climactic words of *Sartor Resartus*, that most influential masterpiece of Victorian sagacity, were "Close thy *Byron;* open thy *Goethe*,"[48] and though Carlyle was not specifically thinking of what came to be called "the woman question," his canonization of Goethe meant, among other things, a new emphasis on the eternal feminine, the angel woman Patmore describes in his verses, Aurora Leigh perceives in her mother's picture, and Virginia Woolf shudders to remember.

Of course, from the eighteenth century on, conduct books for ladies had proliferated, enjoining young girls to submissiveness, modesty, self-lessness; reminding all women that they should be angelic. There is a long and crowded road from *The Booke of Curtesye* (1477) to the columns of "Dear Abby," but social historians have fully explored its part in the creation of those "eternal feminine" virtues of modesty, gracefulness, purity, delicacy, civility, compliancy, reticence, chastity, affability, politeness—all of which are modes of mannerliness that contributed to Honoria's angelic innocence. Ladies were assured by the writers of such conduct books that "There are Rules for all our Actions, even down to Sleeping with a good Grace," and they were told that this good Grace was a woman's duty to her husband because "if Woman owes her Being to the Comfort and Profit of man, 'tis highly reasonable that she should be careful and diligent to content and please him."[49]

The arts of pleasing men, in other words, are not only angelic characteristics; in more worldly terms, they are the proper acts of a lady. "What shall I do to gratify myself or to be admired?" is not the question a lady asks on arising, declared Mrs. Sarah Ellis, Victorian England's foremost preceptress of female morals and manners, in 1844. No, because she is "the least engaged of any member of the household," a woman of right feeling should devote herself to the good of others.[50] And she should do this silently, without calling attention to her exertions because "all that would tend to draw away her thoughts from others and fix them on herself, ought to be avoided as an evil to her."[51] Similarly, John Ruskin affirmed in 1865 that the woman's "power is not for rule, not for battle, and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet orderings" of domesticity.[52] Plainly, both writers meant that, enshrined within her home, a Victorian angel-woman should become her husband's holy refuge from the blood and sweat that inevitably accompanies a "life of significant action," as well as, in her "contemplative purity," a living *memento* of the otherness of the divine.

At times, however, in the severity of her selflessness, as well as in the extremity of her alienation from ordinary fleshly life, this nineteenth-century angel-woman becomes not just a memento of otherness but actually a *memento mori* or, as Alexander Welsh has noted, an "Angel of Death." Discussing Dickens's heroines in particular and what he calls Victorian "angelology" in general, Welsh analyzes the ways in which a spiritualized heroine like Florence Dombey "assists in the translation of the dying to a future state," not only by officiating at the sickbed but also by maternally welcoming the sufferer "from the other side of death."[53] But if the angel-woman in some curious way simultaneously inhabits both this world and the next, then there is a sense in which, besides ministering to the dying, she is herself already dead. Welsh muses on "the apparent reversibility of the heroine's role, whereby the acts of dying and of saving someone from death seem confused," and he points out that Dickens actually describes Florence Dombey as having the unearthly serenity of one who is dead.[54] A spiritual messenger, an interpreter of mysteries to wondering and devoted men, the *Ewig-Weibliche* angel becomes, finally, a messenger of the mystical otherness of death.

As Ann Douglas has recently shown, the nineteenth-century cult

of such death-angels as Harriet Beecher Stowe's little Eva or Dickens's little Nell resulted in a veritable "domestication of death," producing both a conventionalized iconography and a stylized hagiography of dying women and children.[55] Like Dickens's dead-alive Florence Dombey, for instance, Louisa May Alcott's dying Beth March is a household saint, and the deathbed at which she surrenders herself to heaven is the ultimate shrine of the angel-woman's mysteries. At the same time, moreover, the aesthetic cult of ladylike fragility and delicate beauty—no doubt associated with the moral cult of the angel-woman—obliged "genteel" women to "kill" themselves (as Lederer observed) into art objects: slim, pale, passive beings whose "charms" eerily recalled the snowy, porcelain immobility of the dead. Tight-lacing, fasting, vinegar-drinking, and similar cosmetic or dietary excesses were all parts of a physical regimen that helped women either to feign morbid weakness or actually to "decline" into real illness. Beth March's beautiful ladylike sister Amy is thus, in her artful way, as pale and frail as her consumptive sibling, and together these two heroines constitute complementary halves of the emblematic "beautiful woman" whose *death*, thought Edgar Allan Poe, "is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world."[56]

Whether she becomes an *objet d'art* or a saint, however, it is the surrender of her self—of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both—that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act, while it is precisely this sacrifice which dooms her both to death and to heaven. For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. A life that has no story, like the life of Goethe's Makarie, is really a life of death, a death-in-life. The ideal of "contemplative purity" evokes, finally, both heaven and the grave. To return to Aurora Leigh's catalogue, then—her vision of "Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite" in her mother's portrait—there is a sense in which as a celestial "angel" Aurora's mother is also a somewhat sinister "ghost," because she wears the face of the spiritualized Victorian woman who, having died to her own desires, her own self, her own life, leads a posthumous existence in her own lifetime.

As Douglas reminds us too, though, the Victorian domestication of death represents not just an acquiescence in death by the selfless, but also a secret striving for power by the powerless. "The tombstone," she notes, "is the sacred emblem in the cult of the overlooked."[57]

Exorcised from public life, denied the pleasures (though not the pains) of sensual existence, the Victorian angel in the house was allowed to hold sway over at least one realm beyond her own household: the kingdom of the dead. But if, as nurse and comforter, spirit-guide and mystical messenger, a woman ruled the dying and the dead, might not even her admirers sometimes fear that, besides dying or easing death, she could *bring* death? As Welsh puts it, "the power of an angel to save implies, even while it denies, the power of death." Speaking of angelic Agnes Wickfield (in *David Copperfield*), he adds a sinister but witty question: "Who, in the language of detective fiction, was the last person to see Dora Copperfield alive?"[58]

Neither Welsh nor Dickens does more than hint at the angel-woman's pernicious potential. But in this context a word to the wise is enough, for such a hint helps explain the fluid metamorphoses that the figure of Aurora's mother undergoes. Her images of "Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch and sprite," we begin to see, are inextricably linked, one to another, each to its opposite. Certainly, imprisoned in the coffinlike shape of a death angel, a woman might long demonically for escape. In addition, if as death angel the woman suggests a providentially selfless mother, delivering the male soul from one realm to another, the same woman's maternal power implies, too, the fearful bondage of mortality into which every mother delivers her children. Finally, the fact that the angel woman manipulates her domestic/mystical sphere in order to ensure the well-being of those entrusted to her care reveals that she *can* manipulate; she can scheme; she can plot—stories as well as strategies.

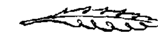
The Victorian angel's scheming, her mortal fleshliness, and her repressed (but therefore all the more frightening) capacity for explosive rage are often subtly acknowledged, even in the most glowing texts of male "angelographers." Patmore's Honoria, for instance, proves to be considerably more duplicitous than at first she seemed. "To the sweet folly of the dove," her poet-lover admits, "She joins the cunning of the snake." To be sure, the speaker shows that her wiliness is exercised in a "good" cause: "to rivet and exalt his love." Nevertheless,

> Her mode of candour is deceit;
> And what she thinks from what she'll say

> (Although I'll never call her cheat)
> Lies far as Scotland from Cathay.[59]

Clearly, the poet is here acknowledging his beloved's potential for what Austen's Captain Harville called "inconstancy"—that is, her stubborn autonomy and unknowable subjectivity, meaning the ineradicable selfishness that underlies even her angelic renunciation of self.

Similarly, exploring analogous tensions between flesh and spirit in yet another version of the angel-woman, Dante Gabriel Rossetti places his "Blessed Damozel" behind "golden barriers" in heaven, but then observes that she is still humanly embodied. The bars she leans on are oddly warm; her voice, her hair, her tears are weirdly real and sensual, perhaps to emphasize the impossibility of complete spirituality for any woman. This "damozel's" life-in-death, at any rate, is still in some sense physical and therefore (paradoxically) emblematic of mortality. But though Rossetti wrote "The Blessed Damozel" in 1846, sixteen years before the suicide of his wife and model Elizabeth Siddal, the secret anxieties such imagery expressed came to the surface long after Lizzie's death. In 1869, to retrieve a poetry manuscript he had sentimentally buried with this beloved woman whose face "fill[ed] his dreams"—buried as if woman and artwork were necessarily inseparable—Rossetti had Lizzie's coffin exhumed, and literary London buzzed with rumors that her hair had "continued to grow after her death, to grow so long, so beautiful, so luxuriantly as to fill the coffin with its gold!"[60] As if symbolizing the indomitable earthliness that no woman, however angelic, could entirely renounce, Lizzie Siddal Rossetti's hair leaps like a metaphor for monstrous female sexual energies from the literal and figurative coffins in which her artist-husband enclosed her. To Rossetti, its assertive radiance made the dead Lizzie seem both terrifyingly physical and fiercely supernatural. "'Mid change the changeless night environeth, / Lies all that golden hair undimmed in death," he wrote.[61]



If we define a woman like Rossetti's dead wife as indomitably earthly yet somehow supernatural, we are defining her as a witch or

monster, a magical creature of the lower world who is a kind of antithetical mirror image of an angel. As such, she still stands, in Sherry Ortner's words, "both under and over (but really simply outside of) the sphere of culture's hegemony." But now, as a representative of otherness, she incarnates the damning otherness of the flesh rather than the inspiring otherness of the spirit, expressing what—to use Anne Finch's words—men consider her own "presumptuous" desires rather than the angelic humility and "dullness" for which she was designed. Indeed, if we return to the literary definitions of "authority" with which we began this discussion, we will see that the monster-woman, threatening to replace her angelic sister, embodies intransigent female autonomy and thus represents both the author's power to allay "his" anxieties by calling their source bad names (witch, bitch, fiend, monster) and, simultaneously, the mysterious power of the character who refuses to stay in her textually ordained "place" and thus generates a story that "gets away" from its author.

Because, as Dorothy Dinnerstein has proposed, male anxieties about female autonomy probably go as deep as everyone's mother-dominated infancy, patriarchal texts have traditionally suggested that every angelically selfless Snow White must be hunted, if not haunted, by a wickedly assertive Stepmother: for every glowing portrait of submissive women enshrined in domesticity, there exists an equally important negative image that embodies the sacrilegious fiendishness of what William Blake called the "Female Will." Thus, while male writers traditionally praise the simplicity of the dove, they invariably castigate the cunning of the serpent—at least when that cunning is exercised in her own behalf. Similarly, assertiveness, aggressiveness—all characteristics of a male life of "significant action"—are "monstrous" in women precisely because "unfeminine" and therefore unsuited to a gentle life of "contemplative purity." Musing on "The Daughter of Eve," Patmore's poet-speaker remarks, significantly, that

> The woman's gentle mood o'erstept
> Withers my love, that lightly scans
> The rest, and does in her accept
> All her own faults, but none of man's.[62]

Luckily, his Honoria has no such vicious defects; her serpentine cunning, as we noted earlier, is concentrated entirely on pleasing her lover. But repeatedly, throughout most male literature, a sweet heroine inside the house (like Honoria) is opposed to a vicious bitch outside.

Behind Thackeray's angelically submissive Amelia Sedley, for instance—an Honoria whose career is traced in gloomier detail than that of Patmore's angel—lurks *Vanity Fair*'s stubbornly autonomous Becky Sharp, an independent "charmer" whom the novelist at one point actually describes as a monstrous and snaky sorceress:

> In describing this siren, singing and smiling, coaxing and cajoling, the author, with modest pride, asks his readers all around, has he once forgotten the laws of politeness, and showed the monster's hideous tail above water? No! Those who like may peep down under waves that are pretty transparent, and see it writhing and twirling, diabolically hideous and slimy, flapping amongst bones, or curling around corpses; but above the water line, I ask, has not everything been proper, agreeable, and decorous. . . .[63]

As this extraordinary passage suggests, the monster may not only be concealed *behind* the angel, she may actually turn out to reside *within* (or in the lower half of) the angel. Thus, Thackeray implies, every angel in the house—"proper, agreeable, and decorous," "coaxing and cajoling" hapless men—is really, perhaps, a monster, "diabolically hideous and slimy."

"A woman in the shape of a monster," Adrienne Rich observes in "Planetarium," "a monster in the shape of a woman / the skies are full of them."[64] Because the skies *are* full of them, even if we focus only on those female monsters who are directly related to Thackeray's serpentine siren, we will find that such monsters have long inhabited male texts. Emblems of filthy materiality, committed only to their own private ends, these women are accidents of nature, deformities meant to repel, but in their very freakishness they possess unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts. Moreover, to the extent that they incarnate male dread of women and, specifically, male scorn of female creativity, such characters have drastically affected the

self-images of women writers, negatively reinforcing those messages of submissiveness conveyed by their angelic sisters.

The first book of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* introduces a female monster who serves as a prototype of the entire line. *Errour* is half woman, half serpent, "Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine" (1.1.126). She breeds in a dark den where her young suck on her poisonous dugs or creep back into her mouth at the sight of hated light, and in battle against the noble Red-crosse Knight, she spews out a flood of books and papers, frogs and toads. Symbolizing the dangerous effect of misdirected and undigested learning, her filthiness adumbrates that of two other powerful females in book 1, Duessa and Lucifera. But because these other women can create false appearances to hide their vile natures, they are even more dangerous.

Like Errour, Duessa is deformed below the waist, as if to foreshadow *Lear*'s "But to the girdle do the Gods inherit, Beneath is all the fiend's." When, like all witches, she must do penance at the time of the new moon by bathing with herbs traditionally used by such other witches as Scylla, Circe, and Medea, her "neather parts" are revealed as "misshapen, monstruous."[65] But significantly, Duessa deceives and ensnares men by assuming the shape of Una, the beautiful and angelic heroine who represents Christianity, charity, docility. Similarly, Lucifera lives in what seems to be a lovely mansion, a cunningly constructed House of Pride whose weak foundation and ruinous rear quarters are carefully concealed. Both women use their arts of deception to entrap and destroy men, and the secret, shameful ugliness of both is closely associated with their hidden genitals—that is, with their femaleness.

Descending from Patristic misogynists like Tertullian and St. Augustine through Renaissance and Restoration literature—through Sidney's Cecropia, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth and his Goneril and Regan, Milton's Sin (and even, as we shall see, his Eve)—the female monster populates the works of the satirists of the eighteenth century, a company of male artists whose virulent visions must have been particularly alarming to feminine readers in an age when women had just begun to "attempt the pen." These authors attacked literary women on two fronts. First, and most obviously, through the construction of cartoon figures like Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop and

Fielding's Mrs. Slipslop, and Smollett's Tabitha Bramble, they implied that language itself was almost literally alien to the female tongue. In the mouths of women, vocabulary loses meaning, sentences dissolve, literary messages are distorted or destroyed. At the same time, more subtly but perhaps for that reason even more significantly, such authors devised elaborate anti-romances to show that the female "angel" was really a female "fiend," the ladylike paragon really an unladylike monster. Thus while the "Bluestocking" Anne Finch would find herself directly caricatured (as she was by Pope and Gay) as a character afflicted with the "poetical Itch" like Phoebe Clinket in *Three Hours After Marriage*,[66] she might well feel herself to be indirectly but even more profoundly attacked by Johnson's famous observation that a woman preacher was like a dog standing on its hind legs, or by the suggestion—embedded in works by Swift, Pope, Gay, and others—that *all* women were inexorably and inescapably monstrous, in the flesh as well as in the spirit. Finally, in a comment like Horace Walpole's remark that Mary Wollstonecraft was "a hyena in petticoats," the two kinds of misogynistic attacks definitively merged.[67]

It is significant, then, that Jonathan Swift's disgust with the monstrous females who populate so many of his verses seems to have been caused specifically by the inexorable failure of female art. Like disgusted Gulliver, who returns to England only to prefer the stable to the parlor, his horses to his wife, Swift projects his horror of time, his dread of physicality, on to another stinking creature—the degenerate woman. Probably the most famous instance of this projection occurs in his so-called dirty poems. In these works, we peer behind the facade of the angel woman to discover that, say, the idealized "Caelia, Caelia, Caelia, shits!" We discover that the seemingly unblemished Chloe must "either void or burst," and that the female "inner space" of the "Queen of Love" is like a foul chamber pot.[68] Though some critics have suggested that the misogyny implied by Swift's characterizations of these women is merely ironic, what emerges from his most furious poems in this vein is a horror of female flesh and a revulsion at the inability—the powerlessness—of female arts to redeem or to transform the flesh. Thus for Swift female sexuality is consistently equated with degeneration, disease, and death, while female arts are trivial attempts to forestall an inevitable end.

Significantly, as if defining the tradition of duplicity in which even Patmore's uxorious speaker placed his heroine, Swift devotes many poems to an examination of the role deception plays in the creation of a saving but inadequate fiction of femininity. In "A Beautiful Young Nymph," a battered prostitute removes her wig, her crystal eye, her teeth, and her padding at bedtime, so that the next morning she must employ all her "Arts" to reconstruct her "scatter'd Parts."[69] Such as they are, however, her arts only contribute to her own suffering or that of others, and the same thing is true of Diana in "The Progress of Beauty," who awakes as a mingled mass of dirt and sweat, with cracked lips, foul teeth, and gummy eyes, to spend four hours artfully reconstructing herself. Because she is inexorably rotting away, however, Swift declares that eventually all forms will fail, for "Art no longer can prevayl / When the Materialls all are gone."[70] The strategies of Chloe, Caelia, Corinna, and Diana—artists manqué all—have no success, Swift shows, except in temporarily staving off dissolution, for like Pope's "Sex of Queens," Swift's females are composed of what Pope called "Matter too soft," and their arts are thus always inadequate.[71]

No wonder, then, that the Augustan satirist attacks the female scribbler so virulently, reinforcing Anne Finch's doleful sense that for a woman to attempt the pen is monstrous and "presumptuous," for she is "to be dull / Expected and dessigned." At least in part reflecting male artists' anxieties about the adequacy of their *own* arts, female writers are maligned as failures in eighteenth-century satire precisely because they cannot transcend their female bodily limitations: they cannot *conceive* of themselves in any but reproductive terms. Poor Phoebe Clinket, for instance, is both a caricature of Finch herself and a prototype of the female dunce who proves that literary creativity in women is merely the result of sexual frustration. Lovingly nurturing the unworthy "issue" of her muse because it attests to the "Fertility and Readiness" of her imagination, Phoebe is as sensual and indiscriminate in her poetic strainings as Lady Townley is in her insatiable erotic longings.[72] Like mothers of illegitimate or misshapen offspring, female writers are not producing what they ought, the satirists declare, so that a loose lady novelist is, appropriately enough, the first prize in *The Dunciad*'s urinary contest, while a chamberpot is awarded to the runner-up.

For the most part, eighteenth-century satirists limited their depiction of the female monster to low mimetic equivalents like Phoebe Clinket or Swift's corroding coquettes. But there were several important avatars of the monster woman who retained the allegorical anatomy of their more fantastic precursors. In *The Battle of the Books*, for instance, Swift's "Goddess Criticism" clearly symbolizes the demise of wit and learning. Devouring numberless volumes in a den as dark as Errour's, she is surrounded by relatives like Ignorance, Pride, Opinion, Noise, Impudence, and Pedantry, and she herself is as allegorically deformed as any of Spenser's females.

> The Goddess herself had claws like a Cat; her Head, and Ears, and Voice, resembled those of an Ass; Her Teeth fallen out before; Her Eyes turned inward, as if she lookt only upon Herself; Her diet was the overflowing of her own Gall: Her Spleen was so large, as to stand prominent like a Dug of the first Rate, nor wanted Excrescencies in forms of Teats, at which a Crew of ugly Monsters were greedily sucking; and what is wonderful to conceive, the bulk of Spleen increased faster than the Sucking could diminish it.[73]

Like Spenser's Errour and Milton's Sin, Criticism is linked by her processes of eternal breeding, eating, spewing, feeding, and redevouring to biological cycles all three poets view as destructive to transcendent, intellectual life. More, since all the creations of each monstrous mother are her excretions, and since all her excretions are both her food and her weaponry, each mother forms with her brood a self-enclosed system, cannibalistic and solipsistic: the creativity of the world made flesh is annihilating. At the same time, Swift's spleen-producing and splenetic Goddess cannot be far removed from the Goddess of Spleen in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, and—because she is a mother Goddess—she also has much in common with the Goddess of Dullness who appears in Pope's *Dunciad*. The parent of "Vapours and Female Wit," the "*Hysteric* or *Poetic* fit," the Queen of Spleen rules over all women between the ages of fifteen and fifty, and thus, as a sort of patroness of the female sexual cycle, she is associated with the same anti-creation that characterizes Errour, Sin, and Criticism.[74] Similarly, the Goddess of Dullness, a nursing mother worshipped by a society of dunces, symbolizes the failure of

culture, the failure of art, and the death of the satirist. The huge daughter of Chaos and Night, she rocks the laureate in her ample lap while handing out rewards and intoxicating drinks to her dull sons. A Queen of Ooze, whose inertia comments on idealized Queens of Love, she nods and all of Nature falls asleep, its light destroyed by the stupor that spreads throughout the land in the milk of her "kindness."[75]

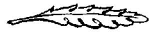
In all these incarnations—from Errour to Dullness, from Goneril and Regan to Chloe and Caelia—the female monster is a striking illustration of Simone de Beauvoir's thesis that woman has been made to represent all of man's ambivalent feelings about his own inability to control his own physical existence, his own birth and death. As the Other, woman comes to represent the contingency of life, life that is made to be destroyed. "It is the horror of his own carnal contingence," de Beauvoir notes, "which [man] projects upon [woman]."[76] In addition, as Karen Horney and Dorothy Dinnerstein have shown, male dread of women, and specifically the infantile dread of maternal autonomy, has historically objectified itself in vilification of women, while male ambivalence about female "charms" underlies the traditional images of such terrible sorceress-goddesses as the Sphinx, Medusa, Circe, Kali, Delilah, and Salome, all of whom possess duplicitous arts that allow them both to seduce and to steal male generative energy.[77]

The sexual nausea associated with all these monster women helps explain why so many real women have for so long expressed loathing of (or at least anxiety about) their own, inexorably female bodies. The "killing" of oneself into an art object—the pruning and preening, the mirror madness, and concern with odors and aging, with hair which is invariably too curly or too lank, with bodies too thin or too thick—all this testifies to the efforts women have expended not just trying to be angels but trying *not* to become female monsters. More significantly for our purposes, however, the female freak is and has been a powerfully coercive and monitory image for women secretly desiring to attempt the pen, an image that helped enforce the injunctions to silence implicit also in the concept of the *Ewig-Weibliche*. If becoming an *author* meant mistaking one's "sex and way," if it meant becoming an "unsexed" or perversely sexed female, then it meant becoming a monster or freak, a vile Errour, a grotesque

Lady Macbeth, a disgusting goddess of Dullness, or (to name a few later witches) a murderous Lamia, a sinister Geraldine. Perhaps, then, the "presumptuous" effort should not be made at all. Certainly the story of Lilith, one more monster woman—indeed, according to Hebrew mythology, both the first woman *and* the first monster—specifically connects poetic presumption with madness, freakishness, monstrosity.

Created not from Adam's rib but, like him, from the dust, Lilith was Adam's first wife, according to apocryphal Jewish lore. Because she considered herself his equal, she objected to lying beneath him, so that when he tried to force her submission, she became enraged and, speaking the Ineffable Name, flew away to the edge of the Red Sea to reside with demons. Threatened by God's angelic emissaries, told that she must return or daily lose a hundred of her demon children to death, Lilith preferred punishment to patriarchal marriage, and she took her revenge against both God and Adam by injuring babies—especially male babies, who were traditionally thought to be more vulnerable to her attacks. What her history suggests is that in patriarchal culture, female speech and female "presumption"—that is, angry revolt against male domination—are inextricably linked and inevitably daemonic. Excluded from the human community, even from the semidivine communal chronicles of the Bible, the figure of Lilith represents the price women have been told they must pay for attempting to define themselves. And it is a terrible price: cursed both because she is a character who "got away" and because she dared to usurp the essentially literary authority implied by the act of naming, Lilith is locked into a vengeance (child-killing) which can only bring her more suffering (the killing of her own children). And even the nature of her one-woman revolution emphasizes her helplessness and her isolation, for her protest takes the form of a refusal and a departure, a flight of escape rather than an active rebellion like, say, Satan's. As a paradigm of both the "witch" and the "fiend" of Aurora Leigh's "Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch and sprite," Lilith reveals, then, just how difficult it is for women even to attempt the pen. And from George MacDonald, the Victorian fantasist who portrayed her in his astonishing *Lilith* as a paradigm of the self-tormenting assertive woman, to Laura Riding, who depicted her in "Eve's Side of It" as an archetypal woman Creator,

the problem Lilith represents has been associated with the problems of female authorship and female authority.[78] Even if they had not studied her legend, literary women like Anne Finch, bemoaning the double bind in which the mutually dependent images of angel and monster had left them, must have gotten the message Lilith incarnates: a life of feminine submission, of "contemplative purity," is a life of silence, a life that has no pen and no story, while a life of female rebellion, of "significant action," is a life that must be silenced, a life whose monstrous pen tells a terrible story. Either way, the images on the surface of the looking glass, into which the female artist peers in search of her *self*, warn her that she is or must be a "Cypher," framed and framed up, indited and indicted.



As the legend of Lilith shows, and as psychoanalysts from Freud and Jung onward have observed, myths and fairy tales often both state and enforce culture's sentences with greater accuracy than more sophisticated literary texts. If Lilith's story summarizes the genesis of the female monster in a single useful parable, the Grimm tale of "Little Snow White" dramatizes the essential but equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman, a relationship that is also implicit in Aurora Leigh's bewildered speculations about her dead mother. "Little Snow White," which Walt Disney entitled "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," should really be called Snow White and Her Wicked Stepmother, for the central action of the tale—indeed, its only real action—arises from the relationship between these two women: the one fair, young, pale, the other just as fair, but older, fiercer; the one a daughter, the other a mother; the one sweet, ignorant, passive, the other both artful and active; the one a sort of angel, the other an undeniable witch.

Significantly, the conflict between these two women is fought out largely in the transparent enclosures into which, like all the other images of women we have been discussing here, both have been locked: a magic looking glass, an enchanted and enchanting glass coffin. Here, wielding as weapons the tools patriarchy suggests that women use to kill themselves into art, the two women literally try to kill each other with art. Shadow fights shadow, image destroys image in the crystal prison, as if the "fiend" of Aurora's mother's portrait should plot to destroy the "angel" who is another one of her selves.

The story begins in midwinter, with a Queen sitting and sewing, framed by a window. As in so many fairy tales, she pricks her finger, bleeds, and is thereby assumed into the cycle of sexuality William Blake called the realm of "generation," giving birth "soon after" to a daughter "as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame."[79] All the motifs introduced in this prefatory first paragraph—sewing, snow, blood, enclosure—are associated with key themes in female lives (hence in female writing), and they are thus themes we shall be studying throughout this book. But for our purposes here the tale's opening *is* merely prefatory. The real story begins when the Queen, having become a mother, metamorphoses also into a witch—that is, into a wicked "step" mother: ". . . when the child was born, the Queen died," and "After a year had passed the King took to himself another wife."

When we first encounter this "new" wife, she is framed in a magic looking glass, just as her predecessor—that is, her earlier self—had been framed in a window. To be caught and trapped in a mirror rather than a window, however, is to be driven inward, obsessively studying self-images as if seeking a viable self. The first Queen seems still to have had prospects; not yet fallen into sexuality, she looked outward, if only upon the snow. The second Queen is doomed to the inward search that psychoanalysts like Bruno Bettelheim censoriously define as "narcissism,"[80] but which (as Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's "The Other Side of the Mirror" suggested) is necessitated by a state from which all outward prospects have been removed.

That outward prospects *have* been removed—or lost or dissolved away—is suggested not only by the Queen's mirror obsession but by the absence of the King from the story as it is related in the Grimm version. The Queen's husband and Snow White's father (for whose attentions, according to Bettelheim, the two women are battling in a feminized Oedipal struggle) never actually appears in this story at all, a fact that emphasizes the almost stifling intensity with which the tale concentrates on the conflict in the mirror between mother and daughter, woman and woman, self and self. At the same time, though, there is clearly at least one way in which the King *is* present.

His, surely, is the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen's—and every woman's—self-evaluation. He it is who decides, first, that his consort is "the fairest of all," and then, as she becomes maddened, rebellious, witchlike, that she must be replaced by his angelically innocent and dutiful daughter, a girl who is therefore defined as "more beautiful still" than the Queen. To the extent, then, that the King, and only the King, constituted the first Queen's prospects, he need no longer appear in the story because, having assimilated the meaning of her own sexuality (and having, thus, become the second Queen) the woman has internalized the King's rules: his voice resides now in her own mirror, her own mind.

But if Snow White is "really" the daughter of the second as well as of the first Queen (i.e., if the two Queens are identical), why does the Queen hate her so much? The traditional explanation—that the mother is as threatened by her daughter's "budding sexuality" as the daughter is by the mother's "possession" of the father—is helpful but does not seem entirely adequate, considering the depth and ferocity of the Queen's rage. It is true, of course, that in the patriarchal Kingdom of the text these women inhabit the Queen's life can be literally imperiled by her daughter's beauty, and true (as we shall see throughout this study) that, given the female vulnerability such perils imply, female bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other. But, beyond all this, it seems as if there is a sense in which the intense desperation with which the Queen enacts her rituals of self-absorption causes (or is caused by) her hatred of Snow White. Innocent, passive, and self-lessly free of the mirror madness that consumes the Queen, Snow White represents the ideal of renunciation that the Queen has already renounced at the beginning of the story. Thus Snow White is destined to replace the Queen *because* the Queen hates her, rather than vice versa. The Queen's hatred of Snow White, in other words, exists before the looking glass has provided an obvious reason for hatred.

For the Queen, as we come to see more clearly in the course of the story, is a plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch, an artist, an impersonator, a woman of almost infinite creative energy, witty,

wily, and self-absorbed as all artists traditionally are. On the other hand, in her absolute chastity, her frozen innocence, her sweet nullity, Snow White represents precisely the ideal of "contemplative purity" we have already discussed, an ideal that could quite literally kill the Queen. An angel in the house of myth, Snow White is not only a child but (as female angels always are) childlike, docile, submissive, the heroine of a life that *has no story*. But the Queen, adult and demonic, plainly wants a life of "significant action," by definition an "unfeminine" life of stories and story-telling. And therefore, to the extent that Snow White, as her daughter, is a part of herself, she wants to kill the Snow White *in herself*, the angel who would keep deeds and dramas out of her own house.

The first death plot the Queen invents is a naively straightforward murder story: she commands one of her huntsmen to kill Snow White. But, as Bruno Bettelheim has shown, the huntsman is really a surrogate for the King, a parental—or, more specifically, patriarchal—figure "who dominates, controls, and subdues wild ferocious beasts" and who thus "represents the subjugation of the animal, asocial, violent tendencies in man."[81] In a sense, then, the Queen has foolishly asked her patriarchal master to act for her in doing the subversive deed she wants to do in part to retain power over him and in part to steal his power from him. Obviously, he will not do this. As patriarchy's angelic daughter, Snow White is, after all, *his* child, and he must save her, not kill her. Hence he kills a wild boar in her stead, and brings its lung and liver to the Queen as proof that he has murdered the child. Thinking that she is devouring her ice-pure enemy, therefore, the Queen consumes, instead, the wild boar's organs; that is, symbolically speaking, she devours her own beastly rage, and becomes (of course) even more enraged.

When she learns that her first plot has failed, then, the Queen's story-telling becomes angrier as well as more inventive, more sophisticated, more subversive. Significantly, each of the three "tales" she tells—that is, each of the three plots she invents—depends on a poisonous or parodic use of a distinctively female device as a murder weapon, and in each case she reinforces the sardonic commentary on "femininity" that such weaponry makes by impersonating a "wise" woman, a "good" mother, or, as Ellen Moers would put it, an "educating heroine."[82] As a "kind" old pedlar woman, she

offers to lace Snow White "properly" for once—then suffocates her with a very Victorian set of tight laces. As another wise old expert in female beauty, she promises to comb Snow White's hair "properly," then assaults her with a poisonous comb. Finally, as a wholesome farmer's wife, she gives Snow White a "very poisonous apple," which she has made in "a quite secret, lonely room, where no one ever came." The girl finally falls, killed, so it seems, by the female arts of cosmetology and cookery. Paradoxically, however, even though the Queen has been using such feminine wiles as the sirens' comb and Eve's apple subversively, to destroy angelic Snow White so that she (the Queen) can assert and aggrandize herself, these arts have had on her daughter an opposite effect from those she intended. Strengthening the chaste maiden in her passivity, they have made her into precisely the eternally beautiful, inanimate *objet d'art* patriarchal aesthetics want a girl to be. From the point of view of the mad, self-assertive Queen, conventional female arts *kill*. But from the point of view of the docile and selfless princess, such arts, even while they kill, confer the only measure of power available to a woman in a patriarchal culture.

Certainly when the kindly huntsman-father saved her life by abandoning her in the forest at the edge of his kingdom, Snow White discovered her own powerlessness. Though she had been allowed to live because she was a "good" girl, she had to find her own devious way of resisting the onslaughts of the maddened Queen, both inside and outside her self. In this connection, the seven dwarves probably represent her own dwarfed powers, her stunted selfhood, for, as Bettelheim points out, they can do little to help save the girl from the Queen. At the same time, however, her life with them is an important part of her education in submissive femininity, for in serving them she learns essential lessons of service, of selflessness, of domesticity. Finally, that at this point Snow White is a housekeeping angel in a *tiny* house conveys the story's attitude toward "woman's world and woman's work": the realm of domesticity is a miniaturized kingdom in which the best of women is not only like a dwarf but like a dwarf's servant.

Does the irony and bitterness consequent upon such a perception lead to Snow White's few small acts of disobedience? Or would Snow White ultimately have rebelled anyway, precisely because she

is the Queen's true daughter? The story does not, of course, answer such questions, but it does seem to imply them, since its turning point comes from Snow White's significant willingness to be tempted by the Queen's "gifts," despite the dwarves' admonitions. Indeed, the only hint of self-interest that Snow White displays throughout the whole story comes in her "narcissistic" desire for the stay-laces, the comb, and the apple that the disguised murderess offers. As Bettelheim remarks, this "suggests how close the stepmother's temptations are to Snow White's inner desires."[83] Indeed, it suggests that, as we have already noted, the Queen and Snow White are in some sense one: while the Queen struggles to free herself from the passive Snow White in herself, Snow White must struggle to repress the assertive Queen in herself. That both women eat from the same deadly apple in the third temptation episode merely clarifies and dramatizes this point. The Queen's lonely art has enabled her to contrive a two-faced fruit—one white and one red "cheek"—that represents her ambiguous relationship to this angelic girl who is both her daughter and her enemy, her self and her opposite. Her intention is that the girl will die of the apple's poisoned red half—red with her sexual energy, her assertive desire for deeds of blood and triumph—while she herself will be unharmed by the passivity of the white half.

But though at first this seems to have happened, the apple's effect is, finally, of course, quite different. After the Queen's artfulness has killed Snow White into art, the girl becomes if anything even more dangerous to her "step" mother's autonomy than she was before, because even more opposed to it in both mind and body. For, dead and self-less in her glass coffin, she is an object, to be displayed and desired, patriarchy's marble "opus," the decorative and decorous Galatea with whom every ruler would like to grace his parlor. Thus, when the Prince first sees Snow White in her coffin, he begs the dwarves to give "it" to him as a gift, "for I cannot live without seeing Snow White. I will honor and prize her as my dearest possession". An "it," a possession, Snow White has become an idealized image of herself, a woman in a portrait like Aurora Leigh's mother, and as such she has definitively proven herself to be patriarchy's ideal woman, the perfect candidate for Queen. At this point, therefore, she regurgitates the poison apple (whose madness had

stuck in her throat) and rises from her coffin. The fairest in the land, she will marry the most powerful in the land; bidden to their wedding, the egotistically assertive, plotting Queen will become a former Queen, dancing herself to death in red-hot iron shoes.

What does the future hold for Snow White, however? When her Prince becomes a King and she becomes a Queen, what will her life be like? Trained to domesticity by her dwarf instructors, will she sit in the window, gazing out on the wild forest of her past, and sigh, and sew, and prick her finger, and conceive a child white as snow, red as blood, black as ebony wood? Surely, fairest of them all, Snow White has exchanged one glass coffin for another, delivered from the prison where the Queen put her only to be imprisoned in the looking glass from which the King's voice speaks daily. There is, after all, no female model for her in this tale except the "good" (dead) mother and her living avatar the "bad" mother. And if Snow White escaped her first glass coffin by her goodness, her passivity and docility, her only escape from her second glass coffin, the imprisoning mirror, must evidently be through "badness," through plots and stories, duplicitous schemes, wild dreams, fierce fictions, mad impersonations. The cycle of her fate seems inexorable. Renouncing "contemplative purity," she must now embark on that life of "significant action" which, for a woman, is defined as a witch's life because it is so monstrous, so unnatural. Grotesque as Errour, Duessa, Lucifera, she will practice false arts in her secret, lonely room. Suicidal as Lilith and Medea, she will become a murderess bent on the self-slaughter implicit in her murderous attempts against the life of her own child. Finally, in fiery shoes that parody the costumes of femininity as surely as the comb and stays she herself contrived, she will do a silent terrible death-dance out of the story, the looking glass, the transparent coffin of her own image. Her only deed, this death will imply, can be a deed of death, her only action the pernicious action of self-destruction.

In this connection, it seems especially significant that the Queen's dance of death is a silent one. In "The Juniper Tree," a version of "Little Snow White" in which a *boy's* mother tries to kill him (for different reasons, of course) the dead boy is transformed not into a silent art object but into a furious golden bird who sings a song of vengeance against his murderess and finally crushes her to death

with a millstone.[84] The male child's progress toward adulthood is a growth toward both self-assertion and self-articulation, "The Juniper Tree" implies, a development of the *powers* of speech. But the girl child must learn the arts of silence either as herself a silent image invented and defined by the magic looking glass of the male-authored text, or as a silent dancer of her own woes, a dancer who enacts rather than articulates. From the abused Procne to the reclusive Lady of Shallott, therefore, women have been told that their art, like the witch's dance in "Little Snow White," is an art of silence. Procne must record her sufferings with what Geoffrey Hartman calls "the voice of the shuttle" because when she was raped her tongue was cut out.[85] The Lady of Shallott must weave her story because she is imprisoned in a tower as adamantine as any glass coffin, doomed to escape only through the self-annihilating madness of romantic love (just as the Queen is doomed to escape only through the self-annihilating madness of her death dance), and her last work of art is her own dead body floating downstream in a boat. And even when such maddened or grotesque female artists make sounds, they are for the most part, say patriarchal theorists, absurd or grotesque or pitiful. Procne's sister Philomel, for instance, speaks with an unintelligible bird's voice (unlike the voice of the hero of "The Juniper Tree"). And when Gerard Manley Hopkins, with whom we began this meditation on pens and penises and kings and queens, wrote of her in an epigram "On a Poetess," he wrote as follows:

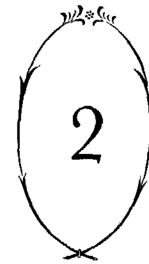
> Miss M. 's a nightingale. 'Tis well
> Your simile I keep.
> It is the way with Philomel
> To sing while others sleep.[86]

Even Matthew Arnold's more sympathetically conceived Philomel speaks "a wild, unquenched, deep-sunken, old-world pain" that arises from the stirrings of a "bewildered brain."[87]

Yet, as Mary Elizabeth Coleridge's yearning toward that sane and serious self concealed on the other side of the mirror suggested —and as Anne Finch's complaint and Anne Elliot's protest told us too—women writers, longing to attempt the pen, have longed to escape from the many-faceted glass coffins of the patriarchal texts whose properties male authors insisted that they are. Reaching a

hand to the stern, self-determining self behind the looking-glass portrait of her mother, reaching past those grotesque and obstructive images of "Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite," Aurora Leigh, like all the women artists whose careers we will trace in this book, tries to excavate the real self buried beneath the "copy" selves. Similarly, Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, staring into a mirror where her own mouth appears as a "hideous wound" bleeding "in silence and in secret," strives for a "voice to speak her dread."

In their attempts at the escape that the female pen offers from the prison of the male text, women like Aurora Leigh and Mary Elizabeth Coleridge begin, as we shall see, by alternately defining themselves as angel-women or as monster-women. Like Snow White and the wicked Queen, their earliest impulses, as we shall also see, are ambivalent. Either they are inclined to immobilize themselves with suffocating tight-laces in the glass coffins of patriarchy, or they are tempted to destroy themselves by doing fiery and suicidal tarantellas out of the looking glass. Yet, despite the obstacles presented by those twin images of angel and monster, despite the fears of sterility and the anxieties of authorship from which women have suffered, generations of texts *have* been possible for female writers. By the end of the eighteenth century—and here is the most important phenomenon we will see throughout this volume—women were not only writing, they were conceiving fictional worlds in which patriarchal images and conventions were severely, radically revised. And as self-conceiving women from Anne Finch and Anne Elliot to Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson rose from the glass coffin of the male-authored text, as they exploded out of the Queen's looking glass, the old silent dance of death became a dance of triumph, a dance into speech, a dance of authority.



2 Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship

The man who does not know sick women does not know women.
—S. Weir Mitchell

I try to describe this long limitation, hoping that with such power as is now mine, and such use of language as is within that power, this will convince any one who cares about it that this "living" of mine had been done under a heavy handicap. . . .
—Charlotte Perkins Gilman

A Word dropped careless on a Page
May stimulate an eye
When folded in perpetual seam
The Wrinkled Maker lie

Infection in the sentence breeds
We may inhale Despair
At distances of Centuries
From the Malaria—
—Emily Dickinson

I stand in the ring
in the dead city
and tie on the red shoes
. . . .
They are not mine,
they are my mother's,
her mother's before,
handed down like an heirloom
but hidden like shameful letters.
—Anne Sexton

What does it mean to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are, as we have seen, both

yearning for "Ecstasy—and Dell," for a transfigured universe in which even the most "old-fashioned" little girl can "live aloud." Guarded and disguised as they are, her self-dramatizations tell us this, tell us—as she once remarked to Higginson about his own art—that if her versified autobiography could "cease to be Romance, it would be Revelation, which is the Seed—of Romance—"[81]

Notes

Epigraphs on page v: George MacDonald, *Lilith* (1895; reprinted New York: Ballantine, 1969), pp. 220–21; Laura (Riding) Jackson, "Eve's Side of It," *Chelsea* 35 (New York, 1976):88–93; first published in *Progress of Stories* (London: Seizin-Constable, 1935).

CHAPTER 1

Epigraphs: "In the End," in *Chelsea* 35:96; "The Introduction," in *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. Myra Reynolds (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903), pp. 4–5; *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, Vol. Two, 1934–1939*, ed. Gunther Stuhlmann (New York: The Swallow Press and Harcourt, Brace, 1967), p. 233.

1 *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, ed. C. C. Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 133.

2 Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 83.

3 Ibid., p. 162. For an analogous use of such imagery of paternity, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Translator's Preface" to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. xi: "to use one of Derrida's structural metaphors, [a preface is] the son or seed . . . caused or engendered by the father (text or meaning)." Also see her discussion of Nietzsche where she considers the "masculine style of possession" in terms of "the stylus, the stiletto, the spurs," p. xxxvi.

4 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Modern Library, 1934), p. 205.

5 Ibid. The whole of this extraordinarily relevant passage develops this notion further: "Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man," Stephen notes. "It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro- and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction" (pp. 204–05).

6 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, chapter 13. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 2, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903), pp. 250–51. Although Virginia Woolf noted in *A Room of One's Own* that Coleridge thought "a great mind is androgynous" she added dryly that "Coleridge certainly did not mean . . . that it is a mind that has any special sympathy with women" (*A Room of One's Own* [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929], p. 102). Certainly the imaginative power Coleridge describes does not sound "man-womanly" in Woolf's sense.

7 Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry." Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 February 1818; *The Selected Letters of John Keats*, ed. Lionel Trilling (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 121.

8 See E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 305, 306. For further commentary on both Curtius's "The Symbolism of the Book" and the "Book of Nature" metaphor itself, see Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 15–17.

9 "Timon, A Satyr," in *Poems by John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 99.

10 Bridget Riley, "The Hermaphrodite," *Art and Sexual Politics*, ed. Thomas B. Hass and Elizabeth C. Baker (London: Collier Books, 1973), p. 82. Riley comments that she herself would "interpret this remark as expressing his attitude to his work as a celebration of life."

11 Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 134.; John T. Irwin, *Doubling and Incest, Repetition and Revenge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 163. Irwin also speaks of "the phallic generative power of the creative imagination" (p. 159).

12 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 11, 26.

13 All references to *Persuasion* are to volume and chapter of the text edited by R. W. Chapman, reprinted with an introduction by David Daiches (New York: Norton, 1958).

14 Anne Finch, *Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*, pp. 4–5.

15 Southey to Charlotte Brontë, March 1837. Quoted in Winifred Gérin, *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 110.

16 Finch, *Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*, p. 100. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (London: Heinemann, 1906), p. 286. This sentence is part of an extraordinary passage in which Weininger asserts that "women have no existence and no essence; they are not, they are nothing," this because "woman has no relation to the idea . . . she is neither moral nor anti-moral," but "all existence is moral and logical existence."

17 Richard Chase speaks of the "masculine *élan*" throughout "The Brontës, or Myth Domesticated," in *Forms of Modern Fiction*, ed. William V. O'Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), pp. 102–13. For a discussion of the "female eunuch" see Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1970). See also Anthony Burgess, "The Book Is Not For Reading," *New York Times Book Review*, 4 December 1966, pp. 1, 74, and William Gass, on Norman Mailer's *Genius and Lust*, *New York Times Book Review*, 24 October 1976, p. 2. In this connection, finally, it is interesting (and depressing) to consider that Virginia Woolf evidently defined *herself* as "a eunuch." (See Noel Annan, "Virginia Woolf Fever," *New York Review*, 20 April 1978, p. 22.)

18 Rufus Griswold, Preface to *The Female Poets of America* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1849), p. 8.

19 Roland Barthes, *Sade/Fourier/Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1976), p. 182; Hopkins, *Correspondence*, p. 133.

20 Finch, *Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*, p. 5.

21 Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), p. 194.

22 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Greenwich, Conn.: Braziller, 1964), p. 114.

23 Marjorie Grene, *Sartre* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1973), p. 9.

24 Quoted by Cornelia Otis Skinner in her 1952 theater piece, *Paris '90*.

25 Norman O. Brown, "Daphne," in Joseph Campbell, ed., *Mysteries, Dreams, and Religion* (New York: Dutton, 1970), p. 93.

26 Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, chapter 6, "Humpty Dumpty."

27 Albert Gelpi, "Emily Dickinson and the Deerslayer," in *Shakespeare's Sisters*, ed. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 122–134.

28 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 58.

29 D. H. Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*, chapter 23, "Huitzilopochtli's Night."

30 See Wolfgang Lederer, M. D., *The Fear of Women* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968); also H. R. Hays, *The Dangerous Sex* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964); Katharine Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966); and Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

31 Lederer, *Fear of Women*, p. 42.

32 Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, "The Other Side of a Mirror," in *Poems by Mary E. Coleridge* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1908), pp. 8–9.

33 See The Wife's Prologue, lines 1–3: "Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, were right ynough to me / To speke of wo that is in mariage." See also Arlyn Diamond and Lee Edwards, ed., *The Authority of Experience* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), an anthology of feminist criticism which draws its title from the Wife's speech.

34 In acknowledgment of a point similar to this, Edward Said follows his definition of "authority" with a definition of an accompanying, integrally related concept of "molestation," by which he says he means "that no novelist has ever been unaware that his authority, regardless of how complete, or the authority of a narrator, is a sham" (*Beginnings*, p. 84). For a fascinating discussion of the way in which one woman was driven to try to defy male literary / patriarchal authority, see Mitchell R. Breitweiser, "Cotton Mather's Crazed Wife," in *Glyph 5*. This madwoman literally dis-continued her husband's power by "molesting"—blotting and stealing!—his manuscripts.

35 Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women," *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942), pp. 236–38.

36 Plath, *Ariel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 8.

37 Christina Rossetti, "In an Artist's Studio," in *New Poems by Christina Rossetti*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (New York: Macmillan, 1896), p. 114.

38 "A Woman's Poem," *Harper's Magazine* (February 1859), p. 340.

39 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (New York: Crowell, 1891), pp. 3–4.

40 In a letter to John Kenyon in August 1844 Barrett Browning declared that the

difference between her early, derivative poems (like her "Essay on Mind") and her mature work was "not merely the difference between two schools, nor even the difference between immaturity and maturity; but . . . the difference between the dead and the living, between a copy and individuality, between what is myself and what is not myself" (*The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed Frederic G. Kenyon [2 vols. in 1, New York: Macmillan, 1899], 1:187).

41 Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphère (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 86.

42 Susan Braudy, "A Day in the Life of Joan Didion," *Ms.* 5 (8 February 1977): 109.

43 See, for instance, Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate*; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon, 1971).

44 Hans Eichner, "The Eternal Feminine: An Aspect of Goethe's Ethics," in Johann Wolfgang van Goethe, *Faust*, Norton Critical Edition, trans. Walter Arndt, ed. Cyrus Hamlin (New York: Norton, 1976), pp. 616, 617. Significantly, even when talk (rather than silence) is considered specifically feminine, it is "only" talk and not action, as the motto *Fatti maschi, parole femine* implies: Deeds are masculine, words are feminine.

45 Ibid., p. 620. Obviously Makarie's virtues foreshadow (besides those of Patmore's Honoria) those of Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay, in *To the Lighthouse*, for Mrs. Ramsay is also a kind of "lighthouse" of sympathy and beauty.

46 Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (London: George Bell & Son, 1885), p. 17.

47 Ibid., p. 73.

48 "The Everlasting Yea," *Sartor Resartus*, book 2, chap. 9.

49 Abbé d'Ancourt, *The Lady's Preceptor* (3rd ed. London: J. Walts, 1745), p. 8.

50 Mrs. Sarah Ellis, *The Women of England* (New York, 1844), pp. 9–10.

51 Mrs. Ellis, *The Family Monitor and Domestic Guide* (New York: Henry G. Laugley, 1844), p. 35.

52 John Ruskin, "Of Queens' Gardens," *Sesame and Lilies* (New York: Charles E. Merrill, 1899), p. 23.

53 Alexander Welsh, *The City of Dickens* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 184.

54 Ibid., pp. 187, 190.

55 Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), "The Domestication of Death," pp. 200–26.

56 "The Philosophy of Composition," *The Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar Allan Poe, with Selections from his Critical Writings*, ed. A. H. Quinn (New York: Knopf, 1951), 2:982.

57 Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture*, p. 202.

58 Welsh, *City of Dickens*, pp. 182–83.

59 Patmore, *Angel in the House*, pp. 175–76.

60 Oswald Doughty, *A Victorian Romantic: Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Frederick Muller, 1949), p. 417.

61 Quoted in Doughty, p. 418. For a thorough examination, from another perspective, of the ambiguous beauty/terror of the dead woman, see Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (London: Oxford, 1970), esp. "The Beauty of the Medusa," pp. 23–45.

62 Patmore, *Angel in the House*, p. 91.

63 Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, ed. Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), p. 617.

64 Adrienne Rich, *Poems, Selected and New, 1950–1974* (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 146.

65 *King Lear*, 4.4.142–43; *The Faerie Queene*, 1.2.361.

66 John Gay, Alexander Pope, and John Arbuthnot, *Three Hours After Marriage*, ed. Richard Morton and William M. Peterson, Lake Erie College Studies, vol. 1 (Painesville, Ohio: Lake Erie College Press, 1961), p. 22.

67 Walpole to Hannah More, 24 January 1795.

68 *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 2:383, ll. 67–68.

69 "A Beautiful Young Nymph," 2:583, ll. 67–68.

70 Swift, "The Progress of Beauty," 1:228, ll. 77–78.

71 "Epistle II. To a Lady," *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 560, l. 219, l. 3.

72 *Three Hours After Marriage*, pp. 14, 54–56.

73 Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub, to Which Is Added the Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operations of the Spirit*, ed. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 240.

74 Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, canto 4, ll. 58–60, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, p. 234.

75 Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743), canto 1, ll. 311–18 in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, p. 734.

76 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 138.

77 Karen Horney, "The Dread of Woman," in *Feminine Psychology* (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 133–46; Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, pp. 124–54. For discussions of the "Medusa Complex" and its misogynistic messages see also Philip Slater, *The Glory of Hera* (Boston: Beacon, 1968) and R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Penguin Books, 1965).

78 For discussions of Lilith see *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hustings (Edinburgh, 1950); also Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), pp. 65–66; and T. H. Gaster, *Orientalia* 11 (1942): 41–79. Also see George MacDonald, *Lilith*, and Laura Riding, "Eve's Side of It."

79 "Little Snow White." All references are to the text as given in *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales* (New York: Random House, 1972).

80 Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 202–03.

81 Bettelheim, p. 205.

82 See Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 211 42.

83 Bettelheim, p. 211.

84 See "The Juniper Tree" in *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*.
85 Geoffrey Hartman, "The Voice of the Shuttle," in *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 337–55.
86 *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 133.
87 See Matthew Arnold, "Philomela," in *Poetry and Criticism of* Matthew Arnold, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 144, l. 7.

CHAPTER 2

Epigraphs: Doctor on Patient (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1888), quoted in Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 219–20; *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975; first published 1935), p. 104; J. 1261 in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas Johnson, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1955: all subsequent references are to this edition); "The Red Shoes," *The Book of Folly* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), pp. 28–29.

1 In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," T. S. Eliot of course considers these matters. In addition, in *Mimesis* Erich Auerbach traces the ways in which the realist includes what has been previously excluded from art in the name of ever-larger slices of life. Similarly, in *The Sense of an Ending* Frank Kermode shows how poets and novelists lay bare the literariness of their predecessors' forms in order to explore the dissonance between fiction and reality, paradigmatic (inherited) forms and contingency.
2 J. Hillis Miller, "The Limits of Pluralism, III: The Critic as Host," *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 1977): 446.
3 See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.
4 Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Vintage, 1975), p. xiii.
5 Ibid., pp. 404–05.
6 Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," in *Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 90.
7 Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 402.
8 See Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).
9 Annie Gottlieb, "Feminists Look at Motherhood," *Mother Jones* (November 1976): 53.
10 *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas Johnson, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958), 2: 475; 2: 518.
11 See Jessie Bernard, "The Paradox of the Happy Marriage," Pauline B. Bart, "Depression in Middle-Aged Women," and Naomi Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female," all in Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran, ed., *Woman in Sexist Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1971). See also Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), and—for a summary of all these matters—Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* (Old Westbury: The Feminist Press, 1973).

12 In *Hints on Insanity* (1861) John Millar wrote that "Mental derangement frequently occurs in young females from Amenorrhoea, especially in those who have any strong hereditary predisposition to insanity," adding that "an occasional warm hipbath or leeches to the pubis will . . . be followed by complete mental recovery." In 1873, Henry Mauldsey wrote in *Body and Mind* that "the monthly activity of the ovaries . . . has a notable effect upon the mind and body; wherefore it may become an important cause of mental and physical derangement." See especially the medical opinions of John Millar, Henry Maudsley, and Andrew Wynter in *Madness and Morals: Ideas on Insanity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Vieda Skultans (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 230–35.
13 See Marlene Boskind-Lodahl, "Cinderella's Stepsisters: A Feminist Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia," *Signs* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1976): 342–56; Walter Blum, "The Thirteenth Guest," (on agoraphobia), in *California Living, The San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle* (17 April 1977): 8–12; Joan Arehart-Treichel, "Can Your Personality Kill You?" (on female rheumatoid arthritis, among other diseases), *New York* 10, no. 48 (28 November 1977): 45: "According to studies conducted in recent years, four out of five rheumatoid victims are women, and for good reason: The disease appears to arise in those unhappy with the traditional female-sex role."
14 More recent discussions of the etiology and treatment of anorexia are offered in Hilde Bruch, M. D., *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), and in Salvador Minuchin, Bernice L. Rosman, and Lester Baker, *Psychosomatic Families: Anorexia Nervosa in Context* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).
15 Quoted by Ehrenreich and English, *Complaints and Disorders*, p. 19.
16 Eichner, "The Eternal Feminine," Norton Critical Edition of *Faust*, p. 620.
17 John Winthrop, *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, ed. James Savage (Boston, 1826), 2: 216.
18 Wendy Martin, "Anne Bradstreet's Poetry: A Study of Subversive Piety," *Shakespeare's Sisters*, ed. Gilbert and Gubar, pp. 19–31.
19 "The Uncensored Poet: Letters of Anne Sexton," *Ms.* 6, no. 5 (November 1977): 53.
20 Margaret Atwood, *Lady Oracle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), p. 335.
21 See *Northanger Abbey*, chapter 10: "You will allow, that in both [matrimony and dancing], man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal."
22 See Dickinson, *Poems*, J. 579 ("I had been hungry, all the Years"), J. 709 ("Publication—is the Auction"), and J. 891 ("To my quick ear the Leaves—conferred"); see also Christina Rossetti, "Goblin Market."
23 See Dickinson, *Poems*, J. 327 ("Before I got my eye put out"), George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, book 2, chapter 20, and M. E. Coleridge, "Doubt," in *Poems by Mary E. Coleridge*, p. 40.
24 See Dickinson, *Poems*, J. 101.