

ABSTRACT

The Image of Woman as Muse and Monster in the Caribbean Novel

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This thesis examines the various delineations of the female polarity of muse and monster in the Caribbean novel. Sexual morality and an acceptance of a subordinate status to man usually differentiate the muse from the monster. Therefore if a woman is benign, chaste and passive, she is depicted as a goddess, a bestower of inspiration and an instrument of salvation. On the other hand a woman is condemned as a whore if she is aggressive, independent and uses her sexual allure to assert her power.

The work of six novelist are analysed and three approaches to the phenomenon of muse and monster are examined in this thesis. Some writers refuse to relinquish this narrow vision of woman as either goddess or whore. In Part One: "Tradition", this limited perspective is exemplified in the works of V.S. Naipaul and John Hearne. In Part Two: "Myth and Reality", H. Orlando Patterson and Jean Rhys perceive the necessity for the removal of this categorization. Although they successfully challenge one myth they succumb to another as the

woman is still in a condition of physical and spiritual bondage to man. Another approach is to perceive that the integration of muse and monster is necessary for the restoration of wholeness. In Part Three: "Synthesis", W.H. Hudson a naturalised British writer who was born in Argentina, and who has written a novel set in the Caribbean territory of Guyana - presents woman as a symbol of the physical and the spiritual and through the man's acceptance of both women an attempt is made to unify this polarity in his consciousness. On the other hand Wilson Harris gives us a psychological presentation of the woman and brings the female polarity of virgin and whore to a realisation of kinship.