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MENSTRUATION: MYTH, TABOO, BELIEF AND FACT

A Psycho-Anthropological Study of Evaluations of Female Role, Character and Behavior, as Reflected in Menstrual Myths, Taboos, Beliefs and Facts

by

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Executive Officer

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Maureen O'Sullivan
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Mother, the Horses Rode

Mother, the horses rode outside my window
All the night long. I could hear their hoofbeats
ringing clear as silver
I could see their manes a-swirling
light and bright as silver.
I could see their wild eyes glowing wet with moonlight.

Something happened in my body.
I am wounded.

Here's the terror and the puzzle:
Sometimes I could hear them running
Hear the clang of rushing hoofbeats
Wild and free outside my window
Wild and free and wet with moonlight
As I lay in bed a-trembling
All in wonder at my window
Sometimes I was running with them
Wild and free and wet with moonlight
And my hair was loose and flowing
Silver in the long dark hours.

Hush, my child. Don't tell your father.
Do not say you heard the horses.

Mother, all night long I wonder
Who am I when I am running
With the horses in the hours
Of the wild and dark free-flowing.
Something happened in my body.

Was I in my bed a-sleeping
Was I silver-maned and fearless
Running moon-mad with the horses.

Hush, my child. The men might listen.
Do not speak of moons and horses.

Mother, you must answer truly.
When the moon is swallowed and eaten
By the black hawk of the long night
Something happens in my body.
I am wounded.
The hawk draws blood from out my body.
Was I in my bed a-dreaming
Did I run, a mare in moonlight.
I think perhaps I am a witch.

Hush, my child. You rode the night mare.
Rode her silver in the moonlight.
Hear the wind sigh in the pear trees.
Hush, my child. The men might hear us.
They have fear of women riders
Who have learned to tame the night mare.

Now I bid you tend the fire.
Stay at home and tend the fire.
Do not speak of night and moon-rides.
Do not speak of hawks and blood.
Do not speak of flight and silver.
Do not speak of dreams and witches.
Do not speak. The men might hear us.
Hush. I bid you tend the fire.

--Merle Molofsky*

*Unpublished poem

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INTRODUCTION

> The social context makes menstruation a curse. Just as the penis derives its privileged evaluation from the social context, so it is the social context that makes menstruation the curse... The one symbolizes manhood, the other femininity. And it is because femininity signifies otherness and inferiority that menstruation is met with shame.[1]
>
> --Simone de Beauvoir

In writing this dissertation my original aim was to study the psycho-physical changes associated with the premenstrual and menstrual phases of the menstrual cycle. However, as I began to read through the vast literature on this topic I made several observations. The first was that the theoretical and empirical studies of the menstrual cycle were being formulated and conducted within a particular social context. That is, in reviewing these studies I realized that I was also uncovering evaluations of female role, behavior and character which were being influenced by the judgments of a society whose value system is based primarily upon a masculine ethos. This raised a question: Were menstrual-related theoretical formulations or the results of any of these studies reflecting or perpetrating a devaluation of female behavior or character? In my estimation, the answer was, "yes."

The second observation was - while there existed an extensive theoretical and empirical literature on <u>female</u> attitudes and feelings about menstruation, very little had been written about <u>male</u> attitudes or feelings about the menstrual aspect of what Simone de Beauvoir calls the female's "otherness." This led to a thorough search through the psychoanalytic literature as well as through empirical anthropological studies,

ethnographic data and historical source material. The search through the historical and anthropological literature proved to be most fruitful. What it produced was an overwhelmingly large accumulation of myths, taboos and superstitious beliefs - primarily the male's view of the powerful influence of the menstruous female and/or menstrual blood.

This library journey through many countries, and a number of academic fields of study, also brought about the realization that the plethora of beliefs and customs surrounding the menses was not only a rich source of information about male feelings towards and beliefs about menstruation. These beliefs and customs also revealed a macrocosmic view of more general attitudes toward females. That is, menstrual-related beliefs seemed to serve as a focusing point onto which males in many different cultures and historical eras, including our own, directed more general feelings, beliefs and evaluations of female "otherness." Moreover, after making this search I also realized that there was a continuity in evaluation. That is, within a wide range of preliterate cultures and historical contexts, the evaluation of/or regard for the menstruous aspect of femininity, which seemed to reveal an evaluation of femininity in general, was also reflected in certain areas of the 'scientific' study of the menstrual cycle. Thus the original direction of my inquiry shifted. The focus changed and the perspective broadened.

This thesis is now primarily a theoretical study of the ways in which a wide range of beliefs about the menses, and certain aspects of the 'scientific' investigation of the menstrual cycle, reflect evaluations of femininity and contribute to stereotypic notions of female character and behavior. While one of my aims is to dis-entangle fact from fiction; that is, to sort out superstitious beliefs associated with the menses from

scientific fact, one of my primary purposes, as stated, is to show how 'facts' about menstruation reveal judgments about female behavior and character. Thus although the Nature-Nurture controversy, as it applies to sex differences, will be touched on at different points throughout this study, it will not be a major focus of discussion. I am primarily concerned with cultural values as they relate to evaluations of femininity. I am assuming that there <u>are</u> biological differences between the sexes, but my position is the same as that put forth by Simone de Beauvoir in <u>The Second Sex</u>, which is - "The facts of biology take on the values that the existant bestows upon them...."[2]

Within this frame of reference my specific intentions are:

1. To analyze the diversity of beliefs in the power and influence of the menstruous female and/or menstrual blood in the context of the belief systems in which they are embedded, i.e., the cognitive-symbolic determinants of these beliefs.
2. To discuss the psychological significance of the male's fear of the menstruous female and/or her blood, as well as the social functions of menstrual taboos, i.e., the psychological determinants and socio-functional aspects of menstrual taboos, both formal and informal.
3. To argue that the motives for enforcing menstrual taboos, both informal and formal, are multi-determined and more complex than anthropological surveys of menstrual taboos indicate.
4. To show that although within a wide range of cultural and historical contexts, including our own, there is a diversity of attitudes towards menstruation, there is also a continuity in evaluation; and that this continuity is expressed not only in menstrual-related myths, customs and superstitious beliefs, but also in the academic study of menstruation.

5. To argue that many beliefs surrounding the menses reflect a cultural evaluation of the female as the "second sex"; and that this evaluation is also revealed in certain empirical or theoretical studies of the premenstrual or menstrual phases of the menstrual cycle.

In addition, it is also my intention to demonstrate:

6. That many beliefs about the harmful or destructive aspects of the menstruant in preliterate, ancient and premodern cultures are an integral part of a larger body of beliefs about females, i.e., the myth of feminine evil.

7. That, on the other hand, evaluations of the menstruous female reflect an ambivalence with which males have regarded females since time immemorial. In this context it will be my contention that there is a double ambivalence at work in relation to both the menstruous female and the female in general. That is, I shall demonstrate that the positive aspect of the ambivalent regard for the menstruous female and menstrual blood in primitive societies, is mixed with negative feelings; and that this, in turn, is reflected in the positive aspect of the ambivalence with which males have viewed females in all cultures. The nature of this ambivalence will be analyzed in terms of its (1) bearing on the cultural devaluation of females and (2) its psychological and philosophical origins.

The scope of this study is broad and the perspective entails shifts in time, place and focus. In terms of the latter, I mean that the focus of discussion will move from the specific, the menstruous female, to the general, the female, and back again. In relation to shifts in time and place, I will be presenting and synthesizing menstrual beliefs and customs from a wide array of cultural and historical contexts.

This study has been designed to be not only broad, but unifying,

integrative, relational and contextual. In this respect I view this piece of work as being a distinctively 'feminine' product, i.e., relational, contextual and integrative. Thus, it represents a woman's approach to gathering knowledge and understanding the world, as well as a woman's attempt to articulate what she finds. I see the framework of this study, its structure, and its language as male, i.e., the format and the notion of a dissertation itself. This union represents another integrative aspect.

The organization of this study is like that of a weaving in which beginning strands of thought are introduced, woven together, left temporarily to bring in new strands, picked up again, and combined with the new strands in another section of the design. This process of combining and recombining continues until the work is finished. While the weaving itself is in the shape of a rectangle, there are very few straight lines in the design which consists mainly of a series of overlapping circular forms. The colors are bright and the texture varies with the pattern. This study represents the rich and brightly-colored thought tapestry of a woman. It is a comprehensive and original synthesis of theory and empirical research - an integration of knowledge from a number of academic disciplines and non-academic sources. Undertaken and carried forth with what Michael Polyani calls "heuristic passion," an approach to inquiry which "sets out not to conquer but to enrich the world,"[3] this study also provides a valuable fund of information which can be used as a resource by those who might want to pursue investigation of specific aspects of this topic in more detail.

NOTES: INTRODUCTION

[1]Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, ed. and trans. H.M. Parshley (Paris: Libraire Gallimard, 1949; reprint ed.; New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 72.

[2]Ibid., p. 32.

[3]Michael Polyani, Personal knowledge: Toward a post-critical philosophy (London: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1958; reprint ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 150.

CHAPTER I

MENSTRUAL TABOOS AND BELIEFS: HISTORICAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL OVERVIEW

> According to Pliny, the touch of the menstruous woman turned wine to vinegar, blighted crops, killed seedlings, blasted gardens, brought down the fruit from trees, dimmed mirrors, blunted razors, rusted iron and brass...killed bees... caused mares to miscarry and so forth. Similarly, in various parts of Europe, it is still believed that if a woman in her courses enters a brewery the beer will turn sour; if she touches beer, wine, vinegar, or milk, it will go bad; if she makes jam, it will not keep; if she mounts a mare it will miscarry; if she touches buds they will wither; if she climbs a cherry tree it will die.... In the Greek Island of Calymnos a woman at such times may not go to the well to draw water nor cross a running stream, nor enter the sea. Her presence in a boat is said to raise storms.[1]
>
> --James Frazer

Introduction

Menstruation has been called a "badge of femininity."[2] For the majority of the world's females it is an inevitable biological fact which occurs throughout one-third to one-half of a life time. Along with menopause and pregnancy, menstruation happens and is a significant representation of biological femaleness. Around the globe and throughout history the menstruous aspect of femaleness has been believed to have a powerful influence on the environment, human and non-human, animate and inanimate. For example, among the great variety of beliefs associated with the menses, in cultures widely separate in both time and geographical area, the touch or the presence of a menstruant have been considered deleterious to plant life, harmful to animals and insects, poisonous to food and/or water, and vitiating to organic matter and certain kinds of inanimate objects, particularly implements used by males for war, hunting

or fishing. In some areas of the world the menstruous female has also been accorded responsibility for causing natural disasters such as storms and floods.[3]

In cultures far too numerous to mention menstrual harm has been regarded as particularly dangerous to males. This harm has been linked with various kinds of disease, injury or death as well as with loss of magical efficacy or spiritual purity.[4-7] Among people of widely different race and cultural tradition the menses have also been explicitly associated with loss of manhood. This is expressed in cross-culturally and historically pervasive beliefs that direct or indirect contact with a menstruating female or menstrual blood will result in feminization of the male or diminution of of masculine strength and power.[8,9] A theme of menstrual-related loss of masculinity is also reflected in widespread beliefs that the blood of a menstruant, or the menstruous female herself, are disruptive or harmful to culturally defined male activities such as hunting, fishing, gambling, war and religious or ritual ceremonies.[10]

Thus, the lady whose "cherry is in sherry"[11] seems to have inspired the creation of a body of beliefs and taboos of such tremendous scope and variety that simply to list them all would be a long and arduous task. In relation to this abundance the American anthropologist, Clellan Ford, noted, "Menstruation appears to have acquired an importance for human beings far out of proportion to its biological functions."[12] Although various theories have been proposed to explain the meaning of certain beliefs associated with menses, as well as the social significance or practical functions of menstrual taboos, there is still a great deal which remains open to question and exploration. For instance, although the French anthropologist, Lévy-Bruhl, speculated about the reasons for

the dangers attributed to menstrual blood in preliterate societies, he also wrote, "What makes the menstrual flow so dangerous? It would be useless to guess."[13] And in relation to the inordinate fear of the menstrual discharge, the well known British anthropologist, Audrey Richards, wrote, "I do not think that psychoanalysts have yet accounted satisfactorily for the strength of the sense of fear of menstrual blood in some primitive societies."[14]

It is clear that in magical-religously oriented cultures menstrual taboos, like all taboos, have been instituted as protection from that which has been considered dangerous - in this case, the menstruant and her blood. Clellan Ford, however, was of the opinion that the specific rationale behind the genesis of certain kinds of menstrual taboos was not fully understood. Based on the results of a cross-cultural survey of menstrual taboos in preliterate societies, he concluded that the reasons for the development of menstrual taboos restricting such activities as cooking food, touching sacred objects and hunting gear, entering gardens and participating in the manufacture of artifacts were still unknown.[15] In addition, although Ford proposed certain explanations to account for the widespread taboo which prohibits sexual relations with a female during the menses, he was of the opinion that, "The conditions responsible for the taboo [regarding sexual contact with the menstruant] are not clear-cut and no definitive statement of them can be made here."[16]

To my knowledge, a theoretical study of menstrual taboos, and related beliefs as subjects in their own right, has never been undertaken. Moreover, to date, there has been no attempt to integrate and compare menstrual beliefs and customs found in preliterate societies with those which appear in ancient literate cultures, in various regions of Europe,

and in the United States. In addition, no one has thoroughly and systematically analyzed these beliefs and customs in order to determine what they reveal about evaluations of female character - which is the aim of this study. It is my intention, first, however, to present an overview of menstrual taboos, both formal and informal, and to briefly review the anthropology literature on the topic.

Cross-Cultural and Historical Overview

Menstrual taboos are found among people of many different races and cultures. They have been nearly universal. As Robert Lowie points out, menstrual restrictions are of "great antiquity in the history of human culture."[17] Within the magical-religious framework of the societies which I shall be discussing in several chapters menstrual taboos are formal or institutionalized. By this I mean part of an oral or written code of law which directly influences and guides peoples' lives. In secular or modern societies menstrual taboos are informal; that is, commonly followed and informally sanctions but not part of an official societal code of law. In preliterate, ancient and premodern cultures, including rural areas of Europe up through the twentieth century,[18-20] the menstruant has been subjected to various kinds of taboos or restrictions on her sexual, religious or domestic work activities.[21] Cross-culturally and historically the taboo on sexual intercourse during the menses has probably been the most pervasive.

In the ancient codes of the world's major religions the menstrual sex taboo is clearly stated. For instance, in the Vedic religious texts of India, from which certain principles of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are derived,[22] in much the same way as principles followed by

Catholics, Jews and Protestants are derived from the Bible, the menstruating female is not only forbidden sexual contact with the male, she is also warned not even to have thoughts related to sex.[23] During menstruation she is also prohibited from eating foods which are regarded as sexually arousing, especially at puberty.[24]

In the Talmud (Book of Niddah) the taboos forbidding sexual intimacy with a menstruant are explicit.[25] Moreover, according to ancient Hebrew scriptures it was a wife's duty to make herself particularly unattractive during the menses in order to avoid arousing sexual desire in her husband.[26] Based on religious law a female was able to obtain a divorce on the grounds that her husband made sexual advances toward her while she was menstruating.[27] On the other hand, according to Muslim religious law, a male may not obtain a divorce while his wife is menstruating, the rationale being that because he is not having sexual relations with her, his judgment is not sound.[28]

According to the Jewish Code of Law sexual relations with a menstruant are strictly prohibited. However, there is an amusing 'pleasure before pollution philosophy' expressed in a section of this code which deals with the situation of a husband who discovers his wife is menstruating while they are engaged in intercourse. As stated in Chapter CLVL the rule in this case is:

> He should not separate from her before his virile strength is exhausted, for this very act [intercourse] affords him pleasure, but he must raise his body supporting himself on his hands and feet and not upon her...He should then consult a rabbi who will instruct him on what penance he should do for his sin.[29]

According to this text, punishment for violation of the menstrual sex taboo was flogging or exclusion from the community for both male and female.[30]

Within ancient and medieval Catholic theology intercourse with a menstruant was considered a venial sin.[31] The sinfulness of sexual relations during menstruation apparently lasted well past the Middle Ages. In 1905 Havelock Ellis, in one of the earliest systematic studies of human sexual behavior, noted that:

> In contemporary recent times Catholic theologians have regarded sexual intercourse during menstruation as a sin. Icard points out that some Catholic theologians have declared that intercourse during menstruation, if not a mortal sin, is at least a venial sin. Sanchez, I may remark, states that many theologians consider it a mortal sin to seek intercourse during menstruation.[32]

According to Jean Paris reference to the menstrual sex taboo is not made in a religious text but in Shakespear's Midsummer Night's Dream. At the play's start Theseus announces that he and Hippolyte must wait four days to have intercourse because "...four happy days usher in another moon."[33] The beliefs that all females menstruated every twenty-eight days, and that menstruation was caused by the new moon were common in ancient thought and in medical theory up until the late eighteenth century.[34] Thus "another moon" is apparently a reference to the cessation of menses in connection with the lunar cycle.[35] This association between the phases of the moon and the monthly cycle of menstruation has appeared world-wide in various forms.[36-38] In modern poetry the moon-menses association is reflected in Sylvia Plath's poem, "Childless Woman," which begins: "The womb/Rattles its pod, the moon/Discharges itself from the tree with nowhere to go."[39]

Returning to the menstrual sex taboo, however, in the earliest cross-cultural study of menstrual taboos, which is based on information obtained from ethnographic accounts of 54 preliterate societies,

Ford reports that 33 societies prohibited coitus with a menstruant, and 10 directly placed a taboo on sexual relations during the menses by forbidding males to be physically intimate with a menstruous female. In a number of other societies in this sample, intercourse during the menses was not specifically prohibited, but was reported as not practiced. There was only one society in the entire sample in which the menstrual sex taboo was reported as definitely absent. Two were questionable. Moreover, Ford points out that not one of the cultures in the sample 'permitted' intercourse with a menstruant. Thus, in effect, the menstual sex taboo, whether formal or informal, was apparently present in almost 100% of the entire sample.[40]

In a more recent study of menstrual taboos (1965) Young and Bacyadan report that out of a sample of 58 preliterate cultures on which such information was available, 80% prohibited intercourse during the menses, while in the other 20%, concern was informal, i.e., intercourse during menstruation was not formally prohibited or societally punished, but it was not practiced.[41] Since the cross-cultural sample used in this study was basically the same as that used by Stephens, in an earlier survey of menstrual taboos, the percentages in relation to the prevalence of the menstrual sex taboos are approximately the same. Moreover, Stephens also indicates that in cultures in which intercourse with a menstruant was not formally prohibited the informal menstrual sex taboo was pervasive.[42]

In the contemporary United States there are indications that an informal taboo on intercourse during the menses is fairly widespread. For instance, in 1973 a survey of 960 California families showed that half the couples abstained from intercourse during menstruation.[43] And based on the results of a recent questionnaire survey of attitudes towards

menstruation, menopause and puberty (1976), Paula Weidiger reported that 25% of a sample of 558 female respondents objected to coitus during the menses. However, 40% of the females in the sample reported that while they did not object to sex during menstruation, their partners did.[44] The menstrual sex taboo, both formal and informal, will be discussed again later in several different contexts.

Other kinds of menstrual restrictions have also been historically and cross-culturally diffuse. For instance, around the globe the menstruant both formally and informally, has been prohibited contact with the food supply and various kinds of plant life used for food.[45] In preliterate cultures restrictions on the cooking and serving of food to males during menstruation have also been common.[46] As Stephens notes, if the menstrual cooking taboo was reported present within the cultures he studied, the menstrual sex taboo and beliefs in menstruation-related dangers to males were also reported present.[47] Restrictions on the religious activities of the menstruous female, and prohibitions on direct or indirect contact with sacred objects have also been historically and cross-culturally pervasive.[48] Moreover, a category of menstrual taboos which Young and Bacdayan refer to as personal restrictions on the menstruant have also been cross-culturally pervasive world-wide. These particular menstrual prohibitions include restrictions on laughing loudly, scratching the body directly, combing hair, etc.[49]

Just as the kinds of menstrual taboos have varied, so has their extensiveness, i.e., the number of menstrual taboos that a particular society enforces. In relation to extensiveness, simply put, the more dangerous the menstruant or the menstrual discharge have been believed to be, the greater the number of restrictions on various aspects of the

menstruant's behavior. In some preliterate cultures the menstruous female has been regarded as a public menace, bringing misfortune to the entire community. In these cultures she has usually been segregated, obliged to reside in a menstrual hut, often on the outskirts of the village.[50] In other societies she has been restricted to a special room in the household for the duration of her menstrual flow.[51] In some parts of the world the menstruant has been required to enter the family dwelling through s special door.[52] In others she has had to travel certain paths and avoid others.[53] In some cultures, including those of peasant Europe, the menstruant has had to wear special clothing or take some action to signify her unclean and dangerous state. This includes calling out "I am unclean," wearing scarves, hoods, etc.[54] In La Dame aux Camelias by Dumas, the main character wears a red flower during her period and a white one when she is not menstruating.[55]

Generally, those cultures which have segregated the female in a menstrual hut have enforced a greater number of menstrual taboos than those in which the menstruant has not been segregated. In the least restrictive societies, such as the Ainu of Japan, the menstruant has been permitted to mingle freely with others.[56] Freedom of movement and lack of restrictions during the menses, however, seem to be exceptional in preliterate cultures. Even in ethnographic accounts in which it is reported that there are few menstrual taboos, one finds that the taboos tend to be informal. However, the degree of danger associated with the menstruant or menstrual blood does seem to be significantly related to the number of restrictions that a culture imposes on a female during her menstrual flow.

As the preceeding discussion suggests the consequences resulting from violation of various kinds of menstrual taboos, and the official

societal punishments meted out for transgression have varied from mild to severe. In terms of official punishments, it would seem apparent that those cultures in which the menstruant or menstrual blood have been considered extremely dangerous are those which have meted out the most extreme forms of punishment. For example, the Illinois Indians considered the menstruous female to be extremely dangerous. Thus, squaws who failed to give notice that they were menstruating were punished with death.[57] And according to John Swanton, among the Creek Indians, who also regarded the powers of the menstruant as extremely dangerous, violation of menstrual taboos, along with murder and breach of marriage, were considered capital crimes. Moreover, if menstrual taboos were violated, the Creek squaw was held responsible for all misfortunes that befell the community and was punished severely.[58] Among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia, heavy penalties have been attached to the showing of a drop of menstrual blood by accident. According to Audrey Richards, if a drop of menstrual blood fell on the bed of a female's husband, "...she would be punished by her fellows by being made to sit over a fire place till her flesh was scorched."[59] Obviously those cultures which have not regarded the menstruant or menstrual blood as particularly dangerous have instituted few menstrual taboos. For example, among the Masai of Kenya violation of the menstrual sex taboo receives no punishment, and does not seem to have serious consequences,[60] while in other cultures punishment for such violation and consequences have been severe.[61]

Anthropology Studies of Menstrual Taboos

In her book on menstruation and menopause Weidiger[62] notes that conversations with anthropologists revealed that it never "occurred"

to them to study menstrual taboos in their field work. The fact that there are only five formal studies of such a wide-spread taboo is surprising.[63] One might speculate that in the field of anthropology there has been a taboo on studying menstrual taboos, a notion which I shall have much more to say about later in this study. The cross cultural studies of menstrual taboos which I have referred to focus mainly on a question of extensiveness - why are menstrual taboos more extensive in some cultures than in others? What are the socio-structural or psychological variables which determine how elaborate these taboos will be?

In the earliest study of menstrual taboos mentioned earlier Ford puts forth the hypothesis that these taboos have been instituted in response to disgust and/or anxiety aroused in males by the menstrual discharge. His major contention, however, is that the extensiveness of menstrual taboos varies in relation to the means of collecting the menstrual discharge. Based on a comparison of the lenience of menstrual restrictions and the efficiency of the means of collecting the menstrual discharge (in a sub-sample of 19 societies), Ford concludes that there is significant relationship between these two variables, i.e., societies in which there is an effective means of collecting the discharge have fewer menstrual taboos. However, a statistical analysis of the data is not included, and the sample is so small that one can hardly call this a formal study. Ford himself points out, however, that in a number of societies in which there was no effective means of collecting the menstrual discharge, there were few if any menstrual taboos. Moreover, as noted earlier, he considered these findings inconclusive.

In a study of menstrual taboos which is more complex and better designed than Ford's, Stephens refutes these findings, as well as

Ford's hypothesis that the extensiveness of menstrual taboos is associated with a disgust factor. Stephens hypothesizes that the extensiveness of menstrual taboos varies in relation to the amount of castration anxiety present in males. He postulates that the menstrual taboo scale used to measure the elaborateness of menstrual taboos is, in effect, a scale of the intensity of the male's fear of genital bleeding. This castration anxiety explanation for the male's fear of the menstruant is consistent with theories proposed by Géza Roheim,[64] George Devereux[65] and several other psychoanalytically oriented anthropologists who have written about this topic.[66]

Stephens, in turn, has been criticized by Schlegel for having "too many untested assumptions for the hypothesis,"[67] and by Young and Bacyadan for postulating an intervening variable, i.e., castration anxiety, which cannot be directly tested. Both of these criticisms are indicative of the controversy between anthropologists whose orientation is sociogenic, and psychologically oriented anthropologists whose approach to the study of cross-cultural phenomena is psychogenic. Based on a reinterpretation of Stephens' data, Young and Bacyadan advance the hypothesis that menstrual taboos are discriminatory against females. They argue that these taboos, in their degrading aspects, are similar to the customs of separation and abasement imposed on minority and low caste groups, and they reason that the physical facts of menstruation are like skin color - a convenient stimulus to "hang" discriminatory customs on.[68]

Based on statistically significant correlations between features of social organization and the extensiveness of menstrual taboos, Young and Bacyadan confirm this discrimination hypothesis. More specifically, they conclude that menstrual taboos are discriminatory against

females, that they are associated with male dominance; and in turn, male dominance and extensiveness of menstrual taboos are related aspects of the same feature of social organization, i.e., social rigidity. In this regard the well known anthropologist Robert Lowie states, "...where the relevant taboos menstrual exist in mild form or are lacking, sex discrimination seems to be like wise moderate."[69]

Bock, however, re-analyzed Young and Bacyadan's data and argued that geographical distribution was an overlooked factor which influenced the results they obtained. That is, a statistical analysis of the distribution of menstrual taboos in the various geographical areas of the world, indicated that the extensiveness of menstrual taboos is significantly associated with a society's geographical location. According to these results, the most extensive restrictions on the menstruant are found in the Americas, Africa and Melanesia. Moreover, in accordance with a general theory of taboo which is standard in the anthropology literature[70] and in agreement with Devereux,[71] Bock argues that the restrictions surrounding the menstruant might also be indicative of social elevation rather than social degradation. That is, he contends that since both kings and menstruants are taboo, then menstrual restrictions may reflect the veneration/sacred/awe side of taboo rather than the degradation/pollution/horror aspect.[72] This is a complex issue which will be dealt with later in several contexts. However, what is pertinent here is that Bock, like Devereux, suggests that there is another way to interpret menstrual taboos.

In a recent study of menstrual taboos in preliterate cultures, which is actually a sub-study of a larger investigation of male dominance and female autonomy in matrilineal cultures, Alice Schlegel also disagrees

with Young and Bacyadan's assumption that menstrual taboos are discriminatory toward females. Based on her results she concludes that the extensiveness of menstrual taboos is not a significant indicatory of female status or what she calls "autonomy." However, she also writes, "It may be that some cultures have used menstruation to explain and justify the inferior status of women...."[73] Similarly, Gabriella Eichinger, in a fairly recent study of female pollution beliefs in India (1972) states that while she does not think that the female pollution associated with the menses in India and other parts of the world, is an expression of misogynism, these beliefs "...may help to legitimate women's permanent inferior position."[74]

In reference to this status issue Ford, in 1945, had suggested that the way in which a society solves the problem of avoiding contact with the menstrual discharge might be directly related to the status of females. The implication here is that if a female must remain secluded, or if her activities are strictly curtailed for four or five days a month, she is handicapped in the struggle for prestige and status.[75] In a study on the Micmac Indians of Northern Canada, Wilson and Ruth Wallis point out that at the time of their study (1955) menstruation was still associated with "inferiority" and the secondariness of females to males, as it had been a hundred years prior.[76] Similarly, in a recent (1975) theoretical-historical analysis of Commanche culture, Thomas Fehrenbach makes the point that the uneasiness and awesomeness associated with the menses "reinforced the social inferiority of women."[77]

In the present study it is this cultural evaluation of inferiority in association with menses which is my primary concern. That is, while this status issue and other issues raised in the preceeding review

will be touched on later, with varying degrees of emphasis, my contention is that exploring the relationship between the extensiveness of menstrual taboos and female status, as it has been considered in several of the studies just discussed, is a fruitless line of inquiry.

There are several reasons why I am making this statement. One is that a number of anthropologists have pointed out that adequate criteria for measuring female status, cross-culturally, are difficult to devise.[78] Moreover, even if we knew about the structural features of a society in which a female might have 'high' status, we still would not know how this was translated into everyday life. In addition, just defining what status is presents a problem.

More important than the difficulty in measuring and defining status, I do not think that there is much to be learned about how females are regarded in other cultures by taking an isolated custom such as the menstrual taboo, and correlating it with one, or several combinations, of 84 cultural traits, customs or structural features (variables) catelogued in George Murdock's Ethnographic Atlas, a compendium of information on 864 cultures in the six major geographic areas of the world. This type of correlational study is standard in the field of anthropology. While such study has its merits, in that one learns something about the distribution or extensiveness of traits or customs throughout the world, this method of investigating cultural phenomena has its obvious limitations; and one of them is that there is little to be learned about the culture as a whole or what meaning is attributed to a custom or a belief in a total context.

Bock criticizes Young and Bacyadan's study for exactly this reason. That is, using a culture studied by Margaret Mead (Arapesh, New

Guinea), he shows that the social rigidity factor postulated by Young and Bacyadan as characteristic of societies in which menstrual taboos are extensive, loses its validity when considered in the context of the total pattern of Arapesh culture. Bock argues, in effect, that by designing atlas-type anthropological studies in which customs are torn out of their cultural contexts there is a danger of producing papers for journals in which the results are statistically significant, but the hypothesis is invalid.[80] In this context it is interesting to note that in anthropology texts one often finds Frazer criticized for being an armchair anthropologist, i.e., one who compiles data on other cultures from afar. Ironically, there are now a legion of "atlas-computer" anthropologists. Perhaps this is because there are few exotic and primitive cultures left for study.

One of the points that is most relevant here, however, is that in order to understand what menstrual taboos and beliefs 'mean', what their social function might be, and what they can tell us about the evaluation of females in other cultures, the subject must be investigated from a number of different points of view. As Ruth Benedict wrote some forty years ago, "The only way to know the significance...of behavior is against a background of motives and emotions and values...."[81] In effect, one of the aims of this study is to constantly look at this topic against a background.

It will be apparent, then, as the discussion unfolds that menstrual taboos must be seen within a framework of psychological, sociological and symbolic factors. The latter includes modes of cognition and ways of perceiving the universe which are characteristic of magical-religious cultures. Menstrual taboos must also be seen in the context of other

customs and beliefs surrounding feminine biological processes which in preliterate cultures are all of a piece, part of what might be called a custom-belief complex. In the modern world the female's regard for her own menstruation must be seen in relation to the male's view of menstruation, and the culture's evaluation of the behavioral and psychological changes that are associated with the menses and other phases of the menstrual cycle. These, too, are all of a piece. To study menstrual taboos, or attitudes towards menstruation, in isolation, or "ripped out of context," as Bock put it, is to end up at the end of the story of the blind men and the elephant. That is, the blind men are asked to tell what an elephant is. Each describes the part that he has touched - the tail, or the trunk, or the leg. Obviously, none of them know what the elephant really is.

NOTES: CHAPTER I

[1]The Golden Bough: a Study in Magic and Religion, 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911-1915), 10:96.

[2]Merton Gill, Functional disturbances of menstruation, Bull. Menninger Clin., 7:6, 1943.

[3]Specific citations will appear throughout text.

[4]Clellan S. Ford, A Comparative Study of Human Reproduction. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945)), pp. 9-19.

[5]William N. Stephens, A cultural study of menstrual taboos, Genet. Psychol. Monogr., 64:385-416, 1961.

[6]Frank W. Young and Albert A. Bacyadan, Menstrual taboos and social rigidity, Ethnology, 4:225-39, 1965.

[7]Alice Schlegel, Male Dominance and Female Autonomy; Domestic Authority in Matrilineal Societies (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1972), pp. 24-26, 75-76, 88-90, 93.

[8]Frazer, 10:49,81.; Raymond Crawfurd, Notes on the superstitions of menstruation. Lancet. 2(Dec. 18, 1915):1334.;Robert Briffault, The Mothers: a Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 2:240-41.; Ernst Crawley and Theodor Besterman, The Mystic Rose: A Study of Primitive Marriage and of Primitive Thought in its Bearing on Marriage, 2 vols. (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927), 1: 187.

[9]Also see, Kenneth G. Orr, Field Notes on the Burmese Standard of Living as Seen in the Case of a Fisherman-Refugee Family. Notes of the Burma Community Research Project (Rangoon: University of Rangoon Press, 1951), p. 48*; and, Sir Richard O. Winstedt, The Malays: a Cultural History (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 107*; Louis Paul, The mastery of sex in a Guatamalan village, in Woman, Culture and Society, eds. Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 93.

[10]Frazer, 10:46, 49, 55, 85-94 passim.; Ford, p. 12.; Karen Sacks, Engles revisited; Woman, the organization of production, privilege and property in Woman, Culture and Society, p. 97, citing Monica Hunter, Reaction to Conquest; E.J. Krige and J.D. Krige, Realm of a Rain Queen and John Roscoe, The Baganda.

[11]Norma F. Joffe, The venacular of menstruation, Word, 4:93, 1948.

[12]Field Guide to the Study of Human Reproduction, 2 vols. (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1964), 2:15.

[13]Primitives and the Supernatural, trans. Lillian A. Clare (New York: Dutton, 1935), p. 311.

[14]Chisungu: a Girls Initiation Ceremony Among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia (London: Farber & Farber, 1956), p. 19.

[15]Comparative Study, p. 17.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Primitive Religion (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1952), p. 217.

[18]Frazer, 10:79, 94-96.; Havelock Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1901) 1:2,6.

[19]Also see, Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Anthropology and Legend, 1950 ed., s.v. "Menstruation," by Norma F. Joffee.; and Theodora M. Abel and Norma F. Joffee, Cultural backgrounds of female puberty, Amer. J. Psychother., 4:90-104 passim.

[20]In reviewing superstitions and folklore surrounding menstruation Emil Novak, Menstruation and Its Disorders (New York: Appleton, 1921), p. 3., noted that in certain areas of Europe surgeons would not allow menstruating nurses to assist them.

[21]Ford, Comparative Study.; Stephens, Menstrual taboos, Young and Bacyadan, Social rigidity.; and Schlegel, Female Autonomy.

[22]Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton: Bollingen Press, 1951), p. 62.

[23]Jean A. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, trans. Henry K. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), p. 701*; and Benjamin Walker, The Hindu World: an Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism, 2 vols. (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1967), 2:61.

[24]Gabriella Ferro-Luzzi Eichinger, Women's pollution periods in Tamilmad (India). Anthropos, 69:115, 1974.

[25]Talmud, Book of Niddah, trans. Rev. Dr. Isreal W. Slotki (London: Socino Press, 1948).

[26]Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem, 1967 ed., s.v. "Niddah," by Isreal Moses Ta-Shma.

[27]Abel and Joffee, Female puberty, p. 102.

[28]Maulan MuHammed Ali, The Religion of Islam (Delhi: S. Chard, 1967), p. 679.

[29]Jewish Code of Law, 4 vols. (New York: Hebrew Pub. Co., 1927), 4:30.

[30]Ibid., p. 21.

[31]Crawfurd, p. 1131; Briffault, p. 242; and Eleanor Commo Mclaughlin, Equality of souls, inequality of sexes: Women in medieval theology, in Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Tradition, ed. Rosemary R. Reuther (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), p. 223.

[32]Psychology of Sex, p. 98.

[33]Mary Jane Lupton and Emily Toth, "Out Damned Spot." Ms (Jan., 1974), p. 98, citing Jean Paris, no title.

[34]Charles F. Fluhman, The Management of Menstrual Disorders (London: Saunder, 1956), pp. 3,4. Fluhman reports that as late as 1935 the belief that females menstruate at the new moon was found in gynecology texts. According to Novak (p. 6), while Gall, an eighteenth century physician, did not hold the theory that there was a lunar influence on the menstrual cycle, he did believe that menstruation took place at about the same time in all females; and that there were certain weeks in which no females were menstruating. Interestingly enough the results of a fairly recent study by Martha K. McClintock (Menstrual synchrony and suppression. Nature, 229, 244-45 (Jan., 1971)) also indicates that females living together dormitory-style at Harvard tended to have synchronous periods.

[35]The word "menstruation" is from the Latin for "monthly." "Catamenia," a word frequently used to refer to the menses in older source material, is from the Greek, "monthly." Websters New Twentieth Century Dictionary, s.v. "Menstruation."

[36]See Briffault, pp. 250-55. He reports that the peasants in Germany referred to women's periods as "the moon"; and in France menstruation was called "le moment de la lune." According to Briffault, since the days of Homer, it was commonly believed in rural areas of Europe that the moon itself menstruated, i.e., it shed red drops. He also reports that among the African Ashanti the day of the new moon is called the "Day of the Blood," and that the Yoruba, also African, believe that if they were to work in the field on the day of the new moon, the corn would turn blood red. Both Briffault and Esther Harding (in Woman's Mysteries; Ancient and Modern, with an introduction by C.G. Jung (New York: n.p., 1951; reprint ed. Rider; London, 1971), pp. 55-56) speculate that the direct forerunner of a sabbath day in the Hebrew and Christian religious traditions is connected with menstruation. That is, in Babylonia the moon goddess, Isthar, supposedly menstruated at the new moon. This was the day when sabbatu, the evil day of Isthar was observed. On this day it was considered unlucky to work, eat cooked food, or do other things which were prohibited to menstruating females. On this basis, and more extensive historical documentation than is being presented here, Briffault and Harding conclude that the sabbath observance in modern religious traditions can be traced to these far off origins.

[37]In many primitive cultures the moon is held responsible for the onset of menstruation, either at puberty or monthly. (Briffault, p. 253). The latter is illustrated in the following tale from New Guinea reported by Ford, p. 9, citing Landtman, The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea, p. 53. A certain Kiwai once wanted to sleep with his wife, but she

declined, alleging that she had her monthly course. This was repeated several nights in succession, and the man got angry, particularly when he heard from his wife that it was the moon who caused the blood by having connection [sexual intercourse] with her. It was a full moon just then, and the man climbed a coconut tree with his bow and arrows and began shooting at the moon....A day or two afterwards the woman was all right and the man felt very pleased thinking he had killed the moon.

[38]In certain South American Indian cultures (Taulipang, Cuna, Okaina, Conibo,Witoto, Zaparo, Shipaya, Guarani) the spots on the moon are explained as the consequence of incestuous relation between the moon and his sister. As the tale goes, the sister, not knowing who her mysterious lover was, marked him with menstrual blood. The moon, out of shame and fear, eventually went back to the sky. Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Moon."

[39]"Childless Woman," The New Poetry 50 (Oct. 1963):71.

[40]Comparative Study. In a later publication, Ford and Frank A. Beach, Patterns of Sexual Behavior (New York: Harper, 1951), p. 211, report that among the Marquesans intercourse during the menses is practiced as a means to stop a heavy menstrual flow.

[41]Social rigidity.

[42]Menstrual taboos.

[43]Karen Paige,"Women Learn to Sing the Menstrual Blues," Psychology Today (Sept., 1973), p. 43.

[44]Menstruation and Menopause: the Physiology and Psychology: the Myth and the Reality (New York: Knopf, 1976), p. 117.

[45]Ford, Comparative Study, pp. 13, 15-16, 99; Schlegel's findings indicate that in a sample of 21 cultures on which such information was available, approximately 76%, or 16 of the 21, held the belief that menstrual blood endangers the food supply.

[46]Laura Makarius, The magic of transgression, Anthropos, 69:548, 1974; Denise Paulme, Introduction, in Women of Tropical Africa, ed. Denise Paulme, trans. H.M. Wright (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 13. Also see Ford, p. 14.

[47]Menstrual taboos.

[48]Specific citations will appear throughout text.

[49]Young and Bacyadan report that 65% of their sample enforced personal restrictions during menstruation. These restrictions seem to be the most extensive at puberty. See, e.g., Frazer, 10:22-100 passim, and Claude Lévy-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (Paris: Libraire Plon, 1964; reprint ed., New York and Evanston: Harper Torch Books, 1969)1:336-37, for a discussion of the symbolic meaning of some of these taboos.

[50]Young and Bacyadan also indicate that 18% of the cultures in their sample practice menstrual seclusion. Approximately 26% of the cultures included in Ford's sample require isolation in a hut during menstruation. Menstrual seclusion was also practiced by the ancient Hebrews (Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Menstruation) and the ancient Persians and Egyptians. See Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 1967 ed., s.v. "Menstruation"; Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation," by EWV ; Ploss, Das Weib in der Natur und Volkerkunde, cited by Novak, Menstrual Disorders, pp. 2, 3; Frazer, 3:145 and 10:76-85 passim; and Walker, 2:61.

[51]Encyclopedia Religion, s.v. "Menstruation; Ford, Comparative Study, p. 16; Eichinger, pp. 128-30.

[52]See Frazer, 10:84. In The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India (Westminister, England: Archibald Constable, 1896), p. 269, Crooke reported that among the Dravidian tribes of Northern India the menstruating female had to creep thorugh a narrow hole to enter the house. He also notes that males objected to walking under walls or balconies where females were seated (p. 270).* Frazer (10:79) also cites instances of a similar fear in various regions of Australia, Burma and Siam. In this regard Briffault (p. 249) and Harding conjecture that this fear is the origin of the superstitious belief that it is unlucky to walk under a ladder. Harding (p. 57) writes,"In England I have repeatedly heard it said that a drop of red paint might fall upon you. I have never heard that there is any danger of green paint or white, it is always red." While the connection between fear of menstrual blood and fear of walking under ladders is highly speculative, it is very likely that the cross-culturally pervasive fear of a female stepping over a male or his objects or being brushed by females' skirts is related to fear of menstrual blood.

[53]John I. Honigman, The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 40 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 25-26; Crawfurd, 1331-32.

[54]Frazer, 10:22-48 passim, 90, 92; Novak, p. 3; Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation."

[55]Ibid.

[56]B. Pilsudski, Pregnancy, birth and miscarriage among the inhabitants of Sakhalen Island, Anthropos, 5:773, 1910 (trans. for HRAF by R. Neuse).* See Ford, Stephens, Young and Bacyadan for cultures with few menstrual restrictions world-wide, and Eichinger (p. 116) for cultures with few menstrual taboos in India.

[57]Novak, p. 3.

[58]Social organization and social usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy. 42nd Annual Report of the Bureau of Indian Ethnology (Washington: Gov't Printing Office, 1928), p. 358.

[59]Chisungu, p. 32.

[60]L.S.D. Leaky, Some notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony, J. Royal Anthro. Ins., (London), 60:202, 1930.*

[61]Specific citations will appear throughout text.

[62]Menstruation and Menopause, p. 14.

[63]Ford, Stephens, Young and Bacyadan, Schlegel and Phillip M. Bock, Love magic, menstrual taboos and the facts of geography, Amer. Anthro., 69: 213-217, 1967.

[64]The Eternal Ones of the Dream: a Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Australian Myth and Ritual (New York: International University Press, 1945), pp. 169-71.

[65]The psychology of feminine genital bleeding: an analysis of Mohave Indian puberty and menstrual rites. Int. J. Psychoanal., 31:237-57, 1950.

[66]Bruno Bettleheim, Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male (New York: Free Press, 1954; reprint ed., New York: Collier, 1962), p. 137. C.D. Daly, The role of menstruation in human phylogenesis and ontogenesis, Int. J. of Psychoanal., 24:151-169, 1943.

[67]Female Autonomy, p. 21.

[68]Social rigidity, p. 225.

[69]Primitive Religion, p. 217.

[70]See, e.g., Franz Steiner, Taboo (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 20.

[71]Genital bleeding, pp. 252-53.

[72]Facts of geography, p. 215.

[73]Female Autonomy, p. 93.

[74]Women's pollution, p. 114.

[75]Comparative Study, p. 19.

[76]The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 244.

[77]Commanches: the Destruction of a People (New York: Knopf, 1974), p. 43.

[78]See, e.g., E.E. Evans Pritchard, The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays (London: Farber & Farber, 1965), pp. 37-57 and Paulme, pp. 1-19. In 1961 Stephens (Menstrual taboos, p. 399) pointed out that there was no direct cross-cultural index of female status. Much more attention is being paid to developing such measures currently. See Peggy Saunday, Female status in the public domain, pp. 189-206 in

Woman, Culture and Society. However, the measurement of status, female or otherwise, remains difficult.

[79]Ethnographic Atlas (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1967).

[80]Facts of geography, p. 215.

[81]Patterns of Culture (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1934; reprint ed., New York: Mentor, 1953), p. 232.

*The asterisk which appears after certain notes in this chapter, and which will appear in subsequent chapter notes, indicates that the reference is also available in the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). This set of files, which is available in universities throughout the United States contains a comprehensive fund of information on primitive societies in the major geographic areas of the world. This information is reprinted from a wide range of ethnographic and anthropologic sources.

CHAPTER II

MENSTRUAL TABOOS: THE MAGICAL-RELIGIOUS WORLD VIEW

> Our world view is a cultural pattern that shapes our mind from birth...it determines the way we think...what we see. It is our pattern of representation and our responses sustain the pattern...Concepts direct percepts as much as percepts impinge on concepts.[1]
>
> --Chilton Pearce

Mana

In many cultures in which magical-religious belief systems have provided definitive explanations for the workings of the cosmos, the menstruous female and menstrual blood have been regarded as potent sources of power, energy and influence. The power associated with the menses has been referred to as mana. Mana, a term of Melanesian origin, has been defined and described in various ways - as a property of a substance and of a force, as both visible and invisible, as identified with the alien or the unusual, or what we might call the mysterious.[2] However, there is general agreement that mana is an impersonal cosmic force or power which can be contained in and conveyed by objects, persons, etc.[3]

Marcel Mauss, a French anthropologist, well known for his analysis of magical belief systems, points out that although mana is a term of Melanesian origin, similar if not identical notions of an impersonal power are found within the cosmologies of various cultures throughout the world. However, terminology differs. For instance, to give but a few examples of this variation in names, in certain regions of Mexico mana is called naural; in New South Wales koochie; and among the Huron Iriquois orenda.[4] According to Harold Driver, who has made extensive

studies of American Indian cultures, the notion of mana was universal in North America.[5] And as Geoffrey Lienhardt notes, mana and taboo, both Melanesian words, have become standard anthropological terms and concepts.[6] Thus, because mana is a concept so widely used to describe the kind of power which has been attributed to the menstruant and her blood, throughout I shall continue to use this term to refer to menstrual power and influence.

Like equivalent notions found cross-culturally, the concept of mana, which is inseparable from notions of taboo and the sacred, forms an integral part of a coherent world view.[7] Within this cosmological scheme, all elements in the universe, human and non-human, animate and inanimate, are believed to be dynamically inter-related. According to Lévy-Bruhl, in such a universe animals, humans, objects, forces of nature, etc. are perceived as united by "sympathetic bonds," or as participants in each other's existence.[8,9] Erich Neumann describes this universe as one in which the individual seems to live "...in the middle of a psychophysical space in which outside and inside, world and man, powers and things are bound together in an indivisible unity."[10] Within the unity of this psychophysical space the manaof an object or an individual - such as the menstruant - can be transmitted to other 'elements' by means of both direct and indirect contact, i.e., via intermediary objects, persons, etc. Mana, in this cosmological framework, can also operate at a distance between 'sympathetic beings'. Mary Douglas describes this mana-infused universe as one,

> ...which is personal in several different senses. Physical forces are thought of as interwoven with the lives of persons. Things are not completely distinguished from persons and persons are not completely distinguished

> from their external environment. The universe responds to mime and speech.[11]

Thus, in many different historical and cultural contexts, the menstruant and her blood, defined as mana-infused elements in a universe of dynamic forces and sympathetic inter-connections, have been accorded a wide sphere of influence. Both have been potentially able to affect the human and non-human environment in a variety of specific ways which will become apparent as the discussion proceeds.

Mana is also a notion with dual meaning in that it has been defined as both dangerous as well as efficacious. In this sense the force inherent in mana seems to be like electricity or atomic power, containing the potential for both harm and good. As Mauss and others have pointed out, throughout the world mana-infused individuals such as the menstruant are usually described as hot, heated, burning - all images suggesting a state which is highly charged, one that conveys energy and power.[12,13]

In relation to this dual aspect of menstrual mana, there is cross-cultural and historical source material which indicates in some areas of the world the menstrual discharge has been believed to be beneficial, potentially able to transmit a curative or protective influence to others.[14,15] However, beliefs in the negative aspects, or its potential harm far out number beliefs in its potential good. While there will be an emphasis on explaining why menstrual mana has been feared and judged negatively, the exceptional situations and particularly the conversion of menstrual harm to menstrual good, will eventually be discussed in relation to a number of different issues.

For different reasons the mana of a menstruant has been compared to that of a divine ruler or king. Frazer based this comparison on the fact that in some areas of the world the taboos surrounding the

menstruant and those surrounding a king have been similar.[16] Freud suggests that both menstruant and king must be set apart to protect them from the unconscious desires of others.[17] What is most relevant here is to point out that there is a distinction between the mana attributed to a divine personage and the mana believed to be inherent in a menstruating female. That is, while the mana of the divine person entails being set apart and restricted, or even indirectly punished for being sacred as Freud suggests, the mana of the divine personage also brings with it prestige, privilege, social power and social authority. By contrast, menstrual mana is not associated with the same benefits. With the exception of puberty, the female does not gain social prestige by being imbued with menstrual mana. Moreover, the mana of a divine personage and his formal authority are related to his position in a religious or political hierarchy. Menstrual mana is primarily a sex-linked power which is accorded the female because she is biologically female. Menstruation happens. As Marilyn Strathern comments, the power attributed to the menstruant and menstrual blood is derived from the simple fact of femininity.[18] Thus, menstrual mana can be described as a 'natural' aspect of femaleness to which super-natural power has been attributed, mainly by males. The female's natural, menstrual-related power seems to be different, then, from the formal, social power and authority which certain kinds of mana accord to males.

Sympathetic Magic

> Sympathetic magic lies at the root of those rationalizations by which customs springing from motivations no longer remembered are explained.[19]
>
> --Laura Makarius

Mana has been defined as a form of energy which is transmissible

and contagious.[20] In this sense the concept of mana is hardly separable from a process of magical transmission referred to in different theoretical contexts as sympathetic, contagious, mimetic or confluent magic. It is via this process of magical contagion that the mana of the menstruant is transmitted to other persons, things, etc.

Sympathetic magic involves not only a process of transmitting influence, which will be described in detail shortly, but also a mode of thinking which is predominantly associative or analogical. Piaget describes this style of thinking as magical-phenomenalistic, and Heinz Werner called it physiognomic or syncretic.[21] As Werner describes it, this kind of thinking involves viewing the world as a place in which motor and affective elements are intimately linked with the perceptions of things and events. Within this syncretic mode, objects and events are not perceived as neutral, but rather as the foci of dynamic power. Moreover, because perceptions are determined, not by the constancy of objects, but rather by the context in which they appear, things are, as Werner describes them, "things of action." Thus, the same objects or events can take on a variety of meanings. This mode of perception, according to Werner, is particularistic and concrete rather than abstract and universal - relative and shifting compared to absolute and constant.[22] Lévi-Strauss, who takes issue with those who have suggested that magical thinking, such as that involved in sympathetic magic, is just a step in the evolution of abstract thought, writes, "Magical thought is not to be regarded as a beginning or a rudiment...It forms a well articulated system..."[23]

The earliest theories of sympathetic magic, are generally attributed to Tylor and Frazer, both of whom derived some of their ideas from Mills.[24] Both Tylor and Frazer have been criticized for a number of

reasons. Criticisms of Frazer have been mainly directed at his ethnocentricity, his view that magic is a precursor to "true" religion and his belief that superstitious beliefs were simply errors in logical thinking.[25] However, despite these criticisms Frazer's theories of magic are still currently widely used, especially in studies of symbolic culture;[26] and he is generally recognized for having made a great and original contribution to the study of magic.[27] Thus, it is Frazer's theory of sympathetic magic which will form the basis for discussion here.

According to Frazer,[28] sympathetic magic is governed primarily by two principles or laws, the Law of Similarity and the Law of Contiguity. Both laws or principles are based on influence by contagion and involve the associative or syncretic mode of thinking just described. The Law of Similarity involves the idea that like produces like. It is sometimes referred to in the anthropology literature as homeopathic magic because it forms the underlying rationale for certain primitive (and ancient) methods of medical treatment.

In relation to menstrual mana this principle is operative in various cross-culturally pervasive beliefs in which the presence of a menstruant supposedly transmits the symptoms or processes associated with menstruating to the male. For instance, in this regard Theodore Gaster cites an old Italian text (1892) in which it is stated that if menstrual clothes are washed with male clothing, the male will "suffer attrocious pains."[29] Similarly, in a totally different cultural group, the Iriquois Indians, A.A. Shimony reports that

> Men and babies, male children in particular, who drink from the same cup as a menstruating woman are in danger of developing bloody diarrhea and bleeding piles, a belief based on an obvious analogy...Also food prepared by a catemenial woman is

> supposed to produce cramps in the more sensitive man.[30]

The Law of Contiguity is based on the notion that every thing with which a person has contact takes on its essence or what Frazer quaintly calls "soul stuff." This law includes several inter-related specific features. These are: (1) each part of an object, human, animal contains its essence, i.e., the part is equal to the whole. Werner describes this aspect of sympathetic magic as a process by which properties pervade things homogeneously;[31] and Lévi-Strauss refers to it as "metonymy."[32] Thus, in relation to the menses, dangers are attributed to almost anything associated with either the menstruant or menstrual blood, even if it is the name of the moss that the female uses to absorb the menstrual discharge.[33]

The second feature of this law is that things or people which have once been in contact continue to act on each other even after this contact is ended. In relation to menstrual mana, this feature is reflected in a myriad of beliefs present in cultures widely distant in time and geographical areas. That is, via her glance, or her breath,[34] her words and even her shadow,[35] the menstruant can cause various types of harm. Moreover, according to this feature, objects, places, food, etc. retain the properties of the person who touches or is near them. Therefore, menstrual contamination can be transmitted via places or things that a menstruous female has touched or been near.

The third feature of this law is reflected in widespread beliefs about the long lasting effects of the influence of menstrual mana. For example, in relation to the belief that the presence of a menstruant will induce piles or cramps in males, Shimony states, "The symptoms may occur years after the transgression has been committed and regardless of whether the contact was accidental or not."[36] Examples like this and

others involving transmission of menstrual-like symptoms to males, could be drawn from many parts of the world.

The principles of sympathetic magic are operative in so many beliefs about the influence of the menstruant and/or her blood that they are far too numerous to mention. However, what appears to be an endless diversity of beliefs surrounding the menses can be unified and made coherent if explained in terms of the associative logic of sympathetic magic. Specifically, in the next chapter I shall show that within a wide range of historical and cultural contexts the negative regard for menstruation, and the symbolic basis for the fear of the menstruant and menstrual blood can be partially explained in terms of an association of the menses with death and death-related phenomena such as disease, injury, barrenness and decomposition or decay.

Taboo

The term taboo is derived from the Polynesian work "ta-pu," defined as "thoroughly marked off," implying notions of untouchability, prohibition, restriction, i.e., "shalt not."[37] The concept of taboo is found world-wide. Since the reasoning behind the enforcement of taboos is "don't do this" because by the associative logic of magical contagion such and such will happen, in a certain sense taboos can be thought of as the negative applications of sympathetic magic.[38] The concept of mana is obviously related to the practice of taboo in that taboos have been defined as magical or religious practices instituted to control the powers derived from the highly charged state of magical influence associated with mana.[39] As Frazer described it, "...taboos act, so to say, as electrical insulators to preserve the force with which these persons are

charged."[40] Moreover, taboos, which are designed to protect others from the potentially dangerous influence of the individual in this electrically charged taboo state, also act to protect the individual who is regarded as equally endangered - the recipient of his or her own dangerous power.[41]

While taboos are basically restrictions or 'should nots,' the sociologist, Arnold Van Gennep, pointed out that they are not autonomous, but always exist as the counterparts of proscriptive rituals, or what might be called the 'shoulds' of taboo.[42] Thus, in cultures in which menstrual taboos have been formally instituted, the menstruant has been required not only to avoid engaging in certain activities, but she has also had to perform certain acts. In some cultures, as indicated earlier, this includes wearing special clothing to signify her unclean state. Performing elaborate cleansing rites and rituals after menstruation are also part of the 'should' aspect of taboo. For instance, orthodox Jewish females were, and still are, required to take a ritual bath after menstruating, i.e., the mikveh ("water of life").[43]

Besides bathing these menstrual ablutions include the use of special purifying substances and, in some cultures, involve a form of roasting or fumigation.[44] The latter have often been required of females who have just begun to menstruate and are part of puberty rites and rituals marking the girl's change in social status and sexual identity, i.e., from an undifferentiated or 'neutral' sexual being to a female sexual being.[45] In magical-religious cultures this means the beginning of sex-linked taboos which the female will have to follow until she reaches menopause, when she again becomes a 'neutral', i.e., non-child bearing sexual being.

The following abbreviated account of the various proscriptive

(should) and restrictive (should not) aspects of menstrual taboos practiced by the Hindu Orissa of central India provides an example of the interplay between these 'shoulds' and 'should nots' and also gives some idea of how elaborate and detailed menstrual restrictions can be in certain areas of the world.

> A menstrous female...must not play at dice... lie on a bed or sleep during the day...brush her teeth or rinse her mouth out. The mere wish to cohabit with her husband would be a serious sin. She must not think of the gods or of the sun or of sacrifices...After living in retirement for three days...she must ...go to the river and purify herself...On the way there she...must take the greatest care to glance at nobody...When she reaches the river she must...take a little fresh cow dung ...and earth...until they make a thin paste... she must rub her hands...her feet...her whole body...After this she must...immerse herself twenty-four times...On entering the house she must immediately send for a Brahmin priest ...so that he may complete the purification.[46]

As is obvious by now the practice of taboo is related to concepts of religious or ritual purity and impurity. The uncleanness of the menstruous state is one of religious or ritual pollution which involves notions of contamination and ritual defilement.

Taboo and Menstrual Impurity

> One would never be done if he were to undertake to mention all the people among whom the menstruating woman is looked upon as impure...[47]
> --Paulo Mantegazza

It is clear that taboo, as a practice, involves various restrictive and proscriptive rituals instituted to control the powerful influence of the tabooed individual. As a general concept, taboo, like mana, involves a duality of thought. It denotes awe and aversion,

veneration and horror, sacredness and religious pollution.[48] The complexities that this duality involves, i.e., that an individual can be both sacred and polluted, or religiously unclean, have generated a great deal of speculation and debate.[49] Most relevant here, however, is that among people of widely diverse cultural backgrounds and religious traditions the ritual or religious impurity and pollution of the menstruant prevails; and horror rather than veneration for the menstruant seems to predominate. As Lévy-Bruhl wrote, "In primitive communities there is no form of uncleanness (according to the meaning which they give the word) more to be feared than a woman during her period."[50]

In those cultures in which veneration for the menstruant or menstrual blood is indicated, it is usually in association with the childbearing potential associated with menstruation, particularly at puberty.[51] Moreover, as we shall see later, for males this veneration in itself involves a duality of regard. In any case, throughout the world the menstruating female has been considered defiled and defiling, polluted and polluting, contaminated and contaminating.

Religious Texts

In various ancient, religious codes of law the impurity or pollution of the menstruant and menstrual blood are clearly established. For instance, in the Vedic scriptures of India (Code of Manu, approximately 220 B.C.) it is stated that the impurity of the menstruant lasts for three days. On the first day of the menses the female is considered to be in the state of Cāndala (the lowest of the untouchables). On the second day she is regarded as a Brāhmin killer, and on the third day her status is that of a washerwoman.[52]

The degree of menstrual pollution in India varies from region to region and from caste to caste, with the severity of pollution and the time of the pollution period being shorter for higher caste females. According to Gabriella Eichinger, these beliefs are still extraordinarily vital, even today.[53] In India, it has been customary for the Hindu female to do penance once a year, penance for the menstrual pollution she brings into the house.[54] In a sense, the idea that the menstruant's pollution accumulates and must be gotten rid of is also reflected in a ritual practiced by certain North American Indian tribes, i.e., Annual World Renewal rites performed to rid, not the house, but the whole universe of menstrual contamination.[55]

In Japanese Shinto texts (dated approximately 552 A.D.) the menstruous female is described as "tsuma," i.e., offensive to the gods because of her ritually impure state; and the menses are regarded as a state of "Kegare" (ceremonial pollution, also tranlated as "sin").[56] Similar concepts of impurity associated with the menses are also found in the religious belief systems of the rural and urban Vietnamese,[57] as well as among Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists.[58]

In the Bible, reference to the impurity of the menstuant appears in verses nineteen to twenty-nine of Leviticus where it is written, "And if a woman have an issue and that issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even." The verses following these state the ways in which the uncleanness of the menstruant can be transmitted, i.e., via touching, sitting or lying on what the menstruant has had contact with, etc. And in relation to purification rites the menstruant was required, on the eighth day, to "take two turtle doves and two young pigeons and

bring them into the priest...and the priest shall offer the one as sin offering and the other as burnt offering...and the priest shall make atonement for her before Jehovah for the issue of her uncleanness." Punishment for violation of the menstrual sex taboo was exclusion from the community.

In the Talmud (Book of Niddah), and in the Jewish Code of Law, the religious impurity of the menstruant and the restrictions surrounding her behavior are spelled out in great detail.[60] In both Hebrew texts, besides establishing the seven day-long restrictions on various aspects of behavior, including male-female contact, religious worship, etc., a great deal of attention is given to discussion of menstrual irregularities and the problematic contingencies that arise in association with these. For example, in the Book of Niddah one finds lengthy discourses in relation to the problems of detection of the onset of the menstrual flow in blind, retarded and insane females, establishing whether or not a female whose regular menstrual flow has ceased due to a stressful situation is still to be considered religiously unclean, etc. The amount of detail in this respect attests to the seriousness with which menstrual pollution was regarded by the ancient Hebrews. Eichinger points out that in the religious texts of India an equal amount of attention is paid to these menstrual-related contingencies.[61]

Although the Koran is not explicit about the length of time that the female is to be considered religiously unclean during the menses, it is clearly stated that during menstruation the female is impure and polluting.[62] The Ibn Quadama sets seven days as the period of pollution during which the female must follow a number of taboos which are similar to those recorded in other religious texts.[63]

According to ancient and Medieval Catholic theology the menstruous female was also a religiously unclean and polluting being who supposedly attracted the devil.[64] As has been implied all along, the belief that the menstruous state is one of impurity is not by any means limited to the world's major traditions. In cultures around the world the menstruous female has been considered ritually impure. Moreover, the association between the ritual or religious pollution of the menstuant and evil is not one that is found just in Catholic theology. It also appears in many different historical and cultural contexts. The evil associated with menstruation and the evil associated with being female will be discussed in detail later.

Remnants

In the present day world, various religious groups still practice the menstrual taboos set forth in the ancient religious texts previously mentioned, As I indicated earlier, Eichinger, who conducted an extensive survey of female pollution beliefs in contemporary India, reports that these beliefs and the practice of menstrual taboos have persisted. Out of 1225 Hindu, Muslim, and Jainist subjects, nearly 100% of the Hindu and Muslim females - more than three quarters of the total sample - regarded themselves as polluting to the sacred and followed the taboos set forth in orthodox religious texts. Moreover, nearly 100% of the Hindu females are still secluded during menstruation.[65]

Eva and Richard Blum (1971) reported that in certain areas of rural Greece a menstruating female is still prohibited from entering church and taking communion.[66] Similar restrictions have been reported to be practiced in the Russian and Greek Orthodox Church in the

mid-twentieth century.[67] In the contemporary United States, Black Muslim females are not permitted to say their daily prayers during the menstrual period.[68]

As indicated, contemporary orthodox Jews still use the mikveh and still practice menstrual taboos set forth in the religious texts mentioned. In contemporary Israel a small sect called the Samiratans strictly adhere to the menstrual sexual codes derived from the ancient Hebrews. Their practices include public purification rites performed by a high priest.[69] And interestingly enough, according to the results of a fairly recent study (1973) Catholic and Jewish females tend to be more anxious than Protestants both premenstrually and during menstruation. In addition, compared to Protestants, Catholics and Jews are more likely to adhere to the informal taboo on sex during menstruation.[70] As far as I know, within the Protestant religion there have been no restrictions on the religious activities of menstruating females, and no evaluation of the menstruant or her blood as being religiously unclean.

This Anathema to God and the Sacred

> No entrance for uncorrect dressed people.
> No entrance for woman in menstruating period.[71]
> --Poster on Hindu temple in Bali, 1972

Because the menstruant has been considered religiously impure and the menses associated with evil, throughout the world the menstruating female has been considered especially defiling to sacred places, objects, and rituals. Thus, within the texts of the world's major religions and in cultures far too numerous to mention, the menstruous female has been prohibited from participating in sacred worship or ritual; from entering places of worship whether they be called churches, temples, mosques or

sacred groves; and from touching sacred objects, whether they be masks, religious texts, or magic flutes.[72] Noteworthy here is that, according to Abel and Joffee, in the late 1940's a Jewish girl from an immigrant Jewish family refused to carry the American flag in a New York public school. It was finally determined that she refused because she was menstruating and did not want to contaminate the symbol of her new country![73]

In some cultures the husband of a menstruant has also been considered impure and, on this basis, has been forbidden to take part in sacred ceremonies.[74] In many cultures direct and/or indirect contact with a holy man, whether he be called shamin, rabbi or priest, is also to be avoided while the female is menstruating lest she deplete magical efficacy or bring about a state of spiritual decline.[75]

In many religious traditions the negative evaluation of menstrual impurity is expressed, either directly or by implication, in terms of the offense, repugnance or wrath that the menstruant and her blood supposedly arouse in the supreme diety. For example, among the Dogon of Africa, the menstruant is considered offensive to the supreme diety, Nummo, because, "Nummo desires clean blood not this foul flow."[76] As I mentioned earlier, in Japanese religious texts the menstruant has been described as "Tsuma" - offensive to the gods. Similarly, according to Tran Dihn Dê, in rural and urban areas of Vietnam the menstruating female must avoid worship lest the "badness" of her "unhallowed" blood offend the ancestors.[77]

In Buddhist Tibet and China the menstruous female is prohibited from cooking lest she anger the hearth gods and spirits, which would supposedly evoke family ruin.[78] And among the Niyyar and Tiyyar tribes of central India the menstruous female was not allowed in the ancestral

house or the sacred grove lest she offend the cobra diety, causing him to vacate and/or vent his wrath on the community.[79]

Among a people as different from those just mentioned as the Navaho Indians of North America, the menstruant was not permitted to participate in the most important religious ceremonies since her impure state would render her offerings offensive to the supreme diety.[80] The notion that the menstruant and her blood are offensive to, or disapproved of by, the supreme diety is also implied in Jewish and Christian religious thought. This will be clarified and elaborated in subsequent discussion. Thus, it would seem reasonable to conclude that in many areas of the world, God, in whatever guise he takes, does not seem to love the menstruous female, except for a short time - at puberty.

The seriousness of the threat that menstrual contamination poses to these various manifestations of God and the sacred in some areas of the world is reflected in the severity of punishment or consequences which result from violation of taboos involving this realm. For example, according to Ford, the African Ashanti punished the female who entered the house of sacred objects, which is in effect a male house, as most houses of sacred objects are in preliterate cultures, with a violent form of death.[81] In India, among the Tiyyar, it has been believed that if a menstruant approached the temple of the ancestors she would be raped by a hairy animal or struck dead.[82] And, according to Esther Goody, the Gonga of Africa believe that if a menstruant enters the hunting shrine room, which involves both offense to the sacred and is considered tantamount to murdering her husband, the consequences for the menstruant are excessive bleeding which results in eventual death.[83] In the ancient Catholic church the punishment for violation of taboos involving the sacred

were mild in comparison to those just described. The Penitentials of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, for instance, established three weeks' fast as penance for a female who entered church or took communion while menstruating.[84]

Within the magical-religious world view that I have been discussing, the inordinate fear of menstrual contamination can begin to be understood if it is looked at in terms of a fundamental underlying belief that this female-associated contamination is disruptive to the relationship with the forces of the sacred. That is, in most if not all cultures in which the sacred and the secular have been inextricably interwoven, a state of religious purity or magical efficacy is extremely important - essential to maintaining the proper relationship with the forces upon whom the well-being of the individual and the community depends. Within this scheme of things menstrual pollution can pose a serious threat in that it brings about a disruption to this relationship which potentially leads to a loss of religious purity or magical efficacy (or vice versa), and results in various kinds of misfortune, including the possibility of death. Thus, in this regard, the menstruant is extremely dangerous and menstrual blood is "bad" blood.

CHAPTER II: NOTES

[1]The Crack in the Cosmic Egg: Challenging Constructs of Mind and Reality (New York: Julian, 1971; reprint ed., New York: Simon & Schuster Pocket Book, 1973), p. 26.

[2]Douglas L. Oliver, Ancient Tahitian Society, 3 vols. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), 1:68; and Marcel Mauss, A General Theory of Magic (London and Boston: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1972), p. 108.

[3]Ibid., p. 110.

[4]Ibid., pp. 113, 117.

[5]Harold E. Driver, Indians of North America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 397.

[6]Geoffrey Lienhardt, Social Anthropology, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964; 2nd ed., 1966), p. 43. Also see Eduard Norbeck, Religion in Primitive Society (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 32-50 passim for a general discussion of the concept of mana.

[7]Mauss, p. 119; Oliver, 2:68.

[8]Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, How Natives Think, trans. Lillian A. Clare (New York: Dutton, 1926; reprint ed., New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 61.

[9]For commentary and/or criticism of this aspect of primitive mentality which Lévy-Bruhl refers to as a "Participation Mystique," see, e.g., Lienhardt, pp. 116-18; Heinz Werner, Comparative Psychology of Mental Development, with a Foreward by Gordon Allport (New York: International University Press, 1948; revised ed., 1964), p. 352; and Raymond Firth, Symbols: Public and Private (New York: Cornell University Press, 1973; reprint ed., New York: Cornell Paperbacks, 1975), pp. 160-61, 170-72. Also see Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), pp. 92-94, 98.

[10]Erich Neumann, The Great Mother: an Analysis of the Archetype, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Princeton: Bollingen, 1963; Princeton/Bollingen Paperback, 1972), p. 39.

[11]Douglas, p. 107.

[12]Mauss, p. 110; C. Lévi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 1:61.

[13]For a discussion of sacredness (taboo) and heat see Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation: the Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1958; reprint ed., 1965), pp. 86-89; and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), pp. 138-39.

[14]Pliny, Natural History, 10 vols., ed. and trans., H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library Series (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 7:13, 23. R. Crawfurd, Notes on the superstitions of menstruation, Lancet, 2 (Dec. 18, 1915): p. 1332; R. Briffault, The Mothers (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 246; T.M. Abel and N.F. Joffe, Cultural backgrounds of female puberty, Amer. J. Psychoth., 4:96, 1950; F. Steiner, Taboo (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 66; J. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911-1915), 10:83; B. Pulsudski, Pregnancy, birth and miscarriage among the inhabitants of Sakhaln Island, Anthropos, 5: 773, 1910.*

[15]Also see, Clellan S. Ford, Smoke from Their Fires (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 6; Claude Levi-Strauss, The Primitive Mind, eds. Jullian Pitt-Rivers and Ernest Gelner (Paris: Libraire Plon, 1962; reprint ed., Chicago: Chicago University Press and George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1966), pp. 51-52; and George W. Briggs, The Chamas: the Religious Life of India (London and New York: Calcutta Association Press, 1920), p. 143.*

[16]Golden Bough, 3:224.

[17]S. Freud, Totem and Taboo (1913) in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 24 vols., ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1952).

[18]Marilyn Strathern, Women Inbetween: Female Roles in a Male World: Mount Hagen New Guinea (New York: Seminar Press, 1972), p. 197.

[19]Makarius, The magic of transgression, Anthropos, 69:543, 1974.

[20]Mauss, p. 109.

[21]Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, The Psychology of the Child, trans. Helen Weaver (Paris: Presses Universitaries de France, 1966; reprint ed., New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 17-19.

[22]Werner, Mental Development, pp. 59, 67, 299, 337-40.

[23]Lévi-Strauss, Primitive Mind, p. 13.

[24]Gustav Jahoda, The Psychology of Superstition (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), pp. 100-102; Lienhardt, p. 116; Firth, pp. 112-116.

[25]Ibid., pp. 26-7; Douglas, pp. 34-60; Steiner, pp. 99-103; and Jahoda, pp. 35-36.

[26]Mauss, pp. 64-65; Firth, pp. 124-26. In relation to the fundamental role of analogical thought in majic, as Frazer describes it, Makarius (p. 543) writes, "There is scarcely a monograph that does not contain dozens of examples of sympathetic magic."

[27]Firth, p. 126.

[28]Golden Bough, 1:52-54; and 55-214, passim.

[29]Theodor H. Gastner, Notes to The New Golden Bough by Sir James G. Frazer (Garden City, New York, 1959), p. 76.

[30]Conservation Among the Iriquois at the Six Nations Reserve (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 217. Shimony (p. 217) also points out that the type of piles supposedly induced via contact with a menstruant has a different name from the naturally caused disease.

[31]Mental Development, p. 347.

[32]Lévi-Strauss uses this concept in many of his works when referring to this particular kind of process of magical transmission of influence.

[33]Murray B. Emeneau, Toda menstruation practices, New Indian Antiquary, 1:82, 1937.*

[34]Breath, see, e.g., Ford, A Comparative Study of Human Reproduction, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 13; Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Menstruation." The belief that the menstruating female can cause harm with a glance is scattered throughout the world. The various versions of this belief will be cited and considered in more detail in subsequent discussion.

[35]Words and Shadow, see, e.g., Nachmonidies, Commentary on Genesis, trans. (loosely) by Serena Wieder in Collection of Commentaries (New York: Schulinger, 1950), p. 375; Frazer, 10:83.

[36]Shimony, p. 217.

[37]Steiner, Taboo, p. 21.

[38]Frazer, 1:111-12.

[39]Mauss, pp. 111-12.

[40]Golden Bough, 3:224.

[41]Ibid.; and Steiner, p. 21.

[42]Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, trans. Gabrielle L. Coffe and Monica Vicedom (Paris: Emile Nourry, 1909; reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 50.

[43]Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Menstruation"; see also Rachael Adler, Tum'ah and Tohararah: Ends and beginnings, Response, 18:117-127, 1973.

[44]Frazer, 10:21-85 passim.

[45]For detailed descriptions of girls puberty rites see, e.g., Audrey Richards, Chisungu (London: Farber & Farber, 1956); Marja-Lisa Swantz, Ritual and Symbol in Transitional Zarumo Society with Special Reference

to Women (Sweden: Almquist & Wiksels, 1970). Also see M. Perlman and M. P. Moal, Analytic bibliography in Women of Tropical Africa, ed. D. Paulme (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 264-67. For a brief description of girls' puberty rites in New Guinea, see Margaret Mead, Male and Female (New York: Morrow, 1949; reprint ed., 1970), pp. 183-86; India, see Kathaleen Gough, Female initiation rites on the Malbar coast, J. Royal Anthro. Ins., 85:45-80, 1955* See Judith K. Brown, A cross-cultural study of female initiation rites Amer. Anthro., 65:837-853, 1963, for an empirical investigation of the social-cultural variables which determine the elaborateness of these rites.

[46]J. Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), p. 707.*

[47]The Sexual Relations of Mankind (Baltimore: Eugenics, 1935), p. 113.

[48]Frazer, 10:224-30; Freud, Totem and Taboo, pp. 22-25.

[49]This controversy, for the most part, has centered around Frazer's notion that 'savages' did not know the difference between the polluting and the sacred; and that religious practices of the Western world were distinct from (i.e., superior by implication) to the magical practices of primitive people. See Douglas, pp. 20-53 passim; Steiner, pp. 90-103. For a more recent discussion of the magic-religion controversy, see, e.g., Dorothy Hammond, Magic: a problem in semantics, Amer. Anthro., 72:1349-56, 1970.

[50]Primitives and the Supernatural, p. 305.

[51]North American Indians, see, e.g., Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (New York: Mentor, 1953); Driver, Indians of North America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). Africa, see, e.g., Collin Turnbull's discussion of "Elima: Blood of Life," in The Forest People: a Study of the Pygmies of the Congo (New York: Doubleday, 1962), pp. 190-206. And world-wide, for a general discussion of fertility associated with first menstuation, see Mircea Eliade, Symbols of Initiation, pp. 41-49 passim, and 67.

[52]G. Eichinger, Woman's pollution periods in Talminad (India), Anthropos, 69:113, 1974; and B. Walker, The Hindu World (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1968), 2:61. A Brahmin is a sacred personage at the top of the spiritual hierarchy. (See Walker, 1:168-74) To kill a Brahmin is a very serious offense.

[53]See pp. 120-133 (Woman's Pollution) for caste variation in menstrual pollution beliefs and length of segregation at puberty and during regular menstruation.

[54]Wilhelm Koppers, The Bhil in Central India, trans. by Theodore J. Ziolowski for HRAF (Vienna: Horn, 1948), p. 129.*

[55]Driver, Indians of North America, p. 371.

[56]Edward Norbeck, Pollution and taboo in contemporary Japan, Sw. J. Anthro., 8:269-70, 1952.

[57]Tran Dinh Dê, Notes on Birth and Reproduction in Vietnam, trans. for HRAF by H. Thompson, 1951 (HRAF Files D-1-3, 814),* no publication information.

[58]Albert Tafels, My Tibet Trip: a Field Trip Through North-Western China and Through Inner Mongolia into Eastern Tibet, trans. for HRAF by Carol Cert (Berlin: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1914), p. 332*; Matthias Hermanns, The Nomads of Tibet, trans. for HRAF by Frieda Schutze (Vienna: Harold, 1949), p. 63,* and Sergei Shirokogoroff, Social Organization of the Manchus (Shanghai: Royal Asiatic Society Publications, 1924), p. 58.*

[59]The Holy Bible, King James Version. Emil Novak notes that in the Bible metaphorical mention of menstruation is usually associated with the sense of being unclean and repellant, such as when Jeremiah says, "Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them." In Menstruation and its Disorders (New York: Appleton, 1921), p. 2.

[60]Jewish Code of Law; see Chaps. CLIII to CLV, (pp. 21-30). This law is an interpretation of the Talmud, which is an interpretation of the Torah.

[61]Woman's pollution, p. 115.

[62]The Holy Koran, S.11.222, "They ask thee concerning women's courses, say, they are a hurt and a pollution."

[63]Cited by Eichinger, p. 130.

[64]E.C. McLaughlin, Equality of souls, Inequality of sexes: Women in Medieval theology, in Religion and Sexism, ed. R. Reuther (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), p. 229; Crawfurd, p. 1331.

[65]Woman's pollution, p. 157.

[66]The Dangerous Hour: the Lore of Crisis and Mystery in Rural Greece (New York: Scribners, 1971), p. 21.

[67]Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation."

[68]P. Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause (New York: Knopf, 1976), p. 187.

[69]Private Communication, Serena Wieder.

[70]K. Paige, "Women Learn to Sing the Menstrual Blues," Psychology Today (Sept., 1973).

[71]Eichinger, p. 129.

[72]Specific citations will appear throughout text.

[73]Female puberty, p. 105.

[74]Africa, e.g., Germaine Dieterlan, An Essay on the Religion of the Bambara, trans. for HRAF by Katia Wolf (Paris: Universitaires Presses de France, 1951), p. 197.* According to the Baraita de-Niddah (1890) a rabbi whose mother, wife or daughter was menstruating could not recite the benediction. Cited in Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Menstruation." According to Ian Hogbin, among the Wogeo of New Guinea males who imitate menstruation by subincision of the penis follow the same taboos imposed on menstruating females, Isle of Menstruating Men (Washington: Chandler, 1970), pp. 88-91.

[75]See, e.g., Crawfurd, p. 1333 (can't shake hands with Rabbi); Dubois, Hindu Manners, Customs, p. 140 (India, Brahmin's Mantrim prayer should not be overheard by menstruating female); Johannes Wilbert, Notes on Guahibo kinship, Sw. J. Anthro., 13:97 (harmful to shaman, South America).

[76]Marcel, Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemmeli: an Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas, with an intro. by Germaine Dieterlan (International African Institute, 1965; reprint ed., London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1972), pp. 146-47.

[77]De, Reproduction in Vietnam.

[78]Tafels, My Tibet Trip, p. 332. In Serbian culture the menstruant has also been contaminating to the hearth. See Phyliss Kemp, Healing Rituals: Studies in the Techniques of Southern Slavs (London: Farber & Farber, 1965), p. 44.

[79]Raghavan Iyer, The Cochin Tribes and Castes (Madras: Higginbotham, 1909), p. 82*; and Mysore N. Srinivas, Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), p. 102.*

[80]G.A. Reichard, Navajo Religion (Princeton: Bollingen Paperbacks, 1974), p. 172.

[81]Ford, Comparative Study, p. 16.

[82]Kathaleen Gough, Female initiation rites, p. 63.

[83]Esther Goody, Legitimate and illegitimate aggression, in The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honor of A.I. Richards, ed. Jean la Fontaine (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 216-17.

[84]Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, p. 76, citing J.T. McNeil and H.M. Gamer, Medieval Handbooks of Pennance.

*Source material in HRAF files.

CHAPTER III

THE MENSES: DANGER, DEATH AND DEATH-RELATED PHENOMENA

The Basic Equation

The African Nuer are a people whose culture has been studied extensively by a number of anthropologists.[1] In the following analysis of the meaning attached to menstrual blood in the Neur belief system, John Burton alludes to the categorization of the menstrual discharge as a form of shed human blood and as a symbol of the unrealized potential for life. He writes:

> Menstrual blood may be viewed as the potential for, but not as yet, consumated creation of life. It is human blood that is shed and would thus seem to fit the category of other instances of shed human blood, belonging to the below and the place of the dead...It would thus be analogically sound to view menstrual blood as something associated with death or potential danger.[2]

When Burton states that in the Nuer belief system an association between menstrual blood, death and potential danger is "analogically sound" he is referring to the principles of sympathetic or contagious magic discussed earlier. It is the analogical mode of thinking involved in sympathetic magic which seems to form the cognitive substratus for the symbolic connection between death, menstrual blood, or the menstruous female, and the destructive influence of menstrual mana.

Moreover, it is my contention that this magic by analogy can explain a wide array of seemingly unrelated, bizarre or illogical beliefs about the destructive influence of the menstruant or her blood. Based on the Law of Contagion, and related aspects of the laws of sympathetic magic

postulated by Frazer,[3] the formulation of a menses-death equation can serve as an explanatory construct which unifies and makes coherent many seemingly unrelated beliefs in the dangers attributed to menstrual mana by people of widely different race and cultural backgrounds. The equation I am referring to is:

Menstruation

is	like	which is	like
(identified with)	shed blood in killing injury - wounding death of potential human being, i.e., menstrual abortion temporary barrenness	(results in) or (transmits)	death and death-related phenomena, i.e., injury, wounding, disease, barrenness, decomposition or decay, or anti-life influence.

In constructing such an equation, I am suggesting that injury and wounding can be considered part of the larger category, death, as can barrenness, disease, and decomposition and decay. This will be clarrified as the discussion continues. Using what is essentially a thematic (context) mode of analysis, in the following discussion my intention will be to show that: (1) the four inter-related, and often over-lapping, features on the left side of this equation are operative in a wide range of cross-culturally and historically pervasive beliefs about the dangerous and harmful aspects of menstrual mana; and (2) the fear and negativity surrounding the menses can be partially explained via an association with death and the death-related phenomena listed in the menses-death equation.

There are several assumptions on which this analysis rests.

The first is that the interpretation of symbolic material, such as that reflected in menstrual-related beliefs and customs, is a speculative art and not a scientific endeavor. What I mean specifically is that since symbols have a multiplicity of meaning,[4,5] there are no 'definitive' interpretations to be made. This will be apparent as discussion proceeds. Symbols are in effect analogies. The second assumption, then, is that in the magical-religious cultures which have created menstruous beliefs and customs, there is an essential similarity in thought structure, i.e., associative, symbolic, analogical. Support for this assumption comes from the work of theorists mentioned in the previous chapter.[6,7] Rodney Needhem, who has made extensive studies of primitive modes of classification writes, in relation to the similarity in 'primitive' thinking, "... Forms of classification and modes of symbolic thought display very many more similarities than do the societies in which they are found."[8]

The Menses: Associations with Death and Injury

Throughout the world menstrual impurity and the impurity associated with death have been regarded as equally polluting and dangerous.[9] In a wide range of magical-religious cultures taboos and customs surrounding menstruation and those surrounding death have been similar.[10] As Burton indicates, among the Nuer one of the symbolic determinants of this menses-death association is derived from a categorization of menstrual blood with shed human blood. This link between menstrual blood and the blood of death is also found in other areas of the world. For instance, in North American Indian cultures there is a striking similarity between the menstrual taboos and taboos imposed on the warrior, the hunter and the homocide - all shedders of blood, human or animal. Moreover, Levy-Bruhl points out that this similarity is cross-culturally pervasive.[12]

Associations between menstruation and death are also suggested by a number of similarities in customs and beliefs surrounding the menstuant and shedders of blood. Among the African Ndembu, for instance, within certain menstrual-related rituatls, which will be discussed in another context in more detail, the dominant symbolic objects used are the same as those used in ceremonies for the hunter's cult and murderers of kinsmen.[13] In certain Eskimo cultures the hands of murderers and the hands of menstruating females supposedly emit a red aura which is associated with blood and death.[14] Moreover, in a culture as different from the Eskimos as the ancient Greeks, menstrual blood was also conceived of in terms of an association with shed human blood.[15]

According to Homigman, among the Kaska Indians of Canada it was customary for a girl returning from menstrual seclusion and a male returning from war to plant a willow stick on a frozen lake.[16] In this regard, one could speculate that in both instances the placing of something living on something frozen symbolizes the transition from a death-associated state to one associated with life. That is, for the girl temporary barrenness has ended with the cessation of the menstrual flow; and for the returning warrior the killing involved in war has ended. While this is a highly speculative interpretation at this point, its plausibility will be established as the discussion continues.

One of the most interesting illustrations of this menses-death association is suggested by the Iriquois method used to determine whether a female was menstruating, I assume when such a decision was questionable. Shimony reports: "To test whether a woman is menstruating at any particular time a small piece of iron wood may be placed in bed with her, and if she is indeed affected, the ironwood will bleed by morning

and the pithy heart of the wood will be black and dead."[17] (my underline)

In relation to this menses-death association, it is important to take note that while there appears to be a definite link between the menses and death in terms of the similarity of the taboos and customs just described, there is a significant difference between the taboos placed on the menstruant and the hunter, warrior or homocide. The distinction I am suggesting involves a difference in process, i.e., how and why these categories of individuals (menstruant and hunter/warrior/homocide) become taboo.

Alice Schlegel postulates that the common denominator underlying restrictions placed on warriors, hunters and menstruating females in most North American Indian cultures is a state of "spiritual tension." Thus, she argues that menstrual taboos are a sub-category of the more general category of taboo which applies to menstruant, hunter, warrior and homocide.[18] However, because of the difference I am suggesting, this 'just a taboo' explanation, in relation to menstrual taboos, is not quite accurate. That is, while it is true that all these taboos involve states of spiritual tension and danger, the warrior, the hunter and the homocide are taboo, i.e., polluted, polluting, and dangerous because they do something. They take action on the environment. The menstruant, however, is taboo, i.e., polluted, polluting, and dangerous, because something happens to her. She takes no action. She is taboo because she is female. Her pollution and the associated danger are biologically sex-linked.

Looked at from this point of view, one might also consider this 'doing' to be culturally sex-linked, i.e., throughout the world being a warrior and a hunter are traditionally defined as male activities. In this case, then, one might say that the taboo state of these individuals

is associated with a culturally defined sex-distinction. However, the homocide can be either male or female; and murder, like hunting and war, involves action on the environment. Thus menstrual taboos seems to involve being while the taboos surrounding hunters, homocides and warriors involve doing.

I am pointing out this essential difference here, as I did earlier in another context, to emphasize that menstrual pollution is female pollution. This tells us that: (1) females are 'natural' pollutants and 'naturally' dangerous, simply by virtue of being physically female; and (2) that males, in many instances, become polluted, polluting and dangerous, not because they are categorically male, but because they do or take action. Much more will be said about this in subsequent discussion.

Among people widely separate, in both time and geographical area, menstruation has also been identified with wounding and/or injury. This wounding-injury theme in connection with the menses is apparent in the thinking of primitive people, among whom it has commonly been believed that the onset of the menses at puberty is caused by the bite of a lizard, snake or bird.[19]

In the modern-day world the adolescent girl's response to the first menstrual flow is often one of fear based on the belief that this genital bleeding means injury.[20] The notion of injury in association with menstruation is also reflected in several of the many English language euphemisms for the menses, i.e., "falling off the roof" and "to be hit."[21] Similarly, according to Mead, among the Manus of New Guinea, the work for menstruation is ""kekanbwot" which translated means "broken leg."[22] Moreover, in modern as well as in primitive man, the perception

of the female's genital as a wound is probably influenced not only by its physical characteristics, but also by menstrual bleeding.[23] This injury and wounding theme is obviously related to the loss of blood which menstruating entails. Moreover, in terms of the association between menstruation and death-related phenomenon, if death is conceived of as an advanced stage of wounding or injury, then both forms of physical damage associated with the menses can be categorized as aspects of death. Stated another way, if life and death were placed on a continuum, then being injured or having a disease would be closer to the death side than the life side because injury presents the potential for death.

Blood of Injury, Disease and Death:
Menstrual Harm to Males

> A man and his wife lived in a certain village. One day she went to the menstrual hut ...Her husband was curious. Turning into a red parakeet he flew up to a tall flowering tree near the menstrual hut and perched there eating flowers. His wife came out of the hut and spoke to him, "Oh my man there you are eating...flowers. Where is my man?" As she looked at him, the bird fell dead to the ground and lay dead at her feet in the shape of man.[24]
>
> --Ronald Berndt

Widespread themes of injury and death in association with the influence of the menses are operative mainly in beliefs about the dangers of menstrual mana to males. Worldwide it has been believed that for males menstrual contamination leads to various kinds of disease, injury, physical debilitation or even death. Within this physical harm cluster of beliefs there are a number of dominant motifs found among people whose cultural backgrounds differ radically. One of these danger motifs is that direct and/or indirect contact with a menstruant or menstrual blood before war or the hunt will result in wounding or death.[25] Another set

of menstrual-related beliefs, mentioned earlier, involves transmission of menstrual-like symptoms to the males, such as cramps, bloody diarrhea, or other kinds of bleeding, i.e., nose bleeds, bleeding ulcers, vomiting of blood, or passing blood in urine.[26,27] In some cultures it has also been believed that menstrual contamination causes TB or leprosy[28](both of which involve some form of bleeding), or that it leads to unspecified diseases which are often described as fatal and wasting.[29] For instance, among the Mae Enga of New Guinea, contact with the menstrual discharge supposedly leads to persistent vomiting, makes the blood black, corrupts the vital juices, darkens the skin, permanently dulls the wits and eventually leads to a slow decline and death.[30,31]

Beliefs that menstrual contamination leads to either paralysis or blindness are scattered throughout a wide range of cultures. For instance, in some areas of the world the glance of a menstruant supposedly turns a male to stone or into a tree.[32] In others, contamination via a look renders the male totally paralyzed or affects only his legs.[33] According to Wallis and Wallis, the Micmac Indian male who believes he has been menstrually contaminated "takes a step, imagines he's helpless and remains in bed."[34]

Blum and Blum report that in contemporary rural Greece (1971) the belief that menstrual contamination leads to blindness has persisted, as is indicated by the following story told by one of the inhabitants of the Greek town of Doraxis: "My son went swimming at the sea one day when there were many people there. There must have been unclean [menstruating] women swimming in the sea because he came home with a sore eye.[35] In relation to this belief Blum and Blum comment, "They connect menstrual blood and a sore eye with the idea that seeing it [the menstrual

discharge] would blind the organ with its destructive force."[36] And in this same context, one of the respondents to Weidiger's menstrual questionnaire writes, "My grandmother told me that her mother told her that if a man saw a woman's menstrual flow he would go blind."[37]

The description of the Micmac Indian male who imagines he is paralyzed by menstrual contamination and remains in bed suggests that in primitive cultures a type of secondary gains phenomenon might be associated with the harmful influence of menstrual mana. Moreover, menstrual contamination seems to receive the blame for many physical diseases in a kind of catch-all fashion. What I mean by blame is that in reviewing ethnographic sources containing information about menstrual danger to males, one gets the impression that in many cultures when something goes wrong for a male, it is easily and readily blamed on either direct (physical) or indirect contact with a menstruant or the menstrual discharge. The following account given by a Nyakusa (African) male illustrates the kind of menstrual blaming I am referring to.

> If I have always been alright and strong and I find that I get tired walking and hoeing, I think: "What is it? See, always I was alright and now I am very tired." My friends say: "It is a woman you have lain with, one who was menstruating."[38]

This blaming phenomenon also seems to be suggested by the wide range of diseases attributed to either direct or indirect contact with a menstruant or menstrual blood. In reality, for the male, there is a slight risk that intercourse with a menstruant can lead to non-specific urethritis (an infection of the urinary tract).[39] Thus some of the physical symptoms of disease attributed to intercourse with a menstruant seem to be reality-based. On the other hand, attributing such maladies as

ulcers, cramps, bleeding piles, and paralysis to menstrual contamination, as well as such diseases as leprosy and tuberculosis to contact with menstrual mana, has no basis in medical fact. What is suggested here, for the most part, is that fear and magic, but not real physical danger, form the basis for the beliefs in menstrual harm to males.

The last death-related influence of menstrual mana on males is poisoning, generally attributed to eating menstrually contaminated food. This belief seems to be the most widespread in various regions of Africa, Melanesia and North America.[40] Menstrual taboos on cooking and serving food to males, however, are found world-wide.[41] In this regard Laura Makarius writes, "the fear of poisoning by a woman due to contact with female blood...is universal and is at the basis of food taboos."[42]

Among certain tribes in New Guinea small boys are instructed to avoid their mothers during the menses. They are told that their (mothers') bodies are smeared with poison (feces) at that time and to eat menstrually contaminated food would result in instant death. Strathern reports that the children probably associate menstruation with poisonous things long before they are aware of the female's physiological condition.[43] Moreover in the cultures in which menstrual blood is regarded as poison, a distinction is made between regular poison and menstrual poison, in that menstrual poison affects males only. Strathern notes in this regard that after age three, boys in Mt. Hagen New Guinea are no longer allowed to accompany their mothers in menstrual seclusion (i.e., huts).[44] Apparently, at three the boy begins to be defined as male, which makes him vulnerable to menstrual (female) poison.

Since in most cultures mentrual poison supposedly affects only males, menstrual blood apparently has within itself an intelligence

which can distinguish between the human sexes. In a similar vein, I might add, menstrual blood can also make the distinction between male and female horses, as well as plants and animals tended by males and those tended by females.[45] In certain areas of New Guinea, for instance, where crops and animals are designated as male or female, depending on symbolic meaning and status in the culture's value system, the menstruous female has been considered deleterious or harmful to male-tended crops and animals, but not to female-associated crops and animals.[46]

It has been pointed out in a number of different contexts that menstrual blood is not just ordinary blood; that the fear of this blood does not fit into the general category of blood-fear, referred to by some theorists as "blood horror."[47] Throughout the world the menstrual discharge has had a special significance. In relation to the fear of menstrual blood as opposed to the fear of other kinds of blood, Simone de Beauvoir comments, "Certainly there is more here than a reaction to blood in general....Menstrual blood is peculiar, it represents the essence of femininity."[48] And as is obvious by now, this essence of femininity has been considered especially dangerous to males. Much more will be said about the relationship between menstrual blood and masculine fear in a number of other contexts.

In summary, we have seen that the mimetic effects of sympathetic magic are clearly operative in beliefs in which menstrual-like symptoms and various kinds of injury and bleeding are transmitted to males. In the general sense, a death-related influence is also reflected in the beliefs that direct and/or indirect contact with a menstruating female or menstrual blood will lead to paralysis, blindness, wasting diseases, poisoning, etc. That is, being menstrually contaminated results

in either death, disease or physical debilitation. However, the one-to-one parallel operative in the bleeding-leads-to-bleeding type beliefs is obviously lacking.

In the preceeding chapter the influence of menstrual contamination on the sphere of the sacred was discussed in relation to loss of magical efficacy and/or religious purity. In the explanatory framework being presented here, i.e., menses-death association, this kind of loss can also be understood in terms of a connection with death. That is, in many cultures in which the secular and the sacred have been inseparable, menstrual pollution has been considered either offensive or anger-provoking to the supreme dieties. Thus for the male, being menstrually contaminated leads to spiritual decline and a disruption of the relationship with the forces of the sacred. This potentially involves not only loss of spiritual purity or magical efficacy, but also implies potential death. That is, such contamination presents the possibility of loss of prosperity, well-being and in some cultures, ultimately, the vital force or power that keeps one alive.

Moreover, it will be apparent later that the destructive, death-related influence of the menstruant, particularly in connection with Eve and other female figures who appear in myths throughout the world, suggests that notions of death, evil and spiritual downfall or decline are interrelated.

Menstrual Abortion and Menstrual Barrenness

> Each month all things are made ready for a child and then aborted in the crimson flow.[49]
>
> --Simone de Beauvoir

As Simone de Beauvoir's comment suggests, menstruating is

like a natural abortion. However, the meaning of this abortive process in primitive thought is far-reaching in terms of a symbolic link between menstruation, death and the fear of menstrual mana. In order to understand this network of associations and influences, 'primitive' ideas about the part that menstrual flow has in forming the foetus must be explained.

For people who have lacked exact knowledge of the physiological basis for the relationship between pregnancy and menstruation, it has commonly been believed that the foetus is formed from the accumulation of the missed periods during the pregnancy.[50] In this regard, for instance, Ford notes that in eight societies in the cross-cultural sample he studied, the period just before menstruation has been considered the most favorable for conception. He is of the opinion that the selection of this particular time is based on the belief that menstrual blood plays a functional part in the formation of a new human being.[51] Moreover, Erich Neumann points out that in the ancient world the view prevailed that the embryo developed from the accumulation of menstrual blood.[52]

Thus, given the supposition that the menstrual discharge actually forms the foetus, and the blood ought to have become a child, then the discharge itself is an undeveloped or potential human being. As Lévy-Bruhl points out, in primitive thought the menstrual discharge represents or, in fact, is the death of an undeveloped human being and is treated as such.[53] In this regard he and others have reported that in many primitive cultures beliefs in the harmfulness of menstrual blood are similar to those surrounding miscarriages, prematurely born foetuses, still-born infants and infants who die shortly after childbirth.[54,55]

In a recent essay on Hebrew notions of Tum'ah (religious

impurity) and Toharah (purity), Rachael Adler comments that in Hebrew thought the menstrual flow signifies death, because "The menstrual blood which inside the womb was a potential nutrient is a token of dying when it is shed."[56] This notion is similar to the Nuer view that menstrual blood represents the unfulfilled potential for life, which is in effect a form of death.[57] Moreover, what is also indicated here is the dual aspect of menstrual blood. In cultures throughout the world the blood of menstruation represents life in that it has been believed to either form or feed the foetus. Yet, ultimately, it represents death because it signifies the unconsumated potential for life. To a certain extent, this explains why the impurity of the menses has been regarded as similar to the impurity of death.

In African tribal cultures menstrual impurity and the 'badness' or evil of the menstrual discharge have been associated with the temporary barrenness that menstruating represents, as is indicated by Germain Dieterlan's comment about the Bambara of West Africa. He writes:

> In this part of Africa, as in may others, menses are conceived of as a necessary flow of empty blood, impure because it has not contributed to the formation of the foetus, the embryo of which every woman carries within ...This blood is considered evil.

Thus like menstrual abortion, menstrual barrenness can also be considered a symbolic representation of death in that menstruating signifies non-fertility or the absence of procreative potential.[59] In association with menstrual abortion and barrenness, the harmful effects and dangers of menstrual mana can be explained in terms of a sympathetic transmission of an anti-life influence to various aspects of the human and non-human environment, as will be apparent in the following discussion.[60]

The Anti-Life Influence of the Menses on the Sources of Life

The anti-life influence of the menses appears to be based on the fundamental notion that either the menstruant or menstrual blood are capable of draining the vital force from, or destroying the life energy of, things that are alive and growing. This idea is inherent in the Dogon belief that the footsteps of a menstruant, "will drain all of the life away from the places where she is forbidden to walk."[61] In the Australian Highlands of New Guinea, the destruction of vital force associated with the menses is expressed in the belief that if a menstruating female tends certain plants or animals (those belonging to males) they will "lose their condition."[62] And similarly, in various North American Indian tribes the presence of a menstruant has been believed to "weaken" vegetables.[63] In Greek mythology, the anti-life influence of the menses is reflected in the belief that the blood of a menstruant will make the earth barren.[64] And in the folklore of Southern Blacks, this same idea is expressed in the belief that if a menstruant steps over a melon vine it will "bear no fruit."[65]

What these beliefs suggest is that, based on the principle of like produces like, a process of sympathetic transmission occurs, and the temporary barrenness or sterility of the menstruant is conveyed to the earth or the vine, i.e., as a result of being menstruallly contaminated they are no longer sources of sustenance or "life." This notion of contagious barrenness in connection with the menses is also reflected in certain dietary restrictions imposed on the menstruant in various areas of the world. For instance, the Gisu Bantu prohibit the menstruating female from eating chicken eggs,[66] and in Australia (Torres Straits) the

the menstruant has not been permitted turtle eggs when turtles are breeding.[67] The rationale for these restrictions is that if the menstruant ate these eggs the animals would become barren, non-food producing. Moreover, as we shall see, the anti-life influence of menstrual mana operative in these beliefs is also reflected in a cluster of other beliefs about the destructive influence of the menstruant or her blood on the source of life or the processes of growth. In relation to the latter, I am suggesting that just as death and injury can be categorized as aspects of death, so can growth be considered an inseparable part of the larger category, life. Thus the anti-life influence of the menses is synonymous with an anti-growth aspect.

Water, potential food and food are obviously essential sources of life, and more indirectly, so are fire and sun. In cultures far too numerous to mention menstrual blood or the menstruous female has been believed to transmit a harmful influence to all of these. As indicated in Chapter II, in certain areas of the world fire has been considered sacred, and the menstruant has been prohibited from cooking or approaching the fire, lest she offend the hearth or cooking spirits. Thus, in many cultures these fire-menstrual taboos actually involve contamination of the sacred. In the current context, however, I am suggesting that fire, stoves, and hearths be considered sources of life, for the obvious reasons that they cook food and provide warmth. Moreover, in Buddhist China and Tibet, there is a direct connecting link between the sacredness of the hearth and the sources of life.

That is, in China and Tibet, it has been customary to hang animal hair (Dar bang) at the rear of the stove or the hearth. This hair is a central cultural-religious symbol which represents "the power to

grow...to multiply, to increase, expand....It bestows fertility on men and beasts."[68] Thus in this particular religious belief system the sacredness of the hearth is associated, via the Dar bang symbol, with the power for increase and life. The fact that such a symbol would be placed on the hearth makes good sense within the analogical mode of thinking being discussed here; that is, a symbol representing increase, the power to grow and expand, etc., would logically be placed in the area where food is prepared (nourishment, sustenance, life). Thus within this symbolic nexus the menstruant and menstrual blood which I have conceptualized as transmitting an anti-life influence would basically be considered contaminating to this double-symbol of life (hearth-Dar bang).

While I do not know if this sacred-life association is found in other cultures, based on a cross-culturally pervasive symbolic or associative mode of thinking the possibility that such an association would be present in cultures other than those described here is not far-fetched. This is supported by Dieterlan's statement that among the African Bambara, "Menstrual blood, testimony to...the temporary sterility of women is the principle taboo of the supernatural powers that create and protect life."[69]

The sun is another symbol which has been invested with multiple meanings. Crawley[70] and Frazer[71] point out that throughout the world, in myth and legend, the sun has been viewed as a male figure who impregnates females.[72] Thus wide-spread taboos which prohibit the menstruating female contact with the sun, especially at puberty, might be understood in terms of a symbolic association with the pervasive menstrual sex taboo which forbids sexual intercourse with human males. In the present explanatory context, however, I am suggesting that the sun. like the earth, is a symbol of a source of life, in that it is essential for the growth of

vegetation; and that taboos which forbid the menstruant contact with the sun might in part be based on the belief that her harmful anti-life influence will be destructive to an important source of life. In this regard, Crawfurd discusses the custom of suspending the newly menstruating girl in an enclosed hammok (which in effect keeps her from touching earth or seeing sky) in terms of menstrual pollution "poisoning" sun and earth, "...the two great source of life."[73] There is also some suggestion that in North American Indian cultures the rationale for the menstruating girl wearing a hood that covers her entire face and shoulders is that she will not pollute the sky.[74] The belief that the menstruant pollutes the heavens is also found in Siberian folklore.[75]

In relation to water as a source of life and the destructive influence of menstrual contamination, in certain areas of Africa, Australia and North America it has been believed that the presence of a menstruant will either dry or drain, or ruin (by making boil), natural sources of water, i.e., streams, wells, rivers, etc.[76] If the water sources are used for bathing and drinking, then the formal taboos which prohibit the female from bathing during her menstrual period can be accounted for in terms of hygienic or aesthetic factors.

The draining away or drying of sources of water in association with the presence of a menstruant, however, can obviously not be explained in this way. In the explanatory framework being proposed here, this drying up or draining can be understood in terms of the menstruant's anti-life influence. That is, by a process of magical contagion, and in a way which is parallel to the transmission of menstrual barrenness to the earth and vegetation, the menstruant destroys or depletes one of the elements which sustain life, in this case water.

In relation to food as a major souce of life, in cultures far too numerous to mention the menstruant and menstrual blood have been considered harmful to food or the food supply, whether fish, animal or vegetable. World-wide menstrual restrictions on planting and tending crops typically involve the fear that the menstruant will transmit an anti-life influence which will lead to a diminished food supply.[77] Menstrual restrictions surrounding the tending of domestic animals reflect the same fear.[78] Similarly, in many hunting and fishing societies, menstrual dietary restrictions (prohibitions on eating fish or fresh game meat) seem to be based on the belief that if a menstruant eats fish or game, the fishing or hunting will go poorly, which will lead to a scarce catch, i.e., a diminished food supply.[79,80] Moreover, the belief that the influence of the menstruant or her blood leads to a diminished food supply suggests a secondary death-related influence in association with the menses, i.e., the possibility of death via starvation.

Menstrual Anti-Life: Sympathetic Connections

As indicated, the underlying basis for menstrual planting and tending taboos is the belief that vegetation will not grow - will not, in effect, reach maturity. With reference to the anti-life influence of menstrual mana, and the principle of like produces like, these beliefs can be understood in terms of a mimetic effect - the interruption of foetal growth (potential human being) or the "dead food" that menstruating symbolizes is transmitted to plant life, which results in a similar "deadness," interference with, or abortion of, the growth process. Moreover, other cross-culturally and historically pervasive menstrual beliefs such as: (1) the presence of a menstruant will cause miscarriage or abortion

in pregnant females or animals,[81] (2) menstrual blood worn on an amulet will prevent conception,[82] and (3) drinking of the menstrual discharge will induce abortion,[83] also reflect the principle of like produces like, and suggest that the abortive process associated with menstruating is transmitted and mimed by living things in the environment in the ways just described. In terms of the last belief mentioned, i.e., menstrual blood induces abortion, Crawfurd reports that in the early twentieth century (1915), menstrual fluid was still one of the ingredients used in medicines to induce abortion.[84,85]

Moreover, in this analogical mode, the principles of contagious magic also seem to provide the connective links between the menstrual interruption of foetal growth and disruption in the growth of young life, whether that life and growth be human, vegetable or even animal. This is suggested by the following menstrual-related clusters of beliefs. (1) In cultures scattered throughout the world one finds the belief that the menstruant is harful to infants or young children.[86] This harm consists of transmitting sickness or injury, the implication of the latter being the stunting of growth. Interestingly enough, in a report on a series of lectures given to junior high school and high school age girls on mentrual health in 1953 and 1963, the author notes that a junior high school girl reported the following: "My mother said I couldn't look after my baby brother when I'm menstruating because it would make him sick."[87] (2) Within the cluster of beliefs surrounding the deleterious influences of the menstruant on vegetation one finds an explicit belief that menstrual mana is most vitiating to young plants and the new growth of vegetation, i.e., young shoots, leaves, blooms, etc. For instance, in certain areas of the Highlands of New Guinea it has been believed

that in the presence of a menstruant "young plants will wither and die."[88] In Pliny's encyclopedia, and within folkloric beliefs scattered throughout Europe one also finds the notion that the menstruant is especially destructive to new growth.[89] Moreover, the idea that menstrual blood will damage seeds, and the analogical similarity between seed and embryo, again suggests that interruption in formation of the embryo is sympathetically transmitted to the environment via contagious magic.

What has been suggested here, in essence, is that there is a sympathetic link between menstrual disruption in foetal growth and the growth and development of young life. This is nicely illustrated in the belief, found among the Landino Indians of Guatemala, that a menstruating girl must not "...look directly at infants, turkey chickens, or sprouting beans lest these sicken and die."[90]

Moreover, in relation to the menstruant's destructive influence on life-related substances or events (represented by food, the growth of vegetation, children, pregnancy, etc.), one could speculate, drawing on a Jungian analysis of symbols, that there is also a connecting link between two seemingly unrelated beliefs in menstrual harm. One of these involves harm to babies, and the other involves harm to bees. In terms of the former, I am referring to the menstruant's influence on infants which involves a type of harm slightly different from the harm to infants and children just described. That is, in various areas of the world one finds the notion that the menstruous female either sours, poisons or contaminates milk - her own if she is a nursing mother, or that of a dairy animal.[91] In terms of the female's own milk, which is of primary concern here, in European folklore it was commonly believed that this menstrual spoiling of mother's milk resulted in convulsions or the

death of infants. Carol Rosenberg, who reports this belief, is of the opinion that it reflects the general fear of menstrual blood which was widespread in premodern European cultures.[92]

In relation to menstrual-related harm to bees, in Pliny's Natural History (62-91 A.D.), an encyclopedia of Greek and Roman customs, one finds it recorded that in the presence of a menstruant "Bees will forsake their hives...for they have a special aversion to a menstruating woman...a glance of her eyes being sufficient to kill a swarm of bees."[93] In this regard, Erich Neumann cites Bachofen's commentary on the symbolic meaning of the bee in Greek and Roman myth. Bachofen makes the observation that:

> The bee was rightly looked upon as a symbol of the feminine potency of nature. It was associated with Demeter, Artemis, and Persephone. Here it symbolized the earth, its motherliness, its never-resting, artfully formative busy-ness...Its relationship with all physically conceived motherhood was expressed in a custom recorded by Heraclides...[94]

In this same context Bachofen adds,

> The bees express their motherhood also as nurses and feed the newborn infant Zeus with honey. The purest product of organic nature in which animal and vegetable production seem so intimately intertwined is also the purest food for mothers...Honey and milk belong to motherhood...[95]

In this same context Neumann notes that the Roman fertility vegetation goddess Spes, a figure symbolizing the "good mother aspect" of the feminine archetype, is typically depicted in Roman art with a beehive by her side, and holding sheaves of wheat.[96] Moreover, Kerenyi points out that bees have been symbolically associated with Mary, another female figure who represents the good mother aspect of the feminine archetype.[97]

What I am suggesting here is that menstrual harm to bees (representing milk, honey, food, sustenance of life) is related to menstrual spoiling of mother's milk and the harm to infants which this spoiling supposedly causes; and that the anti-life influence of the menstruant can be understood as being harmful to two inter-connected aspects of life - the potential for motherhood or creation of life which pregnancy represents and the nourishing and sustaining aspects of motherhood which milk and honey represent. Menstrual harm to the sustenance and creation of life will be considered again later in the context of a discussion of the negative feminine archetype and the relationship that the menstruous female has to mythological figures who symbolize this aspect of femininity. However, at this point the final death-related aspects of the menses - spoiling, decomposition and decay - will be considered.

The Menses: Spoiling, Decomposition and Decay

> ...menstrual blood is supposed to act especially on organic substances, halfway between life, souring cream, spoiling meat, causing fermentation, decomposition.[98]
> --Simone de Beauvoir

The idea that the presence of a menstruant spoils meat is scattered throughout late nineteenth century Europe. For instance, in a British Medical Journal in 1878 it was stated, "...it is an undoubted fact that meat spoils when touched by a menstruating woman."[99] And during the time that Frazer was writing the Golden Bough (early twentieth century), in certain rural areas of Europe it was believed that if a menstruous female assisted in the slaying of a pig the meat would putrify.[100] Similarly, according to Harold Driver when a female was menstruating certain Indian tribes living in Northwestern California brought meat into their dwellings by removing a wall board to avoid poisoning of meat by

menstrual contamination.[101]

This particular menstrual influence is reflected not only in beliefs about spoiling meat (and souring milk), but also in cross-culturally and historically pervasive beliefs about the effects of the menstruant on the fermentation process. For instance, according to an ancient Roman belief (Pliny), the presence or touch of a menstruant turns new wine into vinegar.[102] On the basis of this same belief, some 1900 or so years later, females were prohibited from working in European wineries while menstruating.[103] (The menstruant has also been prohibited from working in canning factories, sugar refineries and perfumeries.)[104] Within the folklore of the rural south one finds the belief that in the presence of a menstruating female "...the mother of vinegar is killed."[105] Moreover, not only does the menstruating female supposedly murder the mother of vinegar (my underline), Southern folklore has it that she also "makes pickles soft!"[106]

In many areas of the world, including our own rural American cultures, it has been believed that if a female bakes while menstruating, dough and/or cakes won't rise. In this regard a host of folkloric "spoiling" beliefs associated with the menses are found scattered throughout Europe and the United States, i.e., tomato paste will be ruined, puddings won't jell, mayonnaise won't thicken, and where cheese is being made the milk will not clot, or milk cannot be turned into butter.[107] In terms of the latter, Crawfurd, in 1915, made the observation that:

> Many a farmer's wife in this country [England] will assure you that milk handled by a menstruous woman cannot be churned into butter...That she has demonstrated the contrary in a series of experiments, month by month, year in and year out has left unshaken the pillars of her faith.[108]

In relation to the decomposition that the menstruant supposedly transmits to the inorganic environment, one finds, recorded first in Pliny's Natural History, and then later in time scattered througout Europe, the beliefs that the touch or the presence of a menstruant will tarnish mirrors, take the polish from ivory, change the color of dyes, corrode copper and decompose iron, etc.[109]

Sympathetic Analogies

Within the analogical mode of thinking being considered here, one could speculate that the words which were underlined in discussing European and American folkloric beliefs about menstrual-related lack of clotting, thickening or jelling of foods reflects the sympathetic transmission of the menstrual flow itself, i.e., lack of clotting or thickening necessary for development of a foetus. Or put another way, these non-clotting, non-jelling beliefs suggest the notion of things not "taking," adhering, sticking, analogically similar to the foetus that doesn't coalesce or "stick" to the womb. In addition, one could also speculate that there is an associative connection between the non-pregnant, i.e., non-swollen, state that menstruation signifies and the folkloric beliefs that in the presence of a menstruant, cake and dough will not rise, i.e., swell. All these menstrual spoiling beliefs seem to be related to the harmful influence that the menstruant or her blood have on the creation or potential for life discussed earlier in relation to sympathetic transmission of menstrual anti-life, i.e., menstrual abortion. As we have seen, in folkloric beliefs the menstruous female and menstrual blood have also been associated with putrification, decay and decomposition, all by-products of death or symbols of what death itself is. These particular death-related effects of menstrual mana have been believed to be

sympathetically conveyed to the environment in the ways just described.

To sum up, in the preceeding discussion it has been established that the harm and destruction associated with menstrual mana and the "badness" of menstrual blood can be partially attributed to a symbolic association of menstrual blood with a death or an anti-life influence; and that via a process of magical contagion this anti-life influence is transmitted to the environment. It has also been suggested that via a series of sympathetic connections menstrual mana has been considered especially harmful to (1) males, to (2) what I have called essential sources of life, represented by food, potential food and other substances symbolizing nourishment, growth and maintenance of life, and to (3) events or processes associated with the creation or growth of life, i.e., conception, pregnancy, the processes of growth and development in living beings, or things. However, people do not live by symbols alone, and in this regard, a number of theorists have argued that there might be a reality base for certain kinds of menstrual superstitions and taboos, a point of view which will be considered next.

Menotoxin and Mitogenetic Rays

In a review of a group of studies conducted mainly in the 1920s and 30s, in which the physiological basis for the origins of certain menstrual superstitions and taboos were investigated, Ashley Montagu suggests that it is highly probable that underlying certain menstruation beliefs and customs there is a "foundation in fact." According to Montagu, this foundation of fact is built on the results of the studies he reviews, which in his opinion, satisfactorily demonstrate that the pharmacological properties of menstrual blood or the saliva or perspiration of menstruating females are chemically toxic and thus have a noxious

effect on (1) plant life (including the bacteria involved in the fermentation process and/or (2) animal tissue (decay of animal flesh or physical debilitation of experimental animals). Moreover, he also suggests, (3) that the chemical constituents of the perspiration of menstruating females have a deleterious influence on non-organic materials, i.e., corrosion of metals.[110]

In this regard Montagu contends that without the benefit of the scientific knowledge revealed by these studies people in the past, and in primitive cultures, have accurately observed the deleterious influence of the menstruant and her blood on the environment. Thus, in his opinion, this is another "foundation in fact" which forms the reality basis for certain menstrual superstitions.[111]

In a similar vein, based on the studies reviewed by Montagu, Allan Coult postulates that recognition of menstrual harm involves a process of "unconscious inference" drawn from observation of "empirical regularities."[112] Thus both Coult and Montagu are suggesting, in effect, that the rational basis for certain menstruation-related taboos and beliefs involves an intuitive awareness or recognition of the process of bacterial transmission--a process, I might add, which was not fully understood by Western scientists until the late nineteenth century.[113] Nevertheless, assuming that the process of bacterial transmission was actually intuitively recognized, the question is--are there pharmacological properties in the blood, saliva or perspiration of a menstruating female which are actually deleterious to certain kinds of organic and non-organic matter?

In Montagu's review of the menotoxin literature (the scientific name given to menstrual poison by David Macht)[114] one finds that for every study in which positive results are reported, there are several

replications in which the findings are negative. For instance, B.W. Michin demonstrated that the toxic chemical properties of the menstrual discharge inhibited the geotropic properties of lupine seeldings.[115] W. Freeman and J.M. Looney,[116] however, did not obtain this effect, nor did E. Meyran and R. Nothass. The latter investigators concluded that any kind of blood serum has an inhibitory effect on lupine seedlings.[117,118]

Clellan Ford considered this biologically based theory as an explanation for the institution and enforcement of menstrual vegetation taboos in preliterate cultures. However, based on the results of his survey of menstrual taboos, he concluded that this explanation was limited because certain societies in which the food supply was derived primarily from agriculture did not enforce menstrual vegetation taboos.[119] The issue here is if there is inherent knowledge of bacterial transmission, then why are some people, particularly agriculturalists, less aware of this process than others?

Based on a series of studies, D. Macht (1924-1936)[120] and O.W. and G.V. Smith (1945-1947)[121] claimed that the injection of menstrual serum into rats either resulted in a debilitating effect on the growth of nerves and muscles, increased error scores in maze performance, or produced other noxious effects including paralysis and death. However, in 1953, Bernard Zondek replicated Smith and Smith's studies under sterile laboratory conditions (when the menstrual extract itself was not contaminated by experimental apparatus), and no such results were obtained. Zondek concluded, like most other investigators who failed to replicate the results of these menotoxin studies, that menstrual blood is no more toxic than any other tissue extract.[122] Thus, significant relationships, when they are reported, are most likely spurious.

In discussing the ancient belief (Pliny) that the menstrual discharge corrodes metals, Montagu cites an article, in which he claims that the author (H.L. Byrnes) states, "...the perspiration of menstruating women in certain industries is well known my underline to stimulate corrosion of the metals involved."[123] A further check on this particular article, however, indicates that Byrnes' observation, i.e, the chemical components of the menstruant's perspiration might be responsible for corroding metals, is tentative and not as conclusive as Montagu suggests. What Byrnes actually states is, "These conclusions while I have not yet had the opportunity of actually proving them...are believed to be well founded." Moreover, she then goes on to request readers of the journal to "...send information and advice relative to confirming or discrediting our theory...."[124] In 1927, Ernest Crawley commented that it has not been long since the medical world had given up the idea that menstrual blood was deleterious or toxic.[125] Apparently in 1957 Ashley Montagu still hadn't given up the idea; and in 1963 Allan Coult was still trying. As Simone de Beauvoir remarked, in relation to pervasive menstrual spoiling beliefs, "A few vague factual reports may offer some slight support for such beliefs; but it is obvious from their importance...that they must have had superstitious or mystical [symbolic] origins."[126]

In relation to the toxic properties of the menstrual discharge Amram Schienfield states:

> Another misconception and a very dangerous one is that the menstrual flow is extremely dangerous. It is no more toxic than any other discharge from the body containing broken down or cast off tissue. According to hemotologists menstrual blood can be safely handled without risk of bacterial infection, even with a cut.[127]

Thus this would seem to put to rest Ford's speculation that the origins of menstrual taboos in preliterate cultures might have been based on a recognition that the menstrual discharge is infectious to open wounds - but only male wounds since, according to Ford, females might have a natural immunity to the infectious bacteria of menstrual blood![128] While Ford did state, in relation to this speculation, that the medical evidence was not 'in,' the idea that females would be immune to infection by their own menstual blood smacks of sympathetic magic and not scientific fact.

As noted earlier, there is a possibility that for males intercourse with a menstruant might result in nonspecific urethritis. However, if anyone is prone to infection during menstruation, it is the female herself. The alkaline-acid ratio in the vagina changes during the menses, and the female has less protective bacteria with which to combat vaginal infection.[129] Thus it is likely that the female is vulnerable to infection carried by the male. Thus, it is feasible that this passing back and forth of infection has been associated with venereal disease - very likely making ample room for the menstrual "blaming" phenomenon referred to earlier.

It would seem, then, that whatever real physical dangers have resulted from intimate contact with a menstruant are like a small seed from which a huge symbol tree has grown, i.e., the many kinds of menstrual harm to males which have no basis in reality. Moreover, is it not possible that the interest in documenting the toxic properties of the menstruant and her blood is an expression of the ancient and widespread negativity and fear of the menstruant and her "bad" blood - a fear and a negativity which has, in this instance, taken the form of a socially acceptable endeavor - the scientific search for the menotoxin? Perhaps.

Mary Douglas has criticized this biologically oriented approach to the study of cultural phenomena on the basis that when it is used without reference to the symbolic meaning of customs and beliefs, as is apparent in the work of Macht, Montagu and Coult, the result is a reduction of complex material to its simplest level.[130] This "medical materialism" type explanation, as Douglas calls it, coining a phrase from William James, can obviously not explain why "menotoxin" is deleterious to male-associated plants and not those associated with females. It also cannot explain why the European witch and the menstruant have been accorded the same destructive influence on vegetation and other organic matter; that is, unless "witchedness" is a state in which the female's body courses with menotoxins and mitogenetic rays. Moreover, one of the strongest arguments against the menotoxin hypothesis, put forth by Montagu, Coult and others, is that in preliterate cultures throughout the world the pregnant female has also been believed to be as deleterious to vegetation as the menstruant - a symbolic paradox which will be discussed in the next chapter. In this context, however, what is relevant is that since the menstruous female and the pregnant female are in totally different "hormonal states," then the body "substances" (saliva, perspiration) that they <u>might</u> possibly exude would be different. Thus, unless the pregnant state is also a state of "pregnotoxicity," then it is apparent that we are dealing with material which calls for psychological, social-functional and further symbolic modes of interpretation.

NOTES: CHAPTER III

[1]See, e.g., T.O. Beidleman, The ox and Neur sacrifice, some Freudian hypothesis, Man: 1, 453-67, 1966; and E.E. Evans Pritchard, Nuer Religion (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956).

[2]Some Nuer notions of purity and danger, Anthropos, 69:529-30, 1974.

[3]The Golden Bough, 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911-15), 1:52-214 passim.

[4]Erich Neumann calls this multiplicity of symbolic meaning "polyvalence," and notes that this is a function of the psychic ambivalence involved in symbol formation. The Great Mother (Princeton: Princeton/Bollingen Paperback, 1972); See Chap. 1, "The structure of the archetype," pp. 3-17.

[5]For a comprehensive theory of multiple symbolic interpretations of rituals and beliefs in preliterate cultures from an anthropologist's point of view, see Vincent Turner, The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 19-46.

[6]H. Werner, Comparative Psychology of Mental Development (New York: International Press, 1964); L. Levy-Bruhl, How Natives Think (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966); J. Piaget and B. Inhelder, The Psychology of the Child (New York: Basic, 1967).

[7]Lévi-Strauss takes issue with theories of primitive thought structure which are based on the notion that the 'primitive' mind sees primarily similarities or fusion and not differences. The literature on Lévi-Strauss is far too extensive to discuss or cite here. The interested reader should see R. Firth, Symbols: Public and Private (New York: Cornell University Press, Cornell Paperbacks, 1975), pp. 197-98, for a brief overview of Levi-Strauss' theoretical position; and Perey S. Cohen, Theories of myth, Man , 5:345-46, 1970, for criticism of this position. Also see, Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

[8]In the Introduction to Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, Primitive Classification, cited by Burton, p. 520.

[9]For instance, according to Eduard Westermarck, in Islamic cultures the worst impurity next to death is that of menstrual blood. Ritual and Belief in Morroco, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1927), 1:358. Similar comparisons between the danger and impurity of menstrual blood and death are also found in the Talmud (Book of Niddah, and various interpretations of the Talmud; e.g., Nachmonides, Commentary on Genesis (New York: Schulinger, 1950), p. 375, in which stepping in the dust that a menstruant steps on makes one as "impure as the dead." Interestingly enough, in the Biblical story that Nachmonides refers to here, Rachael uses her menstrual impurity as an excuse to remain seated on her camel. What she is actually doing is sitting on her father's jewels which she and Jacob are planning to steal.

[10]E. Norbeck, Religion in Primitive Society (New York and Evanston:

Harper & Row, 1961). For instance among the African Bemba purification rites performed after menstruation has ended are the same as those performed after a village has been polluted by death. A Richards, Chisungu (London: Farber & Farber, 1956), pp. 32-33. And among the Zarumo of coastal Tanzania the newly menstruating girl must sleep in the same position as that in which the dead are buried - the same position that mourners must take while sleeping. M.L. Swantz, Ritual and Symbol in Transitional Zarumo Society (Sweden: Almquist & Wiksels, 1970), p. 366.

[11]A. Schlegel, Male Dominance and Female Autonomy (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1972), p. 93; Frazer, 10:98-99.

[12]Primitives and the Supernatural (New York: Dutton, 1935), p. 302.

[13]Turner, Forest of Symbols, p. 41.

[14]Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 1967 ed., s.v. "Menstruation."

[15]Phillip Slater, The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 67.

[16]The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 51 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 125.

[17]Conservation Among the Iriquois at the Six Nations Reserve (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 217.

[18]Female Autonomy, p. 93.

[19]C. Fluhman, The Management of Menstrual Disorders (London: Saunders, 1956), p. 5; and S. Freud, The taboo of virginity (1910) The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth, 1955), p. 197.

[20]Helene Deutsch, The Psychology of Women, 2 vols. (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1945), 1:164; Judith Bardwick, Psychology of Women: A Study of Biocultural Conflicts (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 149; and P. Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause (New York: Knopf, 1976), pp. 158-59.

[21]Louise Brush, Attitudes, Emotional and physical symptoms commonly associated with menstruation, Amer. J. Orthophychiat., 8:286, 1938; and N.F. Joffee, The vernacular of menstruation, Word, 4:186, 1948. Also see Marilyn Coffey, "The Day Marcella Fell Off the Roof," Ms (Nov., 1973), pp. 84-87, 112, for a modern adolescent's experience of first menstruation.

[22]M. Mead, Male and Female (New York: Morrow, 1970), p. 175.

[23]H.R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex: the Myth of Feminine Evil (New York: Putnam, 1966), p. 56; Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: Norton, 1945).

[24]Excess and Restraint: Social Control Among a New Guinea Mountain People (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 86.

[25]North American; Frazer, 10:54; Africa; Ibid., p. 80; and E. Goody, Legitimate and illegitimate aggression, in The Interpretation of Ritual, ed. J.S. la Fontaine (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 216-17.

[26]North American; Honigman, pp. 124, 129; J. Swanton, Social organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek confederacy. 42nd Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington: Gov't Printing Office, 1928), p. 359*; Australia; Ford, p. 16; Italy, T. Gastner, The New Golden Bough (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 76.

One of the more graphic illustrations of death by vomiting of blood in association with menstruation is reported in the following Cherokee Indian legend in which a horrible monster, Nun Yuhu Wi or "Dressed in Stone" is killed by the pollution of seven menstruous females. As the story goes,

> He came along the trail to where the first woman was standing, and as he saw her he started and cried out "Yu! my grandchild you are in a very bad state!" He hurried past her, but in a moment he met the next woman, and cried out again: "Yu! my child you are in a terrible way," and hurried past her, but now he was vomiting blood. He hurried on but met the third and the fourth and the fifth woman, but with each one he saw that his step grew weaker until when he came to the last one, with whom the sickness had just begun, the blood then poured from his mouth and he fell down on the trail.

In James Mooney, Myth of the Cherokees (New York: Johnson Reprint Co., 1970), pp. 319-20.

[27]In the psychoanalytic literature one finds reports of vicarious menstruation in the form of nose bleeds. See M. Gill, Functional disturbances of menstruation, Bull. Menninger Clin., 7:6-14, 1943; and Paul M. Faegerman, Fantasies of menstruation in men, Psychoanal. Quart., 24:1-19, 1955.

[28]Malays, R. Winstedt, The Malays (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 107;* North American Indians, Ralph L. Beals, Cheran: a Sierra Tarascan Village. Smithsonian Institute of Social Anthropology, Publication no. 2 (Washington: Gov't Printing Office, 1946), p. 177;* Melanesia, Robert C. Suggs, Marquesan Sexual Behavior (New York: Harcourt, Brace, World, 1966), p. 177.

[29]South America, Robert F. Murphy, The Trumái Indians of Central Brazil (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 88; C. Ford, Comparative Study of Human Reproduction. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 12; Africa; R. Crawfurd, Notes on the superstitions of menstruation, Lancet, 2 (Dec. 18, 1915), p. 1335.

[30]M.J. Meggit, Male-female relationships in the Highlands of Australian

New Guinea, Amer. Anthro., special publication no. 2, p. 208, 1964. This kind of fatal, wasting disease in association with menstrual contamination seems to be common in New Guinea. See, e.g., Berndt, Excess and Restraint, p. 87.

[31]According to Maimonides' interpretation of the Talmud, if a menstuating female walks between two men at the beginning of her period, one will die. Encyclopedia Judaica, 1967 ed., s.v. "Menstruation," by Isreal M. Ta Shma.

[32]Crawfurd, p. 1333.

[33]Honigman, 124; Frazer, 10:78.

[34]The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 224.*

[35]The Dangerous Hour (New York: Scribners, 1970), p. 48.

[36]Ibid., p. 299.

[37]Menstuation and Menopause, p. 228.

[38]Monica Wilson, Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1957), p. 133.

[39]Theodoor Van de Velde, Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Technique (New York: Random House, 1927; reprint ed., 1965), p. 271.

[40]D. Paulme, Introduction, in Women of Tropical Africa (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 13; David Zeisberger, David Zeisberger's History of the North American Indians, eds. Archer Butler and William N. Schwarze (Columbus, Ohio: Heer, 1910), p. 78.*

[41]Ford, Comparative Study; W. Stephens, A cultural study of menstrual taboos, Gen. Psych. Monogr., 64:385-416, 1961.

[42]The magic of transgression, Anthropos, 69:548, 1974.

[43]Women Inbetween (New York: Seminar Press, 1972), p. 173.

[44]Ibid.

[45]George B. Grinnel, Cheyenne Woman customs, Amer. Anthro., 1:114, 1902; Sherry B. Ortner, Is female to male as nature is to culture? in Woman, Culture and Society, eds. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Standord: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 70.

[46]Meggit, p. 208.

[47]Crawfurd, Superstitions, Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, trans. J.W. Swain (Paris: Alcan, 1912; reprint ed., London: Allen & Unwin, 1926); and Margaret Mead (Private Communication to Paula Weidiger) propose some version of this blood horror theory.

Makarius (p. 539); R. Briffault, The Mothers (New York: Macmillan, 1927; E. Crawley and T. Besterman, The Mystic Rise (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927) and others have disagreed. In this regard Freud wrote, "Other considerations warn us not to exagerate the influence on the origins of menstrual taboos such as the hoor of blood." In, The Taboo of Virginity, p. 197.

[48]The Second Sex (New York: Knopf, 1970), p. 139.

[49]Ibid., p. 26.

[50]Briffault, p. 237, Clyde J. Mitchell, An estimate of fertility in some Yao Hamlets in Liwonde district of Southern Nyasaland, Africa, 19:299, 1949;* G. Devereux, The psychology of female genital bleeding, Int. J. Psychoanal., 31:253, 1950; Bronislaw Malinowski, The Father in Primitive Psychology (New York: Norton, 1927; reprint ed., 1966), p. 37; Isaac Schapera, Married Life in an African Tribe (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 216; and Paulu-Marti Montserrat, The Dogons, trans. for HRAF by Katia Wolf (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), p. 63.*

[51]Comparative Study.

[52]The Great Mother (Princeton: Princeton/Bollingen Paperback, 1972), p. 55.

[53]Primitives and the Supernatural, p. 211.

[54]Ibid., p. 316; and Makarius, Transgression; M. Douglas, Purity and Danger.

[55]Lévy-Bruhl (p. 316) also points out that in certain North American Indian cultures legends tell of a child being formed from a drop of menstrual blood. In a similar but slightly different vein, according to a creation myth of the Yuchi Indians (American Southwest), Sun created the ancestors of the Yuchi's from a drop of menstrual blood, Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation."

[56]Tum'ah and tohararah, Response, 18:119, 1973.

[57]Burton, Neur notions of purity and danger.

[58]An Essay on the Religion of the Bambara (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), p. 80.*

[59]While it has not been recognized in all cultures that it is relatively difficult to conceive during menstruation, it is certainly most apparent that if a female menstruates she is not pregnant. I am considering non-pregnancy as symbolic of an anti-life state.

[60]In Taboo (p. 21) Franz Steiner writes,

> If I were to say that this secretion menstrual fluid is regarded as the

> negative and hence dangerous concomitant of fertility and by this association with other negations of fertility becomes associated with death, what have I said more than a long winded prose poem appropriate to a text book of drawing room psychology?

Steiner's criticism stems from: (1) his general theoretical orientation which is social-functional; that is, in the tradition of the Annee Sociologique, represented by Emile Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown and other social anthropologists who have viewed cultural symbols as mirrors for social values, and religious practices, such as taboo, as instrumental in maintaining social order. Steiner takes the position that the main function of taboo is clarification of attitudes towards social values. Thus, within this theoretical framework an analysis of the symbolic aspects of menstrual beliefs and taboos might be regarded as a "long winded prose poem," and (2) lack of adequate consideration of anthropological and ethnographic material which indicates that such an association exists. Thirdly, Steiner's objection to such an analysis is a case in point of Klaus Fredrich-Koch's observation that postulating uni-causal (or unidirectional) explanations for customs and beliefs often leads to spurious (and I might add, empty) debates. See, Koch, Sociogenic and psychogenic models in anthropology: the functions of Jale initiation, Man, 9:397-422, 1974.

[61]Marcel Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemmeli (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 146.

[62]Meggit, p. 208.

[63]Frazer, 10:79, 96; Swanton, p. 359.

[64]Slater, Glory of Hera, p. 67.

[65]Niles N. Puchett, Beliefs of the Southern Folk Negro (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1926; reprint ed., New Jersey: Patterson Smith Reprint Series, no. 22, 1968), p. 423.

[66]Jean S. la Fontaine, Ritualization of women's life-crises in Bugisu, in The Interpretation of Ritual, ed. J.S. la Fontaine (London: Tavistock, 1972, p. 165.

[67]Frazer, 10:36.

[68]M. Hermanns, The Nomads of Tibet (Vienna: Harold, 1949), p. 63.*

[69]Religion of the Bambara, p. 96.

[70]Mystic Rose, p. 197.

[71]Frazer, 10:74-75.

[72]According to Benjamin Walker, Indian religious texts indicate that the menstruant must avoid strong sunlight because of its fertilizing

properties. In The Hindu World, 2 vols. (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1967), 2:61.

[73]Superstitions, p. 1335.

[74]Frazer, 10:23-25, 29.

[75]Uno Holmberg, in The Mythology of All Races, 13 vols. (New York: Cooper Square Publications, 1964), 4:253.

[76]Frazer, 10:50, 76, 81 (North America, Australia, Africa); Griaule, p. 151, (Africa), and Jane C. Goodale, Tiwi Wives: A Study of the Women of Melville Island North Australia (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), p. 49.

[77]Lois Paul, The mastery of work and the mystery of sex in a Guatemalan village, in Woman, Culture and Society, eds. M.Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Standord: Standord University Press, 1974), p. 93; Meggit, p. 210; Elizabeth Colson, Marriage and the Family Among the Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia (England: Manchester University Press, 1958), p. 139. Also see Ford, p. 15.

[78]Ibid.; Crawfurd, p. 1332.

[79]Frazer, 10:76-8, J.A. Tert, Field notes on the Tahltan and Kasks Indians, Anthropologica, 3:152, 1956;* Meggit, p. 208; Murphy, Trumâl Indians, p. 883.

[80]Asen Balickci (p. 233) notes that among the Nelsilik Eskimos the menstruating female is forbidden to even mention game animals by name. In The Netsilik Eskimos (Garden City, New York: Natural History Press, 1970).

[81]Paul, p. 93; Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation"; Shimony, Six Nations Reserve, p. 126; Pliny, Natural History, cited by Crawfurd, p. 1332.

[82]Ford, Comparative Study.

[83]Pliny, 2:7.

[84]Superstitions, p. 1331.

[85]In this regard one could postulate that thinking by analogy establishes a connection between the belief that the menstruant or menstrual blood will cause abortion and the beliefs that the presence or touch of a menstruant will cause fruit to drop from trees or cause plants with blooms to drop off. See Pliny, 13:7; Donn V. Hart in Donn V. Hart, Dhraya Rajadhan and Richard Coughlin, Southeast Asian Birth Customs: Two Studies in Human Reproduction (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1965), p. 40; and MiMi Khaing, Burmese Family (Calcutta: Longmans, Green, 1946), 1946), p. 37.*

An association between the menstrual flow and flowers appears scattered throughout the world. For instance, in sixteenth century France

Ambrose Pare (cited by Fluhman, p. 6), wrote, "There be some that call those fluxes the flowers, because that as in plants the flower buddeth out before the fruits; so in woman kinde this flux goeth forth before the issue, or the conception thereof." According to N. Joffe (Vernacular of menstruation, p. 186), in the mid-twentieth century menstruation was still referred to as fleurs rouges in France. (Joffe also reports that this euphemism appears in the United States and Ireland.) And in the contemporary world the poet, Anne Sexton, writes, "I did not know the woman I would be/nor that blood would bloom/in me each month like an/ exotic flower"; cited by M.J. Lupton and E Toth, "Out Damned Spot," Ms (Jan., 1974), p. 97.

[86]Paul, p. 291 (Guatemala); T. M. Abel and N. Joffe, Cultural backgrounds of female puberty, Amer. J. Psychoth., 4:92, 1950 (Italian folklore); Walker, 2:61 (India); Shimony, p. 216 (Iriquois Indians); Richards, Chisungu, p. 31 (Africa). Although Stephens reports that this belief is rare, it is apparently more widespread than is indicated in his study of menstrual taboos. He reports the presence of this belief in only one culture (Ojibway Indians of North America).

[87]Edith Anderson, Who wants to know what about menstrual health, Nursing Outlook, 13;1965. (Reprinted for Tampax Inc., Palmer, Mass.)

[88]Meggit, p. 208.

[89]Natural History, 13:7; Frazer, 1;139; Van de Velde, p. 93, citing Ploss, Das Wieb.

[90]Paul, p. 291.

[91]Crawfurd, pp. 1331-32; Frazer, 10:80, 81; M.B. Emeneau, Toda Menstruation practices, New Indian Antiquary, 1:80, 1937;* Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation"; R. Coughlin, in D.V. Hart, D. Rajadhan and R. Coughlin, Birth Customs, p. 250.

[92]Puberty to menopause: The cycle of femininity in 19th century America, Feminist Studies, 1:71 (note #24), 1973.

[93]Vol. 7:19.

[94]Great Mother, pp. 265-66.

[95]Ibid.

[96]Ibid., p. 262.

[97]In, C.G. Jung and C. Kerenyi, Essays on a Science of Mythology: the Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis (Princeton: Bollingen, 1949; reprint ed., Princeton/Bollingen Paperback, 1973), p. 159.

[98]Second Sex, p. 139.

[99]Cited by E. Novak, Menstruation and its Disorders (New York: Appleton,

1921), p. 5, citing Ellis, The Psychology of Sex, Vol. 1. Apparently there was more than one letter about menstrual spoiling written to the British Medical Journal that year. In another, a physician writes, "I thought the fact was so generally known to every housewife and cook that meat would spoil if salted at the menstrual period, that I am surprised to see so many letters on the subject in the Journal." (Ibid.) In this regard, Fluhman (p. 2) notes that this physician failed to answer a question as to what would happen to patients cared for by female physicians at this time of the month.

[100]Golden Bough, 10:96.

[101]North American Indians (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 98. This belief is also reported to have been held by the Iriquois (Shimony, p.), and the Mohawk; Fredrick W. Waugh, Iriquois Foods and Food Preparation. Canada Dep't of Mines Geological Survey Memoir no. 86, Anthropological Series, no. 12 (Ottawa: Gov't Printing Bureau, 1916), p. 21.*

[102]Frazer, Golden Bough, 10:96, citing Pliny.

[103]Crawfurd, p. 1332. In late nineteenth century Germany a menstruating female supposedly turned wine sour, Novak, p. 3.

[104]Ibid., and Ashley Montagu, Anthropology and Human Nature (Boston: Porter, 1957), pp. 196-97.

[105]Puckett, Southern Folk Negro, p. 424.

[106]Ibid., p. 423.

[107]Ibid.; Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation"; Abel and Joffe, p. 92; Blum and Blum, p. 46; de Beauvoir, p. 138.

[108]Superstitions, p. 1331.

[109]Vol. 2:28; Crawfurd, p. 1333; Novak (P. 4), citing Ploss, Das Wieb.

[110]Physiology and the origins of menstruation, Quart. Rev. Biol., 15:211-20, 1940. This article also appears in Anthropology and Human Nature, pp. 194-202.

[111]Origins of menstruation.

[112]Causality and cross sex prohibitions, Amer. Anthro., 65:266-77, 1963.

[113]Douglas, Purity and Danger, p. 48.

[114]Montagu, Origins of menstruation.

[115]Ibid., citing Michin (1902), abstracted in Zentrbl. f. Gynakif. Bd. 27.

[116]Ibid., citing Freeman and Looney (1934), J. Pharm. and Exper. Therap., Vol. 52.

[117]Ibid., citing Meyran and Nothass (1929), Anamie Klin. Wchnschr., Bd. 8.

[118]According to Montagu, W. Christansen (1929) demonstrated that an emanation from the menstrual discharge was capable of influencing the growth of yeast cells from a distance. Christansen attributed this to the action of "Mitogenetic rays." So menstrual magic might actually consist of mitogenetic rays. But then who knows - considering the latest "findings" that "vibes" affect the growth of plants, maybe Christansen was right. This is certainly a question that merits further investigation!

In addition, noteworthy here, is the comment of one individual (also cited by Montagu) who investigated this menotoxin hypothesis (chemical constituents of the perspiration of menstruating females). A. Labhardt (1924) pointed out that on a consistent basis the perspiration of certain males contained as much of the supposed toxic substances as the perspiration of females when they were menstruating. Perhaps this is why we have deserts.

[119]Comparative Study, p. 15.

[120]Montagu, Origins of menstruation, citing Macht, (1924), J. Pharm. and Exper. Therap., Vol. 24; Macht and M.E. Davis (1934), J. Comp. Psychol., Vol. 22; Macht (1936), Protoplasma, Bd. 27, etc.

[121]Cited by Bernhard Zondek, Does menstrual blood contain a specific toxin? Amer. J. Ob. and Gyn., 65:1065-68, 1953.

[122]Ibid.

[123]Anthropology and Human Nature, p. 196, citing Byrnes, Industrial Medicine.

[124]Helen H. Byrnes, Relation between corrosion and menstruation? Industrial Medicine, 10:81, 1941.

[125]Mystic Rose, p. 201.

[126]Second Sex, p. 138.

[127]Women and Men (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1943), p. 114.

[128]Comparative Study, p. 13.

[129]William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, Human Sexual Inadequacy (Boston: Little Brown, 1970), p. 271.

[130]Purity and Danger, pp. 40-44.

*Source materials in HRAF files.

CHAPTER IV

MENSTRUAL TABOOS AND BELIEFS: THEORIES OF SYMBOLIC CATEGORIES AND SYMBOLIC FORCES

Categories of Life and Death

The Mountain Arapesh of New Guinea live in an area in which the terrain is precipitous. Growing food is difficult because there are very few areas which are flat enough to be suitable for planting. Thus according to Margaret Mead, the level parts of the Arapesh village are labeled "good" because they are associated with the growth of food; while the steep parts are labeled "bad" because they are dangerous and non-food producing. (Menstrual huts, along with pig stys and latrines, are located in the "bad," i.e., steep, part of the village.) As Mead describes it, the conditions of valuing among the Arapesh, in relation to the steep and level parts of the village are: level=good=food, and steep=bad=no food. According to Arapesh belief, the blood of a menstruant endangers the goodness of the village in association with levelness and food. Menstrual blood and food are regarded as antithetical.[1]

The antithetical relationship between food and menstrual blood might be conceptualized as: Life (food, good), and Death (the menstruous female and menstrual blood, bad), are antithetical and must be kept separate. Similarly, widespread menstrual taboos surrounding the planting and tending of food crops might also be explained in the same way. Substantiation for this formulation comes from John Burton's explanation of the reasoning behind certain menstrual taboos practiced among the African Nuer; that is, based on theoretical models proposed by Mary Douglas, Rodney Needham, Lévi-Strauss and other post-war anthropologists

who have studied the symbolizing process as a mode of cognition,[2] Burton proposes that the Nuer menstrual taboo which forbids sexual intercourse with a menstruant, and menstrual restrictions which prohibit females from tending cows or drinking milk during their periods, "...involve a symbolic separation of life from death, or more exactly life creating forces (semen, milk, pure) from substances symbolizing death (shed blood, danger)."[3] Specifically in relation to the sanction against intercourse with a menstruant Burton writes, "The necessity of maintaining the distance between ...bleeding women and potential life (intercourse) is...symbolic statement of the necessity for keeping life-creating processes from potential life destructive forces."[4]

Moreover, the Nuer male is enjoined to avoid intercourse with his menstruating wife out of "respect" for their unborn child. This is because within the Nuer belief system violation of the menstrual sex taboo supposedly results in abnormality or death to children who have not yet been conceived.[5] The notion that the violation of the menstrual sex taboo will produce damaged offspring or "freaks of nature" is also found among the Navajo Indians,[6] and is alluded to in certain non-canonical books of the Bible.[7] According to Hebrew belief intercourse with a menstruant will produce monsters, cretans, epileptics or insanity in the offspring of such an "ungodly" union.[8] Moreover, Crawfurd suggests that in Roman myth the reason that Vulcan was born with a deformity was because Juno and Jupiter engaged in sexual relations when Juno was "in her courses."[9]

Based on the explanation of Nuer menstrual taboos proposed by Burton, and the principles of sympathetic magic previously described, beliefs such as : (1) the menstruant and her blood are destructive to

the sources of life (represented by substances and events described earlier), (2) sexual intercourse with a menstruant is dangerous and will produce diseased or damaged offspring, and (3) the menstruant or menstrual blood cause abortion in animals and humans, can be understood in terms of the notion that harm and destruction are the consequence of 'mixing' life-creating or life-sustaining processes with those which represent death and death-related phenomena (symbolized by the menstruant and/or her blood). Moreover, there are a number of other kinds of danger and harm attributed to menstrual mana which can also be explained in terms of this inauspicious union of life and death categories.

For example, in Chapter I I indicated that Clellan Ford was of the opinion that the reasons for prohibiting the menstruant from being in areas in which artifacts were being manufactures were unclear.[10] Within the explanatory framework being presented here, the reasons for this restriction can be understood as an attempt to keep that which is associated with death (menstruant and her blood) separate from that which is associated with life, i.e., the creation of artifacts. In this instance, when these two categories or forces make contact, the result is faulty or ineffective objects, i.e., bows and arrows which miss their targets, spears which fly crookedly, canoes which do not flow properly, etc. Moreover, the consequences of this inauspicious union of opposites seems to be paralleled by that which occurs as a result of intercourse with a menstruating female, i.e., faulty offspring. The other common denominator here, of course, is that all these articles are used by males, and menstrual pollution is a form of female-related danger which has been considered especially destructive to males and male identified activities and objects.

Another cluster of menstrual taboos which can be understood within this explanatory framework are those which involve the beliefs that the presence of a menstruating female, or the menstrual discharge itself: (1) is harmful to ill persons (expressed among the Blackfoot Indians as "like a bullet she makes him worse), (2) destroys the curative power of medicines and/or (3) nullifies the power of medicine men, i.e., shamans, etc.[11,12]

Just to give a few examples of this type of menstrual harm, of which there are many, - in relation to the vitiating influence of the menstruant on medicines, Shimony reports that among various Iriquois Indian tribes menstruating females were prohibited from attending curing meetings; and that they were forbidden to prepare, touch, or even look at medicines, lest the power of the medicine be spoiled or killed instantly by the "poison of menstruation."[13] In ancient Greece and Rome a menstruant was not supposed to touch ivy or rue because according to Pliny's encyclopedia, at the touch of the menstruous female "both ivy and rue, plants possessed of highly medicinal virtue, will die instantly."[14] And, according to Ford, in ten of the societies within his cross-cultural sample it was believed that if a menstruant visited ill people they would become critically ill and die.[15]

It is my contention that the reasoning behind these menstruation-related beliefs and the associated taboos (for which I was unable to find any specific analysis in the anthropology literature) can be explained with reference to an analogical mode of thinking and the life-death separation concept proposed by Burton. That is, medicines and medicine men (shamans, etc.) can be defined as life-related substances or forces in that both promote healing, and presumably contain the power

to restore health or life force. The menstruant and menstrual blood, defined, symbolically, as anti-life or death-related forces, act to nullify or destroy the life-related healing power of medicines and medicine men. (In North American Indian cultures, if the female is a shaman she is also not permitted to prepare or administer medicines while menstruating.) Thus taboos which prohibit the menstruant from contact with these persons or substances can be understood in terms of an attempt to keep the forces of death separate from the forces of life.

In addition, the rationale behind menstrual taboos which protect ill people from the harm of menstrual mana would appear to be slightly different but similar. That is, it seems reasonable to consider ill people as more vulnerable to disease and death than well people, realistically as well as symbolically. In terms of the latter, Lévi-Strauss points out that in myth, which he views as mirroring primitive modes of symbolic thinking, disease commonly represents an intermediary state between life and death.[16] Since in many cultures menstruation has been associated with sickness (bleeding, injury, ultimately potential death), one explanation for the enforcement of these particular taboos is that via magical contagion (like produces like), the menstruant will convey her death-related energy to the ill. This must be avoided because by conveying this death-related force the life-death balance will tip and move to the death side, i.e., exacerbation of illness, or death itself.

On the one hand, then, taboos which prohibit the menstruant contact with the ill can be understood as yet another example of keeping that which is synonymous with death (menstruant and blood) separate from that which is life-related. In this instance, the life category, (or life force) is represented by the potential for cure and the restoration

of health associated with either medicine or treatment of illness. Thus it is restoration of health which the death force of the menstruant would supposedly disrupt. On the other hand, a union of death-related forces seems to also be suggested here. That is, a death force, represented by the menstruant and menstrual blood, combines with death forces represented by illness; and the result of this additive process, or what Lévi-Strauss refers to as an "excessive union" of forces"[17] is exacerbation of illness. More will be said about concepts of excessive union and opposition of forces shortly. However, returning for a moment to a point made in previous discussion in the beginning of Chapter II - I suggested that the Kaska Indian practice of planting a willow stick after returning from menstrual seclusion might be interpreted as a symbolic gesture marking a transition from a death-related state (temporary barrenness associated with menstruation) to a life-related state (the potential for conception).[18] Earlier, I also mentioned that after menstruation ended, Hebrew custom dictated that a female must take a purifying bath, the mikveh, "water of life."[19]

According to Rachael Adler, in the Bible the mikveh is called mayim chayim, "living water," as opposed to stagnant water. In this context she refers to Mircea Eliade's observation that in all cultures the purifying properties of water are related to its ability to nullify the past, regenerate, give symbolic new birth and in general, to restore the newness of things. Purification by water is typically associated with beginnings. Adler relates this to the symbolic purification of the mikveh, explaining that this "water of life" simulates the original living water, the primal sea from which all life comes, the womb of the world.[20]

There are two points to be made here. The first is that in these two very different cultures the transition from menstrual barrenness (categorized as an aspect of death) has been symbolized by substances or acts associated with life, i.e., bathing in living water or placing a green willow stick on a frozen lake. The second point is the symbolic meaning of these rituals lends further support to the idea that the underlying rationale for the existence of certain kinds of menstrual customs and beliefs is embedded in a system of thinking which is based on symbolic categories and associative patterns of thought.

Returning to another point made earlier, in Chapter II, it was also established that the universe in which menstrual mana operates is one which is animated with dynamic force. Therefore, it should be obvious by now that within such a universe life and death are not perceived as static ideas or categories. This mana-infused universe is one which is alive with movement and the exchange of energies. Life and death, then, are forces in motion, energic processes which are contained in things, people and events - potentially able to be released from people, things and events, such as the event of menstruation, the menstruant and menstrual blood. This universe is in effect a field of force in which there is a constant combining and re-combining of energies.

A simplified, physical energy model or metaphor might be used to describe the process of the transmission of menstrual mana, i.e., the inauspicious union of life and death categories just discussed. That is, one might imagine that when a death-related force, represented by the menstruant and her blood, comes in contact with a life-related force, symbolized by all the things and events discussed previously, a transfer of energy takes place in much the same way that energy is transformed

in oxidation and reduction reactions, i.e., electrons (or simply energy units) are both lost (oxidation) and gained (reduction). In terms of a menstrual-related death force coming into contact with a life force, life would operate as the oxidation agent (loss of energy units) and death would act as the reducing agent (gain of energy units). The result would be a diminishment of life energy or "charge" and an increase in death force or "charge."[21] In relation to menstruation, this interchange of energy forces was described earlier as the loss of vital force, an anti-life influence, or a tipping of the life-death balance. However, as I indicated, while the inauspicious union of life and death forces results in the kinds of menstrual harm just described, menstrual harm also seems to occur when there is a combination of like forces, such as the situation in which the death-related force associated with the menses combined with the death force that a state of poor health signifies.

Thus, overall, in terms of symbolic categories and combinations of energic force, many kinds of menstrual danger might be explained either in terms of: (1) patterns of symbolic thinking in which the combination or union of substances, events, forces which are symbolically opposite can result in harmful consequences, i.e., the harm of opposition; or (2) the union of similar substances, events, forces can result in harmful consequences, i.e., harm of similarities. It is the latter which can explain a symbolic paradox, to be discussed shortly. This dual line of reasoning is made more complex by the fact that in certain situations the harmfulness of menstrual mana can be transformed into positive power which serves to protect others from certain kinds of hostile environmental forces. Moreover, in some areas of the world the power of menstrual blood, which for the most part supposedly results in the exacerbation of

illness, has also been accorded curative power.

Menstrual Power: Concepts of Conversion, Transvaluation and Transgression

In European and Indian folklore curative powers accorded to the menstrual discharge have varied, ranging from a vague, "helful in curing most diseases," to specifics, such as reduction of fever, cure of skin diseases, cure of the bite of a mad dog, etc.[22] Central to the discussion here is the fact that the diseases or injurious effects attributed to the menstruant or menstrual blood are in some instances the same as those which can be cured or helped by the intervention of menstrual mana. For instance, the menstrual discharge, supposedly the cause of skin diseases, is also the cure. And similarly, while the menstruant supposedly causes madness in dogs, the menstrual discharge aides in curing the bite of a mad dog.[23] The significance of this cause and cure relationship will be apparent shortly.

In a wide range of cultures one finds the belief that the power of the menstrual discharge can be used against the forces of evil - to deter or render powerless the evil eye, evil spirits, or evil spells. For instance, according to Frazer, in late nineteenth century Scotland menstrual blood was supposedly able to preserve a new cow from the evil eye.[24] Similarly, Steiner notes that in Arabic cultures rags soaked in menstrual blood and tied around the heads of children have been used to ward off the evil eye.[25]

According to Pliny's Natural History, in ancient Rome it was believed that sprinkling door posts with the menstrual discharge served to render ineffective all the spells of magicians.[26] In many North American Indian cultures menstrual blood was regarded as a protection against

evil forces in the form of monsters or demons.[27] For instance, in certain areas of North America fibers soaked with menstrual fluid were placed in the bows of boats to ward off river demons.[28] And Margaret Mead reports that among the Manus of New Guinea a male who believes himself to be under the influence of sorcery goes to a menstruous female to have his chest pounded, which supposedly leads to the undoing of the evil spell.[29,30] What is reflected in all these menstrual curative and/or protective beliefs, and many others which are similar, is both a transvaluation and a transgression. In terms of the former, I mean that which is originally valued negatively is transvalued and judged positively. And in terms of transgressive magic according to Laura Makarius, this kind of magic involves violation of taboos and use of tabooed substances, such as menstrual blood to obtain benefits. As she describes it,

> The magic of transgression is rooted in sympathetic magic...if a man seizes a menstrual cloth in order to direct its dangerous properties towards the enemy, the dangerous element threatening him by sympathetic magic is rejected and denied. The breaker of the taboo had indeed been motivated primarily by an association of ideas...through the violation of taboo he exposes himself to the dangers against which the transgression would preserve him.[31]

Applying this explanation to the protective or transgressive use of menstrual blood, what is most important is that the original state of the blood is evil and dangerous, just as the original valuing of the menstrual discharge, is negative. Only secondarily is the evil and dangerous power inherent in the female's blood transvalued and transformed into "good" by being directed against hostile environmental forces in the form of monsters, the evil eye, disease, or even destructive insects.[32]

In effect, the use of such magic involves fighting fire with

fire; and in the examples given, the combative power of menstrual blood is obviously regarded as stronger than the evil or harmful magic which it is used to deter. There are several points to be made here. As noted, the basis for the power of menstrual good is derived originally from evil. Thus, on a very profound level, this establishes a connection between the menses, the menstruous female and evil. Similarly the starting point for the cure of disease is the association of the menstruant with disease (this association will be considered again later). However, if a conversion of menstrual power is to take place a particular situation or relationship between this power and the environment is necessary. That is, in its original, non-relative state the power of menstrual blood is evil and dangerous. Only when it is pitted <u>against</u> something does it become transvalued and transformed into good.

For instance, the power of menstrual blood, in its uncontrolled or what might be called 'natural' state has been believed to cause disease and injury. In addition, the influence of the menstruant, which I have conceptualized as symbolic of a death-related force, has also been associated with the exacerbation of illness or disease. However, this death-related force or energy is converted into what might be considered a life-related force (restoration of health involved in curing) in situations in which menstrual power is harnessed or directed toward curing.[33] The same type of reasoning can be applied to the conversion of menstrual destructiveness and evil. That is, menstrual power, in its natural (wild) state is basically dangerous. However, when directed and controlled (tamed, domesticated) its uses are beneficent. Thus the field in which menstrual mana operates seems to determine its value and its use. In what might be called an unbounded energy field (wild menstrual

power) menstrual mana is inherently dangerous, especially to males. In a bounded energy field - when the mana is directed and controlled - its use can be beneficient.[34]

In the Straussian idiom, taken up in two essays on conceptions of women in primitive cultures by Edwin Ardener[35] and Jean la Fontaine,[36] the unbounded (wild) power of menstrual mana would represent "nature," which is synonymous with "female"; and the domestication or control of menstrual mana, via these conversions plus various rituals and taboos surrounding menstruation, would represent "culture," which is synonymous with "male." This conceptualization of male (culture)-female (nature), which appears world-wide, will be considered again in subsequent discussion. However, returning to the notion of conversion of menstrual mana in The Primitive Mind, Lévi-Strauss presents an interesting example of such a transformation of power from which an explanation of the kind of 'field conditions' necessary for this transformation to take place can be extrapolated.[37]

The Hidatsa Indians of North America, like most hunting peoples, held the belief that menstruating females had a harmful influence on the hunt. However, Lévi-Strauss points out that the Hidatsa also believed that the presence of a menstruant was beneficial to the hunting of eagles. One of the reasons for this exception, according to Lévi-Strauss, is that the menstruous female was believed to have an enhancing effect on the bait used to catch the eagle. That is, the menstruant and menstrual blood acquired a positive significance in the context of the eagle hunt because the menstrual discharge "evokes the bait as blood and decay."[38]

What is being suggested by Lévi-Strauss is that via magical

contagion the organic decay associated with the menstrual discharge is transmitted to the bait (described as a blood stained carcass destined to rapid decay).[39] This results in an increase in the drawing power of the bait, which in turn makes the hunt more successful. As in other situactions in which transgressive magic is employed, this also involves use of a tabooed substance to obtain benefits, in this case the success of the hunt. If, however, via this transmission of organic decay the menstruant or menstrual blood sympathetically increases the force or drawing power of the bait, why isn't the power of the menstrual discharge used in this way more often? That is, it is reasonable to assume that similar bait is used in other kinds of hunting; and even if it is not, considering that the menses have been associated with death, why doesn't menstrual mana enhance the power of a hunter or supply an additive death force as it supplies an additive 'decay force' in the situation just described?

Although Lévi-Strauss does not raise this question, an answer can be teased out of his analysis of this exceptional situation. That is, he explains that eagle hunting differs from other kinds of hunting in a number of ways. The major difference, however, is the symbolic and physical distance between the hunter and his quarry.

Eagles are hunted by hiding in pits dug into the earth.[40] The eagle, attracted by the bait placed at the edge of the pit, is captured with bare hands. What is pertinent here is that in the literal sense the hunter assumes a very low (physical) position (the pit) while the quarry he is trying to capture is very high. The symbolic juxtaposition as I interpret it is: hunter (low, earth, pit) and eagle (high, flying, sky). Moreover, Lévi-Strauss points out there is a symbolic distance between the hunter and the eagle in that the eagle is at the top

of the sacred hierarchy and the hunter, in comparison, is low. Thus on both a concrete and a symbolic level there is a great distance or gap between the hunter and the hunted, much more so than in other kinds of hunting.

In the ordinary hunting situation the pollution of the menstruant or menstrual blood are considered dangerous because, as Lévi-Strauss explains it, this situation is one in which there is an excessive union of forces, "too close a conjunction between two things which should be kept separate."[41] In relation to the symbolic dangers of menstrual mana, this can be interpreted as an excessive union of death-related forces (death involved in the shedding of blood, and the death-related aspects of menstrual blood).

Lévi-Strauss further describes the ordinary hunting situation in which pollution, such as that associated with the menses, enters as one "saturated" with a "redundancy" of forces, which results in a neutralization of power. This menstrual-related neutralization can assumably diminish the hunter's prowess, affect his luck negatively or result in wounding or death. However, in relation to the eagle hunting situation, Lévi-Strauss writes, "The conjunction of forces is not sufficient...and the only means to remedy the situation is to allow menstrual pollution to enter."[42] Thus while the power of the hunter would ordinarily be cancelled or neutralized by the power of menstrual pollution, in this particular instance the redundancy of forces, i.e., decay plus decay or death and death in the theoretical schema I have postulated, is beneficent because it is needed to fill a gap. Thus in sum, menstrual harm is transformed into menstrual good because it enhances the bait via sympathetic contagion, lessens the distance between hunter and hunted and increases

the chances of the hunter's success.

In relation to metaphorical energy fields referred to earlier, what Lévi-Strauss seems to be describing is an instance in which menstrual power is rendered beneficial because there is a special set of circumstances, i.e., an energy field with boundaries, one in which the force of menstrual mana is being controlled, directed, used for a specific purpose. Thus due to the specific conditions of this situation menstrual power is not dangerous, e.e., it is not moving freely (wild). Extrapolating an analysis from the Straussian theoretical framework, male (culture) has harnessed the power of menstrual mana (female, nature), thus effecting a conversion of potentially destructive force to positive use. Or as Simone de Beauvoir describes it "...Man became master of woman; and the very powers that are frightening in wild beasts or in unconquered elements became qualities valuable to the owner able to domesticate them."[43]

Paradoxes

At the end of Chapter III, I noted that pregnant females had been attributed power for harm similar to those associated with the menses. That is, in many cultures it has been believed that pregnant females transmit what was conceptualized earlier as an anti-life influence. For instance, the pregnant female, like the menstruating female, supposedly has a deleterious influence on vegetation (particularly new growth), can bring harm to infants, and also interferes with the manufacture of artifacts. Moreover, the pregnant female, like the menstruating female, has been excluded from religious or ritual ceremonies and has been regarded as particularly harmful to culturally defined male activities and male virility, i.e., prowess in the hunt, war, etc.[44]

While beliefs about the destructive power of the menstruant and menstrual blood seem to be somewhat more widespread and abundant than those regarding pregnancy, the similarities between menstrual power and 'pregnant power' provoke a number of questions. The first is, how is it that a state which is obviously symbolic of life (pregnancy) can sympathetically transmit an anti-life influence which is similar to that which I have defined as the death-related force of the menstruant or menstrual blood? Secondly, what accounts for the fact that both pregnant and menstruating females are debilitating to maleness and various kinds of culturally defined masculine activities? The first question will be considered here, and the second shortly.

To answer the first question, we must return to explanations which involve symbolic concepts of death and life and the energic forces associated with these categories. Within such an explanatory framework the paradoxical similarities between the anti-life influence attributed to the menstruant and the pregnant female can be understood in several ways. It was established that the death-related influence of menstrual mana on certain substances or processes representing life could be explained in terms of the inauspicious union of opposites, or the inauspicious union of similarities, the latter being reflected, for example, in the harmful consequences which supposedly result when the death-related force associated with the menses combines with the death-related force of the ill. This union of similarities seems to provide an explanation for the anti-life influence of the pregnant female on that which represents sources of life or processes of growth. That is, the life-related force of the pregnant female combines with the life-related force of those things or processes symbolizing life (too close a conjunction as

Lévi-Strauss describes it), which results in the contagious transmission of a harmful influence similar to the anti-life properties conveyed by menstrual mana.

Moreover, in this regard, the similarity between the harmful power of the menstruating female (representing death) and the pregnant female (representing life) seems to be based on another likeness, i.e., that of extremes. What I mean is that in the magical-religious worldview both pregnancy and menstruation have been regarded as states of extreme power and force, as is clearly indicated by the fact that both have been surrounded by taboos designed to protect the individual and others from the potential danger associated with this energy. Thus it would seem that the quality of 'extremeness' is the common denominator which also explains the similarities between the anti-life influence of the menstruant and the pregnant female.

However, returning to life and death paradoxes, while there is no indication in the anthropology literature that pregnant females bring harm to other pregnant females, we know from previous discussion that menstruating females can sympathetically convey menstrual abortion to pregnant humans or animals. Paradoxically, menstrual blood, because it has been associated with life as well as death, has also been believed to sympathetically enhance the procreative capacity of barren females. That is, in some cultures a heavy menstrual flow has been associated with fecundity,[45,46] and as such it has supposedly been able to increase the fecundity of other females via magical contagion. For instance, Abel and Joffee report that in rural areas of Italy, the menstrual linens of a female with a heavy menstrual flow have been laundered with the menstrual linens of a barren female, in the hope that the sympathetic transmission

just described would occur.[47] Similarly, in various regions of India it has also been believed that this menstrual-related fertility can be transmitted to barren females.[48,49]

One might speculate that the increase in procreative potential which the menstrual discharge of a fecund female conveys represents a kind of filling in the gap which is similar to that which Lévi-Strauss describes as occurring in the Hidatsa eagle hunt, i.e., menstrual pollution enters to remedy a situation in which there is an insufficiency of force. Moreover, one could also speculate that it is this lack (barrenness) which provides the conditions which are necessary for the positive (life-related) aspect of menstrual mana to enter and operate beneficially.

In relation to the life-related aspects of menstrual mana Ronald Berndt makes the observation that in New Guinea, for men, menstruation has a dual significance. As a diffuse generalized concept, it is ritually and symbolically expressive of life, energy, power and strength, but in every day life it is a source of extreme danger to males.[50] This statement, which seems to be fairly typical of males' reactions to and evaluations of menstruation in preliterate cultures throughout the world, suggests that the power, energy and strength associated with the menses is threatening; and that the attitude in this regard is one of ambivalent awe - a mixture of fear, respect and wonder. This awe/fear reaction to menstruation is particularly apparent at puberty. At this time the girls newly arrived child-bearing potential is usually considered a sign of her reproductive power (life-force). However, it is also during the first few menstrual periods that the female is considered most dangerous to maleness, much more so than at any other time in her adult life (when menstruating). While elaborate menstrual taboos at puberty seem to be designed

in part to protect the female from her own dangerous power and to insure a large progeny, they also serve to protect the male from females who, as de Beauvoir describes it, are at "the height of femininity."[51]

Pregnancy is also a time of heightened femininity, as is the childbirth situation. The parturient female, like the menstruating female, has also been considered a threat to masculine virility, i.e., renders implements used for masculine pursuits ineffective or diminishes the ability of the males for these pursuits.[52] As Laura Makarius writes,

> It should be obvious that the female sexual organ and associated substances do not arouse the same fear in women as in men. It is the men in particular who stand in fear of menstrual and lochial blood...and it is therefore from the masculine point of view that these substances acquire magical qualities...these ...are magical only by virtue of the dangerous character ascribed to them by men. The supposed effect of a menstruating woman, running through the fields to destroy insects, is due to the destructive power which men attribute to menstrual blood, so that it may be said that this magical power springs from the relation between feminine blood and masculine fear. It is masculine fear, responsible for the taboo on women's blood, which endows the latter with the capacity to produce <u>mana</u>....[53]

Thus the common denominator underlying the dangerous power associated with menstruation (particularly at puberty), pregnancy, childbirth (and loss of virginity) seems to be loss of masculinity. All these states involve forms of female biologically-based, 'natural' power which, in the Straussian idiom, are harmful to masculine (cultural) pursuits. All these states of exaggerated femininity also seem to be regarded ambivalently by males - with fear and awe, horror and veneration, respect and contempt. The fact that they have all been surrounded by taboos is in itself a reflection of this ambivalence or dual regard.

In relation to the ambivalence with which males have regarded the menstruous aspect of femininity, Marilyn Strathern notes that in New Guinea there is an implicit judgment of inferiority or weakness within this response which is juxtaposed by a judgment of strength and power. Moreover, she also points out that this (inferior) weak-but-strong dichotomy in relation to the menstruous aspect of femininity is also articulated by males in other contexts. In this regard she writes,

> Men's stereotypes of women involve a double ambivalence--not only are their pejoratives balanced by a recognition of women's essential productive contribution, we see that derogatory statements are internally inconsistent. Women are obstinate as well as capricious, strong as well as weak. While female strength and weakness are both "bad," "weakness being an inability to act with conviction, "strength" being an egotistic pursuit of ends without regard for others, it is clear that men are both denying that women have any effective power and ascribing such a power to them.[54]

Paradoxically, it is the female's weakness to which strength has been attributed, and vice versa. As will be apparent in subsequent discussion, this shifting duality, as well as the denial and ascription of power to females by males, represents an aspect of the ambivalence toward females which males have expressed since time immemorial.

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

[1]Margaret Mead, Male and Female: a Study of the Sexes in a changing World (New York: Morrow, 1935; reprint ed., 1968), pp. 26, 33.

[2]Raymond Firth, Symbols: Public and Private (New York: Cornell University Press, Cornell Paperbacks, 1975), See chaps. 4 and 5.

[3]Some Nuer notions of purity and danger, Anthropos, 69:530-31, 1974.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]G.A. Reichard, Navajo Religion (Princeton: Princeton/Bollingen Paperbacks, 1974), p. 29.

[7]Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary of Folklore, Anthropology and Legend, 1950 ed., s.v. "Menstruation" by N. Joffee; R. Crawfurd, Notes on the superstitions of menstruation, Lancet,2(Dec. 18, 1915); 1333.

[8]T.M. Abel and N.F. Joffee, Cultural backgrounds of female puberty, Amer. J. Psychoth., 4:101, 1950.

[9]Superstitions, p. 1335.

[10]C. Ford, A Comparative Study of Human Reproduction, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

[11]North America; C. Wissler, The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians, American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers, 7, Pt. 1 (New York, 1911), p. 29;* Thomas Stern, The Klamath Tribe: a People and Their Resurrection (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), p. 8;* Alfred L. Kroeber, Ethnology of the Gros Ventre, American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers, 8 (New York, 1908), p. 81;* D. Zeisberger, David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indians, eds. A. Butler and W.N. Schwarze (Columbus, Ohio: Heer, 1910), p. 14;* J. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1912-15) 10:54; Ford, Comparative Study, T. Ferenbach, Commanches: the Destruction of a People (New York: Knopf, 1974), p. 43; J.A. Tert, Field Notes on theTahltan and Kaska Indians, Anthropologica, 3:152, 1956.*

[12]Africa; Robert McNetting, Marital relations in the Jos Plateau of Nigeria, Amer. Anthro., 71:1044, 1969; M. Wilson, Rituals of Kinship Among the Nyakyusa (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 131; Ford, Comparative Study; Frazer, 10:82; Karen Sacks, Engles revisited: Woman, the organization of production, and private property, in Woman and Culture, eds. M.Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 217; South America; J. Wilbert, Notes on Guahibo kinship and social organization, Sw. J. Anthro., 13:97, 1975; Melanesia; Ford, Comparative Study; Frazer, 10:44; India; Ford, Comparative Study.

[13]Conservation Among the Iriquois at the Six Nations Reserve (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 217.

[14]Natural History, cited by Frazer, Golden Bough, 10:96.

[15]Comparative Study, p. 15.

[16]The Raw and the Cooked (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 61.

[17]Ibid., passim.

[18]J. Honigman, The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction. Yale University Publication in Anthropology, no. 51 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 127.

[19]Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation."

[20]Tu´mah and Tohararah: Ends and beginnings, Response, 18:117, 122, 1973.

[21]The notion that the universe is composed of forces or elements which are dynamically inter-related is by no means limited to the magic-religious world view. There have been a number of fairly recent publications in which the concepts of modern physics have been explored in relation to the religious world view. See, e.g., B. Fritjof Kapra, The Tao of Physics (Berkeley: Shambala, 1975), and Richard Beckett, Emptiness and Movement (Minneapolis, Minn.: Quest, 1971).

[22]For instance, Esther Harding writes, "In India the Mother Goddess is thought to menstruate regularly; during these times the statues of the goddess and blood stained cloth are displayed as evidence that she has had her sickness. These clothes are very highly prised as medicine for most illness. In, Woman's Mysteries (London: Rider, 1971), p. 162. Also see Pliny, Natural History, 7:13; Crawfurd, pp. 1332, 1335; Abel and Joffee, p. 96; Frazer, 10:98. In The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (1962 ed., s.v., "Serpent Worship"), it is reported that the Matacos (South America) believe that cure for a snake bites is to drop menstrual blood into the wound. Among the Gran Chaco also of South America (Frazer, 10:98), to cure the bite of a ray fish the wounded limb was smoked and then a menstruous female sat on it.

[23]Pliny, 7:13.

[24]Frazer, 10:98. Similar beliefs are reported in other areas of Europe. In India menstrual power is supposed to be effective in driving evil ghosts (Charels) away. G.W. Briggs, The Chámas (London and New York: Calcutta Ass. Press, 1920), p. 123.*

[25]Taboo (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 66.

[26]Pliny, 7:13.

[27]Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation." Also the Cherokee legend of the monster who is destroyed by 7 menstruous females is an example of the

protective powers of menstrual blood. J. Mooney, Myths of the Cherokee (New York: Johnson Reprint Co, 1970), pp. 216-217.

[28]Clellan S. Ford, Smoke From Their Fires (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 7.

[29]Sex and Temperament (New York: Morrow, 1968), p. 110.

[30]And in relation to providing protection against the evils of menstruation itself, Audrey Richards reports that among the African Bemba, who have been mentioned several times before, a ritual called ukumukoktala is performed for an infant. In this ritual raw food spat on the baby by a menstruating female supposedly results in immunity from the dangerous power of menstruating females in the present and in later years. In Chisungu (London: Farber & Farber, 1956), p. 31.

[31]The magic of transgression, Anthropos, 69:544, 1974.

[32]In terms of the latter, I am referring to the widespread belief that the menstrual discharge was an effective insecticide. In ancient and premodern Europe, as well as among certain North American Indians, menstruating females were supposedly called upon to walk around fields in which crops grew in order to rid the area of harmful insects. Frazer, 10:98; Pliny (Natural History, 7:19): "If a woman strips herself while she is menstruating and walks around a field of wheat, the catepillars, worms, beetles and other vermin will fall from the ears of corn."

[33]The only instance I could find of menstrual blood having positive value in itself was among the Ainu of Japan (B. Pilsudski, Pregnancy, birth and miscarriage among the inhabitants of Sakhaln Island, Anthropos, 5: 773, 1910).* For males a drop of menstrual blood is supposed to bring prosperity in business. This would seem to suggest that the Ainu emphasize the life and not the death-related aspects of the menses.

[34]In this context it is interesting to note that among the Kaska, as well as the neighboring Pelly River Indians, (Honigman, p. 124), when the tribe was traveling it was customary for the menstruating female to walk far behind. She was accompanied by other females who layed green willow boughs on places where the menstruant's path crossed other trails. Given the concepts being considered here, it would seem as if the boughs placed specifically at junction points were serving the purpose of containing menstrual mana - stopping it from traveling out onto these crosspaths. Moreover, in relation to concepts discussed previously, the fact that green willow boughs were used to stop the spread of pollution also suggests an 'undoing' or neutralization of the death-related force of menstrual mana with an object symbolizing life.

[35]Belief and the problems of women, in An Interpretation of Ritual, ed. J.S. la Fontaine (London: Tavistock, 1971), pp. 140-58.

[36]Ritualization of women's life crisis in Bugisu, in An Interpretation of Ritual, ed. J.S. la Fontaine (London: Tavistock, 1971), pp. 156-84.

[37]The Primitive Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 51-52.

[38]Ibid., p. 52

[39]Ibid.

[40]Lévi-Strauss (Ibid.) calls this a paradoxical situation because the hunter is in effect the trap, i.e., in order to carry out this particular kind of hunt the hunter must adopt the posture of a trapped animal by going into the pit.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]The Second Sex, (New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 143.

[44]Among many possible references here - Edward Norbeck, Pollution and taboo in contemporary Japan, Sw. J. Anthro., 8:277, 1952; Reichard, p. 174; E. Crawley and T. Besterman, The Mystic Rose (London: Boni & Liveright, 1927), p. 9; Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Primitives and the Supernatural (New York: Dutton, 1935), p. 326; Elizabeth Colson, Marriage and the Family Among the Plateau Tonga of Rhodesia (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), p. 139; and Frazer, 1:139, 147-50.

[45]For instance, in the Talmud (Book of Niddah, pp. 217-18) a heavy menstrual flow is associated with female fecundity; Abel and Joffee, p. 93.

[46]In, The Premenstrual Syndrome (London: Heineman, 1964) Katherine Dalton, a physician who has studied the physiological and behavioral concommitants of the menstrual cycle over the last 20 years, suggests that females with heavy menstrual flows do tend to be more fertile than those who do not have heavy flows. Davy Levy (Psychosomatic studies of some aspects of maternal behavior, Psychosomatic Medicine, 4:223-227, 1942) found significant correlations between heaviness of menstrual flow and maternal behavior, i.e., females with heavier menstrual flows exhibited more maternal behavior.

[47]Female puberty, p. 93. Abel and Joffee (Ibid.) also report that in Italy infants were wrapped in the soiled menstrual linens of their mothers in order to ensure a large progeny as adults. In The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 1962 ed., s.v. "Serpent Worship," it is reported that among gypsies barren females supposedly became fertile by sprinkling menstrual blood on the place where they had seen a snake.

[48]Stephen Fuchs, Birth and childhood among the Balakis, Man in India, 12:74, 1934.

[49]The association between menstruation and fertility is also reflected in a number of other ways. Menstrual taboos which were referred to earlier as personal restrictions, i.e., movement, laughter, scratching, also seem to be related to a concern with the protection of female

fertility. See Levi-Strauss (Raw and Cooked, pp. 124-32) for an explanation of why excess laughing is dangerous.

In addition, in certain areas of the world, the female is warned to be careful of the disposal of her menstrual blood lest it be used in sorcery to diminish her child-bearing potential. Leopold J. Popisil, Kapuaku Papuans and their law. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 45* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1958), p. 45; la Fontaine, p. 164; Diane Jacobson, Indian Women: Goddesses and Wives, in Many Sisters, ed. Carol J. Matthiesen (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 114.

[50]Excess and Restraint: Social Control Among a New Guinea Mountain People (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 87.

[51]Second Sex, p. 140.

[52]Clellan Ford, On the analysis of behavior for cross-cultural comparison, in Cross Cultural Approaches: Readings in Comparative Research (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1964), p. 16; Frazer, 1:149-57; Crawley and Besterman, p. 51; R. Briffault, The Mothers (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 238. Also see Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Churching the Women." World-wide, the pollution associated with childbirth is similar to that associated with menstruation. Menstrual huts are the huts in which females give birth.

[53]Transgression, p. 547.

[54]Women Inbetween (New York: Seminar, 1972), p. 162.

*Source materials in HRAF files.

CHAPTER V

THE MENSES: BLOOD OF DESIRE AND DISGUST, CROSS-CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL VIEWS

> There are men--and perfectly normal men--on whom this stimulus menstrual blood casts a spell that is almost irresistible....The knowledge that menstruation has begun drives many a man into the embrace of the wife he loves.[1]
>
> --Theodoor Van de Velde

The Menses: Menstrual Aphrodesia, Amourous Snakes and Love Magic

Esther Harding,[2] George Groddeck,[3] Bruno Bettleheim[4] and a number of other theorists[5] have suggested that the menstruating female is particularly sexually arousing to males. The implication is that this arousal takes place on a subliminal or 'old brain' level. For instance, in this regard Freud speculates that the genesis of menstrual taboos might be traced back to an "organic repression" as a defense against a "phase of development that has been surmounted."[6] The organic repression that Freud is referring to here is the repression of olfactory stimuli as a significant element in sexual attraction. As Vieda Skultans writes,

> In other words, Freud is saying that woman is at her most attractive during menstruation. That for some unknown reason the natural process of this attraction has been stemmed, with the result that the rigid barriers have been erected against the possibility of experiencing consciously this attraction. Hence the prevalence of taboos surrounding menstruation.[7]

Crawfurd[8] and Harding[9] have suggested that the scent of menstrual blood is the subliminal stimulus which attracts males.in much the same way that

the odor of a female animal in heat draws male animals.[10]

There are two clusters of menstrual-related beliefs found in vastly different areas of the world in which the content is strongly suggestive of a theme of male sexual arousal. One of these is a set of beliefs involving menstruation and snakes; and the other involves the use of menstrual blood as an aphrodesiac in love magic. In relation to the first, in menstrual legends and beliefs throughout the world, the snake often appears as an amorous fellow who exhibits a definite attraction for the menstruant. For example, according to Shimony, Iriquois squaws were warned not to walk in wooded areas while menstruating because snakes would follow them.[11] Among other people, the intentions of the snake have been more explicit. This is reflected in beliefs that the menstruant will attract "serpent love" or provoke "amorous attacks by snakes."[12] As indicated earlier, in some parts of the world the snake displays his masculine interest by biting the female or having intercourse with her which supposedly brings on the first menstrual flow. In terms of this belief, certain East Bolivian Indian tribes send an older female searching for a snake with a stick when a girl begins to menstruate.[13] The association of the snake with the menstruant is one which has appeared in a wide variety of cultures and historical eras.

The phallic aspects of the snake are suggested by both its physical characteristics (shape, extending, swelling, secreting fluids in certain species) and its activities (penetrating cracks and crevices, burrowing into holes in the earth). In the traditional psychoanalytic literature the snake is a phallic symbol. According to Freud it was the most important symbol of the male organ.[14] Moreover, Slater points out that the association of the snake with the penis preceded the writings

of Freud by a century in the work of Knight.[15] Actually the snake is a polyvalent symbol. As Slater,[16], Campbell,[17] and Neumann[18] point out, in different mythological contexts the snake can represent life and death, male and female. In this particular context, however, the phallic interpretation of the snake does seem valid, as does the notion that the sexual attraction of the snake for the menstruating female is symbolic of the male's sexual desire.

In relation to the use of menstrual blood in love magic, Raymond Crawfurd states:

> Menstrual fluid has always been reckoned to have a powerful influence over the affections of men and has held pride of place as an ingredient in the love charms and by girls to would be lovers. In modern Germany [1915] girls have administered drops of menstrual blood in coffee to their sweethearts to make sure of retaining their affections....[19]

The practice of using menstrual blood to seduce the male or make him fall "passionately" in love has been reported in Spain and France,[20] rural Vietnam,[21] rural Greece,[22] and rural America.[23] According to Jean Clébert, the gypsies of Central Europe used the menstrual discharge in love potions, mixed with burnt apple pips;[24] and in Morrocco menstrual blood has been mixed with snails and served up in a tasty dish.[25] Seduction via the use of menstrual blood has also been reported in Africa,[26] and among certain North American Indian tribes.[27] Most of these reports indicate that the menstrual discharge has been disguised with food or drink and served to the unsuspecting male. However, in certain areas of Australia, menstrual blood is rubbed in the hair to get full benefits of its aphrodesiacal power.[28,29]

In Rhodesia the strength of the belief in the potency of

menstrual blood as a source of powerful love magic is made clear in a fairly recent study of witchcraft. In this regard, J.R. Crawford reports:

> Women have confessed to killing a new-born child in order to prepare love potions for its mother. The blood of the child seems in this instance to have been used as a substitute for the menstrual blood which its mother was unable to produce on account of her pregnancy.[30]

This menstrual aphrodisia-love magic relationship is also reflected in association with witchcraft as suggested by certain beliefs about the power of the European witch to seduce males. For instance, according to Julio Caro-Baroja young witches were supposededly experts at love magic. Bewitching occurred by means of the "efflux of beams out of their eyes" and the use of the menstrual fluid. However, while males were supposedly lured by the promise of sexuality in association with beams from the witch's eyes, and the scent of menstrual blood, the results of this bewitchment were far different from the promise, for the belief was that "this strange blood [menstrual] , being quite repugnant to the nature of man, infects the rest of him and makes him sick; and then this contagion will continue as long as he has any warm blood left in him."[31] Thus the consequences of being seduced by the witch's menstrual-related love magic are similar to those that supposedly result from contact with a menstruant in a wide range of preliterate cultures.

According to Honigman, despite the belief that intercourse with a menstruant resulted in sickness and death, Kaska Indian boys supposedly took advantage of the easy accessibility of girls in menstrual seclusion to have intercourse with them.[32] In a recent anthropological study, Schlegel reports that Hopi Indian males are more sexually attracted to the female when she is menstruating than when she is not.[33] And

according to Crawfurd, historical sources suggest that the sexual desirability of menstruating females was recognized in the Middle Ages.[34]

In summary, then, the widespread use of menstrual blood in love magic, along with the symbolic material which reveals a theme of menstrual-related sexual arousal suggests that on some subliminal level the olfactory stimulation of the menses has engendered strong sexual desires in males. Perhaps underneath our civilized veneers it still does, as is suggested by the content of one of Molly Bloom's sililoquys in Ulysses: "Oh Jesus wait yes that thing has come on me yes now wouldn't that pester the soul out of a body unless he likes it some men do."[35] In an article entitled, "Is the Curse Sexy? which appeared in a recent issue of Viva, the following comment made by a male interviewee: "I don't want to sound like a freak, but it [menstruation] actually turns me on...,"[36] reveals an even more direct expression of menstrual-related sexual arousal. In this same article the following comment was made by a female interviewee: "The minute it starts I feel flagrantly sexy... Bring on the troops! I love men who'll make love to me during those first days who can dig the elemental juiciness."[37]

This suggests, then, that not only is the male attracted to the menstruating female, but that female sexuality might also be heightened during the menses.[38] In 1901 Havelock Ellis proposed that females felt increased sexual desire during the menses, but that social convention prohibited them from acting out these desires. He wrote, "...the tendency of the female toward sexual intercourse during menstruation has everywhere been overlaid by the ideas of a culture which has insisted on regarding menstruation as a supernatural phenomenon...."[39]

In Patterns of Sexual Behavior, Ford and Beach made the

observation that in the preliterate cultures they surveyed the taboo which prohibited sexual intercourse was a male choice and had very little to do with alterations or lack of sexual desire in the female.[40] And in a similar vein Ashley Montagu discusses the myth that females have no sexual desire during the menses in terms of it "having...pleased man to think that his woman cannot have any desire unconnected with his own."[41] Empirical and theoretical research indicates that females do experience increased sexual desire during menstruation[42] (and premenstrually[43]). However, whether this desire will be fulfilled during menstruation is another story. As I mentioned in Chapter I, Paula Weidiger's menstrual questionnaire survey indicated that while 40% of a sample of 520 females reported being desirous of intercourse during menstruation their partners were not interested.[44]

In mid- and late nineteenth century England menstruating was also associated with the heightened sexuality of females, but in a slightly different way than is being discussed here. In the medical world, which was the only sphere of Victorian society in which it was socially acceptable to discuss menstruation,[45] it was a commonly held opinion that the menstrual flow was necessary to drain away the female's inordinate sexual desire.[46] In the following statement which appeared in both a gynecology and physiology textbook in the mid-nineteenth centurn this belief is made quite explicit:

> In God's infinite wisdom...might not this monthly discharge be ordained for the purpose of controlling woman's violent sexual passions ...by unloading the uterine vessels...so as to prevent the promiscuous intercourse which would prove destructive to the purest...interests of civil life.[47]

What this Victorian menstrual-related view of female sexuality

reflects is an aspect of the myth of the Sexually Insatiable Female. She is the Female who the male can never satisfy sexually, or if he tries, he dies trying, having had his vital energy destroyed in attempting the impossible. The Sexually Insatiable Female bears close resemblance to the Sexual Temptress. She is the Female who seduces the hapless male and destroys either his spirituality or his vital force. The menstrual-related version of this mythic female is the witch who seduces males with her menstrual aphrodisia.

In the contemporary world this mythic view (the Sexually Insatiable Female) seems to be reflected in the male's hysterical fear (usually expressed in his therapist's office) that because of the advent of birth control pills and the Women's Movement his sexual potency will be shattered.[48] This mythic view also appears in Mary Jane Sherfey's explanation for why females have always been supressed by males. Sherfey argues that pre-civilization females were hypersexual, that they were "totally incapable of controling their sexual drives,"and that this hyper-sexuality had to be controlled, otherwise civilization would never have advanced to its present highly developed state. Thus for purposes of cultural evolution, which in large part consisted of getting females to inhibit their inordinate sexual passions long enough to settle down and raise families, males were forced to suppress and dominate females.[49] In this regard Sherfey writes,

> If that suppression has been, at times, unduly oppressive or cruel, I suggest the reason has been neither man's sadistic or selfish infliction of servitude upon helpless women, nor women's weakness or inborn masochism. The strength of the drive determines the force required to suppress it.[50]

Returning to Victorian views of female sexuality, we find

the Sexually Insatiable Female standing side by side with her shockingly, absolute opposite - the female with no sexual desire, the female who is as pure and white as the driven snow, who sees sex as a duty and an obligation, something that bestial males demand, and something that must be done in order to propagate the species. An aspect of this mythic view finds expression in the modern world in the desire-for-motherhood before desire-for-sex theory of female sexuality which appears in the work of Judith Bardwick.[51] A recent review of the image of female sexuality in gynecology textbooks suggests that this Bardwick-type view prevails. In these texts this view is typically expressed in statements such as, "The fundamental biologic factor in woman is the urge of motherhood balanced by the fact that sexual pleasure is entirely secondary or even absent."[52]

Each mythic view of the female is obviously an exaggeration - one that is typical of the ambivalent appraisal of female character which is characteristic of all stereotypes of femininity. As Mary Ellman comments,

> A...consistent quality of feminine stereotypes is the repeated effort to move women in two directions away from a premised, though, indefinable, human center. These movements, like those of an autistic child, perhaps signify no more than an obsessive attention to a single subject. But they result in an odd effect of hoisting or lowering down, as elevators move from the basement to the roof and back again, all day long, or as pieces of clothing, once they are bought, must steadily alternate between being dirtied and being cleaned.[53]

Returning to the menses and heightened sexuality in primitive communities, while both Harding[54] and Briffault[55] were of the opinion that the menstrual sex taboo was instituted primarily to protect

the female from the intensity of the male's sexual arousal, Harding was also of the opinion that females in these societies also experienced increased sexual arousal during menstruation. Actually it is difficult to determine whether females in preliterate cultures experience increased sexual arousal during the menses because such information is not readily available if available at all. That is, in a thorough search of the anthropology literature I found little information on the female's sexual feelings during the menses.[56] In fact, there are very few direct reports of the female's experience of menstruation, an issue which I shall say much more about in a meta-comment at the end of this chapter.

I was able to find only one ethnography and one historical source in which explicit reference was made to the female's heightened sexual desire during menstruation. In terms of the latter, according to Albert Ellis, in ancient India the female's menstrual-related sexual desire was recognized by the physician, Susruta, who considered the tendency to "run after men" one of the signs that the female had begun to menstruate.[57] And in relation to the former, Raymond Firth reports that among the Tikopia of Polynesia, males believe that if a menstruous female approaches them, the flow of blood increases, sexual desire being the stimulus. According to Firth, the men say, "It the menstrual flow becomes active in its joy at the men."[58] Interestingly enough, the Tikopia do not consider the menstruant or menstrual blood as particularly dangerous, thus they have relatively few menstrual taboos compared to other cultures.

Thus it seems that females, as well as males, might experience increased sexual arousal in response to menstruation. There are several implications of this sexual arousal in relation to explaining the

enforcement of menstrual taboos. For instance, assuming that there is a single (male) or double (male and female) sexual arousal associated with the menses, then one might speculate that menstrual taboos serve the very practical purpose of avoiding distraction. Harding suggests that in preliterate cultures the harmful consequences that supposedly result if a male has contact with a menstruating female before dangerous pursuits such as war or the hunt can be understood in this way - lack of attention to a situation when concentration is essential.[59] Similarly, one could also speculate that the defectiveness in the manufacture of artifacts attributed to the presence of a menstruating female is a result of the sexual distraction that occurs when males experience increased sexual desire. The same reasoning can also be applied to the taboos which prohibit females from attending religious worship or engaging in ritual practices while menstruating. In fact, this explanation can be applied to many menstrual taboos.

Considered by itself it is a very good explanation, especially given the thematic "evidence" which suggests that males are aroused by menstruating females. However, it is much too simple. As we know from previous discussion, content-wise, the taboos surrounding pregnant and parturient females are similar, in terms of a debilitating influence on male prowess, and the creating of artifacts. Therefore, while this arousal-distraction explanation might partially account for the enforcement of menstrual taboos in primitive cultures, there are other explanations which are also plausible. As indicated in Chapter I, the avoidance of the menstruous female has been attributed to the castration threat posed by menstrual bleeding. In relation to menstrual sexual attraction and the concommitant avoidance of the acting out of this desire on the

part of males, Bruno Bettleheim writes, "Perhaps the simplest explanation for the genesis of menstrual taboos is that women were either specially attractive sex objects or felt stronger sex desires during menstruation, but that men were frightened...In reaction they may have tried to cancel out their fear of the bleeding vagina."[60]

In a slightly different but related context Géza Róheim maintains that in those primitive cultures in which males practice subincision rites (imitation of menstrual bleeding by slitting the penis to the urethra) the underlying motive is also castration anxiety. The resolution here, however, is taking on the female characteristic (bleeding vagina). That is, psychologically the reasoning is, "now we have one of our own so we don't have to be afraid of yours." Bettleheim, however, argues that the male's imitation of menstruation is based on envy of the female's power for procreation and subincision rites are, in effect, an attempt to own this power, as is the practice of couvade. In this regard he comments that although the castration anxiety explanation for the genesis of menstrual taboos might be the simplest explanation, there is another which might be correct. Based on Freud's theory that taboos imposed on kings are a sign of elevation, and veneration - but also an expression of punishment for elevation, or revenge, which subjects take to punish an elevated personage for being in a position of power, Bettleheim suggests, "It might be then, that childbearing and menstruating were once viewed as so elevating that men, out of envy, imposed unpleasant taboos."[62] This suggests, then, that females are punished for their power - that males in revenge have surrounded females with restrictions. More will be said about this later.

The Menses: Blood of Disgust - Embarrassment: Male and Female Attitudes and Appraisals

> I recognize why...men might be disgusted by making love with me while I am menstruating--intellectually. Emotionally, I feel strongly as a woman that he sould be able to accept my body, my being, at all times of the month, that I accept into my body the discharge of semen and that my body is not "unclean" while I am menstruating. Also, I become easily sexually aroused at this time and do not feel that I should have to inhibit my activity.[63]

As indicated, there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that in contemporary cultures the menstruating female might be sexually arousing to the male. However, for the most part menstruation serves to engender strong feelings of disgust. A dual regard for sexual relations with the menstruating female, i.e., desire-disgust, is reflected in Simone de Beauvoir's observations that in Montherlant's novel, Les Jeunes Filles, menstrual blood disgusts the main character, Costals, but it also turns him on, so that "...with women he always preferred those days he knew they were menstruating."[64] Although there is some indication that in preliterate cultures menstruation also arouses disgust in males, the primary feeling seems to be fear.[65] The strongest expressions of menstrual-related disgust, however, appear in sophisticated cultures. For instance, according to Schowalter and Schowalter, even the infamous Marquis De Sade, who delighted in the handling of moldy dog feces, supposedly felt a particularly strong repugnance for menstrual blood.[66] Menstrual-related disgust is also revealed in the following account of a father's reaction to his daughter's first menstruation, as reported by Simone de Beauvoir:

> When I finally began to menstruate and my father came across the blood stained clothes

> on one occasion there was a terrible scene. How did it happen that he, so clean a man, had to live among such dirty females...I felt the injustice of being put in the wrong on account of my menstruation.[67]

In other anecdotal source material one finds similar expressions of male disgust expressed in response to the menstruous aspect of female "dirtiness."[68,69] One of the most revealing of these disgust reactions, however, in terms of an overall evaluation of femaleness, is found in William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury. That is, Quentin Compson's description of the female as "...a delicate equilibrium of filth between two moons balanced...,"[70] reveals not only an expression of disgust toward menstruation, but also a definition of femaleness as equal to filth. In Germany the vernacular terms for menstruation, (Schweinerei or Saueiei), both of which imply the swinishness of pigs, also clearly reflect a devaluation of femininity.[71]

In relation to pervasive attitudes of menstrual disgust in the contemporary world Mary Ellman observes,

> Menstruation...is now socially so concealed as to seem more denied than before...We are accustomed now to admit only the blood of wounds, the effects of crime, accident and war. The natural bleedings of women remains an indelicacy while deadly bleeding has become a commonplace.[72]

The ridiculous extent to which this indelicacy, or what James Joyce called the "dark shame of womanhood,"[73] has caused social embarrassment for females, is reflected in an observation made by Helene Deutsch in 1944, that, "...during criminal cases women will more easily acknowledge an aggressive crime involving bloodshed than that a given bloodstain is from menstruation."[74] And in 1951, "Imagine," Albert Ellis

commented ironically, "the shame of the 20th century miss whose neighbors discover from the shape of the box that she is carrying that she had regular menstrual periods. How would she ever live it down?"[75] According to anecdotal accounts, and in my experience, I have observed that embarrassment about menstruation is still widespread, particularly outside of sophisticated urban areas. For the most part females seem to be embarrassed by the idea that males know they are menstruating. In turn males seem to be embarrassed, or contemptuous of the fact that females menstruate (i.e., she must have the rag on). While the direction from which the contempt comes is obvious, it is difficult to estimate whose embarrassment is contributing to whose. Although attitudes seem to be changing, menstruation for a large portion of the population remains "woman's secret."

In this regard, Weidiger contends that even in the present-day world informal menstrual taboos are still active because modern males, like primitive males, perceive in women the presence of a great and dangerous power. She argues further that females who feel ashamed of menstruation and hide it reinforce the taboo. She writes,

> Modern-day women are not required to live in menstrual huts, modern-day men are able to have menstruating women cook for them and wash their clothes <u>because</u> women have so conscientiously and completely internalized the assumptions underlying the taboo. It is as though we have constructed menstrual huts around our hearts and minds - and the building blocks of these huts are shame and guilt.[76]

For some females menstruating also arouses feelings of being dirty, unclean and unacceptable, to themselves. Apparently even emancipated females of days-gone-by were not immune to such feelings. According to Lupton and Toth, Victoria Woodhull, a suffragist candidate for the

American presidency considered menstruation a "river of waste" which would cease when the New Jerusalem came. Then this "perverted flow" would become like "a pure river of the water of life, proceeding from the throne of God."[77] In addition, the notion that menstrual blood is "bad" blood, common in preliterate and ancient cultures, persisted among certain immigrant groups in the United States well into the middle of the twentieth century.[78]

In a recent study of attitudes towards menstruation and menopause in a coal mining town in Wales, Vieda Skultans found that females tended to regard menstrual blood as bad blood. Some females in this study expressed satisfaction and relief when they "lost" a great deal of this bad blood. Skultans noted this emphasis on the word "losing" throughout the study, and suggested that this emphasis on losing was an accurate reflection of the female's place in this culture.[79]

Clara Thompson and others have discussed the female's disgust for menstruation as stemming from an association with feces and urine.[80] Borrowing a "sphincter morality" concept from Firenczi to describe this association between loss of feces, urine and menstrual blood, Thompson argues that in our culture, in which there has been an overevaluation of cleanliness, the female's genital organs in association with excretion have been considered "dirty." She was also of the opinion that the inability to control menstruation, and other secretions of the female genitals, contributed to the female's feelings of being unacceptable and unclean.[81] Perhaps one of the most revealing cultural statements, in terms of how menstrual-related disgust has contributed to the female's evaluation of her self as a being who is imperfect, damaged, a leaky vessel, is reflected in an advertisement for Tampax on which the

caption reads, "Now I like myself all the time." Thus for many females, what Merton Gill called "a badge of femininity," is in effect a badge of negativity.[82]

How much has menstrual-related disgust on the part of males contributed to the female's perception and experience of menstruation? Drawing on examples from both clinical case material and preliterate cultures, Bruno Bettleheim suggests that feelings of awe and fear experienced by the male in response to the female's menstrual flow are communicated to the female and an "awe circle" begins, the result being that the female is in awe of her own mysterious power.[83] The same kind of circular notion is involved here. In this instance, it is one of those "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" questions. If abstinence from sexual intercourse is considered a measure of disgust, we know from Weidiger's menstrual questionnaire that females seem more willing to engage in intercourse during menstruation than their male partners. Thus we might assume that being refused intercourse during menstruation contributes to the female's feelings of dirtiness and unacceptability. We also know from a study conducted by Karen Paige that 70% of the females in her sample who had negative reactions (disgust, etc.) to menstruation adhered to the menstrual sex taboo, while only 40% having a positive regard did.[84] In relation to the question being raised here, we might also assume that the female who is disgusted by menstruation either adds to, helps or creates male attitudes of disgust. In any case, the question as it is posed is unanswerable. Moreover, abstaining from intercourse during the menses is only one way in which disgust can be expressed.

While there might be some question as to how much the male's

appraisal of menstruation has contributed to female feelings of menstrual disgust, menstruation itself seems to have made a significant contribution to the ambivalence with which males have regarded female genitality throughout history and cross-culturally. Awe and worship, horror and fear, desire and disgust, or as Lederer writes in The Fear of Women, "Well yes we must face it; the little woman or more specifically her body, has throughout history, though to varying degrees, been considered dirty, diseased, putrid, the more so, perhaps, as she is actually desirable."[85] A similar ambivalence is expressed by Michel Lerris in L'Age d'Homme, whom Simone de Beauvoir quotes to point out that such an ambivalent regard exists. Lerris writes, "At present I tend to regard the feminine organ as something unclean or as a wound, not less attractive on that account but dangerous in itself, like everything blood, mucous, infected." [86]

As an example of what she sarcastically calls the "neo-Freudian contribution to sexual understanding," Shulamith Firestone cites the following from Theodor Reik: "I believe that cleanliness has a double origin: the first is the taboos of tribes, and the second matter coming thousands of years later, namely in women's awareness of their own odor, specifically caused by the bad smells caused by the secretions of their genitals."[87] The fact that in the United States fifty million dollars a year is spent on vaginal deodorants (mainly the spray-no-touch-yourself kind), suggests to Judith Ramsey and others[88] that the message to females is "women smell and are dirty." In relation to this appraisal, Germaine Greer,[89] Kate Millet,[90] Freida-Fromm Reichman[91] and others have suggested that the lack of esteem for the female's genitals[92] expressed by males has resulted in a lowered self-esteem for the individual female. In this context, Shirley Rowbotham writes, "We [women]

substitute our own experience of our genitals, our menstruation, or orgasms, our menopause for an experience determined by men."[93]

In recent years attempts have been made by feminsts to undo some of the negativity surrounding the menses and the female's genitals. Females have started clinics run and serviced by female and not male gynecologists, and the emphasis has been on valuing the female body in its own right - apart from its sexual use and its baby-bearing capacity.[94,95] One of the most dramatic attempts to alter attitudes of secrecy and shame surrounding the menses is represented by Judy Chicago's "Menstrual Bathroom," created as part of a larger exhibit called "Woman House." According to the artist, her motivation for creating such an environment was,

> One day as I was walking down the steps of the house it occurred to me that there was no reference to menstruation anywhere...so I decided to make a menstrual bathroom which would be very sterile, all white. Under a shelf full of the paraphernalia with which the culture "cleans up" menstruation was a garbage can filled with the unmistakable marks of our animality.[96] (my underline)

The notion that menstrual blood is the sign of female animality, expressed in this modern context, has far reaching implications in terms of cultural evaluations of femininity, a topic which will be the focus of discussion in a later chapter.

Meta Comment
The Cognitive Minority

In an expanded version of his original survey of menstrual taboos, Stephens states, in relation to menstrual taboos and the post partum sex taboo which prohibits the female from having sexual relations for as long as 3 years in some cultures, "The woman's feelings about

these customs may be important, but I shall take no notice of them here."[97] In terms of a meta-comment, this is the story in a nutshell. However, to expand on the story in the nut shell - in making a fairly extensive search of ethnographic and anthropological material I found relatively few sources in which the female's experience of menstruation was obtained directly from females. While there are a number of studies on female puberty rites, I found only four sources in which females were directly asked about their experience of menstruation or what it felt like to be "taboo" or unclean. One of these sources is not even a study in the formal sense. It is more like a travelogue-journey; and the information about menstruation consists of a conversation between two females, one native and one European, who just happen to be discussing menstruation.[98]

My point here is that in most ethnographic and anthropological source material in which menstrual beliefs and customs are reported, the emphasis has been on the male's experience of female bleeding. There is no doubt that bleeding is not a pleasant thing to study, or to inquire about in some else's culture. But head hunting, male puberty rites which are often brutal to the least detail, and other practices in primitive cultures which involve blood and gore, have received a great deal of attention by both anthropologists and psychoanalytic theorists. In fact, as these things go, menstruation involves a relatively mild kind of bleeding.

Freud wrote very little on this topic. What he did write is scattered throughout various works.[99] In this regard Bettleheim commented, "In view of Freud's subtle analysis of some major taboos it is regretable that he paid so little attention to those of menstruation."[100]

Jung also had little to say about menstrual taboos. Considering all the mythic material which surrounds the menses, this is surprising. Thus one might speculate that the menstrual taboo, as a subject of inquiry, has been taboo not only for anthropologists, but also for two of the most important theorists of human behavior. In my opinion this lack of attention can be interpreted as yet another reflection of the negativity and fear with which the menses have been surrounded. However, there is also a larger issue to consider here.

The fact that there are so few reports on the female's experience of menstruation in the anthropology literature seems to be symptomatic of a general trend which went unnoticed until the advent of the Women's Movement. That is, the focus in most anthropological field work has been on the male, male-related aspects of culture and the male's experience of the world. In the past 5 to 10 years a number of anthropologists have argued that there has been insufficient recognition of female "culture."[101] In the fields of sociology and psychology similar protests have been voiced.[102,103] However, in relation to this lack of attention in anthropological study, Kathaleen Gough writes, "Pages are devoted to the relationship between male kinsmen and paragraphs to those between men and women - and only a few lines to the relationships among women."[104] Michele Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere argue that women, in the anthropology literature, have been treated as if invisible.[105]

In part this male-centeredness might be attributed to the difficulty that male anthropologists might have in obtaining information on female matters in cultures in which males and females are separated by rigid barriers, both social and psychological. However, Edwin Ardener is of the opinion that it has also been difficult for female ethnographers

to gather data on the female's view of life or model of the world, as he calls it, because due to the "relative inarticulateness" of females they are less willing to express themselves; and most ethnographers are not attuned to "hearing them."[106]

Shirley Ardener notes that this observation is borne out in Marilyn Strathern's recent attempt to present the female's perception of life in Mt. Hagen, New Guinea. In Women Inbetween, Strathern states, "It is with male dogma that I have had to deal in the main, for men... are the more articulate and coherent in their statements. Women do not make contrary assertions with the same apparent cogency; they half, although only half agree with what the men say." Thus, in effect, females, particularly in other parts of the world, have been the cognitive minority, because we know relatively little of how they perceive the world.[107]

In this regard Edwin Ardener points out that in most ethnographies male models of the world are dominant. A similar observation has been made by Vern Bullough in relation to the records of Western history, i.e., they are mainly male.[108] In relation to this issue, Ardener writes, "...if the models of society made by most ethnographers tend to be derived from the male portion of that society, how does the symbolic weight of the other mass of persons - half or more of normal human populations...express itself."[109] He suggests that in order to obtain some understanding of the female's perception of the world, female "models" must be gleaned from the study of symbolic, rather than the structural-functional, aspects of culture. In commenting on Edwin Ardener's contention that the problems in learning about the female's world view in other cultures are related to the female's difficulty with being articulate, as well as the male or male-oriented ethnographers'

inability to ("hear") comprehend a non-male model of the world. Shirley Ardener makes the point that this formulation of the problem is in effect a modern version of Freud's question, posed after thirty years of trying to unravel the mysteries of feminine psychology - What does woman really want?[110]

Psychologists have also begun to recognize that evaluations of female normality and worth have traditionally been measured against male criteria - which is essentially the same as saying that a male world view and male values pervade the field of psychology, and females have been judged not as beings in their own right, but relative to males and male values. In this context, George Guttman contends that the concept of ego strength, as it is defined in the psychoanalytic literature, leads to inaccurate judgments of females as regressive and maladaptive because the standard for evaluation is male.[111] In a similar vein Rae Carlson argues that in psychology research the female has been conceptualized as a non-male rather than as an independent female entity.[112]

In relation to the difference between male and female perceptions of the world, and the notion that male models of the world have been dominant, Shulamith Firestone writes,

> ...men and women are tuned to a different cultural wave length,...in fact there exists a wholly different reality for men and women.... Women have no means of coming to an understanding of what their experience is, or even how it is different from male experience. The tools for representing, for objectifying one's experience in order to deal with it, culture, is so saturated with male bias that women never have a chance to see themselves culturally through their own eyes. So that finally, the signals from their direct experience which conflict with the prevailing (male) culture are denied and repressed.[113]

Twenty-five years or so prior to the time that Firestone presented her point of view, Simone de Beauvoir described the female's universe as a counter universe set up within the world of the masculine universe. She observed that "...this world, always belonging to men still retains the form they have given it."[114]

One of the more cogent descriptions of the goals of the Women's Movement is stated in terms of women searching for their own universe and new models of themselves - models or modes of being which are not based on/or evaluated in terms of male criteria. In this regard Shirley Ardener writes,

> We find...a desire whether conscious or not, to identify, a specifically feminine model...in which the essential attributes, physical, spiritual and moral appear; a model of what we might perhaps term femineity* of the deepest structural level and greatest degree of generality, which is quite distinct from the old supposedly male derived 'femininity' with its load of 'secondary sexual characteristics'...Femineity is not merely an equivalent of femininity, since it is located at a different level of abstraction and articulation....[115]
>
> *Feminiety is defined as "The quality or nature of the female sex; womanliness, womanishness

NOTES: CHAPTER V

[1]Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Techniques (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 127.

[2]Women's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern (London: Rider, 1971), pp. 60-62.

[3]The Book of the It, trans. V.M.E. Collins, with a Foreword by Laurence Durrell (Vienna: Psychoanalytischer Verlag), 1923; reprint ed., New York: Random House, 1972), p. 92.

[4]Symbolic Wounds (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 137.

[5]Géza Róheim, Psychoanalysis and Anthropology (New York: International University Press, 1968), p. 109; C.D. Daly, The role of menstruation in human phylogenesis and ontogenesis, Int. J. Psychoanal., 24:151-169, 1934; Karl Menninger, Somatic correlations with the unconscious repudiation of femininity in women, J. Nerv. and Ment. Disord., 89:514-527, 1939; A. Ellis, The Psychology of Sex (New York: Random House, 1901), p. 91.

[6]Civilization and its discontents (1930) in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1952), Vol. XXI, p. 99.

[7]The symbolic significance of menstruation and menopause, Man, 5:646, 1970.

[8]Notes on the superstitions of menstruation, 2(Dec. 18, 1915): p. 1335.

[9]Women's Mysteries, p. 60.

[10]Norma Joffee reports that in England and Ireland the euphemism for the menses is the "be in season." (The vernacular of menstruation, Word, 4:186, 1948).

[11]Conservation Among the Iriquois at the Six Nations Reserve (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 217.

[12]Harding, p. 54; Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 1962 ed., s.v. "Serpent Worship"; C. Fluhman, The Management of Menstrual Disorders, (London: Saunders, 1956), p. 3.

[13]Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, s.v. "Serpent Worship." Géza Roheim, Australian Totemism (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1925; reprint ed. New York: Humanities Press, 1968), p. 61.

[14]Phillip Slater, The Glory of Hera (Boston: Beacon, 1971), p. 80, citing Ernest Jones, On the Nightmare, citing R.P. Knight, A Discourse on Priapus, 1786.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., pp. 80-115 passim.

[17]Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology (New York: Viking, 1959; reprint ed., 1967), p. 9.

[18]The Great Mother (Princeton: Princeton/Bollingen Paperback, 1972), pp. 169-70, 203-204. Also see Encyclopedia Religion and Ethics, s.v. "Serpent."

[19]Superstitions, p. 1331.

[20]Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary of Folklore, Anthropology and Legend, 1950 ed., s.v. "Menstruation" by Norma Joffee.

[21]Tran Dinh Dê, Notes on Birth and Reproduction in Vietnam (HRAF Files, D-1-3, 841).*

[22]R. Blum & E. Blum, The Dangerous Hour (New York: Scribners, 1970), p. 131.

[23]Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation."

[24]The Gypsies (Middlesex: Penguine, 1961), p. 138.

[25]E.A. Westermarck, Ritual and Belief in Morrocco, 2 vols. (New York Park, New York: University Books, 1968), 1:358.

[26]Witchcraft Beliefs in Rhodesia (London: Published for the International African Institute by Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 114.

[27]Shimony, p. 217.

[28]Phyliss M. Kayberry, Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1939), p. 238.

[29]C.D. Daly, (Phylogenesis and ontogenesis) notes that one of his patients wanted to put mentrual blood in his bed in the hopes of seducing him. Similarly, Michael Balent (A contribution to the psychology of menstruation, Psychoanal. Quart., 6:346-52, 1937), discusses a patient's use of menstruation in what he interpreted as an attempt at seducing him.

[30]Witchcraft in Rhodesia, p. 114.

[31]The World of the Witches, trans. O.N.V. Glendining (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), p. 557.

[32]The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 51 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 125.

[33]Male Dominance and Female Autonomy (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1972), p. 93.

[34]Superstitions, p. 1335.

[35]Cited by M.J. Lupton and E. Toth, "Out Damned Spot," Ms(Jan., 1974), p. 97.

[36]Cesca Vail, "Is the Curse Sexy?" Viva (April, 1975), p. 29.

[37]Ibid.

[38]One of the many bizarre interpretations of human behavior made by George Groddeck (the teacher of Frieda-Fromm Reichman) is reflected in his opinion that the female (in her heightened state of sexuality during menstruation) uses Kotex as a means to masturbate. He wrote, "She fixes a bandage between her thighs, unconsciously commits onanism under the universally approved excuse of cleanliness. And if she is dainty she will do this a day in advance to be on the safe side, and for the same reason wears it a day longer." (Book of the It, p. 98)

Moreover, the concern that materials used to absorb the menstrual flow might also provide sexual stimulation was very much alive as recently as 11 years ago, as is suggested by the following statement which appeared in an article in a medical journal. The authors (Robert E. Wheatly et al, J. Amer. Med. Assoc., 192 (Dec. 24, 1965):698) stated: "The allegation that morality may be affected by tampons seems unwarranted because of the failure to find any specific nerve endings in the deep vaginal mucosa."

[39]Psychology of Sex, p. 99.

[40]Clellan Ford and Frank Beach, Patterns of Sexual Behavior (New York: Harpers, 1951), p. 212.

[41]Sex, Man and Society (New York: Putnam, 1969), p. 110.

[42]W.H. Masters and V.E. Johnson, Human Sexual Response (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), p. 331; and Alfred C. Kinsey et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (New York: Pocketbooks, 1970).

[43]Citations will appear in the final chapter. See Masters and Johnson, Human Sexual Response, pp. 371-2, for an explanation of the physiological basis for increased premenstrual sexual desire.

[44]Menstruation and Menopause (New York: Knopf, 1976).

[45]Elaine Schowalter and English Schowalter, Victorian women and menstruation, in Women in the Victorian Age, ed. M. Vicinus (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), pp. 32-46.

[46]Ellis, Psychology of Sex, p. 66.

[47]Carol Smith Rosenberg, Puberty to menopause: the cycle of femininity in 19th century America, Feminist Studies, 1:65, 1973, citing George R. Lowe, On Some of the Most Important Disorders of Women (1844); and William Carpenter, Principles of Human Physiology (1850). A view of the unbridled sexuality of females is also expressed by Groddeck, who wrote (p. 36), "Woman's vagina is an unsatiable Moloch....The phantasy of

woman is constantly preoccupied with an all powerful penis." One wonders if this is not Groddeck's fantasy of female's fantasies.

[48]See, Norman Mailer, The Prisoner of Sex (New York: Bantam, 1971), for a contemporary expression of the birth-control-pill-related fear of free female sexuality and its shattering effects on male potency. In the last five years or so a spate of articles in magazines, journals and newspapers have appeared, the various authors claiming that more cases of sexual impotence have been reported since the advent of the Women's Movement. However, the question here is: has male impotence increased or is it more socially acceptable to report the problem now?

[49]The evaluation and nature of female sexuality in relation to psychoanalytic theory, in Women and Psychoanalysis, ed. Jean B. Miller (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 19-3), pp. 136-53.

[50]Ibid., pp. 151-52.

[51]Psychology of Women (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

[52]Diane Scully and Pauline Bart, A funny thing happened to me on the way to the gynecologist's office: Women in gynecology textbooks, Amer. J. Sociol., 78:1045, 1973, citing Willard P. Cooke, Essentials of Gynecology.

[53]Mary Ellman, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Harvest Paperback, 1968), p. 65.

[54]Women's Mysteries, p. 60.

[55]The Mothers (New York: Macmillan, 1927). Briffault wrote (p. 244), "They menstrual taboos are...the original veto laid by woman on the sexual instincts of men."

[56]In, Factors Affecting Human Fertility in Non-Industrial Societies: a Cross Cultural Study. Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 66 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), Moni Nag, (p. 25) reports that among the Kgatha Bantu females experience nosexual desire during the menses.

[57]Psychology of Sex, p. 6. In this regard, Benjamin Walker indicates that ancient religious texts of India link menstruation with erotic desire in females. He points out that the period of pollution (rajas) is called sonita, which suggests both the color of blood and increase in sexual desire. In, The Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism, 2 vols. (New York and Washington: Praeger), p. 61.

[58]We The Tikopia: a Sociological Study of Kinship in Primitive Polynesia (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1957), p. 476.

[59]Women's Mysteries, p. 76.

[60]Symbolic Wounds (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 137.

[61]The Eternal Ones of the Dream (New York: International University Press, 1945).

[62]Symbolic Wounds, p. 137. The belief that there was an original matriarchy in which females ruled and dominated males was first promulgated by Johann J. Bachofen in the late nineteenth century. See Myth, Religion and Motherright, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Princeton: Bollingen, 1967). Of late a number of books expressing the same point of view have been published. See, e.g., Elizabeth Gould Davis, The First Sex (London: Penguin, 1972); Helen Diner, Woman and Amazons: The First Feminist History of Culture (New York: Julian, 1975; and Evelyn Reed, Woman's Evolution From Matriarcal Clan to Patriarchal Family (New York: Pathfinder, 1975). Most anthropologists hold this original matriarchy theory in disrepute. See, e.g., Kathaleen Gough, The origin of the family, J. Marr. and Fam., 33:760-771, 1960; and Jean Bamberger, The myth of matriarchy: why men rule in primitive society, in Women and Culture and Society, eds. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 263-80.

[63]In Paula Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause (New York: Knopf, 1976), p. 126.

[64]The Second Sex (New York: Putnam, 1970), p. 193.

[65]According to Nag (Human Fertility, p. 34) the Yap of Micronesia express disgust at the odor of menstrual blood. George Devereux claims that this is also true of the Mojave Indians (The psychology of feminine bleeding: An analysis of Mohave Indian puberty and menstrual rites, Int. J. Psychoanal., 13:238, 1950.) On the other hand, Phyliss Kayberry claims that disgust towards menstruation is not expressed among aboriginal tribes of Australia (Sacred and Profane, p. 238). As indicated in Chapter I, Ford hypothesized that disgust was an important factor in determining the extensiveness of menstrual taboos (Comparative Study of Human Reproduction, 1945). However, Stephens tested this disgust hypothesis and found there was no substantial evidence to indicate that the motivating force behind the genesis of menstrual taboos was disgust (A cultural study of menstrual taboos, Gen. Psychol. Monogr., 64:385-416, 1961).

[66]Victorian Women and Menstruation, p. 38.

[67]Second Sex, p. 305.

[68]For instance, Weidiger (p. 68) reports the following account from a respondent to her menstrual questionnaire:

> I went to visit a friend on the Lower East Side of New York. His apartment was a disgusting mess - plaster falling from the walls and ceiling, furniture broken...etc. He said a Zen prayer for killing a living thing before squashing a 2 inch roach...Since the bathroom was out of order in the hall, I squatted down behind some junk in the apartment and started to change my tampon...he became hysterical and ranted and raved the rest of the night about uncleanliness and

how unclean woman should be segregated like in primitive tribes. The menstrual taboo is alive and sick in modern society.

[69]Another version of menstrual-related disgust with a slightly different angle is found in Carolyn Hennessey's book, I Bitch, in which she describes an incident of a sexually aroused male who discovers the woman is menstruating. His response is "...not until after your period - unless you want to go down on me." Cited by Lupton and Toth, p. 96.

[70]The Sound and The Fury (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 159.

[71]Joffee, Word, p. 186.

[72]Thinking About Women, pp. 142-43.

[73]Cited by Ellman, p. 34.

[74]The Psychology of Women, Vol. 1 (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1945), p. 61.

[75]The Folklore of Sex (New York: Country Life, 1951), p. 124.

[76]Menstruation and Menopause, p. 11.

[77]"Out Damned Spot," p. 98.

[78]According to ancient Western medical theories menstrual blood was "bad blood" or a superfluous humour which caused disease if not purged each month. (See Fluhman, pp. 3-5.) This notion also appears in the folklore of many cultures; and seems to be one of the reasons for not bathing during the menses, i.e., danger of stopping the menstrual flow. Abel and Joffee report, for instance, that within Italian folklore the belief was that if the menstrual flow ceased it later went to the lungs and caused TB or to the head which supposedly resulted in madness. If menstrual periods ceased for too long it meant death. Louis Paul, The mystery of work and sex in a Guatemalan village, Women and Culture, p. 241, found the same belief in Guatemala.

According to Ian Hogbin one of the reasons for imitating menstruation (via subincision) among the Wogeo of Australia has been to rid the male of impurities, and particularly when disease is suspected to be the result of female impurities. In, Isle of Menstruating Men (Washington: Chandler), pp. 88-91. Ashley Montagu makes the same observation, Coming into Being Among the Australian Aborigines, 1937, cited by Bettleheim, Symbolic Wounds, p. 107.

[79]Symbolic Significance of Menstruation and Menopause, p. 643.

[80]Some effects of the derogatory attitudes toward female sexuality, in Psychoanalysis and Women, ed. Jean B. Miller (Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), pp. 58-84.

[81]Clara Thompson (Ibid., p. 67) discusses a patient's refusal to accept sanitary napkins from her mother at first menstruation because she felt the involuntary soiling of menstruation to be humiliating and associated the sanitary napkin with a baby's diaper.

In this regard, de Beauvoir (Second Sex, p. 62) comments,

> The sex organ of a man is as simple and neat as a finger...but the feminine sex organ is mysterious...concealed, mucous and humid... it bleeds each month, it is often sullied with body fluids, it has a secret and perilous life of its own...Man 'gets stiff' but woman 'gets wet'; in the very word there are childhood memories of bedwetting, of guilty and involuntary yielding to the need to urinate...it is humiliating if the liquid flows out passively, for then the body is no longer an organism with muscles, nerves, sphincters, under the control of the brain and expressive of a conscious subject, but it is rather a vessel, a container, composed of inner matter and but the plaything of capricious mechanical forces. If the body leaks as an ancient wall or a dead body may leak - it seems to liquify rather than eject fluids; a horrible decomposition.

[82]Functional disturbances of menstruation, Bull. Menninger Clin., 7:6, 1943.

[83]Symbolic Wounds, p. 136.

[84]Effects of oral contraceptives on affective fluctuations, Psychosom. Med., 33:515-37, 1971.

[85]The Fear of Women (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), p. 37.

[86]Second Sex, p. 134.

[87]Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex: The Case For Feminist Revolution (New York: Bantam, 1972), p. 66, citing Reik (1966, no title). Reik also wrote, "I assume that the little girl who compares her genitals to the little boy finds her own ugly." Reik attributes the female's need to beautify herself as a compensation for having ugly genitals. (Ibid., p. 66). This reflects the "female is a male with a genital defect" appraisal of femininity rempant in psychoanalytic thought and pervasive in Western history. See de Beauvoir, Chap. 3, "The Psychoanalytic Point of View," pp. 33-46; and Margaret Mead, Mead on Freud, in Women and Analysis: Dialogues on Psychoanalytic Views of Femininity, ed. Jean Strouse (New York: Dell, 1974), pp. 116-128. For a defense of the Freudian point of view, see Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism; Freud, Reich, Laing and Women (New York: Pantheon, 1940; reprint ed., New York: Random House, 1975).

[88]Judith Ramsey, "Those Vaginal Deodorants," Ms.(Nov., 1972), pp. 28-33.

Also see Shirley Ardener, Sexual insult and female militancy, Man, 8: 435-38, 1973.

[89]The Female Eunuch (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971), pp. 44-45.

[90]Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 47.

[91]On the denial of women's sexual pleasure, in Psychoanalysis and Women, pp. 86-93.

[92]Levi-Strauss indicates that within South American Indian myths which deals with the creation of the vagina a foul smelling bird or substance fashions the female genitals, thus explaining its characteristic odor. (Raw and the Cooked, pp. 269-70).

[93]Woman's Consciousness: Man's World (Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), p. 35.

[94]See, Our Bodies, Our Selves, Boston Women's Health Collective (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973); and Weidiger, Chap. 6, in Menstruation and Menopause.

[95]Probably in response to the Women's Liberation Movement, in the past two years Tampax ads have changed dramatically. For instance, in 1973, the typical Tampax ad emphasized that "no one will ever know you're menstruating" theme, as well as others in which every stereotyped notion about females known to the history of mankind was promoted. For instance, one classic advertisement in this respect (1973) read, "You're all woman. Intuitive, mind-changing, feminine, tearful, joyful woman. Men love you ...You use Tampax tampons to maintain that femininity...." and more remarks about odor, etc. In 1975 the captions on Tampax advertisements began to change and more action-oriented themes were emphasized. These now read, "Today you discovered a whole new world," or "You're always ready to set sail," "You learn something new every day," "Your life is what you make it," or "Every day is a new adventure." Moreover, these ads now often picture females in professional roles.

[96]Through The Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 106.

[97]The Oedipus Complex (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 41.

[98]The travelogue - Emily O. Lorimer, Language Hunting in the Kara Koram (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939); and the other three - Skultans, The Symbolic Significance of Menstruation and Menopause; G. Eichinger, Woman's pollution periods in Tamilnad (India), Anthropos, 69:115-160; Margaret L. Cormack, The Hindu Woman (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1953), pp. 74-75. In this regard, Esther Harding wrote, "Anthropologists...have not asked what effect these customs [menstrual taboos] have on women." (Women's Mysteries, p. 70). By contrast there is an extensive empirical literature on the study of the female's perception of menstruation. For a review of this literature, see Julian A. Sherman, On The Psychology of Women: a Survey of Empirical Studies (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1971).

[99]Totem and taboo (1913), Standard Edition (London: Hogarth, 1952); Taboo of virginity (1918), Standard Edition, and Civilization and its discontents (1930), Standard Edition, Vol. IV, IV, and XXI, respectively.

[100]Symbolic Wounds, p. 136.

[101]See, e.g., Alice Singer, Marriage payments and the exchange of people, Man, 8:80-92, 1973; Louise Lamphere, Strategies, co-operation and conflict among women in domestic groups, in Women and Culture, pp. 97-112. Also see Peggy Golde (ed.) Women in the Field (Chicago: Aldine, 1970).

[102]Sociology, see, e.g., Jesse Bernard, Jesse Bernard's four revolutions, Amer. J. Sociol., 78:777-89, 1973; Pauline Bart, Why Women's Studies?, in Female Studies IV, ed. Ray Siponn (Pittsburg: KNOW, 1972); Marcia Millman, Observations on sex role research, in J. Marr. and Fam., 33: 772-776, 1973; also for a comprehensive review and critique of books written about women, see, Carol Erlich, Women's book industy, J. Marr. and Fam., 33:421-30, 1971.

[103]Psychology, see, e.g., I.K. Broverman et al., Sex role stereotypes and clinical appraisals of mental health, J. Consul. and Clin. Psych., 34:1-7, 1970. Also see footnotes 111, 112 below.

[104]Nuer kinship, in Traditions of Culture, ed. T.O. Beidleman, cited by Singer, p. 90.

[105]In, Introduction, Women, Culture and Society.

[106]Belief and the problems of women, in Interpretation of Ritual, ed. J.S. la Fontaine (London: Tavistock, 1971), p. 72.

[107]Female Insult, p. 439, citing Marilyn Strathern, Women Inbetween.

[108]The Subordinate Sex:. a History of Attitudes Towards Women (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1973; reprint ed., Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1974), p. 4.

[109]Belief and the Problems of Women, p. 138

[110]Sexual Insult, p. 434.

[111]Women and the conception of ego strength, Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 11:229-240, 1965.

[112]Sex differences in ego functioning: Exploratory studies of ego and communion, in J. Consul. and Clin. Psych., 37:267-77, 1971. Also see, David Bakan, The Duality of Human Existence: an Essay on Psychology and Religion (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).

[113]Case for Feminist Revolution, p. 149. For an interesting exposition on the difference between male and female world views, see Jesse Bernard,

The Sex Game: Communication Between the Sexes, (Forge Village, Mass.: Murray, reprint ed., New York: Athenium Paperback, 1972).

[114] Second Sex, p. 641.

[115] Female insult, p. 435.

*Source materials available in HRAF files

CHAPTER VI: PART I

THE MENSES: EVALUATION OF FEMININITY

> By their incantations, spells, crimes and infamous acts, they destroy the fruit of the womb in other women, in cattle and various other animals; they destroy crops, vines, orchards, meadows, pastures, wheat, corn and other plants and vegetables. They bring pain and affliction, great suffering and appalling disease (both external and internal)...; they prevent men from engendering and women from conceiving. They render both wives and husbands impotent.[1]
>
> --Summis Desideranted Affectibus
> Papal Bullshit on Witchcraft
> Pope Innocent VIII, 1484

Menstrual Evil

Within the folklore and religious belief systems of people widely separate in time and geographical area, the impurity and harmful influence of the menstruant and menstrual blood have been attributed to demons or the forces of evil. As indicated in Chapter II, the notion that the menstrual flow is the blood of evil has been widespread in African tribal cultures.[2] Raymond Crawfurd points out that in primitive societies it has commonly been believed that, "The menstruous woman is possessed by an evil spirit; the spirit resides in her blood and by the medium of her menstrual blood it may exert its influence...on the environment."[3] Moreover, based on the discussion of conversions of menstrual mana presented in Chapter IV, we know that the connection between evil and the menstruous female exists on a profound level.

An association between menstrual blood and witchcraft has also been widespread. In the Western world, for instance, Robert Graves

notes that the use of menstrual blood for purposes of witchcraft dates back to ancient Thessaly.[4] In fifteenth century Christian-dominated Europe the menses-evil association emerges in a number of ways, one of which is reflected in the belief that menstrual blood was used in sealing pacts with the devil.[5] According to Ploss and Bartels, who compiled one of the most extensive compendiums of menstrual-related folklore, this menses-witches-devil association appears in the legends of European gypsies who believed:

> that witches have their sabbath on a Friday night on "Moon Mountain." They renew their pact with the devil once every seven years on such a mountain. During these seven years, Gypsy women collect their menstrual blood and, during the pact they give all this blood to the devil to drink.[6]

It has been pointed out in a number of contexts that the harmful powers attributed to the menstruant have been remarkably similar to those attributed to the European witch of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[7,8] This similarity is clearly established in the quotation which introduces this section of discussion. That is, Pope Innocent's bull indicates, that the witch, like the menstruant, has a destructive influence on the fecundity of females, that she is harmful to children, and deleterious to vegetation, that she engenders disease, the descriptions of which are remarkably similar (fatal, wasting) to those which the menstruant supposedly "causes" in various primitive cultures throughout the world. Both menstruant and witch have been accorded a host of other pernicious powers--including causing inpotence in males, interfering with the healing process, and souring milk.[9] What accounts for these remarkable parallels?

Based on observations of the responses of neurotic (and I

assume psychotic) analytic patients to menstruation, Mary Chadwick argued that the basis for this witch-menstruant similarity was to be found in reality. According to Chadwick females act strangely and have unusual longings when they menstruate--all females, I might add. Chadwick does not seem to recognize or acknowledge that she is basing her argument on observations of a very select population, one which can hardly be called all females, both because of number and type of females observed. Nevertheless, as the argument goes, since menstruating females express strange desires, such as the urge to eat meat (which Chadwick associates with the cannabalistic tendencies of witches), odd fantasies and wishes, which are likely to emerge only in an analytic session, a dream or a psychotic episode, Chadwick maintains that menstruous females are indeed like witches. Moreover, according to Chadwick, the facts that witches are likely to have a "masculinity complex," and menstruating females would unconsciously like to ruin masculine pursuits (hunting, etc.) (based on resentment and envy of males) constitute other "real" witch-menstruant similarities.[10]

Chadwick's "it's really so" argument is similar to certain aspects of theories proposed by Freud and other psychoanalytically oriented theorists to explain the origins of menstrual taboos and the males' fear of the menstruant in both primitive and modern cultures.[11] That is, while some theorists have proposed that menstrual taboos have been instituted to protect males in primitive cultures from the unconscious threat of castration anxiety aroused by the vaginal bleeding of females,[12] other theorists have suggested that these taboos also have a reality base - which is that they protect males from the consciously expressed (but unconsciously derived) anger of penis-less females directed at

males for being the privileged owners of the much-envied penis.[13] More will be said later about the obvious phallocentric bias, which this formulation reflects. The main points to be made here, however, are that: (1) while certain females do experience hostility or anger both menstrually or premenstrually, it is presumptuous to attribute the source of this anger to penis-envy or castration rage, except in clinical populations among whom penis-envy or castration rage as forms of pathology are real issues;[14] (2) the mood changes and desires that "normal" (non-psychotic) females experience during menstruation can hardly account for the many striking similarities between the powers attributed to the menstruant and the witch. Moreover, as indicated, there is a larger issue - Chadwick generalized from a small, select population to a larger one. This has always been a controversial issue in relation to the acceptability (or unacceptability) of psychoanalytic theories of human behavior.

Symbolically, the similarities between the witch and the menstruant can best be explained within a Jungian conceptual framework, with specific reference to theories developed by Erich Neumann in The Great Mother.[15] In discussing the archetype concept, which is central to Jungian theory, I shall make no attempt to deal with fine points in theory.[16] In the present context I am primarily interested in establishing the place that pervasive danger and death-related symbols associated with the menstruant and menstrual blood have within this theoretical framework. Thus, I shall be concentrating mainly on the external forms of mythological and symbolic expressions and focusing on the aspect of Jungian theory, which as a comprehensive system of symbolic interpretation can explain the similarities in menstruant-witch power.

The Menstruous Female: An Aspect of the Terrible Mother Archetype

> In the myths and tales of all peoples, ages and countries...the dark half of the black and white cosmic egg representing the Archetypal feminine engenders terrible figures.... Just as world, life, nature and soul have been experienced as generative and nourishing, protecting and warming Femininity; so their opposites are also perceived in the image of the feminine; death, destruction, danger....[17]
>
> --Erich Neumann

Within the Jungian conceptual framework the witch is considered an aspect of the negative Archetypal Feminine, or what Erich Neumann calls the elemental character of the Terrible Mother. According to Neumann, the Terrible mother figure appears in mythologies throughout the world. She takes many forms and has many names, but she is typically represented by the chimerical and fantastic aspects of female goddesses who are identified with the realm of the dead and snakes - typically associated with rot and decay, as well as with a number of other death-related images and symbols. The characteristic activities of these negative feminine figures are either devouring, dismembering, seducing, poisoning or castrating males. Within the Jungian conceptual schema, the petrifying gaze of Medusa belongs to the realm of the terrible Great Goddess. As Neumann writes, "...to be rigid is to be dead."[18] Hecate, a snake-entwined moon goddess, is also associated with the Terrible Mother. An archetypal witch of sorts, Hecate, when angry, stops life and growth and "closes the womb of all living things."[19] Kali, the blood-stained female figure of Indian myth, in association with death, destruction and decay, also symbolizes the Terrible Mother or negative Feminine Archetype.

Hecate, Medusa, Kali, and a host of other female figures who also represent the Terrible Mother Archetype are the opposite of the mythological female figures who represent the positive aspect of the Archetypal Feminine, i.e., the Good Mother. In various myths and legends throughout the world the positive aspect of the Feminine Archetype is represented by goddesses of vegetation and agriculture. These goddesses (The Great Mother) symbolize the natural nourishing principle. Their activities are characterized by cherishing, sustaining and fostering growth. They represent the unchanging part of the feminine which is associated with constancy and motherliness. Throughout the world the positive aspect of the Archetypal Feminine is represented by many mythological figgures and goddesses such as Spes, the Roman goddess mentioned previously in relation to the bee, honey and motherliness; Demeter, and Mary, in her original aspect as a fertility goddess (Madonna of the Sheaves). The Date Palm goddess of Egypt who is pictured in Egyptian art as a tree with arms giving nourishment to humanity also represents the Good Mother aspect of the Archetypal Feminine.[20]

The positive Archetypal Feminine is represented by a consistent set of symbols which appear in myth, legend, art, dreams, etc. The cow, the earth, the spring and the stream, vegetation, food and the oven are all symbols which have been interpreted as representing the positive feminine. Healing, the baking of bread and activities which symbolize the maintenance and sustenance of life are all considered characteristic of the Good Mother.[21]

The menstruant and menstrual blood, as we know, have been regarded as harmful or destructive to all these symbolic representations of the Good Mother . To briefly review, within the discussion of the

anti-life aspect of the menses it was established that in a wide range of cultures menstrual mana was associated with a deleterious influence on the source of life and growth, represented by a variety of substances and events, i.e., vegetation, milk, growth of the young, pregnancy, conception, medicines and healing, springs and streams, ovens and hearths, etc.

There are also a number of ways in which the influence attributed to the menstruous female parallels the characteristics and activities of the female figures who symbolize the Terrible Mother Archetype. For instance, like Hecate, the menstruant (and the European witch) are associated with the barrenness of the earth and human beings. In addition, the menstruous female, like Medusa, has a petrifying gaze which renders males immobile and impotent. Throughout the world, in cultures far too numerous to mention there is an emphasis on the harm that can be transmitted via the glance or the gaze of the menstruant. For instance, among the Mae Enga of New Guinea the menstruating female is referred as "she with the evil eyes."[22] In the Zorastrian sacred books (app. 5th century B.C.), which I shall have much more to say about shortly, the menstruant is described as "a fiend so violent is that fiend of menstruation, that where another fiend does not smite anything with a look, it smites with a look."[23] In addition the menstruant and menstruation can also be identified with the Terrible Mother Archetype in that both symbolically represent rot, decomposition and decay. The menstruous female and mythological females representing the Terrible Mother also have two other activities in common - seducing and poisoning.

We know from previous discussion that menstrual poisoning is harmful primarily to males, and that the menstrual poison is usually

disguised in food. In this context, both Denise Paulme and Marilyn Strathern note that throughout New Guinea and Africa the general atmosphere of mistrust between the sexes is in part related to the males' fear of poisoning by menstrual blood.[24] About this menstrual poisoning Marilyn Strathern writes, "...thus the very persons who nourish are the ones who poison....As a regular food provider the wife should nourish and not destroy her husband."[25] Appropos of this statement it seems clear, in summary, that the menstruous female is in effect a nourisher turned poisoner, a good mother turned into a bad one; and that the witch and the menstruant have similar powers because they are both aspects or reflections of this primordial archetype. However, there are archetypal, symbolic mothers and there are real mothers who are perceived as both good and bad. Later in this discussion I shall consider mothers in relation to psychological explanations for the male's fear of the menstruant and menstrual blood and related issues. At this point, however, the following interplay of mythic themes will begin to establish the relationship between menstrual evil and feminine evil.

Menstrual Evil and Feminine Evil

In the Zoroastrian sacred texts, in which the principles of the Mazdaean religion are recorded, the menstruous female is described as a "fiend" - "a work of the devil."[26] According to the Zoroastrian or Mazdaean world view, the universe consists of two contending principles, i.e., Good (light, God or Mazda, the soul) and Evil (darkness, Satan or Uhremaun, the body). Within this cosmological scheme Uhremaun (also referred to as Angra Mainyu) is conceived of as working to ruin the ordered universe.[27] As the principle of evil, Uhremaun commands a host of demons who spread disease and death on the world's human inhabitants

The demoness Jahi, or menstruation, is one of the devil's helpmates. According to Mazdaean legend, Uhremaun, after having slept for 3000 years was awakened by Jahi (menstruation) who shouted at him,

> Arise, O father of us all: For I shall now cause in the world that contention from which the misery and injury of Ahura Mazda, and his archangels are to proceed. I shall empoison the righteous man, the laboring ox, the water, plants, fire, and all creation. 'Whereupon Angra Mainyu, starting up, kissed her on the forehead, and the pollution called menstruation appeared on the demoness...'[28]

A number of points can be made here: (1) The first, and most obvious, is that the menstruating Jahi is an evil being who brings destruction and death to the world, i.e., she "empoisons." In relation to the association between menstruation and destruction of the environment, a minor world destruction theme is also reflected in A Chao legend (South America) in which the menstruous female offends a water diety by her presence and thus brings about world cataclysm,[29] and in an Australian legend in which the menstruant's offense to the sacred results in disastrous floods and torrential rains.[30] (2) The second point is that in the world of ancient Persia, apparently menstruating females mimed Jahi's evil power for destruction, which explains why the menstruant was believed to be the work of the devil, and thus defiling and harmful.[31] (3) In effect, Jahi represents a kind of summing up of the death-destruction-menses motif discussed previously. In terms of the association of the menses with death, disease and destruction, Jahi seems to represent what might be called archetypal menstrous female.

Most important, however, in the broader perspective, is that there are several connective links between the Jahi legend and the Eve

and Pandora myths. Although Jahi seems to approach her task of bringing evil into the world with a gusto and vengeance which is not associated with Eve's transgression or Pandora's box, all three mythological ladies are similar in that they are credited with unleashing upon mankind evil, sickness or death. Moreover, as the actual menstruating female represents Jahi's destruction to the world in Persian belief, so does the menstruating female, in Judeo-Christian thought, represent the original sinfulness of Eve. Moreover, Islamic beliefs (derived in part from ancient Zoroastrian texts) that females' bodies exude an evil influence, and that they are friends of the devil,[32] suggests that from the cradle of Western civilization comes a strikingly similar evaluation of female character.

Blood of Crime, Punishment and Guilt

In a Morroccan myth which is remarkably similar to the Eve myth in the Bible, menstruation is attributed to transgression on the part of the female, i.e., Hawwa's eating of the forbidden fruit in the garden of paradise.[33] Among the Dogon of Africa a crime and punishment theme is association with the origins of the menses is reflected in a legend in which menstruation is explained as being a perpetual punishment for primordial incest - the mating of a jackal (son) with his mother (earth), as instigated by the jackal.[34] Moreover, several New Guinea legends attribute the origins of menstruation to either an adulterous or incestuous act, initiated by male figures. For instance, one of these myths tell the story of ancient times when the moon lived on the earth in the form of a handsome boy. After many attempts to seduce different girls he finally found one to comply. However, in the middle of what was

apparently an adulterous act the girl's mate appeared. He cut off any retreat by setting fire to the house. While trying to escape, the boy (adulterer) was slain, his blood spurting in a great stream to the heavens where it become the moon. In retaliation for this crime women suffer a loss of blood each month. Old women and pregnant women, however, were absolved from the penalty.[35]

A slightly different punishment theme in association with the origins of the menses is also suggested in a story which is narrated in the Indian Tai Śāstras. According to this tale, a female takes part of the guilt from the legendary Indra who killed a Brāhmin in battle.[36] (Since a Brāhmin represents the essence of the divine force and is also highest in the caste system, murder of one is a serious offense.) The consequence of this sacrifice is that every month the female emits the color of "Brahamana" murder, i.e., menses.

The association between the down fall of mankind attributed to Eve and menstruation as punishment for this sin is one which appears again and again in Western thought. For example, in Victorian England a physician writing on the subject of female nature was of the opinion that females needed more forgiveness and regeneration than males because of this original sin, thus they were given this "special secretion" to help them atone.[37] Some fifty years later, in a study of female attitudes toward menstruation (conducted in 1938) one of the participants wrote, "This unpleasant, disagreeable act was imposed on me for some sin of mysterious origin committed by Mother Eve in the Garden of Eden."[38] Moreover, throughout this study, females expressed the feeling that God punished them with menstruation.

And lo and behold, in 1973, the menses-crime and punishment

motif crops up again, this time in the mouth of the leading character of a very popular television series, All in the Family.

> Archie: Read your Bible. Read about Adam and Eve. They had it pretty soft there in Paradise. They didn't even know they was naked. So going against direct orders, she makes Adam take a bite outta that apple. So God got sore and told them to get out of there. So it was Eve's fault. God cursed women with this trouble. That's why they call it, what do you call it, the curse.
>
> Mike: Staight from the Reverend Archie Bunker, the true story of menstruation.
>
> Archie: Shhhhhhhh with that word.[39]

Interestingly enough, Paula Weidiger reports that in response to Mike's use of the word "menstruation" the producers received a flood of critical mail.[40] Apparently, the euphemistic "curse," and the notion that it was Eve's "fault" are more acceptable than the menstrual fact of female biology, or "animality" as Judy Chicago calls it.[41]

Moreover, lest anyone think that the concept of sin did not become the notion of neurotic guilt in psychoanalytic treatment, and most pertinent in this context, that the disdain for the menstruating female and blaming expressed in connection with Eve, did not filter into the thinking of certain psychoanalysts, we find, in a psychoanalytic study of the emotional concommitants of menstruation (1950) a description of menstruation as "the constant curse of Eve."[42]

In a similar vein, Merton Gill's choice of words in explaining the reason why girls tend to form secret clubs shortly after first menstruating reflects the same association. That is, he explains the origins of these clubs as stemming from guilt derived from the girls' feelings that menstruation "...is a punishment for their sins...."[43] (my

underline) Another guilt-related or sin -ful feeling which also supposedly emerges with the menstrual flow is based on the arousal of "... feelings of aggression and resentment towards males...."[44] More will be said about this formulation and others which are similar in subsequent discussion.

However, returning to the crime and punishment motif in association with the menses, in the Book of the It, written by George Groddeck (an analyst who was an active correspondent of Freud's), menstruation is described as the female's "brand of Cain" which "...stirs up the castration complex...brings up the repressed poisons and dregs out of the unconscious...."[45] Groddeck's Biblical metaphors continue and bring us back to Eve - in this case, Eve the Temptress.

In relation to the female sexual arousal during menstruation he observes,

> The sexual passion of woman is greatly intensified during the days of bleeding.... She attracts the man to herself in some way or another during this period...As evidence that this is really so, there is the curious fact that three fourths of all cases of rape take place during this period. In other words, a mysterious something in the menstruating woman throws the man into a madness in which he no longer fears to commit the crime. Eve tempts Adam; so it was, and is, and shall ever be.[46] [amen] (my underline)

The negative evaluation of the menstruous aspect of femininity, which clearly reflects a condemnation of females in general in association with Eve, is evident in Groddeck's free associations. What these associations also reveal, along with the content of the New Guinea, Dogon and Indian myths just described, is a punishment theme - punishment for male crime. While this blaming is reminiscent of the menstual blaming phenomena referred to in another context, in the broader perspective

it would seem that the inevitable fact of menstruation has served as a kind of focusing point onto which negative feelings or evaluations of female otherness have been projected in both primitive and sophisticated cultures.

In association with death and destruction, notions of menstrual evil are part of a larger body of myth which Hays calls the Myth of Feminine Evil.[47] This larger body of myth and notions of menstrual evil are like a very ancient tree and its branches, with the Myth of Feminine Evil the roots - gnarled,twisted, growing deeply into and spreading widely thorughout the earth, and beliefs about menstrual evil, the branches and leaves. On the other hand, notions of menstrual evil seem to be the roots for the creation of the Myth of Feminine Evil. Whichever way one wants to envision or conceptualize the direction of this relationship, there is no doubt that it is one which has been closely knit, ancient and historically and cross-culturally pervasive.

Mary Daly calls this myth of evil a "cosmic misnaming,"[48] and Eva Figes argues that the Eve myth, and others like it, represent externalizations of male flaws.[49] Karen Horney also viewed this attribution of evil to females as a matter of projection based on the male's underlying dread of the female's mysterious powers.[50]

In Judeo-Christian thought, the philosophical roots of the evil associated with the menstrous female and the female in general, can be traced to the dualistic world view pervasive in pre-Greek, Gnostic and Christian cosmologies. The similarity within these cosmologies is that the world is divided into two principles, good and evil. Evil is typically associated with darkness, chaos, body and female. Good is associated with light, order, spirit and male. Moreover, within this

view of the world the body itself has been considered a source of lesser worth than the spirit because it imprisons the soul and presents an obstacle to reaching the highest level of spiritual enlightenment.[51] This kind of thinking as it entered the mainstream of Western philosophy is usually referred to as Manicheanism.

Considering the excess physicality of the female, in association with menstruation and childbirth, her receptivity to the higher forms of spirituality has been judged as lacking as compared to the male's. That is, while she may be worshipful, her basic alliance is with carnality, materiality, the earth.[52] Moreover, as Mary Douglas[53] and Gabriella Eichinger[54] have pointed out in most of the major religious traditions, the wholeness of the body is a prerequisite for religious worship, summed up in the metaphor of the perfect container or vessel. While it is beyond the limits of the present discussion to deal with this concept in detail, Mary Douglas maintains that holiness is synonymous with bodily wholeness or integrity. Thus, females who bleed during menstruation and at childbirth, are in effect un-whole, thus unholy for a good part of their lives. Thus as imperfect vessels they are inferior in the eyes of God, which are often the eyes of the men who create God's existence.

Returning to the notion of evil in relation to the physicality and materiality of females, however, Erich Neumann writes,

> In a patriarchate...the <u>mater</u> character of... <u>materia</u> is devaluated; matter is regarded as something of small value in contrast to the ideal which is assigned to the male paternal side. Similarly...in all gnosticizing religions from Christianity to Islam, matter becomes inert, negatively deominized "matter," as opposed to the spirit aspect of the male.[55]

In this context Rosemary Reuther,[56] Vern Bullough[57] and others have pointed out that the demonized aspects of female physicality which Neumann refers to have been a major focus in the androcentric Christian religious tradition and have made a significant contribution to an evaluation of the female as secondary and of less worth than the male. Rosemary Reuther writes, "The assimilation of male-female dualism into soul-body dualism in patristic theology constitutes basically the definition of women...in the order of her nature and in the disorder of her sin."[58] Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir and Anne Battle-Sister[59] maintain that it is the Manicheanistic streak permeating Western thinking which creates the notion of female otherness or alterity, an otherness from the male implying not only different from, but an enemy to be feared. In this regard Battle-Sister writes,

> ...Manicheanism characterizes oppressor rationales. Thus there tends to be a uniform stereotype which is applied to all oppressed. It has to do with power. By defining his victims as abstractly inferior, the oppressor means to transform their contingent and mutable social weakness into a necessary inevitability. The effort involves some bad faith; a contradiction remains. So, while on the surface he defines them to be weak and docile, in fantasy he attributes to them omnipotence and an unsleeping desire to harm him.[60]

It is important to point out, however, that this dualistic philosophy and the concommitant association of female physicality with lesser, lower (and evil) is not limited to Western religious thinking. In the Buddhist tradition (particularly Hiniyana) the female body is also considered an obstacle to full spiritual awakening. Because of this physicality females have also been considered less receptive to the teachings of the Buddha than males. Moreover, it is the female who gives

birth to the phenomenal world, the world which must be denied and overcome if one is to reach the desired spiritual heights, which is the goal.[61] According to Charles Ponce in most of the world's major religious traditions the female is associated with the "damned earth, which is in turn the harbor of evil and the prison of the feminine."[62] Moreover, he also points out that this religious dogma is usually inseparable from cultural attitudes and evaluations of femininity which, one can safely assume from these remarks, is primarily negative

In relation to female physicality it is noteworthy that within the non-Vedic Tantric Yoga tradition the body is not considered an obstacle to the development of the spiritual. The body, and sexual union, are considered manifestations of the divine, or visible forms of the Brāhmin principle (not be confused with a Brāhmin). Thus the female's body is not considered polluted and polluting. Within sects practicing this form of Yoga, menstrual taboos are non-existent.[63] Interestingly enough, Heinrich Zimmer points out that within Tantric Yoga, females as well as males may become gurus; and initiation by a female is considered efficacious. In this context he notes that this presents a striking contrast to the Vedic texts "...wherein women are consigned to a secondary (though highly praised and sentimentalized) sphere of spiritual competency and aspiration; the Tantrics transcend the limits of biological and social differences."[64]

Various conceptual dichotomies associated with male and female, such as high/low, bad/good, chaos/order are also found throughout the world in primitive cultures far too numerous to mention. For instance, the female is typically associated with the below, the male with the above; male with order and female with disorder; male with right and

female with left; male with light, female with darkness, etc.[65] Moreover, in a fairly recent study of verbal associations to the words right and left, William Dumhoff reports that as it has been throughout the ages, the category left was characteristically associated with female, profane, dark, evil, wrong; and right with male, sacred, light, right.[66] The evaluations of femininity which these symbolic categorizations reflect would seem to be self evident.

Returning again to the notion of evil and femininity, in mythologies throughout the world, females have been held responsible for bringing death and evil into the world. Thus Eve, Pandora and Jahi are joined by an international brigade of ladies who have also been assigned similar blame. Robert Briffault lists them one by one.

> In the myths of North American Indians the first women was the cause of all evil and brought death into the world. The northern Déné hold the same doctrine....The Eskimo also believe that death was brought into the world by a woman. The ancient Mexicans ascribed all the miseries of the world to the first woman....The first woman is regarded as having brought death into the world by the Baila of Rhodesia, by the natives of Calabar, by the Baluka, the Kosai, and the natives of Equator Station, and by the Balola of the Congo....the Wamyamwezi believe that men would have been immortal but for the first woman who introduced death into the world. Among the Baganda the first woman was the sister of death and the cause of human mortality. The Kabyls of the Sahara ascribe the origin of death to the first woman. Woman is likewise held responsible for the origin of death in Melanesia. The Igorots of Luzon have a legend to the effect that the first woman instigated men to fight; previously they had lived in peace with one another. Woman is, in fact, universally regarded as having brought death into the world and all our woe.[67]

Geoffrey Lienhardt points out that myths which explain the

division of the sky (God) and earth (humans) as due to an act committed by a female are widespread in primitive cultures. In a myth which Lienhardt recounts (Dinka, Sudan, Africa) two blaming theses come together, as they do in the Eve myth, i.e., she brings an end to immortality and separates God from man. According to this myth the first woman was trying to pound more grain than God had allowed for human requirement. The women was angry and struck God and the sky with a long-handled pestle. Offended, God withdrew from the earth and men have since had to propitiate him, especially in sickness and in death, which were unknown prior to this act committed by the first woman.[68]

Derogation and Elevation: The Play of Ambivalence

Devereux argues that in certain cultures menstruation has been considered a sign of the elevation of the feminine rather than its derogation. In support of his argument he cites a belief found in Italian folklore that during menstruation the female moves up the social hierarchy. That is, if she is a peasant, when she menstruates she is elevated to the status of lady; if she is a lady, she moves, symbolically, to noble woman, and from a noblewoman to queen. Since the queen is identified with the madonna in this cultural belief system, then menstruation is noblizing in identification with this elevated religious personage.[69]

In this regard Abel and Joffee report that in Italy one of the euphemisms for the menses is Il Marchase Magnifico (the magnificent marquis), a term which obviously also implies noble status in association with menstruating, although curiously enough, the noble status of a male.[70] Moreover, in Germany a girl is supposedly told at her first menstrual flow

that menstruation happens "...even to the Virgin Mary." Similarly, in England a girl is told, "...even the Queen menstruates."[71]

Thus these scattered bits of information would seem to indicate that there is support for Devereux's argument. However, there is another way to interpret these beliefs, a way that Devereax does not consider. That is, the noblizing of menstruation reflected in these beliefs, prefaced by the word "even" could just as well be interpreted as a kind of compensatory rationale designed to placate the female for having to put up with menstruation - an attempt to glorify the social derogation and physical discomforts associated with the menses - to persuade the female that despite her menstrual bleeding she is, indeed, a noble creature...anyhow. Moreover, considering that in Germany the vernacular terms for menstruation are so derogatory (in association with the swinishness of pigs), the girls would <u>have</u> to be told that <u>even</u> the Virgin Mary menstruates to compensate for what Abel and Joffee maintain is the "...unclean and devalued role that the menstruous woman has played in this particular culture."[72]

However, considered in the broader perspective, which is the perspective of this study, what we find revealed here is another aspect of the play of ambivalence in relation to the feminine - extreme disdain and contempt, or elevation. As Weidiger writes, "We are alternately blessed madonnas and the cursed who bleed from the uterus."[73] And as Vern Bullough notes, and others have pointed out, "Men have usually tended to see women from two extremes, as the perfect mother symbolized by Mary, or as temptress symbolized by Eve. Only rarely is she pictured as a real living human being with ideas and emotions like those of other (male) human beings."[74]

Moreover, whether the female is elevated in religious thought (greater than human) or devaluated (less than human, animal and carnal), the outcome is the same - not human. One of the masters of creating fantasies of the feminine in the film world, Fedirico Fellini, comments, "In our moments of exultation woman seems an angelic creature - the good mother, madonna, the inspiring muse, everything good and helpful that exists in this world and the other. In moments of discomfort whenever we are desperate, the image of the woman changes and she becomes the malignant mother, sin and the devil."[75]

Carol Rosenberg argues that within Christian religious thought, which has made a significant contribution to the devaluation of females, the motherhood of Mary is often the whitewash that covers menstruation in association with the sinfulness of Eve.[76] In addition, it often seems to be the case that the elevation or worship of the "feminine" principle in religious or cultural thinking, whether in relation to Mary, menstruation (as Devereux maintains), or salvation, often appears to be another kind of covering, masking basically negative evaluations of females as people; or in religiously oriented cultures, spiritually impure beings who tempt males with their lustfullness and bring about their downfall, a view which has been clearly operative in Christian thought.[77]

In relation to this tendency, an observation made by Charles Ponce, a scholar of mystical religious traditions, illustrates the point I am making here. He writes,

> There appears to be a universal law, unfortunate in its implications, which states that wherever you find a religious or mystical system which exalts the feminine, which makes of the feminine a divine attribute, through which salvation may be known,

> in the society where that view is promulgated you will find a proportionate disregard of woman as a social being. One can almost point to this fact and postulate the existence of a law of compensation. From the Virgin Mary to Shakti to Yin and to the Shekhinah of Kabbalistic doctrine, the case holds true. Woman as a spiritual factor is desired, but woman as an existant in her own right is exemplary of an downfallen clod of earth.[78]

In sum then, so far it has been established that in a wide range of historical and cultural contexts: (1) there is a direct link between the myth of feminine evil and menstrual evil, (2) the witch and the menstruant, accorded similar destructive powers, are aspects of the Terrible Mother Archetype, (3) females have been attributed responsibility for bringing death, destruction and woe into the world, and (4) the latter has been associated with the spiritual downfall or the separation of God and man. If we consider that in reality the female brings life into the world, and that she is also responsible for creating death, then it is obvious once again that female is synonymous with Nature, and that like Nature the female is extremely powerful.

In this regard Simone de Beauvoir writes,

> Man seeks in woman the Other as Nature and as his fellow being. But we know what ambivalent feelings Nature inspires in man. He exploits her, but she crushes him, he is born of her and dies in her; she is the source of his being and the realm that he subjugates to his will; Nature is a vein of gross material in which the soul is imprisoned...she opposes the spirit...Now ally now enemy. She appears as the dark chaos from whence life wells up... Woman sums up nature as Mother, Wife and Idea ...But more often man is in revolt against his carnal state...the pure and active exhalation in which he likes to recognize himself is imprisoned in the mud of the earth...nature has a hold on him.[79]

NOTES: CHAPTER VI: PART I

[1]Julio Caro Baroja, The World of the Witches (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 94.

[2]Germaine Dieterlan, The Religion of the Bambara (Paris: Universitaires Presses de France, 1951);* Collin Turnbull, The Forest People (New York: Doubleday, 1962).

[3]Notes on the superstitions of menstruation, Lancet, 2 (Dec. 18, 1915): 1334; Esther Harding writes, "Primitives attempt to drive out the evil spirit by purging and fasting; by flagellation and fumigation with smoke; by washing the body and the clothes of the afflicted individual; in some cases even her hair is pulled out or she is shaved. These well-meant efforts to drive out evil are carried to such lengths at the first menstruation that the girl may be almost killed," Women's Mysteries (London: Rider, 1971), p. 59.

[5]Wolfgang Lederer, The Fear of Woman (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), p. 202, citing Margaret Alice Murray, The Witch-Cult in Western Europe. Footnotes 4 and 5 are reversed.

[4]The White Goddess (New York: Creative Age, 1948; reprint ed., New York: Vantage, 1958), p. 167.

[6]Paula Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause (New York: Knopf, 1976), p. 6, citing H.H. Ploss, M. Bartles and P. Bartles, Woman: An Historical, Gynecological and Anthropological Compendium, vol 1. Unfortunately, this book seems to be unavailable in the English version, at least in New York or California. In the Acknowledgements to her book Weidiger requests that the person who stole the book from the New York Library return it.

[7]Mary Chadwick, The Psychological Affects of Menstruation (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Co., 1932); Lederer, Fear of Women; Eva Figes, Patriarchal Attitudes: The Case for Women in Revolt (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1971).

[8]Noteworthy in this context is a survival of a menses-evil-devil associative trilogy which is suggested by the following report of a respondent to Weidiger's menstrual questionnaire. The respondent writes, "I was complaining to my sister about having cramps. She referred to menstruation as the 'dirty devil'." (p. 233)

[9]Lederer, Fear of Women, see Chap. 22,"Broomsticks and Acts of Faith," pp. 205-11; Chadwick, pp. 12-13, 25-35 passim.

[10]Ibid., pp. 25-35.

[11]The taboo of virginity (1918) in the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Norton, 1952), Vol. IV.

[12]W.N. Stephens, A cultural study of menstrual taboos, Genet. Psychol.

Mongr., 64:385-416, 1961; C.D. Daly, The role of menstruation in human phylogenesis and ontogenesis, Int. J. Psychoanal., 24:151-162, 1943; and C.D. Daly, The menstruation complex in literature, Psychoanal. Quart., 4:307-343, 1935.

[13]Karl A. Menninger, Somatic correlations with the unconscious repudiation of femininity, J. Nerv. and Ment. Disord., 89:514-27, 1939; Merton Gill, Functional disturbances of menstruation, Bull. Menninger Clin., 7: 6-14, 1943.

[14]The female's experience of castration anxiety, assuming that the concept has some validity, is far more likely to center around her own sexual organs and not the male's. In The Mother, Anxiety and Death (Boston: Little Brown, 1967), p. 91. Joseph Rheingold points out that a theory proposed by Bieber and Dreillich (1959) is probably the most reasonable. That is, they propose that the female's castration anxiety is divided into two parts. The first is seen as a transitory phase (based on the girl's recognition that she does not have a penis). However, this does not contribute to her emotional life or psychic development in any way, unless it is part of a pathological personality organization. The second, and most important, part is castration anxiety in reaction to interference with/or injury to the female sex organs. On this matter Freud wrote (Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety (1900) Standard Edition, p. 130), "We can hardly speak of castration anxiety where castration has already taken place."

[15]The Great Mother (Princeton: Princeton/Bollingen Paperbacks, 1972).

[16]The reader interested in fine points and general Jungian theory should see, e.g., Anne B. Ulanov, The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and Christian Theology (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971); Ira Progoff, Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning (New York: Julian, 1953; reprint ed. New York Anchor/Doubleday, 1973); Charles E. Whitmont, The Symbolic Quest (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Erich Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness (London: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1954); and C.G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Princeton: Bollingen, 1959).

[17]The Great Mother, p. 149.

[18]Ibid., p. 170.

[19]Ibid., p. 170.

[20]Ibid., see Chap. 13, "Our Lady of the Plants."

[21]Ibid., and C.G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation (Princeton: Bollingen, 1956).

[22]M.J. Meggit, Male-female relationships in the Highlands of Australian New Guinea, Amer. Anthro., Special Publication, no. 2, p. 208, 1964.

[23]Cited by Evelyn Reed, Woman's Evolution From Matriarchal Clan to Patriarchal Family (New York: Pathfinder, 1975), p. 102.

[24]Women of Tropical Africa (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 13; Women Inbetween (New York: Seminar, 1972), pp. 173, 177.

[25]Ibid., p. 173.

[26]Cited by Karen Paige, "Women Learn to Sing the Menstrual Blues," Psychology Today (Sept., 1973), p. 241.

[27]Norman Cohen, The myth ofsatan and his human servants, in Witchcraft: Confessions and Accusations, ed. Mary Douglas (London: Tavistock, 1970), pp. 5-12.

[28]Cited by Lederer, p. 28.

[29]Ibid., p. 27.

[30]Bruno Bettleheim, Symbolic Wounds (New York: Collier, 1972), p. 172.

[31]In India menstruating is also associated with evil in that it is at this time when evil forces supposedly try to make contact with the female. G.F. Eichinger, Woman's pollution periods in Tamilnad (India), Anthropos, 69:114, 1974.

[32]Edward Westermarck, Ritual and Belief in Morrocco (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1968), 2:5; p. 296.

[33]Ibid., p. 4.

[34]Marcel Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemmeli (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 146.

[35]In C. Fluhman, The Management of Menstrual Disorders (London: Saunders, 1956), p. 5.

[36]Eichinger, p. 141.

[37]Carol S. Rosenberg, Puberty to menopause: the cycle of femininity in 19th century America, Feminist Studies, 1:63, 1973.

[38]Louise Brush, Attitudes, emotional and physical symptoms commonly associated with menstruation, Amer. J. Ortho. Psychiat., 8:275, 1938.

[39]"All in the Family," Tandem Productions, written by Michael Ross and Bernie West, copyright 1973.

[40]Menstruation and Menopause, p. 91.

[41]Through the Flower (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 106.

[42]Isador A. Silberman, A contribution to the psychology of menstruation, Int. J. Psychoanal., 31:262, 1950.

[43]Disturbances of menstruation, p. 7.

[44]Ibid., p. 10.

[45]The Book of the It (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 93.

[46]Ibid.

[47] H. P. Hays, The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil (New York: Putnam, 1966).

[48]Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon, 1973), p. 74.

[49]Patriarchal Attitudes, p. 38. Figes argues that as such a "repository" of externalized evil, the female's power, in the male's imagination, usually increases in inverse proportion to her actual power in the real world (Ibid., p. 55).

[50]Feminine Psychology, ed. Harold Kelman (New York: Norton, 1967), pp. 113-144. In relation to this projection issue in primitive cultures Esther Harding (p. 59) writes, "Whenever primitive man senses and dreads a supernatural force...there we must look for a psychological factor, unknown to him and therefore perceived in the object to which it has been projected."

[51]Vern L. Bullough, The Subordinate Sex: a History of Attitudes Toward Women (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin), Chap. 2, "The Formation of Attitudes."

[52]Mary Ellman writes, "Materiality is the favorite statement of the feminine alliance with the concrete. It implies a masculine alliance with the abstract." Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), p. 97.

[53]Purity and Danger (Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), pp. 75-75.

[54]Women's Pollution, p. 114.

[55]The Great Mother, p. 49. In this context Newman also writes, "In the patriarchal development of the Judaeo-Christian West, with its masculine, monotheistic trend toward abstraction, the goddess as a feminine figure of wisdom was disenthroned and repressed." (Ibid., p. 331).

[56]Mysogynism and virginal feminism in the fathers of the church, in Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, ed. Rosemary Ruether (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), pp. 150-183. For a comprehensive overview of evaluations of female character in Western religious traditions, the reader should see this entire collection of essays.

[57]The Subordinate Sex, pp. 174-79.

[58]Reuther, Mysogynism and virginal feminism, p. 156.

[59]The Second Sex (New York: Bantam, 1970); and Conjectures on the female culture question, J. of Marr. and Fam., 33:411-420, 1971.

[60]Ibid., p. 414.

[61]Neumann, 335-36; Diane Jacobson, Indian women, goddesses and wives, in Many Sisters, ed. C.J. Matthiesen (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 135-36; C. Trungpa, Femininity, Maitreya, 4:23-26, 1973; Charles Ponce, Woman, the feminine and alchemy, Maitreya, 4:31-41, 1973. Randall Collins writes, "In Brahminism, Islam, Jainism, Confucianism, and the official Roman cults, women are usually regarded as incapable of detaching themselves from the mundane world, and high religious status is reserved for men," A conflict theory of social stratification, Social Problems, 19:12, 1971.

[62]Ponce, Woman, p. 25.

[63]Eichinger, p. 130.

[64]Philosophies of India (Princeton: Bollingen, 1951), p. 597.

[65]For instance, according to the Pythagorean world view, there is a good principle which has created order, light and man, and a bad principle which has created chaos, darkness and woman. Cited by de Beauvoir, p. 74. Among many possible examples and versions of this male-female dichotomy, see Alice H. Murphie, A functional analysis of Southern Folk beliefs concerning birth, in Southern Anthropological Society Proceedings #1 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1968), p. 68, i.e., female-left, male-right; Elli Maranda, A woman is an alien spirit, in Many Sisters, pp. 178-202; female-profane, after, male-sacred, before; John Burton, Some Nuer notions of purity and danger, Anthropos, 69:515-536, 1974; female-below, male-above. For an interesting discussion of these male-female conceptual dualities, as they differ in the East and the West, see Herbert W. Guenther, The male-female polarity in Oriental and Western thought, Maitreya, 4:51-62, 1973.

[66]But why did they sit on the king's right hand in the first place, Psychoanal. Rev., 56:586-589, 1969.

[67]The Mothers, Vol. III, cited by Lederer, p. 222.

[68]Social Anthropology (London: Clarendon, 1966), p. 125.

[69]The psychology of feminine genital bleeding: An analysis of Mohave Indian puberty and menstrual rites, Int. J. Psychoanal., 31:252, 1950.

[70]Cultural backgrounds of female puberty, Amer. J. Psychother., 4:97, 1950.

[71]Ibid., p. 81; and Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Anthropology and Legend, 1950 ed., s.v. "Menstruation," by Norma Joffee.

[72]Female Puberty, p. 98.

[73]Menstruation and Menopause, p. 177.

[74]The Subordinate Sex, p. 4.

[75]San Francisco Chronicle, 8 March 1974.

[76]Puberty to Menopause, p. 63.

[77]According to Nor Hall in one of the apocryphal gospels , it is written "Christ has come to destroy the womb of women: lust, birth, decay and death." In Mothers and Daughters (Minneapolis, Minn.: Rusoff, 1976), p. 29.

[78]Ponce, Woman, p. 33.

[79]Second Sex, p. 135.

CHAPTER VI: PART II

> We are dealing with stench and decay which, as has already been established signify nature, as opposed to culture, but this time they are expressed in terms of anatomical coding. And woman everywhere is synonymous with nature... even among the matrilineal and matrilocal....[1] (my underline)
>
> --Lévi-Strauss

Menstrual Pollution and Concepts of Female Pollution

The primitive male's fear of the menstruating female has been described by Freud, Frazer, Winstedt and Crawley[2] in terms of a fear of being infected, by feminine weakness or infected by effeminacy. Crawley, in particular, postulates that while in primitive males this involves a fear of the transmission of the physical characteristics associated with menstruation, i.e., weakness, illness, in more sophisticated cultures it takes the form of fear of "infection by moral effeminacy."[3] I am not taking issue here with this explanation of menstrual-related fear in males, which I think is a sound possibility given what we know about the principles of contagious magic, and the fact that physical prowess and (male) strength have probably been essential for survival in primitive cultures.

I am most interested in the use of the word "infection" in association with the female. In effect, this formulation suggests an equation which is: menstruation=disease=female. This equation can be read in either direction, forward or reverse. It is like the equation that can be drawn from Quentin Compson's definition of femininity in The Sound and The Fury[4] i.e., menstruation=female=filth. This also can

be read in either direction.

Moreover, if we consider (1) pollution is something which by its nature spreads like an infection, and (2) that there are far more pollution beliefs surrounding females than males, then we might assume that females have been viewed as more infected and infecting than males. In addition, if we also consider that with rare exception this pollution moves primarily in one direction - from female to male,[5] then we might also conclude that over large areas of the world a two-way caste system has been operative - one in which the lower caste (females) "infect" or contaminate the higher caste (males).

In Response, a publication devoted to Jewish culture, the editors question the concept of Niddah (the taboos surrounding menstruation) on exactly this basis. In this regard they write, "Is there really no stigma attached to the concept of Tum'ah (religious impurity) especially as practiced in the isolation of Niddah? She [the female] is treated, after all, as though bearing a rather unpleasant, contagious disease."[6] They comment further that the period of pollution lasting seven days after the menstrual flow ceases "...reinforces the impression that the menstrual blood itself has powerful contaminating properties which must be guarded against";[7] and they conclude, "It is difficult to avoid the implication that we are dealing with the potent residue of an ancient taboo based on...male fear, awe and repugnance toward woman's creative, biological cycle."[8]

In a similar vein Rachel Adler notes that for unknown reasons at a certain point in Jewish history, the positive aspects of the mikveh in association with rejuvenation and regeneration (bathing in the "water of life") were transformed, and "The state of Niddah became a monthly

exile from the human race (my underline), a punitive shunning of the menstruant....The mikveh, instead of being the primal sea in which all was made new, became the pool at which women were cleansed of their filth and thus became acceptable sexual partners once more....Nor did it help when rabbis [informed] women that their filth was spiritual rather than physical."[9] Thus what is being strongly indicated here is that concepts of menstrual pollution in association with infection and disease reflect a devaluation of the feminine.

If we also consider a statement made by Mary Douglas in Purity and Danger, an analysis of concepts of religious pollution and purity, "A polluted person is always in the wrong. He [she] has developed some wrong conditon...,"[10] then we might also conclude that females in magical religious cultures throughout the world, are more wrong than right; or as Mary Ellman writes, "Femaleness is a congenital fault rather like excema or original sin."[11]

Referring to a point made earlier - that in most magical-religious cultures the female has been categoriezed as a natural pollutant, Marilyn Strathern writes,

> Status may be taken not only as compounded of various ideas to which rites and duties are attached, but as stemming also from the way in which roles or combinations of part-roles are categorized or evaluated. Thus the specification that females are polluting defines a role (woman having a duty to follow menstrual taboos), but in addition it is an attribution of a category "woman."...Categorizations...summarize social attitudes.[12] (my underline)

Thus based on Strathern's statement and Sherry Ortner's contention that "...Symbolic devices such as the attribution of defilement ...may be interpreted as implicitly making a statement of inferior

evaluation...,"[13] then menstrual taboos and beliefs, as part of a larger custom-belief complex (consisting of female-related pollution beliefs and taboos), seem to reflect a derogation of femininity.

In categorizing female as "natural" pollutant, females have been discriminated not against but from the male because, for a good part of their lifetime, their sex places them in this pollution category. Biological maleness, by contrast, is not categorically synonymous with pollution. Looked at from this point of view, menstrual taboos, as part of this larger custom-belief complex, are discriminatory acts, and menstrual pollution beliefs are discriminatory beliefs.

Moreover, in this context it is interesting to note that the root definition of the word dis/crim/ination, as the marked off portion of the word suggests, implies the notion of criminality or having committed a crime. If we consider this, along with the fact that the polluting person is always in the wrong, and an observation made by Curt Nimendaju that in many primitive cultures the girl at first menstruation is treated as if she were being punished for a crime or some wrong doing,[14] then we might conclude, once again, that females, by virtue of being biologically female, are naturally in the wrong.

In addition, criminality implies being outside the law, outside human society, or at the margins of society, i.e., civilization. As Rachel Adler implies, is this not what menstrual seclusion consists of? That is, menstrual huts, much like prisons and other institutions designed for marginal (less than human) individuals who are unsafe, are located on the outskirts of the village. It is outside of civilization, where the female goes with her animal bleeding - the bleeding involved in menstruation and childbirth. She goes to what Edwin Ardener calls

the "wild" outside the boundaries of culture![15] Since from previous discussion we know that in New Guinea menstrual huts are in the bad (unlevel) part of the village, along with other representations of animality (pig stys and latrines),[16] then we might conclude that there is something less than human about the natural biological functions of females. Or as Shulamith Firestone so aptly puts it, "Women, being biologically distinguished from men are culturally distinguished from human."[17]

The Menses: Disorder and Order

In Purity and Danger, Mary Douglas writes, "Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas."[18] In this context she proposes that all societies have symbolic categories of order and disorder which are essential to maintaining a consistent world view, i.e., one in which cognitive (symbolic) order provides a unity of experience. Those events or items which are regarded as out of place in the symbolic order are considered polluting, and thus dangerous, because they are (1) anomolous and (2) inherently have the qualities of disorder. In essence, these anomalous events or items - in this case menstruating and menstrual blood - are a threat to a consistent world view, which consequently makes them dangerous. That which is anomalous or out of place is put back in place or re-ordered by means of rituats which serve to restore cognitive consistency and allay danger.

Douglas also contends that any given system of symbolic classification must give rise to anomalies, because in all cultures these anomalies, or what she sometimes calls "ambiguous events," (such as monstrous births or menstruation) occur. She lists six ways in which a culture

deals with the dangers of symbolic disorder and the resulting pollution. The two which are the most pertinent in the present context are (1) avoidance and (2) labeling dangerous. Both of these obviously apply to the menstruous female.

According to this theory, then, menstrual blood is polluting and by association the menstruous female is a pollutant, anomalous, representative of disorder and danger, specifically, because "...menstrual blood has the impossible [anomalous] status of a dead person that never lived."[19] Thus the ritual purifications which the menstruous female must perform can be understood not only in terms of restoring ritual purity, but also in terms of re-establishing symbolic categories of order, or as Douglas puts it, restoring, "One single, symbolically consistent universe."[19A]

Thus within this symbolic perception of the world, each month the female disrupts the orderly universe and brings potential danger to herself and the community in which she lives. Moreover, pregnancy and childbirth also represent disorder, in that anomalous states of being involve ambiguity and the unknown.[20] In terms of cultural evaluations of femaleness, then, the female's physicality defines her as an anomalous being. As such she violates society's sense of order; and as Michelle Rosaldo points out, "whatever violates a society's sense of order is seen as threatening."[21] The menstruant, as a representative of disorder within this system of symbolic thought, obviously poses a threat to world order, another indication that her power is that of the chaotic or the wild.

In European folklore one finds the beliefs that the menstruant can stop clocks, break glasses from afar, snap violin or harp strings and cause several other kinds of poltergeist-like phenomena which defy

the laws of physics.[22] In Europe, as well as in various preliterate cultures, it has also been believed that the menstruant can start and stop storms, and cause bad weather or floods. As mentioned earlier, in some areas of the world the menstruant also supposedly causes natural sources of water to dry up.[23] It is my contention that the concept underlying these beliefs is one of disorder or disruption.

Moreover, the anti-life or anti-growth influence of the menses on vegetation and young children discussed previously, as well as the sympathetic transmission of the properties of the menstrual flow itself (non-clotting or jelling of the foetus) to certain aspects of the organic environment (non-jelling of puddings, non-clotting of cheese, etc.) can also be categorized as types of disorder or disruption. What I am proposing here is that all these beliefs, i.e., starting storms, stopping clocks (time), causing poltergeist phenomena (interference with physical laws), disrupting the development process that would ordinarily lead to the maturity of the foetus, as well as the maturity of vegetation, suggest a theme of disorder. Additionally, the ability of the menstruant to transmit disruption or disorder to nature in the ways just described once again implies that her tie with nature is intimate; and that the power of the menstruant is, in effect, the power of nature herself.

In the modern-day world, which is not altogether free of sexual analogy or primitive thinking, especially in evaluating female behavior, this menses-nature-disorder equivalency is translated into different terms. That is, the emotions or behavior of the menstruating female might be described as "irrational," "dangerously impaired,"[24] or "out of control." In psychoanalytic jargon the behavior of a menstruating female might be described as a regression to a pre-genital level of

psychic organization. Moreover, notions of disruption to the social sphere in association with the disorder of menstruation are fashioned into theoretical statements such as the following, in which the menstruant is seen as a source of emotional contamination to the demands of civilization: "Menstruating women's troublesome and acting out behavior is a source of considerable discomfort to their environment, since their examples tempt others to relinquish their painfully acquired emotional stability...."[25] In this respect we might surmise that those who fear the loss of painfully acquired emotional stability most are males; and that in the modern world, the fear that Paula Weidiger suggests males still experience in response to menstruating females is this emotionality.

Moreover, herein lies another aspect of the ambivalence with which females have been regarded by males. That is, while the emotionality of females is deemed desirable and valuable in relation to the nurturance of children and the comfort of males, in its menstrual or premenstrual aspects it is irrational, out of control, wild. How many females have been driven into further fury when in the midst of expressing anger or irritability a male's response has been "you must have your period!" What this does, in effect, is to take the individuality away from the feeling by placing it in the category of "due to menstruation." This occurs in Ingmar Bergman's movie, Scenes From a Marriage, when the main character's wife displays an unusual burst of anger, one of the few expressions of defiance directed toward her spouse.

Notions of disorder and disruption in association with the menses have also become part of theories such as the so-called "raging hormone"[26] theory of female behavior and character within which questions about the menstruant's emotional stability in the work world--her

competence and her ability to function effectively in positions of responsibility and authority are raised. In the late nineteenth century James McGrigor Allen questioned the female's right to vote on the basis of the "langour and depression" she experienced during the menses, which he viewed as diminishing the female's capacity to make sound judgments.[27] In the modern world of technology the question about menstrual-related competence (or incompetence) takes a different form. As Norman Mailer writes,

> The womb was a damnable disavantage in the struggle with men, a cranky, fouled up bag of horrors for any woman who would stand equal to man on modern jobs, for technology was the domain of numbers, of machines and electric circuits, of plastic surfaces, static vibrations and contemporary noise. Yet through all such disturbance technology was still build in conformity of practice...each departure from a uniform beat demanded a new expensive control. The best operator was the uniform operator and women had that unmentionable womb, that spongy pool, that time machine with a curse, dam for an ongoing river of blood... How this womb...disrupted every attempt at uniform behavior!"[28] [sic order]

In a fairly recent review of the effects of menstruation on cognition and performance, Barbara Sommer concludes that there is little if any substantial evidence to indicate that the female is incapacitated for work during menstruation.[29] In this context Germain Greer remarks, "Women are no more incapacitated by their menses than are men by their drinking habits, their hypertension, their virility fears...." Similarly, while empirical studies suggest that during the menstrual and premenstrual cycle, pathological or aberrant behaviors such as suicide attempts, alcohol intake, admissions to psychiatric hospitals, crime rates, etc., increase,[30a,b,c] it has been noted in a number of contexts

that males, as a group, exhibit more of this kind of aberrant behavior than females.[31] In addition, in a fairly recent review of studies of the behavioral and psychological correlates of the premenstrual syndrome,[32] Mary Parlee makes a number of important points.[33]

In relation to the population to whom these results can be generalized, Parlee writes, "From knowing that crimes are likely to be committed during certain phases of the cycle it is not possible to assume the truth is the inverse - that women in these phases of the cycle are more likely to commit crimes. This latter is true only for women who will at some time commit crimes."[34] Obviously, this reasoning can be applied to all aberrant or pathological behaviors associated with the premenstrual or menstrual phases of the menstrual cycle.

Parlee also points out that negative findings are not published in journals, and that there have been no studies of the positive aspects of menstruation. To my knowledge, the only recognition of the positive aspects of menstruation within the field of psychology comes from the Jungian analyst Esther Harding, who viewed menstruation as a valuable opportunity for the female to get in touch with her inner being.[35] Females have reported informally (to me) that premenstrually and during menstruation they experience bursts of creativity, increased empathic understanding in their roles as therapists and a general sense of "up" rather than "down." In this regard it is noteworthy that in the Olympics three females won gold medals while they were menstruating.[36]

NOTES: CHAPTER VI: PART II

[1]The Raw and the Cooked (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 31.

[2]The taboo of virginity (1913), Standard Edition, p. 198; The Golden Bough, 1:98; The Malays: a Cultural History (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 107;* E. Crawley and T. Besterman, The Mystic Rose (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927), p. 187.

[3]Ibid.

[4]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 159.

[5]In my research I came across several cultures in which it has been believed that males are polluting to females, e.g., the Wogeo of New Guinea (I. Hobgin, Isle of Menstruating Men). There were none in which males transmitted their physical characteristics to females(i.e., strength). In this regard, Crawley (p. 203) wrote, "Owing to the monopoly of thought by the male sex it is rarely we hear of transmission of masculine properties to females." To a certain extent, this is what Young and Bacyadan are suggesting in Menstrual taboos and social rigidity, Ethnology, 4:225-39, 1965.

[6]Editor's note, Response, 18:125, 1973.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 126. This change in attitude is also noted in Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem, 1967 ed, s.v. "Menstruation" by Isreal Moses Ta-Shma.

[10]Purity and Danger (Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), p. 136.

[11]Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1968), p. 97.

[12]Women Inbetween (New York: Seminar, 1972), p. 286.

[13]Is female to male as nature is to culture? in Women and Culture, p. 69.

[14]The Tucana: Habitat, history and language, Ethnology Bulletin, no. 143 (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1948), p. 718.*

[15]Ardener develops this idea in Belief and the problems of women, in An Interpretation of Ritual (London: Tavistock, 1970), pp. 140-158. In Purity and Danger (Chaps. 7-9) Mary Douglas develops this concept of marginality from a number of different perspectives. In the present context what is most relevant is her interpretation of danger and power. In discussing anti-social (criminal) behavior in terms of its being a marginal condition, she writes, "It seems that if a person has no place

in the social system and is therefore a marginal being, all precaution against danger must come from others (p. 117). In her view being in a polluted state represents a kind of powerful marginality which must be controlled (taboos, rituals) by others. Thus the female who, because of her biological processes, is often in a polluted state, is a constant source of danger.

[16]Sex and Temperament (New York: Marrow, 1968), p. 37.

[17]The Case for Feminist Revolution, p. 205. Lionel Tiger notes "being human is more persuasively characteristic of a human male than being male," and, "being male is part of being a person." Men in Groups (New York: Vintage, 1971), p. 71.

[18]Douglas, p. 85.

[19]Ibid., p. 116.

[19A]Ibid., p. 85.

[20]Douglas integrates her theories here with those of Arnold Van Gennep, Rites of Passage (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960.

[21]Woman, culture and society: A theoretical overview in Woman and Culture, p. 31.

[22]Raymond Crawfurd, Superstitions, p. 1335; Emil Novak, Menstruation and Its Disorders (New York: Appleton, 1921), p. 3; Funk and Wagnalls, s.v. "Menstruation."

[23]Frazer, 1:96, 10:45, 50, 76; Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemmili, p. 151; Jane Goodale, Tiwi Wives (Seattle: University of Seattle Press, p. 50.

[24]This phrase, i.e., "...a wide range of indices demonstrates dangerously impaired behavior in menstruating women" appears in D.S. Janowsky, R. Gorney and B. Kelly, The curse--Vicissitudes and variations of the female fertility cycle. Part II. Evolutionary aspects, Psychosomatics, 7:283-87, 1966. The notion that the premenstrual phase of the menstrual cycle manufactures madness is reflected in H.L. Olack's suggestion that this phase be considered a state of temporary insanity. Thus females should not be considered legally responsible for criminal acts. According to Olack this has been an "informal" law in France. (Legal aspects of premenstrual tension, Int. Rec. Med., 166:492-504, 1953).

[25]George Devereux, Psychology of feminine bleeding, p. 252.

[26]An example of this view of female character is found in an oft-quoted statement made by Dr. Edgar E. Berman, friend of ex-Vice President Humphrey:

> If you had an investment in a bank you wouldn't want the president of your bank making a loan under these raging hormonal influences at that particular period.

> Suppose we had a President in the White House, a menopausal woman President who had to make the decision of the Bay of Pigs which was of course a bad one, or the Russian contretemps with Cuba at that time?

Cited by Karen Paige, "Women Learn to Sing the Menstrual Blues," Psychology Today (Sept., 1973), p. 241. See, Alan Alda, "What Every Woman Should Know About Men," Ms (Oct., 1975), pp. 15-16, for the seven warning signs of testosterone poisoning in males. The notion that males might have a hormonal cycle which effects their behavior was proposed by Havelock Ellis in 1901. See Studies in The Psychology of Sex, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis). Also see Estelle Ramey, "Men's Cycles," Ms (April, 1972), pp. 8-14.

[27]Paige, p. 241. The following appeared in Ms (Nov., 1973), p. 94.

> Why men shouldn't have the vote
> 1. Because men are too emotional to vote. Their conduct at baseball games and political conventions shows that ...their innate tendency to appeal to force renders them particularly unfit for the task of government.
> 2. Because no really manly man wants to settle any question other than by fighting about it.
> 3. Because man's place is in the army.
> 4. Because men will lose their charm if they step out of their natural sphere and interest themselves in matters other than feats of arms, uniforms and drums.
> 5. Because if men should adopt peaceable methods, women will no longer look up to them. --Alice Durer Miller, 1915.

Reprinted in Aurora, Prism of Feminism.

[28]The Prisoner of Sex (New York: Bantam, 1971), p. 47.

[29]"Does menstruation effect performance?"- paper presented at the annual meeting of the Ontario Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 1 February 1973. Also see B. Sommer, The effect of menstruation on cognitive and perceptual-motor behavior, Psychosomatic Medicine, 6:215-234, and "Perceptual-motor performance, mood and the menstrual cycle," paper presented at the meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Portland, Oregon, April, 1972; Mary Wickham, The effects of the menstrual cycle on test performance, Brit. J. Psychol., 49:34-41, 1958; Katherine Dalton, Effects of menstruation on school girls' weekly work, Brit. Med. J., 2:1752-53, 1961; and on a lighter note, see Hadley V. Baxendale, "A Person Who Menstruates Is Unfit To Be a Mother," Psychology Today (March, 1975), p. 49.

[30]The Female Eunuch (New York: McGraw Hill, 1971), p. 46.

30(a) In relation to lack of emotional and behavioral control during the premenstrual and menstrual phases of the menstrual cycle; see, e.g., R.D. Wetzel and R.N. McClure, Suicide and the menstrual cycle: A review, Comprehensive Psychiatry, 1:369-373, 1960; A.L. Ribero, Menstruation and crime, Brit. Med. J., 1:640, 1962; found that 19 of 22 Hindu females who committed suicide by burning themselves alive in kerosene were menstruating. Also see C. Tonks, P. Rack and M. Rose, Attempted suicide and the menstrual cycle, J. Psychosom. Res., 11(4):319-323, 1968.

30(b) Increases in either psychiatric or medical hospital admissions rates, crime, psychotic episodes, or accidents in association with the premenstrual and/or menstrual phases of the cycle have been reported by: J.H. Morton et al., A clinical study of premenstrual tension, Amer. J. Ob. and Gyn., 65:1182-1191, 1953; E.Y. Williams and L.P. Weeks, Premenstrual tension associated with psychotic episodes, J. Nerv. Ment. Disord., 116: 321-329, 1952; and K. Dalton, Menstruation and acute psychiatric illness, Brit. Med. J., 1:148-149, 1959; Dalton, Menstruation and accidents, Brit. Med. J., 1:1426-28, 1960; Dalton, Menstruation and crime, Brit. Med. J., 1:1752-53, 1961.

30(c) D.S. Janowsky, R. Gorney and A. Mandell, The menstrual cycle, Arch. Gen. Psychiat., 17:459-69, 1967: D.S. Janowsky et al., Premenstrual increases in psychiatric admission rates, Amer. J. Ob. and Gyn., 103(1):189-191, 1969; R. Miranda, Premenstrual tension and criminality, Arch. Neuro. Psiquiat. (S. Paulo) 24(2):118-21, and G.S. Glass et al., Psychiatric emergency related to the menstrual cycle, Amer. J. Psychiat., 128(6): 705-11, 1971; T.J. Jacobs and E. Charles, Correlation of psychiatric symptomatology in an out patient population, Amer. J. Psychiat., 126: 1504-08, 1970; M.L. Belfar et al., Alcoholism in women, Arch. Gen. Psychiat., 25:540-44, 1971.

31 Paige, p. 241; Rhoda K. Unger and Florence L. Denmark, Introduction in Women - Dependent or Independent Variable?, eds. Unger and Denmark (New York: Psychological Dimensions, 1976), p. 506; also see Julia A. Sherman, On the Psychology of Women: A Survey of Empirical Studies (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1971).

32 The man who is credited with first describing such a syndrome is R.T. Frank, The hormonal causes of premenstrual tension, Arch. Neurol. and Psychiat., 26:1053-57, 1931. One of the primary symptoms, according to Frank, was a tendency toward "foolish and ill considered actions."

33 The premenstrual symdrome, Psych. Bull., 80:454-65, 1973.

34 Ibid., p. 456.

35 Women's Mysteries, pp. 72-75.

36 Anne Critendon Scott, "Closing The Muscles Gap," Ms (Sept., 1974), pp. 50-55. For information on the effects of the menstrual cycle on athletic performance see, G. Erdelyi, Gynecological survey of female athletes, J. of Sports, Medicine and Physical Fitness, Sept., 1962; Carl E. Klafs and John N. Lyon, The Female Athlete (St. Louis: C.V. Mosby, 1973).

CHAPTER VII

THE MENSES: REFLECTIONS ON SOCIAL ORDER, SOCIAL VALUES

God, Survival of the Species and Psychoanalytic Theory

> Menstruation is the uterus crying for the lack of a baby.[1]
> --William F. Ganong, Principles of Medical Physiology, 1971

There is no doubt that until fairly recently, in cultures vastly different in tradition and level of sophistication, it has been deemed socially valuable for females to bear children and be mothers. This is reflected in more ways than it is possible to enumerate here. As many anthropologists have noted, in preliterate cultures children are greatly desired, and a woman's status is dependent on her ability to produce a large progeny.[2] In both preliterate, ancient and modern cultures, being barren for a female has been considered shameful while for a male, sterility has been of minor importance in comparison.[3] Since menstruation has been linked with fertility, it is quite likely that one of the reasons females in preliterate cultures have not protested the enforcement of menstrual taboos is that these taboos are related to protection of child-bearing potential.[4]

To a great extent, the social value of producing many children in preliterate, ancient and modern cultures has been practical, i.e. high infant mortality rates. However, the social value of producing a large progeny is also related to other factors, some practical, others not, i.e. prestige, social power, maintaining a lineage (male ego),[4a]

usefulness of children for work, etc. Whatever the reasons, the value has been ever present.

This value has been reflected in social customs and laws. For instance, in magical-religious cultures taboos on abortion have been widespread, and to have or perform an abortion has been considered an offense to the supreme deity or a "sin."[5] Thus, in this case God's laws are definitely a mirror for social order and the reinforcement of social roles, i.e. females bear many children and are primarily defined as mothers. In secular societies, abortion has been considered a crime against the state, i.e. the state, in place of God, upholds social order and helps to maintain and reinforce sex roles. As indicated earlier, in preliterate cultures from puberty to menopause--the childbearing years--the female is subjected to many taboos, defined as religiously or ritually impure for a good portion of her life. This restricts her entry into the religious-social-political sphere, and limits her formal power, which in the social ordering of most cultures belongs to males. By surrounding the females with such extensive taboos and restricting entry into male realms, these taboos are also obviously the means by which the child-bearing, mother role is reinforced and social cohesiveness or "order" is maintained. When a females's childbearing years are over, then in some preliterate cultures she has been permitted to enter the male arena and her prestige and power become more equal to that of the male.[6]

The widespread taboos on abortion in preliterate cultures led Ford to the conclusion that females in many societies are motivated to commit abortion. In this context he writes, "The crowning achievement of social control reveals itself when women can blind themselves

to the disagreeable phase of pregnancy and think only of its pleasant aspects."[7] Moreover, in an extensive cross-cultural study of abortion practices in preliterate cultures Devereux takes issue with Helene Deutsch and other psychoanalytically oriented theorists who contend that the female's urge toward motherhood is basic, instinctive and unaffected by social factors. He writes,

> Without seeking to deny the basic human reality of the urge toward motherhood...the fact remains that the urge toward motherhood is a relatively plastic one, so that in a society where children are desired by men, women will frantically consult oracles and undergo innumerable rites. While in societies where too many children entail the risk that the woman may be deserted, or where pregnancy interferes with marital or extramarital relations the women will abort with no psychic turmoil.[8]

He adds further that theintensity of the urge toward motherhood in preliterate cultures is to a great degree a function of male attitudes toward fatherhood. In relation to psychoanalytic theories in which the instinctive basis of motherhood is stressed he states, "It is regrettable that psychoanalytic theory is not altogether free from such culturally determined preconceptions."[9] As we shall see shortly, the preconceptions that Devereux is referring to in this particular context are also reflected in psychoanalytic formulations of menstrual-cycle related emotional changes.

Earlier I mentioned that in widespread areas of Africa the badness of menstrual blood, its evil and religiously impure aspects, were related to notions of menstrual barrenness. It is my contention that one of the reasons that the menses have been regarded so negatively in preliterate cultures is that menstruating means non-pregnant or temporarily barren. In this context, it is interesting to note that in

three cultures in which female barrenness is not considered a source of social shame (Ainu, Trobriand, Tikopia) (probably because producing a large progeny is not one of the most important social values), the menstruant and her blood are not considered bad, evil, or dangerous, and there are few or no formal menstrual taboos.[10]

As we also know from previous discussion both the witch and the menstruant, regarded as sources of evil, have the power to control fertility and in effect induce barrenness. Moreover, as Lederer points out, the European witch, who was often either childless or a menopausal female, "possessed the highest degree of the feminine quality of changeableness and to the least degree the virtue of motherliness."[11] Thus, what I am suggesting here is that the evaluations of the menstruant and menstrual blood have been directly related to the role of female as child bearer--a negative evaluation when that role is not being fulfilled, i.e. temporary barrenness of menstruation. In this regard, Janowsky speculates that there has been a survival value to menstrual taboos; and that being put in a menstrual hut might be interpreted as punishment for a wasted pregnancy. He also suggests that menstrual taboos might have been enforced to protect the community from females "who are angry at having been cheated of their compensation for the disadvantage of being female."[12] Thus in Janowsky's formulation we also see a reflection of values--his own.

In a previous chapter I referred to a menstruation-related ritual in which the dominant objects used were like those used in rituals for hunters and murderers. At this point I shall discuss this ritual in detail because it illustrates the relationship between the

cultural values I have been referring to and attitudes toward and/or evaluations of the menstruant or menstrual blood. This discussion will also be used as a jumping off point which will take us into the modern world and an analysis of the ways in which formulations of the female's response to menstruation and other phases of the menstrual cycle also reflect cultural values and social norms.

The Nkula Ritual

In the Forest of Symbols, a study of symbolic ritual behavior among the Ndembu Tribe of Northern Rhodesia, Vincent Turner[13] describes a ritual performed for females who have menorrhagia (excessive flow of menstrual blood which lasts beyond a normal menstrual period). The goal of this ritual is to promote pregnancy and coagulate the patient's menstrual blood around the foetus in order to nourish it. The ritual items and medicines used in this ceremony represent the procreative aspects of motherhood and the principle of matriliny. In the ritual itself the female is dressed in skins like a male hunter, carries a hunter's bow and arrow and performs a hunter's dance. Turner points out that the ritual items used and the behavior are all connected in one way or another with rituals performed by male shedders of blood. Moreover, the red symbolism in the ritual performed for the female also has explicit reference to violence, killing and what Turner describes as "breach, both in the social and natural order." Turner raises the question, why is this female patient identified with male blood-spillers? His response is:

> The field context of these symbolic objects and items of behavior suggest that the woman, in wasting her menstrual blood and in failing to bear children, is actively renouncing her expected

> role as a mature married female. She is behaving like a male killer, not like a female nourisher.... The situation is analogous...to the following pronouncement in the ancient Jewish Code of Qaro, "Every man is bound to marry a wife in order to beget children, and he who fails of this duty is one who sheds blood.[14]

Overall, then, Turner sees the aim of this ritual as being the inculcation of social values, i.e. making sure that the female accepts her lot in life as a child-bearer. Moreover, he also adds,

> The symbolism suggests that the patient is unconsciously rejecting her female role, that indeed she is guilty; indeed, Mbayi, one term for menstrual blood, is etymologically connected with Ku-baya (to be guilty), thus the norms expressed in ritual are those governing the behavior of mature women, which ascribe to them the role appropriate to their sex.[15]

I think the point is crystal clear. Not only does Turner explicitly illustrate the part that social values play in creating rituals and reinforcing sex roles, his formulation also ties together several strands of thought presented in previous chapters, primarily those ideas and concepts proposed to explain the fear and negativity surrounding the menstruant and menstrual blood in terms of a death or anti-life influence. This same reinforcement of social values is also reflected in the Yap (Micronesia) belief, that the female who violates menstrual taboos will be punished with excessive bleeding, while the one who abides will be rewarded by the gods by pregnancy.[16] Similarly in Hebrew thought the man who has intercourse with a menstruant will produce damaged offspring, while the man who avoids the menstruant, and has intercourse at the prescribed time, which is exactly the time when the female is fertile, will be blessed by a brilliant male progeny. The greater social value accorded to male as opposed to female is also obvious here.[17]

The Modern World

In modern Western culture we find the same normative prescription in relation to the menses and the female's role as child bearer expressed in a variety of contexts and in a variety of ways. With reference to reinforcing or promoting the role of the female as child bearer, one of the most explicit statements of a cultural norm is reflected in the quotation cited at the beginning of this discussion, i.e. menstruation is the uterus crying for the lack of a baby. The fact that this "old saying" appears in a standard medical book of physiology, (translated into six languages), a socializing agent for future medical practitioners around the world, suggests that the message continues to be widespread. Moreover, this anthropomorphized uterus homily has cropped up here and there in a number of different contexts, varying slightly in wording and apparently increasing in dramatic flavor with age.

For instance, in the early twentieth century Havelock Ellis wrote, "Menstruation is the result of the disappointed preparation for pregnancy."[18] In 1937 Merton Gill, a Freudian analyist, wrote, "Menstruation is the weeping of the disappointed uterus."[19] And in 1967 Erik Erikson commented that menstruation was "a crying out to heaven in the mourning of the child."[20, 21]

In response to what she called the absurd description of female emotions Kate Millet wrote, "by rough computation a woman menstruates some 450 times in her life. One begins to grasp the multiple sorrows of this many bereavements, that many children she didn't bear, as a demographer's nightmare."[22] Erikson responded to Millet's criticism, stating that what he meant to write was that this mourning over a

lost child may or may not be a woman's experience during menstruation (my underline). In this regard, it is interesting to note that he explains this statement as having been influenced by the fact that in his generation children did die frequently and that menstruation was like the death of a child.[23] Considering the "survival" theory just discussed in explaining the negative evaluation of the menstruant throughout the world, Erickson's explanation makes sense.

This pressure of cultural norms is also reflected in more subtle ways. For instance, in an article appearing in a medical journal in 1967, Eva Dodge writes, in relation to modern attitudes towards the menses, and the notion that the girl no longer has to be inactive while menstruating, "Frequently her energy is increased, her creative abilities are stepped up during her period when nature is reminding her of one of the most important functions of her body, the continual cycle of preperation for the bearing of children."[24]

The notion that every month females despair because they are not pregnant is one which is reflected in what is considered a . . classic series of studies of the psychophysiological concomitants of the menstrual cycle. In these studies, conducted by Benedek and Rubenstein, hormonal changes associated with the phases of the menstrual cycle, were correlated with the dreams, free associations and transference phenomena of fifteen females who were in psychoanalytic treatment with Benedek.[25] Menstrual cycle phase was measured by taking daily basal body temperatures and vaginal smears. What is pertinent here, however, is that Benedek postulates that when conception fails to occur, menstruation brings with it sad memories and depression which are supposedly triggered by this failure to conceive.

Based on self-reports and empirical studies of the menstrual cycle, there is little doubt that some women do indeed experience depression, premenstrually and menstrually.[26a,b,c] However, to conceptualize this expression in terms of the mourning for loss of a child or failure to conceive reflects the social valuing of motherhood in much the same way as the Nkyula ritual performed by the Ndembu.[27]

Menstruation and Sexual Arousal

In Benedek and Rubenstein's studies women reported that they felt the greatest amount of sexual desire near or during the time of their menstrual flow. However, when Benedek analyzed their dreams and free associations she concluded that while her patients (subjects) reported the most intense sexual feeling at or near menstruation, they were actually most sexual at ovulation (mid-cycle). This conclusion was based on the kinds of sexual feelings expressed by the women and the kinds of feelings found in their dreams and fantasies. At ovulation, according to Benedek, the subjects felt most loving and receptive.

In her view the "normal" menstrual cycle of the "natural" woman is characterized by active, heterosexual strivings during the preovulatory phase of the cycle which culminates in the ovulatory phase, the height of biological and emotional readiness for conception. As Benedek describes it, at ovulation there is a surge of narcissistic concern for the body and passive, receptive tendencies which mirror the biological preparation for pregnancy. In her opinion the receptivity supposedly experienced at ovulation represents the highest form of

female sexual expression.[28] In this context she writes,

> The emotional cycle is always parallel to and dependent upon the gonadal cycle. In the evolution of the sexual cycle [menstrual cycle] woman reaches the highest level of psychosexual integration of which she is capable at about the time of ovulation when her phsyiological preparedness for conception corresponds with her emotional preparedness for conception.[29]

Another psychoanalytically oriented theorist who has recently studied the psychophysiological changes associated with the menstrual cycle, Judith Kestenberg, has observed that lowered levels of progesterone, premenstrually and menstrually, decisively influence neural threshholds in that they act to lower these threshholds for incoming stimuli. She postulates that as a result this produces a diffuse sexuality which she compares to "immature phases of genitality."[30]

Benedek's formulation is that the reported high point of sexual feeling is actually an expression of a lesser or lower (pregenital) form of sexuality, characterized by an "impatient demand for sex, extroverted activity and urgency." This aspect of female sexuality in Benedek's opinion is more masculine in character, while loving tenderness combined with receptivity are more feminine.[31]

As Weidiger so aptly points out,

> Surely this conclusion is laden with value judgments...Why should we agree that receptivity is of higher value than extroverted activity? It is not higher or lower, but rather another dimension of female sexuality. To place a value judgment on types of sexual feeling and to call those around the time of ovuation "better" reflects the prejudice of an investigator who assumes that when women are conforming to this vision, that they are at the highest level of psychosexual development.[32]

Thus, in sum it is apparent that within these theories the pressure of cultural norms is reflected in evaluations of one kind of sexuality as good--that which conforms to the prescribed female role (passive, childbearing-related), and another kind of sexuality as bad (active, non-child-bearing-related).

The fact is that certain females do experience increased sexual urges both menstrually and premenstrually--and this arousal, most likely hormonally and physiologically induced,[33] has little to do with survival of the species, propagation of the race or biological cues from the female's body at ovulation telling her it is time to be passive-receptive and to have a baby.

Menstrual Taboos, Menstrual Sexual Arousal in Females, Concepts of Female Penis Envy and Castration Rage

I mentioned earlier that within the psychoanalytic theoretical framework the concepts of female castration anxiety (or castration rage) and penis envy had some bearing on the reasons proposed for the origins of menstrual taboos and the male's fear of the menstruant. Briefly stated, according to psychoanalytic theory, each girl passes through a stage in which she becomes aware that she has been castrated. She desires her father and wishes for his child as a penis substitute. Since she is forbidden to act this out she becomes enraged at being castrated as well as at being prohibited from having the best substitute for a penis, i.e. her father's child. According to the theory proposed, all this rage is repressed but it reappears at crucial stages in the reproductive cycle when the female re-experiences, although not consciously, her rage at loss of a penis and the impossibility of having father's child. Moreover, she carries this penis envy with her throughout life although there

is some resolve when she bears a child, especially a male child which is viewed as her compensation for not having a penis of her own.[34]

The pertinent aspect of this theory is that during menstruation this castration anxiety-penis-envy-fury supposedly surfaces. Thus Chadwick and others imply that the genesis of menstrual taboos can also be explained in terms of protecting males from witnessing the rage stemming from the female's castration anxiety, which is unconsciously aroused by her genital bleeding, and projected onto males in the form of anger or resentment.[35] If this aspect of psychoanalytic theory is combined with the notion that the menstruant arouses unconscious castration anxiety in the male, then the menstruous female is in effect a double duty castrator. That is: (1) each month simply by bleeding she arouses the unconscious castration anxiety in the male and (2) by expressing her unconsciously derived castration anxiety-penis envy-rage consciously in the form of projected anger towards the male, she is acting in a castrating manner, i.e., direct expression of anger traditionally associated with being non-feminine.

Moreover, a third element can be added here, (3) which is the female's sexual arousal during the menses. If the female is more sexually aroused during menstruation she is more likely to be the sexual aggressor, another untraditional feminine behavior within the realm of values for females in psychoanalytic thought. Thus, this is likely to be experienced by the male as another form of castrating behavior on the part of the female.[36]

If we interpret myth as a mirror for social order, and the reinforcement of social roles, there is a case in point here which is directly related to what I am suggesting. Based on an extensive analysis

of myths, in The Raw and the Cooked, Levi-Strauss points out that in myths which involve the seduction of males by females, the outcome is poison (i.e., myths which explain the origin of poison in the world), a composite being of ambiguous sexuality, or a male child whose testicles do not reach maturity.[37] Thus the message is clear within this mythological context - when females take the "masculine" (seductive, active) role the results are disastrous. The sexually aroused menstruant, in effect, subverts social order, within what Levi-Strauss calls "a human society which is primarily a masculine society..."[38] and in psychological terms she is a castrator.

As Michael Balint describes it, the female who is sexually aroused during menstruation and takes the part of the aggressor has not been well received.[39] She has been taught to "wait her turn," or in the colloquial language of Dan Wakefield in the novel Going All the Way, "nice girls don't do it when they're on the rag."[40] However, returning to this three-pronged formulation of psychoanalytic thought, it is no wonder that menstrual taboos abound everywhere. There is an extensive literature which indicates that certain, but not all females, experience anger and hostility during menstruation and premenstrually.[41] However, to interpret these feelings as derived primarily from unconscious castration rage or penis envy reflects a phallocentric bias, one which has been criticized so severely and so eloquently that it does not seem necessary to do more here than to point out that the central criticism has been that if the female has envied anything about the penis it has been the social privileges which go with the person who wears it.[42,43]

In a provocative analysis of Freud's analysis of female penis envy Norman Mailer speculates that maybe...

> Freud had displaced the trauma of his circumcision and thereby had made the grand error of assuming that his unique set of blocks, inhibitions, and inchoate anxieties, plus the field of snarls between his mind and his groin, were the universal castration complex (and indeed his modest sex life gives every indication of whole areas of desire sufficiently cauterized to be thought of as gone and amputated). Yet one deprived of anything like some average use of his genitals, it is not inconceivable Freud made the reasonable error of projecting his envy of other men's penises over to women. In any case, from the best or most unhappy motives we have inherited the concept of penis envy.44

NOTES: CHAPTER VII

[1]Principles of Medical Physiology (Los Altos, Calif.: Lange Medical Publishing Co., 1971), p. 372.

[2]Denise Paulme (ed.) Women of Tropical Africa (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963. All the essays in this book contain some reference to the importance of female fecundity and its relationship to female status and worth. With rare exception almost any essay or study on females in preliterate cultures does contain some reference to the importance of fecundity. As Audrey Richards, Chisungu (London: Faber, 1956), p. 19, writes, "Fertility is intensely desired in simpler societies." A similar emphasis is found in the Western world, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See. e.g., Carol Rosenberg, Puberty to menopause in nineteenth century America, Feminist Studies, 1:58-72, 1973. The importance of fecundity is also reflected in statements such as an Italian folk statement that after menopause, when a female is barren, she should be "thrown in lake with the laundry." Abel and Joffee, Cultural backgrounds of puberty, Amer. J. Psychother., 4:90-113, 1950.

[3]Bridget O'Laughlin reports, for instance, that among the Mbum (Chad, Africa) sterility and failure to bear children is considered a major tragedy and a moral violation. On the other hand, male sterility, while it may be blamed on crazy or foolish behavior, is not considered a moral violation. Mediation of contradiction: Why Mbum women do not eat chicken, in Women, Culture and Society, eds. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 302.

[4]In this regard, Paulme, p. 13, maintains that since females are essential to the survival of the group they are surrounded by many taboos. On the other hand, Shirley Lindenbaum postulates that extensive menstrual taboos in New Guinea, as one aspect of the many kinds of pollution beliefs surrounding females, serve to minimize sexual contact between males and females, which in turn has the function of reducing the birth rate in areas where resources are meager and children are not needed. She calls these pollution beliefs a form of "ideological" birth control. Sorcerers, ghosts and polluting women: An analysis of religious belief and population control, Ethnology, 11:241-253, 1972.

[4a]For instance, Ethel Albert, in her essay on the Rundi in Women of Tropical Africa (p. 203) points out that the husband of a wife who produces many children is considered a "real" man of whom people speak highly.

[5]Carolyn Bird points out that in Isreal barrenness was considered a shame and a reproach. It was considered a sign of divine displeasure. Moreover, it threatened the female's status as a wife and the only position of honor available to females. Images of Women in the Old Testament, in Religion and Sexism, ed. R. Reuther (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), pp. 41-88. Monique Gessain (p. 36) notes that among the Coniaqui of Africa who consider the essential value of the female to lie in her fecundity, childlessness is regarded as a punishment for sin. Coniaqui women, Women

of Tropical Africa. A similar notion is also evident in India (S. Fuchs, Birth and childhood among the Balakis, Man in India, 12:74, 1939) as it has been throughout the world.

[6]This has been noted in a number of contexts. In A neglected aspect of social structure (Amer. J. Sociol., 45:593-94, 1940), Ralph Linton made the observation that in many preliterate cultures ceremonial and social barriers were let down for old women, and that patriarchal cultures are often ruled by strong willed grandmothers. One of the reasons that females are interested in having many children (especially boys) in certain cultures is that eventually social power and prestige will come via her sons.

The reinforcement of the child-bearing role is reflected more subtly in terms of discouraging certain kinds of activities. For instance, Margaret Mead makes the observation that among the mountain Arapesh of New Guinea girls are taught not to think abstractly or hypothetically because it will supposedly effect their reproductive potential negatively. In a totally different culture (Victorian England and America) English and Elaine Showalter discuss the opinions expressed in the Harvard Journal that higher education would destroy the procreative capacity of the female via overwork. Victorian Women and Menstruation, in M. Vicinus, Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Era (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 35-42. There is a certain irony in this since the concern about overwork in relation to education expressed in this journal, and other public documents of the period, was being voiced in an era of history when females were being tremendously overworked and exploited in factories, which would probably effect their reproductive capacity much more.

[7]A Comparative Study of Human Reproduction, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 32(New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 51. In a siminar vein, L.L. Langness notes that among the Bena-Bena of New Guinea females fear child birth and are prone to commit abortion (p. 164). Largness writes, "In so far as religious beliefs stress fertility... women's actions tend to go against the expressed intentions of religion... religion is strictly a male affair." (P. 171) Moreover, he points out that women attribute the superior status of men to the fact that they do not menstruate. Sexual antagonism in the New Guinea Highlands, Oceania, 30:163-177, 1966. This stands in opposition to the rather romantic notion that in primitive cultures women take to childbirth as ducks to water.

[8]A Study of Abortion in Primitive Society (New York: Julian, 1955), p. 127. In relation to the repetition of a female's life, or what Simone de Beauvoir refers to as the "immanence" of females (Second Sex, passim) Elli Maranda (p. 201) reports the following, "Lau women are well aware that their life has its limitations. In the chats they have in their leisure hours, they often talk about the woman's lot. One women formulated it this way, 'My husband makes me pregnant, I give birth and I nurse, he makes me pregnant, I give birth and I nurse, he makes me pregnant....'; A woman is an alien spirit, in Many Sisters, ed. C.J. Matthiessen (London: Colliers, 1974).

[9]Abortion, Ibid.

[10]Ainu - B. Pilsudski, Pregnancy, birth and miscarriage among the inhabitants of Sakhaln Island, Anthropos, 5:772, 1910;* Tikopia - R. Firth, We the Tikopia (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1957), p. 84; Trobriand - B. Malinowski, The Father in Primitive Psychology (New York: Norton, 1966). Malinowski (p. 81) indicates that while sterility in females is not approved of, it is not considered a social disgrace and does not effect social status. In relation to taboos on females in general, Margaret Mead maintains that societies which have defined females primarily as child bearers have far less difficulty letting down taboos and social barriers. Sex and Temperament, p. 229. From a different point of view, in Engels revisited: Women, the organization of production and private property, Woman and Culture, p. 217, Karen Sacks suggests that in preliterate cultures, "...menstrual and pregnancy restrictions are based on private property, and that they serve to symbolize a contradiction between social production of exchange goods and private or familial appropriation."

[11]The Fear of Women (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), p. 194. Mead's comment, "the witch is seen as a woman who denies or is forced to deny her child bearing and becomes a danger to all life on earth," (Ibid.) reinforces formulations duscussed in previous chapters.

[12]D.S. Janowsky, R. Gorney and B. Kelley, The curse - viscissitudes and variations of the female fertility cycle, Pt.II, Psychiatric aspects, Psychosomatics, 7:284, 1966. Janowsky et al. also suggest that menstruation is not actually necessary physiologically, and can be safely eliminated. However, in relation to the psychological effects, the authors express concern about the influence this might have on females who depend on monthly discomfort and bleeding to validate their sexual identity. They also worry that elimination of menstruation might add to the reduction of sex differences. (Heaven forbid!) And in a statement which is somewhat medically-oriented, Hitlerian fashion, (when it comes to making decisions about females' bodies) the authors suggest that if such menstrual regulation is to take place, we should deal with phenotypes and not genotypes. For articles on this kind of menstrual regulation, the interested reader should see, G. Davis, Menstrual regulation, Family Planning, 21:57-59, 1972; and a more popularized revision, Judith Ramsey, "Is Menstruation Really Necessary," Ladies Home Journal (Nov., 1974), pp. 42-58, 128.

[13]Forest of Symbols (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 41-43.

[14]Ibid., p. 42. According to de Beauvoir (Second Sex, p. 110) St. Augustine wrote, "Any woman who acts in such a way that she cannot give birth to as many children as possible as she is capable of is herself guilty of that many murders."

[15]Forest of Symbols, p. 42.

[16]Moni Nag, Factors Affecting Human Fertility in Non-Industrial Societies, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 66 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 34.

[17]Abel and Joffee, Cultural backgrounds of female puberty, Amer. J. Psychoth., 4:102, 1950, report the belief that avoidance of intercourse will result in a brilliant male progeny. In relation to the greater valuation of males than females, and concepts of female pollution which have been the focus of discussion throughout this study, it is interesting to note that throughout the world the pollution period following the birth of a girl is longer than for the birth of a boy. For instance, in Japan a female is in a polluted state for 31 days after the birth of a boy, and for 33 days after the birth of a girl. E. Norbeck, Pollution and taboo in contemporary Japan, Sw. J. Anthro., 8:281, 1952. In certain areas of Africa, 3 days after the birth of a boy and 4 after the birth of a girl. G. Beresford, Man, 1928, cited by M. Perlman and M.P. Moal, Analytic Bibliography, in Women of Tropical Africa, pp. 231-93. In the Talmud (Book of Niddah) the period of pollution for a boy is 7 days, for a girl 14 days. In response to the question as to the reason for this difference, the answer is that the Torah ordained it so because on the occasion of the birth of a male child all rejoice and the female regrets her oath [sexual abstinence] but on the birth of a female about whom everybody despairs, it takes her 14 days to forget her oath (p. 218). The implication here seems to be that if she produced a male child the female happily breaks oaths to engage in intercourse again, while if whe gives birth to a female child she is not so ready to break oaths. In the Bible the period of pollution for a boy is 40 days and for a girl 80 days. Nag, p. 84.

In relation to this custom of "churching of women", as it was called in Christian dominated Europe, Bernard Pursak notes that in the early Catholic church this period of birth pollution was seen in association with the sin of Eve. For instance, Clement of Alexandria, based on Job 14:4, interpreted the necessity for churching as the result of every birth representing the sinfulness of Eve so that the offspring is automatically tainted; and Origen, a 3rd century Greek theologian, interpreted birth pollution in association with Eve being seduced by the serpent, who poured the poison of his sin into her and infected her posterity. Woman: Seductive siren and source of sin? Psuedepigraphal myth and Christian origins, in Religion and Sexism, pp. 102-102.

[18]Studies in the Psychology of Sex (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1901), 1:95.

[19]Functional disturbances of menstruation, Bull. Menninger Clin., 7:7, 1943.

[20]Erickson, Identity, Youth and Crises, cited by Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 218. In a similar vein, Ethel Albert also takes issue with Erickson for calling menopause a "permanent scar." The unmothered mother, in The Challenge to Women, eds., S.M. Farber and R.H.L. Wilson (New York: Basic Books, 1966), p. 148.

[21]The phrase, "menstruation is the uterus weeping for the ovum that was not fertilized," also appears in another medical text, i.e., William Bickers, Menstrual Distress (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1954).

[22]Sexual Politics, p. 218.

[23]Once more the inner space: Letter to a former student, in Women and Analysis: Dialogues on Psychoanalytic Views of Femininity, ed. Jean Strouse (New York: Grossman, 1974, reprint ed., New York: Dell, 1975), p. 374.

[24]The docter talks about menstruation, J. Amer. Med. Women's Assoc., 24: 1969; reprinted for Tampax Incorporated, Palmer, Mass.

[25]T. Benedek and B.B. Rubenstein, The correlations between ovarian activity and psychodynamic processes: I, The ovulative phase, Psychosom. Med., 1:245-270; and The correlations between ovarian activity and psychodynamic processes: II, The menstrual phase, Psychosom. Med., 1:461-485, 1939.

[26(a)]Premenstrual and/or menstrual-related depression(and other fluctuations in affect) are reported in studies by I. Melville and J.M. Bardwick, Patterns of affective fluctuation in the menstrual cycle, Psychosom. Med., 30:336-45, 1968; L. Gottschalk et al., Variations in magnitude of emotion. A method applied to anxiety and hostility during phases of the menstrual cycle, Psychosom. Med., 24:300-311, 1962; L. Rees, Psychosomatic aspects of the premenstrual syndrome, J. Ment. Sci., 99:62-73, 1953; M. Altman, E. Knowles and H.D. Bull, A psychosomatic study of the sex cycle in women, Psychosom. Med., 3:199-224, 1941. And cross-culturally - O. Janiger, R. Rittenburg and R, Kersh, Cross cultural study of premenstrual symptoms, Psychosomatics, 4:226, 235, 1972; G. Theano, The prevalence of menstrual symptoms in Spanish students, Brit. J. Psychiat., 114:771-73, 1968; See Mary Parlee, The premenstrual syndrome, Psych. Bull., 80:454-65, 1973, for a critical review of some of the studies cited here and others not included.

[26(b)]The most recent hormonally-based theory for premenstrual depression and other fluctuations in affect associated with the premenstruum has been postulated by E.L. Klaiber et al., Effects of estrogen therapy on plasma MAO activity and EEG driving responses of depressed women, Amer. J. Psychiat., 128:1492-98, 1972, and C. Grant and S. Pryse-Davies, Effects of oral contraceptives on depressive mood changes and on endrometrial monsamine oxidase and phosphates, Brit. Med. J., 1:777-80, 1968. This theory is based on the hypothesis that premenstrually the amount of monoamine oxidase (MAO), a chemical substance associated with the affective disorders of mental illness, released into the blood stream increases, which in turn effects brain chemistry, brain barriers and moods. Studies by Klaiber et al, and Grant and Pryse-Davies suggest that there is a positive correlation between changing hormonal levels, MAO activity and premenstrual affective fluctuations.

On the other hand, N.J. Gilmore, D.S. Robinson and T. Nies (Blood monoamine oxidase levels in pregnancy and during the menstrual cycle, J. Psychosom. Res., 15:215-20, 1971), correlated menstrual cycle mood changes with MAO activity and concluded that there was no evidence to indicate that altered MAO activity is an etiological factor in the mood changes common to the premenstrual phase of the cycle. Karen Paige (Effects of oral contraceptives on affective fluctuations associated with the menstrual cycle, Psychosom. Med., 33(6):513-37, 1971), shows that the menstrual-related negative affects may be socially mediated emotional

responses to menstruation rather than a direct consequence of physiologic factors.

In reaction to stereotypic views and negative evaluations of females based on these hormonal fluctuations, Mary Ellman (pp. 82-83), writes, "But in the mood which is the more associated with women, hysteria is generated from within, like a hormone and little or no connection with the external event is acknowledged....In general the feminine psyche suggests an extreme internality to others, like that of a ship in a bottle. Sealed off, the psyche undergoes various but obscure glandular changes which create a semblance of reactions to reality but in fact are oblivious to it." Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1968).

[26(c)]The reader interested in the overall systemic changes associated with premenstrual and menstrual phases of the menstrual cycle should see: Katherine Dalton, The Premenstrual Syndrome (London: Heineman, 1964); A.I.. Southern and F.P. Gonzaga, Systemic changes during the menstrual cycle, Am. J. Ob. and Gyn., 91:142-65; and Paula Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause (New York: Knopf, 1976), Chaps. 2 and 3.

[27]In this context it is interesting to take note of this comment which appears in a study of the Kurdish of Iraq. "Due to the fact that all women within a community like the Kurdish and other Muslim societies possessed the possibility of living the life of a normal [my underline] woman - to be married and bear children - there has never been in Mohammedan countries a group of matrimonially superfluous women, the type mainly behind the Women's Movement in the West." Henry H. Hansen, The Kurdish Woman's Life: Field Research in a Muslim Society, Iraq (København: National Museet, 1961), p. 184.

[28]Therese Benedek, Studies in Psychosomatic Medicine: Psychosexual Functions (New York: Roland Press, 1952), pp. 144-148.

[29]Ibid., p. 146. In more recent studies, i.e., R. Moos, The development of a menstrual distress questionnaire, Psychosom. Med., 30(6):853-867, 1968, and R. Moos, Fluctuations in symptoms and moods during the menstrual cycle, J. Psychosom. Res., 13:37-44, 1969, no evidence was found to support Benedek's findings that passive-receptive tendencies were associated with progesterone. The sadness of the menses, as described by Benedek, was also not reported in either of these studies. One of the most serious criticisms of Benedek's and Rubenstein's studies is experimenter bias. The subjects were Benedek's patients. Benedek also supervised the analysts who worked with eleven of the patients. Moreover, verbatim recordings of analytic sessions were not used. Benedek relied upon interpretive notes. In response to these criticisms Benedek denies that her results were biased. See, T. Benedek, An investigation of the sexual cycle in women, Arch. Gen. Psychia., 8(4):311-22, 1963, for her rationale.

[30]Phases of adolescence, Pt. I: Antecedants of adolescent organizations in childhood, J. Amer. Acad. Child. Psychia., 6:426-63, 1973.

[31]Studies in Psychosomatic Medicine, p. 145-46.

[32]Menstruation and Menopause, p. 122.

[33]Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause, A. Kinsey et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (New York: Pocket Books, 1970); F.J. Kane, M.A. Lipton, J.A. Ewing, Hormonal influences in female sexual response, Arch. Gen Psychia., 20:202-09, 1969. Masters and Johnson, Human Sexual Response (Boston: Little Brown, 1966). In Human Sexual Inadequacy (Boston: Little Brown, 1970) Masters and Johnson (p. 221) suggest that heightened sexual desire menstrually and premenstrually is probably created by pelvic congestion due to water retention. They also note that there is no contraindication, physically, to intercourse during menstuation. (Sexual Response, p. 120)

A number of studies indicate that females mating responses (engaging in sexual intercourse) are significantly correlated with estrogen peaks (i.e., mid-cycle ovulation). J.R. Udry and N.M. Morris, Distribution of coitus in the menstrual cycle, Nature, 220:593-96, 1968; and by the same investigators, A method for validation of reported sexual data, J. Marr. and Fam., 29:442-46, 1967. Frank Beach, interprets this in a number of ways: (1) females, like animals, may be more receptive, proceptive and attractive to males during the ovulatory (high estrogen) phase. However, he notes that these questions will never be answered if investigators ask females about their feelings. He writes, "The situation might be clearer if we dealt less with a woman's analysis of her own feelings and paid more attention to actual sexual behavior, as we do in studying other species." Behavioral endocrinology: An emerging discipline, American Scientist, 63:179, 1975. Apparently Beach has forgotten that it takes two to tango. That is, while measurements of sexual behavior (acts of intercourse) might provide information on when in the cycle a female has intercourse, we don't know if that means her peaks of sexual desire are at that time, or if those are the times when the male is willing or interested in sexual intercourse. Considering the findings that males might be turned off to intercourse during menstruation, then it cannot be assumed that rates of intercourse can provide definitive information on the correlations between hormonal influences on sexual behavior.

[34]Three essays on the theory of sexuality, (1905), in Standard Edition, Vol. VII; Female sexuality, (1931), in Standard Edition, Vol XXI; Karl Abraham, Manifestations of the female castration complex, (1920), in Woman and Analysis, ed. Jean Strouse (New York: Dell, 1976).

[35]The Psychological Effects of Menstruation (New York: Nervous and Mental Health Disease Publishing Co., 1932); S. Freud, The taboo of virginity (1913), in Standard Edition, Vol. IV., Merton Gill, Functional disturbances of menstruation, Bull. Menninger Clin., 7:6-14, 1973.

[36]John Money describes the ovulatory phase as one of sexual willingness and surrender, and the premenstrual phase as one of increased initiative, Psychosexual differentiation, in Sex Research: New Developments, ed. J. Money (New York: Holt, Rheinhart & Winston, 1965), p. 27. Apparently this premenstrual phase is also one in which female monkies initiate sexual behavior. That is, according to R.P. Michael and J. Herbert, Menstrual cycle and influences on grooming behavior and sexual activities

in Rhesus monkies, Science, 140:500-501, 1963, at mid-cycle, the female is at a minimum in grooming the male; while during the premenstrual and early menstrual phase the female takes the initiative in grooming the male.

[37]The Raw and the Cooked (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 276.

[38]Ibid. In this regard Robert Murphy reports that among the Mandurucu of South America it is the duty of all village men to gang-rape females who take the initiative in sex, proper only for males. According to Murphy, in preliterate cultures this is not atypical punishment for this particular social violation. Social structure and sex antagonism, Sw. J. Anthro., 15:93, 1959.

[39]Contribution to the psychology of menstruation, Psychoanal. Quart., 6:346-352, 1937.

[40]Cited by Lupton and Toth, "Out Damned Spot," Ms (Jan., 1974), p. 97.

[41]See footnotes nos. 26(a)(b)(c), this chapter. In relation to the angry feelings that females might feel about menstruation, Norman Mailer, in what seems to be a rare moment of compassion writes, "...it is not so unnatural to act with rage against a mystical communion with nature which condemns her to diapers and the foul shock of unforgiving cramps." The Prisoner of Sex (New York: Bantam, 1971), p. 48.

In this regard the notion that premenstrual tension and other menstrual disturbances are an expression of "rejection of the feminine role," has been criticized by Paula Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause, pp. 140-43; K.J. Lennane and R. J. Lennane, Alleged psychogenic disorders in women - A possible manifestation of sexual prejudice, New Eng. J. of Med., 288:288-92, 1973; and Karen Paige, "Women Learn to Sing the Menstrual Blues," Psychology Today (Sept., 1973), 241-246. Paige reports that females who have adopted traditional "feminine" roles are those who often have the most premenstrual and menstrual discomfort.

[42]See, e.g., Margaret Mead, On Freud's view of female psychology, in Women and Analysis, pp. 116-128; and the other essays in this book. Also see the entire book of essays, Psychoanalysis and Women, ed. Jean Miller, (Baltimore, Md., 1973); and Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, pp. 33-47. In terms of psychoanalytic evaluations of masculinity and femininity she writes, "A man is defined as a human being, and a woman as a female. Whenever she behaves as a human being, she is said to imitate the male." (p. 47)

[43]Although this penis-envy concept might be considered old hat at this point, it remains in the consciousness of modern psychoanalytic theorists. For instance, in an article on the impact of the menarche on adolescents, Marion Hart and Charles Sarnoff discuss the conflicts that arise in response to first menstruation in terms of the girl wanting to maintain an "illusory penis" (psychically), to avoid the "narcissistic depletion" of giving up the idea that she has a penis. (The impact of menarche, J. Amer. Acad. of Child Psychia., 10:257-71, 1971). While there is no doubt that

girls might experience conflict at first menstruation about assuming a feminine identity, especially in relation to having to give up the freedom that boys manage to maintain, to argue that the conflict centers around wanting to maintain an illusory penis smacks of what now seem to be outdated and biased notions.

[44]The Prisoner of Sex, p. 48.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MENSES: REFLECTIONS ON MALE AND FEMALE POWER

The Menses: Power and Advantage for Females

It has been noted by a number of anthropologists and other theorists that menstrual taboos provide certain power advantages for females. For example, Harding[1] and Briffault[2] point out that in various preliterate cultures the female has used menstruation as an excuse to avoid sex with unwanted husbands or lovers. According to Briffault, among the Beaver Indians females frequently pretended they were menstruating in order to avoid the sexual advances of husbands. That this was oviously an excuse to avoid sex was revealed by the fact that while these "menstruating" females avoided husbands, they accepted the advances of lovers.[3]

Similarly, Moni Nag reports that among the Kgatla Bantu of Africa, females often avoid sexual advances of ardent lovers by pretending that they are menstruating.[4] And in a fairly recent study on the Malaita (Solomon Islands) Elli Maranda recounts the incident of a bride who pretended that she was menstruating most of the time in order to avoid consummation of her marriage. (She was eventually sent back to her parents and the bride price refunded.)[5] Abel and Joffe, and Ashley Montagu,[6] point out that the Talmudic restrictions on sexual intercourse during menstruation gave females the opportunity to pretend they were menstruating, which they used to avoid sexual intercourse.

As noted earlier, according to Hebrew religious law a female

may obtain a divorce on the grounds that her husband made sexual advances during her menstrual period. Among the Nuer and Dogon of Africa, sexual approaches to females during menstruation, besides being considered dangerous for males, are also regarded as disrespectful and constitute social disgrace.[7] Likewise, among the coastal Zarumo of Tanzania Marja Liisa Swantz reports that although pollution beliefs are no longer as stringent as they probably were in former times, a male who insists on making sexual approaches to a menstruating female is considered disgraceful and is brought before societal authorities for punishment.[8]

The menstrual taboos and the belief that menstrual mana is dangerous or polluting to males gives females in primitive cultures the power to say "no." Moreover, it also provides them the power, in some instances, for public redress. The practice of pretending to menstruate in order to avoid intercourse during the menses is certainly not limited to primitive or religious oriented societies. It has probably been used by females cross-culturally and since time immemorial to avoid unwanted love-making with a husband, a lover, or in the western world, a first date. In modern cultures there is obviously no public redress or punishment for the male who makes such advances, but most females know that in most instances it is a sure fire way to deal with unwanted sexual advances.

Another advantageous aspect of menstrual power is what might be called menstrual malingering. For instance, in various preliterate cultures females will go to menstrual huts in order to avoid work (or to have privacy).[9] In modern-day cultures females have often used

menstruation as an excuse to avoid the unwanted, i.e., work, examinations, social engagement, gym class, etc.[10] To a certain extent this menstrual malingering has contributed to the notion that the female is less competent in the work world when menstruating.[11]

Alice Schlegel is of the opinion that in many preliterate cultures menstruation and menstrual seclusion provide a much needed vacation for overworked females.[12] Both Gabriella Eichinger and Margaret Cormack report that in India far being considered restrictive, menstrual taboos are considered a rest. For example, Cormack reports this conversation with an Indian female, speaking about her mother's reaction to menstrual taboos: "She does get a feeling of being unclean, but the three days of rest is very good for her and is the only rest she gets in the month. Many husbands unwilling to do the cooking must do so when wives are resting. It is good for menstruating girls to have three days rest too. It's a break for women who otherwise work very hard. That is one reason they don't protest."[13]

Similarly, Eichinger recounts this report from an Indian male, "We do not much believe in pollution but continue to observe it by tradition. My wife, during her courses, sits in a corner and does nothing whatsoever, but every now and then she asks me to bring her a cup of tea or to do some service for her."[14] It is interesting to compare this to Morton Hunt's version of menstrual demandingness. He writes,

> ...woman may unconsciously "choose" any one of a number of ailments to express resentment and rivalry. Menstrual pain, for example, is in many cases the result of emotional factors rather than physical ones. What, indeed, could be more simple and justifiable than menstrual pain to humble the male a little. Not only does he have to sympathize, but he must relinquish some of his male prerogatives. It is he

> who gets out of bed to bring her a pill, make her hot tea, and take care of the baby at 3 a.m. She can act cross, lose her temper, and be more than usually illogical and impulsive; if at last he objects or bridles, she effectively crushes him with a single sentence, "You should have it just once."[15]

In certain cultures in which the consequences of contact with the menstrual discharge for the male are considered particularly harmful, the female has a potent weapon to use against the superior physical strength of males. For instance, Michelle Rosaldo writes, "The idea of purity or pollution, so often used to circumscribe female activities, may also be used as a basis for assertion of female power. In the simplest case we might note that a woman who is feared often has power; many a New Guinea man will observe his wife's wishes for fear that an angry woman will serve him food while she is menstruating, or step over him, letting blood drop while he sleeps."[16] Similarly Lois Paul reports that among the Landino of Guatemala females learn that "all women have a secret weapon [menstrual blood], to be used illegitimataly as a desperate last resort to defend themselves against men's aggression."[17] Moreover as we know from previous discussion, menstrual blood, in association with love magic and witchcraft has been used to seduce the male--in effect to render him will-less.

Menstrual Power, Social Issues and Sex Distinctions

In terms of social power, I.M. Lewis, Esther Goody and other anthropologists have pointed out that the type of power attributed to the witch, whether in primitive or European societies, is "illegitimate", i.e., the power of a group in the margins of society, an oppressed or disenfranchised group.[18] In this context Marcel Mauss observes that in

primitive cultures the biological functions of menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth endow females with special powers, but even outside these special states of femininity, "Women are the butt of superstitions, jural and religious taboos which clearly mark them off as a separate class in society...they are excluded from religious cults and if they are admitted they are reduced to passive roles. The only practices left to them on their own initiative are magical ones...the magical attributes of women are derived primarily from their social position and are more talked about than real. Men perform magic and women are accused of it.[19] Moreover, as Geoffrey Lienhardt points out, witches who are living individuals are potentially controllable by society, but the caprices of the environment are not.[20]

In terms of social power, then, the use of menstrual blood in witchcraft, to either harm or seduce males, can be viewed as the use of power in social situations in which there is little legitimate access to formal, social-political control. In effect, this is the power of a minority group. It is not formal, legitimate power. Interestingly enough, it has been pointed out in a number of contexts that in societies in which females gain access to social power, witchcraft accusations markedly increase.[21]

Within the social arena then, the threat of menstrual blood and the menstruous female can be understood in terms of the fearful imagination of those males who have oppressed a minority group (females) and expect retaliation; i.e., in this menstrual-related context, fear of poisoning food via menstrual blood. As George De Vos writes, "...the increasing exercise of power and dominance...may induce a consequent

institutionalized fear of the restricted group."[22] In relation to menstruation, specifically, the institutionalized fear would be reflected by the enforcement of menstrual taboos.[23]

As noted previously, in early and Medieval Catholic theology the menstruant was identified with evil in that she supposedly attracted the devil and other "unclean" spirits. In connection with the original sin of Eve, menstruation was considered a sign of the essential sinfulness of the female. In terms of the social ramifications of these beliefs, in a recent essay Clara Henning argues that females were excluded from liturgical roles in the early Catholic Church on the basis of attributions of menstrual evil and menstrual contamination. In this context she writes, "The male's peculiar awe and discomfort regarding the female's menstruation is, in fact, very pronounced in the canonical sources. It militated against an acceptance of deaconesses...." She also adds, "Several contemporary authors are convinced that a major factor for the exclusion of women from liturgical roles and organizational law lies in this discomfort." In this regard, she quote Erling Brodersen, who writes, "...I must emphasize that the biological fact of menstruation is the main obstacle to women's participation in liturgical functions..."[24]

In a similar vein, a number of anthropologists and other theorists are of the opinion that in preliterate cultures the emphatic exclusion of females from the major religious cults has been based on the fear of menstrual evil and menstrual pollution.[25] Moreover, even in those preliterate cultures in which females were supposedly accorded access to positions of importance within the religious sphere, the belief that the menstruant was a source of contamination to the sacred

still persisted. As Sherry Ortner points out, even in North American Indian tribes such as the Crow, among whom females were awarded honorific offices and major roles in the religious life of the tribe, a menstruant was still forbidden contact with sacred objects.[26]

On the other hand, G.A. Reichard contends that among the Navaho the menstruous female, and the female in general, were not considered particularly contaminating to the sphere of the sacred. Yet the Navaho, who theoretically permitted the female access to the highest religious office, did not permit the menstruating (or the pregnant) female to take part in the most important religious ritual, the Hogan rain ceremony in which prayer sticks for the Night Chant were made.[27] In addition, among the Iroquois, who have been considered a relatively sex egalitarian society,[28] we learn from Shimony that "The general menstrual taboos arise out of the belief that menstruating women are 'poisonous' and 'dangerous' in contact with men, hunters, babies, pregnant women, medicines and ritual items."[29] (my underline)

Phyliss Kayberry, well known for her studies of Australian aboriginal culture, argues that among certain Australian tribes the menstruant has not been considered contaminating to the sacred.[30] However, upon reading in other source materials what the sacred consists of in the cultures she refers to, the reason why the menstruating female is not considered contaminating to the sacred is clear. That is, in these cultures notions of the sacred involve blood of all kinds, but especially the blood of females, and dream power. Males "own" the dream power; and with it they "own" the blood of females and their procreative power--so much so that females (and males) believe that the females have very little to do with conception. It is the male

who "dreams" them pregnant. Unless they are "dreamed" pregnant, females believe they will not conceive.[31]

The point her is that since the sacred revolves around female blood, and both males and females believe that males have control over this blood through male dream power, then control of the power inherent in menstrual blood is virtually in the hands of the males. In most preliterate cultures this is not the situation. Therefore, by owning or having control of what is usually considered dangerous to the male (synonymous with the realm of the sacred), the male is safe from the contamination and danger of menstrual blood.

However, more importantly there are a number of other points to be made here. The first is that ascribing religious or ritual impurity to females has in effect prevented them from taking on roles of authority, and has excluded them from positions of formal social power. The second is that within the religious sphere there has always been a distinct difference between male and female sacrality. As Mircea Eliade points out, throughout the world female sacrality involves the earth and universal fecundity, while male sacrality involves spirit and transcendence--from the earth. Touching on issues discussed in several other chapters, he writes, "In the final analysis, the tension is always between two kinds of sacrality, which are the foundations of two different and polar world views, masculine and feminine."[32]

Eliade points out further that initiation rites for boys mark the passage from a natural mode (that of a child) to a cultural mode, which is typically identified with maleness, and that of the status of a human being. By contrast, before the time of initiation the

boy, in association with his mother and other females, is considered a part of the profane world. And as a part of this mother-profane world he does not share in the "human condition." In certain areas of Australia the boy is told before initiation, "Until now you have been in the darkness of childhood. You are like women and you knew nothing."[33] The girl, however, remains in the world of the profane, and in the mode of the natural. There is no passage for her into the cultural mode. Thus as established previously, the female does not seem to become fully a human being, by male standards--which are typically the criteria of cultural value throughout the world. In relation to our Western culture Karen Horney made the observation that, "...woman has fewer or none of those human or cultural qualities that men hold in high esteem."[34]

In the anthropology literature a distinction is often made between sorcery and witchcraft. Although not always, but most often, sorcery is attributed to males and witchcraft to females.[35] To a certain extent this distinction rests on conscious control of magical power (sorcery) as opposed to "natural" unconscious magical power, such as that associated with the menses. Thus, in effect, one kind of power involves taking control of the environment (sorcery) and the other (unconscious power) suggests the use of the natural power available to females. As Mary Douglas writes, "If we find women use one kind of power and men are thought to use another...we can suppose that the distinction enters into the definition of the sexes".[36]

Noteworthy is Mary Ellman's amusing observation about the ways in which sex role distinctions enetered into notions of

European witchcraft. In this context she writes,

> Traditionally, magic was divided between man and woman, exactly as the professions and trades continue to be divided. Male magic was intellectual. The men pored over portentious charts and symbols and were visited by high ranking devils. The women cackled and mixed vile broth in pots. This arrangement was felicitous; the double standard rarely furnished such lively parts to both performers. But of course neither exciting approach to improper knowledge survived later....Some nostalgia, however, is perhaps expressed in the present male executive ambition for charisma.[37]

In many preliterate cultures sorcery has been generally regarded as more socially prestigious than witchcraft and as indicated earlier much more within the realm of legitimate, sanctioned social power.

Thus, as both Douglas and Ellman suggest, this ascription of power enters into the definition of the sexes. About this distinction and the magic attributed to females, Simone de Beauvoir writes,

> Alain said that magic is spirit drooping down among things, an action is magical when instead of being produced by an agent it emanates from something passive. Just as men have always regarded woman as the immanence of what is given; if she produces harvests and children, it is not by an act of her will; she is not... transcendence, creative power, but an object charged with fluids....The magician operates apart from society, against the gods and the laws, according to his own deep interests. Now, woman is not fully integrated into the world of men; as the other, she is opposed to them. It is natural for her to use the power she has, not to spread through the community of men and into the future the bold enterprise od transcendence, but being apart, opposed, to drag the males...into the shades of immanence....The man captivated by her charms no longer has will power, enterprise, future; he is no longer a citizen, but mere flesh enslaved to its desires, cut off from community...[38]

From Simone de Beauvoir's commentary, the formulations of Lévi-Strauss, and other theorists discussed so far, a number of points can be combined into summary statements about the cultural devaluation of femininity. In The Raw and the Cooked, Lévi-Strauss uses a raw (nature)/cooked (cultural) metaphor to establish his central thesis which, in abbreviated form, consists of the idea that the opposition between nature and culture is one that appears in the thinking of all people; that throughout the world nature has been synonymous with female and culture with male; and that the business of civilization has always been the transformation of nature (the raw) into culture (the cooked).[39] Within Simone de Beauvoir's framework female (nature) is synonymous with immanence, defined as "confinement or restriction to a narrow round of uncreative and repetitious duties." This concept stands in marked contrast to transcendence (male, culture) which is defined as "freedom to engage in projects of ever widening scope that mark the untrammeled existent."[40]

It is on the basis of these distinctions that De Beauvoir, and more recently Rosaldo, Lamphere, Ortner, and Firestone have explained the cultural devaluation of females.[41] That is, the immanence of females is directly related to their role of giving birth and caring for children; their subordination to the species, or biological fate, as de Beauvoir calls it, their immersion in repetition, i.e., repeating from day to day identical activities and producing nothing new. By contrast, the male, whose body does not doom him to reproduction and repetition, asserts his creativity through technology (culture). As Ortner writes, "In doing so he creates relatively eternal,

transcendent objects, while the woman creates only perishables--human beings."[42] In this context then the "natural" process of birth, which happens, which involves no act of will, no project, no creativity which goes beyond the self, in the cultural sense, is considered of less social value than projects created by males.

Moreover, as Ortner points out, de Beauvoir's formulations on the matter explain why male activities involving the destruction of life (hunting and warfare) are often accorded more prestige than the female's ability to give birth and create life. It is not killing which is the essential factor in this evaluation. It is rather the transcendental (cultural) nature of these activities--the risk.[43] As de Beauvoir writes, "For it is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded by humanity not to the sex that brings forth life but to that which kills."[44]

Ortner elaborates on this immanence (nature) transcendence (culture) issue and argues that this female-nature association is compounded by the fact that females are restricted to social contexts which are associated with the category, nature. That is, in their role as caretakers of children (who are also associated with nature--i.e., uncivilized, "uncooked') females are seen as part of the natural mode. Thus, ironically, while the female has the task (for a certain number of years) of socializing the child ("cooking" him in the Straussian idiom), and as such she is an agent or representative of culture, via her involvement in this socializing process, she is associated with children (thus often seen as child like) and again categorized as

part of nature. In this context Ortner comments,

> It is ironic that the rationale for boys' initiation rites in many cultures is that the boys must be purged of the defilement accorded from being around mother and other women so much of the time, when in fact so much of the women's defilement may derive from her being around children so much of the time.[45]

In this same context, Rosaldo maintains that males, who typically remain more separate from their families than females, who are not as embedded in and subject to the demands of immediate interaction, can maintain a psychological distance, a sense of privacy and individuality which gives them more leeway to control their social environment. She writes, "Because men can be separate, they can be 'sacred.'"[46]

In relation to another issue which has been the focus of discussion throughout this study, i.e., the males' control of nature as represented by female power, or vice versa, Jean la Fontaine explains that in preliterate cultures rituals and customs surrounding the menses, particularly at puberty, are designed to make the female's dangerous power beneficient. He writes, "...these rituals control and harness the reproductive power of women for the benefit of men...whose power is of a social and not a natural order."[47] Thus what is being suggested here is that males are accorded social power and females natural power; and that when males take control of the female (natural) power it is socially useful, when they do not have control it is dangerous. Or, as Simone de Beauvoir writes, "Human society is an antiphysis--in a sense it is against nature; it does not passively submit to the presence of nature but rather takes over the control of nature in its own behalf."[48]

In a more contemporary context, the association between female and nature, the cultural devaluation of the female, and the male's need to make a break from nature (female, mother) is somewhat crudely, but explicitly, reflected in Norman Mailer's statement on the matter. He writes,

> ...one had to alienate oneself from nature to become a man, step out of nature, be almost as if opposed to nature, be perhaps directly opposed to nature, be perhaps even the instrument of some larger force in that blind goat-kicking lust which would debase females, make all women cunts....it would not have surprised him if the power to be male might also rest in the power of the just-formed embryo to pick up some confidence or detestation of the future from the communicating waves of the womb and the nutrients offered by the mother, and so could have the power to embark on the mightiest decision of the life which was yet to come, the decision to separate oneself from nature to the extent of becoming a man.[49]

Menstrual Power and Mother Power

As indicated earlier, psychoanalytically oriented theorists who have concerned themselves with explaining the male's fear of the menstruous female have generally postulated a castration anxiety theory. In a cross-cultural study of menstrual taboos Stephens tested this castration anxiety thesis. Based on the results, he concluded that in preliterate cultures there was a significant relationship between the intensity of castration anxiety and the extensiveness of menstrual taboos.[50]

In postulating this castration anxiety hypothesis Stephens makes the assumption (based on classical analytic theory) that the

castration threat posed by menstrual bleeding and the menstruous female has its origins in the oedipal situation, i.e., that the fear of genital injury aroused in the adult male by the menstruating female is derived, developmentally, from the boy's imagined fear of punishment (castration) by father in response to incestuous wishes and rivalrous feelings. In this regard Stephens reasoned that a number of child rearing variables would be strong indicators of the extensiveness of menstrual taboos. Based on the assumption that several of these cultural customs or child rearing variables involved practices which would realistically act to increase the boy's fantasized fear of castration by father, Stephens postulated that they would be positively correlated with the extensiveness of menstrual taboos. However, his results indicated that only one of these proved to be a significant predictor of the extensiveness of menstrual taboos, i.e., father as main disciplinarian (.02 level of confidence).

One of the four child rearing variables which had strong predictive power (.01 level of confidence) was the post partum sex taboo, i.e., the taboo which prohibits the female from having sexual relations after the birth of a child. In this regard Stephens postulated that the length of this taboo would be a significant factor in determining the development of castration anxiety (and the consequent elaborateness of menstrual taboos). He reasoned that the long post partum taboo promoted a situation in which a strong infant-mother tie develops, one that is highly sexualized due to the post partum enforcement of sexual abstinence.

That is--since the mother is deprived of having her sexual needs met, she will tend to direct these needs toward her (male) child. According to analytic theory, this situation is one in which the development of castration anxiety will be maximized. Based on this reasoning, Stephens postulates that in the adult male castration anxiety will be manifested in an inordinate fear of menstrual bleeding. The social expression of this psychological threat is the enforcement of extensive menstrual taboos, i.e., a social defense against the arousal of a castration threat.

Although Stephens makes the assumption that the castration threat is associated with the father, in a footnote he writes,

> Psychoanalytic treatment mentions both the mother and the father as possible agents of castration. In cases where the father is feared, we might say that the "second part" of the Oedipus Complex (father-son rivalry) is contributing to the castration fantasy. When the mother is feared, it could be that the "first part" of the Oedipus Complex is generating castration anxiety more or less independently. The antecedent measures used so far [child rearing indices] seem most directly relevant to the "first part."[51]

Thus in effect what is suggested here is that fears of the menstruous female and menstrual blood originate in a pre-Oedipal stage, and the castration threat originates not from the fantasy of retaliation by father, but from the incorporative (sexually seductive) aspects of the relationship with mother.

It is my contention that what Stephens and others have described as a menstrually-related castration threat in the adult male,

is actually derived from/or is a manifestation of an earlier fear, having to do with death, physical incapacitation (body mutilation), powerlessness and infantilization. Support for this view is suggested by the content and nature of the many beliefs about the magical powers of the menstruous female which involve harm to males.

The notion that the fear of castration is derived from a more basic fear of death is taken up by Joseph Rheingold in The Mother, Anxiety and Death.[52] He argues that the formulations of castration anxiety in early analytic theory are no longer tenable, that these early conceptualizations rest on a too-narrow base--fear of literal severing of the genital. He supports his argument by citing the many theorists who have proposed that in essence the castration fear is a death fear. Moreover, his central thesis is that the male's fear of castration (i.e., body mutilation, death, etc.) has its origins in the early infant-mother relationship. Thus the fear of castration, as Rheingold defines it, is associated primarily with mother and not father.

C.D. Daly,[53] a contemporary of Freud's, proposed an explanation for the male's fear of the menstruating female which combines a number of points just discussed, with several others considered previously, and one which has not been considered before. Like Bettleheim, Daly maintained that the menstruous female was sexually arousing to the male, but that a castration-death fear prevented him from acting out this desire. Moreover, Daly also maintains that it is the mother's genital bleeding which acts as an incest barrier in the Oedipal (phallic) stage. That is, the genital bleeding is the visible proof of punishment (castration and death) for having incestuous wishes for mother and

rivalrous feelings for father. In the adult male, then, the castration threat posed by the menstruating female is derived from the unconscious arousal of a repressed memory of mother's vaginal bleeding, which is associated with castration/death, punishment. Daly writes, "For men, menstruous woman is taboo because this deeply unconscious id attraction [sexual] is associated with the unconscious ego's fear of being eaten and castrated by mother, fear through which his incestuous desires were frustrated."[54] In this regard Daly's formulations are consistent with Rheingold's, i.e., that the castration threat originates from the relationship with mother.[55]

Daly also argues that while the fear of castration-death in association with menstrual bleeding brings about the repression of incest desires, it also results in anger towards the mother (matricidal tendencies) which are projected onto females (I don't want to kill you--you want to castrate me), which becomes the basis for the creation of fantastic castrating females, such as the witch. Thus what can be extrapolated from Daly's analysis of the male's fear of the menstruant is an explanation of the developmental origins to which the attribution of magical (witch-like powers to the menstruating female can be traced. To a certain extent, Daly's analysis is also consistent with Jungian theory, as we shall see shortly.

Based on Joseph Rheingold's[56] formulation of castration anxiety, menstrual-related castration fear can also be conceptualized in terms of a threat to body integrity. In relation to the menses, this is quite obviously reflected in the many beliefs surrounding menstrual physical harm to males. Moreover, the notion that castration

anxiety is a threat to body integrity (which is ultimately, in my opinion, a fear of death) is suggested by certain results in Stephens' study. That is, Stephens hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between the frequency of genital severing and genital injury incidents in folklore and the extensiveness of menstrual taboos. His results indicated the contrary. However, there was a highly significant relationship between the extensiveness of menstrual taboos (or fear of the menstruant as I prefer to conceptualize it) and all types of physical injury in folklore (.001 level of significance).[57]

It has been suggested by Freud and a number of other theorists[58] that the fear of castration, in its earliest form, is related to the anxiety surrounding separation from mother. In the phallic-oedipal stage this separation anxiety is manifested as fear of the severing (separation from) the genitals. In this regard, the combined results of a number of anthropological studies suggest that the male's fear of the menstruous female will be most intense in cultures in which a number of specific social and/or psychological variables are operative.[59] While the intensity of this fear seems to be determined by a combination of variables, one of the most essential factors seems to be the long post partum taboo and the strong dependency or symbiotic attachment fostered in cultures in which the taboo exists.

As established previously, in the Jungian conceptual framework the menstruous female seems to represent an aspect of the negative Feminine Archetype, or the "Bad Mother." In terms of the psychodynamic aspects of this theory, fear of the menstruous female can be understood as a projection of the male's fear of ego dissolution,[60] often

associated symbolically with feminine mythological figures who represent death. In my opinion this concept of ego dissolution can be understood in terms of damage to body integrity (menstruants' physical harm to males), death (another threat the menstruant poses to the male), and a fear of re-merging with mother, which seems to occur in societies in which a strong infant-mother tie is created by the long post partum taboo.

Within Jungian theory the symbiotic tie between mother and infant is referred to as uroboric. It describes a stage of development in which mother and child engage in a "participation mystique." In adult life the wish to return to this original state (merging, passivity) is set against a fear of ego dissolution and loss of individuality, i.e., uroboric incest. This desire-fear ambivalence is the psychodynamic basis for the male's ambivalence towards females. Moreover, it is from the negative aspect of this ambivalence (fear of dissolution of the ego) that the male creates the phantasmagorical female figures representing the Terrible Mother Archetype.[61] In this context, it is my contention that intense fear of the menstruant (who symbolizes an aspect of this negative archetype) is one manifestation of a defensive reaction against the longing to re-merge, to be dependent, to be passive. As indicated earlier, the results of a number of anthropological studies provide support for the explanation I am proposing.

In Kleinian terms, in adult life this close infant-mother tie results in a paranoid-like feeling of persecution (exaggerated fear of the destructive power of the menstruous female) in response to dealing with separation and dependency.[62] Moreover, extrapolating from

the Kleinian conceptual framework, as interpreted by Hannah Segal,[63] the male's fear of the menstruous female can be explained in terms of a projection of the "bad breast," a projection based on the male's reaction to separation from mother. According to certain aspects of Jungian theory this "splitting off" would represent the feminine aspects of self which are projected onto the female. In this instance, the projections involve badness and evil, and result in the devaluation of femininity and feminine values.[64]

Returning to Kleinian theory, splitting-off also involves envy and devaluation. That is, since the breast is literally everything it arouses envy, which in turn engenders a wish to spoil the source of goodness. Thus the infant (and the adult who carries these feelings with him or her throughout life) projects onto the breast the bad, spoiling parts of himself; then there is no longer any need for envy because that which has been made into badness (the menstruous female) is no longer enviable. Envy, therefore, is one kind of defense against over-evaluation. As Segal explains it, however, this envy may be muted to devaluation in order to protect the object (the mothering figure or the female) from total spoiling. Thus this kind of emotional dynamic merely lessens value. In addition, envy in its defensive aspects can be projected as a kind of rigid over-idealization (elevation of the feminine, or the menstruous female, as Devereux suggests). Moreover, in response to overvaluing and dependency, a third defensive reaction is to control, express triumph or contempt[65] (devaluation or contempt for the menstruous aspect of femininity or the female, control of and triumph over her reproductive power via ritual and conversion of menstrual power via transgressive magic.

While I have been discussing theoretical formulations which explain the male's fear of the menstruating female, it would seem obvious, as indicated in remarks in the parentheses, that these formulations can also provide an explanation for (1) the ambivalence with which males have typically regarded females, (2) the cultural devaluation of femininity which has occurred world-wide.

In this regard Joseph Lubart proposes that in Eskimo culture the devaluation of the female is based on deep and prolonged wishes to be cared for, and a perception that the female's life is easier than the male's, thus enviable. In response to giving up the soft life of attachment to the mother (which boys in most preliterate cultures have to do) to become a "man" who engages in risky and dangerous pursuits, the male has to persuade himself that his life and values are more worthwhile than the female's. Moreover, he has to deny this dependence and longing for passivity which would make him appear unmanly.[66] Thus as Jean Briggs interprets Lubart's theories an envy-disparagement-fear process is set in motion, or an attitude of ambivalent awe. We come back, then, to the notion that perhaps the taboos surrounding females may be a form of punishment--punishment for what Jean Briggs calls "the emotional centrality" of females, a centrality which exists worldwide and is based on the fact that females usually have prime responsibility for raising male children.[67] Briggs maintains that both males and females experience ambivalence toward and envy of each other, but since females do not have to make the same sharp emotional break from their mothers, the psychodynamic conflicts for male and female are quite different, particularly in relation to dependency issues, the evaluation of the

opposite sex and the taking on of the appropriate role identity. Therefore, while females might envy males their powerful roles in society, the male's envy of females is more complex, more hidden, and tends to lead to devaluation of the female.[68]

In relation to the universality of the psychological dynamics involved in the male-mother tie in both primitive and sophisticated cultures, and the contribution they make to the world-wide cultural devaluation of the female and feminine values, Nancy Chodorow writes,

> A boy in his attempt to define an elusive masculine identification often comes to define his masculinity largely in negative terms, or that which is not feminine or involved with women....Internally the boy tries to reject his mother and deny his attachment to her....He also tries to deny the deep personal identification with her that he has developed in the early years. He does this by repressing whatever he takes to be feminine inside himself, and, importantly, by denigrating and devaluing whatever he considers to be feminine in the outside world.[69]

Summary and Implications

A number of the concepts presented here and in earlier discussion have been expressed succinctly in literature by both Norman Mailer and D.H. Lawrence. In Women in Love, for instance, Lawrence writes about Birkin, one of the main male characters, "It was intolerable, this possession at the hands of woman. Always a man must be considered as the broken off fragment of a woman, and the sex was the still aching scar of the laceration. Man must be added on woman, before he had any real place or wholeness...."[70]

On the other hand, in another part of the text, D.H. Lawrence describes the same character as "...filled with almost insance fury at this calm assumption of the Magner Mater, that all was hers, because she had borne him...He had a horror of the Magna Mater. She was detestable."[71]

And in defending Henry Miller's view of females against the attacks of Kate Millet, Norman Mailer, in his own inimitable style, poses an explanation for the male need to devalue the female.

> For he captured something in the sexuality of men as it has never been seen before, precisely that it was man's sense of awe before woman, his dread of her position one step closer to eternity (for in that step were her powers) which made men detest women, revile them, humiliate them, defecate symbolically upon them, do everything to reduce them so one might dare to enter them and take pleasure of them....So do men look to destroy every quality in a woman which will give her the powers of a male, for she is in their eyes already armed with the power that she brought them forth, and that is a power without measure...[72]

Thus, it seems that the blood (menstrual) of the "other" is mother's; it is Simone de Beauvoir who relates the fear of mother to the dread of the menstruating female when she writes, in relation to the menstrual sex taboo,

> ...it has been supposed that masculine energy and vitality would be destroyed because the feminine principle is then at its maximum of force. More vaguely, man finds it repugnant to come upon the dreaded essence of the mother in the woman he possesses; he is determined to dissociate these two aspects of femininity. Hence the universal law prohibiting incest expressed in the rule of exogamy or in more modern forms; this is why man tends to keep away from woman at the times when she is especially taken up with her reproductive role: during her menses, when she is pregnant, in

> lactation. The Oedipus complex--which should be redescribed--does not deny this attitude, but on the contrary implies it.[73]

Thus in summary, it seems that the male's fear of menstruating females, as a reflection of the fear of females, and the cultural devaluation of the menstruous aspect of femininity, as a reflection of the cultural devaluation of females, are linked to the enormous psychological power of mothers over sons. Other than the theories and arguments which have been presented so far, a theme of mother power is also reflected in the origin myths, found throughout the world, in which females had the original power, the original secrets, which males stole and made their own.[74] While this has been interpreted literally by some, i.e., females once dominated society in a matriarchal phase at prehistory,[75] a more likely interpretation is that offered by Elizabeth Janeway, i.e., that these myths represent the original mother-infant situation in which, indeed, mothers were all powerful.[76]

In relation to mother-power, Elias Canneti points out that females have been accorded private (informal, domestic) power in return for public submission.[77] Since females now have more control over their biological destinies, and can make a choice about having children, they are beginning to ask for public recognition and formal societal power. However, females are still mothers, and for the most part they still raise male infants. As Mailer's statement implies, based on this mother-power, no matter how many laws are passed to guarantee equal rights or equal pay, males will continue to resent and resist the female's role of authority in the work world. Moreover, this also suggests that females who choose to take on positions of authority must be

prepared for an onslaught of conscious and unconscious reactions from males, which psychologically, without a doubt, presents a Herculean task.

NOTES: CHAPTER VIII

[1]Women's Mysteries (London: Rider, 1971). Harding (p. 61) writes, "The untamed desire on the part of the men naturally constituted a menace for the woman. Certain primitive myths suggest that in self defense against the demands of the men, women imposed abstinences upon themselves." This is a view also taken by Elizabeth Gould Davis, The First Sex (London: Penguin, 1972); Helen Diner, Woman and Amazons (New York: Julian, 1968), and others who propose a matriarchal theory of civilization.

[2]The Mothers (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 248.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Factors Affecting Human Fertility in Non-Industrial Societies (New Haven: Yale University Publications in Anthropology, 1966), p. 21.

[5]A woman is an alien spirit, in Many Sisters: Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective, ed. D.J. Matthiessen (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 197.

[6]Cultural backgrounds of female puberty, Amer. J. Psychoth., 4:102, 1950; Anthropology and Human Nature (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1957), p. 97. In the Book of Niddah (p. 219), the question is asked, "Why did the Torah ordain 7 days unclean?" The answer is "Because being in constant contact with his wife (a husband might) develop a loathing towards her. The Torah therefore ordained: Let her be unclean for 7 days in order that she shall be beloved by her husband as at the time of her first entry into the bridal chamber."

[7]John Burton, Some Nuer notions of purity and danger, Anthropos, 69:527, 1974. Marcel Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemmeli (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 154.

[8]Ritual and Symbol in Transitional Zarumo Society (Sweden: Almquist & Wiksel, 1970), p. 270.

[9]Miranda, Alien spirit, p. 181; Yehudi A. Cohen, The Transition from Childhood to Adolescence: Cross Cultural Studies of Initiation Ceremonies, Legal Systems and Incest Taboos (Chicago: Aldine, 1964), p. 121.

[10]Paula Weidiger, Menstruation and Menopause, p. 162, reports that menstrual manipulation is still alive among the high school set. The menstrual manipulation technique, according to a teenage informant, is to look the teacher square in the eyes and explain that the work wasn't done because you were menstruating. It supposedly works like a charm with male teachers.

[11]Georgine Seward, in a review article of the effect of the menstrual cycle on women workers (Psychological effects of the menstrual cycle on women workers, Psych. Bull., 41:90-102, 1944), suggests that an attitude of "menstrual invalidism" contributed greatly to menstrual'related industrial absenteeism. J. Smith (Menstruation and industrial efficiency, II,

Quality and quantity of production, J. App. Psychol., 34:148-152, 1950), measured absenteeism rates in aircraft, parachute and garment factories. In relation to the menstrual and premenstrual phases of the cycle. While results varied from factory to factory, none of the results supported a menstrual-non-menstrual difference. To my knowledge there have been no studies on how the premenstrual or menstrual phases of the cycle effects the work of professional women.

[12]Male Dominance and Female Autonomy (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1972), p. 25.

[13]The Hindu Woman (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1953), p. 74.

[14]Woman's pollution periods in Tamilnad (India), Anthropos, 69:160, 1974. On the other hand, Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger (Middlesex: Penguin, 1966), p. 178, reports that among the Lele of Africa

> ...a menstruating woman was a danger to the whole community if she entered the forest. Not only was her menstruating certain to wreck any enterprise in the forest that she might undertake, but it was thought to produce unfavorable conditions for men. Hunting would be difficult for a long time after, and rituals based on forest plants would have no efficacy. Women found these rules extremely irksome, especially if they were regularly short handed and late in their planting, harvesting and fishing.

[15]Her Infinite Variety: The American Woman as Lover, Mate and Rival (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 316.

[16]Woman, culture and society: A theoretical overview, in Women and Culture, p. 38. Rosaldo calls female power "Witch and Bitch" power.

[17]The mastery of work and the mystery of sex in a Guatemalan village, in Women and Culture, p. 298; Meggit, (p. 207), reports that in New Guinea women crossed in love often use menstrual blood for revenge; Phyliss Kayberry, Aboriginal Woman, Sacred and Profane (Philadelphia: Blackiston, 1939), p. 240, reports the same use in Australia. She gives an example of a woman who desired intercourse with a certain man who refused. She contaminated him with her menstrual blood and the only way he might be cured was to give in to her wishes; and in terms of female pollution, in general, Maranda (p. 178) reports that among the Lau women can show contempt for men by giving birth in the area of the island designated as "neutral," i.e., neither male nor female, thus polluting the area with their contaminating properties.

[18]Spirit possession, Man, 1:307-27, 1966; Legitimate and illegitimate aggression, in Witchcraft, Confessions and Accusations, pp. 207-43.

In the modern-day world menstruation as a weapon in the

battle of the sexes takes a different form. In relation to the use of "illegitimate" power in the office, Marion Meade, Bitching (New York: Manor), p. 72, writes,

> Which brings us to the favorite office game, Menstruation, a foolproof ruse which excuses any uppity behavior a woman may indulge in when she's had it. Menstruation can be played at any time of the month.
>
> Miss Gofer: You can shove the rest of these letters up your ass, sir. It's 6:30.
>
> Company Man: So it is. I hadn't noticed. ("Probably having her period").
>
> Menstruation provides an opportunity for all manner of insubordination. That's why women can afford to overlook the daily tantrums of the Company Man who obviously suffers from a tempestuous hormonal imbalance. As Nora understates the matter:
>
> MEN HAVE THEIR PERIODS ALL MONTH LONG.

[19]A General Theory of Magic (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 28.

[20]Social Anthropology (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), p. 125.

[21]George Devereux, A Study of Abortion in Primitive Societies (New York: Julian, 1955), p. 125; Elizabeth Janeway, Man's Place, Woman's World, A Study in Social Mythology (New York: Dell, 1971), p. 128.

[22]Menstrual taboos and chi square; Current Issues in Anthro., 2:436, 1963.

[23]These taboos might be considered roughly comparable to informal taboos on minority groups, which are essentially fear-based restrictions. This is a point made by Young and Bacyadan, Menstrual taboo and social rigidity, Ethnology, 4:225-39, 1965).

[24]Canon law and the battle of the sexes, in Religion and Sexism, ed. R. Reuther (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), p. 272, 273; and p. 213, citing Erling Broderson, Studies in Sacred Theology, 2nd. Ser., no. 213.

[25]M.J. Meggit, Male-female relationships in the Highlands of New Guinea, Amer. Anthro., Special Publ. no. 2, pp. 204-24, 1964; Douglas Oliver, Ancient Tahitian Society, 3 vols. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, vol. 1, 1974); Robert Briffault, The Mothers (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 246, was of the opinion that notions of the pollution of females in general have their origins in the beliefs in the impurity of menstrual blood.

[26]Is female to male as nature is to culture?, in Women, Culture and Society, eds. M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 70. As indicated in an earlier Chapter, the belief that the menstruous female is contaminating to the sacred appears world-wide. Gabriella Eichinger, Woman's pollution, p. 115, points out that the ancient Greeks and Romans did not consider the menstruous female to be contaminating to the sacred or ritually impure.

[27]Navajo Religion (Princeton: Bollingen/Princeton Paperback, 1974), p. 177. While females could theoretically hold high office, few of them actually did.

[28]According to M.C. Randle, Iriquois women, then - now, in Symposium on Local Diversity in Iriquois Culture, American Ethnology Bulletin, no. 149 (Washington: U.S. Gov't Printing Office, 1951).

[29]Conservation Among the Iriquois at the Six Nations Reserve (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 217.

[30]Aboriginal Woman, p. 238. Kayberry takes issue with Briffault - that femininity is inextricably interwoven with the profane and impurity.

[31]John Caule, Medicine is the law: Studies in Psychiatric Anthropology of Australian Tribal Doctors (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), pp. 146-48.

[32]Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 80.

[33]Ibid., p. 25.

[34]Feminine Psychology (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 114.

[35]Laura Makarius, The magic of transgression, Anthropos, 69:544-45, 1974.

[36]Introduction, in Witchcraft, Confessions and Accusations (London: Tavistock, 1970), xxix.

[37]Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), p. 141.

[38]The Second Sex (New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 153. Makarius makes a similar point in discussing transgressive magic, i.e., that males are the primary violators of taboo; moreover, violating taboos is associated with "activity, initiative, boldness, heroism" (p. 543).

[39]The Raw and the Cooked (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

[40]Second Sex, p. 58.

[41]M. Rosaldo, Woman, culture and society, pp. 17-42; L. Lamphere, Strategies, cooperation and conflict among women, in Women and Culture, pp. 97-112; S. Ortner, Is female to male as nature is to culture? in Women and Culture, pp. 67-87; and S. Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (New York:

Bantam, 1972).

[42]Female to Male, p. 75.

[43]Ibid., p. 75.

[44]Second Sex, p. 58.

[45]Female to Male, p. 78.

[46]Woman, culture and society, p. 26.

[47]Ritualization of women's life crises in Bigusu, in The Interpretation of Ritual (London: Tavistock, 1970), p. 179. See J. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911-15) 10:83, for the tale of the Persian king Sapor, who with the help of the destructive power of the menstrual discharge manages to finally conquer a city which had been under siege for 2 years.

[48]The Second Sex (New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 47.

[49]The Prisoner of Sex (New York: Bantam, 1971), p. 47.

[50]A cultural study of menstrual taboos, Gen. Psych. Monogr., 64:385-416, 1961. In formulating his hypothesis Stephens (p. 402) writes, "It may be that some men in preliterate societies have a phobic reaction to menstruating females, similar to the phobias toward snakes and spiders common in our society," - an interesting choice of analogies.

[51]Ibid, p. 401.

[52]The Mother, Anxiety and Death (Boston: Little Brown, 1967), pp. 77-189 passim.

[53]Daly develops these ideas in two articles, i.e., The role of menstruation in human phylogenesis and ontogenesis, Int. J. Psychoanal., 24: 151-169; and The menstruation complex in literature, Psychoanal. Quart., 4:307-343, 1935. Daly was obviously quite taken with the effect of the menstruating female on the male psyche. He maintains (Literature, p. 307) that the "menstruation complex" is universal; thus he could not "imagine" an analyst working without it.

[54]Phylogenesis and Ontogenesis, p. 163. In Literature (p. 338), Daly writes that Edgar Allen Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" is "...a story which repeats in dramatic form the terror and despair occasioned in every male at the sight and odor of the mother's menstrual bleeding, which confirms the fear of death as punishment for the crime of menstuation."

[55]One of Rheingold's essential purposes in writing this book is to take issue with theorists (i.e., Melanie Klein, Erick Erickson, etc.) who propose that the destructive aspects of mothers are based on the infant's or the child's projections. Essentially, Rheingold argues that, based on the rejection of the feminine role, there are murderous mothers and the

infant's or the child's responses are to a real threat. They are not projections. While Rheingold makes some valid points, his theories smack of a mother-blaming tendency.

[56]Ibid., p. 98.

[57]Menstrual Taboos, p. 411. Besides the post partum taboo and father as main disciplinarian, the two other variables which yielded statistically significant relationships were (1) punishment for masturbation, and (2) overall severity of sex training.

[58]In, Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety (1926) Standard Edition, Vol. XX, p. 79, Freud wrote, "I am therefore inclined to adhere to the view that the fear of death should be regarded as analoguous to the fear of castration." See Otto Rank, The Trauma of Birth; Max Shur, The ego in anxiety, in Drives, Affects and Behavior, ed. R.M. Lowenstein, etc., cited by Rheingold, pp. 85-89.

[59]Studies I am referring to are:

1. Stephens' study shows that the extensiveness of menstrual taboos is significantly correlated with
   (a) long post-partum taboos, and
   (b) sex anxiety, measured in the anthropology literature by the severity of societal punishment surrounding premarital sex;
2. Studies by J.M. Whiting, R. Kluckhorn and A. Anthony (The function of male initiation rites at puberty, in Readings in Social Psychology, eds. Eleanor Macoby, T.M. Newcomb and E.L. Hartley (New York: Holdt, 1958, pp. 359-370); and R.V. Burton and J.W. Whiting The absent father and cross sex identity, Merril Palmer Quart., 7:89-95, 1961) show that in cultures in which there are long post-partum taboos there are also initiation rites for boys at puberty in which there is a dramatic separation from mother, an emphasis on genital operations, explained as ridding the boy of the mother's influence (in some cultures described as ridding the boy of mother's milk via bleeding), painful hazing and tests of manliness;
3. The extensiveness of menstrual taboos, the practice of initiation rites for boys just described and the long post-partum taboo, are also correlated with the sex anxiety variable just mentioned. This information is gleaned from M.R. Allen, Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967); Klaus Fredrich Koch, Sociogenic and psychogenic models in anthropology: The functions of Jali initiation, Man, 9:397-422, 1974; and Willian Stephens,

The Oedipus Complex: Cross-Cultural Evidence (New York: Macmillan, 1962);
4. Long post-partum taboos and extensive menstrual taboos are found in cultures in which the family structure is polygonous. Stephens (Study of Menstrual Taboos) reports that in nuclear families menstrual taboos cluster low on the menstrual taboo scale. Jean Saucier, Correlates of the long post-partum taboo: A cross-cultural study, Current Anthropology, 13:238-48, 1972, shows that the length of this taboo is significantly related to type of family structure. The important factor here is that in societies in which there are long post-partum taboos and extensive menstrual taboos, there is a rigid separation of the sexes. My thesis is distance increases fear and fantasy of imagined harm. For instance, it has been reported that in polygonous marriages the male is often fearful that the females will "get him." The imagined "getting" often seems to consist of fear of poisoning via menstrual fluid;
5. What can be gleaned from all this is what Burton and Whiting call a psychodynamic circle which consists of (a) a rigid separation of the sexes, (b) a close infant-mother relationship via the long post-partum taboo, (c) which leads to a primary identification with the feminine (and a later fear of being feminine), (d) an abrupt break with the mother, via the initiation rites just described, with earlier (female) aspects of the self being rejected, (e) a protest masculinity, i.e., male dominated institutions and a rigid separation of the sexes based on fear of females (in the frame of reference being discussed here, inordinate fear of the menstruous female as an aspect of this more generalized fear of females)
6. The point here is that exaggerated fear of the menstruous female, as indicated by the extensiveness of menstrual taboos, will occur in cultures in which the variables just described are operative. Moreover, as I pointed out at the outset of this study, the fear of the menstruous female does not stand in isolation. It is an aspect of a larger custom-belief complex involving the pollution of females.

[60]Erich Neumann, The Great Mother (Princeton: Bollingen/Princeton Paperback, 1972).

[61]Ibid., and Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1954).

[62]Melanie Klein, Contributions to Psychoanalysis, with an introduction by Ernest Jones (London: Hogarth and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1948).

[63]Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein (London: Hogarth, 1973).

[64]For various discussions of the anima concept as it effects the male's projections onto females, see, e.g., Emma Jung, Anima and Animus (New York: Spring, 1971), and C.G. Jung, Four Archetypes: Mother/Rebirth/Spirit/Trickster (Princeton: Princeton/Bollingen Paperback, 1973). In The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Princeton: Bollingen, 1959), Jung (p. 27) writes in relation to the anima, "What is not I, not masculine is most probably feminine and because the not-I is felt as not belonging to me and is therefore outside of me, the anima image is projected onto women." He also wrote (Ibid., p. 28), "Everything the anima touches becomes numinous, unconditional, dangerous, taboo, magical. She is the serpent in the paradise of the harmless man with good resolutions and still better intentions." Also see Gregory Zilbourg, Masculine and feminine, Some biological and cultural aspects, Psychiatry, 1:257-296, 1944, for one of the earliest criticisms of the androcentric bias in Freudian psychology, and a discussion of the castration anxiety concept in relation to who is projecting onto whom (male-female).

[65]Segal, pp. 40-111 passim.

[66]Psychodynamic Problems of Adaptation - Mackensie Delta Eskimos, Ottawa, n.p., 1970. Norman Mailer's version of the male's wish to be passive is expressed as "We are long familiar with male contempt of the pussy and, lately, with pussy envy...If this seems odd or exaggerated to women, they can be reminded that in the profound pussy envy of men, there is the simple and sentimental expression that it is easy to be a woman - one need merely lie back and all Heaven will come into the cunt." (Prisoner of Sex, p. 65.)

[67]Eskimo women: Makers of men, in Many Sisters, pp. 261-304.

[68]Ibid., pp. 297-99.

[69]Family structure and feminine personality, in Women and Culture, p. 50. In relation to the New Guinea male, K.E. Read writes, "Manhood, in fact, is never regarded as the certain result of a natural process...for its supreme expression is cultural, the result of a demonstrated ability in those achievements which are designated male," New Guinea cultures, Sw. J. Anthro., 10:27, 1954. In this regard Margaret Mead writes, "Maleness in America is not absolutely defined. It has to be re-earned and redefined every day." She goes on further to state that one of the essential elements in this definition is "beating" women (in the competitive sense) which helps the male to define himself as non-woman. In Sex and Temperament, p. 232.

[70]Women in Love (New York: Bantam, 1959), p. 201.

[71]Ibid., p. 200.

[72]Prisoner of Sex, p. 86.

[73]Second Sex, p. 139.

[74]Joan Bamberger, The myth of matriarchy, in Women and Culture, pp. 263-280; Kathaleen Gough, The origin of the family, J. Marr. and Fam., 33: 768, 1971.

[75]Those who propose a matriarchy theory of civilization were mentioned earlier. J. Bachofen, Mother Right, etc.; see Footnote 2, this chapter; andH.H. Bacon, Women's two faces: Sophocles view of the tragedy of Oedipus and his family, in Science and Analysis, Vol. 10, ed. J.H. Masserman (New York: Grune & Stratten, 1966).

[76]Man's World Woman's Place, p. 53. Janeway (p. 51) writes, "So the myth of female weakness...can, it seems, mask its contrary, the myth of female power...the myth of female power is as much a projection of need and a focus for fear as its twin."

[77]Crowds and Power, cited by Janeway, p. 54. In an essay on images of females in the Old Testament, Phyliss Bird points out that motherhood, the only position of honor available to females in Isreal, also brought authority in providing the female with the single opportunity to exercise legitimate power over another person - the only relationship in which dominance by a female was sanctioned. Images of women in the Old Testament, in Religion and Sexism, ed. R. Ruether (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), pp. 41-88. Also see Philip Slater, The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family (Boston: Beacon, 1971) for a study of the psychological implications of mother-son relationships.

[78]For an excellent study of this problem, see Carol Beauvois, "The Family and the Work Group: Problems for Women in Authority" (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1976). In addition, for several male views on this matter, and others, see Marc. C. Fasteau, The Male Machine (New York: McGraw Hill, 1974); Michael Korda, Male Chauvanism: How It Works and How to Get Rid of It (New York: Random House, 1972); and Jack Nichols, Men's Liberation: A New Definition of Masculinity (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin, 1975).

*Source materials available in HRAF files.

EPILOGUE

...Black Elk said, 'You will notice that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the power of the World always works in circles and everything tries to be round. ...you should know there are no squares in Nature, not in macrocosm or microcosm. Nature creates in circles. Atoms and galaxies are circular, and most organic things inbetween. The earth is round. The wind whirls. The womb is no shoe box. Where are the corners of the egg and the sky?...The square is the product of logic and rationality. It was invented by civilized man. It's the work of masculine consciousness....Woman is a round animal. The male...has used logic as a weapon and a shield. The whole object of logic is to square the circle. Civilization is a...circle squared....It's the duty of the advanced woman to teach man to love the circle again.

--Tom Robbins, Even CowGirls Get the Blues (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1976), p. 305.

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III. Miscellaneous

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