Defining the mythic patterns which accurately reflect the forms and realities of woman's experience is a major concern of feminist literary criticism. Mythic analyses of literature by and about women have revealed the inadequacies of the paradigms describing the masculine experience that have been posited by Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Northrop Frye. The social restrictions traditionally placed upon women, and hence upon the heroine, result in a radical difference between the nature of her existence and that of her male counterpart, the hero. From this straightforward observation, it is but a very simple step to conclude that the myths which describe the hero's experiences could not function accurately when it comes to describing those of the heroine. Annis Pratt, in "The New Feminist Criticism," observes: "It is startling to realize that volumes have been written about the development of the male psyche as if it, in itself, defined the human soul. If there is a 'myth of the hero' there must also be a 'myth of the heroine,' a female as well as a male *bildungsroman*, parallel, perhaps, but by no means identical."¹ Carol Christ similarly observes that "the quests of heroes, from Gilgamesh and Odysseus, Apuleius and Augustine, to Stephen Daedalus and Carlos Castaneda, have been recorded throughout history. Joseph Campbell in his classic work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, charted the journey of the hero in many cultures. Typically the hero leaves home, defines himself through tests and trials, and returns with a clearer understanding of himself and his place in the world. But if the hero has a thousand faces, the heroine has scarcely a dozen."²

Given this situation, the literary critic must undertake her or his own quest to discover the patterns which define the experiences of the heroine. Like many undertakings by feminist literary critics, my own quest began in the wilderness,³ with a curiosity about the kinds of initiations protagonists undergo in the forest. Originally, I intended to study twentieth-century narratives that evinced similarities to the myths of Orpheus,
Acteon, and Callisto. I began by working on Callisto for reasons that I seemed almost unable to articulate: her experience felt startlingly familiar, in spite of the fact that it was literally unfamiliar. Later I recognized that seldom during my undergraduate or graduate studies had I written about a woman. Still later I realized the extent to which her experience incorporates common motifs in literature by and about women; later yet I recognized the way her rape reflects a patriarchal culture’s control and definition of women’s sexuality.

In my early explorations of feminist criticism, and of historical, sociological, and psychological studies of the female experience, I found the motifs that constitute the myth of Callisto – rape, troubled motherhood, forest exile, metamorphosis – were viewed by scholars as integral to the lives of real and fictional women. In the course of writing Archetypal Patterns of Women’s Fiction, for example, Annis Pratt found that “the rape-trauma archetype recurs as one of the most frequent plot structures in women’s fiction.” Similarly, Nina Auerbach notes that “the fallen woman, heartbreaking and glamorous, flourished in the popular iconography of America and the Continent as well as England” during the Victorian era. Simone de Beauvoir’s study of a young woman’s initiation into sexuality in The Second Sex suggests that the raped or seduced woman is such a major concern, because for young women the first sexual encounter often seems like rape. Even if that encounter occurs under legally sanctioned circumstances, in the marriage bed, the first sexual intercourse symbolizes not only a man’s physical possession of a woman, but his legal possession as well. In Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape, Susan Brownmiller proposes that “by anatomical fiat – the inescapable construction of their genital organs – the human male was a natural predator and the human female served as his natural prey. Not only might the female be subjected at will to a thoroughly detestable physical conquest from which there could be no retaliation in kind – a rape for a rape – but the consequences of such a brutal struggle might be death or injury, not to mention impregnation and the birth of a dependent child.”

With the birth of that dependent child, women enter upon another experience unique to them: motherhood. Yet the main theme of Adrienne Rich’s study, Of Woman Born, is that, potentially powerful as motherhood might seem, the patriarchy has consistently sought to undermine its “mana”: “The one aspect in which most women have felt their own power in the patriarchal sense – authority over and control of another – has been motherhood; and even this aspect, as we shall see, has been wrenched and manipulated to male control ... The idea of maternal power has been domesticated. In transfiguring and enslaving woman, the womb – the ultimate source of this power – has historically been turned against us and itself made into a source of powerlessness.”
Another motif common to the lives of women is a special relation to nature. Sherry Ortner has suggested in "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture" that the single factor which most contributes to man's perception of a woman as different is her chthonic quality. This characteristic is reflected in the studies of female deities: Erich Neumann's The Great Mother and M. Esther Harding's Woman's Mysteries, for example, reveal that the Goddess in all her variety is consistently a chthonic deity, tied to the fertility of nature and the fecundity of women.

The biological and cultural fact of woman's special relationship to nature is expressed in literature through the use of plot structures that consistently place the heroine in a natural setting which functions not only to express her tie to the earth, but also serves as a refuge from patriarchal control. Francine du Plessix Gray writes: "From Emily Bronte's moors to Doris Lessing's veld, women authors have turned to nature not only in search of heightened perception but also as a refuge from the patriarchal order ... Until all forms of sexual dominance are abolished, nature may be the only form of nunnery left to us, the only shelter in a desacralized world." Similarly, Pratt notes that the heroine often escapes the confines and demands of society by retreating to a green world.

At this point Pratt introduces an archetypal figure that she identifies as the green-world lover, a man who is removed from the patriarchal social structure and its values, and who initiates the heroine into her sexuality. Yet the heroine's sexual experience in the forest is equally likely to occur at the hands of a rapist, a representative of the enclosing patriarchy, whom Pratt identifies with Olympian (and non-chthonic) deities like Zeus and Apollo. Pratt observes, then, that this configuration of the heroine's sojourn in the natural world has two opposite manifestations, initiation and rape, and that both are central to fiction.

Another paradox in fiction by and about women is manifested in the quality of the forest retreat itself. Gray's remarks suggest that the natural world may be a place of chosen retreat - a "nunnery -" a place of companionship with other women, or, as Pratt describes it, a place of escape from the pressures of the patriarchy. But Pratt also observes that because such an escape signals a woman's rebellion against the patriarchy it frequently results in a rape which is designed precisely as punishment for her rebellion. Consequently, such a retreat is as likely to end in rape as in freedom from domination. The natural world is also a place of involuntary exile. After a woman's fall, Auerbach writes, "indifferent nature simply reclaims her. Once cast into solitude, the fallen woman is irretrievably metamorphosed."

Auerbach's choice of words here is significant, for metamorphosis is also part of female experience, specifically metamorphosis which renders woman part of the natural world. Pratt uses the same word to describe
woman's experience in the green world: "As in many examples of 'green-world fiction' the hero not only appreciates and likes nature but, through a process of metamorphosis, becomes an element in it."\(^{14}\)

Auerbach finds that "apotheosis" is the last element of the career of the fallen woman, as if "a woman's fall is imagined as the only avenue through which she is allowed to grow."\(^{15}\) Yet if she succeeds in transforming herself and growing, that apotheosis is likely to be punishment or death. Similarly, Pratt writes that: "Woman's rebirth journeys ... create transformed, androgynous, and powerful human personalities out of socially devalued beings and are therefore more likely to involve denouements punishing the quester for succeeding in her perilous, revolutionary journey."\(^{16}\)

The myth of Callisto encompasses all these motifs. A nymph in Diana's following, nature was her "nunnery" and her refuge from the patriarchal society that had defeated her father. The green-world villain is Zeus, who rapes her as she rests in the forest, tired from the hunt. Diana's band of virgins exiles her; Hera in her anger transforms her into a bear. Hence the forest now becomes the place of involuntary exile and her metamorphosis makes her part of that landscape. Because she is a bear, she cannot raise a human child; thus her motherhood is dramatically wrenched from her. The final element in her story combines both death and apotheosis: she is nearly killed, but Zeus rescues her at the last moment and enshrines her in the sky as the Great Bear constellation.

Clearly, a study of the Callisto myth's recurrence in literature in English serves to synthesize many of the motifs already observed by other critics as being integral to the experience of woman. The recurrence of this myth further indicates that it constitutes an archetype, in keeping with Leslie Fiedler's definition of the term as "any of the immemorial patterns of response to the human situation in its most permanent aspects: death, love, the biological family, the relationships with the Unknown, etc., whether those patterns be considered to reside in the Jungian Collective Unconscious or the Platonic World of Ideas."\(^{17}\)

But the feminist practice of archetypal criticism necessarily differs from that of Jung's more traditional followers. Certainly Jung's ideas begin to acknowledge the feminine insofar as he views masculine and feminine qualities as "equally available for development by either sex"\(^{18}\) and insofar as he recognizes the importance of feminine qualities in the masculine personality. But there are several crucial limitations to archetypal theory as it has been typically applied to women's experiences.

The first limitation is the tendency to assume an identity between archetypes of the anima – archetypes that are manifestations of man's psychological experience of the feminine – and the archetypes that emerge as descriptors of either the social or psychological dimensions of women's lives.\(^{19}\) Such a limitation manifests itself in two ways. First, there is a ten-
dency to interpret female characters in the light of male characters' experience of them, and to see the heroine primarily as an anima figure for the hero. Second, there is a tendency to read texts about women written by men without recognizing that the masculine viewpoint of the author must function as some kind of filter – not necessarily one that produces inaccuracies or fallacies, nor necessarily one that is unsympathetic or misogynistic – but a filter nevertheless. If recognition is given to the author's masculinity, the heroine is likely to suffer reduction to the role of his anima. The result is a criticism that is phallocentric and that asserts, more or less emphatically, that literature is about men: women are aspects of, or appendages to, the masculine psychology.

The second essential inadequacy of traditional Jungian criticism for feminist scholars is its tendency to view archetypes as fixed and immutable. As Naomi Goldenberg points out, by viewing the archetypes as unchanging "we run the risk of setting bounds to experience by defining what the proper experience of women is. This could become a new version of the ideology of the Eternal Feminine and it could result in structures just as limiting as those prescribed by the old Eternal Feminine." Such archetypes could be used to justify socially-sanctioned, seductive but oppressive roles and behavior patterns because they are an immutable part of the feminine psyche. The solution to this problem suggested by Lauter and Rupprecht in Feminist Archetypal Theory is to "regard the archetype not as an image whose content is frozen but ... as a tendency to form and reform images in relation to certain kinds of repeated experience; then the concept could serve to clarify distinctively female concerns that have persisted throughout human history. Applied to a broad range of materials ... it could expose a set of reference points that would serve as an expandable framework for defining female experience, and ultimately the 'muted' culture females have created."

By viewing archetypes as fixed, traditional Jungian theorists ignore Jung's own exploration of the ways in which the archetypal images of the collective unconscious mirror the culture in which they arise. Similarly, archetypal images, as they rise from the Collective Unconscious to an individual's consciousness, are inevitably filtered through the experience, biases, and culture of the individual. Consequently, Lauter and Rupprecht propose a concept of archetype that "requires that we consider the experiential context in which the image occurs. A central tenet of [their] theory is that image and behaviour are inextricably linked; our images of possible behavior inform our actions, and our actions, in turn, alter our images."

The purpose of this study, then, is to note not only the recurrence of the myth, but the variations which it undergoes. The configuration observed by Pratt, Auerbach, and de Beauvoir has a Janus-faced quality: the natural world may represent a retreat or an exile, the green-world man may be lover
or rapist, the fallen woman’s situation may end in death or apotheosis. To ignore these paradoxes would be simplistic. Consequently, the critic must also attend to what Fiedler, noting the same phenomena as Lauter and Rupprecht, terms “signature,” an individual response to the “immemorial patterns”: “the sum total of individuating factors in a work, the sign of the Persona or Personality, through which an Archetype is rendered, and which itself tends to become a subject as well as a means of the poem ... Signature ... belongs ... to the social collectivity as well as to the individual writer. The Signature is the joint product of ‘rules’ and ‘conventions,’ of the expectations of a community, and the idiosyncratic responses of the individual poet, who adds a personal idiom or voice to a received style.”24 These variations reflect a point or points of view on the issues which the myth or archetype addresses.

This study examines the recurrence and variations of the myth, both the archetype and the signatures, by observing its appearance in fifteen works in English. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the myth was treated in translations of Ovid’s Metamorphoses by William Caxton, Sir George Sandys, and William Golding. It was incorporated into the fabric of other works as well: Caxton’s translation of Raoul Lefevre’s Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, William Warner’s Albion’s England and W.N.’s lyric, The Barley-Breake, or a Warning for Wantons. It is central, also, to John Milton’s A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle, but does not make a significant appearance in English literature again until the end of the eighteenth century, in Mrs Radcliffe’s Mysteries of Udolpho. After that rather lengthy hiatus, its recurrence is frequent. Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, George Eliot’s Adam Bede, and Thomas Hardy’s Tess of the D’Urbervilles all revolve around heroines who are Callisto figures. Two major works of the twentieth century, D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover and Margaret Atwood’s Surfacing, provide contemporary variations of the myth. I have, perhaps somewhat controversially, included works by male authors when the myth was clearly present, under the (perhaps once again controversial) belief that women are not the only biological gender who can make observations about or attempt to grapple with a woman’s experience in a patriarchal world. Whether those observations are sympathetic, misogynistic, or ignorant can only be determined by a careful reading of the text in which they appear, by attention, in short, to signature.

This is not, of course, an exhaustive list of Callisto narratives: other works which could be included range from Radcliffe’s Mysteries of the Forest to Marian Engel’s Bear. Some principle of selection was necessary, however, to keep this study manageable. Accordingly, the criteria consisted of a conjunction between the generic, historical, or cultural significance of a given work and the extent to which it engenders new perspectives on the myth.
The chronological order of the study and the frequency with which writers are aware of their predecessors’ work might suggest that I intend Callisto to be a source study. Mrs Radcliffe does quote Milton’s A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle in Mysteries of Udolpho; George Eliot did read about Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale shortly before she wrote about her own Hetty and Arthur in Adam Bede. But a writer’s conscious influence by another source (much less an unconscious one) is difficult to prove and not particularly fruitful in the context of this study. What I wish to suggest, instead, is the remarkable tenacity, persistence, and elasticity of this myth. Any chronological development points not to literary sources, but to the changing attitudes toward women that the respective variations of the myth serve to index. My use of historical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological sources is further intended to explain the ways in which the recurrences of the myth are a reflection of their time, but I am in no way pretending to be a polymath.

Carl Jung, curious about the process that brought the unconscious, mythic configurations into the conscious realm so that they could be expressed in creative work, concluded that archetypes arise as a response to the problems of the writer’s time: “Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present.”25 In this context, the frequency with which writers have reached back and found this particular “primordial image” is surely telling. As a myth about a woman’s powerlessness and her rape, a myth about sexual aggression as a means of possession and control, its persistence is surely a comment upon women’s lives and women’s experience of their sexuality. Yet, as I shall argue, the myth has a positive, pre-patriarchal element that describes a woman’s sexual initiation and her achievement of the right to self-determination. The expropriation of this aspect of the myth and our relative ignorance of the ancient women’s rituals that were its expression is part of woman’s dispossession, her loss of images, myths, narratives that legitimate and celebrate her strength and her complexity. Consequently, the study of Callisto’s myth ought to reveal many aspects of the realities of women’s experience from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century – the “inadequacy and one-sidedness” of each age. But it should reveal as well the “primordial image in the unconscious” that provides a vision of woman fully realized, fully self-possessed, fully feminine.