CHAPTER III

THE TEMPTRESS AND THE NURTURER

The most ready explanation offered for the prevalence of the predatory female in the writings of the major Jewish-American writers is that they must have been the victims of very powerful and aggressive mothers. And it would seem that a novel like Portnoy's Complaint capitalizes on and caters to this kind of belief. Most of Portnoy's sexual problems and his inability to establish satisfactory relationships with women are said to be the result of the overpossessiveness of his emasculating mother, Sophie Portnoy.

The hard drive, energy and competence of Jewish women assume an insidious aspect when they are seen in the light of Freudian concepts like Oedipus complex and castration complex. Freud's theory of Oedipus complex emphasizes the enormous influence and power a mother has over her child. Mother who is her son's first and strongest love-object, rejects him in favour of his father; he, therefore, sees her as faithless, unresponsive to his love, a feeling which persists unless the complex is completely resolved. In addition to this inevitable strain on the relationship, if the mother happens to be cold,

sadistic, irrational, possessive, or inadequate, the boy is quick to feel her deficiencies so deeply that he will see them in all women and will never be able to free himself of hostility in his relationships with them. Thus Freud's theory of Oedipus complex underlines the destructive influence a mother may have over her son.

The influence of Freud has made the mother's position vulnerable and difficult and has given rise to the portrayals of destructive mothers, beginning notably with D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers and gathering force in the writings of many recent authors--especially in America. Freud's attempt to translate all psychological phenomena into sexual terms, and to see all problems of adult personality as the effect of childhood fixations has put an onerous burden on mothers. If they leave the child alone, they will be charged with gross neglect of parental obligation. If they devote themselves to the child, they will be guilty of the absorption of the child's personality or of a destructive symbiosis. Portnoy's Complaint ostensibly exploits the theme of the destructive influence of a mother's affection by tracing Portnoy's troubles to "the bonds obtaining in the mother-child relationship."[1]

Anyway, the attack on motherhood is not a Jewish phenomenon alone but seems to have become a common practice in American letters as can be seen in works like Edward Albee's The American Dream. This may owe to the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis or to a reaction against the Victorian idealization of motherhood.

Besides, it has often been noted that in an American family the ties between mother and her children are closer than those between father and the children as children spend most of their time with their mother, the father being generally out busy making money. Page Smith observes that "Remarkable as were the energies of the American man, they were not inexhaustible. The attrition of the effective life of the American male, especially in his role as father of a son . . . created a kind of emotional vacuum filled by the figure of Mother who became, in a more cynical age, that monstrous caricature--omnivorous, insatiable, merciless Mom."[2] Another factor that mainly contributes to this attack on mother is the American's love of individual freedom. As Robert Jay Lifton remarks, "American culture may, in a special way, have a particular sensitivity to 'Momism' precisely because it has long emphasized an opposite myth of absolute 'individualism'--that of the child's eventual capacity to achieve total independence from its parents (and from everyone else)--and this sensitivity makes us the first to seek out 'Momism' in our midst."[3]

The closely-knit structure of the Jewish family and the important place the mother enjoys in it, make her an easy target for attack, especially in an American context. Though Jewish religion and culture have come in for a lot of criticism for perpetuating patriarchal ideology in which man enjoys the superior position while woman is relegated to a subsidiary role, it has also been observed that in actual practice Jewish women

enjoyed a position of authority and influence in their families and homes, and through these also in the community. This view is endorsed by Barbara Quart as she says, "Despite Old Testament patriarchal emphases on men as the supreme figures of authority, and on sons as the hope of the future, at the same time the world of Eastern European Jewry created strikingly strong, aggressive, capable women, very effective in the world. With immigration and Americanization these very qualities turn destructive in the eyes of the sons. The men in most of the novels choose competent tough women who can take care of themselves, and then feel jealous, competitive, cannibalized by them."[4]

The admirable qualities of Jewish mothers become destructive in the eyes of their sons to the extent they are drawn into the American ethos with its emphasis on individual as well as sexual freedom. The Jewish family and culture with their insistence on restraint, repression and responsibility are almost like a stifling prison for a boy who is seduced by the lures of freedom that America promises. It is not Sophie Portnoy alone who is responsible for the infantilism and perversions of her son, but the atmosphere outside the home encourages these tendencies in him against which she is only fighting a losing battle. This can be borne out by the examples of Portnoy's adolescent friends, Smolka and Mandel, who come from different backgrounds and who have mothers very different from Portnoy's, and yet they too are perverts like Portnoy. It would, therefore, be more rewarding, perhaps, to

view Sophie Portnoy in the Jungian perspective of mother as a bearer of culture than in the Freudian light alone. Woman, and especially mother, has come to stand more and more for the culture or the society or the reality principle in modern American fiction. To a man's mind she quite often represents the moral or social authority or the harsh outside realities that he is either trying to escape or forget. And as most of the novels here betray the impatience of the hero with the restrictions and obligations imposed from outside, the mother--often equated with the Superego--becomes all the more destructive.

Of course, in most of the other novels--apart from Portnoy's Complaint where Sophie Portnoy is actually Portnoy's mother--woman is split into two kinds of mother-figures, "the loving and the terrible mother."[5] The loving mother plays a positive and nurturing kind of role in the life of the hero: "The qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility."[6] The terrible mother, on the other hand, has a destructive and negative part in a man's life: "On the negative side the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate."[7] This Jungian motif is quite apparent in Malamud's works, especially in The Natural. But though it may not be so obvious in Mailer or Roth, as in

Malamud, they too divide women into two categories--that of the destructive bitches or femme fatale on the one hand, and the nurturers or homemakers on the other hand. Moreover, wives often assume the role of a devouring mother in recent fiction, as in An American Dream where Deborah Kelly is Rojack's wife, not his mother, and still she is a mother-figure and stands for the destructiveness of American society in the eyes of Rojack.

Even though we may forgo the mythic interpretations of woman's role in these novels--and writers like Philip Roth are particularly critical of these mythologizing tendencies--the fact remains that women are sharply divided into two categories--good and bad, or those who help the hero in his career and those who destroy his chances for a better life. This ambivalent attitude of the Jewish male writers towards women, which in turn is reflected in their portrayal of women, has been deplored by the feminists and considered to be a clear proof of their belonging to the school of fantasy. Perhaps this ambivalence in these writers is all the more strengthened by the presence of the Gentile women in their novels. Their male protagonists feel a curious fascination, not unmixed with fear and misgivings, for these strange women. The shiksas seem to beckon them to the heaven of sexual freedom and pleasure, but at the same time these strangers cannot inspire the sense of security and confidence that their mothers did. This fearful attraction for the Gentile women is often

responsible for the dissatisfaction with Jewish as well as Gentile women or women in general.

The tendency to divide women into two types is also considered to be a characteristic of the writers, who are brought up in a patriarchal society. Kate Millett, for instance, looks upon it as a part of sexual politics which perpetuates and defends the patriarchal attitudes. As she says, "The image of woman as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from a fear of the 'otherness' of woman. Yet this notion itself presupposes that patriarchy has already been established and the male has already set himself as the human norm, the subject and referent to which the female is 'other' or alien."[8] Eva Figes tells us that "Man's vision of woman is not objective, but an uneasy combination of what he wishes her to be and what he fears her to be, and it is to this mirror image that woman has had to comply."[9] This is one of the reasons, says she, why the male image of woman has a tendency to split into two, into black and white, Virgin Mary and Scarlet Woman, angel of mercy and prostitute, gentle companion and intolerable bluestocking.[10]

Philip Roth's The Professor of Desire, Norman Mailer's An American Dream and Bernard Malamud's The Natural are selected for discussion in this chapter as they highlight the tendency in these writers to divide women into two categories--the temptress and the nurturer. However, it must be remembered

that, to a certain extent, this division between the good and the bad, whether it is in the case of women or men, cannot be avoided. It is a general human tendency, in men and women, and not something special in Jewish male writers alone. It has also been the feature of quite a number of novels written in America in the nineteenth century, notably those of Cooper, who divides his women characters into the fair and chaste heroine on the one hand, and the dark and voluptuous woman on the other hand. Even women writers, moreover, are guilty of this tendency, though they may give us complex and human portrayals of women more often than a great number of male writers can do.

Still, writers like Roth and Mailer, perhaps, cannot escape the charge of being misogynous or being male chauvinists as the destructive aspect of woman is more predominant in their works than the benign one. Woman as a temptress or an Eve, who deprives this Jewish-American Adam of his Paradise and destroys his chances for happiness in life, seems to be more powerful than woman as a Mary or a person who heals the hero of his wounds. However, the authors in question also use the devouring female as a kind of barometer that indicates the extent to which the male protagonist has withdrawn himself from the world and has become a prisoner of sex or his own ego. The self-destructive tendencies of the hero thus are reflected in this mirror-image.

"Every character of Roth's seems to be stuck with this obligation, to satisfy deep-seated but contrary needs at once; to grow up and to regress; to let go and to hold on; to be autonomous and dependent. Totalists that they are, they are unable to find and occupy a human middle ground on which self-reliance need not be isolation or love entrapment."[11] These remarks by Mark Shechner would serve to describe the character and predicament of David Alan Kepesh, the hero of The Professor of Desire. Right from his early days Kepesh is torn between two alternatives which to him seem equally fascinating and almost irreconcilable. This dichotomy in Kepesh's soul is also reflected in the characters of Helen and Claire, the two women who influence his life most.

Like Peter Tarnopol of My Life as a Man, David Kepesh is also a professor and student of literature. The story is narrated by Kepesh in the form of a first person narrative or autobiographical monologue, which has now become a common narrative technique with Roth since his Portnoy's Complaint. Though The Professor of Desire contains the familiar ingredients and characters that are found in Roth's earlier works, the mood and tone of this novel are much more tender and gentle than those of My Life as a Man, The Breast or Portnoy's Complaint. One reason for this change of tone lies in the person of David Kepesh, the narrator, who seems to be a much more understanding, loving and subdued person than

either Portnoy or Tarnopol are. Kepesh is most of the time aware of his weaknesses and failings though he can do little about them. He knows that most of his troubles are either due to the contradictions in his own nature or they are part of the human condition. Perhaps this awareness comes from Kepesh's studies in Anton Chekhov, who is also largely responsible for the change of mood and tone in this novel. Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr. obeserves that "kindness and humanity, a sense of the unexplainable mystery of life, a blend of comedy and pathos, a sympathy for the human condition and a hard-won understanding--these are the qualities, present sporadically in all of Roth's work, which are developed most fully through this voice."[12] The narrative voice in The Professor of Desire is imbued with the spirit and philosophy of Chekhov and can feel sympathy and compassion even for a character like Helen who plays the role of a femme fatale in Kepesh's life.

Kepesh's first childhood hero in Horbie Bratasky, a versatile mimic, who is bent on perfecting the sound of the fart with his mouth. "Temptation comes to me first," says Kepesh in the opening lines of the novel, "in the conspicuous personage of Herbie Bratasky, social director, bandleader, crooner, comic, and m.c. of my family's mountainside resort hotel."[13] Kepesh follows in the footsteps of his hero as he later on becomes a good mimic himself and acts in the college plays at Syracuse. One day, overcome with self-disgust at his

shallowness and vanity, Kepesh abandons the spotlight and applause of the stage and tries to mould himself into a sober, solitary and rather refined young man who is devoted to European literature and languages. About this sudden change in him, Kepesh humorously observes that "Well, I have my airs, and the power, apparently, to dramatize myself and my choices, but above all it is that I am an absolutist--a young absolutist--and know no way to shed a skin other than by inserting the scalpel and lacerating myself from end to end. I am one thing or I am the other. Thus, at twenty, do I set out to undo the contradictions and overleap the uncertainties."[14]

These contradictions, however, persist as can be seen when Kepesh acquires the reputation of being a seducer of girls in his college, though in actuality he has little success with them. His real success as a sexual prodigy comes to him when he goes to London as a Fulbright scholar. On his very first evening there he has the first whore of his life. The two sides of Kepesh's nature are highly evident in his relationship with the two Swedish girls with whom he gets acquainted during his stay in England. Elisabeth Elverskog is an innocent and sweet creature who falls in love with Kepesh and out of her love for him submits herself to his experiments in perverse sex. She does not care for these sexual gymnastics and they, in fact, make her feel desperate and dehumanized. As she later puts it in her imperfect English in her letter to Kepesh, "I was in love

with someone and what I did had nothing to do with love. It was like I no more was human being."[15] The other girl, Birgitta Svanstrom, on the other hand, is a tough and enterprising person and is a game for all sorts of sexual orgies. So here too Kepesh is faced with two equally tempting and yet--to him--equally unsatisfactory alternatives. "Yes, there is Elisabeth's unfathomable and wonderful love and there is Birgitta's unfathomable and wonderful daring, and whichever I want I can have. Now isn't that unfathomable! Either the furnace or the hearth!"[16] With Kepesh it must be either love or sex--perverse sex--but never the two of them together.

It is in connection with these Swedish girls, too, that Kepesh discovers that he is a poor judge of human nature and especially of what goes on in a woman's mind. He is all the time under the impression that Elisabeth is also enjoying their sexual adventures as he and Birgitta do. This belief of his is given a severe jolt when Elisabeth tries to kill herself under a truck. Though he rides on a high wave with Birgitta, he is conscious that in order to achieve his intellectual ambitions he will have to suppress the beast in him. One way--the only way he can think of--of suppressing this side of his nature is to give up Birgitta and all that she stands for in his mind. On their European tour, when Kepesh announces to Birgitta that he will be going back to America without her, contrary to his expectations, Birgitta walks off at the hour of midnight without offering an argument

or creating a scene. "In response, no tears, no anger, and no real scorn to speak of. Though not too much admiration for me as a shameless carnal force. She says from the door, 'Why did I like you so much? You are such a boy,' and that is all there is to the discussion of my character, all, apparently, that her dignity requires or permits."[17] Like most of his other protagonists, Kepesh is treated with comic irony by Roth,as is clear from the statement quoted above.

Leaving his exciting past behind him, Kepesh returns to America to resume his studies. When he is about to finish them and is also congratulating himself about the self-control he has exercised over himself in achieving his goal, he meets Helen Baird and realizes that the other side of his nature is as strong as ever. Helen possesses startling good looks and a capacity for sensual abandon. In addition, she is also intelligent and physically captivating. In spite of his serious doubts and fears Kepesh finds himself getting involved with Helen.

Helen Baird, who is endowed with a strongly romantic temperament, has a very exotic and adventurous past to her credit. At the age of eighteen, she had run away from home to Hong Kong with a journalist twice her age and since then had lived with one or the other of her Karenins--wealthy and elderly men, who offered her good time and jewelry, while they were married to another woman. According to Helen's version, she had to give up this beautiful life which she had lived for eight years,

because her very important and well-known lover, Jimmy Metcalf, had begun to talk about getting his wife killed in an accident. This had made Helen lose her nerve and return to America leaving behind her her fabulous existence in the East.

Though one side of Kepesh's nature is strongly attracted towards Helen, the other side is ever doubting and questioning whether Helen can be a fit partner for a man like him who is devoted to literature and is, moreover, meticulously observant about the requirements of daily living. To him Helen appears to be a vain and narcissistic person whose concept of life is limited to the notions of cheap screen romance. He also suspects that in her heart Helen is still faithful to her elderly lover and has turned to him only in the hope that he may serve as a barrier against the past, the loss of which had nearly killed her.

After three years of their affair and his indecision Kepesh finally marries Helen and, as expected, the marriage is soon on the rocks because of the deep temperamental differences that exist between the two partners. Apart from his predilection for sex Kepesh is very much of a Jewish intellectual. Helen turns out to be a poor housekeeper and a sad misfit for the daily business of living. None of them, moreover, can forget about her grandiose past and her former lover. In spite of their best intentions and efforts the

marriage becomes a torturous ordeal. "At our best we make resolutions," says Kepesh, "we make apologies, we make amends, we make love. But at our worst . . . well, our worst is just about as bad as anybody's, I would think."[18]

The final dissolution of this hopeless misalliance begins when in her desperation Helen runs away to Hong Kong without Kepesh's knowledge. Soon after this incident they are divorced and Kepesh leaves San Francisco and takes up a job at the State University of New York on Long Island. This experience leaves him in a bad shape and he has to take the help of Dr. Frederick Klinger, a psychoanalyst, so that he can put the marriage and the divorce behind him and keep himself afloat. It is not only Kepesh who suffers from the breakdown of the marriage, but Helen also becomes a victim of different ailments that ravage and mar her beauty. Both discover that if marriage and commitment are difficult, so are freedom and loneliness. In his misery and guilt, Kepesh keeps asking himself, "Instead of being enemies, of providing one another with the ideal enemy, why couldn't Helen and I have put that effort into satisfying each other, into steady, dedicated living? Would that have been so hard for two such strong-willed people?"[19] Kepesh also discovers that he is vulnerable to bad influences and temptations and is unable to do anything creative. It is not before he meets Claire Ovington that he can put an end to his pointless and purposeless existence.

Claire Ovington plays the role of a nurturer or a homemaker

in the novel. She heals Kepesh of the wounds that Helen had given him. "God, as tender within as without!' The tact! The calm! The wisdom! As physically alluring to me as Helen--but there the resemblance ends. Poise and confidence and determination, but, in Claire, all of it marshaled in behalf of something more than high sybaritic adventure."[20] Kepesh now gives up the anti-depressents and psychoanalysis and furnishes a new place of his own. He also turns again to his studies in Chekhov and starts working on a book that he had been planning to write for the past few years. Kepesh almost begins to believe that he has come through his ordeal and his miserable and lonely days are a thing of the past.

On their tour of Europe, which Kepesh and Claire undertake together, there are clear indications, however, that this happy new life is not going to last long. Though he tries to suppress them, the memories of Birgitta return as he visits with Claire the place where years ago he had come with Birgitta. He cannot get over his obsession with sex as is evident during his visit to Prague and the incidents that take place there. In his conversation with the Czech professor, Kepesh remarks "I sometimes wonder if The Castle isn't in fact linked to Kafka's own erotic blockage--a book engaged at every level with not reaching a climax."[21] The rock that covers Kafka's remains looks like a tombstone phallus to Kepesh. This preoccupation with sex is also obvious in the introductory lecture that Kepesh prepares for his class for comparative literature and also in his dream about Kafka's whore. These incidents clearly point

out that the other side of Kepesh's nature, though lying dormant for the time being, is as strong as ever.

After their return from Europe, Kepesh and Claire take a small house in the country to spend the remaining part of their vacation there. Kepesh tells us that by now the physical passion that had existed between him and Claire is clearly on the wane. And though he keeps telling himself that he would not regret its passing, he does take it to heart. Then comes the visit of Helen. Like Kepesh, Helen has also tried her best to rehabilitate herself and begin a new life by marrying a young and energetic man who loves her and who has saved her from her misery and ailments just as Claire had saved Kepesh from his. But this new life is an illusion as nothing has really changed in either Kepesh or Helen. They are as infantile and self-destructive as ever. It is remarkable how Kepesh and Helen are alike in their inability to relinquish their youthful dreams and come to terms with the realities of life. Whereas Kepesh cannot get over his longing for unrestrained and perverse sexual pleasures, Helen cannot give up her romantic illusions about life.

The visit of Helen and her confession about her being pregnant as well as being unable to love anybody perhaps affects Kepesh more than he is ready to admit to himself. Claire also has a surprise for him when she tells him that she was pregnant by him and had undergone an abortion without his knowledge. She did not want the child unless he was ready for it. Nor did she want him to feel responsible for the abortion.

That is why she had taken the step on her own. For Kepesh these confidences are only a revelation of the lacks and failures on his part. "On her own she decided to have that abortion. So I would not be burdened by a duty? So I could choose her just for herself? But is the notion of duty so utterly horrendous? Why didn't she tell me she was pregnant? Is there not a point on life's way when one yields to duty, welcomes duty as once one yielded to pleasure, to passion, to adventure--a time when duty is the pleasure, rather than pleasure the duty. . . ."[22] But obviously in the case of Kepesh this stage of growth or maturity does not seem possible. By the time his father visits him, the disintegration of Kepesh's personality is all the more apparent and the novel ends on the note of an impending disaster without exactly telling us what it is going to be.

In fact, the actual picture of happiness that is presented at the end of the novel is sharply in contrast with Kepesh's forebodings of a catastrophe. His father and Mr. Barbatnik, the old man's companion, are enjoying the day they spend in the company of a person like Claire, who has done everything in her power to make them happy. Claire herself looks a picture of happiness and beauty. If there is a snake of doubt in this happy Paradise it is in the heart of Kepesh. Perhaps Kepesh wants to suggest that no perfect happiness lasts long on this earth as is evident from the manner in which he sums up the events of the day in what he calls a simple Chekhov story. But Kepesh's fate--as he himself admits--is more like that of a

character in Gogol's stories than that of Chekhov's. In the last pages of the novel Kepesh is already crying over his waning passion for Claire: "Already it is dying and I am afraid that there is nothing I can do to save it. . . . Toward the flesh upon which I have been grafted and nurtured back toward something like mastery over my life, I will be without desire. Oh, it's stupid! Idiotic! Unfair! To be robbed like this of you! And of this life I love and have hardly gotten to know! And robbed by whom? It always comes down to myself!"[23] Unlike most of the other Roth protagonists, Kepesh at least seems to recognize that there is something in him that is hostile to his own happiness and well-being though he can do little about it. His inability to reconcile or accept the contradictions and conflicts within him makes him go from one extreme to another without being satisfied with either. There is certainly something fractured or infantile in Kepesh's mental make-up which does not allow him to grasp his happiness even when it comes a-begging to him.

The Breast appears like a sequel to The Professor of Desire though it was published much earlier than the latter work. Since both the works have the same hero, David Alan Kepesh, one cannot help linking the two together. The fears and forebodings that Kepesh had felt at the end of The Professor of Desire take on a nightmarish reality in The Breast where he is transformed into a man-sized female breast. This metamorphosis seems to be the consequence of the unresolved conflict between

the sexual and the intellectual sides of Kepesh. The Breast, in short, presents in a nutshell the dilemma which almost every Roth protagonist faces and is unable to resolve, that is, how to reconcile the physical with the intellectual in his nature.

In My Life as a Man woman and the divorce laws of the State of New York join their forces to victimize man. The laws are so rigid and punitive that they come to appear to Tarnopol as the very codification of Maureen's morality and the work of her hand. In An American Dream, too, the woman, the female, represents the fearful social power against which man must defend himself, if he is to preserve his separate identity. Deborah Kelly, therefore, assumes the symbolical significance of the destructiveness of the modern society which is hostile to the free growth of the individual. When Stephen Richards Rojack strangles Deborah to death he not only gets rid of a bitchy wife but, as it were, also divorces himself from society and sets out on the uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self. An American Dream is one more instance of the intellectual's flight from social reality into the dream world of his own or, in other words, his attempt to control reality with the help of abstract thought. The following observation made by Caudwell regarding G.B. Shaw can as well be applied to Mailer and his An American Dream: "This is a familiar spectacle: the intellectual attempting to dominate hostile reality by 'pure' thought. It is a human

weakness to believe that by retiring into his imagination man can elicit categories or magical spells which will enable him to subjugate reality contemplatively."[24]

Deborah Kelly belongs to the famous legion of bitch goddesses of American literature. Like Madeleine Herzog or Sophie Portnoy, Deborah has become a well-known figure, and like them, too, she remains an image filtered through the consciousness of the male protagonist, who, in this instance, is a psychopath. One really does not know much about Deborah. In fact even for Rojack she seems to remain a mystery, and most of his frustration results from his inability to understand or control her.

The reader is not invited to sympathise with Deborah. She is portrayed as an exceptionally domineering and castrating woman, with no other apparent motive than that of making her husband's life miserable for him. "Now it is just as useless," says Joanna Russ, "to ask why the Bitch Goddess (e.g. Deborah Rojack) is so bitchy as it is to ask why the Noble Savage is so noble. Neither 'person' really exists."[25] She further points out that if one looks for reasons to explain the conduct of the Bitch Goddess, one will not find them; there is no explanation in terms of human motivation or the woman's own inner life; she simply behaves the way she does because she is a bitch.[26] However, in spite of Rojack's assessment of Deborah's character, which is not only partial but also highly prejudiced, Deborah emerges as an interesting figure, perhaps more interesting than the hero himself.

Deborah is not a pathetic, frightened proletariat like Maureen Tarnopol of My Life as a Man, but has the poise and elegance of an aristocrat. She is shrewd, too, and knows how to play upon the feelings of her husband. Most of Tarnopol's frustration results from Maureen's refusal to let go her hold over him, whereas Deborah retains her hold over her husband, by like Madeleine Herzog, walking out on him. Separated from her and yet tied to her by his habit, Rojack reaches the dead end of his career, unable to concentrate on or do anything successfully. Financially also Deborah and Maureen are a severe burden on their husbands. Rojack keeps running into debts on account of Deborah.

The marriage between Rojack and Deborah is empty and barren. "Now, cohabiting with Deborah was like sitting to dinner in an empty castle with no more for host than a butler and his curse."[27] One of the greatest faults of Deborah according to Rojack is her inability to bear any children to him. So much is made of the sterility of the relations between Rojack and Deborah that one almost forgets that Deborah, after all, is not a barren woman, but the mother of a daughter, Deirdre, the issue of the incestuous relationship between herself and her father, Barney Oswald Kelly. Her sterility in relation to Rojack, however, assumes a symbolical significance in the novel as it denotes the lack of love between the two partners.

Marriage between Rojack and Deborah is not only empty and barren but has also turned into a bloody war--a battle between

the sexes. Bellow, Roth and Mailer use marriage as a battle-ground where the opponents try out their strength and the males, in most cases, fight a losing battle. Mailer uses the war metaphor in order to describe the relations between Rojack and Deborah:

> We had been married most intimately and often most unhappily for eight years, and for the last five I had been trying to evacuate my expeditionary army, that force of hopes, all-out need, plain virile desire and commitment which I had spent on her. It was a losing war, and I wanted to withdraw, count my dead, and look for love in another land, but she was a great bitch, Deborah, a lioness of the species: unconditional surrender was her only raw meat.[28]

Deborah is, besides, too good at making strategic moves in this war and Rojack never knows what her next move would be, she is so unpredictable. Rojack, moreover, informs the reader that she is an artist with the needle and never pinks you twice on the same spot unless it has turned to ulcer. Like Lucy Nelson of When She Was Good, who is too much for poor Roy Bassart, Deborah also is too powerful a woman for Rojack to control. Deborah has done everything in her power to undermine the confidence of her husband and question his manliness. She, especially, like Lucy, loves to explode the myth of Rojack's heroism, and that too, not without a sense of humour either:

> 'God, you're a whimperer,' said Deborah. 'Sometimes I lie here and wonder how you ever became a hero. You're such a bloody whimperer. I suppose the Germans were whimpering even worse than you. It must have been quite a sight. You whimpering and they whimpering, and you going pop pop pop with your little gun.'[29]

That Deborah is a mother-figure, and especially "the terrible mother," can easily be seen from her regular association or identification with wily animals and ferocious beasts. One interesting feature of An American Dream is its mystique of odours which defines either the mood or the nature of a character. Unpleasant smells emanate from Deborah and after her death, the representatives of the corrupt social forces give out odours which remind Rojack of her, thus underlining their identity with her. Deborah sometimes has the smell of the wild boar full of rut. And when she is angry, "A powerful odor of rot and musk and something much more violent came from her. It was like the scent of the carnivore in a zoo. This last odor was fearful--it had the breath of burning rubber."[30] Deborah is, at different times, a bull, a carnivore, a snake, a bitch, a lioness of her species, in short, a violent, bullying and devouring female who has gotten her hooks into her husband and demands nothing less than complete surrender from him. As in the case of Peter Tarnopol and Maureen, the battle between Rojack and Deborah seems to have reached the extreme pitch and both writers resort to the same solution, that of doing away with the undesirable woman.

It is remarkable that though Deborah dies in the first chapter of the novel, she leaves a lasting impression on the reader. Even after her death, like Maureen, she exerts an influence on the life of her husband. Though Rojack seems to be free from any feeling of regret for his act of murder, he

cannot easily escape the repercussions of his action. The evil forces, of which Deborah is considered to be a representative, pursue Rojack, like the Furies, throughout the novel, beginning with the cops, the television and university authorities and culminating in his crucial encounter with Deborah's father, Barney Oswald Kelly, supposed to be the incarnation of the Devil. Deborah in this sense continues to haunt Rojack and dominate the action of the novel.

Then there is Deborah's secret life of which Rojack knows nothing. Even though he gets a few glimpses of it after her death, they only serve to deepen his sense of the mystery to which there seems to be no solution. Just as Roy Hobbs finds Memo Paris too complicated for him to comprehend her, Deborah, whether alive or dead, remains a kind of enigma to Rojack. And here perhaps lies the source of irritation against the woman--this sheer inability on the part of the male to penetrate her heart or life, which does not yield itself to simple formula. Herzog muses, "Will never understand what women want. What do they want? They eat green salad and drink human blood."[31] Rojack, too, feels equally baffled, "before the straight-out complexity of this, the simple incalculable difficulty of ever knowing what is true with an interesting woman, I was lost."[32] After Deborah's death, Rojack spends a considerable time unravelling the mystery about her. In this way, too, Deborah continues to dominate the action of the novel.

Despite Rojack's unsympathetic and unfavourable portrayal

of Deborah, a few glimpses of her, here and there, make one feel that Deborah possesses a better self-knowledge than Rojack will ever be capable of. And she is without self-delusion and self-pity. She knows she is evil and hates the fact. She knows she has fallen from grace and yearns for it. Once she remarks to Rojack,

> "I know that I am more good and more evil than anyone alive, but which was I born with, and what came into me?"
>
> "You shift allegiance from day to day."
>
> "No. I just pretend to." She smiled. "I'm evil if truth be told. But I despise it, truly I do. It's just that evil has power."[33]

The evil in Deborah seems to be more a matter of her birth than her choice, as Helen Weinberg points out, "Deborah . . . is doomed involuntarily by the fact of her birth; and she did, in her life, struggle against the demonic in herself, although she lost the battle."[34] Kelly, Deborah's father, admits to Rojack that he had damned Deborah even before her birth, as she was the issue born out of the hatred rather than love between him and his wife. Not only had he damned her even before she began, he had also seduced her when she was fifteen. In fact, Rojack is drawn more in the tradition of the American Adam and Deborah is assigned the role of an Eve fallen from grace. Deirdre, Deborah's daughter, says to Rojack, "Mummy told me once that you were a young soul and she was an old one. There was the trouble."[35] Though there are touches like these, they are too few and too rare to counteract the unfavourable portrayal

of Deborah and redeem her character in the eyes of the reader.

Having lost her soul to the Devil, Deborah turns to society and politics and assumes an insidious power in them. She has her father's money and prestige to back her in all sorts of enterprises. She dabbles in spying, too, and becomes a constant source of embarrassment for her father, so much so that Kelly has to part with his mistress, Ruta, so that she can keep an eye on his daughter's activities. Deborah has become uncontrollable not only for Rojack but also for her father and Rojack perhaps does a favour to Kelly when he kills Deborah.

Besides Deborah there are the other two women in the novel. Though Rojack, like Herzog or Tarnopol, is a failure with his bitchy wife, like them, he is a smashing success with other women. Ruta is like an extension of Deborah and she appears to exist in the novel only to be buggered by Rojack. She is portrayed as the consort of the Devil, Barney Kelly. The relations between Rojack and Ruta are described as the Devil's, sexuality, hatred and sterility being their characteristics.

Cherry is another woman Rojack meets in the aftermath of his wife's murder. Though she comes from a corrupt background with an unpleasant and unpalatable past, like Iris Lemon of The Natural, Cherry is the "good" woman in the novel. Like Iris Lemon she has some ugly physical characteristics about her, notably her behind and her bad toes which represent the corruption of her body and also add a human touch to her otherwise angelic and innocent appearance. Cherry also serves

as a kind of foil for Deborah. Her role in the novel, like that of Claire Ovington in The Professor of Desire or Iris Lemon in The Natural, is that of a nurturer or a life-giving mother, who heals the wounds of the hero that bitch goddesses or terrible mothers like Helen, Memo Paris or Deborah, have inflicted on him.

The relationship between Rojack and Cherry raises high hopes and that is why, perhaps, Rojack's failure with regard to Cherry is all the more conspicuous. The murder of Deborah and the buggering of Ruta can be explained away by treating the two women as symbols of evil forces. But one expects a better fate for Cherry, the blonde singer, who is presented by Mailer as a corrupted innocent. Like Deborah and Ruta, Cherry, too, has had truck with the Devil or Barney Oswald Kelly and has known evil intimately, but she has managed to preserve her innocence in the midst of her corruption.

Like Deborah, Cherry too has a symbolical role in the novel. If Deborah, as has already been pointed out, represents the hostile society destructive to an individual's growth, Cherry stands for "nature" as well as "American South." She is the vestige of the role woman used to play in fiction, that of nature, before she came to be identified with society. Cherry also stands for the value of love in the novel. The theme of courage and its relation to love is developed at length in the novel. As Rojack climbs the stairs of Cherry's apartment, he is warned by the stench of slum plumbing that he must not fail at love. "Fail here at love," said the odor, "and you get closer

to subsisting like me."[36] Again, while on his second visit to Cherry, Rojack assures the reader that "now I understood that love was not a gift but a vow. Only the brave could live with it for more than a little while."[37] And a little later he goes on in the same strain, "It had always been the same, love was love, one could find it with anyone, one could find it anywhere. It was just that you could never keep it. Not unless you were ready to die for it, dear friend."[38] These words prove to be prophetic in the light of the later events of the novel. It is not in Rojack to die for anyone. His bravery and courage are at the service of his own self only. Though much is made of the fertility of his relations with Cherry, beyond giving momentary sexual satisfaction to him or proving his "manliness" to himself, it amounts to nothing as Rojack fails miserably to save Cherry by walking the parapet a second time and so betrays his love. Like the other nurturers mentioned, Cherry is betrayed and hurt by the man she loves. Women like Cherry, Iris Lemon, or Claire Ovington, though they are good women, fare no better than the evil ones.

Whatever glimmer of hope there is in the novel dies with the death of Cherry. Rojack is a representative of modern man in so far as he is not only alienated from "society" of which he is an unwilling member but also from "nature" to which he longs to return. Divorced from society and nature, he leads a futile and barren existence, vainly trying to take shelter in "self" and/or "sex". Cherry's death also signals the disappearance of love from the life of Rojack. The hero's inability

to love in a courageous manner takes away much from his ability to survive in a hostile environment. What Rojack will accomplish without society or nature or the value of love is hard to guess. There seem to be very few possibilities left for him. He can either be an ascetic or a homosexual hunter or fighter like D.J. of Why Are We in Vietnam? or he can return to that beastly existence, that Barbary Shore, based merely on self-preservation and animal instincts. Mailer wants us to return to the primitive in us, but that too seems to be a very unattractive proposition. Many people will choose the present civilization and society with all their evils rather than escaping from their challenges into a beastly and primitive existence.

Ever since James M. Mellard in his "Four Versions of Pastoral" drew attention to the Grail quest motif in The Natural, it has become commonplace to look upon Roy Hobbs as a modern Sir Percival in quest of the major league pennant, a latter day grail, and Memo Paris as Morgan Le Fay who tempts the hero away from his quest.[39] Memo Paris, in turn, has been compared to different mythic figures, especially temptresses like Eve, Circe, Niniane or Vivan. According to Robert Ducharme, "The name of the femme fatale Memo Paris warns every man (though Roy misses the warning and he needs most to heed it) to remember the fatal weakness of Paris, who abducted Helen and precipitated the Trojan War and his own death."[40] In Earl R. Wasserman's opinion

Memo carries in her name the memory of the infant's nursing.[41] Seen from this viewpoint Memo Paris becomes the "terrible mother." And, of course, like Daisy Fay of The Great Gatsby, Memo Paris is also the representative of the famous host of bitch goddesses now become common in American literature.

Another woman who plays the role of femme fatale in The Natural and who foreshadows Memo Paris--perhaps it could even be said she is the same woman in another guise--is Harriet Bird. Roy's ambition to be the hero, to be "the best there ever was"[42] in baseball, is frustrated on account of these two destructive temptresses. Of these two, Roy Hobbs meets Harriet Bird on the train on his way to Chicago for a try-out when he is nineteen. Harriet Bird, "the silver-eyed mermaid,"[43] is a neurotic who is out to kill heroes. Like Memo Paris, she is dressed in black, the symbol of death. When Roy strikes out the Whammer, the reigning champion, he marks himself out as the victim of Harriet Bird.

Although Harriet is often identified with Memo Paris because of her destructive role in the life of the hero, she also has a close resemblance to Iris Lemon, the Lady of the Lake. Like Iris Lemon, Harriet is concerned with the ideals and values in life and it is perhaps the lack of values in Roy that brings out the worst in Harriet. Critics like Earl R. Wasserman have pointed out how Roy's infantilism, his self-centredness, his lack of concern for others make him vulnerable to the destructive tendencies in Harriet Bird first and Memo Paris later on.[44]

Though Roy Hobbs is a baseball hero, intellectually or spiritually he is no match for Malamud's other heroes. Roy's attraction for Harriet is mere appetite and he is no more able to understand her than he is able to understand Memo Paris.

When Harriet asks Roy what he will accomplish in his life, Roy replies that he wants to be "the best there ever was in the game."[45] Harriet, not satisfied with the answer, asks him if that is all. Roy's answer betrays, again, that he has no values outside of the baseball myth. To his mind, baseball is only a means of getting earthly rewards like fame, fortune and females. Harriet tries to remind Roy of the importance of values in human life, "Isn't there something over and above earthly things--some more glorious meaning to one's life and activities?"[46] she asks Roy. Though he is touched by the sad expression in her eyes and feels "a curious tenderness for her, a little as if she might be his mother"[47], Roy cannot think of an answer that would satisfy her. Instead, he makes an infantile gesture by tweaking Harriet's nipple which sends her screaming down the aisle. Roy's inability to rise above his own ego and his lust for her arouse the destructive tendencies in Harriet. As Wasserman points out, with Roy's blindness to the communal and reproductive purpose of his vitality, Harriet becomes what Jung has called the "terrible mother."[48]

Alone in Chicago and sick for home, Roy is called to Harriet's hotel room. There again Roy pronounces his determination to be the best there ever was in the game and Harriet, who has already

shot down two other athletes, makes Roy her third victim by sending a silver bullet into Roy's guts. Harriet's response to her own deed is quite ambiguous as she dances about the stricken hero making noises of triumph as well as despair.

Shorn of her mythical trappings, Harriet is merely a destructive neurotic bent on killing men, especially heroes. The ambiguity regarding Harriet's motives and characters is accentuated by the fact that she is not given the inner consciousness by her creator. She, therefore, remains a remote and mysterious figure. Instead of coming into the game at the age of nineteen, thanks to Harriet, Roy has to knock about for fifteen more years before he can make his entry into major league. And when it appears that Roy's hopes to be a champion, his hopes to get the pennant for his team, the New York Knights, and Pop Fisher, their manager, are about to be realized, he falls into the trap of another destructive woman and repeats the same old story--defeat in sight of the goal. In the structure of the novel, therefore, the early section Pre-game is the part of the past which Roy is trying to escape and which he is condemned to repeat because he refuses to learn the lessons it has to teach.

Memo Paris is the niece of Pop Fisher, the manager of the Knights. Memo, however, does not feel any affection or loyalty for her uncle, who has supported her ever since her mother's death. From what she tells Roy about her life it is evident that she has had an unhappy childhood ever since her father walked out on her mother and herself. The only bright spot of

her life, she feels, is her love for Bump Baily, the leading ball player of the Knights. Bump, however, is a selfish and self-centred man and he does not care much for Memo. As he loves to play pranks on people around him, Bump, out of mischief, asks Roy to spend a night in his room and Memo, not knowing that a stranger has taken Bump's place, enters the room. It is significant that before Memo's entry Roy is thinking of "the crazy Harriet (less and more than human) with the shiny pistol, and him, cut down in the very flower of his youth, lying in a red pool of his own blood."[49] When Memo gets into bed with him, he almost cries out in pain as her icy hands and feet, in immediate embrace, slash his body just as Harriet had slashed it with her silver bullet some fifteen years back. This incident establishes that Memo is going to play the same role as Harriet had in Roy's life.

This caprice of circumstance brings Roy and Memo together for the first time and makes Roy a slave to Memo's seductive charms. He is irresistibly drawn by Memo's red hair, green eyes and her beautiful body. Roy's relationship to Memo is based on mere physical attraction. Memo, in turn, hates Roy since their night together and her hatred turns even stronger after Bump's death. In her mind she holds Roy responsible for Bump's death and resents his success with the bat. Though she is portrayed as evil and destructive, Memo Paris, like Malamud's other heroines, is a very unhappy and dissatisfied woman. Though her brief for Bump is excessive, it is at the

same time intense and genuine. She mourns for Bump endlessly and what hurts her most is Bump's disloyalty, "and here she was herself, a little girl weeping, as if nothing ever changed. . . . The heartbreak was always present--he had not been truly hers when he died (she tried not to think whose, in many cities, he had been) so that she now mourned someone who even before his death had made her a mourner. That was the thorn in her grief."[50] Father-abandoned, introverted and regressive, Memo, dressed most of the time in black, represents death. "I'm strictly," she says to Roy, "a dead man's girl."[51]

Blinded by a selfish passion for a woman who hates him, Roy fails to see the similarity between Memo Paris and Harriet Bird. He persuades himself that she is the only one for him, the ever desirable and there is nothing for him to do except wait for her to overcome her grief for Bump. He considers his attraction for her more as a matter of fate than of choice. With Memo, he argues with himself, "flaming above and dark below, there was no choice--he was chosen so why not admit it though it brought pain?"[52] Memo is a hard person to win and the more unattainable she is, the more irresistible she becomes to Roy. He knows her body and longs to possess it again, though her mind always remains a mystery to him. He cannot overcome his lust for her, at the same time his inability to understand her mind irritates him. "He thought about what she had said on the bridge about never being happy again and wondered what it meant. In a way he was tired of her--she was too complicated--but in a different way he desired her more than ever."[53]

It is in connection with Memo that Roy first thinks of approaching Judge Goodwill Banner, the Knights' owner, and asking him for a raise in his salary. He instinctively feels that a woman like Memo will not be won unless he can give her a good time at the nightclubs and musical shows. Also, to buy her some decent presents he must first have cash. The connection between money and Memo is underlined by the phrase, "his mind skipped from money to Memo."[54] It is ironical that the Judge, an evil person who ultimately corrupts Roy, should warn him that emphasis upon money would pervert his values.

In the words of Frederick W. Turner, III, "In The Natural the pressure of reality is represented by the unholy alliance of Judge Goodwill Banner, the Knights' owner; Gus Sands, the Supreme Bookie; and Memo Paris, Roy's love."[55] Memo Paris, since the death of her hero, Bump Baily, has lost her faith in love as well as in the baseball myth, and she has now aligned herself to the corrupt forces that the Judge and Gus represent. Disappointed in love and afraid to be poor, Memo turns her attention to wealth and power. Her interest in money and fame is blatantly apparent when, after having spurned Roy for a long time, she consents to go with him for a ride in his new car that he gets from his fans on his Day.

Roy's car ride with Memo is highly significant. The place to which Roy and Memo go on their ride contains poisoned or polluted water. The nature of the water clearly indicates that Memo, destructive and regressive, is not the nourishing

life mother, but the "terrible mother" who undermines the strength of the hero. Memo's sick breast stands as a symbol of the lack of love in her. The incident where Roy has the illusion of Memo running over the boy and his dog is likewise an image of the destruction wrought by Memo on Roy's moral innocence and his psychic energy. Pop Fisher warns Roy that Memo is unlucky and carries her ill luck to other people. "She was my sister's girl," says he, "and I do love her, but she is always dissatisfied and will snarl you up in her trouble in a way that will weaken your strength if you don't watch out."[56] His words prove prophetic when, the day after the ride with Memo, Roy's slump begins and Memo, again, gives a cold shoulder to him. Memo, like Roy, runs after pleasure and tries to avoid the pain and suffering that are inevitable in life.

In An American Dream there is Cherry, the corrupted innocent, to counterbalance the bitch goddess, Deborah Kelly. Similarly in The Natural there is Iris Lemon, who heals the wounds of the hero given to him by destructive women like Memo Paris or Harriet Bird. At the same time, Iris is only a benign aspect of the same mother figure--the nurturing mother--while the other two represent her terrible aspect. Edwin M. Eigner observes that "the gentle and helpful Lady of the Lake is only one of the forms assumed by the shape-shifting Fairy Queen. Another of her identities is that of the wicked temptress Niniane, or Vivian. In the first aspect the queen nurses her orphan knight and heals him when he is wounded; in the other guise she seems

bent on luring him to his destruction."[57] Eigner also traces the origin of Iris Lemon in the Loathly Lady of Chaucer, Gower, and many anonymous writers from Iceland, Scotland, and Ireland.[58] Seen in this light the choice of the right lady becomes a moral choice for the hero and his success or failure in life depends on this vital decision.

Iris Lemon comes into Roy's life when he has reached the lowest ebb of his slump. Her presence in the stands revives Roy's confidence in himself and restores the power of his bat, Wonderboy. She also helps Roy to save the life of a child by breaking his slump. Roy goes on a car ride with Iris, too, and this time they go to Michigan lake. But the waters here are the waters of life, not those of death as was the case with Memo Paris. Roy is eager to know why she had stood up in the stands for him. In answer Iris says she hates to see a hero fail because "Without heroes we're all plain people and don't know how far we can go."[59] Her definition of a hero, however, is different from Roy's. While for Roy the hero stands for personal glory, for Iris he represents the possibilities of life and has a vital role to play in the society. She thinks it is the responsibility of the hero, as a man, to give his best to his people.

"In the novel's thematic context, Memo Paris represents the allure of the flesh, sex without love, a lustful and irresponsible relationship. Iris Lemon, the lady of the lake, as both mother and grandmother, represents love with

responsibility."[60] Iris, besides, is the woman who has suffered and who, like Morris Bober of The Assistant, has given a moral base to suffering which is inevitable in human life. As a young girl Iris had lost her virginity to a man with whom she had gone for a walk in the park. As a result she became a virgin mother when she was hardly sixteen. Instead of running away from her past, as Roy had done, Iris assumed the responsibility for her daughter and in doing so she found her peace and happiness. The same spirit of self-sacrifice makes her stand up for Roy and give up her privacy among the people in the stands. Though she feels embarrassed, she keeps standing because she does not think "you can do anything for anyone without giving up something of your own."[61]

When Roy wonders why he had to suffer so much, Iris replies that experience makes good people better. "We have two lives, Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live with after that. Suffering is what brings us toward happiness."[62] Besides, she says, suffering teaches us to want the right things. However, in Roy's case, all that suffering has taught him is to stay away from it. Instead of facing his ugly and unhappy past, as Iris has done, and accepting the responsibility for it, Roy tries to evade it. It is only at the end of the novel that Roy realizes his mistake, "I never did learn anything out of my past life, now I have to suffer again."[63] In Malamud's world, those who do not remember their past are condemned to repeat it.

Iris Lemon's resemblance to Loathly Lady is already

mentioned. Even in appearance she is a good foil to Memo Paris. Whereas Memo is green-eyed, red-headed, black-dressed and slim, Iris is brown-eyed, dark-haired, red-dressed and heavy. Like Martha Reganhart of Letting Go, Iris is a big woman and Roy, like Gabe Wallach, prefers small and slim girls. However, what makes Iris most ugly in the eyes of Roy is the fact of her being a grandmother. The thought spoils his appetite for her. Moreover, accepting Iris would mean accepting the role and the responsibility of a father and/a grandfather. And Roy Hobbs, being a self-centred person, is reluctant to accept a burden of any kind.

Roy Hobbs, like Rojack of An American Dream, fails to protect the woman who loves him. In pursuing the fatal beauty of Memo and in rejecting the woman who saves him in his dire need, he opts for sex rather than love. When Iris asks him once why he picks up women who hurt him, he says that it is rather they that pick him and one cannot say no to such women. Levin, Frank Alpine and Yakov Bok--Malamud's other heroes--find it necessary to discipline themselves as far as love is concerned, but Roy never learns to rise above his lust and therefore he is more vulnerable to bitchy and destructive women.

Rejecting Iris, Roy turns again to his fatal love, Memo Paris. The night before their crucial game, Memo, carrying in her name the memory of the infant's nursing, plans to corrupt Roy and wreck the Knights' quest for the pennant. With Gus's money she arranges a Circean feast for Roy and his team. Food,

she says, is a woman's work. She even agrees to sleep with Roy that night. Roy's greedy devouring of the food gives him enormous belly-ache. As he sinks in delirious pain, Roy has a fleeting glimpse of Memo as she really is and what she has done to him. He sees her as a "singing greeneyed siren"[64] and then finds himself being sucked down in a whirlpool of dirty water--the polluted water of maternal death--in a nearby toilet. The belly-ache not only makes Roy physically weak but also leaves him vulnerable to moral corruption.

Faced with a bleak future and feeling washed out, Roy's morale is at its lowest during his illness. Memo works upon Roy's weak condition and first impresses on him that if he wants to marry her, he ought to have sufficient money to provide her/the with good things of life. Then she suggests that he accept the bribe offered to him by the Judge and Gus by selling himself out to them. Though Roy is self-centred and oblivious to altruistic good, it remains doubtful whether he would have been prepared to acquire money by unfair means, had it not been for Memo and the hope of getting her. Roy thus falls victim to the lucre of wealth and the seductive charms of a woman who hates him. For her sake, he sells the dream of his life which had sustained him through all the trials and tribulations. In the final and crucial game, he strikes and hurts Iris Lemon, the woman who has stood by him in the hour of his trial, and finally strikes himself out. The hero, who could have been a king, is left at the end of the novel like an unredeemed bum on the street.

In the end when Roy visits the Tower he sees Memo as she really is. It is clear that she has never had any intentions of marrying Roy. She is more loyal and devoted to Gus, who is a kind of father-figure to her, and she even tells Roy that Gus is worth a million of Roy's kind. When Roy strikes Gus, Memo runs at him and tries to scratch Roy's eyes out. Failing to do that she lifts the bookie's head on her lap and makes mothering noises over him. Like Harriet, she also attempts to shoot at Roy with the Judge's pistol and finally, when she does not have the guts to kill Roy, she tries to take her own life. The last sight of her shows her sobbing hysterically. This unhappy woman succeeds in destroying Roy's dream of life to be the hero, the king in the game of baseball. She, like an Eve, tempts Roy Hobbs from the myth of baseball into the sordid world of reality.

Philip Roth's The Professor of Desire, Norman Mailer's An American Dream and Bernard Malamud's The Natural are grouped together in this chapter as they serve to underline the tendency on the part of these authors to divide women into two categories, with particular emphasis on woman as a destructive force in man's life. No doubt, this will be taken as a clear proof of their ambivalence towards women as well as their patriarchal bias against her. We are told that the story of the Fall and the role Eve played in man's fall from grace and Paradise is deeply rooted in the Jewish as also in the Puritan mind.

Therefore, the theme of woman as the source of man's all troubles is likely to recur in one form or another, in the writers who are brought up in the patriarchal tradition. The novels mentioned above seem to follow the pattern of the Adamic myth as they unfold how, either with her physical charms or her cunning the femme fatale traps the male protagonist in her clutches and then tries to dominate and destroy him. She makes it impossible for him to live in his dream-world or happy myth of himself as a hero and thus having dislodged him from his paradise forces him to live in the sordid world of reality. Helen Baird, Deborah Kelly and Memo Paris are the notable instances of femme fatale.

However, there is also another dimension to this story which considers the fall of Adam as necessary and beneficial. In order to grow up or become mature, man has to lose his paradise of happy adolescence. And in this respect most of the male characters in the novels under consideration are miserable failures. They flee from the complex historical social world which might help them to mature. R.W.B. Lewis in The American Adam offers two possible and yet opposite explanations for the endurance of the hero as Adam in American literature. In the first place, "We may suppose that there has been a kind of resistance in America to the painful process of growing up, something mirrored and perhaps buttressed by our writers, expressing itself in repeated efforts to revert to a lost childhood and a vanished Eden, and issuing repeatedly in a series of outcries at the freshly discovered capacity of the

world to injure." On the other hand, says he, "when the narrative account of the hero as Adam is lit by the author's awareness of the American habit of resistance to maturity, then the continuing life both of the hero and of his story are evidence rather of cultural manhood."[65] That Malamud belongs to the second category few will question. In novel after novel, he puts his protagonists to test by exposing them to intense suffering, which is a kind of education in self-discipline and responsibility that helps them, in turn, to grow and mature. Roth, on his part, has always insisted that writers and their fictional characters face the world as it is, and though his and Mailer's men mostly fail to grow up or come to terms with the world, in a way, it is an indirect reflection on the tendencies in American culture which lead to infantilism and self-centredness in people.

Seen in the above perspective the role of Eve assumes a different significance as she is the one who provides the necessary shock and suffering, in short the experience, through which maturity and identity may be realized. And one then understands why she appears all the more destructive in her relation with the kind of hero we are concerned with, who refuses to come out of the cocoon of his self and face the complex forces working around him that may help him in his growth. The end of The Professor of Desire shows David Kepesh pressing and tugging Claire's nipples--an infantile gesture. And in The Breast this process of regression is completed as we see Kepesh transformed into a female breast. After Maureen,

the fearsome wife in My Life as a Man, is dead, Tarnopol loses no time in returning to the routine of his school days. Rojack, under the illusion of an authentic self, flies from the challenges of society to the jungles of Guatemala and Yucatan. Roy Hobbs, too, resists the process of growth throughout the novel, though he seems to be on the verge of it as he realizes and repents for his past mistakes at the end of The Natural.

This resistance, on the part of the hero, to growth also explains the presence of mother-figures--especially "terrible mother"--and his dependence as well as his hostility to them. As Erich Fromm observes, "Eventually, the mature person has come to the point where he is his own mother and his own father. . . . The mature person has become free from the outside mother and father figures, and has built them up inside. In contrast to Freud's concept of the super-ego, however, he has built them inside not by incorporating mother and father, but by building a motherly conscience on his own capacity for love, and a fatherly conscience on his reason and judgement."[66] Only a few male figures, like Paul Herz, Frank Alpine, Levin or Yakov Bok for instance, live up to this description. The majority of other protagonists fail miserably in this respect.

As said earlier, the symbiotic relationship between the son and mother--particularly Jewish mother--is often held responsible for the inability on the part of most of the male characters in the novels under discussion either to grow up or establish permanent relationships with women. But the bond

between mother and her child is not something special about the Jews or the Americans alone; it is a common phenomenon all over the world. And as the drive and energy of Jewish women did not appear so destructive in the European environment as they do in America, there must be something in American culture, besides "mother-child relationship," which encourages infantilism and self-centredness in people. The cult of individualism with its motto of every man for himself seems to have made deep inroads into the Jewish family structure and made the Jewish mother an easy target for attack. It has also affected the other relationships as individuals are reluctant to take responsibility or commit themselves to another person. In addition, the current preoccupation with sex has also encouraged fleeting connections rather than enduring ties between men and women.

Kepesh, Rojack and Roy Hobbs, when they are offered a choice between sex and love, opt for sex without love. Women who possess power and glamour and who, moreover, are regressive and self-centred like them hold more appeal for them than women who offer them love and understanding. The presence of the good women in the novels under consideration, and the unfair treatment that is meted out to them by the hero, underline how he is not merely a victim of the devouring female but is also a victimizer himself. He is largely responsible for his own predicament. He is, invariably, given a choice between the temptresses and their counterparts, the nurturers, and still through some flaw or weakness in his character he is drawn to the first type. He

often hurts the women who serve him in his needs and who try to heal the wounds that the bitches have given him. While the bitches are the harsh aspect of reality, the nurturers represent a benign aspect of reality and, above all, they also stand for certain values that make life worthwhile. However, only a mature hero who is able to rise above his ego and fulfil his obligations to human community can accept these women. The selfish and infantile heroes, on the other hand, become the victims of the destructive bitches.

Notes

[1] Philip Roth, epigraph to Portnoy's Complaint (1967; rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1970)

[2] Page Smith, Daughters of the Promised Land : Women in American History (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), p.214.

[3] Robert Jay Lifton, "Woman as Knower : Some Psychohistorical Perspectives," in The Woman in America, ed. Robert Jay Lifton (1964; rpt. Boston: Houghton, 1965), p.46.

[4] Barbara Quart, "The Treatment of Women in the Work of Three Contemporary Jewish-American Writers: Mailer, Bellow, and Roth," Dissertation Abstracts International, 40 (September 1979), 1472-A.

[5] C.G. Jung, Four Archetypes : Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster, trans. R.F.C. Hull (1972; rpt. London: Routledge, 1974), p.16.

[6] Ibid., p.16.

[7] Ibid., p.16.

[8] Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), pp.46-47.

[9] Eva Figes, Patriarchal Attitudes (1970; rpt. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1971), p.14.

[10] Ibid., pp.14-15.

[11] Mark Shechner, "Philip Roth," Partisan Review, 41 (1974), 420.

[12] Bernard F. Rodgers, Jr., Philip Roth (Boston: Twayne, 1978), p.168.

[13] Philip Roth, The Professor of Desire (New York: Farrar, 1977), p.3.

[14] Ibid., p.12.

[15] Ibid., p.33.

[16] Ibid., p.47.

[17] Ibid., p.50.

[18] Ibid., p.68.

[19] Ibid., p.109.

[20] Ibid., p.151.

[21] Ibid., p.173.

[22] Ibid., p.253.

[23] Ibid., p.261.

[24] Christopher Caudwell, quoted by Fraya Katz-Stoker, "The Other Criticism : Feminism vs. Formalism," in Images of Women in Fiction : Feminist Perspectives, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon (1972; rpt. Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973), p.316.

[25] Joanna Russ, "What Can a Heroine Do? or Why Women Can't Write," in Images of Women in Fiction, p.6.

[26] Ibid., p.6.

[27] Norman Mailer, An American Dream (1964; rpt. New York: The Dial Press, 1965), p.26.

[28] Ibid., p.9.

[29] Ibid., p.23.

[30] Ibid., pp.29-30.

[31] Saul Bellow, Herzog (1961; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, 1976), pp.41-42.

[32] Mailer, An American Dream, p.10.

[33] Ibid., p.36.

[34] Helen Weinberg, The New Novel in America : The Kafkan Mode in Contemporary Fiction (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), p.136.

[35] Mailer, An American Dream, p.213.

[36] Ibid., pp.121-22.

[37] Ibid., p.165.

[38] Ibid., p.165.

[39] James M. Mellard, "Four Versions of Pastoral," in Bernard Malamud and the Critics, ed. Leslie A. Field and Joyce W. Field (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p.68.

[40] Robert Ducharme, Art and Idea in the Novels of Bernard Malamud : Toward The Fixer (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p.36.

[41] Earl R. Wasserman, "The Natural : World Ceres," in Bernard Malamud and the Critics, p.59.

[42] Bernard Malamud, The Natural (1952; rpt. New York: The Noonday Press, 1961), p.33.

[43] Ibid., p.16.

[44] Wasserman, pp.45-65.

[45] Malamud, The Natural, p.33.

[46] Ibid., p.33.

[47] Ibid., p.34.

[48] Wasserman, p.53.

[49] Malamud, The Natural, p.65.

[50] Ibid., p.87.

[51] Ibid., p.94.

[52] Ibid., p.88.

[53] Ibid., p.122.

[54] Ibid., p.197.

[55] Frederick W. Turner, III, "Myth Inside and Out : The Natural," in Bernard Malamud and the Critics, p.116.

[56] Malamud, The Natural, p.126.

[57] Edwin M. Eigner, "The Loathly Ladies," in Bernard Malamud and the Critics, p.89.

[58] Ibid., p.89.

[59] Malamud, The Natural, p.154.

[60] Ducharme, p.56.

[61] Malamud, The Natural, p.155.

[62] Ibid., p.158.

[63] Ibid., p.236.

[64] Ibid., p.191.

[65] R.W.B. Lewis, The American Adam : Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (1955; rpt. Chicago: Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1964), p.129.

[66] Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper, 1956), p.44.