And God Created Woman
An Exploration of the Meaning and the Myth of Eve

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Short Abstract

The aim of my thesis is to destabilise the persistently pessimistic framing of Eve as a highly negative symbol of femininity within Western culture by engaging with marginal, and even heretical interpretations that focus on more positive or sympathetic aspects of her character. My objective is to question the myth that orthodox, popular readings represent the 'true' meaning of Genesis 2–4, and to explore the possibility that previously ignored or muted rewritings of Eve, which emphasise her knowledge or her motherhood, are in fact equally 'valid' interpretations of the biblical text.

By staging analytical and dialogic encounters between the biblical Eve and re-writings of her story, particularly those that help to challenge the interpretative status quo, my thesis re-frames the first woman using three key themes from her story: sin, knowledge, and life. Employing a method of ideological reception criticism, I consider how and why the image of Eve as a dangerous temptress has gained considerably more cultural currency than the equally viable pictures of her as a subversive wise woman or as a mourning mother.

To conclude, I argue that Eve is neither an entirely negative nor entirely positive figure, but rather that her characterisation, both biblically and in reception, is ambiguous and multivalent. My thesis thus offers a re-evaluation of the meanings and the myths of Eve, deconstructing the dominance of her cultural incarnation as a predominantly flawed female, and reconstructing a more nuanced and balanced presentation of the first woman's role in the Bible and in her afterlives.

Long Abstract

The aim of my thesis is to destabilise the persistently pessimistic framing of Eve as a highly negative symbol of femininity within Western culture by engaging with marginal, and even heretical interpretations that focus on more positive or sympathetic aspects of her character. My objective is to question the cultural myth that orthodox, popular readings represent the 'true' meaning of Genesis 2–4, and to explore the possibility that previously ignored or muted rewritings of Eve, particularly those which emphasis her knowledge, or her motherhood, are in fact equally 'valid' interpretations of the biblical text. In doing so I consider how and why the image of Eve as a dangerous temptress has gained such considerable cultural currency, and I question its dominance over the equally viable pictures of her as a subversive wise woman or a mourning mother.

This interrogation of the traditional construction of Eve's identity is structured in three main sections, each centred on a different facet of the first woman's character in Genesis 1–4: bearer of sin (Chapter 2), bringer of wisdom (Chapter 3), and source of life (Chapter 4). The first aspect of Eve is obviously the characteristic that has come to define her in popular imagination, as theologians, authors, and artists through the ages have consistently depicted her, and through her all other women, at best as weak and carnal, and at worst as deceptive and dangerous. Echoing elements of the structure and hermeneutics employed by Yvonne Sherwood in *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (2000), Chapter 2 offers a critical presentation of what Sherwood would calls the 'Mainstream' focus on sin. It is in this chapter that I

consider how concentration on Eve's transgression blinkered interpreters, leading them to exaggerate biblical evidence of the first woman's misdemeanour, as well as blinding them to other aspects of her character, resulting in a distortion of any of her potentially positive features. Chapters 3 and 4 are comparable to Sherwood's section on the 'Backwater' afterlives of Jonah, as these two sections provide counterpoints to the image of Eve as sinner presented in Chapter 2, exploring how thematic shifts in the focus of a reader onto the first woman's knowledge (Chapter 3) or her motherhood (Chapter 4) result in fresh reconfigurations of her story. Thus, in the third and fourth chapters of my thesis I will illustrate, firstly, how Eve's pursuit of knowledge, which is portrayed rather ambivalently by the writers of Genesis, and secondly, her positive role as mother to all living, but more specifically to Cain, Abel and Seth, have been, for some interpreters, the first woman's most poignant attributes.

The chapter outline is:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Eve and Sin
I. Introduction
II. Eve and Sin in the Hebrew Bible
III. Jewish and Christian Reception of Eve as Anti-Intellect
IV. Jewish and Christian reception of Eve as Sinful Mother
V. Concluding Remarks

Chapter 3 Eve and Knowledge
I. Introduction
II. Eve and Knowledge in the Hebrew Bible
III. Gnostic Reception of Eve as a Figure of Knowledge
IV. Postmodern Feminist Reception of Eve as a Figure of Knowledge
V. Concluding Remarks

Chapter 4 Mother Eve
I. Introduction
II. Mother Eve in the Hebrew Bible

III. Early Jewish and Christian Reception of Genesis 3.16, 20; 4.1, 25
IV. Mother Eve in the Visual Arts
V. Mother Eve in the Work of Pre-Twentieth Century Women Writers
VI. Concluding Remarks

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The introductory Chapter 1 explains the structure of the thesis, and offers a literature review of previous works on the reception of Eve. This is followed by my methodology, which has been subject to constant refinement throughout my DPhil. Here, I outline the significance of ideologically motivated reception studies such as my own, which seek to destabilise dominant strands of interpretation by questioning the authority and accuracy of the readers who produced them, while bringing to light less well-known strands of exegesis as valuable interpretative alternatives. I therefore advocate a future-oriented view of reception studies, which employs past interpretation not only to understand tradition, but also to challenge it. I argue that this is especially important with texts such as Genesis 2–4, which have made a profound, and in some cases deeply unsettling, mark on Western culture. Thus, my methodology is centred on clarifying and distinguishing the cultural myth of Eve as the negative forerunner of all women, and exploring the complex meaning of her story and its potential significance for re-evaluating the damaging gender constructs that have been developed in her name.

Chapter 2 then engages with the problematic history of Eve as the bearer of sin and death by critically examining the negative discourse surrounding her wrong-doing. The purpose of this section is not to justify the position taken by

those interpreters who frame Eve as a *femme fatale*, but rather to critique common negative assumptions about the first woman's connection to sin and its effect on her character. In the first section of Chapter 2 I investigate where the theme of sin might be construed as being present in Genesis 2–3, acknowledging that while the enigmatic text does not employ any word for 'sin', Eve's disobedience and her punishment by God has the potential to spark readings focused on the first woman's sinfulness. From this groundwork, the purpose of the remainder of Chapter 2 is to investigate how subsequent readers transformed the woman found in the ambiguous biblical account into the ultimate bearer of sin precisely by using the theme of sinning as lens through which to read Eve's story. In order to avoid replicating the numerous works on the reception history of Eve that have charted her denigration in Jewish and Christian cultures, my aim is to consider how interpreters' negative view of the first woman have manipulated or erased the more positive aspects of Eve's attraction to wisdom and her role as a life giver. Thus, in the following section I offer a chronological examination of the ways in which Eve's transgression has in fact been used to distance her from knowledge, and instead justified her alignment with carnality and stupidity. The final section offers a similar chronological trajectory, but this time investigating the historical characterization of Eve as the mother of sin and death, by contrast to life. Cumulatively, Chapter 2 establishes the historical and literary development of the reductive practice of framing Eve as an archetypal female sinner.

In contrast to my focus on the problematic history of Eve as a bearer of sin and the bringer of death in Chapter 2, Chapters 3 and 4 develop

counter-histories that map instances in which Eve's reach for knowledge and her maternal power have been favourably presented over the centuries. Chapters 3 and 4, like Chapter 2, begin with thematic analyses of the biblical text, which is complemented by consideration of other ancient female 'types' for Eve as knowledge giver and life bearer, and then conclude with in depth case studies of relevant pieces of reception. The Hebrew textual exegeses at the beginning of Chapters 3 and 4 lay the foundation for subsequent encounters with later positive and sympathetic interpretations, drawing attention to different linguistic, thematic and theological components in the biblical text that offered stimuli for later interpreters' visions of Eve's knowledge and her motherhood. The aim of the in depth case studies is to reflect on the interpretative techniques employed by those who portray Eve as a wise woman or a powerful mother to evaluate the extent to which they offer 'good' readings of the biblical text, especially in view of my findings on the production of mainstream readings in Chapter 2. Thus my aim here is to destabilise the authority and dominance of Chapter 2 by arguing that readers, both orthodox and heterodox, often undertake similar patterns of selective reading, and that the status awarded to these different readings is more strongly dependent on the voice of the speaker and their relationship to tradition, than on the literary legitimacy of their expansion on the biblical text. By providing a platform for heretical voices such as the Gnostics and feminist authors, or the marginalised contributions of many pre-twentieth century women writers, or of artists who chose to picture Eve mourning her dead son, Abel, my thesis complicates and disrupts the assumed 'truth' of Eve's wholly negative status.

Cumulatively Chapters 2 to 4 form an '*anthology with purpose*' which seeks to deconstruct the dominance of Eve's cultural incarnation as a predominantly flawed female, and reconstruct a more nuanced, multivalent, and balanced presentation of the first woman's role in the Bible and in her afterlives. The *purpose* of reception criticism in my thesis is, then, to explore the process involved in reading, contextualising, defining, and redefining Eve's character within the frameworks of tradition, orthodoxy, and heresy, and its effect on understanding of the biblical text. To conclude, I argue that Eve is neither an entirely negative nor entirely positive figure, but rather that her characterisation is ambiguous and at times contradictory. Eve is, therefore, not an inert character, but rather she personifies a timeless theological and cultural debate that has greatly influenced the conceptualisation of womanhood.

While there have been several studies on the reception of Eve's story in recent years, for example the popular publication by Pamela Norris (*Story of Eve* [1998]), as well as books primarily directed at an academic audience including, *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden* (ed. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer) and, *Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters* (ed. Bob Becking and Susanne Hennecke), my work offers a new perspective on this area of study in two key ways. Firstly, in view of reception criticism as a sub-discipline, my thesis represents a much broader approach to the study of biblical afterlives. It is neither chronologically driven, nor contained by a specific discipline. Rather, my work is ideologically motivated, leading me to coin the description 'ideological reception criticism', as I employ the methodological and hermeneutical insights offered by reception criticism to

'critique the critics'. That is, in my thesis I challenge the established legitimacy of the conventional interpretative history of Eve's character, using the biblical text as my guide for seeking out less well-known or indeed repressed readings of the first woman. In this sense, my work complements the small but growing number of scholarly works that take an ideological or political stance on the study reception of biblical texts—for example Sherwood's volume on Jonah, and more recently Joy A. Schroeder's, *Deborah's Daughters: Gender Politics and Biblical Interpretation* (2014). Second, by structuring my research in response to the biblical text itself, and exploring three facets of Eve that are present within Genesis 2–4, I have sought out material concerning the first woman that has rarely made its way into more general studies on the reception of her character. This is most strongly evident in the third chapter, where considerable focus is given to Eve's motherhood and her relationship with Cain, Abel, and Seth; an area of her story that is rarely considered in any modern exegesis of the biblical text. My thesis therefore functions on two levels, one in which I am exploring broad themes of authorship, textual meaning, tradition, legitimacy and authority, and one in which I am augmenting and re-evaluating the role of Eve as a woman in the Bible and in her afterlives.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Susan Gillingham, for her wisdom, her generosity, and her unwavering support. I would also like to thank Professor John Barton, Dr John Jarick, Dr Deborah Rooke, and Professor Paul Joyce, each of whom has offered me valuable advice, opportunities, and help. I have also benefitted immensely from the Oxford Old Testament and Graduate Old Testament seminars, and am grateful to members for their feedback and encouragement. From the years before I came to Oxford, my thanks are owed to the staff of the Theology and Religion faculty at the University of Bristol, the staff of the Visual Cultures department at Goldsmiths, and to my brilliant R.S. teacher, Deborah Lewis, who first instilled me with a love of the Hebrew Bible.

Without financial backing I would not have been able to complete my degree, so I would like to thank the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford, Worcester College, the Crewdson Trust, and the Reid Trust for their generous scholarships and grants.

Additional thanks go to those institutions that have allowed me to reproduce their images and to their staff who assisted me in the process: the British Library, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Bodleian Libraries, Hildesheim Cathedral, the Morgan Library, Vatican Museums, Musei di Bassano Del Grappa, Polo Museale de Veneto, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, Bridgeman Images, the Chrysler Museum, and Erich Lessing Images.

Of course, a DPhil is not a purely academic enterprise, but permeates every aspect of life. Completing this thesis would have been entirely impossible without the care and love of my family and friends. I want to thank my wonderful mother, Kaye, who has tirelessly supported me in my pursuit of knowledge. Thanks also go to my partner, Sean, who has graciously endured the good days and the bad days of research. I must also thank Valerie, Graham, Robbie, Jane, Bobby, and Helen each of whom has helped me in different ways. To my dear friends—there are too many of you to name, but you know who you are—thank you.

Abbreviations

Journals and Series

BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BSFEM	*Bulletin de la Société Française d'Études Mariales*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ChrLit	*Christianity and Literature*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible Old Testament Studies
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
TS	*Theological Studies*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In Roger Vadim's 1956 film, *And God Created Woman*, Brigitte Bardot's character Juliete is depicted as a motherless, sensual, sexually uncontrollable, adulterous, and dangerous woman. Though the film makes no explicit references to the biblical text, the allusion in its title suggests Juliete is a kind of 'secularized form of Eve', sexual, unstable, threatening.[1] This is typical of popular interpretations of Genesis 2–3, in which Eve is transformed into a *femme fatale*, the cause of sin and violence, and even death. In my thesis, I argue that this image of Eve is entirely man-made, and does not fully reflect the complex woman 'built' by God in Gen. 2.22. My aim is thus to destabilise the persistently pessimistic framing of Eve as a highly negative symbol of femininity within Western culture by engaging with marginal, and even heretical interpretations that focus on more positive or sympathetic aspects of her character. My objective is to question the cultural myth that orthodox, popular readings represent the 'true' meaning of Genesis 2–4, and to explore the possibility that previously ignored or muted rewritings of Eve, particularly those which emphasise her knowledge, or her motherhood, are in fact equally 'valid' interpretations of the biblical text. In doing so I consider how and why the image of Eve as a dangerous temptress has gained such considerable cultural currency, as well as question its dominance over the equally viable pictures of her as a subversive wise woman or a mourning mother.

[1] R. Wagner 2011: 464.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

The story of Adam and Eve is perhaps one of the most studied and debated texts from the Bible, both within Biblical Studies and beyond. As a story of origin, it has been used to 'think with' about humanity, divinity, reality, morality, gender and sexuality for centuries. In particular, Eve, as the first woman, has gained metonymic status as representative of all women who follow her. Consequently, the way her role has been interpreted is highly significant, with Genesis 2–3 in particular inspiring a considerable breadth of scholarly writing.[2]

Indeed, the text has been one of central importance for feminist biblical scholarship, with the issue of whether the account supports equality or hierarchy between the sexes fuelling academic debate for decades.[3] Amongst scholars who have argued that the text essentially presents man and woman as being created equal, with hierarchy only being established after the transgression, are Phyllis Trible and Mieke Bal.[4] Their modes of feminist reading have been countered by numerous scholars, including David Clines and Pamela Milne, who view the biblical text as inherently androcentric, and according to some, misogynistic.[5] These discussions have been critical for highlighting issues within Genesis 2–3

[2] For a very helpful and broad bibliography of recent work see L. S. Schearing (2015) and for feminist interpretations in particular see J. Abraham (2002).
[3] More accurately, this issue has fuelled debate for centuries. For example, the story of Adam and Eve was integral to the *Querelles des Femmes* during the early modern period, and was returned to repeatedly during the woman's suffrage movement of the nineteenth century onwards. My remit here in the Literature Review, however, is only to consider modern scholarly works. For a reader on the history of interpretations that see Genesis 2–3 as supporting either gender hierarchy or equality see K. E. Kvam, L. S. Schearing, and V. H. Ziegler (1999).
[4] P. Trible 1978; M. Bal 1987. See also J. F. Parker (2013) on the influence of translational practice on the misrepresentation of Eve. C. Meyers (1989) uses the 'combined resources of archaeology, the biblical text, and comparative sociology and social anthropology' to reconstruct the everyday Eve of ancient Israel and to argue for the biblical text as representative of the harsh reality of her, existence, rather than a condemnation of Eve or an aetiology for women's essential and innate inferiority to men (see p. 44 for quotation).
[5] D. J. A. Clines 1990; P. J. Milne 1997.

that might lead to different readings of Adam and Eve and their relationship. Indeed, the very presence of the tension between the work of scholars like Trible and Bal and Clines and Milne accentuates to me that the biblical account is difficult and ambiguous, and suggests neither position will ever be proved 'correct'. In response to this I argue below that the entire story of Eve is one characterised by ambiguity, and so cannot yield a singular response. It is for this reason I have chosen not to concentrate on a single factor, such as whether or not she was created equal to Adam, or whether or not Eve was the primary sinner. Rather, my aim is to hold in tension a variety of readings of the first woman, demonstrating that her character is multivalent and mutable, shifting with the perspective of the reader and the preconceptions they hold about the text.

In order to fully express the plurality of Eve's characterisation, I will examine her rich and multi-faceted reception history. Several collections of essays have been published in the last few decades that have offered chronological approaches to the interpretative history of Adam and Eve. These have focused predominantly on mainstream interpretations from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus and the Rabbis, the New Testament, the Church Fathers, and subsequent significant Jewish and Christian theologians. Each volume does, however, also offer its own individual insight into one or two perspectives outside of this framework, such as Islamic understanding of the figure of Eve, or non-authoritative responses from groups such as the Gnostics, as well as some other less well-known groups of interpretation, for example

psychological approaches the Genesis 2–3.[6] For the most part, however, it is not unfair to say that contemporary studies of the reception of Adam and Eve remain dominated by mainstream, 'authoritative' Jewish and Christian discussion of the nature of their wrong-doing, and whether the man or the woman was more to blame for the first sin. Furthermore, while some of the separate articles in each volume do focus on Eve and her characterisation, the publications as wholes do not offer extended treatments of her afterlives alone, but are more generally interested in the reception of Genesis 2–3.

There have, however, been two popular monographs that focus solely on the afterlives of Eve: John Phillips', *Eve: The History of an Idea*, published in 1984, and Pamela Norris' *Eve: A Biography* in 1998.[7] Both volumes offer fairly wide-ranging treatments of Eve and both include an element of examination of her reception. The former focuses on the negative appropriations of the story of Eve through the centuries in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in a variety of different modes of reception including theology, literature, and art. While Phillips amasses a great deal of resources, and offers some insightful comment, there is little in depth discussion of the interpretative trends that he includes in his volume. The account is therefore more suitable for a general readership than as a significant resource for biblical scholarship. The same can be said of Pamela Norris' 'biography' of the first woman. Like Phillips' volume, this is certainly targeted towards a more general audience, though Norris offers a good deal of perceptive

[6] Kvam, Schearing, and Ziegler 1999; B. Becking and S. Hennecke 2010; G. A. Robbins 1988; K. Schmid and C. Riedweg 2008.
[7] J. A. Phillips 1984; P. Norris 1998.

comment which biblical scholars can and have developed more thoroughly.[8] Given that both of these publications are both over ten years old and that they do not cater to a specialist audience, there is clearly call within Biblical Studies for a new study dedicated to the afterlives of Eve.

Where the volumes of Phillips and Norris are popular and generalist undertakings, in recent years a number of biblical scholars have taken an entirely opposite approach. These articles and books offer highly selective and specialist analyses of Genesis 2–3 and Eve, by focusing entirely on specific eras of interpretation, such as Kathleen Crowther's research on Adam and Eve during the Protestant Reformation,[9] or particular works or readers, such as Vita Daphne Arbel's monograph on the depiction of Eve in the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*.[10] Each of these volumes has informed my own writing, and has been crucial to my enterprise of placing a wide variety of interpretations into dialogue with one another.

As I will demonstrate below when I outline my own approach to the reception of Eve, I aim to bridge the gap between works such as Phillips' and Norris', who offer a wide-ranging but simplistic take on Eve, and the more specialist but restricted undertakings of scholars such as Crowther.

[8] While my own work inevitably shares some affinities with her volume—her book includes a chapter on Pandora, as well as a section on women writers' approaches to Eve—both my approach to the topic and the content of my thesis differ from hers in crucial ways. For example, Norris' examinations are broad, and her book covers a great volume of material, whereas I offer a more in depth and methodical approach to specific case studies to examine more closely and critique the interpretative practices of the readers under consideration.
[9] For example K. Crowther 2010; P. Almond 1999.
[10] For example V. D. Arbel (2012); N. Aschkenasy (1986), G. J. Blidstein 1997; N. Calvert-Koyzis and H. Weir (2010) to name only a very small selection.

II. APPROACH

> *Suppose… I want to create a female character who is not a natural force, whether good or evil… who makes decisions, performs actions, causes as well as endures events, and has perhaps even some ambition, some creative power. What stories does my culture have to tell me about such women? Not very many…*
>
> Margaret Atwood[11]

This description of a writer's desire to create a complex female character was written by Margaret Atwood in the mid 1970s in reaction to the lack of nuanced women in the history of storytelling. For centuries Western culture has incessantly simplified and polarised the concept of womanhood. Literature, as Atwood observes, has been populated by female stereotypes: virgins and whores, wives and mistresses, accepted and rejected femininity. Eve has famously fallen foul of this type-casting with her name becoming synonymous with titles such as temptress, *femme fatale*, fallen woman, and she has repeatedly been portrayed as the inferior of man and the mother of death.

In this thesis I aim to question the dominance of the cultural myth of Eve, and its popular acceptance as the 'meaning' of the biblical text, by reflecting on whether it is possible to produce a more complex picture of the first woman. Thus, I will argue that Eve's appearance in Genesis 2–4 offers a character that fits Atwood's description of her longed for female character. I will demonstrate that Eve is neither the embodiment of good nor evil; she makes her own decision to take of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; she subsequently acts on this decision, picking the fruit, eating it and sharing the experience with her partner, Adam. In

[11] M. Atwood 1979: 32.

doing so Eve becomes the cause of a change in the nature of humanity, introducing self-awareness, knowledge and perhaps sexuality to human life, while also being the first to endure the painful reality of life outside of Eden. This series of choices and deeds undertaken by Eve is famously entangled with the knotty issues of her ambition and her desire. Furthermore, a female who is given the honorific title, 'mother of all living', must be in possession of 'some creative power'! And yet, despite the affinities with Atwood's missing woman, Eve has popularly been conceived of as vain, weak, disobedient, and lacking in reason, while her creative power has frequently been tainted by her association with illicit sex and death. This has led Mieke Bal to observe that Eve's myth is actually a double myth: one being found in the biblical text, and the other being the cultural myth of Eve that has taken root in Western cultural consciousness.[12] In view of this tension between the multiplicity of the biblical character of Eve and the singular domination of her cultural afterlives by the theme of sin, my aim is to *reframe* the first woman with two other themes that are critical to her story—knowledge and life—using a combination of literary criticism and reception criticism to re-evaluate her image.[13]

The idea of exploring the process by which a text is *framed* that I adopt below has been written about extensively by Mieke Bal, and offers a very useful hermeneutical model for those working in the field of biblical interpretation and reception history. Bal has argued that a focus on the act of *framing* that takes place as part of the meaning making process for a text/object by its reader/viewer represents a helpful alternative to the common practice of relying

[12] M. Bal 1987: 109.
[13] For a full discussion of the significance of framing as a means of reading and meaning making see Bal 2002: 76–84. Bal's writing is highly informed by J. Culler (1988).

on the *context* of a text/object to ascertain its meaning. Context is a fairly static concept, which is primarily associated with historically located data.[14] A scholar will consider the context of particular artefacts—literature, paintings, sculptures—in an attempt to 'uncover their meaning'.[15] Mieke Bal argues that this action regularly entails a confusion between explanation and interpretation, suggesting that too often context is used to *explain* the meaning of an artefact based on notions of 'origin, cause, and intention', rather than to *interpret* it.[16] When context is employed in this way, the meaning of the artefact becomes defined by a static set of data, and in turn becomes closed to any further interpretation. In response to this issue a number of theorists have considered the process by which a text is *framed* and thus made meaningful.[17] The active term *framing* used in relation to a text contains a reminder that meaning is produced through a process, and by necessity is performed by an agent. In contrast to *context*, which exists as fact, *framing* is an action. So, when a text is *framed*, it is done so by a reader; it is a subjective act and is repeated endlessly. The concept of *framing* also carries recognition of the fact that readers can bring about the 'frame-up' of a text or its characters, in the sense of it being framed for a crime, or indeed set-up for a fall.[18]

In my thesis I argue the primary stimuli for the popular conception of Eve as a symbol of feminine sin are a series of deeply engrained interpretative assumptions about Genesis 2–3 that have framed readings of the text through the centuries. Perhaps the most pervasive and problematic amongst these is the

[14] Ibid. 135.
[15] Ibid. 134–5.
[16] Ibid. 135.
[17] Ibid.134–5.
[18] Culler 1988: xiv. See also Ibid.138.

belief that the story offers an account of the Fall of Humankind.[19] Over time this mode of reading, which focuses on the theme of sin in the biblical account, has led to a 'frame-up' of the first woman, effectively blinding the majority of readers to other potential interpretations that might offer equally 'good' readings of her story. Consequently, my aim is to explore the process of *framing* Eve, offering a critique of the dominant frame of sin by exposing its weak rooting in the Hebrew Bible, as well as the selective and subjective interpretations of the first woman that it encourages. I will also examine the potential plurality of Eve's biblical and cultural characters by considering two further potential thematic frames that have been acknowledged by interpreters through the ages, but remain on the margins of the popular understanding of Eve: knowledge and life.

I will begin my interactions with Eve's story by producing three separate thematic narrative criticisms of the Hebrew text, one at the beginning of each chapter, giving attention to the textual issues of the Genesis narrative. These initial evaluations will draw attention to textual details available in the notoriously ambiguous story of Eve that highlight a specific theme intrinsic within the narrative: Chapter 2 will deal with the theme of sin, Chapter 3 with knowledge, and Chapter 4 with life. A close examination of what the text 'says' helps to highlight what readers *do* as they develop their meanings for it. For a 'doxic' story like Eve's, this enterprise is critical, as acknowledging the numerous textual supports for a plurality of themes in the biblical narrative is a significant

[19] For the ways in which ideas of 'the Fall' developed separately in Judaism and Christianity see T. Römer et al (2014).

step towards de-bunking the monolithic status of Eve as first and foremost a sinner, and encourages acknowledgement of her more complex character.[20]

Having established the narrative markers that are available in the Hebrew text, I will offer some reflection on the earliest potential influences on the framing of Eve with the theme of sin, knowledge or motherhood, considering parallel ancient female figures such as Pandora, Shamhat and Asherah, as well as some of the first instances of the reception of Eve's story. This exploration is comparable to the process Mieke Bal used in her examination of a painting of Judith holding the head of Holofernes by Gerrit Pietersz Sweelinck (1605).[21] She curated the show with the aim of blowing open the traditional 'Judith theme', 'the kind of thematics that surround castration anxiety'. Instead she considered the ambiguities of the image and the character, 'not concentrating on powerful women, the famous lady killers, but on a variety of power relations between women and men'.[22] For example Bal included 'victim paintings', such as *Lucretia* (Frans Floris, 1519–20) and *Faun and Nymph* (School of Titian, 1540–1550) that ordinarily might stand in opposition to the 'lady-killer' Judith in order to 'reframe' the biblical heroine.[23] By linking the female figures together on the basis of the sexualisation of their bodies by male artists, Bal forged a balance between stories of women victims and women assailants who all become objects of the male gaze when rendered in image. In my analysis of Eve, I borrow this

[20] Mieke Bal defines a 'doxic' text as one that is 'very well known to the general public, yet hardly *read* in its textual form' (2006: 319).
[21] The exhibition, 'Moordwijven! (Lady Killers!)', was held at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in 1998.
[22] Bal 2002: 156.
[23] Ibid. 156–7.

process of establishing multiple encounters between different 'types' of women as a means of producing meaning and questioning dominant framings of Eve.

In the final sections of each chapter, I employ a mode of ideological reception criticism to frame Eve with her own afterlives. I use the term 'ideological reception criticism' to describe a mode of 'analysis of readers' responses [to biblical texts] through history [that] can be employed to interrogate dominant strategies of interpretation'.[24] Consequently, I do not offer a solely chronological examination of Eve through the ages, but instead use Eve's history of interpretation to refresh and renew the biblical text and contemporary readers' understanding of it.[25] I argue that by taking this approach to the reception history of the Bible:

> … scholars expand the interpretative possibilities of biblical texts for modern readers, as well as increasing their awareness of problematic texts of the Bible and equally problematic appropriations of them.[26]

This type of ideological reception criticism is typically undertaken with a specific political or cultural purpose, for example by taking a post-colonial or a queer approach to a particular biblical text and its history of interpretation.[27] In my thesis I adopt a feminist approach with the aim of readdressing the depiction of Eve as woman, and in particular to critique misogynistic and patriarchal appropriations of her image that have had a damaging effect on popular understanding of the biblical story. In doing so I follow Cheryl J. Exum in asking

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[24] For my extended discussion of ideological reception criticism and reception criticism more generally see H. Morse (2014). See p. 253 for quotation.
[25] For a similar approach but to the book of Jonah, see Y. Sherwood 2000, whose work I am incredibly indebted to.
[26] Morse 257. For examples of this mode of reception criticism with scholars taking a feminist stance see: J. Shaw (1989: 113–32); Y. Sherwood (1996: 19–82) J. C. Exum (1996); K. Low (2013); N. Calvert-Koyzis and Heather Weir (2010); M.A. Taylor and H.E. Weir (2006).
[27] Ibid. 257–9.

how biblical women's, and in particular Eve's story has been 'altered, expanded, or invented… how does what we think we know about biblical women, our preconceptions and assumptions shaped by our encounters with their cultural personae, affect the way we read their stories?'[28].

The structure of my ideological critical approach to Eve and her reception has been strongly informed by the work of Yvonne Sherwood in, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (2000). Thus the division of chapters is not only made on the basis of themes, but it also echoes her treatment of the reception history of Jonah by beginning with a critical examination of 'Mainstream' readings, followed by exploration of more marginal 'Backwater' interpretations.[29] Consequently, her book effectively 'demonstrates the extreme divergence between Mainstream/scholarly/Christian and Jewish/popular readings.'[30] While I see more of a convergence between 'popular' and 'Mainstream/scholarly/Christian' interpretation of Eve than Sherwood does of Jonah, I have employed a similar model of critiquing the most dominant trajectories of interpretations (Chapter 2), as well as offering less well-known and in some cases rejected or silenced appropriations in order to trouble the 'Mainstream' reading of Eve (Chapters 3 and 4). Similarly to Sherwood I am interested in giving voice to those readers who are usually erased from mainstream scholarly accounts, especially the voices of women.[31] So, as part of my feminist agenda, I have included two sections on the work of women writers

[28] Exum 1996: 8.
[29] Sherwood 2000: 7. For Jonah the 'Backwater' interpretations were taken from Jewish readings and popular culture references
[30] Ibid. 3.
[31] This is a burgeoning field of research with only a very small number of studies conducted on women writers' interpretations of Genesis to date. See example Calvert-Koyzis and Weir (2010); Taylor and Weir (2006).

and their appropriations of Eve—Chapter 3.IV and Chapter 4.IV. Thus, my work contributes to a number of biblical scholars' recent efforts to question the 'gendered "legitimacy"' present in contemporary reception critical studies, which are dominated by white, male, authoritative Christian and Jewish voices.[32]

My thesis, then, challenges the conventional interpretative history of Eve's character, using the biblical text as my guide for seeking out less well-known or indeed repressed readings of the first woman. In this sense, my work complements the small but growing number of scholarly works that take an ideological or political stance on the study of the reception of biblical texts. Secondly, by structuring my research in response to the biblical text itself, and exploring three facets of Eve that are present within Genesis 2–4, I have sought out material concerning the first woman that has rarely made its way into more general studies on the reception of her character. This will be most strongly evident in the Chapter 3, where considerable focus is given to Eve's motherhood and her relationship with Cain, Abel, and Seth; an area of her story that is rarely considered in any modern exegesis of the biblical text. My thesis, therefore, functions on two levels, one on which I am exploring broad themes of authorship, textual meaning, tradition, legitimacy and authority, and one on which I am augmenting and re-evaluating the role of Eve as a woman in the Bible and in her afterlives.

[32] Morse 2014: 258. Cf. Sherwood 1996: 256.

Chapter 2

Eve and Sin

I. Introduction

Eve is, according to popular views held in Western culture, the original *femme fatale*. For centuries, she has been framed as a negative 'everywoman', with countless interpreters claiming Genesis 2–3 as a prooftext for viewing women as inherently more sinful than men. In the first section of this chapter, I investigate how and why the theme of sin has been construed in the Hebrew version of Genesis 2–3 and subsequent translations.[33] This may raise the question of why focus on the Hebrew text, when the majority of later translators, especially in the Western world, have always read the text in translation? For me, this is precisely the reason for returning to the Hebrew, as it helps to illustrate how far interpretations that have been taken to be 'correct' or legitimate have strayed from the earliest versions of the text. From the point of translation, interpretations that might appear to be reasonable, for example on the basis of the LXX might in fact be fairly distant from the earlier Hebrew account. It is for this reason that I begin from the Hebrew account, moving forwards, to demonstrate the process by which readers depart from the biblical story, and to

[33] There are numerous interpretative issues that have been important for both Eve and the image of woman that I am unable to discuss directly or with any sustained attention in this thesis. For example, the issue of whether hierarchy or equality is intended between the sexes in the Hebrew account. While this issue is clearly influenced by whether Eve is seen as negative figure, it does not always follow that if Eve is secondary to Adam, she is also perceived as wicked. Thus, while I do discuss the issue of gender equality repeatedly, it is not the main focus of my work in the way that it is for a study such as Phyllis Trible's famous article 'A Love Story Gone Awry' (1978).

call into question the possibility of ever coming to a definitive meaning for Eve's story.

In the following two sections I then examine how various textual and translational details have contributed to later readers' depictions of Eve as a feminine symbol of sin, and in particular the ways in which the first woman's wrong-doing has negatively impacted upon her relationship with knowledge (section 2), and her motherhood (section 3). The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to both examine and critique the interpretative process that has resulted in the popular cultural view of Eve as a figure of carnal foolishness and a mother of death. Cumulatively, I consider how the image of Eve as a dangerous temptress has gained such considerable cultural currency, and question its damaging dominance over, and corruption of, equally viable images of her as a subversive wise woman or a mourning mother, which I will explore in chapters III and IV.

II. EVE AND SIN IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

While numerous English Bible translations present Genesis 3 under headings such as 'the first sin and its punishment'[34] or 'the Fall of Man',[35] in modern scholarship there is considerably less agreement over the focus of the story, with studies supporting the reading of Eve's narrative as one concerned with sin;[36] or crime and punishment;[37] or the loss of immortality;[38] or human maturation.[39]

[34] NRSV.
[35] NIV; NJB.
[36] G. Wenham 1987; W. Moberly 1988; T. Fretheim 1994; T. Mettinger 2007 (divine test); P. Trible 1978; A. J. Hauser 1992.
[37] C. Westermann 1994.

While this small sample of recent scholarly perspectives demonstrates the variety of themes that can be discerned in Genesis 2–3, I wish to analyse the aspects within the Hebrew text that might have provided triggers for countless interpreters through the ages to see Eve as a negative and corrupt initiator of sin and death. Several elements of Genesis 2 but mainly Genesis 3, are crucial to the development of this characterisation of Eve: Gen. 2.17, Gen. 3.1-5; Gen. 3.6-8; Gen. 3.12-13; Gen. 3.15-16. In these verses, the woman's relationship with the snake, with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with the man, and with God are developed through dialogue and description, with every pericope functioning as a potential source of inspiration for the popular and widespread vilification of Eve. Nonetheless, in a problematic text which does not include any of the Hebrew language's rich vocabulary for sin, I will demonstrate that most of the impetus to read Eve as a sinner is derived from silence and ambiguity.

a. Genesis 2.16-17: Prohibition

One of the crucial elements for the depiction of Eve as the initiator of sin actually appears in part of the story *before* she has been created. Without Yahweh Elohim's prohibition in Gen. 2.16-17 the human couple would not have been able to break it.[40] By establishing a rule that could be disobeyed in his newly created world, God simultaneously establishes the possibility for sin in the form of

[38] J. Barr 1992.
[39] L. M. Bechtel 1995; S. Dragga 1992; S. Niditch 1985.
[40] See Moberly (1988: 4–5). It is critical for his reading of Genesis 2–3 as a story about sin that the actions of ch. 3 are contextualised by those in ch. 4. In particular, he sees Gen. 2.16-17 as indicative of a broader biblical concern with moral choice, responsibility and obedience: 'It is this context of certain basic principles of Hebrew theology and ethics which, I suggest, sets the scene for chap. 3.'

rebellion.[41] After forming the first human, and planting a garden in Eden, which included the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Yahweh Elohim sets a single behavioural boundary: 'And the LORD God commanded the human, saying "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."'[42]

The particular purpose and meaning of this prohibition is veiled due to the lack of any explanation or reasoning from the deity. Indeed, even the specific qualities of the fruit that is banned remain a mystery to the reader and the human. Through the centuries, several explanations have become popular amongst interpreters in their efforts to discern what the 'knowledge of good and evil' would offer, including sexual knowledge, maturation, ethical or moral knowledge, or universal knowledge.[43] Yet, the only explicit qualifier stated in the Hebrew account is that, according to God, the human being will die if it eats from the tree. Whether the deity makes this remark because the fruit is inherently lethal, or because God will bring about the death of the human if he disobeys, remains ambiguous. When Yahweh Elohim utters '"for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"', is he making a death threat or simply advising the human that the fruit is poisonous, much like a concerned parent?

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[41] i.e. A sin in the sense of disobedience or rebellion particularly against God. See R. C. Cover 1992: 36.

[42] Gen. 2.16-17. I depart from the NRSV here by translating אדם as 'human' rather than 'man'. All quotations from the Bible are taken from the NRSV unless otherwise stated (*Bibleworks 9* [2011]). For a discussion of the potential difficulties in the Hebrew construction of 'the tree of knowledge of good and evil' עץ הדעת טוב ורע see Mettinger 2007: 61–2. MT Hebrew is taken from *BibleWorks 9* (2011).

[43] For summaries of these various interpretations see Westermann (1998: 243–5); Mettinger (2007: 62–3); J. Day (2013: 41–4).

Further to this, there has been a great deal of discussion over the temporal quality supplied to the text by ביום. It is unclear when he says this whether Yahweh Elohim means that the one who eats will die on the same day that they consume fruit, or that they will simply become mortal and death will eventually come upon them (this reading of course implies that primordial humanity was immortal).[44] In spite of the problematic nature of the interdiction, it is crucial to the rest of the story, and indeed to the fate of Eve; depending on how the prohibition is interpreted, by taking the tree's fruit Eve either condemns herself, and some argue Adam, to death, or she brings humanity into a state of mortality.

For some interpreters, such as Walter Moberly and Trygve Mettinger, the vagueness of the narrative regarding the qualities of the tree is deliberate: 'it is the fact of prohibition, rather than the content of what is prohibited, that assumes central importance'.[45] Thus, the tree is taboo not because of what it can confer to those who eat from it, but because it is forbidden by God. Following this line of interpretation of the theme of Genesis 2–3, the narrative is concerned with the establishment of divine boundaries by God and the human ability or inability to abide by them, rather than with the human acquisition of knowledge, maturity, or immortality. [46]

Whichever way the text in Gen. 2.17 is interpreted, it is important to note that the woman has not yet been formed, and thus the prohibition is addressed

[44] For discussion see Westermann (1994: 224–3). See also the interchange between James Barr (1992, 2006) and Walter Moberly (1994, 2008) that took place over several years.
[45] Moberly 1988: 4.
[46] Ibid.; Mettinger 2007—he uses his conclusion to support viewing the author as being deeply influenced by Deuteronomistic traditions.

to the human alone, using the second person masculine singular form תֹּאכַל in vv. 16 and 17, and the masculine singular suffix in v. 17: אֲכָלְךָ. Pamela Milne, working from a structural perspective on the text, suggests that this ordering is significant because:

> Since the creation of the woman follows the prohibition, the text is stressing that it is only the man's fate which is at stake: the woman and the snake are essential actors in the working out of the man's fate but the focus is on the man.[47]

If this reading is accepted, then it is possible to discern a narrative stimulus for an interpretation of Genesis 2–3 that lays blame for the demise of man directly on the actions of the woman before she has even been created.[48] Conversely, more sympathetic interpreters of Eve's story could take her absence at the original issuing of God's command to support seeing the woman as *less* culpable than the man.[49] While the text is clear in its demonstration that the אָדָם has heard the prohibition directly from Yahweh Elohim, neither the narrator nor the woman offer any explanation of how she comes to know that the fruit is forbidden when she speaks in ch.3. It might have been the man, or some other unknown agent, that explained the deity's prohibition to the woman, thus diminishing its potency. If she did not directly receive the words from God, then it would be reasonable for her to doubt whether the deity did indeed speak them. This clash of scholarly takes on precisely the same element of text neatly illustrates the problems that arise from attempting to pinpoint the definitive meaning of Genesis 2–3.

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[47] P. J. Milne 1997: 159.

[48] See section 2.III.a below for how this interpretation of the biblical text was frequently adopted by those readers who assume a gendered intellectual hierarchy between the man and the woman, and who see Eve as a conduit for Adam's sin.

[49] So D. Rooke (1992: 166): 'God and the (hu)man between them are responsible for creating the conditions where something is bound to go wrong, and… moreover they do it before the woman is created; so to put the blame on her when things do go wrong is to say the least unfair.'

b. Genesis 3.1-5: Temptation

One of the most major factors in the Hebrew Bible account that has contributed to the identification of Eve as the vehicle for sin and death is her conversation with the snake (Gen. 3.1-5), which appears to function as a catalyst for her subsequent decision to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3.6). In this first section of Genesis 3, the speech pattern observed in Genesis 2 shifts. While the focus in the latter was on the voices of God and to a lesser extent the first human, אדם, with the first woman portrayed as a silent object once she has been 'built', in Gen. 3.1-5 the tables turn. There it is the אדם who remains silent, with the new characters, Eve and the snake, vocally taking centre stage.[50] Purely by implication of the character dynamics in each chapter, rather than any specific markers in the Hebrew text, Adam seems linked to the deity and Eve to the snake. This has led even modern commentators to make remarks such as the following from McKenzie's 1954 article on Genesis 2–3: 'The drama of sin has really only two actors: the serpent and the woman', a reading of the text which clearly correlates with Milne's observation mentioned above.[51] Clearly this is potentially problematic for the woman, as from this perspective she becomes much more closely aligned with sinfulness and fault than the man. On the other hand, it is equally possible to question the man's whereabouts at this point, and wonder why he offers no support to the woman.

[50] For interpreters and interpretations that recognise this element of the woman's personality as a sign of Eve's superior intellect, rather than her attraction to sin, see discussion in Chapter 3.
[51] J. McKenzie 1954: 570. He contextualises this statement by saying that 'the pre-literary story expressed, beyond doubt, the popular belief that the weaker sex is the morally feeble side of the race. In view of the symbolism of the serpent, it is altogether likely that the moral weakness of the woman which is here indicated is sexual; this also is in harmony with popular belief'.

The tone of the dialogue between the woman and the snake in Gen. 3.2-5 is initially set by the description of the snake as the most cunning or crafty—ערום—of all the creatures made by Yahweh Elohim. The word ערום is not negative per se—for example it is employed throughout Proverbs in reference to the prudent or the clever (Prov. 12, 13, 14, 22, 27).[52] This ambivalence is also reflected by LXX which has φρονιμώτατος—a term that can refer to practical wisdom and shrewdness (cf. Matt. 10.16), while the Vulgate selects *callidior*, again indicating artfulness rather than evil.[53] Indeed, based on the Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts, the reader should not assume that because the snake is crafty it represents any kind of supernatural or mystical embodiment of evil.[54] After all, as Westermann summarises, if the writer 'wanted to say that the serpent was really opposed to Yahweh, then he could not say in the same breath that Yahweh created it.'[55] Nonetheless, when the 'craftiness' of the snake manifests itself in rhetorical form in its speeches in vv. 1 and 4-5, it is clear that the animal *is* an agent of disruption who enters the action with a rather loaded question for the woman:[56] 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' (Gen. 3.1).[57] In Hebrew the enquiry opens with אף כי, a construction often translated as 'but even' or 'is it even so…?', as is clearly demonstrated by

[52] H. Kraus 2011: 28.
[53] LXX Greek and Vulgate Latin are taken from *BibleWorks 9* (2011).
[54] Nonetheless, the majority of readings that have been accepted as authoritative assume that the snake is an agent of the devil, or is the devil in disguise. See sections 2.III. and 2.IV below, which include a variety of different popular and/or influential readings of Genesis 2–3 that rely on this interpretation.
[55] Westermann 1994: 238. See also G. von Rad 1963: 88.
[56] As Anthony Philips (1983: 25) puts it, 'the snake confirms his reputation by asking the woman a question which cannot be directly answered'.
[57] Of course the internal thought process of the snake is not provided by the biblical text, but it seems clear from the ensuing conversation that its aim is to destabilise God's prohibition in Eve's mind.

the JPS Tanakh translation: '"Did God *really* say…"'.[58] This phrase allows the animal to simultaneously question God's activity, as well as encourage the woman to doubt her understanding of the command. Thus, while being ערום is not in itself a bad quality, when this description is accompanied by an account of tricky, disruptive and potentially heretical behaviour, it becomes clear how readers might see the snake as a negative, wily, manipulative animal acting to destabilise God.[59]

This potentially problematic animal then chooses to speak to the woman, drawing her into a relationship with it. In much the same way that God offers no reason for his command in Gen. 2.17, neither the snake nor the narrator explains its decision to address the woman rather than the man. It is possible that this was a deliberate compositional choice by the writers of the text, but also equally conceivable that the sex of the snake's conversation partner was of no importance to them. Regardless of the invisible intention of the authors, the fact that the issue is left unresolved opens space for readerly speculation, with the woman often assumed to be more susceptible than the man to persuasion and deception.[60]

In her favour, the woman's response to its approach appears to place her in opposition to the snake, as she immediately attempts to correct its misunderstanding of the divine command:[61] 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the

[58] Italics added for emphasis.
[59] Wenham 1987: 73.
[60] See 2.III for examples of this mode of reading.
[61] Moberly gives considerable weight to this as the main intention of the snake's speech (1988: 6).

middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die"' (Gen. 3.2-3). Yet, on closer inspection of the woman's answer to the snake, it is clear that her own grasp of the interdiction diverges from its form in Gen. 2.17.[62] Indeed, the woman changes a considerable amount of the language from God's original speech. This has the potential to raise additional questions concerning her culpability in the mind of the reader, if they assume that the alterations 'reveal the inner workings of Eve's mind' and a move towards disobedience.[63] First, the woman appears to weaken God's allowance of all the trees in the garden, as well as his threat that the fruit will bring death, as she fails to include either of his emphatic infinitive absolute configurations of אכל and מות. Further, her understanding of the specific tree that had been forbidden is brought into question as she talks of the, 'the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden' (ומפרי העץ אשר בתוך־הגן), rather than the 'knowledge of good and evil' as it is labelled in Gen. 2.17.[64] For readers of the final form of the text, this might indicate vagueness in the woman's understanding of God's words, compounded by the fact that she, like the snake, only refers to Yahweh Elohim as 'Elohim'. By allowing Eve's vocabulary to mirror the animal's, the text offers readers further occasion to connect the two characters. Furthermore, for some interpreters, the failure of both the snake and the woman to use 'Yahweh Elohim' suggests that they lack proper knowledge or due respect for the deity.[65] A final

[62] For a clear overview of all the divergences see R. Kimelman (1996: 7).
[63] Kimelman 1996: 7.
[64] In Gen. 2.9 the 'tree of life' is described as 'in the midst of the garden'. To source critics this suggests that Gen. 3.4-5 may represent a separate strand to the earlier verses, with the author of the woman's speech only having awareness of one tree and so not needing to clarify it by name. Von Rad 1963: 88; Westermann 1994: 213.
[65] Moberly (1988: 6) argues that the snake uses only 'Elohim', rather than 'Yahweh Elohim', because it doubts God's caring and personal relationship with his creation. For counter-suggestions see John Day, who argues that for the writers of the text, which he identifies as the 'J'

significant difference between the woman's speech in Gen. 3.4-5 and God's in 2.16-17 is that she *adds* a detail to it, claiming that the couple had been forbidden from even touching the fruit. These ambiguities in the text have proved crucial stimuli for later interpreters, and have resulted in various negative assessments of Eve, her relationship to sin, knowledge, the snake, the man, and God. While the narrator of the Hebrew Bible account avoids offering any value judgment on the woman's actions, or indeed any clarifications about the snake or God's motivation in relation to the tree of knowledge, it is precisely this silence that has left space for later readers to cast aspersions on Eve's character.

Cumulatively, the woman's words develop a sense of distance between her and God. Indeed, as Westermann comments:

> This sentence makes it clear that a command that is questioned is no longer the original command, as the continuation of the narrative makes clear. One who defends a command can already be on the way to breaking it.[66]

Moberly offers an even more damning interpretation of Eve's actions, framing them as traditional interpreters have by appealing to the biblical caution against adding or subtracting from God's words:

> Traditional Jewish commentators, however, have usually seen significance in terms of the principle of Deut. 4:2, Prov. 30:6 of neither adding to nor subtracting from God's word, and I would judge that such an intuition is probably correct.[67]

While I am cautious in assuming shared inner-biblical attitudes without considerably more supporting evidence, Moberly 's position certainly highlights

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source, the name Yahweh did not appear in speeches until after Gen. 4.26 with the exception of Gen. 4.1, which Day sees as coming from a separate source (2013: 38).

[66] Westermann 1994: 239–40. See also Wenham (1987: 73): 'these slight alterations to God's remark suggest that the woman has already moved slightly away from God toward the serpent's attitude', and Kimelman (1996: 8) 'Through them [Eve's alterations], the narrative signals Eve's suggestibility if not susceptibility to the snake's argumentation by showing the movement she has already made in that direction'.

[67] Moberly 1988: 7.

how Eve's speech may have cast a shadow over her character and her relationship to God. In many ways, in a similarly ambiguous style to Gen. 2.17, while refraining from supplying any explicit reason to question the moral character of the woman, the mystery generated by the terseness of the text provides the reader with scope to see the woman as already on the path to wrong-doing. Given that this is their first encounter with the woman as a subject, the verses could clearly have considerable effect on their understanding of her character. On the other hand, though the observations above might collectively help to shed doubt on the woman and her relationship to both God and his command, nothing is explicitly supplied by the text to definitively confirm this line of thinking. Indeed, it is also entirely possible for a reader of Genesis 3.2-3 to acknowledge Eve's additions to God's words as an effort to ensure she keeps his command.[68]

Whichever way the reader regards the woman's extension of the words of God, it is unequivocally clear that by Gen. 3.6 she is on the way to breaking the prohibition. In response to the woman's defence of God's instruction, the snake offers a more direct challenge to Yahweh Elohim than in v. 1. It suggests that not only will the humans not die when they take the fruit of knowledge, but that they will gain a form of divine wisdom that God wishes to guard as his own (Gen. 3.4-5). This particular provocation apparently has an effect on the woman, as it is immediately after hearing the snake's words that her perception of the fruit changes. Subsequently, she no longer sees death when she looks at the fruit, but recognises its more appealing qualities. She is able to identify the sensual

[68] See 3.II.c ,where I include precisely this type of interpretation.

attributes of the tree, its pleasing appearance and presumably taste, as well as its ability to confer knowledge. This is a particularly problematic moment for the woman, as she appears to be listening to the snake rather than to God, and to be attracted to qualities of the fruit that have been forbidden by the deity. For traditional interpreters, regardless of the divine motivation behind the prohibition, the fact that Yahweh Elohim has banned the fruit means that the woman should not entertain the possibility of eating it.

Further analysis of the vocabulary used in the paragraph highlights the difficult position the woman is now in. Not only can she been seen to have aligned herself with the snake over God, but she also appears to be described committing one of the Hebrew Bible's prime sins: coveting. The tree is described as 'good'—טוב—for food, and the visual attraction of the plant is rendered by תאוה, which can express both covetous desires, as well as righteous desires.[69] There is allusion to a more serious use of moral or ethical language in relation to Eve's attraction to knowledge: ונחמד העץ להשכיל. The verb חמד, here in niphal participle form, denotes that the tree is desirable. The active form of the verb, that is to say, the action or feeling that the tree stimulates in the woman, is frequently, though not always, employed in the case of a negative or damaging desire.[70] For example, it appears in the Decalogue warning not to covet neighbour's possessions, including their wife (Ex. 20.17; Deut. 5.21), as well in texts covering the desire of others' lands (Ex. 34.24, Mic. 2.2), and is often connected to the desires linked with idolatry and apostasy (Deut. 7.25; Isa. 1.29,

[69] D. J. A. Clines 2011: 582. Interestingly, in Proverbs 13, the very same noun is used in v. 12: 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a ***desire*** fulfilled is a tree of life.'
[70] Note, though, that in Gen. 2.9 all the trees are described as desirable to see, using the passive form of חמד.

44.9; Ezek. 23).[71] This specific use of vocabulary could function as a stimulus for later interpreters to feel justified in characterising the woman as arrogant to the point of sinfulness. While it is legitimate for her to desire the fruit because of its visual appeal and its potential as food, her desire to gain wisdom that the snake has informed her is an attribute of God/gods is covetous and hubristic.[72] Interestingly, though, in view of reception, this emphasis on the covetousness that the fruit can induce is lost in the LXX and Vulgate, where more attention is placed on the sensual appeal of the fruit in its deliverance of understanding: the Greek ὡραῖόν and the Latin *delectabile*.

By Gen. 3.6, the woman's path through Eden appears to have become something of a slippery slope. Though in earlier verses it has been possible to defend her, often on the basis of the text's silence on various details, that strategy becomes harder to maintain here. Nonetheless, for readers sympathetic to the woman's experience in the garden, though she can be viewed as hubristic and heretical because of her choice to eat the fruit of knowledge, she can equally be characterised as pioneering and positive in her independent pursuit of wisdom that is integral to human development.[73] There is, therefore, evidence present in Genesis 3 that can support both perspectives, though the former vision of Eve as prime sinner has of course been the most historically influential, and these verses have offered a crucial scriptural source for defining the first woman, and thus all women, as greedy, vain, proud and easily led astray.

[71] Note the use of the verb in the Psalms is usually positive and in Song 2.3, on occasion in Isaiah (27, 32) and Prov. 21.20. Elsewhere in Proverbs it is associated with harmful desire.
[72] See section 2.III.a for interpretations that read this as pride. For counter-readings that focus on knowledge and positive rebellion see Chapter 3.
[73] See discussion in Chapter 3 for the implications this has for the understanding of the character of God.

c. Genesis 3.6: Transgression

The actual moment of the woman's transgression passes quickly, being described in only three words: ותקח מפריו ותאכל. Even for the characteristically terse literary style of Genesis 2–3, this is brief. But the text says all it needs to say; after a considerable build up, the woman makes her decision and acts against God's command. But she does not act alone; she shares the fruit with 'her husband, who was with her' (Gen. 3.6). It is often assumed that the woman was alone while she was speaking with the snake, however, now in v. 6 the man is described as being 'with her'—עמה. There are also some textual clues throughout the chapter that point to the fact that the woman was actually accompanied by the man all along. This has been observed by Julie Faith Parker, who, in a recent article on the significance of עמה in the history of translation of Gen. 3.6, notes that when the snake speaks of 'you', it does so using second person masculine plural verb forms. Thus she writes, 'this repeated use of Hebrew plural verbs could create the impression that Adam is beside Eve throughout the scene'.[74] Interestingly, the plural form is also maintained in the Greek and the Latin versions of the text. Numerous English translations, however, because there is no differentiation between the singular and plural 'you', have facilitated the popular assumption that Adam was not present while the woman and the snake spoke, thus exonerating him to a certain extent, while placing the majority of blame of her.[75]

[74] Parker 2013: 733.
[75] Ibid. 734–5. This is the case in, for example, the NRSV and JPS, but in KJV the use of 'Ye' indicates that the snake is address both Adam and Eve.

Jerome's Vulgate very likely influences this tradition of interpretation, which rejects the possibility that the man might have been party to the temptation. This Latin version of the Hebrew Bible, while maintaining the second person plural forms in the snake's address to the woman, fails to translate עמה entirely: *deditque viro suo qui comedit*.[76] Consequently, in the Vulgate and numerous subsequent translations such as the RSV, REB, and, interestingly, NJPS, Adam is not *with* Eve when she eats the fruit, she simply gives to her husband and he eats.[77] This allows for the possibility that the woman ate the fruit in an entirely different part of the garden, at an entirely different time, and only subsequently deliberately sought out the man to encourage him to transgress as well. Thus, in the tradition encouraged by the Vulgate, even those interpreters who do acknowledge the Hebrew עמה often assume that Adam was not party to the temptation, and thus point to Eve as the conduit for sin. Yet, like many of the arguments for the biblical woman's sinful, rebellious, vain, or proud character considered above, the potential argument that underlies her representation as a temptress is based on silence. The Hebrew text never implies or uses any language of seduction to describe Eve, and it is only with the Vulgate that any suggestion that she was alone when she transgressed arises.[78]

d. Genesis 3.7-13: Realisation and Confrontation

Verse 7 begins by confirming that the snake, rather than God, appears to be correct. After eating the fruit, the eyes of the couple are opened, and they do not die. Subsequently, in Gen. 3.22 Yahweh Elohim declares that the pair are to be

[76] In doing so it departs from all other versions. Ibid. 736.
[77] See Parker 2013 for overview.
[78] Bechtel 1995: 11.

expelled from Eden because they have becomes like G/god/s. Given that the focus of this particular examination of the Hebrew text is on Eve, it would be beyond my scope to offer a full discussion of the complex problem of who tells the truth, the snake or God.[79] It is, however, important to recognise that for many readers throughout the centuries it has been inconceivable that God could be wrong, and the serpent right, and so numerous interpretative strategies have developed to deal with this issue. Whether God or the snake was the more truthful, when Yahweh Elohim learns of the humans' actions, it is he who is in a position of power and not the reptile.

The effect of the fruit on the first couple, of course, contributes to readers' notions of the forbidden knowledge. The instant effect is the human ability to discern their own nakedness, which is attended by an implied sense of shame that was initially missing from their existence in Gen. 2.25 (האדם ואשתו לא יתבששו). This cumulative effect of Gen. 2.25 and Gen. 3.7 has led Graham Ward, amongst others, to conclude that 'the first effect of disobedience, and eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was shame at the realisation they were naked'.[80] This assumption also correlates with Johanna Stiebert's observation that, 'one of the primary impulses of proper shame is concealment of the genitals, attended by an acute concern to confine sexual practices to a private domain and demarcated by conventions.'[81] This is

[79] For a very well known and highly informative discussion of whether or not God lied, see the exchange between Barr (1992, 2006) and Moberly (1992, 2008). For a feminist perspective on this issue, with particular reference to its effect on the image of Eve see Rooke (2007).
[80] G. Ward 2012: 305. Ward defines the Genesis 2–3 narrative as a story 'about the origins of shame and the origins of sin' (p. 306).
[81] J. Stiebert 2002: 122—she makes this point in relation to a different biblical text entirely, though does make reference to Gen. 3 in the accompanying footnote. Furthermore, to read this as the *first* human experience of shame fits within the general aetiological pattern of Genesis 2–3.

precisely what appears to take place when the humans in Genesis 3 know that they are naked—they immediately make garments or 'loin coverings'—חגרת. This strand of narrative concerned with knowledge, nakedness, and shame that can be discerned within Genesis 2–3 has undoubtedly contributed to the popular and pervasive interpretation that Eve, as the initiator of the transgression, was also the initiator of human carnality and lust.

So, Claus Westermann rightly points out, 'this understanding of the narrative of Gen 2–3 is largely responsible for the identification of sexuality, consciousness of sexuality and sin which has so strongly coloured the whole Christian era'.[82] But he also questions whether this is really justified. While I have suggested that there are some stimuli within the text that *might* allow this reading to develop, there is certainly not a strong foundation for it. Indeed, evidence for both sexuality and sin as the key themes of the text is only implied, and often the arguments for these readings rely as much from silence as they do from textual support. Echoing James Barr's first argument against reading a theme of sin in Genesis 2—the absence of the term sin throughout the narrative [83]—Reuven Kimelman observes that to assume the couple felt shame as a consequence of eating the fruit is questionable in particular because 'the absence of the word "shame" in v. 7 [is] bothersome.'[84] Alternatively, it is possible to accept the interpretation of shame, but to reject it as having sexual connotations. Rather the pair may feel shame at exposure, though it is difficult to remove this from the context of sexuality.

[82] Westermann 1984: 235.
[83] Barr 1992: 6.
[84] See also Westermann (1994: 235), who argues that there is no sense that shame accompanies sin according to Gen. 3.7.

Having covered their naked bodies, and attempted to evade Yahweh Elohim (Gen. 3.8-10), the Hebrew Bible then describes how first couple defend themselves against God's anger. Once God has discovered them hiding in the Garden, he confronts the man first, who explains his decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge by saying: ''The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate"' (Gen. 3.12). Despite the fact that the man's words do not give any suggestion that the woman seduced, cajoled, or tricked him into eating, his speech has provided grounds for later interpreters to frame Eve as the primary perpetrator, with Adam as her victim.[85] When Yahweh Elohim then confronts the woman, she clearly points out that it is her relationship with the snake that brought about her fault: 'Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate"' (Gen. 3.13). The NRSV translation of the Hebrew השיאני (√נשא) emphasises the deceptive, or crafty quality of the snake in its choice of the word 'tricked', as does the JPS and KJV use of the term 'beguiled'.[86] It is important to emphasise that apart from on very rare occasions, this Hebrew verb form does not have sexual connotations. Thus according to the original account, though the woman might have allowed herself to be deceived by the snake, she was not seduced. In the LXX, however, this changes, as the translation provides perhaps the earliest insinuation towards a sexual association between Eve and the snake. The Hebrew השיאני is replaced by the Greek verb ἠπάτησέν, which as both William Loader and Gary Anderson have observed, brings a rather broader

[85] J. M. Higgins 1976: 644.
[86] Other uses of the verb in the hiphil form almost always refer to deception or bringing about false hope. Interestingly, in two cases the deception is explicitly linked to the deluded party's sense of pride (Jer. 49.16; Ob. 1.3). This seems to compliment the v. 1 description of the snake as ערום.

semantic range to the woman's words.[87] The term can refer to both deception and seduction, and it is frequently used elsewhere in the Old Testament text to specify behaviour that almost certainly had a sexual dimension to it, for example in the 'rape' or 'seduction' laws of Ex. 22.16, the coaxing of Samson by his wife and Delilah (Judg. 14.15; 16.5) and to describe Holofernes' desire to seduce Judith (Jd. 12.16). Thus, while the Hebrew Eve is clear that she was victim of the snake's crafty deceptive manner, the Greek text allows space for a more grotesque, sinful animal/human relationship.

e. Genesis 3.14-16: Consequences

Unlike the human pair, the snake is not given the opportunity to defend itself. Instead, Yahweh Elohim's response of cursing—ארור—the crafty—ערום—snake establishes a clear condemnation of the reptile, which is emphasised by Hebrew word play. Furthermore, the punishment seems to confirm the difficult relationship between the woman and the snake, emphasising that enmity will be placed between *her* and the animal, not the couple and the animal (ואיבה אשית בינך ובין האשה). This focus on their relationship, and its entire omission of Adam, could be taken as further evidence that the woman, rather than the man, was the primary wrong-doer, or sinner, as well as suggesting that prior to Yahweh Elohim's declaration, the snake and the woman were the opposite of enemies.

Following the cursing of the snake, God turns back to the woman. By moving his judgement from the snake, to the woman, to the man, it is possible to

[87] W. R. G. Loader 2004: 45–6, 121; G. A. Anderson: 2001: 91.

perceive a 'descending order of guilt: the serpent was certainly the guiltiest, since he instigated the crime. If Eve came next and only after her Adam, did this not imply that she was more guilty than Adam but less guilty than the serpent?'[88] While there is no explicit proof that this was the intended effect in the structuring of the punishments, and indeed, Adam's condemnation to death is equally if not more serious than the penalties laid on the woman, interpretative space is certainly left for the interpreter to discern a hierarchy of guilt.

God's words to the woman in Gen. 3.16 are, according to Carol Meyers:

> … perhaps the most problematic in all the Hebrew Bible from a feminist perspective. They seem to establish an absolute and hierarchical dominance of males over females. The simple words have had a profound and persistent influence on sexual politics for millennia.[89]

It is important to establish first that, despite popular reference to 'the curse of Eve', the woman is not in fact cursed by God as the snake is, nor does Yahweh explicitly contextualise his address to Eve with a statement like 'because you have done this…'[90] However, for the majority of readers Yahweh Elohim's proclamation—'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'—is offered as punishment for her taking the forbidden fruit.[91] Furthermore, the precise nature of the penalty placed upon the woman can be seen to strengthen the physical associations between femininity and transgression, as well as providing further justification for viewing the hierarchy between men and women as the result of sin. Most often the fate of the woman

[88] J. L. Kugel 1997: 101.
[89] Meyers 1988: 113.
[90] Both the judgments on the snake and the man include explanation of why they are being given: Trible 1978: 126.
[91] Westermann 1994: 261–3; Trible 1978. For those supporting the argument that these are only aetiologies and not punishments see. Bechtel (1995), Dragga (1992), and Meyers (1988).

prescribed by God is identified as a reversal of the perfect state of heterosexual love and community described in Genesis 2, with the woman's role as companion and helper being reversed.[92] This punishment, along with the man's in vv. 17-19 where he is allocated a life of hardship and eventual death, has been taken as evidence that by committing the first sin the protoplasts initiate a fundamental change in humanity, a fall from the state of perfection created by God.

So, in Gen. 3.16a Yahweh Elohim promises to increase the difficulty with which the woman will conceive. If we translate the Hebrew as it has been traditionally understood—'I will greatly increase your pain (עצבונך) in conception, in pain (עצב) you will give birth to children'—the woman appears to receive a kind of corporal punishment.[93] Even those who recognise that neither עצבונך nor עצב are usual words for labour pains, frequently maintain the connection to physical suffering during childbirth.[94] Thus, while LXX in its use of λύπας, Vulgate's *aerumnas* and *dolore*, and certain other translations such as the King James Version, maintain a rather more emotional tone to the text, emphasising the woman's 'sorrow' in conception, I will demonstrate later in the chapter that there is a strong interpretative tendency within the mainstream reception of this text to contextualise this sorrow as implying physical pain. One scholar of the Hebrew text who maintains that the text refers to labour pains, A. J. Bledstein has suggested God responds to the woman's attempt to be like a deity by preventing her from being able to give birth like certain ancient Near

[92] Trible 1978; Wenham 1987; Westermann 1994.
[93]Not all translations render this section of the verse as hendiadys. Thus, it can also be read as 'your pangs and your conceptions', or something similar. For further discussion of this verse see Chapter 4.II.a.
[94] Wenham 1987: 81.

Eastern goddesses, that is, without discomfort.[95] Thus according to Bledstein, God's physical punishment of the woman is intended to regulate her hubris at being like a god. While she remains a creative force, and it is her body that will ensure the continued survival of humanity, this will be restricted by suffering attached to it, and indeed be framed by a subservient position to the man. All of these possible readings of Gen. 3.16a, while differing in detail, agree on the fact that restrictions are imposed on the woman, implying that she has done something to deserve this change in circumstance, namely, she has sinned.[96]

The second part of God's words to the woman strengthen this suggestion, as not only will the woman suffer in relation to childbearing, she will also experience a desire for her husband that appears to be connected to his domination over her: 'yet your desire (תשוקתך) shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you (ימשל־בך)'. Kraus simply summarises the key interpretative questions that are raised in Gen. 3.16b: 'is the woman subjugated to male dominance or is she trapped by her own needs, both sexual or economic?… what is the relationship between ruler and ruled?' [97] In order to clarify this more consideration needs to be given to the noun תשוקה and the verb √משל. The former is a famously problematic term, appearing only three times in the Hebrew Bible: Gen. 3.16, Gen. 4.7 and Song. 4.7. The *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* offers two suggestions for each instance; either desire/longing i.e. 'your desire shall be for your husband'—or 'driving' 'as expression of ruling

[95] A. J. Bledstein 1997: 143.
[96] In Chapter 4 I discuss the work of numerous scholars and interpreters through history who have positively, or at least sympathetically read the suffering motherhood of Eve.
[97] Kraus 2011: 32.

over someone' i.e. 'your driving shall be for your husband' or 'he will rule over you'.[98] It does not, however, seem necessary to separate these two senses of the word, especially in the particular case of Gen. 3.16. Rather, it is quite clear that desire can imply a power-based relationship, with the party doing the desiring often being ruled by the object of that desire, and so תשוקה might specify a type of controlling urge. If this is the case, one can detect a sense of continuity throughout the various elements of God's speech. This is highlighted particularly in translations that chose to translate ...ואל along the lines of '... yet to your husband is your desire...', such as the NRSV.[99] While the woman will suffer in childbearing, she will nonetheless feel a driving sexual desire for 'her man'. Furthermore, this reading also complements the following statement 'and he shall rule over you'.

The root משל, which is used to describe the husband/wife relationship in the final part of v. 16, clearly indicates 'rule', with a superior party having dominion over another party of a lower rank for example, God over people, or king over subjects.[100] However, attempting to discern the particular quality of dominion meant by משל is another case in the Hebrew text where 'the semantic domain can accommodate more than one meaning, creating enough room for a translator's subjectivities, be they conscious or otherwise.'[101] One suggestion is that the woman is 'is enslaved by her desire rather than by his dominance', but it is equally possible that *because* she is enslaved by her desire he is able to

[98] Clines 2011: 684. For an alternative overview of different interpretations of תשוקתך in 3.16 see S. Foh 1975: 377.
[99] This is my own very literal translation.
[100] Judg. 8.25; 1 Kgs 5.1.
[101] Kraus 2011: 33.

dominate her. In response to the woman's wrong-doing, either she will be controlled by her own sexual desire, a reading that leaves space for interpreters to view the first prototypical woman as an entirely carnal, sexually motivated being, and/or the woman will become justifiably dominated by her male companion.

The LXX translates תשוקתך with ἀποστροφή—'turning away', or even 'escape' or 'refuge'.[102] Thus in the Greek, the woman is not punished with desire, but is described as 'returning' to the authority of the man, suggesting she acted inappropriately as a wife taking action beyond the control of her husband. Alternatively, it could be interpreted to mean that the man will provide a refuge for the woman, offering a caring kind of dominion. This is coupled with the use of κυριεύσει for משל. So while there is a sense of beneficent male dominance over the woman, there is also 'a distinct shift of emphasis towards a hierarchical structure where the man both protects and rules over the woman, in much the same way as God does for the man' in the translation from Hebrew to Greek.[103]

The Latin Vulgate intensifies male dominance over the woman even further: '*et sub viri potestate eris et ipse dominabitur tui*'. The woman's תשוקה or 'desire' is entirely removed and the woman will be under the power of the husband/man and he will be lord over her/hold power over her. Interestingly, despite a strong interpretative tradition that focuses on Eve as a wanton and lustful figure, in the Greek and Latin versions her sexual desire is less pronounced than it has the potential to be in the Hebrew Bible. Instead there is a

[102] With Greek readers possibly reading תשוקה as תשובה. See H. Reuling (2006: 32).
[103] Kraus 2011: 63.

concerted shift away from concern with the woman's desire, towards an emphasis on the power structures in the man/woman, husband/wife relationship.

It is a challenge to find alternative readings for Gen. 3.16b that can effectively counter suggestions of divinely ordained gender hierarchy in response to the human consumption of the fruit. Phyllis Trible has argued that God's original intention was for gender equality, but that sin or transgression corrupted this. Alternatively, Carol Meyers' study of the Hebrew has led her to suggest that the man does not place the woman under unequivocal rulership, but rather that he will dominate the woman's desire in order to balance the fear she might feel about childbearing. Consequently Meyers suggests the translation of משל as:

> ..."he shall predominate over you," which preserves the concept of rule (dominion) yet allows for the less than absolute imposition of male will. Instead of projecting the idea of legal control, as does "rule," "predominate" at the least can avoid the connotation of authority and take into account the specific context of these poetic lines.[104]

While both of these interpretations show that there is space to mitigate the woman's punishment, it is clearly difficult to erase it entirely.

f. Summary

From this brief overview of the central interpretative issues for understanding the woman's role in the problematic and complex narrative of Genesis 2–3, I have highlighted some of the textual stimuli that may have driven later readers to characterise Eve as the initiator of the first sin, and in turn to hold her responsible for the mortality and strife of humanity. Simultaneously, I have also

[104] Meyers 1988: 117.

sought to be critical of this trajectory of interpretation, as while vilification of the woman is encouraged by the text to a certain extent, it can also be reductive in its failure to 'adequately render the multiple meanings of Gen 2–3'.[105] Though there are a number of individual elements that can contribute to the interpretation of Eve not only as a transgressor but as particularly predisposed to sin by comparison to the her male partner, it is imperative to recognise that such readings are equally reliant on filling out gaps and silences in Genesis 2–3. Thus, to interpret Eve as the initiator of the Fall and a symbol of evil necessarily relies on a selective mode of reading the biblical account.

If the message that the first woman, Eve, was the instigator of sin and death is not explicitly located in the Hebrew Bible account of her story, how and when did it develop? And what ramifications did this have for her characterisation more generally? One of the earliest influential texts for shaping the tradition of Eve as responsible for human mortality and evil is located in the book of Ben Sira.[106] In Sir. 25.24, it is specifically a female, rather than a male who is identified as the author of sin and death:

> From a woman sin had its beginning and because of her we all die.
>
> NRSV

[105] T. Römer 2014.

[106] B. J. Malina argues that this is the 'oldest tradition ascribing the first sin and its consequences mainly or exclusively to Eve' (Malina 1969: 24). Other significant Second Temple Jewish and early Christian texts that primarily blame Eve for the inception of sin and/or death include Rom. 7.5-25 (for those who argue that this is in fact a text about Eve, rather than Adam – see A. Busch 2004); 2 Enoch 30.17; Philo *de Opficio Mundi*. 150; the theme appears throughout both *Latin Life of Adam and Eve* and in some parts of the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*; 1 Tim 2.13-14. This list is not intended to suggest that Adam never took the majority of blame during antiquity, as he does in, for example, Rom. 5.12-14 or 1 Cor. 15.21-22, but rather to outline the tradition that *did* primarily indict the woman.

מאשה תחלת עון ובגללה גועגו יחד

MS C[107]

ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀρχὴ ἁμαρτίας καὶ δι' αὐτὴν ἀποθνήσκομεν πάντες

LXX

Due to the 'collocation of the ideas of woman, beginning, sin, and death [this text] seems to constitute an allusion to Eve'.[108] Indeed, the Greek version certainly appears to reverse the honorific epithet 'mother of *all* living' that accompanies Eve's naming in Gen. 3.20 (ὅτι αὕτη μήτηρ <u>πάντων</u> τῶν ζώντων) by defining the role of the 'woman' as the one who introduced death to *all* (ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀρχὴ ἁμαρτίας καὶ δι' αὐτὴν ἀποθνήσκομεν <u>πάντες</u>). If this is a reading of Genesis 3, Ben Sira assumed that the woman held primary responsibility for the outcome of eating the fruit, and furthermore, that the result of eating the fruit was indeed the initiation of death. As I have demonstrated above, these details are not unequivocally native to the Hebrew account of Genesis 2–3, so the author expresses his own interpretative conclusions.

This identification of the 'woman' mentioned by Ben Sira as Eve is, however, not without its problems. Both Jack Levison and Teresa Ann Ellis have questioned this association on several grounds. Levison lists three main concerns: first, to see Eve as the source of death diverges from Ben Sira's

[107] P.C. Beentjes 1997: 99.

[108] This quotation is given by J. Levison when he describes why readers often assume that the 'woman' is Eve. He himself disagrees with this identification, favouring instead a comparison between Sir. 25.24 and 4Q184 'The Wiles of the Wicked Woman'—see below for discussion of his hypothesis. (1985: 622).

position on death elsewhere;[109] secondly, that interpreting 25.24 as referring to Eve is not in keeping with the writer's interpretation of Genesis 1–3 elsewhere in the text;[110] and thirdly, that the wider context of Sirach 25 focuses on the figure of the bad or evil wife, not on a specific woman such as Eve, while the mention of death is related specifically to husbands, not humanity.[111] Consequently, he favours translating the verse as 'From the [evil] wife is the beginning of sin, and because of her we [husbands] all die'.[112] Teresa Ellis develops her argument for rejecting the association between Eve and the 'woman' in Sir. 25.24 through a close investigation of the linguistic similarities and differences between the Hebrew Ben Sira and MT Genesis, as well as the Greek Sirach and LXX Genesis. Based on numerous dissimilarities between the Hebrew and the Greek she concludes that Ben Sira was not alluding to the woman in Genesis 3.[113] Instead she believes that the Hebrew author probably had Pandora in mind when he wrote this text, in view of his Hellenistic cultural milieu.

Thanks to the works of Levison and Ellis, it is clear modern biblical interpreters must acknowledge that the Hebrew text of Sir. 25.24 might not have been written as an interpretation of Eve, and thus we should not uncritically take it as early evidence of a tradition focusing blame on her. Nonetheless, in the

[109] Levison argues that Ben Sira understood mortality as being part of the human condition from creation, rather than being initiated after the first sin (1985: 618). Ben Sira, however, often appears to contradict himself at different points in his writings, especially on matters of free will and divine determinism (see J. K. Aitken 2002: 286–7), so it is not impossible that he might offer two alternative perspectives. While Levison also suggests that the 'we' refers to husbands, it is almost impossible in Greek to tell who the 'we' refers to, as the first person plural is ungendered.
[110] Levison argues that there is no suggestion that the author of the book of Ben Sira viewed the Eden story as an account of the 'fall' of humanity (1985: 615). The author does, however, frequently associate breaking the law with the penalty of death. Given that he assumes that the Law was established at the beginning of creation, and that humans are created with the ability to know good and bad and with free will, it is not out of keeping with his thinking for Ben Sira to associate Eve's choice to sin with resultant death. See S. Berg (2013: 139–57 especially 149–51).
[111] Levison 1985: 618.
[112] Ibid. 622.
[113] T. A. Ellis 2011.

bigger picture of Eve's reception history v. 24 has had a profound effect, as this text has certainly been understood by numerous later readers to refer to her, and thus is highly significant in the formation of the tradition of the woman as a source of sin.

Interestingly, while Ellis draws a clear distinction between Eve and Pandora when she reviews the intertextual inspirations for the Hebrew text of Ben Sira 25.24, believing the latter to be the more likely point of reference, she observes that 'a conflation of Eve with Pandora may have affected the Greek translation, in Sirach.'[114] Indeed, this link between the two mythic women has been popular throughout the ages, and is a central element of Eve's reception history. The key similarities between the two women and their stories are thematic, and function on a narrative level, with Justin Glenn describing the Prometheus myth which includes Pandora as 'an attempt to probe the origins of Evil: why must we endure suffering and death?'[115] While biblical scholars are by no means unanimous on the precise meaning of the Eden story, many would agree that it does appear to offer an aetiology for human 'suffering and death' (Gen. 3.16-19), thus pointing to an obvious link between Hesiod's writing and the biblical account. More specifically, both the myth of Pandora and the story of Eve develop motifs of *female* action that leads to punishment in the form of human hardship, and perhaps death.[116] Additionally, both are creation stories, with Pandora being the first human woman made by Hephaestus with the help of

[114] T. A. Ellis 2014: 160.
[115] J. Glenn 1977: 179–85. I do not agree with Glenn's conclusion concerning the similarity of the myths as both symbolically representing sex as the source of evil. It is Teresa Ellis who observes the most significant parallels between the two myths occur at a 'narrative level' (Ibid.).
[116] Pandora opening the jar is only present in one version of the myth: *Op.* (90–100). In Genesis this unfolds over the first 6 verses of ch. 3, with the results being described in Gen. 3.16-19.

other deities following an order from Zeus, and Eve being formed as the first human woman by Yahweh Elohim.

Teresa Ellis notes several more specific parallels elements between the myth of Eve and the myth of Pandora. These include the fact that both open on a world in which only the human male exists, without a female. A deity or deities then create a woman, who is made for a particular man. She is brought to that man, and eventually her actions lead to strife for humanity.[117] In addition to these structural parallels between the plots of the two myths, it is also clear that antagonism arises between men and women in Hesiod's myth in a similar, though more extreme way to the tension that develops between the sexes in the duration of Genesis 3. Although the biblical couple are initially apparently content, after they eat the fruit of knowledge, more animosity arises between them.[118] One final correspondence I, and others before me, have observed is the names of the two women. 'Pandora' (Πανδώρην) means 'all gifts', though the precise meaning of this is unclear.[119] Certain classicists suggest that originally Pandora would have meant the 'giver of all gifts', but that Hesiod 'reverses the original meaning of the name' by giving it a passive sense, describing how Pandora received 'gifts' from various deities during her creation.[120] Thus with Hesiod's Pandora, we might be encountering an initially powerful, potentially maternal, female figure who comes to be associated with evil and death. This

[117] Ellis 2013: 160–1. The author provides a very helpful table including more specific details from each myth.
[118] This is particularly evident in Adam's blaming of Eve for leading him to take the fruit (Gen. 3.12), as well as Yahweh Elohim's confirmation that the woman will be dominated by her husband (Gen. 3.16).
[119] Hesiod, Work and Days 81. All quotations from *Works and Days* are taken from Hesiod (2007).
[120] J. O'Brien 1983: 35–45. Especially p.36, see also n. 5 for her mention of scholars who share in her observation. Interestingly, in Homer, the word πάνδωρος refers to Mother Earth and other positive mother figures, suggesting that the name was initially linked to a powerful maternal force (36 n. 5).

history of her name offers clear echoes to Eve in Genesis 2–3, who, as the 'mother of all living', is also associated with sin and death by some of her readers because of her actions in the garden. For Joan O'Brien, this particular similarity, while not showing any direct connection between the two texts, demonstrates that both myths offer an insight into the demotion of mother goddesses in Greek and Israelite myth, arguing that 'the names Eve and Pandora and Eve's epithet are precious fossils linking the women to their earlier divine prerogatives.'[121] In the case of Hesiod's myths and Genesis 2–3, these divine prerogatives have disappeared, leaving only names that do not appear to entirely fit the women they are given to.

While there are numerous similarities between the two myths, which have meant that for centuries the two women have frequently been linked to one another, there are also some very significant differences between their texts. For example, the mode and purpose of the creation of the two women is different. The biblical woman is created from the side—or rib—of the man after Yahweh Elohim recognised that the human he had created should not be alone,[122] and her arrival is clearly celebrated by the first man.[123] By contrast, the woman in Hesiod's two works is formed from earth and water (more akin to the first biblical human) so that she might be a punishment for men because of Prometheus' theft of fire. Indeed, she is specifically described as 'a woe for all men who live'.[124] Furthermore, though Eve is undoubtedly portrayed as a wrongdoer, the precise gravity of her misdemeanour is left ambiguous by the

[121] Ibid. 36–7, 39, quotation from p. 45.
[122] Gen. 2.18, 22.
[123] Gen. 2.23.
[124] *Works and Days* 82.

Hebrew Bible, while Hesiod's woman is unmistakably represented as the source of evil, being described as a 'beautiful evil' responsible for opening the jar that brings disaster to the world. [125] One more significant difference between the biblical account and the Pandora myth is that while Eve is described as source of all life,[126] Pandora is the originator of 'the deadly race and tribe of women, a great woe for mortals, dwelling with men, no companions of baneful poverty but only of luxury.'[127] Finally, Pandora is not tempted to open the jar that brings evil into the world and acts entirely alone, unlike Eve whose actions are stimulated by her conversation with the snake.[128]

Though these differences between the original stories of Eve and Pandora are wide ranging and considerable, the similarities between them have proven strong enough for later readers to make a connection between the two. As Teresa Ellis has eloquently observed, despite the opposite messages about women put forward in each text, 'the extreme parallelism of the elements… from the two stories make Eve and Pandora interchangeable at the level of narrative, allowing the negative associations of Pandora to be mapped onto Eve with the result that the two become semantically equivalent.'[129] This has been most problematic for Eve, who through the lens of Pandora becomes a figure of female sin and death, a 'beautiful evil' who brings disaster and calamity to men because of her consumption of the forbidden fruit.

[125] All quotations from *Theogony* are taken from Hesiod (2007). *Theogony* 585.
[126] Gen. 3.20.
[127] *Theogony* 592, *Works and Days* 82.
[128] *Works and Days* 90–5.
[129] Ellis 2013: 162.

In the following sections, I will demonstrate how texts such as Sir. 25.24, as well as the intertextual interpretative opportunities offered by Hesiod's first woman, whether alluded to consciously or unconsciously, have provided the foundation for long lasting and dominant traditions of Eve as the initiator of sin and death. As Daniel Boyarin has observed, it can be argued that 'at the root of Western ideologies of women lies Pandora superimposed on Eve.'[130] Below I aim to offer a selective overview of some of the more negative interpretive trends in the reception history of the first chapters of Genesis, focusing on how her identification with evil has influenced interpreters' understanding of her relationship with knowledge and her role as a mother. I do not, therefore, offer a comprehensive chronological history of Jewish and Christian vilification of Eve. Nor do I claim that the material I examine should be taken as entirely representative of the understanding of Eve within Judaism and Christianity. I do, however, believe that the pejorative, negative depiction of Eve as a source of sin, and in particular as a symbol of feminine carnality, and a figure of death, are interpretations that have been supported by numerous Jewish and Christian (male) figures of authority and have consequently gained the most cultural capital.

[130] D. Boyarin 1993: 100. One very clear visual example of precisely this merging of characters is the sixteenth century painting by Jean Cousin, *Eva Prima Pandora*. For discussion see D. and E. Panofsky 1956: 62–7. Dora and Erwin Panofsky, in their study of the changing symbol of Pandora, observe that 'curiously enough, the Fathers of the Church are more important for the transmission – and transformation – of the myth of Pandora than secular writers: in an attempt to corroborate the doctrine of original sin by a classical parallel, yet to oppose Christian truth to pagan fable they likened her to Eve, a step the full effect of which was not to be felt until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' (p. 11). The Panofksys mention Eve and Pandora included in Irenaeus, Tertullian, Gregory Nazianzus and Origen (pp. 11–13).

III. JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RECEPTION OF EVE AS ANTI-INTELLECT

a. Eve as Intellectual Inferior

One of the most damaging trajectories in the history of interpretation of Genesis 2–3 has been the employment of Eve as proof of women's essential carnality, foolishness and pride. This reading developed from various facets of the text, but primarily relied on ambiguities concerning the woman's creation, which to some suggested her inferiority to the man, and her conversation with the snake, which to some suggested her gullibility. Readers also allowed the first woman's disobedience towards God to influence their perception of her mental capacities, leading to Eve being transformed into a figure of anti-intellect, despite the fact that she pursued (forbidden) wisdom, according to the Hebrew account. Nonetheless, from antiquity to modernity, Eve's story has been used to validate a binary view of gender, in which man is associated with superior qualities and faculties such as reason and the mind, while woman represents the inferior senses and the body. Genevieve Lloyd in her book, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosoph*y, has identified three 'milestone' interpreters whose works have been critical for the advancement and influence of this reading of Genesis: Philo, Augustine, and Aquinas.[131] In this section I investigate how these incredibly influential writers employ the biblical text to develop the figure of Eve as the antithesis of knowledge.

[131] I am greatly indebted to Genevieve Lloyd's observations, though my writing focuses more on Eve, and less on the symbolic concept of woman than her work. See G. Lloyd 1993.

1. Philo

For Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15 BCE–45 CE), a Jewish biblical exegete, Genesis was one of the 'most significant books' for his exegetical work, which led to him producing forty-three treatises on the text across three commentaries, as well as scattered references throughout the rest of his corpus of writings.[132] His interpretation of Genesis in his different writings encompassed both literal and allegorical modes of reading, interpreting, and rewriting the biblical text.[133] Furthermore, Philo's approach to the Hebrew Bible was strongly influenced by his Hellenistic environment, with much of his interpretation deeply indebted to Platonic philosophy.

For the purpose of providing a brief overview of Philo's representation of Eve as a figure of weakness and irrationality, I will focus on his account in *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, which frequently combines both literal and allegorical responses to particular interpretative questions that arise from the Genesis text.[134] In this work Philo uses the biblical conversation between the snake and the woman to explain how pleasure corrupted the mind through the senses: 'Why does the serpent speak to the woman and not to the man? In order that they may be potentially mortal he deceives by trickery and artfulness. And woman is more accustomed to be deceived than man.'[135] The question put forward by Philo is one that is left open by the biblical text. From his answer it is clear Philo assumes the snake only addressed the woman and not the man,

[132] G. E. Sterling 2012: 63. See also A. van den Hoek 2000: 63.
[133] van den Hoek 2000: 63.
[134] For more in depth treatments of Philo's work on Adam and Eve, see D. Sly 1990; van den Hoek 2000; Loader 2011; Sterling 2012.
[135] All quotations from *Questions and Answers on Genesis* are taken from Philo (1953).

despite the biblical text being entirely ambiguous on this matter. In his literal response to his own loaded question, he builds upon the woman's admission in Gen. 3.13 that the snake deceived her. Philo claims that it is precisely *because* she was a woman, and therefore easier to deceive than the man, that the snake approached her.[136] Drawing a parallel between the bodies and minds of man and woman, Philo writes that Adam's 'judgment, like his body, is masculine and is capable of dissolving or destroying the designs of deception; but the judgment of woman is more feminine, and because of softness she easily gives way and is taken in by plausible falsehoods which resemble the truth.'[137] Manipulating the biblical account, Philo develops an image of Eve alone speaking to the snake and immediately being tricked. He forgets that in the LXX the snake uses masculine plural verbs in his speech, and that the woman does initially attempt to correct the snake.[138]

This intellectual hierarchy established in his literal interpretation was also apparent in Philo's more allegorical mode of reading Genesis, in which 'the story of the fall tells not just of the fall of the first man but of the origin of sin in the life of Everyman.'[139] When approaching the Eden story as a symbolic representation of the fall of the human mind into sin, Philo understood the three key figures in the narrative, aside from God, to be representative of the tri-partite human soul: Adam represented the mind or reason (νους), Eve represented materiality or sense-perception (αἴσθησις), and the snake

[136] *Questions and Answers on Genesis* I.33.
[137] *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.33. Cf. *Creation* 155
[138] See section 2.II.c above.
[139] R. A. Baer 1970: 39.

represented pleasure.[140] In *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.37 Philo's allegorical answer to the question of why the woman, he argues that the woman represented sense-perception, and thus it was through her that Adam, or reason, experienced anything sensory.[141] He comes to this response despite the fact that, according to the biblical account, the woman does not eat the fruit only because of its sensory appeal, but also because of its ability to give wisdom. Nonetheless for Philo, Eve as a woman was a weak minded, soft, and easily persuaded person, while Eve as the feminine symbol of the soul was equally irrational and drawn to sensory pleasure. Both literally and allegorically the first woman of the Bible featured as a figure of anti-intellect in his interpretation of Gen. 3.1-6, primarily due to Philo's perceptions of women and femininity, rather than because of evidence in the biblical account.[142]

Following the developments in Genesis 3, Philo writes that once the snake has been successful in convincing the woman to take the fruit, and the woman then gives it to her husband, Eve/the senses allow pleasure and desire to access Adam/the mind, and thus brings about its downfall. Here we find another common trait of allegorical interpretations of Genesis 3; it is *through* the woman that the man fails and falls into sin: 'sense-perception being already infected by its object, passes on the infection to the sovereign and ruling element.'[143] Clearly, then Philo makes the interpretative assumption that the action described in Gen. 3.6 suggests that the woman ate before the man, rather than the couple eating

[140] All quotations from *On the Creation of the World* are taken from Philo (1929). *On the Creation of the World* 165; cf. *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.25
[141] *ibid*. 'woman is a symbol of sense, and man, of mind. Now of necessity sense comes into contact with the sense-perceptible; and by the participation of sense, things pass into the mind'.
[142] *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.49. Cf. *On the Creation of the World* 165.
[143] *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.46, 47.

together. So, not only is the woman inferior to the man in intellect, but she is also a danger to his mind.

In another of his writings, *On the Creation of the World*, Philo gives considerably more attention to the action that brings about this 'infection' of the mind than he does in *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, using a great deal of sexualised language, which belies his distain for uncontrolled, non-procreative sexuality.[144] In this text pleasure, which is usually depicted as the male snake, shifts to a feminized figure.[145] Pleasure is described as a 'courtesan and a wanton', who 'searches for panders, by whose means she shall get one on her hook. It is the senses that act as panders for her and procure the lover.'[146] The sexual dynamic in this particular part of Philo's symbolism is highly interesting, as it is this feminine pleasure that lures the senses/Eve.[147] While the biblical woman is not depicted in *On the Creation of the World* as a seductress, she is nonetheless bound very closely to the sensual ensnarement of the mind. Indeed, Dorothy Sly suggests that in this particular allegory, Eve acts as 'pimp who procures partners for the harlot, pleasure '.[148] It seems that Philo expands and builds on the description of the woman's sensual attraction to the tree in Genesis 3, and converts it into a sexual encounter. Consequently, in Philo's writings, not

[144] *On the Creation of the World*, 164-5. William Loader, in his very thorough examination of Philonic attitudes towards sexuality, suggests that Philo is not entirely ascetic, but understand sexual intercourse to be as 'appropriate as eating and drinking if properly directed and not in excess.' (2011: 47).
[145] The shift presumably takes places because the Greek ἡδονή is enjoyment, pleasure feminine and this easily accommodates the development of feminine imagery. Interestingly, the description of pleasure is reminiscent of another female personification, Woman Folly in Proverbs 1–9.
[146] *On the Creation of the World* 165.
[147] There is a long tradition of Eve actually being lured by a female; often the snake is portrayed as having a woman's face (H. A. Kelly 1971). Similarly, here in Philo, the seductress pleasure is both different from and yet similar to the biblical woman.
[148] Sly 1990: 104.

only is the woman a symbol of intellectual weakness, but she also functions as a facilitator of carnal transgression. All of this serves to emphasise that Philo understood Eve to be the vehicle of sin, and that he also closely aligned her both literally and allegorically, with weakness and lack of self-control.

Philo responds to gaps and ambiguities in the biblical text to express disdain for the woman and the weakness he perceives in her, as well as allegorically aligning her with the inferior bodily senses. He thus helps to set in motion a problematic tradition of selectively reading the biblical account, focusing on certain elements from the original story to build a negative picture of the first woman and her relationship to knowledge. While man is a representation of intellect, reason, and strength, metonymically symbolised by the first masculine archetype, Adam, Eve, becomes a figure of carnality, stupidity and weakness. Although some of Philo's writings assessed here have examined the symbolic 'male' and 'female' aspects of the mind, rather than descriptions of 'woman', they nonetheless have had an impact on both the characterization of Eve as a figure of anti-intellect, but also more widely on women because, as Genevieve Lloyd writes:

> That the woman symbolically represents the non-rational aspects of human nature does not of itself carry the implication that women are irrational, but it is precisely his pejorative attitude to women that enables Philo's allegories to function as they do.[149]

This observation from Lloyd is critical to understanding the impact and ongoing resonance of the tradition in which Eve is depicted as the antithesis to knowledge. While it is often the patriarchal, and at times, misogynistic cultures of subsequent interpreters that have facilitated these negative readings of

[149] Lloyd 1993: 25.

Genesis 2–3, their writings on the topic only go on to strengthen, authorize, and legitimize damaging gender norms despite the fact that they are based on readings of the text that are grounded on its original ambiguity. Or, as Daniel Boyarin puts it, 'woman as the sign of corporeality was thereby committed to the realm of the senses, indeed construed as the realm of the senses, the scene was set for the production of the systematic misogyny which has plagued the Western cultures ever since.'[150]

After Philo, 'beginning with Origen and Ambrose and continuing through the medieval tradition, many concluded that temptation began at the bottom and worked its way up,' that is, that the fall worked its way from the weakest, inferior member of the first human couple, Eve, to Adam.[151] For example, Origen, like Philo, employed both literal and allegorical modes of interpretation. Thus he too 'habitually codes "male" and "female" as either spirit, mind, or reason as opposed to soul, flesh, and body'.[152] In *Homily* 1 from his *Homilies on Genesis*, writing on Gen. 1.26, Origen describes how the 'inner man' has both 'spirit' and soul'.[153] In his interpretation, he aligns the first female with the inferior human element of soul, while the man represents the superior element, spirit. Though he agrees that the two can live productively and harmonious as constituent parts of the 'inner man', he believes, like Philo, that if the female soul turns from the male

[150] Boyarin, 1993: 81.
[151] M. L. Mattox 2003: 44.
[152] E. A. Clark 1999: 172. Origen was clearly familiar with some of Philo's work as he cites him in his writings, and according to Mireille Hadas-Lebel, he was a 'central link in the transmission of Philo's work… what is clear is that Philo led Origen to the path of allegorical exegesis.' (2012: 208).
[153] All quotations from *Homilies on Genesis* are taken from Origen (2002). *Homilies on Genesis* 1.15.

spirit, she allows an excess of pleasure to take over and gain a grip on the mind.[154]

Origen's understanding of the female soul is more explicitly sexual than Philo's. Ultimately, pleasure is the real source of trouble for the senses and the mind, according to Philo, and it is pleasure that he describes in very strong sexual terms. While his interpretation of the biblical woman shows her facilitating pleasure's domination of the mind, she herself is not a temptress or an adulterer. Origen, on the other hand, believes the female element of the 'inner man', depicted as the first woman in Gen. 1.26, often identified as Eve by ancient readers, is herself the 'harlot' who pursues 'carnal vices'.[155] So, there is a shift in the allegorical interpretation of Eve between Philo and Origen, as readings of her weakness and her lack of intellect become bound to an increasingly sexualized view of the female and symbolically of Eve.

Ambrose also maintains the natural superiority of the male over the female, remarking that despite the fact that the first woman was made in a superior location to the man, in Paradise, she was nonetheless his subordinate.[156] Furthermore, he assumes her primacy in the failure to keep God's command, which arises because of this inferiority: 'the weaker sex begins by an act of disobedience.'[157] Clearly then, woman's physical and mental deficiency are closely bound to her propensity to sin. Furthermore, because of her weakness, not only is the woman responsible for her own wrong-doing, but

[154] Interestingly Origen uses a sexual metaphor to describe the relationship between soul and body, arguing that if the latter acts adulterously, following 'bodily pleasures' then the mind will become ruled by pleasure.
[155] *Homilies on Genesis* 1.15.
[156] All quotations from *Paradise* are taken from Ambrose (1961). *Paradise* 4.24.
[157] *Paradise* 14.70.

also she 'is responsible for the man's error.'[158] Eve, for Ambrose, is thus both subordinate and dangerous. While she may not be wicked in and of herself, her susceptibility to deception, and her affect on her male partner are problematic.

This is also clear from his perpetuation of the allegorical reading of Genesis in which Eve represents the lower emotional aspect of the human mind or soul (αἴσθησις), while Adam is the superior Reason (νους).[159] In very explicit terms he writes in a letter to Sabinus: 'beware of having that man, our understanding, enervated by woman, that is, by passion, for she was deceived and beguiled by the pleasures of the senses. Let her not enslave and drag him over to her laws and purposes.'[160] Here, not only does Eve appear as the one who opens the doors to Adam's sin, but she becomes more active in 'dragging' him towards *her* mode of existence which is clearly bodily and desirous, rather than rational and self controlled.

2. Augustine

The most famous aspect of Augustine's (354–430 CE) interpretation of Genesis 2–3 is his understanding of Original Sin. For Augustine, the sin of Adam and Eve was not only the first sin of humankind, but also the sin that led to a universal change in humanity. After Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit of knowledge, they experience 'concupiscence' or 'lust', which drives them to sin again and again. Furthermore, this concupiscence will be passed from parent to child, through the process of sexual reproduction, meaning that sin 'contaminates life from birth,

[158] *Paradise* 12.55.
[159] Ambrose *Paradise* 2.11, cf. *Letters* 25.
[160] *Letters* 25, see Ambrose (1954).

and dominates it thereafter'.[161] For Augustine, then, the sin committed in the Garden was catastrophic, leading to a complete transformation of God's good creation, and the fall of humanity into sin. Adam and Eve were equally responsible for the first sin, according to Augustine, with the former's transgression being the most grievous (*City of God* XIV.11). While this might initially appear to be positive for Eve, 'Augustine's assignment of responsibility for original sin to Adam lies not in any desire to exonerate Eve, but, rather, in his belief in her inferior position.'[162] Thus he maintained the tradition of imaging Eve as subordinate to and more bodily than Adam that had been well established in the works of Philo and early church Fathers such as Origen and Ambrose, with the latter standing in 'a direct line of transmission' to Augustine.[163]

Once again adopting both allegorical and literal interpretative methods, Augustine wrote expansively on the first chapters of Genesis, as he formulated his own theology concerning sin and the body.[164] Early in his career, Augustine predominantly favoured the allegorical mode that had been popular with his predecessors, reading the narrative as an explication of the human mind and its

[161] A. McGrath 2010: 352.
[162] McDuffie 2007: 104. See also K. Børrensen (1981: 55–6). This interpretation is clearly due to Augustine's interweaving of Genesis with Pauline writings. In *City of God* XIV.11 he quotes 1 Tim. 2.14, which states that only the woman was deceived. From this Augustine argues that Adam acted not because of deception but because he 'refused to be separated from his sole companion even in a partnership of sin' (Augustine 1966). Gillian Clark (1993: 73) has also commented on Augustine's use of Rom. 5.12 in the same passage: 'But the female contribution was not thought to be equal to that of the male, and it seemed obvious that the male seed initiates the process of generation. This belief had an important effect… on Augustine's doctrine of original (sexually transmitted) sin. Augustine finds it surprising that Paul says 'sin entered the world through one man' (Rom. 5: 12) rather than through one woman, Eve. He suggests an explanation: it is the vitiated seed of the male, infected by the lust which is biologically necessary.'
[163] K. Power 1995: 134.
[164] See R. J. Teske's introduction to Augustine (2001: 3). For all quotation from *On Genesis against the Manichees* see Augustine (2001).

experience of sin.[165] Taking an ascetic stance on the text, he read the creation story spiritually, rejecting the idea that the couple would have been sexually active in Eden, and arguing that carnal human relations were a product of the Fall.[166] Consequently, the entirety of the story was taken to be allegorical, and Augustine's rendering of the biblical narrative reflected the Philonic associations of snake/pleasure, Eve/sense, Adam/reason, or Origen's snake/pleasure, Eve/soul, Adam/spirit, though he adopted the following triad: *suggestio*, *delectatio*, *consentio*. In *Genesis Against the Manichees*, the snake signifies the devil and suggestion, Eve is 'delight' or alternatively 'desire' which responds to the snake's suggestions, while it is Adam who ultimately consents to the pleasures being offered. Like Philo before him, Augustine thus understood the narrative to offer a window into the human soul, which consisted of the feminine and the masculine elements.

According to tradition Augustine believed that, 'Nor can our reason be brought to the consent that is sin, except when delight is aroused in that part of the soul which ought to obey reason as its ruling husband.'[167] The imagery of marriage is so closely interwoven into Augustine's notion of the human soul here that it belies an assumption by the writer that it is natural and good for the wife to be ruled by her husband.[168] Thus, Eve is symbolically representative of human desire, which ought to be managed and controlled by reason, as a woman and a wife is naturally subordinate to her husband.

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[165] *On Genesis against the Manichees* II.14.21: 'Even now nothing else happens in each of us when one falls into sin than occurred then in those three: the serpent, the woman and the man.' On the changes in Augustine's interpretative methods see Clark (1988: 99); see also R. J. Teske's introduction to Augustine (2001: 3).
[166] *On Genesis against the Manichees* I.19.30.
[167] *On Genesis against the Manichees* II.14.20.
[168] See G. Bonner 1997: 22–34.

While the hierarchical structure of Augustine's thinking about male and female seems entirely clear from this particular excerpt, he was also acutely aware of the tension between this gender hierarchy, especially in its formulation in Pauline literature (1 Cor. 11.7), and the apparent equality of the sexes according to the biblical tradition in Gen. 1.27.[169] Thus, his position shifts over time in order to respond to the problem. In *De Trinitate* (12.7.10), he concludes that first, male and female *together* are in the image of God, but that the female *alone* is not. Second, Augustine suggests that male and female are spiritually equal, however, it was clear from their bodily differences that in the current physical reality, female subordination to males was natural, and became heightened to a slave/master type relationship after the Fall. This tension between equality and hierarchy is well summarised by Kari Børrensen, when she writes 'the equality of the sexes on the spiritual plane implies an equivalence, whilst their difference on the bodily plane entail, for woman, a state of subordination.' [170] The very fact that Augustine has to alter his understanding of the creation story over the course of his career is an excellent indicator of the fundamentally ambiguous stance of the biblical text, which denies the reader any ability to reach a definitive conclusion as to its meaning. Though Augustine may have tried through his reappraisal of Genesis to build a level of sexual equality into his theology, with respect to Eve/woman/female and knowledge, Genevieve Lloyd notes, 'despite this conscious upgrading of female nature, his own

[169] Børrensen 1981: 33–4.
[170] Ibid. 35.

interpretations still put women in an ambivalent position with respect to Reason,' and so in his interpretation she remains a figure of anti-intellect.[171]

A second familiar effect of the passage in *Genesis Against the Manichees* is to identify Eve not only as an inferior figure of desire, but also as the facilitator of Adam's sin: 'Still he [the snake/devil] deceives by means of the woman'.[172] She, like Philo's Eve, is the route by which pleasure and sin take root in Adam/mind. Thus, while Eve might not be the primary sinner according to Augustine, because of her inferiority to Adam, she is still the weak link that allows sin to take hold. While it is important to note that Augustine does not think that the 'delight' associated with the feminine is inherently negative, he does, however, believe that it must be controlled by reason. Without proper management, the weakness of desire has the potential to be incredibly damaging. Thus, not only is female weakness of intellect a restriction in terms of feminine capacity, it is also damaging to the superior male. Symbolically, for Augustine Eve represented the feminine, foolish and potentially dangerous aspect of the soul, a nexus of ideas that had deep ramifications for historical women.

Later in his career, especially due to ongoing disputes with various thinkers he perceived to be heretical, such as Jovinian and Pelagius, Augustine began to move away from allegorizing the biblical text in favour of more literal interpretations.[173] Though Augustine had attempted to distance himself from the asceticism of Manicheans, as theologians such as Jovinian began to question the Christian belief in the superiority of virginity over marriage, his spiritual

[171] Lloyd 1994: 29.
[172] *On Genesis against the Manichees* II.14.20.
[173] Clark 1988: 111–12.

understanding of Genesis came under attack precisely for appearing to be too close to Manichaeism.[174] As Eugene TeSelle has observed, Augustine began to see his earlier allegorizing exegesis as 'too spiritualizing, too fearful of the literal meaning, too devaluing of the body.'[175] Thus, he developed his *Literal Interpretation of Genesis*.[176]

In this text, from the point of woman's creation, Augustine focuses on the differences between man and woman. In his exegesis of the verses 'it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner' (Gen. 2.18), Augustine discerns that the 'help' the woman is supposed to supply to the man must be for procreation. Augustine comes to this conclusion because, he argues, if the partner was for companionship alone, a second man would have been preferable to a woman. This androcentric understanding of the purpose of Eve, and thus of all women, defines woman solely in terms of her physical capacity, and implicitly reduces the importance of her intellect in her relationship to man.[177]

On the matter of why the woman, who was, according to Augustine, a rational human being, should have listened to the snake, he cites the woman's pride, which was natural to her from creation. Augustine asks:

> How could these words persuade the woman that it was a good and useful thing that had been forbidden by God if there was not already in her heart a love of her own independence and proud presumption of self which through that temptation was destined to be found and cast down?[178]

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[174] Ibid. 115; M. Miles 1979: 65.
[175] E. TeSelle 1993: 350.
[176] Other important works that offer evidence of Augustine's shift away from allegorical interpretation in his *Retractions*, *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Holy Virginity*.
[177] For all quotations from *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* see Augustine (1982). *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 9.5.9.
[178] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 11.30.39.

While Augustine also condemns Adam's pride, it is not in combination with a belief in the fundamental weakness of his character, as it is with Eve. So, later in the same commentary, Augustine reflects on why Eve might have been the first to believe the words of the snake, and he concludes that it was likely because she was not of equal intellect to Adam, because she had been created with less knowledge than her husband and so had to rely on his tutelage.[179] In his literal interpretation, while Augustine acknowledged the goodness of human procreative sexuality, and the woman's rational mind, he was unable to entirely remove the assumption that in much the same way that the female aspect of the human was more bodily and less intellectual than the male, the woman Eve was lacking in knowledge by comparison to the husband.

Furthermore, like Philo, Origen, and Ambrose, he concluded that it was *through* Eve's foolishness that Adam sinned. Indeed, while Augustine claimed that Eve was the first to disobey God because of her mental frailty, he simultaneously condemns her 'audacious curiosity'.[180] This fits with Augustine's image of the woman requiring tutelage from Adam I described above; she is an immature child by comparison to her husband, following her impulses rather than acting cautiously. The only point at which Augustine appears to credit Eve with any mental strength is in her ability to persuade Adam to eat the fruit. He writes that 'she took some of the fruit, and ate and gave some also to her husband, who was with her, using perhaps some persuasive words which Scripture does not record but leaves to our intelligence to supply.'[181] This one

[179] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 11.42.58.
[180] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 11.31.41. See Bonner 1997: 28.
[181] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 11.30.39

suggestion of Eve's capacity for active knowledge, is, of course, entirely negative and misguided.

3. Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas' writings on the creation of the woman offer a development on the writings of Augustine. Whilst he frequently used the works of his predecessor, Aquinas synthesized these with Aristotelian philosophy. Thus there were many significant similarities in thinking between Augustine and Thomas on Genesis and on Eve, as well as some differences.

Firstly, though Thomas did not subscribe to the dualist division of the human person that Augustine did, he nonetheless maintained that while woman was made in the image of God as a rational being, she was nonetheless inferior to man. So Aquinas writes that 'as regards a secondary point, God's image is found in man in a way in which it is not found in woman; for man is the beginning and the end of woman', intertextually weaving together the creation of woman in Genesis 2 and the Pauline assertion that 'man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man' (1 Cor. 11.7).[182] Thus, while employing a different anthropological model than Augustine, Aquinas uses the same intertextual combination of Genesis and 1 Corinthians to claim woman's natural dual equality and subordination to man.[183] Furthermore, Aquinas agrees that woman was made in order to help man propagate the human race. If any other help were required, then a male companion would have been chosen by God, and in doing

[182] All quotations from *Summa Theologiae* are taken from Aquinas (1964–1981). *Summa Theologiae* I. 93, 4. Børrensen 1981: 175.
[183] Børrensen 1981: 317; R. Radford Ruether 2012: 77.

so he maintains a predominantly 'biological purpose' for woman rather than seeing her as an intellectual partner.[184]

In another writing on the temptation of Eve, Aquinas specifically links the physical weakness he perceives in women, by comparison to men, to women's intellectual weakness. Given that for Aquinas body and soul were one, he logically concludes that the physical weakness of women implies the weakness of their intellect by comparison to men.[185] In other words, while women may be equal to men in the sense that they share a rational soul, 'proportionality between the soul, and the form of the body,' means that in actuality the woman is 'more imperfect than the man even as regards the soul.'[186] It is on the basis of this weakness of woman that Aquinas, like many before him, assumes that she listens to the words of the snake during the temptation, rather than rejecting them. Unlike Augustine, however, who actually diminished Eve's culpability on the basis of her intellectual weakness, Aquinas sees her as the primary sinner. First because 'hers was the greater self-conceit… Wherefore her ignorance did not excuse her, but aggravated her sin, in so far as it was the cause of her being puffed up with still greater pride.'[187] It seems that for Aquinas one element of woman's inferiority in terms of reason might be her susceptibility to pride which constituted coveting something 'against God's will'.[188] Furthermore, the stupidity that led to her sin was also the cause for the man's sin, and thus she sinned

[184] *Summa Theologiae* I. 92, 1. Quotation from Børrensen 1981: 330.
[185] *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* II d.21, 2, 1. 'Since there should be proportion between the soul and body, like form to matter, and the mover to the thing moved; and thus, woman was less perfect than man even as regards her soul.' English translation provided by Børrensen 1981: 205.
[186] Børrensen 1981: 175.
[187] *Summa Theologiae* II-II. 163, 4.
[188] *Summa Theologiae* II-II. 163, 4.

doubly, 'both against God and against her neighbour'.[189] While the woman sinned in ignorance and pride, Adam sinned from love of his wife. This distinction is found in Augustine's writings, too, but for Augustine the man, as the figure of intellect, reason, and consent, was the more grievous sinner because he ultimately should have known better. Thus we see in Aquinas an exaggeration of the impact of woman's inferior intellectual capacity, which for him was a determining factor in the original sin and left the woman more culpable than the man.

The development of Protestantism several centuries later, and in particular the writings of Luther, continued this emphasis on what Børrensen has identified as 'subordination and equivalence'. Although he did not pursue any kind of allegorical interpretation of Genesis, Luther's interpretation maintained the paradoxical insistence on woman's equality in the image of God, whilst maintaining that there was difference between the sexes: 'For as the sun is more excellent than the moon (although the moon, too, is a very excellent body), so the woman, although she was a most beautiful work of God, nevertheless was not the equal of the male in glory and prestige.'[190] He thus perpetuated the belief that the snake approached the woman because she was weak and pliant, though he altered Eve's crime from ignorance and pride to unbelief, converting the first woman into the first heretic by building on Eve's distortion of God's words in her response to the snake.

[189] *Summa Theologiae* II-II. 163, 4.
[190] Luther 2013: 70.

A similar division between the strength and the weakness of the sexes also made its way in to perhaps the most famous modern re-writing of Genesis, *Paradise Lost*. While there is a great deal of scholarly discussion over Milton's misogyny, I see the poem as representing Eve in primarily bodily language, emphasising her physical beauty and her vanity, rather than her intellectual equality to Adam.[191] Though Milton, like Augustine and Luther, was keen to champion the mutual love of marriage, the proper place of human sexuality, and the integral role of the woman as part of this, he was also unable to view Adam and Eve as equals. Reiterating the order of creation found in 1 Cor. 11 that came to dominate the interpretation of Adam and Eve, in Book IV of Paradise Lost he repeats the familiar conclusion that while man was made 'for God only, shee for God in him.'[192] Eve, though inferior in mind, was beautiful and charming in body. Indeed, Milton intensifies Eve's representation of the senses by making her literally, rather than allegorically, the embodiment of Adam's male desires. So the figure of Eve as a carnal conduit of sin and symbol of female intellectual inferiority continued as a fundamental aspect of popular and powerful interpretations of her story.

To conclude, in this section I have employed the works of Philo, Augustine and Aquinas, as well as some other thinkers, to offer an insight into the interpretative strategies that have contributed to the popular image of Eve as the antithesis to knowledge. I have demonstrated that the apparent inferior intellect of woman was frequently taken to be a catalyst for the first sin, with femininity in essence being understood as irrational, bodily and weak by all three

[191] See *Paradise Lost* IV.295-6; K.L. Edwards 2007: 144–60; Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 184–308.
[192] *Paradise Lost* IV.299–310.

interpreters. This interpretation was made without any regard to the potentially positive aspects of Eve's desire for knowledge and wisdom, and relies entirely on the assumption that the primary meaning of the Genesis text was to demonstrate some kind of primal sin, or failure of a divine test by the first couple that could also be seen to be allegorically representative of all human sin. At the heart of this interpretation is the figure of Eve as a conduit of sin and the downfall of the mind.

b. Eve as Foolish Wife

A second and separate, though related, strand of Eve traditions emphasise the sinful stupidity of the first woman by situating her not as the embodiment of sensuality, nor as representative of the inherent pride or sinfulness of all women, but as a stereotypical foolish wife. Thus, Nehama Aschkenasy has observed that 'generally, the image of Eve in the rabbinic tales is not that of a dangerously evil creature, but rather that of a silly and childish female', in contrast to the essentialist interpretations presented by Philo, and later Christian exegetes influenced by his allegorical approach to the text.[193]

In rabbinic literature, the clearest example of Eve as the flawed wife is found in a parable that appears in different versions in different sources (*Genesis Rabbah* 19.10; *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan A* 1; *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan B* 1), all of which clearly offer intertextual retellings of Genesis 3 and the myth of Pandora.[194] While the details and focus of the variants shifts slightly, the story can for the most part be summarised as follows. The midrash on Genesis 3 describes how

[193] N. Aschkenasy 1986: 43. For an extensive discussion of the differences between the rabbinic Eve on one hand, and the Philonic Eve on the other see Boyarin (1993: 77–106).
[194] See 2.II.f above.

when a woman decides to visit her neighbour, the wife of a snake charmer, to borrow some vinegar, she also stops to make conversation, asking her friend 'how does your husband treat you?' The female neighbour replies that their relationship is good, except for the fact that her husband has banned her from looking in a jar that he says is full of scorpions and snakes.[195] The woman guest immediately casts doubt on the husband's words by suggesting that his riches are, in fact, concealed in the jar. He has saved them and hidden them, says the neighbour, because he plans to take another wife. On hearing this, the snake charmer's wife immediately goes to the jar and plunges her hand inside, getting stung and bitten by the reptiles. When her husband returns, he sees that the woman must have touched the jar, with different versions describing his reaction differently.[196]

Daniel Boyarin has argued that this parable as it appears in *Genesis Rabbah* focuses on the sin of Adam, not Eve, with the wife representing Adam, while the husband in the story is God.[197] Boyarin does not offer any thoughts on the biblical analogue for the visiting neighbour, though it seems to me she could represent either the snake or Eve.[198]

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[195] In the versions found in *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan*, it is clear that the husband deliberately sets up a test for his wife. In *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan A*, he hides a specific number of figs and nuts in the jar, along with a scorpion, in order to test her obedience, while in *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan B*, he gives her control over all of his precious possessions except the jug of scorpions. See Blidstein 1997: 108. For further discussion of the tradition that appears to grow from the *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan B* see Chapter 3.IV.c.

[196] In the version from *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan A* the woman is expelled by her husband, apparently as she is about to die from her injuries, while in *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan B* the text clearly states that the wife dies as a result as her folly. See G. J. Blidstein 1997: 108-11.

[197] He acknowledges that in the likely later version of this midrash that is found in *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan B*, where the husband is a king, the character analogues are explicitly described by the writer: 'The king is Adam. The wife is Eve. The one seeking to borrow vinegar is the serpent' (see Blidstein 1998: 111 quoting A. Saldarini 1975: 35–6).

[198] Blidstein (1997: 106) identifies the neighbour only with the snake.

In a more balanced way than Boyarin, which gets closer to the subtlety of the midrashic re-telling, Blidstein concludes that the snake charmer's wife can be representative of Adam or Eve. To see her as Eve clearly fits in terms of the 'sexual correlation' of the parable and the biblical text, though in Jewish culture it is less common for the snake to be represented as a woman by comparison to its great popularity within Christian art and literature. Nonetheless, for God to be represented by the husband, and Eve by the wife makes a good deal of sense. Furthermore, elsewhere in rabbinic literature, Eve is presented as being concerned that Adam will take another wife if she dies before him, which clearly corresponds with the wife's fears in the story of the jar of scorpions.[199] Yet, because *Genesis Rabbah* frames the tale with God's words to Adam in Gen. 3.10-11, Blidstein surmises that the snake charmer's wife represents both protoplasts.

Anne Lapidus Lerner reads a similar pattern of analogy, suggesting that while the husband is given the role of God, in this particular version of the Garden narrative, Eve and Adam are represented by the snake charmer's wife, while the snake is depicted as a prattling but persuasive female neighbour. In Lapidus Lerner's own words 'in the female's domain of the household, of food, women are portrayed as jealous troublemakers who would do well to honor and obey their husbands, who in turn, have assumed a divine role.'[200] While Adam and Eve share the role of transgressor in the form of the snake charmer's wife, Ladipus Lerner observes the fact that the rabbinic story casts 'two women in the three roles of tempter, transgressor/tempter, and transgressor, does not exonerate the woman.'[201]

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[199] *Genesis Rabbah* 19.5.
[200] Lapidus Lerner 2007: 105.
[201] Ibid. 104.

For other scholars though, as well as the writer of the version of the parable in *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan B*, the wayward wife is identifiable only with the woman from the biblical account.[202] Nehama Aschkenasy argues that the foolish wife who is easily led into disobedience represents a rabbinic interpolation of both Eve and Pandora. Commenting on the version of this tale found in *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan A*, she argues that, 'the main impetus behind this story is clearly the wish to convert the biblical conflict of Adam and Eve to a domestic squabble, and to diminish Eve's figure to that of a silly woman'.[203] Thus, not only does the parable, according to Aschkenasy's reading, characterise Eve as stupid and untrusting of her husband, but it also denies her any of the cosmic potency of a figure like Pandora. This transition has both positive and negative connotations for Eve.[204] While her curiosity is not blamed for the entry of evil into the world, the woman is also denied the power of such a negative action. Instead, she simply appears as the model of a jealous and rash wife, who chooses to listen to her gossiping friend rather than her husband. Furthermore, though Aschkenasy does not mention this in her argument, in the folktale, unlike in the biblical account, the woman does not receive any knowledge—regardless of how problematic it might be—but only a painful, potentially lethal, attack from scorpions and snakes.

Other texts that use Eve's story to present an image of woman ultimately as a foolish and flawed wife, rather than the source of sin and carnality, appear periodically throughout the rabbinic material.[205] Similar instances of depicting Eve as a nagging and foolish wife can also be found on occasion in medieval

[202] Aschkenasy 1986.
[203] Aschkenasy 1986: 44.
[204] Aschkenasy 1986: 44.
[205] *Genesis Rabbah* 17.4, 18.2, 20.11.

Christian writings,[206] as well as in subsequent Lutheran and other Protestant texts that emphasised a domestic and literal reading of Genesis 2–3.[207]

c. Summary

In my evaluation of both of these trajectories of interpretation, I have illustrated how in every case the depiction of Eve as intellectually inferior to Adam relied upon the readers making a series of assumptions about the woman's role in the biblical text and her function as an initiator of sin or simply as a transgressor. Framing Eve's story with the theme of sin, each of the writers assessed above filled gaps left in Genesis 2–3 concerning the snake's reasons for approaching the woman, the woman's reasons and motivations for breaking God's command and her influence on the man to conclude that the first woman, Eve, was a figure of anti-intellect. This allowed them to disregard the fact that she pursued knowledge, as well as avoid dealing with the potentially problematic character of God as he is represented in the biblical account.[208] Regardless of the selective nature of these readings, they have been accepted as authoritative and 'correct' readings of the biblical story, and thus have become integral to the popular

[206] For example, Woolf (1986: 26) notes that in *Genesis B*, an Anglo-Saxon Old English poetic re-writing of the Fall, the figure of Eve, far from being a force of 'cosmic evil' or a symbol of the inherent sinfulness or carnality of women, is better described as a precursor to the 'nagging wife' trope that developed in later medieval literature. While this mode of representing Eve as a failed and stupid spouse is still entirely negative, it offers as slight differentiation from the depiction of Eve as a metonym for all women, and simultaneously a symbol of anti-intellect. For further reference to this tradition, and in particular Eve as a gossiping wife see also S. Lasine (2001: 167–75),

[207] See S. Brauner 1995: 61. Brauner argues, for example, that for Luther, woman is less a powerful force of lust and carnality, but more like a simpleton, a foolish wife. It is because of Eve's stupidity and gullibility, Luther suggests, that women are more predisposed to superstition and idle prattle. While Luther did attempt to modify certain misogynistic views that were popular during his time, he was unable to view women entirely positive, and there is evidence in his writings that he viewed women as unreliable and gossiping. On Eve in Luther's writings see S. C. Karant-Nunn and M. E. Wiesner 2003: 15–31.

[208] I deal with this element of the text in considerable detail below in Chapter 3.

negative 'myth' of the sinful, as well as having considerable significance for Western gender norms.

IV. JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RECEPTION OF EVE AS SINFUL MOTHER.

a. Eve as Mother of Death

The representation of Eve as the initiator of death, indeed, in many cases the mother of death, has a strong history in both Jewish and Christian traditions. In the earliest stages of interpretation, Sir. 25.24 asserted that 'from a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die.'[209] This tradition of blaming Eve for the initiation of sin and death can potentially be located in Genesis 2–3, though as my discussion above has illustrated, it requires a number of interpretative leaps to be made by the reader.[210] First, the reader must assume that Yahweh Elohim only makes humanity mortal in direct response to the actions of the first couple. Secondly, they must assume that the woman, more than the man, is responsible for that mortality. This assumption must be made despite the fact that God links *Adam* with death (Gen. 3.19), rather than Eve, and that the woman is identified as חוה 'mother of all living' (Gen. 3.20) *after* she has taken the fruit of the tree.

Regardless of these issues, Eve's role as the woman who brings death and sin into being is deeply entrenched in her reception history. One particular strand of this trajectory specifically targets Eve's maternity: the Eve/Mary

[209] See discussion above in 2.II.f.
[210] See 2.II.

typology. The Christian comparison of these two women, which was established as early as the second century, but may well have had even earlier unrecorded roots, contrasted the actions of Eve and Mary, most frequently to the detriment of the first woman and her motherhood.[211] Luigi Gambero neatly summarises this tendency:

> In Holy Scripture, Eve is called mother of the living (Gen 3:20), but, to the Fathers, quite early on, there seemed to be a sharp contrast between this title and her role with regard to the destiny of her descendants. For it is true that Eve transmitted physical life to her descendants, yet (by her sin) she was also the cause of their ruin and death. For this reason, the prevalent tendency among Christian authors will be to see, in the title 'mother of the living', attributed to the old Eve, the prophetic type of a new Eve, who would become the mother of the living in a truer and fuller sense of the word.[212]

The parallel between the two women appears to have initially developed in the West,[213] with the first written evidence of the Eve/Mary typology usually credited to Justin Martyr (d.165).[214] One crucial element of the comparison that he develops responds to the maternity of the two women. In his description of Eve from *Dialogue with Trypho* 100, which falls within a broader discussion of 'in what sense Christ is [called] Jacob, and Israel, and Son of Man?', Justin writes: 'For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death'.[215] The language he employs is both sexual and maternal, with Eve conceiving through the snake's words as she would 'conceive' a child (συλλαβοῦσα cf. Gen. 4.1), after which she is described

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[211] J. Pelikan 1996: 44. 'it may have already become natural in the second half of the second century to look at Eve, "the mother of all living," and Mary, the mother of Christ, together, understanding and interpreting each of the two most important women in human history on the basis of each other'.
[212] L. Gambero 1999: 46.
[213] W. J. Burghardt 1955: 110.
[214] J. Flood 2011: 13–14; J. Glancy (2010: 93 n.55 cf. Burghardt 1957: 88–9) posits that it may in fact have been Papias, writing at the turn of the first century, who offers the first evidence of a theological connection made between the two women. Pelikan suggests that while Justin provides the earliest written evidence of the typology, his mode of speaking about this subject indicates that Justin assumes his reader to be familiar with the pairing (Pelikan 1996: 44).
[215] *Dialogue with Trypho* 100 —Justin Martyr (2003).

as ‘giving birth’ (ἔτεκε √τίκτω cf. Gen. 3.16) to both disobedience and disease.[216] His particular reading of Eve might allude to an established Jewish tradition of a monstrous coupling between the woman and the snake (see section IV.b.1 below), with Justin connecting this bestial sexual encounter and Eve's association with death to provide a troubling picture of the 'mother of all living' actually giving birth to mortality. Thus, Justin elaborates on the biblical text's ambiguities that leave space for assuming Eve's actions were responsible for causing human mortality, creating a nightmarish image of the first woman conceiving death and sin through her ear by the words of the snake. In contrast, Mary, while sharing in Eve's virginal status, counteracts this first woman in all other ways; she is faithful and obedient, receiving the Spirit of the Lord and giving birth to the Son of God, the one that will deliver repentant humankind from death. Not only does this antithetical image present difficulties for the characterisation of the first woman, but also signals the initiation of a problematic gender model that was used to distinguish between 'good', chaste, and obedient women, such as the Virgin Mary, and 'bad', sexual, and rebellious women like Eve.

After Justin Martyr, it is Irenaeus of Lyons whose reflections on the typological relationship between Eve and Mary are best known. The theology he develops, particularly with regard to Mary's recapitulative and redemptive role, is rather more advanced than his predecessors', though it is not possible to discuss it in full here. In terms of Irenaeus' views on Eve, his work echoes Martyr's emphasis on her shared virginal status with Mary, as well as contrasting

[216] *Dialogue with Trypho* 100—Justin Martyr (1909).

the first woman's seduction with the Virgin's obedient attention to the divine message. He also contrasts the former's link to death and the latter's to life, but does not maintain the specifically maternal imagery used by Martyr. Nonetheless, contrary to her biblical title as mother of all living, Eve is cast as the 'cause of death for herself and for the entire human race'.[217]

Tertullian, on the other hand, like Justin Martyr, specifically contrasts Eve and Mary by comparing their motherhood. As Jennifer Glancy has demonstrated, at this early developmental stage of the typology, the comparison does not yet revolve around the pain in labour that Eve felt, and the painless birthing by Mary.[218] Rather than contrasting the *process* of Eve and Mary's maternity, Tertullian contrasts the *product*; Eve thus becomes the mother of death and devilry, while it is the Virgin Mary who is the true mother of life when she redeems the first woman's actions by giving birth to Christ. Following the pattern of similarities and differences between the women already observed in the work of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, Tertullian writes:

> Into Eve, while still a virgin, had crept the word *(verbum*), constructive of death *(mortis*): into a virgin no less needed to be introduced the Word of God, constructive of life... ' But Eve on that occasion conceived nothing in her womb by the devil's word.' Yes, she did. For the devil's word was to her a seed (*verbum diaboli semen*), so that thenceforth she should be abject and obedient, and should bring forth in sorrows: and in fact she did give birth, to the devil, the murderer of his brother. Mary, on the other hand, brought forth him who should sometime bring to salvation his brother according to the flesh, Israel, by whom he himself was slain. So then, God brought down into the womb his own Word, the good brother, that he might erase the memory of the evil brother.[219]

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[217] *Against Heresies* III.22.
[218] Glancy 2010: 94. I am highly indebted to Glancy's article, and this section uses many examples that are also found in her chapter 'Mary in Childbirth'. My focus is rather different, though, as Glancy is primarily interested in 'the Eve-Mary analogy and the tradition that Mary gave birth without experiencing pain emerge and circulate independently,' while I am interested in the contrast between Eve as a figure of death and Mary of life.
[219] *De carne Christi* XVII.5—Tertullian 1956.

Tertullian's description of the Eve/Mary parallel both continues and develops the model found in earlier writers' work. He offers a more complex description of the aural conceptions of Eve and Mary and the intertextual link between Gen. 3.1-5 and Lk. 1.26-3 by explicitly converting the 'word' (*verbum*) of the serpent into 'seed' (*semen*). This 'seed' is connected to the 'death' that Eve introduced to the world (*In virginem enim adhuc Evam irrepserat verbum aedificatorium mortis*), suggesting that the product of her womb conceived from the word of the devil was mortality. The 'seed' is also, however, linked to her actual progeny, Cain. Tertullian, then, contrasts Mary, the one who gave birth to the bringer of salvation for his brother, with Eve, who produces death and a fratricidal child. He entirely ignores both the potential typological link between Eve's innocent, murdered child, Abel, and Jesus, as well as the maternal trauma that would likely have accompanied his death, which points to similarity with Mary rather than dissonance. Instead he favours developing a picture that strips the first woman of any maternal power, or redemptive suffering.[220] Tertullian's belief in the primary female responsibility for sin is also clearly illustrated by perhaps his most famous instance of misogyny, in which he addresses women on the matter of their dress, explaining that it was their sex who 'opened the door to the Devil' (*On the Apparel of Women*—Tertullian 1959).[221] Indeed, it seems that for him, every woman had the potential to be an Eve and so be the route by which sin and

[220] For readings that specifically focus on these more positive, or at least sympathetic, links between Eve and Mary's maternity, see Chapter 4.III and IV. For a similar association to Tertullian's between Eve's role as mother, Cain and death, see also Pseudo-Chrysostom, *On the Annunciation to the Mother of God against the Impious Arius* quoted by Gambero p. 276: 'Eve bore Cain, thus giving birth to envy and murder; you, instead, will conceive a Son who will give life and immortality to all'.

[221] This is more famously translated as 'you are the devil's gateway'.

death continued to enter the world: 'On account of *your* desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die'.[222]

Eve's aural conception of death through the words of the serpent, and its intertextual parallel with the Annunciation, was also taken up in Eastern Christianity, and is evident in Ephrem the Syrian's (d. 373) writings on the two women.[223] In one hymn from his collection *Hymns on the Church,* Ephrem developed this motif following a similar strategy to Tertullian, describing the opposing aural conceptions of Eve and Mary:

> Just as from the small womb of Eve's ear
> Death entered in and was poured out,
> so through a new ear, that was Mary's.
> Life entered and was poured out.[224]

Elsewhere in his work, Ephrem outlines this comparison more directly, without the foil of the Annunciation and the theme of conception: 'one was the cause of life, the other the cause of death. Through Eve death arose, and life by means of Mary.'[225]

Similar comparisons between Eve as the mother of death, or at least mortality, continued throughout the patristic period and into the medieval period as this particular strand of her tradition gained in strength and popularity. As well as the more subtle comparative descriptions of Eve and Mary's maternity, more literal and direct labellings of Eve were used by certain writers; Athanasius of Alexandria pronounced that, 'As for Eve, she is the mother

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[222] Tertullian 1959: 118.
[223] For further examples see W. J. Burghardt 1957: 91–100. On the Christian preference for focusing on Eve as aurally conceiving death by Satan or the Devil, rather than a child, or any kind of demon see G. A. Anderson (2001: 92–3). For discussion of early Jewish tradition Eve's demonic sexual encounter with the snake, see below 2.IV.b.1.
[224] Brock (1992: 33) cited by T. Beattie 2007: 89.
[225] Quoted by Burghardt 1957: 92.

of the dead',[226] and Ambrose (d.397) declared that, 'Eve is called mother of the human race, but Mary mother of salvation',[227] while Epiphanius of Salamis removed the title of 'mother of the living' from Eve and conferred it onto Mary instead (*Panarion* 78, n.18). Indeed, so common was it for Eve's role as 'mother of all living' to be eclipsed by her connection to death, and Mary's association with life, that John Henry Newman, in his writings on Mary as the Second Eve, suggested that 'by the time of St. Jerome (331–420 CE), the contrast between Eve and Mary had almost passed into a proverb,' citing Jerome's description of Eve and Mary in one of his letters to Eustochium—'Death by Eve, Life by Mary'—as evidence.[228]

In his *Book of Hebrew Names*, Jerome offers two interpretative possibilities for Eve's name, *havva*: *Eva, calamitas, aut vae, vel vita.* While it is generally accepted that the Hebrew proper noun is derived from the verb to live (חיה), and Jerome, as well as LXX and other ancient translations, reflect this, [229] the Latin father also links Eve's name to 'woe' and 'calamity' by developing an anagram: *vae* / *Eva*. Indeed, the emphasis in his definitions seems to be on the *negative* aspects of the first woman's character, with the likely more accurate definition of her name 'life' appearing as a kind of afterthought to the primary emphasis on *both* 'calamity' and 'woe'. Eyal Poleg describes Jerome's definition as, 'succinctly encompassing the Christian reading of the Garden of Eden and

[226] Quoted by Gambero 1999: 106. See also Gregory of Nyssa for an explicit renaming of Eve, who '"took of the fruit thereof and did eat," and that eating became the mother of death to men' (see Gregory of Nyssa 1891—*On the Making of Man* XX.4)
[227] Ambrose *Ep*. 63, n. 33 quoted by Burghardt 1956: 11.
[228] J. H. Newman 2001: 218.
[229] For a full discussion of this etymology see below Chapter 4.II.b. Another highly popular pun on Eve's name is found, for example, in the hymn 'Ave Maris Stella'. Here a word play is developed between 'Eva' and its reverse form in the greeting received by the Virgin from Gabriel—'Ave'—indicating the transformation of Eve's sin by Mary's willingness to hear and obey God.

departing from the original etymology as Mother of all Living (Gn 2.20).'[230] Given the highly influential status Jerome's text throughout the medieval period, and his etymology for 'Eve' represents a significant point in the history of interpretation of Eve.

Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies,* which were also widely available during the Middle Ages, appear to have appropriated and expanded on Jerome's definition.[231] Indeed, Isidore weaves together the two separate interpretations offered by Jerome in his letter to Eustochium and his *Book of Hebrew Names*. He explains that Eve is called 'Life, because she was the origin of being born; calamity or woe because by her lying she was the cause of death.'[232] Isidore relates that while woman can be a 'source of salvation' and life for a man, she can also be the cause of 'calamity and death'.[233] Given that in the wider spectrum of interpretations of Eve it is the Virgin Mary who usually takes credit as 'a woman' responsible for salvation, Eve is left with the responsibility of death alone. While Jerome and Isidore do not explicitly title Eve 'the mother of death' in the way writers such as Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa did, nor do they give particular attention to her maternity and its connection to death, by figuring her as a symbol and cause of mortality, they do diminish the fertile, life-giving capacity of Eve described in the original biblical account, as well as ignoring the potentially redemptive qualities of her maternal suffering.

In his thorough discussion of medieval treatments of the Virgin Mary and her typological relationship with Eve, Barré suggests that the sermon given by

[230] E. Poleg 2013: 219.
[231] Flood 2011: 52.
[232] Isidore of Seville 2006: 162.
[233] Isidore of Seville 2006: 162.

Pope Innocent III (1160–1216) for the feast of the Assumption offers a succinct synopsis of the antithetical comparison of the two women that was popular and prevalent during the period. In content, Innocent's sermon continues the oppositional relationship established and developed between the two women amongst patristic writers.[234] Amongst the points of distinction he lists several that correspond to their maternal roles and involvement in life and death. Innocent states, while Eve is the source of death and damnation, Mary is the source of life and salvation. Where the first woman ate the apple of death, the Virgin gave birth to the child of salvation, and while Eve's child, Cain, killed his brother, Abel, Jesus, the son of Mary died at the hands of his brother.[235] In much the same way that Tertullian emphasised the contrast between the first woman's child Cain and Christ, rather than seeing an comparison between Abel and Jesus, so too does Innocent.

J. M. Evans, in his study of traditions that grew up around the story of Adam and Eve, echoes Barré's suggestion that though there were subtle distinctions between individual medieval writers' treatments of the Eve/Mary typology, the dominant understanding of their relationship was fairly consistent. Indeed, for most typological readings of Genesis 2–3, Evans suggests that after Cyril of Jerusalem's work, 'the figural interpretation of the Fall appears to have been exhausted, for during the following twelve centuries, little or nothing was added to the scheme of types which had been evolved during the first four.'[236]

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[234] H. Barré 1956: 5. 'Si l'on voulait se faire rapidement une idée assez exacte et complète des développements donnés au parallèle antithétique entre Ève et la Vierge il pourrait suffire d'en emprunter l'expression, particulièrement autorisée, à un sermon du pape Innocent III pour la fête de l'Assomption.'
[235] See H. Barré 1956: 5 for the Latin text.
[236] J. M. Evans 1968: 102.

While I am cautious of such generalisations, it is clear that the Eve/Mary binary that was established in antiquity continued with great popularity into the early modern and modern periods, as did the symbolic affiliation of Eve with motherhood and death, and Mary with maternity and life.[237] Given the scholarly consensus on the stability of this particular mode of medieval interpretation, I will not offer a full overview here, as the material available is too vast, and has been well documented by numerous others.[238]

Eve's depiction as the initiator or mother of death and sin, promoted through contrasting her with the Virgin Mary remained significant for Protestants as well as Catholics following the Reformation, and throughout modernity into the contemporary period. While Protestantism largely criticised the high Mariology that had developed during the Middle Ages, and was concerned by excessive devotion towards her, her superiority to Eve was nonetheless largely maintained. [239]

For the modern Catholic Church, so persistent has the typological

[237] This view is echoed strongly by Teresa Reed in her study of Mary during the Middle Ages. Indeed, so strong and dominant is this antithetical typology, that Reed only describes Eve and Mary in extreme binary terms, with Eve as 'most deviant and tempting of women' in the medieval imagination (p. 5). She goes on to suggest that 'Even as Mary transcends the concupiscence of conception, the pain of childbirth and the fear of death, in many instances her exceptional nature is based upon an opposition to the errancy of Eve's flesh. Such opposition often sets up a relationship to Eve and the stories about her, and this relationship to the most negative of women imaginable is never far from of (*sic*) any reference to Mary, even in the most holy of circumstances.' (p. 8). See T. Reed (2003), especially her introduction. John Flood, in his study of Eve in antiquity and the English Middle Ages also concurs that the Eve/Mary typology was the most popular (2011: 14).

[238] H. Barré 1956; Guldan 1966. On the gendered visual depiction of death in medieval art and literature and symbolic connection drawn between Eve and female personification of death, as well as the Eve/Mary typology see K. S. Guthke (1999: 58–68). In the wider course of the chapter, Guthke demonstrates that both the protoplasts were associated with death in medieval interpretation, as they were in antiquity, offering close analysis of the particular representation of Eve on pp. 58–68. Here he argues that for those who identified the woman as the primary sinner, 'death, sin, canal desire, and Eve were fused to the point where one could allegorically stand in for the other.' (p. 59).

[239] For the continuation and reformation of the Eve/Mary typology, see B. Kreitzer (2004: 36–9); K. Lehnhof (2002: 38–75).

comparison between the maternity of Eve and the maternity Mary been, that both the papal bull establishing the official dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the second Vatican Council (1962–1965) reinforced the Eve/Mary binary. Thus, in the *Lumen Gentium*, under the section dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the concept of Mary as the 'New Eve' is reiterated:

> Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert in their preaching, "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith." Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her "the Mother of the living," and still more often they say: "death through Eve, life through Mary."'[240]

Indeed, this document itself offers a window into the historical development of the tradition, as well as a summary of the basic premise that while Eve is a symbol of death, Mary is the true 'mother of the living'. In the accompanying notes, John Paul VI grounds his writing in the works of Epiphanius, Jerome, Augustine and several others all of whom maintained the binary opposition between the two women, reinforcing and authorizing this mode of thinking about the pair. Tina Beattie describes this text from Vatican II as the culmination and summary of the 'irreconcilable opposition' of Eve and Mary that developed in Church dogma over the centuries.[241]

This trajectory of interpretation has helped to eclipse from contemporary popular understanding of Eve the more sympathetic aspects of her maternity. By connecting her motherhood with death and sin, and denying or limiting her status as 'mother of all living' the tradition I have outlined above has erased any

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[240] *Lumen Gentium* 8 http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

[241] T. Beattie 2002a: 27. Beattie suggests that in the earlier history of the typology there was more complementarity and dependency between the two women. To a certain extent I agree, but I do differ on the particular examples I would offer to support this. For my own approach see Chapter 4.

inclination towards Eve's connection to ancient traditions of powerful female maternity, as well as ignoring the potential for reading her maternal suffering that is hinted to in Genesis 4 as a source for redemption.[242]

b. Eve as Monstrous Mother.

As well as connecting Eve's motherhood to death, there is a strong tradition in both Jewish and Christian writings of associating the first woman with unsettling sexuality, as well as aligning her maternity with the physical punishments of menstruation and childbirth that emphasise the otherness of women and their bodies. Thus, while Eve's maternity could be a source of positive strength and celebration for the first woman, in these traditions it is associated with monstrosity and alienation.

1. Eve as Mother of a Monster.

In a different, though linked trajectory of interpretation concerning Eve's motherhood, not only is her maternity associated with death, but also with the birth of an actual monster.[243] Linked to Eve's birthing of a devil is interpretative concern about how Eve conceives, and in particular whether the 'deception' of the snake mention in Genesis 3 actually alluded to some kind of sexual encounter between the first woman and the reptile.[244] The sexual undertone to the relationship between Eve and the serpent that appears to have been established

[242] See Chapter 4 for a 'counter-history'.
[243] As we saw above in 2.IV.a, both Tertullian and Innocent focused on the 'devilish' and evil characteristics of Cain, which reflected back onto Eve and her connection of sin. This mother/son relationship was employed by both theologians to cast Eve in shadow in contrast to the chaste Virgin Mary who conceived an innocent child who would bring about the salvation of humanity.
[244] This is something that is alluded to less explicitly in the Christian tradition of Eve's aural conception.

with the LXX also seem to underlie 4 Macc. 18.6-8 (18-54 CE),[245] where a righteous mother uses allusion to Eve's plight to describe how she, unlike the first woman, avoided having her virginity "defiled" (ἐλυμήνατό) by, the deceitful serpent, the "destroyer."[246] This text employs the noun ἀπάτης, related to the Greek verb used in the LXX, in order to convey the deceitful and seductive, character of the snake. A remarkably similar allusion to Eve's physical sexual defilement is made in the Christian *Protoevangelium of James*, where Joseph, in discovering that his virgin wife-to-be is pregnant, seems to suggest that he, like Adam, is the victim of adultery:

> Who is he that hath ensnared me? Who hath done this evil in mine house and hath defiled the virgin? Is not the story of Adam repeated in me? for as at the hour of his giving thanks the serpent came and found Eve alone and deceived her (ἐξηπάτησεν), so hath it befallen me also.[247]
>
> *Protoevangelium of James* 13.1

As traditions developed throughout the first centuries of the Common Era, Satan and the serpent became linked, most frequently with the latter functioning as a vehicle for the former's evil action, and Eve's relationship to both became increasingly explicit.[248]

Furthermore, as time goes by, Eve's biblical role as 'mother of all living' evolves to include her birthing of a monstrous child sired by a lustful serpent/devil. For example, this heinous coupling may underpin to 1 John

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[245] See above 2.II.d for discussion of this particular shift in translation between MT and LXX.

[246] οὐδὲ ἔφθειρέν με λυμεὼν ἐρημίας φθορεὺς ἐν πεδίῳ οὐδὲ ἐλυμήνατό μου τὰ ἁγνὰ τῆς παρθενίας λυμεὼν ἀπάτης ὄφις (4 Macc. 18.8). For further elaboration on this allusion to Eve, see Ogden Bellis (2000: 83).

[247] The Greek ἐξηπάτησεν that is used in the Protoevangelium of James generally means 'deceive', but can be used for the seduction of a woman, which given the context in this passage seems an appropriate understanding.

[248] Examples of the snake and devil/fallen angel becoming linked—1 Enoch 69.6; 2 Enoch 31.6; Apocalypse of Moses; 3 Baruch 9.7. See Kugel 1997: 98–100.

13.11—'We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one' — and the Nag Hammadi Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* (the earliest available manuscript dates from fourth century CE), which also implies that the murderous Cain is the product of an adulterous tryst between Eve and the serpent — 'first adultery came into being, afterward murder. And he was begotten in adultery, for he was the child of the Serpent. So he became a murderer, just like his father, and he killed his brother'.[249] The longevity of these images is attested to by their appearance in writings throughout the following centuries, where Eve becomes a monstrous mate in the Babylonian Talmud (c. 500 CE),[250] and mother of a monster, Cain, in both *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* 21–22 (c. 700–800s CE)[251] and the *Zohar* (c. 1200s CE).[252] The understanding of Eve's child Cain as the son of the serpent also enjoyed a revival amongst some seventeenth century radical Christian sects that appeared in England, who perpetuated the theory of two seeds, inspired by the works of Jacob Boehme. Many of these groups supported the belief that the snake had sexual intercourse with Eve, resulting in Cain, and that his ancestors made up the more degenerate portion of the population still alive in their time.[253] We might also identify this trend towards the sexualisation of the relationship between Eve

[249] *Gospel of Philip* 61.5–10. For English translation of Nag Hammadi texts see J. M. Robinson 1990. Cf. 1 John. As I mentioned above, Tertullian also seems to make use of this tradition.
[250] E.g. *Šabbat* 146a 'For when the serpent came upon Eve he injected a lust into her', *Yevamot* 103b 'When the serpent copulated with Eve, he infused her with lust', *ʿAbodah Zarah* 22b 'When the serpent came unto Eve he infused filthy lust into her'—lust is related to idolatry of the Israelites at Sinai in all. All translations are taken from I. Epstein (1935–9).
[251] *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* 21: '(Sammael) riding on the serpent came to her, and she conceived; afterwards Adam came to her, and she conceived Abel… "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and he begat in his own likeness after his own image" (Gen. 5.3) Hence thou mayest learn that Cain was not Adam's seed, nor after his likeness, nor after his image.' Translation from G. Friedlander (1965). What is crucial to this text is not Eve's motherhood, but the writer's need to reconcile the evil Cain with the exemplary Adam. It is the woman who falls victim to this mode of interpretation, and nothing is said on the way her children, bad or good, might reflect on her or her image.
[252] Accounts of the history of the Eve/snake tryst have been given in a variety of publications, for example Kugel 1997: 147–8.
[253] See Almond 1999: 173–5.

and the serpent in the visual tradition of Eve, for example in paintings such as William Blake's *Satan Exulting Over Eve*, which has very strong sexual overtones. In this work Eve lies on the floor with an expression of ecstasy or agony on her face, while the snake is entwined around her naked body. Its head lies on her breast. Above her, flying horizontally, with his genital area in parallel to hers, is the naked angel, Satan. Even more sexually provocative is Franz von Stuck's dark and deeply suggestive 1899 image entitled, *The Sin* (*Die Sünde*), in which Eve becomes conflated with the female figure of Sin and is transformed into a grotesque *femme fatale*; her eyes and the serpent's simultaneously lock on the viewer as their bodies entwine in a sexual embrace.

In this trajectory of interpretation, the biblical Eve's deception by the snake in Genesis 3, as well as her role as mother of the first murderer, Cain, in Genesis 4, are drawn together into a nexus of sex, sin and monstrosity. With such re-writings, the first woman is aligned with evil and, in some cases, is transformed into a vessel by which wickedness and lust take root in the world. In other words, Eve literally becomes a monstrous mother engaged in bestial or devilish procreation that divorces her from God and the natural order of the world. Yet, such stories, while loosely taking inspiration from the biblical text, are fairly distant from the earliest version of the Garden myth. In the Hebrew text of Genesis, while a shrewd snake apparently 'deceived' Eve, and the biblical narrative more broadly hints to both sex and sin, it by no means legitimates this particular smear campaign. For the most part, texts such as the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Zohar* are elaborations that, though employing the characters of Eden, have more in common with general misogynistic traditions concerning the

workings of the devil, the female responsibility for sin, and the insatiable, even demonic, sexuality of women, than they do with the text of Genesis 3.

2. Monstrous Maternity

In addition to Eve's maternity being linked with death and with the demonic offspring Cain, her story has repeatedly been used as a patriarchal aetiology for explaining *why* women and motherhood are so closely aligned with the abject and the monstrous, with impure menstrual blood and unstable birthing bodies. The works examined above, though all presenting frightful images of the first woman, forge Eve's monstrosity through identifying her with the snake, Satan, and Cain, rather than defining her as a monster in and of her self. While the picture of Eve/woman as the devil's consort has been persistent enough, far more unsettling are the images of Eve, and thus her daughters, as profane, defective, and in some cases sub-human, by comparison to the male bodily norm. This strategy of abjecting Eve and her womanhood establishes an identification of Eve as monster by nature, rather than by association. Before proceeding I wish to offer further explanation of some contemporary feminist theories of abjection and the monstrous feminine that have informed my understanding of this facet of Eve's reception history.

The specific notion of socially constructed feminine monstrosity has been pinpointed and commented upon by various feminist thinkers during the last three decades. Julia Kristeva's 1982 text, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, provides an exploration of the cultural frameworks of purity

and abjection.[254] In this volume she observes that the laws in Leviticus 12, focused on controlling women's bleeding and childbearing bodies, are important resources for establishing the cultural conception of 'defiled maternality.'[255] Due to the status of impurity placed on the natural functions of the female body in the book of Leviticus, women must adhere to specific regulations of separation and offerings that allow them to atone for the natural changeability of their bodies during menstruation and childbearing.[256] Kristeva also identifies a significant associative transition from Leviticus 12, and the discussion of maternal purity, to Leviticus 13 that reflects on the decaying leprous body. She argues that this link 'induces the image of birth as a violent act of expulsion,' an event that, like leprosy, leads to wounding, suffering, and bodily instability.[257] By constructing parturition as a significant cause of impurity, the text of Leviticus betrays the simultaneous male horror at and fascination with the fertile female body that represents life and death, pleasure and pain, and that is "sacred and soiled, holy and hellish."[258]

Kristeva's work has informed writers such as Barbara Creed, Rosi Braidotti, and Jane Ussher, who have expanded upon her observations concerning the abjection of the maternal, observing a link between this female Other of patriarchal culture, and monstrosity. For example, Braidotti posits that 'if we define the monster as a bodily entity, anomalous and deviant vis-à-vis the norm [i.e. the male norm], then we can argue that the female body shares with

[254] J. Kristeva 1982.
[255] Ibid. 100.
[256] Ibid. 99–100.
[257] Ibid. 101.
[258] R. Braidotti 2011: 227.

the monster the privilege of bringing out a unique blend of fascination and horror.'[259] In particular those bodily functions women experience that men do not, such as menstruation and childbirth, help to define the female body as monstrous in patriarchal cultures.

With this theory in mind, I will now consider the ways in which Eve has been employed as an aetiology for the unstable female body through an interpretative process that aligns her maternal physicality with sin and punishment, rather than productivity and strength. For example, for a number of rabbinic Jewish interpreters, the nexus of Eve, punishment, and suffering maternity that is found in Gen. 3.16, and God's condemnation of her—'"I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children,"'—provided fertile ground for elaboration on the nature of women. In *Genesis Rabbah* 17.8, though no direct allusion is made to the biblical penalties, the theme of Eve's punishment is used as an aetiology for menstruation by aligning the monthly bleeding of women with Eve's spilling of Adam's blood by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge: 'why was the precept of menstruation given to her? 'Because she shed the blood of Adam [by causing his death], therefore was the precept of menstruation given to her.'[260] Thus, Eve's association with death is employed as an explanation for women's menses, creating a parallel between sin and fertility, rather than life.

Arguably, the rabbis expand upon the association of female fertility and retribution in Genesis 3, as well as drawing in Gen. 2.17, where Yahweh Elohim

[259] Braidotti 2011: 226; B. Creed 1993; J. M. Ussher 2006.
[260] Translation taken from H. Freedman and M. Simon 1939.

warns Adam that the penalty for eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge will be death. In the words of Judith Baskin, *Genesis Rabbah* 17.8 portrays 'woman's numerous faults and disadvantages as divinely ordained and as deserved due to her inherent moral weakness', and furthermore:

> It seems no accident that all three of these commandments/punishments specifically directed at women have to do with separation. All three may be read a symbolizing the chasm between the sacred and the profane, the holy and the secular, the pure and the impure, the realm of men who obey commandments and that of women who suffer disadvantages.[261]

She suggests that is precisely through Eve's sin that the rabbis construct an image of the first woman, and through her, all women, that pictures the female form as unstable, bleeding, and a site of penalty. Following Julia Kristeva's theory, this type of reading makes Eve the source of women's abjection, the beginning of their monstrous bodily difference from the male norm.

The type of story that aligns Eve, menstruation and punishment can also be found in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, this time with direct allusion to Gen. 3.16: 'Eve was cursed with ten curse, since it is written: *Unto the woman He said, and I will greatly multiply*, which refers to the two drops of blood, one being that of menstruation and the other that of virginity, "*thy pain*" refers to the pain of bringing up children, "*and thy travail*" refers to the pain of conception, "*in pain thou shalt bring forth children*" is to be understood in its literal meaning"',[262] as well as in perhaps its most misogynistic form in *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* 14:

> He [God] gave the woman nine curses and death: the afflictions arising from menstruation and the tokens of virginity; the afflictions of conception in the womb; and the affliction of child-birth; and the affliction of bringing up children; and her head is covered like a mourner… and her ear is

[261] J. Baskin 2002: 73.
[262] Babylonian Talmud *ʿErubin* 100b (Epstein 1935–9). See also Palestinian Talmud *Šabbat* 2.6

pierced like (the ears of) perpetual slaves… and after all these (curses comes) death.[263]

It is by texts such as these, which bind the nature of Eve, and metonymically woman, to a state of pollution, punishment, and subservience, that men—and indeed women—readers are encouraged to position the female body as a site of fault and monstrosity.

Within Christianity, we find a similar association between the pains of maternity and punishment, as well as, much like with Jewish laws on menstruation and childbirth, a horrified fascination with the inner/outer boundaries of women's bodies, in this case conveyed often through a preoccupation with intact virginity and painless birth. In the work of early Latin Christian poets such as Claudius Marius Victorius (c.425–450 CE) and Prudentius (d. c. 413 CE), Eve and her body are depicted with brutal condemnation:[264]

Soon, when your womb conceives… you will testify to its burden with groans… and your weariness complete, an offspring, producing life, makes good nature's curse with the vengeance birth takes.[265]

Here, then, Eve's curse *by nature* is represented with horrifying savagery, and the act of childbirth is pictured, as an act of violence, trauma and retribution for sin. While this aggressive mode of abjecting Eve's body by no means represents the Christian mainstream, it nonetheless offers an amplified concern with the fecund female body. This anxiety more frequently manifests in the dualistic comparison of Eve and the Virgin Mary, with the latter exemplifying perfect, enclosed, and pure femininity, while Eve is associated with a state of

[263] Friedlander 1965.
[264] See also Claudius Marius Victorius, *Alethia* (Truth), 2:85–9: 'Then it will come to pass that Eve, having acquired wisdom and certain of salvation, will serve me and having experienced the hard sufferings of giving birth she will bring forth peoples who will be struck by our crime… bringing about eternal punishment', quoted by Flood 2011: 35.
[265] Flood 2011: 39.

'curse.'[266]

This strand of Eve's reception history has tainted her maternal qualities that are outlined in the biblical text. Indeed, readers who assume that the woman is 'cursed' in the Hebrew text clearly misread the text, which records only the cursing of the snake and the earth. Furthermore, to assume that the punishment of Eve in Gen. 3.16 relates to menstruation and physical childbirth offers a reductive approach to the biblical text, which more accurately describes the physical and *mental* pains of childbearing. So, interpreters allow their preoccupation with Eve's sin to manipulate the way they understand her maternity. Thus, the first woman becomes a type of monstrous mother, blamed for the beginning of female impurity and employed throughout the ages to explain to women that their painful labours to give birth were justified punishment for the sin of their ancestor.

c. Summary

Following a similar pattern to my investigation of Eve as anti-intellect, in the two sub-sections above I have critically reflected on the selective interpretative techniques that have contributed to the image of Eve as a mother of death and evil, which resulted in some readers aligning all women's childbearing with sin and punishment because of the first woman. For Christian readers, the contrast between the motherhood of Eve and Mary proved especially damaging for the first woman and her children, and led to a problematic feminine binary in which the procreative female body of Eve was associated with death and disaster, while

[266] M. Warner 1978: 75. It is of course important to note that, despite these many references to Eve's curse, the biblical text does not state that the woman is cursed.

the pure, non-sexual Mary symbolised life. For Jewish interpreters a similar collocation of sin, maternity and menstruation was developed, that relied on understanding Eve as ultimately sinful, and her body as the site of her punishment. These interpretations arise despite the fact that the biblical text is unclear as to whether Gen. 3.16 represents punishment or simply as shift in reality because of the consumption of the fruit, that Eve was named 'mother of all living', and that Genesis 4 describes the first woman giving birth to the sinful Cain, but also the innocent Abel, and Seth, whose son is linked to the beginning of Yahwism (Gen. 4.26). Thus, by interpreting her motherhood through the lens of sin, the original complexity of the biblical woman's character is reduced. Like the motif of Eve as a figure of anti-intellect, her perceived monstrous motherhood has been a dominant strand within her reception history, marginalising an equally viable interpretative focus on the positive and powerful aspects of her fertility.[267]

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has offered a critical insight into the process by which the cultural myth of Eve as sinner has grown out of the text in Genesis 2–3 and how this focus on the woman's transgression has been resulted in the depiction of the first woman as weak and intellectually inferior, as well as tainting her role as a mother. I began my critique by demonstrating that while the Garden story can certainly be read as a story about sin, to categorise it as a myth about the 'Fall' of

[267] For a 'counter-history' that takes a more sympathetic approach to reading Eve's motherhood, see Chapter 4.

man is not definitively proven by the text itself. Indeed, I have shown that for the most part the text remains enigmatic as to the gravity of Eve's sin, as well as whether she alone should be identified as the initiator of sin, or whether Adam was present at the point of transgression. The result of my analysis has begun my process of destabilising the dominant myth of Eve as a feminine symbol of evil, precisely because the Hebrew text could not be shown to unequivocally support this reading.

Rather, it is subsequent texts such as Sir. 25.24 and Hesiod's Pandora myths that appear to have been more important in the interpretative process that led to the popular, negative understandings of the first woman. I suggest that it through the influence of intertexts such as these, and readers' single-minded focus on the importance of sin in the Garden story, that the first woman came to be viewed in such a negative light.

Consequently, I argued that interpreters such as Philo, Augustine, and Aquinas were so driven by their focus on Eve as a transgressor, that they allowed her perceived connection to sin to depict the first woman, and thus all women after her, as essentially weaker in intellect to men. In Rabbinic literature, this conviction of Eve's transgression as a sign of her foolishness is also apparent. Yet, I demonstrated that each of these interpretations relies on a series of assumptions about the original biblical story that are not explicitly apparent in the Hebrew text, or subsequent translation. For example, in the works of Philo, Augustine, and Aquinas, each interpreter assumes a natural inequality of Adam and Eve that is not clear from the biblical text, as well as assuming that the snake addresses only the woman, when it is entirely possible that the man was also

present according to the Hebrew. Nonetheless, they assume that the snake deliberately chooses to converse with the woman because she is weak by comparison to the man. Consequently, her weakness is the conduit for the man's failure, too. The same can be said for interpretations that transform Eve's role as mother of all living into a mother of death and the progenitor of devilish, serpentine seed.

Thus, I have argued that while these interpretations have been accepted into Judaeo-Christian tradition, they cannot be said to be the best or most accurate literary readings of the biblical text as each takes creative liberty with its source text, imaginatively developing a flawed figure of Eve that is far more negative than she is in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter 3

Eve and Knowledge

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I critically examined how and why the theme of sin has been discerned in Eve's story, acknowledging the strengths of this interpretation, but also highlighting some crucial weaknesses. I demonstrated that while it is impossible to deny Eve's transgression, a great deal of rewritings of the biblical text nonetheless emphasise her sinful, carnal nature and her connection to death. There are, however, other equally important and valid themes that can be read in the first chapters of the biblical account. In this chapter I consider the importance of knowledge in Eden, and examine how framing Genesis 2–3, and more importantly Eve, with wisdom rather than sin can bring new facets of the story and its female protagonist to light. I will illustrate the ways in which Eve's story can and has been read as the tale of an agent of knowledge, a mediator of culture, a spiritual enlightener, and a feminist agitator.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first will examine the biblical text of Genesis 2–3, and the ways in which the theme of knowledge is established. As I did with the theme of sin in the previous chapter, below I explore the language used to convey the story of Eve's acquisition of knowledge, and consider how it may have encouraged a select number of interpreters to challenge negative assumptions about the woman's desire for wisdom. This will

be strengthened by a comparative examination of the story of Enkidu and Shamhat in the Epic of Gilgamesh, which provides an ancient analogue of woman as culture bringer for Genesis 2–3.

In the following section I examine how the theme of knowledge was taken up and examined by Gnostic writers working in the early centuries of the first millennium AD, when Judaeo-Christian orthodoxy was yet to be fully established. These highly spiritual, marginalised communities privileged knowledge or *gnōsis* above all else in the cosmos, and believed that human salvation would come through this form of spiritual wisdom. For the Gnostic writers, Eve was an agent of spiritual knowledge and salvation, and here I examine the insight this interpretation can provide for twenty-first century readers of the biblical text. Indeed, analysis of the Gnostic approach to reading Genesis 2–3 raises a number of interesting issues, such as the place of creativity within textual exegesis, and the notion of how to define a 'legitimate' interpretation, if such a thing exists at all.

In the final part of this chapter, I reflect on interpretation from the other end of the historical perspective by examining the writings of Angela Carter (1940-1992). With the postmodern turn in twentieth century Western culture came a strong scepticism of cultural metanarratives and orthodoxies. Creative and critical approaches to the biblical text thrived, with numerous interpreters questioning the ideological messages of both the Bible and the traditions that had grown up around it.[268] In section IV I investigate the ways in which Carter

[268] I do not mean to suggest here that it is *only* with the development of postmodernism that readers began to question traditional readings of the Bible, but rather to highlight that this

wrote and rewrote her own versions of Eve's pursuit of wisdom as a symbol of the feminist cause, with the first woman representing transgressive and rebellious female knowledge.

II. EVE AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Knowledge is one of the most vibrant thematic threads that weave through chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Genesis, and Eve is integral to this element of the narrative. Although she is a relative late-comer to the narrative progression—arriving at the end of ch. 2—the entirety of the story of human initiation into knowing hinges upon her consumption of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

There are four narrative cruxes that are crucial to Eve's placement within this theme that pervades Genesis 2–3:[269] Gen. 2.9, 2.17, 3.1-7 and 3.22. It is in these verses that the reader encounters the tree of knowledge for the first time, witnesses God's prohibition of its fruit from the first human, observes Eve's conversation with the snake and her consumption of the forbidden fruit, and hears God's fears of the humans' new knowing status. These hubs offer potential points of departure for the interpreter interested in the interrelated subjects of the character of knowledge, the character of woman, and indeed, the character of God.

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critical development facilitated wide-scale deconstructive approaches to theology, literature, art, culture and tradition, and in turn to Eve's story.

[269] While knowledge is focused on throughout the entirety of the text, these are moments that provide explicit detail on the matter of what knowledge is, who has it, and how it should be limited.

a. Genesis 2.9: The Tree of Knowledge

The theme of knowledge is first sown into the garden story when Yahweh Elohim brings the tree of knowledge of good and evil into existence in Gen. 2.9: 'Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' One key question that arises as soon as the reader encounters this verse is: why does Yahweh Elohim place this mysterious tree of knowledge in Eden? Prior to this moment, the world had been a rather basic environment, populated with only a single primordial human and the beginnings of the world's flora. Why should the deity then choose to introduce such an obscure plant? As I demonstrated in 2.II.a above, the biblical text supplies the reader with no explicit answer, leading numerous interpreters to assume that the introduction of the tree also marks the initiation of a test for the first human, set by God. However, there are other potential interpretations concerning the purpose and function of the tree of knowledge.

At the beginning of v. 9, the narrator makes it clear that Yahweh Elohim is the creator of all the trees in the garden, and so the reader can assume he also created the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Logically it follows that the deity has the knowledge of good and evil and therefore has no need of the tree's fruit. [270] Rather the trees appear to be placed in the garden for the only other creature in existence, the primordial אדם—human.[271] This being's existence is defined by a state of lack and desire—it has no food and no knowledge, and it

[270] W. Brueggemann 1982: 45.
[271] After this point in the thesis, I will use the transliteration, *'ādām*, for ease of reading. All other significant terminology from the original text of Genesis 2–3 will be given in Hebrew.

desires both. The narrator's description of all the trees mirrors these desires as it emphasises the plants' anthropocentric qualities, saying that they are: 'pleasant to the sight and good for food'. [272] Included amongst these beautiful and nutritious plants is the tree of knowledge, which is also desirable to the *'ādām*.[273] Hugh C. White observes the tree's correspondence to primal humanity's lack/desire:

> with the mention of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" we are faced with another ominous human deficiency… it represents here the most crucial human lack of all. The same deficiency which evokes desire for the material fruit of the trees will also be experienced in relation to knowledge, wisdom, or intellectual discernment.[274]

In other words, the structure of the text implies that the *'ādām* will naturally hunger for the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the same way that it hungers for food. Given the fact that Eve will be created from the material body of the *'ādām* in Gen. 2.21-22, it is equally logical for a reader to assume that she will also suffer from the same deficiencies and experience the same desires. Verse 9, then provides a hint of the nature of Eve and supplies some context for her later actions.[275]

A second, related question begged by the tree's existence is: what type of knowledge does it offer Eve and Adam? For it is not simply the tree of דעת, 'knowledge', but rather it is the tree of הדעת טוב ורע, which has traditionally been translated as the 'knowledge of good and evil'. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, there are various ways in which the tree of knowledge has been interpreted, but

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[272] See H. C. White 1991: 118. I do acknowledge that one could argue that these are also qualities the deity would appreciate, but it seems more likely to be related to the *'ādām*.
[273] D. J. A. Clines 1974: 8.
[274] White 1991: 118.
[275] The idea of examining the motivation for Eve's actions is something that is played on by feminist interpreter Angela Carter. See 3.IV.c.

these demand further examination.[276] To begin with, the conventional rendering of the tree as 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' is 'debatable' and a full reappraisal of the morally loaded use of 'good and evil'.[277]

דעת, 'knowledge', is from the root ידע, which in a very broad sense pertains to the act of knowing.[278] English translations of the Hebrew Bible render the verbal form as 'perceive', 'realise', 'get to know', 'understand', 'have insight', and 'to know sexually', amongst other things. Within the unit of Genesis 2–3 the root makes a further two appearances: in Gen. 3.5 it is used to describe the deity's intellectual, pre-emptive knowledge, and then again in Gen. 3.7 with reference to the humans' realisation of their nakedness. Even within this short section of text, the root 'refers once to knowledge that is intellectual and once to knowledge that is experiential', and once to knowledge that has been placed in a tree.[279] Despite this multiplicity of meaning, the association between the root ידע and sexual knowledge has been a popular and dominant reading amongst interpreters, who have frequently associated the tree with carnal knowledge.[280] This has in turn coloured the interpretation of Eve, and likely contributed to her character becoming closely associated with sexuality and seduction.[281]

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[276] Chapter 2.II.a.
[277] W. Vogels 1998: 148.
[278] For discussion of this see Vogels (1998: 147–8); C. Westermann (1994: 242–9).
[279] Vogels 1998: 147.
[280] Ibid. 148. For a discussion of the idiomatic use of ידע את for specifically sexual knowledge see A. Brenner (1997: 22–3). See Gen. 4.1 for an example of this use of the verb, with Adam as the subject and Eve as the object (this is the standard male-subject, female-object application). The LXX maintains this connection between knowledge and sex using the verb γινώσκω where the Hebrew employs the idomatic ידע את to describe sexual encounters. So even for those reading the Bible in translation the association would have remained clear. The same is true in the Latin translation in the Vulgate (*cognosco* for ידע את), and in English versions, too.
[281] See 2.IV.b.1 above for sexualised interpretations of Eve.

Nonetheless, as the various synonyms used for the translation of ידע suggest, a broad definition of knowledge is held within the Hebrew term.

טוב of course appears in the famous phrase 'good and evil', but the term 'good' is also inextricably linked to the process of creation, due to its repetitive use in the evaluative statement 'and God saw that it was good' in Genesis 1. טוב appears again in the creation story of Genesis 2–3 to describe the trees of Eden which are 'good for food' in 2.9. In Gen. 3.6, this 'good' asset of the tree is then paralleled with further positive attributes that make the plant both תאוה—'a delight'—for the eyes and נחמד—'desirable'—for gaining knowledge. Based on the association of these three words, there is no evidence to suggest the quality of the tree as 'good' is moral or ethical, but evaluative. Beyond references to the tree, the word טוב is also used in Gen. 2.12 where the gold in the land of Havilah is described as 'good', and the same vocabulary appears again when Yahweh Elohim declares that the *'ādām* is not yet in a 'good' state because it lacks a partner. In each of these instances the word טוב is once more employed in an evaluative sense, and consequently Vogels has suggested that suitable explanatory synonyms might be 'beautiful, appropriate, and harmonious.'[282]

רע, when placed in conjunction with the word טוב is often translated as 'evil'. This seems to be supported by LXX which adopts the term πονηροῦ, primarily translated as 'evil', as well as the Vulgate's use of *mali*, again predominantly associated with the concept of evil. This common rendering of the

[282] Much of my analysis of the term טוב is strongly indebted to the work of Vogels 1998: 149.

terms טוב ורע as 'good and evil' secures a moral dimension to the tree, which in turn influences the way readers assess Eve and her consumption of the tree's fruit. Yet, when considered in terms of its internal function within the Hebrew language, though רע does undoubtedly carry a negative value, it commonly appears in the Hebrew Bible where it is best translated as 'bad' or 'disagreeable'. Given the placement of רע in connection with טוב, which I have already demonstrated does not occur here in an ethical context, it is likely that the former would also be best translated without reference to the moral concept of evil. Rather it is more accurate to define the word in relation to terms such as 'ugliness, suffering and disharmony'.[283]

Based on this brief but close analysis of the vocabulary of Genesis 2–3, it is evidently viable for a reader to adopt a slightly weaker translation than traditional 'good and evil' and instead render הדעת טוב ורע as 'the knowledge of good and bad'.[284] So, a clear understanding of the terminology of knowledge presented in Gen. 2.9, which is detached from dominant translation practises, reveals that the epistemological function of the tree need not necessarily be defined in terms of morality. Furthermore, when the language of knowledge is couched in the more ethically and sexually neutral terms that are seemingly appropriate to the Hebrew vocabulary, a broader scope for interpretation of Eve's interest in knowing becomes legitimised.[285]

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[283] Ibid.

[284] Following a number of scholars including Korsak (1998b: 27), Slivniak (2003: 442, n.5) and Vogels (1998: 5–6).

[285] To avoid confusion when discussing various sources of interpretation throughout this thesis, I feel I am unable to refrain entirely from using the traditional translation of 'good and evil' but

This biblical ambiguity concerning the nature of the knowledge of good and bad held in the tree is only strengthened when the holistic function of the phrase טוב ורע is assessed. Following Westermann, when evaluating the composite function of the tree's title, I believe 'it would be a misunderstanding to divide it into a verb "to know" with an object "good and evil."'[286] Rather, in totality the title 'describes a particular way of knowing'.[287] Working from this premise, the binary opposition of 'good and bad' that is presented in conjunction with knowledge can reasonably be understood as representing a quality of discernment, a recognisably human ability, and is necessary for survival in the world beyond Eden. If the reader accepts this interpretation of knowledge then something of a riddle is established when God subsequently prohibits it from primordial humanity in Gen. 2.15-17.

b. Genesis 2.17: Prohibition

In vv. 16-17 the conundrum is established: despite the fact that the tree of knowledge and the human are, on first impression, made for each other, the Creator disrupts this apparent complementarity. In v. 16, Yahweh Elohim confirms that the majority of the trees are edible and available to the humans, echoing Gen. 2.9. But, in v. 17 the deity then adds an extra proviso: '"but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."' Two things are made clear by the prohibition. First, that it represents a transition in the status of the knowledge of good and bad. In Gen.

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when it is my own use, it will only be made 'with the reservation that "bad" in the general sense is meant' by 'evil'; see Westermann 1994: 243.

[286] Westermann 1994: 241.

[287] Ibid.

2.9 the tree of the knowledge of good and bad seems to be available to the *'ādām* along with all the others in the garden. Yet, as soon as Yahweh Elohim gives the primordial human behavioural boundaries, the tree is placed off limits.[288] Furthermore, the addition of the prohibition also brings to light the subtext of power that runs throughout Genesis 2–3. Although Yahweh Elohim has repeatedly exercised power and control over the world through his acts of creation (Gen. 2.7-9, 15), this is the first moment in Genesis 2 where he makes an explicit command. In turn this command establishes a relationship between the deity and humanity that is founded on divine control. Secondly, when Yahweh Elohim pronounces the mortal consequences of eating its fruits, the tree of knowledge of good and bad becomes associated with death.[289]

In Genesis 2, then, before Eve has even been created, a puzzling picture of knowledge that is both natural and taboo has been established. After the first woman is introduced in Gen. 2.21-24, it is her role in this textual conundrum that drives the plot forward, and pushes the tension between human yearning for, and divine control of, knowledge to breaking point. As has already been seen in Chapter 2 of this thesis, this paradoxical picture of knowledge has produced a strong trajectory of interpretation that is very keen to accept God's ban as both fair and legitimate, demanding absolute obedience to both the deity and his prohibition. But does the text of the Bible actually provide such a clear picture of judgement on the first transgression?

[288] Slivniak 2003: 444.
[289] The precise meaning of God's words is unclear, as discussed in Chapter 2.

c. Genesis 3.1-7: Transgression

While Genesis 2 sets the scene of the human transition from Eden to reality by establishing the prohibition of knowledge, Genesis 3 is where the action takes place. It smoothly leads from the last episode of Gen. 2.21-24 by mirroring it; just as a new character, the woman, was introduced at the end of ch. 2, so ch. 3 opens by adding another: נחש, the snake. These newcomers to the narrative then provide the focus for the ensuing drama, while the first human, *'ādām*, fades into the background. The snake's arrival in the narrative signals a continuation of the focus on knowledge that had been established in Gen. 2.9 and 15-17. Being described as 'crafty' (ערום), he is an ambivalent, clever figure.[290] When focusing on the theme of knowledge in Genesis 2–3, in addition to a concern for defining the moral connotations of the snake's cunning, it is important to acknowledge that from its biblical description, the snake appears to be the most knowledgeable, self-aware animal existent in the world. Yet, for many interpreters the snake, or as it is commonly translated, the serpent, is not defined by its aptitude but by its perceived wickedness.[291] There is, however, nothing in Genesis 3 to suggest that the snake is anything other than a

[290] See 2.II.b on the ambivalence of ערום.

[291] See 2.IV.b.1 for conflation of snake with Satan/Devil. Based on my work on the text and its interpretation, I agree with Deborah Rooke who suggests that the translation of נחש into English as 'serpent' is rather meaning-laden and errs toward a negative representation the character. Commenting on the use of 'serpent' by one particular scholar, Rooke observes that 'use of the archaic term "serpent", instead of the more mundane term 'snake' which could equally well translate the Hebrew term, gives the impression that the creature is intended to be a mythological embodiment of evil': see D. Rooke (2007: 163, n.6).

mouthpiece through which the narrator can destabilise God's prohibition from Gen. 2.16-17, an action that does not necessitate enmity between the two.[292]

The snake's cleverness above all other animals is made clear when it opens its mouth to speak to the woman, making it more like humans than any other creature created by Yahweh Elohim.[293] Not only can the reptile speak, but it can do so with considerable rhetorical skill; its first offering is a question, and a carefully constructed one at that.[294] By asking ''Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?', it formulates its question for Eve in such a way that connotes a level of scepticism concerning the interdiction, apparently in order to plant seeds of doubt in the woman's mind concerning God's words.[295]

Initially the woman responds to the snake by proving that what it has said is not totally accurate. She picks up on the fault in its words and corrects it, saying that it is only one tree, the one in 'the middle of the garden', that is not available to humans. While the woman confirms she has some knowledge of the command not to eat of the tree, it seems she is not aware of any specific details about the plant, identifying it only by its location rather than its title. Furthermore she then adds her own infelicity to God's prohibition, explaining that if they touch it or eat from it they will die.[296] As I outlined in Chapter 2.II.b, Eve's additions to God's words have the potential to be a significant source for her vilification. Walter Moberly, for example, appealed to rabbinic anxiety over any addition or subtraction to Eve's words to suggest that the intention of the

[292] Westermann 1994: 238–9 following G. von Rad (1963: 85) 'the mention of the snake here is almost incidental… we are not concerned with what the snake is but rather what it says'.
[293] Rooke 2007: 166.
[294] See 2.II.b for closer discussion of the Hebrew.
[295] See Chapter 2.II.b for discussion of the snake's use of אַף כִּי.
[296] Further discussion of this was given in 2.II.b.

biblical authors was to present the first woman as well on her way to sin in Gen. 3.2. Phyllis Trible, however, offers her own interpretation of the woman's addition to God's words, arguing that her alterations to Gen. 2.16-17 demonstrate her ability not only to obey God's command but 'also to interpret it faithfully'.[297] In a similar line to Moberly's appeal to traditional Jewish modes of biblical interpretation, Trible sees a parallel between Eve's augmentation of the command, and the rabbinic technique of building '"a fence around the Torah," a procedure… developed to fully protect the law of God and to insure obedience to it.'[298] Thus it is possible to see Eve's addition as a symbol of her faithful and clever instinct, amplifying God's prohibition to help deter herself from breaking it. Furthermore, while the woman does alter the initial command, she clearly understands that the price of the fruit, according to God, is death.

It is at this point that the serpent is able to challenge the authority of Yahweh Elohim's voice and cast doubt on his motivation for establishing the prohibition. First, the snake removes the threat that is associated with the tree in Gen. 2.17 and 3.4, informing the woman that she will not, in fact, die if she eats of its fruit. In doing so, the snake neutralises the peril to humanity seemingly imposed by God. It is neither interested in wickedness nor goodness, but simply knowledge. After all, as Hugh C. White observes, 'if the violation will not bring death, then it would become a possibility worth considering'; in other words the snake supplies the woman with an alternative course of action, one that she can take without the shadow of death hanging over her.[299] So, as the story progresses, and Adam and Eve do not die after eating the fruit, it becomes

[297] Trible 1978: 110.
[298] Ibid.
[299] J. McKinlay 1999: 75.

possible to see the snake's truthfulness about the fruit as a sign of its ambivalence as a transmitter of knowledge.[300]

Furthermore, the snake makes clear to the woman the real effect of the tree, that when 'you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good and evil' (Gen. 3.5). Once again, this statement is proved to be true as the narrative continues, when, towards the end of the story in Gen. 3.22, Yahweh Elohim explicitly states that the fruit has made the humans 'like one of us'. The snake then, is not only the cleverest of all animals, but seems to have an accurate insight into the fruit of the tree and how it stands in relation to both the humans and God. Consequently, its conversation with Eve need not be viewed as a negative seduction, but could equally be interpreted as an encounter that helps the woman to see the true potential of the tree, which had been shrouded by God's command.

As soon as the snake has supplied the woman with an alternative picture of the tree in the middle of the garden, she forms a new perspective on its importance. While for some interpreters this has suggested that the woman was weak and open to deception, if the snake does in fact appear to tell the truth, then it is equally possible to read her pursuit of knowledge as well-founded and intelligent. After all, if the tree does not in fact lead to death, then all that remains is its appeal to the innate human desires. On a primary level, the tree appeals to her body as food, on a secondary level its aesthetic beauty attracts the woman's

[300] For an overview of the scholarly debate on the nature of the warning of death and whether it is fulfilled see Westermann (1994: 224–5).

visual sense, and on a tertiary level, the tree is desirable to expand the mind.[301] This final attraction communicates with arguably the most significant privation that the primitive humans are still yet to overcome: knowledge. Whatever the form of the knowledge offered by the tree, humans as yet do not have it and as such, perhaps inevitably, will respond to its desirability.

This verse also brings into focus a second subtext to the theme of knowledge that was established in Genesis 2: desire. Following Graham Ward, 'by desire… I am not simply speaking of eros nor of agape…. Desire is sexual and procreative, but it is also existential (as yearning for completion and recognition of incompletion) and theological'.[302] In the case of Eve's desire for the tree, it clearly falls with the first—bodily (though in a wider sense than Ward provides for)—and middle— existential—conceptualisations of desire. It is the latter form of desire in particular that corresponds to knowledge, which will fulfil a yearning in the woman for a completion of the self:

> She has thus chosen to base her decisions about her actions, not on the divine Voice, which is ground for Adam's and her conscious existence, but upon observation and desire. The prohibition becomes a not a positive to the transcendent Subject but an unjust limit to desires for autonomy and self-sufficiency.[303]

Though many interpreters have assumed that the woman's desire for the fruit offered a covetous sign of her pride, or her vanity, based on the textual account it is possible to argue that the biblical text is focused not on the morality of Eve's desire for knowledge per se, but rather provides a more neutral reflection on

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[301] See also White 1991: 134

[302] G. Ward 1995: 9. Westermann (1997: 247) also recognises the broad existential appeal of the fruit of the tree of knowledge in his attempt to define the nature of the knowledge itself: 'any limitation of the meaning of "the knowledge of good and evil" is thereby excluded. It can mean neither moral nor sexual nor any other partial knowledge, but only knowledge which includes and determines human existence as a whole.'

[303] White 1991: 135.

what it is to be human.[304] In relation to the woman's response to her new understanding of the tree of knowledge, Fewell and Gunn argue it should not come as a shock that the woman desires knowledge that will make her like God: 'God's own breath has transformed the human into a living *nepesh*, "a bundle of appetites/passions/desires"… that is to say, desire is part of the divinely inspired programming of the human.'[305] Eve's natural yearning is obviously in direct tension with the prohibition, yet Yahweh Elohim is seemingly the cause for this whole situation: he created the tree, he made the prohibition and he formed the woman. The text, therefore, leaves the reader with the issue of how to reconcile the apparently innate human desire for knowledge with God's limitation of human aptitude, and in turn raises interpretative questions about the nature and goodness of Yahweh Elohim, as well as of the man and most importantly, the woman.

The conflict between human and divine desires relating to knowledge is of course exaggerated as soon as Eve acts upon her wishes at the end of v. 6. By taking the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the woman commits a truly autonomous act. She makes a decision based on her own faculties, having been given information from both God—although this of course may have been delivered from the mouth of the man—and the snake. Indeed, this ability to act independently in itself connotes a likeness to God before she even takes the fruit, as she is willing to behave autonomously. Furthermore, it transfers a level of power to her, as she breaks free from divine authority and by doing so she, like the snake, calls into question God's ability to control his creation. As Mieke Bal

[304] See 2.III.a and b, and 2.IV.b.1 traditional and dominant takes of Eve's desire and sexuality.
[305] D. N. Fewell and D. Gunn, 1997: 24. Cf. F. Landy 1983: 242–3.

has observed, by choosing knowledge and disobeying Yahweh Elohim, by deciding that his death threat is empty, the woman momentarily demotes his character to the same status as all the other players in Eden. [306]

Eve's powerful ability to choose not only influences her own fate, but that of the man with her too. She does not eat alone, but also gives some fruit to her husband who is with her. It is this action by the woman that has led to her being derided as a temptress and a *femme fatale* throughout history, imaged as the conduit of human sin.[307] Yet, the only textual reference to the exchange of fruit between the woman and the man is found in v. 6 and simply reads, 'she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate'. On the basis of a reappraisal of this verse, numerous scholars have now recognised the neutrality of this moment in the story, where Eve simply passes on the fruit to the man and shares her new knowledge with her partner.[308] There is no description of her physically luring Adam to eat the fruit, and perhaps more importantly, in a chapter that has so far been full of speech, the couple do not utter any words to one another. As Hugh C. White suggests, 'silence at such a critical point cannot be without significance in a narrative that habitually places such importance upon dialogue.'[309] Eve speaks no persuasive words, but perhaps more importantly, Adam asks no questions as to why he should eat. This, then, can be read not as a scene of temptation, but as a meal shared between woman and a man.

The new knowledge acquired by the couple results in their eyes being opened to the truth or reality of their existence together, and thus they gain

[306] M. Bal 1987: 125.
[307] See Chapter 2.
[308] Westermann 1994: 249–50.
[309] White 1991: 136.

awareness of what it is to be naked, in response to which they clothe themselves with fig leaves (Gen. 3.7). Furthermore, the couple are clearly able to perceive that their actions will displease God, because they hide from him when they hear him in the Garden (Gen. 3.8). Clearly then, knowledge has given the two the power to discern their situation—but what does this change mean? The text is characteristically ambiguous here, and so interpreters are divided. Some see the effect of the fruit as confirming the human acquisition of sexuality and thus shame,[310] while others believe it results in a change from a primitive to a civilised or cultured humanity who chose to cloth themselves.[311] Westermann gives a more general, but perhaps also more accurate, answer to this question, especially in view of the earlier discussion of 'knowledge of good and bad'. He suggests that in Gen. 3.7: 'the text gives but an indication of how the man and woman have progressed… [they] have come to know what it means to be masters of their existence'.[312] That is to say, they have gained the ability to live autonomously and in full self-awareness. This episode in Genesis charts the transition of humanity from unknowing creatures bound to exist in a divinely controlled state into a transgressive, self-aware model for humanity, the very humanity that all readers, throughout the centuries, recognise as their own.

Textual analysis with a focus on the theme of knowledge has illustrated the primacy of learning for humanity, the significance of female desire, and the power politics that define the relationships between God, the humans, and the snake. The woman emerges as an independent, potent, and decisive character

310 Ward 2012; J. Stiebert 2002. See earlier discussion in Chapter 2.II.d.
311 L. M. Bechtel 1995, 1993; S. Niditch 1985.
312 Westermann 1984: 251.

who negotiates between the truths, half-truths, and lies of the snake and God, and gains knowledge for humanity. Depending on the perspective of the reader, this conflict of interest that exists between Eve and God can be configured in different ways. Although for centuries, she has lost the battle and been condemned for her behaviour, the text does leave some space for a role reversal to take place between the woman and Yahweh Elohim.

d. Genesis 3.22: God's motive.

Although the 'curses', 'punishments', or 'consequences' of disobedience in Gen. 3.14-19 may on first reflection seem to give some insight into the nature of knowledge, they actually simply confirm Yahweh Elohim's rather predictable displeasure at the humans' disobedience.[313] What is of more importance for understanding the place knowledge holds in the garden at the end of the story, and the significance of the woman's actions, is God's short, but telling speech in Gen. 3.22:

> Then the LORD God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.'

Here God states his reasons for prohibiting knowledge, and punishing the humans: the desire to restrict their capabilities. In a speech that has strong echoes with the Tower of Babel story (Gen. 11.6), Yahweh Elohim expresses serious concerns about human progress. Indeed here, and in Genesis 11, 'the primary, and in fact only, concern is protection of divine privilege'.[314] For, if the humans become immortal, they will be even closer to the divine than they have

[313] The consequences of the woman's behaviour have more relevance for readings interested in exploring Eve as either a sinner or a mother, and for this reason they will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 4.
[314] D. Penchansky 1999: 12.

just become through gaining knowledge. So here God's words confirm that even in Eden, 'knowledge is power'. Furthermore, the tone of the deity's speech brings into question whether Yahweh Elohim should be conceived of as an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent deity, in the way that many interpreters have done.[315] Rather, Gen. 3.22 provides a portrait of a restrictive and insecure God whose motivation for prohibiting knowledge may be purely self-seeking. It seems that when knowledge is placed at the heart of Eden, not only are traditional understandings of Eve called into question, but so too are those of Yahweh Elohim.

e. Summary

Close examination of the presence of knowledge in Eden has only served to strengthen my insistence on the complexity and ambivalence of Genesis 2–3. At the end of the story the tension between humanity and divinity centring on the possession of knowledge remains high, as God drives his people from the garden into reality. This reality has been particularly hard on Eve, who for centuries has been blamed for damaging humankind irrevocably and driving a terrible rift between humans and God. But my interrogation of the text in this chapter has raised a number of questions that destabilise the traditional understanding of Eve's pursuit of knowledge: is Yahweh Elohim perhaps more to blame than Judaeo-Christian culture has been willing to recognise? Is the deity's desire to dominate humanity and deny them knowledge acceptable? Should the woman perhaps be recognised as a rebel with a cause, rather than sinner? Should we in

[315] For expansion on this detail see the Gnostic takes on God discussed below in 3.III and Angela Carter's depiction of God in her short story 'The Bloody Chamber' discussed below in 3.IV.c.2.

fact praise her for escaping her primal condition? It is precisely these interpretative questions that a now ever growing group of interpreters have interacted with, producing vibrant and challenging interpretations of Genesis 2–3 that directly reject the notion of 'the Fall', and instead focus on the strength and power of Eve as an agent of knowledge.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, one of the most famous ancient female characters to have contributed to the interpretation of Eve's story is Pandora. While this connection served to emphasise the possibilities for reading Eve as the source of sin, the Epic of Gilgamesh, and its female culture bearer, Shamhat, can provide an alternative ancient parallel for examining Eve's pursuit of knowledge.

The Babylonian myth, which predates both the stories of Eve and Pandora, has had considerably less impact on the understanding of the Hebrew myth until relatively recently, but its character, Shamhat offers a significant analogue for Eve. Shamhat appears in the Epic as the agent chosen by Gilgamesh to civilise his future companion, the primitive man Enkidu, by using her sexuality and her teaching. The comparison between Eve and Shamhat, then, highlights the significance of women as mediators, teachers, and transmitters of knowledge and culture for some writers and readers in the ancient world.[316]

Though the earliest written Sumerian versions of the Epic of Gilgamesh, or at least parts of it, can be dated to the early second millennium BCE, the creation of the fuller, unitary 12 tablet 'Standard Babylonian' version can be

[316] In the case of the Hebrew Bible, see C. Meyers (1988: 139–64).

placed in the late second millennium BCE, with the best preserved copies being located in the library at Nineveh that was completed by Ashurbanipal in the 7th century BCE. Interestingly, the episode in the Epic of Gilgamesh featuring Shamhat has no record in the earliest Sumerian version of the written epic, but only appears in the fully formed versions of the narrative. This places the narrative as being first developed around the thirteenth – tenth centuries BCE, and retaining literary presence into the seventh century and beyond. Shamhat is, then, a relatively close contemporary of Eve, in terms of literary dating. Despite this chronological proximity, I am not interested in the direction of influence between the two stories. Rather, I wish to focus on the similarities and differences of their particular representation of women as mediators of knowledge and the ways in which these challenge the traditional categorisation of Eve as originator of sin, rather than of wisdom. As Susan Niditch observes, 'cross-cultural comparison is especially useful in the study of biblical myths, urging one to explore the meanings of certain kinds of narrative themes unfettered by a pre-conceived theology'.[317]

The episode concerning Shamhat and her civilisation of Enkidu appears in the Old Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh between 2.2-5 and receives a fuller account in the Standard Babylonian Version 2.3-6 and 7.2-4. The story begins with the creation of a primitive man, Enkidu, by the goddess, Aruru, in response to a plea from the people of Uruk to put a stop to their king, Gilgamesh, who had been creating civil unrest amongst his own people.[318] Enkidu, however,

[317] Niditch 1985: 4–5.
[318] The motif of human creation from clay is obviously echoed in Genesis 2.7, as well as in Pandora's formation and numerous other ancient creation stories.

in order to fulfil his destiny as companion to the great Gilgamesh, needed to be initiated into civilisation, as he initially existed as a hairy, animal-like man, who ate and drank with the fauna of the steppe. This transition is brought about when a huntsman travels to the city of Uruk and petitions Gilgamesh him to stop the wild man from freeing his quarry. In response to this problem, the king elects Shamhat, who is very likely a to be a cultic prostitute from Uruk,[319] to go back to the steppe with the hunter and seduce to Enkidu away from his animal cohorts. On first sight of the woman's naked body, the primitive man leaves his companions, and lies with her. After six days and seven nights of intercourse with Shamhat, Enkidu attempted to return to the beasts, but the 'gazelles saw Enkidu and scattered,' signifying that he had 'acquired judgement (?)… become wiser'.[320] This differentiation between the man and the animals is similar to the process of separation of human and animal in Genesis; the *'ādām* discovers his difference from his animal companions through his relationship with the human woman (Gen. 2.18-24).

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, after Enkidu has been initiated into civilisation, Shamhat then offers him more wisdom by explaining his new situation to him. As Rivkah Harris observes, 'the lowly, marginal *harimtu* [prostitute] is elevated to the central kin role of mother', as her advice brings Enkidu into human knowledge.[321] While Shamhat comforts him, he dutifully listens to her explain 'you have become [profound] Enkidu, you have become like a god'.[322] The

[319] S. Dalley 2008: 54 n.14 'Shamhat is used as a personal name here; it means "voluptuous woman, prostitute", in particular as a type of cultic devotee of Ishtar in Uruk.'
[320] Dalley 2008: 56.
[321] R. Harris 2000: 122.
[322] Dalley 2008: 56.

knowledge that she has given to the primitive man is familiar from the description of the forbidden knowledge in Genesis 2–3, as the snake tells Eve that the knowledge of good and bad is in fact divine knowledge (Gen. 3.5, 22). In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the god Shamash appears to celebrate human acquisition of this knowledge, it is clear by the prohibition in Gen. 2.16-17 and Yahweh Elohim's speech in Gen. 3.22-23 that he would rather not have shared his wisdom with humanity.[323] Nonetheless as one scholar has observed, 'the Eden story *is* complex and part of its thematics is embedded in the Near Eastern tradition of the "ascent of knowledge"', by contrast to the later framing of the story as an account of the 'Fall of Man'. [324] Interestingly, as with the Epic of Gilgamesh, it is the arrival of woman in Gen. 2.21 that is the signifier of a shift from humanity's state of unknowing to knowing, from primitive existence to cultured life. Though the level of culture attained in each story is rather different, as Adam and Eve seem to be moving into the most basic subsistence economy, while Enkidu is ultimately introduced to urban life, both narratives involve a change from a natural, animal-like existence to one of human reality characterised by order, structure, and behavioural restrictions. By eating Eve performs an act of mediation, as she bridges the gap between pre-reality and the real world and between the polar points of primal humanity and divinity.

While the two ancient Near Eastern female characters may perform a similar function, there are also some considerable differences that need to be taken into account, as to acknowledge these divergences will allow Eve and Shamhat an element of individuality. Firstly, in contrast to Shamhat, Eve is the

[323] Dalley 2008: 85–6.
[324] R. A. Veenker 1999–2000: 70.

true partner of Adam, his 'genuine counterpart'. Shamhat, on the other hand is depicted as a tool used by Gilgamesh and the hunter for their own purposes. Consequently, on close comparison, it is Eve who retains more independence within her narrative setting as she takes much greater initiative in the pursuit of knowledge for humanity.

Indeed, Shamhat is never credited with desiring knowledge; while she is a symbol of culture, an urban and experienced knowledge, she never displays the kind of 'epistemophilia' that Eve does in Gen. 3.6. The biblical woman, in her decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, makes a deliberate and considered choice of action because she saw that the fruit was 'good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise' (Gen. 3.4-6). By considering the attractiveness of the fruit of the forbidden tree, 'the woman consciously chooses: she sees, assesses, judges and acts'.[325] By acting on her desire, Eve then 'wrests knowledge from the realm of the divine, takes the first step towards culture, and transforms human existence'.[326]

This pursuit of understanding is of course problematic for the woman in Genesis, as it leads her to disobey God's prohibition of the fruit. By contrast, Shamhat's actions are fully sanctioned and authorised. That said, Eve appears in the biblical story as a vital rebel, the necessary dissenter who turns the story around. After all, without Eve and her eating, there would be no plot; humanity would not leave Eden and reality as the reader knows it would not exist.

[325] S. Dragga 1992: 8.
[326] T. Frymer-Kensky 1992: 109.

Furthermore, despite the fact that she does transgress a divine command, the narrative does not necessarily suggest that this crime is as devastating as it is often portrayed to be. As one scholar points out, the change in the fate of humans, from unknowing in the garden, to knowledge out in the world is not really a move 'from a glorious situation to a deficient one, but from one ambivalent status to another'.[327] Rather, the two humans have made a necessary alteration, from being childlike and unknowing, to being self aware and able to survive in the 'real world'. [328]

Interestingly, when we consider how Eve transfers her newly acquired knowledge to her companion, Adam, we find another contrast between her and Shamhat which serves to highlight the problematic, and perhaps inventive, aspect of the traditional judgement of Eve as temptress. First, and most obviously, while Shamhat uses her sexuality to pass knowledge to Enkidu, Adam and Eve gain understanding through eating. Secondly, Shamhat is described as being deliberately sent to have sex with Enkidu. Once she arrives in the countryside where he dwells, the hunter instructs her to wait for Enkidu to appear, at which moment she 'loosened her under garments, opened her legs and he took in her attractions'.[329] While this seduction is of course viewed positively in the story, Shamhat nonetheless uses her beauty to attract Enkidu towards her, and therefore towards culture. The textual description of Eve's interaction with Adam is utterly different and apparently chaster.[330] When she hands the fruit to

[327] K. Schmid 2008: 63.
[328] See Westermann (1984: 252), 'when people come to know what it means to be masters of their existence, they can make progress in civilisation'.
[329] Dalley 2008: 55.
[330] Some scholars and interpreters have, of course, suggested that the knowledge exchange that takes place in Genesis 3 is in fact sexual. For example see Veenker 1999–2000: 57–73.

'her husband who was with her', she does not need to seduce him. Consequently, while she is a dominant force in the plot because it is she who makes the all-important initial choice to eat the fruit, Eve is not domineering. She neither coerces nor seduces her partner into joining her, she simply gives the fruit to Adam, and he eats. It therefore seems evident that Eve is not interested in corruption at all, as the term temptress would suggest, but only in knowledge.

One final point of dissonance between the two narratives also serves to emphasise the significance of Eve. Without her choice to eat from the fruit of the tree and to share it with Adam, the aetiological element of the creation story would fail; there would be no explanation for the human condition. In a similar way to Shamhat in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Eve instigates a fundamental change in reality. Yet, while the latter alters the nature of all humanity, Shamhat is an agent of change solely for Enkidu. Consequently, in the biblical story the female's role is more nuanced, more complex, and more powerful than in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

This examination of the parallels and distinctions between Shamhat and Eve is intended to illustrate to contemporary readers of the Bible the potential for reading Eve as a knowledge bearer. In much the same way that my examination of Pandora in 2.II.f highlighted how reading Genesis 2–3 through the lens of a *femme fatale* had damaging consequences for Eve, the comparison to the Epic of Gilgamesh presents an equally important, though less popularly

acknowledged alternative.[331] Below I build on some of the insights that have been made through this comparative analysis of Eve and Shamhat, and examine the way later interpreters have picked up on some of the themes I discuss above.

III. GNOSTIC RECEPTION OF EVE AS A FIGURE OF KNOWLEDGE

a. Gnostic Appropriations of Genesis

In this section I will analyse some of the complex representations of Eve in three Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt: *Apocryphon of John* (*Ap. John*), *Hypostasis of the Archons* (*Hyp. Arch.*), and *Origin of the World* (*Orig. World*). The discovery was made in 1945 and scholars have been working ever since on translating, dating and interpreting the literature.[332] In each of these tractates Eve appears as an agent of divine knowledge and a salvific figure. This conception of the first woman was peculiar to the Gnostic authors, both in terms of their exegesis and their presentation of femininity. For the Gnostics' contemporaries in Graeco-Roman antiquity, femininity was very rarely

[331] J. Bailey, in his 1970 article, offers one of the few scholarly examinations of the comparison of the two women. He concludes, however, that Eve comes out from the comparison in a negative light.

[332] While the codices are written in Coptic, most scholars argue for a Greek *Vorlage* on which the Nag Hammadi manuscripts depend and tend to date the writing of *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch*, and *Orig. World* between the second and third centuries CE. It should be noted that that *Ap. John* appears in four versions: Nag Hammadi Codex II, III, IV, and the Berlin Codex. Nag Hammadi Codex II and IV are 'virtually identical, with only minor variants', while the shorter texts of Nag Hammadi Codex III and the Berlin Codex are more considerable, see King (2006: 25). I will mostly be working from the longer version unless specified otherwise. *Hyp. Arch.* is found only in Codex II, while *Orig. World* features in Codex II, XIII, and British Library, Or. 4926. As with the *Ap. John* I will work mostly from Codex II unless any detail from one of the variant versions requires further attention.

associated with knowledge or learning in either Jewish or Christian writing.[333] Though there are a small cluster of texts that do suggest a marginal tradition of women as direct *receivers* of divine knowledge existed at this time,[334] these female characters were not usually accorded the same revelatory significance as Eve in the *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch*., and *Orig. World*. [335]

While my focus is on three texts from the Nag Hammadi library, it is first important to recognise the diverse, and sometimes ambiguous, nature of Gnostic literature.[336] A great deal of scholarly work over the last two decades has been focused on trying to understand what the term 'Gnostic' means and the implications this may have for the way the Nag Hammadi texts are classified.[337] This issue is deeply entangled in questions relating to discourses of orthodoxy and heresy, as until 1945 the only accounts of the 'Gnostics' available to scholars were from works of heresiology, such as the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons and Epiphanius of Salamis.[338] Despite the fact that we are still prone to define Gnostic writers as 'heretics' it is becoming increasingly clear that at the time they were working, there was no such clear cut concept of 'orthodox' and 'heterodox'. Rather, during the first to the fourth centuries CE there was 'no pure doctrine' for

[333] See 2.III.a.1 above for a discussion of Philo's understanding of women and intellect. The New Testament also exhibits similar conceptualisations of femininity: 1 Cor. 11.3-8, 1 Tim. 2.11-15. There are many, many more examples of highly negative appropriations of Eve in Jewish and Christian writing from antiquity, see K. E. Kvam, L. S. Schearing and V. E. Ziegler (1999: 41–155).
[334] See for example, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Jubilees*, *Testament of Job*, *Apocalypse of Moses*. For further discussion see, B. Halpern-Amaru (1999), P. van der Horst (1989), and V. D. Arbel (2012).
[335] It is not only Eve who gets a positive treatment, but there is a significant amount of feminine imagery throughout the Nag Hammadi texts. While the images of women may not necessarily correspond with contemporary feminist views on women, especially the twentieth and twenty-first century efforts to reclaim the power of feminine sexuality, nor do they necessarily correspond with the actual social reality of women living in Gnostic social communities they nonetheless provide a positive symbolic picture of femininity. See K. King 1988.
[336] K. King 2003: 150.
[337] D. Brakke 2010; King 2003; A. H. B. Logan 1996. This is a small selection from the huge variety of literature available on the subject.
[338] King 2003.

Judaism or Christianity, so to assuredly condemn the writings at Nag Hammadi as heretical may be somewhat anachronistic.[339] While there is not space for a full discussion of this issue here, two points of clarification regarding my method should be made.

First, Gnosticism was a diverse religious movement that was constructed from a variety of different sub-groups, a number of which developed their own individual interpretations of Genesis 1–3. In this section I do not claim that Eve is credited with an enlightening role in every groups' version(s). As Kvam, Schearing and Ziegler observe, 'in some gnostic texts, Adam represented the higher self; in other texts… Eve represented the higher power who emerged from Adam as he slept, urging him to awaken to the spiritual enlightenment dormant within him.'[340] Here I am only concerned with the latter group of texts.[341] Secondly, I do not wish to base my research of Gnostic presentations of Eve on polemical material written by early Church Fathers.[342] Rather, I will concentrate my attention on three myths believed to have been written by members of the Gnostic community: *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch.*, and *Orig. World*.

It is widely acknowledged that these texts bear close relation to one another in a number of ways. Consequently, some scholars have suggested that a

[339] Ibid.
[340] Kvam, Schearing and Ziegler 1999: 111.
[341] I have chosen to analyse *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch.*, and *Orig. World* because they provide relatively full and close re-writings of Genesis 2–3. Other Nag Hammadi texts that also include, or allude, to a positive, knowledgeable Eve are, *The Apocalypse of Adam*, *Thunder: Perfect Mind*. So, while there is not a uniform reaction to the Genesis text amongst Gnostic writings, the majority of texts do present Eve, rather than Adam, as representative of the highest spiritual self, see Pagels (1988: 66).
[342] So I do not discuss the 'Gospel of Eve' mentioned by Epiphanius in his *Panarion*, despite its apparently positive appropriation of Eve. See J. Hartenstein 2014.

single Gnostic group, such as the Ophites or the Sethians, produced them[343] while others argue for literary dependence between the texts at various stages of their redaction.[344] Furthermore, *Ap. John, Hyp. Arch., and Orig. World* each display signs of the characteristically hybrid style of Gnostic myth-making, exhibiting motifs taken from Platonism, Judaism, and Christianity, although there is a great deal of scholarly debate concerning the balance each narrative forges between these three elements.

Rather than reflect on these particular issues of classification, my focus falls on the presentation of Eve within the three narratives, and an assessment of the similarities and differences between her appearance in these texts, as well as the biblical story. Before proceeding to a close analysis of *Ap. John, Hyp. Arch., and Orig. World*, it is, however, worth briefly considering the more general reasons why Gnostic approaches to Genesis 1–3 could allow for a positive interpretation of Eve as a bearer of knowledge, where their Christian and Jewish contemporaries could not.

The correspondences between the textual appropriations of Eve in *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch.*, and *Orig. World* are governed by a number of general characteristics: the first is an emphasis on the importance of *gnōsis* or knowledge, the second is the writers' dualistic view of the cosmos, and the third is their hermeneutical strategy. The cosmology and epistemology of Gnostic communities can be summarised as follows: '(1) an emphasis on the salvific power of *gnōsis*, that is, a personal or experiential knowledge of the divine, the

[343] See T. Rasimus (2005: 263) for a discussion on Ophite classification, and J. Turner (2001: 167) on Sethian classification.
[344] Logan 1996: 35–55.

self, and all that exists ("gnosis"); (2) radical dualism, that is, a worldview that distinguishes sharply between the superior realm of the divine and the inferior realm of the cosmos and its creator.'[345] In their appropriations of Genesis 1–3, Gnostic writers associated the corrupted creator of the material world, the Chief Archon or demiurge, with the God of Genesis, and depicted a world dominated by the evil ruler and his companions, the archons. The Gnostics, then, identified and expanded upon the self-serving, authoritarian, and anthropomorphic elements of Yahweh Elohim in Genesis 2–3 (cf. 2.16-17; 3.8-11, 22), as well as developing the subtext of the human/God conflict that underlies the biblical creation story. The writers of *Ap. John, Hyp. Arch., and Orig. World* believed that the cosmos was the site of battle between the heavenly forces of good and the Chief Archon's worldly forces of evil. Caught in this hostile environment, humans were trapped in their embodied existences in the material world and required *gnōsis* or knowledge to allow them to escape into a spiritual existence and to reach salvation. Eve's rebellious attainment of salvific *gnōsis*—which the Gnostics identified as the knowledge held in the forbidden tree—meant that she was held in high esteem in a number of Gnostic myths and provided them with a profound symbol of the plight of humanity.

In literary terms, this dualistic restructuring of the biblical creation myth constituted an allegorical presentation of the deeper meaning of Genesis 1–3.[346] Numerous exegetes working during late Classical Antiquity, including Philo of Alexandria and the later Church Fathers who formed the so-called 'Alexandrian

[345] A. McGuire 1999: 258.
[346] E. Dawson 1992: 135; E. Pagels 1989: 63–5.

school' of interpretation, adopted similar allegorical hermeneutics.[347] However, the developing Christian orthodoxy that consistently attacked Gnosticism, while not opposed to the allegorical approach to exegesis, did object to the Gnostic writers' use of it. As such, the Gnostic writers were condemned as heretics, and have remain under this shadow until relatively recently.[348]

It should be noted, though, that while this may have been the opinion of 'proto-orthodox' Christians, the Gnostic writers believed that their allegorical readings reached behind the words of the biblical narrative and brought out their true, authoritative meaning.[349] Here I explore the claims of legitimacy made by the writers of *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch*, and *Orig. World* regarding their rewritings of Genesis 2–3 and suggest that their creative appropriations of the text grew out from a combination of their dualistic world-view, their allegorical hermeneutic, and the problematic presentation of human knowledge in the biblical text. This allowed the Gnostic writers to produce interpretations of Eve that emphasised certain qualities of her character implied by the biblical texts that other exegetes may have ignored, while rejecting other aspects of her story that many judged to be of critical importance.

Though this position appears unorthodox, I argue that the project of reframing Eve necessitates the contemporary readers' revaluation of the assumption that Gnostic writings on Genesis were simply unbound inventions, on the grounds that this opinion was inherited from the rather biased perception

[347] See 2.III.a above for examination of Philo and Augustine who employed allegorical exegesis of the Eden story, but came to entirely opposite conclusions from many of the Gnostics on Genesis 2–3, women, and knowledge. Siegert 1996: 187–9, 197–8.
[348] For further discussion on the issues concerning the use of the term 'heretic' to describe Gnosticism, see King 2003.
[349] B. D. Ehrman 1993: 22.

of nascent orthodoxy presented in the works of many of the Church Fathers. [350] Rather, here I argue that the literature discovered at Nag Hammadi 'involves a process of meditation—and improvisation—on the scriptures to "discover" mythical actions hidden within cryptic words and phrases',[351] and that this meditation provides a striking insight into the interpretative possibilities surrounding Eve's character that calls into question patriarchal conceptions of the feminine that her story has been used to justify throughout the centuries.

b. Gnostic Eve.

To the Gnostic mind, knowledge and spirituality were two closely entwined concepts. To acquire *gnōsis* or knowledge, was to gain greater understanding of the true nature of the cosmos and therefore to come closer to the Divine. It is for this reason that Eve became a character of great fascination for them:

> Gnostic authors loved to tell, with many variations, the story of Eve, that elusive spiritual intelligence: how she first emerged within Adam and awakened him, the soil, to awareness of its spiritual nature.[352]

Through a variety of literary techniques, a number of Gnostic writers developed complex and playful appropriations of the Hebrew Bible stories of creation, and in doing so formulated a very particular concept of Eve. For the authors of *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch.*, and *Orig. World* there were two specific aspects of Eve's character that supplied points of departure for their interpretation: Her role as a helper and her narrative involvement with both the tree of knowledge and the snake.

[350] For example P. S. Alexander 1992: 100.
[351] Pagels 1988: 206.
[352] Ibid. 66.

1. Eve as Spiritual Helper.

There has been a great deal of scholarly discussion concerning the meaning of Eve's designation as 'helper' to Adam in Gen. 2.18 and 2.20 translated from the Hebrew עזר. Modern scholars have recognised the slightly derogatory, servile, and inferior sense that can and has been applied to this vocabulary, therefore implying that Eve was not an equal to the superior Adam, but merely played a supporting role in the natural hierarchy.[353] Indeed, for thinkers such as Augustine and Aquinas, Eve's 'help' could be reduced to a biological, bodily function, as a mother for the children of the man.[354] This hierarchy of purpose between the man and the woman is also potentially reinforced by the fact that she is created after Adam. Consequently, little attention has been given to the link that can potentially be drawn between Eve's role as helper and her decision to pursue wisdom and share it with her partner. The Gnostics, however, viewed the archons' creation, Adam, as existing in a terrible, rather than blissful, state of ignorance. For this reason, Eve's role as helper and her pursuit of knowledge had great interpretative scope; Eve could be construed as Adam's spiritual aid who provided him with *gnōsis*. [355] The Gnostics may have found some corroboration for this perspective on Eve in the LXX, as the Greek translation of the Hebrew term into βοηθός can be understood in a fairly positive and powerful light, as Jean Higgins observes:

[353] For example, Westermann acknowledges that early interpreters inferred Eve's role as a reproductive partner from the terms עזר or βοηθός (1984: 227). Many now reject the negative translation of 'helper'.
[354] See 2.III.a.
[355] From this point in the essay I will predominantly refer to the LXX version of Genesis 1–3 as this would most likely have been the particular version in use by Gnostic groups who were also writing in Greek.

> Of forty-five occurrences of the word in the LXX, forty-two unmistakably refer to help from "a stronger one, in no way needing help." Only three occurrences could possibly be understood as help from equal or lesser forces. Even they need not be understood that way, for the help referred to in all three instances is help in battle. The LXX achieves and maintains this consistency while using *boēthos* to render not only *ʿēzer*, but also *ʿōz*, and *maʿōz*, *ṣûr*, etc.[356]

Ap. John, *Hyp. Arch.*, and *Orig. World* all exhibit slightly different strategies for representing Eve as Adam's helper, either by explicitly naming her as such, or by implicitly developing the concept. For the sake of clarity in my analysis I will deal with the three texts separately before developing some synoptic observations.

Ap. John 20.14-25 details the first spiritual part of a two stage—spiritual and physical—creation of the first woman.[357] This, amongst other reasons, leads to the episode involving Eve, Adam, and the tree of knowledge being perhaps 'the most complicated part of *ApJohn's* Gnostic creation story.'[358] The first stage of the creation of Eve takes place when a female being, *Epinoia*, is sent to Adam, who shares numerous characteristics with the woman described in Genesis 2–3. Though she is not given the title of Eve, or ⲉⲩⲍⲁ in Coptic, the Gnostic author nonetheless suggests the affiliation. For example, the *Epinoia* is sent to Adam as a 'helper', ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲟⲥ in Coptic, a Greek loan word directly paralleling the vocabulary used in the LXX description of Eve as βοηθός (Gen. 2.18 and 2.20).[359] Unlike in the Hebrew and Greek texts where the type of help supplied by Eve is left

356 J. M. Higgins 1978: 255–6.

357 Eve and Adam both go through creation in two parts, with the body (and soul) of each being created separately from the spirit. This corresponds to the Gnostic view that humans are divided entities; it seems possible that this belief may have partially been formed in a response to the issue of the double creation of humanity in the book of Genesis (Gen. 1.27; 2.7, 22), or at the very least subsequently addressed the textual difficulty. The Coptic word ⲍⲱⲏ is a loan word from Greek, see S. Giversen (1963 :127).

358 G. P. Luttikhuizen 2006: 67.

359 See K. King (2006: 103, n.16): 'The term "helper" is a translation of the Greek βοηθός, the same term used in the Greek translation (LXX) of Gen 2.18 to describe the role of the first woman.'

unqualified and the vocabulary is therefore open to readings of servility,[360] in the *Ap. John* the role of the female helper is integral to the human ascent to the spiritual world, that is, to salvation. The Eve/*Epinoia* 'assists the whole creature [Adam]... by teaching him about the descent of his seed (and) by teaching him about the way of ascent' (*Ap. John* 20.19-23). Luttikhuizen observes that in the *Ap. John* 'the myth-tellers imagined Eve as a helper in the full Gnostic sense of the term, as a bringer of the divine truth to Adam.'[361]

As well as the characters of *Epinoia* and Eve being fused together through their role as Adam's helper, they also share a name. In *Ap. John* 20.19 the *Epinoia* is referred to by a secondary title, Life, or ⲍⲱⲏ, a Coptic borrowing of the Greek Ζωή, the name Adam gives to the first woman in Gen. 3.20 (LXX).[362] This link between *Epinoia* and Eve represents a Gnostic commentary on the latter character, in which she becomes associated with spiritual life. While the textual presentation may seem, to the modern reader, to be rather ambiguous and the associative link between Eve and *Epinoia* to be conjectural, as Karen King has remarked, the fluidity of identification between characters was a narrative strategy employed frequently throughout the work of the Gnostic writers. She argues that they used this device to create composite characters taken from various points of reference, thereby developing highly complex literary identities and plots. She notes that in the case of *Ap. John*:

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360 While I do not wish to argue that the terms necessitate a reading of inferior 'help', I do suggest that because the words are not descriptively qualified they are left open to interpretive translation. The only detail supplied by the biblical text is that the 'help' is 'fitting' for Adam.

361 Luttikhuizen 2006: 70.

362 It is not until Gen. 4.1 that the first human woman is given her title of Eve in the LXX. This is probably so that the Greek translators could maintain the wordplay established in Hebrew by naming the first woman Ζωή and describing her role as mother of all the Ζώντων in Gen. 3.20—see Wallace 1985: 143 n.1

> Eve is identified with the Epinoia of the light, hidden in Adam and working for his enlightenment… In this way, Epinoia is identified with the enlightening Spirit within Adam, the *spiritual Eve*, the snake, and the tree of knowledge.[363]

King's explanation demonstrates how the Gnostic myth realigns the biblical Eve's character by association with a separate Gnostic female spiritual principle, and thus extends her functional potential. More specifically the writer reframes Eve's role as helper by mingling her with the *Epinoia*, and in doing so produces their own meaning for the biblical term βοηθός, which *positively* links Eve to the acquisition of knowledge, spirituality and salvation.[364]

The theme of Eve as assistant to Adam is also found in *Hyp. Arch.*, though in this case her role as his spiritual 'helper' is implicitly suggested by the author, rather than explicitly highlighted through any direct designation of the spiritual woman as вонвос/βοηθός. Despite the fact that *Hyp. Arch.* also contains an appropriation of Genesis 1–3, re-written with Gnostic interests at its core, the narrative expresses a number of dissimilarities from the *Ap. John*. For example, initially the writer of the former text replicates the mode of creation of the woman in Genesis 2 more closely than the latter. That said, the 'spirit-endowed' woman of the *Hyp. Arch.*, who is taken from Adam's side, is not a physical being like the female in the biblical account. Rather, in *Hyp. Arch.*, where there is no mention of a rib, the first woman is seemingly created from the spiritual element of Adam that the archons removed from him after they had put him under the sleep of Ignorance (*Hyp. Arch.* 89.5-7).[365] The Gnostic writer, then, while

[363] King 2006: 187. Italics added for emphasis.
[364] This strategy is not dissimilar to the popular merging of Eve and Pandora that helped to shape the negative reception history of Eve. See above 2.II.f and also D. M. and E. Panofsky (1956).
[365] So, like in *Ap. John* a two-fold process of creation takes place for Eve: spiritual then physical.

retaining the same type of event as in Genesis 2, moulds it to fit his purposes by applying a unique gloss or '"spiritual exegesis"' to the text.[366]

The spiritual rather than physical nature of the relationship between Adam and Eve is further emphasised by a subsequent departure from the structure of Genesis 2–3. After Eve has told Adam to 'arise' from the sleep of Ignorance, he responds to his partner, but 'addresses to her not the words of Gen. 2:24-25 but those of Gen 3:20'.[367] This slight alteration to the course of the story is significant in two ways. First, by cutting Gen. 2.24-25, the Gnostic author avoids any allusion to the potentially sexual connection between Adam and Eve, which they deemed the lower, destructive aspect of their relationship. Secondly, Adam's speech to Eve is lengthened and altered in *Hyp. Arch.* 89.14-16 by re-organising the order of the biblical text again. For example, it is here that Adam also says to his companion 'you will be called the mother of the living', borrowing a section of Genesis 3 and moving it to the *Hyp. Arch.* equivalent of Genesis 2 in order to formulate a connection between this spiritual woman and the biblical Eve.[368] The author of *Hyp. Arch.* manipulates the portrayal of Eve as a life giver by bringing it forward into Adam's elated speech and relating it to her enlightening role in his spiritual life, and the assistance she supplies in his transition into truth. By waking Adam from the sleep of Ignorance, she acts as his 'mother' and his 'midwife', helping him to realise his capacity for *gnōsis*, and in turn salvation. So, although no explicit vocabulary concerning help or assistance appears in relation to Eve's role as an agent of knowledge, it is clear that she

366 Pagels 1988: 191.
367 Ibid. 195.
368 This flexibility in the Gnostic adoption of biblical chronology is also evident in the fact that Eve is not named or referred to in anyway as a 'helper' for Adam until much later in *Hyp. Arch.*, after the couple have eaten from the tree of knowledge (*Hyp. Arch.* 91.35).

provides succour to Adam. Interestingly, Philip Alexander's evaluation of the spiritual Eve in the *Hyp. Arch.* exhibits a remarkable similarity to Luttikhuizen's comments on the Eve/*Epinoia* in *Ap. John* that are provided above. Alexander suggests that in *Hyp. Arch.* 89.13-16 'it now becomes clear in what sense the Gnostic interpreter regards Eve as Adam's "helper"', as she seems to be a part of the 'assistance' (ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲓⲁ in Coptic from the Greek βοήθεια) that is described as being sent to Adam from the divine realm in *Hyp. Arch.* 88.17-18.[369] The Gnostic text transforms Eve from a physical mother into a spiritual mother and an assistant who helps Adam to escape his condition of ignorance.[370] The similarities between Eve's role as a spiritual aid in both *Ap. John* and *Hyp. Arch* would suggest that the community or communities who were responsible for these texts shared a positive attitude towards the first woman, primarily due to her connection with knowledge. Both texts, then, exhibit remarkably similar interpretative strategies, building on the textual theme of knowledge present in Genesis 2–3 in order to fully explore the relationship between Eve's biblical roles as 'helper' and as agent of knowledge.

This point is made clearer still when a third account of Eve's creation is considered in *Orig. World.*[371] This is perhaps the most interesting of the three, as the formation of Eve as a helper for Adam is an amalgamation of Gnostic ideas, as well as Gen. 1.26 and Gen. 2.4b–3.24. In reaction to the foolish creative

[369] Alexander 1992: 96. See S. Emmel (1989: 332–5) for an index of the Greek loan words found in *Hyp. Arch.*
[370] Interestingly, in much the same way that a focus on sin often leads to negative interpretations of Eve's maternity (2.IV), including separating her bodily maternity from the spiritual maternity of Mary, for the Gnostics, their concern with knowledge and their aversion to materiality sees them transform Eve into a spiritual mother. For alternative views to both of these takes on Eve's motherhood see Chapter 4, where I explore sympathetic interpretations of the first woman's physical maternity.
[371] *Orig. World* 116.8-33.

endeavours of the archons, Sophia (Wisdom) creates Eve, who will provide humanity with the opportunity to become 'containers of light' (*Orig. World* 115. 36), and reach salvation. Sophia acts very much like the God of the Genesis creation stories, using existing matter—in this case light and water rather than earth and water—to create an androgynous being (cf. Gen. 2.7). She then forms this into a female body, 'in the likeness of the mother' (*Orig. World* 113.28 cf. Gen. 1.26), named ⲉⲩⲣⲁ ⲛⲍⲱⲏ, 'Eve of Life (Eve of Zoe), the female instructor' (*Orig. World* 113.33-4 cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 90.11). As was the case in the *Hyp. Arch.*, the term 'helper' is not specifically used to describe Sophia's woman, despite the fact that this Eve of Life is again clearly defined as a spiritual aid for Adam. Rather, *Orig. World* 115.3–116.8 describes how, to assist the 'inanimate vessel', Adam, 'Sophia sent her daughter Zoe, being called Eve, as an instructor in order that she might make Adam, who had no soul, arise'. As soon as Adam has been awakened, he proclaims to the woman: 'You shall be called "Mother of the Living". For it is you who have given me life' (*Orig. World* 116.6-8). Once again we are presented with a Gnostic writer who artfully synthesizes Eve's roles as mother and helper or instructor by drawing them into her connection with knowledge, thus articulating his own perspective of the first woman as a spiritual aid to Adam.

It clear from this analysis that the authors of *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch.,* and *Orig. World* have allowed the theme of knowledge to permeate aspects of Eve's character that are often employed in Judaeo-Christian interpretation to denigrate and demote her power and importance in Genesis. Through a process of play Eve's biblical roles as helper, agent of knowledge, and mother, the Gnostic writers of these three tractates transform the first woman, the symbol of

femininity, into a positive mediator of enlightenment. The Gnostic writers' understanding of Eve, then, results directly from the account in Genesis 2–3 and its gaps, offering a creative but legitimate reading of the creation story which has nonetheless often been dismissed as 'radical' and 'imaginative'. While the Gnostics' appropriation of the first woman provides a picture of her as a redemptive and salvific feminine force characterised by wisdom, independence and benevolence that is in total contrast to the 'orthodox' interpretation, I would argue, it is nonetheless an equally valid textual interpretation of Eve.[372]

2. The Metamorphoses of Eve

In the *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch.*, and *Orig. World* the episode of 'the Fall' is complex and Eve's role is divided between the actions of her spiritual self and the actions of her physical self; this is more evident in the latter two texts than in the former, but is present to a certain extent in all. In each of the separate myths there is great fluidity between the symbols of the spiritual woman, the tree and the snake, with the different authors conceptualizing the relationship between the three in their own unique ways. Yet there is consensus among the three stories that Adam and Eve's consumption of the fruit of knowledge was a 'necessary precondition for spiritual progress',[373] and that 'the tree may be associated with… the spiritual Eve and the fruits of wisdom.'[374] Following the method used above, I will consider each account separately in order to emphasise the peculiarities attributed to each Eve, prior to making any general statements about her general 'Gnostic' character.

[372] For an article that discusses one further example of a positive interpretation of Eve's role as βοηθός produced in antiquity, see Higgins (1978, especially 256).
[373] I. S. Gilhus 1987: 339.
[374] Ibid. 338.

It is apparent from *Ap. John* that the temporal structure of the plot in 21.12–23.35 is highly disjointed. The author explains his version of 'the Fall' and how 'they', that is Adam and Eve, ate of the fruit of knowledge before he accounts for the creation of first woman in Eden—at this stage of the narrative the reader has encountered the spiritual Eve/*Epinoia*, but not her physical counterpart.[375] Consequently the 'paradise' episode involving the two trees appears as an interlude to the narrative concerning Adam and Eve's creation and is bracketed off by the acknowledgement that the Eve/*Epinoia* was hidden within Adam in *Ap. John* 20.25 and 22.28. To avoid confusion, I will consider the creation of woman in the physical world first, and then return to the episode of 'the Fall'.

Once Adam has been placed in 'the tomb of the newly-formed body' (*Ap. John* 21.10), the Chief Archon then attempts to remove the Eve/*Epinoia* who had hidden herself within the human. The spiritual woman evades his grasp, and instead of capturing her the authority 'brought a part of his [Adam's] power out of him' and from it created a physical being 'in the form of a woman according to the likeness of the Epinoia' (*Ap. John* 22.35). The Gnostic writer carefully manipulates the description of Eve's creation in Gen. 2.21-22 and illustrates that the true message of the story is that Eve originated from spiritual power, *not* Adam's rib (*Ap. John* 23.1-3). This is significant, as it means that not only is the first physical woman made in a specifically feminine form—after the *Epinoia*—but she also possesses the same 'light-power' as the man, thus affording her the same spiritual potential.[376] Adam recognizes this being as his 'counter-image'

[375] King 2006: 106. Luttikhuizen (2006: 68) also comments on the discrepancies in the narrative. Contrast with Philo, Augustine, and Aquinas, who all see the woman as created inferior to the man. See 2.III.a.
[376] Luttikhuizen 2006: 69.

because 'the luminous *Epinoia* appeared, and she lifted the veil which lay over his mind' (*Ap. John* 23.5-7). It is unclear where the Eve/*Epinoia* appears, and it is entirely possible, given her fluid identity, that she may have entered the female body in order to clear Adam's mind.

Having established the mode of Eve's physical creation, as opposed to the arrival of the Eve/*Epinoia*, I will now return to the 'paradise' episode, which relies on the presence of both humans. Interestingly, in the account of the *Ap. John* little is made of Eve's role of taking the fruit from the tree. Rather the emphasis of agency is placed on Christ, who takes responsibility for prompting Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of knowledge (*Ap. John* 22.9).[377] Christ explains to John that the snake did not persuade them to pursue knowledge, but instructed them/Eve in the negative ways of sexuality. *Ap. John* omits any conversation between Eve and Christ, which might be expected in place of her discussion with the biblical snake that occurs in Gen. 3.1-7, nor does the text report her recognition of the qualities of the fruit as she does in Gen. 3.6. This is not to say that Eve is made superfluous to the story. Her role in taking the fruit is authorised and validated by the connection between Christ and the fruit of knowledge, assuring that Eve's action cannot be interpreted as sinful. It can also be argued that the spiritual Eve is alluded to in the same section of the narrative, as the Eve/*Epinoia* is described as hidden inside Adam, but instead is dwelling within the tree of knowledge (*Ap. John* 22.3-5). This conflation of the spiritual Eve and a tree is also common to *Hyp. Arch* and *Orig. World*. Consequently, analysis of these texts, which are more explicit in their association between the

[377] *Ap. John* includes numerous obviously Christian elements and is thus identified as a Christian Gnostic text or at the very least a Christianised text.

two entities, will supply strength and clarity to the hypothesis that Eve, through her link to the *Epinoia* in *Ap. John*, is also entwined in the symbol of the tree of knowledge.

Once Eve has come into existence in *Hyp. Arch.* and Adam has recognized her as the one who will assist him in his spiritual advancement, the story progresses in a similar vein to Genesis 2–3 with one important, purely Gnostic addition—the rape of Eve by the archons.[378] In this episode the authorities, who are associated with the God of Genesis, become 'agitated' when they see Adam's 'female counterpart' and respond to their lust by conspiring to rape in order to gain control over her and regain control over Adam. Eve's response to this physical attack on her is two-fold. Firstly she laughs at the archons' reaction to her power and attraction.[379] She then metamorphoses into a tree, leaving behind her a 'shadowy reflection'. Pagels argues that the woman finds the archons' 'foolish confusion of sexual with spiritual knowledge' comical. She also observes that Eve's laughter is reminiscent of Proverbs 1, where Wisdom warns 'dullards that hate knowledge' that she will 'laugh at your [their] calamity', suggesting intertextual allusion to a variety of biblical materials was used by the author to weave several characters into his representation of the spiritual Eve of wisdom.[380]

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[378] *Hyp. Arch*. 89.17-90.19. For discussion see K. King 1990: 11. This addition probably has its roots in the early Jewish tradition of the seduction of Eve by the serpent (2.IV.b.1), and the story of the sexual relations between women and the 'sons of God' in Gen. 6.1-4. It should be noted that *Ap. John* also includes the Chief Archon's rape of Eve but the narrative does not reveal anything about her relation to knowledge, so need not be assessed here.

[379] It is significant that this text gives an account of Eve's defiant reaction, clarifying that she was not 'seduced'.

[380] Pagels 1988: 196.

Having mocked the foolish advances of the archons, the spiritual Eve transforms herself into a tree. This transformation sheds more light onto the association between Eve*/Epinoia* and the tree of knowledge that is found in the *Ap. John*. Interestingly, in contrast to *Ap. John* 22.3-5, in *Hyp. Arch.* there is no explicit explanation for whether this tree of Eve is the tree of life or the tree of knowledge. Layton opines that the former probably represents the original textual form, based on an argument for the underlying presence of an Aramaic pun between *Ḥawwāh,* Eve and *ḥayyayā,* life. He argues this may have subsequently been 'corrected… by implying identity between the tree of recognizing good and evil.'[381] I argue that there is a simpler response to the question of which tree Eve represents: she is both. Due to the highly nuanced and multilayered literary style of Gnostic writers, I suggest that there is no need to posit an argument for correction of the text over time. Rather it is plausible that the author intended to leave the association between the different entities open and fluid.[382] After all, thus far in *Hyp. Arch.* Eve has been associated with life *and* knowledge, because she gives both to Adam through her role as his helper. Indeed, to the Gnostic mind, (spiritual) life and *gnōsis* were inseparable concepts. Pagels, developing Layton's theory of puns, suggests that the link between life, knowledge, and Eve may have its textual root outside of Genesis. She contends that 'the author's familiarity with the verbal connection among Eve, life, Instructor… as well as his later identification of Eve with Wisdom… suggests a more direct spiritual source of inspiration: the Wisdom passages of

[381] Layton 1976: 55-6.
[382] Alexander (1992: 97) also makes this point and suggests that the amalgamation of the two trees may have been a view shared by at least on other early commentator.

Proverbs 1–4.'[383] In Prov. 3.18, a female spiritual force, Sophia in the LXX, is described as a 'tree of life', which in Greek appears as the ξύλον ζωῆ, a tree of *Zoe*; the Greek name for Eve supplied in LXX Gen. 3.20 is *Zoe* (Ζωή). By play on language, there is a conflation between Proverbs, Genesis in *Hyp. Arch.*, and between wisdom, life, and Eve, embodied in the symbol of the tree. I argue that it is entirely possible the Gnostic writer of *Hyp. Arch.* requires only one tree of significance in Eden, the 'tree of Eve', which supplies knowledge of 'recognizing evil and good' and therefore provides spiritual life.

Of course, while the spiritual woman represents strength and power, the shadowy, empty body of Eve, who is left to be 'defiled foully' by the archons should not be forgotten (*Hyp. Arch.* 89. 27-28). On the subject of her victimhood in the rape scene, McGuire suggests that 'from the perspective of the text, this is a moment of victory and mockery, for the rape victim is "only" the bodily Eve, a shadowy reflection of the Spiritual Woman who departs and laughs.'[384] To a contemporary reader, this may seem rather horrific, and demeaning of women. However, to judge the text on this ground would be anachronistic. The rape constitutes a critical symbolic narrative, in which the '"only"' added in by McGuire skews the emphasis of the text. The dismissive attitude towards female physicality is not gender specific, but focused on materiality more generally. The same '"only"' could be applied to the defective body of Adam when he is first formed by the archons in *Hyp. Arch.* 88.5-10. At this stage he '"only"' had a body and soul; he was devoid of the most important element, the spirit, and therefore in a situation very similar to that of the 'shadowy' image of Eve. Rather than the

[383] Pagels 1988: 196.
[384] McGuire 1999: 271.

issue of female embodiment, the most significant factor of the rape sequence is the total foulness of the archons and their misunderstanding of what it is to be human, highlighted by the laughter of the spiritual Eve.

The construction of the interaction between Eve and the archons presents a very specifically female conceptualization of spirituality and knowledge, while exhibiting a certain level of sympathy for those who are defiled by one stronger than them. Without denying the horror of the rape narrative, it is important to observe that the physical Eve is never portrayed as 'asking for' the attack, and the blame is resolutely placed with the archons. Interestingly, the symbolism of the episode sets up a dualistic vision encompassing gender distinctions, which are rather uncharacteristic of antiquity. Rather than equating the feminine with a focus on materiality, in this episode, the female is wise, spiritual and good. In contrast, the male archons are foolish, blinded by physicality and wicked.[385] Once more, then, in the archons, we find a particularly Gnostic extension of the problematic aspects of Yahweh Elohim as he is presented in Genesis 2–3, and an emphasis on the innocence of Eve in her conflict with the deity. This will become clearer still in the *Orig. World*, where the rape of Eve is also part of the rewriting of her story.

Significantly, this episode concludes with the spiritual Eve, having outwitted the archons by causing them to be damned through their own actions, beginning to remedy the situation of her physical self. It is she who initiates a dialogue with her shadowy counterpart by shifting from the form of the tree to the form of the snake. This establishes a pattern in which a number of key

[385] See 2.III.a for Philo's reading of the Eve/body/weak/inferior to Adam/mind/strong/superior.

characters and entities from the Genesis story are shaped by their involvement with the 'agent of salvific activity', spiritual Eve.[386] In contrast to Genesis 3, Eve's association with the snake entirely alters the way the animal is perceived by the reader of *Hyp. Arch*. Pagels describes the conversation between the snake and bodily Eve as a 'dialogue' between the 'pneumatic feminine principle' and 'her "sarkic" counterpart',[387] illustrating that the snake is merely a vessel through which the spiritual Eve can assist her physical self. The story remains true to the fact that, in response to the advice of the snake/spiritual Eve, the bodily Eve is the first to take the fruit. Having eaten, Eve and Adam experience a moment of enlightenment in which they realise their own lack of knowledge: 'they were naked of the spiritual element' (*Hyp. Arch* 90.17). In other words, they become aware of the truth of their existence, and are no longer deceived by the archons' desire to hold them in the material world.[388] By being the first to take the fruit, the physical woman of *Hyp. Arch.* retains the role of knowledge bringer that is attributed to her in Genesis, but free from any connotation of sinfulness. It is clear that the spiritual Eve and the bodily Eve worked together to bring humanity into a position of humility and self-awareness. Consequently, both of the female figures, spiritual and physical, function as positive deliverers of knowledge and salvation.

The narrative of the rape of Eve and 'tree of Eve' is presented in a very similar way to *Hyp. Arch.* in *Orig. World*, although there are some interesting differences which should be examined. For example, both the spiritual Eve and

386 King 1990: 20.
387 Pagels 1988: 196.
388 Clearly, this is a Gnostic gloss on the relationship between nakedness and knowing that is established in the biblical text. But for the writers of *Hyp. Arch*, the nakedness of the humans is not a physical or sexual matter, rather, it is a sign of spiritual deficiency.

the bodily 'likeness' are presented with slightly more detail in the *Orig. World*.[389] First of all, the archons motivation for committing the rape is described in terms of power, not just lust. They hope to defile Eve in order to restrict her and her children to the material world, in other words, to taint the spiritual *gnōsis* that she is filled with and thus prevent her from rising into the light.[390] So, in this narrative, the rape explicitly comments on the restrictive behaviour of Yahweh Elohim/Chief Archon, as his servants, the archons, perpetrate the crime. In response to the archons threat to rape the 'luminous woman' Eve, the text describes that she was 'a force' who was able to 'put mist' in the eyes of the authorities while she entered a tree and left her 'likeness' with Adam (*Orig. World* 11613-29). This picture of Eve supplies her with even more strength than in the *Hyp. Arch.* as she has the power to impair the sight of the archons in order to deceive them. She also instils the 'blind creatures' with fear when she reveals her transformation to them, illustrating her strength over them (*Orig. World* 116.33).

Once the archons have recovered their sight they attack the spiritual Eve's likeness, which they mistakenly think to be the 'true Eve' (*Orig. World* 117.2). Their error is made clearer still in 117.12-13, where it is explained that by defiling the physical likeness, the archons 'erred, not knowing that it was their own body that they had defiled.' The Gnostic writer uses the text to suggest that the physical aspect of a human, such as the likeness of Eve, belongs to the world of the archons, their representation of the God of Genesis, and a human in search

[389] See also *Orig. World* 114.4-15.
[390] *Orig. World*. See connection with Hildegard of Bingen's interpretation of Eve as victim, though she assumes that the devil wants to defile the first woman because of her potential procreative power (see 4.IV.c).

of salvation should try to shed it. In doing so the writers continue their critique of the anthropomorphic, authoritarian Yahweh Elohim, whilst identifying with Eve's victimhood at the hands of a terrible oppressor.[391]

As soon as the authorities realise that their attempt to corrupt Eve has failed, they are shaken by her power and begin to wonder whether the spiritual Eve is the 'true human being'.[392] This is an incredibly important part of the text as it explicitly establishes the Gnostic opinion: the spiritual woman is an example of the ideal human. It also sheds light on the *Hyp. Arch.* too, and explains the privilege placed on the spiritual Eve in that narrative. For this reason, in the eyes of the Gnostics, this symbolic story represents the correct path of a human—to reject their body, which is associated with earthly matters, and embrace the pursuit of knowledge and spirituality. In this way, the spiritual Eve represents the Gnostics and their trials in the world.

The physical Eve, however, is not abandoned to the terror of the material world, nor is she 'entirely negative or defiled'.[393] Once the rape episode has concluded, the plot returns to following Genesis 2–3, with some alterations. As is expected, an instructor character arrives to advise the humans of the deceitful prohibition of knowledge established by the archons (*Hyp.* 118.17–119.6). Unlike the snake in the *Hyp. Arch.*, there is no direct reference to what type of being this character is, although it is described as the 'wisest of all creatures, who was

[391] This identification may be as much inspired by the persecution of the Gnostics by the growing Christian orthodoxy as by their dualistic rejection of the material world.
[392] Translation by B. Dunning 2009: 92.
[393] Ibid.

called Beast' (*Orig. World* 118.25-26).[394] This beast, though not a vehicle for the spiritual Eve as it was in the *Hyp. Arch.*, does retain a link to her, as earlier in the narrative she is described as giving birth to it (*Orig. World* 113.34–114.4). This is confirmed by the fact that the Beast here recognizes 'the likeness of their mother Eve' (*Orig. World* 118.27). Despite the difference in detail between *Hyp. Arch* and *Orig. World* the result of the conversation between instructor character and the humans is the same: Eve is allowed to 'function as a hero insofar as she listens to the… instructor and eats from the tree of knowledge.'[395] Furthermore, in *Orig. World* her independent thought process, which is detailed by Gen. 3.6, is recorded. This text therefore emphasizes Eve's integral role as a bearer of knowledge and salvation by retaining pertinent textual details supplied by the biblical account.

The Gnostic intermingling of Eve, tree, snake, and most importantly *gnōsis* serves to portray a very different image of the first woman to the familiar model of her as a fallen, sinful female. This representation is not, however, simply a reversal of her fate from sinner to a bringer of salvation. Rather, the Gnostic writers of *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch.*, and *Orig. World* articulate their own unique appropriations of the first woman that rely upon wordplay, synthetic character association, and symbolic additions to the narrative. In doing so, they

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394 The Coptic word used for 'Beast' here, is ⲡⲏⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ, a word borrowed from Greek: θηπίων. This term appears in LXX 3.1 Ὁ δὲ ὄφις ἦν φρονιμώτατος πάντων τῶν θηπίων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, so the Gnostic writer of *Orig. World* is clearly making reference to the biblical text, while tailoring it to fit their own uses. It could also be that there is an underlying semitic pun that is acknowledged by the Gnostic text's 'beast', as in the Hebrew text Gen. 3.1 reads והנחש היה ערום מכל חית השדה (the snake was more crafty than all other beasts of the field), while Eve is said to be the אם כל־חי (mother of all the living) in Gen. 3.20. While this pun is not preserved in the LXX, it may be possible that this play on words is implicit in the creation of the Gnostic 'beast' in the *Orig. World* who seems to be identified with both the biblical snake and the offspring of Eve.

395 Dunning 2009: 92.

creatively re-write the woman of Genesis 1–3, and provide a vision of Eve's femininity that is in stark contrast to a number their contemporary interpreters due to its emphasis on her great spiritual capacity.

c. Summary

In conclusion, analysis of Eve in *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch* and *Orig. World* provides evidence of an interpretative Gnostic tradition of the first woman as an agent of knowledge whose role is integral to human salvation. Working at a time when an 'orthodox' approach to the Bible was yet to be established, the Gnostic writers formulated a picture of Eve that seems totally alien to modern readers of Eve's story, but is nonetheless rooted in the biblical myth. For the Gnostics, the ambiguous and enlightening knowledge housed in the tree and permeating the entire story of Genesis 2–3 was salvific, spiritual *gnōsis*. As a helper, and as a mother, Eve is always an agent of knowledge in *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch* and *Orig. World*. In much the same way that Eve's perceived sin tarnished both her role as helper and as mother for the later orthodox tradition, so for the Gnostics her wisdom elevated them. Furthermore, this Gnostic picture of the salvific Eve, mother of wisdom and spiritual knowledge directly reversed the commonly perceived binary of male intellect and female carnality. The voices of the Gnostic authors, then, stand out as ones that decide to take a different route through Eden, in search of the origin of human knowledge and the human condition, rather than the origin of sin. Their path of interpretation is an entirely legitimate one, which simply follows the directions of the biblical text on a different trajectory of thought, leading to a vision of Eve as a 'luminous woman', an agent of enlightenment and salvation.

IV. POSTMODERN FEMINIST RECEPTION OF EVE AS A FIGURE OF KNOWLEDGE

a. Feminism and Judaeo-Christian Myth

During the twentieth century, nearly two millennia after Gnostic writers employed Eve as a symbol of spiritual *gnōsis*, feminist writers embraced her as an emblem of transgressive, independent, feminine knowledge.[396] As modern and postmodern feminism developed, numerous women writers engaged with numerous popular and traditional myths and tales that they viewed as the stalwarts of contemporary popular gender constructions.[397] These seemingly timeless stories of Western culture, for many feminists represent 'the sanctuaries of existing language, the treasuries where our meanings for "male" and "female" are themselves preserved'.[398] Consequently, numerous women writers began to experiment with manipulating the patriarchal framework surrounding well-known myths and stories, appropriating the narratives as a means of disrupting naturalised cultural conceptualisations of masculinity and femininity. As Rachel DuPlessis has observed, 'twentieth-century women poets turn again and again to rewrite, reinterpret, or reenvision classical myths and

[396] In fact, the cultural and historical *milieu* of feminist writers in the twentieth century mirrors, to a certain extent, that of the Gnostics; the postmodern turn actively encouraged scepticism towards religious and cultural metanarratives some of which were only beginning to be established in late Antique Jewish and Christian culture. This is not to say that there were no attempts before the feminist revisionist myth-makers to appropriate Eve from traditional interpretations (see Ch. 4), but simply to acknowledge the potentially interesting parallel between the context of 'pre-orthodox' Judaism and Christianity discussed in relation to Gnosticism in section III and postmodernism's deconstruction of metanarratives.
[397] For an interesting and informative discussion concerning the relationship between myth and fairy tale in relation to women's rewritings of them see S. Sellers (2001: 1–34).
[398] A. Ostriker 1986: 211.

other culturally resonant materials such as biblical stories or folktales';[399] the same comment can be applied to women prose writers, too. Authors such as Margaret Atwood, Michèle Roberts, Emma Tennant, and Angela Carter have insistently revised and re-worked 'culturally resonant' narratives in order to explore, and in some case, explode the patriarchal and at time misogynistic gender discourse that has grown out of them.[400]

Traditional stories such as myths, fairy tales, and folk tales readily lend themselves to feminist appropriation precisely because they are representative of, and partially responsible for, damaging patriarchal gender stereotypes that have come to be engrained in Western consciousness, and, some would argue, sub-consciousness. The notion of myth in particular holds a significant place in feminist literature, and the practice of re-writing 'culturally resonant' stories has frequently been defined as 'feminist revisionist mythmaking'.[401] I say the *notion* of myth precisely because the word 'myth' often operates in dual sense when used in conjunction with discussion of feminist writings. The 'plain' meaning of the term 'myth' is used to delineate a formal, historically informed category, a narrative genre.[402] While the specific criteria for what sort of text constitutes a myth are fluid, generally speaking a myth is a narrative about origins, very often involving the divine, and usually rooted in oral culture. The first definition provided by the Oxford English Dictionary for 'myth' is:

[399] R. DuPlessis, 1985: 105.
[400] See M. Atwood 2005; M. Roberts 1987, 1991; E. Tennant 1990; A. Carter 1977, 1979.
[401] A. Ostriker 1968, 1993; S. Sellers 2002; P. S. Anderson 1996.
[402] Katsavos 1994.

A traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon.[403]

It is, until relatively recently, with this sense that the term 'myth' has been most frequently used within biblical studies, and particularly with reference to Genesis 2–3. So, the story of Eden is a myth because it provides an explanation of humanity, and indeed the world, as we know it, involving the deity, Yahweh Elohim, the mysterious trees of knowledge and life, and a talking snake. While this type of story has a number of shared characteristics with fairy tales and folk tales—such as the speaking animals—it belongs, many would argue, to a formally distinct genre.[404] Perhaps most significantly, biblical and classical myths have come to form part of the Western canon of literature, while fairy tales and folk tales remain firmly in the realm of popular culture.

On a more theoretical level, however, myth, fairy tale, and folk tale may be closer to one another than formal distinctions allow for; indeed they might all come under the umbrella term 'myth'. After all, the OED also provides a second, broader definition for the noun 'myth': 'A widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief; a widely held misconception; a misrepresentation of the truth'.[405] It is this second aspect of myth as 'misrepresentation of the truth' that has been taken up by Roland Barthes in his exploration of the ideological aspect of mythology.[406] For Barthes, a myth is a text that 'consists in overturning culture

[403] "myth, n.". OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. 8 October 2013 <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124670?rskey=FeiKKx&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.
[404] A few scholars have explored the underlying folkloric aspects of Genesis 2–3 to great effect, see Niditch (1993), but the text nonetheless is predominantly labelled as a myth, due to its aetiological function, as well as the sacred aspect of the story.
[405] "myth, n.". OED Online. 2013. (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124670?rskey=FeiKKx&result=1&isAdvanced=false>, accessed 8 October 2013.
[406] See essay by R. Barthes, 1982: 93–149.

into nature or, at least, the social, the cultural and ideological, the historical into the "natural".'[407] In other words, any text that naturalises historically contingent social constructions, such as gender, into normative, and even seemingly 'objective', truths constitutes a myth. This Barthesian rubric provides a much wider conceptualisation of myth, which can encompass a variety of traditional stories, including classical and biblical myths, fairy tales, and folk tales, all of which are vessels for gender, racial, and social "norms".[408] So, Eve's story is a 'myth' in this sense, because Genesis 2–3 has become the myth of 'the Fall'. The interpretation of Eve as the primal sinner has been naturalised to the extent that the majority of people now believe this is the truth of the story; it has become a cultural myth. So, as Mieke Bal has observed, the myth of Eve is, in fact, a double myth: the myth found in Genesis 2–3 and the myth of 'the Fall' that is firmly located in cultural interpretation.[409]

For many women writers, this relationship of similarity and difference between myths, fairy tales and folktales provides fruitful ground for creative play in their rewriting of literary spaces previously colonised by patriarchy. The formal differences between the 'high' cultural association of canonical classical and biblical myths, and the 'low' cultural association of fairy tales and folk tales, offers a rich seam for exploration, especially when employed as means of deconstructing the gender mythology which all of these 'culturally resonant stories' participate in together; this is particularly true of the double myth of

[407] See essay by R. Barthes, 'Change the Object Itself: Mythology Today' (1977: 165–9).
[408] J. Zipes 1994: 1–16.
[409] Bal 1997: 108–9.

Eve.[410] For example, Emma Tennant's retelling of Eve's life, *Sisters and Strangers: A Moral Tale*, transforms the biblical creation myth into a folk tale by removing many aspects of divinity and casting Eve as an aged female tale spinner, a Mother Goose type character.[411] Furthermore, Tennant interrogates the cultural myth of Eve as a wicked sinner by framing her story as a cautionary tale about the dangers of being a woman, told by grandmother Eve to two young girls. In re-framing Eve's story as type of fable about the victimisation of women within a patriarchal world, narrated by the female protagonist of the biblical text, the author destabilises the status of the Genesis 2–3 as an authorised, enclosed, Judaeo-Christian myth, and opens it up to her own subversive creativity. Furthermore, she also critiques the ideological framework that has grown up around this canonical story, and successfully calls into question the gender norms it has been used to construct. Thus Tennant, by recreating as well as expanding upon the original biblical story, successfully demythologises both the biblical myth and the cultural myth of Eve.

b. Eve in Feminist Re-visioning

Emma Tennant's appropriation of Eve's story represents only one of an overwhelming range of explicitly, and indeed implicitly, feminist appropriations of Genesis 2–3. While many famed mythic, legendary and fantastical women's

[410] On the significance of canonisation, myth, and feminist rewriting see DuPlessis (1985: 106). See also G. Pollock 1999. Although Pollock writes with specific reference to art and art histories, her discussion of canon and myth is very useful for understanding feminist interactions with these issues. For current ongoing research on notions canon, authority and gender see the work of The Gender, Canonicity and Critique research group based at the University of Oslo: <http://www.stk.uio.no/english/research/groups/gender-critical-canonicity/index.html> accessed 19 July 2013. For a more general, but no less interesting discussion of the significance of canon and 'recycling' the Bible, see G. Aichele 2006: 195–201.
[411] Tennant 1990.

stories have been appropriated in pursuit of this revisionist goal, the myth of Eve, in particular, offered fertile ground for rewriting. Due to her status as first woman, as 'everywoman', her story had great potential for women writers.[412] Eve appears in the work of female poets and prose writers from various nationalities, working from secular, Jewish and Christian positions. In her reflections on contemporary American women poets' revisionist writings, Alicia Ostriker gives numerous examples of Eve's importance within their works, citing the poems of Diana George, Linda Pastan and Kathleen Norris.[413] She remarks that in the literature of these women, there is an 'insistence that the flesh is not incompatible with intellect', in direct contrast to the common interpretation of Adam and Eve as representing reason and carnality respectively.[414] This positive association between Eve and knowledge is portrayed with great clarity, for example, in Norris's poem 'Mrs Adam':

She knew
when it was time to sin.
You were wise,
to let her handle it,
and leave that place.[415]

In this stanza Norris interprets the exit from Eden as being a necessary change for humanity, and describes Eve as a competent character who is able to 'handle' this transition. In the following stanzas, the poet acknowledges that the knowledge gained by Eve was 'a bitter knowledge' initially, but recognises that it

[412] See 'Eve', in M. E. Snodgrass 2006: 179–81; Ostriker 1993: 81–2; M. Sprengnether 1989.
[413] Ostriker 1993: 81–2. For her wider discussion of women poets' revision of the Bible, see pp. 56–91.
[414] This twentieth and twenty-first century strategy is in direct contrast to the asceticism of the Gnostics, who maintain the binary distinction between spiritual knowledge and bodily ignorance in their presentation of Eve as an agent of knowledge. For the Gnostics, while Eve represents *gnōsis*, it is the male archons who represent carnality, thus reversing the common binary gender construction of late Antique Graeco-Roman culture. For contemporary feminists, however, it is not enough to place Eve on the positive side of this binary value system, rather, she is used to dismantle it. Nonetheless, both 'heterodox' groups share Eve as their knowledgeable heroine.
[415] K. Norris 1990a.

subsequently imparted free will and choice onto the rest of humanity. She concludes her poem with the lines:

You were chosen too,
to put the world together.[416]

These words, seemingly directed to her reader, clarify the 'fortunate fall' motif at work within her poem; Eve's sin opened the way for humanity's future growth. This view is reiterated more explicitly elsewhere in Norris's poetry, in a piece entitled 'Prayer to Eve' where she bestows the first woman with a number of knowledgeable epithets:

Mother of fictions
and of irony...
Mother of science
and the critical method...
Help us to know, Eve,
the one thing we must do[417]

In these lines, the poet once again portrays Eve as the purveyor of human progress, rather than of sin. Norris's poems supply just one example from many of a woman writer applying her own interpretative gloss to the figure of Eve, and most importantly, focusing on Eve's positive, and knowledgeable, legacy for humanity.

It is important to note that not only American women writers turned their attention to Eve; the Bible's first woman also features in the works of British[418] and Jewish[419] women writers too, and doubtless appears in women's' writings from many more cultures and religions, though too many to acknowledge here.

[416] Ibid.
[417] Norris 1990b.
[418] Michèle Roberts, Emma Tennant, Angela Carter.
[419] N. Aschkenasy 1986; A. Lapidus Lerner 2007.

Having briefly acknowledged the broad significance that Eve has for women's writing I will now draw my focus in onto one writer's repeated attention to Eve. Angela Carter's work has been selected for analysis here because Eve features strongly throughout her writing, in both her short stories and novels. Furthermore, not only does Carter provide her own feminist take on the story of Eve in the way that a writer such as Kathleen Norris does, but she also develops a number of relatively direct rewritings of the Genesis 2–3. Through her repeated encounters with Eve's story, Carter plays with the characterisation of Eve and illustrates how she can be appropriated as an effective symbol of feminine and indeed, feminist knowledge.[420]

c. Eve and Knowledge in Angela Carter's Writings.

> Reading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts. I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode.
>
> Angela Carter [421]

Angela Carter, an English, postmodern, feminist, fiction writer began publishing work in the 1960s and continued to write until shortly before her death in 1992. Her work has been highly influential, particularly for other women writers, and she has come to be one of the best-known British women writers of the twentieth century. Indeed, so significant was Carter's output that the editors of a

[420] By paying specific attention to Angela Carter's work, I do not intend to suggest implicitly that her writing is indicative of all feminist rewritings of Eve. First, the idea that any one feminist writer could be representative of all feminists exhibits a flawed understanding of feminism itself, which is notoriously diverse and divided and perhaps best thought of as 'feminisms'; see S. Kemp and J. Squires (1997: 13–6). Indeed, Carter's own model of feminism raised criticism from a number of her contemporaries, including Andrea Dworkin and Susanne Kappeler. Her writing, nonetheless, provides an excellent exploration of Eve's potential for feminist appropriation as a figure of transgressive knowledge, and a feminist heroine, and as such, I argue, deserves close attention here.

[421] A. Carter 1983: 69.

recent collection of scholarly essays written on her works astutely remark that Carter should not only be viewed as a major woman writer but more importantly, a major writer of the twentieth century.[422]

Angela Carter's oeuvre is constituted primarily, though not entirely, by fantastical, explicit, and macabre short stories and novels, which repeatedly explore themes including gender, sexuality, and violence. Most importantly, though, her work is highly political and the majority of Carter's writings function as a critiques of Western patriarchal culture. In an essay entitled 'Notes from the Front Line', in which she speaks of her motivations as an author, Carter writes:

> I can date to that time [the 1960s]... my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a woman. How that social fiction of my 'femininity' was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing.
>
> This investigation of the social fictions that regulate our lives... is what I've really concerned myself consciously with since that time.[423]

It is for this reason that she is interested in myths—in the Barthesian sense—which she describes as 'extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree', and she sees herself and her own works as participating 'in the demythologizing business'.[424] On the more conventional level of myth as genre rather than ideology, Carter states that she is in fact 'much more interested in folklore...[because] folklore is a much more straightforward set of devices for making real life more exciting and is much easier to infiltrate with different kinds of consciousness'.[425] For Carter, popular and traditional narratives—both classical and biblical myth, as well as fairy tale and folktale—supplied important

[422] S. Andermahr and L. Phillip 2012: 2. This fact is confirmed by her inclusion on the Times list 'The 50 greatest British writers since 1945'.
[423] Carter 1983: 70.
[424] Ibid. 71. When subsequently asked to define her use of the word 'myth' in 'Notes from the Front Line' during an interview conducted by Anna Katsavos, Carter made explicit reference to the writing of Roland Barthes: see A. Katsavos (1994).
[425] Carter 1983: 71.

sources for her own work. Indicative of this interest is perhaps her most famous and influential text, *The Bloody Chamber*, a collection of re-written fairytales, many of which also contain allusions to biblical themes. In fact, the majority of her work is highly intertextual, shot through with numerous literary allusions or echoes. It is in this role as an artful *bricoleuse* of popular tales that Carter makes her most effective critiques of pervasive patriarchal narrative.

Unsurprising, then, that one of the key motifs to appear throughout Carter's work is the most famous and problematic Western myth of all, the double myth of Eve. Hope Jennings writes that, 'Carter views Genesis as one of the more insidious patriarchal narratives, since within Western culture it has had such a significant impact on the gendered subjectivities as well as socio-sexual roles and/or relations.'[426] Consequently, in many of her novels and short stories, the author explores the possibilities for rewriting Adam and Eve, continuously playing with the interpretative potential of the Genesis story. Eve-like figures appear in three of her short stories, 'Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest', 'The Bloody Chamber', and, to a lesser extent, 'Peter and the Wolf', in her novels *The Magic Toyshop*, *Heroes and Villains*, and *The Passion of the New Eve*, as well being briefly alluded to in numerous other of Carter's works. Although Eve is predominantly categorised as a mythical character, Carter repeatedly extracts the mythical elements of her story, and relies more strongly on the folkloric, initiatory aspects of the biblical narrative, exploring the transition from unknowing to knowing and innocence to experience.[427] By converting, or

[426] H. Jennings 2012: 165.
[427] See Niditch 1985.

reverting, Eve's story away from its mythic status in the Western canon into a folkloric tale, Carter destabilises its authority.

So Carter transports her Eves from the biblical Eden into a tropical, though inhabited forest, a fairytale castle, 1960s South London, and two different post-apocalyptic settings.[428] In each of these varied rewritings and expansions, Carter, much like her contemporary, Emma Tennant, consistently demythologises the biblical story, removing any explicit aspects of divinity or theology as a means of opening up the plot to experimentation and provocation and thus she crumbles the gender myth built around it; Carter's deity is reduced to human patriarchs, and her Adams and Eves are 'real' people, not the first human couple. In her hands, Eve become an emblem of female curiosity, experience, and knowledge, and her character provides a cipher through which to reconfigure the ways in which these qualities have been traditionally understood. The two short stories that I will analyse below, 'Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest' published in 1975, and 'The Bloody Chamber' published in 1979, provide the clearest and most succinct illustration Carter's use of Genesis 2–3 to 'think with' when tackling notions of gender relations, female self-determination, and knowledge.[429]

1. 'Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest' (1974)

[428] S. Gruss (2009: 54) also observes that all of Carter's Eves are clearly 'non-biblical Eves' that have been broken free from the canonical setting of Judaeo-Christian scripture.
[429] While *The Magic Toyshop* and *Heroes and Villains* both offer fairly extensive meditations on the story of Adam and Eve they are rather more convoluted than those in her two short stories. As such the latter provide a clearer, more succinct picture of Carter's exploration of Eve's interactions with knowledge. Furthermore, *The Passion of the New Eve* is not really focused on the process of rewriting the biblical Eve, but is solely concerned with demythologising the gender myth that has developed around the interpretation Eve.

The short story, 'Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest' (*PHF*), from the collection *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces*, though not Carter's earliest rendering of 'the Fall', is the rewriting which remains closest to its biblical source in terms of narrative structure and setting.[430] Furthermore, it is Carter's least radical version of Genesis, and thus offers the best point of access from which to examine her interaction with Eve in 'The Bloody Chamber'.[431]

In *PHF*, Angela Carter offers a folkloric re-writing of the biblical text as a coming-of age myth in which the female lead character is the positive catalyst for her and her brother's transition from childhood innocence in a restrictive 'paradise' to exploration, adult love, and sexuality. She cleverly builds upon the biblical account, adding clarificatory details to the originally sparse narrative, and in doing so deftly suggests meaningful possibilities for the story that break with the traditional readings of Western Judaeo-Christian culture. In particular, she focuses on notions of ignorance and knowledge, idleness and action, and presents her rewritten Eve as an active agent whose transgressive curiosity results in freedom and knowledge rather than punishment and exile.

PHF opens in a luscious, paradisiacal setting, though in the background there is the shadow of an ambiguous and forbidden tree. In this environment arrives a single father, Dubois, who has brought his identical twin children, a boy, Emile, and a girl, Madeline, to the forest so that they may grow up in a state of innocence. Yet, over time, as they progress towards puberty the children also develop great curiosity about the forest. They decide to leave their father, and

[430] Carter 1996: 55–67. Following from here, 'Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest' in Carter (1996a), will be referred to with the abbreviation *PHF*.
[431] 'Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest' is Carter's most direct re-writing of Eve's story, in the sense that the characters and plot are readily recognizable as those of Genesis 2–3.

their safe home territory to venture into the forbidden depths of the forest. Here they discover the mythic tree, eat its fruit and in the process of the journey, gain new knowledge of themselves and one another. This brief summary clearly illustrates how the story written by Carter in *PHF* closely follows the narrative sequence of the Genesis 2–3.[432]

One of the most interpretatively significant actions Carter takes with *PHF*, and indeed all of her 'Fall' stories, is to extract Adam and Eve from their position in a myth of origin, and place them into a different time and place. At the outset of the story there is no mention of any acts of creation, nor is a creator deity present, thus beginning the process of demythologising. Carter's paradise is also not the Garden of Eden, now generally understood within popular culture to be a mythical location.[433] Nonetheless, the setting of *PHF* is unmistakably edenic—when Dubois, an outsider, discovers the forest he exclaims ' "Dear God! It is as if Adam had opened up Eden to the public!"'[434] Unlike Yahweh Elohim's garden, however, Carter's forest is peopled by runaway slaves for whom the paradise offered a refuge from the cruelties of civilisation.[435] Yet the fertility and comfort provided by the 'promised land' breeds apathy rather than protection: 'not a single exploring spirit [among the settlers] had ever been curious enough to search to its source the great river that watered their plots, or to penetrate to the

[432] Jennings 2012: 171.
[433] I acknowledge that there is evidence to suggest that the biblical writers' description of Eden is that of a physically located, real space (Gen. 2.10-14). Furthermore, I recognise that numerous scholars have argued for the biblical garden's basis to be found in the world: a clear discussion of the issues is provided by E. H. Cline (2012). I would argue, however, that in popular, predominantly secular, contemporary culture, God's garden is not generally thought of as being an actual geographical location.
[434] *PHF*: 59.
[435] *PHF*: 59.

heart of the forest', as they preferred 'the joys of idleness' over inquisitiveness.[436] So, while there are aesthetic similarities between Eden and Carter's forest, the author rejects themes of divine creation in favour of developing the image of 'paradise' as a refuge that encourages laziness.

In Carter's 'Eden', the tree is not a mysterious plant created by God, but is brought into being by the forest-dwellers, who:

> almost as if to justify to themselves their lack of a desire to explore... finally seeded by word of mouth a mythic and malign tree within the forest...whose fruits could have nourished with death an entire tribe.[437]

In Carter's forest there is no need for a god to forbid the tree from humanity, instead they do so for themselves. Despite the missing deity figure and prohibition, Carter nonetheless successfully reformulates the biblical paradox in which natural human curiosity and desire for knowledge, transgression, and death become interwoven and placed into the fruit of a forbidden tree. Simultaneously, Carter's conversion of the divine prohibition of knowledge from Gen. 2.17 into a ban based on gossip seems to offer direct comment on the fact that Adam and Eve do not die when they eat the fruit of knowledge, suggesting God's threat, too, was fictitious.

The first characters to enter into this 'paradise' from the outside are Carter's deity figure, the knowledgeable botanist, Dubois, and his children, who sought a place to settle where 'ambition, self-seeking and guile were strangers so that they [the children] would grow up with the strength and innocence of young

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[436] *PHF*: 59.

[437] *PHF*: 59. Carter here seems to be playing on the notion of cultural mythologies becoming transformed naturalised actualities. It may also allude to the disjuncture between God's description of the tree as fatal in Gen 2.17

trees'.[438] Dubois's paternity clearly aligns closely with the parental aspects of the figure of Yahweh Elohim; both patriarchs are alone with their motherless children whom they wish to shield from knowledge. Perhaps surprisingly, Carter, who has already demonstrated an aversion to the atmosphere engendered by Eden, renders her mortal version of Yahweh Elohim rather sympathetically; he is a benign but absent father who leaves his children, Emile and Madeline, 'to grow as they please'. [439]

Emile and Madeline are, like their biblical counterparts, twins;[440] they are formed of exactly the same flesh, though their split from one another took place in the womb of a woman, rather than by God. Initially the children 'resembled one another so closely each could have used the other as a mirror', and were contented in their peaceful world. As Carter's pair grows older, their curiosity for experience outside of 'Eden' strengthens simultaneously. Having spoken with the other forest dwellers about the mysterious tree, rather than being afraid, both children unanimously agree that 'their world, though beautiful, seemed to them, in a sense, incomplete—as though it lacked knowledge of some mystery they might find, might they not? in the forest, on their own'.[441] Their desire to break the rules of their community and escape to explore the hidden heart of the forest peaks exactly at the moment of reaching adolescence, at the age of 13. So, Carter links the curiosity of humanity that is implied in the biblical text to the well-acknowledged, natural curiosity experienced by all humans during adolescence,

[438] *PHF*: 60
[439] *PHF*: 62.
[440] *PHF*: 59 cf. Gen 2.21-23.
[441] *PHF*: 62.

framing the biblical story as a tale of maturation in a not dissimilar interpretative move to a number of biblical scholars whose work postdates Carter's fiction.[442]

When Emile and Madeline decide to journey away from the paradisiacal home they now find claustrophobic,[443] Carter employs the narrative gap left in the biblical text between the creation of the humans and their transgression as an opportunity to explore the motivations behind Emile/Adam and Madeline/Eve's course of action. In doing so she opens up the possibility for understanding Emile/Adam and Madeline/Eve as naturally maturing human beings, rather than sinfully curious individuals, in a way that the biblical text hints towards. Carter then artfully draws her own text back in line with the Genesis 2, concluding this section by describing how the children 'were curious. But they were not afraid,'[444] mirroring, but also altering, the vocabulary of v. 25 to reaffirm her focus on the biblical text's themes of curiosity and fear, rather than of nakedness and shame.

It is very early in the twins' journey into the depths of the forest that their closely interdependent lives begin to drift apart. The first notable sign of this process of differentiation is Madeline's initial explicitly independent experience from her brother. As they walk in the awe-inspiring forest, she puts out her hand to pick a water lily, but is shocked when the plant viciously bites her and draws blood. As soon as they discover that this lily has hidden 'white, perfect fangs', Emile's immediate reaction is to think of the excitement their botanist father would feel about such a discovery. By contrast Madeline, tells him that this

[442] Niditch 1985, 1993; Bechtel 1993, 1995.
[443] *PHF*: 63.
[444] *PHF*: 63.

experience, and any other they have 'in the heart of the forest' must be kept secret from Dubois. Her desire for secrecy indicates that she is the first of the children to wish to create a space for her own wisdom and her own experience, which is separate from their father.[445] The interaction with the unnaturally fanged, carnivorous water lily, then, rewrites Eve's conversation with the speaking snake in Gen. 3.1-6; both episodes result in a female character coming to recognise her desire for independent experience and knowledge.[446]

Madeline is thus depicted as a figure of positive, though transgressive, action. Indeed, Emile, listening to his sister, at this point recognises her separation from him, as by uttering her call for privacy she has begun the process of her own self-determination as a woman:

> Looking at her in a new puzzlement, he sensed the ultimate difference of a femininity he had never before known any need or desire to acknowledge and this difference might give her the key to some order of knowledge which he might not yet aspire, himself, for all at once she seemed far older than he.[447]

From the very beginning of Emile and Madeline's time in the heart of the forest, it is Madeline who takes control of the situation. Most interestingly, Carter chooses to write this episode of the biblical story from the perspective of the male character. Rather than rewriting Adam as either weak or aggressive towards his newly independent sister, Emile accepts her difference, and possible superiority, to him and agrees to uphold her desire for secrecy.[448] So, she fills Adam's silence and rejects the voice of blame he finds under the questioning of

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[445] *PHF*: 64.
[446] Carter's play on the natural/unnatural character of the biblical snake is both careful and clever; while the speaking reptile seems to be both animal and human, the lily in *PHF* sits on the borderline of animal and plant.
[447] *PHF*: 64. Contrast traditions discussed in Chapter 2.III.a, where the man is the intellectual superior and woman 'drags him down', rather than her being a position he might aspire towards.
[448] See Jennings 2012: 170.

Yahweh Elohim in Gen. 3.12. Carter thus counters the typical reception of Adam as an unwilling participant in the woman-knowledge relationship, and in turn portrays the woman's pursuit of knowledge as valuable.

After a little more travelling the children arrive at 'a pool that seemed to have no outlet or inlet and so must be fed by an invisible spring,' with the mythic tree standing by it. Here Carter clearly plays on the language of desire found in Gen. 3.6, providing an explicit description of how the tree 'was a delight to the eyes', with fruit that looked as if 'all the unripe suns in the world were sleeping on the tree until a multiple, universal dawning should wake them all in splendour.' This plant, then, is Carter's tree of knowledge, waiting to bring about a 'dawning' of understanding for those who eat from it. The aesthetic appeal forged by the author not only mirrors the biblical text, but also intensifies her readers' sympathy for the siblings, and by extension Eve's experience of desire for the tree's fruit.

In reaction to seeing this seductive tree, Madeline, like Eve, reaches for the fruit. Simultaneously, Emile, experiences a moment of desire for his sister, echoing those interpretations of the biblical narrative that see the knowledge provided by the tree as initiating lust into human sexuality, yet in *PHF*, the sexual element of the story is written without judgement .[449] Furthermore, Carter's story highlights the contrast between the desires experienced by man and woman in the biblical text: the feminine desire for the beautiful fruit of knowledge in Gen. 3.6 and the masculine desire for the female body that is

[449] Contrast, for example. Augustine, who understands the result of the fall to be the beginning of concupiscence – Chapter 2.III.a.2.

voiced in Gen. 2.23. While interpreters such as Philo, Augustine and Aquinas associated woman with sensual desire, for Carter the male is the one whose desire is primarily physical. Carter's story also departs from the popular reading of Eve's desire for knowledge as a sign of her pride by instead celebrating her inquisitiveness: Madeline/Eve is clearly portrayed as a figure of enlightenment. She is described as dedicatedly pursuing new experience and understanding, and in doing so she initiates her brother into adulthood too.

As soon as Madeline eats the fruit, her eyes are opened, like Eve's, and they become 'enormous'. Through her gaze she then imparts to her brother 'in expressible entirety the hitherto unguessed at, unknowable, inexpressible vistas of love.'[450] It is at this moment that they are no longer only siblings but become lovers too, as Carter plays upon the potentially incestuous aspects of the biblical couple's relationship. Nonetheless, Carter avoids the recriminations of the biblical myth by omitting any mention of punishment or exile, and instead closes with a happy ending, as the couple kiss. In contrast to the divinely mandated institution of female subjugation and male dominance in Genesis 3.16, in the heart of the forest Madeline is in full control of her own knowledge, her own desire and her own sexuality; she is a truly feminist Eve.

Carter's 'profane', at times fantastical, rewriting of the story of Genesis provides a creative and interpretative play on the themes of the original text, that while in direct contrast to traditional readings deliver new, feminist insight into the narrative that in some ways echo and predict interpretations of the

[450] *PHF*: 67. This element of the story directly echoes the language of vision/knowledge that is spread throughout Genesis 3.

Hebrew text made by feminist biblical scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. Carter's extension allows for a nuanced image of feminine knowledge to emerge from Genesis 2–3 that is both intellectual—the desire for self-definition—and physical—the desire for Emile. So, the author employs her Eve as a means of breaking down the traditional binary assumption that male is representative of mind and woman of body, and shows that it is through Madeline's capacity for independent thought that she reaches sexual maturity.[451] Furthermore, Carter's Eve figure is also a mediator of knowledge, as it is through *her* experiences that Emile also begins his own journey of independence.[452] By removing the divine command, and cutting the divine punishment, Carter's configuration of the story explores the folkloric aspects of the biblical tale, which focus on neither sin nor punishment, but on the necessary stages of initiation into adult life, and as such she frees Eve from any burden of guilt.

2. The Bloody Chamber (1979)

The 'The Bloody Chamber' (*BC*), which first appeared in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*, is, like *PHF*, a story about female curiosity and 'epistemophilia', a concept Laura Mulvey describes as being 'inherent in the drive of curiosity'.[453] In many ways it offers a continuation of the themes dealt with in *PHF* that are derived from Genesis 2–3: forbidden knowledge, curiosity, transgression, and initiation. Yet, while Carter's earlier short story offered a relatively benign re-telling of the biblical narrative, which greatly minimised the

[451] Contrast with the readings I examined in Chapter 2.III.a.
[452] With her 'maturation' understanding of the biblical text and the value placed on knowledge, Carter reverses the traditional image of Eve as a conduit for Adam's sin.
[453] L. Mulvey 1996: 60. Following from this point I will refer to A. Carter, 'The Bloody Chamber' (1996b) as *BC*.

role of the deity, in *BC* she tackles the problematic figure of a God who jealously withholds knowledge from the humans he created. Furthermore, she takes a specifically feminist approach to this issue, casting Yahweh Elohim as a tyrannical patriarch who denies knowledge of his violent and vengeful nature from an innocent woman who he brings into a paradisiacal prison of his own creation.

Unlike *PHF*, which is a relatively simple re-telling of Eve's story, *BC*, is a more complex narrative in which Carter artfully weaves a retelling of Genesis 2–3 into her own rendition of the fairy tale, *Bluebeard*. These two plots, once fused together by Carter's skilful story-telling, cleverly comment upon, as well as elucidate one another, drawing out new perspectives on old stories. As Cheryl Renfroe observes, 'in "The Bloody Chamber," Carter strongly acknowledges the mythic parallel between "Bluebeard" and Genesis, but… casts her own feminist perspective on the heroine's actions.'[454] Despite Carter's decision to amalgamate *Bluebeard* and Genesis 2–3, on the surface the fairy tale and the biblical story may seem to be rather unusual literary companions. *Bluebeard*, perhaps best known from the French version, *La Barbe Bleue*, written by Charles Perrault in 1697 and translated into English in 1729, is the story of a mass-murdering, blue-bearded husband, who attempts to kill his latest young bride after she, disobeying his express command, unlocks his secret room and discovers hidden within the bodies of his previous spouses.[455] His murderous effort to exact retribution for her behaviour is almost successful, but the young girl's two brothers save her at the last moment and slay the monstrous man. By contrast,

[454] C. Renfroe 1998: 89.
[455] C. E. Hermansson 2009: 26.

Genesis 2–3 is, of course, a creation story in which two newly made humans disobey their God's prohibition of the fruit of the mysterious tree of knowledge and are banished from the Garden of Eden to an existence of pain, toil and suffering.

While the dissimilarities of the two stories are undeniably obvious, these brief synopses also clearly exhibit various thematic and structural parallels. Both *Bluebeard* and the story of Adam and Eve focus on the topics of curiosity and retribution. Indeed, they follow the same structure: interdiction, transgression, punishment. Furthermore, Carter's decision to merge the two stories is not without precedent; numerous readers and critics have remarked upon the affinities between Eve and the last wife in *Bluebeard*.[456] For example, Laura Mulvey, in her work *Fetishism and Curiosity*, makes the astute observation that Angela Carter 'retells this story [*Bluebeard*] in *The Bloody Chamber* and compares the room with Pandora's box and the heroine with Eve.'[457] Shuli Barzilai suggests that this commonly recognised connection between Eve and the heroines of both *Bluebeard* and *BC* is stronger than mere thematic similarity, but suggests that they are linked through literary transmission. She explores the possibility of understanding the rabbinic parables of the snake charmer's wife that I explored in Chapter 1.III.b as a bridging text in the transition of the narrative from the biblical story to the popular fairy tale focused on the same subject.[458] If Barzilai's theory can be upheld, then not only is there a generally acknowledged thematic mirroring between *Bluebeard* and Genesis 2–3, but also

[456] H. Schor (2013: 5) describes the bride of Bluebeard as 'a nineteenth-century Eve'. See also Barzilai (2009: 1–21); Renfroe (1998: 82–94); Warner (1995: 244–7).
[457] Mulvey 1996: 60. Cf. Carter 1996: 137 and 140 respectively.
[458] This would also explain the similarity to Pandora myth found in Bluebeard, because the rabbinic parables do seem to have been influenced by Hesiod's first woman.

to a textual tradition that has its roots planted in the biblical story and grows into modern short fiction like that of Angela Carter.[459]

The first half of *BC* is dedicated to the marriage of the young girl to the Marquis, and in many ways bears very little similarity to Genesis. Yet, the heroine's transition into married life does set the scene for the development of the Eve theme in the second part of the narrative. For example, the girl's transition from home to castle represents a move from one trap to another—she departs from 'from girlhood... from the white, enclosed quietude of my mother's apartment'[460] and enters 'into marriage, into exile'.[461] In this sense, the Marquis's castle bears some resemblance to Carter's earlier conceptualisation of Eden as a kind of stasis in *PHF*. It is clear that for Carter the biblical garden is no utopia, but a space that restricts its inhabitants' potential.

Immediately after the couple have consummated their marriage—a violent experience which leaves the girl 'infinitely dishevelled'—the Marquis abandons his young bride, leaving her alone in the house with only one rule.[462] He hands her the keys to all the rooms of his castle, giving only a single command concerning their use: ' "Promise me this… promise me you'll use all the keys on the ring except that last little one I show you. Play with anything you find… All is yours, everywhere is open to you—except the lock that this single key fits.'[463] This speech is not only very close to Perrault's version of the interdiction, but of course clearly echoes Yahweh Elohim's prohibition in Gen. 2.16–17: 'You may

[459] Barzilai 2009: 1–21. See also Aschkenasy (1986: 43–4) for a brief discussion of Eve's downgrading from her 'near-heroic dimension' in Genesis to the image of a 'hapless woman'.
[460] *BC*: 111.
[461] *BC*: 115.
[462] *BC*: 121.
[463] *BC*: 124.

freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat'.[464]

Subsequently, the girl is left in solitude, and the reader witnesses her inner struggle as Carter allows her heroine the opportunity to speak of her own motivations for breaking the command.[465] This episode supplies an extension of the Eden narrative, in which, having given his command and created woman, Yahweh Elohim disappears until after it is transgressed (Gen 2.2–3.8). Remarking upon Carter's use of the female voice as a means of narrating the girl's feeling of isolation, Cheryl Renfroe suggests that the 'reader may find herself experiencing the unfolding knowledge along with the girl in the story and then re-framing the long-standing condemnation of Eve'.[466]

Alone in the house of a relative stranger, the girl begins to long to understand her mysterious, absent husband, and by doing so to understand herself in her new status as woman and wife. In a subtle way, the girl's wish to know her 'husband's true nature',[467] mirrors Eve's desire for knowledge that will make her 'like God', and therefore give her insight into Yahweh Elohim. Interestingly, the girl in *BC* does not need any encouragement from a serpentine advisor to see that this knowledge will benefit her, but is credited with total independence of thought by Carter. The girl is utterly undaunted by the prospect

[464] It is also highly reminiscent of the rabbinic texts, and in particular *'Abot de Rabbi Nathan B* where the husband is transformed into a wealthy king, in which many of the husband's possessions are listed as available to the wife, just not his jar of snakes and scorpions! See 2.III.b.
[465] As she did with Madeline and Emile, Carter reacts to the biblical reticence on Eve's actions and expands the narrative to include greater characterisation of her female protagonists. While the Bible says Eve acts simply because she 'saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise' (Gen. 3.6), Carter's Eves are both inflicted with boredom, and in the case of 'The Bloody Chamber', isolation, which compels them to seek knowledge.
[466] Renfroe 1998: 82.
[467] *BC*: 127.

of using the forbidden key about which she 'felt no fear, no intimation of dread'.[468] Once more, Carter fills in the space left by the biblical text, and indeed *Bluebeard*, concerning the female's emotions, creating the picture of a strong and determined woman who desires to know that which is hidden from her, rather than a weak, unfaithful girl. Carter's Eve, then is not a fallen woman who has succumbed to temptation, but a rational, inquisitive human in pursuit of truth.

Having searched the castle for clues to her husband's real self, eventually his young bride approaches the out of bounds door. With 'a holding of the spiritual breath' the girl unlocks it and walks in to a 'room designed for desecration', where she encounters the mutilated bodies of her three predecessors. Her curiosity, then, has finally led her into awareness of the shocking truth of the castle and the murderous, oppressive Marquis.[469] Thus Carter offers a politicised reading of the biblical account, in which her protagonist's transgressive decision 'to enter the forbidden room and thus to defy the right of others to determine what she may or may not know. To do what is forbidden is to exercise power,' offers a close parallel of Eve's choice to defy God's authoritarian control over knowledge.[470]

While the girl in *BC* resonates with the first woman of the Bible who has her eyes opened, the murderous Marquis is representative of Yahweh Elohim; an all-seeing, terrifyingly powerful entity, who re-appears in the plot

[468] *BC*: 130.
[469] *BC*: 130–2. In contrast to the rabbinic snake charmer parables, and indeed most orthodox rewritings of Eve (see Chapter 2.III.b), which assume that God's prohibition of knowledge was good, the painful knowledge Carter's Eve receives brings about realisation of the terror of patriarchal monopoly on knowledge. While the woman in the Hebrew Bible and later rewritings is blamed for introducing death and suffering, Carter reverses this dynamic, holding the Marquis responsible.
[470] M. Joannou 2000: 96.

simultaneously with the girl's act of disobedience, as if he were waiting for her failure.[471] Like the Gnostic myths, the God of Genesis 2–3 provides the villain for Carter's story. But here he is neither ignorant nor weak as the Chief archon and his companions were. Rather, Carter directly addresses the problematic tradition of picturing the God in Eden as an omniscient and omnipotent deity who sets a test for humanity knowing they are doomed to fail. Indeed, the sadistic element of the acts of prohibition by both Yahweh Elohim and the Marquis is key for Carter, when she writes, through the mouth of her heroine:

> I knew I had behaved exactly according to his desires... I must pay the price for my new knowledge. The secret of Pandora's box; but he had given me the box, himself, knowing I must learn the secret. I had played a game in which every move was governed by a destiny as oppressive and omnipotent as himself, and I had lost.[472]

Later in the story, the girl's unavoidable doom is directly to Eve's fate in a conversation with the blind piano-tutor:

> "You do not deserve this," he said.
> "Who can say what I deserve or no?" I said. "I've done nothing; but that may be sufficient reason for condemning me."
> "You disobeyed him," he said. "This is sufficient reason for him to punish you."
> "I only did what he knew I would."
> "Like Eve," he said.[473]

Like Eve, the girl has been trapped in a choice between a natural desire to gain knowledge and an inflicted state of innocence. Here, Carter's Eve is exonerated from any crime, and instead the author explores the guilt of the Marquis and by association, Yahweh Elohim. Both domineering patriarchs deliberately ban females from knowledge of the truth of their life situations, forcing them into a double bind, where they will either need to live in submission forever, or to

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[471] Cf. Gen. 3.8. As soon as the girl closes the lid on the Iron Maiden she discovered in the forbidden room, the opal engagement ring on the her finger 'flashed once, with a baleful light, as if to tell me the eye of God – his eye – was upon me... my first thought... was, how to escape'.
[472] *BC*: 137, italics added for emphasis.
[473] *BC*: 140.

disobey and receive punishment. By focusing on the gendered aspect of this story, Carter develops a particularly disturbing God-like character acting as a sadistic puppet master, who deliberately entraps an innocent girl.[474] Here, then, not only is Carter commenting on the conflict between Eve and Yahweh Elohim that is established in the biblical story, but also the entire patriarchal framework which uses this narrative to legitimate the repression of women.

Despite having established this clear connection to the biblical text, Carter then departs from it again, and concludes *BC* with the girl being rescued by her mother, who slays the Marquis as he is trying to execute her daughter. The choice to replace the brothers of the traditional *Bluebeard* story with an avenging mother affirms Carter's feminist slant on the tale and further emphasises the power and validity of female rebellion against the dominant male. Mother and daughter then live happily ever after with the girl's new husband, Yves Jean. Thus, in *BC* 'curiosity is both a curse and the thing that produces a plot. For however dark it seems, this is still a story of enlightenment, as the heroine crosses the threshold and moves toward knowledge.'[475] The same process of realisation can be seen to be true for Eve, who in taking the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil experiences the jealous and vengeful side of her God who condemns her to a dual passion of pain and desire (Gen. 3.16) in retaliation for her behaviour.[476]

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[474] This depiction of a patriarchal God-like figure as a puppet master is also used by Carter in her rewritings of Adam and Eve in both *The Magic Toyshop* (Uncle Philip) and *Heroes and Villains* (Donally).
[475] Schor 2013: 32.
[476] Schor (2013: 20) also recognizes this 'capacity for pain and pleasure' in the girl in 'The Bloody Chamber'.

d. Summary

Reading the biblical story from a perspective that is critical of the dominant condemnation of the woman's pursuit for knowledge, Angela Carter transforms her Eve into an agent of knowledge. This knowledge is not spiritual *gnōsis*, but experiential, sexual, 'real world' knowledge; both *PHF* and BC are 'coming of age' tales. While *PHF* offered a benign interpretation of the biblical story as a folktale concerned with the transition from childhood to adulthood and innocence to experience, with Carter's retelling echoing and in many ways pre-empting contemporary biblical scholarship on Genesis 2–3 as a maturation myth. *BC* offered a more radical reimagining of Eve's rebelliousness against a male oppressor that Carter reads as a distinctly feminist act. This is, of course, a rather heretical stance, as it necessitates the framing of God as a villainous bully, but one that has now, some years after Carter was writing, been recognised as a valid interpretative strategy by biblical scholars.[477] Thus, while Carter's fictional rewritings might initially appear to be nothing more creative riffs on the biblical story that offer little in the way of insight into the meaning of Scripture, I argue that her retellings actually represent entirely legitimate appropriations of the biblical text that can encourage readers to turn the tables against traditional ways of understanding the biblical account of the female pursuit of knowledge and consider both stories from a new perspective.

[477] See Penchansky 1997 and 1999.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this chapter was to investigate the counter narrative of knowledge that runs through Genesis 2–3 and into the world of biblical interpreters. By considering the story of Eve from a number of different aspects, using a variety of interpretative devices, it has been re-framed as a tale of enlightenment, rather than sin. The textual analysis served to highlight the tension that arises between humanity and divinity because of the presence of the tree of knowledge in Eden. Furthermore it highlighted that while Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit was a transgression of God's will, it might also be perceived as a necessary step in the process of human maturation.

The Epic of Gilgamesh offered clarification to this mode of reading Eve as a mediator of culture. While this connection has not become popular until recent years in biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, I argue that it nonetheless offers an important tool for modern readers to recognise the possibility of reconfiguring Genesis 2–3 as a myth of maturation, rather than an account of the 'Fall'.

Several centuries after both Genesis and the Epic of Gilgamesh were written, when Judaeo-Christian orthodoxy was slowly developing, the Gnostics also identified this positive potential within Eve's story. For them however, the focus was no longer on the woman's mediation of humanity's initiation into material culture, as it was for the writers of the Epic of Gilgamesh. Due to their belief in the salvific power of *gnōsis*, or knowledge, they framed Eve as a figure of wisdom and spiritual beneficence, a type of female saviour, while Yahweh

Elohim was associated with the material wickedness of the archons. Employing specific textual facets of the biblical account, they expanded and illuminated various elements of the story that focus on the human acquisition of knowledge, and the problematic figure of God. This is clearly the opposite interpretative trajectory to the mainstream readings of Eve's story I assessed in 2.III, which assumed God's goodness and Eve's intellectual inferiority. For the Gnostics, however, Eve and her pursuit of knowledge came to be a symbol of their own personal plight in the world, as they too strived to struggle from the grip of the material world.

In a historical moment that in some ways mirrors those of the Gnostics in their 'pre-orthodox' environment, Angela Carter appropriated Eve as a symbol of feminine knowledge and the feminist struggle. In the postmodern world of twentieth century Western culture, Eve appears once more as an agent of knowledge, though in this era the knowledge she represents is unlike either form of wisdom that appear in the Epic of Gilgamesh or the Gnostic myths. In the hand of Angela Carter, the first woman of the Bible, the everywoman, also becomes the first feminist. She rejects the patriarchal control of Eden, and God, in favour of pursuing her own independent, specifically feminine knowledge and power.

Each of these readings frames Eve as an agent of knowledge and destabilises the cultural myth of 'the Fall'. The selection of counter-narratives presented in this chapter, which are all both attentive to and critical of the biblical story, have provided a kaleidoscopic image of Eve's pursuit of understanding. By illuminating its powerful and challenging presence in the biblical text and beyond, this chapter not only supplies an alternative image of

Eve, but also her femininity, which is no longer restricted to sin, but here becomes representative of intellect and power.

Chapter 4

Mother Eve

I. Introduction

Within popular Western interpretative tradition, as well as the majority of modern works on the reception history of Adam and Eve, the first woman's role as a mother, particularly to Cain, Abel, and Seth, has ultimately been eclipsed by her action in the garden.[478] Nonetheless, Eve is, according to the Bible, the first female to give birth to a child and begin the cycle of human procreation, thus representing a potent symbol of female creative power. Furthermore, some of the most poignant aspects of Eve's story are bound up in her maternity; she is mother to all living but her children will know mortality because of her actions; she will suffer pain and anguish in order to bring about new life; and she will experience the death of her second son Abel at the hands of her firstborn, Cain. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which Eve's motherhood is represented by a number of different trajectories growing out from the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish and Christian interpretations (section II), the visual exegesis (section III), and the work of pre-twentieth century women writers (section IV). Each of these categories of interpretation offers their own unique insight into mother Eve, while also sharing considerable imagery and themes amongst them. For example, the dual pain and the promise of Eve's maternity is a central theme throughout the chapter, as is the significance of Eve's links with other key

[478] See Chapter 2 sections III and IV for negative views of Eve's motherhood that still dominate contemporary assumptions about the first mother.

maternal figures from Jewish and Christian traditions, in particular the Virgin Mary. By exploring these different themes, this chapter continues to pursue the overarching aim of this thesis, to examine marginal trajectories of Eve's after lives that are rarely addressed in studies of her history, and thus to destabilise the dominant tendency to define her only by her connection to sin.

II. MOTHER EVE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE .

In the following section of my thesis, first I explore the portrayal of Eve's motherhood in the biblical text, and secondly its early reception elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament. In the latter no account is given of reception that denigrates or downgrades Eve's motherhood, for example Sir. 25.24 or 40.1, but rather I seek out examples that positively, sympathetically, or subtly appropriate the biblical account of mother Eve.[479] The overarching aim is to complicate the popular notion of Eve as a mother of sin and death by highlighting the complexity and vivacity of her maternal role in the eyes of many of her ancient readers.

a. Genesis 3.16: Consequences

Within the biblical text, the first woman's transformation from wife (אִשָּׁה) to mother (אֵם) is characterised by a tension between negative and positive perspectives. God makes the first mention of Eve's experience of actual

[479] See Chapter 2 discussion of the negative transformation of the first mother.

childbirth after the couple have eaten from the fruit of the tree of knowledge. In response to this event, Yahweh Elohim declares to the woman:

הרבה ארבה עצבונך והרנך בעצב תלדי בנים

Although Gen. 3.14-19 is frequently accepted as a series of punishments, the vocabulary used by God, particularly in the case of Gen. 3.16a, has been seen by scholars such as Carol Meyers as potentially mitigating. She argues that Yahweh Elohim's words reflect the harsh realities of the couple's life to come, rather than retributive suffering.[480] Meyers also emphasises that עצבונך and עצב, both from √עצב, are predominantly linked to notions of hard labour affecting both body and mind, rather than the labour pains suggested by many modern translations.[481] Meyers therefore proposes translating Gen. 3.16a as: 'I will greatly increase your toil and your pregnancies; (Along) with travail you shall beget children.'[482] In her accompanying analysis, Meyers aligns the biblical text with what is known of the social conditions of Israelite women's lives, positing that the verse should be understood as referring to woman's future of gruelling agricultural work as well as conceiving children. While I am not opposed to her wording *per se*, Meyers' insistence that the toils described by עצבונך and עצב are specifically to do with day-to-day labour is too restrictive, especially as Gen

[480] C. Meyers 1988: 119.
[481] Ibid. 95–109, 117-121. See also I. Provan 2012: 285–96.
[482] Meyers 1988: 118.

3.16a unavoidably contextualises these words with conception and giving birth.[483]

עצבון occurs only three times in the Hebrew Bible, Gen. 3.16a, 17 and 5.29. While the work described in the latter two cases is agricultural, it is also specifically related to the cursed earth. In Gen. 3.17, God promises that Adam will struggle to grow food, suggesting that the curse has compromised the fertility of the ground. This correlation between עצבון, a human's toil, and the cursed earth is repeated in Gen. 5.29. Thus, עצבון specifically qualifies humanity's struggle to gain the fruits of the ground. Framing the noun in this wider context goes some way in explaining its appearance in Gen. 3.16aα; the woman will struggle to conceive, to be fertile. In other words, her conception mirrors the fertility of the earth in Gen. 3.17 and her toil mirrors the man's in bringing about this fertility.[484] In view of this, I am inclined to counter Meyer's suggestion, and translate the Hebrew of Gen. 3.16aα as a hendiadys: 'I will greatly increase your struggle in conception' or 'I will greatly increase your toil in conception'.

Genesis 3.16aβ offers further support Eve's toil being bound to her fertility. *If* the woman is successful in conceiving, she will give birth in pain (עצב). The noun עצב appears on one other occasion in the context of childbirth, in 1 Chron. 4.9, where the mother of Jabez explains his name saying 'I gave birth in pain (בעצב)'. Iain Provan suggests that in both 1 Chron. 4.9, as well as Gen. 3.16aα, the noun עצב refers to 'the "agony, hardship, worry, nuisance, and

[483] See T. Novic 2000: 236–40 on root of הרנך.
[484] M. Stol 2000: 12.

anxiety" of the circumstances into which children are born and then raised, and in which they die.'[485] I am in favour of this broad rendering of the term in the case of Gen. 3.16aβ, as it proves particularly poignant in view of the first woman's own relationship with Cain, Abel, and Seth.[486]

Interestingly, the LXX and Vulgate maintain this ambiguity concerning the exact nature of Eve's pain in childbearing. In fact, the translators of the Hebrew into Greek seemed to have had some difficulty understanding the original verses, giving: πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὰς λύπας σου καὶ τὸν στεναγμόν σου ἐν λύπαις τέξῃ τέκνα. There is no distinction between עצבונך and עצב, perhaps implying that the translators recognised them to be from the same root. The Greek word used, λύπη, can mean both pain in body, but also grief or sorrow, thus encompassing both the physical and emotional turmoil of childbirth as in the Hebrew vocabulary does. In LXX version of Gen. 3.16aα, however, this pain is not actually associated with childbearing, as the translators do not seem to have understood הרנך to be derived from √הרה, instead translating it as 'groaning' στεναγμόν. While this may depart from the probable meaning of the Hebrew, the cumulative force of Gen. 3.16a remains intact, portraying the intensification of suffering in childbirth (τέξῃ τέκνα). The Vulgate, however, maintains a differentiation between עצבונך and עצב, as well as recognising הרנך as 'your conception': *multiplicans multiplicabo aerumnas tuas et conceptus tuos et in dolore paries filios*. Thus, while we have slight differentiation of vocabulary

[485] Provan 2012: 290 quoting J. H. Walton 2001: 227.
[486] Provan 2012: 293.

between these two versions, they agree on the message that God's punishment is to increase the suffering and sorrow felt in response to childbearing.[487]

In the original Hebrew and early versions, while God's words on the first woman's future motherhood are rather more ambivalent than most modern translations suggest, they nonetheless offer a pessimistic vision of childbearing. Furthermore, whereas the man suffers alienation and struggle in relation to the ground in Gen. 3.17, the woman's penalty entails the disruption of her relationship with her own body, as well as the offspring she produces. In this sense there is a misogynistic tone to the text that unavoidably aligns female fecundity and childbearing with punishment.

b. Genesis 3.20: Mother of All Living

Yet, this negative picture of the realities of the first human woman's status as a mother is not definitive of her entire story. Indeed, directly after Yahweh Elohim has promised the woman that she will suffer through having children, the human man offers an entirely different perspective on her potential motherhood:

ויקרא האדם שם אשתו חוה כי הוא היתה אם כל־חי

Though a proportion of feminist scholars have focused on the negative aspects of Gen. 3.20—that the man names the woman and that she is only elevated because of her role as mother—the majority of modern commentators are in agreement

[487] On the transition and tradition of interpreting the 'curses' of Eve as aetiologies for menstruation and labour pains, and by extension for abjecting Eve see 2.IV.b.2.

over the positivity of the name חוה and its accompanying epithet.[488] The most divisive feature of the verse is the meaning of the proper name, and how it relates to the ensuing explanation. Genesis 3.20 is a folk etymology, which establishes a phonological play on the words חוה 'Eve' and חי, 'living'. While the two words may sound similar, they potentially stem from different roots, with חוה deriving from √חוה, while חי is from √חיה. Numerous scholars have provided helpful catalogues of the various positions that have been posited regarding the underlying meaning of the חוה, so I shall not repeat their efforts in full here, but rather offer a brief summary.[489]

Some commentators have concluded that though in appearance חוה and חי seem to originate from distinct roots, in actuality their difference can be explained by a shift in the root, from the earlier medial *waw* to a later medial *yod*.[490] This kind of variation is comparable to the Ugaritic cognate *ḥwy/ḥyy*, which only has a medial *yod* when in the Qal form.[491] On the basis of this connection between the Hebrew and Ugaritic roots, Kapelrud suggests that חוה is derived from the Ugaritic noun *ḥwt* 'living'.[492] Wallace, too, concurs with this link between Eve and *ḥwt*, remarking that the Ugaritic noun was an epithet for the Canaanite goddess, Asherah, 'mother of the gods'.[493] He is careful to qualify this association between the biblical mother and the Ugaritic deity when he writes 'we do not mean to imply a simple equation between Eve and Asherah.

[488] See C. Westermann 1994: 268; M. P. Korsak 1993: 49–50; L. M. Bechtel 1993: 110, 114.
[489] A. S. Kapelrud 1980: 257–60. See also N. Wyatt 1999: 316–7.
[490] S. C. Layton 1997: 27.
[491] Ibid. 23–7; Wyatt 1999: 316; I. M. Kikawada 1972: 34 n.9.
[492] Kapelrud 1980: 258.
[493] Wallace 1985: 152–7.

The possible etymologies for חוה suggest that the name and the connection with Asherah are part of long tradition.'[494] Thus חוה, with its echo of a mother deity, appears to represent the biblical facet of a continuously evolving effort within ancient Near Eastern culture to name and negotiate between divine and human females' power to give life.

The picture of Eve's motherhood found in the Hebrew of Gen. 3.20 is perhaps best described as gynocentric in tone by comparison to Gen. 3.16, despite the fact that the words are uttered by Adam.[495] Not only does this naming speech credit Eve with power as a mother, but more importantly it does not qualify her procreativity in relation to a male; Eve is described neither as the bearer of a man's seed, nor as the mother of a son. Rather, very much like a mother goddess, or indeed, like the Creator God himself, Eve is depicted as mother to *all* life.[496]

The LXX, presumably without any knowledge of the underlying links Eve and her epithet might have had to Asherah the life-bringing goddess, maintains and intensifies the word-play as referring to Eve as Ζωή (life) and describing her role as mother of all living ζώντων: Ζωή ὅτι αὕτη μήτηρ πάντων τῶν ζώντων. Consequently, the link between Eve and life becomes concretised in the LXX,

[494] Ibid. 151–8.
[495] D. M. Slivniak 2003: 449–51.
[496] On the mirroring of Yahweh and Eve, the etymological history of *chavvah* and its correspondence to the evolution of the Tetragrammaton is of interest. As W. F. Albright (1924), who argues for the name Yahweh as a causative for of the verb היה has observed, 'If we, then, regard *Yahweh* as an imperfect verb, it is most naturally to be derived from *hwy* (as still in Aramaic), later *hayah*, "to come into existence, become, be." The preservation of an archaic form with *waw* in proper names is illustrated by *Hawwah*, "Eve," as well known.' While 'Yahweh' causes to be (√היה), causes existence, 'Eve' חוה causes life (√ חיה). For a interpretative traditions that see Eve as a positive figure with her desire to become like God through her quest for knowledge see Chapter 3.III and IV.

which only introduces the Greek equivalent of חוה, Ευα, in Gen 4.1. The Old Latin preserves this tradition, employing *Vita* for חוה (*Adam imposuit nomen uxori suae Vita quia mater est omnium vivorum*), in contrast to the later Vulgate, which favours the proper noun 'Hava' (*et vocavit Adam nomen uxoris suae Hava eo quod mater esset cunctorum viventium*). Thus it seems there was no set strategy for dealing with Adam's naming speech in antiquity.

c. Genesis 4.1: Eve gives birth to Cain.

Once the reader moves to Genesis 4, Eve's motherhood makes the transition from hypothetical to actual. In spite of the common scholarly tendency to bring the story of Adam and Eve to a close at the end of Genesis 3, the first couple's story crucially extends through the following chapter.[497] This trend is particularly surprising given that there is not only an obvious continuation of character and plot, but also of theme and vocabulary.[498] Indeed, while Genesis 1–2 focuses on the creation of the world by God, Genesis 3–4 concentrates on the continuation of this creation by human beings, integral to which is human procreation. In Genesis 3 the reader experienced the divine and human male perspective on procreativity; in Genesis 4 they are introduced to the woman's view.

Thus we read of *Eve*'s conception (ותהר), and *her* giving birth to Cain (ותלד), followed by *her* speech concerning the name of the child

[497] Notable exceptions are: I. Pardes (1992); H. Kraus (2011); D. E. Bokovoy (2013: 19–35). I am particularly indebted to these authors whose work I have drawn on repeatedly for my analysis of Gen. 4.1 and 4.25.
[498] See A. Hauser 1980: 297–305; D. Rudman 2001: 461–6.

(…קניתי ותאמר). In much the same way that Adam's naming of Eve in Gen. 3.20 clashed with God's words in Gen. 3.16a, here we find an even starker contrast, with the description of the events in Gen. 4.1 directly echoing the vocabulary of the punishment (√הרה and √ילד). But instead of the troubling nexus of transgression, pain and parturition envisaged by the deity in Genesis 3, in Genesis 4 Eve is allowed to give her own positive account of her experience of childbirth: 'and she said '"I have acquired a man with Yahweh"'.[499] While this divergence may at first suggest disparity between Genesis 3 and 4, it actually continues the conflict that existed between God and Eve in Eden.

Eve's words in v. 1 are, for the most part, typical of naming-speeches throughout the Bible.[500] While the genre title 'naming-speech' might lead one to expect that the speaker utter the name of the child, quite frequently this is not the case. Accordingly, Eve is not explicitly recorded naming the child Cain; instead her 'naming-speech', reminiscent of Adam's words in Gen. 3.20, consists of an 'explanation' of the title by means of a pun on the Hebrew קין 'Cain' and קניתי 'I have acquired':

ותלד את־קין ותאמר קניתי איש את־יהוה

[499] This is my own translation.
[500] See Pardes 1992: 41; cf. M. Sternberg 1985: 330–1.

Given that the actual Hebrew roots of קין and קניתי (√קנה *or* √קני *are i*ndeed completely different from one another, it seems reasonable to suggest that Eve's speech is an 'aetiology rather than [an] etymology' for the name Cain.[501]

Trying to interpret Eve's aetiology is, however, no simple matter; in particular, the verb קניתי has caused a great deal of problems for modern biblical scholars. The root קנה can take two, potentially linked, meanings: the most common being 'acquire', but equally valid, though less common, is 'create'. So, while there is an overwhelming preference to translate Eve's speech as 'I have acquired a man…', there are grounds to challenge this. The most commonly agreed occurrences of קנה being used in the sense of 'create' within the Hebrew Bible are found in Gen. 14.19, 22; Deut. 32.6; Ps. 139.13; Prov. 8.22.[502] In each case, God is clearly the subject of the verb.

In light of these biblical parallels there is potentially some justification for reading קניתי in Eve's speech as pertaining to creation rather than acquisition, strengthened by the fact that Eve acts 'with Yahweh' (את־יהוה). As a number of commentators have observed, this particular instance of את does not appear to signify a definite object marker, but rather a preposition.[503] Thus, the phrase את־יהוה is most simply understood as 'with Yahweh'. However, in view of this comitative function of את, it becomes conceptually problematic to maintain the

[501] A. Brenner and F. van Dijk Hemmes 1993: 97. They suggest the presence of a naming speech might point to a female voice, rather than a male voice, opening potential for a female tradition concerning Eve's maternal power within the biblical text.
[502] Westermann 1994: 290.
[503] Von Rad 1963: 100. V. P. Hamilton 1990: 221 n.10.

traditional 'acquire'.[504] After all, the phrase 'I have acquired a man with Yahweh' implies Eve has joint ownership of a human with God. To overcome this problem את here has frequently been translated as 'with the help of', despite the fact that the preposition is, according to Westermann, 'never used elsewhere in this sense'.[505] It is possible to avoid both of these issues if 'I have created' is employed for קניתי*: 'I have created a man with Yahweh'*.[506] Doing so maintains the association between God, creation and the verb קנה noted elsewhere in the Old Testament, as well as avoiding any unusual translations of the preposition.[507] While this move solves the linguistic problems attached to Gen. 4.1, it transforms the verse into a theologically difficult text, because, as Ilana Pardes observes, 'it is precisely by using a verb which in all other cases defines divine (pro)creation that Eve sets the birth of her son on the same footing with the birth of the race'.[508]

Parallels from the ancient Near East strengthen the suggestion that not only is Eve elevating herself above all other human mothers by aligning her abilities with God, but that she may, like Adam before her, also be echoing language used to describe the procreative power of a goddess. A particularly interesting comparison can be drawn between Eve's speech in Gen. 4.1 and a number of Ugaritic texts where a cognate of the Hebrew קנה is used to form the epithet of the goddess Asherah, consort of El.[509] Vocalized as '*qaniyatu 'ilima*',

[504] Bokovoy 2013: 31–2.
[505] Westermann 1994: 290.
[506] My own translation. See Bokovoy 2013: 19–35. On co-subject see Westermann (1994: 290). Examples of accompaniment in action include e.g. Gen. 5.22, 25; Gen. 6.13; 1 Kgs. 8.15.
[507] For a more in depth argument see Bokovoy (2013: 19–35).
[508] Pardes 1992: 45.
[509] *CTA* 4.30.30; 4.4.32; 4.1.23.

this particular title translates as 'creatress of the gods' or 'progenetrix of the gods'.[510] Given that Asherah was well known to the Israelite religion, her name appearing several times within the Hebrew Bible, and that there is a potential link between the very same goddess and Eve's epithet in Gen. 3.20, it seems entirely plausible that an ancient Israelite audience would have recognised this connection.[511] Thus, from the human perspective of both Adam in Gen. 3.20, and Eve here in Gen. 4.1, the first woman appears endowed with goddess-like creative qualities,[512] while God, to borrow the words of Ilana Pardes, 'is treated scandalously as a partner, not quite as the pivot around whom everything swerves'.[513]

This textual evidence for Eve's potentially heretical vision of her own procreativity survives in the LXX, but in a rather muted form. Thus we find in Gen. 4.1 Αδαμ δὲ ἔγνω Ευαν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν τὸν Καιν καὶ εἶπεν᾽εκτησάμην ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ. Within Eve's speech there are several notable choices of vocabulary. First, the verb used for קנה, κτάομαι, removes any potential nuance for understanding Eve as 'creating' with God. This, then, is perhaps the root from which the majority of modern translations have grown, as᾽εκτησάμην here means 'I have obtained' or 'I have acquired'. The choice of word could be seen to be a deliberate action on the part of the translators, to minimise the potentially problematic action of Eve. Such a hypothesis is strengthened in view of their employment of the neutral ἄνθρωπον 'human' rather than איש, the non-comitative διὰ 'through' in place of את, and

[510] D. Sivan 1997: 75. See discussion in Bokovoy (2013: 23).
[511] Bokovoy 2013: 19–35; U. Cassuto 1961: 200–2; Kikawada 1972: 33–7; Pardes 1992: 45.
[512] Wyatt 1999: 317; Meyers 2000: 82; H. N. Wallace 1985: 158.
[513] Pardes 1992: 44.

θεοῦ where we might expect κυρίου for the tetragrammaton. One could posit, as Helen Kraus does, that 'the Greek rendering seems to reflect little of the woman's awe as expressed in the Hebrew', and, I would argue by extension, none of her strength.[514] The same might also be said of the Vulgate, which is remarkably close to the LXX, and gives *possedi hominem per Dominum*. The only real departure back to the more sensational Hebrew is the retention of *Dominus* for Yahweh, in favour of *Deus*. Thus the transition from the scandalous Hebrew Eve, to the modern 'pedestrian' Eve of English translations is somewhat illuminated by the ancient Greek and Latin versions of Gen. 4.1.

d. Genesis 4.25: Eve gives birth to Seth.

To return to the Hebrew rendering of Eve's experience of childbearing, it is not until after the first mother has witnessed Cain's tragic murder of Abel that she speaks again, in Gen. 4.25[515]:

ותקרא את־שמו שת כי שת־לי אלהים זרע אחר תחת הבל כי הרגו קין

There are several contrasts between this and v. 1. Firstly, Adam appears as a proper noun, while Eve is only referred to as 'his wife', obscuring the association between the woman, and the honorific explanation that accompanies חוה, 'mother of all living'. Second, a strong sense of the woman's deference to the deity is then developed in her speech.[516] It is now God who is attributed sole creative power; it is God who 'puts' or 'appoints' 'another seed' to Eve. The verb

[514] Kraus 2011: 65.
[515] Although 'she said' is not included, it is woman who names the child so it would make little conceptual sense if the 'me' referred to Adam.
[516] See Pardes who also observes this shift in tone (1992: 51–3).

used to describe God's actions, שית, is employed deliberately to establish another 'folk etymology', this time for the name Seth, 'the appointed one', though this does not in actuality explain the meaning of the proper noun.[517] Thus we read 'And she named him Seth for "God has appointed (√שית) to me a seed (זרע) in place of Abel…"'. Eve's vocabulary here mirrors God's curse on the snake in Gen. 3.15, where he says: 'I will put (√ שית) enmity/Between you and the woman/And between your seed (זרע) and her seed (זרע)', perhaps suggesting that Eve is now, unlike in Gen. 4.1, heeding the deity's vision for her future. She recognizes that this child is not simply the product of her fecundity, an individual man as Cain was, but a 'seed' appointed by God who will be the source of future generations of humanity.

The word זרע, seed, is frequently associated with dynasty and generation, and appears repeatedly in the 'promise to the patriarchs' throughout Genesis.[518] Interestingly, within the Hebrew Bible women are very rarely the progenitors of זרע—notable exceptions include Hagar (Gen. 16.10); Rebekah, (Gen. 24.60); and Hannah (1 Sam. 1.11).[519] In the cases of Hagar and Hannah, as with Eve, the women's 'seed' is closely bound up in their relationship with God. Hagar is promised numerous descendants by an angel of the LORD, while Hannah petitions God for the 'seed of men', which as it stands appears to refer to an established family line. The same notion of Eve, 'mother of all living' establishing her own lineage is found within the context of Gen. 4.25, as Seth provides hope for the

[517] Westermann 1994: 338.
[518] Gen. 12; 13; 26; 28.
[519] J. P. Lewis 1991: 299.

future of humanity after the death of Abel and the banishment of Cain. So, while Eve is no longer celebrating her own generative power in Gen. 4.25, her naming speech for her third son pictures the woman as a powerful and pious matriarch who has come to realize God's control over creation.

There is little to remark upon in the transition of this verse from Hebrew to Greek and Latin, as there are few variations. Perhaps the only details of note are that while the Hebrew of Gen. 4.25 does not supply the noun חוה in the LXX Eve is given her proper name, Ευα, arguably maintaining more of her power. Interestingly the Greek also clearly marks that Eve is the speaker in this verse by adding the feminine participle λέγουσα where the Hebrew fails to mention who does the talking. What is perhaps most striking is that both the Greek and the Latin maintain the unusual description of a woman, Eve, being given another 'seed', with the use of the σπέρμα in the former, and *semen* in the latter.

As the story unfolds through Genesis 4, and Eve experiences the realities of motherhood, and the complications and potential pain of family life outside of Eden, her relationship with God becomes transformed. The violent story of Cain and Abel, framed by Eve's maternity, seems to imply that the first woman experiences the pain of childbearing, promised by God in Gen. 3.15, when she witnesses her first child murder his brother. Eve appears to respond to this pain by renegotiating her relationship with God, recognizing in Gen. 4.25 his power over childbirth, rather than her own. This journey taken by the woman has led some scholars, such as Ilana Pardes, to see Genesis 4 as a kind of second fall for Eve, mitigated by the birth of a third child, and thus following the broader

pattern of creation—destruction—recreation found throughout Genesis 1–11.[520] I would extend this conclusion to suggest that not only do we find a 'reconciliation' between Eve and God, but also that v. 25, the real end of Eve's story, represents an elevation of the first woman to the progenitor of a divinely appointed lineage.

e. Summary

The Hebrew Bible itself provides a fraught and conflicting picture of Eve's motherhood, which has both positive and negative facets. While Eve's maternal powers are clearly curbed in the biblical account, her motherhood is also celebrated. Indeed, it functions as a crucial aspect of her relationship with God. On close inspection of the elements of the Hebrew text and its interpretations, it has become plain that it is not until the writings of later interpreters that Eve's pain in childbearing become associated with menstruation and labour, or that she comes to be depicted as a monstrous sexualized mother figure. In the following sections, I will illustrate that Eve's reception history also includes interpreters who found cause to celebrate her strength, or sympathise with her struggles[521]

A number of notable articles and books have been produced that survey the early reception of these texts. For example, Jacques van Ruiten's article 'Eve's Pain in Childbearing? Interpretations of Gen 3.16A in biblical and early Jewish Texts' presents a linguistic survey of how the nature of the first woman's pain altered over time in various writings. In view of Eve's role in Gen. 4.1, 25, several

[520] Pardes 1992: 52–3.
[521] See Chapter II for discussion of the negative developments concerning Eve's motherhood.

publications catalogue the afterlives of Cain, Abel and Seth, and thus also include some important references to Eve's role as their mother. These include John Byron's volume *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition*, as well as *Eve's Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, a collection of essays edited by Gerard P. Luttikhuizen in which van Ruiten's article appears.[522] I will structure my own brief overview of the early reception history of Eve's role as mother verse by verse, dividing sections between Gen. 3.16, Gen. 3.20 and Gen. 4.1, 25.

Genesis 3.16, often accompanied by reference to the curse on the snake in v. 15, has proved to be immensely important for later interpreters' understanding of Eve's role as a mother. This is perhaps to do with the potentially oracular quality of the verses, helping to facilitate the depiction of Eve's suffering in childbearing as metonymic of all other women. Furthermore, the idea that God's punishments in Gen. 3.14-19 represented a re-ordering of the originally perfect creation in response to human sin lent these verses to being reframed in eschatological visions of paradise renewed in subsequent Jewish and Christian literature.[523]

Within the Hebrew Bible itself there seem to be at least three possible examples in which Eve's painful conception and childbearing are alluded to: 1 Chron. 4.9 as discussed above, Isa. 65.23, and Isa. 66.7-9. The latter two are both mentioned within Trito-Isaiah's vision of the new creation, when Yahweh will create 'new heavens and a new earth' (Isa. 65.17, cf. Isa 66.22). There are strong thematic

[522] J. van Ruiten 2003: 3–26; J. Byron 2011; G. P. Luttikhuizen 2003.
[523] In this section, I will, for the most part, be considering the same biblical and Jewish texts that van Ruiten employs in his article. My focus, however, is on the development of Eve's childbearing in relation to a feminine motif of painful promise.

and linguistic echoes established between Trito-Isaiah's hopeful image of the future, and the 'paradise' associated with Genesis 1–3, leading numerous scholars to comment on the particular link between Isa. 65.23, 25 and Gen. 3.14-19:[524]

They shall not labour in vain,
or bear children for calamity
for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD…

לא ייגעו לריק
ולא ילדו לבהלה
כי זרע ברוכי יהוה המה

but the serpent—its food shall be dust!

ונחש עפר לחמו

The resonances between these verses and Gen. 3.15 and 16 can be detected both in theme and, to a certain extent, vocabulary. Thus we find the verb ילד from Gen. 3.16a, as well as the highly significant זרע used in relation to the woman's offspring in both Gen. 3.15 and 4.25, while the words for snake (נחש) and dust (עפר) are identical in Isa. 65.25 and Gen. 3.15. The childbearing described in Isa. 65.23 is not framed as a physically painful event. Rather, the turmoil promised to Eve in Gen. 3.16 is rewritten in the redemptive prophecy of Isaiah 65, which weaves the Genesis narrative into a re-ordering of the natural world similar to that envisioned in Isa. 11.6-9. In Isaiah 65 Eve's pain becomes the pain experienced by all women in Israel, hinting at the first woman's metonymic

[524] For example K. Schmid (2014: 180–98) and W. Brueggemann (1998: 249).

status for her sex. In this instance the suffering in childbearing instigated against Eve becomes transformed into extreme despair or terror (בהלה); the kind of fear mothers in the ancient world, particularly in the shadow of a catastrophe such as the Babylonian exile, were likely to have felt concerning childbirth and the future of their children. The reversal of women's real, but also theologically loaded, strife in childbirth that is described in Isaiah 65 is typical of the message of chs. 56–66 of Isaiah more widely, which as Lawrence Boadt observes, 'reflect the tensions between the *vision* of a renewed Israel and the plain, hard *reality* which the exiles found on their return.'[525] It is apt then, that the punishment of Eve is used to implicitly convey the trauma experienced by women in exile, but also that its reversal represents the ultimate hope. While this interpretation does not exonerate Eve, nor present a particularly positive representation of her *per se*, it does establish a critical link between Eve, her punishment, and the promise of its alleviation in the new creation.

While Isaiah 65 envisages the actual reversal of women's physical birth pains, childbirth imagery as a means of representing both crisis and relief is found throughout Isaiah, as well as other prophetic books, where it is frequently used to metaphorically convey both crisis and hope. In the post-exilic Isaiah 26, the people explain their suffering at the hands of God as comparable to a woman in the pain of childbearing: 'Like a woman with child, who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near her time, so were we because of you, O LORD; we were with child, we writhed, but we gave birth only to wind' (vv. 17-18). The physical fear and dangers attached to the experience of giving birth became a

[525] L. Boadt 1984: 444

potent symbol for the terror experienced during times of calamity. While there is a clear emphasis on crisis, and on the physical pain of childbearing in this metaphor, Isaiah 26 also forges a familiar link between punishment and the negative aspects childbirth in a way reminiscent of Eve in Gen. 3.16.

In direct contrast to the use of birth metaphor to emotively depict catastrophe, Trito-Isaiah (Isa. 66.7), in the vision of the new creation, reverses the trauma felt by the people in Isa. 26.17-18. In the image of personified Zion giving birth:

Before she was in labour, she gave birth;
Before her pain came upon her, she delivered a son.

בטרם תחיל ילדה
בטרם יבוא חבל לה והמליטה זכר

John Sawyer, in his commentary on Isaiah, writes of this description of woman Zion in labour, 'the birth is miraculous: the curse of Eve (Gen. 3:16), ameliorated in 65:23, is now removed altogether (v. 7), or at least reduced to a momentary pang (v. 8)'.[526] While Susan Ackerman has also drawn a link between Isaiah 66 and Genesis 3, there are several reasons to support the argument that the writer here is once again directly alluding to Eve.[527] First, there are parallels in vocabulary between Genesis 3 and Isaiah 66. Though one, the use of ילד to describe childbearing, pertains to a fairly common term, when coupled with the use of איש for a male child in v. 13, it becomes rather more convincing to suggest an intertextual link with Genesis 2–4 and Isaiah 66. Katheryn Darr has supported this connection citing the use of איש, as well as more general descriptive

[526] J. Sawyer 1986: 218.
[527] S. Ackerman 1998: 174.

parallels, to posit a connection between the two texts.[528] Furthermore, though there is no explicit allusion to Gen. 3.16a in Isa. 66.7, the ambivalent and veiled echo between Eve as a suffering mother and woman Zion as a mother who gives birth without pain in Gen. 3.16aα and Isa. 66.7 should be registered, not only because it may be a precursor to the relationship between Eve's and Mary's maternity in much later literature, but also because, as I will demonstrate below, the nexus of Eve, Zion, motherhood, suffering and salvation is explored elsewhere in biblical and parabiblical texts.[529]

Van Ruiten suggests that further reference is made to Eve's 'curse' in the apocalyptic text of 4 Ezra (first to early second centuries CE), which, written in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, is deeply concerned with themes of theodicy and eschatological hope.[530] The first nine chapters offer a bleak picture of a humanity burdened with an 'evil heart', the paradigm of which is Adam (4 Ezra 3.20-7), and, interestingly, not Eve. Yet, in Ezra's fourth vision (4 Ezra 9.26–10.59) there is a turning point in the text, in which his pessimistic dialogue with the angel, Uriel, concerning the problematic relationship between a sinful but suffering people and its God, is replaced by an image of Ezra as a comforter to the suffering Zion. In this vision, Ezra encounters a woman who, after a period of barrenness, gives birth to a son, only to witness her child then die at his own wedding. Although the woman is unnamed, it later becomes clear that Ezra is in fact speaking to mother Zion. As he attempts to comfort the woman, who has declared that she will mourn until the day she dies, he says:

[528] K. P. Darr 1996: 252.
[529] This relationship will discussed below in more detail.
[530] Van Ruiten 2003: 23-4.

> You most foolish of women, do you not see our mourning and what has happened to us? For Zion, the mother of us all (*mater nostra omnium*), is in deep grief and great humiliation. It is most appropriate to mourn now, because we are all sorrowing; you are sorrowing for one son, but we, the whole world, for our mother... But if you say to me "my lamentation is not like the earth's, for I have lost the fruit of my womb, which I brought forth in pain and bore in sorrow (*quem cum maeroribus peperi et cum doloribus genui*)…" then I say to you "as you brought forth in sorrow…"'[531]

4 Ezra 10.7-14

Here we encounter a series of echoes between Eve (cf. Gen. 3.16a; 3.20), mother Zion (cf. Isa. 49.21; Isa. 66.7), and the earth (cf. Gen. 2–3; Sir. 40.1). In the words of van Ruiten, 'It is, of course, true that Zion or Jerusalem as a mother is a figure that has clear biblical roots and appears elsewhere in both early Jewish literature and the New Testament. However, the addition "(the mother) *of us all*" is something especially said of Eve (cf. Gen. 3:20).'[532] While the wording of the epithet is slightly different in the Latin of 4 Ezra than it is in the Vulgate of Genesis 3, or indeed in the original Hebrew, when combined with the descriptions of pain in childbearing in vv. 12 and 14 that certainly echo the biblical account in Gen. 3.16, it is almost impossible to deny that an allusion is being made to Eve.[533] Furthermore, the fact that the woman is mourning a son echoes the experience of Eve, who also lost her child, Abel. Thus, woven into this tragic image of a lamenting woman, mother of us all, who is revealed to be Zion herself, is significant amounts of Eve imagery. As van Ruiten summarises, due to the complex intertextuality and multifarious imagery 'it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the use of Gen. 3:16, [but] it seems as if, according to *4 Ezra*, the pain and the sorrow are related explicitly to childbirth. It is not so much Eve

[531] B. Metzger 1983: 546.
[532] van Ruiten 2003: 24.
[533] M. E. Stone 1990: 323.

who suffers this pain, but women in general, Zion and the earth.'[534] The first woman, and the feminine symbols of woman Zion and the earth as symbolic female progenitors meet at the cusp of crisis and hope, in a complex and fairly ambiguous framing of women's tragic experience of childbearing. While it is impossible to mark this as either a positive or a negative appropriation of Eve's curse, in view of the development of Eve's character as a mother, the explicit correlation between Eve and Zion's experience of childbearing is significant in the broader trajectory of the reception of Gen. 3.16, particularly in the light of Isaiah 66 as we have already seen, and Revelation 12, as we shall see below.

In this short catalogue of Hebrew Bible and pseudepigraphical texts it has become clear that a tradition surrounding Eve's painful maternity was developed, following a trajectory from Isa. 65–66 to 4 Ezra. This pattern of interpretation draws Gen. 3.16a into an eschatological frame, where pain in childbirth is woven into notions of punishment and suffering, hope and new creation. While Eve is by no means directly exonerated, neither is she directly attacked as a fallen mother. This is particularly interesting in view of the famous virgin/whore dichotomy that comes to be established between Eve and Mary in later centuries, an important facet of which was the contrast between Mary's painless birth, and Eve's 'curse'. Interestingly, Jennifer Glancy has argued that the immaculate, pain-free birth of Christ was a relatively late development of Mariology, arguing that 'in the second and early third centuries the story that the sinless Mary was exempt from the punitive pain visited on the sinful Eve was not

[534] van Ruiten 2003: 25.

yet written on Mary's storytelling body.'[535] Thus, in the earliest stages of the Eve/Mary relationship, they were not presented as type and antitype with respect to childbearing. This seems to support my suggestion that Eve's suffering in childbearing was rather ambivalent in the earliest stages of reception; it was a sign of her humanity, which was fallible though not necessarily 'fallen' in the way later interpreters understood. Though Gen. 3.16 represented Eve's crisis, this would be reversed in the eschaton. The first woman's fate is mirrored in the fate of Zion, both as a people and as a personified female, who, when in a state of crisis experiences the pains and turmoil of childbirth (Isa. 26.17-18; Jer. 4.31; Mic. 4.10), while in the new creation Zion will bear without pain (Isa. 66.7). In particular, this correlation between the two feminine symbols of Eve and Zion is significant, as Zion's experience of both anguish and hope in childbearing provides a more sympathetic context in which to understand Eve's 'curse', as opposed to the contrast that developed later between the pain of the first mother, and the immaculate Virgin Mary.[536] Though I do not argue that this relationship between Eve and Zion was in any way a fully formed or stable tradition developed between Isaiah and 4 Ezra, I believe there is enough evidence at least to posit an interpretative matrix that included links between Eve and Zion, crisis and new creation, pain and promise, thus complicating the picture of the first mother's suffering maternity.

The employment of Yahweh Elohim's 'curse' on Eve's motherhood to discuss a particularly feminine facet of hope is not only prevalent in the Hebrew

[535] J. Glancy 2010: 86–136, quotation on p.86. See also T. Beattie (2002b: 99–106) where she suggests that in patristic writings, the oppositional relationship between Eve and Mary was not as clear cut as it came to be, though I would argue that writings by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus certainly lay clear foundations for this development.
[536] See discussion of this interpretative trend in Chapter II.

Bible and pseudepigraphical literature, but also features in the New Testament. While there are several references to Eve within the New Testament—1 Cor. 11.7-12; 2 Cor. 11.3; 1 Tim. 2.12-15, Rev. 12—only the latter two make reference to her motherhood.[537]

Revelation 12 (late first century CE) offers perhaps the most graphic and dramatic reinterpretation of the role of Eve as mother in Gen. 3.15-16, delivered from a distinctly apocalyptic perspective:

> A great portent appeared in heaven: woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent appeared: a great red dragon… then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born… But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God…
>
> Rev. 12.1-6, 13-17

Alongside the very clear echoes of Genesis 3, this text also brings to mind the suffering mother Zion of 4 Ezra, and Zion's birth of a son in Isa. 66.7. The language of woman, seed, serpent/dragon and obedience that is developed throughout Revelation 12 has led David Aune to go as far as suggesting that the text is 'a dramatization of the so-called *protoevangelium* of Gen 3:15'.[538] In view of Gen. 3.16, the structure of the description of the woman giving birth is noteworthy. First the sound of pain is mentioned, as it is in Gen. 3.16aα LXX ('I will greatly increase your pains and your groaning'), followed by a description of pain closely linked to actual birth, again echoing Gen. 3.16aβ ('in pains you will give birth to children'). Admittedly, the specific vocabulary used in the Apocalypse and in the Greek of Genesis 3 differ from one another. However, it

[537] For discussion as to whether John 16.21 might also refer to Gen. 3.16 see discussion by Judith Lieu (1996:232–3).
[538] D. E. Aune 1998: 708.

seems safe to accept that we should not expect the language employed by writers of the late first and early second centuries CE to be rigidly homogenised. That said, the unusual use of σπέρματος to describe the woman's offspring in Rev. 12.17 seems to be a deliberate choice by the author to maintain the allocation of 'seed' to Eve, as found in Genesis 3–4.[539] Further support for the allusion to Eve in the 'woman clothed with the sun' is derived from context; there is an undeniable series of references made in this passage to the curse on the snake in Gen. 3.15, while the later description of the struggle between the woman and the dragon in vv. 13-17 seems to echo Gen. 4.11.[540]

Eve's pain is here developed into an eschatological battle between good and evil, where the woman is undoubtedly portrayed as the victim. Though the female character is undergoing the struggles associated with Eve's punishment for wrong-doing, the author of Revelation 12 describes how both God and the earth act to save the woman and her child (Rev. 12.6, 14-17). Clearly, then, the penalty described in Gen. 3.16 is not envisioned by this author as being instated by God without the hope of future removal, a notion that has been repeatedly present throughout the Hebrew Bible and Pseudepigrapha. Interestingly, this theme is accompanied by a familiar symbolic feminine matrix of Eve and her seed, mother Zion and her son, and the earth. In time the unnamed woman of Revelation 12 will become deeply woven into the mythology of the Virgin Mary, however due to the anonymity of the 'woman', Eve is not herself automatically precluded from sharing this hope of salvation. Instead, her character and her

[539] See also van Ruiten (2003), which clearly illustrate the variety of semantic range attributed to this passage due to processes of translation and interpretation.
[540] For a through survey of the intertextual links between Genesis 3 and Revelation 12 see P. S. Minear (1991: 71–7), where he argues for 'no fewer than ten shared motifs' between the two texts (p.75).

story forms an integral part of the vision; Paul Minear goes as far as to suggest that Rev. 12.10-12 celebrates 'the end of the curse on the earth, and with it the end of the curse on the woman and on the woman's seed.'[541]

Moving to the later text of 1 Tim. 2.11-15 (mid to late second century CE), an (arguably) deutero-Pauline epistle, we encounter a passage that is often cited as one of the most misogynist narratives within the biblical text; a sanction for the subjugation of women by men, and a justification to deny women a role in the church, and indeed, any public voice (cf. Gen. 3.16b). Certainly, the text is undeniably androcentric, indeed misogynistic, in its establishment of a troubling gendered hierarchy based on the fact that 'Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor' (1 Tim. 2.13-14). Furthermore, for modern feminists, the window of 'hope' presented in v. 15—'yet she will be saved through childbearing'—offered to women who have been stripped of any public visibility (1 Tim. 2.11-12) was simply a shackle to domestic submission as a mother. Yet, in view of the reception of Eve as the mother of death and sin because of her transgressions (Sir. 25.24), the association between Eve and redemption in 1 Timothy is potent. Furthermore, this text brings a new perspective to the connection already established in the Hebrew Bible, Pseudepigrapha, and Revelation 12 between redemption and childbearing, and is in fact unique in its total removal of the punishment in Gen. 3.16, despite the fact that the woman's transgression is mentioned only a moment before her childbearing is described. Thus in view of

[541] Ibid. 77.

the early reception of Eve's maternity this image of redemptive childbearing is unambiguously positive, precisely due to its total omission of the 'curse'.

While the syntax of this passage is complex, with the author moving between singular and plural, past and present, in order to form an analogy between Eve and the Ephesian woman, many still agree it is possible to discern a specific message about the first woman within the verses.[542] Though the Ephesian women/woman are/is the focus of the present tense in vv. 9-12, the past tense is then used to discuss Eve in vv. 13-14, before moving to the future tense in v. 15a, where the subject is left open. Nonetheless, the postpositive conjunction between v. 14 and v. 15, δὲ, 'but', appears to link the two verses together, thus encouraging the reader to see Eve as the subject of σωθήσεται. As Mounce concludes, 'v 15 shows that what Eve did, although it had consequences, has been dealt with, and both Eve and all women can be saved.'[543]

While a great deal of effort has been made to either minimise, or indeed taint, Eve's role as the mother of all the living, in the early reception of Gen. 3.20 one is still able to encounter some strikingly positive renderings of Eve's maternal role.[544] In the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37–71: first century BCE – first century CE), in several instances where English translations usually have the 'Son of Man', the Ethiopic texts actually include a fascinating reference to Eve. Rather than 'the Son of Man' it gives the 'son of the woman' (*1 Enoch* 62.5; 69.29); or '"son of the descendants of the mother of the living" (62.7); or "that son of the descendants of the mother of the living" (62:9, 14; 63:11); or have the

[542] W. D. Mounce 2000: 94–149.
[543] Ibid. 143.
[544] For negative interpretations of Eve's maternity see 2.IV.

same epithet but use other pronouns (69:26, 27; 70:1; 71:17).'[545] Lewis explains the phrase as a 'double translation' of Eve's seed mentioned in Gen. 3.15. It is, however, also a particularly interesting development in view of my earlier exegesis of the Hebrew of Gen. 4.25, in which I suggested that Seth was the first in an important genealogy with Eve at its head, rather than Adam. Given that there is ongoing debate concerning the identification of Seth's descendant, Enoch, with the messianic figure in *1 Enoch*, based on chs. 70–71 of the text, this idea is not entirely without grounds.[546] Perhaps in the Ethiopic *1 Enoch's* presentation of Eve as progenitor we find a tradition that focuses on the maternal root of the messianic lineage, drawing on the notion of '*her* seed'.[547] In the words of Koch, for the writers of the *Similitudes*, 'the life of the first woman has remained the nucleus for eschatological liberation… in Enoch the Son of Man is conceived as the victorious descendant of the first wife!'[548]

Elsewhere in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the role of Eve as the 'mother of all' does not receive any extended attention. The same can be said of the New Testament, and the earliest Church fathers. Interestingly, in the Talmud, there is one significant reference to Eve's role as 'mother of all living', which certainly seems to have ancient origins. In the '*Abodah Zarah* ('foreign worship'), the following passage is found:

'R. Judah also includes the picture of a woman giving to suck and Serapis.' A woman giving to suck alludes to Eve who suckled the whole world… [The picture of Serapis is only prohibited when he

[545] E. Isaac 1983: 43, n.j; Lewis 1991: 302.
[546] J. J. Collins 1998: 188–91.
[547] Lewis 1991: 302. See also H. S. Kvanvig (2007: 194), who links this to the expansion on Gen. 3.15 in the Targums.
[548] K. Koch 2007: 232.

is represented as] holding a measure and is measuring, and that [of Isis] when she is holding a child and giving it to suck.[549]

This prohibition on the image of Isis suckling a child—presumably Horus—appears to be directly built upon a perceived correlation between the Egyptian goddess and Eve.[550] Whatever conclusions we draw about the specific relationship between Eve and Isis, the most surprising aspect of this passage is the immediacy of identification the rabbi makes between the *image* of a nursing mother and Eve 'who suckled the whole world', potentially implying that the motif of Eve as 'mother of all' was rather more potent than the relatively meagre textual findings suggest.[551]

Unfortunately Eve's role as the mother of Cain provided a locus around which negative portrayals of her maternity collected. In particular her relationship with her son was tainted in the Jewish and Christian traditions by textual expansions that depicted Eve as the lover of the snake, or indeed the devil, with whom she produced Cain. This reading seems to stem from an unnatural and unsettling gloss on Eve's own admission that the serpent had 'deceived', or as it is sometimes translated 'seduced', her, as well as a play on her ambiguous speech in Gen. 4.1.[552]

This theme, however, did appear with a slightly different nuance, in the Gnostic writings *Ap. John*, *Hyp. Arch*. and *Orig. World*. Here Eve is described as being raped by the archons—the wicked rulers of the material world, often

[549] '*Abodah Zarah* 43a. Translation taken from I. Epstein (1935).
[550] See E. McCabe 2008: 102–5.
[551] For further discussion of the image of Eve breast-feeding see section III.a of this chapter.
[552] See IIb, which contains an overview of the development of the traditional representation as a monstrous mother and mate of Satan. On the significance of Gen. 4.1 see J. L. Kugel (1998: 147–8).

associated with the God of Genesis—resulting in the first woman giving birth to Cain, and in the case of *Ap John,* Abel too.[553] While this interpretation has echoes of the Jewish tradition referred to above, it has clearly been realigned to depict the woman as a victim, while the 'God' figure is the wicked criminal.[554]

Within the early reception history of Adam and Eve, perhaps the fullest representation of the couple as parents to Cain, Abel and Seth, is offered in the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* (100–300 CE) and Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* (post-300 CE).[555] As Vita Daphna Arbel has illustrated, the earlier *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (*GLAE*) offers a multi-vocal image of Eve, with contrasting positive and negative perspectives on the first woman appearing alongside one another. Particularly interesting within this re-telling of the story of the primal couple, which is narrated from outside of Eden, is the description of Eve's motherhood. Indeed, the *GLAE* actually opens with the account of the births of Cain and Abel (*GLAE* 1.3). Directly after the birth of the two boys, Eve has a dream that foreshadows the fatal violence of the brothers' relationship, which she recounts to Adam:

> I have seen in a dream this night the blood of my son Amilabes who is styled Abel being poured into the mouth of Cain his brother and he went on drinking it without mercy. But he begged him to leave a little of it. Yet he hearkened not to him, but gulped it down completely; nor did it stay in his stomach, but came out of his mouth.
>
> *GLAE* 2.2-3

Clearly the writers, in their dramatisation of the biblical text, have woven together the murderous capabilities of Cain and the description in Gen. 4.11 of

[553] Byron 2011: 14.
[554] See 3.III.c on Gnostic interpretations of Genesis 1–4.
[555] Arbel 2012: 3.

the earth swallowing up Abel's blood after he has been killed. Arbel suggests that the particularly gruesome and shocking depiction of Cain within his mother's dream also reflects negatively on the dreamer herself. She argues that Cain's crime of consuming his brother's blood echoes a tradition associated with children of the fallen angels and human women in *The Book of the Watchers*, thus implying that the underlying message of the dream points to Eve's adultery with a fallen angel, and Cain.[556] Arbel writes, 'the description [of Cain in the dream] emphasizes her dissenting, sinful nature, and further calls attention to her corrupt sexual encounter with an evil angel that yielded such disastrous results.'[557] While she is undeniably accurate in her identification of a heightened sense of violence in Cain's characterisation in the *GLAE*, her conclusions about Eve may be a little premature.[558] After all, though their may possibly be some indication of Eve's coupling with a fallen angel, this is in no way certain, and it remains unclear how else the dream narrative 'emphasizes her dissenting and sinful nature'. Eve does not conceal her dream, or use the information for wicked purposes. Rather she shares the premonition with Adam and the couple immediately go to look for their children, though tragically they are too late, and find Abel dead (*GLAE* 3.1). Furthermore, Arbel fails to take into account Eve's grief when she discovers that Cain has indeed killed his brother (*GLAE* 3.2-3). Though the angel Michael appears to Adam and Eve, and instructs them not to be distressed—αλλὰ μὴ λυποῦ—because God will provide them with another child, the parents are unable to let go of their grief—ἔχοντες τὴν λύπην περὶ Ἄβελ τοῦ

[556] Arbel 2012: 33. See 1 Enoch 7.4-6.
[557] Arbel 2012: 33.
[558] Indeed, Arbel seems to presuppose the tradition that Cain's wickedness is some way indicative of Eve's flaws or her sinful behaviour. See 2.IV.a and 2.IV.b.1.

υιοῦ αὐτῶν (*GLAE* 3.3).[559] Cumulatively, Eve's brutal dream and her mournful experience of its reality, I argue, offer a tragic and moving image of the first mother, rather than one of condemnation.

Indeed, the theme of Adam and Eve mourning the death of Abel is also found in Jubilees 4.7 and is represented in the Animal Apocalypse in 1 Enoch 85, which, in fact, highlights Eve's mourning over Adam's death.[560] Furthermore, this seems to have been constructed in deliberate response to the biblical text, as in the LXX of Gen. 3.16, the word λύπη to describe the pain that Eve will suffer as part of her childbearing, which is the very same word (λύπην) used to convey grief she experiences when Abel dies in the *GLAE*. Thus, Eve becomes a mourning mother in the *GLAE*, which clearly construes the grief of childbearing that the Hebrew and LXX versions assign to Eve in Gen. 3.16 as the reality of the suffering she goes through when one child murders another. The enactment of Eve's punishment outside of Eden remains a significant feature of the later Latin *Vita Adam et Evae* (*LLAE*). Once more, the vision Eve has of Cain ingesting Abel's blood is present, but its connection to her feelings of suffering as a mother are more explicit than in the *GLAE* as she concludes her speech describing the dream to Adam by saying: '*Propterea dolorem habeo*'—'therefore I have pain' (*LLAE* 23).[561]

In addition to the description of Eve's painful experience of the death of her child, Abel, the *Vita* actually includes a preceding description of Cain's birth, in which the suffering childbearing described in the Gen. 3.16a is 'narrativised'. After failing a second trial of obedience set by Adam in the so-called 'penitence

[559] All quotations in Greek from *GLAE and LLAE* are taken from G. A. Anderson and M. E. Stone (1999).
[560] van Ruiten 2000: 155.
[561] Compare language of the Vulgate—*et in dolore paries filios*

narrative' (*LLAE* 5.1-11.3), Eve is separated from her husband and travels west. Three months pregnant, she sorrowfully takes shelter, and after some time she goes into labour (*LLAE* 18–19). The *Vita* presents Eve crying out to God to help her, but the deity shows no mercy to the woman. Eve then petitions the celestial bodies to inform Adam of her distress, and the very next verse describes Adam's realisation of Eve's anguish, and his journey to find her. When he reaches Eve, Adam discovers that she is in a state of tremendous pain, and she asks that he pray on her behalf for divine assistance (*LLAE* 20–21). Unlike Eve's prayer, Adam's prayer receives a response, as twelve angels arrive to help the first woman give birth to the first child. Amongst the divine beings—or accompanying them, it is unclear—is the angel Michael, who 'touched his face to her chest and said to Eve: "Blessed are you, Eve, on account of Adam, for his prayers and supplications are great. I was sent to you that you might receive our help. Arise now and prepare yourself for birth"' (*LLAE* 21). Thus, Eve is given hope and assistance in her hour of need, and the biblical punishment found in Gen. 3.16a is, to a certain extent, mitigated in the account of the *Vita*. Indeed, Eve's maternal experience is simultaneously one of suffering and alienation from God as well as one of repentance and consequent blessing. Admittedly, Eve's blessing and survival of the first birth is only made possible through Adam's intervention. While this gendered hierarchy, inherited from the biblical text, undoubtedly limits the positive aspect of Eve's relief from suffering in childbearing, there is, nonetheless, an optimistic element to her role as mother.[562]

[562] Anderson 2000: 23–9.

To conclude, in this catalogue of reception of Eve's motherhood as it is represented in Gen. 3.16, 20; 4.1, 25 it has become clear that the first mother and her attendant imagery were highly significant within ancient Jewish and Christian interpretation. In particular it has been shown that in contrast to the dominant and popular notion of Eve as the 'mother of death', her motherhood was not, in fact, entirely tarnished by sin. Rather, a complex matrix of symbolism concerning women's childbearing, pain, punishment, promise and salvation was developed in a wide range of different religious writings, and Eve played a significant part in this. Indeed, Eve appears to have been woven into imagery that would subsequently become crucial to Marian theology, thus pointing to *shared* analogical, rather than antithetical connections between the first woman and the Virgin, in relation to Mother Zion and the Woman Clothed With the Sun. Furthermore, the focus on Eve's suffering in writing such as *Jubilees* and the *Lives of Adam and Eve* for example her maternal mourning over Abel, suggest further similarities between Eve and Mary.

III. MOTHER EVE IN THE VISUAL ARTS.

This brief and deliberately selective account of Eve's earliest reception history has demonstrated that the first mother's experience of childbirth, suffering, and grieving for her son Abel is a persistent, though often unnoticed feature of her first afterlives. Although the majority of Eve's history in art is, like academic scholarship of the garden narrative, dominated by scenes of the Temptation and Fall, and to a certain degree, Expulsion, there are several examples of visual

renderings of the first woman outside of Eden that can help to open the eyes of contemporary readers of Genesis 2–4 to the complexity of Eve's maternity.[563]

Images of the first parents beyond Paradise follow relatively set iconographic patterns; from the early medieval period, we find evidence of Eve portrayed in a maternal role either at the birth of one, or both of her first two sons Cain and Abel, holding or nursing one or both of these children, or in a state of mourning for the death of Abel at the hands of Cain. She is occasionally depicted with Seth, though this is rather more rare, and in some instances both male and female children surround Eve. While many representations of Adam and Eve with their offspring offer quite literal representations of Eve as a mother, the earliest developments in Eve's maternity bear reflection here, as they shed light onto the process of her characterisation as mother through image making, and indeed, the development of different notions about her maternity. Thus, this chapter does not seek to offer a comprehensive account of the visual traditions surrounding the depiction of Eve as a nursing mother nor as a mourning mother, but to investigate the insights these two tropes might offer for contemporary readers of Eve's story and the potential they have for expanding of the popular notion of Eve's womanhood both historically and today.[564]

[563] See H. M. von Erffa 1989–1995: 1–420 on Genesis 1–5 (esp. 166 and 178). On the comparative rarity of punishment scenes, which are usually positioned in pictorial narrative renderings once the couple are outside of Eden actually living their punishments, see von Erffa (1989–1995: 231, 353).

[564] For catalogues of these particular scenes within visual art, and indeed the text of Genesis 1–3 more generally, see von Erffa, (1989–1995); L. Réau, (1955–1959). Some times also depicted with the apocryphal daughters—see B. Murdoch (2009: 240).

a. *Mater Lactans*

Eve's appearance as a mother with her infants initially seems to have developed as part of the iconographic tradition of *The Labours of Adam and Eve*, and thus interpretatively speaking functions as a visualisation of Gen. 3.16. Interestingly, these images of Eve with a small child or children frequently appear following the Expulsion in the majority of pictorial narrative schema, thus conflating the tasks verbally described by God in Gen. 3.16-19 and the reality of these as they take place outside of Eden. Though the representation of Adam's labour, which primarily takes the form of him working the land with tools, or sometimes oxen, bears no relation to the text of Genesis 4, envisioning Eve's task as childcare aligns with vv. 1 and 2. Thus, while the images of the first man at work are embellishments on the details supplied in ch. 4, imaging Eve with her offspring is an expansion rooted in the Bible account.[565] Eve's labours, however, were not *always* associated with motherhood, and frequently in manuscripts from late antiquity into the middle ages, the first woman is envisioned spinning while Adam tilled the earth, meaning there was an entirely apocryphal trajectory within her depiction in the *Labours*, too. That said, there might be an underlying symbolic connection to Eve's maternity in the depiction of her with a spindle and/or distaff, as through her role as mother, the first woman weaves in her womb the 'garments of skin' that God initially gave humans in Eden (Gen. 3.21).[566] Regardless of the symbolism, the image of Eve weaving conceptually seems to mirror the manual labour of Adam working the ground. These two

[565] It should be noted that Eve's labour is not always depicted as bearing, and her representation is rather less iconographically stable than Adam's. Thus, on numerous occasions Eve's is presented spinning alongside Adam working the land.
[566] G. A. Anderson 2001: 86–89.

motifs are also combined in a number of cases, with Eve with her child as she spins.[567] Below, I focus primarily on *Eva Lactans*, examining the ways in which this particular motif was used to characterise Eve as mother.

1. Cotton Genesis and its Archetype

The development of these different forms of Eve imagery in the earliest manuscript illuminations has been discussed by Kurt Weitzmann in his reconstruction of the Cotton Genesis (MS Cotton Otho B VI), a fifth to sixth century illuminated LXX Genesis now badly fire damaged, believed to have originated in Egypt, probably Alexandria.[568] As part of his reconstruction, he posits that CG would have presented the first woman with a spindle and distaff in its rendering of the *Labours of Adam and Eve*. Weitzmann, along with numerous other art historians and theologians, understands this imagery to represent a typological connection between Eve and Mary. In the description of the Annunciation in *Protoevangelium of James* 10–11 Mary is said to have been spinning Temple cloth when an angel of the Lord appeared before her to tell her that she would give birth to 'the Son of the Highest'. By portraying Eve engaged in the same domestic activity before either of her children is born, early Christian artists developed an implicit visual association between the two women. The precise nature of this link is difficult to ascertain—does Eve's spinning draw a complementary link between the two maternal figures, both of whom play critical roles in the generation of humanity, or does it imply opposition?[569] The

[567] For example, in a stone relief from Ferrara Cathedral.
[568] K. Weitzmann, 1986: 30–4.
[569] As I demonstrated in 2.IV.a, there is a strong trajectory of interpretation that constructed an anti-thesis between Eve and Mary by comparing Eve's temptation and conception of the snake's words, and Mary at the Annunciation.

answer is not immediately clear, and certainly the figure of maternal weaving appears to have been used as points of both positive and negative connection between the two.[570]

Having observed this apparently typological, Christianised style of representation in the reconstructed CG, Weitzmann goes on to posit that 'an earlier version of the imagery existed and that version, though Christian, contained fewer overt Christological features and was richer in Jewish elements.'[571] He argues this on the rich interweaving of 'biblical and haggadic elements' that are present in CG. Indeed, he suggests that there is a possibility that the archetype for CG was a Jewish pictorial source, defending this suggestion by indicating the same 'blending of biblical and haggadic elements' found in the Jewish murals at Dura-Europos.[572] Rather than typologically portraying Eve spinning, he suggests that this archetype or model for Cotton Genesis would, in fact, have included a nursing Eve.[573] He bases this hypothesis on the fact that certain cognate manuscripts also share the same motif. Weitzmann posits that this earlier iconography would likely have been drawn from the birth account in the *Apocalypse of Moses*. This bears some critique, as while it is clear that Eve's maternal role is considerably extended in the *Lives of Adam and Eve* materials, Weitzmann's specific observations lack due care. First, it is the Latin version, often understood to represent a Christianised version, and not the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses,* which is recognised as Jewish, that includes any description

[570] Eve's spindle in Junius 11 discussed below has been taken to be a positive female symbol. For negative, anti-type framing of Eve spinning see P. H. Jolly's discussion of the San Marco mosaics in Venice (1997), and Anderson (2001: 86–89).
[571] Weitzmann 1986: 37.
[572] Ibid. 36–7. See also Weitzmann 1971: 76–95.
[573] Weitzmann 1986: 37.

of Eve's childbearing and the building of booth or bower structures by either Adam or Eve. Secondly, though the *Vita* does describe how Eve gave birth under a bower, it does not explicitly mention her breastfeeding in the same location. That said, we might conclude that the image of Eve nursing served as a visual representation for the textual reference to childbirth. These details aside, Weitzmann's more general conclusion that the cumulative evidence for the inclusion of apocryphal Jewish details throughout the CG permits the possibility that it relied on a pictorial Jewish origin remains viable, and thus should not be immediately disregarded on the basis of my criticisms alone. If Weitzmann's hypothesis is accepted, and we assume the earlier archetype, Jewish or otherwise, included an *Eva Lactans*, it suggests that the maternal visualisation of Eve nurturing a child formed part of the earliest Adam and Eve iconography, along with the Temptation, Fall and Expulsion[574] This is, in many way, unsurprising, as the image of Eve with child after the expulsion is considerably closer to the biblical text than the motif of spinning.

There is one main flaw, however, that I can discern in Weitzmann's argument. It is unclear why he perceives the spinning figure of Eve to be more Christian, and more specifically, typological, than the figure of *Eva Lactans*. After all, *Protoevangelium of James*, which is the source for the tradition of Mary spinning, also describes her nursing Christ. While I accept the possibility of a transition from one motif to the other taking place during the production of the Cotton Genesis, I am not entirely convinced this can confidently be explained on the basis of a Christianising impulse. That said, while the textual representation

[574] Ibid. 37.

of Mary breastfeeding has very early roots in Christian writings, it is not until the seventh century that we find any visual evidence of this.

Regardless of the reasoning behind the visual development that apparently took place between Cotton Genesis and its model, if Eve did appear nursing her child in the earlier, Jewish influenced manuscript archetype, it is difficult not to be reminded of '*Abodah Zarah* 43, mentioned above in IV.2.VII. In this tractate from the Talmud, Eve is linked to Isis by the motif of breastfeeding, and consequently R. Judah specifically prohibits any image of nursing women. Based on the iconographic syncretism that is attested here, we might speculate that the supposed presence of an *Eva Lactans* in an early illuminated manuscript might in some way be connected to the practices alluded to in the Talmud. While the association between Eve and Isis is clearly disapproved of by R. Judah, it was obviously part of religious visual culture for certain groups of Jews, and could therefore have some connection to the representation of Eve breastfeeding an infant within early manuscript tradition. Even if the Cotton Genesis archetype was of Christian origin, it may have inherited imagery from a Jewish tradition of manuscript illumination, as well as Jewish literature.[575]

Though the potential allusion between *Eva Lactans* and *Isis Lactans* that I outline above is entirely speculative, if accepted it might in turn have significance for the broader history of the Eve and Mary relationship. Many scholars studying imagery associated with the Virgin have posited a connection between *Maria Lactans* and *Isis Lactans.* For example, Marina Warner, in her famous study of the

[575] For discussion of the interaction between Jewish and Christian illumination see K. Kogman-Apel (1999: 61–96).

Virgin, *Alone of All her Sex*, suggests that Mary has been pictured as a lactating mother in her earliest visual depictions, and that this motif was inherited from Isis iconography, in particular images of the goddess nursing her son, Horus.[576] But more recent studies on the topic of the Virgin's breastfeeding highlight a considerable historical gap between the nursing Virgin and the nursing Isis.[577] While evidence of figures of Isis suckling has not been found after fourth century CE, it is not until the seventh century that there are any known, definitive visual representations of Mary nursing Christ.[578] Perhaps *Eva Lactans* functioned as an iconographical mediator between these two, with images of her nursing her son being attested to—though without extant visual evidence—during the second to fourth centuries CE.[579] Though Eve does not suckle a divine child in the way that Isis and Mary do, she nonetheless has striking maternal connections to both female figures, and these revolve around her capacity to nurture and feed new life. Furthermore, the images of Eve nursing her child first appear precisely in the window of time between the demise of *Isis Lactans* and the arrival of *Maria Lactans*. Indeed, as I will demonstrate below, in response to one instance of later iconography of Eve and Mary, art historian Wilhelm Pinder has suggested that the image of Eve breastfeeding her infant could be one origin for the turn towards portraying Mary with Christ at her breast.[580]

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[576] M. Warner 1978: 192–3. This connection has been posited by many more art historians and theologians.
[577] S. Higgins 2012: 71–90.
[578] Priscilla Catacombs—I follow scholars who suggest that there is not sufficient evidence to definitively identify the two women with infants as Mary, and further that the images are not clear enough to confidently state that the woman is portrayed in the act of breastfeeding: Higgins (2012: 71–90). Higgins follows V. Tran Tam Tinh (1973). Earlier literary resources do refer to Mary's lactation—for example *Protevangelium of James* 19.2.
[579] Working on the basis that the *CG* archetype predates *CG* likely created in the fourth or fifth centuries.
[580] W. Pinder 1952: 127.

Several later biblical cycles may have developed out of the Cotton Genesis archetype, yet unlike CG they maintain the image of Eve nursing. These include two of the famous illuminated Carolingian Bibles, the Moutier-Grandval Bible (c.830-840—see Fig. 1) and San Paolo fuori le mura Bible (c. 870).[581] This formed part of a wider tradition of presenting Eve's labour in terms of her childbearing, and more specifically, representing this labour by the act of breast-feeding. Eve's punishment, or labour, in this trajectory of visual exegesis therefore becomes associated with toil, but also nurture and new life. In other examples contemporary to the Moutier-Grandval and San Paolo fuori le mura Bibles, such as the Vivian Bible and the Bamberg Bible, Eve appears with a child, but she is not breastfeeding. Rather the infant sits in her lap. Though this still foregrounds Eve's maternal capacity, I would argue it does not offer such a strong symbol of her life-giving power as the depiction of her nursing a child.



Fig. 1 Moutier-Grandval Bible, Add. MS 10546, fol. 5v, c. 830–840.
© The British Library Board

[581] H. L. Kessler 1971: 151.

2. Ashburnham Pentateuch



Fig. 2 Ashburnham Pentateuch, MS nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 6r., c. sixth to eighth centuries CE. Bibliothèque Nationale de France

While discussion of Cotton Genesis and its hypothetical archetype can only remain speculative, concrete visual evidence of Eve nursing her sons is found in the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Fig. 2). Dated to the late-sixth or seventh centuries, the provenance of the illuminated Vulgate manuscript is still debated, with possible locations for its production including Spain, North Africa, or Italy, amongst others.[582] Believed to initially have included sixty-eight miniatures, only nineteen now survive.[583]

[582] D. G. Verkerk 1999: 102–5.
[583] D.G. Verkerk n.p.

In the full-page illumination documenting the life of Adam and Eve after expulsion, and the story of Cain and Abel, the viewer encounters two representations of Eve with a child. The first in the orange register at the top of the page, depicts, from left to right, Adam and Eve lamenting their expulsion beneath a canopy, Eve with a child on her knee—possibly nursing, it is unclear due to damage—beneath another canopy, and Cain and Abel in two different poses. In the green band below, Eve appears, this time in different costume and pose, holding an upright infant in her lap while Adam ploughs the fields, and on the far right God admonishes Cain.

Like the Cotton Genesis and its archetype, there has also been much discussion of the Jewish influence upon the iconography found in the Ashburnham Pentateuch, with J. Gutmann suggesting that the manuscript was copied from a Jewish model.[584] Clearly, as with the Cotton Genesis archetype the illuminations appear to have been influenced by the *Life of Adam and Eve*. In this case the illustrations more fully replicate details found in the text, which describes how 'When Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise they made for themselves a tent and spent seven days mourning and lamenting in great sadness' (*LLAE* 1.1).[585] The imagery of Adam and Eve beneath a booth directly parallels the literary tradition, as does the image of Eve with a child beneath another bower, if we accept that her nursing was employed to represent the act of childbearing.

[584] B. Williamson 1999: 111. J. Gutmann 1953: 60.
[585] Gutmann 1953: 64.

Due to the damaged state of the miniature, the images are open to interpretation. According to R. Gregg, the now incomplete orange strip once depicted Eve with two children in her lap, rather than her breastfeeding one infant, while it is quite clear from the inscription that only infant child, Cain, was depicted in the green register: *hic Ava sub casa feret Cain filium suum*.[586] Dorothy Verkerk, however, in her earlier study of the same image in the Ashburnham Pentateuch, differs from Gregg's reading. Rather than recognising two children on Eve's lap in the red strip, Verkerk maintains that only one infant, Abel, is present, while in the green we find Cain.[587] Furthermore, she understands the child in the top damaged section of the miniature to be suckling from its mother.[588] In order to develop this reading, Verkerk gives considerably more attention to the depictions of Eve than Gregg, closely analysing the differing representations of Eve in the red and green registers. Comparing the dress and the pose of each mother Eve, Verkerk perceives a connection between the presentation of Eve's motherhood and the moral character of her child. In particular she highlights the difference in attire in the characterisation process. For example, Eve in the red strip is dressed in plain, basic clothing, and the child against her breast is naked, creating a humble scene of motherhood. By contrast, Eve in the green register is ornately dressed, as is her son. Verkerk points to 1 Tim. 2.9-15 as an interpretative key to this visualisation, arguing that the meek, plain Eve in the top strip conforms to that text's assurance that woman 'will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and

[586] R. C. Gregg 2015: 11–12.
[587] D. Verkerk 2004: 109–118
[588] The image of Eve with two children in her lap appears at S. Zero in Verona, but otherwise it is highly unusual for both children to be in the woman's lap. If both sons appear it is usually with Abel on Eve's knee and Cain seated or standing by his mother.

holiness, with modesty', and thus bring about her own redemption by giving birth to an innocent and righteous child, Abel. Conversely, in the green register she is attired in bejewelled and colourful garments, leading Verkerk to suggest that 'the materialistic and well-dressed Eve, who plays with Cain rather than feeding him, has pursued the things of this world', and apparently this has resulted in the birth of a sinful son.[589] I would also suggest here that the notion of Eve as an arrogant mother might result from the artist's reading of her speech in Gen. 4.1, which can be perceived as a kind of boast. By interweaving the pride expressed by Eve in Genesis 4 with the admonishment of female of vanity in 1 Timothy 2, the Ashburnham Pentateuch miniature functions as a comment on good and bad mothering, with Eve as the archetype.[590]

While Verkerk's reading, which I find convincing, is not entirely positive in its findings on the characterisation of Eve in the Ashburnham Pentateuch illuminations, it nonetheless suggests that she was depicted as a model mother, both good and bad. Furthermore, there is the suggestion from its interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 that woman, represented in the metonymic Eve, can redeem

[589] On the use of costume and pose to depict Eve as prideful, see Jolly (1997).

[590] A similar differentiation of imaging Eve as mother of Cain and mother of Abel is found in the stained glass of the north Rose at Reims Cathedral (c. 1241). In her book, *The Gothic Stained Glass of Reims Cathedral* (2011), Meredith Parsons Lillich points out that there are two female figures portrayed with boy children seated in their laps in the North Rose which depicts the first four chapters of Genesis. Historically, the second woman has been identified as the Virgin with Christ-child, but Lillich convincingly argues that 'a nursing Virgin would be unexpected in French art as early as ca. 1240' (p.121), and consequently identifies her as Eve. Lillich does not, however, suggest there is any sense of reconciliation or redemption of Eve in this image of her with her innocent child. While she recognises, using medieval colour theory, that Abel, dressed in blue, is a type of Christ figure, Lillich argues that Eve is veiled in yellow in order to emphasise her negative qualities. However, later in her discussion of the composition and ordering of the stained glass medallions, Lillich notices the paralleling of the image of Eve and Abel with an eel, suggesting an allusion to Gen. 3.15, and the redemption that Eve's seed will bring about (see pp. 113–125). On the basis of this evidence, and the arguments put forward by Verkerk as well as further evidence found below, I would suggest that while Eve might be represented as a sinner in the Reims stained glass windows, this was once again complicated and nuanced by her role as mother, and in particular to mother of Christ-type sons, viewed through the lens of Gen. 3.15.

herself through the bodily act of birth and the social and moral acts of good parenting. While defining a mother's success and acceptability in relation to her modesty, and indeed the behaviour of her male children is by no means compatible with a modern, feminist or gynocentric understanding of maternal importance, this image does offer a important witness to the potential symbolic significance of Eve's maternity for early Christians, and in particular, mothers. Though she can be used as a tool to perpetuate patriarchal understanding of proper female behaviour, Eve also offers a window into the esteem that was attached to good mothers, and thus some elements of power and status within the medieval familial structure, and most importantly according to the Ashburnham Pentateuch miniatures, she participates in this through her parenting of Abel.[591] This is particularly significant for the character Eve, as in popular memory her association with her murderous son Cain has often eclipsed her pathos filled relationship with the innocent Abel.[592]

[591] On the significance of women as mothers, and the recognition this provided for them within patriarchal social structures, see Atkinson 1991.
[592] Indeed, it is usually Mary who is credited as the 'good' mother, against Eve's failure. While Abel is frequently linked to Christ, explicit reflection on what this might mean for Eve's maternity is rare.

3. Junius Manuscript



Fig. 3 MS. Junius 11 p.47.
Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



Fig. 4 MS. Junius 11 p.52.
Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

In a rather different textual vein to CG, AP, or the Carolingian Bibles, the depiction of Eve as a mother is highly prominent in the Anglo-Saxon Caedmon manuscript, also known as Junius 11, which is currently housed in the Bodleian collection. Dating from 680-1100 CE Anglo-Saxon England, rather than including either an LXX or Vulgate version of part or all of the Bible, Junius 11 offers three Old English poetic rewritings of Old Testament books—Genesis, Exodus and Daniel—and fourth poem, *Christ and Satan*.[593] These texts are accompanied by a number of illustrations in the re-writing of Genesis, though the full program of intended images for the entirety of the volume was clearly not completed, as the manuscript is full of blank spaces.[594] The text covering the Genesis story is itself comprised of two combined poetic versions entitled, *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. These works are not only re-writings of the biblical text, but also include numerous apocryphal details from the Adam and Eve tradition, including the Fall of Satan.[595]

While there has been a great deal of writing on the nature of Eve's subjectivity and strength or weakness in Junius 11, and in particular *Genesis B*, relatively little material appears concerning Eve's role as mother in the manuscript.[596] As Michelle Dockray-Miller suggests, on the topic of Junius 11 Eve, 'critics have long argued whether to celebrate or excoriate her, but none has examined her *as mother* and questioned whether she actively reared her

[593] In my assessment of Junius 11 I am indebted to the insights of M. Dockray-Miller (2003) and C. E. Karkov (2001) whose works drew my attention to the unusual maternal representation of Eve in this manuscript's illuminations.
[594] L. Lockett 2013.
[595] For a full discussion of the textual sources behind Genesis A and B, see Ibid.
[596] For example G. Overing 1991: 35–63.

children';[597] an observation that I have argued is applicable to the majority of the history of interpretation of Eve. Yet, as a work that rewrites and illustrates the Genesis account of the story of Creation, Flood and the Patriarchs, Junius 11 undoubtedly shares the key themes of generation and procreation found in the biblical narrative.[598] Interestingly, while the written poetic account appears to follow the patrilineal focus of the majority of biblical accounts of human generation, the images offer a rather different view.[599] On the topic of procreation and gender roles in the family Dockray-Miller correctly observes that there is considerable tension between the verbal and the visual accounts.[600]

The text of *Genesis A*, which encompasses both Gen. 3.16 and Gen. 4.1,2 and 25, clearly associates Eve with death, sorrow and lamentation by embellishing the scriptural version of God's word—'And unto Eve God spake in wrath: 'Turn thee from joy! Thou shalt live under man's dominion, sore smitten with fear before him. With bitter sorrow shalt thou expiate thy sin, waiting for death, bringing forth sons and daughters in the world with grief and tears and lamentation' (XVI II. 918-924). Furthermore, the poem also diminishes her role in childbearing by comparison to the biblical account. Eve's speech following the birth of Cain is removed in its entirety, as are any verbal descriptions of her physical childbearing, while her naming of Seth is credited to Adam.[601] Thus, the text appears to be closer to the Genesis 5, priestly focus on male lineage, than to the vocal picture of maternal authority described in Genesis 4. There is one further detail that suggests a more actively negative understanding of Eve's role

[597] Dockray-Miller 2003: 227.
[598] Karkov 2001: 143–58.
[599] Ibid. 144; Dockray-Miller 2003: 222.
[600] Dockray-Miller 2003.
[601] Dockray-Miller makes similar observations (2003: 238).

as mother according to the text's writer. Within the poem, Eve's crime is associated with Cain's crime, developing this link through the use of literary imagery. In the Junius 11 text, between lines 985 and 999, the writer compares the results of Cain's crime to the growth of a 'fruit of pain… a horrible fruit', which serves to 'reinforce the connection between the fruit of the tree of death that Eve carried inside her after the Fall and her son, the fruit of her body'. [602]

By contrast, the images of the first parents and their children are dominated by the female figure. Though the illustrations do nothing to minimise Eve's guilt or pride in her pursuit of forbidden knowledge—for example, she is leading Adam away from Eden after the expulsion while he looks back in anguish—her maternity is nonetheless foregrounded, thus complicating the manuscript's representation of the first woman.[603] Though Eve is not depicted as breastfeeding her child as part of a *Labours* type scene, Junius 11 in fact presents the viewer with an even more intimate maternal image and for this reason merits inclusion here.[604] In this manuscript the reader encounters an image of Eve in the childbed (Fig. 3), holding her baby, presumably Abel, as Cain looks on from between the central columns.[605] Adam is relegated to the corner of the illustration, and is rather detached from the children who are so clearly presented as *his* in the poetic text. Instead, Eve dominates, with her body

[602] Karkov 2001: 80. This echoes the literary association made by both Tertullian and Innocent in 2.IV.a and the focus on Eve as the bearer of a wicked seed discussed in 2.IV.b.
[603] Dockray-Miller 2003: 241.
[604] Other instances of Eve in the childbed include the Lutwin's *Eva und Adam* (likely composed around 1300; the only surviving manuscript dates to fifteenth century Codex Vindob. 2980), which is an illuminated manuscript comprised of the biblical material, a substantial amount from the vernacular *Life of Adam and Eve*, and original poetic material by the author (see M.-B. Halford 1984: 3–7). The illumination is clearly reliant on a version of the *Life of Adam and Eve* as it includes the group of angels who are described helping Eve with the birth of her first child (4.II.e). Another instance is found in the Queen Isabella psalter, where Eve is imaged in the childbed with Cain—see below further discussion of this manuscript.
[605] Dockray-Miller (2003) and Karkov (2001) both agree on this reading of the figures.

extending across half of the page she holds her infant in front of her; mother and child stare into each other's faces. Karkov notes this departure from the usual iconography of Eve with her children that I have outlined above, and offers the following explanation for the differences, suggesting that 'the Junius 11 illustration… is clearly related to contemporary Anglo-Saxon images of the Nativity'.[606] While Eve is frequently described as the carnal, sexual side of Woman, in opposition to the pure Mary, in these images that focus on her motherhood, a physical similarity between the two women as life-bearers comes to the fore. Karkov assumes that the alignment between Eve and Mary can only function properly here because it is Abel and not Cain who is depicted in the childbed scene, and as such the parallel between the innocent Abel and the innocent Christ provides ground to also forge a positive connection between Eve and the Virgin.[607] This strengthens the pattern discerned above in relation to the Ashburnham Pentateuch, where likewise the depiction of Eve's maternity was characterised by the nature and actions of her children.

Junius 11 also features an image of Eve with Seth (Fig. 4), which is rare by comparison to the depiction of the first mother with Cain and Abel. In direct contrast to the accompanying text, but arguably remaining close to the original biblical text, it is Eve, rather than Adam who is connected to the child. As Dockray-Miller suggests in her analysis of these differences, 'in these drawings, Eve demonstrates subjectivity and agency… especially in the scenes relating to her children'.[608] I would also emphasise that along with agency, Eve gains in credibility and moral status as a woman. By depicting Eve with her innocent

[606] Karkov 2001: 79.
[607] Ibid.
[608] Dockray-Miller 2003: 246.

sons, rather than with Cain, these images consequently only portray the positive aspects of Eve's role in giving birth to important male children, two types of Christ. Thus, not only iconographically does Eve echo Mary and her infant—especially in scene with Seth—but also theologically she becomes aligned with the Virgin in such a way that complicates the more usual opposition of the two female characters as symbols of Woman.[609]

Karkov and Dockray-Miller have both offered their own hypotheses as to why such a gendered difference might arise between the text and the images. First, the images were added to the manuscript by another separate hand, or more likely hands, than the writer, or indeed copyist. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that the images were added some time after the manuscript was composed—or at least when several different poetic versions were combined—and at an entirely different location. [610] Dockray-Miller suggests that given the lack of consensus on the precise provenance and dating of the manuscript, female scribes should not be ruled out from being involved in the process. Indeed, she suggests this might be the precise reason for such a divide between text and image, positing that the artist responsible for the maternal images of Eve, and indeed other mother figures, may have been produced in a women's scriptoria.[611] Dockray-Miller makes this suggestion not only based on the prevalence of female agency in certain of the illustrations, but also on certain

[609] For discussion of the *complementary* rather than *oppositional* roles of Eve and Mary as mother in several Italian Quattrocento paintings, see B. Williamson (1999: 105–38). Here she argues for reading several Italian renaissance paintings, in particular the Cleveland Panel, of the nursing Virgin with naked Eve at her feet in the context of their motherhood, rather than contrasting the carnal first 'real' woman with the ideal Virgin mother. Crucially she notes, 'Eve's being honored for the part she played in the drama of Salvation is further reinforced by the fact that in most of the paintings in the group surrounding the Cleveland panel Eve is depicted with a halo' (p. 122)
[610] See Dockray-Miller 2003: 251–2.
[611] Ibid. 253–4.

specific stylistic details. She argues that while the images of seated biblical mothers with children on their laps echoes contemporary representations of the nativity, they offer a rather more life-like depiction of the women with infants, suggesting to Dockray-Miller that 'this sort of accurate depiction of babies and mothers in the Junius 11 maternity illustrations implies an illustrator intimately familiar with babies and their needs.'[612] While she eschews any kind of essentialism by avoiding the argument that these images could *only* be made by a woman/women, Dockray-Miller does use her observations to open the possibility of a female 'voice' being expressed within the manuscript through these illustrations. She supports this by observing that Anglo-Saxon nuns, particularly abbesses, were often mothers who took holy orders after becoming widowed, and thus could have brought these lived experiences into the scriptoria.[613] This sheds interesting light onto the gendered nature of textual and visual culture production, and highlights a possible contrast between female and male experience of motherhood, and in turn the influence this had on the interpretation and re-presentation of Eve.

In a slightly more conservative approach, Karkov discusses the female *audience* of the text as a potential influence behind the creation of the images. Noting that during the potential period of production of Junius 11 a number of powerful queens ruled England, she suggests that 'while the images do play on the traditional association of women with the body and domestic space, and do limit female power to the ability to produce male heirs, they also reflect the very real way in which Anglo-Saxon queens attained and manipulate power, shaping

[612] Ibid. 250.
[613] Ibid. 251.

their own histories through their bodies and their sons.'[614] This observation of the particular maternity imaged in Junius 11 supports observations made in relation to the image of Eve in the Ashburnham Pentateuch. While, like with Mary, it is her male children that define her motherhood, it is also her motherhood that offers a means of acceptance, agency and, indeed, redemption for herself and for other women.

4. Hildesheim

In the eleventh century, one of the first direct visual representations of the Eve/Mary typology appeared on the bronze doors constructed for Hildesheim Cathedral, commissioned by Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim. Following in the iconographic traditions of the Cotton Genesis archetype and some of the Carolingian Bibles, these doors represent the full biblical account of the Adam and Eve's lives that had become established visual tradition, including the scenes of Adam and Eve's labour. The doors do, however, offer their own unique

[614] Karkov 2001: 86. See a similar take on the representation of Eve's maternity in the Isabella Psalter (1308–1330), in an article by Anne Rudloff Stanton (2002: 1–27). Rudloff Stanton highlights the ambivalence of the imaging of Eve's maternity in this particular document, which draws attention both to her sin, but also to her positive capacity as life-giver (p. 18–19). In particular Eve is displayed as nursing Abel in the initial of Psalm 11 (Vulgate 10), perhaps highlighting the mother's nurturing role as she shelters her child Abel while Cain observes, as well as foreshadowing the wickedness of the first son. In a psalm focused on the righteous and the wicked, Eve is associated with her innocent son Abel, rather than the evil Cain. Rudloff Stanton concludes from this imagery, 'there are no scenes of the *Virgo lactans* in this psalter; given the well-known typology of Eve and Mary, our *Eva lactans* could have acted as a reminder of the heights, as well as the depths, to which woman could aspire'. She makes this point precisely in relation to the female audience, Queen Isabelle, for whom this Psalter was intended. Rudloff Stanton, echoing Karkov's theory concerning the meaning of the Junius 11 illustrations of Eve and other Old Testament mothers, suggests that in the Isabella Psalter 'Eve is the first of a long line of Old Testament mothers, including those mentioned in Isabelle's coronation, and the integral, yet uneasy, relationship between her sin and her maternity mirrored the uneasy relationship between a queen's sexual influence over her husband, and her role as dynastic vessel' (p. 22). Rudloff Stanton contrasts this with treatment of Eve's story in the Tickhill Psalter, more likely to have been created by men, for men, which omits any sort of depiction of Eve's motherhood.

variants on earlier manuscript imagery, indicating their simultaneous continuation *and* development of Adam and Eve imagery.[615]

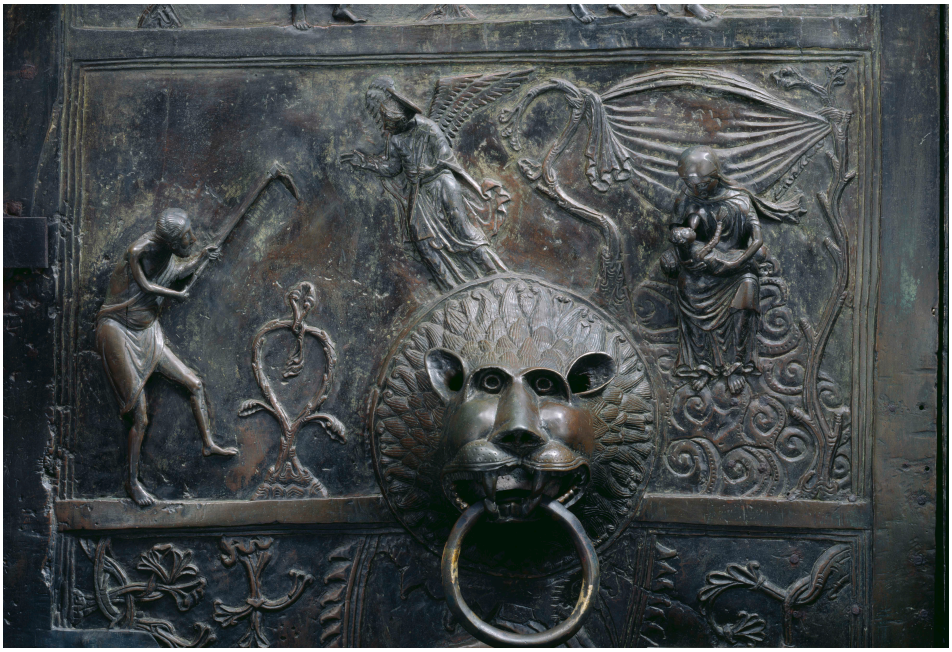


Fig. 5 *Labours of Adam and Eve,* Left door—Bernward Doors, Hildesheim Cathedral, c.1015. Photo courtesy of Dr. G. Lutz

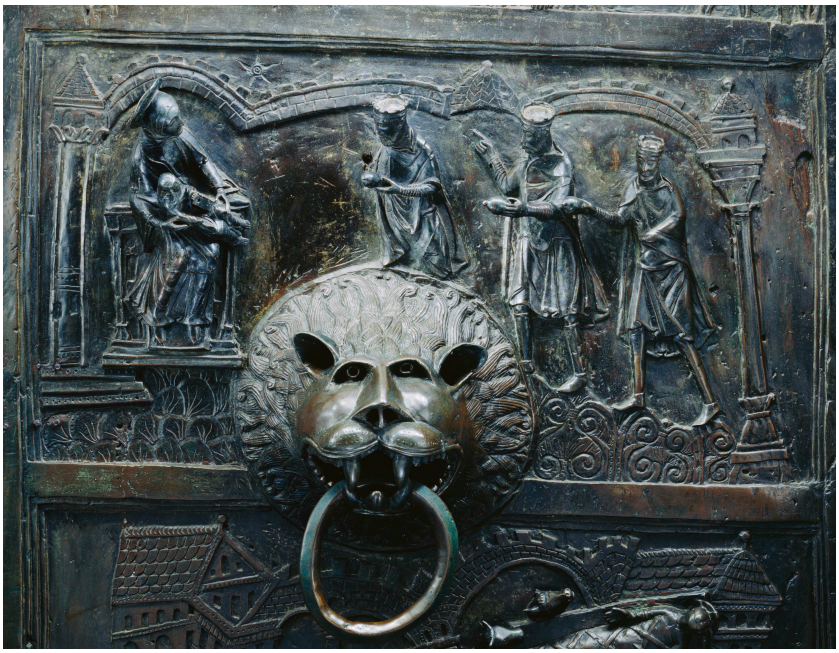


Fig. 6 *Adoration of the* Magi, Right door—Bernward Doors, Hildesheim Cathedral, c.1015. Photo courtesy of Dr. G. Lutz

[615] See A. S. Cohen and A. Derbes 2001: 19–38.

On the left hand bronze door, at the end of the Creation, Fall and Expulsion sequence, which clearly portrays Eve as responsible for human transgression, picturing her as considerably more sexualised than other contemporary depictions, we find the familiar motif of the *Labours of Adam and Eve*. Like the examples of CG archetype, AP and Touronian Bibles given above, here Eve appears under a bower on the right hand-side of the left door, while Adam is depicted working the earth. It is unclear which child Eve is holding, though there is no sign of a second infant, which might suggest the babe is Cain. Determining the identity of the son, as has already been established, clearly influences the understanding of Eve's motherhood. Furthermore, in the specific case of the Bernward Doors, the connection of Eve and Mary has become visually unavoidable, as Mary and her child being greeted by the Magi appear in the corresponding register on the right hand door. Whether the boy pictured with Eve is Cain or Abel will determine therefore not only the meaning of Eve as mother, but also the type of relationship that is established between the first woman and the Virgin; was this a relationship of type, or type and antitype, of identification or of opposition?

In his discussion of the Hildesheim door, Ernest Guldan points to the contrast between Eve's motherhood and Mary's motherhood that was put forward by Tertullian who strongly emphasised Eve's role as mother of the first murderer, which he directly opposes to Mary's birthing of the redeeming

Christ.[616] Guldan assumes that a similar distinction was at work in the imagery of Hildesheim, concluding that the child depicted with Eve on the doors is Cain. Thus he suggests that this instance of Eve with child forms part of a larger visual strategy in the bronze work that was intended to offer an unquestionably antithetical presentation of Eve and Mary, with the first woman being associated with sin, sexuality and monstrous, flawed maternity, while Mary represents purity, and salvation through her birthing of Christ.[617]

Yet, an earlier art historian also noted the debt that Mariology might owe to Eve iconography which is highlighted in the Hildesheim doors. Pinder, in his volume *Die Kunst der deutschen Kaiserzeit bis zum Ende der staufischen Klassik,* suggests that in this work of art, 'und dennoch spürt man in der Eva mit dem Kinde die Urmutter aller kommenden plastischen Madonnen.'[618] Employing an interesting familial mode of language to describe the visual relationship he perceives between the image of *Eva Lactans* and *Maria Lactans*, Pinder appears to make a similar connection between the iconography of the two women that I suggested earlier in reference to the link between Eve nursing and *Isis Lactans*; that the figure of Eve breastfeeding her child served as a model for the tradition of depicting Mary nursing Christ. If this line of thought were pursued, one would assume then, that Pinder understood this child to be Abel, rather than Cain, with Eve as a mother of an innocent. This is certainly the reading developed by

[616] E. Guldan 1966: 19. For more in depth discussion of this aspect of Tertullian's work see Chapter 2.IV.a.
[617] Ibid.
[618] Pinder 1952: 127.

Rebecca Garber in her mention of Pinder's interpretation of the Hildesheim doors—she assumes the babe is Abel. [619]

The issues of interpretation that accompany the Hildesheim doors are characteristic of the majority of visual representations of Eve's maternity that have been discussed in this section so far. It is clear that one of the key factors in determining the reception of Eve's motherhood was the character of her sons. While the figure of Eve nursing an infant is, in itself, a relatively positive image by comparison to the better known renderings of her as a companion of the devil or a temptress to Adam, this is qualified by whether the babe at her breast is her wicked son, Cain, or her innocent child, Abel. This contrast between the two children, and therefore the evaluation of Eve's motherhood, becomes bound into her typological association with Mary. If Eve is presented as mother of the murderous Cain, the implication is that her motherhood is the absolute antithesis to Mary's pure birthing of the innocent Saviour. By contrast, if Eve appears nurturing Abel, her relationship alters to one of analogy with Mary. Abel, as a type of Christ brings Eve into a similar relationship with the Virgin. Indeed, as we saw in the Ashburnham Pentateuch, the two characters of Eve's children allow her to appear as a model for both bad and good mothering. While this determination of Eve's character based on the lives of her sons cannot be said to be empowering in a modern feminist sense, it nonetheless allowed for Eve to be portrayed as a positive mother figure within the patriarchal context that these manuscripts were produced, and indeed the continuing patriarchy of Western culture until the twentieth century, therefore complicating her moral status.

[619] R. Garber 2002: 179 n. 4.

b. *Mater Dolorosa*

As well as being a nurturing mother, Eve was also depicted as a mourning mother. Building on the Bible's account of Eve's suffering, pain, and according to some translations, sadness, in childbirth, the figure of Eve lamenting the death of her son Abel entered into her afterlives.[620] Very early in the development of interpretation on the lives of Adam and Eve, the protoplasts' mourning over Abel was added to the plot of Genesis 4 (see above section 2.II.e). *Jubilees* 4.7, the *Animal Apocalypse* of *1 Enoch 85*, and the *Greek Lives of Adam and Eve* explicitly developed, in individual ways, accounts of the mourning of the first parents over their murdered child, while earlier texts such as 4 Ezra allude to the grief and suffering of Eve described in Gen. 3.16. Interestingly, these early interpretations, which utilise Eve as a model of female pain and promise, also often form the foundation of a great deal of mariological imagery—for example Isaiah 66 and the Woman Clothed With the Sun in Revelation 12—suggesting that from the very earliest stages Eve and Mary shared an association with a complex nexus of ambivalent, suffering, tragic maternal figures.[621] Indeed, I suggest both women might be referred to as a type of *Mater Dolorosa*. While this title became a popular feature of Mariology during the middle ages, the label is also fitting for the first mother.[622] In the Vulgate, Gen. 3.16 describes Eve's fate in childbearing with the term 'dolor'—in *dolore* paries filios—offering a linguistic echo between

[620] See for example the Vulgate's use of *dolor* and the continuation of this tradition in the KJV 'in sorrow…'

[621] On Mary and the woman in trito-Isaiah M. W. Elliott 2007: 283–4; on Mary and Woman Clothed with the Sun see Pelikan 1996: 177–88.

[622] Pelikan suggests that during the High Middle ages, Mary as *Mater Dolorosa*, became very popular (1996: 125–38).

the maternal grief of Eve described by and Mary, *Mater Dolorosa*.[623] Within art, the most effective and direct articulation of this aspect of their typology is developed in works that create direct visual symmetry and comparability between compositions featuring Eve mourning over Abel, and Mary mourning over Christ (also not a strictly scriptural event).[624]

One of the earliest visual renderings of a typological comparison between Mary's lament over Christ's body and the mourning of Abel by Adam and Eve was clearly articulated both textually and visually in the popular *Speculum humanae salvationis* (SHS), dating to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries.[625] *SHS* was dedicated to illuminating the links between Old and New Testaments, and according to Adrian and Joyce Wilson, 'The *Speculum humanæ salvationis*… is unique in portraying, more fully and dramatically than any other book of the period, the medieval concept of typology, or the thesis that all the events of the New Testament were prefigured by the events recounted in the Old.'[626]The overarching focus of the work was on the Fall and Salvation of humanity, and crucial to this history was the role of the Virgin in the redemption of humankind.[627] Equally, given these themes, Eve features repeatedly in the work, which develops both contrasting and complementary associations between the first woman and Mary.

[623] See 4.II.a for discussion of Hebrew, Greek and Latin versions of Gen. 3.16
[624] See Erffa, 1989–1995: 383–4.
[625] T. D. Jones, L. Murray and P. Murray 2014: 302; K. J. Vrudny 2001: 2. The popularity of the *SHS* is attested by the 400 extant manuscripts, as well as fourteen different print editions, in numerous languages.
[626] A. Wilson and J. Lancaster Wilson 1984: 10.
[627] Vrundy 2001: 216–73.

In its treatment of the Fall, the *SHS* is particularly unforgiving of Eve, placing blame squarely at her feet; 'our mother Eve… brought death to the whole human race'.[628] The text openly embellishes the biblical account, suggesting that though it is not mentioned in Scripture, the woman actively seduced Adam to eat the forbidden fruit after listening to the tempting words of the Devil.[629] This failure of Eve clearly represents the antithesis of Mary the Redemptrix in *SHS*, and the contrast between the two women made in the text can also be illustrated through a comparison between the depictions of their respective interactions with the Devil in numerous copies. In *SHS* manuscripts and prints Eve is often pictured apparently in conversation with the devil, usually taking the form of a female hybrid human/snake, directly before the actual taking of the fruit.[630] In contrast, like many Patristic and Medieval thinkers, the author of the *SHS* perceived Mary to be 'the woman' mentioned in Gen. 3.15 whose seed would eventually triumph over the serpent, and consequently she is often pictured in copies of the Mirror crushing the head of the serpent. [631]As Crowther neatly summarises, 'The image of Mary emphatically trampling the Devil under her feet is a striking counterpoint to earlier images of Eve.'[632]

While there is clearly an antithetical, oppositional treatment of Eve and Mary in relation to sin, both textually and visually, this is complicated by the typological treatment of the women's motherhood in *SHS*. Though admittedly the text, like many others, strips Eve of any redemptive role in Gen. 3.15 and

[628] Translation taken from Crowther 2010: 29. This clearly follows the tradition outlined in Chapter 2.IV.a.
[629] Ibid.
[630] See B. Cardon 1996: 171. This is cited by Crowther 2010: 31.
[631] Vrundy 2001: 224–28. Crowther 2010: 21. N.b. not all manuscripts have the same imagery—Morgan Library MS M.140 fol. shows Christ defeating the devil using the Cross.
[632] Crowther 2010: 31.

transfers this to Mary, *SHS* does forge an apparently positive link between the pair through their experience of mourning over their children.



Fig. 7 *Speculum humanae salvationis,*
MS M.140 fol. 28v, c.1350–1400.
Morgan Library New York



Fig. 8 *Speculum humanae salvationis*
MS M.140 fol. 29r, c. 1350–1400.
Morgan Library, New York.

The images of Mary, *Mater Dolorosa*, lifting her son's body from the Cross in a scene of tragic loss, and the support of the cruciform corpse of Abel by his parents are obvious visual partners, accompanied by the following text: 'That grief so great of Mary also was prefigured / When by the false Cain Abel was slaughtered and slain'. The writer subsequently goes on to clarify that Mary's grief was greater than Adam and Eve's, with the first couple's mourning lasting a century, while Mary's continued for eternity. Nonetheless, the allegorical association between Adam and Eve, and Mary is decidedly positive, and is of particular significance for the first woman, who as Kimberly Vrundy observes, 'is less often a type of Mary symbol than a symbol of precisely the opposite of that which Mary represents'.[633] The two images and text are also accompanied by a further two Old Testament types for Mary: Jacob weeping over the coat of Joseph, and Naomi grieving for her dead sons. Clearly, in each instance, the examples presented in *SHS* are meant as prefigurations of Mary's sorrow, instead of contrasts. Furthermore, rather than focusing on potential types of Christ that might be discerned within these topics, as many interpreters had done for centuries, the author highlights the acts of lamentation, using this as the point of coherence for all four images. Thus, the agony of Adam and Eve functions as an Old Testament type for Mary. Within the history of interpretation of Eve, bringing Eve and Mary together by their shared experience of grief was an innovative aspect of *SHS*, and served to complicate the work's characterisation of Eve and by nature of her metonymic status, woman.

[633] Vrundy 2001: 168.

Interestingly, in recent scholarship on the importance of the figure of Eve in *SHS*, this significant moment for first woman, and indeed the Eve/Mary relationship, has been given little attention. Kathleen Crowther, in her overview of *SHS* mentions the parallel between the mourning of Abel and Christ at the start of her summary, but only in order to contextualise the general typological scheme of the text. The remainder of her analysis focuses on the text's negative treatment of Eve. John Flood, in his thesis on Eve in Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon and Medieval England touches on the depiction of Eve as a type of Mary in this part of *SHS*, but gives little attention to the specifics in relation to the women's mourning. After quoting the primary sources but making no mention of accompanying illuminations, he writes briefly:

> The typology that joined Mother of God to the 'mother of all living' may have redeemed Eve and at least it was a point commonly invoked in defences of women's worth. Although the Mirour does not deny the importance of the Eve/Mary type, its shift to parentage from motherhood erodes one of Eve's postlapsarian dignities…[634]

While Flood deals generally with the Eve/Mary type that develops around their maternity, Kimberly Vrudny, in her thesis of the Marian theology of *SHS* offers a fuller examination of the particular motif of Eve mourning Abel and Mary lamenting Christ.[635] She demonstrates that this interpretation was rare, to the point of being almost non-existent amongst Patristic and Medieval interpreters.[636] Thus, *SHS* appears to build on other material, likely apocryphal and pseudepigraphical sources such as *Jubilees* and the *Lives of Adam and Eve*, to develop a clear parallel between the extra-biblical tradition of Mary's sorrow and the extra-biblical tradition of Adam and Eve's sorrow.

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[634] J. Flood 2011: 75–6.
[635] Vrundy 2001: 168–77.
[636] Ibid.

We might also draw some comparison between the interpretative strategy found in *SHS* and the motif of *Eva Lactans* discussed above. While it is clear that the shared act of lamentation is crucial to the typological association of Adam and Eve and Mary in *SHS*, it is also of note that this is strongly reliant on the underlying Abel/Christ type. In much the same way that the nursing figure of Eve appears to have either contrasted or complemented the Virgin and child depending on whether she was depicted with Cain or Abel, it is Eve's loss of Abel that once more provides a point of contact between the two women, and in the case of *SHS* Adam as well. Interestingly, in contrast to the visual imagery of Eve and Mary nursing, which appears to develop first in the context of depictions of Eve and subsequently as part of the visual tradition of the Virgin, the representation of Eve cradling her dead son seems to have developed retroactively, with images of the Old Testament lamentation over Abel being directly influenced by the motif of the Lamentation of Christ, and the introduction of the *Mater Dolorosa* into Marian theology.[637]

While *SHS* appears to offer one of the earliest examples of a typological connection between Eve and Mary as mourning mothers, the visual echoing of the lament of Christ and Abel did continue to reappear on occasion in text and image throughout the following centuries.[638] The fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a rise in interest in the topic of the first funeral in engraving and painting.[639] In numerous works from all over Europe that engaged with this topic, Eve appears in various poses, at times turning her face upwards

[637] Erffa, 1989–1995: 384
[638] Ibid. 383–4 for one potentially earlier image of Adam and Eve mourning Abel.
[639] A. Pigler 1974: 19–20.

to the heavens, while Abel's body lies at her feet,[640]or kneeling, sometimes in a position of prayer over the corpse of her son.[641] While all works on this topic offer a tragic, and potentially sympathetic view of the First Family, allowing Eve to take on the role of grieving mother, due to the sheer quantity of material I cannot offer a comprehensive treatment of the theme throughout the visual arts. Rather, as I did in the case of *Eva Lactans*, here I shall focus on the influence of Marian art, and in particular, the *Pietà*, on images of Eve. This compositional trope poignantly encapsulated the maternal suffering of Mary at the death of Christ, as she was depicted alone with the body of her son on her lap.[642] The earliest examples of the *Pietà* are found in thirteenth century German art, with the motif appearing in Northern European and Italian art from the fourteenth century. Perhaps the most famous example of this trope is Michelangelo's marble sculpture now housed in St Peter's Basilica, which was made by the artist during the fifteenth century.[643] As Jaroslav Pelikan has observed in his study of Mary through the centuries, the representation of Mary as the *Mater Dolorosa* increased in popularity during the middle ages, and though there are 'many statues, altarpieces, and woodcuts in which the Virgin was being pierced in the heart by the sword... Michelangelo's *Pietà* was certainly the best-known attempt, in statuary or painting, to capture the depth of the Virgin's grief as she held the body of her crucified son.'[644]

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[640] For example Lucas van Leyden, *Adam and Eve Bemoaning the Death of Abel*, Museum University of Michigan Museum of Art (1529); Alessandro Tiarini, *Adam and Eve Mourning Abel*, Pitti Palace (sixteenth century). See Pigler 1974.
[641] e.g. Johann Liss, *Adam and Eve Mourning for Abel*, Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice (1624–1629); Michelangelo Cerquozzi*, Adam and Eve mourning Abel*, Galleria Corsini. Rome. (seventeenth century). See Pigler 1974.
[642] M. Santangelo n.p.
[643] Ibid.
[644] Pelikan 1996: 128. For a history of the development of the *Pietà* motif, see Santangelo (n.p.).

The emotionally charged motif of the *Pietà* appears to have influenced a number of renderings of the first funeral for Abel.[645] In particular, several works of art made during the nineteenth century turned to the motif in their representations of Eve and Adam, presenting deeply tragic, emotive images of the first couple, and in particular, the first woman. For example, Antonio Canova (1757–1822), an Italian sculptor famous for his neo-classical works, produced a number of powerful renderings of Adam and Eve lamenting over the body of their son. The terracotta models, or *bozzetti*, he made on this subject were intended as preparation for a very large, greater than life-size marble, though this was never achieved.[646] Nonetheless, the loose style of the preparation works adds to their sense of turmoil and anguish, in part due to the rapid and rough texture of the pieces.

Canova experimented with a number of different compositions for this particular topic, depicting Abel's body in Adam's lap (Vatican Museum 44452), as well as the lap of a kneeling Eve (Vatican Museum 44451 and Gipsoteca Canova). As Draper and Scherf note, 'the changes to each group are psychological as well as compositional'.[647] While all three terracotta renderings readily express the anguish of the parents, in the latter two sculptures the artist foregrounds Eve's suffering and her relationship to her son. This is perhaps most apparent in one of *bozetto* now housed in the Vatican Museum (see Fig. 8) and its accompanying

[645] These are not the only, or necessarily the most popular, modes in which Adam and Eve are represented mourning Abel, and the representation of their parental grief, is, in itself an under-represented facet of the history of interpretation of the first couple. For the purposes of my thesis, however, those works of art that deliberately develop a mirror between the mourning mothers are of crucial significance for the understanding of the Eve/Mary relationship and for destabilising dominant assumptions about the two women. For catalogue of Adam and Eve mourning Abel see von Erffa (1989–1995: 384); Réau, (1955–1959: 98); and Pigler (1974: 19–20).
[646] J. D. Draper and G. Scherf, 2004: 40.
[647]Ibid. See Draper and Scherf catalogue for images of these works.

sketch (Fig. 9), which even more clearly renders the centrality of Eve and her son.[648] Following the style of a classic *Pietà*, which traditionally only features the Virgin and her dead son, Canova placed Adam on the periphery of his group, depicting him leaning into the scene of Eve and Abel, rather than being fully part of it.



Fig. 9 Antonio Canova, *Lamentation over the Dead Abel*, c.1804–8.
Photo © Vatican Museums, all rights reserved.

[648] The identification between these two works is made in Draper and Scherf 2004: 40.



Fig. 10 Antonio Canova, *Lamentation over the Dead Abel*, c. 1804–5.
MBA F8 36.1758 Musei di Bassano Del Grappa.

On comparison with a later *bozzetto* by Canova for a *Lamentation of Christ*, the similarities in pose between Eve and Mary are remarkable, suggesting that the artist perceived an echo of experience between the two women and their maternal mourning.



Fig. 11 Antonio Canova, *Pietà*, c. 1817-21,
Polo Museale de Veneto.
Reproduced with permission from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism.

Both Eve and Mary are seated behind their children, cradling the bodies in their laps, with faces bowed in towards Abel and Christ respectively. Their shared pose is one of poignant maternal intimacy between mother and son, highlighting the personal grief of each woman. In the image of Adam and Eve with Abel, there is no sense in which blame is apportioned to either man or woman; rather their parental suffering is the focus of the image.[649] Thus Eve appears as a type of Mary, with the two women becoming almost visually indistinguishable save for the presence of Adam. For Eve, this type of visual identification offers a level of sympathy and understanding that are usually denied the first woman.

Later in the nineteenth century, a number of French artists took up the same topic. In 1861, Léon Bonnat painted *Adam and Eve Discover the Body of Abel*, which now forms part of the collection at the Musée des Beaux-Art in Lille.



Fig. 12 Léon Joseph Florentin Bonnat, *Adam and Eve Finding the Body of Abel*, 1861. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, France / Bridgeman Images

[649] For an alternative strategy, which shifts focus to the traumatic effects on Cain after he has murdered Abel, see Blake's *The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve* (Tate, London). Also, J. Koskal (1994: 142).

Painted against a desolate landscape of desert and mountains, the first parents and Abel dominate the canvas. While Adam and Eve are presented in natural light, with Adam appearing especially shadowy, the body of Abel glows with an unnatural light, representing the innocence of the young man. Eve sits in a *Pietà* pose, with Abel's head resting limply in her lap. His head tilts back, allowing his mother to gaze on his lifeless face, her hands clasped against her chest in a prayer-like position. Though there is more distance between the face of Eve and Abel than in Canova's representation, the more restrained picture of grief presented by Bonnat is equally powerful. His Eve is serene and soft, in contrast to the muscular, active Adam who is once more detached from his wife and son. Her youth and tranquillity is reminiscent of Michelangelo's Mary in his *Pietà,* who famously appears too young to be the mother of the man she holds in her lap. Thus, Bonnat sympathetically pictures Eve as a pious and humble mourning mother, rather than a woman ravaged by suffering, or indeed bewailing her own fate as a bereaved parent.[650]

Over a decade later, in 1878, Ernest-Louis Barrias exhibited the model for his 1883, *The First Funeral* (Fig. 13).[651] In this composition, which has been described by one art historian as 'a distinguished work in the academic style and as a work of high seriousness and profound moral content,' both parents stand, holding the body of Abel.[652]

[650] For another *Pietà* like composition from the late nineteenth century, see William Bouguereau, *The First Mourning*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires (1888). This is not discussed in detail here, as Abel appears in Adam's lap, rather than Eve, and there is no particular focus on the mother/son relationship, though of course the painting does serve to highlight the tragic aspect of Adam and Eve's lives outside of Eden.
[651] R. Butler 1980: 92.
[652] J. C. Harrison 1994: 30.



Fig. 13 Ernest-Louis Barrias, *The First Funeral,* c. 1883.
Chrysler Museum of Art. Gift of the Mowbray Arch Society. 92.41.

As in the sculpture by Canova, Eve's head is bowed down towards her son's, kissing his head, emphasising the personal and familial aspect of the scene. Consequently, Barrias' sculpture was not only well-received due to its technical skill and beauty, but also because it represented 'the manifestation of the highest sentiments which sculpture can express.'[653] This critic's recognition and applause of the emotional content of the sculpture confirms the interpretative power such an image can have on its viewers, and thus the importance it has in

[653] Quoted by Harrison 1994: 29.

the history of Eve's representation. By expressly visualising the first woman's pain in childbearing using a visual motif more frequently associated with the Virgin, Barrias and others, reframe the first woman, and presents her with a potent level of pathos entirely lacking in the majority of her artistic afterlives. As Harrison summarises, 'Barrias rejected Eve's traditional characterization as a temptress and cast her in the new and more sympathetic role of the grieving mother who gathers her dead son in her arms to bestow a final kiss.'[654]

c. Summary

This brief, selective examination of two motifs from Eve's visual history, *Eva Lactans* and Eve as mourning mother, has demonstrated the continual presence of the first woman as a maternal figure of pain and promise. Although it is clear that the characterisation of her maternity is often deeply reliant on interpreters' perceptions of her sons, the sympathetic images of Eve nursing her child Abel or mourning over his body add considerable nuance to the popular reception of Eve as mother of death and sin. Indeed, while the artworks examined above have played on silences and ambiguities in the biblical text to build their imagery, they do so using much the same strategies as interpreters who viewed Eve's motherhood negatively. Thus, while I demonstrated in chapter 2.IV that the conclusion that Eve was the mother of mortality, or indeed demonic seed, came about through expansion on small textual details and narrative silences, so too do the images of Eve nursing her child Abel or mourning his death. Nonetheless, the latter group of interpretations have held considerably more cultural currency throughout the centuries. By drawing attention to the less well-known

[654] Ibid.

visual traditions that I have outlined in this chapter, I challenge the focus on the pejorative presentation of Eve's motherhood by presenting historical evidence of alternative, equally valid, modes of representing the Bible's first mother.

IV. MOTHER EVE IN THE WORK OF PRE-TWENTIETH CENTURY WOMEN WRITERS.

a. Introduction

A similar focus on the role Eve has to play as mother can be discerned, though in a fragmented and disparate trajectory, in the work of a number of women writers throughout the ages, that might be offered as another 'counter-tradition' to more dominant strands of interpretation focused on the sin and status of the first woman.[655] As Tina Beattie has observed in her own Catholic theology laid out in *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate*: *A Marian Narrative of Women's Salvation*, 'Eve has the capacity to represent everywoman, not as the sinister figure of the sexual (m)other who bears the burden of all men's unexamined fears of the mother, sex and death, but as a woman who symbolises the struggling reality of women's lives in the existential journey between paradise lost and paradise regained.'[656] This statement, made as a call to contemporary theologians, summarises neatly precisely the kind of interpretative position taken by numerous women writers, from Hildegard von Bingen to Christina Rossetti. The examination of women's representations of Eve offered below is intended to illustrate that the figure of the first woman has been used in precisely such a way

[655] On women's interpretation as 'counter-tradition' see Gössman 1999: 29–30.
[656] T. Beattie 2002b: 101.

for centuries by women negotiating their own understanding of what it means to be a woman in relation to the Bible, their faith, their society, and mother.

The exploration I provide in this chapter is not intended as a comprehensive or linear account of all women writers' reactions to Eve. Nor is my intention to reduce all work of female writers on the first woman to the theme of maternity.[657] It goes without saying that women's writing, as with men's, is characterized by variety and difference. Indeed, this may be even more apparent in the writing of women, as unlike the works of men that were frequently circulated, shared and developed into 'traditions' of thought, such continuity was not always available for women, though it certainly did begin to develop with time.[658] I have selected material that illustrates the ways in which women used Eve to 'think with' about their own connections to maternity, as well as the ways in which their understanding of motherhood shaped their image of Eve. As Mary Dockray-Miller has observed, though for some time feminism had a rather ambivalent, and at times negative, view on motherhood as a restrictive category placed on women within patriarchal society, the work of Adrienne Rich has gone some way to reformulate this. In her work Rich highlights the separation 'between the patriarchal institute of motherhood, and women's actual experience of motherhood, which Rich reads to be empowering and illuminating'.[659] Thus, women's own self-defined images of mothering are

[657] Additionally, I do not wish to suggest that no male interpreters throughout the history of interpretation have given positive thought to Eve's motherhood. This is clearly indicated by the previous section, which is predominantly filled with the work of male artists. I do, however, wish to focus on pre-twentieth century women's writings, firstly because they are deeply underrepresented in the general schema of modern reception histories, and secondly, because the insight of women who share Eve's experience of motherhood, or the potential for it, offers insight into the biblical text that is not necessarily apparent for men.
[658] See Gössman 1999; M. J. M. Ezell 1993.
[659] Dockeray-Miller 2001: 1.

critical to disrupting often restrictive male produced constructions of maternity, and I will demonstrate that Eve can be an important site for these negotiations. I have restricted this investigation, for the most part, to Western women, and in the main, from modernity onwards, English texts.

b. Eve and Perpetua in Antiquity

The earliest known record of a Christian woman's writing, and indeed, the earliest record of a woman's writing alluding to Eve, is the diaristic account of Vibia Perpetua, recorded in the hagiography *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felcitatis*, describing her life until she was executed in March, 203 AD. The life recounts the experiences of a married Christian noblewoman, Perpetua, who was imprisoned and martyred in Carthage for refusing to renounce her belief. During her period of imprisonment, at the encouragement of her brother, Perpetua seeks a vision from God in order to interpret her situation. This vision is granted, and Perpetua describes how she is shown the afterlife. She sees 'a bronze ladder of great length, reaching up to heaven', surrounded by weapons, and 'there was a serpent of great size lying at the foot of the ladder, which would lie in wait for those who climbed and deterred them from climbing' (*Et erat sub ipsa scala draco cubans mirae magnitudinis, qui ascendentibus insidias praestabat et exterrebat ne ascenderent*).[660] Nevertheless, Perpetua takes the first step onto the ladder, and in doing so she describes how 'the serpent slowly stuck out its head, as if it feared me, and I stepped on its head and climbed up, as if it were the first step' (*Et desub ipsa scala, quasi timens me, lente eiecit caput; et quasi primum gradum*

[660] For translation see T. Heffernan 2012: 127 IV.3-4. For Latin see p. 107.

calcarem, calcavi illi caput, et ascendi).[661] Here we find allusion to both Genesis and Revelation, with the snake in the former (LXX ὄφις; Vulgate *serpentem*) envisaged like the oversized beast in the latter, which describes a great dragon (LXX δράκων; Vulgate *draco*). A direct lexical link to the biblical account in Gen. 3.15 is found in Perpetua's choice of vocabulary to describe her treading on the serpent's head.[662] Her use of the verb *calco*, while not found in the description of Eve's seed in Jerome's Vulgate, is present in the general form of the Old Latin*: ipse tuum calcabit caput*.[663] It is therefore possible to argue that based on both lexical and thematic similarities, Perpetua, manipulates the biblical language of both Genesis and Revelation in her vision, and in doing so positions herself as a 'seed' of Eve, one who can fulfil the oracle in Gen. 3.15.[664]

While Perpetua in some ways stays close to the language of the Vetus Latina, by figuring herself as Eve's descendant, she alters the gender of the 'seed'. In the Old Latin, the use of *ipse* implies the understanding of a male descendant, while Perpetua clearly sees herself as the 'seed' of Eve. This offers an interpretative precursor to Jerome's unusual translation—*illius ipsa conteret caput tuum*—that likewise genders Eve's 'seed' as female. By recognising Eve as *her* genetrix, Perpetua positions herself as a salvific figure, forging a matrilineal link between herself and the first woman in her vision of the afterlife and her defeat of evil. Virginia Burrus, in her study of early Christian saints and martyrs, also acknowledges Perpetua as a new Eve figure, but does not emphasise this

[661] See Heffernan 2012:127 IV.7. For Latin see p. 107.
[662] It is possible that this vision is also influenced by Ps 91.13 (Vulgate 90.13), which in the Latin Vulgate shares linguistic similarities with both Gen. 3.15 and Revelation 12.
[663] Fischer (1951–1954: 68). Jerome prefers to use '*ipsa conteret caput tuum et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius*.'
[664] P. Dronke (1984: 8): 'the moment in which she steps on the serpent's head was doubtless stimulated by God's words to the serpent in Genesis (3:15)'. See also Heffernan (2012: 176).

specifically *female* genealogy of salvation that is developed in her appropriation of Gen. 3.15.[665] Crucially, in Perpetua's account the woman, the mother identifies *herself* with this role, thus marking her interpretation as significant.

c. Eve and Hildegard in the Medieval Period

Between the periods of late antiquity and the early middle ages, evidence of women's writing is relatively sparse. [666] From the twelfth century, we begin to find an increasing amount of evidence for women's literary activity.[667] While the majority of women writers' works from this period deals closely with the biblical text in various ways, few appear to treat Eve or her motherhood in any great depth. A notable exception to this relative scarcity of women's literature on Eve, the writings of Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179) provide a presentation of Eve that both interacts with and re-evaluates many of the predominantly male traditions Hildegard inherits and does so with a strong focus on the maternal qualities of the first woman.[668] Hildegard produced numerous works through the course of her life, including visionary texts such as *Scivias* and *De operatione Dei* (or, *Liber divinorum operum simplicis hominis*), musical and lyrical compositions, and works on science, for example *Causae et Curae.* Indeed, as Peter Dronke has remarked, 'compared with what earlier and later women writers have left us, the volume of her work is vast'.[669] Within her considerable catalogue, Hildegard

[665] V, Burrus 2007: 29.
[666] S. M. Gilbert and S. Gubar (1996: 1). The lack of evidence for women's writing during this period of time remains true at the point of producing this thesis, though scholarship on women's writing, before the seventh century is growing and may well recover more examples. See, for example D. Watt (2013: 537–54). For a helpful overview see Dronke (1984).
[667] Dronke 1984: vii–xi.
[668] In this examination of Hildegard's work, I have been closely informed by Barbara Newman's famous work on her feminine theology (B. Newman 1997).
[669] Dronke 1984: 144.

frequently wrote about Adam and Eve, though not as a single commentary. Rather, the creation and fall are interspersed throughout her works.[670]

This focus on the fertility of Eve is apparent in one vision from perhaps Hildegard's most famous work, *Scivias*, which is represented in both image (Fig. 14) and text form.



Fig. 14 Hildegard von Bingen, *The Fall—The Scivias*
© Erich Lessing / lessingimages.com

In the visual rendering of Genesis 2–3 found in *Scivias*, the image portrays both the creation of Eve, who appears as a green cloud filled with stars, emerging from the side of Adam, simultaneously with 'the Fall', represented by the black,

[670] Newman 1997: 89.

snake-like cloud injecting darkness into Eve. Thus, it captures the transition from the pre-lapsarian state of creation into 'fallen' humanity, and offers several important insights from Hildegard on the original nature of Eve as woman.

Firstly, while Hildegard subscribes to the common iconography of Eve being removed from a horizontal Adam's side, the emergence of a cloud, rather than a nude woman, is unique. According to the illumination, this cloud is green in colour, while in the text it is a *candidam nubem*, a white cloud; both versions present the cloud as filled with stars. The discrepancy of the cloud's colour in the image and the written account of the vision need not indicate inconsistency in the image of Eve.[671] Rather, the double imagery serves to present the first woman as simultaneously fecund and pure. The choice of the green colouring in the image appears to represent *viriditas*, 'greenness' or 'greening power', a term Hildegard uses repeatedly in a rather complex and multifarious manner. For the most part, *viriditas* is an integral feature of the cosmos, representing fertility and is closely connected to life and abundance.[672] Thus the image depicts Eve as intrinsically fertile and powerfully alive, suggesting that Hildegard understood the first woman to have been created as 'mother of all living' from the very beginning, despite only being given this title, according to the biblical account, after 'the Fall.'

This visual rendering of Eve is augmented by Hildegard's accompanying written account, where she describes 'a white cloud which contained a large number of stars in itself'.[673] Elsewhere in her writings a white cloud is usually a

[671] Garber 2003: 42.
[672] For an overview of various uses of the term see Hildegard von Bingen 1998: 7–8.
[673] *Scivias* I.2 All translations taken from Hildegard von Bingen (1986) unless otherwise specified.

symbol of purity. For example, in a letter to a member of the laity, she describes a vision of a white cloud and a darker, stormy cloud. She interprets this vision for her correspondent, clearly explaining that the former represents good desires.[674] In addition to this short account, in *Scivias*, on two occasions the female personification of the Church, *Ecclesia*, appears to be represented in totality or in part by white cloud.[675] In one of these, the fifth vision of the second part of *Scivias*, *Ecclesia* is depicted as woman with her lower body, from her navel to her thighs, as a group of white clouds (Fig. 15). As Barbara Newman has suggested, the clouds appear to be related to *Ecclesia's* virginal motherhood of her members, an interpretation that is clarified by Hildegard's own writing on the vision: 'another light that was white as cloud surrounded her honourably from her navel downward to where she had not yet come into existence… around the navel is the seed from which every member of the human race is procreated.'[676]



Fig. 15 Hildegard von Bingen, *The Estates of the Church—Scivias*
Photograph courtesy of Lessing Images.

[674] Hildegard von Bingen 2004: 146.
[675] *Scivias* I.5 and *Scivias* II.5
[676] *Scivias* II.5.23.

Cumulatively, from these writings it is clear that 'white cloud' was a significant, positive symbol in Hildegard's iconography. Indeed, within *Scivias* both Eve and the Church are crucial fecund females in the history of Christianity, and both are depicted with clouds in Hildegard's interpretative visions, drawing an association between the two females, as visually 'Eve's motherhood thus prefigures that of Mater Ecclesia.'[677] The description of Mother Church in *Scivias* echoes the description of Eve in Genesis 3, who is promised 'seed' and is positioned as 'mother of all living', suggesting that as with the early interpreters of Genesis, such as the author of 4 Ezra, who aligned Eve with mother Zion, for Hildegard the first woman also fell into a powerful matrix of female creators. However, unlike the apocalyptic writings, which focus on the mourning motherhood of both Eve and Mother Zion/Mother Church, or the battling maternity found in Revelation 12, Hildegard configures her paralleling of the female figures around a virginal, pure, future motherhood.

The fertility of the first woman, and her importance for the procreation of the rest of humanity is also evident from the stars that are held within the cloud. In the textual account, Hildegard describes how she saw 'Eve with her innocent spirit taken from the innocent Adam, pregnant with the whole multitude of mankind in her body, shining in the foreordination of God,' clearly identifying the first woman of the Bible with the cloud in the image.[678] The use of stars to depict the future humankind potentially functions on two levels. Firstly, I agree with Garber who suggests that Hildegard, by rendering 'the persons of the stars within the physical, yet non-fleshly body of the first Eve' is able to 'return the

[677] Newman 1997: 103.
[678] *Scivias* I.2.10—translation taken from Newman 1997: 102.

first Eve joyously to her role as mother, and addresses one of the aspects of the bodiliness of procreation which may theologians ignored, that of pregnancy.'[679] Furthermore, this iconography of stars potentially forges an inner-biblical link between Eve, and the promises to the Patriarchs, in which God assures Abraham and his descendants that their progeny will be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15.5; 22.17; 26.4). If this allusion was intended by Hildegard, she envisions Eve as the ultimate source of human life, and places her as the primary Matriarch.

Developing from Hildegard's focus on Eve's creation as a perfect, uncorrupted mother, it is perhaps unsurprising that she frames the first woman's eventual corruption with a maternal focus on Eve. For Hildegard, Satan's pursuit of Eve is founded in his deep resentment of Eve as a mother. In *De operatione Dei* II.5.16 she develops an intertextual allusion to Revelation 12, explaining that 'The ancient dragon… sharpened his wrath against the woman, because he recognized that through childbearing she was the root of the whole human race.'[680] The 'woman' referred to here is clearly Eve 'the root of the whole human race', and it is against her procreative power that Satan 'sharpened his wrath'. Rather than predicating the relationship between Eve and Satan on seduction and lust, Hildegard offers a gynocentric interpretation of Eve's 'fall', with the first woman portrayed as a victim of Satan's attack on her perfect fecund womanhood.

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[679] Garber 2003: 43.

[680] Translation taken from Newman 1997: 113. In the image of the *Scivias,* we might find some allusion to the tradition of Eve being injected by the poison of the snake. While their maybe a sexual element to this imagery that echoes the more negative images of Eve in a bestial tryst with the serpent, it is not entirely clear because of the abstract depiction of the woman. Either way, when read in the context of *De operatione Dei* II.5.16, it seems the most important aspect for Hildegard is not the sexual association between Eve and the snake, but his threat to her maternal power.

That Hildegard, a Benedictine abbess, could not accept post-lapsarian sexuality of Eve and prioritises virginity over marriage is undeniable, but also unremarkable in the social, cultural and religious environment that surrounded her. Nonetheless, within this context she still found a space for Eve's role as mother of all humanity that recognized her potent female fertility. She did so by manipulating mainstream interpretative traditions concerning the first woman, as well as developing a feminine imagery that combined, associated and contrasted Eve with a number of female figures—Ecclesia and the woman in Rev 12—to create a complex feminine ideal, which Eve, to a certain extent, is able to participate in. Indeed, for Hildegard, the pre-lapsarian Eve's perfect maternity was a precursor to the Virgin Mary, an aspect of Hildegard's theology that has been examined extensively by Barbara Newman.[681] Even in her fallen state, Hildegard felt able to expresses concern and sympathy for the sufferings of the first woman, arguing that women when suffering in childbirth and menstruation, should be shown mercy rather than judgment—a belief perhaps made all the more clear in her medical writings that offer treatments for pain during menstruation, and assistance with difficult births.[682] Yet Hildegard herself, as a spiritual mother to the nuns of her abbey, appears to have identified with the fecund maternity of Eve as God first created her. It is this ideal, that Hildegard understands as perfect 'woman'.[683]

[681] For a full and extended discussion of Hildegard's incarnational theology and its significance for Eve and Mary see Newman 1997.
[682] *Causae et Curae* 1.2.20, 27—see Newman 1997: 118.
[683] Dronke 1984: 170. Contra Garber: 2003: 59.

d. Eve in Women's Writing of the Early Modern Period

Between twelfth to sixteenth centuries, the transition from the middle ages to early modern period, there were numerous political, social, cultural, and religious upheavals that affected women's writing. For example, in conjunction with the rise of humanism, towards the end of the fourteenth and into the beginning of the fifteenth centuries women began to write defences of their sex, explicitly countering much of the misogyny and mistreatment of the time, and offering their own gender constructions of 'man' and 'woman'.[684] Beginning with Christine de Pisan, women writers began to respond directly to the various works by earlier and contemporary male writers that dismissed women as weak, lustful and inferior. For many of these women, particularly those writing in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, Eve was an integral part of their defences. As the first woman, and the mother of all other women, it was her creation and her actions that helped early modern women, like Hildegard in the middle ages, to define their understanding of 'woman'.[685] Barbara McManus succinctly summarises the integral nature of biblical exegesis for women writers when she writes, 'Because the biblical account of the creation and fall of human beings carried the weight of divine authority, it constituted the foundation of Renaissance discourse about the essential nature and function of women,' and indeed, I would argue the same is true of earlier and later writings by women, too.[686]

[684] J. Kelly 1982: 6–7.
[685] For a full discussion of this topic, see E. Beilen (1987).
[686] B. McManus 2000: 193–4.

Alongside efforts to illustrate that Eve was, in fact, superior to Adam because she was made from flesh rather than earth, or to excuse her actions due to her 'weakness', Eve's role as mother featured in a number of the pamphlets.[687] Jane Anger's pseudonymous polemic 'Jane Anger her Protection for Women', published in 1589, was the first defence of women written by a woman in English.[688] In her brief but powerful treatment of Genesis within her tract, Anger deliberately manipulated the traditional argument of male superiority based on the priority of his creation according to Genesis 2. Instead, like Hildegard, Anger focused on the fact that unlike man who was created from 'drosse and filthy clay', woman was the first to be created from flesh and thus 'purer than he'. Indeed, Anger addresses her fellow women when she notes that because Eve was made from human matter to be a help to Adam, 'Our bodies are fruitefull, wherby the world encreaseth, and our care wonderful, by which man is preserved. From woman sprang mans salvation.' By linking the flesh of Eve to the flesh of the Incarnation, to her own flesh as a woman and to her women readers, Anger develops a community of fecund female bodies that strengthens the significance and power of 'woman', drawing a productive web of allusion and identification between Eve, the Virgin, and all other women. In contrast to Philo, Augustine, Aquinas, and all other interpreters who assumed female inferiority due to her connection to the body and the senses, Anger uses this positive emphasis on the first woman's bodily strength and caring maternal qualities to assert that she is superior to man, rather than his equal. Coming from flesh, and being entirely of

[687] The women pamphlet writers include Rachel Speght, Jane Anger, Ester Sowernam, and Constantia Mundia (the latter 3 may have been pseudonyms). For more see P. Phillippy (2002); Beilen (1987); McManus (2000.)
[688] J. Anger 1589. All subsequent references to Anger's writing are taken from this resource.

'pure' flesh, the first woman, and all women after her 'are more excellent than men'.

While emphasising the link between Eve and Mary, interestingly, the paralleling of their maternity is complemented by a spiritual connection that Anger observes between the two women: 'A woman was the first that beleeved, & a woman likewise the first that repented of sin'.[689] Anger again manipulates the notion of priority to emphasis the religiosity of two prototypical women; she highlights that Mary, a woman, was the first of all to express faith at the Annunciation, while Eve, a woman, was the first to repent her sins. Thus Anger identifies a further point of identification, rather than contrast, between Eve and Mary as specifically female pioneers of central Christian tenets. In doing so she presents them as exemplars, and indeed types of mother to faith and repentance.

Several years after Angers' defence of women appeared, in 1617 Rachel Speght published a pamphlet, *A Mouzell for Melastomus,* offering another female perspective to the gender debate.[690] Written as a direct response to Joseph Swetnam's *The arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant* women, Speght's polemic was more directly centred on the Genesis account than Anger's. Though Speght, like Hildegard and Jane Anger, found herself unable to contest Eve's sin, she nonetheless developed a number of interpretative strategies to reclaim the first woman.[691] Amongst these was an emphasis on the opportunity given to Eve by God to redeem herself through motherhood. In a similar move to

[689] This offers a very different link between the Annunciation and Eve to the more popular contrast of Mary's faith and Eve's deception (2.IV.a).
[690] R. Speght (1617). All subsequent references to Speght's writing are taken from this resource.
[691] For example, man and woman both created in the image of God; though woman was weaker this weakness lessens her culpability, whereas man, as stronger party, was more responsible.

Anger, Speght manipulates the idea of priority as a source of power to highlight that the first divine promise to humanity recorded in the Bible was made to woman:

> … the firſt promiſe that was made in Paradiſe, God makes to woman, that by her Seede ſhould the Serpents head be broken: whereupon *Adam* calles her *Hevah*, *life*, that as the woman had beene an occaſion of his ſinne, ſo ſhould woman bring foorth the Saviour from ſinne, which was in the fullneſſe of time accompliſhed.

In a clever interpretative act of play, Speght employs Gen. 3.15 and 3.20 to develop a specifically feminine image of salvation history, in which women may be sinners, but they are also vehicles of redemption. This she specifically relates to Eve, 'by *Hevah's* blessed seed (as Saint Paul affirmes) it is brought to passe, *that male and female are all one in Christ Jesus*', and thus constructs a female genealogy in which Eve is both the first to sin, but also the 'grandmother' of human redemption through the Virgin's birthing of Christ. Echoing Anger's device of female identification, Speght uses the term 'woman' to blur the relationship between Eve and Mary, allowing them to become closely aligned, indeed, almost indistinguishable from one another as agents of 'life', and as Woman.

A second, and fascinating strategy employed by Speght is to dissect the 'curses' placed on the couple. In response to the question of whether woman 'brought death and misery upon all her posterity', Speght observes that while the punishment of Eve is specifically related to only women, the punishment of Adam can be interpreted as demonstrating that 'for the ſinne of man the whole earth was curſed.' This clearly reverses the notion that if Eve is a mother of death and destruction, and shifts the balance of blame away from her by reasoning that due to the maternal and matrimonial focus of the woman's

punishment, she cannot be held responsible for mortality, which is in fact more obviously suggested by the punishment given to the man in Gen. 3.19.

In these two examples of women's contribution to the gender debate during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, Eve's maternity is constructed as a sign of female power, elevation, and divine promise. The community of women developed in these works, moving forward from Eve, to Mary, to the woman pamphleteers, offers a strong affirmation of the creative strength of women as life-givers, as well as figures of repentance and redemption. Most importantly, in the work of Anger and Speght, Eve herself is included in the process of redemption, with her act of giving birth represented as integral to the human path to deliverance. Eve and the Virgin are placed in parallel in a line of female descent that is critical to human salvation history. This seems to echo Koch's observation mentioned above in relation to 1 *Enoch,* where he observes that in some manuscripts 'the first woman has remained the nucleus for eschatological liberation'.[692] This appears to be true in the minds of these women writers, too.

Another genre that arose during the early modern period, in close proximity to the pamphlet wars, was the mothers' advice manual, in which women offered accounts based on their own maternal experiences.[693] One such mother's advice manual, written by Elizabeth Clinton and published in 1622, features the figure of Eve in its defence of maternal breast-feeding, a practice that was highly uncommon among the literate classes of the period. Clinton, a

[692] Koch 2007: 232.
[693] On the relationship between defence of women pamphlets and mothers manuals see M. Suzuki 2011: 3.

Puritan British noblewoman, published her volume as a secular text written by a woman, for women.[694] Indeed, Clinton herself is highly aware of the importance of her *own* motherhood as a source of authority on this subject:

> Because it hath pleased God to blesse me with so many children, and so caused me to observe many things falling out to mothers, and to their children; I thought it good to open my minde concerning a speciall matter belonging to all childe-bearing women… even to write of this matter…[695]

Like other books of its type, and echoing the message of Anger and Speght, Clinton's work departs from the earlier asceticism of Perpetua, as well as Hildegard's privileging of the virginal state, by affirming the God given importance of the maternal role for women. She finds proof of divine support for breastfeeding in the biblical text, and in particular with Eve. According to Rachel Trubowitz, the use of biblical exemplars in discussions about female anatomy and the breast-feeding was common in the seventeenth century.[696] In her chapter on the 'political and religious appeal' of the nursing mother, she observes that numerous Puritan guidebooks support maternal breast-feeding 'by invoking the nursing practices of three key biblical matriarchs, Sarah, Jochobed (*sic*) (the Hebrew mother of Moses), and Mary'.[697] Clinton appears to echo this strategy of biblical interpretation but begins her genealogy of righteous mothers with Eve, who is then followed by Sarah, Hannah and Mary,[698]:

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694 Clinton 1999.
695 Ibid.
696 R. Trubowitz (2012: 43–5). She demonstrates that in the case of texts urging ideal behaviour of women, men also employed the idea of female genealogy, but to support their own definition of 'Woman' as domesticated subordinate mother/wife rather than powerful creative mother. See Dockeray-Miller's (2001: 1) discussion of Rich for these two different modes of understanding maternity.
697 Trubowitz 2012: 45.
698 A similar strategy is used by eighteenth century mid-wife Elizabeth Nihell in her defence of women mid-wives rather than male obstetricians. She gives examples of biblical women, beginning with Eve, who would have given birth without the aid of men. See Elizabeth Nihell, *A Treatise on the Art of Midwifery* (1760).

By his word it is proved, firſt by *Examples*, namely the example of *Eve*. For who ſuckled her ſonnes Cain, Abel, Seth, but her ſelfe? Which ſhee did not only of meere neceſſitie, becauſe yet no other woman was created; but eſpecially becauſe ſhee was their mother, and ſo ſawe it was her duty: and becauſe ſhee had a true naturall affection, which moved her to doe it gladly.[699]

This portrayal of Eve in which Clinton expands upon her life outside of Eden, like the visual representations of her nursing that are discussed above, credits 'the mother of all living' with affection and care, two qualities which are rarely associated with the first woman. Clinton builds a tender picture of Eve, as a woman that 'gladly' cared for her offspring, a 'duty' undertaken with joy. While this is clearly an expansion on the biblical text, it is possible that her understanding of Eve's maternal qualities grew out of Eve's speeches in Gen. 4.1 and 4.25, where the woman appears to express joy at the birth of her sons. By employing the first woman, the metonym of all women, in her discussion of breast-feeding Clinton's perceptions of the value and honour of nursing come to be reflected back onto the Bible's first mother, thus elevating the account of Eve's maternal experience.[700]

Speaking directly to her female audience, rather than to husbands as a number of other guidebooks did, Clinton remarks on the duality of Eve as a prototypical woman, highlighting that though she did sin, Eve was not entirely sinful:

Wee have followed *Eve* in tranſgreſſion, let us follow her in obedience. When God laid the ſorrowes of conception, of breeding of bringing forth, and of bringing up her children upon her, & ſo upon us in her loynes, did ſhee reply any word againſt? Not a word…[701]

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[699] Clinton 1999.

[700] On the similarities and differences of Clinton's work with other male-authored texts in support of breastfeeding, see M. Luecke (2000). A similar divergence between female and male understanding of maternity in relation to Eve from the early modern period is found in the contrast between the positive appropriation of the story by Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and the negative interpretation found in the writings of her husband. See D. Willen (2002: 30) for this observation.

[701] Clinton 1999.

This quotation seems to offer context to the notion of motherhood as a 'duty' as expressed in the previous excerpt. Certainly Clinton portrays Eve as a compliant mother, but crucially this compliance is with the will of God, rather than her husband, thus emphasising motherhood as a religious activity based on a relationship between woman and the Deity. Acknowledging the fear and terror that was associated with childbirth in the seventeenth century, Clinton uses Eve's silence in response to God's penalty as an encouragement to women to take up their own God-given task of childbearing without question. Thus Clinton's work, like a number of other women's, deliberately develops positive points of association between Eve, other biblical mothers including the Virgin, and her female audience, while challenging patriarchal frameworks of motherhood.[702] By weaving Eve into the project of female self-definition, the first woman is transformed into a complex reflection of the self of the writer, rather than framed as an ultimate 'other'.

The next account of Eve's motherhood from a woman's writing is taken from the work of Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672), who was the first female writer to be published in the Colonies. Born in England to a Puritan family, she had a direct connection with the Clinton family. Bradstreet's father was steward to the Earl of Lincoln, son of Elizabeth Clinton's husband Thomas Clinton, and husband of Bridget, the woman Elizabeth Clinton dedicated her manual to. Indeed, it was within the Lincoln household that Anne was educated, as she would have had

[702] Luecke 2000.

access to the family library.[703] These potential points of contact also raise the possibility that the Countess of Lincoln's interpretation of Eve may have impacted upon Bradstreet.

Though born in England and raised in close proximity to the Clinton household, in 1630 Anne travelled to America with her parents and her husband, and it was in the New World that she became both a writer and a mother. While many of Bradstreet's writings touch on Puritan themes of pain and illness as a means of correcting sin, building on her own experiences of suffering, she does not regularly connect the pain of childbirth with transgression.[704] This is unusual in view of her Puritan context, where labour pains were frequently understood as a sign of sinfulness. In her poem *Contemplations* (published 1678, likely composed 1660s) she offers a reflection on the human condition and particularly mortality, recounting the story of creation and "Fall". Interestingly, Eve is only described once she has left Eden, and has had her first child:

Here sits our Grandame in retired place,
And in her lap, her bloody Cain new born,
The weeping Imp oft looks her in the face.
Bewails his unknown hap, and fate forlorn;
His Mother sighs, to think of Paradise,
And how she lost her bliss, to be more wise,
Believing him that was, and is, Father of lyes[705]

In Bradstreet's brief mention of Eve, her rewriting of the first woman's fate is tinged with tragedy and intimacy, which departs considerably from all accounts considered thus far, bringing focus to a new aspect of Eve's maternal experience; grief. Both Cain and Eve are depicted as bereft, and the pain that the woman

[703] M. Wynne-Davies 1999: 370. For further connections between Bradstreet and Clinton see V. Brackett (1995).
[704] J. M. Lutes 1997: 323 and 326.
[705] A. Bradstreet 1678.

must endure is a pain shared with humanity as whole, the feeling of a terrible sense of paradise lost.[706]

Some critics have read this passage as a direct attack on Eve that situates the first mother as responsible for the terrible acts that will be committed by her son.[707] This interpretation is developed on the basis of the gaze shared between child and mother, which for some implies that Bradstreet wished to denote a kind of 'maternal imaging' taking place. The child's stare into its mother's face represents the transference of characteristic between parent and son. Thus, Eve imprints Cain with her sinful nature.[708] While it is clear that Bradstreet does not attempt to exonerate Eve in this stanza of poetry, where she clearly associates the first woman with a transgressive search for wisdom, there is, nonetheless, more a sense of tragic loss surrounding the first woman, than vilification. As Lutes opines, the scene suggests that Eve is 'less a perpetrator of evil than a victim… although the agony of birth is over, the agony of existence in a world of sin and depravity has only just begun', and this is a genderless agony.[709] She has been expelled from paradise and now faces the brutal and bloody reality of the world, one in which her child is destined for a 'fate forlorn'. Thus, as with Hildegard, Bradstreet does not directly blame Eve, but paints her as a victim of the 'father of lyes'. Furthermore, this victimisation results in Eve being posed, in the words of Michael Ditmore, as 'an odd, tragic, inventive Madonna-and-child parody'.[710] This 'parody' of the divine maternal scene of Virgin with Christ child

[706] I share this reading with Lutes (1997: 327–8).
[707] For example Z. M. Hutchins 2014: 125–6 and ns. 78 and 80 p.287.
[708] Hutchins 2014: 287 n.78 referring to Lutes 1997: 328, 330.
[709] Lutes 1997: 328.
[710] M. Ditmore 2007: 36–7 n.13.

on her knee seems to me to offer a potent means of expressing the tragedy and desolation of the first mother.[711]

One woman's response was particularly aimed at politically revitalising maternal authority, and emphasising the power motherhood could provide for women. Lucy Hutchinson (1620–1681) was a highly educated English biographer and writer, most famous for her biography of her husband, John Hutchinson. A Puritan and Parliamentarian, like her near contemporary, John Milton, she too produced an epic poem based on Genesis, *Order and Disorder*. David Norbrook only recently published the full text of this work in 2001, although the first five cantos of the poem were printed anonymously in 1679. Hutchinson's poem in many ways offers an example of a woman writer's reaction to *Paradise Lost*, with her rewriting of Genesis offering both similarities to, as well as numerous divergences from, Milton's work.[712] Arguably, one of the key features on which the two poets differ is their treatment of the theme of maternity within the biblical creation accounts. While a number of scholars have argued that Milton's poem at points frequently either represents maternity in highly negative, grotesque terms, or represses it entirely, Hutchinson's poem returns repeatedly to the significance of the maternal role.[713]

At each critical moment of her re-writing of the creation and 'Fall' story, Hutchinson finds opportunity to emphasise the maternal experience of Eve.[714] Thus, she defines the first woman's creation as the inauguration of matrimony

[711] For Eve and the *Pietà* see 4.III.b.
[712] See D. Norbrook's introduction to Hutchinson (2001: xxv).
[713] For a full discussion see S. Miller 2008. I am grateful to her book for introducing me to the work of Hutchinson, and for many of her critical observations that I have included in this section.
[714] For discussion of maternity, Eve, and *Order and Disorder* see Miller (2008); Murphy (2010: 152–75); L. Shook (2014: 179–204).

and motherhood, clearly placing the maternal figure of Eve at the centre of the order of God's good creation. The poet achieves this effect by weaving together the creation accounts from Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, explicitly linking the creation of Eve to the creation of 'male and female' in Gen. 1.27. After Eve has been formed in *Order and Disorder*, the poem initially continues to follow the order of Genesis 2, with Hutchinson extending Adam's speech to include Gen. 2.23-24:

Thou are my better self, my flesh, my bone,
We, of late one made two, again in one
Shall reunite, and with the frequent birth
Of our joint issue, people the vast earth…
When marriage male and female forth combine,
Children in one flesh shall two parents join.[715]

In doing so she manipulates the biblical motif of 'one flesh' in order to emphasise the mutuality of parenthood envisaged by Adam, rather than a male-dominated familial structure.[716] Echoing the way in which Hildegard highlighted the reciprocal reliance of man and woman in her interpretation of Eve's maternal role, Hutchinson elaborates on the potential of Gen. 2.23-4 to counter the otherwise strong biblical, and contemporary seventeenth century, tendency to focus on male-only genealogy.[717] Directly after Adam's speech, God confirms the marriage bond, and it is at this point that Hutchinson includes the deity's words from Gen. 1.28. In doing so she ensures that her reader is unable to mistake the 'dominion' God gives to humanity over the rest of creation as a male prerogative. By merging the two separate accounts, it is clear that Hutchinson understands

[715] All quotations from Hutchinson's Order and Disorder are taken from Norbrook's 2001 edition (Hutchinson 2001). *Order and Disorder* III. 405-16.
[716] Miller 2008: 119.
[717] Miller 2008: 116-9; E. Murphy 2011: 159.

the person of Eve to have received this blessing, and she is envisioned as integral to populating the earth.

This sense of generation, and the foundation of humanity through woman, as a body linked with fecundity is confirmed by an extended typological presentation of the second Adam, Christ, and the second Eve, as 'the Gospel Church', God's 'mystic bride.'[718] The closeness of association is emphasised through the unusual relationship that Eve has to Adam, as his wife and his sister, which Hutchinson replicates in God's description of his relationship with the Church, as well as an explicit causal link between the creation of Eve as a 'help' and the establishment of the Church: 'For without help to propagate mankind… / The Church, fruit of this union, had not come / To light, but perished, stifled in the womb' (III. 325, 331–2). As Flood, has remarked, 'The Eve/church identification is largely based on positive associations (in that Eve and the church are the mother of the live and Eve/church is the spouse of Adam/Christ).'[719] As I have already demonstrated earlier in this chapter, ancient Jewish texts such as Isaiah, 4 Ezra, to develop allusion between mourning, suffering, redeemable Mother Zion—herself associated with Mater Ecclesia in the Christian tradition—and Eve, complicating her moral status through reference to her maternal role. Hildegard also developed a similar matrix of feminine imagery, in which Eve's pre-lapsarian pure motherhood in likened to the motherhood of the Church. Hutchinson employs this technique to

[718] See E. Scott-Baumann (2013: 185) for her discussion on this aspect of *OD*.
[719] See Flood (2011: 16). Flood makes this point with reference to typologies employed by Patristic writers, but this generalized observation is clearly applicable to writers employing the Eve/church analogy outside of this time frame.

deliberately redeploy any sensual language to develop a marital and maternal as she builds her typology between Eve and the Church.[720]

Following Eve's transgression, there is another strong affirmation of the maternally oriented experience of Eve in paradise. The biblical text in Gen. 3.16 of course lends itself to Hutchinson's exploration of the position of motherhood in the divine order, but as in the creation of Eve, here Hutchinson elaborates on the particularly female experience of punishment.[721] Furthermore, this section of the poem in Canto 5 offers one of the clearest representations of the poet's own female voice within *Order and Disorder*, as Hutchinson interweaves her personal experience as a woman with that of Eve's. Indeed, David Norbrook, in an essay defending the attribution of the poem to Lucy Hutchinson, writes that in this part of the poem:

> The Genesis text is developed with a particular interest in female psychology… Here the troubles of marriage and childbirth are presented from the wife's point of view…. Eve thus receives a different, and in some ways more sympathetic, portrayal in *Order and Disorder* than in *Paradise Lost*.[722]

While Hutchinson's words clearly mourn Eve's actions, remarking 'Alas! How sadly to this day we find / Th'effect of this dire curse on womankind', she also appears to express a level of affiliation with the first mother (V.125–7). These lines of *OD* clearly place post-lapsarian childbirth and rearing within the context of disorder, as Hutchinson describes even the best children as a source of fear

[720] Scott-Baumann 2013: 177–86. Importantly, Baumann seems to counter her initially positive framing of the Eve/church typology in Hutchinson's work by concluding on a note of caution, saying 'Hutchinson does not defend Eve explicitly, but she redirects the reader's attention away from her body and from her sin' (p. 185). This seems to me to contrast with Scott-Baumann's final observation that 'Hutchinson makes the creation of Eve's body into a prefiguring of the spiritual church' (p. 185), which undoubtedly develops a positive frame for the first woman.
[721] Her treatment of the punishment given to Adam, however, is less obviously gendered, and appears to reflect the effect the penalty would have on all humankind, not only men.
[722] D. Norbrook 1999: 15.

and sadness. Interestingly, Eve's sorrow is described not as a personal suffering, but in more generic maternal terms, addressing the experience of all mothers (rather than fathers). Thus Hutchinson builds a sense of solidarity and identification with Eve, in a similar style to the pamphlet writers. This takes place through a change in the use of pronoun employed; initially Hutchinson describes the effect of the 'curse' on all women using third person pronouns, for example 'How painfully the fruit within them grows, What tortures do their ripened births disclose' (V.149–150). Within two lines, the poet then shifts to first person collective, placing herself amongst those who, along with Eve, suffer the trials of maternal life:

> How great, how various, how uneasy are
> The breeding-sicknesses, pangs that prepare
> The violent openings of life's narrow door,
> Whose fatal issues we as oft deplore!'…
> Even the good, who would our cares requite,
> Would be our crowns, joys, pillars and delight,
> Affect us yet with other griefs and fears,
> Opening the sluices of our near-dried tears.[723]

In much the same way that Bradstreet's brutal, grotesque and very real image of Eve with her bloodied son on her lap can be read as a tragic image of Eve's fate, so too, Hutchinson's meditation on motherhood.

Later in Canto V, Hutchinson develops an image of the redemptive power of tragic maternity, concluding the section on the curses with a note of hope, glossing the margin of the manuscript where her reiteration of Gen. 3.15 appears with 1 Tim. 2.16: 'Yet hath a promise that thereby shall / Recover all the hurt of the first fall / When, in a mysterious manner, from her womb / Her father, brother, husband and son shall come' (V.227-8). This clearly points to the birth of

[723] *Order and Disorder* V.151-4, 169-172.

Christ by the Virgin Mary, but the language used by Hutchinson is ambiguous and vague, drawing the relationship between Eve and Mary very closely around 'woman', in a formulation very similar to that employed by Rachel Speght. Thus, Hutchinson's deployment of this typology does not place Eve and Mary as type and antitype, but following on from the work of to the Anger, Speght, and Clinton, alludes to a genealogy of women, stretching from Eve who is offered pain and promise to Mary who removes the pain and fulfils the promise. Hutchinson thus appears to picture the two women in parallel rather than contrasting them to develop a female gendered picture of redemption.[724]

Unlike Milton, who does not venture outside of the garden, Hutchinson's poem covers the entirety of Genesis, so that her work is not focused solely on 'the Fall' but includes the first episode in the history of human salvation. In her record of the very beginning of human life in reality, Hutchinson emphasises the mutuality of parenthood. For example in her rewriting of Gen. 4.1 she alters the pronouns in Eve's naming speech for Cain to read: ' "For God", said she, "gives *us* possession"' (my emphasis—*Order and Disorder* VI.25-7). This clearly contrasts with the biblical, 'I have gotten a man from the LORD' (Gen. 4.1—KJV). So, while Hutchinson emphasises the power and importance of Eve's womb in the history of humanity, she nonetheless also wishes to support an entirely co-dependent, and equal balance of parenthood. Though this may appear to weaken the role of the woman to modern readers, the very fact that Hutchinson draws attention to male *and* female aspects of parenthood, as well as repeatedly emphasising the female role in the genealogy of humanity and the church, challenges the

[724] Here I depart from Shook, who sees the relationship between Hutchinson's Eve and Mary as oppositional (2014).

perception of passive maternity producing children to perpetuate male lines. As Shannon Miller argues, Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* seems to offer a reaction against Milton's elision of the maternal, as she builds Eve back into the story of creation, and restores her central role in the perpetuation of humanity. While her view, like most other women writers we have already encountered, cannot remove or remedy the negative actions of Eve, her representation of the 'curse' of woman is tinged with tragedy, and perhaps affiliation with, the first mother.

e. Eve in Women's Writing in Modernity

Like Lucy Hutchinson, who chose to revise Milton's decision to end Eve's story with the expulsion from Eden, Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861) set the entirety of her work based on Genesis, *A Drama of Exile* (*DE*), outside of the garden. In the preface to her first collection of poetry published in 1844, which included this poem, Barrett explains that 'the "Drama of Exile," is the longest and most important work (to *me*!) which I ever trusted into the current of publication'.[725] In a similar move to Hutchinson, Barrett Browning offered a revision of *Paradise Lost*, and thus of perhaps the most influential interpretation of Eve after Augustine. In this endeavour she was alone amongst other Victorian women poets, who, though undoubtedly deeply influenced by Milton's work, had not attempted to respond to it so directly or fully.[726] The personal connection she felt to this poem may be related to the fact that in some of her letters, Barrett expressed an affinity with Eve, not just as a 'daughter of

[725] E. Barrett Browning 1845: vi.
[726] L. M. Lewis 1998: 51.

Eve' due to her sex, but also on a more individual level. In one letter sent to her sister in 1839, Barrett writes 'You must remember, I was always of an Eveish constitution'; she makes this statement in relation to her own religious position, which she describes 'as a tolerant Congregationalist—a kind of heretic believer', a non-conformist choice she describes with reference to 'Eveish' behaviour.[727] Several years later, in 1844, Barrett sends a letter to a fried, Mary Russell Mitford, in which she writes in relation to her own recent consumption of French literature 'I was curious beyond the patience of my Eve-ship'.[728] As Linda Lewis remarks, these personal identifications with Eve might offer further context for understanding the way she employs the character in her poem, too; 'An identity with Eve's mythic and theological role suggests an identity too with the religious doctrines taught by Eve in *A Drama of Exile*. Eve's theology is Elizabeth Barrett's theology as well.'[729]

Within the *Drama*, Eve appears to be the central character, rather than Adam. The poem describes the moments after the couple has been expelled from Eden, but before they begin their family in Genesis 4. As such, the work is a meditation on themes of loss, sorrow and grief. Indeed, a further remark from the preface to the *Drama* clarifies this:

> My object was the new and strange experience of the fallen Humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence —appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man.[730]

[727] P. Kelley and R. Hudson 1986: 141
[728] P. Kelley and R. Hudson 1988: 162-3.
[729] Lewis 1998: 50.
[730] E. Barrett Browning 1845: vi.

Several features of this explanatory comment emphasise Barrett's personal connection to the subject matter, especially as a woman writer. Thus she states that her focus is on the specifically feminine experience of guilt and suffering, which she frequently aligns with Eve's motherhood throughout the poem. Though when she wrote the poem Barrett was not yet a mother, she nonetheless felt more qualified, as a woman, to present the passion of Eve than any male writer, including Milton, and as such she claims creative power.[731] Dorothy Mermin suggests that in *DE* 'it occurs to Barrett Browning… that loss, suffering, and passive renunciation might be empowering subjects, rightly considered, for a woman poet,'[732] thus '*A Drama of Exile* accepts the feminine role exemplified by the mother and redefines it as a source of imaginative power that enables her to write in the great masculine tradition.'[733]

In the first section of *DE* Adam and Eve are pictured outside of Eden. Barrett Browning uses the exchanges to characterise the first couple, with Eve being described as considerably more humble and repentant than Adam. Throughout these early stanzas the penitent Eve's grief is emphasised, and her specifically maternal sorrow clearly and emotively represented. Indeed, Barrett Browning allows Eve to chastise herself to the extent that the woman questions herself as a mother, and instead follows the traditional line of picturing herself as a figure of death. She says ''O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve — / Thine Eve, thy life — which suits me little now, / Seeing that now I confess myself thy death.'[734] Yet, through the voice of Adam, Barrett Browning counters Eve's words,

[731] Elizabeth Barrett Browning's first and only child, a son was born in 1849.
[732] Mermin 1986: 720.
[733] Ibid. 721.
[734] Barrett Browning 1845: 35.

and the tradition of Eve as a mother of death, using the man as a vehicle for recognising the woman as a source of life: 'Mine Eve and life — I have no other name / For thee or for the sun that what ye are, / My utter life and light!'[735]

Later in the poem Adam and Eve suffer a number of troubled encounters with various spirits of nature, who chastise them for their actions in Eden. Eve, who continues in a deep state of misery after her encounter with the various angry spirits, falls to the floor as she hears a series of passing voices, not of spirits, but of future humankind crying out 'O we live, O, we live'.[736] Despite their cries of life, it is clear from the rest of their speeches that their existence is one of 'laughter and of wailing', of life *and* of death. In response Eve comes to question her role as progenetrix in the fallen world, the mother of all those voices of future humans that she has heard bewailing their condition:

Eve Shall I be mother of the coming life?...
Am I cloud to these—mother to these?
Earth Spirits: And bringer of the curse upon all these.[737]

Barrett employs the now familiar motifs of pain and pleasure, disaster and hope, which characterise life after the Garden, developing a tragic image of Eve as one who is marked with guilt but also humility. In a state of desperate sorrow, unlike Adam who appeals to God's kingship for mercy, Eve relies on her maternal connection to the deity and entreats God as Christ, 'her seed', to offer them redemption:

There is pity in Thee,
O sinned against, great God!—My seed, my seed,
There is hope set on Thee—I cry to thee,
Thou mystic Seed that shalt be!—leave us not

[735] Ibid. 36.
[736] Ibid. 94–100.
[737] Ibid. 98.

In agony beyond what we can bear….
…. Oh my Seed…
Let me have token! for my soul is bruised
Before the serpent's head is.[738]

Her petitionary prayer is immediately answered with the appearance of Christ. In an interesting move that confounds other traditions where, in her suffering maternity, Eve relies on Adam's prayer for help, Barrett confirms, and indeed emphasises, the genealogical relationship between Eve and Christ.[739] Playing closely around the words in Gen. 3.15, she constructs a deeply moving image of Eve clinging to the promise made to her by God while the couple were still in Eden. While reference to the birth of Christ as 'the Seed' or descendant of Eve has been frequently mentioned above, more so than any other woman writer encountered so far Barrett draws attention to Eve's direct connection with Christ, rather than Mary's mediation of the promise.[740]

Barrett then once more uses the character of Adam to present a positive picture of Eve, placing a blessing in his mouth that is built around Gen. 3.20. Adam offers his wife a prophetic vision of her role as 'mother of the world', encouraging Eve not to become drowned by grief, but to embrace the 'sanctified devotion and full work, to which thou art elect for evermore, / First woman, wife, and mother!'[741] This move appears to build on the gendered picture in Genesis, where it is God who disciplines, while it is the man who celebrates woman for her creative power as mother and partner (with the exception of Gen. 3.12). For Barrett Eve's role as mother is 'sanctified', God-given, spiritually significant work. Though Eve responds to Adam's message by highlighting that

[738] Ibid. 103-4.
[739] For example— see *Life of Adam and Eve* earlier in this chapter.
[740] Mary is only mentioned twice, in an exchange between Christ and Eve.
[741] Barrett Browning 1845: 107.

she was also 'the first in sin', he continues to praise her powerful position as 'sole bearer of the Seed / Whereby sin dieth'.[742] Barrett accentuates the fact that the oracle concerning the seed of the woman was given to her *alone* rather than to both Adam and Eve, again illustrating her belief in the hope planted in Eve's body—and employing a now familiar interpretative strategy adopted by a number of women writers.

In a final confirmation of the powerful image of Eve as suffering mother of humanity, Barrett appears 'to align Eve as mother with Christ… an innovation indeed.'[743] Thus, in *DE*, not only is Eve related to Christ through genealogy, but also identified with him as a figure of suffering. Through allusion to Gen. 3.16, in his prophecy to Eve Adam tell hers: 'Be satisfied:/ Something thou hast to bear through womanhood, / Peculiar suffering answering to the sin, -- / Some pang paid down for each new human life, / Some weariness in guarding such a life…'[744] Later in the poem we find an echo of this description of suffering in Christ's address to Eve, where he says: 'I… / will tread the earth, / and ransom you and it, and set strong peace / Betwixt you and its creatures. With my pangs / I will confront your sins'.[745] Eve will pay for sin with pangs and bring about new life by doing so, in much the same way that Christ will bring about new life with his pain. As Linda Hughes suggests, his words 'enable Eve to go forward, modelling in her painful birth and nurturance the suffering and love of Christ's sacrifice.'[746]

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[742] Ibid.
[743] Hughes 2010: 157.
[744] Barrett Browning 1845: 109.
[745] Ibid 114.
[746] L. K. Hughes 2010: 156.

As has been the case with a number of pre-twentieth century women's appropriations, Eve's consignment to servitude in motherhood might appear both weak and submissive to modern readers, but for Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who was committed to Victorian Christian principles of humility, suffering, work, and pity, her humbled post-lapsarian Eve was in some ways an exemplary woman redeemed, who learned from her failings in order to develop spiritually.[747] Eve, who is clearly the protagonist of the work, not only comes to understand that her and her daughters' position of maternal humility was, from Barrett's perspective, a fruitful rather than restrictive role, but also allowed her a very specific form of identification with God as Christ. Barrett employs her own theology to reclaim Eve as an exemplary figure of female religiosity.[748]

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894), an almost contemporary Victorian woman poet, hailed Barrett as 'the Great Poetess of our day and nation'.[749] In fact, during 'Rossetti's lifetime opinion was divided over whether she or Elizabeth Barrett Browning was the greatest female poet of the era; in any case, after Browning's death in 1861 readers and critics saw Rossetti as the older poet's rightful successor.'[750] While the two women had considerable biographical differences, for example in their religious commitment—while Barrett was a Congregationalist, Rossetti was a Anglican/Anglo-Catholic—Rossetti's work shares a number of broad points of connection with Barrett's. Most obviously, both poets produced deeply religious poetry informed and influenced by their experiences as Victorian women, and to both women's creative endeavours was

[747] Lewis 1998: 3–4.
[748] Ibid. 60.
[749] Quoted Ibid. 212.
[750] <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/christina-rossetti> last accessed 7 Jul. 2015.

the re-evaluation of key female figures.[751] Thus Barrett and Rossetti employed their writings to develop their own theologies and gender constructions that were both influenced by, and in turn influenced, their perceptions of Eve.

Christina Rossetti is the only one of the women writers I have considered in this chapter, with the exception of Hildegard, who never had children. Nonetheless, themes of physical motherhood, but also a focus on the performance of feminine maternal behaviour, are critical features of her writing. Furthermore, like Hildegard, Rossetti's oeuvre is varied, consisting of poetry and devotional prose writings; her most direct poetic treatment of the Bible's first woman is found in 'Eve', though Rossetti also alludes to her in many other works including 'Shut Out', 'An After-Thought', 'A Daughter of Eve', and 'A Helpmeet for Him', and 'Aurora Leigh', as well as in *Letter and Spirit: Notes on the Commandments* and *The Face of the Deep: A Devotional Commentary on the Apocalypse*.

In her poem, 'Eve', Rossetti, like her predecessor Barrett Browning, elaborates on the depiction of the first woman outside of Eden.[752] The poem is entirely focused on the female experience of grief and mourning in the wake of the expulsion, with four of the seven stanzas supplying Eve with a voice. In the opening of the poem, it is clear that the woman's desolation is linked not only to exile from paradise, but also to her responsibility for human mortality, as she describes how the tree of knowledge actually bore the fruit of death. Thus, 'While the imagery suggests her disobedience in Eden, it also suggests the death of her

[751] On the religious specificities of their poetry see K. Dieleman (2001).
[752] Rossetti 2002: 158-60.

"fruit"—her children, Cain and Abel.'[753] In the fourth stanza, this allusion becomes explicitly realised, as the reader is made aware that the context of the poem is not only Eve outside of Eden, but Eve mourning the death of her child Abel at the hands of her first son, Cain: 'I, Eve, Sad mother / Of all who must live… / Who but should I grieve? - / Cain hath slain his brother: / Of all who must die mother, / Miserable Eve.'[754] Echoing Barrett Browning's allusion to the contradiction between Eve as 'mother of all life' and also bringer of death, Rossetti allows Eve to lament, and by offering her a voice, also offers her sympathy. This mourning is not focused on the woman herself. Rather, the misery she feels is generated by guilt concerning the fate of her children. While she is given promise as 'mother / Of all who must live', Eve must also deal with the consequences that her children, humanity, will be mortal.[755]

Elsewhere in her writings, Rossetti confirms this focus on Eve as a source of life, defining her maternal capacity as the interpretative key to understanding the role of the first woman. In an unpublished note on Exodus 1:22 ('Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live'), Rossetti expands on the gendered association between life and femininity in this passage, writing of 'her desire… to see Eve in terms of life, not death.'[756] In the same commentary, Rossetti reflects on the 'curses' given to woman and man in Genesis 3, and finds evidence in the biblical text to suggest that 'There seems to be a sense in which from the Fall downwards the penalty of death has been made on man and life on

[753] V. Sickbert 1995: 298.
[754] Rossetti 2002: 159.
[755] L. Palazzo 2002: 43.
[756] Quoted by D'Amico 1999: 124.

woman.'[757] Despite the prevailing tradition that sin is transferred through the female body, and the association of women/Eve with rather than with men/Adam, Rossetti reads the plain sense of Gen. 3.16 and Gen. 3.19 identifying that while Eve is promised pain in childbirth, Adam is promised a return to the dust of the earth.[758] This interpretative move aligns with Speght's observation that while the woman's punishment is specific to her life-giving capacity, it is through man that 'for the ſinne of man the whole earth was curſed'.[759] In her article on the unorthodox treatment of Eve by Rossetti, Virginia Sickbert concludes that she 'raises Eve to a position of dignity, minimizing her sinfulness and her punishments and emphasizing her reward—the gift of giving life.'[760]

As well as re-evaluating the relationship between Adam and Eve, Rossetti's work on the Eve/Mary connection is complex. She, like numerous other female authors, attempted to develop a positive female genealogy from Eve to Mary, avoiding a simple dichotomy between the two women, but acknowledging their similarities. Indeed, Rossetti develops a 'feminine triptych' in her commentary on Revelation 12, where she reflects on the place of women in heaven.[761] Here she begins by establishing the usual typological presentation of Eve as negative, and Mary as positive.[762] This then gives way to a rather more complex picture of maternal redemption, in which Rossetti identifies Mary, Eve,

[757] L. M. Packer 1963: 330.
[758] It is important to note here that there is evidence to suggest Rossetti would have been unable to read Hebrew, so her interpretation can only be based on an assumption of the singular second person pronoun in Gen. 3.19.
[759] Speght 1617.
[760] Sickbert 1995: 297.
[761] D'Amico 1987: 175–91.
[762] Rossetti 2002: 365–6.

herself, and her reader through their shared connection to motherhood, with Rossetti positioning herself as a daughter:

> And yet, even as at the foot of the Cross, St Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, stood beside the "lily among thorns," the Mother of sorrows: so (I humbly hope and trust) among all saints of all time will stand before the throne, Eve the beloved first Mother of us all. Who that has loved and revered her own immediate dear Mother, will not echo the hope?[763]

Like Elizabeth Clinton's writing, Rossetti's plea for Eve is directly addressed to mother and daughters, placing Eve within a community of women, and urging a transformation of the traditional condemnation of our tragic first mother through her link to all humanity.

f. Summary

This section has demonstrated that, while not offering a consciously or deliberately developed tradition concerning Eve, for women writers through the centuries, the first woman represented a figure of tragic identification, and indeed of hope. To reiterate Tina Beattie's suggestion, Eve can offer a means for women to articulate their 'struggling reality'. For women before the rise of the women's movement, living in the predominantly Christian West, this identification necessarily took place within a theological framework that made it nearly impossible to deny the first woman's transgression. For Hildegard, her pre-lapsarian perfection was one she could identify with as a cloistered abbess, while for secular writers from Rachel Speght onwards, the biblical text's ambiguity concerning Eve's physical procreative powers allowed them to portray her as a source of both sorrow and hope. These women, who could not identify with the pure Virgin Mary, could situate themselves between the first

[763] Ibid. 366.

mother and the mother of God, in a powerful line of genetrixes upon whom salvation history relied. Thus, while I demonstrated in chapter 3 that Angela Carter and other twentieth century women writers employed Eve's rebellion as a motif for their own feminist struggle against patriarchal monopoly of power and knowledge, for many pre-twentieth century women the figure of Eve allowed them articulate their maternal sufferings and hopes, as well as the power they could assume as mothers, and in doing so they transformed Eve into a figure of pathos and strength, rather than weakness and condemnation.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has offered a 'counter-history' to the popular negative picture of Eve's motherhood, which has dominated ideas about the first woman for centuries. Developing outwards from the Hebrew text, I have analysed how and why Eve can be depicted as a nurturing, suffering female archetype. Having identified several keys aspects of both the negative and positive elements of Eve's motherhood in the biblical account—the suffering promised in Gen. 3.16, the power suggested in Gen. 3.20, and the reality in Gen. 4.1 and 25—I examined the way in which, contrary to the popular image of Eve, her suffering and her strength made its way into the earlier Jewish and Christian re-writings of and allusions to her story. Having established this maternal frame for viewing Eve's reception, my two case studies of very different trajectories of interpretation followed the development of the first mother.

The visual traditions I explore offer a counterpoint to the ubiquitous focus amongst the majority of reception history on artists' renderings of the temptation, Fall and expulsion. Rather, by examining visualisations of Eve's maternity, I illustrated the interpretative possibilities left open by the biblical text. In much the same way that numerous artists have expanded on the account in Genesis 3 with repeated depictions of the 'fruit' as an apple, and the snake with a woman's face, with Eve portrayed as a sexual temptress, others built on the account in Genesis 4 to image Eve breastfeeding her baby Abel to develop a nurturing and positive image of the post-lapsarian woman. Within Christian iconographic tradition this also allows for the development of a highly significant complementary parallel between the first woman and the Virgin Mary configured around their maternity, rather than the more commonly recognised antithetical binary. This became all the more evident through examining the poignant motif of Eve mourning Abel. While this is not a strictly biblical event, it has its roots in the text of Gen. 4.25 that suggests Eve's acknowledgement of the death of her child, and became part of her reception history from very early on (see above 3.II.e). Furthermore, the famous image of Mary mourning the dead Christ, which many of the renderings I examined echoed, is also an apocryphal event. Yet, within the cultural afterlives of both women, these episodes are critical expansions on their biblical stories that emphasise their implied maternal grief.

I concluded by examining the ways in which women writing before the women's movement, working within the confines of patriarchal Western culture, appropriated the first woman as a means addressing maternity. In a variety of

ways these women expressed identification with the first woman, either as mothers themselves, or daughters of mothers, and in doing so examined the powerful potency of Eve's maternal role assigned to her by God, as well as exploring her personal tragedy in the Genesis 2–4. In doing so they realigned the focus of Eve's guilt away from a focus on the damage she has caused to Adam, and onto her suffering as a mother who has injured her children. Thus, by focusing Eve's transgression with a focus on her maternity, Genesis 2–4 becomes a story centred on the tragedy of Eve's fallibility, rather than a condemnation for her failures and her sins.

While I acknowledge that many of the interpretations here offer an expansion of the biblical text, extending the account in Genesis 2–4 in order to explore Eve's maternal care of her children and her suffering at their pain, I have also argued that these departures from the text are no different to those made in more popular presentations of Eve as the mother of death, evil and suffering examined in chapter 2.IV. Consequently, the image of Eve as a caring, tragic maternal figure has an equally valid and significant place in her reception history.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

By examining often rejected, ignored, or forgotten aspects of Eve's afterlives, and assessing the process by which they grew out of Genesis 2–4, I have illustrated that any history of interpretation of the first woman should mirror the tensions and contradictions of the biblical story. I have argued that despite the popular cultural myth of Eve perpetuated by 'mainstream' rewritings of her story, there are equally important and valid modes of reading her account offered in less orthodox sources. Consequently, I have explored Gnostic myth, twentieth and twenty-first century feminist fiction, as well as marginal aspects of Eve's art history, and her appropriation by women writers working from antiquity to modernity. While the myth of Eve as a feminine symbol of sin is powerful and well established, I have demonstrated that her story is multivalent, and thus that the Bible's first woman can function simultaneously as a transgressor, a bearer of knowledge, and a figure of life. Eve, as I understand her, is far from ideal Woman, but rather she represents the multiplicity of womanhood: fallible but powerful, destructive yet creative, suffering and hopeful; human.

This thesis builds on the works of Mieke Bal and Yvonne Sherwood to offer a study of Eve that moves beyond the usual texts and themes discussed in many contemporary histories of the interpretation of Genesis 2–3; my aim being to 'reanimate the over-familiarised text'.[764] Following theoretical and curatorial work undertaken by Mieke Bal, I have experimented with the 'framing' of Genesis 2–4. By examining three different themes that 'frame' Eve's story—sin,

[764] Y. Sherwood 2000: 291. M. Bal 2002.

knowledge, and life—I have offered fresh approaches to the biblical story that break out of the usual model of solely analysing the first woman's sinfulness in Genesis 2–3. In doing so, I have also considered the importance of the development of her story in Genesis 4, and the further insights this offers into her character.

In structuring my thesis, I have borrowed Sherwood's model of analysing 'mainstream' and 'backwater' readers, though within these categories I group my case studies on the basis of the themes (*framing*) from the biblical text they interact with, rather than on readers' religious beliefs or culture.[765] In several cases, not only have I chosen to assess marginal readings of the text in my examination of the fluidity of its meaning, but also to seek out the work of marginalised readers, such as Gnostics and radical feminists, and perhaps the most persistently ignored, pre-twentieth century women writers. Following Sherwood's work on Jonah, not only does my thesis destabilise the popular image of Eve, but also the monopoly on scriptural interpretation held by the mainstream. Thus my approach to Eve's reception is both backward and forward looking, employing sidelined receptions from history as useful tools for the contemporary biblical scholar and reader of the text.

I have, therefore, developed a critical metacommentary on some popular interpretative trends in Eve's cultural afterlives that define the first woman by her sin. David Clines has observed that 'when we write commentary, we read what commentators say. When we write metacommentary, we notice what

[765] Sherwood focuses on Jewish interpretations of Jonah, as well as readings from popular culture (2000).

commentators do'. [766] While many commentaries and reception histories of Eve have examined 'what commentators [and interpreters] say' about the first woman, I have endeavoured to 'notice what they do' to the biblical text in order to come to their interpretations. Consequently, I have examined some of the reading strategies that underpin images of Eve as a figure of intellectual weakness, as well as those that taint her role as mother with death and evil, illustrating that these owe as much to the readers' preconception about Eve's sin as they do to the biblical account. I have highlighted the aspects of Genesis 2–3 that offer readers points of departure for their construction of particularly negative views of Eve, and by extension women. These primarily grow out of the text's ambiguity on whether the woman alone conversed with the snake, the space it leaves for readers to assume she ate the fruit first and subsequently convinced Adam to eat it, and her confession that the snake 'deceived' her, which by the process of translation quickly developed into 'seduction'. Under scrutiny, it has become clear that despite the considerable cultural currency of readings of Eve that define her by her association with sin, they do not necessarily represent 'good' readings of the biblical account. At least no more so than readings that selectively interpret the text by a focusing on other facets of Eve's character, such as her desire for knowledge and her power to give life.

When we examine the effects of shifting the thematic frame of the biblical story from sin to knowledge it becomes clear that an entirely opposite understanding of Eve's story is possible. When the reader challenges the traditional mode of reading, asking 'Why does God ban knowledge?', which is

[766] D. J. A. Clines 1995: 76.

generally viewed as a positive human asset, the answer from the biblical account remains ambivalent. Though God judges the humans for their consumption of the fruit, it is not entirely clear whether the reader is expected to accept the deity's actions. After all, several aspects of Yahweh Elohim's conduct point towards him functioning as a jealous and controlling character, rather than a caring and compassionate one. For some interpreters, then, Eve's reach for knowledge and human development is a positive action, initiating growth, maturation and culture for humanity, while God very quickly morphs into a dark figure.

Though the case studies I offer in support of this reading —the Gnostic writings and twentieth-century feminist literature—could easily be dismissed as heretical and 'incorrect' eisegeses of the biblical text, I argue their readings are insightful for two key reasons. Firstly, because they are equally 'good' readings of the biblical text as those offered by the 'mainstream' precisely because Genesis 2–4 is fluid and multivalent. Readers who view Eve as a positive agent of wisdom are selective in their focus, and their interpretations arise due to the frame of knowledge they place around the text. Yet the decisions they come to about the meaning of the narrative, and the expansions they make on it are not that different from the type of interpretative decisions I found 'mainstream' interpreters making. For example, the mainstream vilify Eve and elevate Yahweh Elohim on the basis of their belief in the benign character of God and the inherent sin of transgressing his will, and consequently they denigrate the woman. This position, however, is more reliant on the Jewish and Christian traditions of a good God than it is on the literary characterisation of the deity in

Genesis 2–3. In a similarly selective fashion that yields an entirely opposite meaning for the text, Angela Carter, interpreted the boundaries of Eden to be a limitation rather than a paradise, and understood the character of God to be authoritarian and untrustworthy. In turn Eve becomes elevated, with Carter celebrating her transgression as worthwhile and beneficial. This interpretative strategy that questions the character of God, and refuses to overlay the deity in Genesis 2–3 with the omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent God of Judaeo-Christian culture, is now increasingly supported by a number of biblical scholars, further strengthening my claim that such interpretations should not be immediately rejected as heretical.[767]

Second, as valid readings of the biblical text, the writings of the Gnostics and of Angela Carter serve to destabilise the frequent employment of the garden story as a biblical prooftext for a highly problematic gendered binary in which woman equates to the senses and to weakness, while the man represents the mind and strength. Rather, they present Eve as a symbol for knowledge; a rebel who wrests wisdom from the controlling hands of a malign God. Furthermore, while she is traditionally represented as the conduit for Adam's sin and fall, in these readings she is the superior party who elevates the human man by offering him new insight. Thus, those readings that prioritise the theme of knowledge can help contemporary readers of Genesis 2–3 to re-evaluate a number of naturalised 'truths' about the meaning of Eve's story, and to critique the negative gender myths that have denied women's rational, intellectual capacity.

[767] For example D. Penchansky (1997, 1999). Furthermore, several contemporary biblical scholars support the idea of Genesis as a maturation myth, rather than a fall, arguing that the moral content of the story is rather less severe than traditional Jewish, and especially Christian readings have assumed (L. Bechtel 1993, 1995; S. Niditch 1985)

As well as employing interpretations that directly contest Eve's sin by elevating her to a figure of wisdom, my focus on the maternal frame of the first woman's story in chapter 4 introduces a highly underrepresented aspect of Eve's biblical story and her cultural afterlives. This illustrates that, far from being entirely tarnished by sin, mother Eve can and has been viewed as a figure of maternal pain and promise. Though her visual tradition has been dominated by deeply sexualised depictions of the temptation, fall, and expulsion, my examinations of more marginal facets of Eve's art history have been highly productive for nuancing the image of the first woman. Powerful visualisations of Eve nursing her children, or mourning the death of her son Abel can encourage the twenty-first century reader of the biblical text to continue beyond Genesis 3 into Genesis 4, and to recognise the tragic aspects of Eve's role as a mother. Furthermore, the images are highly effective in challenging the problematic Eve/Mary binary, which established a model of 'bad' and 'good' femininity, offering two motifs—nursing and mourning—by which the mothers can be linked and likened rather than contrasted.

This process of complicating Eve's role by focusing on her maternity was also apparent in the work of a number of pre-twentieth century women writers I examine in the same chapter. Interestingly, the appropriation and rehabilitation of Eve by these often ignored interpreters frequently focused on the redemptive power of the first mother, and her integral role in Christian salvation history. From Perpetua to Christina Rossetti, I illustrate that women writers repeatedly identified with Eve in ways that were not possible for their male counterparts. Focusing on the centrality of the first woman in the perpetuation

of the human race, many of the women recognised themselves as heirs of Eve, participating in a genealogy of mothers stretching from Eve to Mary, all of whom were critical to human salvation. I use these interpretations to trouble the image of Eve as 'other' that has been perpetuated by male writers, as well as to draw attention to the ways in which women sympathetically appropriated Eve as a representation of their own suffering and their hope and power. Furthermore, in this section of the thesis I implicitly put forward a case for the inclusion of women's voices in histories of the biblical reception more widely, in order to challenge the monopoly male interpreters have on the Bible.

Cumulatively, my thesis has interrogated the biblical text and the traditional myth surrounding Eve and has found the meaning of her story to be multivalent and mutable.[768] I have offered a platform for heretical, marginal, forgotten and ignored interpretations, and employed them to explode the popular cultural myth of Eve as sinner. In doing so, I have critiqued both the mainstream interpretation of Eve as well as the mainstream approach to Eve's history of interpretation. I would like to finish as I began, by reflecting on a quotation taken from Margaret Atwood that has great resonances with my project of re-visioning Eve's character:

> *I will enter a simple plea; women, both as characters and as people, must be allowed their imperfections. If I create a female character, I would like to be able to show her having the emotions all human beings have - hate, envy, spite, lust, anger and fear, as well as love, compassion, tolerance, and joy - without having her pronounced a monster, a slur, or a bad example. I would also like her to be cunning, intelligent and sly, if necessary for the plot, without having her branded as a bitch goddess or a glaring instance of the deviousness of women. For a long time, men in literature have been seen as individuals, women merely as examples of a gender; perhaps it is time to take the capital W off Woman. I myself have*

[768] Sherwood 2000: 291.

never known an angel, a harpy, a witch or an earth mother. I've known a number of real women, not all of whom have been-nicer or more noble or more longsuffering or less self-righteous· and pompous than men. Increasingly it is becoming possible to write about them, though as always it remains difficult for us to separate what we see from what we have been taught to see.[769]

[769] M. Atwood 1979: 33.

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