Witchcraft and Women's Spaces; A cultural Materialism Study of John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick*

Assistant Professor Dr. Azhar Noori Fejer
University of Baghdad / College of Education
Ibn Rushed / Department of English
E-mail: azharnoori63@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT:

Witch stories are part of American popular culture, and this culture is extremely influenced by a continuing reliance on its past. The modern obsession of Americans with witches, whether real or metaphorical, is related to politics especially when it came to issues of gender politics. This article exposes a modern image of the female character seen from a male author point of view. John Updike, influenced by the changes that happened to women within second wave of feminism, attempted to write *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984). Actually, he presented women who did have a sort of careers. His witches are professional active and dynamic. What do witches stand for in American Culture? Why did Updike choose to write about women? Why were these females witches and not ordinary women? This is the core discussion of the present study.

Key Words: witches, female characters, feminism, American culture, male author.

Introduction:

Feminism as a political movement became more active within the second half of the 20th century with the publication of two important feminine books; Betty Friedan's landmark book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) which is generally believed to have been the impetus for the feminist counterculture (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005), and Kate Millett *Sexual Politics* (1970) which was originated on radical feminis stance, and upheld that all relationships between men and women were based on patriarchal power. Friedan maintained "[t]he feminist revolution had to be fought because women quite simply were stopped at a stage of evolution far short of their human capacity" (Friedan, 1963, p.85).As for Millett, she clarified that the "mythic version" which attributes "human suffering, knowledge, and sin" to the female "is still the foundation of sexual attitudes, for it represents the most crucial argument of the patriarchal tradition in the West" (1970, p.52). Actually, both previous books are indication for countercultural change for they expressed "what many women seemed to feel but couldn't put into words," and feminist used counterculture as a means "to help create a new political, economic and cultural society"

(McCauley, 2009). They clarify the issues women were challenging and suggested changes thought necessary to build an image of a better and fairly equal society, adds McCauley. These two texts motivated thought and allowed people to talk.

In fact, "Friedan dismantled the female version of the American dream, which taught women to aspire to perfect domesticity, in order to reveal the frustration and feelings of entrapment beneath" (Gamble, 2001, p.237). Dissatisfied with their traditional role probably have led many women to work seriously to change. During the hard early years, second wave feminists believed that they could speak for all women. Radical feminists, in this phase, were branded with a claim for sisterhood and unity leading feminist agenda "to attempt to combine social, sexual, and personal struggles and to see them as inextricably linked." They also claimed that their struggle is a "class struggle" (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005, p. 10). The movement had its limitations in its early years concerning participants who included women of colour and of working class backgrounds; however it had relatively broadened. The presence of those women did not mean that feminism was being adopted within these communities, clarifies Epstein (2001). Yet, the inclusion of this wide range of women enforced it.

It is a complex and diverse "wave" for one of its strains was the development of women – only spaces, with the notion that women working together would create a special dynamic that is not possible in mixed – groups, and that would be good for the betterment of the whole planet. Martha Rampton describes women as "collaborative, inclusive, peaceful, nurturing, and holistic in their approach to problem solving than men" (2008). It is an idea shared by some people who saw women to be, relatively, more humane than men, either because of their long "subjugation" or their biology.

In the 1970s some political conservatives tried to change the climate, as they were keen to the traditional status quo, believing that the state of the nation is revealed in the condition of the family. The country as a whole turned out to be more conservative in all areas of political life. Not feminists alone experienced rather disappointing and growing pessimism; the decline of the movement has coincided with a right-wing attack on feminism, and with the decline of other activist movements under the domination of conservative politics of President Reagan. Second wave managed to survive and its impact was wider and deeper than the first wave. It was rather hard for the U.S. politics to wipe it off account. It has managed to change women's lives and thoughts in ways that would not be reversed.

Witches in American Culture:

The debate to Updike's choice to write *The Witches of Eastwick* could be possibly linked with what Marion Gibson's article "Retelling" indicates. She states that it became clear in 2000 that witches "both real and metaphorical, were a highly politicised symbol and a touchstone for both left and right, particularly when it came to issues of gender politics" (2006, p.85). Gibson relates America's modern obsession with witches to three key periods of American history: the 1690s, 1880–1900, and the middle decades of the 20th century from 1930 and on. In each period witches have appeared "at moments of national crisis, when America was torn between radical and conservative impulses". Gibson reveals how "powerfully America's enduring reliance on the past" (2006, p.86) is reflected on popular culture that has revived and rewritten witch stories from all three periods.

Matilda Joslyn Gage vehemently argues that witches had rather been victims of a constant masculine oppression. She blames the Medieval Church for starting the witch-hunts that has "degraded woman by destroying her self-respect" (Gibson, 2006, p.231). Those women had ultimately been "early scientists, mesmerists and workers with plant extracts, elemental spirits and psychic forces," she affirms, were not yet understood, and thus accused of witchcraft (2006, p.236). Women's intellectuality seems to be dreaded and cruelly diminished by force. The church suspected and suppressed such thinking; it was a "bondage . . . over free thought" launching from "patriarchism" (2006, p.245). Finally, New England witchcraft trials took place because Puritans had "adopted all the unjust previsions of European christianity [sic] as parts of their own religion and government" (2006, p.272). Gage believes that "rebellion" had begun at an early time, and it would progress and defeat these institutions which always thwarted free thinking. An equally radical writer is Charles Godfrey Leland has "gathered and created spells and poems about witches," and collected stories of Diana, goddess of the witches and religion (Leland, 1999, p. 88). He believes that "with every new rebellion . . . humanity and woman gain something, that is to say, their just dues or rights" (Leland, 1999, p. 113). Hence, it was Gage and Leland who brought the witches into modern America as symbol for feminists, as well as revolutionary thought.

Later on, in 1900, witches developed into liberal metaphors for political dissension and female self- empowerment with Baum's Oz book, *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904) which contained a satire on "suffragism", states Gibson; it is largely feminist work, authorized by female fantasy. The

shift in implicating witchcraft in American life from the disputed facts of history to the world of fiction occurred as the book was filmed in the 1930s. It was moved from the public to the domestic sphere, for once "real" witches became mere metaphors for women.

Witches at the 40s became feminist metaphors. The idea of a man marrying a witch is rather known in English literature; however, Thorne Smith retrieved the story again in his anti-feminist *The Passionate Witch* (1941) and made his witch a misogynist joke. Smith's anti-feminist novel, ironically, turned out to be the basis of "American witch-comedies," some of these feminist films and television series overtly took "the political battle over the witch-figure through the rise of first-, second- and third-wave feminism and into the twenty-first century" explains Gibson. It has obviously influenced later plays and films (Bell, Book and Candle), television series (Bewitched), comic strips (Sabrina the Teenage Witch) and novels (*Practical Magic*), in addition to many others (Leland, 1999, p.90). In these works, there is a tendency to turn the image of the witches from the criminal, dissenting and outcast to propriety and approval.

Smith's novel *The Passionate Witch* and *I Married A Witch*, and the film that was based on it, are model of the portrayal of witches in 20th-century popular culture; it a clear metaphor for discussion concerning the role of women. Gibson asserts the importance of "[t]he relative dating of novel and film" which illustrates "what is at stake each time the witch-figure is portrayed". Depression battered America in the 1930s. Working women were seen to be taking traditional male roles as providers; "malice and parasitism of the witch is that of all women" (Gibson, 2006, 92). Americans devotion in 1942, however, had turned toward the wickedness of external enemies, rather than female enemies within (Crunden, 1994, p.252). Eventually, Norman Rockwell's *The Four Freedoms and Rosie* (1943) tended to celebrate the virtue and value of American women in private and public life. Socially, times were better for women both at home and work; accordingly they became also better for witches. The message sent was woman's best place is home.

Usually, witches were distinct to be lacking feminine attributes: they do not blush, cry or fall in love. Despite their powers, badness, and danger, they usually ended in narratives either tamed or dead (Krzywinska, 2000, p.122). When a witch falls in love, she will no longer be a witch, she becomes a normal human and was back home where she belonged. Cultural works intention was to "[express] the sacrifices necessary to take one's place in the conventions of heterosexual romance and marriage" (p.150);

another message these works were carrying to women in the 40s and 50s consistent with the ideology that imagined the nation as home. They dealt with the politics of gender; creating resemblance between witches and communists by playing on the link between witchcraft and liberalism (Gibson 94). The idea that witches might be simultaneously liberals and liberated was only suggested in the 1960s, and American writers did not have to present witches to be, or begin as, bad women.

More liberating parallel, possibly, was drawn between the witch's magic and the woman's independence of mind and body. Television programmes in the early 1960s integrated a component of fantasy helped television producers address

"the changing role of women in America . . . without risking a reduced viewership among conservative, white, middle-class viewers, or making plain that the culture was losing faith in the post-World War II American Dream" (Helford, 2000, p. 2).

John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984), is regarded as a good example of the indecisive sexual politics intricate in reading witches during latter decades of the century. Updike states that the book was slightly about the difficulties of divorced women. He wonders "what do women do with their freedom from male or patriarchal authority, and how do women handle power?" (Plath, 1994, p.263) as divorce became very common among women during the 60s. So he presents the life of three lively and forceful divorced women who have careers. Usefully, we can read the novel as an extended metaphor for women during the era of the 70s. The author attempted to describe the sociological condition throughout the book.

To use witchcraft as a metaphor for women's aspirations, Americans were able to discuss covertly what they couldn't discuss openly. Domesticating witches safely; Americans proposed that everything was well with profoundly gendered ideals of their family life. They believed that the most appropriate thing for woman is to fall in love and get married, and let her husband to be head of the household, even if she was obviously cleverer and more powerful than him and other men around her. Americans tried to confirm the usual family values pleasantly because during the 60s and 70s Americans saw it necessary to put women's social, cultural and economic power under careful control.

John Updike's New Sense of life:

John Updike states that fiction "to a degree is fantastic," and life is a "literally fantastic." He regards fiction works to be charmingly presenting "life in something like its true colors, it's true, bright colors." Life would look like fiction When habits and dullness are removed from it, he continues; life is "a strange territory, but a splendid one" (Reilly, 2002). It is the way Updike felt life and sensed the world around him which can be grasped through analysing *The Witches of Eastwick* thoroughly. However, he adopted magical realism in writing this work.

During early career, Updike was accused of giving slight attention to women characters in his books. He defends himself stating: it is in "the domesticity, the family, the sexual relations, that women interest me" (Rothstein, 1988). Later, he gave more space and emphasis to women because; "[a] writer makes his world, but it's very much based on the world he has experienced and seen," he adds. So he based his characters on attitudes and trends of the majority of women around during second wave feminism. No American writer took women so seriously, he explains; or has tried more sincerely to show women as heroines the way he did, and there might be certain things that he did not know about women, but he would try to write a long piece from a female point of view. He also thought that women writers have variously and amazingly succeeded to cross "over into male minds" (*An Interview*, 1975). A writer should not be afraid of the experience, he added, thus, he wrote a novel from a female point of view, accepting the challenge and continuing his attempts to write about women. Updike had the attempt "to explore, on the realistic level, the whole question of power in women" (Plath, 1994, p. 264). He wondered whether power would be less murderous in female hands, however, he showed the opposite through the way his witches deal with their rivals.

Feminists accused men to be "murderous," and they suggested letting women lead instead, Updike shows feminist myth of the gentler sex to be merely sentimental (Raine, 1984). Women are not less vicious, Updike sensibly argues, for "Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir and other female leaders throughout history had not proven to be conspicuously more clever in avoiding war than men had" (Plath, 1994, p.264). Feminists claimed seems to be quite untrue simply because human beings: "both sexes are two-legged, mortal, fallible creatures with, I think, much more in common than not," Updike believes (Plath, 1994, p.79). Simultaneously, his book does not expose high opinion of men either, for the Vietnam War rests as a crucial setting to the novel.

He describes the book to be "a very determined attempt to write about women who did have careers of a sort," presenting them as professional witches ;"active and dynamic;" and even more dynamic than the men in the novel (Rothstein, 1988).He defended his portrayal of the female which has gone through excessive debate, and led to an antagonistic feminists' prejudice. But feminist remained not quite satisfied with his portrayal of women and considered him a misogynist this time.

Updike was quite distressed and hurt by women's objection about his female's portrayal. He believes himself to be: "a man who's had plenty to do with women in many capacities." He says that he has a mother and two daughters, and two wives, and a lot of female editors. His life is full of women as colleagues and domestic companions, and he "never thought of [himself] as anything in [his] role as a novelist but fair and sympathetic" (Plath, 1994, p.79). His insight to understand women and genuinely write about them is an outcome of living with and among them for he was never detached from women's lives. Updike finds "Do we not alike suck milk, learn to read, leave home, do work, play games, fear death, and die" ("Introduction," 1976). Feminists have "hated the book," he admits and justifies that because the work is "a male attempt to look at the female revolution or aspects of feminism, or women alone, or women in group, or women as power centers" (Plath, 1994, p.267).

Examining the book just as an anti-feminist work, as it is regarded, is not quite rightful for the book demands to be viewed also from other perspectives. However, many critics see the book to be remarkable, for it "remains [Updike's] only novel to have made a significant and lasting impact on popular culture" (Thorne, 2008). When culture deals with witchcraft, jokingly or seriously, it has a great deal "to do with its views of sexuality and power, and especially with the apportioning of powers between the sexes," and its mainstream acceptance to be as "a dark and unusual book," states Atwood (1984). She also believes that the novel treats attractive female beauty unconventionally, approves female power slightly, later condemned it for the murder done. In other words, conservative American society remained to expect women/witches to sacrifice and be secondary homemakers.

The Witch in the novel is seen as an acquisition of power by individuals. Feminists wanted women to be free and empowered; "It is a convention of feminist thought, at least in the sixties and seventies," clarifies Updike. He feared, as many other Americans the limitless power that would be gained by free-thinking women. Updike, as a 'member,' is

"confident of the values, attitudes and institutions of the society;" (Williams,1961/2011, 109) by referring to these essential ways and values, he thinks that tensions and conflicts within society could be solved. Many hints to feminist movement could be found in the text; the three women's friendship is outstanding, and the structure of their relation is very strong reminding one of women's sisterhood claimed by feminists at the time. Though they are quite different in characteristics and desires, yet, share mutual respect. It is an indication to feminism ideology that sees women as a secluded social class. These witches were ordinary domestic wives; but getting divorced and losing husbands made them establish a religious-charged "coven" of their own. The witches' magical power came within their liberation from marriage ties and men's domination.

Updike's Narrative Writing:

Updike is often seen as reactionary, a forefront American novelist in an era of social change. Through his "insight [Updike] brings freshness to the familiar, and supplies the novel with traditional pleasures"(Samuels, 1960, 6). A common goal in almost all his books is to write about the truth of the human heart. As a serious writer who often has a point; Updike believes in the value of words and that reality can be obtained through language. The imagery in the book puts it in the canon; it contains too many extended metaphors and similes, but they never seem to be too much as readers, mostly, welcome the intricate writings. Updike never preferred his works to be termed as literary fiction for it limits him and his potentials of what might come of his writing. The fact that they are written in words simply makes his works literary, clarifies Updike. He never comments on his characters or try to justify their actions while writing; he only describes in extensive details how they act and react.

The book is seen as a traditional American Romance or a "fable" as Atwood clarifies. Updike uses omniscient point of view in the novel. The narration of the story is shared between three women. The beauty of Updike's prose, according to some critics, comes from writing excessive details; "the abundance on every page, and in every sentence". Gradually, "this abundance could sometimes slip over into parody," but in this novel he has "a subject that demands this omnivorousness" (Slatcher, 2011). The fact that the author is a man and that he wrote so well from women's point of view, is admirable.

Updike was attacked because of his strict description of everyday life and his way of portraying women as "sardonic and often brutal." During the era of female equality, he was not regarded highly by many who find his tone to be suspiciously puckish. The respect for his craft often counterbalanced "the mixed feelings towards his subject matter" (Oard, 2008). The novel is meant to be entertaining and its purpose is to allow the reader to escape. He centred the story around the lives three divorced women during the Vietnam War rather than on spells and magic. It starts with elements of fantasy immediately revealing magical realism which is used fantastically to empower women to do extraordinary things that are not experienced by humans.

As a magical realist; he avoids the reliable tone of objective realistic report. It is a tendency of magical realists to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folk tale, and myth while maintaining a strong contemporary social relevance. It is "an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles in closed or open structures." Here, the writer opposes reality and tries to unravel it, "to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts". The principle thing is to discover the 'mysterious relationship' between man and his surroundings. The writer does not copy the surrounding reality or twist it, but hold the mystery that "breathes behind things" (Leal, 2005, 119-123). In magical realism key events usually have no logical or psychological explanation.

Part of magical realism is the acknowledgment and acceptance of the witches' powers by their community, and the reader is also asked to believe that Alexandra, Jane, and Sukie have turned their ex-husbands, discretely, into a jar of dust, a dry sheaf of herbs, and a plastic placement. In effect, a little witchcraft would not be a problem in the madness of the era. The three witches are aware of their powers, as they have deposited their respective husbands, and sometimes used their powers sparingly for domestic reasons and frivolous means. However, they live a normal life and do not usually use their magic to do everyday tasks.

The novel presents the messy America of the early 70s; the setting of the story is Eastwick, a small town in America where identical mainstays of church and family hardly seem to exist. The Vietnam War is firmly in the background and the shock of economic downturn is everywhere, meanwhile manifesting feminism could be a possible theme for the book. Reading the novel as an extended metaphor for women during the tumult of second

wave feminism provides the reader with a special insight. Updike's views of women are really worth rising, and they merit further examination.

Updike's Women:

Updike continuously tried to improve his females. Yet, some still see a misogynist touch in his characterization. His book lacks amiable characters of either sex, for the male characters are "self-centred cheaters and liars, the women shrews or caricatures" (Moleti 2009). Others find it to bear "perhaps a too uncomfortable true picture of the lives of women, and what men really think of them" (Johnson 1984). Being criticized for misogyny and racism, Updike defended saying that he was writing with a sincere heart about common people in everyday situations, believing that there can be no happy characters in fiction.

The three witches are rather close to American women in the 60s and 70s. They are ordinary, with professional jobs, and children to take care of; they have dreams, share concerns, and have common fears. Their liberty and supernatural power categorize them to be vivid model for particular women – the unconventional. Updike also presents, with less emphasis, other images of women in the background of the story – those who are more domestic and conservative. The second category reflects women who still lead traditional lives; he refers to different types; the subjugated, the deserted, and the nagging. So, there are notable differences between women nowadays, since not all women apprehend liberation to be leading a total free life as the witches do.

The story is a reminder of the Salem witches; the New England town where the bewitched Anne Hutchinson was out casted and later died. The "air of Eastwick empowered women;" (Updike, 1984, p.6) but in "a highly original conceit, witchcraft here is real, and part of being a woman" as Adrian Slatcher (2011) suggests. Their former husbands, who apparently had died from natural causes, are kept as mementos. Alex's husband "rested on a kitchen shelf in a jar, reduced to multi-coloured dust, the cap screwed on tight," Jane's ex-husband "hung in the cellar of her ranch house and was occasionally sprinkled, one pinch at a time, into a philtre, for piquancy" (Updike, 1984, p.5). Sukie had 'germanized' hers in plastic and used him as a place mat." They served a "fucktion," Jane comments. So they have said fare well to their old life and indulged into a new, liberated, unconventional one.

The Facets of Modern Women:

The three witches are not outcasts living in dark woods; their lives are interwoven with the community. In an American small-town, divorcees are embodiments of what society tends to think about divorcees. If one leaves her husband or she is left "doesn't make any difference," it will be news to many other abandoned women trapped in full child support (Atwood, 1984). The three witches meet regularly in a suburban "coven" to share gin and memories about men; they call their own meeting a "coven". The novel offers an effective combination of female empowerment and women mysticism simultaneously. In their meetings they

would conjure up the spectres of Eastwick's little lives and set
them buzzing and circling in the darkening air…they could erect
a cone of power above them like a tent to the zenith, and know at
the base of their bellies who was sick, who was sinking into debt,
who was loved, who was frantic, who was burning, who was
asleep in a remission of life's bad luck (Updike, 1984, p.36).

Predominantly, their magic is not quite harmful; they used it for fun. Later the three witches are initiated for tasting the knowledge both of power and destruction that may proceed from it: "It felt wonderful, administering that horrible power!" (Updike, 1984, p.298). It makes them feel proud of their abilities and craft. The witches are of a similar age and share strong sisterhood. Cunningly, the novel is set at a specific moment in America's modern history; feminism has been everywhere, and some of its phrases have spread so the witches use words like ""chauvinist" in light social repartee" (Atwood, 1984). The witches care much about each other and even, at times, Alex and Sukie show some concern about women in town. Yet, they never befriend these women for they are entirely different.

There is a deal between the three witches not to think seriously of men: "Men aren't the answer," states Alexandra. Simultaneously, we see them amused with seducing unhappily married men, leading a free sexual life– an irreverence that has mostly stood the test of time. They feel that such relations would free them from traditional marriage ties when one has to take decisions. Besides, they consider themselves doing favour to miserable married men who lost happiness through living with irritated wives:

Healing belonged to their natures, and if the world accused them

of coming between men and wives … and if the world not merely
accused but burned them alive in the tongues of indignant opinion,
that was the price they must pay. It was fundamental and instinctive,
it was womanly, to want to heal (Updike, 1984, p.74).

In spite of the generally common features shared by the three, Updike attempts to highlight specific features while portraying them. Obviously, he tries to intensify a certain feature through each character.

The Depressed Witch

Alexandra Spofford, is a plump, depressed artist from the West. The author gives more space to Alexandra for she occupies the majority of the first section, 'The Coven'. Updike describes her as "the large, drifting style of witch…and in the heart rather lazy and entropically cool" (Updike, 1984, p.3). She is a sculpturess who makes figurines which she sold to two local boutiques. She cares about women in general, and pities anyone in distress, but has more empathy for her friends. She has gained the gift of sculpture after getting divorced, nearly the same time she had got her other powers. Alexandra loves her work and defends it forcefully against van Horne ridicule: "My little bubbies aren't jokes, they're meant affectionately" (Updike, 1984, p.97). Just like the other two, Alex, wishes to assert her individuality through her profession: "I don't want to be another Niki de Saint-Phalle … I want to be me" (Updike, 1984, p.39) says Alex to van Horne as he criticises her art.

She is more thoughtful and less cruel than the other two witches, and a little bit more traditional, while the two younger are more modern and less conservative in their attitudes. Alex usually tends to "dominate, when the three were together, by being sullen and inert, making the two other come to her" (Updike, 1984, p.34). It could be a reference to the dissimilarities between conventional thoughtful feminists and the rather daring and liberated modern ones.

Alex suffers depression; it is a common psychological illness most women suffer due to the pressures of modern life. She is the eldest and biggest in size than the other two; she shows more weariness about weight and age. It is the main reason behind her depression and fear of death. She is afraid of "Cancer;" which is usually caused by "Irritation" and because women, in general, suffer from frustration. She is haunted with fear,

weariness, and sees cancer symbol to be everywhere in nature. It is in "clusters of blueberries," in "grapes ripening on the sagging rotten arbor," in the "ants bringing up conical granular hills," simply she sees it in all "blind and irresistible multiplications" (Updike, 1984, p.25). This gloomy view reflects her depression. Alex always resists these thoughts by pushing them away from her mind. Though she is a witch, she is quite positive that her powers will not last for ever: "Someday I don't feel like I have any magic." They are temporary powers, they are related to an individual situation they are in now, and they will vanish, then death will come to them just like other humans. Alex knows others to have magic besides them, not necessary of their kind but still it come from the feeling of freedom. So, magic is a metaphor for all kinds of power possessed by humans, it gives certain advantages for a specific time; yet it cannot last for ever.

The obsession with weight, most intensely reflected in Alex's character, is another aspect of modern women. Alex appears to accept her weigh; still she keeps struggling with it. The two other witches also feel that weight and shape are important for "divestment" was a natural principle that is "being demonstrated." They should lose weight to survive because [s]afety lies in lessening, in becoming random and thin enough," comments the narrator (Updike, 1984, p.109). They are possessed with ideal body's idea. The repeated topics of weight and the acceptance of one's body all remind the reader of what has been flown in American current culture; the notion to portray the thinnest figure as the ideal. Although she drinks diet and struggles with her desire for food, she keep winning weight continuously.

Alexandra's depression usually draws her to think "of eating to cheer herself up," she resists this by turning to do some housework, but again she feels bored; she is tired of remaking the beds, washing dishes. She sees herself exactly as Van Home says: "a mechanism, a robot cruelly conscious of every chronic motion (Updike, 1984, p.75). This exposes vividly what a large portion of modern women feel concerning their bodies, health, and routine of life.

Alex lost her body's beauty within marriage, but she gains it again when she got divorced, however depression makes her seem very weak sometimes. Sukie wearies about Alex's palpable depression, and she is scared that Alex might have stopped believing in freedom, in witchcraft, in their powers, and their ecstasy anymore. Their troubles, weariness, and exhaustion are also out of heavy responsibility; it has proven to be a

tiresome task to many independent women. Alex also shows deep depression when Van Horne fails to sell her art works. Actually, money is another weary to the witches, and it is reflected in their tendency toward Van Horne. They thought him to be rich and would help them in getting on with their profession, but, he never actually did anything. The weight of war on economy of the country, and its pressure is directly reflected on people.

Though Alex is nice, her magical powers rather intensify when she is vexed. Being the eldest, she is the steadiest one among them. But she conjures a violent thunderstorm when some kids on the beach annoy her: "felt irritated and vengeful. Her insides felt bruised … She decided to clear the beach for herself (Updike, 1984, p.14)".Alex also kills crabs running for their lives; "she danced from crab to crab, crushing them" with her bare foot. In another incident, Alex kills a puppy for barking too much. The three witches show callousness when they decide to murder the upright, moralistic conservative Felicia leading her husband to do the act. Later on, the threesome also make a most intricate spell and cause incurable multiple cancers to Jenny, the young woman Van Horne marries, and end her life. Many evidences are indicated in the book to prove women's viciousness. Alex likes mostly to hear men talking to each other because it bears aggression and "the clash of shirt fronts". She believes men to be violent and harsh something that is related with the wild nature. Here, is a reflection of new feminist's ideas concerning men's violence.

Alexandra's character, explains Moleti "mediates both literally and figuratively between Sukie, the flighty, free spirit, and Jane, the refined yet most wicked" (2009). In "an ambiguous essence", Alex is the leader in the relation with Jane and Sukie: she is "the profoundest witch of the three, and yet also the slowest, a bit in the dark, a bit – yes – innocent." The two others were younger, somewhat more modern less bound to nature with its massive patience, its infinite care and imperious cruelty, its ancient implication of a slow-grinding, anthropocentric order (Updike, 1984, p.117). We might assume Alex to be a metaphor for first wave of feminism; she is the older, the more conservative, traditional, and sympathetic among them. These old feminists were thoughtful, sympathetic, and attentive, while the new tend to be unconventional, uncaring, and self- interested both in attitude and thinking.

The Malicious Witch:

Jane Smart is a cellist; a sharp, embittered musician and music teacher. She is "hot, short, concentrated like a pencil point" whose speech pattern reminds the reader of a serpent (Updike, 1984, p.3). She is harsh

like all people from Massachusetts, because puritanism "had landed smack on that rock" (Updike, 1984, p.243). Jane is always attacking, and calling women of town names; such as "viper," "ridiculous," and "vapid." The author/narrator describes her saying: "Her s's hurt, stinging like match tips" (Updike, 1984, p.241). She is the most vicious of the three.

The two other witches see Jane's talent to be something marvellous, Sukie states that Jane so talented and it was not proper for her to imprison her musical talent and waste herself in this small town. She believes it better for Jane to "go somewhere serious with it, a city." Alex and Sukie are too much caring and affectionate toward her, but Jane reflects much indifference in return for she is rather selfish. She does not have patience in dealing with the other two witches and promptly vexed.

Jane is quite bitter and indifferent towards the town people. When Ed Parsley leaves town with a girlfriend, deserting his wife and kids, Jane says concerning the wife: "She'll have to get a job. She'll find out what it's like, being on your own" (Updike, 1984, p.137). Jane is vindictive and wishes to see people suffer solitude the way she does while taking responsibility of home and children for it is a source of enjoyment to her. Jane is an envious and resentful woman, always wishing bad for others. Alex has to be patient and wait for "Jane to be milked of all her malice" (Updike,1984, p.137). One should be cautious with Jane for she could be irritated quickly.

Jane enjoys getting rid of those who upsets her. Alex once shows her discontent about Sukie's condition with Clyde because of his "awful wife." Alex says, hardly minding her words, that Brenda "should be put out of her misery," Jane hastily replies: "Let's do it." Alex gets confused and a bit frightened by this sharp new wickedness in Jane, so she mildly protests: "Oh I don't think it's for us to do" (Updike,1984, p.138).Obviously the two differ in their attitude toward people in general. Effectually one could say that Jane is more vicious and malicious than Alex.

Jane shows selfishness and aggression even in her relation with her two best friends; she dates van Horne behind their backs and she uses magic to play hard during the tennis game because Sukie has brought Jenny with her. When the awful murder of Clyde and his wife took place, Sukie feels very sad and guilty because it was caused by the out of fun casting spells they have passed on the poor woman. Jane considers Sukie an infantile, "a weak sister;" and that they should "put up with her". Jane regards Sukie a "conceited immature girl," and not quite womanly the way Jane herself is.

Meanwhile she regards Alex to be "innocent," for she shows sympathy and passions for people in distress.

Jane regards all men to be violent, even those who seem to be the mildest for it is "biological;" she opposes Sukie who keeps describing Clyde as the gentlest man that she had ever known while they discussed Clyde's murder of his wife. Men are "full of rage because they're just accessories to reproduction" (Updike,1984, p.175). But a little bit later, she is raged and briskly approves that murder saying: "Clyde was right about that," because Felicia was "full of hate," the hate was coming out of her mouth is the reason of her death. She continues saying that Felicia

had lost touch with her womanhood. She needed pain to remind her she was a woman. She needed to get down on her knees and drink some horrible man's nice cold come. She needed to be beaten (Updike,1984, p.179).

This female regards men's violence necessary when the opponent is someone who deserves to be murdered which proves the idea that women are capable of showing equal rage and violence similarly to men. She believes that men are supposed to "adore" women: men are "absolutely shits," but women get them in the end because women can suffer better. "A woman can outsuffer[sic] a man every time" (Updike,1984, p.179). In fact, Jane's views of men are rather offensive and harsh.

Concerning maternity, Jane never shows affection to, or weary about her children. Her son asks for a home meal for he is fed up with take away food, and her little daughter is always with a dirty face. Once Jane was busy with the other two witches preparing a spell, the girl comes in and notices that her mother does not look normal, and innocently asks whether her mother is drank: "Jane slap[s] the child with a magical quickness, as if the two of them, mother and daughter, were parts of a single wooden toy that performed this action over and over" (Updike,1984, p.280-281). The act is not new for both of them; it seems to happen over and over till it is performed now automatically.

Indifferent Jane mockingly describes the three witches' children as: "Poor neglected little scruffy things… Out there," imitating the tone of town people who have raised hostile gossip against them. Sukie believes that too much care of children is "oppressive" for she "was raised very protectively" by her own parents. Alex also comments: "you can't live other lives for them," it is time for women when they "must stop serving everybody and then getting even psychologically." The three agreed on

using this "politics up to now," (Updike,1984, p.208) which seems quite pleasing for them. They discharged everything in their life just to live freely.

Jane is pleased with her own self and accepts her existence as: "A fair cellist, a dreadful mother, and a boring lay (Updike,1984, p.265)". It is her stimulation that had evoked their most horrific deed of hexing Jenny to her eventual death. Jane convinces the others to go along with a plot to punish the young initiate Jenny, their former friend, for stealing their fun and dream by marrying van Horne. She outrages because they have been "betrayed". They have "nursed a Viper" in their bosom, exclaims Jane.

Jane is a hateful woman; according to Alex, she is the "weak sister," when the matter concerns casting the spell, because she is a hateful person and one cannot fuel magic with hate. "Lately Jane seemed intent on poisoning every pot," contemplates Alex (Updike,1984, p.214).In this aspect she differs greatly from both Alex and Sukie who could, at least show some conscious, or feeling of guilt for doing bad deeds, and usually have sympathy toward people in distress. Jane radicalism presents some women's arrogance; those who are self-centred, selfish, and antagonist in dealing with everybody, especially people who do not confirm with their thinking and attitude.

The Indifferent Mother:

The third witch is Sukie Rougemont; the beautiful, intelligent local gossip reporter. She is the most recently divorced among them. She always brings news for she likes gossip and social existence. After divorce she starts writing for the local newspaper to earn living. Sukie's personality is not comparable to her appearance because people usually "have these fantasies about redheads." She says that she is just like other people, and though she "bustle around a lot and try… to look smart, at least by Eastwick standards, I don't think of myself as having the real whatever it is – power, mystery, womanliness – (Updike,1984, p.148).She has but little confidence in herself, and regards her two friends to be better than her. Sukie is unsteady fun-loving; she enthrals her lover that he later beats his wife to death and hangs himself.

After her divorce, Sukie was involved in many relations with married men, and lately with her boss in the newspaper, Clyde Gabriel. Everyone in town knows that, including his wife, Felicia. The wife has no respect to the three witches; she wonders why they "bother to go on living, whores to half the town and not even getting paid". She describes their

motherhood as a "positive crime," and their kids as "poor neglected children". Furiously, Felicia calls them: "Whores and neurotics," and regard them shame to society. She blames Clyde for employing Sukie and allowing her "space to drip her ridiculous poison into everybody's ears" while Sukie, according to Felicia, is unable even to "write a decent English sentence". The job enforces Sukie to have more control over people of town, Felicia adds. These women's "vice and shamelessness" is everywhere (Updike,1984, p.142), and it is inflected on the few good people left in town.

Clyde defends Sukie saying that divorced women have to work… Married women," Clyde explains, "don't have to do anything and can fart around with liberal causes" (ibid) referring to her regular participation in demonstrations against the government's policy. Clyde loved Sukie for she was much like his wife before marriage. He used to love his wife extremely but now he considers her "hell," while Sukie was "heaven" to him.

Updike portrays the witches as "fecund women;" they are quite different from those one might find in fairy tales; it is "because they are existing in a real world" (Slatcher 2011). They have many children as big families were familiar during the era. But, the witches' maternity is not highly celebrated. Updike shows these women to neglect their children and rarely talk to them, dealing with them most of the time through notes pinned to the refrigerator. They expose a palpable selfishness and self-interest, in their maternal relation, and that is displayed in Sukie's character in particular.

When at home, Sukie's regular meal would be "throwing some peanut butter and jelly at her poor children before heading out to the evening's idiotic civic meeting, says Jane (Updike,1984, p.85).It is the regular meal, and it is served by "throwing". The description reflects, relatively, no maternal affection. Sukie is busy with her work, with meetings, with love relations, besides the "coven" meetings. Hence, she does not have time for maternal duties. Apparently, modern women's involvement in "idiotic civic meeting," is performed at the expense of total neglect to their maternity and homes.

Alexandra's neglected children sacrificed so their mother "could have her powers, her silly powers, and only Jane understanding, Jane and Sukie," (Updike,1984, p.51) comments the narrator. Their indifference is criticised severely by the community, but they see it a natural right, thus they justify each other's behaviour. They never admit their negligence and always complain about motherly duties; for instance Sukie tediously says:

"God, don't children get in the way?" Her children keep having terrible fights with her complaining that she is "never home" while she tries "to explain to the little shits" that she is "faming a living" (Updike,1984, p.33). An excuse used by the three while we see them regularly having time for fun at Van Horne house. Though, sometimes, one of the witches would exclaim that she must do something for her children; to go home and make supper or to phone the house to put the oldest daughter in charge, actually they rarely give up the fun.

Sukie never shows patience in dealing with her kids. Her little daughter comes crying, while she is having one of her long chatters on phone. The girl looks terribly awful with her uncombed tangled hair and the "Peanut Butter and jelly" that flecked her lips; she explains between her sobs that her brother "wouldn't let her watch an educational special about lions mating" because he wants to see another show, "Hogan's Heroes on a UHF". Sukie's reaction is a desire to "slap the repulsive child's dirty face and knock a little sense into those TV-glazed eyes" (Updike,1984, p.86). She neither takes action nor practices her role as a responsible mother by preventing her children from watching such inappropriate TV shows. Apparently, they suffer total neglect and lack of observances, and he boy's selfishness reflects lack of family ties. Sukie has no careful watch over her children nor direct them rightfully.

John Updike's works are documents for Americans national situation as they provide the reader "with a detailed road connecting [the reader] from past to present" (Oard, 2008). His extended details provide particulars that give a clear background of the era. The period is branded with war and liberty, and such programmes as Hogan's Heroes were displayed for the public by the government. Meanwhile, the "educational" show about "lions mating" confirms with the liberated spirit of the time.

Sukie loves the world of women: "I love being a woman, really…I mean it, it's not a propaganda" (Updike,1984, p.213). In spite of her obvious neglect to her children, Sukie believes that men always see women wrong, and they are "very angry" with women because women "can have babies and they can't. They are terribly jealous, poor dears," she states to Jenny (Updike,1984, p.192). It is a statement transformed to the witches through Van Horne. Sukie shows tenacity and bravado when she is dismissed by her new young boss: "Actually, before I walked out I took the pencil out of his hand and broke it right in front of his eyes," she informs Alex. The latter is quite happy to have "such a spirited friend, a friend in three dimensions. She asks her again if she really had done that. Sukie

confirms: "Yes, and I even said, 'Go break a leg,' and threw the two pieces on his desk" (Updike,1984, p.219). However, she immediately feels sad for losing the job.

Sukie is tired of listening to men's complains out of their miserable lives turning her to a refuge. She wonders how long she will endure the situation; whether she has the strength to go on in that; "how long she could hold these grieving, doubting men on her own chest and not being contaminated (Updike,1984, p.155). Sukie is very sensitive and feels shy to face people. Her excessive relations with married men, the narrator states: "made Sukie feel naked, she could be seen right through, with no lead vest of innocence to protect her (Updike,1984, p.194)". The town has full view of her life; though embarrassed and ashamed, she never stops.

Her sensitive spirit is also reflected in the feeling of guilt Sukie carries toward people against whom they practice their spells. She cries and blames herself after the Gabriel's incident; she feels sad for Jenny and her brother for becoming orphans, she feels guilty also because her own children have a mother to tend them while these two are left parentless. Sukie stands for the diffident, uncertain, careless women who cannot take stand, and prefer to suffer rather than take a decision. She is the indifferent mother who seems to think of everyone except her own children and their concerns.

The witches apparently differ from each other in their personalities; however, they have a lot of things in common. The three saw divorce as a way to free themselves from responsibilities, duties, and domesticity. They hate men and family life, but do not mind having affairs with married men since such relation would not tide them up with responsibilities. Being different in their thinking and attitude, isolated them from other women, yet, their sisterhood gives them extra force to face life and go on.

The Witches' Sisterhood:

The witches had chosen to live a liberated life, according to their own rapports. Yet, the sense of discontent, dullness, and tiresome is felt in their speech. The three witches' interest in married men is out of the privilege such relation offers: in such illegal relation the benefit of a wife is she holds back the mistress from "making any decisions," confesses Sukie to Van Horne. When the wife "really had ceased to be any check," (Updike,1984, p.146) meaning that the couple cannot go on together

anymore, the witch would withdraw immediately. The three witches' lives seem to be stable, while happily sharing their sisterhood.

Van Horne arrival to their lives is important; he is a devil figure who becomes a disruptive force. His ability is specious in what he can get people to do for themselves. He is drawn to the women's abilities in witchcraft, and "provides each of them with the foil they need for their own talents – whether it's admiring their music, their sculpture or their beauty" (Slatcher, 2011). The witches are fascinated by him; they thought he is trying to help them. Van Horne is a "liberator;" he offers the witches a chance to be with each other, and discover their shared fondness. He has the "quality that women seem to like, of stirring them up and permitting them to be, permitting them to self-explore" explains Updike (Plath, 263). A quality they have never found among men they knew before, so they become very fond of him. The vital fantasy is that they look for the perfect man, and they find him in the diabolic man, one they probably can never dominate.

He praises women so much; it is an "abstract" thing about his love for them. He admits his preference to women over men for they are the superior "mechanism"(p.73).They felt that his "kindness" has subsumed their love for each other into a kind of love for himself. Each witch feels that Van Horne has given her a chance to be herself. They never minded his demand to call him king, for "his system of taxation at least dealt in assets" (Updike,1984, p.131). In Van Horne's mansion life is different: the three witches felt free "from the stale-smelling life that snored at their sides" (Updike,1984, p.157). He invited them to play tennis, swim in the hot tube, and spend the evening together: His big house has "expanded their meagre domiciles"; in his kingdom they left their children behind and turned into children, willingly accepting to share him between them.

Meanwhile their sisterhood dissolves when each wishes to have him for her own. They begin to keep secrets, rarely called each other, and stopped their coven meetings. Under his motivation, they began to take what they wanted from the town of Eastwick by making the awful wives of their men suffer. But the young son and daughter of the Gabriel's, return to town and become part of Van Horne's circle. His influence on the witches is eventually driven apart when he marries the young woman. The shock awakens them from the illusion they are driven into, abruptly realizes that they were deceived, misguided, and controlled. So, they quickly act to restore their sisterhood and gain back their powers.

Their sisterhood was about to dissolve because of the devils influence, as it has transformed from a spiritual tie (the triangle force) into bodily (lesbianism). It is only through their work as a team that they manage to turn their powers against the devil: "I need the three of us," "It should be all of us, we should all put a finger on it, (Updike,1984, p.279)" explain Jane. They return back to their women space and union, restore back their power and skills that enable them to bewitch and drive Van Horne away, and end the story living in happy communal families.

John Updike tackles notion that says "sisterhood is powerful," and imagines it literally. Sisterhood proves to be really powerful as the witches have proven. But how are they going to use witch for human sake? Atwood comments that Updike shows witches, luckily, "to be only interested in the "personal," rather than the "political"; otherwise they might have done something unfrivolous, like inventing the hydrogen bomb" (1984). Human nature does not differ, whether men or women both are proving hostility.

Updike might not be a moralist for no code of value can be inferred from his fiction, yet, "his characters may raise moral questions" (Samuels, 1969, 9). Liberation is mistakenly understood by many women to be the freedom from household tasks, traditions, and ethics. Some got more extreme ideas such as the desire to abandon marriage, family, and maternity ties. Its influence is reflected on the society as a whole; the large number of divorces, the neglect of children, the pressure on lone mothers, the merging of lesbians and gays and a bunch of other mischiefs.

Some critics admired Updike for breaking the gender stereotypes, a thing that he might also have been really after. Not all Updike's divorced women are witches. Brenda does not follow the witches' route in life. Updike does not blame or attack all divorcees, nor do the rest turn into witches. Marriage troubles are recurrent issue, separation and divorce became very common and widely inflecting society. The witches end up seizing opportunities of marriage as a solution. Updike ends the novel by traditionally domesticating his witches; it is the solitary way to restrain these women/ witches. Witchcraft is more obvious, here than magical fiction.

Conclusion:

Within the renovation in women's lives during second wave of feminism, their role and statue in society witnessed extreme alteration. There seem to be much disregard to conventions, morals, and responsibilities. Combating with women writers who managed brilliantly to portray male characters, Updike wrote *The Witches of Eastwick*. He vividly

presents the new version of American women. The work deals with the politics of gender. By resembling women to witches, he plays on the link between witchcraft and feminism. He focuses on liberated women who carried quite radical ideas concerning their rights and demands. He also presented lateral images of other women characters which seem to be less extreme and more conventional. Americans saw it necessary to put women's social, cultural and economic power under careful control. Updike feared free women's uncontrollable power. Many Americans clutched to the idea that home is the most appropriate place for woman as they wanted to confirm usual family values that were slipping away.

References:

Atwood, M. (May 13,1984). "Wondering What It's Like to Be a Woman". *New York Times.*
www.nytimes.com/1984/.../wondering-what-it-s-like-to-be-a-woman.htm.

Crunden, R.M. (1994). *A Brief History of American Culture*. New York:
Paragon House.

Epstein, B. (2001). "What Happened to the Women's Movement?" *Monthly Review, 53. 01.*

Friedan, B. (1977). *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc. (Original
work published 1963)

Gamble, S., (ed.), (2001). *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism.* London,
England: Routledge.

Gibson, M.(2006). "Retelling Salem Stories: Gender Politics and Witches in American
Culture." *European Journal of American Culture,* 25.2, 85–107.

Helford, E. R.(2000). "Introduction". *Fantasy Girls: Gender in the New Universe of Science*
Fiction Television, Lanham, Boulder, Oxford. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Johnson, D. (1984). "Warlock." *New York Review Books,* 3-4.
www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1984/jun/14/warlock/

Krolokke, C. and A. S. Sorensen.(2005). "Three Waves of Feminism". Gender Communication
Theories and Analyse: From Silence to Performance.
www.sagepub.com/.../6236_Chapter_1_Krolokke_2nd_Rev_Final_Pdf.p.

Krzywinska, T.(2000). *A Skin for Dancing In: Possession, Witchcraft and Voodoo in Film.*
Trowbridge: Flicks Books.

Leal, L. (2005). *Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature. Magical Realism. Ed.*
Zamora and Faris 5th ed. Durham, North Carolina:Duke University Press.

Leland, C. G. (1999). *Aradia Basic Edition Gospel of the Witches,* WA: Phoenix Publishing
Inc. (Original work published 1899)

McCauley, D. (2009)."Feminist books as evidence for the cultural changes of the 1960s".
In *Tauranga Memories: Tauranga City Libraries History.*
tauranga.kete.net.nz/.../991-feminist-books-as-evidence-for- the-cultural-.

Millett, K. (2000). *Sexual Politics*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press. (Original work
published 1969)

Moleti, C. A. (March 2, 2012). "Updike and the Up and Coming: *The Witches and Widows of*

Eastwick,and *The Lace Reader*. www.irosf.com/q/zine/article/10513

Oard, B. A. (Feb. 4, 2008). "*The Witches of Eastwick* by John Updike": Mindful Pleasures.

mindfulpleasures.blogspot.com/2008/.../it-all-adds- up-by-saul-bellow.ht.

Plath, J., (ed).(1994). *Conversations with John Updike*. *Literary Conversations Series.* Ed.

Peggy Whitman Prenshaw. Jackson:University Press of Mississippi.

Rampton, M.(Fall,2012)."The Three Waves of Feminism". *PACIFIC*,41.2.

www.pacificu.edu/magazine_archives/2008/fall/echoes/feminism.cfm

Raine, C. (Sep. 28, 1984)."Sisters with the devil in them." *TLS*.

www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/tlssearch.do?querystring...offset.

Reilly, C. and J. Updike. (Summer, 2002). "An Interview with John Updike." Contemporary

Literature, 43.2, 217-248. University of Wisconsin. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1209072

Rothstein, M. (March 2, 1988). "In 'S.,' Updike Tries the Woman's Viewpoint. In Arts."*The*

New York Times.www.nytimes.com/books/97/04/06/lifetimes/updike.html

Samuels, C. T. (1969). *John Updike: Pamphlets on American Writers*. No. 79. Minneaoplis:

University of Minnesota Press.

Slatcher, A. (Sunday, Sep.11, 2011). "The Art of Fiction". artofficction.blogspot.com/

Thorne, M. (Oct. 31, 2008). "*The Widows of Eastwick,* By John Updike". The Independent.

www.independent.co.uk › Arts + Ents › Books › Reviews.

Updike, John. (1988). "An Interview. Critic's Notebook; Updike's Long Struggle To Portray

Women". By John Updike Michiko Kakutani. *TheNew York Cultural Desk;ColumnI: 29.*

www.nytimes.com/.../critic-s-notebook-updike-s-long-struggle-to-portray-

(1984)*The Witches of Eastwick*. Fawcett Crest. New York: Ballantine Books.

Williams, R. (2011). *The Long Revolution*. 2nd ed. Wales: Parthian. (Original work published

1961).

السحر ومجال النساء; دراسة ثقافية مادية لرواية جون ابدايك ساحرات ايستووك

أ.م.د.ازهار نوري فجر
جامعة بغداد/ كلية التربية ابن رشد للعلوم الإنسانية
قسم اللغة الانكليزية

الملخص:

تعدَّ قصص الساحرات جزء من الثقافة العامة الامريكية، وان هذه الثقافة متأثرة بالاعتماد الكبير على الماضي. الولع الحديث للأمريكان بالساحرات، سواء كن حقيقيات او مستخدمات بالمعنى المجازي مرتبط بالسياسة ولاسيما عندما يتعلق بسياسة النوع.

هذا البحث يعكس صورة حديثة لشخصية المراة من وجهة نظر كاتب ذكر . تأثر جون ابدايك بالتغييرات التي حصلت للنساء مع الموجة الثانية للحركة النسوية وكتب رواية ساحرات ايستووك(١٩٨٤) في الحقيقة هو قدم النساء اللواتي يمتلكن نوعا ما من الحرف . ساحراته كن مهنيات ، نشيطات ومفعمات بالحيوية . ما الذي تمثله الساحرات في الثقافة الامريكية ؟ لماذا اختار ابدايك الكتابة عن النساء ؟ لماذا كن هؤلاء النسوة ساحرات ولسن نساء اعتياديات ؟ سيكون هذا محور النقاش لهذا البحث .