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碩士論文

亞瑟米勒《鎔爐》的變異女性情慾之能動性  
與羨嫉



Witches in the Blood: the Dynamics and Ambivalence  
of Deviant Female Sexuality in Arthur Miller's  
*The Crucible*

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## 亞瑟米勒《鎔爐》的變異女性情欲之能動性與羨嫉

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## 摘要

本論文主要以女性主義觀點來解讀在亞瑟米勒《鎔爐》劇中之女巫/女人在父權社會的處境。本文由四個章節所組成，第一章介紹《鎔爐》的時空背景以及探討女巫如何在男性社會中被型塑。第二章則是討論在劇中女孩們在森林中的聚會與劇中兩名女性主角阿比蓋兒、蒂度帕在劇中所扮演的角色與位置。對於劇中所出現的儀式，就像是一場由女孩轉變成為女人或女巫的成年儀式。因為亞瑟米勒在麥卡錫事件中，被視為污名化的一員，因此他就將自身經歷過的苦難投射於此劇中。不管是被指控與惡魔或撒旦有秘密契約的女巫們或是指控他人為女巫的女孩們皆是父權社會下的犧牲者。第三章則著重於獵殺女巫以及集體歇斯底里。這章節大略地描述了獵殺女巫的時空背景、歷史以及與性別的關係。除此之外，也闡述了這些女孩們如何透過表演歇斯底里成為她們反抗父權的自我保護機制。第四章，總結前三章的論述並重新界定女巫的身分，希望在女巫污名化的稱謂下，重新找回女人專屬的能動性與情慾世界。

關鍵字：亞瑟米勒、鎔爐、阿比蓋兒、蒂度帕、普克特、女巫、獵殺女巫、女性情慾、集體歇斯底里

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**ABSTRACT**

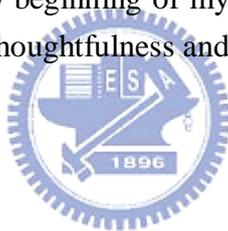
This thesis is composed of four chapters. In chapter one, I will briefly deal with the background of *The Crucible* and investigate how those witches have been shaped by male dominators and how they have been viewed by the audience. Chapter Two discusses about a ritual in the forest and the two female protagonists Tituba and Abigail. The ritual or a group of female's gathering in *The Crucible* is, in my view, like an initiation of being witches. Furthermore, I would elaborate the roles the Tituba and Abigail play in this play. Since Arthur Miller has been demonized in the 50's McCarthyism witch-hunt, he projects his own experience onto women/ girls in *The Crucible*: the women who have been accused of being witches and the girls who accuse them of having covenant with the Devil are both the victims under the patriarchal society. When encountering public terror, how people who are involved in this affair, such as Abigail and Tituba, balance the contention of parties, the patriarchal side and the women's side? Which side would they choose to take? Chapter Three focuses on witch-hunt and mass hysteria. I would briefly describe background and history about witch-hunt and the relationship between gender and witch-hunt. More than that, I would illustrate how the girls play their game--mass hysteria, to prevent themselves from being convicted. In the last chapter, I will conclude my thesis and redefine what a witch is, and then, hopefully, retrieve the female dynamics and sexuality underneath the stigmatized "witches."

Keyword: *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller, Abigail, John Proctor, Tituba, witch, witch-hunt, Sabbat, female sexuality, mass hysteria

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## Chapter I : Introduction

### **Background of *The Crucible***

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is based on a true historical event, which is about witchcraft trials and witch-hunt of Salem Village in Massachusetts in 1692. During the period from 1950 to 1954 when Miller wrote this play, America was experiencing international conflicts from the Cold War and hence the force of McCarthyism was growing strong within the states. The term was derived from a Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy who pushed the government to reinforce the policies of anti-communism while persecuting political dissidents. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1950, he claimed that he had a list of 205 members of American Communist Party, and he told the listed members that the only way to prove their innocence is to identify other Communist members. In order to evade the crucifixion, those who had been accused were forced to blame other members after admitting their commitment of being a communist. During this period, thousands of Americans were accused of being Communists or communist sympathizers and became the subjects of aggressive investigations and interrogations by government or private-industry panels, committees and agencies. After the political torrent ended, Newsweek caricatured and summarized Joseph McCarthy in a figure of 'a witch ridding a

broom.'

Since Miller was one of the falsely accused victims at that time, he projected his own suffering experience together with controversial gender issues of 1692 witch hunt in his play *The Crucible*. Yet, with self-contradiction, Miller once said that "This play is not history." From different references, such as the original records, Marion Starkey's book that was already mentioned, or the more recent *Witchcraft at Salem* by Chadwick Hansen, we can see how closely Miller followed his sources.<sup>1</sup>

Why he made this kind of assertion that *The Crucible* is only a fiction? Does it leave some space for the readers to reach their own conclusions? Did he repress himself due to his own traumatic experience? Arthur Miller's original intention in this play is to highlight the "public terror." However, by investigating this kind of attack on women we could see how women fight against Puritan or patriarchal society impotently. In fact, *The Crucible* not only represents a political allegory but also a revelation of misogyny.

There is a medieval treatise on witchcraft and the witch-hunt --*The Malleus Maleficarum* which was written by Heinrich Krammer and James Sprenger in 1486, and its title means "The Hammer of Witches" in Latin. Basically, this handbook encircles a saying of Bible, "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live."(Exodus 22:18).

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p23.

The authors declare that women and men can all be witches but women are more susceptible to witchcraft due to sexual discrimination which claims women as lower creatures than men, and there are some reasons for them to support this point,

"Because the female sex is more concerned with things of the flesh than men"; being formed from a man's rib they are "only imperfect animals" and "crooked" whereas man belongs to a privileged sex from whose midst Christ emerged. The authors' main reason for the increase in witchcraft among women laid in the "vile contention between married and unmarried women." And, "They warned against the 'spitefulness of womankind.'<sup>2</sup>"

Additionally, what Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger attack most is not about witchcraft, but the wanton feminine sexuality.

Being engaged in a feminist critique on those false accusation of dissident women as "witches," I would like to appropriate Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,<sup>3</sup>" and then further state, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a witch." Are women acquiesced to be forced in the ways the society has made for women? Do they have a way out? The more recent works of socio-biologist such as Corinne Hutt, Robert Trivers and Edward O. Wilson seem to further emphasize the biological differences between men and women, which emphasizes male sexual domination over females.<sup>4</sup>

### **Salem Trial**

Some documentaries showed, during the witch-hunt of the Salem village in

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/m/malleus\\_maleficarum.htm](http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/m/malleus_maleficarum.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> Marianne Hester. *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches*, p.79.

1692, nineteen women and two dogs were hanged for being accused of executing witchcraft and one man died for refusing conviction. And it is said that the Salem witch-trial disclosed one of the darkest pages of American history.<sup>5</sup> That was a time when the New England Puritan burdened their citizens with severe doctrines. In the historical document, townspeople considered that several youngsters who had exhibited grotesque behaviors were afflicted by the devil. And those who had been regarded as been connecting to devil should be hung unless she or he identified other confederates. Similarly, in the play of *The Crucible*, the whole society was pervaded with stifling repression. The crucible of this trail began with a misty night, when Abigail, Betty and other girls are dancing in the forest with a black slave. The Indian slave Tituba's appearance in this play deepens the gloomy color, especially when the girls ask Tituba to make some rituals for them. It seems that Tituba is just like a priest and the girls, of whom some are even naked, reveal their wishes or fantasies around fire to tell the inner secrets which couldn't be mentioned in normal lives. Most interestingly, these fantasies are almost about "affairs," especially Abigail's wish. Because there is a hidden adultery between John Proctor and Abigail, she desperately wants to replace Elizabeth Proctor's position. For the past centuries, seeking the "love magic" is a feature specific to girls. Perhaps those girls deeply

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.salemwitchtrials.com/>

believe that the magic could enhance their personal magnetism to fascinate someone they adore. All of a sudden they seem all growing up from little girls to women. While the dancing party goes on, those girls are accidentally caught by Samuel Parris who is the minister of religion in Salem. The next day, Betty, Samuel Parris' daughter, lies on the bed and loses her consciousness and the townspeople begin to conjecture that her unconsciousness is caused by witchcraft. Suddenly, the rumor has spread all over the town.

There is a traditional hearsay that witches congregate around fire to dance in the night, and their aspiration is to gain power by conspiring with Satan. As a minister, Parris has the duty to calm the townspeople down and to repel any bad thoughts, so he questions the leading girl Abigail about the real situation in the dark forest. It is possible that Abigail is aware of that taboo, so she tells Parris the party is just for fun without any profane meaning, and at the same time, she also warns other girls from admitting anything or betraying the secret they talks about. The event reaches a climax when Betty's symptom gets worst. Reverend Hale who is an expert on witchcraft begins to examine the source of the rumor. And then Abigail professes that it's Tituba's trick to make her drink the blood in order to fight against Elizabeth Proctor. After some cruel whipping, Tituba "confesses" that she indeed gets in contact with Devil in that misty night, and yet she becomes hysteria to blame that

others in town also consort with the Devil. Unexpectedly, Abigail joins her to accuse the townspeople with a “name list” in her mind, and Betty also joins them to name other as witches. And then, other girls are involved in one after another. Thus, Salem village is enveloped in a shroud of witch-hunt. Not only are the accused women/witches suffering a sever test, but also the witch-finders and those residents as well.

With the burst of girls’ mysterious illness, the “fake aberration,” the town sunk into a kind of “terrorist activity” immediately. In the eye of the Church, such gathering of women is easily to be related to the devil. It is a common belief that an uncontrolled woman can never threaten men, while organized women as a group might do so. Most witches are hunted by public suspicions that they are eating babies or indulging in orgies at the little secret community or Devil’s party.

In Chiung Wen Huang’s master thesis, *The Oppressor and the Oppressed: A Study of Arthur Miller’s "The Crucible,"* she cites Simone de Beauvoir’s point that women are the Other and the second sex to argue that Abigail and Elizabeth are just the epitome of the oppressed ones in this patriarchal society. With regard to the human nature, Huang mentions that female desire and rebellion are intolerable to the clergy and the normal people. In Hung Ting Lin’s master thesis, *The Crucible and Simone de Beauvoir’s the Self and the Other,* she focuses on women’s situation of the Puritan society and points out that unmarried Abigail and married Elizabeth are

both the oppressed “Other.” What is more, she discusses that the relationship between the Self and the Other is, actually, destructive to each other. In some respects, I do not agree with their viewpoint that Abigail and Elizabeth are both the oppressed ones, since they are females in the Puritan society. On the contrary, in this play, I believe that Abigail’s performance of witchcraft does dominate the townspeople’s fate and, in fact, her performance transforms into a sort of “resistant mechanism” in fighting against the invisible male power and hence saves Abigail from stigmatization. She is not one of the victims but the perpetrator instead. As for Elizabeth, in my view, she gains benefit from this event. Changing from an apathetic wife to a gentle wife, she wins her husband’s heart after surviving the war of the crucible and John Proctor also changes his attitude from aloofness to gratitude toward Elizabeth. The dichotomy between male/ oppressors and female/ victim is not the best answer.

In Puritan society in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a wanton or liberal woman might be stigmatized as a “witch” due to her active or excess female sexuality. Woman/witch’s sexual power is a double-edged weapon which threatens male domination and hence becomes one of the causes of male retribution. People at that time believe that a woman/ witch’s power comes from her own sexuality.

“The Church associated women with sex, and all pleasure in sex was condemned, because it could only come from the devil. Witches were supposed

to have gotten pleasure from copulation with the devil (despite the icy-cold organ he was reputed to possess) and they in turn infected men. Lust in either man or wife, then, was blamed on the female.”<sup>6</sup>

Sex is regarded as women/ witches’ ferocious trick or gimmick to degenerate men little by little. Women/ witches’ with sexual power can be associated with the subversive “wicked women” as mentioned by feminist critics. In Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic*, they argue that the “wicked women” are often utilized by major women writers since Jane Austen achieved a distinctive female duplicitous voice by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards. Consequently, the female stereotypes of “angel” and “monster” are simultaneously reinforced and deconstructed. In order to follow men’s principle, law and order, “the wicked woman” who skulks within her inner body has to sleep. Once the sleeping inner self revives and begins to re-think the “absurd,” women would try all ways to fulfill their true desire. In brief, if women want to face their own desire throughout their lives they have no choice but to play the card of bewitchment. It cannot be denied that Abigail possesses this kind of seductive power. She bravely pursues the love she wants and claims loudly her desire for John Proctor. Vacillating between meeting the traditional constraints and fulfilling one’s own desire between conformity and betrayal, Proctor eventually

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<sup>6</sup> Ehrenreich Barbara and English Deirdre, *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healer*, page 11.

selects to hang himself for saving his name but Abigail would pretend to be a “goddess” who receives the decree from God than stopping accusing others. And as to this term” goddess,” it can be, in Starhawk’s words, extended into another graduation. That is a saying about the goddess--“all acts of love and pleasure are her rituals” which means that, in some sense, sexuality is not the only access for women to get ecstasy; instead, women are blessed through all types of love. For example, in *The Crucible*, the erotic love between Abigail and Proctor, the friendship between the girls and the emancipation in the forest can be regarded as a transformation for these girls to become goddesses.



### **Self-Protection**

Somehow, when the girls were aware of that their “little girls’ game” has been detected they broke up in a hubbub. Betty became ill in the following day and Parris deeply believed Betty’s illness was caused by the previous night’s witchcraft. But Parris did not realize her unconscious was a mechanism of self-protection. Moreover, in order to protect themselves, other girls began switching on their mutinous behaviors, and they used some gimmicks to let people believe the game at that night was not their original intention but the devil’s invoking. The woman (girl), Abigail,

looks like an “alpha girl<sup>7</sup>” playing a crucial part in the turning point of this play. She threatens other girls to cooperate with her “performance” to escape from the pressure of public opinions. The “performance” of escape has been enacted like physical symptoms or a kind of aberration such as unconscious fainting and hysterical fits. Those hysterical fits are bombastically over-acted and their symptoms will be aggravated when facing the crowd. In the very beginning of the hysteria, Abigail’s performance is just a part of individual behavior, but in the following section the affection of hysteria has spread to all of the girls who have met in the forest. The individual hysteria becomes the “mass hysteria.” Mass hysteria, also called collective hysteria or collective obsessional behavior, is the sociopsychological phenomenon of the manifestation of the same or similar hysterical symptoms by more than one person. A common manifestation of mass hysteria occurs when people believe they are suffering from a similar disease or ailment.<sup>8</sup> These physical fits are the compensations for insatiable drive, when the girls are seized with a cramp the painless expression on their faces are so insouciant. There is a possibility that those sufferers try to escape from an uncomfortable reality and hide into diseases by being “hysteria.”

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<sup>7</sup> The term “Alpha girl” means the dominant or primary girl in a group, esp. one who bullies.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/alpha%20girl>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/depress/antidprs.html>

This kind of digressed performance might be explained with Clement and Cixous's thinking, "sometimes privileged madness is fostered by marginalization, on the wilderness out of which silenced women must finally find way to cry, shriek, scream, and dance in impassioned dances of desire."<sup>9</sup> And "woman must challenge 'phallogocentric' authority through an exploration of the continent of female pleasure." Why would authority/ men rather choose to believe that woman's symptoms of hysteria are a supernatural event while refusing to accept it as a release of women's body and will? Freud claims that when the repressed returns, it does so as the uncanny (das Unheimliche), undomestic, unsettling. According to Freud, he explains that the uncanny as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, its return has the power to unsettle the realm of the canny. Uncanny has another meaning, of course: supernatural.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, if we parallel women with the "uncanny people", it is easy to understand why these uncontrolled women have been treated as the witches. As for the girls in this play, their behaviours are deeply believed as a supernatural.

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<sup>9</sup> Diane Purkiss. *The Witch in History*, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Sigmund Freud. "The Uncanny" in Phillips, p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> Diane Purkiss. *The Witch in History*, pp.79-80.

Even nowadays, men have complex and ambivalence about women's bodies which simultaneously project men's horror and desire. For a long time, women have been put down in the subordinate status and associated with dark power out of men's control in films and literary works. It is rumored that some particular women would attend the Sabbath and then become Satan's lovers. The particular woman here means that she is the one who could hardly resist the temptation because of their weak will. Why do men have serious misgivings about the invisible "force"? Sex is the primal power to connect men and women while sex might deteriorate men's sense of superiority. The threat of women's sexual power might explain why men have "virgin" complex. Women should be "pure" and innocent, like Jack Nichols explains why men stress virginity of their brides: "It assures them that their virgin partner is ignorant of their prowess." (*Men's Liberation*, 1975)

In addition, the relationship between women and men is often compared to the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Women are compared to an uncivilized dark continent which needs the superior power, the reason, to bring the light into it. And the way to civilize them is to intrude their bodies. But in *The Crucible*, the situation is likely to be up side down. Abigail becomes a dominant to bring light to John Proctor in the sexual aspect because she forces him to face the desire, yet he didn't appreciate her "kindness." Miller portrays two extreme types of

feminine characters in this play – the amorous ladylove and the ramrod wife, and these two kinds of female sexuality “test a man’s body, endanger his spirit, and threaten his “natural” dominance or needs.”<sup>12</sup> In regards with the relationship between Proctor and Abigail, Proctor is the first one to invade Abigail’s body and also the first one to initiate her into a “woman’s world.” His desire unlocks Abigail’s female sexuality. When he explores Abigail, at the same time, her “woman’s desire” is unleashed and hence her virgin’s blood is lost forever.

Female sexuality projects male’s ambivalence towards female body as well as male’s castration anxiety. The traditional stereotype of sex which emphasize male/ penetration/ aggression and female/ being penetrated/ passivity is subjugating woman to man biologically and culturally. Among the pervasive myths projecting male’s ambivalence towards female body, those about vagina, virginity, and menstruation are common in North America. Psychoanalyst Mary Hays points out that some aboriginal tribes of North America at least have twenty two mythologies about “vagina dentate”, which means vagina has sharp tooth or knife. Therefore women would castrate penis through having sex with them. Here is ambivalence, if this kind of horror makes men impotent, why are men still indulging themselves in the pleasure of making love with women? Taking another example, the common

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<sup>12</sup> Christopher Bigsby. *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*, p.96

character of films or novels, “femme fatale,” is used to describe an attractive but lethal woman that can send men to their doom. Here, women are demonized. Similarly, in John Proctor’s mind, Abigail is not only a charming lover but also a femme fatal or a witch. She has double identities, one is God’s herald who passes the message to the townspeople via her body to debunk those who have kinship with the Devil and the other, for John Proctor, is a witch who bewitches men. Many critics have pointed out that the destructive she-evil arouse collective phobia within the patriarchal community. Karen Newman notes, for example, “Witches threatened hegemonic patriarchal structures.....as cultural producers, as representatives of an oppositional ‘femininity.’<sup>13</sup>” One taboo projecting male phobias of female sexuality is menstruation. Some even consider that woman’s “blood” is the prototype of human filth which would endanger men at most. Aristotle says that menstruation is the residue of blood which is not used up in nourishment.<sup>14</sup> Menstruation cannot be compared to the ejaculation of semen, which is considered healthy blood, while female blood is considered “left over.”




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<sup>13</sup> Deborah Willis. *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England*, p.9.

<sup>14</sup> "the semen begins to appear in males and to be emitted at the same time of life that the catamenia begin to flow in females"--Aristotle  
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/menstruation>

## Witches

From feminist perspective, witches can be considered subversive female power or the embodiment of a revival for feminism “lurking” in the shadows of the patriarchy. As noted in Deborah Willis’ book, she mentions that "more polemical" feminist accounts "are likely to portray the witch as a heroic proto feminist resisting patriarchal oppression and a wholly innocent victim of a male-authored reign of terror designed to keep women in their place."<sup>15</sup> What is more, according to some documentary, witches do exist. One may assume that a witch is the one who possesses psychic power, but it doesn’t mean that such supernatural power makes woman a witch. What is a witch and who are witches? Do women choose to be witches on their own? How do the men declare that women/witches are guilty and then persecute them? Whether the witches are beautiful or ugly, they always enjoy themselves having a good time with the demon. Moreover, the witches can metamorphosize into different forms, which also means the women’s form is free, flexible, and open. In other words, female sexuality is revolutionary, subversive, and heterogeneous. In *The Crucible* Abigail is the prototype of being vigorous and unrestrained. She had adultery with John Proctor and when he is about to leave Abigail back to his wife, she tries hard to retrieve their affair. Abigail wants him to

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<sup>15</sup> Deborah Willis. *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England*, p.12.

know that only she can bring him the passion. “I have a sense for heat, John and yours has drawn me to my window, and I seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness.” But it was in vain. Their breaking up triggers a chain of the witch-hunt. During the witch-hunts, Abigail plays double roles in it: when she remains silent to the whole adultery she is an angel; nevertheless, when she stood out to fight for her own desire, she becomes a witch for John Proctor. It seems that Abigail was dominated by an insatiable drive for love.

It is one of the curses afflicting the passionate woman that her generosity is soon converted into exigency. Having become identified with another, she wants to make up for her loss; she must take possession of that other person who has captured her. She gives herself to him entirely; but he must be completely available to receive this gift<sup>16</sup>.

Apparently, the passionate woman, Abigail, turns her love into hatred and the man who has captured her, John Proctor, does not receive this “gift.” Moreover, this kind of announcement has evolved into a very personal and original self-awareness, and her “speech” could be regarded as the precursor to unveil the myth of that patriarchal Puritan society.

Here, let me go back to the girls’ party or we can say it is the women’s ritual. The rhythm of the girls’ bodies, for example, dancing, screaming, and crying, seems to reveal their anxiety to be women. What is more, they choose the place which is

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<sup>16</sup> Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p.656.

dark and private in order not to be found. Does it mean that female body and sexuality should not be seen and touched? Can the party or the ritual be viewed as a nascent of feminist movement? For girls, this kind of gathering is the only chance to be emancipated from the social norms. Also, we should not forget that witches possess brooms to fly away and the symbol of brooms may be extended by the word – “voler<sup>17</sup>,” which used by Helena Cixous as a term to elaborate the dualities of women which are inherent inside their bodies. This carnival transforms those girls from controlled girls into “abnormal” women, who have frenzied desire. As for Abigail, her “speech” could freely disrobe all of the codes of Puritan society and, I believe, her guiding principle is love. Abigail, in some way, lays herself bare in front of Proctor.

Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering (if she hasn't painfully lost her wind). She doesn't 'speak', she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the 'logic' of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare.<sup>18</sup>

*The Crucible*, in my view, is a play about women. Abigail is not only a director who maps out the future of townspeople, but an actress who shows her versatility and dynamics. Sometimes she is artful and succeeds in getting what she wants, while sometimes she is just like a docile lamb when facing Proctor. Of course, it is not

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<sup>17</sup> “voler” is a French verb which means to fly, to steal.

<sup>18</sup> Helena Cixous' *The Laugh of the Medusa*.

only Abigail's story; it is the story about a woman who has confessed her sexuality.

The perpetrators, Abigail, and those suffering women who have been accused as witches, are telling and creating a story with their blood.

In fact, she physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she *inscribes* what she's saying, because she doesn't deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking. Her speech, even when 'theoretical' or political, is never simple or linear or 'objectified', generalized: she draws her story into history.<sup>19</sup>

This thesis is composed of four chapters. Chapter One: Introduction briefly deals with the background of *The Crucible* and investigates how those witches have been shaped by male dominators and how they have been viewed by the audience. Chapter Two discusses about a ritual in the forest and the two female protagonists Tituba and Abigail. The ritual or a group of female's gathering in *The Crucible* is, in my view, like an initiation of being witches. Once you get in, no matter what your age is, you will find it hard to get rid of the devil's name—a witch. Except for the traditional saying, why is considered women's ritual to be baleful? If it is baleful, where does the ritual's magic come from? Furthermore, I would elaborate the roles the Tituba and Abigail play in this play. Since Arthur Miller has been demonized in the 50's Marcarthisim witch-hunt, he projects his own experience onto women/ girls in *The Crucible*: the women who have been accused of being witches and the girls

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<sup>19</sup> Helena Cixous' "*The Laugh of the Medusa*."

who accuse them of having covenant with the Devil are both the victims under the patriarchal society. There will be an analysis on how this kind of McCarthyism pushes women against the wall. When encountering public terror, how people who are involved in this affair, such as Abigail and Tituba, balance the contention of parties, the patriarchal side and the women's side? Which side would they choose to take? And if someone comes to a compromise with the main stream, the patriarchal side, does it mean that another kind of McCarthyism is arising among women? Seemingly, men control the whole situation; as a matter of fact, it is Tituba and Abigail's performance that "imprison" their eyes. When men fantasize their power of judgment, at the same time, they all fall into the women's trap unknowingly.



Chapter Three focuses on witch-hunt and mass hysteria. I would briefly describe background and history about witch-hunt and the relationship between gender and witch-hunt. More than that, I would illustrate how the girls play their game--mass hysteria, to prevent themselves from being convicted. In the last chapter, I will conclude my thesis and redefine what a witch is, and then, hopefully, retrieve the female dynamics and sexuality underneath the stigmatized "witches."

## Chapter II : The Bewitched Ritual and the Dynamic of Female Sexuality

There is a voice crying in the wilderness, Catherine Clement and Helena Cixous say—the voice of a body dancing, laughing, shrieking, crying. Whose is it? It is, they say, the voice of a woman, newborn and yet archaic, a voice of milk and blood, a voice silenced but savage.

*The Newly Born Woman*

In this chapter, I will discuss the plot of the girls' dancing-party in the forest and probe in the relationship between female rituals and female sexuality. One of the pivotal roles, Tituba the Indian slave, has an important part in the Sabbat, as her racial identity heightens the fears and fantasies in Puritan society. Given the double standard prevailing in that society, how could Tituba integrate her marginal status, a marginal race and a marginal class, into an agency to save her from the time of adversity? And as for Abigail, *The Crucible* is centered on her vengeance. How could Abigail reveal her ambitions little by little and then imprison townspeople's eyes to carry out her evil plan?

### Ritual of Initiation

The crucible of this trial begins on a misty night, when Abigail, a group of girls and the black slave Tituba dances around a fire in the dark forest. As the dancing-party goes on, they try to cast spells, or fantasies, on someone they obsess with and it is likely that the shadowy moonlight has an effect upon the girls. The girls then ask Tituba to perform some rituals for them. Although Tituba has no idea

what the spells are, she uses an unusual language, her native language, to perform her “witchcraft”. Tituba is just like a witch who invokes demons, and the girls, of whom some are even naked, reveal their wishes or fantasies around the fire, telling the inner secrets which cannot be mentioned ordinarily. This kind of “non-linguistic” system, including Tituba’s witchcraft, the girls’ crying, and the bodily performance, the dance, unexpectedly, become a medium to release the girls from a personal closet to a public stage. M. Bloch, in his *Ritual, History, and Power*, observes that the linguistic aspects of rituals, especially singing and dancing, have played an important role in communication. He points out that “There is some sense in saying that bodily movements are a kind of language and that symbolic signals are communicated through a variety of movements from one person to another”<sup>20</sup>. In normal life, the girls can rarely communicate with each other. They are all admonished to discipline themselves to be normal people and anything beyond the patriarchal system would never be allowed. As we know, men stand on an equal place to voice in political sphere because Puritan society is extremely male-dominated. Women have little voice in this domain. Once women make an incursion into the almighty patriarchy, men would be anxious to obviate the forces of reaction just like what the girls’ doing in the very beginning of this play. It is no

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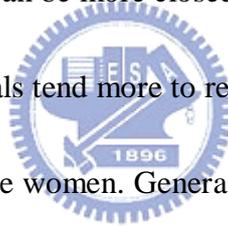
<sup>20</sup> Maurice Bloch. *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology*, p34.

wonder that the girls' gathering, which is demonized, is viewed as a kind of conspiracy. Something lies in the liminal zone between the unknown and the dangerous is to challenge and to disarrange the men's law. Yet what the townspeople fear most is not the devil's power but spiritual power. Imagine that a group of witches who assemble in the kitchen stand around a boiling pot to decoct some magic medicine. And perhaps the medicine is made for a particular man. In the long run, the kitchen, or the domestic space, has always been the particular space where women can gossip freely and cook secretly. The exchange of knowledge and the communication of private thinking are well to the fore in that space. Men never know what women can do. In my view, the kitchen becomes a symbol and allows men to fancy that conspiracy originates from the congregation of witches or women.

### **Female Body**

Nevertheless, whenever we mention women's rituals, we inevitably talk about bodily movement, especially that of female bodies. Various female rituals have different meanings. I will take two examples, the Greek rituals and the witches' Sabbat, to elaborate the gender issue reflected in these rituals. One of Greek rituals aims at celebrating the resurrection of Dionysus. Tradition has it that Dionysus is the son of the god Zeus and the woman Semele. Zeus' wife Hera, after discovering the truth, throws Dionysus into a fire. Fortunately, he is rescued by a nymph. The dying

and rebirth Dionysus has gone through represent a lifecycle of birth, growth, decay, death, and regeneration, and the four seasons, spring, summer, fall and winter. In addition, Dionysus is the god of wine, fertility and agriculture. During the ritual worshipping Dionysus, the dances and singing seem to symbolize the Dionysiac spirit of enthusiasm and passion. Ritual taboos and preparations have endowed people with the restraint of morality and the individual's value. As the proceedings go on, the power of the gathering and the strength of contagion deepen their collective consciousness, and the ethnicity can be more closed and cohesive.



From this perspective, rituals tend more to religious belief, the divine, and it is apparent that most participants are women. Generally speaking, the ritual is the only avenue to enter public space from the *oikos* (house) and it is the only space to be seen. In *Citizen Bacchae. Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*, Barbara Goff elaborates how women's role in rituals is often related to their outstanding contributions in the realm of the domestic, and owing to their particular 'works', women play distinctive parts in birth, weddings and especially funerals.<sup>21</sup> This is the tricky aspect. Men consider that childbirth and death are both polluted and dark. An infant comes from the mother's womb, the dark space, and a corpse goes back to the complete darkness. It seems that men are not willing to share this sort of 'bodily

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<sup>21</sup> Barbara Goff. *Citizen Bacchae. Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*, p25-p30.

disorder,' or that women, in essence, are uncanny in men's eyes. Does ritual become the medium of an intangible constraint on women's activities in patriarchal society? Does it imply that men, in fact, have the authority to control women's matters of life and death by emphasizing their subjectivity?

In some ways, ritual is a sort of demonstration. Through religious and official sanctions in public, it demonstrates that the authority or the patriarchy has the absolute power to control the corporal sphere, including, of course, women's bodies and desires. But from another perspective it could induce an effect of women's autonomy in a patriarchal/men's world. "The roles women played in ritual also taught them their identity in society."<sup>22</sup> Yet Barbara Goff explores her thoughts about the funeral part with the statement, "True, women are prominent in such important roles as mourning the dead but this prominence not only recognizes their presence, agency, and cultural value but also rehearses the justifications of their marginal status."<sup>23</sup>

If we consider the gender aspect of the rituals, the subject is complex and hard to simplify. "In the delegation of real ritual responsibilities gender was often a consideration; but gender is never a simple category, and the relationship between

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<sup>22</sup> <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2005/2005-04-12.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Barbara Goff. *Citizen Bacchae. Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*, p.35.

gender and ritual is not always transparent”.<sup>24</sup> Greek convention meant that women and men could not share the same space, for example, the incubation of the Amphiareion at Oropos. The dormitory was divided into two regions. Women had to sleep in the space to the west and men to the east of the altar. The distinction between east and west signifies the dawn and the evening, the light and the darkness, and life and death. Susan Guettel Cole writes that “women naturally belong to the propitious place. In some rituals, women had no place at all” What is more, the imagery of evening, darkness and death in some senses refer to the moon, the lunar goddess, which is an emblem of metamorphic obscurity. The moon is linked to the cosmic cycles and such correlation is most established in the field of nurture, agriculture and fertility, times of birth and women’s menstrual cycles. Because of the cycle of the moon, the menstrual periodicity of women is often considered to be part of the lunar goddess. Women are the earthly moon. The moon goddess has three aspects: as she waxes, she is the Maiden; full, she is the Mother; as she wanes, she is the Crone.<sup>25</sup> Women’s mystic power comes from the periodical change.



### **Sabbat**

Another notable example is the witches’ Sabbat or the “witchcraft rituals” and it is also one of the key features of demonology. Sabbat is a secret gathering for

<sup>24</sup> Susan Guettel Cole. *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space: the Ancient Greek Experience*, pp.94-95.

<sup>25</sup> Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, p.104.

witches who ride on broomsticks, flying at night to worship demons or Satan and indulging in diabolism, for example, eating roasted or boiled infants. The sites are always located in quiet, secluded forests where they do what witches are supposed to do, and they congregate around the bonfire in order to wait for the ritual's coming. In the course of the ritual, the covens drink, sing and dance naked and with curly tresses. Here, the cycle or circle has a meaning of "between the worlds". In theory, a circle is a boundary to keep and concentrate the power within and to protect the magician from any evil without.<sup>26</sup> We do not know if the girls in *The Crucible* have drawn a circle on the ground, but a circle sometimes separates space and time: inside the circle is a space without time and space. Within the social milieu, women automatically hide in this kind of construction, but once they become witches and get rid of the traditional shackles, they can do a lot of things that ordinary women and even men cannot.



Has anyone ever witnessed the rituals of the witches' Sabbat? The answer is largely no, and most of the descriptions come from artists' and historians' fabrications. Baldung Grien Hans, a German painter before the Reformation, produced thirteen paintings of witches between 1512 and 1517. One painting, the *Hexhensabbat*, shows below<sup>27</sup>:

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<sup>26</sup> Luhrmann, T. M. *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*, p.223.



As can be seen in this painting, there are three naked witches sitting around a smoking cauldron preparing a revel for the demons at midnight. The triangle (the way the three witches sit) symbolizes the bewitchment of sex. Another naked witch sits on a goat's back and holds a broomstick, flying into the sky. The basic elements of the witches' Sabbat are known to include nudity, broomsticks, and rituals for conjuring demons. The following quotation is a vivid image of the Sabbat written by John of Salisbury, a diplomat and the bishop of Chartres.

There are people who claim that a certain Herodias or Mistress of the Nights holds nocturnal gatherings and feasts, where she lords it over her various servants, and that witches there are offered babies, - some to be torn to bits and eaten, others to be laid back in their cradles. Who is so blind as not to see that this is all a mischievous illusion caused by demons? This is shown, if by nothing else, and those less firm in the faith, that believe these things.<sup>28</sup>

The demons in Sabbat are sometimes shown as androgynous beings whose sexuality may reinforce men's fears. Thus, the aspect of Sabbat which is most vilified is not what they eat but the women's sexuality and copulation. The inherent instincts of

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.onlinekunst.de/februarzwei/fasching\\_hexen3.html](http://www.onlinekunst.de/februarzwei/fasching_hexen3.html)

women's bodies and nature give birth to vicious demons and women who have sex with the demons have cravings for improper desire or unnatural pregnancy. Sabbat is a women's or witches' carnival of evil and degeneration. As for the unnatural intercourse, it is, in my view, what men yearn to hear about, the description of sexual intercourse between the witches and the demons or Satan. In fact, the devil is just the incarnation for men to materialize their fancies and to accomplish their excessive desires. And it is not hard to find out that the devils almost appear in an image or a shape of men.



According to hearsay, women seduced by the demons make a compact to exchange the soul, that is, women would give their soul to gain sexual *jouissance*. In addition, the festival of Dionysus and the witches' Sabbat have some similarities with each other: for example, the aura of revelry, the emancipation of women or witches' bodies, and the floating sexuality in the Sabbat. Celebrating the superiority of female body and ignoring earthly restrictions echo the unlimited Dionysus who transcends the boundary. The demons and Dionysus, in some ways, invoke people's or women's inner potency by destroying and reproducing it to awaken them.

In *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller arranges the gathering or ritual to be the curse of the witch-hunt to emphasize the little girls' devilish characters. These girls are caught by Samuel Parris, the minister of religion in Salem, and the dancing-party is

diabolized. Witchcraft is deeply believed by the townspeople to be the original cause of Betty's losing consciousness, and no matter what Abigail says, the gathering rapidly assumes the mantle of a witches' Sabbath. That is, this event has reference to the repulsive issues of body and sexuality. The following dialogue takes place between Samuel Parris and Abigail in Parris's house after his daughter Betty pretends she is in a coma. We can see how Parris firmly refuses to accept Abigail's statement.

Abigail: Uncle, the rumor of witchcraft is all about; I think you'd best go down and deny it yourself. The parlor's packed with people, sir. I'll sit with her.

Parris, *pressed, turns on her*: And what shall I say to them? That my daughter and my niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest?

Abigail: Uncle, we did dance, let you tell them I confessed it- and I'll be whipped if I must be. But they're speakin' of witchcraft. Betty's not witched.

Parris: Abigail, I cannot go before the congregation when I know you have not opened with me. What did you do with her in the forest?

Abigail: We did dance, uncle, and when leaped out of the bush so suddenly, Betty was frightened and then she fainted. And there's the whole of it.<sup>29</sup>

According to Puritan law, dancing is a heathen practice which is strictly forbidden, and that's why Samuel Parris's reaction is so strong. For example, Mercy Lewis, who is "a fat, sly, merciless girl of eighteen,"<sup>30</sup> takes her dress off to be naked. From what Arthur Miller describes about her it is not hard to detect that Mercy Lewis possesses some characteristics of the witch. In addition, Abigail drinks blood

<sup>29</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.9.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.16.

that night. The following dialogue occurs after Betty awakes and denounces Abigail for drinking blood.

Betty: You drank blood, Abby! You didn't tell him that!

Abigail: Betty, you never say that again! You will never—

Betty: You did, you did! You drank a charm to kill John Proctor's wife! You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!<sup>31</sup>

For the witches, drinking blood is not only a symbol of releasing the one's power but also of purification. Because the power of blood is the absolute purification, Abigail drinks chicken's blood to reinforce her self power to gain the faith. On the other hand, the blood also signifies that the evil power enters Abigail's body.

As we know, the cauldron is the basic tool for witches to make magical medicine, and in *The Crucible* the tool appears in their little games. When Hale diagnoses Betty's symptoms and then asks Abigail about the Sabbath for more evidence, Parris tells him that he found some soup near them.

Hale: Does someone afflict you, child? It need not be a woman, mind you, or a man. Perhaps some birds invisible to others come to you—perhaps a pig, a mouse, or any beast at all. Is there some figure bids you fly? *The child remains limp in his hands. In silence he lays her back on the pillow. Now, holding out his hands toward her, he intones: In nomine Domini Sabaoth sui filii que ite ad infernos. She does not stir. He returns to Abigail, his eyes narrowing.* Abigail, what sort of dancing were you doing with her in the forest?

Abigail: Why— common dancing is all.

Parris: I think I ought to say that – I saw a kettle in the grass where they were dancing.

Abigail: That were only soup.

Hale: What sort of soup were in this kettle, Abigail?

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<sup>31</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.18.

Abigail: Why, it were beans—and lentils, I think, and ---

Hale: Mr. Parris, you did not notice, did you, any living thing in the kettle? A mouse, perhaps, a spider, a frog—

Parris, fearfully: I—do believe there were some movement—in the soup.

Abigail: That, jumped in, we never put it in!

Hale, *quickly*: What jumped in?

Abigail: Why, a very little frog jumped—

Parris: A frog! Abby!<sup>32</sup>

Parris mentions a mouse, a spider and a frog because they are traditional witches'

pets believed to be the witches' familiars, friends and servants. For example, the frog

is amphibian, living on land and water, which implies that it can exist in both

darkness and light.



Furthermore, it is born in the form of a tadpole which needs to evolve to be a frog. And if we extend the parallel to becoming witches, women also experience

“evolution” to become witches. Under social and economic constraints, women have

to adapt to the repressive situation, so they have imbued their nature with binary

opposites: good versus evil, sweet versus savage, pure versus variable. Abigail and

the other girls allege that they are the messengers sent by God to help the

townspeople to wipe out the evil power. They are, at their age, sweet but dangerous,

innocent but shrewd. As for the spider, it is notorious for its poison, yet its web

symbolizes an image of women's weaving. Women weave their dreams to

compensate for the drawbacks in their lives and the spider's web circulates the

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<sup>32</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, pp.30-40.

unique experiences among women. It is also a web, just like the one spun by Fates, in which Abigail and the other girls weave their fate, revenge and death.

From the girls' perspective, it is merely a frolic with madcap behaviors. In their small world, it is not necessary to take any responsibility for the things they do and the words they speak, and everything seems to be upside down. On the other hand, from the religious and authoritative perspectives, the dancing-party which is just like the witches' Sabbath is a provocation to diverge from the norm. As Mikehail Bakhtin says in *Rabelais and His World*, "The carnival offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things"<sup>33</sup>. Abigail and the other girls transgress the existing social order and then create a world of madness, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Somehow, their "new orders" are imbued with liminal status, liminal time and space. We can say that witches live on this kind of boundary. What does the word "liminal" mean? It comes from the Latin word *limen*, which means a threshold or a border. For example, the girls' party is held in the wild forest near the civilized village at midnight. The liminal space takes place in-between two worlds, the unknown wilderness and the civilized culture. Midnight is just on the cusp of one day and the next and it is also the convergence of darkness and light.

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<sup>33</sup> Mikehail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*, p.34.

With similar ambiguity, women's bodies and sexuality are in some manner liminal and uncertain, abundant with fluid of female desire. Victor Turner describes the "antistructure" elements of rituals:

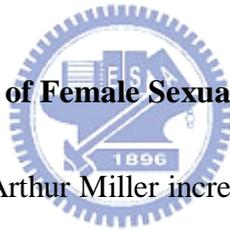
...ritual as the affirmation of communal unity in contrast to the frictions, constraints, and competitiveness of social life and organization. Rite affords a creative "antistructure" that is distinguished from the rigid maintenance of social orders, hierarchies, and traditional forms.<sup>34</sup>

The girls' festival in the forest is imbued with what Turner calls "antistructure", which means that everything is upside down and a taboo is being transgressed. The girls' carnival strikes and blurs the subsistent boundary to dissociate it to be more vitality. What is more, the girls can be, in some respects, deemed as "liminal entities" termed by Victor Tuner. He argues that the so-called liminal entities stand in a blurry space because they do not belong to a normal status or states in a classified organization. And in some initiations "they may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, to demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system.<sup>35</sup>" As mentioned, the girls somehow dress themselves loosely, such as disheveled hair and pajamas, in abnormal way in the eyes of Puritan society. However, it is also this kind of unlimited condition that furnishes them the invisible power to transform themselves in the forest and helps them to find

<sup>34</sup> Catherine, Bell. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, pp.20 -21.

<sup>35</sup> Victor Tuner. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, p.95.

possibilities of being new selves. According to Richard Schechner, performers can be transformed through performing<sup>36</sup>. In *The Crucible*, the girls' ritual is, in my view, just like a transformative performance and the forest is their secret stage. By acting, the girls/ performers feel more intimate with one another than before and are liberated from the ordinary life. For the girls, this adventurous ritual allowing them for nakedness does create a transient moment for them to strip off the fixed fetters of a rigid society. What is important is that they re-build new identities in this liminal status.



### **The Dynamic and Ambivalence of Female Sexuality**

What is interesting is that Arthur Miller increases Abigail's age from twelve to seventeen, noting that it is only for dramatic effect, not for some special reason. We may not learn his intention, but one possible reason, I think, is that Abigail in the actual Salem witch-hunt was too young to commit adultery with John Proctor. In the document of real events in Salem village, the sexual aspect is implicit, yet, in Arthur Miller's version, he reinforces the sexual roles and exaggerates the flowing desires of the girls, especially the audacious Abigail. He adds to the event the love triangles between Abigail, John Proctor and Elizabeth Proctor to rationalize the reason why Abigail purposely circumvents Elizabeth. In the historical document, there is no

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: an Introduction*.

story of love and revenge. Under the rigid disciplines of the Puritans, Abigail's words and behaviors as described in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* have no place in puritan patriarchal society. In Puritan society, the individual should repress his/her ecstasy and freedom for social solidarity, particularly female sexuality and lust. Is it Arthur Miller's intention to increase the tension between the two sexes in this play? By any reckoning, he wants to promote an upright imagery, whereby even a man abides by the results of his own mistakes, by shaping Abigail as a jade, a skittish female. Besides, Proctor has sexual fantasy of women, but is also terrified with the invisible and immense power that might tear men to shreds, just like Abigail does to John Proctor. She brings him to Heaven and then dooms him to Hell.



### **Abigail**

I would further argue that Abigail, as the subordinate maiden who chooses to fight for her own desire, represents a precursor in this play. Arthur Miller glorifies John Proctor for having the faith to resist authority and to take responsibility for his adultery while he puts down Abigail for her lust. Similar to Arthur Miller, some critics also criticize Abigail's evil nature. For example, Leonard Moss in 1967 notes that Abigail is a malicious and unstable individual and William Hawkins says that she is an evil child. Some even criticize her as a whore. The following is what

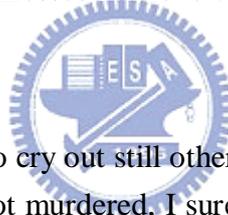
Proctor says to Abigail: "How do you call Heaven! Whore! Whore!"<sup>37</sup> "Not long after the fever died, Parris was voted from office, walked out on the highroad, and was never heard of again. Some may say that Abigail and other women in the play are the repressed victims of the patriarchy. In Chiung Wen Huang's master thesis *The Oppressor and the Oppressed: A Study of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible,"* she notes that "The radical feminists think that woman is oppressed under the patriarchal system. The symbols of this system are power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition. And there is no way to change this social bias except for rising a revolution." It is true that the women have been oppressed for a long time, and we cannot deny that the suppression of the women's revolt puts them in a lower position. Excessive female sexuality is always associated with evil, violent, and vengeance. For example, Medea in Greek mythology is an exact parallel to Abigail. Medea betrays her father, kills her brothers and steals the golden fleece because of her love for Jason. Jason abandons Medea to marry another woman. She swears vengeance. She kills her own sons and poisons Jason's new lover, and so on. If we compare Abigail and Medea, they both have wild tempers. Abigail is angelic when John Proctor becomes enamoured of her; Abigail becomes a witch when he tries to leave her. The same situation arises between Medea and Jason. Abigail and Medea both

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.109.

find their way through an irregular “orbit.” Simon de Beauvoir says “If, on the other hand, woman evades the rules of society, she returns to Nature and to the demon, she looses uncontrollable and evil forces in the collective midst. Fear is always mixed with the blame attached to women’s licentious conduct.”<sup>38</sup>

In the play, Abigail has changed from a coy virgin to a wanton woman, from a passing object of male desire to an active desiring female subject. Abigail knows that she is beautiful and charming, which are enough to usurp Elizabeth’s position. The following is how Abigail confesses her love to John Proctor. The location is in the wood where they meet.



Proctor: Abby- you mean to cry out still others?

Abigail: If I live, if I am not murdered, I surely will, until the last hypocrite is dead.

Proctor: Then there is no good?

Abigail: Aye, there is one. You are good.

Proctor: Am I! How am I good?

Abigail: Why, you taught me goodness, therefore you are good. It were a fire you walked me through, and all my ignorance was burned away. It were a fire, John, we lay in fire. And from that night no woman dare call me wicked any more but I knew my answer. I used to weep for my sins when the wind lifted up my skirts; and blushed for shame because some old Rebecca called me loose. And then you burned my ignorance away. As bare as some December tree I saw them all-walking like saints to church, running to feed the sick, and hypocrites in their hearts! And God gave me strength to call them liars, and God made men to listen to me, and by God I will scrub the world clean for the love of Him! Oh, John, I will make you such a wife when the world is white again! She kisses his hand. You will be amazed to see me every day, a light of heaven in your house, a—*He rises, backs*

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<sup>38</sup> Simon de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, p.190.

*away, amazed. Why are you so cold?*<sup>39</sup>

In this “soliloquy,” Abigail shows her subjectivity because of John Proctor’s civilization. Lovemaking for her is just like a watershed which divides the past, her girlhood, and the present, her womanhood. She is standing in a blurring space. She is aggressive but compromising. She is the angel but the witch. She is pathetic but abominable. She is beautiful but coquettish. She could be a wife but has already lost her virginity. If she was a wife, the sexual desire would be rationalized, and, what is important, Abigail could attach herself to her husband without drifting. Because she is a servant, what she has to do is to deal with some domestic trifle. The “fixed space” for her is meaningful. “Her home is thus her earthly lot, the expression of her social value and of her truest self. Because she does nothing, she eagerly seeks self-realization in what she has.”<sup>40</sup>

It cannot be denied that John Proctor is indeed obsessed with Abigail for a short time. He finds that Abigail asks for more, and then he ends their relationship. He wants to possess her, but he never figures out that he is the one who is possessed by Abigail. “Man is delighted by this very complexity of woman: a wonderful servant who is capable of dazzling him—and not too expensive. Is she angel or demon? The uncertainty makes her a Sphinx.”<sup>41</sup> Is Abigail an angel or a demon? I think the

<sup>39</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.141.

<sup>40</sup> Simon de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, pp.450-451.

<sup>41</sup> Simon de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, p.192.

answer is that she is a femme fatale, who causes his misgivings. The term “femme fatale,” the fatal woman, means women who are seductive and alluring, but evil and mysterious. Or the women that men thirst for but should not command.

### **Anima and Animus**

Moreover, Carl Jung gives it a different meaning: in *Anima* he mentions that the femme fatale is the dark *anima* who evokes destructive power and symbolizes a dangerous illusion. And he creates two terms, the animus and the anima to illustrate archetypes of feminine and masculine. He suggests that every individual has a psychological hybrid, that everyone has either a masculine or feminine side within their unconsciousness.



The Anima is the personification of all feminine psychological tendencies within a man, the archetypal feminine symbolism within a man's unconscious. The Animus is the personification of all masculine psychological tendencies within a woman, the archetypal masculine symbolism within a woman's unconsciousness.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, the anima and the animus both have negative and positive influences on a person. If a negative animus is strongly present, the woman is more ruthless, destructive and aggressive. John Proctor's cold-heartedness makes a great impact on Abigail and motivates her to do away with her role of a passive, feminine woman but learn to be more masculine and aggressive in order to grab what she wants. She has to be more logical, ambitious and assertive. Consequently, Abigail has

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/anima.html>.

developed the animus or the masculine energy within her unconsciousness. She is a masculine woman.

The disorder of Abigail/ the woman/ the witch whose boundless body has threatened patriarchal norms. She always finds a way to protect herself with the atypical bewitchment. She has made men in town submit to her “oracle.” She indirectly murders John Proctor to let Elizabeth Proctor lose her husband yet, at the same time, Abigail is certainly losing him. Abigail confronts the phallogocentrism by exploring her “dark continent” of female pleasure and challenges God and the patriarchal authority by performing her flexible and malleable body. Is Abigail a victim? The answer, definitely, is negative. Ritual for Abigail is not just a fantasy, but a meaningful tactic. Because of her adultery with John Proctor, she desperately wants to be more attractive and fascinating.

Rituals do create a free space where transformation could occur, thus the unknown consequence is powerful. It breaks through the swirling thoughts chasing each other around and around in the mind by taking us out of that mind, down into the body and through the heart.<sup>43</sup> And this kind of psychic transformation resonates with self-awareness, being and consciousness. Sometimes it is also an autohypnosis isolating us to reconstruct a new order beyond the official system. As for the girls’

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.awakenedwoman.com/ritualbooks.htm>.

festival, the ritual is just like a performance; the individual experience and the fantasy are the principles for them to design their own story, their own history. That is, the inherent flow and the instinctive rhythm inside the women's bodies could never disappear and in Ruth Barrett's essay "Daughters of the Goddess," she points out, "It is often through women's rites that women connect to and honor the deepest parts of them, bringing their inner knowledge to conscious awareness". And, of course, their behaviors intensify through the environment, observation, and imitation.

In *The Crucible*, according to Arthur Miller's description, Abigail is in her prime at seventeen: "a strikingly beautiful girl, an orphan, with an endless capacity for dissembling."<sup>44</sup> It cannot be denied that Abigail is indeed an attractive girl or woman and the other girls perhaps have a little admiration for and envy of her beauty and charms. In some situations, pretty looks, for a female, could win privilege or some special treatment, especially from the opposite sex. It is possible that the other girls, in some sense, want to be part of Abigail without knowing it, so they try to persuade Tituba to conjure the so-called witchcraft in order to increase their charm or femininity.

Through powerful autohypnosis, the consciousness resonates with inner knowledge and experience; the rituals connect to collective unconsciousness. Carl

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<sup>44</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.8.

Jung has theorized two unconscious levels, the personal unconsciousness and the collective unconsciousness. The personal unconsciousness is based on the individual experience, which is composed of suppression, forgotten memories and traumas, whereas the collective unconscious connects to everyone's common experience. Not only does each person have special experiences, but also shares some similar unconscious with one another. According to Jung, there are archetypes, including images and memories of important human experiences, which pass from generation to generation. The content of collective unconscious impinges immense influence: when the content cannot be unfolded in the consciousness it appears as a symbolic form within a dream or fantasy. For the girls' gathering, it is proceeding by fantasy, and I think the conspicuous part is Tituba's "non-linguistic" performance. From this aspect, the rituals are, according to Ruth Barrett, categorized as collective unconscious, and she also notes that "In effective ritual, both the right and left hemispheres of the brain are involved through the simultaneous use of visual symbols, spoken words, movement, and / or rhythm."<sup>45</sup>

### **Tituba**

Tituba is Parris's servant, bought by him when he had business in Barbados. Barbados is another British colony that furnished the North American colonies with

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<sup>45</sup> Ruth Barrett, "Daughters of the Goddess."

African slaves. Tituba has a very obscure and ambiguous identity: her mother is an Indian and her father is a fierce black. Puritans placed Indian, African and slaves into the same category, and could hardly tolerate the half-breed of half-Indian and half-African. Because her skin fuses two kinds of unknown darkness it is considered that Tituba is inclined to affiliate with the Devil.

The salient characteristic in the Puritan mind, shared by both Indians and Africans, was their degeneracy due to their alien culture, pagan rituals, and corrupted skin color. Therefore, being perceived as both African and Indian served not to diminish but to intensify the satanic attached to Tituba and to heighten fears and fantasies Puritans projected on her.<sup>46</sup>

As a slave, she has been under a severe strain, and her suppression is more serious than that of the other girls. Before entering the room to nurse Betty, Tituba has already sensed that she would be the first to suffer from scolding and controversy.

“She enters as one does who can no longer bear to be barred from the sight of her beloved, but she is also very frightened because her slave sense has warned her that, as always, trouble in this house eventually lands on her back.”<sup>47</sup> Her ESP tells her that Betty’s illness will bring her misfortune. When she is forced to confess it is surprising that her testimony is so flawless. How could an uneducated slave express her thoughts so fluently? The following section shows Tituba’s perfect performance:

*Tituba pants and begins rocking back and forth again, staring ahead.*

Tituba: There was four. There was four.

Parris, pressing in on her: Who? Who? Their names, their names!

<sup>46</sup> Veta Smith Tucker. *Purloined Identity: The Racial Metamorphosis of Tituba of Salem Village*. p.628.

<sup>47</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.8.

Tituba, *suddenly bursting out*: Oh, how many times he bid me kill you, Mr. Parris!

Parris: Kill me!

Tituba, *in a fury*: He say Mr. Parris must be kill! Mr. Parris no goodly man, Mr. Parris mean man and no gentle man, and he bid me rise out of my bed and cut your throat! *They gasp*. But I tell him “No! I don’t hate that man. I don’t want kill that man.” But he say, “You work for me, Tituba, and I make you free! I give you pretty dress to wear, and put you way high up in the air, and you gone fly back to Barbados!”<sup>48</sup>

Here, we find that Tituba is ruthless in her anger and the reason why she performs with a clear conscience is that she has neither privileges nor obligation to keep the Puritan orders. What she wants to do is to defend herself. Being an uncivilized slave, I believe that the self-protection power comes through her nature. The flowing female sexuality and the vulnerable exotic color become a kind of shelter to let Tituba loose herself from the gaze of her detractors. Tituba’s racial identity and gender are a double-edged weapon that protects her from death. The fact that she is a woman and a black makes the townspeople tolerate her manners more than other girls. In addition, in the girls’ Sabbath, Tituba stands in a tricky position. She is just like a priest when casting her “benison” on the girls who need the love miracles and, at the same time, she is just like a mother who helps her daughters to be women. In this sense, Tituba’s position even seems to be superior when she is asked to enchant the girls. In other words, racial hierarchy does not exist in girls’ Sabbath. On the contrary, Tituba is the oldest female and a mother figure to those girls. The Sabbath,

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<sup>48</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.44.

in fact, transgresses national boundaries and race prejudice to weave mutual experiences. Tituba administers her inherited talent to the girls and similarly the girls provide the supportive atmosphere for Tituba. Tituba “is priest and altar and she is the host with which all the people take communion.”<sup>49</sup> In this ritual, the girls experience transformation through role playing.

Tituba, meanwhile, already metamorphoses into the image of a Black Madonna. The Black Madonna is the sacred Roman Catholic icon who is portrayed with black or brown skin. Obviously, Tituba has the same color as her. Moreover, it is believed that the Black Madonna is the maternal and female archetype, or the female divine, who holds the power of creation and destruction, for example, healing and harming, protection and lack of protection. One of her immense power comes from menstrual blood, that is to say, women’s menstrual blood has a power to create and to destroy. Creation means fertility, and if the blood is touched by someone, it would cause sickness and death, the destructive power. Furthermore, “the original meaning of the Sabbath can be understood as “menstrual separation,” particularly as related to the new moon”.<sup>50</sup> In *The Crucible*, it is not hard to find out that Tituba, in a large sense, is an emblem of the Black Madonna. For example, in the scene of dancing party, Tituba gives Abigail the chicken’s blood to drink.

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<sup>49</sup> Helen Cixous and Catherine Clement. *The Newly Born Woman*, p.31.

<sup>50</sup> <http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/grahn/chapt01.htm>.

Though the blood is not Tituba's own blood it could epitomize as menstrual blood. In the very beginning of the ritual, the blood is a sort of might to fulfill Abigail's hope for being loved by Proctor. It is also blood that gives Tituba courage to fight against the unwarranted sin. In regards with Tituba's witchcraft, her performance is certainly an outlet to demonstrate her innate feminine power, and the Sabbath is the only stage which provides a space for Tituba's fantasy, helping her escape from the reality.

However, with the spread of the rumor, the blood becomes a curse and an evidence for people to accuse her. Obviously, the blood destroys Tituba herself.

Abigail: She makes me drink blood!

Parris: Blood!

Mrs. Putnam: My baby's blood?

Tituba: No, no, chicken blood. I give she chicken blood!

Hale: Woman, have you enlisted these children for the Devil?

.....

Abigail: She comes to me every night to go and drink blood!

Tituba: You beg me to conjure! She beg me make charm---<sup>51</sup>

No matter what women's roles are in the rituals, the rituals bring them into a world where they question male domination and understand their own power to overcome the dominant patriarchal system. The rituals are a kind of performance, a theater, and an initiation for the girls in *The Crucible* and for women in real life, and the rituals are not only to invoke the mutual support but also to raise the consciousness in the

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<sup>51</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.41.

group.

For the girls in Salem, the Sabbat is not only the utopia of sisterhood but also the community of womanhood, and there is no hierarchy between the black slave Tituba and the girls. They depend on each other, in this ritual and in the following fake accusations, to keep covert the truth of mass hysteria. Equal partnership, friendship, and ecstasy do exist in their utopia and thus a new subjectivity/relationship is formed to threaten the patriarchy. “Sabbaths are imbued with the symbolic significance of commensality: the witches constitute a counter-community with its own idyllic commensality, a commensality which unites the participants.”<sup>52</sup> They are no longer the “Objects” who disperse to men’s lives, and they are not making a symbolic commotion about nothing but they are all “womanists.” The term “womanist” is first used in Alice Walker’s *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. It is originated from a black folk that a mother tells the female children how to act like a woman without any abject attitude.

'You acting womanish,' i.e. like a woman ... usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one ... [A womanist is also] a woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture ... and women's strength ... committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist ... Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.<sup>53</sup>

In my view, what Alice Walker may demonstrate is that there would be no

<sup>52</sup> Diane Purkiss. *The Witch in History*, p.137.

<sup>53</sup> <http://science.jrank.org/pages/8159/Womanism.html>

hierarchical difference in the womanist thinking and what is more important is women should be more capacious to receive and to exercise much women's power. Hence, here, I want to borrow the word to put the name "womanist" on the girls and Tituba. The girls and Tituba make their own history with their fantasy, bodily rhythm and "witchcraft." Love is the religion. It is a dystopia, however, for the patriarchal system. From the beginning of "God's / men's rituals" to the women's rituals, the women's roles have transformed from passive collaborationists to active participants. Women avail themselves of these opportunities to gain much enigmatic knowledge outside the domestic realms and to enhance the dynamics which is inherent inside their bodies. "As the subject of her own desire the woman undermines masculine control, and as the object of others' desire she provides a source of unwanted conflict among men".<sup>54</sup>

What is more, the gathering is just the initiation into being women or witches. Although most of them are so-called maidens except for Abigail and Tituba, they are aware of the rudiments of affection and the sexiness of the bodies. Perhaps they start to explore the myth of their physical parts and to seek the revelation of their spiritual parts. They all have the sacred might to control their bodies. The subtle power is raised through their chant, Tituba's witchcraft, spells, and the dance. Under the

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<sup>54</sup> Barbara Goff. *Citizen Bacchae. Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*, p.80.

mantle of the clothes and the Puritans' severe doctrine, the hidden feminist thoughts of the girls are symbolized to be visualized. From isolated individuals to the collective communion, they sing and dance to celebrate their sexuality. The girls reconstruct their own secret society and their own time. The Sabbath is "born from the consciousness-raising groups which gave women a chance to talk about their seemingly private, personal experiences and find them validated by thousands of other women."<sup>55</sup>



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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.warren-wilson.edu/~religion/newifo/religions/paganism/index/goddess/essay.shtml>.

### Chapter III : Witch-Hunt and Mass Hysteria

In this chapter, I will discuss the brief history of the witch-hunt and the relationship between gender oppression and the witch-hunt. How do these female characters differentiate between the so-called witches and the hidden witches according to the evidence? The fountainhead of the witch-hunt in Salem is Betty's illness. In order to avoid being censured by Samuel Parris and the crowd, the girls "confess" the sin. Arthur Miller cites "the ravings of a klatch of repressed pubescent girls who, fearing punishment for their implicitly sexual revolt, began convincing themselves that they have been perverted by Satan."<sup>56</sup> Yet, the girls' confession evolves into a retaliatory and absurd farce; most of the women in Salem who have escaped by sheer luck die because of the fabricated accusations. This kind of farce is called pathological mass hysteria. I will also discuss it in this chapter.

#### Witch-Hunt

Since *The Crucible* deals with the witch craze, the relationship between the witch-hunt and gender oppression, especially the question "why women are witches or why witches are women" must be explored. These issues can be interpreted in two different ways, each of which would affect women's situation and place it under a different kind of social spotlight.

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<sup>56</sup> Bernard Rosenthal. *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692*, p.33.

First, “why women are witches” implies that women who are born to mess with demons or Satan are naturally witches, that is, witches are believed to be women. Some critics point out the misogynist views relating women to witches in some folklore or literature because of being the surviving supporters of an evil cause, the witch-crafted women possess a kind of hollow (lack of phallus), the conspiracy (the sexuality) and infernal music(women’s voice) to bring them from hell to the earth. According to Stuart Clark’s “The ‘Gendering’ of Witchcraft in French Demonology: Misogyny or Polarity?” he argues that “witches were accused not because they were women, but because they were witches.”<sup>57</sup> The other question, why witches are women, sounds more lenient towards women. It assumes that not only are witches women but also that some witches are men. According to hearsay and scholars alike, women are considered weak-willed and addicted to sexual pleasure, thus the word “seducible” always describes witches. Moreover, if men are considered witches, at the same time they are considered to be wizards, sorcerers who possess the higher knowledge. If women are considered witches, they are simply the messengers who possess supernatural power, their inferior knowledge invoking the spirits.

Moreover, as the records of English witch trials show, people who were

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<sup>57</sup> Elspeth Whitney. *International Trends: The Witch "She"/The Historian "He": Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch-Hunts*, p.83.

accused of being witches at that time were overwhelmingly women.

The indictments demonstrate that just under 90 per cent of those indicted for witchcraft at the south-eastern assizes were women, which is higher than what might be described as the European average of 80 per cent (it should be remembered that in some parts of Europe the proportion of women charged as witches was much lower.<sup>58</sup>

In Europe, about nine million so-called witches were executed and 80 per cent were women, including adolescent girls and children. Most of them were believed to inherit the evil genes from their mothers. Bamberg was a small German city with 6000 citizens, but 600 people were burnt as witches in five years. During the same period, almost 900 women were burnt in a fire in a town with the same citizen population, Würzburg. Two women died per day. From the fifteenth century for the next 300 years, Christian priests cited a quotation from the Bible, "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18), to justify persecution of those who did not conform to their ideas. Countless women in the Dark Ages were framed as witches and many of them were burned to death in public. One such victim is Joan of Arc. She is the girl, or the witch, who was convicted of heresy, refusing to acknowledge the Church's authority and dressing as a man. Why do the accused witches have to suffer this kind of torture?

The meaning of these tortures is that she was in this way given back to Nature after being deprived of her social dignity; by her sin she had let loose natural emanations of evil: the expiation was carried out in a kind scared orgy in which the women- demanding, striking, massacring the guilty one- released in

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<sup>58</sup> J. A. Sharpe. *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, p.42.

their turn fluids of mysterious but beneficial nature, since the avengers were acting in accordance with society's rules.<sup>59</sup>

A "professional" book of witch-hunts, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the Hammer of the Witches, was published by two demonologists, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, in 1486. Owing to its popularity, it was republished thirteen times; therefore, the witch craze penetrated all of Europe up to the seventeenth century. The *Malleus Maleficarum* describes how women who are the descendants of the demons conclude a treaty with a demon or Satan and are depicted as evil and wanton, some of whom are dressed up to seduce men to have intercourse with them. The purpose is to make men impotent by stealing away the penis. It also records the concrete interrogations and effective ways to torture those who have been accused so they plead their guilt. Some critics consider that this book is full of a complex misogyny, the hatred of women. In medieval Christianity, knowledge is not important at all: instead, religion is the crucial element. The Bible is the only religion and the principle that explains the phenomenon of the cosmos. These rigid principles and doctrines required people to adhere to them without question. And, of course, irregular sex between women and men was forbidden. It was said that the body was produced from the sin of Adam and Eve and the sin was, principally, invoked by Eve who was seduced by the snake, the disguised Satan. This account in Genesis is one

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<sup>59</sup> Simon de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, p.190.

of the possible explanations of women's weak will and unsatisfied lust. The body, the sexuality, brings its original sin from birth. The way to absolution and redemption is dependent on the last judgment. For the women or witches in a witch hunt, the judgment is based on God's decree and the stake could annihilate their sin.

Under the coercitory mortification and caution, the social construction does make people believe that women's sexuality is affiliated with the reproduction. Additionally, the traditional hearsay is, as the previous chapter mentioned, inspired by the evil slander about women or witches, and it is no wonder misogyny gained such ground during that period. Because of menstruation and giving birth, women do play an important role in service of consolidating the patriarchal system, while female carnal lust is prohibited and retributed. The *Malleus Maleficarum* states "All witchcraft stems from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable".<sup>60</sup> Because of the chaotic source of the statistical information, it is hard to tell how many women died in witch-hunt. What we do know is that women by definition are the victims in the "woman hunt." The judges and the priest are just the arbitrary dictators who determine whether they live or die. The witch-hunt becomes, so to speak, a superb means for men to uphold the majesty without staining their hands; on the contrary, it is a vicious circle causing cannibalism among women who are accused of being

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<sup>60</sup> Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, p.30.

witch and are required to identify their confederates. Except for the eyewitness's testimony, to admit the guilt is also crucial for those who have been accused as witches to survive. The example could be found in Hathorne's interrogation of Martha in the Salem Meeting House.

Hathorne: Now, Martha Corey, there is abundant evidence in our hands to show that you have given yourself to the reading of fortunes. Do you deny it?

Martha: I am innocent to a witch is.

Hathorne: If I were I would know it.

Hathorne: Why do you hurt them? I scorn it.

Corey: I have evidence for the court! (Voices of townsfolk rise in excitement.)

Danforth: You will keep your seat!

Corey: Thomas Putname is reaching' out for land! (Crowd louder.)

Danforth: Remove that man, Marshal! (A roaring goes up from the people.)

Corey: You're hearing lies, lies!

Hathorne: Arrest him, Excellency!<sup>61</sup>

### **Patriarchal Authority**

In *The Crucible*, apparently, the so-called judges and the priest are those who have substantial power to determine the future of those sufferers. The following dialogue between Hale and Danforth shows how Danforth has a firm belief in the value of his authority in the name of God even Hale has already detected the truth of witchcraft. In the following scene, Danforth interrogates Elizabeth whether her husband-- Proctor is a lecher or not and Hale comes forward to defend Proctor in the court and then gives a clear answer to Danforth about the Abigail's accusations.

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<sup>61</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, pp.51-52.

Dabforth: Look at me! To your own knowledge, has John Proctor ever committed the crime of lechery? (In a crisis of indecision she cannot

speaking.) Answer my question! Is your husband a lecher!

Elizabeth: (Faintly.) No, sir.

Danforth: Remove her. (Proctor and Abigail turn around into scene.)

Proctor: Elizabeth, tell the truth, Elizabeth!

Danforth: She has spoken. Remove her. (Hale crosses R. following Elizabeth.)

Proctor: (Cries out.) Elizabeth, I have confessed it!

Elizabeth: Oh, John! (Goes out U. R.)

Proctor: She only thought to save my name!

Hale: Excellency, it is a natural lie to tell; I beg you, stop now; before

another is condemned! I may shut my conscience to it no

more.....private vengeance is working through this testimony!

From the beginning this man has struck me true. I believe him

now! By my oath to heaven, I believe him, and I pray you call back

his wife before we....

Danforth: She spoke nothing of lechery, and this man lies!

Hale: (He cries out in anguish.) I believe him! I cannot turn my face it no

more. (Pointing at Abigail.) This girl has always struck me false!

She....(Abigail with a weird cry screams up to ceiling.)<sup>62</sup>

As a judge, Danforth believes he himself is the only qualified spokesman for the Law, Justice and God.

Hale: Excellency, I have signed seventy-two death warrants; I am a minister of the Lord, and I dare not to take a life without there be a proof so immaculate, no slightest qualm of conscience may doubt it.

Danforth: Mister Hale, you surely do not doubt my justice?

Hale: I have this morning signed away the soul of Rebecca Nurse, Your Honor.

I'll not conceal it—I tell you true, sir, my hand shakes yet as with a wound! I pray you, sir, this argument let lawyers present to you.

Danforth: Mister Hale, believe me; for a man of such terrible learning you are most bewildered—I hope you will forgive me. (Relishing in his knowledge of the law.).....One calls up witnesses to prove his innocence. But witchcraft is *ipso facto*, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime. Therefore, who may possibly be witness to

<sup>62</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, pp.70-71.

it?—the witch, and the victim. None other. Now we cannot hope the witch will accuse herself; granted? Therefore, we must rely upon her victims—and they do testify, the children certainly do testify. As for the witches, none will deny that we are most eager for their confessions. Therefore, what is left for a lawyer to bring out? I think I have made my point. Have I not?<sup>63</sup>

In the courtroom, Danforth strongly considers that Abigail and the other girls are unable to lie because “witchcraft is *ipso facto*, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime.” That is to say, Danforth has convicted those who are named by the girls and the testimonies formally legitimize his decision-making. However, when Hale questions his discretion and the sense of righteousness, Danforth could not bear this terrible insult to his pride and reputation. Thus, Danforth refuses to face the truth and hangs innocent people to strength his lofty status. Moreover, in Act IV, Scene 2 it shows that how Danforth holds firm to his rigid determination.

Hathorn: Riot! – Why, at every execution I have seen naught but high satisfaction in the town.

Parris: Judge Hathorne—it were another sort of that hanged till now. Rebecca Nurse is no Bridget that lived three year with Bishop before she married him. John Proctor is not Issac Ward that drank his family to ruin. (To Danforth.) Let Rebecca stand upon the gibbet and sent up some righteous prayer, and I fear she’ll wake a vengeance on you.

Hathorne: Excellency, she is condemned a witch. The court have....

Danforth: (In deep concern, he raises a hand to Hathorne.) Pray you. (To Parris.) How do you propose, then?

Parris: Excellency... I would postpone these hangin’s for a time.

Danforth: There will be no postponement.<sup>64</sup>

Obviously, Danforth believes that this postponement for hanging Rebecca Nurse

<sup>63</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, pp.61-62.

<sup>64</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p,79.

would definitely expose his weakness and degenerate his own judgments in front of the public perception. From above, it can be said that Hathorne and Danforth represent the tyrannical patriarchal authorities who tolerate no challenge. What is more, they gain a lot of profit from the “witches’ property”, and the charge for wood needed for the stake and the festivals. They not only enjoy the gratitude of the people but also, at the same time, earn money from the victims. At this point, however, we could not know if the church takes over the victims’ property in *The Crucible*.



This gives us some concrete evidence to prove that women are accused and demonized as witches under misogynist persecution. It also gives some demonological writers reason to justify their biased patriarchal system. William Perkins comments on the problem of women and witchcraft.

The woman, being the weaker sexe, is sooner intangled by the devil’s illusions, with the damnable art, than the man. And in all ages it is found true by experience, that the devil hath more easily and oftner prevailed with women then with men.....his first temptation in the beginning was with Eve a woman, and since he pursueth his practice accordingly as making for his advantage. For where he findeth easiest entrance, and best entertainment, thither will he oftenest resort.<sup>65</sup>

Yet, according to some propositions, witches are categorized into three types. One from the historical angle is that women are regarded as Satan’s lovers, servants or even wives in the period of the witch-hunt in the fifteenth century. Christianity

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<sup>65</sup> J. A. Sharpe. *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, p.43.

aimed to eradicate those who held different views and society was not to accept heresy. If anything happened, for example, illness in the neighborhood or the unusual weather, it would be blamed on women or witches. Basically, the witch-hunt is defined as an epitome of the evil which mirrors men's fear and of women's power of danger, pollution and disorder. Another classification is that of the traditional witches who have to attend the women's gathering that is, the coven. The coven is the so-called Sabbat. In the coven, the witches gain a variety of knowledge, for example, astrology, medical treatment and medicine. Yet the hierarchy persists in it. For Europe at that time, knowledge lay in pupillage, only the monks and the aristocracy being allowed to be educated. Those knowledgeable women who were not willing to conform were mystical and intimidating to the eye of an ordinary person because they had no idea what kind of power they had. What is more, the purpose of the congregation for women or witches was not to glorify God, but to help females who needed some assistance. This help included unmentionable gynecological diseases, lovesickness, and so on. The third one, the modern witches, disengages from the illiberal stereotype. The witches have more space to spread their "witchcraft," and they are the pioneers who confront the patriarchy, the male chauvinist.

Moreover, most of them are the poor, the married or the widows, whose ages

are generally from forty to sixty.

Brian Levack's survey, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (1987), for example, devotes several pages to sex and age as factors in determining who was accused of witchcraft, pointing to both the vulnerability of women, especially old women, as well as to 'male anxiety' about the supposed sexually predatory nature of mature woman.<sup>66</sup>

It is not hard to understand why the collective image of witches is that of the ill-tempered, older woman, "because they were marginal, dependent members of the community and therefore more likely to arouse feelings of both hostility and guilt."<sup>67</sup>

Sometimes, witches are called wise women, and what is the link between the older women and the wise women? Both the widows and the elderly spinsters have specific experiences and prerequisites, the material conditions to treat authority with indifference. Thus, the atypical women who live apart from the direct male domination are respected by the patriarchal society. The widows, if they don't have sons to inherit, receive properties from their husbands, so they can manage the money without any interference. Moreover, it is considered that "widows were particularly active in making transactions, suing, and being sued for lands and debts."<sup>68</sup>

Interference here, however, means that no one could protect them from

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<sup>66</sup> Elspeth Whitney. *International Trends: The Witch "She" / The Historian "He": Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch-Hunts*, p.83.

<sup>67</sup> Clarke Garrett. *Women and Witches: Patterns of Analysis*.

<sup>68</sup> C. Dallett Hemphill. *Women in Court: Sex-Role Differentiation in Salem, Massachusetts, 1636 to 1683*.

other mighty powers, the clergy and the court. Therefore, the widows' properties turn into the targets which are coveted the most by those greedy eyes and at the same time, it becomes an economical mechanism to attack the deviance. As for the elderly spinsters, they lived all alone and made their own money by themselves. Basically, most of them were healers, especially midwives and herbalists. With the rising of the male doctor, those women became their competitors. In order to establish their specialty, men started to stamp out the witches in the name of God.

### **Real Witches and Hidden Witches**



In Salem in 1692, two kinds of witches are shown in *The Crucible*. One is the 'real' witches, and the others are the 'hidden' witches. First, I want to identify these two types. Those girls who attend the congregation on that misty night comprise the alpha girl Abigail Williams, Betty Parris, Ann Putnam, Mary Warren, Mercy Lewis, Elizabeth Parris, Mary Walcott, Elizabeth Hubbard and Samuel Parris' Indian slave Tituba. In this gathering, Tituba is implored by the girls to use some "magical practices and spells" to pray and predict their fortune, particularly the love affairs. Yet everything is out of control after Betty pretends to fall into unconsciousness. Every girl in the "community" clearly knows that her illness is just to evade public censure for her dishonorable behavior. The village doctor and the townspeople in panic ascribe Betty's sickness to witchcraft. Parris refuses to believe Abigail's

version and forces her to tell the “truth”. Under pressure, she has no alternative but to identify Tituba and concocts the lie that Tituba has come into contact with demons. Tituba knows that the only way to avoid being punished is to embroil the girls in the crucible. These girls’ hysterical seizures start with Tituba’s revolt and the crucible starts to snowball. The girls’ deviance, their dancing, Tituba’s voodoo, and the misty night are pictured by the townspeople, a vision associated with the witches’ Sabbat. In some ways, they are the invisible witches, who hide behind blind authority to control Salem village’s fate.



As for the real witches, they are the official victims, including Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Good, and Sara Osbun. Since the girls have been increased their unexpected activities, people suspected of sympathizing are summoned to testify and identify the conspirators who have collaborated with demons. Those who don’t confess and name the confederates are blacklisted. One of the accomplices is Thomas Putnam’s wife, Ann, who had seven children of whom only one survives, Ruth Putnam. The townspeople and Ann Putnam believe that her dead babies were cursed by supernatural means, witchcraft. What is more, Sara Osbun is her midwife. When Tituba names Sara Osbun, Ann Putnam says “I knew it! Goody Osburn were midwife to me three times. I begged you, Thomas, did I not? I begged him not to

call Osburn because I feared her. My babies always shriveled in her hands.”<sup>69</sup> At the same time, Ruth Putnam is in the same situation as Betty. Because of women’s weak will, they are the ones who easily submit to demons. On the other hand, as a midwife, the woman has to bear the fear and disgust with her usual fortitude and touch the bloody birth substances with her hands. She knows that she should be effectual and aggressive in uncertain circumstances because she takes responsibility for two lives and has control over other women’s bodies. This kind of control is always related to sexual knowledge and female autonomy. For those reasons, the midwife holds a higher position than other women in social and financial circles. The midwife, however, is also envied and vilified. An older woman once said: “It is a sin for one who is born with the virtue (power) to refuse to go out and help women, but people also gossip about midwives; they say their husbands don’t know how to support them. People are always envious of the things others do.”<sup>70</sup> Does Mrs Putnam symbolize a woman who is easily to receive the divinity of the patriarchal system? Or does this event perhaps give her a good reason to heal some traumatic experiences of the past and persuade herself that it is not her fault the babies died. In addition, Sara Good, one of the women accused by Tituba, is a rather bad-tempered woman, and such marginal identities become scapegoats under social heat. As the

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<sup>69</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.44.

<sup>70</sup> Judith Hoch-Smith and Anita Spring. *Women in Ritual and Symbolic Roles*, p.131.

documentaries show, most witch-finders were women, some even friends or neighbors. The witch-hunt is not merely a war between two sexes but also a war between women and women, and most witches are accused on the evidence given by women witnesses. With regard to this point, Lyndal Roper argues “psychic conflicts attendant on the feminine position, both Oedipal and related to motherhood, underlay at least some cases of witch accusations and fantasies of witchcraft grew out of conscious and unconscious images of the female body.”<sup>71</sup> No matter who the witches are, all women possess “witchy” blood inside their bodies.

### Mass Hysteria



Yet the existence of witches is not the main catalyst of the witch-hunt but the contagion of madness, that is, the hysteria. The hysterics’ accusations use ingenious devices, which are certainly based upon the unexplainable supernatural, to make people believe that it is the will of God. Similarly in *The Crucible*, what the girls do almost destroys the order of Salem village. In fact, the cunning Abigail is the first perpetrator to persecute Tituba and Tituba never expects that she will be betrayed by a member of their community.

Abigail: She sends her spirit on me in church; she makes me laugh at prayer!

Parris: She have often laughed at prayer!

Abigail: She comes to me every night to go and drink blood!

Tituba: You *beg me* to conjure! She *beg me* make charm---

<sup>71</sup> Elspeth Whitney.. *International Trends: The Witch” She ”/The Historian “He”*: Gender and the Historiography of the European Witch-Hunts, p.89.

Abigail: Don't lie! To *Hale*: She comes to me while I sleep; she's always making me dream corruptions!

Tituba: Why you say that, Abby?

Abigail: Sometimes I wake and find myself standing in the open doorway and not a stitch on my body! I always hear her laughing in my sleep. I hear her singing her Barbados songs and tempting me with—<sup>72</sup>

Abigail knows those words could not be tolerated by such a rigid Puritan society so she repeatedly mentions sexual parts, corruptions, nudity and temptation in order to reinforce Tituba's sin. Obviously, Abigail's tactic is successful and finally Tituba, who is menaced by Parris, admits herself to witchcraft. This sort of confession not only saves Tituba from being hanged but also makes her a messenger to pass on God's will to the townspeople. Hale says: "You are God's instrument put in our hands to discover the Devil's agents among us. You are selected, Tituba, you are chosen to help us cleanse our village. So speak utterly, Tituba, turn your back on him and face God—face God, and God will protect you."<sup>73</sup> The girls know being mad is the best way to keep them from being punished. After Tituba's performance, Abigail then prepares her story. Abigail realizes that she too is the target of public criticism. In a sense, Abigail and Tituba are similarly categorized. They are forced to work but have no discretion in what they do. Unmarried women and slaves are viewed as children or the minorities and only the master or the husband can represent them in court. It is legal for them to be whipped and abused. They cannot seek any help and

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<sup>72</sup> Arthur Miller *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.41.

<sup>73</sup> Arthur Miller *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.44.

no one would come forward to defend them. They are needed but excluded. Why do Tituba and Abigail first rise in revolt? One of the possibilities is that Abigail's notorious behavior and Tituba's dark skin both have a sexual aspect. They sense that they are walking on the line which could bring them into heaven or hell. So they cross the line to control their destiny. They are just like a dormant volcano which could awake at any moment. The resentful person, especially among the subsistence farmers, easily turns into a truculent rioter. At the same time, when Abigail is speaking, "*Betty is rising from the bed, a fever in her eyes, and picks up the chant,*"<sup>74</sup> Betty suddenly wakes up to perform this farce.

Betty: *staring too:* I saw George Jacobs with the Devil! I saw Goody Howe with the Devil!

Parris: She speaks! He *rushes to embrace Betty.* She speaks!

Hale: Glory to God! It is broken, they are free!

Betty, *calling out hysterically and with great relief:* I saw Martha Bellows with the Devil!

Abigail: I saw Goody Sibber with the Devil! It is *rising to a great glee.*

Putnam: The marshal, I'll call the marshal!

*Parris is shouting a prayer of thanksgiving.*

Betty: I saw Alice Barrows with the Devil!

*The curtain begins to fall.*<sup>75</sup>

The mass hysteria at this point is contagious.

The hysteria indicates the individuals' illness and mass hysteria often occurs in closed communities. It is common across all kinds of cultures and situations, especially at a time of stress. The patient may suffer twitching, headache, dizziness,

<sup>74</sup> Arthur Miller *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.45.

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Miller *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.45.

nausea, fainting, ranting or screaming: the girls' weeping, screaming, and fainting are typical. Their runaway emotions transcend rational thought and govern their outward actions.

What, however, is the relationship between witch-hunts, mass hysteria and the feminist movement? Peter Gay in *Freud for Historians* argues that

The delusions from which the witches, their victims, and their judges suffered [in 17<sup>th</sup>- century New England] found social, institutionalized expression, and drew on beliefs generally held and rarely questioned. Yet the mental conflicts that give rise to suspicions, accusations, and confessions... were experiences of individuals.<sup>76</sup>

Whenever this kind of witchcraft hysteria is fired up, individualist is contagious. To confess or not to confess, that is a dilemma. This dilemma splits the rational and irrational parts of the accused. In order to avoiding being tortured, those who have been accused cannot but confess that they are enslaved by the Devil by feigning madness and acting like an idiot. For the townspeople, the conspirators of the Devil are regarded as abnormal humans or creatures because they are outside the authoritative regime. Licentious behavior, hysteria, is often therefore equated with witches. In *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, Brian Levack states that “witches were often thought to be hysterics, although most were probably mythomaniacs or simply senile.”<sup>77</sup> Those who experience the maladies are infected

<sup>76</sup> Peter Gay. *Freud for Historians*, p.203.

<sup>77</sup> Brian Levack. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, p.137.

by the witches is “some form of what we would call hysteria.”<sup>78</sup> And he continues to argue that the witch hunt is

a mode of profound fear or panic { or “mania” or “craze”} while the hunt was going on...Appearances suggest that communities involved in witch-hunting sometimes experienced a form of mass hysteria [,but] this psychic development [ must be distinguished] from the pathological hysteria that groups of demoniacs contracted.<sup>79</sup>

What is more, hysteria almost becomes a women’s disease because the word “hysteria” is from the Greek *hysterikos*, which means the womb. It is believed that the symptoms of hysteria are caused by the unmarried woman’s womb shifting inside the body

the hysteric is, after all, the creature whose wandering, even wondering, womb manifests the distinctively female bonding, or bondage, of mind and body, the inescapable female connection between destiny that is inexorable determined by anatomy.”<sup>80</sup>

This explanation of hysteria and the wandering or wondering womb refers to ambiguous femininity. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the medical opinion constructed women not only as different but also as the radical other. “Female sexuality began to seem, from the perspective of reproductive research, biologically superfluous, and perhaps even pathological.”<sup>81</sup> With regard to this point, women’s health is usually dependent upon the womb.

Thus, in early nineteenth-century Europe “gynecology and psychological

<sup>78</sup> Brian Levack. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, p.222.

<sup>79</sup> Brian Levack. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, p.160.

<sup>80</sup> Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement. *The Newly Born Woman*, introduction.

<sup>81</sup> Sander L. Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, G.S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, p.261.

medicine [converged in the construction of] hysteria as a woman's disease, stemming from the reproductive system and generating an emotional pathology."<sup>82</sup>

In addition, in Elaine Showalter's *Hysteria* she mentions Auguste Fabre's assertion:

"all women are hysterical and ... every woman carries with her the seeds of hysteria.

Hysteria ... is a temperament, and what constitutes the temperament of a woman is

rudimentary hysteria."<sup>83</sup> That is to say, hysteria is synonymous with femininity and

it allegorizes the negative manifestation of femininity. Showalter further explains

"grande hystérie is commonly regarded as an acting out of female sexual experience,

a spasm of hyper femininity, mimicking ... both childbirth and the female orgasm"<sup>84</sup>

and "the diagnosis becomes 'a caricature of femininity' but also an exaggeration of

the cognitive and personal styles that women are encouraged to develop as

attractively 'feminine.'"<sup>85</sup> Here, we should not forget that the girls ask Tituba to

cast the love magic on them to increase their attractive power. In my view, the mass

hysteria, in fact, has already been invoked by their feminine hysteria in the Sabbat.

For example, the dancing, laughing and nakedness allude to the positive side of

femininity. Some may argue that female hysteria is the result of social oppression

rather than their inherent psychology.

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<sup>82</sup> Sander L. Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, G.S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, p.260.

<sup>83</sup> Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria*, p. 287.

<sup>84</sup> Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria*, p. 287.

<sup>85</sup> Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria*, p. 287.

## Voler and Broom

This ambiguity is manifested in the witch's broom, which makes women *voler* (fly or steal), that is, every woman/witch has her own invisible broom to let her fly and steal. In *The Crucible*, the flying imagery of the witch/woman appears several times. For example, when Mrs. Putnam comes to visit Betty, she asks Parris "How high did she fly, how high?"<sup>86</sup> And Abigail pronounces that she sees a bird that seems trying to attack her in the court:

Abigail: Why—? She gulps. Why do you come, yellow bird?

.....

Abigail, to the ceiling, in a genuine conversation with the "bird," as though trying to talk it out of attacking her: But God made my face; Envy is a deadly sin, Mary.<sup>87</sup>



Moreover, the abrupt change of Betty's reaction is conspicuous. She wants to fly away from the predicament that she concocts by herself. "Betty: I'll fly to Mama. Let me fly! *She raises her arms as though to fly, and streaks for the window, gets one leg out.*"<sup>88</sup> Except for the meanings of flying and stealing, *voler*, I think, also means metamorphosis. The metamorphosis is the only form that a woman could assume to liberate herself. She could acquiesce in the plans a master/husband/father has made for her in the daytime, and she could ride on the broom to attend the devil's Sabbath at midnight: the broom is compensation for the one that woman lost,

<sup>86</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.12.

<sup>87</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.106.

<sup>88</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.18.

the phallus. With the broom/phallus, women have the autonomy to fly away from the containing framework of the patriarchal system. In a sense, I consider that the girls' mass hysteria is an effect that is derived from the broom/ voler.

According to Denis J. Brion,

the popular distinction between hysteria as a clinical category ( whether a psychical disorder, a sexist mistake, or “false” symptom) and as a social phenomenon (“mass” hysteria) begins to collapse. This collapse is initiated not merely because individual and social hysteria can be viewed roughly as two sides of the same coin (i.e. the psychiatric establishment responds hysterically to women by naming some of them mad – which conception retains the individual/ social distinction), but because hysteria is a group (= women) symptom that embodies a social, and not merely individual or even familial, disorder.<sup>89</sup>

Mass hysteria could be deemed not only an individual disorder but also a social frenzy. It is not only a social frenzy but also female frenzy. Mass hysteria could also be treated as a public wave or collective movement which is often associated with witchcraft. Mass hysteria, according to some critics, is a sort of collective movement/ behavior, a term used in a particular way by sociologists and collective behavior scholars, who link it to such things as riots, crowds and mass hysteria.<sup>90</sup> Collective movement/ behavior refers to like-minded individuals who gather together to express a kind of crowd phenomenon, sometimes they show similar conduct and affection in the usual way. And mass hysteria is considered one of the so-called collective movements. In mass hysteria, rumors play a principal role

<sup>89</sup> Denis J. Brion. *The Hidden Persistence of Witchcraft*, pp.227.252.

<sup>90</sup><http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/smc/glossary.html>.

within the various congregations, including riots, panic rioters and frenzied reactions. In *The Crucible*, the rumor is just a signal of mass hysteria which brings about the girls' anomalous emotions, thoughts and actions. Thus, this sort of anomaly would solicit spontaneous movement. That is to say, mass hysteria actually gives the girls/the women a stage or space to materialize their subjectivity. Their autonomy is recuperated from the enactment of mass hysteria and the "beneficial result" from mass hysteria can be evidently seen from the girl, Mary in her conversation with Elizabeth and Proctor.

Mary: (Striving for her authority.) I'll not stand whipping any more! The Devil's loose in Salem, Mister Proctor, we must discover where he is hiding!

Proctor: I'll whip the Devil out of you... (With whip raised she yelled.)

Mary: (Pointing at Elizabeth.) I saved her life today! (Silence. His whip comes down.)

Elizabeth: (Softly.) I am accused?

Mary: you are somewhat mentioned. But I said I never see no sign you ever sent your spirit out to hurt no one, and seeing I do live so closely with you, they dismissed it.

Elizabeth: Who accused me?

Mary: I am bound by law; I cannot tell it. (To Proctor.) I ....I hope you'll not be so sarcastical no more—four judges and the King's deputy sat to dinner with us but an hour ago. I .... I would have you speak civilly to me, from this out.

Proctor: (In disgust at her.) Go to bed.

Mary: I'll not be ordered to bed no more, Mister Proctor! I am eighteen and a woman, however single!<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.33-p.34.

It seems that Mary becomes more confident to make an eloquent appeal for her subjectivity when she claims that she is a mature woman. Besides, Mary fears Proctor no more because she knows there is a prop behind her to protect her. It goes without denial that not only Mary but also other girls do experience this procedure of awakening in which they liberate their hidden desire by performing mass hysteria in search of their new identities.

In ancient times, mass hysteria was a women's disease, but in Salem mass hysteria means "ease", if we ignore the negative "dis". In the eyes of feminism,

Feminist understanding of hysteria has been influenced by work in semiotics and discourse theory, seeing hysteria as a specifically feminine protolanguage, communicating through the body messages that cannot be verbalized. For some writers, hysteria has been claimed as the first step on the road to feminism, a specifically feminine pathology that speaks to and against patriarchy.<sup>92</sup>

Yet, as a matter of fact, the girls'/ women's mass hysteria becomes a weapon to fight against the patriarchal system and women have their own particular way of doing things when encountering problems and the unknown. Moreover, the girls/ women/ witches/ may accept or repudiate the projected guilt but do not do so by using rational thinking – rather, they reverse it by cursing or enacting a curse. Cursing is so-called "performative language"; enacting a curse entails a bodily performance and the two are closely linked.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender*, p.286.

<sup>93</sup> Juliet Mitchell. *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria*, p.203.

Hysteria or madness is even more a mechanism of self-protection and self-defense. By performing her own body and speaking with her own language, a woman knows how to play on to the audience's susceptibility, the male gaze. When the focus falls on the girls or women who have been marginalized and oppressed, they find pleasure that could not happen in real life. There is one scene that Tituba confides her abomination about Parris through the performance.

Hale: who came to you with the Devil? Two? Three? Four?—how many?

Tituba:(*She pants, and begins rocking back and forth, staring ahead.*) there was four. There was four.

Parris: Who? Who? Their names, their names!

Tituba: Oh, how many times he bid me kill you, Mister Parris!

Parris: Kill me!

Tituba: (Staring to weep.) he says Mister Parris must be kill! Mister Parris no goodly man, Mister Parris mean man and no gentle man, and he bid be rise out of my bed and cut your throat! (*Parris backs away a step L., then all straighten up. They gasp.*) I tell him, no! I don't hate that man! I don't want to kill that man! But he say, You work for me, Tituba, and I make you free! I give you pretty dress to wear, and put you way high up in the air and you gone fly back to Barbados! And I say, You lie, Devil, you lie! And then he come one stormy night to me, and he say, Look! I have white people belong to me. And o look,.....and there was Goody Good.<sup>94</sup>

The one who knows the truth clearly finds out that Tituba pretends to pass the Devil's words to express her complaint. In the real life, this kind of offense would definitely bring her in a predicament. At that moment, it is Tituba's turn to manipulate Parris.

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<sup>94</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.25.

## Hysterical Movement

Furthermore, women no longer lack identity. In this hysterical movement, women share the same definition, composed of several self-identities, and this kind of 'movement' attracts the same type of adherents. Their intention seems to be similar among them and the movement just provides a logical stage or result of this action to satisfy women's need and to make it more possible. In Jeff Chien-fu Hsueh's paper, *Exclusion and Self-Preservation: the Utopian Sublime in Arthur Miller's the Crucible*, he argues that the individual in the interests of self-preservation is forced to name others and she must keep her distance from the authoritative power, the sublime terror, and thus the collective hysteria or madness is produced. In the very beginning of the mass hysteria initiated by Tituba and Abigail, it is true that sublime terror does convulse the repressed individual. When the contagion spreads, however, the crowd situation is subversive. The sublime devolves on those who play the witchcraft hysteria, at this moment they have the supreme authority over patriarchal affairs. It is the time when men have to keep at a distance from them in order to avoid their dominant ideology being smashed. From individual hysteria to mass hysteria, a contagion of pleasure becomes a sort of unique charisma of the girls.

Mass hysteria is a unique counterplot and method of women. A

woman's/witch's broom is the hysteria which takes her off, sweeps her away, and takes her into a homogeneous world. Women/witches know what they do, yet men will never realize it. Hysteria is a better way to challenge the patriarchy indirectly and, as Elaine Showalter mentions female hysteria is the first step on the way to feminism.



## Chapter IV : Conclusion

In 1957, John Steinbeck wrote a stirring defense of Arthur Miller, who faced a contempt of Congress charge because he refused to “name names” when called before the House’s Un-American Activities Committee. The words echo the dilemma faced by many of the characters in *The Crucible*.<sup>95</sup>

*The Crucible* is the one work which comes to mind in any discussion of witch-hunts and McCarthyism, and many critics consider that *The Crucible* represents Arthur Miller’s political suffering. It is also an allegory for an era in American history-- McCarthyism that affected him and others and the term “witch-hunt” seems to be a codeword for terrorism, McCarthyism, when someone suffers a wrong that is not righted. *The Crucible* is a work that “concerns the dilemma of making moral choices in the face of community pressure and the irrational basis of that pressure”<sup>96</sup>. As Miller writes this play, he comments that “the more I read into the Salem panic, the more it touched off corresponding ages of common experience in the fifties.” No matter what the people suffered in the Salem witch trials or Miller himself experienced in the McCarthy era, the same terror has paralyzed these two societies. When the spotlight falls on him he has a choice of confession or non-confession. Either choice would destroy his life.

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<sup>95</sup> Richard Dreyfuss, Stacy Keach, and Arthur Miller. *The Crucible* (L.A. Theatre Works Audio Theatre Collection), p.4.

<sup>96</sup> Jeffrey Helterman. *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Twentieth-Century American Dramatists Part 2: K-Z*, p.95.

Which path am I to choose? Either way I am caught. It may occur to me that a man who is disloyal to his friends could not be expected to be loyal to his country. You can't slice up morals. Our virtues begin at home. They do not change in a courtroom unless the pressure of fear is put upon us.<sup>97</sup>

### **Moral Dilemma**

This statement reveals the moral dilemma that Arthur Miller has to face and this kind of situation also happens to John Proctor who is forced to make a painful decision. It seems that John Proctor is just the spokesman for Miller himself and both of them walk the line between “absolute” right and wrong and “ambiguous” truth and morality. As for this point, Miller may imply that men are able to control their impulses with morality better than women are. Moreover, after the play ends, Arthur Miller depicts Abigail as a whore. “The legend has it that Abigail turned up later as a prostitute in Boston.”<sup>98</sup> As for Elizabeth's fortune, she is married to another man. “Elizabeth Proctor married again, four years after Proctor's death.”<sup>99</sup> Perhaps in Arthur Miller's mind, and in most men's minds, Abigail, a virgin who once experienced an abnormal relationship as well as intercourse with demons becomes an evil woman or a witch whose body is polluting, disordered, and filthy, and her chastity has gone. She has lost the qualification for getting married. In addition, Elizabeth Proctor becomes a widow and then marries again and is “subordinated” to a man again. That is to say, every woman should need a man/

<sup>97</sup> Richard Dreyfuss, Stacy Keach, and Arthur Miller. *The Crucible* (L.A. Theatre Works Audio Theatre Collection), p.4.

<sup>98</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.135.

<sup>99</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.135.

husband to complete her life. All these in a sense expose Arthur Miller's male-chauvinism.

Although the Salem witch trials and McCarthyism occur in different eras, there are some correspondences between the two events. They both have an extreme authority to deal with the suspects; the Salem witch trial uses religion to judge people's doings and McCarthyism uses its extreme politics to attack communists. The devices for persecution are both brutal and ruthless and the accusations against the suspects are standing to reason. Judgment is based on the testimony of someone who has confessed. At the Salem trial, the authority only believes the "hysterical body's" testimony to decide if the accused should be imprisoned. Widespread hysteria occurred in McCarthyism, but what is different is that the hysteria happened among men. The common intention is to break down the confidence of the individuals and attempt to repel the rebellious crowd.

When most critics focus on Arthur Miller's intention in writing *The Crucible* and on the part of the oppressed women in this play they seem to ignore the positive female characters. Apparently, the male characters that Miller portrays in *The Crucible* have the advantage of a good position, for example, John Proctor, Abigail's master and secret lover, Reverend Parris, the minister of Salem's church and so on. Witch-hunt is, indeed, a successful device to rope women's life tight under such a

social background of “alpha male.” What is more, John Proctor is not only shaped as a tragic hero but also treated as an embodiment of Arthur Miller, even though he is a flawed hero by reason of his adultery with Abigail. John Proctor is a kind of rebel. He always chooses to stand in opposition to the Church because he abominates what the cavalier prudery of authoritarianism demonstrates. Under Arthur Miller’s pen, John Proctor is the one who stands up to the Church and he takes the responsibility for his transgression. In a sense, Arthur Miller possibly wants to show that if the individual has enough faith and self-awareness s/he will succeed in making right moral choices and of keeping her/ his good name. He forgets that women in that era had no name to represent their own identity. This could be explained in Act Four when John Proctor is struggling with a paper that he must sign to admit his guilt. He says to Danforth: “ Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave my name!”<sup>100</sup> Obviously, John Proctor’s statement shows that a man would die rather than live on in degradation and shame. As a matter of fact, John Proctor’s rebellious temperament is precisely a mirror of the infidel girls. If John Proctor is substituted by a woman, however, would she leave behind a good name like him? Or

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<sup>100</sup> Arthur Miller. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*, p.133.

would her reputation suffer? Yet, we should not forget that Proctor has an irregular relationship with Abigail and he is considered an atheist who rarely goes to Church. Somehow, he dies with honor. What does it stand for? It is quite a tricky part here. When Proctor trumpets his innocence, hasn't anyone thought that he is a hypocrite? Evidently Proctor is a hero in this play but what underline his heroism are social injustice and patriarchal hypocrisy. When refusing to sign the document Proctor mentions that he already admits his sin to God, however, he never repents to Abigail of his sin.



Probably, Arthur Miller never senses that he, in gender domain, is the absolute power and what he wants to convey is that the importance of an individual's faith is a cure-all. But this cannot apply to women. A man's/authority's sin is easily forgiven by the public, yet a woman's / witch's defect is not. Most misogynists attribute women's defect or sin to female sexuality Thomas Adler observes "The Establishment itself criminalizes sexual desire, reading the women's bodies as the source of sin and shame; feminine power is interpreted as dangerous in the eyes of a 'Puritanism'[that] transforms risky sexuality into witchcraft."<sup>101</sup> The historical stereotype of women is more or less represented in this play; women are born to be evil and sinful and women's wickedness comes from their carnal lust. Actually,

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<sup>101</sup> Jeff Chien-fu Hsueh. *Exclusion and Self-Preservation: The Utopian Sublime in Arthur Miller's The Crucible*.

Arthur Miller himself plunges into the trap without knowing it, especially when portraying the invisible witches, those girls. I believe that some of the readers or audiences would condemn the girls' foolish behaviors and consider they are the ringleaders trying to devastate peace and order. On the other hand, some of them may sympathize with the girls' abnormal behaviors because they have been in inferior and oppressed situations in that rigid society. Some of the criticism comments sadly on the female characters in *The Crucible*.

I have not discussed the male characters in this play but paid more attention to female issues. I would like to define the girls or women in *The Crucible* as feminist witches who use Wicca or witchcraft as a weapon, including the dancing party and the hysterical carnival. The dramatic performances are unquestionably protests about Puritan society. As recorded in Britannica Encyclopedia, if witches in the past united to contend with men they were the ancestors of the feminist movement.<sup>102</sup> From the initial ritual, the girls who are surrounded by virgin forest are blessed by the lunar goddess to create a peculiar ethos. This new ethos is given meaning by challenging the power of the Puritan autarchy and the relationship between sexuality and authority. More importantly, what the hysterical body shows in this play is the resistant mechanism to the patriarchal system, and at the same time it uncovers the

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<sup>102</sup> 廖詩文譯, Candace Savage 著。《女巫：魔幻女靈的狂野之旅》*Witch: The Wild Ride from Wicked to Wicca*, p.133.

tenacity and the vitality of women. While a man obdurately makes a last-ditch defense to maintain his persuasion just like what John Proctor does in the end of the trail, a wise woman dexterously uses her unfathomable power, stepping onward. In *The Crucible*, the price that John Proctor pays for his name is death, yet Abigail merely loses a man. Abigail is a marginal woman without property and family, who has nothing to lose but gains the *jouissance* of revenge from her game. Who wins the war? John Proctor or Abigail?

### Witches and Goddess

Witches are sometimes viewed as goddesses because the women or the covens often meet in moonlight, especially the full moon, in honor of the goddess. Her image is not that of a beautiful doll but an embodiment of strength and power. In Starhawk's book, *The Spiral Dance*, she writes of a faery tradition "Work for yourself, and you will see that Self is everywhere".<sup>103</sup> And she continues,

It is through the material world that we open ourselves to the Goddess. But Witchcraft also recognizes that when material needs are satisfied deeper needs and longings may remain. These can only be satisfied by connection with the nurturing, life-giving forces within, which we call Goddess.<sup>104</sup>

I consider what Starawak means is that whether a woman is a witch or a goddess the woman should liberate herself from closet and kitchen. The first step towards liberation is to explore her own body, which is taboo. "To emancipate", according to

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<sup>103</sup> Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance*, p.108.

<sup>104</sup> Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance*, p.108.

Simon de Beauvoir, “is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her; let her have her independent existence and she will continue nonetheless to exist for him.”<sup>105</sup> One of the representatives is Abigail, and she dares to tell John Proctor in a woman’s strain that she is anxious for his love and his body, and at this moment the goddess is inside her body. The role that the goddess plays is that of the liberator and “Her service is perfect freedom” and “She is the liberator because She is manifest in our deepest drives and emotions, which always and inevitably threaten the systems designed to contain them. She is love and anger, which refuse to fit comfortably into the social order.”<sup>106</sup> From mistress to prostitute, Abigail, perhaps, in the eye of the patriarchy, is a girl with questionable morality, yet, in the eye of modern feminists, she is walking her road independently. Simon de Beauvoir notes the situation of a prostitute:” if she takes this road, woman does succeed in acquiring certain independence. Lending herself to several men, she belongs definitely to none.”<sup>107</sup>

Furthermore, we should not forget that Tituba and other girls all find pleasure from the Sabbat ritual. What they seek is “love.” In the witches’/women’s congregation, love is not only their faith but also the guiding principle, and the acts of love and pleasure are witches’ / women’s rituals where they control their actions

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<sup>105</sup> Simon de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, p. 731.

<sup>106</sup> Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance*, p.109.

<sup>107</sup> Simon de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, p. 567.

but not their feelings. Luce Irigaray says that,

*woman has sex organs more or less everywhere. She finds pleasure almost everywhere. Even if we refrain from invoking the hystericization of her entire body, the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined—in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness.*<sup>108</sup>

Through building such a community, women learn either spiritual pleasure or physical pleasure from each other and they realize that the plurality of female sexuality is a gift of love and power, for example, women's hysterical body. In *The Crucible*, the girls' distinctive constitutions not only upset the men but also unexpectedly anticipate a new age. Pathologically, hysteria that women demonstrate to men is not alarming because it is just a symptom of a disease. Hysteria becomes a harbor when a woman wants to express herself in an unacceptable way; at this moment she loses the femininity and the obedience which the patriarchy requires. In the eyes of feminists, this sort of furious extravaganza is indispensable for the feminist revolution. From a woman's disease to woman's power, the feminists try to prove that hysteria plays a decisive role in the feminist movement and justify hysteria's necessity in a patriarchal society. As Diane Herndl explains, hysteria "has come to figure as a sort of rudimentary feminism and feminism as a kind of articulate hysteria". Juliet Mitchell describes hysteria as a "pre-political manifestation of feminism," an unconscious protest by women "in terms of their

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<sup>108</sup> Luce Irigaray. "This Sex Which is not the One" in Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott. *Feminism and Sexuality: a Reader*, p.81.

definitional and denigrated characteristic—emotionality. If femininity is by definition hysterical, feminism is the demand for the right to be hysterical.”<sup>109</sup>

That is to say, every woman within her blood hides a rebellious power but it is not easily discovered by the woman herself. Hysteria for women is an extreme and radical manifestation. According to Betty Friedan, the excess

stemmed from, and were a passionate repudiation of, the degrading realities of woman’s life, the helpless subservience behind the gentle decorum that made women objects of such thinly veiled contempt to men that they even felt contempt for themselves. Evidently, that contempt and self-contempt were harder to get rid of than the conditions which caused them.<sup>110</sup>

Perhaps, Tituba, as an outsider of outsider, knows that she has to take an anticipatory action to be believed by the townspeople. And then Abigail follows Tituba’s steps.

Based on Tituba’s and Abigail’s outstanding performances, all the girls start to create their new shows though some of the girls have no idea about how to play at the very beginning. To the readers’ or audiences’ surprise, the effect is beautiful.

### **Redefinition of Witches**

To draw a general conclusion from my previous chapters, I want to re-define what the witch is and who the witch is. As my thesis title, “The Witches in the Blood: The Dynamics and Ambivalence of Deviant Female Sexuality in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*,” suggests, I do not discuss the negative side of the invisible witches who have falsely accused others, because the witch, to my mind, is the one who

<sup>109</sup> Elaine Showalter. *Hysteria beyond Freud*, p.333-334.

<sup>110</sup> Betty Friedan. *The Feminine Mystique*, p.87.

possesses the self-awareness and the one who knows how to invoke the mind, spirit, confidence and emotion. We can see the power of Her. What is more, the witch is also the goddess. “The Goddess is the symbol of the inmost self, and the beneficent, nurturing, liberating power within woman. The cosmos is modeled on the female body, which is sacred. All phases of life are sacred: Age is a blessing, not a curse.”<sup>111</sup> And who is the witch? I think Starhawk already gives us an answer: every woman is not only a witch but also a goddess. The woman/ the witch/the goddess would never be limited by her withered appearance because the broom would take her flying to find pleasure everywhere. “She has loosed herself from the looks fixed upon her attacks; she has loosed herself from the ties that bound her to those showmen of she-bears”.<sup>112</sup> As women, “we must fly away to be regenerated. To be innocent as the healthiest processes of nature. To be immune to the hierarchical “principles” of culture.”<sup>113</sup>

There is a saying among witches: “Where there’s fear, there is power”. The girls in *The Crucible* empower themselves with unique bodily rhythm to step forward and to confront the patriarchal system. Every woman undergoes a metamorphosis to stretch herself as far as she can. More than that, every woman has at least two faces, a feminine face and that of a virago. When she wants to toy with a

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<sup>111</sup> Starhawk. *The Spiral Dance*, p.111.

<sup>112</sup> Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement. *The Newly Born Woman*, p.57.

<sup>113</sup> Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement. *The Newly Born Woman*, introduction.

man, she is a Goddess; on the other hand, when she wants to show her decision-making power, she is a witch. Every woman should be newborn.



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