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Introduction

Our subject here is Genesis 2, the myth about the creation of Adam and Eve. I relate this to the sequel of the story: Genesis 3, the Fall. My frame of reference is psychology of religion, in which religion is seen as human behaviour. My focus of attention is on human emotions, needs, emotional conflicts and the god-image, which are expressed in religious texts. Here I make use of psychoanalytic theory. With its help I analyse the content of these chapters.¹ For this method a universal human structure is presupposed, although we have to take account of great cultural differences.

A first question is what emotional problem of living is at stake in this myth, and what solution is offered? This myth undoubtedly makes a patriarchal impression: the male comes first, and after him the woman as a helpmeet for him. Patriarchal societal structures have been sanctioned with an appeal to this myth (1 Tim 2:8-15). The emotional problem here is the relation between the sexes. Sometimes patriarchy is seen as a kind of primeval datum, an “original sin”, inherent in men. Psychoanalysis offers a view of the emotional conflict at the root of patriarchy. Dorothy Dinnerstein argues that patriarchy is a reaction to “matriarchy” in early childhood.² This “matriarchy” is not a societal structure, but an emotional domination of the mother over her child and her partner. This theory is supported by some studies. According to these the early history of humanity also included matriarchy, probably not as a societal structure, but only on an experiential level with respect to fertility. In the beginning fertility was attributed exclusively to females. With respect to fertility men feel inferior to women. The exercise of power over women, patriarchy, is seen as a defence against these inferiority-feelings.³ Patriarchy as a societal structure possibly has its origin in an emotional matriarchy.⁴

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¹ First published in G.P. Luttikhuizen (ed.), The Creation of Man and Woman. Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions [Themes in Biblical Narrative vol. III] Leiden: Brill 2000, pp. 172-186. We thank the publishers for their kind permission to print here the enlarged version of the text that was initially presented at the Erasmus course in Barcelona on 11 February 1998.


⁴ B. Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds 1955; G. Zilboorg, Masculine and Feminine 1944.

⁴ To underline this I use quotation marks when using forms of the word “matriarchy”.

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then, is the link with Genesis 2 and 3: this patriarchal text could have a “matriarchal” background. Reading this text in a “matriarchal” context possibly makes this patriarchal text more understandable. And perhaps with the help of this insight we can derive a meaning from it that is of value for both sexes.

In this paper I start with Dorothy Dinnerstein’s theory. Thereafter we look for traces of “matriarchy” and of ambivalence between the sexes in some Sumerian myths and in Genesis 2 and 3. Then we take a “matriarchal” background of our text as a working hypothesis and read our text in that way, curious to know if it makes sense. At last a conclusion is drawn with respect to exegesis and reception of the text. I would like to underline that my argumentation is psychological, and conclusions are drawn on the basis of psychological evidence. This is no substitution for the work of biblical scholars, but a supplement. I hope biblical scholars are inclined to take my study into consideration.

**Patriarchy as Sanctuary from the Omnipotent Mother**

Dorothy Dinnerstein’s theory is based on an analysis of the consequences of the role division, common until recently, between fathers and mothers, in which baby- and childcare were exclusively the mother’s task. What is the influence of this practice of exclusively female child-rearing? With this role division, the mother, a female person, is not only responsible for taking care of small children, but she is also the only person who is seen as capable of doing so. Only mothers, women, are able to handle the very little, dependent baby, to give it bodily care, to handle its emotions and to empathise with the child’s needs and feelings. But not only that: mothers, women, are seen as the caretaking sex in general.

According to the “classic” role division, mother also takes care of father. With respect to caretaking, the mother, the woman, is almighty, omnipotent. Some men themselves address their wives as “Mom”. She is “the wife”, “the missus”. However, for a little, totally dependent child, it is very difficult to experience ambivalence towards such an almighty parent. Mother, for the child, is “all I have”; he cannot risk losing her. This risk is greater to the extent that father himself is also dependent on mother’s care, unable to take an independent position towards her and to have a stand of his own. In this case for the child there is no model for the possibility of disagreeing with and rebelling against mother while still maintaining the relationship with her. Thus, the practice of exclusively female “mothering” gives the mother an almighty position. Instead of solving the ambivalenceconflict by way of a “mourning process”, father and fatherly omnipotence (patriarchy) are used as a
surrogate solution: father as a sanctuary from maternal authority. How can this happen? In a family in which the caretaking comes exclusively from the mother, the child enters a relationship with the father at an age at which the child is already more individuated, more reasonable, more “humane”. In the case of the father not sharing in childcare, the child never has a symbiotic relationship with the father. Thus, the father is experienced as a separate person: not invested with the all-penetrating omnipotence that the mother has for the child.

Because of this difference, father and “father’s world” can become a sanctuary for the child who wants to flee from the mother’s ambivalently experienced omnipotence. This fatherly sanctuary, however, can only be perceived as safe on two conditions: that Father, and his masculine world, should be clearly different from Mother and her female world; and that Father and his masculine world should be a match for Mother and her female world. Father should be as omnipotent as Mother.

For these reasons, as a counterforce against an almighty mother at home, the inner world of care and feelings, an outer world with an almighty father is necessary. And as long as the mother’s omnipotence is not limited by the father as a partner in caretaking, it is not safe to give up the father’s omnipotence in the outside world. Men and women, fleeing towards the father and his world, will always be afraid of the return of the almighty mother.

The more women are representatives of the world of gratification of emotional needs, the more men are in danger of perceiving women as overpowering “great mothers”, even in adult relationships. On this basis men can also, in sexual relationships, perceive female sexual attractiveness as irresistible; confronted with an attractive woman they feel again like a little child. This is mirrored in legends and folksongs, for instance the legend of Die Lorelei. She only has to sing a song (like a mother sings a lullaby for her little baby) and to comb her long golden hair, and the boatman is totally lost.

We stated that as a defence against men’s feelings of powerlessness in the realm of caretaking and emotions, domination by men in the outside world of work, business and society is needed. In this realm women have no say. Each sex is excluded from the territory of the other sex. This gives rise to feelings of ambivalence and rivalry between the sexes. Freud postulated penis envy in women. This is paralleled by womb envy in men.\(^5\) Because both patriarchy and matriarchy for men and women are needed as a defence, men and women remain mutually dependent on each other. This mutual dependence is maintained among generations via the Oedipus complex. For a father who experiences his wife as “mom”, the almighty mother, a daughter can be a “better” — i.e. a controllable — woman. A mother, by patriarchal

domination doomed to be only a housewife, can find in her son a controllable man, and somebody to realise for her her own masculine aspirations: “my son is a doctor”. In this way parents take advantage of the child’s dependence and of his unconscious Oedipal wishes. This is, however, the opposite of the child’s real need for limitation of Oedipal wishes. The child’s omnipotence fantasies are reinforced, so that men stay omni-potent “patriarchs”, women omnipotent “matriarchs”.

Parallel between Ontogenesis and Phylogenesis

Freud postulated a parallel between the development of the individual (“ontogenesis”) and that of mankind (“phylogenesis”). According to several authors the above-described genesis of patriarchy also holds for the history of mankind. It starts with “the Great Mother”. The survival of mankind is dependent on fertility, and in the beginning fertility was not recognised to be a consequence of sexual intercourse. This means that the role of the masculine seed was not seen, and fertility was exclusively attributed to women. Zilboorg and Bettelheim (1955) conclude that woman-envy in men, in combination with woman-hatred, precedes penis envy in women. This is mirrored in religion. The Great Mother-goddesses, who gave birth to everything, appeared in the beginning of the history of religion. The Great Mother-goddess is the “mother of all living”. She is almighty, omnipotent and autarchic, not in need of a male partner. Much later in history the role of the masculine seed in fertility was recognised. This meant that the autarchy and omnipotence of the mother could be limited and denied. A crucial question is then: how would the almighty mother react to this development, in reality or in the fantasies of men and women? Would she be willing to accept limitation and to share her power with the male, or not? Several authors describe as a next phase in the religion of the Mother-goddess the veneration of the Great Mother along with her son-lover. Often this “son”, chosen by the goddess, is a mortal man who fertilises her. Thereafter the son-lover dies and then is raised to life again by the goddess. Instances of this are Kybele and Attis or Ishtar and Dumuzi (Tammuz). In the myths of the goddess and her son-lover no father is mentioned. The role of the masculine seed is indeed recognised, but masculine fertility is “son” of the goddess, which means that ultimately she produces it. Masculinity only has a function in fertilisation. After this is done

6. G. Zilboorg, Masculine and Feminine 1944.
he can die, as with the queen-bee and the drone. In the Bronze Age (3500-1250 B.C.) the myth of the son-lover is also connected with human or animal sacrifice. The Great Mother brings him back to life: she remains “mother of all living”. Masculinity is here only an attribute of the almighty mother. In this respect the serpent is pre-eminently an important symbol, connected with the veneration of the Great Mother-goddess. As a symbol it has many aspects and meanings. It is, for example, seen as an autarchic being; it renews its own life by casting off its old skin. In psychoanalytic and in Jungian psychology the serpent is also often seen as a phallus-symbol. But, in the case of the goddess-withserpents, she usurps masculinity as an attribute of her own. In this way she is also very threatening to males. She is not only a lover, but also the “terrible mother”. Erich Neumann states that this threatening, terrible woman always manifests herself as the ouroborus, the primal serpent (like the Leviathan), the phallic woman. The symbol of castration is an essential symbol in the representation of the terrible, threatening mother. According to some authors the symbol of the serpent is often also connected with the symbol of the “tree of life” or the “tree of knowledge of good and evil”. Tree — serpent — Goddess belonged together as a fixed motif.

Traces of Ambivalence between the Sexes in Sumerian Mythology

We came to our working hypothesis of a “matriarchal” background of the biblical creation myth on psychological grounds. This could seem very unlikely, because the Great Goddess is totally absent in the god-image of the Old Testament. One could conclude that in the Old Testament the problems around the Great Mother do not exist. However, from a psychological viewpoint another possibility is that the problem is repressed and “works” on an unconscious level.

Among biblical scholars it is common to view the culture and religion of ancient Mesopotamia as an integral element of the context of Scripture. On many points similarities between Mesopotamian and Israelite cultures exist, but on several points the Old Testament also seems to be in discussion with the religion of its cultural context; they have their questions in common, but

the biblical answer is different. Traces of an ambivalence-conflict between the sexes originating from fear of the Great Mother in Mesopotamian myths would support our hypothesis, while its absence would make our hypothesis very unlikely. What do Sumerian and Akkadian myths tell us? As I will show, in some older Sumerian myths an attitude of ambivalence between man and woman is obvious. In later Akkadian myths and in the Gilgamesh-epos this conflict emerges in a more hidden way: as aggression against goddesses. Gilgamesh refuses to be Ishtar’s lover because she treated her former lovers very badly. In Enuma Elish, Tiamat is killed by her children. Her lover Qingu is the one who is killed to give his blood as material for the creation of man. Here the ambivalence-conflict is in a later developmental stage, in which the Great Mother is repressed more and more and aggression towards her dominates. In Enuma Elish mother-goddesses no longer play a role in the creation of mankind.

Here I prefer the older Sumerian myths as material to demonstrate the ambivalence-conflict, because here the conflict is so clearly visible. An attitude of ambivalence and rivalry between man and woman can be seen especially in myths concerning Enki, Ninhursag and Inanna. Enki as a god is not easy to categorise. Two important items characterise him: water and wisdom (or cunning). “Water” has a double sense. It is the sweet water beneath the earth — the great abyss — and it is the water of the rivers, which are seen as Enki’s ejaculations. Ninhursag is the mother-goddess pre-eminent. She was regarded as the mother of all living things. She was also known, for example, as “supreme lady”, “Mamma”, “womb-goddess” and “mother of the gods”. Inanna is the goddess of passionate love and war. In psychoanalytic terms she is the goddess of the love and aggression drives. Inanna makes people lose their heads. She overthrows order and reverses societal roles. In her temples orgiastic feasts were held; there men wore women’s clothes and vice versa. She has a lust of power. Inanna and Enki were the most beloved Sumerian gods.

**Enki and Ninhursag**

The myth is situated in Dilmun, the Sumerian paradise:

Enki impregnates Ninhursag, “the mother of the land”, who, after nine days of pregnancy gives birth, without pain and effort, to the goddess Ninmu. Enki then proceeds to impregnate his daughter Ninmu, who in the same way as her mother Ninhursag, gives birth to the goddess named Ninkurra, and the

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15. Ninhursag is not Enki’s wife. In the first part of the myth Ninsikilla is spoken of as Enki’s wife.
latter gives birth to the goddess Uttu. Enki is now evidently prepared to impregnate his great-granddaughter Uttu when Ninhursag, the great-grandmother, intervenes and offers the latter some pertinent advice. Unfortunately the relevant passage is almost completely destroyed. But to judge from the passage that follows Uttu may have been instructed by Ninhursag not to cohabit with Enki until and unless he brings her a gift... Enki brings this gift to Uttu and the latter now joyfully receives his advances and cohabits with him.

But of this union probably no new goddess is born. Instead, Ninhursag seems to utilise Enki’s semen in a way, which leads to the sprouting of eight different plants ..., and now Enki commits a sinful deed. As he looked about him in the marshland, he noticed the eight plants and probably determined to decide their fate. But first, it seems, he had to know their heart, that is, he probably had to taste what they were like ... Angered by this act, Ninhursag ... utters a curse against Enki, saying that until he dies she will not look upon him with the “eye of life”. And, as good as her word, she immediately disappears.

Whereupon, Enki no doubt begins to pine away, and the Anunnaki, the “great” but nameless Sumerian gods, sit in the dust. The fox brings Ninhursag back to Enki. Ninhursag then seats the dying Enki in her vulva. Eight times Ninhursag asks Enki where he feels pain. Eight times Enki names an organ of the body, and Ninhursag then informs him that she has caused a certain deity to be born for him. The implication is that the birth of the deity will result in the healing of the sick member. Finally, probably at the request of Ninhursag, Enki decreed the fate of the new-born deities....

In this myth a very striking feature is Enki’s sexual lust for the mother-goddess and her female offspring. What is Enki after? In the course of the narrative it becomes clear that it is not sexual gratification. Sexual intercourse for him is a way of incorporating (“eating”) the power of the mother-goddess. Behind his insatiable sexual lust is womb envy. However, his attempt at incorporating the plants, to let them grow inside his belly as if he were a mother, is a mortal sin. For him, being a man, these plants are “forbidden fruit”. To survive he needs the mother-goddess and her female organs. And after accepting her help he is allowed to fulfil his own task: to decree the fate of the newborn deities. “Forbidden fruit” evokes associations with Gen 2:17: “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”. Thus a parallel is drawn with the biblical paradise myth. Kramer mentions further an interesting viewpoint with respect to the background of Genesis 2 and 3. He draws attention to the way in which goddesses give birth in the Sumerian myth. Goddesses give birth “without pain or travail”. A mortal woman in childbirth, on the contrary, is called in Sumerian “the screaming one”.

18. E. Ebeling, Tod und Leben 1931, p. 177: “die Kreissende”.
“Enki and the World Order” and “Inanna and the Me”

Both myths deal with the “me”: the “government departments” of the world government. However, they offer a different view about who or what rules the world. “Enki and the World Order” tells how Enki allots the “me” to the different gods and goddesses; the government of the world is well ordered. But in the last part of the poem an angry Inanna appears on the scene. She feels neglected and left out: “Me, the woman, [wh]y did you treat differently? I, the holy Inanna, — where are [my prerogat]ives?” Enki answers her that she has no reason to complain: she has in her own right a number of attributes such as war, sexual jealousy, contradiction, lawlessness, and so on. In Enki’s well-ordered world Inanna has no place. “Inanna and the Me”, to the contrary, tells a different story. The beginning lines of the myth are too fragmentary for a line-by-line translation, but the following is clear:

Inanna, wearing the turban head-dress known as “the crown of the steppe” went forth in the steppe to visit and have sexual intercourse with the shepherd, probably Dumuzi, in his sheepfold. There, as she bent over, presumably for a coitus a tergo, she was so taken with her “wondrous to behold” vulva, that she broke out into a song of self-glorification, closing with her resolve to journey to the Abzu in Eridu to honour Enki and offer him a prayer. Enki welcomes her with great gladness, and offers her food and drink. Enki and Inanna then settle down to a prolonged drinking bout, competing with each other in the draining of many a liquor-filled bronze vessel of its contents. In his drunken state, Enki becomes expansively generous, and proclaims that he will present, cluster by cluster, all the precious “me” in his keep, to his daughter Inanna. When the party is over Inanna takes the “me” to her city Erech (Uruk). When Enki is sober again he regrets his generosity, but it is too late.

The meaning of these two myths is self-explanatory. Inanna rules the world; Enki, in spite of his wisdom and cunning, is no match for Inanna’s sexual attractiveness.

Traces of a “Matriarchal” Background in Gen 2:7-3:20?

Are there traces of a “matriarchal” context to be found in Genesis 2 and 3 besides the above-mentioned symbols of the serpent and tree? With respect to this question several points deserve attention. First, in general, Adam, as first-created man, is seen as “lord of the creation”. But in this Bible-section he
does not behave like that. After falling in sin he shelters himself behind his wife. Further, in Genesis 3:20, Eve is called “mother of all living”, a title of the Great Mother-goddess.\(^{22}\)

The above mentioned is not an exhaustive argument to prove a “matriarchal” context for the first chapters of Genesis. But in my opinion it is enough to use it as a working hypothesis. Thus we investigate what it means to read this narrative in a “matriarchal” context. In a “matriarchal” context, in the same way as in a patriarchal one, the two sexes are not equal: one sex is dominant, the other subordinate. The subordinate sex does not have an autonomy and identity of its own. Autonomy belongs to the dominant sex, and the identity of the subordinate sex is derived from the dominant sex. In a “matriarchal” context the female sex is dominant; the male sex is subordinate. Thus, when we read this narrative, we should read “subordinate” where “man” is written, and “woman” should be translated as “dominant”. Let us start our reading.

Gen 2:15: The subordinate man is created first; he is put into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. God addresses the subordinate sex as “man”, human being.

16/17: These verses are difficult to understand. Here the subordinate sex is threatened with death. But, to the contrary, in 2:7 man is said to be created of the dust of the ground, and 3:19 refers to that. Here mortality is linked to creation. One possible explanation could be that mortality becomes a threat when mortal man transgresses her/his God-given limits. It is also possible to hear in these verses an echo of the Sumerian paradise myth. Using elements of this myth the myth-teller speaks the language of the cultural background of his time: eating of the forbidden fruit is usurpation of forbidden power, a mortal sin.

18: The subordinate sex needs help. This also means that one sex cannot be autarchic, self-sufficient. N.B.: The Hebrew word \textit{ezer} should not be read as a subordinate help, without autonomy or identity of his own. \textit{Ezer} is also used as a name for God.\(^{23}\)

19: The subordinate sex is called to give names to the animals: to define them. But animals are not equal, fitting partners, “a helper who is a counterpart”\(^{24}\) for man, the human being.

\(^{22}\) Cf. M. Dijkstra, Mother 1999.
\(^{24}\) Ph. Trible, Eve and Adam 1979, pp. 74-83.
21-22: God creates the dominant sex out of the subordinate. She is bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh, and as a consequence of that the dominant sex is named — defined — after the subordinate one.

24: Refers to the contemporary marriage practice. The bridegroom went to the house of the bride’s parents and there the marriage was consummated. Only after a certain amount of time (sometimes months) would the bride leave her house to join her husband in a house in the neighbourhood of her husband’s family.\(^{25}\)

25: Both the dominant and the subordinate sex were naked, and not ashamed. In the Christian tradition, and also in psychoanalysis,\(^{26}\) very often shame and nakedness are related to sexuality. But that needs further specification. In Erikson’s lifecycle psychology an attitude of shame is the negative outcome of the emotional conflict of the second life-stage, that of autonomy. It is in origin the conflict of the toddler who, outgrowing the early symbiosis with the mother, comes to master his own body. He derives from that a sense of autonomy and of the possibility of having a will of his own. He starts to experiment with that new-found will, for instance, in the conflict around toilet training. But this sense of autonomy is still very vulnerable! In this first use of his own will the toddler also exposes himself and lays himself open. In Dutch we speak of “blootgeven, -stellen” (“bloot” means naked). He is at risk of being laughed at, and when this happens he feels ashamed: a feeling of not daring to show oneself because one feels ridiculous and worthless. On an adult developmental level this returns in shame of sexual organs. Sexuality also has much to do with autonomy. Sexual organs cannot be autonomously mastered: one falls in love, gets sexually aroused, and men get an erection, whether they want it or not. Read in this sense this verse means that the subordinate and the dominant sex recognise and approve each other’s autonomy, they feel safe with each other, they can expose themselves to each other in their mutual vulnerability.

Gen 3:1-5: Now the serpent appears on the scene. As we have seen the serpent can be a symbol of the omnipotent mother, who usurps male potency as an attribute of her own. The serpent is the embodiment of the temptation to be as God. And this is a temptation for the dominant sex. “To know good and evil” also means to be as God, because it means to define, to decide what is good and what is evil.\(^{27}\) And this is what in reality happens in society: the

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\(^{25}\) K. van der Toorn, Van haar wieg tot haar graf 1987, pp. 56, 57.


dominant sex or party defines good and evil. To be as God also has as a consequence the denial of one’s own mortality.

6: The dominant sex tempts the subordinate “to eat the forbidden fruit”, to be as God. One can ask: does this make sense? Why should the dominant party share godliness with the subordinate? In my opinion this could make sense in different ways. First, feelings of guilt about committing a crime often give rise to the search for an accomplice. But this sharing of the “forbidden fruit” could also be an image for what happens in reality. The dominant sex or party makes the laws for society, defines its ideals, and passes them on to the subordinate party. Subordinates want to be like dominants. The almighty mother passes the wish for almightiness to her children: they want to be omnipotent mothers or fathers.

7. After eating of the “forbidden fruit” the eyes of man and woman are opened, they know that they are naked and they cannot bear that any longer. When both sexes want to be like God, and no longer know their own limits, they no longer respect each other’s limits and it is no longer safe to expose themselves to each other.

8. They also no longer feel safe in the presence of God.

9. Then the Lord comes and he calls the subordinate and asks him: “Where art thou?” The Lord calls the subordinate back to his original destination to be a human being.

12. But the subordinate hides behind the dominant sex: “It is her fault!”

13. The dominant sex also hides her responsibility, but her hiding place is different. The dominant sex attributes omnipotence to the temptation.

14. God’s first curse strikes the tempter. Here the primal antithesis for mankind is also defined: to be a mortal creature, accepting God as creator, as opposed to wishing to be like God.

16-19. The woman is punished with multiplication of the sorrows of giving birth. Seen against the background of the above-described Sumerian myth, this stresses that the woman is a mortal, not a goddess. The same is true of the punishment of Adam: in Enuma Elish mankind is created to release the gods from toil. Woman and man are creatures, mortals, and this is underlined by aggravation of their “jobs”, because by eating the forbidden fruit they wanted to be like God. And the domination of men over women is also seen as punishment, which means that the domination of men over women, patriarchy, is not according to God’s intention of the world.

20: Adam calls the name of his wife, as he earlier gave names to the animals. Man rules over woman after the Fall. And Adam calls his wife “mother of all living”, a name of the Great Mother-goddess. The history that started with the Fall goes on.

Mind the Context!

We took a “matriarchal” context of this part of Genesis as a working hypothesis, and we made an application of it. What is the outcome? In my opinion, this working hypothesis works. It makes sense, and the details of the narrative fit with each other like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. It also makes sense of details often neglected in exegesis.

By reading this text in a certain context we were able to extract a meaning from it. We ask now: is this meaning patriarchal? Is this a patriarchal text? Is patriarchy ordained by creation, as 1 Timothy 2:11-15 suggests? In my opinion this myth is not patriarchal as long as the “matriarchal” background is taken into consideration; i.e. as long as the male is seen as the subservient party. In that case this myth is the primeval version of the Song of Hanna (1 Samuel 2) and the Magnificat (Luke 1:52, 53): “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away”. The meaning of the myth is clear when read against a “matriarchal” background. However, this myth becomes patriarchal when self-evidently read against a patriarchal background. Then figure and background fuse, and its original meaning disappears. In a patriarchal background the male is dominant and the woman subordinate. Read against this patriarchal background, the creation of the male as “man” and woman as his helpmeet reinforces male domination over women. This happened in the reception history of this text. As a matter of course we usually read texts against our own background, i.e. a patriarchal societal structure and culture. The emotional problem concerning the omnipotent mother, however, has not disappeared. Emotional problems do not disappear unless they are solved. When it is not possible to solve the problem it is repressed. It survives on an unconscious level.

The repressed ambivalence-conflict with respect to women comes to the fore, for example, in a hidden way in legends about Lilith, Adam’s first wife, who refused to lie under in sexual intercourse, and who became a terrible demon. In our time it can be seen, for example, in jokes about mothers-in-law. Most of the time, however, we are not conscious of ambivalent feelings with respect to motherly dominance and conflicts connected with them. For that reason the “matriarchal” context of this text is not seen and neglected. However, to keep the meaning of this text (“God reverses
roles”) in a patriarchal context, the literal version of the text should be changed. Then the narrative should be translated, so that it would run as follows:

The woman is created first as “the” human being, and man (the male) is created as a helper who is a counterpart for her. The male is created out of the woman and is named after her. And it is man, the male, who yields to the temptation to be as God. When God comes into the Garden of Eden he ignores the male, but calls the woman back to her original destination to be a human being. But the woman hides behind the man, and does not take up her responsibility. This makes sense. To me this is very recognisable. For example, very often I have heard women refuse to take responsibility for their own lives, saying: “I would like to do it, but my husband does not want it” or “If only my husband would change, then I...”. In our patriarchal society I see the narrative of the Fall happen again and again. But in my psychotherapeutic practice I also see the original, the “matriarchal” version of this myth happen: the almighty mother and the absent father. Then males need limitation on the power of the Great Mother and affirmation of their own potency.

Therefore, reading this text in the right context is crucial. The importance of the context is twofold. First, it offers a background in which the meaning of the text becomes clear. Second, it limits the literal meaning of the text. In the case of Genesis 2, Adam comes first only in a “matriarchal” context. It is not an absolute truth; it has no absolute validity. The literal text is of relative value: it gains meaning in relationship to the context. Neglect of the context can entail the reversal of the original meaning of the text. Then a myth of liberation changes into a text of oppression.

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Walker-Barnes implores her God to “help her to hate White people” to at least “want to hate them, or at the very least stop caring about them, individually and collectively” in her poem, recently published in an anthology called “A Rhythm of Prayer.” Fellow seminarians raised an eyebrow at the use of such intolerant language in the context of religion. Pastor Ryan McAllister, of Life Community Church in Alexandria, Virginia, who first shared one of the inflammatory pages on Saturday and has recently added more, deemed the passage “completely anti-biblical” in a post on Twitter, and blamed the rise of Critical Race Theory for what he described as the rapid spread of such xenophobic viewpoints.

He also criticized Marxism and previous members of the Frankfurt School for missing the hermeneutical dimension of critical theory. Habermas incorporated the notion of the lifeworld and emphasized the importance for social theory of interaction, communication, labor, and production. He viewed hermeneutics as a dimension of critical social theory. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang. Google Scholar.
