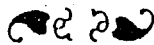


Appendix A



The Burning Times: Notes on a Crucial Period of History

She is afraid. Her own fear has a smell more pungent than the needles of pine that her feet crush on the forest path. The earth steams after spring rain. Her own heart is louder than the lowing of cattle on the common. The old woman carries a basket of herbs and roots she has dug; it feels heavy as time on her arm. Her feet on the path are her mother's feet, her grandmother's, her grandmother's grandmothers'; for centuries she has walked under these oaks and pines, culled the herbs and brought them back to dry under the eaves of her cottage on the common. Always, the people of the village have come to her; her hands are healing hands, they can turn a child in the womb; her murmuring voice can charm away pain, can croon the restless to sleep. She believes she has faery blood in her veins, blood of the Old Race who raised standing stones to the open sky and built no churches. The thought of the church makes her shiver; she remembers her dream of the night before — the paper pinned to the church door. She couldn't read it. What had it been? The proclamation of a Witch-hunt? She passes her hands over her eyes. These days, the Sight is a trouble; her dreams are haunted by the faces of women in torment; their sleepless eyes, the lids forced open as they walk up and

down, night after night, weak from hunger, their bodies shaved and displayed to the crowd, pricked deep to find the evidence they call devil's marks, then taken for the private amusement of the jailors. And they were mild here in England, where Witches were only hung. She thought of the tales, whispered at Meetings, of Germany and France, of devices to crush bones and tear limbs out of their sockets, of veins ripped apart and blood spilling on the dirt, and of flesh charred as flames rose about the stake. Could she keep silent under that — or would she break, confess to anything, name anyone they wanted as her fellow Witch? She doesn't know; she hopes she will never know.

The old woman makes a banishing sign with her left hand and walks on. Perhaps the paper in the dream was something else entirely. But the bad smell clung to it. Enclosure? Were they going to divide the common land, build fences, tear down the little cottages like her own? She feels a stab under her bodice and sits down, hardly able to breathe. Yes, that was it. What will she do? Who will speak for her or take her in? She has no husband, no children. Once the village would have protected her, but now the priests have done their work well. The sick fear her even when they come to her for help. The villagers fear each other. The bad harvests, the rents, and the always increasing price of food — there are too many rats scratching at the same little pile of grain, and the priests and the preachers are always at them to scratch at each other. Still, there were uprisings in the West and in the North against enclosure. There could be risings here.

She turns and looks deep into the forest. For a moment she is tempted to turn around, to follow the pathway further than she has ever been. Some have said the Old Race still lives in the forest's hidden center. Would they shelter her? Or would she find the camps of the master-less, the tinkers, the outlaws, those who had been driven, like herself, off the land? Would it be a freer life under the trees? Could they use a healer? And would they someday swarm out from the woods and wastes, an army of the dispossessed, to tear down the fences of the overlords, the manor houses, and the churches, to reclaim their own land for freedom?

She is still. But finally she shoulders her basket and starts off, back toward the village. Young Jonet at the mill is near her time,

and the old woman knows it will be a difficult birth. She will need the herbs in this basket.

She is afraid but she walks on. "We have always survived," she tells herself. "We will always survive."

She repeats it, over and over again, like an incantation.

* * *

We survive, still, in the culture of estrangement, for how much longer no one knows. Yet to change that culture intelligently, we must understand it, trace its roots, know its history — not because estrangement is the lineal descendent of one particular historical event or time, but because the past is still alive in the present.

The drama of estrangement is a long and complex story, and perhaps it can never be fully retold. To tell it fully would be to retell all of history. But at least we can raise the curtain on the first scene of what may well be the last act, and look closely at the old woman's period, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a time when Western Culture underwent crucial changes that produced the particular brand of estrangement that characterizes the modern world.

"Two descriptions are better than one," states Gregory Bateson in *Mind and Nature*, because "the combination of diverse pieces of information defines an approach of very great power to what I call . . . the pattern which connects." When we look at the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with binocular vision, we can see in sharp relief the many facets of our present dilemma.

One eye gives us the view with which we are familiar. We see the period of the Renaissance and Reformation as the great flowering of art, science, and humanism — a time when constricting chains of dogma were thrown off, a time of questioning and exploration, of the birth of new religions and the reevaluation of corruption in old institutions, a time of discovery and enlightenment.

But close that eye and look through the other — the left eye, the Witch's eye, and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are the Burning Times when persecution of Witches, and of women as Witches, reached its peak; the times of terror and torture; the

times of the rack and the strappado; of forced confessions; of children used as witnesses against their mothers; of public death at the stake.

With binocular vision, the question that stands out is not: why did they persecute Witches? Church history is a history of persecution. The Witch burnings were not an isolated phenomenon; they must be seen in the context of centuries of blood and terror.¹

For the Jews, the Middle Ages were a period of continually escalating restrictions, humiliations, expulsions, and wholesale slaughter. In Spain, the forcibly converted Marranos, who continued to practice Judaism secretly, were tortured by the Inquisitors and, if unrepentant, were burned like Witches at the stake. Christian heretics, both individuals and whole communities such as the Waldenses and Albigenses, were also victims of the rack, of the sword, and at the stake.

Rosemary Ruether points out in *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*, that "many of the ideas later projected upon Witches, such as nocturnal orgies and child sacrifice, were directed by the Inquisition first against heretics. . . . The image of the Jew as a demonic alien was similar in many ways to that of the Witch . . . The Jew was seen as a devil worshipper, equipped with horns, claws, and tail, riding on a satanic goat. Like the Witch, the Jew was believed to steal the Eucharist and to perform other blasphemous caricatures of Catholic rituals."²

The Witch persecutions were, however, different in several important ways from persecutions of Jews and heretics. To begin with, they were directed primarily, although not exclusively, against women — particularly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Witches were not an alien ethnic-religious group, like Jews, set apart from Christian society. Nor were they a clearly delineated alien sect, like the Albigenses, with a clearly defined doctrine and organization. It is true that Witches were accused of worshipping the devil, but not in the same sense that the Marranos, for example, were accused of continuing their traditional Jewish worship.

The devil, in the mind of the witchhunters, was an actual being, and Witches were charged with having actual social and sexual

intercourse with him. They were accused of feats that were fantastic and bizarre, that contradicted our ordinary grasp of reality: night flights, turning people into animals, and charming away penises and hiding them in birds' nests.⁴ We are tempted to conclude that somebody must have suffered from full-blown paranoid delusions.

Throughout the late Middle Ages, sporadic Witchhunts occurred, as the Renaissance bloomed in the late fifteenth century, they become widespread.⁵

In 1484, a papal bull by Innocent VIII declared Witchcraft a heresy and extended the power of the Inquisitors to hunt Witches in Southern Germany. In 1486, the Dominican Inquisitors Kramer and Sprenger published the *Malleus Maleficarum* (called "The Hammer of the Witches"), which became the witchhunter's manual for the next two and a half centuries. Persecutions increased throughout the sixteenth century and reached their greatest extent and ferocity in the early seventeenth century. (The Salem Witch trials, in the late 1600s, were a localized outbreak that will not be considered here.)

Estimates of the actual number of Witches executed range from 100,000 to 9,000,000.⁶ The higher estimates include many who were not officially executed but died in prison. The true number is difficult to estimate, and this fact is less important than an understanding of the climate of terror that was unleashed. Anyone — especially any woman — could be accused of being a Witch. Witchcraft was defined as a special crime to which the ordinary laws of evidence did not apply. Jean Bodin, a noted French witchhunter and intellectual, actually favored the use of children as witnesses because they could be persuaded more easily to give evidence against the accused.⁷ Once accused, the suspected Witch was subjected to tortures such as those in the following contemporary description:

There are men who in this art exceed the spirits of Hell. I have seen the limbs forced asunder, the eyes driven out of the head, the feet torn from the legs, the sinews twisted from the joints, the shoulder blades wrung from their place, the deep veins swollen, the superficial veins driven in, the

victim now hoisted aloft and now dropped, now revolved around, head undermost and feet uppermost. I have seen the executioner flog with the scourge, and smite with rods, and crush with screws, and load down with weights, and stick with needles, and bind around with cords; and burn with brimstone, and baste with oil, and singe with torches.⁸

Sometimes torture went on for days and nights, as in Germany, and sometimes it was limited to an hour at a time, as in Italy and Spain.⁹ So-called torture was banned altogether in England, where starvation, deprivation of sleep, and gang-rape did not count as torture. Whether the accused yielded to intolerable pain and named others or confessed to whatever her torturers suggested; whether she was mercifully strangled at the stake before burning, or burned alive, or hung, or banished, or whether she committed suicide, accusation meant ruin.

In practice, accusations of Witchcraft were mostly directed at women in the lower strata of society.¹⁰ Especially at risk were widows, spinsters, and those who were unprotected by a man. When wealthy or prominent persons were accused, "the credibility of the confessions extracted under torture broke down and influential public opinion began to suspect that the previous confessions did not represent real experience."¹¹ The Witchhunts, then, were directed against women as a sex and against the peasant-laboring class.¹²

The question that emerges in my mind about the Witch persecutions is not: why? It is: why *then*? Why at this particular time in history did the hierarchies of both the Catholic and the newly formed Protestant Churches sanction and encourage the persecution of Witches? Whose interests were served?

A society is not a static thing, an object, a single entity. It is a system, an ever-changing network of interlocking relationships wherein the whole is more than — and sometimes qualitatively different from — the sum of its parts. The ways in which necessities and luxuries are produced, the shares of both to which different classes within society are entitled, the level of science and technology, the distribution of power, the sexual arrangements, the child-rearing practices, the individual psychology and ideologies

embodied in religion, in philosophy, in education, and in institutions — all these shape each other. Interactions among them are not simple; they are nonlinear, circular loops of cause and effect that feed back on one another, acting as mutual pressures and restraints. A change in one aspect of society changes the dynamic balance among all its aspects. Other aspects then must change in an attempt to preserve a constancy in the relationship between human beings and their environment, so that this relationship will allow group survival.¹³

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Western Society was undergoing massive changes. The Witchhunts were an expression both of the weakening of traditional restraints and of an increase in new pressures. It was a revolutionary time, but the persecutions helped to undermine the possibility of a revolution that would benefit women, the poor, and those without property. Instead, the changes that occurred benefited the rising monied-professional classes, and made possible the ruthless, extensive, and irresponsible exploitation of women, working people, and nature.

As part of that change, the persecution of Witches was linked to three interwoven processes: the expropriation of land and natural resources; the expropriation of knowledge; and the war against the consciousness of immanence, which was embodied in women, sexuality, and magic.

THE EXPROPRIATION OF LAND

Feudalism was an authoritarian, hierarchical system, but it was based on an organic model. Carolyn Merchant, in *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, gives many examples of Medieval thinkers who used the human body as a model and metaphor for the societal body.¹⁴ In a work published by John of Salisbury in 1159, the prince, together with the clergy, functioned as the soul of the commonwealth. The lawmakers were its heart; judges and governors were its sense organs. Soldiers were its arms and hands; one arm protected the people from without, the other disciplined them from within. Financiers were the states' bowels. Peasants, laborers, craftspeople and menial workers were the feet that supported all the rest.¹⁵

Feudal society was, in reality, a system of complex, interlocking rights and responsibilities that functioned, in many ways, like an organism.¹⁴ Its basic unit was the local community, the manor, village, or, in late Medieval times, the town. The economy was agrarian, based on subsistence farming. Roads were poor and transportation was slow. Agricultural goods were perishable, so each community depended primarily on what it could grow and produce itself.

Agriculture was based on the village as an organism, rather than on the labors or profits of the individual or the nuclear family as independent agents. In many areas, the fields were held and worked in common. The introduction of the heavy plow in the Carolingian period had made it necessary for peasants to band together in order to acquire and maintain a plow and a team of oxen or horses needed to pull it. Instead of having small individually owned fields, the village as a whole might own enormous open fields. Decisions about when and what to plant, what land to leave fallow, how to rotate crops, and how to allot the harvest fairly would be made communally. Instead of owning a compact plot of land, a peasant owned or rented "a right to part of the profits of the soil."¹⁵ In some cases, the peasants received from the produce several strips of land of different types: arable fields, hay meadows, and pastures. The peasant owed a corresponding contribution to the communal work of ploughing, planting, harvesting, and husbandry.

Even in areas in which land was owned independently, vast tracts of pasture, forest, fen, and wasteland were covered by a complex network of *rights of common*.¹⁶ Although the local lord might be said to own a wood or pasture, the common people would have the right to graze cattle on the fallow fields, to run pigs in the forests, and to gather wood for fuel or for repairing buildings and fences. In some areas, large tracts of forest land were set aside as the king's private game preserve. (This is the legal meaning of the word *forest* in the medieval period.) Peasants were forbidden to kill deer. (Remember the Robin Hood stories?) And they could not even drive them away from their fields, but the peasants might have compensatory rights to downed wood, or to other benefits from the forest.¹⁷

Even in villages where land was farmed independently, it was bound by the rights of others. One family might, for example, have the right to graze cattle on another family's fields after the harvest.

The lords possessed the land but they did not *own* it as we own private property. They were restrained by traditional common rights from changing the use of the land. A lord could not, at his pleasure, cut down a forest in which common people held rights. Even in the middle of the sixteenth century, the "City Doctrine" that "men could 'use their possessions as they list' seemed tantamount to atheism."²⁰ Land was expected to provide a livelihood, but profit was not its primary purpose:

In the Middle Ages, land was looked on as a source of dignity or as a nursery of soldiers, or as a means of maintaining a governing class in the social position appropriate to it. To exploit an estate in order to get from it the highest monetary revenue was considered almost an abuse of property rights, especially if such exploitation involved the misery or degradation of the cultivators of the soil . . . The growth of a money economy made inroads on manorial custom behind which the tenants had found shelter, and allowed the lord to indulge to the full his profit-searching proclivities.²¹

Feudal society was still guided by an economic principle of use, not one of gain. Land, for example, had value because it provided subsistence; this fact was the basis of its power to determine social standing. It supported armies, and was thus the base of political power. But it was not yet seen as a resource to be exploited for maximum gain.

Feudal laws and customs guaranteed peasants — whether free or serfs — access to the land, to the means of subsistence. The same laws and customs denied the peasant-laboring classes the right to anything more than subsistence. Whatever the peasants succeeded in scratching from the land beyond what was needed for keeping themselves and their families alive was distributed upward, as rents, feudal tribute, church tithes, and mandatory work tributes. That surplus wealth of grain, fruit, milk, meat, wool, and other produce supported the classes that fought and governed, and that also ruled the church.

The upper classes were supported at the expense of a gradual, long-term depletion of the land's fertility:

The landlords' practice of extracting from unfree peasants (those not subject to fixed rents) any income above subsistence meant that those peasants were unable to give back to the land what they took. They had insufficient reserves to reinvest in animals for plowing and manuring the soil. In many regions, soils became quickly exhausted and badly eroded.²³

The prosperity of the upper classes was a false prosperity based on the accumulation of an ecological debt, much as today we maintain an artificially high standard of living by depleting the land and our nonrenewable resources.²⁴

Declining fertility of the land was one source of pressure to change traditional agricultural patterns. Other pressures came from the rise of a market economy that superseded the feudal economy. The feudal economy, of course, had always included markets. In the late feudal period and the early Renaissance, they began to dominate. The rise of a market economy meant a shift from use-values to gain as a value. Instead of producing one's own food, and selling what was extra, landowners began to produce for the market, not what was needed, but what could be sold for a profit.

American gold flooded Europe in the sixteenth century, causing terrible inflation. Landlords found their traditional rents were worth less and less. Inflation provided the pressure, as the opening of markets provided the opportunity, to maximize profits from the land.

In England, many landowners turned from raising grains and vegetables for local consumption to raising sheep for the expanding wool market.²⁵ Wool was England's first major export, and the textile industry was the first one organized along capitalist lines. Grain was restricted from export in 1491 and its price and profitability were kept low by law. The export of wool was encouraged, and unlike perishable agricultural products, wool could be shipped, even in an age of poor roads and slow trans-

port. English woolens found a ready market in the Netherlands and elsewhere on the continent.

Raising sheep required fewer laborers than raising crops. It was also done most efficiently when the land was enclosed, i.e., fenced off. Profits also tended to be more secure when decisions were made by one owner or his agent (who would have only one set of interests to keep in mind) rather than by a communal body that might have to weigh, balance, and compromise among the interests of many villagers.

Landowners began to pressure for enclosure. Enclosure, in effect, turned the land into private property under a single person's control, destroying the network of mutual rights and obligations that had characterized the medieval village.

In the seventeenth century, enclosure increased and spread from forests and wasteland to fields and farmland. Towns now provided a market for crops and dairy produce. Landowners who could consolidate large holdings and put into practice the new so-called scientific agriculture could make large profits. Defense of enclosure was based on the fact that increased production and new agricultural methods succeeded in improving the yield of the land — in part because landholders of the upper classes could retain the surplus wealth the land produced and could return some of it to the land by investing in methods that renewed fertility.

The laws and customs that secured rights of common could be changed in several ways. If the common land fell into disuse because the land changed or the population was destroyed, the lord might acquire unilateral rights. In times of disturbance, such as the religious wars of the sixteenth century, or when massive amounts of land changed hands for political reasons — for example, when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries' holdings, the common people often lost their traditional rights.²⁵

Land that was not held under ancient common rights, such as wilderness, wasteland, forests, and marginal land, could be appropriated more easily than the legally entangled fields and meadows of the villagers.²⁶ So the wilds and wastes were often enclosed earlier than arable farmlands were. Forests, already

shrinking because fuel and wood were demanded for building, especially shipbuilding, now were further diminished. The natural environment was changed beyond recognition, and much wilderness was destroyed. The view of land as private property was linked to the new world-view that saw nature as non-alive, and as something valuable only when it could be exploited.

Land could also be enclosed by agreement of those who held common rights, and who were paid in proportion to their holding. A single payment of money, however, was inadequate compensation for loss of access to the means of providing an independent livelihood. And, as Paul Mantoux states:

The mighty had means at their disposal to suppress any opposition: "Unwilling commoners are threatened with the risks of long and expensive lawsuits; in other cases they are subject to persecution by the great proprietors who ditch in their own demesne and force them to go a long way round to their own land, or maliciously breed rabbits and keep geese on adjoining ground, to the detriment of their crops."¹

Enclosed land, instead of serving multiple needs and purposes, served only one. When a forest was cut down and enclosed for grazing land, it no longer provided wood for fuel and building, acorns for pigs, a habitat for wild game, a source of healing herbs, or shelter for those who were driven to live outside the confines of town and village. When a fen was drained to provide farmland, it no longer provided a resting place or nesting sites for migratory birds, or a source of fish for the poor.

"Enclosures," as Bacon put it, "'bred a decay of the people.' Whole villages were depopulated; the houses tumbled into ruin; the roofless church became a sheep-pen; a few herdsmen lived where once had been the abode of a thriving agricultural community."²

Enclosure was hardest on those who lived marginally: the squatters on the common, the poorest of the peasants who supplemented scanty crops with the produce of forest and fen; the laborer whose wages did not provide a livelihood.

Those who lost their source of an independent livelihood became totally dependent on wages. In the seventeenth century, maximum wages for agricultural workers were fixed by the magistrates at the Quarter Sessions.²⁹ These varied according to the price of corn, not the cost of living. Wages in industries, such as the textiles, were also fixed by laws that protected the manufacturer, not the worker. Men could earn barely enough to support themselves; there was little or no margin for feeding a wife and children. Women's wages were much lower than men's.³⁰

A family who held and worked a small plot of land could provide most of their own food, and money earned from wages could provide necessary extra cash. Generally, wives tended the family gardens and raised cows, pigs, or chickens. Their women's work was of utmost importance to the family's survival. When a family lost its land, it became dependent on meager wages, the whims of an employer, and the ups-and-downs of the economy. The poor sank into deeper poverty and helplessness. The result was most devastating for women. When a family had too little food to go around, the husband could work on a neighboring farm, where at least he was fed. "The woman with a baby to care for and feed, could not leave her home every day to work and must share the children's food. In consequence, she soon began to practice starvation."³¹

Infant mortality was rampant among laborers. Those who depended on wages for a living were considered likely to end up "a charge on the parish" — which institution was, by law, required to provide relief to the poor. Parish officials, in order to keep the number of poor people to a minimum and to keep "rates" (taxes) down, prevented unemployed laborers as well as other destitute people from settling in new areas in search of work. Pregnant women of the poorer classes were especially undesirable, for they would soon produce new mouths for the parish to feed.

The fact that a woman was soon to have a baby, instead of appealing to (parishioners') chivalry, seemed to them the best reason for turning her out of her house and driving her from the village, even when a hedge was her only refuge.³²

Enclosure destroyed the peasant village as an economic unity. Power over important decisions, which affected the well-being of the whole community, was no longer vested in the village or its representatives. Instead, it became fragmented and privatized, appropriated by the landholders along with the land.

The poor were no longer seen as entitled to the means of a livelihood — even a bare one. Instead they were forced into wage labor at wages that did not provide even a subsistence income.” The organic community was destroyed, and individuals became like atoms — separated, no longer bound by mutual obligation.

In many areas, the peasants resisted.¹⁴ There were riots against enclosure in many areas of England, such as Somerset, the Taunton wool district, Wiltshire, Gloucester, and North Devon. In Germany, the Peasants’ War of 1525 was an open rebellion against the landlords’ usurpation of the peasants’ traditional common rights. In the 1630s, fen dwellers in England destroyed drainage projects. Enclosure was one of many underlying issues in the English Civil War.

The persecution of Witches undermined the unity of the peasant community and contributed to its fragmentation. Such a climate offered an outlet in which any local quarrel could escalate into a lethal attack. Moreover, the peasants began to live in fear of each other. Any old woman who got mad and muttered under her breath might be a Witch uttering a curse. And any neighbor, herself accused and taken, might name her closest friends or her own relations under torture.” The persecutions encouraged, spawned, paranoia. Among people who for centuries had been in a powerless position, the persecutions could only exacerbate the difficulties of cooperating to challenge the oppressive power of others.

Witches also made convenient scapegoats, diverting the anger and rage of the poorer classes to these other members of their own class. They provided an accessible target for men’s hostility to women. They encouraged women to blame each other for misfortunes instead of looking for the conditions that caused suffering and misery. If a child died or wasted away, one could feel power in accusing a Witch and seeing her hanged, instead of admitting one’s powerlessness.

Festivals, feasts, and folk customs, either overtly pagan or pseudo-Christian, had always provided a source of communal unity. The maypole, the bonfires on the ancient Celtic feast days, the traditional dances and customs were tied to the seasons and the changing round of the agricultural year.³⁶ They expressed the integration of the community with the land, and the changing cycles of the seasons in a never-ending round of renewal. While in many places their original meanings were undoubtedly forgotten, they continued to encourage feelings of local pride and bound the participants to each other:

Many of the folk customs which had previously been ignored by the high culture of the church leaders had now come to their attention . . . The first stage of Witch persecution functioned as a purge by the orthodox Catholic culture of the ethnically distinct folkways of villagers and highlanders.³⁷

These customs were the expression — in actions, songs, costumes, celebration — of the organic unity of the human community and of the oneness of the peasant with the land and its gifts. Their destruction ripped apart the unconscious fabric of peasant life. Those leaders who remembered the deep meanings of festivals and customs no longer dared to share their knowledge. The rituals that had bonded villagers together were destroyed as the communal bond was destroyed. The celebrations that tied the peasant to the land were branded as evil and satanic when the peasants began to be driven off the land.

Enclosure was also devastating for Witchcraft. The sacred places and meeting grounds of the Old Religion were the wastes and forests that were now fenced off, cut down, or destroyed. Many of the Witches were themselves among the marginally poor who were hit hardest by the loss of their traditional rights of common.

Oral traditions tell us that many Witches, along with the remnants of the pre-Celtic peoples know as Faeries, left Britain at this time. Legends differ about their destination, some say it was Portugal, others says Eastern Europe, still others say the New World

Ivan Illich, in an essay called "Vernacular Values," discusses the politics behind the standardization of language. Nebrija's Castilian grammar, the first grammar of a vernacular tongue, appeared in 1492 — the year in which the Jews were expelled from Spain, and in which Columbus set off upon his voyage of discovery. The standardization of the unbound and ungoverned common speech became a tool of discrimination and a weapon of conquest.

The language that people had always learned on their own and used as their own was appropriated by a professional elite of educators who could impart the approved version to the fortunate, for a fee. Those who spoke with an unapproved accent or non-standard grammar were, and still are, branded as inferior, and excluded from access to wealth, status, and power.

When language becomes a commodity, it is no longer a vernacular that spreads by practical use, [that] is learned from people who mean what they say and who say what they mean to the person they address in the context of everyday life. . . . With taught language, the one from whom I learn is not a person whom I care for or dislike, but a professional speaker. . . . Taught colloquial is the dead, impersonal rhetoric of people paid to declaim with phony conviction texts composed by others, who themselves are usually paid only for *designing* the text. . . . This is language that implicitly lies when I use it to say something to your face. . . ."³⁹

Elsewhere, Illich points out that the word *education* was not used before the Reformation: "By the early seventeenth century a new consensus began to arise: the idea that man was born incompetent for society and remained so unless he was provided with 'education'."⁴⁰

Institutionalized education differs from the learning of skills and concepts. *Education* is a thing to be acquired. Anyone with a brain can learn, but an educated person has, like the Scarecrow in the *Wizard of Oz*, more than a brain. The educated person has a *testimonial* — a degree, a license, an official seal.

Women were excluded, in this period, from the institutions of formal education. They had no opportunity to acquire degrees or licenses. The growing importance of institutionalized education

meant that women were increasingly excluded from fields in which they had previously worked.

Foremost among the rising professionals eager to consolidate their power were doctors. Healing was an area in which women had always played a vital role. As mothers they cared for their families. As noble ladies, they dispensed care to their dependents and nursed the wounded after battle. In medieval times, women practiced as physicians and apothecaries. Among the poorer classes, the village wise woman, or Witch, who preserved the traditional knowledge of herbs and natural healing, was often the only available source of medical care.⁴¹

Licensing is supported by the premise that it protects the consumer of services from incompetents, charlatans, and unethical practitioners. In reality, licensing protects those with approved credentials from competition by allowing them to limit their own numbers and raise their fees. It is one of the primary ways in which "functions that a dominant group prefers to perform . . . are carefully guarded and closed to subordinates."⁴²

In London, the College of Physicians monopolized medical practice. They restricted their membership to twelve physicians in 1524, when the population of the city is estimated to have been 60,000. By 1640, when the population is variously estimated to have been from 360,000 to 420,000, the physicians had increased their ranks to a total of forty-three members. Obviously, the vast majority of people had no opportunity to receive approved medical care. "One object of keeping the number of physicians down was to keep fees up; at 6S 8D to 10S⁴³ for a visit, only the well-to-do could afford to call a doctor."⁴⁴

"In so far as the less well-to-do had any medical treatment at all, they got it from surgeons, apothecaries, and a nameless host of freelance practitioners, some chemists, some herbalists, some cunning men or white witches, some quacks."⁴⁵

"The College objected most of all to those unlicensed practitioners who were not quacks but had some medical knowledge, especially if they gave their services to the poor gratis."⁴⁶

Those who turned to the uneducated but knowledgeable village Witch probably received more sound advice than those who

could afford the high fees of a licensed physician. Then, as now, the approved medical profession favored the heroic style of treatment: bleeding, purges, emetics, and cauteries were the licensed physicians' stock-in-trade. The Witches, and radical critics of the medical profession who often drew on the Witches' knowledge, favored preventive medicine, cleanliness, the use of herbs, gentle, natural treatments, and building up the patient's strength." Many of the so-called old wives' remedies are still used today — both by those who are returning to a more holistic view of healing and rediscovering the value in herbs and in nature's medicines, and by those who use these remedies as the basis for pharmaceuticals. Foxglove, which yields the drug digitalis, useful for heart ailments, is a well-known example.

[The Witches had] pain-killers, digestive aids, and anti-inflammatory agents. They used ergot for the pain of labor at a time when the Church held that pain in labor was the Lord's just punishment for Eve's original sin. Ergot derivatives are the principal drugs used today to hasten labor and aid in the recovery from childbirth. Belladonna — still used today as an anti-spasmodic — was used by the Witch-healers to inhibit uterine contractions when miscarriage threatened."

The wise women or Witches were also midwives. As the male medical profession began to drive out unlicensed healers, male doctors began to encroach upon what had always been the female preserve of midwifery:

Only by the seventeenth century do we find the man-midwife appearing on the scene, and he appears at the moment when the male medical profession is beginning to control the practice of healing, refusing "professional" status to women and to those who had for centuries worked among the poor. He appears first in the Court; attending upper-class women; rapidly he begins to assert the inferiority of the midwife and to make her name synonymous with dirt, ignorance and superstition."

Adrienne Rich, Mary Daly, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Deirdre English have written comprehensive and moving accounts of the takeover of midwifery by the male medical profession, and of the resulting toll of suffering exacted from women.¹⁰

The Witch persecutions were used to destroy unlicensed healers and midwives. They were a direct attack on those who offered unsanctioned healing. Physicians were often instrumental in "bringing charges of Witchcraft or suggesting that Witchcraft was operational in a difficult case." Doctors were consulted as experts by the Witchhunters, much as psychiatrists are consulted as expert witnesses in legal cases today. "In the Witch-hunts, the Church explicitly legitimized the doctor's professionalism, denouncing non-professional healing as equivalent to heresy: 'If a woman dare to cure without having studied, she is a Witch and must die.'"¹¹

"Witch hunts did not eliminate the lower class woman healer, but they branded her forever as superstitious and possibly malevolent."¹¹ In so doing, they further fragmented the communal bonds of the peasant-laborer cultures, and they weakened women's power to resist male domination.

Healing is a vitally important part of culture. In traditional communities, healers are focal figures. Today in the Third World, "The midwife is, and always has been, a key figure in the lives of rural women. She is part doctor, part counselor — in some places still part sorceress — and, mostly, a confidence-inspiring person at the time of childbirth."¹⁴

To destroy a culture's trust in its healers is to destroy that culture's trust in itself, to shatter its cohesive bonds and expose it to control from outside.

Healers provide models of knowledge, competence, and worth. Yet healing is also a power relationship. If, at a vulnerable time of sickness or childbirth, I put my body and life in the care of someone of my own sex, class, and culture — someone whom I see as being of *my own kind*, I give power-over to that person. But I can also identify with her, and internalize the image of her strength so that it feeds my own confidence and strength. If I am forced to give power-over my own being to someone who represents an

elite from which my kind are excluded, my confidence in myself, in my own ability and right to control my own destiny is weakened.

As a woman, if my society withholds from me the approved knowledge about my body, and forces me to turn to men for care and help with the most female of experiences, I hear the clear message that I am incompetent, incapable of caring for myself. When women healers are downgraded and portrayed as filthy and malevolent, women as a group are forced to internalize a sense of shame, self-loathing, and fear of their own power.

When lower-class healers are branded ignorant and superstitious, and are excluded from approved knowledge, other members of that class begin to see themselves as ignorant, and to doubt their ability to assert control over their own lives. Their ability to resist the external forces that exploit them is lessened.

Colonial powers knowingly and deliberately use Western medicine to undermine the faith of Third World people in their own healers and in cultural traditions that stand in the way of industrial development that benefits the corporations and economies of the West. In 1892, Indian healers were called "An influence antagonistic to the rapid absorption of new customs. . . . Only after we have thoroughly routed the medicine men from their entrenchments and made them an object of ridicule [could whites] hope to bend and train the minds of our Indian wards in the direction of civilization."³ Today, so-called improved medical care justifies the destruction of indigenous culture. This occurs as the resources of remote areas are more and more exploited. Approved Western medicine is the hypodermic that injects Western values of ownership and profit and the Western world-view that supports those values into cultures that are still based on intimate connections with nature, and on organic ties among human beings.

Traditional healers were, and are, religious leaders. As such they upheld the values of immanence, of the spirit present in the world, of worth inherent in nature and all living creatures — values that opposed exploitation of natural and human resources. They were focal figures around whom communities might organize. In America, before the Civil War, black healers such as Harriet Tubman and Nat Turner "played important roles in help-

ing blacks resist the slave system.”¹⁶ Native American healing methods, religions, and culture are today central in the Indian struggle to regain and protect their rights and their lands.

The Witch persecutions and attacks on unapproved healers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were also an attack on a value system, a campaign in the ideological war that continues today.

THE WAR ON IMMANENCE

The Witch persecutions, the enclosures and the expropriation of land, the attacks on traditional healers and midwives, and the seizing and withholding of knowledge, were powerful factors in changing people's attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. The effect of these events was not limited to the suffering of specific victims:

These events were aspects of something more: the revolution in man's thinking and feeling that imposition of the protestant ethic involved. Protestant preachers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century undertook a cultural revolution, an exercise in indoctrination, in brain-washing, on a hitherto unprecedented scale. We only fail to recognize this because we live in a brain-washed society: our own indoctrination takes place so early, and from so many directions at once, that we are unaware of the process.¹⁷

This indoctrination had deep consequences in forming our views about work, time, and pleasure; about women and sexuality; and about the intrinsic nature and value of the world.

The Reformation and, in England, the Revolution and Restoration in the middle of the seventeenth century, can easily be portrayed as conflicts between two opposing classes and their religious and philosophical ideologies. The first could be termed the *Old Order*: the static hierarchy supported by the Catholic (or Anglican) church that upheld custom, tradition, and authority. The underlying power and wealth of the Old Order was based on land.

The New Order, represented by the mainstream Protestant sects — Lutherans, Zwinglians, and Calvinists (Puritans in England) — challenged hierarchy and authority, and upheld the

authority of the individual conscience. They were based primarily in the rising commercial-professional classes, and their eventually triumphant power and wealth was based on money, i.e., on the ownership and use of capital in a market economy.

Both the Old Order and the New Order located God, as the source of true value, outside the living world. In the Old Order value was brought back into the world through the formal hierarchy of the church and the landed aristocracy it supported.

In the New Order, value was brought back into the world — that is to say, God spoke — through the individual conscience, without the need of an intervening hierarchy. Max Weber in his classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, has shown how the Protestant ideology of individualism gradually became a new ideology of work and gain. The doctrine of predestination held that only a chosen few were, from the beginning of time, destined for salvation. Those few, the elect, were the *content* of the world. The rest, the vast majority, were filler, irretrievably damned and not inherently important. This doctrine both reflected and supported the unequal distribution of graces and comforts in this world; it legitimized inequality. Work and material gain became signs of one's membership in the elect. Money was imbued with a new symbolic value. It became the token of grace, the conduit through which God's value was returned to the world — and therefore it was far more important than any other value.³⁴

The rise of markets provided an arena in which *gain* as a value could flourish. The rise of the Protestant Ethic reinforced the transformation of the European economy into one that was increasingly controlled by markets. These were based not on the value of things-in-themselves or the comfort, enjoyment, or usefulness things provided, but on gain and profit, on things-as-instruments-of-gain. The New Order was one of yet deeper estrangement.

There was, however, a third force, in conflict both with the Old Order and the New: the peasant-laboring classes, whose wealth, if any, was limited to a plot of land for subsistence, whose numbers were great, and whose sources of power were few. History may

record their risings and rebellions, but rarely does it record their beliefs, philosophies, and ideals.

In England, during the Revolution, from 1641 to 1660, censorship was lifted.⁵⁹ The writings that surface from the lower-classes at that time reflect a wide variety of religious and political philosophies. But a common thread among them is the recognition of true value in this world and this life — the world-view that I have termed *immanence*.

How much of this world-view stemmed directly from the remnants of the Old Religion is difficult to document. The most radical of religious sects still presented themselves within a Christian framework, however Pagan their practices or ideas. The Witch persecutions carried on by representatives of both the Old and New Orders, under the auspices of both King and Parliament, created a climate in which an overtly Pagan movement would have faced both popular prejudice against it, and severe and immediate repression by the authorities of Church and state.

Many of the dispossessed peasants and laborers without land squatted in the forests and wastes where there was "freedom from parson as well as squire."⁶⁰ In the extensive forests such as Sherwood, Arden, and the New Forest, a mobile and volatile society of "squatters, itinerant craftsmen and building labourers, unemployed men and women seeking work, strolling players and jugglers, peddlars and quack doctors, vagabonds and tramps . . ."⁶¹ lived. "They were lawless; nobody to govern them; they care for nobody, having no dependence on anybody."⁶²

These same areas were both the regions of greatest peasant revolt in the early seventeenth century (according to Christopher Hill) and the areas where, according to our Oral Tradition, Witchcraft maintained its hold the longest. (It was in the New Forest that Gerald Gardner discovered a Witch coven in the 1930s that claimed to descend in an unbroken line from the time of William the Conqueror.)⁶³

Squatters in forest or pastoral regions, often far from any church, were wide open to radical religious sects — or to witchcraft. (Hostility to the clergy had been a striking ele-

ment in the Robin Hood ballads) . . . The densely populated forests of Northamptonshire were centres of rural puritanism, strange sects and witchcraft. The "cheese" district of Wiltshire, the scene of violence resulting from disafforestation in the early seventeenth century, was also an area of poorly-paid part-time clothing workers and of religious heresy. Ely . . . had long been a centre of plebian irreverence and resistance . . . In the Isle of Axholme the inhabitants were said to have been virtual heathens until the draining of the Fens . . ."

Matthew Hopkins, the witchfinder, found two villages in Northamptonshire that he described as "infested" with Witches in 1645 or 1646.⁶³ A year later, he or his coworker may have sparked execution trials at Ely that resulted in several executions.⁶⁴ Wiltshire, the county in which Stonehenge and Avebury are located, was the ancient center of pre-Christian religion. Robin Hood is identified, both by our oral tradition and by records of trials, with the God of the Witches.⁶⁵ His band of merry men and Maid Marion form a coven of thirteen. "Maid" or "Maiden" was (and still is) the honorary title for one of the female leaders of a coven, and Marion was one of the common names of women tried in England as Witches.⁶⁶

The witch-cult, which had survived for so many centuries as an underground popular religion, may have contributed more to radical protestantism than has yet been appreciated. "The witches," said Cotton Mather in a significant phrase, "are organized like congregational churches." Some aspects of the witch-cult have indeed much in common with medieval heresies, as well as with protestant sectarianism. The connections, if any, are obscure and difficult to establish: much more investigation is needed before we can speak with certainty. What is clear is the lower-class basis of the cult. It was a secret organization, anti-state, anti-state church. . . . Many leaders of peasant revolt in this period claimed to be sent by God. Some of them may have been sent by the God of the Witches rather than by Jehovah.⁶⁷

More investigation certainly is needed before direct connections can be established firmly. But an underlying similarity of ideas

can be demonstrated. Radical sects, like Witches, preached immanence (God manifest in the world). Familists, one of the earliest sects, were followers of Henry Niclaes, born in 1502, who taught that heaven and hell were to be found in this world.⁷⁰ A related sect, the Family of the Mount, "questioned whether any heaven or hell existed apart from this life: heaven was when men laugh and are merry, hell was sorrow, grief and pain."⁷¹ Christ, they held, was within every believer.

Ranters, who could easily be seen as seventeenth-century hippies, "set up the light in nature under the name of Christ in man."⁷² They called God *Reason* which, in the seventeenth century, had a meaning closer to *consciousness* than to mechanistic logic.

"One of them said that if there was any God at all, he himself was one. 'God is in everyone and every living thing,' said Jacob Bauthamly (in a pamphlet dated 1659). 'Man and beast, fish and fowl, and every green thing, from the highest cedar to the ivy on the wall. He does not exist outside the creatures.' 'He is me and I am him.'"⁷³

Ranters addressed each other as "fellow creature," a phrase reminiscent of ritual salutations in the Craft. They referred to themselves collectively as "my one flesh": God was a member of the community of my one flesh, one matter. "Ranters insisted that matter is good, because we live here and now."⁷⁴

The Diggers, another radical sect, attempted to abolish private property, hold land communally, and turn the commons and wastes over to the common people for their livelihood. On April 1, 1649, a group of laborers began digging the commons on St. George's Hill, on the edge of Windsor Great Forest, an area with both radical and Pagan traditions.⁷⁵ Gerrard Winstanley, their philosophical leader, "had a vision in a trance telling him to publish it abroad that 'the earth should be made a common treasury of livelihood to whole mankind . . .'"⁷⁶ A second formulation was: "True religion and undefiled is to let every one quietly have earth to manure."⁷⁷ "Collective manuring of the common lands was a religious act for the Diggers . . ."⁷⁸ The manuring, making the earth fertile, takes precedence over cultivation. The

Diggers may or may not have been connected with the Witches, but they were certainly earth-religionists.

Winstanley also equated God with universal reason that "dwells in every creature, but supremely in man."¹⁰ "This idea of God as immanent within the whole material creation . . . is connected with a respect for natural science as the means of becoming acquainted with God's works."¹¹ "To know the secrets of nature is to know the works of God . . ."¹¹ He identified the traditional Christian God, who legitimizes private property, with the Devil, and The Fall with the rise of property ownership.

Sectarians were noted for practicing sexual freedom. Ranters and Quakers occasionally went naked as a sign of grace. The Ranter Lawrence Clarkson anticipated Freud and Norman O. Brown by identifying sin, not with an act — but with its repression. "None can be free from sin till in purity it be acted as no sin, for I judged that pure to me which to a dark understanding was impure: for to the pure all things, yes all acts were pure . . . Without act, no life, without life, no perfection."¹² "What act soever is done by thee in light and love, is light and lovely . . . if that within thee do not condemn thee, thou shalt not be condemned."¹³

These words are comparable to the modern Charge of the Goddess from the present-day liturgy of the Craft (of unknown origin): "All acts of love and pleasure are my rituals . . . and if that which you seek you find not within yourself, you will never find it without. For I have been with you from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the end of desire . . ."

The sects also contained women in high positions. They allowed women to participate in Church government. Women preached, traveled the country in company with men, spoke out against unequal marriages, and demanded divorce by simple declaration. Mary Cary, a minister, wrote a utopian pamphlet in 1651 declaring that, "The time is coming when not only men but women shall prophesy; not only aged men but young men, not only those who have university learning but those who have not, even servants and handmaids."¹⁴

The triumph of the New Order with its Protestant ethic and the defeat of the radical sects, was a political, economic, and religious triumph of the commercial-professional classes over the peasant-laboring classes, of male domination over women. The imposition of the Protestant ethic involved a campaign against ideas of immanence in three realms: work, sexuality, and philosophy.

Max Weber has shown the way the rise of the Protestant ethic provided a new ideology of work, one that reflected the shift in value from *use* to *gain*, and served the rise of capitalism. The concept of a *calling* placed a new sort of value on work and gain, which became signs of one's membership in the elect, and were not valued for their real benefits, the material benefits they conferred, but because they were now the channel through which one approached God, who was not of this world. Work and gain, paradoxically, were valued as if they were not of this world, as if they were inherent goals, good in-and-of themselves. Work became an ascetic discipline and "this asceticism turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer."¹

For the rising monied classes, hard work and ascetic self-discipline, however piously motivated, did pay off in material success. They prospered; and prosperity as the visible sign of God's grace could be enjoyed, even though other spontaneous enjoyments — sex, dancing, sports, games, festivals, and nature — were still seen as works of the Devil.

For the peasant-laboring classes, however, discipline and hard work led, at best, to bare survival. The work ethic was used by the monied classes to impose discipline on the laborers and the poor. Idleness was sinful; charges that cottagers were idle were made in support of enclosure.² Charges of idleness also justified low wages, which ideally "should allow the labourer but just wherewithal to live; for if you allow double, then he works but half so much."³

A man does not "by nature" wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to

earn as much as is necessary for that purpose. Wherever modern capitalism has begun its work of increasing the productivity of human labour by increasing its intensity, it has encountered the immensely stubborn resistance of this leading trait of pre-capitalism."¹¹

Traditional festivals, saints' days (which were often Christianized versions of ancient Pagan holidays), dances, and games were attacked by mainstream Protestants. The Witch Persecutions were an attack on the celebrations, beliefs, and customs that had supported the peasant-laboring classes in their desire for comfort and enjoyment — for pleasure in life as well as work.

As work became an ascetic discipline, women were pushed out of many kinds of productive labor. We have seen how enclosure divested women of the land they had used to provide food for their families, and how the rise of the male medical profession, in company with the Witch persecutions, forced women out of the domains of healing and midwifery. In late Medieval times, women played important roles in many crafts and industries. Marriage was in many ways a business partnership, and wives of merchants or craftsmen often worked alongside their husbands. Widows usually continued their former husbands' businesses. Women had been brewers, bakers, shipowners, publishers, printers, glovers, peddlars, merchants, accountants, pinmakers, and shopkeepers. They had also worked in agriculture and in the textile industries.¹²

As long as the family remained the basic unit of production in the economy, women retained an important role in many sorts of work. But as industry moved out of the home and workshop, into factories and large-scale enterprises, women were excluded. The productive unit became the individual worker, who was more easily manipulated, more conveniently mobilized, and more fully exploitable when *work* (not family, personal pleasure, or communal obligations) was defined as the only true purpose of this life.

The Witch persecutions were, above all, attacks on women. The propaganda that supported the Witchhunts stressed women's inferiority and defined their nature as inherently evil.

When a woman thinks alone, she thinks evil . . . They are more impressionable than men and more ready to receive the influence of the disembodied spirit . . . Since they are weak they find an easy and secret manner of vindicating themselves in Witchcraft. They are feebler both in mind and body . . . As regards intellect or understanding of spiritual things, they seem to be of a different nature than men . . . Women are intellectually like children . . . Women have weaker memories, and it is a natural vice in them not to be disciplined, but to follow their own impulses without a sense of what is due . . . She is a liar by nature . . . Woman is a wheedling and secret enemy . . ."⁹⁰

Hatred of women was not limited to any one area or religious body: "This misogynist pattern was not peculiar to the Dominican's work. It was standard to refer to witches as women in the witch hunter's treatises and to include a section showing, from the 'nature' of women, why witches are female. This pattern is found equally in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treatises written by Protestants."⁹¹

Women bring life into the world. In a culture in which women mother, women's bodies provide our first experiences of warmth and comfort, of a deep sensual pleasure untainted by restrictions." To turn against women, then, is to turn against life itself, to deny flesh, pleasure, and comfort. And an asceticism that denies the flesh must, of necessity, denigrate women.

Women are also, however, our first frustrators, source of the first will that opposes our own, that denies as well as gives, as well as the source of our mortality, of the vulnerability of body-bound creatures to disease, pain, and death. Norman O. Brown in *Life Against Death*" argues that we are willing to relinquish the deep pleasure of sensual life in the body in order to deny death. In so doing, we turn to the substitute pleasure of enterprise — culture-building work in the world.

In order for the realm of work and enterprise to be free from the taint of mortality, women and all we represent must be excluded. So, as the Protestant ethic raises work to the status of a transcendent endeavor, women, who embody immanence, are driven out. Immanence is attacked through women's bodies: the immor-

talities of spirit-estranged-from-flesh is exalted through the torture and destruction of women's flesh. Men revenge themselves on the mother who failed to satisfy completely by destroying mother-kind. They repair the childhood humiliation of bowing to the mother's will by destroying women's wills. The blame for women's destruction must fall, not on the conflicts inherent in mothering, but on the religious and economic systems that deepen those conflicts, that encourage men to act them out by victimizing women.

When a woman is excluded from productive labor, she is forced into the role of object. Both lower-class and upper-class women are relegated to the realm of reproduction, intensifying both men's and women's tendencies to identify all women with mother — someone both more than human and less than human, but never simply human.

A lower-class woman also reproduces the labor power⁴⁴ of her man. Her work is unpaid, but necessary. It is she who takes the commodities earned by the worker and transforms them so that they can be used; she cooks the food, washes the clothes, and cleans the house. The cold abstract, money, is transformed again in her hands, restored into the realm of what has value in-and-of-itself, what can be used and enjoyed. But because her work is unpaid, it does not partake of the new value now accorded to gain and profit. She cannot profit from it, cannot bargain for higher wages or attempt to gain from it more than she puts into it. Her work gradually comes to be considered less real than a man's work, and the woman herself becomes unreal, a two-dimensional screen upon whom a man can project his fantasies.⁴⁵

Working women are relegated to the least attractive jobs, and excluded from those occupations offering hints of transcendence or the nobility of a calling. Lower-class women are an expendable labor force, cheaper to hire than men, and easier to fire in a slow season since they are not considered real workers.

Upper-class women become commodities, exchanged in marriage as tokens of men's power, status, and success. The upper-class woman learns to package and market herself. She too is an

object, not a subject; the other, not the self, of culture.

As the others, the objects, women have been made screens upon which men's latent fear and hatred are projected. The Witchhunts inflamed and legitimized that hatred, aiding the economic forces that attacked her physical and existential self.

In women, the persecutions reinforced self-hatred and suspicion of other members of their sex. To both sexes, the role of victim was made to seem the woman's natural and deserved role.

Hatred of women extends to hatred of all flesh, all sensual life. The Witchhunts, as a campaign in the war on immanence, were also directed against sexuality, especially women's sexuality and homosexuality.

"All Witchcraft comes from carnal lust," states the *Malleus Maleficarum*, 'which is in women insatiable.' Witches were accused, as their primary acts, of consorting with demons, of lewd and lascivious acts. Witches' Sabbaths were portrayed as orgies where unnatural lusts were indulged.

Lesbianism and male homosexuality were often associated with Witchcraft; Arthur Evans, in *Witchcraft and the Gay Counter-culture*, cites numerous instances of this.⁹⁶ Homosexuals and lesbians were subject to torture and execution as civil criminals, but so-called unnatural sex was also evidence of Witchcraft. The Witch persecutions denigrated sexuality and enforced heterosexuality. They punished women for sexual aggressiveness and enforced passivity, punished women for enjoying sex and enforced frigidity.

Sexuality was a sacrament in the Old Religion; it was (and is) viewed as a powerful force through which the healing, fructifying love of the immanent Goddess was directly known, and could be drawn upon to nourish the world, to quicken fertility in human beings and in nature. The Goddess was known, not through hierarchy or ascetic discipline, but through ecstasy, through deep connection with another human being. The ritual cycle in the Craft centers around themes of the interweaving of life and death; through confronting death, acknowledging and accepting our mortality, we are free to experience life deeply in its full sensual-

ity. "Sing, feast, dance, make music and love, all in my presence, for mine is the ecstasy of the spirit, and mine also is joy on earth.""

If the woman, symbolically, is the body of immanence, then sexuality, valued in-and-of-itself, is its soul. Gay sexuality, affirming in its very nature the primacy of pleasure over reproduction, and religious sexuality, upholding the deep value of the body and its experience, both threaten the ascetic discipline of labor, which requires denial of the body. Aggressive female sexuality is incompatible with the role of women as victims, as objects. The Witch persecutions used torture and terror to scar the Western psyche by identifying sex with evil.

Finally, the Witch persecutions aided the war on immanence as it appeared in the sciences and in the intellectual life of the time.

In the seventeenth century, the mechanist view of the world as composed of dead, inert, isolated particles was still being challenged by views expressed in systems of magic, such as alchemy, astrology, hermeticism, Cabbalism, and ritual magic. Many of these systems had, by this time, become very different in practice from Witchcraft. These formal magical systems tended to be hierarchically structured and rule-bound, and by this period, they had adopted Christian and Jewish, as well as classical Greek and Roman symbolism and terminology. However, they shared with the Old Religion, and with many of the radical Protestant sects, a view of the world as inherently alive, dynamic, and relational — valued in and of itself. Their logic was dialectical, not a dualism without synthesis; opposites were interdependent; from each entity arose its opposite, and the resulting tension caused change.

David Kubrin describes mechanical philosophy as follows:

Matter itself . . . existing in empty space . . . is all there is, all that underlies the whole of the sensate world of phenomena. Changes in the phenomenal world all arise out of the "matter and motion" of the underlying molecular or atomic world, each of the atomic or molecular particles in itself having *only* size, shape, and its state of motion — all quantitative entities — as its attributes. The world, in essence, is colorless, tasteless, soundless, devoid of thought or life. It is essentially dead, a machine . . ."

Mechanism, in our minds, has become identified with reality and truth, and magical philosophies are identified with error and superstition. Yet mechanism has, in the long run, proved invalid. Physicists now tell us that there are no solid atoms — only interactions among particles, which themselves may be patterns of probabilities, none of which can be observed objectively because observation requires interaction with the observed." Systems theory teaches us to move beyond simple cause-and-effect logic, and look instead at patterns of interactions. Magic can be seen as the philosophical precursor of relativity and probability theory.

Mechanism triumphed, not necessarily because it was the best description of reality, but because of its political, economic, and social implications. Magic, the science and philosophy based on the principle of immanence, was identified with radicalism and lower-class interests. "The animist concept of nature as a divine, self-active organism came to be associated with atheistical and radical libertarian ideas. Social chaos, peasant uprisings, and rebellions could be fed by the assumption that individuals could understand the nature of the world for themselves and could manipulate its spirits by magic. A widespread use of popular magic to control these spirits existed at all levels of society, but particularly among the lower classes."¹⁰⁰

After the Restoration of Charles II in England, such ideas were termed *enthusiasm*, and a vigorous campaign was carried out by the state, the established Church, and the new scientific institutions against them. Enthusiasm was associated with radical activism and rebellion. "[A] conception of the world's being inherently active, full of Gods, and constantly changing helped develop people's self-confidence, and perhaps better encourage them . . . to step forward to act, to transform the world, rather than to remain passive in the face of the great social transformations then sweeping England."¹⁰¹

The expropriation of knowledge, which we have seen operating in the area of healing, extended to science as a whole. Mechanism, which supported exploitation of nature because nature was inherently dead and valueless, and which furthered the removal of value from things-in-themselves, from everything that could not be quantified and counted, became the approved knowledge.

Other views were branded as dangerous, wrong-headed and foolish. Kubrin demonstrates that even Newton, whom we commonly think of as the father of mechanism, was deeply involved with the study of alchemy and Hermeticism. His magical writings, however, were never published because he feared being linked with radicalism and freethinkers.¹⁰¹

The Witch persecutions helped assure the triumph of mechanism. Ironically, mechanism, by undermining belief in demons, devils, and all noncorporeal beings, as well as belief in all systems of magic, eventually destroyed the rationale for Witchhunts. However, by that period (the eighteenth century), mechanism itself had become an entrenched ideology that legitimized the rising capitalist economy, the exploitation of women and workers, the plundering of nature — and one that exalted the quantifiable over the qualitative elements of life. "Mechanism, as a metaphysics and an epistemology, not only spread from physics to chemistry and biology, but also to physiology, psychology, religion, poetry, ethics, political theory and art."¹⁰²

THE PAST ALIVE IN THE PRESENT

The old woman is gone now. Whether she was hanged as a Witch, or escaped to live in the wastes with other refugees and vagabonds; whether she ended her life in the comfort of her own small cottage, or was driven out to lie cold and hungry under hedgerows, she is dead. But something of her lives on, in the children of the children of the children she delivered. Her fears, and the forces she struggled against in her lifetime, live on.

We can open our newspapers, and read the same charges against the idle poor. The expropriators move into the Third World, destroying cultures, purveying approved Western knowledge, plundering the resources of land and people. The ethic of ownership supports them. Scientific agriculture poisons the earth with pesticides; mechanist technology builds nuclear plants and bombs that may yet make the earth a dead thing. If we turn on the radio, we can hear the crackle of flames in every broadcast. If we watch the news or walk out into the streets, where the transcendent value of gain raises rents and real estate prices, forcing people

out of their neighborhoods and their homes, we can hear the dull thud of the enclosure notice nailed to the door.

The issues seem endless. Everywhere we turn for comfort or for healing, we are met by the approved guardians of a knowledge that alienates us from our bodies and our souls. The smoke of the burned Witches still hangs in our nostrils; most of all, it reminds us to see ourselves as separated, isolated units in competition with each other, alienated, powerless, and alone.

But the struggle also lives on. Understanding the history of that struggle allows us to undertake it with a clear vision, one that recognizes the interwoven nature of the issues involved, that knows that our interests are not separate, whether we are women struggling to regain our place in the work force, or migrant workers demanding a living wage, or Indians whose lands are poisoned by uranium tailings, or ecologists trying to preserve a wilderness area. Whether our immediate needs are for food, health care, jobs, childcare, housing, or open spaces, our ultimate interest is the same — restoring a sense of the sacred to the world, and so restoring value to our own lives and to the community of beings — human, plant, and animal — that share life with us.

That common vision, that common value, can be the base of a power no one can wield alone — the power to reshape our common lives, the power to change reality.

Appendix A

1. Bateson, Gregory. *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. New York: Bantam, 1979, p. 77.
2. We cannot understand the Witch persecutions if we view them simply as a male conspiracy against women or see them removed from the recurring patterns of persecution throughout the Middle Ages. Mary Daly's account of the Witch-hunts while in other respects excellent, manages to erase the Jews from history as thoroughly as patriarchal historians erase women. See Daly, Mary. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.
3. Ruether, Rosemary. *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1975, pp. 100-106.
4. Quoted from Kramer and Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, in Daly, Mary. *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 199
5. This account of the Witch persecutions is based on Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*; Ehrenreich, Barbara, and English, Deirdre. *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers*. Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1973; Murray, Margaret. *The God of the Witches*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970; Notestein, Wallace. *A History of Witchcraft in England*. New York: Crowell, 1968; Ruether. *New Woman, New Earth*.
6. Ruether. *New Woman, New Earth*, p. 11.
7. Daly. *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 197.
8. Quoted from Henry Charles Lea in Daly. *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 200.
9. Daly. *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 200.
10. See Daly. *Gyn/Ecology*, p. 185; Ruether. *New Woman, New Earth*, pp. 104-105; Hill, Christopher. *Reformation to Industrial Revolution: The Making of Modern English Society*. Vol. 1: 1530-1780. New York: Pantheon, 1967, pp. 89-90

Copyright © 1982 by Miriam Simos

Beacon Press books are published under the auspices of the Unitarian
Universalist Association, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108
Published simultaneously in Canada by Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited,
Toronto

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

(paperback) 9 8 7 6

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Starhawk.

Dreaming the dark.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Witchcraft. 2. Sex and religion. 3. Religion and politics. 4. Women and
religion. I. Title.

BF1572.S4S7 1982 299 81-70485

ISBN 0-8070-1001-4 (pbk.) AACR2