

Witch as a Symbol



The dark side of human nature has always made people believe in greater powers, good or evil. This went on with the rise of Christianity and people believing in Satanism and sorcery; curses and spells. During the dark ages, people possessing knowledge of plants or medicine could be judged, taken to trial, and killed because people would claim they communicated with the devil himself. Old single women, also called hags, crones, or mad women, who lived by themselves, in the woods or apart from the rest of the people, were also targets of persecutions; people found them to be mysterious and blamed them for whatever type of illness that might befall them.

Witches were also present in literature. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the three witches occupy a very important role in the story as they prophecy Macbeth's future. They were a symbol of the supernatural and they were intriguing because the audience would want to see whether or not the witches were right. Lady Macbeth is also one that could be considered a witch as she uses sex to influence Macbeth which is something that was considered witchlike also.

In conclusion, men were quite often simply afraid of women and made up accusations to assert more control over them. For example in the Salem trials, when the wife of the governor was accused, he put an end to the masquerade and the survivors were paid compensation. Men chased women, accused them of doing evil deeds because “normal” women should not do certain things that were inappropriate. Since the human mind fears things it cannot understand, humans have created many different types of things to help them feel more stable in their environment such as religion or general beliefs.



Relevant links

<http://www.123helpme.com/view.asp?id=3346>

<http://anthropology.uwaterloo.ca/courses/Anth311/salem.htm>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/salem/>

<http://www.alibris.com/search/books/subject/Witchcraft%20in%20literature>

Work cited

Boyer, Paul. Nissenbaum, Stephen: "Witchcraft and Social Identity" pp. 266-271 in *Ritual and Belief*, pp. 274-279 (2nd Ed.