Chapter VI

Demeter and Persephone: Re-connecting with
the Mother in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Sita*

I began . . . to want to define and understand the meaning of sexuality and the meaning of gender in my life and in our society . . . The way I did my thinking was to write a novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* is the record of my consciousness, the process of my thinking . . .

a thought experiment. - Ursula Le Guin

I am particularly pleased that this edition (Sita) is more complete in lesbian matter, however early and primitively outlined, that it has not only celebration and complaint, ode and apostrophe, narrative and dialogue, interior and social life . . . The entire round of an experience beginning to announce itself as a new phenomenon in letters as well as in life. - Kate Millet

Ursula Le Guin and Kate Millet, appropriate the ancient myth of Demeter and Persephone in their texts *The Left hand of Darkness* and *Sita* respectively so as to challenge patriarchal concepts of heterosexual relationships based on the binary of male and female, which subjugates women with prescribed gender roles. They are found to be slightly closer in their thematic
representation to Angela Carter and Arundhati Roy, wherein they experiment with a reintegration of self and other. Both the writers worked towards one of the ideals of the feminist movement of the sixties and seventies – that of an androgynous society in which neither gender would dominate the other. Kate Millet better known for her theoretical output The Sexual Politics (1970) offers an articulate critique of patriarchy in Western society and literature. As Andrea Dworkin rightly points out in her article ‘Great thinkers of our time – Kate Millet,’ published in Newstatesman that “the world was sleeping and Kate Millet woke it up. Betty Freidan had written about the problem that had no name. Kate Millet named it, illustrated it, exposed it, analyzed it.” (2003).

Acknowledged as one of the founding texts of second-wave feminist movement, Sexual Politics established that personal relationships between men and women are fundamentally political, becoming the paradigm for all other power relationships within patriarchy. Her other works including Flying, The Loony Bin Trip, are highly autobiographical in content and discuss at length her experiences of Lesbian sexuality. Ursula Le Guin, a contemporary of Millet and a prolific writer (poet, essayist, novelist, critic) whose contribution to literature is significant in that she merged conventional elements of Science fiction with more traditional literary techniques, forayed into the realm of the male bastion only to question the accepted norms of gender and sexuality. She endeavored to transform women’s thinking about themselves and their roles as women. Recipient of numerous literary awards
including the Nebula and awards, Le Guin is best known for her novels, *The Dispossessed, Earthsea Cycle - A Wizard of Earthsea, The Tombs of Atuan, The Farthest Shore* and *Tehanu*. In his book *Approaches to the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin*, Bittner states that while women like Betty Freidan and Kate Millet “were using non-fiction to answer the question ‘Who am I,’ Le Guin was answering the question by writing science fiction addressed to a male audience.” Le Guin who wrote science fiction for and in terms of men subsequently shifted the emphasis from “essentially imperialistic, mechanistic, and masculine values,” to “anarchistic, organic and feminine values” (44).

With the beginning of the second – wave of the women’s movement, a characteristic feature of the women writers of this period was their use of myth to rewrite/subvert oppressive narratives and open up new possibilities for women’s fiction. Elements of myth were either consciously or unconsciously used in order to reinscribe notions of human nature, and gender roles that can lend itself to subversion and resistance enabling the writer to represent truth in the guise of mythic fantasy but which cannot be presented in the realistic mode. Both Le Guin and Kate Millet adopting the science fiction genre (though *The Left Hand Darkness* is not categorized as hard core science fiction), and the autobiographical genre, *Sita* (again the line between autobiography and women’s novels is a thin one), respectively, have used
myth to subvert oppressive structures of patriarchy. Ursula Le Guin in her
*Bryn Mawr Commencement Address* (1986) justifies her stand so-

> When women speak truly they speak subversively . . . they can’t help it: if you’re underneath, if you’re kept down, you break out you subvert. We are volcanoes. When we women offer our experience as truth, as human truth, all the maps change. (Le Guin “Bryn Mawr Address”)

Le Guin and Kate Millet use their literary texts as the ‘new space,’ that redefines radically the conventional concepts of gender and sexuality by creating alternative cultures offering drastic solutions for potential equality between the sexes. Mythic structures help them in transcending cultural boundaries and become the product of women’s common ground of experience in patriarchal societies. Women writers like Adrienne Rich and Margaret Atwood have envisaged and explored possibilities of pre-patriarchal/pre-classical age where women were not only worshipped but were actually temporal rulers. While feminist conception of such societies speak of matriarchy or female as primal power, even literature which survived to a much later period seems to exemplify this hypothesization as in the Homeric poetry that portrays the Earth Goddess Demeter of the ancient Greeks as a maternal figure with special relationship to women and children, but with enormous powers over men as well. (Gettel, and Dunning 92).
Whether these ancient gynocracies existed as history or as a mythic archetype, what is significant, however, is the fact that an inter-connection between female biology and religious/secular power has been struck. Feminist anthropologists argue that the common/unique consciousness shared by women is responsible for the ‘inner’ power or rather the ‘soul’ of feminist art, the source of which lies in the female biology, in its capacity to bear and nurture children. Motherhood/mothering must first be understood as a potential quality inherent in women irrespective of whether she has ever borne or ever will bear a child. Hence biology alone is in no way an adequate explanation of what it is to be female (93). Patriarchal myths, just as its literatures offer none or only negative models of women, Elaine Showalter points out that female literature of the seventies sustained a radical and courageous quest for the mother. Le Guin and Kate Millet are no exceptions to this for they consciously or unconsciously draw on the myth of Demeter and Persephone using it as mythic pattern in their works, *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Sita* respectively, to drive home their message.

The myth of Demeter and Persephone though less often cited by critics and writers, is one classical myth that comes entirely from a woman’s point of view. Considered to be the archetypal myth for women, it touches upon timeless themes in every life, such as the male–female relationship, love between women, mother/daughter bond, Life and death, rebirth, thereby offering insights in its implications for contemporary men and women. In the
Hymn to Demeter, Demeter the Goddess of fertility and her daughter Persephone enjoy a life of warmth and closeness together until Hades, the God of the underworld and brother of Zeus, erupts above ground. He abducts Persephone, separation and pain follows. Demeter rebels and crafts a compromise with Zeus in which Persephone is to spend two-thirds of the year with her mother and one-third with Hades. When the two women are reunited, their minds are one; they soothe each other’s heart and soul in many ways.

Gelfand in her article, “Mothers and Daughters: The Myths we live by,” points out some notable features in order to bring out the significance of this myth in terms of critical re-vision of women’s life stories – firstly, it suggests a rich mother-daughter paradigm expressing full range of maternal emotions. Secondly, it serves to present a mother who is powerful and effective. Thirdly, it also brings to light the repressed mother-daughter intimacy broken by the intervention of man (patriarchy). Fourthly, it brings about the reunion of the mother and daughter who maintain closeness, but are two different women with distinct identities. Finally, the principal structure of the story is a circle: The circle of the return to the mother, cycle of seasons, the recurrence of life and death. This complex structure rejects simple narrative resolution and affirms multiple relationships. Both Millet and Le Guin’s use of the myth signifies such an integrated pattern within their texts.
Writing in the Preface to *Sita*, Kate Millet describes her work as ‘the story of the end of love, the death of a love affair, the very stuff of the Western romantic tradition…. Even if the protagonists were both women…. There had been no language for this love, no examples (VIII – IX), *Sita* records the intimate relationship between Millet and Sita, a middle-aged university administrator and mother, and a veteran of several marriages. ‘Fiery, seductive, elegant and exotic,’ *Sita* captivates Millet in every sense of the word, offering her unimagined pleasure and much needed emotional security. However, Sita, loses interest in Millet after a three year affair, and starts dating men once again. Her separation with and longing for Sita, the love and betrayal make up the rest of the story.

Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* portrays planet Gethen where people are biologically neuter and asexual except during phases of ‘kemmer,’ when they become either male or female. Genly Ai, a conventional young human male through whose eyes most of the Gethenian life (its politics, culture, religion, and androgynous peoples) is brought to us, is on a political mission from the ekumen (Earth) to unite Gethen’s states Karhide and Orgeryn with ekumen. Central to this story line is the love that develops between two individuals Estraven, the older Gethen and Prime Minister of Karhide, (a person of substance and integrity, the only person in karhide who has the capacity to make decisions, has character and quality) and Genly Ai, the alien and the way in which each of them confronts their responsibility to
the other, to themselves, and to the larger communities, Le Guin defends *The Left Hand of Darkness* as ‘a book about betrayal and fidelity’ (Palumbo 222).

In *Sita*, Millet’s husband Fumio in a sense represents Hades and her life in New York that of Hell while California (Paradise) where Sita (Demeter) resides. And Kate unquestionably becomes Persephone. Her depression, and mental illness, imprisonment leads to suffering and attempt at suicide from which she is saved, secured back to life through a phone call from Sita. Millet’s final break up with husband Fumio and her life with Sita is described so by her:

I am someone in a fairy tale transplanted to a beautiful kingdom every year. A place of spring time and sun and flowers. But one year I arrive to find my queen or fairy Godmother or princess or whatever completely obdurate. She no longer loves me at all, no longer even remembers. Then slowly, by infinite degrees, I warm the ice which surrounds her. She comes to life. She smiles and loves me again. And then I say, I cannot live here, prefer my winters and my darkness and my shanty at the bottom of the mountain and tell her that the paradisiacal kingdom is not enough, is not habitable. (*Sita* 267)

Millet shuttles between New York and California every six months and in describing her intense love for Sita refers to her as Demeter and to herself as Persephone returning to her spring each time. The novel is neatly divided
between the journey that Millet undertakes in summer and winter, is also symbolic of her passage between life and Death (Earth and Hell). Similarly, Genly Ai, in *The Left Hand of Darkness* is rescued by Estraven from the voluntary farm (Hell) where he is almost in a state of death. “His rescue takes the form of a mock death and rebirth” (Spivack 51). Genly’s unconscious body is carried out as a corpse and this rescue is entirely engineered by Estraven. He is brought back to life by Estraven, from Orgoreyn that plots to kill Ai because they think he’s a threat to their country. Regaining consciousness, he thinks:

I woke. Until now it had been strange, unbelievable, to wake up inside a dim cove of warmth, and to hear my reason to tell me that it was a tent, that I lay in it, alive, that I was not still in Pulefen farm. This time there was no strangeness in my waking, but a grateful sense of peace. (*LHD*190)

Also, Genly Ai and Estraven journey together from Karhide to Orgoreyn and back to Karhide. The book begins and ends in late spring. As Charlotte Spivack suggests, in her book Ursula K. Le Gim, that “the journey across the planet moves north and east in a clock wise direction from the nation of Karhide to Orgoreyn and back to Karhide by way of the Glacier… the pattern of the action moves through distinction, and disintegration toward unity” (47). The journey on the ice is symbolic of the journey into each other’s heart.
Both Estraven and Sita die towards the end, while Sita commits suicide out of depression, her death symbolically sets Kate free, making her into a new/separate identity, for Kate had always wanted to be independent with no permanent commitment to their relationship. Kate in fact grows into her own after Sita’s death, reconciling herself so: “As dead you begin to live with me” (339), a rebirth of her new self. Estraven’s death is also a kind of suicide which seeks to preserve the life of his companion, so that Genly Ai is able to finally achieve his political mission of the Ekumen – “two are one, life and death, lying together . . .” (LHD 267), Estraven never regretting his sacrifice.

Kate Millet and Genly Ai are forced to learn the lesson of profound love. Their experience of love gained has to go hand in hand with love lost as that of joy and sorrow, light and darkness. The experience of the profundity of love follows the experience of the profundity of sorrow, at the end of which they emerge with greater self-knowledge. Sita is lost to Kate through the permanence of death. However, Kate has absorbed Sita’s very being into herself, empowering her,

I become Sita . . . . Even as I become her, learning by memory, recollecting all she knew, absorbing her savvy . . . reviewing all the lessons she gave me in doing and getting done . . . . I also still experience Sita as outside myself, a voice entering consciousness . . . (Sita 327-328).
Death only serves to reveal the ‘core of the being’ (328), in its extraordinary capacity to bring an entire life into focus – Sita as mentor, administrator, politician, diplomat, sensualist and romantic. Whenever Kate felt betrayed by Sita, she sought recourse to writing her moments with her (Sita) which becomes a therapeutic exercise as she says, “I am scribbling because the compulsion is so great, because it might ease the pain” (61). ‘Writing’ actually saves their relationship and they are reconciled to one another before Sita’s death. The process of writing then, has, metaphorically speaking, helped in re-establishing the lost female ancestry, a return to the mother, with Sita symbolizing the archetypal matriarch/- the ‘voice’/ the maternal body. Inevitably, the autobiography is an attempt to “write the self, or give the self a narrative” (Anderson 58). It becomes an alternative place of identification, a place where her interiority is actualized, creating a ‘self’ and an ‘other’ within herself simultaneously. Kate Millet’s text follows a “pattern of retrospection, memory, breaking the surface in what is also a movement of recovery” (63). Linda Anderson in her essay ‘At the threshold of the self: Women and Autobiography,’ argues that in trying to become a subject through the process of reconstructing her story, the woman author recognizes within herself the process of return and her own interiority, constituting herself, ‘differently within the symbolic’ (Anderson 58). The text, hence becomes the product of memory and the woman writer, by her very act of re-writing raises questions of identity (sexual/feminine), while
seeking to publicize herself she is violating an important cultural construction of her femininity as passive or hidden. She is resisting or changing what is known about her. Her place within culture, the place from which she writes, is produced by difference and produces difference. (59)

Bella Brodzki posits that in writing the autobiography the author engages in a kind of “search for origins, for women a search for the maternal origins, that elusive part of the self that is coextensive with the birth of language” (Brodzki 157). In fact the autobiographical narrative, she suggests, is generated as a compulsive need to “enter into discourse with the absent or distant mother . . . to reject, reconstruct, reclaim- to locate and recontextualize” (157), the mother’s language. Millet’s autobiographical venture runs parallel to her lesbian relationship with Sita, both reiterating the search for the m/other in content and form. In writing about a different economy of desire, Millet explores a different kind of openness in her text that represents the hitherto silenced areas of women’s desires or even sexuality. The personal is extended to the political when the text is realized in its publication. As Millet points out towards the end of the book, Sita herself has read the book and agreed to its “birth and christening” (Sita 324). In constructing the personal moments of her life, Kate Millet certainly is engaging herself in the reconstruction of her new person, therefore erasing the severely circumscribed space of woman in the heterosexual power structure of male against female.
Le Guin, who perceived that feminism had a tradition and a history in which she herself had a place, was one of the first writers really willing to explore and experiment with gender and sexual roles. *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the hallmark novel of this kind of experimentation, unlike Kate Millet’s *Sita*, presents a utopian vision of ‘female creativity’ in a non-oppressive and non-sexist society (Moi 121). The outer journey that Genly Ai undertakes parallels with the journey into his own self. In other words, his journey into himself is simultaneously a growing awareness of himself and of himself in relationship with the ‘other’ (Estraven). Just as Kate’s journey to California signifies a return to the mother, so also Ai’s journey to planet winter signifies, ‘man’s’ return to matriarchy/ the maternal/ mother’s womb, not as appropriation but as apocalypse/ revelation or a lesson that he learns not of male or female nature but of human nature. The ‘Dark Continent’ that is woman according to Genly Ai is from planet Earth where “the heaviest single factor is whether one’s born male or female. In most societies it determines one’s expectations, activities, outlook, ethics, manners, almost everything” (*LHD* 223). He is at a loss to define the female of his species at a query from Estraven. Ai refers to them as ‘alien.’ But, by the time he completes his mission/journey, his self-realization is also complete.

Both Sita and Estraven represent the archetypal woman manifesting a true to her nature androgynous figure combining the natural strength of female and male. The archetypal nature also keeps in line with the life – enhancing
virtues as warmth, nourishment, growth, protection, etc. Kate Millet envisions Sita as “the matriarch . . . , the center, the authority, the power” (Sita 17) who knows her well enough, masters her, plays her and pleasures her. Kate is surprised at the many sided aspects of Sita, the very epitome of “a being made for living . . . she goes to rule, to administer, put in order . . . . Beyond that, she lives in the real world, with adult cares, mature responsibilities…She is capable, majestic” (24). Sita is someone who decides everything, even controls her desire, using her body as the symbol of power. She is as the mother of two children, at the same time, caring, showing tenderness and giving emotional security to Kate. Exhibiting similar kind of tendencies, Estraven plays the Mother figure to Genli Ai. Ironically, Le Guin has created an androgynous society where every person has mothered/ fathered a child. The androgynous gethenian society transcends the patriarchal dichotomy, which enables them to share the burden as well as the privilege of rearing add children, considered to be the basis of inequality between man and woman in a human society. Assigning androgynous/ bisexual nature to her characters, Le Guin has left the possibility of reading her novel as one about women, women’s lives and the meaning of love and sexuality in women’s lives. Or it can be read as a story about two males, who love one another sexually as well as fraternally. (Palumbo 222). However, the manner in which facts are presented in order to establish planet Winter as different from the earth
inhabited by men and women (the ‘reality’ familiar to the readers), Le Guin juxtaposes a new ‘reality’ where,

anyone can turn his hand to anything. This sounds very simple, but its psychological effects are incalculable. The fact that everyone . . . is liable to be . . . “tied down to child bearing”, implies that no one is quite so thoroughly “tied down” here as women, elsewhere, are likely to be- psychologically or physically. Burden and privilege are shared out pretty equally . . . Therefore nobody here is quite as free as a free male anywhere else . . . a child has no psycho-sexual relationship to his mother or father. There is no myth of Oedipus on Winter. There is no unconsenting sex, no rape. (LHD 93)

Winter is a place devoid of ‘war’, a purely masculine occupation that signifies a vast rape, rather it is a place where,

there is no division of humanity into strong and weak halves, protective/protected, dominant/submissive, owner/chattel, active/passive. In fact the whole tendency to dualism that pervades human thinking may be found to be lessened, or changed, on Winter. (LHD 93-94)

Estraven, the gethenian protagonist is a manwoman, portrayed as a shrewd politician, a prime minister, a powerful aggressive figure, constantly pushing forward and struggling to realize what he strongly believes in. For
most part of the text he plays the traditional male role (but we are also conditioned to see him as female as from the point of view of Genli Ai, the human male). And only during his journey across the ice with Genly Ai, he’s seen mothering/nurturing the almost dead Ai, while his sexual role (as a woman) is evident from the ‘kemmering’ female phase that he undergoes in the company of Ai. The first instance where Ai meets Estraven is in a public parade when Estraven stands to the left of Ai. The title *The Left hand of Darkness* has a special significance in that it’s two key words – ‘Left’ and ‘Darkness’ are interconnected suggesting a very subtle and intelligent use of it by Le Guin. In psychological/psychoanalytic terminology ‘Darkness’ is metaphorically linked to ‘woman.’ ‘Woman’ according to man is the remote ‘other’ so that in “constructing femininity as a dark continent patriarchy has engendered a situation in which woman can be ‘kept at a distance from herself” and made to see… woman on the basis of what man wants to see of her, which is to say almost nothing” (Cavallaro 66-67). The title therefore is a pointer towards not only Estraven the person, but to the whole of the female species or simply the universal ‘woman’ as defined by patriarchy. In the subsequent encounters Ai looks at Estraven as “womanly, all charm and tact and lack of substance, specious and adroit” (*LHD* 17), looking at his performance as womanly and hence disliking and distrusting him/her for his/her supple femininity. Ai’s attitude here is that of a typical male towards a
female. Le Guin mocks at the patriarchal attitude towards women and in its attempt to make women believe that they are too dark to be explored.

Pamela J. Annas, in her article entitled ‘New Worlds, New Words: Androgyny in Feminist Science Fiction,’ discusses the use of androgyny as a concept by women writers in “creating alternate worlds based on an image of unity in which ‘male’ and ‘female’ elements are poised in harmony within the individual and/or society. Alternatives to sex role stereotyping are central to the utopian vision of feminist writers” (143-44). She further argues that the concept of androgyny operates at two levels – the psychological and the social. At the social level, androgyny may suggest not only a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes but a “full range of experiences opens to individuals who may, as women, be aggressive, as men, tender” (143). At the psychological level androgyny may include “a psychic unity conceived as existing in all individuals” (144). It also includes “a mystical moment, a revelation, orgasm, manic ecstasy and the aesthetic experience” (144). The very inclusive nature of androgyny suggests that feminist writers use it in their utopian society to modify sex roles to allow for “full human development of each individual person” (144). It is precisely through her biologically androgynous characters that Le Guin forces Genly Ai to understand the simultaneity and complementarity of human nature, its complexity and sublimity thereby understanding ‘femininity’ in the process. His relationship with Estraven is exactly an eye-opener for this man from Earth. During their
escapade through the Ice, Estraven gets into ‘Kemmer’ as the female and is as a result, attracted to Genly Ai as the heterosexual male. But Genly Ai, does not respond to Estraven because their friendship that has turned to love is not due to their ‘likenesses’ as human and gethenian but because of differences – “for us to meet sexually would be for us to meet once more as aliens,” (LHD 235), as male and female in a heterosexual matrix. However in his effort to transcend love at the physical plane Ai has to go through an arduous process in order to overcome the feeling of ‘otherness’ that Estraven represents for him to finally accept him as a human being, as ‘I’ and ‘you’ not as ‘I and it.’ Le Guin structures her text through the creative duality of opposites such as Life and Death, Light and Darkness, Female and Male, etc. where one is complementary of the other that exists simultaneously.

Both Kate Millet and Genly Ai are complementary of Sita and Estraven. There is intense emotional, intellectual as well as spiritual bonding between the couples. Sita and Estraven play the metaphoric/ Lesbian mother to Kate an Ai respectively. According to Adrienne Rich ‘mother’ and ‘motherhood’ are socially/culturally constructed. She defines the term ‘mother’ as ‘a woman, who is devoted to other women,’ and that mothers can be biological, adoptive, lesbian, creative or metaphorical. Le Guin and Kate Millet in their conscious/unconscious reenactment of the early relationship between mother and daughter have sought to break and alter gender and sexual roles as a means of exploring the unexplored area of desire. In other words, in their
attempt at rearticulating the mother-daughter relationship have invariably indulged in the restructuring of desire. Phallocentricism had buried women through reduction to maternity. Through a re-inscription of women’s desire, Millet and Le Guin use the repressed mother / daughter relationship to found a new space that is maternally structured.

Estraven the ‘metaphorical’ mother is often referred to as ‘he,’ calls himself as ‘man,’ but exhibits ‘feminine’ attributes when he hosts a party to Genli Ai and when he cares and tends for him on the ice. In her essay, ‘Is Gender Necessary,’ Le Guin says that she was trying to avoid strictly feminine reading of the word ‘mother.’ The person who conceives and bears a child is the child’s mother (on earth) but among gethens it is not a gendered relationship. Le Guin argues that since our thinking is dualistic and we don’t see women as scheming prime ministers or sledge haulers across the ice, and hence we fail to see “Estraven as the mother, with his children in any role which we automatically perceive as ‘female’” (Spivack 58), he is instead seen as a man. Sita breaks the cultural concept of motherhood by engaging in active university life and also in fulfilling her desire outside the heterosexual man / woman relationship. While Estraven, never gives birth to a child like other Gethenians but is strongly capable of nurturing, a maternal attribute.

This ‘thought experiment’ becomes the cutting edge of Le Guin’s novel, for when Estraven is male then his relationship with Genly Ai borders on homosexuality. Even before he meets Ai, Estraven is guilty of incestuous
love, between him and his brother Arek who is the ‘kemmering’ female and begets a son. Estraven had vowed fidelity to him. Just as Sita betrays Kate by having relationships with other women and men as well, Estraven too from time to time had betrayed one or the other of his ‘kemmering’ brother. At one level, Estraven’s sexual attraction to Genli Ai is because he feels or sees Arek in him. It could be that Le Guin is making a mockery of the compulsory heterosexual bonding that patriarchy perpetuates and practices in order to oppress women. At another, she could mean to say that a mother-daughter bonding (pre-oedipal) is stronger and inevitable rather than a mother-son bonding (Oedipal).

In Sita, on the other hand, Kate Millet explores and lives the bonding she has with Sita as almost in a ‘marriage,’ a kind of friendship that was “perfected and serene: We would make up for settled couplehood with a superior longevity. Because we would maintain this passion all our lives” (Sita 325). Kate Millet becomes a bold advocate and practitioner of ‘multiple relationships,’ as a means of sexual liberation. Helen Cixous in her essay ‘The Newly Born,’ posits a form of bisexuality that works as “an alternative to the destructive masculine hegemony … bisexuality is a position she suggests women necessarily already adopt… that women have retained a closer relationship to love” (qtd in Sellers, The Helene 40). Sita and Kate can be called bisexuals in that their sexuality is inclusive of both male and female relationships, and at the same time by living there multiple relationships and
desires for one another, tend to break away from the repressed desire of leaning toward one’s own sex. Their desire is no more repressed as patriarchy would deem fit. Their lesbian sexuality mocks at conventional gender norms and becomes in itself a symbol of power giving subjective identity to them.

Bisexuality/androgyny in Estraven is both psychological and physical. He is both simultaneously male and female. But what is under focus is his forbidden love for his brother. It might appear that Le Guin has constructed a society in which two ‘males’ can legitimately love and be loved in return. (Palumbo 229). Although she doesn’t permit one for her two protagonists, the undercurrent of potential homosexuality is very much evident at the surface level. Le Guin uses the ‘body’ as the site of power that includes at once the masculine/feminine, male/female, mother/father thereby transcending dichotomies of gender and sexuality. Both Millet and Le Guin prove that not only gender but sexuality too is constructed. *The Left Hand of Darkness* predates recent theoretical developments in feminist scholarships, especially gender studies that counter traditional essentialist positions and argue a literary criticism that leaves behind conventional boundaries of the male and the female. (Hunter 353). *Sita* too depicts an alternate life-style and ‘explores in unprecedented depth the old themes of power and powerlessness and offers a model for emotional self-revelation’ (Matuz 233). In violating sex-role performances of patriarchal culture, both the women writers create texts of
As Annis Pratt suggests,

...the structure of the new-space novel itself revolves around epiphanic moments, or peaks experiences, of erotic or metaphysical vision or both of a better world beyond genders, beyond sexual politics; the material of characterization, plot, imagery, and detail focuses upon the...struggle out of patriarchal marginality toward a new hub. (Pratt 109)

Le Guin and Kate Millet in their respective ways have implicitly and explicitly used myth (Demeter and Persephone) in their texts to reconstruct, revision, analyze and contribute various meanings to patriarchal terminology of gender and sexuality based on the binary mode of thinking. Their literary texts are the site of experiment and also the vehicle used to convey their ideas categorically. Their’s is a psychological journey towards reintegration of self and other. Like Arundhati Roy, who plays her representation of Rahel and Estha’s relationship very subtly, Le Guin too has many things to speak through the representation of Arek and Estraven. On the one hand, Estraven is seen by Ai as only a woman (he gets sexually attracted to him/her, during his/her kemmer, towards the end). On the other hand, it is Arek who had mothered Estraven’s child. Le Guin in other words happens to actually speak about women’s connectivity. Kate millet and Le Guin therefore break barriers of biology and culture in their reinterpretation of the myth. Though the
structure of myth is circular, their reworking of the myth of Demeter and Persephone is non-linear, rather spiral and multi-leveled because their writing signifies a return to the mother/womb, with the emphasis being laid on the pre-oedipal status of women and female bonding.