Chapter II

Should the Deity be the Scapegoat?

In many Irish and Indian legends and in literary works based on ancient legends, female deities are shown as demanding and receiving blood sacrifices from male members of the society. These legends and related myths, though some of them might have originated in pre-historic periods when female centrality had been a reality, have been altered and adapted to new situations and systems, especially in the context of the emerging dominance of patriarchal ideology. Legends, myths and literary works based on them, thus, contain important transitional elements, in the sense that they often tell of the transfer of power and centrality from the female to the male. Some of them present the pioneering assaults of male heroes upon the forts and fortresses of queens or goddesses. The term male-hero is used, throughout this study, as one who has contributed positively to the degradation of female centrality and their consequent marginality. Almost all the accepted gods and heroes like Heraclitus, King Minos, Lord Krishna, Lord Siva and Sage Parasuraman have, according to the legends and myths that revolve round them, championed the cause of the upgradation of male supremacy. The gradual inversion of the position of women in society, from centrality to marginality, from sacrificer to sacrificed, exemplifies the appropriation and adaptation of the institution of sacrifice and the scapegoat mechanism. Edasseri Govindan Nair has succinctly posed the central problem thus:
Should the deity be the scapegoat
If the idol worn out defies identity?

(Kunkuma Prabhatam 24)

The supreme idol of one system becomes worn out and defies identity in a later system. Seldom bothering about the historico-social origin and evolution of the system, as a rule most of the people within the system take for granted and internalise the central assumptions and values. Only the initiated and the insightful, like the poet Edasseri, who are aware of the diachronic and diverse aspects of the problem, ask a question like the one which forms the title of this chapter. The analysis, in this chapter, of Edasseri Govindan Nair's "Kavile Pattu" and W.B. Yeat's A Full Moon in March and The King of the Great Clock Tower, along with the discussion of related myths and legends, shows the gradual decrease of female centrality and how the Great Mother, the supreme idol of the matricentral and goddess-centred system, stripped of her lustre, glory and identity, turns into the scapegoat of later systems. The female/male power struggle and the crucial juncture of transition from female-centrality to male domination are exemplified by Yeats's plays The Herne's Egg and At the Hawk's Well.

The oracle of the temples of Bhadra Kali in the north of Kerala on certain auspicious days or on the days of the annual festival becomes possessed or inspired by the terrible goddess. On such occasions, he makes wounds upon his head with the strokes of the sacred sabre in his hand. There will be a large group of
devotees, including women and children, to witness this awful sight. Children often ask their mothers: "Why does the oracle break his own head and spill blood?" The poet Edasseri Govindan Nair had also asked such a question when he was a child. When he became old enough, he asked the same unanswerable question to himself. The poet knew that it was an absurd and insane question. Once a Christian friend told him that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was not a time-space-bound event. That Magnus Martyr, the hope of the suffering and pitiable, is repeatedly crucified. Is there any message more meaningful and touching than: "Son, don't be afraid that thou would be damned as thou hath sinned. For thy sake I am prepared to be crucified." Is there any punishment more severe than this? What is given above is from the poet's own introduction to "Kavile Pattu" (EK 504). The last line "Is there any punishment more severe than this?" resembles the refrain of George Herbert's doctrinal poem "The Sacrifice": "Was ever grief like mine?" Analysing the poem, William Empson finds blasphemous contradictions unintended by the pious poet (226-233). Describing passionate love and conscientious love, Yeats finds the former as forming a group and selecting those who are akin to the group. Having no toleration the group persecute the outsiders (Explorations 327). The person who has developed conscientious love atones for the sins of others to save the world from agonies and sufferings (327). Empson's interpretation of Herbert's Christ as a "scapegoat and tragic hero" (233) also contains the archetypal idea of sacrifice as in the case of Yeats's book and Edasseri's "Kavile Pattu."
Herbert and Empson base Christ's sacrifice upon His "mercy" making the sins of others as few as possible (231). The material causes for the sacrifice like the socio-cultural surroundings and the stage of human evolution and development have been left untouched by the poets and their interpreters. All the contradictions and ambiguities are explained away by the divine mercy of the sacrificed like the fact that being a god, Christ has to punish the wicked and he is said to be all-merciful and does sacrifice for the sins of others. In the same way, in spite of the tall claims made by the poet Edasseri and paraphrased by two of his most prominent critics, M. Leelavathy (Varnaraji 240) and P. Narayana Kurup (Kaviyum Kavitayum 130), the poem "Kavile Pattu" remains ambiguous. The progress of the fierce blood-demanding goddess Kali towards the merciful, self-wounding deity seems to be a riddle. If the veil or halo of theology and ideology is removed, the basic source for the transformation of the deity can be discovered.

The poem "Kavile Pattu" (EK 504-514) opens with the line "Alari blossomed like blood oozen in the wood." It alludes to the ancient ritual of sacrifice before the altar of female deities. The chorus, a group of maidens standing before the sacred bower with their heads bowed and their palms joined in homage to the deity, soon announce the time of her arrival. The goddess is cruel and angry, wearing the garland of blood-red flowers, and she revels in dancing in the field of blood. The deity brandishes her shining sabre like lightning. The devotees have
made preparations for giving a grand welcome to the goddess.

In the past, the deity was thirsty for the blood of demons and sanguine young men. The chorus sing the tale of the sacrifice of a young man. He is fresh from the ground of martial training. The only son of a mother, he is at the height of his youthful bloom. Circumambulating the earthy platform sacred to the goddess, the young man finds her calling him to become her sacrificial victim. Coming there in search of the missing son, the mother asks the deity a series of questions, enumerating the suffering and sacrifice she has undergone to give birth to and bring up her only son. Her pertinent and powerful interrogation moves the goddess. Thenceforth, the goddess becomes powerless to punish the wrong-doers and sinners. She has to redirect her anger and cruelty towards herself. Instead of attacking others, she decides to inflict wounds upon herself and shower her own blood. She spills her own blood for the atonement and expiation of the sins of her devotees and others. Her kind and considerate action of self-sacrifice generates repentance in the minds of devotees. They express their readiness to serve her always.

Images related to fertility abound in the poem. The chorus are a group of virgins. The goddess is described as wearing garlands and pendants of flower buds. To welcome the deity, pots are filled to the brim with sweet wine. In a pot of gold, bunches of flowers are set. The rice-measuring vessel is filled with rice. It is the horn of plenty or cornucopia. All the cotton-wicks of the bronze oil lamps are lit. Maidens stand,
with plates of lamp and flowers, on the two sides of the broadway leading to the sacred seat. Images of disease and destruction are also presented. "On those who ran like chaff/were sown the seeds of small-pox." The goddess for the first time came to the region on a summer day (507). Another image of summer is given. "Your throat was parching with the fire of hell" (509). The thirst of the goddess was highly destructive. It could be quenched only by soaking her throat in the fresh blood of young men.

The blood-red techi-garland worn by the goddess and the crimson silk covering her wooden seat are connected with blood-sacrifice. The young man's coming to the premises sacred to the goddess and his self-decapitation are ritualistic. When the goddess demands sacrifice, he does not show any sign of fear, resistance or unwillingness. He goes to the bathing pond and washes himself. He salutes the ground as if he is respecting his mother's feet. He retraces seven steps and leaps forward seven feet. Then, he salutes his own bright sword. He praises the goddess, the creatrix and mother-protector of all the seven worlds. He circumambulates her seven times. Appropriating himself to the occasion of worship and offering, he sits down and cuts his own throat. "The garlands became pale/At the sight of the blood-fall" (511). The sacrifice is recognised by the heavenly planets. "The sun lost lustre and like an unwashed plate of crumbs/Stood half-immersed in the mud of the sky" (511). The stars, removing the curtain of propriety, stand staring at the
earth during that midday. The irregular behavior of the heavenly body is interpreted in connection with sacrifice and murder by European critics in similar situations. John Vickery has observed that the falling star signals someone who has been murdered or eaten (227). The death of the Irish political leader Parnell which forms the subject matter of Yeats's poem "Parnell’s Funeral" is interpreted as sacrifice and the heavenly bodies are said to have behaved unnaturally on that occasion (CP 319). Stock notes that at Parnell’s funeral a star was seen falling in daylight (215). Jeffares also refers to the popular Irish belief that a bright star fell down as Parnell’s body was lowered into the grave (NC 339). In the comparative context of Yeats and Edasseri the convention of associating a heavenly body and sacrifice is significant. The convention confirms the reading that the young man’s death is a sacrifice. K.P. Sankaran, comparing Edasseri’s lines with a stanza in Unnuneeli Sandesam, a fourteenth-century Malayalam epistolary poem, finds a sacrificial allusion. The sky is the unwashed dish-plate held topsy-turvy by the fierce goddess Kali, after butchering and drinking the fresh blood of elephants ("Kavile Pattu" 137).

The words of the mother in "Kavile Pattu" show that the sacrifice of the son was preordained. She presents before the goddess the story of her preparations for the sacrifice, her marriage, delivery and child-rearing:

After seven years of vow and penance I married;
I took seven years to give him birth;
My breasts fed him milk for seven years;
And he had seven years of martial training.
Goddess, tell me frankly whether his young
forearm trembled
When it was lowered for self-murder? (EK 512)
The immediate cause for the demand of sacrifice might be the
sight of the blooming, bonny youth. But, the goddess was waiting
long for the bloody event. When she demanded blood, "The human
boy stood smiling/Exuding innate sympathy for your thirst of a
long time" (509). Her thirst was long-standing as if the
sacrifice was overdue. One provocation behind the demand of
blood was the necessity of periodical renewal of her fertility,
on which the fertility and plentifulness of the entire village
depended. The victim was fully aware of his destined role. He
knew that for the welfare of his society or community, he had to
obey the goddess. His attitude is contrasted with that of demons
and cowards. "He did not protest like a demon/Nor did he run
like a coward" (509). He knew that the goddess had beheaded
demons like Sumbha and Nisumbha. The cowards who tried to run
away from her presence had been cursed with the affliction of
smallpox. The sacrifice was not necessitated by anything
particular, some fault of an individual or community; it was
meant for the general expiation of many unnoted and accumulated
petty sins and blemishes of the people. The last sentence of the
mother's argument before the goddess reveals this. The mother
expresses the doubt whether the young man's act of self-sacrifice
has degraded his clan and whether that act has thrust a grave
blemish or stigma upon his own mother. The universal convention or custom of selecting scapegoats from degraded groups and the performing of self-sacrifice in expiation of some sins do not explain these doubts. In connection with sacrificial customs, the only explanation possible is that the blood of her son washes away all the sinful and disturbing blemishes of the community. The mother questioning the justice of the goddess in demanding and accepting the young man's blood shows that the goddess-centred system is under attack. This problem is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The human sacrifice in Kali temples is a thing of the past. It is not really described by the chorus, but recollected. The chorus reveal that this was the last "capital sacrifice" demanded and received by the deity:

Oh Divine Virgin! We do not know
What change was wrought upon you by the human mother.
Thenceforth, if you raise your terrible sabre
Aimed to strike at our sinful actions,
It would invariably fall upon your own head.
Oh the Black Beauty of the azure cloud! We do not know that
You have turned your fierce cruelty towards
yourself. (512-13)

Leelavathy interprets the change worked out on the goddess as the victory of the human mother who suffered the labour pain and who is imbued with the spirit of sacrifice and who is even
affectionate to the blood-thirsty eternal virgin (Varnaraji 240). According to her the poem also reveals the poet’s personal preference for self-immolation as a panacea for man’s original bias towards destruction. Self-sacrifice can transform cruelty into mercy and love (244). P. Narayana Kurup apparently refutes Leelavathy’s interpretation: "All instincts of man are not for self-destruction, but self-protection" (130). But, he also falls into the same trap of idealistic explanation. He remarks that in the poem the poet presents an advanced stage of evolution. The transformed deity is the vision of a superman who washes away all the sins of the world with his own blood. It shows the progress from savagery to civilization (132). In fact, this explanation is not basically different from that of Leelavathy. It is only a paraphrase of what Edasseri writes in his introduction to the poem. Similar to what Nietzsche said ironically and humorously about Christ’s sacrifice: "The god of Israel demanded that the father should sacrifice his son, but the god of Christians went him one better and sacrificed his own" (qtd in French, Beyond Power 76), Edasseri’s introduction and the explanations given by Leelavathy and Narayana Kurup impart no insight into the mystery of the deity’s transformation. The transformation of the fierce goddess Kali, drinking and demanding the blood of others, into a self-wounding, merciful goddess has a solid foundation. To discover this, the historical degradation of the different mother goddesses of India has to be analysed.

The indigenous deities of ancient India were predominantly mother goddesses. To retain virginity or to renew fecundity,
they used to receive blood sacrifice including the immolation of their consorts and suitors. This was in accordance with the universal ancient phenomenon of fierce virgin queens decapitating their young and handsome lovers and bathing in the fresh blood to invigorate themselves. Kosambi gives many examples (78). Hera, Pallas Athene, was worshipped as child, bride and widow. She renewed her virginity by periodic baths in the springs of Canathus. This was ritual purification after the sacrifice of her earthly husband, presumably the temporary consort of her priestess. Aphrodite similarly renewed her virginity by bathing in the sea of Paphos. Athene and Artemis remained virgins. Nevertheless, a "husband" was formerly sacrificed to Artemis in various places, and boys flogged once a year till the blood drenched her image at Sparta. About Durga, the fierce Indian goddess, David Kinsley observes: "She is beautiful and seductive in appearance, but her beauty does not serve its normal function, which is to attract a husband. It serves to entice her victims into fatal battle"(99). In the poem under discussion, the poet uses the epithet Chandi (EX 512) which is used to describe Durga, Kali and such fierce goddesses (Kinsley 117). The goddess of the poem has broken the throats of thousands and drunk the blood-fall. When the goddess sees the handsome and healthy boy, the chorus ask: "Your heart didn’t soften, did it? to hug him, / O Eternal Virgin who revels only in killing!" (510). The blood-offering, animal or symbolic, to the terrible goddess in temples are ritualistic repetitions of the virgin goddess/victim motif. In most South Indian myths, Durga identifies Mahisha as
her suitor or would-be husband. Independent in her unmarried state, Durga is portrayed as possessing untamed sexual energy that is dangerous, indeed deadly, to any male who dares to approach her (Kinsley 114-115). The fiery goddesses had a pride of place in Indian society. Even in the Vedas, which were composed and collected by the Aryans who followed a patriarchal system and a male-dominated pantheon of gods, there are signs of the power of female deities which they had wielded earlier. The dialogue between Pururavas and Urvasi in Rg Veda (X.95), as interpreted by Kosambi (54), shows that Pururavas was unable to change Urvasi’s decision to sacrifice him after begetting a son, as was the custom of the time. But the goddesses like Urvasi, in a later Veda, viz. Atharva Veda, degenerate into witches. They had to appropriate themselves to survive in certain localities like remote villages and jungles (64). Kinsley remarks that the central dramatic event of village goddesses’ festivals is a blood sacrifice. This sacrifice represents the defeat of a demon, who invades the village, who is also associated with the goddess’s consort or husband who had afflicted or abused her in the myths (205). Now the village goddesses have to be satisfied with symbolical immolations. In the past, when they were very powerful, these cruel deities used to get real blood. In the words of Robert Graves they used to "get the vision of the Naked King crucified to the lopped oak and watched the dancers, red eyed from the acrid smoke of the sacrificial fires" and chant "kill and blood" (446). Such a practice had been continued till the "achievement" of "the ultimate victory of man over perverse
vicious woman obsessed with her virgin cruelty" (Henn 286).

Kinsley establishes the indigenous origin of Durga and such goddesses: "Durga’s historical origin seems to be among the indigenous non-Aryan cultures of India... many early references to Durga associate her with peripheral areas such as Vindhya Mountains, tribal peoples such as ‘Sabaras’" (96). Kali is a similar goddess who is associated with the periphery of Hindu society. She is worshipped by tribal or low-caste people in uncivilized or wild places (117-118). The places and peoples with which the goddesses are associated have been traditionally rated "low" and "wild" in the dominant discourses. But, in an earlier period they had occupied central positions and high places. Kosambi has shown that mother goddesses were situated at city-centres, crossways and junctions (108). Travellers and merchants were expected to pay homage and offer sacrifices in favour of the mothers at crossroads.

The primitive custom of the annual sacrifice of the male consort was broken by male-heroes like Krishna, Heracles and Theseus (Kosambi 25). Kosambi’s analysis of the Krishna-Tulasi legend is a case in point. In every Hindu homeyard, there is a Tulasi [Holy Basil] altar. Everyday an oil lamp is lit there. There are periodical worship and offering before the Tulasi-altar. Lord Krishna, the epic hero, belonged to the Gokula, or a cattle-commune, which was patriarchal. He played his pranks at Vrndavana, sacred to a mother goddess, the goddess of "group" [Vrnda] symbolised by the Tulasi [Basil] plant. Krishna had to
marry that goddess. He is married to her every year, which means that the priestess who represented the goddess annually sacrificed her male consort. There is no myth of Krishna's annual sacrifice. There is only the substitution of Krishna for the slain consort (25). In the worship of Tulasi-altar, the memory of slain husband or consort is kept, as does Keats's Isabella in keeping the pot of basil. In some legends and forms of worship Tulasi is a widow (Kosambi 2). The allusion in Rg Veda of destroying the chariot of the dawn-goddess by Indra is interpreted as the usurpation of power by the new patriarchal system enforced by the Aryans (64). Kosambi has also mentioned Siva's conflict with various mother goddesses or senior deities at one stage (2-3). This stage is nothing but that of transition from matricentry to male supremacy. In Irish legends like "The Humbling of Queen Meave" (Hull 167-70), there are similar incidents.

Returning to Edasseri's poem, one finds the following lines posing a very pertinent and significant problem, which neither the poet nor his commentators have succeeded in unmasking:

What a metamorphosis!
The slayer of Sumbha and Nisumbha
Became a tender fragrant flower plant!
Thou, wrath-incarnate, how did the inborn
cruelty in you

Turn into the cool bower of the Cosmos? (EK 506)
The killer-goddess became a kind deity not because of the
mother's strong arguments but because of the change effected in the power-structure and hierarchy of the society. Kinsley has supplied a South Indian tradition which reveals how Kali was tamed by Lord Siva (119). After defeating Sumbha and Nisumbha, Kali takes up residence in a forest with her retinue of fierce companions and terrorizes the surrounding area. A devotee of Siva in that area becomes distracted from doing austerities and petitions Siva to rid the forest of the violent goddess. When Siva appears, Kali threatens him, claiming the area as her own. Siva challenges her to a dance contest and defeats her when she is unable, or unwilling, to match his energetic tandava dance. In a similar way, two of the key questions raised by the chorus—whether the effulgence of the bonny blooming youth dazzled or dazed the deity (508) and how the deity, Chandi, managed to stand the furious mother, without being burned to ashes (512)—can be resolved in the light of a Kali legend in the Bhagavata Purana (5.9.12-20) as interpreted by Kinsley (117). In the Bhagavata Purana, Kali is the patron deity of a band of thieves whose leader seeks to achieve Kali's blessing in order to have a son. The thief kidnaps a saintly Brahmin youth with the intention of offering him as a blood sacrifice to Kali. The effulgence of the virtuous youth, however, burns Kali herself when he is brought near her image. The chorus visualising the old tale find it difficult to believe that the goddess managed to survive the penetrating look of the young man and the fury of the mother.

The two legends, in the mythical language of mystery and ideology, tell about the reduction of the power wielded by the
goddess Kali. In the first one a male-hero, Lord Siva, tames the wild deity. In the second one, a brahmin youth’s effulgence destroys the goddess. He is said to be "virtuous." Terms like "effulgence" and "virtuousness" have no fixed denotations and are that of ideology. Here, they are interpolated in the legends as part of the process of mystification. The youth is a brahmin. It signifies the imprint of male ideology’s invasion. Brahmins, the uppermost priestly community in India, are the most powerful and crucial factor of the Aryan system which established male-dominated societal structures and values displacing or destroying the matriarchal, matricentral, aboriginal or native religions and structures. What was burned to ashes was not the physical body of the goddess but the power enjoyed by goddesses and females in general. Men captured power. Thenceforth, their very looks have been able to overpower women. The chorus, in "Kavile Pattu," live in a male-dominated society. Though maidens they have internalised the values and assumptions of such a society. That is why they express surprise at the fact that the goddess resisted the stare and glare of the youth’s looks. The first legend tells the history of the transfer of power from a female deity to a male-hero or god. The tandava dance comprises "masculine" qualities like virulity, energetic and dynamic movements and the show of physical strength as befitting a male champion. It is distinguished from lasya dance containing "feminine" qualities expressing love, lust and eroticism to fascinate young men. In lasya body movements are slow and graceful. In fixing such a norm, that is, the tandava dance, for
the contest with Kali, Lord Siva betrays prejudice, discrimination and injustice. The contest predetermines the winner as in the case of a dance contest described by Ayyappa Paniker in the Malayalam poem, "Kutira Nrtatham" [Horse Dance] (Nervazhikal 92). In the poem there are four horses. Only the first one has four legs. The second has three and the third two. But the norm of the contest is fixed by the fourth horse which has only one leg. He tells others that it is time to dance and they can dance on one leg. Others ratify his decision and all start dancing on one leg. The horse with four legs falls dead. The second horse falls unconscious. The third with two legs limps and gasps. The fourth horse is the leader horse, probably a political party leader, and it performs well. It goes on dancing. Cleverly and cunningly, the political leader defeats and destroys the intellectuals, patriots and 'normal' beings by distorting and holding topsy-turvy the norms and normalcy. The sub-normal but shrewd political leader wins the show and convinces the audience or people that he is the real winner and establishes that he deserves the leadership. In the Siva-Kali dance contest, also, an impartial third party did not decide the norms of the competition and victory. Inviting Kali for tandava dance and outsmarting her in it, Siva was really betraying goddesses and females in general and wrestling power from them on behalf of male gods. Henceforth men have got the privilege to tame wild women who disobey them and who do not dance to their tunes. And the privilege also obtained divine or ideological sanction and sanctity.
The Siva-Kali legend, analysed above, indicates a stage of evolution when a female deity's action of drinking the blood of male sacrificial victim and revelling in wild dance was questioned and impeded. As Krishna stopped Tulasi's practice of sacrificing her current consort every year, Siva stopped Kali's blood bath. Such events and the change in the general societal outlook, as an outcome of male-centrality, have been forcing the goddess Kali in "Kavile Pattu," and the like, not to demand and receive the sacrificial blood of men any more. Instead, they inflict wounds upon their own heads to draw blood. A reading of socio-cultural legends, as done above, reveals that Kali in "Kavile Pattu" stopped the practice of human sacrifice not out of her mercifulness and magnanimity. She has appropriated or adapted herself to the loss of centrality and has been constrained to survive within the allotted marginal space.

Edasseri Govindan Nair does not describe or allude to the dance of the goddess after drinking the blood of her victim. But in the light of the reading offered here, "Kavile Pattu" is seen to allude to the legend in which Siva dictates the terms and forms of Kali's dance. However, Kali's counterparts in Yeats's works do not seem to have lost the power to dance according to their will and fancy. A queen or fierce lady who demands, enforces or accepts the blood-sacrifice of young men is there in some of the poetical plays of Yeats like A Full Moon in March and The King of the Great Clock Tower (CPI 619-630, 631-642). After the decapitation of the victim, there is singing and dancing,
flaunting the severed head of the victim. The sacrifice of a male by a mother goddess or that of a tribal leader by the community is in accordance with the universal pattern of fertility rites. The land or kingdom, its plant or animal produce, needs periodical fertilisation and purification for sustaining or renewing their fecundity. Mahamaya, the Universal Mother Goddess, in some archaic period, lured men to their destruction. The priestess who represented or personified the Goddess had regularly sacrificed her male consort as a part of annual fertility rite (Kosambi 108). Yeats describes the dance with the severed head as "part of the old ritual of the year: the mother goddess—and the slain God... the slain, the risen God" forms the subject of both The Resurrection and The King of the Great Clock Tower (Rajan 158). The combination of the male-victim and the dance of the killer-female in the world of Yeats is synchronized with the legend of Salome, who by dance pleased the King Herod, her mother Herodias and John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12). Kermode remarks that Yeats added to Salome what had not been hers before—cruelty and desire, passions which had formerly been her mother's. In Yeats's work, the notion of human sacrifice as the price of the symbolic dance is deeply and curiously embedded. From very early days, he associates Salome with the Sidhe. Sidhe is the wind and the wind is the daughter of Herodias (The Romantic Image 74). Yeats notes that the journey of the whirling wind is the dance of the daughters of Herodias. Herodias takes the place of some old goddess (CP 524). The aforementioned change in the Salome legend was effected by
Yeats to appropriate it to the pattern of mother goddess and male victim.

In *A Full Moon in March*, the male victim is a swineherd. The beheading takes place on a full moon day. The Queen is veiled, keeping a distance from others, at first, protecting her purity and sacredness as a virgin. On that auspicious day, she feels that some terrifying man has come at the door. Her yawning and stretching (*CP1* 622) are the signs of man's arrival. From certain wandering beggars, the Swineherd has collected the news that the day is the day of the Queen's marriage. "He that sings best his passion" shall take the Queen for a wife and he can get the kingdom as gift. In South India, the periodical or annual blood bath of fierce female goddesses occur during the height of summer, before the April shower, which heralds the spring season and the sprouting of seeds and new flower-buds. In Kerala, in the abodes of terrible goddesses, blood sacrifices are offered during *Kumbham* (February-March) and *Meenam* (March-April), the months of extreme summer. In Yeats also, the blood immolation takes place before the spring season. But, here, the goddess longs for a healthy young man's blood, not to quench her thirst, but to rejuvenate herself from frigidity. The winter has destroyed or made dormant her vitality. She admits that she is "Cruel as the winter of virginity" (624). The Queen has killed and maimed many young men who approached her professing love. Considering the perils risked and suffering undergone by the Swineherd, the Queen, at first, advises him to leave the place
before she changes her attitude. But the lusty Swineherd, yearning to win her love and embrace, remains there. He seems to be forcing his own sacrifice. The Queen is renowned for cruelty: "A lover in railing or in flattery said/God only looks upon me without fear" (624). The Swineherd, like the young man in Edasseri's "Kavile Pattu," is not afraid of the Queen. In reply, he tells the Queen: "Desiring cruelty, he made you cruel./I shall embrace body and cruelty,/Desiring both as though I had made both" (624). The Swineherd makes it clear that the Queen’s cruelty is God’s will. Irrespective of the irremediable consequences, the hero wills to become one with the Queen and thus surrender to the Destiny. The Swineherd is a true hero in the sense that he is ready to sacrifice everything including his life for realising his goal. In the Kierkegaardian terminology, he is an active hero (Purity of Heart 108). He has prepared himself for sacrifice the intention of which is to awaken the dormant fertility of the Queen. He provokes the Queen to make her "possessed" or inspired on such an auspicious full-moon day. Richard Ellman’s definition of a hero is fully applicable to the Swineherd: "The hero is one who sacrifices nothing of the ideal he has imagined for himself; death can do nothing but confirm his integrity" (Identity of Yeats 11). When the Queen threatens him with instant death, he only laughs:

My severed head.

There is a story in my country of a woman
That stood all bathed in blood--a drop of blood
Entered her womb and there begat a child.

(CPI 626)

The Queen exclaims "foul foul" and expresses her irritation and horror at his words "The blood begat." The Swineherd calmly adds that the woman sank in bridal sleep. The Queen cannot even tolerate the idea that the woman's body in sleep conceived a child. This shows the Queen's reluctance to renounce her immaculate virginity. Like the Goddess Kali of "Kavile Pattu," so far, she has killed many young men. Yet, she has not allowed any to embrace her. But the Swineherd is determined to make her a mother, shedding her virgin fierceness and cruelty. There is an Irish tale which traces the legendary origin of the twelve tribes of Galway. In this pre-Christian legend, the hero, the son of the King in Connacht, went to the Well at the End of the World. He impregnated the Queen of the Well and her eleven maidens when they were asleep (Hyde 52-62). The son named Cart [right] took water from the Well to cure the sore foot of the old king. The Well was under the custody of the Queen at the Well. In a female-dominated society or system, the feeble-footed king would have been butchered. He could get no chance of trying to set right his sore foot. The hero's act of reaching and possessing the secret and sacred water simply signifies the wresting of power from women by man. The power was mysteriously and jealously guarded by the Queen at the Well and her maidens. This legend is an allegory of the end of world of power of women. Defeating their virginity, the hero has completed the process of asserting and establishing male superiority.
The Queen in the play turns towards the Swineherd and slowly drops her veil. The dropping of the veil is symbolic of undressing and surrendering before the hero. Earlier, when the hero requested her to drop the veil, she felt irritated and insulted: "Ask me to drop my veil!" (CPI 626). After closing the inner curtain, the First Attendant tells the Second one to sing about "An Ancient Irish Queen/That stuck a head upon a stake" (627). The Second Attendant replies that it is a different queen and a different story. The Queen takes the blood of the Swineherd. But it seems to be the last one of its kind. In the song sung by the First Attendant the surrender of girls before some man—king or clown—is referred to:

Girls that have governed cities,
Or burned great cities down,
Have bedded with their fancy-man
Whether a king or clown;
Gave their bodies, emptied purses
For praise of clown or king,
Gave all the love that women know! (627)

The transfer of power is complete. Harold Bloom observes: "The Swineherd is a sacrifice, a priestly offering to the only divinity Yeats truly recognized, creative death" (Yeats 342). The hero’s death is creative only in the sense that it creates a new power structure. If it is a masochistic death to beget a stronger life, it begets a stronger and higher position or post for man in the new hierarchy. The hero is reborn as a child and it sings. The slain God is resurrected as the Son of God. The
severed singing head of the hero is symbolic of the rebirth. The Queen dances before the head, a dance of adoration and affection. The Queen, who in the past, abhorred and destroyed strong young men, now worships the hero. The energy of cruelty gives way to the love of a mother and the devotion of a devotee. She takes the head up and dances with it. At the climax of the drum-taps, she presses her lips to the lips of the severed head. She sinks slowly down, holding the head to her breast. The martyr-hero has realised his goal. "The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero's mastery of life, for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master" (Campbell, The Hero 120). Campbell's remark, though uttered in a different context, is typical of the dominant male discourse. It is an idealized explanation like those by P.Narayana Kurup and M.Leelavathy cited earlier in connection with Edasseri's poem "Kavile Pattu." Campbell, who speaks only of heroes, not heroines, looks at events from the perspective of male heroism. He does not consider the gradual loss of the power and centrality of women in the material world and the goddesses who are their counter-parts in the world of myths and legends. If there is any mystery behind the mastery of male-heroes over women, it is men's gradual capture of power and centrality. In the words of Engels, it is the development of "the welfare and advancement of one [men] by the woe and submission of the other [women]" (Engels 103). About the self-punishing aspect of the goddess Kali's later character, Raghava Warrier has made a remark similar to that of Joseph Campbell: "The scapegoat-saviour concept of Jesus Christ and the
Indian concept of Bodhi Satva are present in the concept of the self-immolating nature of the goddess in "Kavile Pattu" ("Kanneeril Virinha Chiri" 32). The presence of male prejudice and the absence of any consideration of societal evolution are quite evident here. The gradual marginalisation caused women to try and change the pattern of sacrificial performances. Once women revelled in wounding and mutilating their male consorts and companions. But later they developed the mechanism of self-wounding to vent their grievances, which in terms of faith and theology were meant "to expiate sins." This mechanism helps to find an outlet for violence and anger with minimum danger and destruction. The self-immolating aspect of Goddess Kali in "Kavile Pattu" is different from the scapegoat-saviour concept of Christ and Bodhi Satva on account of the following factors. The Goddess had been a cruel deity who became a kind one. Such a transformation is absent in the legends pertaining to Christ and Bodhi Satva. The transformation corresponds to the shift in power and centrality enjoyed by women and men in society. The self-sacrificing traits of Christ and Bodhi Satva are not presented in relation to societal evolution; they are a synchronic manifestation of the aspects of sacrifice. In the case of Kali, the poem "Kavile Pattu" itself, not to speak of related legends, reveals the diachronic aspects of the institution of sacrifice. Moreover, unlike Christ and Bodhi Satva, Kali still feels anger towards the sinful activities or actions of people. Powerless to curse or punish them, she directs the fury towards herself. Raghava Warrier's remark
serves to obliterate the play of power at work in the establishment of male supremacy.

In The King of the Great Clock Tower, there is an extra character, the King, who occupies a dominant position. Compared to her role in A Full Moon in March, the Queen is less powerful here. Speaking about the representation of Lord Siva and Goddess Sakti in the masculine and feminine cults, Tapasyananda observes that in the former

the Siva aspect is the Principal and the Sakti represented as His Consort is subsidiary and an accessory. In the Sakta conception however, Sakti becomes the dominant factor and Siva becomes practically a substratum, an entity taken for granted as a background for His own manifestation as Power or Sakti, represented on the Divine Mother.(8)

In Yeats's play, the King speaks and commands as a monarch, not as the Queen’s male consort:

A year ago you walked into the house,
A year ago to-night. Though neither I
Nor any man could tell your family,
Country or name. (CPI 634)

He asserts his authority: I put you on that throne/I ask your country, name and family." Such questions would not be raised by a male consort in a female-dominant matrilocal society. The Queen came in search of throne and accommodation. In a female-dominant epoch and society, the suitor would go to the domicile of the queen, as in the play A Full Moon in March. Here is a
patrilocal society or period where the social institutions like monogamy, private property, personal name and chastity have become established. The "downfall and the historic defeat of the female sex, the men seizing the reins also in the house and the women stripped of their dignity" (Engels 100) have happened. The King's interrogation and assertion are their signs. Engels has found that monogamy, slavery and private property became established simultaneously. Kathleen Gough remarks: "Sex restrictions on women before marriage do not normally develop until control of the state and of durable property make them the masters over women, imbued with notions of legitimacy and feminine chastity" ("An Anthropologist Looks at Engels" 113). The King's speeches show that he is suspicious of the Queen's chastity. "If he was not your lover in that place/You come from" (CPI 638), that is, if the Stroller is not the Queen's former lover, the King does not mind her dancing and singing with him. The discourse of chastity, an attribute of the system of monogamy, was instituted in the world by male domination. One is reminded of Sankaracharya (8th century A.D.) who established the Advaita philosophy which, to a great extent, contributed to the subjugation and subordination of the feminine cults of the matricentral societies in Kerala. A stanza in his Saundarya Lahari [Inundation of the Feminine Divine Splendour] runs as follows:

O Chastity Embodied! How numerous are the poets who have courted and attained Saraswati, the consort of Brahma and the deity of learning and fine arts! So also
who with some wealth fails to become the Lord of Sri (Sripati), the consort of Visnu and the goddess of wealth! But, O the foremost of Chaste Ones! None besides Siva the Great God—not even the tree called Kuravaka, has ever the embrace of Thy breasts. (Sloka No.96)

Here the poet Sankaracharya makes use of a poetic convention which links beauty worship and chastity taboo.

It is a belief that kuravaka tree will flower only if it is embraced by a beautiful woman. Though the embracing of such an inanimate object is of no consequence from the point of view of chastity, the poetic fancy finds a breach of the rules of chastity even in such contacts. (Tapasyananda 156)

Other "deities are supposed to have consorted with other persons and thus lost their chastity" (156). In a female discourse it is the immolation-blood of a male hero or child that makes a tree fertile. For example, at the sacred grove Nemi the priest-consort of Diana is sacrificed (Vickery 202). Another exaggerated description of chastity in the Indian context is supplied by Swami Vivekenanda: "The girls of India would die if they, like American girls, were obliged to expose half their bodies to the vulgar gaze of young men" (Complete Works 3.506). Such views and descriptions pertain to the taboo of chastity, which came into existence after male domination. The Sloka from Saundarya Lahari and Vivekananda's remark betray pro-male ideology. Women have to suffer bruise or death in both the cases to preserve the
prevailing convention. The diachronic aspects of male and female sacrifices do help to understand the dialogues in the play under discussion.

In the play, the King asks his male-rival: "What is your name?" (CP1 635). The Stroller who belongs ideologically to an earlier epoch is unaware, or pretends to be so, of the change of values. He believes in the polyandrical system in which a queen or goddess is courted by different consorts. The Stroller attaches no importance to the institution of personal name: "Enough that I am called/ A stroller and a fool" (635). The Stroller is unprepared to recognise the value of the new institution, that is, the King. The Stroller is full of devotion to the Queen: "But never have I said/Brazen, audacious, disrespectful words/Of the image in my head" (636). He is not inclined to have a lengthy dialogue with the King. He is eager to reach his goddess: "Summon her in /That I may look on its original" (636). When the King replies that the Queen is at his side, the Stroller is surprised. He has expected a higher position for the idol of his admiration. The Stroller prefers to remain nostalgically in the vanished world: "What matter for all that/ So long as I proclaim her everywhere/Most beautiful" (636). In spite of the King’s instruction, the Stroller is not ready to leave the court. He had a vision that the Queen would dance with him that night. He would glow grateful and sing. These words evoke the jealousy of the King. The King gives an order to the guard to flog the Stroller. The Stroller expresses surprise
at the command given by the King: "What, flog a sacred man?" The King cannot understand the sacredness of the suitor. In Edasseri's "Kavile Pattu," the mother and her son have prepared ritually, observing formalities like fasting, for the auspicious and immolatory confrontation with the Goddess Kali of their family temple. Here, in Yeats's play, the Stroller describes his observances. He went to Bogne Water, lay on the green hillock and fasted for nine days. By undergoing ritual penance, the young man in "Kavile Pattu" and the Stroller become consecrated or sanctified to be sacrificed. The great Aengus spoke to the Stroller: "On stroke of midnight when the old year dies,/Upon that stroke, the tolling of that bell,/The Queen shall kiss your mouth" (637). The prediction that the Queen should be won at a full moon in March was made by the beggars in A Full Moon in March (CPI 624). On that basis, the Swineherd lingered in the palace. Here, in spite of the threat of immediate execution, the Stroller believes firmly in the prophecy: "First the Queen/Will dance before me, second I shall sing" (637). When a god dies for the sake of a goddess, he will resurrect as a new god. The King does not know the pattern of rebirth and expresses surprise: "Sing without a head?"(637). The King thinks of all the words of the Stroller as extravagance and lies. A sacrificial victim like the Stroller who has been sacralized is a god. The King, the protagonist of a male-dominated society, does not realize the assumptions of a goddess-centred society. The Clock strikes the midnight hour. The Queen dances to the sound. At the last stroke, she presses her lips to the lips of the
severed head of the Stroller. Then the King rises and draws his sword. The Queen, who has certain remnants of the power of the goddesses of the old system, fixes her eyes upon him. The King appears about to strike, but kneels, laying the sword at her feet. The King is subjugated. For the sake of begetting a new god for the new year, the female creative power, so far dormant, rises with vigour. While the King decapitates the Stroller to destroy a rival and maintain his power to fully possess the Queen, the Swineherd has also the goal of possessing the Queen and her land. Heroes think in terms of possession and private property. The Queen in both plays utilises the blood-immolation of the victim to beget a child. Her concern is fertility and continuity of life. In *A Full Moon in March*, the hero himself is the sacrificial victim; he is the slain god and the Queen, the mother goddess. In *The King of the Great Clock Tower*, which pertains to a later period in social evolution, the hero is a slain god as well as a scapegoat. Ever since a male ruler, a king, caught hold of central power firmly, the custom of the periodical sacrifice of the male consort has been abandoned. Instead, a substitute is sacrificed on the auspicious day. Joseph Campbell describes how the self-annihilate divine Minos became the holdfast tyrant monster Minotaur (*Hero 94*). King Minos would sacrifice himself, according to the pattern of the tradition at the close of his eight-year term. Instead, he offered the substitute of seven youths and maidens. Kings, who usurped power from queens, have found self-sacrifice uncomfortable, and, therefore, practices of substitution have
become prevalent throughout the world. In the Indian context also the transfer of power from woman to man has been indicated by corresponding changes in the sacrificial custom. Kosambi interprets the sacrifice of two human victims at Caitra (April) full moon every year in a village of Maharashtra (123). It was a male god who demanded human sacrifice but he had come into existence by replacing a mother goddess. After the decapitation, the heads were exhibited on slabs (123). Later, the ritual was changed into another kind of blood sacrifice, that is, hook-swinging. The hooks are passed through the loin muscles. In the same village in Maharashtra, goats are sacrificed to atone for the drowning of seven girls. Kosambi interprets that it was the male god who caused the drowning of the seven priestesses of the mother goddess cult of the village. The magical number "seven" links the descriptions given by Joseph Campbell and Kosambi. The King of the Great Clock Tower presents a male-dominated society. Hence, the king, instead of self-immolation on the auspicious day, substitutes the Stroller. The scapegoat-mechanism enables him to protect his precious life and position. In pre-historic times, when women occupied the central power, the mother goddesses had altars at crossways and city centres. Societies were matrilocal. Goddesses and queens got the fresh blood of healthy young heroes for their periodic baths of rejuvenation. Later, they had to be satisfied with the blood of outcasts, criminals and prisoners of war. Still later, they were forced to anoint themselves with animal blood. Now, during sacrificial rites, they get only materials symbolic of human blood like red
Kosambi's interpretations of the Krishna Tulasi legend and Lord Siva's fight with goddesses show that the practice of sacrifices in the pattern of female deity/male victim was stopped, as a rule, after hard-fought battles between male heroes and female deities. Kinsley's interpretation of the Siva-Kali dance contest also presents a male/female struggle. The pre-Christian Irish legend of "King Connacht and the Well at the End of the World" also indicates such a power struggle. The reading of "Kavile Pattu," Full Moon in March and King of the Great Clock Tower exemplify some aspects of these historical battles between "mankind" and "womankind." Yeats's The Herne's Egg (CP1 643-678) and At the Hawk's Well (205-220) vindicate such a reading. These plays are similar in many respects. There is a "supposed" mother goddess in both. Nobody says that she has been seen. But the existing society around have internalised the manifestation of her power. The deity is known as a bird, herne or hawk. There is a Big Egg sacred to the Great Herne; a Mysterious Well is sacred to the Hawk. The Herne has a queen dedicated to Her service. The Herne is said to be a male god. But the analysis of the play reveals that it is a mysterious or ideological lie as the whole system is a female-centred one. The queen acts as the priestess or the oracle of the Herne. The Hawk has a girl who moves and dances like a hawk. She is the Hawk's priestess or oracle. The Herne as well as the Hawk becomes possessed on certain days. The Herne or the Hawk curses men who encroach upon
the premises and break sacred regulations. The Herne is very particular that men should not take the eggs. The Hawk never gives men an opportunity to drink water from the Well. Both the systems exist in remote mountainous regions, far away from the maddening mankind's ignoble strife. Still, the male colonisers "discover" these regions and intrude into the tribal and horticultural female set-ups. Joseph Campbell in The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology observes that before "the violent entry of the late Bronze and early Iron Age nomadic Aryan cattle-herders from the north and Semitic sheep-and-goat herders from the south into the old cult sites of the ancient world, there had prevailed in that world an essentially organic, vegetal, non-heroic view of the nature and necessities of life" (21). Kosambi's interpretation of the Krishna-Tulasi legend and Engels's and Gough's observations on the advent of patriarchy show that during the periods of pre-iron agriculture and horticulture and social systems based on them women had enjoyed power and prestige. The systems maintained by the Herne and the Hawk are horticultural. Congal in The Herne's Egg and Cuchulain in At the Hawk's Well are male-heroes heralding and instituting male domination.

Balachandra Rajan interprets The Herne's Egg as an account of man's war against God and his subsequent defeat (162). Congal, the man-hero, intrudes into the territory of the "god," the Great Herne, and breaks open the mystery and halo around Him. Though Congal dies at the hands of a fool, because of the "curse"
of the "god," he succeeds in melting "the abominable snow of virginity" kept by the priestess and prophetess of the Herne. In fact, Congal's war is against a female-god. His triumph is among the different and diverse triumphs of men-folk which have contributed to the historic defeat of the women-folk.

Congal and Aedh, who have fought a series of exactly matched, ceremonial battles, declare the customary peace after the fiftieth battle and Congal proposes to enrich the banquet which follows with a "certain novelty or relish," namely, the sacred Herne's eggs. Attracta, the priestess of the Great Herne, will not permit the sacrilege; the eggs are taken by force and the Herne's curse is pronounced. Congal is to become a fool and to die at a fool's hands..... Congal...retaliates by effecting...an earlier suggestion that seven men should melt the "abominable snow" of Attracta's virginity.

(Rajan 162)

Congal's attack aims also at freeing Attracta "from all obsession" and enabling her to live "as every woman should" (162). In the end, Attracta hastily attempts to lie with Corney, her servant, "in an endeavour to save Congal from rebirth as an animal" (163). Thus, Attracta, who has so far claimed to be the eternal virgin bride of the Herne, invites a human male to have her and surrenders her virginity.

Congal decides to unravel the mystery of the Herne and destroy the power wielded by the priestess. He wants the Egg for
himself and his men. Attracta tells him:

Custom forbids:
Only the women of these rocks, Betrothed or married to the Herne, The god or ancestor of hernes, Can eat, handle, or look upon these eggs. (CPI 649)

Attracta does not reveal why the eggs should not be made available to man. She tells only "Custom forbids." Custom is an elastic term, which has been appropriated by different systems and ideologies. Congal infiltrates into the female discourse advocated by Attracta and her servants and argues that Attracta denies the precious Egg to Congal and his men as they are old warriors. She, the priestess, is interested only in the young. Young blood should be nourished and vivified by the eggs. Congal cannot tolerate the fact that the power of the distribution of the eggs is held by a woman. Congal contradicts her decree that the eggs can be handled only by women. His cooks are capable of proving their skill, if the eggs are given to them. Congal finds no mystery or sacredness in the supposed consecration of Attracta to the Herne. Attracta is one among the "Women thrown into despair/By the winter of their virginity" (649). For Congal, "alleged possession by a transcendent reality is merely an ecstatic delusion, a protection against the responsibility of living" (Rajan 164). Unprepared to surrender her virginity, the emblem of feminine power, before a man, Attracta, like some other "abnormal" and "crazy" women, delights in moulding the image of a bird-god and feeding her sensuality. Danae was desecrated by
Zeus. Leda was overpowered by him in the form of the Swan. Beggar men in *A Full Moon in March* and Aengus in *The King of the Great Clock Tower* prophesy that the male-heroes would take hold of the queens. Here, Mike, the man of learning, foretells that the goddess Attracta will not be satisfied with weather-stained and war-battered old compaigners. Seven healthy men have to be ritually prepared for subjugating the priestess: "Seven men packed into a day/Or dawdled out through seven years/Are needed to melt down the snow" (CPI 650). The magical number "seven" relates the main event of this play with those of Edasserri’s "Kavile Pattu" and the interpretations discussed previously of certain sacrificial events in myths and legends by Joseph Campbell and D.D. Kosambi. Attracta declares: "There is no happiness but the Great Herne" (CPI 650). "Betrothal to a bird," "return of womb and urn to the unbegotten," "lying in a blazing bed," "bird stealing one’s maidenhood" and "growing terrible to ward off the enemies" (650)--these are part of the female discourse which has not been so far questioned by anybody except Congal. Congal’s offer of seven men to Attracta can be read as an immolation-offer to a goddess. The offer is repeated by Congal: "Take to your bosom seven men" (652). Congal is not afraid of the Herne’s curse:

That I shall live and die a fool,

And die upon some battlefield

At some fool’s hand, is but natural,

And needs no curse to bring it. (652)

Congal describes himself as a criminal who has robbed sheepfolds
and cattle trucks. Even without the cause of the Herne, he is destined to die an unnatural death. The death of Congal, as per the curse of the Herne, serves two purposes—the elimination of a criminal and the ritual sacrifice before a mother goddess. The death will take place on a full moon. The periodical disappearance of Attracta to spend a night with her "god" [male consort] takes place on a full moon day: "The last time she went away/The moon was full" (655). On full moon days goddesses become possessed and they demand the companionship, contact and even the blood of a male consort. Attracta reveals to the girls, who come to give her presents and receive her marriage-blessings, that the day is the day of her union with the Herne. Her "marriage" "May come this very night" (653). The girls describe Congal and his men as "fierce." Corney, Attracta’s servant, calls Congal’s men "sacrilegious" rascals. Such terms show the conflict between those who are loyal to the priestess and Congal’s men who want to violate the sacred regulations of her hernery. Congal is an alien conqueror in relation to Attracta’s system. Like all intruders and colonisers, Congal vindicates his encroachment. When male aggressors trample over the strong-willed and unyielding women, the operation tends to be called "the taming of the shrew." Congal longs to free Attracta from all obsession and make her live as every woman should. The attacking process is outlined by Congal:

...we seven in the name of the law
Must handle, penetrate, and possess her,
And do her a great good by that action,
Melting out the virgin snow,
And that snow image, the Great Herne;
For nothing less than seven men
Can melt that snow, but when it melts
She may, being free from all obsession,
Live as every woman should. (662)

The King of Tara Aedh's and Congal's temporary peace treaty is meant to wrest power from Attracta and her women. For defeating the female ruler they have forgotten the enmity between themselves. Suspecting that Aedh has stolen the Egg, Congal kills him. This is in accordance with the pattern of sacrifices performed by men who stand for asserting and retaining power. Congal offers a ritual funeral and lamentation for the slain: "I can weep at his funeral" (660). Congal, then, speaks to his men in typical male rhetoric:

> A Court of Law is a blessed thing,
> Logic, Mathematics, ground in one,
> And everything out of balance accursed.
> When the Court decides on a decree
> Men carry it out with dignity. (663-64)

At the cost of his life, Congal carries out his historical project with dignity. Attracta is forced to shed her claims on virgin-power and invites her man-servant Corney to lie and mate with her. When the moon is full, she wants "a work that should be done" by "a man" (677).

The Herne is only a creation of the imagination of Attracta.
By utilising the magical and mysterious symbol, a bird-god, Attracta has been able to keep her virginity unmolested and her eggs unstolen. But the intrusion of Congal and his men into her hernery and privacy dismantles her individual identity and the system of her province. Finding her proud possessions gone, Attracta seeks full satisfaction of her animal passion. Hence her invitation to Corney to become her consort. Corney is horrified by the priestess's idea of self-desecration "What? lie with you...?" (677) Attracta herself exposes the unreality of the Herne:

   Lie and beget.
   If you are afraid of the Great Herne,
   Put that away, for if I do his will,
   You are his instrument or himself. (677)

Rajan refers to "the compulsive recklessness of man pitted against his fate" (164). The recklessness of man was a "historical necessity" for breaking the taboos and prohibitions established by female-centred structures. Rajan's remark that "there seems to be no precedent in any mythology but Yeats's own" (164) for Congal's recklessness betrays the lack of a proper socio-cultural perspective. After "the mystic marriage," Attracta becomes a different, "more human" woman: "whether the difference is the work of seven men, the Herne, or a combination of both, is a matter which the play does not settle, and the reader is permitted to conclude that the Herne is not necessarily the master of every irony" (164). The Herne is an "ecstatic delusion" which Attracta has made use of as "a protection against
the responsibility of living." The responsibility of living signifies the surrender of virginity and the consequent admission of male dominance. Attracta lives among the rocks, like an outcaste goddess, far away from the civilized social centres. She has run a hernery, which does not need much man-made tools of hunting and agriculture. Male discourses like logic, science, mathematics and sword-fight are taboos in her matrilocal system. Attracta does not get the fresh blood of sanguine young heroes. What she is given is the blood of a criminal like Congal at a fullmoon night. This indicates the degree of degradation of this marginalised goddess. The confusion pointed out by Rajan is the outcome of the admixture of idealistic and literal readings of Yeats's play. "Attracta becomes more human" signifies the appropriation suffered by her in the man-made world. Her initial position as the uncrowned queen of a hernery, where the eggs of domestic fowls and other birds are produced and sold, with the help of a primitive transportation system, the donkey, alludes to a specific horticultural epoch. Attracta's dream to live for ever nostalgically in the old world, however limited the territory of the hernery in the rocks be and whatever primitive the assumptions and delusions be, has been completely shattered by the seven hooligans led by Congal. Congal does not become a fully triumphant male-hero. His metamorphosis into a donkey at the end of the play signifies that he has been overpowered by the queen Attracta. "Perhaps, he is reborn in order to carry the Herne's eggs" (Rajan 163). Attracta's treatment of Congal also undergoes change, as is evident in her words like "I will protect
youn" (CP1 677). Jeffares opines that "It is difficult to see why Attracta, who has acted previously as the Great Herne's agent, should wish to thwart him now, unless it be that she has come to realise the weakness of her position" (Jeffares, CCP 272). The play reveals that Congal has also condescended to enter into the system of the Herne. Of the seven men who risked themselves to break the structure of the Herne's system, only Congal succeeds in having a "vision" of Him. When the Herne produces His thunder, all except Attracta and Congal have to kneel and lie prostrate. As Congal has already got an entry into the sacred set-up, by admitting partial self-defeat and appropriation, Attracta has to shield him. Congal has realised something of the secret of the Herne's power. So, Attracta later adopts an affectionate attitude towards him. The punishment to all other men-rascals are pronounced suddenly. But Congal's fate is disclosed later. He is converted into a donkey. Ruth Nevo remarks that Congal is a "wilful hero" and "supreme iconoclast" (18). His victory and Attracta's defeat are partial. Congal admits the incompleteness of victory when he betrays his fear in the Herne's power to punish him and convert him into the shape of a beast. Congal's success is attested by the fact that Attracta deserts the Herne "code" (Nevo 19) and "attempts to determine the form his reincarnated soul will take" (19). Discussing the question: "is the god-defying Congal indeed hero or fool?" Nevo concludes that Congal's "winning of the sympathy, if not even the love, of the Herne's votaress must surely reassert his humanist domination, and Congal has won" (20). Like the Stroller and the
Swineherd, Congal also becomes a martyr at the altar of the establishment of male domination. This play also refers to a period of transition from the epoch of female centrality to that of male superiority.

The play *At the Hawk's Well* (CPI 207-220) is set in "the Irish Heroic Age" (CPI 207) There are three musicians, the Guardian of the Well, an old man and a young man as characters. The musicians are the chorus of the play. The Guardian of the Well is a woman or a hawk. The First Musician sings a song about old age which is similar to the lines in "Among School Children" analysed later. The song here also contains the theme of the delusion of motherhood:

A mother that saw her son
Doubled over a speckled shin,
Cross-grained with ninety years,
Would cry, 'How little worth
Were all my hopes and fears
And the hard pain of his birth!' (CPI 208)

Such a song is apparently not related to the play. But, there is an old man in the play who has spent more than fifty years of his life to find water bubbling over the mysterious Well there. Water comes up in the Well only on very rare occasions. It is believed that if somebody is able to drink water from the Well, he becomes immortal. But at such "golden" moments the man who waits near the Well may be asleep. Sometimes he is led away from the Well by the dance of the hawk or the girl, who is the
Guardian of the Well. The images of old age are there in the second song of the First Musician:

Night falls:
The mountain-side grows dark;
The withered leaves of the hazel
Half choke the dry bed of the well;
The guardian of the well is sitting
Upon the old grey stone at its side,
Worn out from raking its dry bed,
Worn out from gathering up the leaves,
Her heavy eyes
Know nothing, or but look upon stone.
The wind that blows out of the sea
Turns over the heaped-up leaves at her side;
They rustle and diminish. (209)

The reference to old age in the first song of the First Musician and its relation to the delusion of motherhood, the image of old age like "night," "dark," "withered leaves," "dry bed," "old grey stone" and others are significant in analysing the Old Man, the Mother Goddess of the Well, and the Goddess-centred structure of society. It is a female-centred society as the Well is guarded by a female. The Guardian is described to be a hawk in the sense that the owner of the Well is very powerful. The power to confer immortality rests with the owner. As the Guardian has drunk water from the Well, she is immortal. "Immortality" is a mystifying term or concept. In the context of this study, it is a term of ideology. The power wielded by or the centrality
occupied by females in that society is presented in the language of myths or legends. Yeats himself has clarified that the play is set in the "Irish Heroic Age" (CP1 207). Analysing the Irish legend of the Well and the End of the World, the female/male power struggle has been discussed earlier. The possession of the privileged well and the opportunity to drink its water simply signify power, centrality or domination. The Old Man and, later, the Young Man, that is Cuchulain, the male-hero, have come near the Hawk’s Well and wait there for the splash of water in the Well. Getting water from the Well means capturing power and centrality. Their attempts should be seen as those of males to attack and break the forts of power built by females. The Old Man reveals that the Well belongs to "deceivers of men" (213). He asks the Young Man to go away from the premises: "Go from this accursed place! This place/Belongs to me, that girl there, and those others,/Deceivers of men." The place is an accurs ed one for men-folk.

Interpreted this way, the images of old age become symbolically significant. The Old Man represents a generation of men who have tried to break the female centrality. The attempts have failed. He has not got even a drop of water from the Well. He has been deceived invariably on all occasions when water splashed in the Well. He has been exhausted of all his vigour and vitality to invade the female set-up. The Old Man explains to the Young Man that he has been cheated by the dancers there:

I came like you

When young in body and in mind, and blown
By what had seemed to me a lucky sail.
The well was dry, I sat upon its edge,
I waited the miraculous flood, I waited
While the years passed and withered me away.
I have snared the birds for food and eaten grass
And drunk the rain, and neither in dark nor shine
Wandered too far away to have heard the plash,
And the dancers have deceived me. Thrice
I have awakened from a sudden sleep
To find the stones were wet. (213-14)

Pertaining to the Guardian of the Well, the description and allusion to old age suggest that for so many years she has been guarding the well from male aggression. It seems that she has been fed up with the business of shielding the place. References to old age also imply that the female-centred system has become old and weak. As in the case of "Her Vision in the Wood," images of and references to old age suggest the weakening of the female system. There are many lines in this play which refer to the presence of a witch or female deity who is interested in killing or betraying men. Skene has indicated that the terms "witch" and "goddess" are used to refer to the same order of being and that it is the Old Man who uses the term 'witch', and that he uses it to denote a spirit, not a human being who practises witchcraft. The Old Man notes the two aspects of the mountain witch, her capacity to allure and to destroy. When, at the end of the play, her image is
projected on the woman Aoife, Aoife will take on these characteristics of the mountain witch. The tribes of female warriors led by Aoife worship the goddess in her most destructive form. (138-39)

In this respect also the play invites comparison with "Her Vision in the Wood." When the Guardian of the Well gives a hawk cry, the Young Man asks: "There is that cry again. That woman made it,/But why does she cry out as the hawk cries?" The Old Man replies:

It was her mouth, and yet not she, that cried.
It was that shadow cried behind her mouth;
And now I know why she has been so stupid
All the day though, and had such heavy eyes.
Look at her shivering now, the terrible life
Is slipping through her veins. She is possessed.
Who knows whom she will murder or betray
Before she awakes in ignorance of it all,
And gathers up the leaves? (215-216)

The Guardian of the Well is the oracle or the priestess of the Goddess. The actions of the Goddess are manifested through the Guardian. In the Bhadra Kali or Durga temples of South India, it is the oracle who reveals the likes and dislikes, the demands and boons of the goddess. The oracle becomes "possessed" on such moments. The will of the deity is realised through the oracle. The oracle shivers, runs and dances with the sacred sabre in hand. He or she cries aloud and strange and abnormal gestures and manners are performed. The oracle's eyes may be blood-red.
Here, in Yeats's play, the Guardian makes a hawk cry. All the day through, she has been stupid. She has heavy eyes and she is shivering. "She awakes in ignorance of it all" means that when the priestess is "released" from the Goddess's "possession" she becomes a normal woman. During the moments of "possession," she is not aware of herself. She is just an instrument at the hands of the Goddess.

When the young man hears the hawk cry for the first time, he thinks that the cry is made by a real hawk. The Old Man explains: "there is no bird" (214). Then, the Young Man says:

It sounded like the sudden cry of a hawk,
But there's no wing in sight. As I came hither
A great grey hawk swept down out of the sky,
And though I have good hawks, the best in the world
I had fancied, I have not seen its like. It flew
As though it would have torn me with its beak,
Or blinded me, smiting with that great wing.
I had to draw my sword to drive it off,
And after that it flew from rock to rock.
I pelted it with stones, a good half-hour,
And just before I had turned the big rock there
And seen this place, it seemed to vanish away. (214)
The hawk is not an ordinary one. It is the manifestation of the presiding deity of the region. It touches the Young Man's head with its beak to inform the new-comer that there is a deity who is the authority of the locality. Her manifestation in the form of a powerful bird portends a warning to the new visitor. His
word "blinded me, smiting with that great wing/I had to draw my sword to drive it off" show the strength of the deity's manifestation. A similar interpretation is made by Keralites when crows touch their heads with beaks. A particular kind of crows are said to be the manifestation of the souls of ancestors. If somebody does not perform the annual sacrifice in honour of their deceased parents or ancestors, such a kind of crow touches the culprit's head with its beak. It is a reminder to the living that the annual sacrificial rite has been missed. In the play, as a reply to the Young Man's doubts, the Old Man explains that the hawk is the manifestation of the native goddess:
The Woman of the Sidhe herself,

The mountain witch, the unappeasable shadow.
She is always flitting upon this mountain-side,
To allure or to destroy. When she has shown
Herself to the fierce women of the hills
Under that shape they offer sacrifice
And arm for battle. There falls a curse
On all who have gazed in her unmoistened eyes;
So get you gone while you have that proud step
And confident voice, for not a man alive
Has so much luck that he can play with it.
Those that have long to live should fear her most,
The old are cursed already. That curse may be
Never to win a woman's love and keep it;
Or always to mix hatred in the love;
Or it may be that she will kill your children,
That you will find them, their throats torn and bloody,
Or you will be so maddened that you kill them
With your own hand. (214-15)

This passage shows that the goddess is a very powerful one who
receives sacrifices. This female deity favours women: "When she
has shown Herself to the fierce women of the hills/Under that
shape they offer sacrifice/And arm for battle." Women are
willing to serve her offerings. The suggestion of man/woman
rivalry or power-struggle is in the passage. Women give arms to
the goddess. The deity prefers to curse men. She curses those
who gaze in her eyes and "not a man alive/Has so much luck that
he can play with" her curse. Like the Pootam in Edasseri’s
"Poota Pattu" or Kali in "Kavile Pattu," this "mountain witch" is
interested in young blood. "Those that have long to live should
fear her most." She curses men not to win or keep women’s love.
The cruel goddess may kill children or tear their throats. She
may enter the body of men. As incubus, she makes them mad and
forces them to kill their own children. Another sacrificial
allusion in the play is "the old grey stone" (209) described by
the First Musician. It reminds one of the druid stones on which
Irish priests performed human sacrifices in the past. Nangeli,
the mother in "Poota Pattu" is said to be searching for her child
over the sharp stones on the side of the hillock. Here, the
Guardian of the Well has the duty to clean the grey stone by
raking and gathering up leaves. There is a dance by the queens
after beheading the heroes in A Full Moon in March and The King
of the Great Clock Tower. Here, too, there are dancers, but
their purpose in dancing is to divert the attention of the heroes from realising the splash of water in the Well. The power of the Goddess is believed to be contained in the mystery regarding the water in the Well. The male hooligans led by Conga appear in *The Herne's Egg* to unravel the mystery around the Great Herne. Uncovering the mystery and realising the secret are privileges to knowledge which is the synonym of power. The degree of success attained by the two male heroes in *Hawk's Well* in subverting the existing female dominance can be understood by contrasting their attitudes to the Well and its mysteries. The Old Man has understood only this much:

A secret moment that the holy shades
That dance upon the desolate mountain know,
And not a living man, and when it comes
The water has scarce plashed before it is gone. (213)

The Old Man speaks only about the dangers and difficulties of the place. He explains that the presiding deity is a cruel one, associated with the fierce women of the hills. He finds only hurdles; the young man has confidence in himself and exudes determination. He has come crossing the waves of a sea and requests the Old Man to lead him to the spot "where a solitary girl keeps watch" (212). He has heard that he who drinks "of that miraculous water lives for ever" (212). Instead of a well, he can see only "a hollow among stones" (212). The Old Man narrates the impossibility of drinking water from the Well. The Young Man presents only the positive or the encouraging part of the Old Man's long and dismal narration: "So it seems/There is
some moment when the water fills it." The Old Man is incapable of predicting the moment when the water bubbles up in the Well the next time. But the Young Man is optimistic:

I will stand here and wait. Why should the luck
Of Sulatim's son desert him now? For never
Have I had long to wait for anything. (213)

The Old Man discourages him describing the deception of the dancers and the difficulties to live in that place. The Young Man reveals his determination to stay there and drink water from the Well:

My luck is strong,
It will not leave me waiting, nor will they
That dance among the stones put me asleep;
If I grow drowsy I can pierce my foot. (214)

In the two stanzas uttered by the Young Man quoted above, the word "luck" appears twice. It is only a euphemism for the Young Man's firm will and strength. All the references "to all that's old and withered" (214) in the Old Man's words betray his lack of confidence and imbecility. The Old Man dissuades the Young Man, treating at length the curses and immolations of the fierce goddess. Fed up with the Old Man's narration, the Young Man asks:

Have you been set down there
To threaten all who come, and scare them off?
You seem as dried up as the leaves and sticks,
As though you had no part in life. (215)

The Old Man behaves and speaks as if he has no life in him. He
has been subjected to the ordeals of female domination. He offers no resistance or initiates no invasion. The Old Man expresses anxiety over the possibility that if they are able to find water, the younger one may drink completely what little drops that bubble up. The Young Man alleviates the Old Man's fear. He replies: "We shall both drink, and even if there are but a few drops, share them (CPl 216). The Young Man exhibits a spirit of conciliation and cooperation, instead of confrontation. He is a true male hero as he wants to share among men what is achieved by men. He is magnanimous enough to imagine "mankind" as one community.

The Old Man becomes frightened when the Guardian makes her strange and terrible "gaze." He thinks that the Young Man has incurred her displeasure. His presence there might have displeased her. His firm determination and confidence seem to be an insult to the institution of the Well and its assumptions. The Old Man covers his head to protect him from the fierce look of the Guardian. He says to the Young Man:

...you have looked at her;
She has felt your gaze and turned her eyes on us;
I cannot bear her eyes, they are not of this world,
Nor moist, nor faltering; they are no girl's eyes. (261)

But the Young Man is least afraid of the Guardian's hawk eyes. He tells her: "Why do you fix those eyes of a hawk upon me? I am not afraid of you, bird, woman, or witch." (CPl 216). He goes to
the side of the well, which the Guardian has left. He declares his decision to stand there resisting whatever threats are posed by the Guardian: "Do what you will, I shall not leave this place/Till I have grown immortal like yourself" (CPl 216). Unlike the oracle or the male priest in Vishununarayanan Nambudiri's Malayalam poem "Narabali" [Human Sacrifice], the Young Man is not afraid of the terrible looks which portend dangers like the demand of blood-sacrifice. The priest, who has performed many human sacrifices and bloodful oblations upon the idol of Kali, the terrible goddess, becomes startled and frightened, when the goddess, by her fierce staring, demands the blood of the priest himself (Indiayenna Vikaram 52-53). In the context of a fierce goddess or her incumbus, the oracle or priest or priestess, in moments of "possession" or inspiration, the terrible gaze signals the demand of blood. Here, in Yeats's play, the context is problematized or complicated by the male/female power struggle. From such a perspective, the girl's terrible gaze is intended to scare the Young Man off. Now she begins to dance. Dance by a queen, goddess or woman has sacrificial implications in Yeats's plays. The Old Man in "The Death of Cuchulain" says: "Emer must dance, there must be severed heads" (CPl 694). The dance of the Guardian goes on for some time. Unlike the Old Man who has fallen asleep in fear of the Guardian, the Young Man challenges the Guardian: "Run where you will,/Grey bird, you shall be perched upon my wrist,/Some were called queens and yet have been perched there"(217). The words of the Young Man are proper to a male hero. He has tamed or
appropriated many "wild," "improper" and "abnormal" women. A little earlier, he has said that he is not intimidated by either a bird, woman, or witch (216). The halo of terror and mystery around a "possessed" woman is broken by the Young Man. He describes her sacred dance as a kind of running (217). To whatever place she goes, he will capture her. At the nick of the moment, the First Musician announces that he has heard the sound of water in the mysterious Well. The Guardian of the Well goes out. The Young Man goes after her. The Old Man is awakened from his sleep. He raises the complaint and regret that he has been deluded. He has missed the water once again. The young Man re-enters. He says that the Guardian has fled from him and hidden in the rocks (218). The Old Man explicates that she has done so to lead him away from the fountain or the Well. The two men have missed the chance of drinking the sacred water from the Well. The sound of calling a crowd and that of swords and shields is heard. The Old Man explains that the Guardian has roused her troop, "the fierce women of the hills," Aoife and her troop, to kill the Young Man (218). The Young Man cannot have peace for his remaining life. In spite of the Old Man's warning, the Young Man goes to the mountains to face the Guardian and her troop. Unlike the Old Man, the Young Man is not a failure. He has achieved a certain degree of success in his struggle against female centrality. He has questioned some of the assumptions and ideological mystifications. He does not run like a coward nor falls asleep like the old.

Edasseri's "Kavile Pattu" charts the diachronic patterns of
the female goddess/male victim theme and power struggle. Kali, the deity, who had revelled in shedding male blood, had to change her modus operandi because of the intervention of Lord Siva and the arrival of male-dominated Vedic and brahminic gods. Now, she sheds blood by wounding her own head. The male-heroes in Full Moon in March and King of the Great Clock Tower are slain by the respective queens. But they defeat the queen's virginity. Congal in Herne's Egg and the Young Man in Hawk's Well break open some of the secrets of the female-centred system. Congal and the Young Man wage an open war against the goddesses. The witch described in "Her Vision in the Wood" exhibits diachronic aspects as in the case of Kali in "Kavile Pattu." The witch succeeds in wounding "her man." Later she indulges in self-laceration. The motherland/martyr theme infiltrates into "Easter 1916," "Parnell’s Funeral" and "The Rose Tree." The nationalist spirit transforms the motif of sacrifice in such a way that direct or oblique allusions to man-woman power struggle are absent in such poems. Men are expected to lay down their lives for their motherlands. The more immediate danger and terror of foreign domination makes men and women forget for the time being their internal rivalry. Mothers are not expected to battle against foreign oppressors, but they should participate in the sacrificial struggle by allowing and inspiring their sons to fight. To inspire the freedom fighters the images of motherland, mothers and sacrifice are raised and reasserted. The motherland/martyr theme is related to the mother goddess/victim
theme as well as the theme of motherhood as a sacrificial institution. The next chapter which bears the title "The Victim's Joy among the Holy Flame" deals with the themes indicated above.